

PAULINE PERSPECTIVES

ESSAYS ON PAUL, 1978–2013

N. T. WRIGHT

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To Nick, Archie,
Ben, Chad, Kevin and Jamie

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ABBREVIATIONS

1 Stylistic Shorthands

ad fin.	at the end
ad loc.	at the [relevant] place
bib.	bibliography
cf.	confer
com.	commentary
cp.	compare
ed.	edited by
edn	edition
esp.	especially
ET	English translation
f(f).	and the following page(s)
frag.	fragment(s)
ibid.	source cited in the preceding note
introd.	introduction/introduced by
loc. cit.	in the place previously cited
mg	margin
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
nb.	note well
NT	New Testament
op. cit.	in the work previously cited
OT	Old Testament
passim	throughout/frequently
ref(s).	reference(s)
rev.	revision/revised by
subsequ.	subsequent
tr.	translation/translated by

2 Primary Sources

(a) *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*

1 En.	*1 Enoch*
1/2/3/4 Macc.	1/2/3/4 Maccabees
4 Ez.	*4 Ezra*

Jub.	*Jubilees*
Jud.	*Judith*
Ps. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
Sir.	Ben Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

(b) ***Other Ancient Sources***

2 Bar.	*2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)*
b. Arak.	Babylonian Talmud, *Arakhin*
Ep. *Discourses*	Epictetus, *Discourses*
Eus. *HE*	Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*
Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah
Josephus, *Ant.*	Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*
Josephus, *C. Ap.*	Josephus, *Against Apion*
Josephus, *War*	Josephus, *Jewish Wars*
m. Ab.	Mishnah, *Abot*
m. Kid.	Mishnah, *Kiddushin*
Mart. Pol.	*Martyrdom of Polycarp*
Philo, *Heir*	Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit* (*Who is the Heir of Divine Things?*)
Philo, *Leg. All.*	Philo, *Legum Allegoriae* (*Allegorical Interpretation*)
Philo, *Migr. Abr.*	Philo, *De Migratione Abrahami* (*On the Migration of Abraham*)
Philo, *Mos.*	Philo, *De Vita Mosis* (*On the Life of Moses*)
Philo, *Spec. Leg.*	Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* (*The Special Laws*)
Plato, *Men.*	Plato, *Meno*
Ps. Philo	Pseudo-Philo
Seneca, *De Ben.*	Seneca, *De Benificiis*
Suetonius, *Claud.*	Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum: Divus Claudius*
Tac. *Annals*	Tacitus, *Annals*
Test. Dan	*Testament of Dan*

3 Secondary Sources

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
BDAG	*A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3rd edn rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, based on W. Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsch Wörterbuch,* 6th edn, and on previous English edns by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1957]
BDF	*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, ed. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, tr. and rev. R. W. Funk (1961)

BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BR	*Biblical Research*
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
ETS	The Evangelical Theological Society
HDB2	*Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. J. Hastings, rev. 1 vol. edn (1932) [4 vols. 1898–1902]
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JThCh	*Journal for Theology and the Church*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MG	W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, *Concordance to the Greek New Testament.* Sixth edn, fully revised, ed. I. H. Marshall. London: T&T Clark, 2002.
NBD	*New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas et al. London: IVP, 1962
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible.* 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2002
NIDNTT	*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown. 3 vols. Exeter: Paternoster, 1975–8
OCD	*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. Third edn. Oxford: OUP, 1996
SB	H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch.* 6 vols. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1926–56
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neuentestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZthK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

4 Bible versions

AV	Authorized Version (King James Version)
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint version of the OT
MT	Masoretic Text
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version

NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version

PREFACE

Looking back over thirty-five years of scholarly writing is a bit like looking back at a road over which you have driven and realizing that the car window had been open and papers had been blowing out. There, behind you, is a string of publications scattered across the landscape of various journals, Festschriften and other collections. There may be something to be said for retracing your route, gathering up the bits and pieces, and seeing if you can put them back where they belong.

These essays take their place, of course, within the larger construal of Pauline theology about which I have been writing on and off most of my adult life, and which now finds a new expression in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (*PFG*). But at several points along the journey I have tried to put down certain markers, and have tried as well to respond to criticisms and defend points I had made earlier. It may now be useful to have all of these pieces gathered together in one place.

I have made no attempt to bring these essays up to date. They stand as markers to 'the way I saw things at the time'. However, I have been surprised, re-reading them after (in some cases) the interval of half a lifetime, to discover how much of what I still think I think was present, at least by implication, in some of the earliest pieces. Whether this shows mere stubbornness, or rather patience in drawing out meaning over time, others must judge. Nor are they uniform in style or even genre: some retain the oral format of their original presentation, some are geared specifically to current issues and moments within the life of the church, some are explicitly apologetic, defending a position taken earlier against specific criticism, and some are in a more traditional scholarly format. Like Paul himself (a point made by John A. T. Robinson in his *Redating the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1976]), there is no reason why a scholar who has also worked within the ongoing life of the church should not write in several different styles in quick succession.

This is not, of course, my first collection of Pauline articles. *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* was published in 1991, and many of the pieces there remain seminal for all my subsequent work. Likewise, the book published under the quirky title *What Saint Paul Really Said* (1997) contained reworked versions of various lectures and essays that I had developed in the mid-1990s, and no attempt is made to reproduce

any of them here (though one or two pieces here will inevitably overlap with some of that material). There is, likewise, a certain amount of overlap between some of the present essays and some of the material in *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (US title *Paul in Fresh Perspective*) (2005), and of course *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (2009). I hope that will be helpful to many and irritating to few if any.

By no means have all these articles, as it were, the same status within my developing project of Pauline theology. Some, as will readily be seen, are ephemeral, responding to particular moments and challenges. Others, however, are loadbearing, offering a fresh account of a particular theme or set of passages and arguing the point more fully than I can do in *PFG*. The loadbearing essays include the very first one ('The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith') and the very last ('Paul and the Patriarch'), and also, particularly, 'Paul, Arabia and Elijah', 'New Exodus, New Inheritance', '4QMMT and Paul', 'Romans 2.17—3.9', and 'Messiahship in Galatians'. My repeated attempts to say something sensible about Paul and Caesar (three essays here, and frequent sections in some of the others) act more as signposts to the fuller, and I hope more nuanced, account I have given in *PFG*.

It was decided, in assembling these essays from a period of thirty-five years, to leave them in chronological order of composition rather than trying to group them in themes. There may be something to be said, if any are so minded, for tracing the development of a strand of thought and seeing how different ideas gradually emerged. They divide quite nicely into those I wrote during my time, first, in Merton College, Oxford (1975–8), Downing College, Cambridge (1978–81) and Worcester College, Oxford (1986–93) (the essay on Käsemann's Romans commentary was written in Cambridge though not published until we had moved to Montreal, where I was from 1981 to 1986); second, in Lichfield (1994–9) and Westminster (2000–3); third, in Durham (2003–10), and fourth and finally, in St Andrews (2010 to the present). The four sections form a kind of arch, from the academy to the church and back again – though I was active in pastoral and preaching ministry throughout my early academic life, and tried to keep up my academic work during the three periods in which I was primarily involved in church work. For ease of reference, the pagination of the original publication has been inserted in each case. I have added short autobiographical remarks to each in order to contextualize the writing within 'real life'. I hope younger scholars in particular will be encouraged to see that essays and reflections do not necessarily emerge from some grand, well-organized original design, but often proceed in fits and starts in what seems at the time a fairly random fashion, only gaining such little overall coherence as they may have with the benefit of long and perhaps generous hindsight.

The present volume could not have arrived at its present form without the energetic and enthusiastic help of my current research assistant, Jamie Davies. This is only one aspect of the many tasks on which he has been engaged on my behalf, and it has been a joy to leave the collection of the essays, in some cases their transcription, and in many cases the seeking of permission to reprint (for which I am grateful), in his capable hands. Jamie

is the most recent in a notable line of assistants to whom I have been indebted over the last twelve years, starting with Nick Perrin in Westminster, continuing first with Archie Wright and then with Ben Blackwell in Durham, and including Chad Marshall during my four months in Princeton in 2009. I list alongside them Kevin Bush, who has nobly set up, organized and run 'my' website (<www.ntwrightpage.com>) and has advised me on all kinds of matters to do with that way of presenting my work and drawing out discussion and debate. I dedicate this book to all six of them with gratitude for their fellowship, their hard work, and their constant and cheerful wisdom.

N. T. Wright

St Mary's College
St Andrews
Lent 2013

Part I

Oxford and Cambridge

Chapter One

THE PAUL OF HISTORY AND THE APOSTLE OF FAITH (1978)

The *Tyndale New Testament Lecture*, delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, on 4 July 1978. Originally published in *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 61–88. Reprinted with permission.

This was not the first piece I published on Paul. That dubious distinction belongs to the short article on *peri hamartias* in Romans 8.3 which I gave at the Oxford Congress on Biblical Studies in the spring of 1978 and which, after its initial publication in the volume of conference papers, found its way into *The Climax of the Covenant*. But the present article was the first time I tried out on an audience the larger thesis about Paul which had been coming clear in my mind over the previous two or three years, and to which the 1977 publication of Ed Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* had given a considerable boost. I remain very grateful to the Tyndale Fellowship for inviting a young, untried scholar to give the annual New Testament lecture, and to the lively audience who listened to it, and to its proposal for a 'new perspective' on Paul (p. 64 in the original). That was the summer my family and I moved to Cambridge, and the meeting at Tyndale House gave me an appetite for working in that collegial atmosphere for which Oxford had provided no parallel. Owing to the arrangements for billeting conference participants, I wrote the final version of this lecture in the room I had been assigned in Newnham College, just down the road from Tyndale House. My grandfather used to boast of having been at Somerville College, Oxford, explaining after puzzled glances that the female-only college had been transformed, during the First World War, into a military hospital, where he recovered from wounds received at the Front. I am happy to pay a similar, though less painful, tribute to Newnham for its hospitality.

* * *

[61] 'Controversy' writes Ernst Käsemann 'is the breath of life to a German theologian'[1] – and he should know. What he imagines the rest of us breathe he does not say: but since the essay which begins with these words engages in debate with Krister Stendahl, a Swede now living in America, I see no reason why a mere Englishman may not join in as well. I want in this lecture to contribute to the debate in question, and then to exploit the ambiguities of my

[1] Käsemann 1969a, 60.

title and discuss the distinction which needs to be made today between the real Paul and the Apostle of the church's imagination. The debate between Stendahl and Käsemann concerns the relation, in Paul's thought, between justification and salvation history – between the Apostle who preached the Lutheran Gospel of justification by faith and the Paul who was called, in God's historical purposes, to be the Apostle to the gentiles. It would not be an overstatement to say that all the major issues in Pauline interpretation are contained (at least by implication) in this debate, and in one lecture there are therefore bound to be oversimplifications and downright lacunae. I want to try nevertheless to present what I take to be a new view of Paul, in the hope of at least stimulating fresh thought, and also to prepare the way for further, and fuller, exegetical studies. If I seem at times to be deliberately controversial, I hope you will take that as a sign that I am trying to impart the breath of life to the subject.

[62] Justification and Salvation History: Stendahl and Käsemann

I begin, then, with the debate between Stendahl and Käsemann. Nearly 20 years ago Krister Stendahl wrote the now famous article 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West'.[2] In it he pleaded that we should let the text which Paul actually wrote function as a critique of inherited presuppositions in interpretation, and warned of the danger of 'modernizing' Paul. Specifically, he claimed that the picture of Paul inherited from Augustine and Luther was misleading in several important respects. Paul, he said, had never suffered from a bad conscience: the soul-searchings and agonies of Luther were not to be read back into Romans or Galatians. Instead of the question 'how can I find a gracious God?', Paul had asked the question: granted that the gospel is for the gentiles, what is now the place of the Jews, and of the Torah? Romans 9—11 is, he claimed, the real centre of the epistle: salvation history is the basic content of Paul's theology, and justification by faith is part of Paul's apologetic for the gentile mission and the place of gentiles in the church.

Not surprisingly, this drew a sharp intake of the breath of life from Ernst Käsemann.[3] Salvation history, he affirmed, was opposed to the true Protestant doctrine of justification and its basis, the *theologia crucis*. The gospel of the cross shatters comfortable assumptions, and declares, particularly to those who rest on their historical background and continuity with the past, that God is the God who justifies the ungodly. Though Käsemann, like Stendahl, insists that the Bible must be allowed to be over the church, he does not tackle the detailed exegetical points on which Stendahl had based [**63**] much of his case, but leans heavily on a theological interpretation of twentieth-century politics and philosophy, warning that salvation history

[2] The article, first published in *HTR* 56 (1963) 199–215, and reprinted now in Stendahl 1976, 78–96, developed from an article in *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 25 (1960) 62–77.

[3] 'Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans', Käsemann 1969a, 60–78.

had been used to back up Nazism, and aligning it with 'an immanent evolutionary process whose meaning can be grasped on earth, or which we can control or calculate'.[4] While agreeing that there is a sense in which, for Paul, Christianity is in continuity with Judaism, Käsemann emphasizes the discontinuity. Though justification and salvation history belong together, justification is prior in every sense. Otherwise, says Käsemann, we cease to be true Protestants.

Stendahl has now replied to Käsemann, in the book which reprints his original essay.[5] He claims, justifiably, that Käsemann has misrepresented him at various points, and questions whether 'the justification of the ungodly', being mentioned so rarely by Paul, can properly be regarded as the centre of his thought. Käsemann, he says, has begged the question by beginning from the traditional Protestant doctrine of justification which it was his (Stendahl's) purpose to challenge. Whereas Käsemann claims that justification is 'the centre the beginning and the end of salvation history',[6] Stendahl reasserts that 'the very argument about justification by faith functions within [Paul's] reflection on God's plan for the world', and he points out tartly that, if theologies of history have been responsible for political evils in Germany, so has a theology which has seen 'the Jew' as the symbol of all that is false and dangerous in religion.

The last point is one of the most important that the debate has raised. I will shortly question very seriously whether the traditional understanding of Judaism and of Paul's attack on it is not fundamentally mistaken. And Stendahl is absolutely right to draw attention to Paul's robust conscience, and to the fact that justification and salvation history have a habit of keeping close company in Paul (Romans 1—4; 9—11; Galatians 2—4; Philippians 3). It does appear that [**64**] Käsemann has not allowed for the force of these arguments, themselves (we should note) essentially historically critical ones, essentially a critique of presuppositions on the basis of the text, and has on the contrary lapsed into a dogmatic polemic which does little credit to his professed desire to let the church stand under the word. Nevertheless, many of his criticisms strike home at Stendahl: the scheme the Swede has proposed has little or no place for the theology of the cross, for the discontinuity between Christianity and Judaism witnessed to by Paul's strong polemic in Romans, Galatians and Philippians, for the contrast between Adam and Christ, or for the fact that it is salvation, salvation from sin and ungodliness, that Paul is talking about. Käsemann, in fact, is not alone in leaning heavily on twentieth-century dogmatic presuppositions, though he does so more openly. Stendahl's belief that Jews have their own way of salvation apart from Christ and the church[7] has clearly in turn influenced his reading of the text. It is curious how, though both men have reacted sharply against Nazism and anti-Semitism, they have arrived at opposite conclusions.

[4] Käsemann 1969a, 63.
[5] Stendahl 1976, 129–33.
[6] Käsemann 1969a, 76.
[7] Stendahl 1976, 132. See the critique of Stendahl in W. S. Campbell 1980.

This debate has all the makings of a classic, with the agenda including wide-ranging issues in Pauline theology, detailed exegesis of several passages, and challenges to traditional dogmatic frameworks, all with inescapable twentieth-century overtones. I want now to contribute to it by offering a new way of looking at Paul which provides, I believe, not only an advance in the debate between Stendahl and Käsemann, but also a new perspective on other related Pauline problems. I shall first sketch out this new view and argue briefly for its central thrust, and then show how it offers new light on the debate. That will be the first half of the lecture, and will provide the groundwork for the (shorter) second half, in which I will try to distinguish the Paul of history from the Apostle of traditional imagination.

[**65**] One of the central points in the view I propose is that Paul regarded the historical people of Abraham as God's answer to the problem of the sin of Adam. He would have agreed in principle with the Rabbi who put into God's mouth the words 'I will make Adam first: if he goes wrong Abraham will come to restore everything again'.[8] Romans 4 and Galatians 3 are best explained not as arbitrary proofs of justification by faith, but as an exposition of the true nature of Abraham's faith and his family. Paul, in other words, read Genesis 12ff. as the sequel to Genesis 1—11. Where Paul differs from Jewish understanding, however, is in the next step of the argument: Abraham's people, intended as a light to the world, provided only darkness. Israel, as Psalm 8 implies,[9] were meant to be God's new humanity, taking Adam's place under God in obedience and over the world in authority, but Israel failed in this task. Their failure – whose nature I shall come to in a moment – meant both that the task had to be undertaken by their representative, alone, and also that they would themselves need saving. By acting out on a grand scale the sin of Adam,[10] Israel not only could not redeem the world, but also needed redeeming herself.

If we ask how it is that Israel has missed her vocation, Paul's answer is that she is guilty not of 'legalism' or 'works-righteousness' but of what I call 'national righteousness', the belief that fleshly Jewish descent guarantees membership of God's true covenant people. This charge is worked out in Romans 2.17–29, 9.30—10.13, Galatians, and Philippians 3, to which we will return later. Within this 'national righteousness', the law functions not as a legalist's ladder but as a charter of national privilege, so that, for the Jew, possession of the law is three parts of salvation: and circumcision functions not as a ritualist's outward show but as a badge of national privilege. Over against this abuse of Israel's undoubted privileged status, Paul establishes, in his theology and in his missionary work, the true children of Abraham, the world-wide community of faith. Faith, unlike the Torah, is available to all.

[**66**] At the centre of this scheme of thought stands Christology, since the task of Israel has now been handed on by default to Israel's anointed representative, the Messiah. Two aspects of Christology in particular stand out

[8] *Gen. Rab.* 14.6: cf. SB III, 478, 597.
[9] Cf. Moule 1977, 152.
[10] Rom. 5.20 with 5.12: compare Rom. 11.11–15.

here. First, the Messiah sums up his people in himself, so that what is true of him is true of them. Second, the Messiah has died and been raised. From these two sources flow salvation history and justification by faith, not as two parallel streams, nor even as two currents in the same stream, but as one stream. If the Messiah has died and been raised, so has Israel: and her death and resurrection consist precisely in this, that God's purpose of saving Jews and gentiles alike is achieved through justification, in Christ, by faith. And behind the Christology and the soteriology stands the theology: there is one way of justification for all men (Romans 3.27ff.) *since God is one*. In a brilliant and daring move, Paul takes the Shema itself, the heart of Jewish life and worship, and uses it as the heart of justification and salvation history, which are as inseparable in Romans 3 as anywhere else.[11] The one God has purposed and promised that he will create one worldwide family for Abraham, a family in whom the sin of Adam is reversed: and this he has achieved in the Messiah, Jesus.

The fundamental assumption behind this view, that the Messiah sums up his people in himself, is not (of course) new,[12] but is so often ignored or overlooked that it is worth rehearsing in brief some of the arguments for it. In his picture of Jesus Christ Paul uses several themes – Son of David, Son of God, the Spirit, the resurrection, and so on – which combine to make the Messiah, in OT terms, the representative of Israel, the representative (on the one hand) of fleshly Israel, with whom he is identified according to the flesh (Romans 9.5), and the representative (on the other hand) of the true Israel, the worldwide people of God. In Romans 1.3f., in particular, which can be shown to be programmatic for [**67**] the epistle as a whole, the 'Son of David' motif points back to 2 Samuel 7.14ff.,[13] to the son of David who will be called the son of God, even as Israel is called the son of God in the exodus narrative and elsewhere.[14] But David's son as God's anointed carries in the Old Testament even stronger implications of identity with the people. In 2 Samuel 5.1ff. the tribes of Israel come to David at Hebron and say 'behold, we are your bone and your flesh': and, thus claiming him as their king, they anoint him.[15] The anointed one is the one in whom, according to the flesh, Israel is summed up: and Paul is (I suggest) deliberately evoking this Old Testament background in Romans 1.3 and 9.5, both of which are programmatic. The Messiah as David's son according to the flesh, and as the son of God, embodies Israel in himself.

Once we recognize this point we can see it all over the New Testament, not least in the gospel presentation of Jesus as the Son of Man, taking on himself the role of suffering Israel, dying precisely as the King of the Jews.[16]

[11] See Caird 1976–7.

[12] Compare, e.g., Dahl 1941, 227; Caird 1963, 738–9.

[13] Hengel 1976, 64, and the literature there cited.

[14] Ex. 4.22: cf. Dt. 14.1; Jer. 31.9; Hos. 11.1.

[15] Cf. too Jdg. 9.2; 2 Sam. 19.12, 13. Compare also, for the wider OT background, Pss. 2.2; 18.50; 20.6; 45.7; 89.20, 38, 51; Isa. 61.1, and particularly Isa. 11.1ff. See too the discussions in Hengel, op. cit. 61, Moule, op. cit. 31–5, 47–96, and van Unnik 1961, 101–16.

[16] Cf., e.g., Rengstorf 1976, 339.

It is reflected specially in Paul's use of the word itself. While this may well have become a proper name in many of its occurrences, its titular use is at least never far away, and emerges in the well-known *en Christō* and *syn Christō* formulae.[17] If we are [**68**] right, those phrases mean primarily 'belonging to the people of the Messiah' or 'members of Israel' in a way which cannot be reduced either to talk of 'fields of force'[18] or to the experience of Christian community.[19] They refer to the visible, historical people of God. This is brought out strikingly in some of the passages where *Christos* has the definite article, or where the genitive *Christou* is used. We may note, for instance, 1 Corinthians l.12ff., where the visible church is clearly the context, and Galatians 3.29, where baptism into Christ, belonging to the Messiah, justification by faith, and membership in Abraham's worldwide family are closely and fascinatingly correlated. The Messiah's people, like Moses' people in 1 Corinthians 10, are a visible community entered by a real (and not a metaphorical) passage through water.[20]

One of the strongest arguments for the identification of the Messiah with his people, and one of the best ways of seeing its effects in both justification and salvation history, is the fact that the cross was a stumbling block, a scandal, to the Jews. This cannot be reduced to general terms of the offence of the cross, as though the distinction stated in 1 Corinthians 1.23 was merely rhetorical. The cross is offensive to Jews because a crucified Messiah implies a crucified Israel. Israel rejects the proffered Messiah precisely because she understands this: that is part at least of the force of Romans 9.33. If the Messiah dies under the law's curse, that means that Israel stands under the same curse: that is part at least of the meaning of Galatians 3.10–14. Calvary means that Israel also must die between two thieves, must share the fate of the ungodly. In the long purposes of God, Israel acts out the role of fallen mankind. Nor does she thus escape from fulfilling also the role for which God has cast her, since it is precisely by her fall that salvation is brought to the gentiles. This paradox, clearly set out in Romans 11, could be summed up by saying: Israel has become what Adam is, so that Adam may become what Israel is.

[**69**] We can therefore restate and develop a little the framework of thought we are postulating, in order to show the way forward in the debate between Stendahl and Käsemann. God's answer to the problem of Adam is the people of Abraham: but this people, being themselves sinful, fail in the task, and their anointed representative has to do the job solo. Since this job is the inauguration of the new humanity, the Messiah is the foundation for the world-wide (i.e. Jew-plus-gentile) community, those who are justified by his death and resurrection according to the promise to Abraham.

This framework holds together God's plan for Israel and the church and his purpose in justifying the ungodly. All can be traced back to the Damascus

[17] For details, cf. *TDNT* 9:540–62 (W. Grundmann), and Moule, op. cit. 54–69.
[18] Grundmann, loc. cit. 550.
[19] Dunn 1975a, 259–65 and especially 323–4.
[20] Against Dunn 1977–8, 175.

Road vision: the fact that God has raised up a man crucified for blasphemous and Messianic claims vindicates those claims and, by doing so, delineates a new form of Messianism, namely, a crucified one (not, of course, that this form was totally new, as early apologetic was at pains to point out: it was, rather, different from current expectation). It is not the case that Paul merely now knew the name of the Messiah, and could fit him into a pre-conceived scheme. The realization that the Messiah is the crucified Jesus destroys and remakes all Jewish categories, because of the identification of the Messiah with his people. Damascus Road says to Paul: *this* is what God is doing with Israel, putting her to death in the flesh and bringing her alive in a resurrection body. That is why the vision of Christ is also the start of Paul's call to be the apostle to the gentiles, to be the Jew entrusted with the creation of the worldwide people of God, Israel crucified and risen again. And because Israel is God's means of remaking mankind, Damascus Road says to Paul: *this* is what God is doing for man in general, providing, in Israel's representative, justification for the ungodly and life for the dead.

We must now bring the debate between Stendahl and Käsemann into the light of this view of Paul. To Käsemann we must say that justification is indeed to be set in the context of salvation history: otherwise it becomes, as in the case of Bultmann, anthropology or unhistorical mysticism, both of which Käsemann rightly rejects. This does not set the church over Christ, as he fears: indeed, since salvation history has the shape of the cross and resurrection, the crucified and risen [**70**] Christ is the pattern, as well as the Lord, of history. For this reason salvation history can never be the comfortable pious community of 'good' people which Käsemann so dislikes. Salvation history cannot be triumphalistic, if it is to be true to itself. As the risen Lord is recognized by the mark of the nails, so the risen Israel must be known by its suffering, temptation, repentance and bearing of the cross. If the church is, in salvation historical terms, *ecclesia catholica*, the visible community of God's people, its cross-and-resurrection pattern demands that it be also *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

To Stendahl, on the other hand, it must be said that salvation history is not an end in itself, but God's way of saving people from sin, of remaking mankind as the eschatological people of God. Stendahl, like Albert Schweitzer, has made justification a 'subsidiary crater' in Paul's theology, and this the whole framework we have set out denies. An interesting exegetical point emerges here. Schweitzer set Romans 6—8 over against Romans 1—4 as a different, and more fundamental, doctrine of salvation (the 'mystical' as opposed to the 'juridical'), and Stendahl has implied that Romans 9—11 takes precedence over Romans 1—4 (the 'historical' rather than the 'juridical'). But the three sections cannot be played off against each other in this fashion, and indeed any solution that shows how they cohere must have a strong *prima facie* claim against views which find them irreconcilable. This could be argued in detail,[21] but one point must suffice here. In the course of Galatians 2, 3 and 4 Paul uses material which is paralleled in Romans

[21] See my 'The Messiah and the People of God'.

indiscriminately throughout chs. 1—11; and in Galatians it is all mixed up together in one long argument. Justification, baptism into Christ and salvation history are all, it appears, inescapably correlated. To use an analogy, we are not dealing with different sets of cards, but with the same set of cards simply shuffled and redealt in different patterns. Stendahl, by failing to see this, has ignored large and important areas of Paul, not least the offence of the cross and the criticism of the Jews which Paul actually mounted, in his efforts to absolve Paul's contemporaries from the charges of being legalists and having bad consciences.

[**71**] Our position, then, can incorporate the strengths of both parties while avoiding their weaknesses. We must, first, stress both the continuity of the church, with Israel and with itself, as an historical and visible community and the discontinuity which occurred on the cross and which challenges the church continually to reform itself under the word. The church is Israel but no longer according to the flesh, just as Jesus Christ is raised from the dead never to die again, and just as the Christian is truly human but no longer (in Paul's sense) 'in the flesh'. The church is Abraham's family, but now worldwide: missionary activity, from Paul to the present day, is therefore part of the inevitable theological structure of the church.[22] Second, we must see justification by faith as a polemical doctrine, whose target is not the usual Lutheran one of 'nomism' or '*Menschenwerke*', but the Pauline one of Jewish national pride. The way in which, for Paul, the Jews filled out the sin of Adam was not by using the law as a ladder of good works but by using it as a charter of national privilege. And this total critique of what I have called 'national righteousness' goes back, if we are to believe the gospels, to John the Baptist and to Jesus himself. God can give Abraham children from these stones: many will come from East and West and sit at table with Abraham, while the sons of the kingdom are cast out.[23] Justification by faith is a polemical doctrine because it declares that the way is open for all, Jew and gentile alike, to enter the family of Abraham. Possession neither of the Torah nor of [**72**] circumcision is necessary for membership of the true Israel. It is not that faith is easier than law-keeping: both are, for Paul, impossible without grace. Nor is it, despite the nineteenth-century idealism which still dogs our footsteps here, that faith is more 'spiritual': for Paul the law itself is 'spiritual'.[24] The significant point about faith is simply that, unlike the Torah, it is available world-wide: that is why, when God promised Abraham a world-wide family, it had to be on the basis of faith. This is the thrust of Romans 4 and Galatians 3. And all this, as Käsemann has rightly seen, is fundamentally Christological. The cross and resurrection of the Messiah, as themselves a revelation of the righteousness of the one God (Romans 3.21–31), are the

[22] Not forgetting the continuing mission to Jews, as set out in Rom. 11.11–24. This must be maintained against Stendahl 1976, 132. Stendahl has made an interesting addition to a footnote in the original article (Stendahl 1976, 84 n. 9, cf. Stendahl 1963, 204 n. 9), acknowledging the force of Rom. 11.11ff. in this context. But (a) he also ignores Rom. 2.25–29, another passage where Paul contrasts Jews and gentile Christians, and (b) he does not allow this modification to affect his analysis of Rom. 9—11 as a whole – as it would if thought through fully.

[23] Mt. 3.9 // Lk. 3.8: Mt. 8.11–12.

[24] Rom. 7.14.

key to the whole pattern, as well as the means of its revelation to Paul on the Damascus Road.

Stendahl, therefore, has drawn attention to material which protrudes awkwardly from the traditional view. But he has then made a new system out of only those protruding bits, ignoring the original – and not unimportant – framework. We need his new insights, but within a framework where they are at home with the rest of Paul. Käsemann's protest, while in many ways justified, needs to have its horizons widened, via the Christology which is its strength, to include God's purposes in history as the shape, content and *raison d'être* of justification itself. But here a serious question emerges. Is it possible for a radical Protestant to align history and faith in this way at all? I want now to conclude this first (and longer) half of my lecture by examining the wider question of history and faith – the question of the relationship, in Paul, between faith and the Jesus of history.

It is by now customary to reject Bultmann's thesis that 2 Corinthians 5.16 implies that Paul had no interest in the historical Jesus beyond the barest facts of his existence and death.[25] In fact, the verse if **[73]** anything gives support to our case, that Paul's Jewish ideas of 'the Messiah according to the flesh' had to be drastically re-assessed in the light of the death and resurrection of the Christ and the resultant new creation. But this exegesis of Bultmann's was merely symptomatic of a wider point, which has remained highly influential and which, I believe, runs quite counter to Paul. It is this: that in order to preserve the doctrine of justification by faith in its Lutheran purity, as a theology of the Word and as a *theologia crucis*, faith must be cut off from history and must stand by itself. To base faith on history, this view says, makes faith into a work. Elevated into a principle, this divorce of faith and history has been regularly offered as an underlying vindication of the whole historical-critical method itself.[26] But in fact this principle is not only untrue to Paul. It proves too much: because (as we often see in its practitioners) instead of leading to an historical-critical method worthy of the name it leads to an historical-*sceptical* method, in which historical facts must not be knowable, lest anyone should attempt to base his faith on them and so cease to be a 'Protestant'. At this point it could be argued that the method ceases to have any claim to the word 'historical' at all: it has to find 'myth' in the gospels (for instance), because only myth will do for its sort of faith. Historical facts imperil the doctrine of justification. But this is justification by doubt, not by faith: and faith is opposed to 'doubt' no less than to 'sight'. Of course faith must be prepared to walk in the dark: but being in the dark is not equivalent to having faith. And in fact, for Paul, justifying faith has clear historical facts as its object – facts whose denial is not faith but unbelief.

This has begun to be recognized in the work, for instance, of Professor Stanton, who has shown that Paul was much more interested in Jesus of Nazareth than has **[74]** often been thought.[27] It is also clear in the often-repeated

[25] Bultmann 1951, I, 238f.: compare Barrett 1973, 171f.
[26] See, e.g., Ebeling 1963 (1960), 34–6, 54–6, 60: and compare Käsemann 1969a, 48f.
[27] Stanton 1974, 86–116.

central thesis of J. D. G. Dunn's most recent volume.[28] But I want here to draw attention to two further aspects of the same point.

The first (mentioned tantalizingly briefly by Stanton[29]) is Paul's doctrine of the obedience of Jesus Christ. Paul never speaks of Jesus obeying the law (though he certainly did not imagine that Jesus had broken the law), but rather, in Philippians 2 and Romans 5, of Jesus' obedience to the whole saving purpose of God. Not only did Jesus offer God the obedience which Adam had failed to offer: he offered God the obedience which Israel should have offered and had likewise failed in, obedience to the vocation of redemptive vicarious suffering for the sins of the world. This is the theology which, in Romans 5, ties together all the other strands of the epistle. Though Christ's 'act of obedience' clearly refers to his death in particular, the scope of Philippians 2.5–11 shows that it is wider, including the obedient and humble life which culminated on the cross. Here, at the heart of Paul's theology *and as the object of faith*, there stand historical events by which that faith, and the theology built around it, stand or fall. Jesus as Israel, Jesus as man, established the new people of God, the new humanity. In order to free the world from real, historical sin Jesus gave, according to Paul, real historical obedience to God.

[**75**] The second area in which Pauline justifying faith is based on history is the resurrection of Jesus. For Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 it is crucial that this was an event in history, not in mythology or in meta-history or in the disciples' imagination or in some 'spiritualized' area otherwise outside the province of the scientific historian. It will not do to attempt to play off Paul against Luke here by maintaining that, while Luke spoke of Jesus' risen 'flesh', Paul wrote instead of the risen 'body'.[30] 'Flesh', for Paul, is a notoriously specialized term, whose absence in Paul's picture of the resurrection signifies not at all an idea of incorporeality but simply that in the new creation there is nothing opposed to God, no foothold for sin or corruption. The resurrection, again, is for Paul the beginning of the end, the first event of the great eschatological consummation, the inauguration of the sovereign rule of God in which at last God's intention at creation, and (as in Psalm 8) in Israel can be fulfilled, namely, the rule of the world through obedient man. It is very significant that in 1 Corinthians 15 too Jesus is described as the last Adam.[31] The resurrection means that the remaking of creation has begun at last: and the remaking will not be less real, nor less historical, than the first making.

[28] Dunn 1977, where (e.g. p. 369) the unifying element is said to be 'the unity between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ'.

[29] Op. cit. 110, quoting T. W. Manson's review (*JTS* 50 [1949] 206) of Bultmann's *Theology*. See too R. N. Longenecker 1974, 142–52. The idea that Christ obeyed the law is, however, no part of our case; see below.

[30] Against Dunn, op. cit. 224.

[31] In this Pauline picture of the Kingdom of God, God's sovereign rule exercised on the last days through his obedient last Adam, we may be justified in seeing a third, more subtle connection of Paul's faith with Jesus of Nazareth, this time in the area of his teaching. While Paul does not often quote Jesus' words, we might suggest that in Romans 5, Philippians 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 we have creative theological reflection (in the light of Calvary, Easter and Pentecost) on Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God and the Son of Man. Here at least is a possibility worth exploring further.

And since the Messiah represents *Israel*, there is as much continuity between Israel BC and AD as between Jesus on Good Friday and Jesus on Easter Sunday. What you do with the resurrection you do with the church – as is apparent from those theologians who take the easy way out and remove both from true historical existence. For Paul, then, Jesus' obedient life and death, and his vindication and resurrection on [**76**] the third day (if an actual event is not indicated, why would there be this stress on the date?) were facts upon which faith was to be built. If Christ is not raised, faith is in vain.

If this is so, the charge that basing faith on history turns faith into a work rebounds on its inventors. Faith, if anything, becomes a work when it is not based on history, when it is reduced to terms of self-understanding or when it becomes, in effect, its own object. The history of Jesus is the God-given context which, in grace, evokes faith and gives it its content. We must not be neo-Docetists any more than neo-Marcionites. Jesus is not reducible to my experience of him, any more than the historical Israel of God is reducible to our experience of community within it. Such reductionism, laudable no doubt in its desire to promote living Christianity instead of orthodoxy, and to stress the *pro me* of the gospel, owes far more to empiricism and idealism than it does to Paul. This shows up a false dichotomy that has existed far too long in Pauline studies, the dichotomy between the church as the people of God and the church as the body of Christ. Again, there is time only to summarize: the church is the body of Christ in the same way that the Jews are the flesh of Christ. Jesus was identified with the people of God, the Jews, according to the flesh, and he died in the flesh. When he rose on Easter morning he rose as the representative of the church, no longer limited by Jewish flesh but in the resurrection body. That is why, as Pannenberg has stressed, the resurrection and the gentile mission are inescapably correlated.[32] In this sense it is true to say that the church is the resurrection body of the Messiah, just as it is true to say that the Jews were the flesh of the Messiah. And the concept of the body of Christ thus carries within itself not only the overtones of charismatic and mutually responsible community. It concentrates in one vivid metaphor, which is yet much more than a metaphor because of the Messiah's real identification with his people, the Pauline pictures of the church as the new humanity, the true Israel, the [**77**] historical and visible people of God. Paul sets this out, I believe, in one long argument whose foundation is in Romans 9—11 and whose conclusion is Romans 12.5: we can trace it also through Galatians 3 and 1 Corinthians 10—12.[33] This is the point at which justification, salvation history and the idea of baptism into Christ, entry into the visible community of God's people, meet and merge. For Paul, the historical Jesus and the historical church are not antithetical to faith, but its close correlates. The Paul of history is also the apostle of faith, just as, for Paul, the Jesus of history is also the Christ of faith.

[32] Cf., e.g., Pannenberg 1977, 53–62. The argument of these pages also supports our wider thesis about faith and history.

[33] For detailed arguments, see my 'The Messiah and the People of God'. This view also contributes positively to the debate about the Body of Christ as outlined in Moule, op. cit. 69–89, and holds together in particular the strong points of Robinson 1952 and Gundry 1976, while avoiding their respective weaknesses.

The 'Real Paul' and the Imaginary Apostle

I have deliberately devoted most of this study to exploring history and faith in Paul, and to drawing a new picture of Paul's theology which I believe does more justice to the texts than the usual one. I want now to turn to the other meaning of my ambiguous title, and to examine the real Paul in contrast with the imaginary apostle that the traditional understanding is always in danger of producing. In doing this I am, of course, conscious of all sorts of presuppositions and dangerous imaginations on my own part, and do not pretend to have solved all the problems and arrived at hard and indisputable historical facts. I simply want to mark out areas in which our traditional understanding of Paul seems to me to be at direct variance with the texts of the letters as they stand before us: and often this has been tacitly acknowledged when critics admit that they cannot see what Paul is driving at in a particular passage which simply refuses to fit into the regular view. I shall stick to the epistles, though I believe there would be striking results also if this understanding of Paul were applied to Acts 13—28 as well.

[**78**] There is one particular misunderstanding of Paul which has dogged the footsteps of Pauline studies, particularly (though by no means exclusively) in the Lutheran tradition. Here I am no longer so much out on a limb since the publication of Charlotte Klein's small book, *Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology*,[34] and E. P. Sanders' much larger *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.[35] In fact, what both are saying about Judaism supports strongly if indirectly the position I am arguing throughout this lecture, though ironically neither of them – despite Sanders' intentions – sees the relevance of their thesis for Pauline studies.

My case here is simply stated: the tradition of Pauline interpretation has manufactured a false Paul by manufacturing a false Judaism for him to oppose. Nor, it appears, is this a chance mistake. It seems to be a subtle variation on the theme of seeing one's own reflection at the bottom of a deep well. That activity, so well known from the history of gospel criticism, is comparatively easy to recognize. What we are now faced with in New Testament criticism is a method that claims to be talking about Paul's (or Jesus', or Mark's, or Matthew's) opponents, and in reality is seeing, at the bottom of the same muddy well, the reflection of its own opponents. That is why I am at once suspicious when someone standing foursquare in the Lutheran tradition tells me that Matthew's chief purpose was to fend off 'nomism' on the one hand and 'enthusiasm' on the other.

[**79**] I have met those categories before, and they belong not to the first century but to the sixteenth, and to Luther's double battle against Rome and the radical reformers. The same misgivings arise when a generation that hates

[34] Klein 1977. See too Stendahl's remarks in Stendahl 1976, 132f., and the wide-ranging analysis of anti-semitism in Küng 1969, 132–8: note especially Hegel's view of Judaism as the manifestation of the evil principle (Küng 1969, 136). In view of Rom. 11, it would be better to speak of 'the hidden Adam within Israel' than of 'the hidden Jew in all of us', with all its overtones of just that inverted theological snobbery which Rom. 11.11ff. was written to counteract.

[35] Sanders 1977.

triumphalism and is suspicious of miracles declares that Mark and John found tales of a divine miracle-working hero, and that instead of consigning such dangerous stuff to the rubbish-heap, they went over them, carefully superimposing a *theologia crucis*, with such skill that no-one can agree on the breaks in the material. But such misgivings are hard to substantiate. We have no record of Matthew's community except Matthew, nor of Mark's sources except Mark. With Paul and his opponents it is quite different.

Though the problem of dating Jewish sources is of course notoriously difficult, we have in the Rabbinic literature, the Targums, the Scrolls and the Apocalyptic literature a broad and varied picture of the many-sided Judaism which, in the widest sense, formed Paul's milieu. Those who are experts in these fields (i.e. those who read the literature for its own sake instead of merely combing it for parallels to the New Testament) have recently been saying increasingly clearly that the real Judaism was not a religion of legalistic works-righteousness. G. F. Moore said this fifty years ago, and nobody listened.[36] Sanders, Schoeps[37] and Klein have now said it in England, Germany and North America, and unless we are to bury our heads in the sand we must pay attention. Sanders in particular has documented the way in which the traditional view of Judaism was set out by Weber, Schurer and Bousset, enshrined in Strack-Billerbeck, and repeated by scholars who did not check back behind these assumed infallible guides.[38] In fact, **[80]** we are told, Judaism, so far from being a religion of works, is based on a clear understanding of grace, the grace that chose Israel in the first place to be a special people. Good works are simply gratitude, and demonstrate that one is faithful to the covenant – a sort of primitive version of the *tertius usus legis*. Where, then, did the idea of a works-righteousness come from? Sanders has a ready answer, backed up by long and patient argument: 'We have here the retrojection of the Protestant–Catholic debate into ancient history, with Judaism taking the role of Catholicism and Christianity the role of Lutheranism.'[39] This appears, to take but one example, in the often-repeated and massively anachronistic assertion that the Pharisees or the Rabbis held a doctrine of 'works of supererogation'.[40] We might supplement this presupposition, of the Protestant–Catholic debate, with three variations. Baur and the German idealists were very ready to cast Paul and the Jews in the roles of pure spirit and outward religion. Kümmel, Bultmann and their followers have seen in them the contrast of authentic existence and the anxious struggle for self-understanding and self-justification. English evangelicals have tended to see the Jews as the establishment figures, the liberal or high-church bishops and theologians, with Paul as the evangelical underdog who wins through in the end, while (of course) keeping his nose clean from charismatic excesses within his own camp.

[36] Moore 1921, 197–254; cf. Sanders, op. cit. 33–59.

[37] Schoeps 1961.

[38] Sanders, loc. cit.

[39] Op. cit. 57. From this point of view, the debate between Paul and James looks more like a debate between Paul, James and Judaism on the one hand and Lutheranism on the other.

[40] Cf. Sanders, op. cit. 48.

The result of the traditional, and false, picture of Judaism has been, then, the manufacture of an imaginary apostle, attenuated and demythologized to suit the limited needs and desires of certain periods and groups, an apostle who must be made to oppose sixteenth- or twentieth-century enemies of which the Paul of history was unaware. And exegesis suffers directly as a result. We have the apostle of existentialism, experiencing authentic existence incompatible with the struggles faced [**81**] by the Paul of history in Romans 7 or Galatians 5.[41] We have the apostle who opposed 'triumphalism', while the Paul of Colossians and 2 Corinthians triumphantly leads enemies captive to the gospel. We have the apostle who abolished the law as a dead letter, to be contrasted with the Paul who, in Romans 3.31, expressly and consistently denies doing any such thing.[42] We have the apostle who opposed 'ritualism' in Galatians, and who therefore could not have substituted baptism for circumcision:[43] whereas 'ritualism' is in fact a blunt modern tool, quite unfitted for the analysis of first-century concepts. We have, in short, as a result of a projection of reformation and modern ideas into the world of Paul, an apostle of faith, or at least of imagination, who reveals more about his inventors than about the Paul of history.

How then did the real Paul face up to the real Judaism of his day? Here, sadly, the advocates of a new view of Judaism let us down. Schoeps, on the one hand, having exonerated Judaism from the traditional charge of works-righteousness, preserves the usual view of Paul, and consequently accuses him of attacking only a debased and untypical form of Judaism. Sanders, on the other hand, seems at a loss to know how to cope with this problem, and concludes rather lamely that Paul rejected Judaism simply because it was not Christianity, and because he had found salvation in Christ.[44] Neither of these views are at all satisfactory, any more than the idea that Paul as a Rabbi had a clear picture of the Messianic age, including the abolition of the law, and that he simply fitted Jesus into this picture.[45]

[**82**] In fact, as we have already begun to show, Paul mounts a detailed and sensitive critique of Judaism *as its advocates present it*. The key passages are Romans 2.17–29, 3.27–31, 9.30—10.13, Galatians 2—4 and Philippians 3.2–11. Space forbids a detailed study of all five passages, and I therefore restrict myself to two.

There are four brief points to be made about Romans 2.17–29. First, Paul's basic charge against the Jews is that of boasting. Nor is this the boast of the legalist *tout simple*. The Jew boasts in God (v. 17), claiming God as the God of the Jews and not the gentiles. This meaning is clear from 3.27ff. The Jew also boasts in the law (v. 23): not, that is, because he keeps it and so has earned salvation, but because his possession of the law marks him out as a member of the chosen people. Second, Paul's accusations are not against

[41] Cf., e.g., 'Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul' in Bultmann 1964, 173–85. For the contrary view, cf., e.g., Dunn 1975b.

[42] Compare the confusing account in Drane 1975.

[43] Dunn 1977, 159f.

[44] Sanders, op. cit. 549–52.

[45] For this view and its weaknesses see the discussion in Sanders, op. cit. 476–82.

legalism, but against sin, the breaking of the law. This (thirdly) leaves the law itself undamaged: it remains, as in ch. 7, God's law, containing the form of knowledge and truth. Paul has not a word to say against the law itself, but only against its abuse – and its abuse is not legalism but 'national righteousness', the attempt to use the fact that God has entrusted the Jews with his oracles (compare 3.2) as a foundation for permanent and automatic Jewish privilege. Again, 3.27–31 undergird all these points. Fourthly, Paul's attack on Jewish trust in the law and circumcision as badges of national privilege does not abolish the idea of the 'true circumcision' which keeps the law from the heart. In language rich with 'new covenant' significance, Paul outlines here his theology of the church as the true Israel, the people of God. For those who are interested in how Paul was read in the second century, it should be noted that this passage has very close links with Justin's dialogue with Trypho.[46]

Romans 2.17–29 is a somewhat neglected passage. The same could not be said of 9.30—10.13: here, in fact, the same position is taken up, with detail appropriate to this section of Paul's overall argument. The traditional view has been to maintain that Paul attacked Israel for following the law, showed that the law was abolished by [**83**] Christ, and set up a new way of salvation, that of faith.[47] This Lutheran view has been subjected to damaging criticism from the Reformed standpoint, and Cranfield in particular has shown that 9.30–33 in fact vindicates the law while showing that Israel has not attained to it.[48] The Reformed view, however, does not itself do full justice to the text either. Israel's fault is not 'legalism' as such, but 'national righteousness'. This appears particularly from 10.3–4. Israel, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish her own (*tēn idian [dikaiosynēn]*), did submit to God's righteousness: for Christ is the end of the law, so that *everyone* who believes, Jew and gentile alike (*panti* is to be emphasized as the contrast to *tēn idian*) may be justified. We may compare vv. 11–13. The Lutheran attack on the law is misplaced; and, I believe, the Reformed attempt to rescue the law overplays its hand. Paul does not say that Christ fulfills the law. He is no more a legalist than anyone else is. The fulfilling of the law comes, as in 2.25–29, within the context of the people of God, the true Israel, who by the Spirit make the baptismal profession of faith (10.6–10). As we would find in Galatians and Philippians also, Paul vindicates the law, demonstrates how its abuse as a charter of national privilege is done away with by the rejected and crucified Messiah (hence the stone of stumbling in 9.33), and establishes the worldwide church as the true people of the Messiah, the Spirit-filled visible baptized community.

Paul's criticism of Judaism, then, was on target, as can be seen from the account of Jewish attitudes to the gentiles given by Sanders.[49] The polemic against the [**84**] law is to be seen in this context, and emphatically not in the

[46] See particularly chs 11; 16; 18f.; 23f.; 28; 43; 92; 113f.
[47] Cf., e.g., Sanday and Headlam 1902, 275–92.
[48] Cranfield 1975b.
[49] Op. cit., 147–82, 206–12: see especially 180, 211.

sixteenth- and twentieth-century categories of 'legalism' or 'nomism'. It would be interesting to show in detail how, in their different ways, Baur, Wrede and Schweitzer felt after this solution but were diverted from following it through: here we can only summarize. Baur saw the critique of the law as being against Jewish particularism, though he saw it as Jewish-*Christian* particularism only.[50] Wrede thought Paul's view of the end of the law dependent in part on the needs of the gentile mission, though he (like Davies, later) thought that Paul had, in his Rabbinic days, a fully blown picture of the Messiah, into which he simply fitted Jesus.[51] Schweitzer, too, related Paul's view of the law to the worldwide scope of the gospel, though he did not make this a driving force in his arguments.[52] In fact, as we have seen, Paul's critique of the law forms the spearhead of his doctrine of justification, which is itself (to stretch the metaphor in a Pauline fashion) the spearhead of the doctrine of salvation history. The critique of the law, that is to say, follows from the rejection of Israel: and all is once again based on the crucified and risen Messiah, and on the righteousness of the one God revealed in him. Christ is the end of the law, so that everyone who believes (and not merely Jews) may be justified – and may then, as members of the eschatological but still historical Israel, have the law written on their hearts by the Spirit. This is the message of the historical Paul, by which we must correct the teaching of the imaginary apostle.

[**85**] It is high time to draw the threads of this lecture together, which I propose to do by asking: what categories is it appropriate to use in investigating Paul's theology? It is quite unsatisfactory, as Schweitzer noted with some scorn, to produce merely an unrelated string of Pauline *loci*.[53] How are we to show the integration and coherence of his thought? Jewish categories by themselves will not do: not only did Paul explicitly reject them, but we have also seen that the attempts to turn Paul into a good (or even a bad) Rabbi have not been markedly successful, however important they may have been in alerting us to the presence of Jewish elements in his thought. At the same time, we have set all sorts of question-marks beside the traditional Lutheran and existentialist understanding of Paul, so that as well as the doubts which are being raised more and more by Hengel and others about the division of Jewish and Hellenistic Christianity (itself often a mere mythologizing of language differences into unwarranted geographical or chronological schemes),[54] we now have good reason to doubt the scheme which sets 'enthusiasm' on one side of the golden mean and *Frühkatholizismus* on the other. I believe that J. D. G. Dunn has implicitly destroyed this scheme, even though it continues to dominate his writings, by demonstrating with great skill that Luke was both an 'enthusiast' and an 'early catholic'.[55] If both categories fit the same writer so well, neither can be of any great relevance to

[50] Baur 1873.
[51] Wrede 1907. Compare W. D. Davies 1980 (1948).
[52] Schweitzer 1912: see especially p. 246. The same position is worked out in Schweitzer 1931, 177–204.
[53] Schweitzer 1912, 33.
[54] Cf., e.g., Hengel 1976, particularly 57–83, and the literature there cited; Marshall 1972–3.
[55] Dunn 1977, 356–8.

New Testament criticism, since it is of the essence of both categories that they exclude each other. In fact, Dunn recognizes in a footnote the presence in much of the New Testament of the idea of the continuity between Israel and the church:[56] what I have tried to do in this lecture is to explore that idea in Paul at least, and I believe that it would stand not just as a parallel to his continuity of Jesus of Nazareth and the exalted Lord but actually as the necessary consequence [**86**] of that continuity. And the view I have presented of Paul's church is the eschatological Israel – a concept which easily includes within itself the gift and life of the Spirit on the one hand and the historical and organizational church on the other.

But to admit that is to ask for a new set of categories altogether, that will allow fully for the correlation of justification and salvation history, based upon the Christology of the crucified and risen Messiah, which we have been exploring. I believe that Paul himself offers us such categories. To begin with, he offers the Old Testament, interpreted in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. This does not mean the Old Testament as a helpful collection of proof texts to be called in if and only if they fit what Paul wants to say on other grounds, a book to be treated as servant rather than master.[57] If it did, the concept would collapse from sheer lack of logic, since an authority would be at the same time claimed for, and denied to, the Old Testament. Rather, it means that the Old Testament is seen by Paul as the book of the people of God, and like the people of God this book must die and be raised. Therefore (to take an obvious example), the food laws, relevant to the time when Israel was one geographical and physical nation, are not relevant now that Israel has died and been raised as the worldwide people of God. On the other hand, much of the law, as quoted in Romans 13, is equally relevant: there is the continuity of resurrection as well as the discontinuity of death.

Paul, then, offers us the Old Testament as the book of the people of the Messiah, to be interpreted as such. He offers us, as we have seen, the Messiah as a Jew [**87**] according to the flesh and as the risen Lord of all, Jew and gentile alike – in other words, he offers us the Messiah not just as an individual but as the representative of his people, both his people according to the flesh and his new covenant people, his eschatological, worldwide, Spirit-filled Israel. With categories like that, the standard divisions, and particularly the concept of Early Catholicism, stand out as being anachronistic, arbitrary and misleading. It is not just, as Dunn admits, that the categories are loose and overlapping though more or less right,[58] as though one were to play squash with a tennis or badminton racquet. It is simply that these are the wrong categories for analysing the material at all. It is more like trying to play squash with a golf club.

[56] Dunn 1977, 398 n. 26.

[57] Against Lindars 1976–7, 59–66. Lindars' summing up, likening Jesus' demoting of the scriptures from master to servant to Jesus' changing of the basis of religion from law to grace (p. 66), shows that a new view of law and grace such as this lecture has worked out is justified in seeking a parallel new view of OT hermeneutics.

[58] Op. cit. 236f.

My view of Paul can be summarized in a paraphrase of Romans 1.3–5. Paul, having been born a Jew according to the flesh, became a true Jew, a son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, and on the same basis was commissioned as the apostle to the gentiles, holding together in himself the triple resurrection of Jesus, of Israel, and of his own baptism. Paul's life and thought flow consistently from his vision on the Damascus Road, and salvation history and justification by faith take their proper places as inescapable partners within his Christology, which is itself based on the doctrine of God, the one true God of Jew and gentile alike, the God who reveals his righteousness in the gospel of his Son. The categories with which we are to understand Paul, and for that matter the whole New Testament, are not the thin, tired and anachronistic ones of Lutheran polemic. They are the ones given to us by the Paul of history himself. Of course there will always be problems and arguments over details and passages and words. I would not pretend to have solved all the problems at a stroke. But at least we have here a framework within which Paul's ideas are not played off against each other, nor cheaply reconciled, but rather integrated and mutually illuminating. The real Paul, the Paul of the letters, must continue to provide the critique of the modernized apostle. His view of history and of faith, in which the two are not divorced but held inescapably together, must [**88**] inform our exegesis of him at every point. And, therefore, this programme can only be carried out in a truly Pauline fashion, by holding together a true historical method and the perspective of faith, by refusing to lapse into historical scepticism on the one hand or into unhistorical, or unthinking, pietism on the other. If controversy is the breath of life to the theologian, in England as well as in Germany, that may be because it is the necessary means by which the balance is to be kept, by which the believing community is to remind itself that it is also the historical church, and, conversely, by which the visible church may live under the word and by the Spirit – the means by which *ecclesia catholica* is to remain *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

Chapter Two

JUSTIFICATION: THE BIBLICAL BASIS AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICALISM (1980)

Excerpt from: *The Great Acquittal: Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought* (ed. Gavin Reid, London: Collins, 1980), 13ff. Reprinted with permission.

While I was Chaplain of Downing College, Cambridge, I was invited to give this lecture as part of a day conference on Justification at St Mary's, Islington. I had heard of the 'Islington Conference', a mecca for Anglican evangelicals, but had never before attended it, let alone lectured to it, and was relieved that the experience was thoroughly positive. I thought then, and think still, that since one of the official hallmarks for anything that calls itself 'evangelical' is a willingness to search the scriptures for fresh insights, an 'evangelical' gathering ought never simply to reiterate things that have been said many times before but continually to be probing deeper into the texts. That is what I have tried to do, with what results the reader may judge. This piece embodies my lifelong oscillation around the two poles of historical exegesis and application to contemporary church life. Were I writing it again today there are undoubtedly many things I would say differently, but also quite a few I would simply want to underline. It is frustrating to see in the footnotes references to my forthcoming work on Paul; this was of course my doctoral dissertation, completed in 1980 but never published as it stood, finding its way gradually into several other works, notably the Romans commentary of 2002.

* * *

[13] Introduction: The Shape of the Doctrine

Imagine asking a jeweller to describe a watchspring. He might simply talk about the spring itself; he might demonstrate how it was related to the rest of the mechanism; he might even explain the value of knowing the right time, and the significance of the watchspring as part of achieving that end. Now being asked about justification is like being asked about a watchspring.[1] We could confine our attention to the relevant words and concepts themselves.

[1] It is also like being asked for the moon. So much literature has appeared on this and related topics in recent years that all we can do here is to indicate where useful material can be found. The articles by J. I. Packer in the *NBD*, 683ff., and by H. Seebas and C. Brown in the *NIDNTT*, III, 352ff. are, at their different levels, useful introductions. The latter has a good bibliography, and another can be found in the

We could show how justification is related to other doctrines, being (as it were) wound up by some and (as it were) driving others, or we could outline God's whole plan of salvation, and indicate the place which justification has at the heart of that plan. This distinction between different levels of explanation warns us that when we talk about justification we easily get lost in a mass of cogs and wheels and nuts and bolts – grace and faith and works and history and righteousness. We need to see how justification is related to all these – but we also need to see what it is in itself. There is no point in the jeweller telling you what a marvellous thing a watch is and leaving you with the impression that the spring is used to hang it on your watch chain. I shall therefore begin by looking at justification itself in general terms, continue with an examination of certain biblical passages, and end with some conclusions for our contemporary theology and practice.

[**14**] To start with, a bare definition: justification is the declaration that somebody is in the right. It is a term borrowed from the lawcourt – that is what people mean when they say it is 'forensic'.[2] In the lawcourt, justification is the judge's verdict in favour of one party or the other (cases in Jewish law were simply between accuser and accused, there being no Director of Public Prosecutions). The basic meaning of the term is therefore not 'forgiveness': a favourable verdict implies that justice, not (at this stage) mercy, is being carried out. Nor is 'acquittal' quite strong enough: justification has a positive sense, indicating not merely absence of guilt but a positive standing in the right. This status is termed 'righteousness', which in this context does not refer primarily to the character or morals of the person concerned, but simply to his status in the court on the basis of the judge's declaration. Justification is the judge's verdict that someone is in the right. Righteousness is the status before the court which results from that declaration.

In theology, therefore, justification is not the means whereby it becomes possible to declare someone in the right. It is simply that declaration itself. It is not how someone becomes a Christian, but simply the declaration that someone is a Christian. It is not the exercise of mercy, but the just declaration concerning one who has already received mercy. This is a crucial distinction, without which it is impossible to understand the biblical material. Not to make it is as if the jeweller were to talk about the watchspring when he meant the winding mechanism.

In the Bible, of course, the judge is God himself, and the verdict is to be issued on the day of judgment.[3] But with the Gospel of Jesus Christ a dramatic new turn has been taken. God's verdict has been brought forward into the present. Even now God declares that certain people are in the right. Even though this declaration concerns sinners, it is itself righteous, because of two things: grace

TDNT, X, part 2 ('Literaturnachträge'), 1048–53, supplementing that in II, 176–229. I shall not attempt to enter into proper debate with the many points of view on offer, though the debate is implicit in many parts of the section; nor shall I support detailed exegesis with more than an indication of where some relevant material can be found. I hope to set out the argument more fully in the course of a substantial work on Paul now nearing completion.

[2] For discussion, see, e.g., Ziesler 1972; Hill 1967, ch. 4; Caird 1978.

[3] See, e.g., Rom. 2.1–16; 14.10; 2 Cor. 5.10; Ac. 17.31; etc.

and faith. We can therefore expand our definition as follows: justification is not only God's declaration on the last day that certain people are [**15**] in the right: it is also his declaration in the present that, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the person who believes the Gospel is in the right.

We begin to understand what this means if we take a further step in the argument. In the biblical lawcourt the law, which the judge himself has promulgated, is the covenant between God and his people. For God, to act righteously means to act in accordance with the covenant. For his people, to appeal for vindication in the heavenly lawcourt is to appeal to the covenant. Justification is therefore God's declaration that certain people are within the covenant. And the significance of this is that God's covenant people are a forgiven people: the covenant was designed in the first place as the means of undoing the sin of humanity. God called Abraham to reverse the sin of Adam.[4] And when Israel herself sinned, and turned her vocation (to be a light to the world) into the arrogant boast that she and she alone was within the covenant, God promised to establish the covenant by renewing it so that Israel would be transformed and sin dealt with once and for all.[5] The Gospel will do what the law could not do so that God's covenant promises may stand. The Gospel, in other words, will provide justification for the ungodly, whereby gentiles and sinners will be declared 'righteous' – that is, within the covenant. The language of the lawcourt, of the 'wondrous exchange' whereby Christ takes my sin and I take his righteousness,[6] is not only describing individual salvation, but is the explanation of how Abraham's worldwide people are righteously declared to be in the right.

Here, then, is the watchspring of justification. It is God's declaration, in the present, that those who believe the Gospel are in the right, are members of the covenant family. But if this is the spring, we need to be clear as to what winds it up and what cogs and hands it drives. We must therefore look at the basis and the results of justification before turning to the detailed biblical evidence.

[**16**] The Basis of Justification

Justification presupposes two things, sin and grace. No sin, no need for justification: no grace, no possibility of it. Human sin is presupposed in every chapter of the Bible from Genesis 3 onwards: divine grace is revealed in God's covenant promises, finding their climax in the work of Jesus Christ and of the Spirit. We must look at each in turn.

First, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the focal point of the covenant, anticipated in the Old Testament and remembered in the New. Justification

[4] This idea was developed in later Judaism (see *Gen. Rab.* 14.6, and the references in Hooker 1967, 73ff.), on the basis of the OT understanding of God's purposes for Israel; compare, e.g., the way in which the commands of Gen. 1.26ff. are developed into the promises of Gen. 17.2, 6, 20; 22.17; 26.4, 24; 28.3; 35.11 and the comments of 45.27 and Ex. 1.7.

[5] See Jer. 31.31ff.; Ezek. 36.16ff.; Joel 2.28ff., and the idea of the circumcision of the heart (Dt. 10.16; 30.6; Jer. 4.4; 6.10; 9.25; Ezek. 44.7).

[6] 2 Cor. 5.21.

is made possible by grace incarnate: sins are dealt with on the cross, the blood of the new covenant is poured out. In biblical terms, the way to deal with sin is to punish it:[7] in Gethsemane, and on the cross itself, Jesus obeys his Father's saving purposes by drinking the cup of the wrath of God, so that his people may not drink it.[8] Justification and atonement are not the same thing: justification presupposes an objective dealing with sin. There can be no present justification if atonement is merely a process within the sinner, or merely a readiness on God's part not to take sin seriously after all. Justification safeguards, because it presupposes the centrality of the cross and resurrection.[9]

Likewise, secondly, justification presupposes the work of the Spirit, promised in the Old Testament as the one who would write God's law on the hearts of his new covenant people.[10] Justification takes place on the basis of faith because true Christian faith – belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead[11] – is the evidence of the work of the Spirit, and hence the evidence that the believer is already within the covenant. If a man believes this Gospel, his religious stance is clear. He can be neither Jew nor Greek, but only Christian. This is where it is vital to distinguish justification from regeneration. Justification is not how God makes someone a Christian: it is his righteous declaration that someone is already a Christian. Faith is not an achievement which earns salvation,[12] but the evidence of saving grace already at work. Only the renewed heart can believe in the [**17**] resurrection; only the penitent heart can submit to Jesus as Saviour and Lord.[13] Because of the work of the Son and the Spirit, God rightly declares that Christian believers are members of the covenant family. The basis of justification is the grace of God freely given to undeserving sinners.

The Results of Justification

The watchspring of justification is thus wound up by grace, by the love of God Incarnate dying on Calvary and by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The mechanism driven by this spring has positive

[7] On the wrath of God, see Cranfield 1975a, 106ff., especially the bibliography on p. 110 n. 2.

[8] This is one of the biblical themes which justify the language of 'substitution' in talking about the atonement, though it is important to stress that this can only be understood within the context of the Messiah's representative role.

[9] From this perspective it is even possible to speak of the atonement itself as the justification of those in Christ, in that in the resurrection God declares that the Messiah, and hence his people, are in the right; see Torrance 1965, 150ff., developing the ideas of Karl Barth. But the New Testament does not, I think, speak in this way; Rom. 4.25 shows the close links of justification and resurrection, but to think of justification as anticipating faith seems to contradict everything else Paul says.

[10] See n. 5, above.

[11] Rom. 10.9; cf. 4.25; 1 Cor. 15.1–11. True Christian faith does not, then, consist in holding (for instance) one particular interpretation of the atonement – though it could be argued that belief in the resurrection, if properly thought through, will lead to the full biblical view of the cross.

[12] Faith could only be a 'work' if justification were confused with regeneration; see the doctrinal debate in the third and final section of the present article.

[13] See n. 5, above. Though Paul rarely speaks of 'regeneration', we use this term in discussing his ideas to denote his regular doctrine of the renewal of the heart by God's Spirit.

and negative aspects: on the positive side, holiness and assurance, and on the negative side, the critique of alternative means of justification.

The positive result of justification is that we live for God because Christ has died for us. Good works, as the Reformers never tired of saying, are done not to earn salvation but out of gratitude for it: not out of fear lest we should be lost after all but out of joy that we are saved after all. Sanctification is the completion, not of justification, but of regeneration: holiness is the continuation and bringing to perfection (in the resurrection of believers) of the good work which God has begun by the new birth. Justification is a different kind of event altogether: regeneration and sanctification are acts of grace to change the heart and life, whereas justification is the declaration, anticipating the verdict of the last day, that the believer is in the right. Justification results in holiness because it presupposes the new birth. It is therefore also the basis of Christian assurance, the certain hope of eternal life. Assurance is not an extra blessing over and above justification, but simply the outworking of justification itself, the realization that the Spirit who inspired faith and now inspires love will continue until, in the resurrection, he has produced the full harvest of which he himself is presently the first fruits.[14]

Justification thus results in holiness and hope. And this proves already that the doctrine is neither immoral, nor in-[**18**]coherent, nor scandalous. It points back to the cross of Christ, forward to the resurrection of the Christian. It is not a fiction, a pretence or a process: it is God's righteous declaration in the present that the person who believes in the risen Lord Jesus Christ is a member of the covenant family, whose sins have been dealt with on the cross and who is therefore assured of eternal life.

By declaring that certain people are within the covenant, the biblical doctrine of justification inevitably declares that others, at least for the moment, are not. Broadly speaking, that means unbelievers:[15] Paul is concerned with the attempt to seek justification on grounds other than those set out above, grace and faith, the cross and the Spirit. The negative result of the doctrine is polemic against all spurious justification. The central claim against which this polemic is aimed is the boast that covenant membership is for Jews and Jews only, with very few exceptions.[16] Paul would have approved of John the Baptist's warning against reliance on physical membership of Abraham's family.[17] Jewish birth, circumcision and possession of the law are in fact, in themselves, neither necessary (Romans 4) nor sufficient (Romans 9) qualifications for membership within the covenant. 'Works of the law' were not, as is usually thought, the attempt to earn salvation *de novo*: they were the attempt to prove, by obedience to the law given to the Jews, that one was

[14] See, e.g., Rom. 8.23.

[15] We cannot here deal with the admittedly huge problem of unbelief, its causes and consequences. See Ridderbos 1975, 91–126.

[16] For a few Jews being excluded from 'all Israel', see the famous passage in *Sanhedrin* 10 (Danby 1933, 397ff.). For the inclusion of a few gentiles (Rahab, Ruth, etc.) see the discussion in W. D. Davies 1955, 63f., and references there.

[17] Mt. 3.9; compare too Mt. 8.11f.; Jn. 8.37–59; etc.

already a member of Abraham's family.[18] Such an attempt is both misguided (because the covenant was always designed to include gentiles as well as Jews) and impossible (because of universal sin, which the law merely showed up). The doctrine of justification therefore provides both a positive and a negative answer to the question 'Who are the true children of Abraham?' And that, as we shall now see in turning to the details of the biblical evidence, is the really crucial question.

[19] The Biblical Material

Old Testament

Justification is not a subject in its own right in the Bible, but always one aspect of a larger subject, namely God's covenant purposes for his worldwide people. Whilst, therefore, justification itself only emerges in certain key books and passages, other doctrines correlated with it are to be found almost everywhere. The passages where the subject does occur explicitly (particularly, of course, Romans and Galatians) bear out our assertion that it is essentially a polemical doctrine, needed when one particular battle is to be fought. When Paul fights other battles – as, for instance, in 2 Corinthians – he uses other weapons.

Paul himself, who has most to say about justification, sends us back to Genesis to understand it. God calls Abraham to be the means of saving the world. Reading Genesis as it stands, we find that in chapters 15 and 17 God establishes his covenant with Abraham: this is the context of 15.6, the first biblical mention of justification. Abraham believed God's promise concerning his descendants, and God 'reckoned this faith as righteousness'. This does not mean that Abraham's faith was regarded by God as a sort of moral virtue which earned him a reward:[19] the promise had already been made. 'Righteousness' means 'status within the covenant'. Abraham's faith was the evidence that he was already, by the grace and call of God, entering into that partnership with God which is then embodied in the covenant described in the next verses, followed in chapter 17 by the covenant sign of circumcision.[20] And the covenant envisages both the restriction of blessing to some, not all, of Abraham's children and the extension of blessing to the gentiles.[21]

[18] On this whole subject, see Sanders 1977, 33–59. Sanders's thesis is open to various criticisms, but the point here at issue can be well established: the book of *Jubilees*, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and most of the other Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament exhibit what we may call 'national righteousness', as do the Qumran scrolls. To generalize the discussion of the law, as is almost always done (particularly in the Reformation tradition), and to take it out of the context of Israel in the interests of making the doctrine 'relevant', is to demythologize Paul, and to make it impossible to understand whole sections of his thought. Witness the failure of most writers to take Rom. 9—11 seriously (Bultmann and Dodd being classic examples).

[19] As some (e.g. the Good News Bible) imply.

[20] Note the way in which Paul (Rom. 4.11) interprets 'sign of the covenant' (Gen. 17.11) as 'sign of righteousness'.

[21] Gen. 17.19–21; cf. 12.3; 17.6; 18.10; 21.1–12; 22.18.

The covenant also envisaged the Exodus from Egypt, and Israel therefore looked back to the events of Passover night and the giving of the law as the development and fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham.[22] The covenant was put into operation to redeem the people under the blood of the lamb. But life under the law could not result in the true fulfilment of [**20**] the covenant, because Israel both shared the sin of the nations and boasted of her superiority to them. The prophets therefore looked forward to the time of covenant renewal, of the blessing of Abraham reaching out even to the gentiles in the future revelation of the righteousness of God.[23] The Old Testament is the book of the Old Covenant: it points beyond itself, waiting for God to fulfil his promises to Abraham and so to undo the sin of Adam and the consequent misery of the world.

The Gospels and Acts

Though the language of justification only occurs briefly in the gospels,[24] the wider issues associated with it are central there. The narrative begins with John the Baptist, whose task is clearly to redefine Israel, Abraham's family, in terms of repentance and of readiness for the Kingdom of God. Jesus himself proclaims the Kingdom, which can best be understood, I believe, as the re-establishment of God's sovereign rule through the one who is in himself God's obedient Man, his true Israel.[25] In his baptism, temptation, miracles, preaching and promises Jesus took on himself Israel's destiny and mission, and became the light of the nations and the glory of Israel by dying for the sin of the world and (like Israel after the exile)[26] rising again, demonstrating that sin had indeed been dealt with on the cross. He thus inaugurated the new covenant, redefining Israel around himself, around the twelve, around the covenant signs, above all around the cross where the new covenant blessing of forgiveness is attained. Then, having ascended on high, Jesus sent the Spirit to write the law of God on the hearts of his people and to empower the gentile mission through which Abraham's family is to become the promised worldwide people of God.[27] Since justification answers the question 'Who are the true children of Abraham?' – a question raised in gospels and epistles alike – Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection, seen especially in terms of the

[22] Gen. 15.3–6; cf. Ex. 2.24; 6.2–8; 19.5f.

[23] See especially Isa. 40—55: e.g. 41.8–10; 42.1–9; etc.

[24] The classic exception being of course the parable of the Pharisee and Publican (Lk. 18.9ff.; cf. v. 14); compare too the use of 'righteousness' in Matthew (3.15; 5.20; 21.32; etc.), for which see Brown, loc. cit., 360f.

[25] We cannot here explore this huge subject. For a recent survey see *NIDNTT*, I, 372ff. (B. Klappert). Note the openings of Matthew and Luke, both concerned with the redefinition of the people of Abraham around the Messiah.

[26] The phrase 'according to the Scriptures' is best taken as referring, not to isolated proof-texts, but to the whole theme of God's judgment of Israel and her restoration when sin had been dealt with. That which was spoken of Israel in the OT is properly applied to Israel's representative, the Messiah, in the NT.

[27] Pentecost was the feast of the giving of the law, and it appears that Luke in writing Ac. 2 is deliberately drawing out the significance of this fact. See J. Dupont, 'Ascension du Christ et don de l'Esprit d'après Actes 2.33', in Lindars and Smalley 1973, 219ff. (English summary, p. 228), and references there; and compare Caird 1976, 73ff., and the further study referred to there. For the resultant transformation of Israel into a worldwide people, see Ac. 1.6–8; 13.46–48; 26.20–23; 28.23–28.

inauguration of God's Kingdom (that is, God's eschatological sovereign rule) by the renewal of the [**21**] covenant, are in fact all about justification, though it is left to Paul to develop this particular implication.

The difference between the teaching of Jesus and Paul is therefore one of function and perspective, not of theological substance.[28] The Apostle has not altered or muddled the Gospel of the Master. Though he does not often refer to the Kingdom of God,[29] it is clear that the meaning of the phrase (God's rule of the world through his true Israel, his true humanity) is at the heart of his thought, emerging particularly when he allows himself a glimpse of the cosmic scope of God's purposes.[30] For Paul, as for Jesus, the salvation of the individual is set in the context of God's redefinition of Israel, his call of a worldwide family whose sins are forgiven in the blood of the new covenant.

Paul: Galatians

From this perspective one of the most fascinating Pauline problems can be resolved. Theologians are divided over the mutual relationship of Romans and Galatians. Some treat Galatians as basic[31] and so emphasize Paul's critique of the law and Israel, while others take Romans to be central and thus appear to soften or flatten out the sharp edges of that critique.[32] Others simply declare the two to be at odds and postulate a development or change of mind between them.[33] But with the analysis of justification we have developed so far, a more satisfying possibility emerges. Both letters are concerned with the question as to who are the true children of Abraham, though their different approaches reflect the needs of the particular congregations being addressed. Galatians is written to convince converted pagans that they have nothing to gain by becoming Jews physically which they do not already possess through belonging to Jesus Christ. On the contrary, to go on from Christianity into Judaism is to step down into a realm under sentence of death because of the law and the cross. Romans, however, is written to convince Christians from a mixed background that they do indeed inherit all the [**22**] blessings of Israel, but issues at the same time the warning (which the Galatians scarcely needed) not to lapse into anti-Semitism. From the same theological position Paul argues two different, though fully compatible, cases.

The debate about table-fellowship recorded in Galatians 2 is therefore no peripheral issue, loosely related to the real question.[34] It raises precisely the question of justification: who is within the covenant family? Peter's behaviour at Antioch had implied that only Jews were really within the covenant, and

[28] See Bruce 1974; Fraser 1974.

[29] Rom. 14.17; 1 Cor. 4.20; 6.9, 10; 15.24, 50; Gal. 5.21; Eph. 5.5; Col. 4.11; 1 Thess. 2.12; 2 Thess. 1.5. For the idea of Christ's Kingdom, see Col. 1.13; 2 Tim. 4.1, 18; Eph. 5.5 and 1 Cor. 15.23–28.

[30] Cf. Rom. 8.18–25; 1 Cor. 15.20ff., Eph. 1.17–23; Phil. 3.20f.; Col. 1.15ff.; see Caird 1968.

[31] Recently, England 1979, 4ff.

[32] E.g. Cranfield, op. cit.: see pp. 845–62. Those who begin with Galatians tend to have trouble with, e.g., Rom. 3.31; those who start with Romans tend to soften or explain away Gal. 3.19ff.

[33] E.g. Hübner 1978; see the review in Riches 1979.

[34] Cf. England 1979, 4f.

that gentiles were at best second-class citizens. Paul's reply in 2.15ff., often taken completely out of this context and so robbed of its true meaning, is this: justification is not based on the fact of being a Jew, nor on keeping the Jewish law, but on faith: and, if Jewish Christians have thereby technically become 'sinners' by eating with gentiles,[35] this does not involve actual sin, whereas if they insist on living under the law they will be shown up as transgressors. The crucified and risen Messiah means a crucified and risen Israel, so that Christian Jews like Paul have left behind on the cross the fleshly status defined by possession of the law. To go back to the law as the basis of one's own righteous status would be to spurn the grace of God, to behave as though the crucifixion of the Messiah were unnecessary.

From this point of view the argument of Galatians flows as smoothly as Paul's agitation will allow. The quotation from Genesis 15.6 in Galatians 3.6 is not an arbitrary proof-text or a subtle Rabbinic ploy: the whole chapter deals with the question as to who Abraham's children really are, as becomes clear when we reach the conclusion in 3.29. Abraham's family cannot be the people of the law: the law only brought a curse, and anyway was only a temporary provision until the coming of the Messiah. Jesus has taken the curse on himself, enabling God to fulfil the purpose of the covenant, which was that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles.

Israel has therefore come of age with the arrival of the Messiah (3.23–25; 4.1–7). The sending of the Spirit enables all who believe to share Israel's inheritance, to be called sons of God.[36] It is Christians, not Jews, who are of the line of [**23**] Isaac, because they are the children of promise, not of the flesh (4.21–31).[37] They can therefore confidently await the public proclamation of the verdict on the last day (5.5), knowing that it will conform to the one already pronounced over their faith, since what matters is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but 'faith, working through love' (5.6).[38]

Philippians

Philippians 3 follows a similar course. Again, Paul is attacking those who make membership in the covenant community a matter of racial descent and privilege, as he had once done himself. The cross has changed all that. Christians are the 'true circumcision' (i.e. the real covenant family), because the verdict 'righteous' is already pronounced over them when they believe.

[35] The meaning of *hamartōlos* is clear from v. 15.

[36] For the OT background, see Ex. 4.22f.; Dt. 14.1; 32.5, 6, 18; Jer. 31.9; etc.; see Hengel 1976, 21ff.

[37] On this much-debated passage, see now Barrett 1976. Barrett's argument is a step in the right direction, but should be taken further. Paul is drawing on the actual argument of Gen. 17.18–21 and 21.1–12, as in Rom. 9.6–9, to demonstrate that the true children of Abraham are the children of promise (cf. Gal. 3), not of the flesh – perhaps countering the charge that gentile Christians are the 'Ishmaels', and Jewish Christians the 'Isaacs'.

[38] Gal. 5.8 thus makes nonsense of the theological division, based on an atomistic view of the different sections of Romans, between justification, being in Christ, the question of Israel and the nature of Christian ethics. (See the work of Schweitzer, Käsemann and E. P. Sanders.) All four themes are in fact inextricably bound up together, and playing them off against one another merely shows that one has imported non-Pauline presuppositions into the argument.

The Messiah's death and resurrection become theirs:[39] they can confidently look forward to the resurrection of the dead as part of God's plan in Christ for the renewal of all things.[40] Justification is here the central feature in Paul's picture of the new Israel through whom the Kingdom of God, his sovereign rule over the world, is being realized.

Romans

The polemical tone of Galatians and of Philippians 3 is largely absent from Romans.[41] Paul has not, however, changed his mind about the importance of justification;[42] he is merely developing it to deal with a different set of questions. He is now arguing that God is in the right in his dealings with man, Israel and the world, and is pointing up consequent lessons for the church at Rome.

In Romans, therefore, Paul presents justification as God's answer to his own, not merely to man's, problem. Faced with universal sin (1.18—3.20) and with the just demand for impartiality (2.9–11), God must nevertheless be true to his covenant with Abraham. This is the problem of the righteousness of God.[43] Paul's exposition of God's solution is his demonstration that the Gospel of Jesus Christ proves God to [**24**] be in the right.[44] He has dealt with sin: he has made a way of salvation without regard to racial background, and in so doing he has fulfilled his covenant promises to Abraham. When he justifies believers, he is therefore absolutely right so to do. This must now be set out in more detail.

First, God has dealt with sin. As we saw earlier, justification in the present depends on the achievement of an objective atonement in which sins are not ignored but dealt with in the proper way, by punishment. That punishment had not been meted out before (3.24ff.). Now, on the cross, it has. The Messiah's role as Israel's representative, taking on himself Israel's destined role as representative of the world, enabled him to stand in the place of sinners of all races and justly to take on himself what they had deserved.[45] Only so can God be what Paul declares him to be – just, and the justifier of those who believe.

[39] Phil. 3.2ff. applies Phil. 2.5–11 to Paul's understanding of himself; see Hooker 1971, 349–61, especially 355ff. Compare 2 Cor. 5.21, etc.

[40] Phil. 3.10f., 20f.

[41] The strongest polemic in the letter, 16.17–20, appears to be directed at a different target.

[42] Philippians is, of course, usually dated later than Romans.

[43] On this phrase see the summaries of debate in Cranfield, op. cit., 92–9, and the appendix by M. T. Brauch in Sanders, op. cit., 523–42. I have argued in detail for the interpretation adopted here, in my forthcoming work on Paul.

[44] This shows the important link between Rom. 1.3–4 (the Gospel) and 1.16–17 (the result of the Gospel, anticipated in the summary of 1.5). We cannot here enter into the difficult debate about the quotation from Hab. 2.4 in 1.17, except to note that it was a passage regularly used in the attempt of pre-Christian Judaism to understand, as Paul was trying to understand, God's strange ways with his people. For details, see Strobel 1961.

[45] See Cranfield 1975a, 214–17. Behind this is of course also presupposed the incarnation: in Christ God does not lay man's punishment on somebody else, but takes it on himself.

Second, God has renounced all partiality, and made one way of salvation for all men alike.[46] Justification by faith therefore eliminates boasting (3.27–31): not the boasting of the legalist earning his own salvation (though it eliminates that too), but that of the Jew, as in 2.17ff. If this is not so, the question of 3.29 ('Is God the God of the Jews only?') is a total non sequitur. 'Works' are done not to earn privilege but to demonstrate it: they are the attempt to confine grace to one race. But the Gospel presents Israel with the knowledge that all alike have sinned,[47] and with the fact of a crucified Messiah, who spells death to nationalistic pride. The Gospel is revealed 'apart from the [Jewish] law' (3.21), since only so could it benefit both gentiles (who do not possess the law) and Jews (who stand convicted by it).

Third, God must be true to his covenant. Like Galatians 3, Romans 4 is not simply a clever and arbitrary Rabbinic 'proof from Scripture': it is the climax of the epistle so far.[48] Abraham is no mere example of faith. He is the father of the worldwide covenant family which God has always promised and now has established in Christ. Paul quotes extensively from Genesis 15 and 17 to prove that covenant membership **[25]** always depended on grace and faith, since it was always intended for gentiles as well as for Jews.[49] And the theme of God's covenant faithfulness reveals yet another dimension in 3.21–26: as God 'redeemed' his people from Egypt with the covenant blood, so now the blood of Jesus Christ becomes the blood of the new covenant, shed for the worldwide forgiveness of sins, achieving the redemption (3.21) of the true family of Abraham.[50] God has dealt with sin; he has renounced partiality; he is true to his covenant. The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals that God is in the right (Romans 1.16f.).

But why should Christian faith (with which Abraham's faith is identical, 4.19ff.) be the reason for God's declaration that the believer is in the right? And how can it be certain that God's verdict on the last day, to which Paul has already referred in 2.1–16, will correspond with the verdict 'righteous' issued over believers in the present?

The answer is that Paul understands faith to be the true fulfilling of the law. The difficult argument of Romans 9.30—10.13 may be summarized thus: the failure of the Jews lay in their abuse of the law as a charter of national privilege, which caused them to reject the Gospel of the crucified Messiah; the law was actually intended to evoke faith.[51] When, therefore, gentiles come to believe in Jesus Christ, they are in fact fulfilling the law, whether or not

[46] Paul bases this argument on the central Jewish tenet of monotheism (3.30). For the idea of impartiality, compare 2.9–11.

[47] The significance of 'all' is 'Jew and gentile alike'; compare 3.21–23 with 10.11–13.

[48] Contrast the treatment of it in, e.g., Dodd 1959, 88–93.

[49] Packer (loc. cit., 683f.) is therefore wrong to distinguish the argument of Romans from that of Isaiah; in fact, he does not need to, since 'righteousness' and salvation are not, as he is prepared to accept, synonymous there. The irony of the present debate is that, because Rom. 4 has been quite misunderstood, Paul has been accused of arbitrary manipulation of OT proof-texts. Our argument also suggests a reconsideration of the place of chs. 9—11 within the whole epistle.

[50] 'Redemption' is therefore not just one more metaphor about salvation, this time taken from the slave-market: it carries within it the OT overtones of the Exodus. See Hill 1967, ch. 3, particularly 75ff.

[51] See Cranfield 1975a, 504ff. on Rom. 9.30ff.

they have even heard of it,[52] and they are therefore rightly to be regarded as within the covenant, i.e. they are to be justified. Abraham's family has been redefined (9.6–29), with the result that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (10.13 refers to Joel 2.28–32), and Jew and gentile who call on the name of the Lord alike will be saved.[53] God is shown to be in the right in his treatment of Israel and the nations.[54]

This also explains the difficult phrase 'the law of faith' in 3.27. *Nomos* is here to be translated not 'principle', but 'law' in its full sense.[55] Faith in Jesus Christ turns out to be the fulfilment of the law, not its abolition.[56] This faith is of course not a 'work' done to earn God's favour, nor is it to be equated with 'righteousness' understood as a moral quality.[57] It is simply [**26**] the evidence of the work of grace in the heart.

The theme of the renewed heart ties in this exposition with Romans 2.25–29 (compare also 2.14f.). Here, and in parallel passages (Romans 7.4–6; 2 Corinthians 3; Philippians 3.2ff.), Paul argues that Christians are the true Jews, circumcised spiritually and not literally. Here again we find 'new covenant' language.[58] Belief in the risen Lord is in fact the fulfilment which the law sought, and this belief is therefore evidence of the work of the Spirit in writing God's law on the hearts of his people. This is the answer to the question 'Why faith?' Faith is the evidence of grace, and when God sees it he therefore rightly declares that the believer is in the right. This faith is not a 'work' done to earn favour: it is the evidence within the believer that God himself has already been at work. The work of the Spirit also solves the problem of the correspondence between the present verdict and that to be given on the last day. In Romans 5—8 Paul argues that all of Israel's privileges have now been transferred, via the Messiah, to the worldwide people of God, the true family of Abraham.[59] As God's true people, they are therefore assured of eternal life. Chapters 5—8 are one long argument for assurance, based on the new covenant blessings of forgiveness and the Spirit. The same Spirit who inspired justifying faith is at work in believers to do 'what the law could not do' (8.3) – to complete, in other words, the renewal of the covenant.[60] He will give life in place of death (8.1–11),[61] holiness in place of sin (8.12–13),

[52] This is a deliberate reference on my part to Rom. 2.14f., on which see Cranfield 1975a, 155ff. The argument of 10.5–9 is that Dt. 30 provides the correct interpretation of Lev. 18.5: 'doing the law' is to be understood in terms of faith.

[53] This points towards the full meaning of chs. 9—11, which are thus completely integrated into the sweep of thought of the whole book.

[54] The mention of God's righteousness in 10.3 gathers up the discussion of the same topic in 9.6–29.

[55] See Cranfield 1975a, 219f., against (e.g.) RSV, NIV.

[56] 3.31 does not, then, merely indicate that Paul can find support for his doctrine in the OT.

[57] Cf. O'Neill 1975, 18ff.: an interesting discussion which shows up the weaknesses of the traditional approaches but whose own suggestion is equally problematic both exegetically and theologically.

[58] See above, n. 5.

[59] Christians are the new humanity (5.12ff.), God's sons (8.12ff.), inheriting God's glory (8.18ff.), his covenants and law (7.1—8.11), his promises to the Patriarchs (ch. 4) and so offering to God the true worship of Israel (Phil. 3.2f.). That this list fits so well with Rom. 9.3f. is again indicative of the whole shape of Paul's argument.

[60] See Cranfield 1975a, 371ff., and the work of Barth there cited.

[61] The resurrection follows from the renewal of the covenant, picking up the sequence of thought in Ezek. 36—37.

sonship in place of slavery (8.14–17),[62] the new creation in place of the old, and therefore hope in the midst of sufferings (8.18–27).[63] Chapter 8 thus rounds off the train of thought that began in 2.1–16, and proves that the present verdict of 'righteous' will indeed be reaffirmed on the last day. Christians are those who 'by patience in welldoing seek for glory and honour and immortality' (they seek for it, even now they do not earn it[64]), those to whom God 'will give eternal life'. The last paragraph of chapter 8 looks on once more to the future judgment day, when

> [**27**]this shall be all my plea;
> Jesus hath lived, hath died for me

– and, says Paul, has been raised from the dead and even now intercedes on behalf of his people.

Romans 8 thus points to the crowning glory of Paul's doctrine of justification. It demonstrates that the assurance which is contained in the doctrine is found not in looking at anything in oneself, not even at one's faith, but in faith itself, which is looking to Christ. There is no mention of faith in 8.31–39: rather, the whole passage is faith, faith looking to the grace of God revealed in the work of the Son. It is God who justifies: who is to condemn? The chapter demonstrates that justification by faith is not a legal fiction, imputing something to man which he does not really possess; nor is it a process, imparting to man a quality he did not have before. That is to confuse justification with regeneration. Justification is the correct and proper anticipation, in the present, of the righteous verdict which will be delivered on the last day, when death will have swallowed up all that now remains of our sinful nature and when we shall stand before God in the full likeness of his risen and glorified Son – when the whole world will be renewed because the people of God have been renewed, so that God, the King, will be all in all.[65]

The doctrine of justification by faith is that all this is even now certain for those who believe in the Gospel; the experience of justification by faith is the steadfast looking away from oneself at the objective facts of incarnation and atonement, revealing as they do the unchanging and unshakeable love of God for his people. This is justification: because of the work of the Son and the Spirit, God pronounces in the present the future verdict of 'righteous' over all who believe. Irrespective of moral or racial background, believers are declared to belong for all eternity to the true people of Abraham, the family of the renewed covenant, the people whose sins are forgiven. And from this perspective, Romans 9—11 falls into place: God is redefining Abraham's family as the worldwide covenant [**28**] community, formed now by means of the gentile mission and the constant invitation to Jews to become in truth what they are according to the flesh. The climax of Romans 11 is the fulfilment of justification: God in his inscrutable wisdom has provided in the

[62] Compare Gal. 4.1–7; cf. Packer 1973, 181–208.
[63] 8.18ff.; this develops 5.1–5.
[64] Cf. Cranfield 1975a, 147 re: Rom. 2.7, and particularly 152–3.
[65] See n. 30 above.

Gospel of Jesus Christ the way by which Jew and gentile together inherit all the blessings of the covenant with Abraham – the way in which God, by establishing his Kingdom, undoes the sin of Adam and the consequent misery of the world.

Other New Testament Books

We are left principally with the question of James 2.14–26. One might have thought that this passage would no longer present a problem, so often has it been shown that when James says 'faith' he means a dead orthodoxy which Paul and Luther would have been equally quick to condemn.[66] But, since the debate still rumbles on in some quarters,[67] two additional points (arising out of what has been said so far), may be in order.

First, James was no Judaizer. Although one of the most Jewish writers in the New Testament, there is not the slightest suggestion that he regarded gentiles as second-class citizens, or circumcision as necessary for membership in the people of God. Paul's polemic against national pride, with the law as the charter of national privilege, leaves James totally unscathed; and since this is the context of Paul's polemic against 'works', he and James have no fundamental disagreement.

Second, if justification means not how one becomes a Christian but rather God's declaration that one is already Christian, the whole argument of James 2 looks very different. James, like Paul, goes back to Genesis 15.6 as God's initial declaration that Abraham is in the right: and, just as Paul looks ahead to the future declaration which will be in accordance with, though still not earned by, the good works which result from the indwelling of the same Spirit who inspired faith, so James sees that Abraham's works *after his* [**29**] *initial justification* demonstrate simply that God's initial declaration was correct. Problems only arise if we fail to distinguish between justification and regeneration.

Our treatment of justification shows that the rest of the New Testament, while not discussing the subject explicitly, is likewise completely in accordance with Paul. Whereas Galatians warned gentile Christians not to become Jews, Hebrews warns Jewish Christians not to go back to Judaism, and for precisely the same reasons: the covenant has been renewed, sins have been forgiven once and for all in the death of Jesus, and all may draw near not through the Torah but through that faith which, like Abraham's, leads to certain hope.[68] The First Letter of Peter encourages Christians undergoing persecution with the knowledge that they are God's true Israel, formed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[69] The letter to the church in Smyrna, in Revelation 2, mentions 'those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan'[70] – presumably because the church is to be

[66] See Ladd 1974, 592f. For Paul's view, see Gal. 5. For Luther's, compare 'The Freedom of a Christian', printed in Luther 1970, 261ff.

[67] See, e.g., Mussner 1975, 146–50; Dibelius and Greeven 1976, 174–80.

[68] Cf. Heb. 8—10, especially 10.36–39, followed by the whole argument of ch. 11.

[69] 1 Pet. 2.

[70] Rev. 2.9.

seen as the true people of God, called out of every nation and kindred and tribe and tongue by the obedient death of the Lamb, who has made them his true Israel, kings and priests to our God.[71] If justification is God's assurance that those who belong to the Messiah are indeed members of his covenant family, then the whole New Testament is all about justification[72] – which is, after all, what we should expect from a book whose collective title indicates that it is the documentation of the new covenant. This is the book which tells how it is that sinful men and women from every race under heaven are redeemed by God to belong to his people, because of the death and resurrection of his Son and the life-giving work of his Holy Spirit.

Justification and Current Questions: Protestant and Catholic

If I have been right in my analysis of the biblical material, several important consequences follow. The most important **[30]** in the realm of doctrine is still undoubtedly the debate between Catholic and Protestant.[73] Here I believe that my argument has some real light to shed. First, though, we must distinguish the two classic Protestant positions.

The Reformed school have tended to stress the objectivity of justification, the fact that it concerns the total achievement of Jesus Christ. Faith is not the reason why I am declared to be in the right so much as the means whereby I am joined to Christ so that his merits and death become mine. This is in some ways a neat scheme, but it is not what Paul says about faith, and it tends to merge justification with the events which it presupposes, thus virtually making faith appear to be a luxury which follows from the justification which occurs in the cross and resurrection.[74] This is symptomatic of a standard weakness in the Reformed approach, however valuable it may be in other ways as a corrective to faulty views elsewhere within Protestantism.[75]

If the Reformed merge justification and atonement, the Lutheran school (including, I suspect, most English evangelicals) have tended to confuse justification and regeneration, to think of 'justification' as the means whereby one becomes a Christian. This looks back, of course, to Luther's insistence, arising out of his own experience, that one cannot earn salvation by good works, but only receive it through faith. But this has raised all sorts of problems.

[71] Rev. 5.9f., with its echoes of Ex. 19.6; cf. 21.10–14.

[72] Compare the argument of Jn. 1.11–13; Eph. 2.11–22; etc.

[73] Cf. England, op. cit.: Küng 1964; Beckwith, Duffield, and Packer 1977, 6, 48ff.

[74] This appears to be the position of Barth and Torrance; see Brown, op. cit., 371f., and Torrance, loc. cit.

[75] Thus Paul never says that Christ obeyed the law: he is no legalist needing to earn anything, and even to say that he 'earns' righteousness for his people still falls short of the truth because it has not removed, but merely adjusted, the irrelevant and misleading idea of 'earning' itself. Christ is obedient to God's whole saving plan, of which the law is only a small part. Again, the idea that justification in some way precedes faith is the stepping stone towards universalism in Barth's theology: and to make faith the means of union with Christ is to allow it to usurp the role which Paul gives to baptism.

First, it easily leads to a neo-Marcionite rejection of the law, suggesting in effect that God had one way of salvation for the Jews and another for Christians.[76] Popular though that strange theology may be, it makes nonsense of Paul and of the Old Testament itself.[77] The renewal of the covenant in no way implies a change in the way of salvation or the abolition of God's holy law. Second, by asking 'How can I find a gracious God?' and answering 'By faith', Luther not only confused justification and regeneration but consequently put faith in the position of a work, the one thing which God requires as a condition of grace. Third, because Luther realized at the same time that justification belonged to the language of the [**31**] lawcourt, his statement of the doctrine could easily be misunderstood as a legal fiction, in which God declared people to be something they were not.

Our analysis of justification avoids all these pitfalls. Faith is not a ladder to salvation, an alternative to the law: salvation remains a gift of grace, free and undeserved.[78] Justification is no legal fiction, but God's righteous declaration that the believer is within the covenant. I have no desire, as some appear to have, to play down the value of our Reformation heritage: but I believe we are most faithful to the Reformers when we go back to the New Testament and see whether we can understand it even better than they did.

When we come to the debate between Catholic and Protestant we find that the confusions we have just noted have bedevilled it all through. Because justification has not been separated from regeneration, Roman Catholics have accused Protestants of constructing an antinomian doctrine, an immoral legal fiction, or a hopelessly subjective Christianity in which 'my religious experience' takes the place of the objective facts about Jesus Christ.[79] And a good deal of Protestantism over the last four hundred years, including twentieth-century evangelicalism, must plead guilty to these charges.

But these matters have nothing to do with the real point. The charge of antinomianism or of a 'legal fiction' cannot be levelled at the true Pauline doctrine, as we have seen; and, as the Reformed position has always emphasized, 'my religious experience', important though that ultimately may be, is not the centre of Christianity. Because Catholics, like many Protestants, have traditionally used the language of justification to describe the much wider realities of regeneration and sanctification, they have usually simply ignored the reality of which the word actually speaks, namely, the assurance in the

[76] It is difficult to tie Luther down on points of doctrine, because of the often hasty and over-polemical character of his writings. Yet it will hardly be denied that his thought, and that of his followers, tends in the direction of an outright rejection of the law.

[77] See Cranfield 1975a, 861f. The 'Lutheran' position has had serious results in the field of Jewish studies (see Sanders, op. cit., 33ff.) and of OT hermeneutics: in this century the distortion has been increased by the continental alliance of Lutheranism with Idealism and Existentialism, which have strengthened the Protestant tendency to set Christianity apart from history and the historical covenant community.

[78] As all the Reformers (and not just Calvin) saw, this of course implies a doctrine of predestination: but it is beyond the scope of this section to do more than note the fact. See Ridderbos, op. cit., 341–54, for a recent discussion.

[79] See the criticisms made by Newman (discussed in Leaver 1979, 20f.) and Dix 1945, 635, 638f. Compare also Clark 1967, 99ff., 139ff., 143.

present that my sins are forgiven because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that I have a sure and certain hope because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And where that assurance is lacking, other elements come in to usurp its [**32**] place, and all the things in Roman theology to which true Protestantism rightly objects grow from this root. This, I suggest, is the way forward in the current debate: not by broadening the term 'justification' so that it refers to the whole range of doctrine from atonement to final redemption, but by using it with its precise and Pauline meaning.[80] The tragedy of the situation is that there must have been countless Christians down the years in all churches who really did believe in Jesus Christ as their risen Lord, but who failed in this life to enjoy the assurance of salvation which was theirs for the taking, because they were never told that believers are declared 'righteous' in the present because of the death of God's son. 'Legal' categories, which some want to do away with today, are not sterile or irrelevant – they are the key to Christian assurance.

Radical Protestantism

The inadequacies of much traditional Protestant understanding of justification can be seen in their modern developments in what evangelicals normally call 'radical' circles. A wedge has been driven between justification and the idea of the historical covenant people of God, and a choice has been forced as to which is primary. Wrede and Schweitzer asserted that justification was polemical and therefore peripheral in Paul's thinking, while 'being in Christ', and the idea of the people of God, were primary. They have their modern followers.[81] Bultmann and Käsemann, on the other hand, make justification primary, and then argue that therefore the covenant, the historical people of God and all that goes with it, including the close relationship of faith and history, are secondary elements to be pushed to the sidelines as irrelevant or even dangerous.[82] I hope it is clear to evangelicals, as it certainly is to Catholics,

[80] Küng, op. cit., seems to me to reach agreement by so widening the meaning of justification that it includes the whole sweep of God's saving purposes. This agreement is itself a substantial achievement, but it does not seem to me to deal with justification itself.

[81] E.g. Sanders, op. cit.: Stendahl 1976, especially 78ff. and 129ff.

[82] Compare Bultmann's failure in his *Theology of the New Testament* to deal at all with Rom. 9—11 as a whole, and the rejection among his followers of any organic link between Israel and the church, so that for Käsemann Israel has only exemplary significance (Käsemann 1969, 183–7). Because faith is to be loosed from history, this school understands demythologization of the gospels as a necessary result of 'justification by faith', since to base faith on history is to turn it into a 'work'. 'Faith' then becomes the response to the bare word of the kerygma, and justification the word-event in which God reaches out and transforms the life of the individual (compare the work of Ebeling, Fuchs and Stuhlmacher), thus all but falling back into the Catholic idea of justification actually effecting a change in the believer! So many confusions run together here that there is not space to analyse them: but one possible conclusion must be noted. These are self-confessedly Protestant theories, rejecting 'story faith' in favour of personal trust. In the light of n. 18 above, the startling suggestion must be made: if Luther had not demythologized Paul, Bultmann could not have demythologized Jesus. Our whole argument provides an answer in principle to this line of thought. If justification is God's declaration that one is a member of the covenant family, the Bible is to be understood as the book of the covenant, which therefore belongs, and is to be interpreted, in the total context of the covenant community within which it both came to birth and speaks today. The Word of God is to be understood as the Book of the People of God.

that this position is not a bizarre distortion of traditional Protestantism, but an authentic development of it, particularly in its emphasis on individual faith and religious experience over against the historical [**33**] church. I hope it is also clear that it does great violence, exegetically and theologically, to the thought of Paul, for whom justification and the covenant were two ways of talking about the same thing, the declaration of God concerning his true people.

Contemporary Evangelicalism

Modern evangelicalism is not in a position to be smug about the weakness of others, as though we had kept on the high road while our Catholic or radical brethren wandered about in the fog. We have tended to stand closer to Bultmann than we like to realize, with his emphasis on faith as experience unconnected with history, his existentialist call for decision, his view of justification as the establishment of a personal relationship with God, his wedge between justification and the historical people of God. That is why the charismatic movement, and movements for whom assurance is a matter of religious feelings (and what a pastoral disaster that is!), have gained such a ready following;[83] why we have problems with our theology of evangelism; why we lose assurance if for any reason God seems remote; why we find ecclesiology so difficult and apparently compromising, and imagine that we can safeguard the doctrine of justification by insisting on low churchmanship, which is only marginally better than attempting to safeguard low-church traditions by insisting on the doctrine of justification.

All these things happen because we have taken the doctrine of justification out of the context of the covenant and reduced it to the idea that what God wants is inward religion instead of outward performances, churchgoing, sacraments and the like (and then we wonder why the house church movement has such an appeal!). But this reduction of Christianity is an attractive and dangerous mistake. It is attractive because it fits in so well with the Spirit of the Age – with the remnants of the Romantic movement, the heritage of Idealism, the popular existentialism which leads to the cult of sincerity over against [**34**] objective truth, the current emphasis on doing one's own thing instead of conforming to external norms. We latch on to the idea of inner personal religion (which we flatter ourselves is the same thing as justification by faith) because we find it a place where we can enjoy a good deal of Christianity (quietly forgetting the awkward bits, the church and sacraments, that don't fit) and a good deal of the twentieth century. And this mistake is dangerous because it sets up a false either–or which precipitates evangelicals into being anti-church and antisacraments: it is dangerous because it devalues propositional faith and objective truth, leaving doctrines like the incarnation as mere shibboleths without significance for our actual theology.

The irony of all this, and to my mind our great danger at the moment, is that in many evangelical circles people are preaching existentialism in Pauline

[83] Cf. Torrance, op. cit., 161f.

dress and imagining it to be our biblical and Reformation heritage. But the real test for evangelicalism today is this: are we prepared to be reformed under the Word of God, as we traditionally insist that everyone else ought to be? Or have our traditional ways of thinking become the norm into which the Bible must be made to fit? If we are to be true evangelicals, we must, as John Stott said at Nottingham,[84] be Bible people and Gospel people – and I have set out what I believe that means in relation to justification.

It means in particular that we must also be church people. Justification is to be understood in the context of the historical people of God, the one family of Abraham: as the doctrine of covenant membership, it cannot be separated from the covenant signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper. I believe that to call myself an evangelical Anglican, and/or an Anglican evangelical, is not to precipitate an identity problem, let alone a crisis, but rather to place myself at that point on the ecclesiological map where I am free to learn how to be a Bible person, a Gospel person, a church person. I want in concluding this section to look at some of the implications of this position.

[**35**] First, if justification is a polemical doctrine, against which positions does it militate today? Not primarily, I think, against the heirs of the Tractarian movement, as is sometimes implied.[85] I disagree with Anglo-Catholic theology at several very important points, but I do not believe that it is the real opponent of justification today. I suggest that the real cutting edge of the doctrine is against those who most nearly coincide with the Jews of Paul's day. I refer to those who say that membership in the people of God is not a matter of believing certain things to be true, but merely of historical continuity, with a bit of ethics thrown in.[86] I refer to those who say that there are different ways of salvation for different nations or races, and who, in order to maintain their position, stumble as did the Jews over the doctrines which are the basis of justification, namely, the incarnation, cross and resurrection of the one who is Lord of all.[87] In so far as this theology, with its subjectivism and its opposition to historical Christianity, has a claim to be called 'Protestant' – and I am afraid it has – we must beware lest in seeking to be Protestants we cease to be truly evangelical. Without leaving behind any aspect of our true heritage, Paul's doctrine of justification calls us to oppose the present trend away from historical Christianity, and to wake up to the treasures of membership in the historical and visible people of God, to which we have for so long been blind.

Second, then, if God has declared that we belong to his covenant family, it is time that we as evangelicals started to take that family seriously. Precisely because we believe in justification, we must get our view of the church sorted out, and have done once and for all with the watery semi-Baptist theology which has been creeping into evangelical Anglicanism over the last decade or two. Justification belongs with the covenant signs: baptism is the

[84] Stott 1977.

[85] Compare Samuel 1979, especially chs. 1 and 6.

[86] Compare the approaches outlined on pp. 36ff. of the Church of England Doctrine Commission 1976.

[87] E.g. Hick 1977, in particular the work, there and elsewhere, of Hick himself and of Don Cupitt.

sacrament of entry into God's people, the sign of regeneration (in fulfilment of God's covenant promises), and thus faith, which follows and does not precede regeneration, need not precede baptism, though if it does not follow afterwards there will consequently be no justification. Again, the Lord's Supper is the great covenant [**36**] sign, the physical embodiment of the doctrine of justification. As Cranmer saw so well, God declares in the eucharist that those who eat with faith really do belong to the Messiah's people. The people of God are an historical and visible family, demonstrating their historical nature in the sacraments and in that continuity of ministry, in the context of life under the Word of God, for which the later writings of the New Testament show so much concern. Justification is not an individualist's charter, but God's declaration that we belong to the covenant community. If we are not taking that community seriously, we have not understood justification.

But I want to end on a more positive note. The third implication is this: if justification declares that the believer is a member of the covenant community, that community itself is called to live as the family who accept one another in love. Romans 14 is the application of justification to communal Christian living, in which the members welcome one another because God has already welcomed them.[88] The church is thus to be a living demonstration of justification by faith, in which each member is given by the whole community the security of acceptance not on the basis of who they are in human terms of race, class or colour, not on the basis of works, but simply because of shared faith in the risen Lord Jesus. Except in extreme cases of open and unrepentant sin (and then only because such sin is evidence of unbelief), we must not apply ethical tests as a basis for fellowship, particularly the little quasi-moral rules which are designed more to safeguard an insecure position than to promote genuine holiness. Justification provides all the security anyone needs: and the church is to be the community which will be secure enough to welcome into its fellowship all those who, however simply, and however naïvely or unclearly, share its faith. This is the clue to what a friend of mine called 'the mental health of justification by faith': to believe that God really does accept you, and to believe that and practise it as a church in our acceptance of one another, is to turn away from paranoid self-justification and self-defence and to experience the deepest possible [**37**] personal and corporate security. And if we dare to apply that to our current identity problems, and to our relationships with non-evangelical Christians in our church and outside it, I believe that our whole approach to such relationships, and to the church politics they involve us in, will become radically different from what they are. This is in no way to advocate doctrinal indifference. Precisely because I take doctrine, and particularly justification by faith, with the utmost seriousness, I long to see evangelicals, and the church as a whole, becoming in this way a living embodiment of the Gospel.

The message of justification by faith for us as individuals, as evangelicals, as churchmen, is this. Because God is the covenant God, he has kept his covenant with Abraham, and is even now restoring his kingly rule over the

[88] Cf. Robinson 1979, 142f.

world by creating us in Christ as a renewed people for his own possession. Because God is love, he sent his own Son to die for us, and his own Spirit to live in us. Because God is righteous, he declares in the present time that all who believe in the risen Lord Jesus are in the right, that their sins are forgiven. To anxious individuals, to a troubled world, to a divided church, and to muddled evangelicalism, the biblical doctrine of justification declares: God is God; trust in him; be glad and rejoice in him; and do not be afraid. God is God: therefore relax.

Chapter Three

GODLINESS AND GOOD LEARNING: CRANFIELD'S *ROMANS* (1980)

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I count it a great blessing that Charles Cranfield's massive commentary on Romans appeared just when I needed it. The first volume appeared when I was two years into my (prolonged!) doctoral work, the second just in time as I was finishing the thesis. It is a measure of Cranfield's fine-grained, patient scholarship that though I steadily found myself – to my surprise! – agreeing with him less and less, I always found, and still find, his discussions clear, fair and illuminating. I still think that if one had to choose between the (basically Lutheran) view of Paul and the law which was taken for granted by so many in the 1960s – that the law was a bad thing now happily abolished – and the Reformed view which Cranfield articulates so eloquently, one would have to choose Cranfield's Reformed position. If I no longer hold that view, it is not because I have slipped back into one of the varieties of Marcionism against which Cranfield fights so strongly, but because I have found a more nuanced, and historically grounded, reading essential if one is to understand what Paul says about the law not only in Romans but also in Galatians. For that, however, I must refer to the essays on the law in *The Climax of the Covenant*. The present review essay is an act of homage and gratitude to a great scholar from whom I learned much, not least when forced to disagree.

* * *

[**18**] The great work is finished at last. Four years after the first volume, Cranfield's commentary on Romans (the first in the new series of the International Critical Commentary, of which he is joint editor) has now been completed by the arrival of the second.[1] And a great work it truly is. It represents the best part of a lifetime of patient and careful exegetical study, an easy grasp of the classical languages, a thorough familiarity with the work

[1] Cranfield 1975a. The first volume has now gone into a further edition, in which mention is made (p. 44) of commentaries which have appeared since 1975, and in which the many misprints in the first edition have been corrected. Of these, warning should be given to possessors of the first edition that on p. 66 the phrase 'the faith which consists in obedience' has replaced 'the obedience which consists in faith' (due, no doubt, to Pelagian gremlins at the printers') as option (vii) on the phrase *hypakoē pisteōs*.

of commentators from the earliest times to the present day, and, by no means least, a godly, wise and [**19**] sensitive approach to the subtle and delicate theological and practical issues with which Romans deals. The author richly deserves the chair in Durham to which he has recently been elevated. To think his thoughts after him is to be given a lesson in theological scholarship at its very best – that is, in the peculiarly delightful combination of godliness and good learning.

Any treatment of Romans in this detail is bound to make considerable demands on the reader, and Cranfield is no exception. Though most Hebrew words are transliterated, they are usually left untranslated, as are quotations from (e.g.) Chrysostom, Pelagius, Bengel and the modern French and German commentators. At the same time, it should quickly be said that almost all non-English material occurs in the footnotes, so that readers with only English and Greek will have no trouble with the text; and that it is of course in the interests of exact scholarship that authors should speak for themselves (Cranfield is quick to point out weaknesses in some translations).[2] Otherwise the commentary is easy to use. It follows the Nestle text (though Cranfield disagrees with it at certain points, and discusses a good many of the variants with commendable clarity[3]), and the use of heavy type ensures that one can see at a glance (in contrast, for instance, with Käsemann) exactly where one is. The pagination runs on from the first to the second volume (like Kuss, unlike Murray), so that cross-references are simplified. The indices are very full and helpful, with the odd exception that sub-apostolic literature is not listed in the usual way, but instead occurs, by author's name only, in the general list of secondary writers. This means (e.g.) that, though the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is cited (e.g. p. 809), one cannot tell at a glance whether use is made elsewhere of this or other early Christian writings. The bibliographies, though occasionally needing supplementation from Käsemann, are extremely helpful. In particular, the list of commentaries at the start compares well with Käsemann (109 in the 1973 edition, against Käsemann's 40); and Cranfield has made careful use of almost every one he lists. This use of, and debate with, his predecessors is an important feature of the work: unlike many writers, he has cast the net wide and culled the best of Christian scholarship of the last two thousand years. The index reveals that his favourites are Barrett, Barth, Bengel, Calvin, Chrysostom, Gaugler, Käsemann, Lagrange, Michel, and of course Sanday and Headlam. Others who crop up regularly are Huby, Origen, Pelagius (who emerges with more credit than one might have thought) and Zahn.[4] This underlines Cranfield's stated intention of making exegesis prior to the wider theological issues:[5] and it is no doubt because of this that other names well known in recent Pauline research – Davies, Schoeps, Stendahl, Wrede, Schweitzer – are hardly mentioned at all. Ridderbos is one of the most striking absentees, in view of the fact that his

[2] E.g. p. 43 n. 3 re: Barth's shorter commentary.

[3] E.g. p. 784 n. 2 re: 16.3–5.

[4] Käsemann, Black and Schlier appeared too late to be used in vol. 1; the third volume of Kuss, and the first of Wilckens, came too late for either volume.

[5] Cf. pp. 1, 823f.

commentary takes a theological stance fairly close to Cranfield's own. But in general the coverage is extremely full; and Cranfield is always scrupulously fair to his opponents.[6]

In one respect Cranfield stands out from most writers on Romans, namely, in the full coverage he gives to every single part of the epistle. After 44 pages of introduction (authenticity, structure, purpose, the church in Rome, etc., and a good brief history of exegesis), chapters 1—8 occupy 400 pages, with 9—11 taking 150 and 12—16 requiring 200. What Cranfield says of Michel[7] is just as true of himself: it is very difficult to find him unaware of questions which need to be asked. The section on chapters 12—13 reproduces almost exactly the earlier *Commentary* on those chapters,[8] except that one or two of the detailed practical applications in the earlier volume are missing, and one or two others, including a rare peep into the author's background,[9] are added. The only significant modification of stance is that, though Cranfield still thinks it is wrong simply to dismiss the idea of a double reference for *exousiais* in 13.1 (i.e. to heavenly powers as well as to earthly ones), he has 'now come to regard it as less probable than the interpretation according to which Paul in using *exousiais* here had in mind simply the civil authorities as such'.[10]

The commentary is then concluded with two essays. The first[11] deals with Paul's purposes in writing the letter, and the second[12] is entitled 'Concluding remarks on some aspects of the theology of Romans'. Of this, about one-third is taken up with a revised form of Cranfield's deservedly famous article 'St Paul and the Law',[13] the [**20**] revisions consisting mainly of the deletion of material now covered in the body of the commentary. For the rest, the reader is offered a useful summary of Cranfield's understanding of Paul, particularly of his Christology, soteriology, pneumatology and use of the OT (in the last, he holds that Paul has been given, as the servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, the 'legitimate freedom . . . from time to time to take a certain liberty with a particular passage, in order thereby to bring out the more faithfully and clearly the overall sense of the OT's witness', as opposed to the idea that Paul shows 'a readiness to force [the text] to render service to the interpreter's own purpose, in other words, a freedom of arbitrariness').[14] I suspect that Cranfield had to curtail these essays – some sections of which are very brief – in the interests of the publisher's plans: were he to enlarge some of them (perhaps particularly his welcome rejection of the common assumption that Paul wrongly believed that the Parousia would certainly occur in the very near future) he would win considerable further gratitude.

[6] Cf., e.g., p. 778 re: Michel.
[7] P. 43.
[8] Cranfield 1965.
[9] P. 688. Note too the addition of the phrase 'and quite often even in others' in the last sentence on 13.10 (p. 679).
[10] P. 659.
[11] Pp. 814–23.
[12] Pp. 823–70.
[13] Cranfield 1964, reprinted with slight alterations in Batey 1970, 148–72.
[14] P. 869.

Three features of this commentary, hinted at in the title of this review, call for particular comment. First, Cranfield's extraordinary analytic skill. To one who has waded through many discussions of difficult points in Romans, reading Cranfield is always refreshing, because of the painstaking clarity and honesty with which he sets out the alternative options which the text suggests or permits, and the ruthless logic with which he examines their strengths and weaknesses and reaches his conclusion – which is sometimes that the matter must be left undecided between two or more possibilities. Even where one disagrees with the results, one can always see more clearly just where the issues lie.[15] I think particularly of his discussion of 8.28[16] (in which he understands 'all things' as the subject of 'work together'); his arguments for treating 5.1, not 6.1, as the start of the new section of the epistle;[17] and his masterly analysis of 11.30f.,[18] 14.16,[19] and 15.4, 7 and 9.[20]

Second, the sensitivity to the finer points of grammar, and their theological significance. It is good to have pointed out the significance of the presence of *te* in 1.16,[21] of *to* in 9.5,[22] and of the absence of *ho* in the same verse.[23] There is also a nice distinction between *gar* in its explanatory and confirmatory senses[24] (Cranfield never tires of pointing out the importance of Paul's connecting words, and the significance of the occasional sentence that is *not* connected to its predecessor): an interesting suggestion, on the basis of the aorist indicative active in 16.12, that Persis may have already completed a significant amount of Christian work[25] – and countless other similar points. I particularly liked the footnote warning English and German readers not to assume that, just because 'so' in both languages could translate *hōste* in the sense of 'therefore', *hōste* could also carry the meaning of 'so' in the 'as . . . so . . .' sequence – all this by way of pointing out that 7.1–3 is not an allegory but an argument.[26] With this kind of thing always present though never obtrusive, one feels one has learnt more from the commentary than

[15] Occasionally the method becomes too heavy: e.g. pp. 613–16, dealing with 12.3, where we are invited to compare 'the combination of (i)(b)(*β*), (ii)(c) and (iii)(a)' with 'the combination of (i)(b)(*β*), (ii)(b) and (iii)(a)', and both against 'the combination of (i)(a)(*β*), (ii)(b) and (iii)(b)'. And Cranfield's clear and logical mind sometimes draws him into sentences where only the brave will follow without a tremor: e.g. (p. 239): 'Paul's meaning may then be understood to be, not that it was not through the instrumentality of the law but through that of the righteousness of faith that the promise was given, but that it was not through the instrumentality of the law but through that of the righteousness of faith that the promise was to be appropriated, or – to put it differently – that the promise was not given on the condition of its being merited by fulfilment of the law but simply on the basis of the righteousness of faith.'

[16] Pp. 425ff.

[17] Pp. 252ff.

[18] Pp. 582–6.

[19] Pp. 715ff.

[20] Pp. 735, 739f., 742: an example, this, of Cranfield's patient exegesis even at the stage when most commentators, with the end in sight, are skating quickly over complex issues.

[21] P. 91 (though it is odd to criticize RV here and not AV, which is identical).

[22] P. 464.

[23] P. 469 n. 3.

[24] P. 582: though it seems very forced to take *gar* in 12.3 (p. 611) as drawing out the implications of, rather than explaining the reason for, 12.1–2.

[25] P. 793 n. 2.

[26] P. 335 n. 3.

just theology, though everything in the book is tied in to the central theological themes.

Third, godliness (I can think of no better word – 'piety' sounds a bit wet, and 'devotion' suggests that the book is 'devotional' which, though heart-warming to the understanding reader, it is not). It is always apparent, though again never obtrusive, that Cranfield takes very seriously indeed the responsibility of the theological exegete towards the text he handles and towards the church he serves, as well as the responsibility to set before himself, as a member of that church, the many challenges and exhortations the text provides. His practical comments are always worth pondering[27] and his various remarks on prayer, though brief, are excellent.[28] Above all, his sense of awe and reverence before the wise, gracious and loving God of whom Paul speaks is reflected in his writings [**21**] throughout. It is hard to think that anyone could work humbly and attentively through this commentary and not be a better Christian for it: and it is not every work of massive NT scholarship of which that could be said.

Cranfield rightly refuses to treat his commentary as a theological treatise in which to argue a point of view. Nevertheless, a definite theological stance emerges: and it is so distinctive, and so important, that we must describe it a little and direct some questions towards it. The position can be illustrated in two typically Cranfieldian sentences, from p. 867:

> Because he kept his eyes so steadily fixed on Jesus, the author of Romans was able to hear and to comprehend the message proclaimed by the OT; and, because in his total commitment to Jesus as Saviour and Lord he never ceased to be seriously engaged with the OT scriptures, he perceived with amazing clarity of vision vast and splendid reaches of the truth of Christ which lie beyond the ken of all Marcionites and semi-, crypto-, and unwitting, Marcionites. Because he saw Christ steadily in the light of the OT – not abandoning the real Christ, who is the Christ of Israel, for any imaginary Christ more flattering to human self-importance – he did not refuse to grapple with the mystery of God's gracious election or fail to hold firmly to the truth of God's faithfulness – His faithfulness (which does not exclude, but includes, severity) to the Jewish people, all human unbelief and disobedience notwithstanding, His faithfulness to all mankind (Paul saw the gentile mission foretold in the OT) and His faithfulness as the Creator of heaven and earth to His whole creation.

From these two sentences there emerges Cranfield's main theological contention. Against all suggestions that God has had two plans of salvation, that Jews were to obey the law but that, when they failed to do so, God made an easier way of justification (i.e. faith), or that Israel was to be got rid of to make way for the true people of God – against such suggestions, standard though many of them have been in NT scholarship (not to mention evangelicalism), Cranfield reasserts the Reformed position which often goes by default in these debates. The law is not abolished, but fulfilled; faith is not a work, but the surrender of man to the gospel in which all the 'work' is done for him;[29] Jesus Christ, by his obedience culminating in but not to be

[27] E.g. pp. 610–11, re: the last phrases of 12.2.
[28] E.g. pp. 399f., 422, 777 n. 1.
[29] NB pp. 89f., where this is set out very clearly.

reduced to his death, has earned that righteousness which he now shares with his people. In the same way, Israel is not abolished: God still has purposes for the Jews (Romans 9—11 is no mere apocalyptic dream), purposes whose all-embracing end is mercy.[30] It is good to see Marcion, and his many modern followers, thus put in their place, though one could wish that Cranfield had attached names to the tantalizing descriptions in the quotation above! They have for too long had the field of Pauline studies all to themselves, with the only debate being whether Paul was a Lutheran or a Rabbi. And at virtually no point can Cranfield be accused of reaching his conclusions by special pleading. He has outgunned his opponents by good old-fashioned exegesis.

Yet there remain questions. Without any desire at all to return to Marcionism in any of its forms, it may be suggested that the stress on the continuity of the purposes of God (it is important to see the argument against Marcionism and that against anti-Semitism, the arguments that the law is not abolished and that Israel is not 'replaced by the church', as essentially the same point), right and proper though we believe it to be not least as a correction of current imbalance, needs in turn to be balanced by the emphasis on the *dis*continuity between BC and AD, for which Cranfield scarcely allows at all. This discontinuity is not a Marcionite invention, nor need it be understood in a Marcionite fashion. It is there in Paul, particularly in Galatians, at which Cranfield is clearly uncomfortable:[31] we surely should not play Romans and Galatians against each other, but look for a larger theological framework within which both will be at home. The Lutherans have traditionally started from Galatians and ignored (e.g.) Romans 3.31; Cranfield begins from Romans and makes heavy weather of Galatians 3, where Paul explicitly says that the law (while no doubt retaining a permanent validity in the sense of Galatians 5.14: this is most important) held nevertheless a *temporary* function in the overarching purposes of God, which function ceases when the Messiah comes. Bound up with this is of course the exegesis of Romans 10.4, particularly the meaning of *telos*. Here it may be asked whether the meanings of 'goal, fulfilment' (which Cranfield supports) and 'termination' (which he rejects) are necessarily mutually exclusive. If I travel by train from Edinburgh to King's Cross, the latter station is surely the goal, fulfilment *and* termination of the journey. Until a solution is found in which the temporary purpose of the law, and its abolition in [**22**] that sense by Christ, can be explained in a non-Marcionite sense (i.e. within a wider view of the single and unchanging purpose of God), one of the most pressing of all Pauline problems remains on the agenda.

This problem can also be expressed as follows: granted that Marcionism presents an odd picture of God, setting out on an impossible plan and changing his mind half way, is it not equally odd to think of God promulgating a law with the intention of one man, the Messiah, eventually coming to keep

[30] The obvious Barthian overtones of this – to which we will return – are symptomatic of deep indebtedness to Barth. This is almost always a great gain (e.g. pp. 371ff., re: 8.1–11), but very occasionally leads the exegesis into unusual conclusions, e.g., pp. 754f. on 15.15f.

[31] E.g. pp. 522 n. 2, 858 point (2).

it and to earn righteousness for himself[32] and for his people, but equally with the intention that his people should in the meantime understand the law quite differently, namely, as something to provoke not works but faith? In other words, does not Cranfield's theology[33] *either* make Christ himself a legalist (i.e. one who misunderstood the law's purpose, wrongly imagining it to be a means of acquiring merit or 'righteousness' by works), *or* imply that, when the Jews treated the law as a legalist's charter (assuming for the moment that they did) they were not misunderstanding it at all, but merely doing with it what God intended the Messiah to do? I suspect that this view, like the one it opposes, has not quite shaken itself free from an ethical meaning of 'righteousness' and fully grasped the forensic nature of the word: though to take up that question would require several more articles at least as long as this one.[34] (To avoid misunderstanding, I hasten to add that Paul would have dismissed any suggestion that Jesus Christ *dis*obeyed the law – though some, in their eagerness to save the Messiah from legalism, have suggested this.)[35]

Another aspect of the same problem is the use made by Cranfield of the *theologia crucis*. Granted his splendid treatment of the doctrine of the atonement, in which he does not shrink from the always unpopular conclusion that God 'purposed to direct against his own very Self in the person of His Son the full weight of that righteous wrath which [sinful men] deserved',[36] it is not clear that he has seen (as the Germans, particularly Käsemann, see so clearly) the implications of the cross for the place of Israel and the law in the purposes of God. (A further consequence is that he is unable to attack the Lutherans here with the corresponding, and equally Pauline, *theologia resurrectionis*, which does not reverse the verdict of the cross so much as break out into newness of life beyond it. This, I believe, points the way to the resolution of some of the issues mentioned above.) As we need to state the abolition of the law without Marcionism, so we need to state the *theologia crucis*, and its implications for Israel, without anti-Semitism. In other words, Cranfield's perfectly valid points need to be set in a framework which will include the strengths of the opposing case as well.

The law is also central in the issue which many will regard as the most controversial in the whole commentary, namely, Cranfield's powerful support for the 'minority' position that sees in Romans 7.13–25 a description of (one aspect at least of) normal Christian experience. As usual, Cranfield has unerringly put his finger on important weaknesses in the opposing majority view (which, contrary to usual suppositions, is not so much that the passage describes how Paul remembers feeling before his conversion, but rather that it is how Paul, the Christian, analyses what in fact had been the case,

[32] This is odd in itself: why should the Messiah, if (as Cranfield believes) he is fully divine, need to *earn* anything for himself? Is he not already God's beloved Son? Yet Cranfield seems to assert that his works do earn something for himself as well as for others; see the references in the next note.

[33] See, e.g., pp. 240, 290f., 505 (though see n. 1 there), 522.

[34] For similar hints towards a solution, see Caird 1978.

[35] Cf., e.g., Hanson 1974, pp. 50f.

[36] P. 217; cf. pp. 647f., 827ff.

theologically, about his pre-Christian life). In particular, he exposes the shallow view of the Christian life, and of sin and ethics, that presumes to have left behind a state in which the believer says 'the evil I would not, that I do'.[37] He is right to see, behind the normal (existentialist) view, the same incipient Marcionism which he attacks elsewhere. But I am not quite convinced. It seems to me that Cranfield has not fully allowed for the fact that the passage is not first and foremost describing anyone's experience (though no doubt, in some sense at least, it does that even if incidentally): the passage is basically about the law, and its conclusion is that the law is God's law, holy and just and good, but at the same time impotent to rescue man from the plight described. This does not settle the burning issue, since it could still be the Christian who realizes that the law by itself could not save him, but only (8.1–11) the law fulfilled by the Spirit. It is possible, however, to maintain on the one hand that Paul would have agreed with Cranfield's view of the Christian life as a struggle for obedience in which one is always conscious of indwelling sin, while asserting on the other hand that this does not happen to be what he is talking about here. While, therefore, I prefer Cranfield's interpretation to any others I have read – and particularly to the standard Kümmel–Bultmann–[**23**] Käsemann line – I cannot help feeling that the last word has not been said on the subject.

Finally, the vexed question of Romans 9—11. One cannot but applaud Cranfield's determination to wrestle seriously throughout with this notorious passage, and there are several discussions to which I shall often return for illumination. But I do not feel he has done full justice either to the section itself, or to its integration within the whole epistle (though his exposition of the latter point is better than most). It seems to me that 9—11 is not merely a discussion that Paul cannot omit without loss of integrity,[38] but a vital part of the *same* argument that has occupied him in the first eight chapters. Though Cranfield suggests that this may be so,[39] he does not develop the point: and, when it comes to the connection between 9—11 and 12ff., he notices the link of 'mercies of God' in 12.1 with 9—11 rather than with 1—8 specifically and yet seems to play it down.[40] For the detail, he appears to regard the questions of election and predestination, rather than the issue of God's purposes for the Jews, as the main problem in these chapters: and this, I believe, starts off a false (though well-trodden) trail which results in distortion at several points. Thus, despite the clear soteriological language used in connection with predestination in chapter 9 (cf. 'sonship' and 'glory', coming so soon after chapter 8), he takes the old line that predestination is not here to salvation but to a place in God's purposes. Again, despite Paul's emphasis on the unity of Jew and gentile in 10.9ff., he seems to regard this as incidental to the real point of the passage, which he takes to be the proof of the Jews' responsibility. This in turn leads to the idea that 10.14ff. is all about

[37] Cf. pp. 342ff., 365ff.
[38] See pp. 446ff.
[39] On pp. 445f.
[40] Pp. 595f.

the Jews', not the gentiles', hearing and obeying (or not) of the gospel. Despite p. 533, it is surely more natural to identify the subject of 'call' in verse 14 with that of the same verb in the previous verse – i.e. to see it as the world-wide company of (potential) believers, not merely Jews. To maintain that in verses 18–19 Paul was proving that the Jews must have heard the gospel by saying that the gentiles had heard it[41] is surely much more awkward than making Paul's basic point, as in 9.30ff. where this section begins, the inclusion of gentiles within the people of God. Cranfield's very proper concern to counter any suggestion that Paul had fallen into anti-Semitism has, I believe, led him astray in a good cause, a cause moreover which Paul himself champions fully in chapter 11. By that stage, though, Cranfield is on course for a Barthian solution, which is duly propounded: though universalism is not required by chapter 11 (since Paul 'may actually in this context only have meant that God has shut in the various groups he has mentioned as wholes'),[42] it is preferable, he thinks, to refrain *both* from seeking to establish the doctrine on the basis of this or other possible texts *and* 'to refrain from treating the solemn and urgent warnings, of which the NT assuredly contains an abundance, as clear warrant for confidently proclaiming the certainty of the final exclusion of some from the embrace of God's mercy'. This is a typically cautious solution (even non-universalists would hardly want to make 'confident proclamations' about Hell), but the whole discussion leaves one with the impression that Cranfield would like to be a universalist even though he realizes that the text of scripture not only does not support the doctrine but actually tends on occasion, at least *prima facie*, to oppose it. Though I do not enjoy this debate at all, I have argued against such a position elsewhere.[43]

My underlying impression throughout the discussion of chapters 9—11 is that, though there are undoubtedly nettles to be grasped, the issues are clarified by the recognition that Paul has indeed *in some senses* transferred the privileges of Israel to the Christian (Jew-plus-gentile) church; that this is precisely the point which raises the question of God's righteousness not only in chapter 9 but also in 1.16f. and 3.21ff.; that Paul's answer to the problem is given in terms of the OT prophecies which warned Israel that God would (righteously) both punish her and call gentiles to join a remnant of Jews as his true people, the family of Abraham;[44] and that, though 11.1ff. shows Paul's awareness of a potential anti-Semitism at this point, justified not least by the history of exegesis, a deeper understanding of God's purposes for his people makes such an attitude impossible. In short, as with the law, I believe that within the scheme of the continuity of the people of God, which Cranfield is absolutely right to stress against all Marcionism and anti-Semitism, there must be included a proper element of discontinuity, though this must be formulated in a very different way than has usually been imagined.

[41] Pp. 537f., 539.

[42] P. 588.

[43] Cf. my 'Towards a Biblical View of Universalism', and other references in the first footnote of that article.

[44] Cf., e.g., the way in which the OT background to Rom. 9.21 (the potter and the clay) is set in the context of God's strange ways (not with men in general but) with *Israel*.

I would like to emphasize in conclusion that these comments are in no way intended to detract [**24**] from the deliberately high praise given above. Cranfield's theological judgments are a breath of fresh air and an incentive to hard work and further debate, and it is towards that task, not to destroy but to fulfil his true intentions, that my questions are directed. This is a superb commentary, a masterpiece of Christian scholarship: to presume even to criticize it makes me feel uncomfortably like the thistle challenging the cedar. Before I am trampled down for my impudence, let me conclude with a bold assertion and prediction: this book is the finest work on Romans to appear in English this century, and has a good chance of remaining at the top of the list for several decades to come.

Chapter Four

A NEW TÜBINGEN SCHOOL? ERNST KÄSEMANN AND HIS COMMENTARY ON ROMANS (1982)

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The other great commentary on Romans which appeared during my doctoral studies was that of Ernst Käsemann. I have cause to remember it well. I never studied German at school; at the age of 13 I was given the choice of German or Greek and, knowing my vocation, chose Greek; I did sing some Schubert and Schumann songs in my teens, and learned them by rote with the help of friends, but this was hardly an adequate preparation for reading German theology. So, after a quick crash course in the basics, I decided that I could do worse than to sit down with this new commentary and a dictionary and see what happened. It was only later that a German friend remarked to me that many Germans themselves sometimes found the great man hard to understand, but I persevered, and when the English translation finally appeared I had the sense that I had earned the right to use it without shame. It was Käsemann who made me realize the full extent of what most Anglo-Saxon students sense when reading German exegetes: they are asking quite different questions, within a different philosophical and cultural climate, from those with which we are familiar. I am grateful, too, to Professor Gerhard Sauter of Bonn, with whom I stayed for a memorable week in 1976, and who had just written a lengthy review of Käsemann's commentary which he discussed with me. When the present article appeared, I sent a copy to the great man, and received a charming reply in which he congratulated me for understanding him better than some other English readers. Cranfield and Käsemann are chalk and cheese, but with both of them one always has the sense that Romans demands the best attention you can give it, and that wrestling with it matters at every level imaginable. Having read some of the essays in the Festschrift which appeared in 1976, but being unable to afford the price of the book, I offered to write a combined review article of the Festschrift and the English translation of the commentary, which *Themelios* graciously permitted; and this is the result.

* * *

[**6**] In 1925, as a student of 19 years old, Ernst Käsemann attended a lecture course (by Erik Peterson) on the Epistle to the Romans. Looking back from

the vantage-point of 1973, he could write that this early experience determined his course of study 'and in some sense, as befits a theologian, my life'. 'The basic problem was posed. In the following semesters I then listened to the expositions of H. von Soden and R. Bultmann. I then turned successively to the work of K. Barth, A. Schlatter, Luther and Calvin, studied them critically, and was led by them into interpretation ancient and modern. No literary document has been more important for me.'[1]

[7] For those with ears to hear, that quotation says it all. Käsemann is self-consciously a Protestant; a pupil of Bultmann; an avid historical critic; and one who has wrestled long and hard with Paul, and with the problems of Romans in particular. His large-scale commentary is the result. It breathes the air of the sophisticated German Protestant criticism of the last 50 years, with all its dialectical to-ings and fro-ings. It is passionately concerned with Paul's view of Christian freedom, and equally concerned to maintain the true (i.e. Reformation) heritage and tradition. It is doggedly set on producing, through ruthless historical criticism, both an accurate view of what Paul was talking about and the message which Romans has for the church in the twentieth century.

There is already a tension in this double aim which is perhaps all the healthier for never being resolved in Käsemann's writings. On the one hand the commentary gives constant support to an earlier statement of intent:

> My questioning and my listening have never been directed exclusively to academic theology . . . Theology has both the commission and the capacity to summon the church to take up the promise which is given to her . . . My work is intended to have doctrinal implications. If it were to be content with less, it would be merely pretentious . . . It is for the very purpose of liberating the church for decisive action that theology has to carry out its work of radical and critical questioning.[2]

On the other hand, the commitment to rigorous historical-critical exegesis – already invoked, in fact, as part of the *hermeneutical* task – is stated with equal vigour:

> The impatient, who are concerned only about results or practical application, should leave their hands off exegesis. They are of no value for it, nor, when rightly done, is exegesis of any value for them.[3]

One can see what he means, even if the expression is a little harsh. Yet the distinction between the practical value of theological exegesis which Käsemann

[1] Käsemann 1980, vii (ET of *An die Römer* [Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 8a; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck)], 1974). Page references below are to this book unless otherwise stated: and, unless otherwise noted, the German and English publishers of Käsemann's other writings are the same as for the commentary. There are only small changes between the first and third German editions, though they involve some renumbering of pages.

[2] Käsemann 1969a (ET of essays, mostly from *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, II [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965]).

[3] P. viii. Compare the passages which speak disparagingly of 'edifying' exposition, e.g., p. 250: 'Apocalyptic alone can express this (i.e. the paradoxical nature of the revelation of Christ's love) and preserve us from the usual edifying interpretation of the text' (i.e. Rom. 8.35). See too Käsemann 1972, 14 (ET of *Der Ruf der Freiheit* [Tübingen, 1968; a 5th enlarged, German edn was published in 1972]).

commends and exemplifies and the 'practical application' which he despises is, in the last resort, a subtle one, and the reader will have to decide whether it can be consistently maintained.

Certainly for Käsemann the desire (and calling?) to 'liberate the church for decisive action' is so strong that in many passages Paul is made – forced, some might say – to speak directly to the twentieth century. Käsemann has lived and worked all his life with the fundamental question of 'New Testament Theology' ('Are we doing history, or normative theology, or both?'):[4] and the tension that results from giving the answer 'both' is clear throughout his work, just as it was, though in different ways, in the writings of Rudolf Bultmann.

But the world to which Käsemann believes that Paul must be related is not a world in which many readers of the new English translation of his commentary will feel at home. It is the world of postwar German Lutheranism, bruised and shocked after the 'church struggle' of the 1930s and 1940s, horrified by the Holocaust, bewildered to discover that Naziism is still not eradicated, fearful lest the church again be seduced into compromising the gospel. Those who know little about Bonhoeffer and nothing about the Barmen Declaration will find themselves at sea in passage after passage of Käsemann's polemic. He not only fights battles which are vital for him but not (say) for Englishmen or North Americans (we have our own battles: some of them may have analogies with the German situation; but they are not the same ones); he does so allusively, like Dante, so that the uninitiated need almost a running commentary to see what lies behind the sharp remark, the sudden outburst, the sustained polemic, indeed the whole massively thought-out reinterpretation of Paul and Romans. Perhaps the most revealing of his books in this respect is his *Jesus Means Freedom* (subtitled *A Polemical Survey of the New Testament*).[5] There we see – though still in flashes – what Käsemann is really worried about. He discerns in contemporary German Protestantism a comfortable bourgeois mentality that seeks from the gospel not a challenge to radical obedience but a prop for the status quo. He sees in the rediscovery of 'salvation history' a relapse into the sort of theology that allowed Naziism to look respectable ('find out what God is doing in our nation, and do it with him . . .').[6] He opposes a [**8**] 'theology of resurrection' with the old Lutheran *theologia crucis*: God is not the God of the godly, the devout, the comfortable, those who are at ease in Zion, but is the justifier of the outsider, the ungodly, the God who in Jesus became the friend of sinners and set comfortable society by its ears. (It would be to miss the point entirely to object that Christianity is based on the cross *and* the resurrection. Käsemann knows that perfectly well: he is here conducting a war of slogans, of attitudes which he, and those he opposes, have characterized in this sometimes unhelpful fashion. The question is not

[4] See Morgan 1973.

[5] See n. 3.

[6] See his article on 'Justification and Salvation History' in Käsemann 1969b, 60–78, esp. 63ff. On this, see my 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith' [reprinted as chapter 1 of this volume], esp. 63f., 69f. See also Käsemann 1972, 28ff., 134f., etc. Käsemann is here close to Barth and Bonhoeffer in his emphasis on the first commandment (see Busch 1976, 224–7, 257, 271, 273; the whole of ch. 5, pp. 199–262, provides interesting background for this theme).

– or not directly – whether Käsemann 'believes in the resurrection', but whether it is to be seen as the all-embracing theme, with the cross merely as its preliminary, or as the next chapter in the theology of the cross itself.)

Thus Käsemann can write of Jesus that

> the revolutionaries had their eye on him, and felt able to set their hopes on him at least for a time. We are now paying heavily for the fact that German Christian people (original: *deutsche Christenheit*) failed to appreciate this and made him a bourgeois after their own image: and in exactly the same way his laments over the church and the theologians of his own time have never been taken seriously enough by those who had every occasion to do so.[7]

It might be thought that Käsemann is fighting out-of-date battles, seeking merely to exorcise ghosts from the past. I am not in a position to comment on that. I do know that the concerns which most fire him are not, and for all sorts of good reasons simply cannot be, pressing concerns for those who have not shared the struggles of German Protestantism[8] – unless we are to see Germany as Käsemann thinks Paul saw Israel, as somehow paradigmatic for the rest of mankind.

If these remarks serve to distance English readers from Käsemann, they should in doing so heighten, rather than lessen, their respect for him. Germany has signally refused to allow the academic to be isolated from the 'real world', and Käsemann stands in the noble tradition of those who are determined to integrate all the different sides of a theologian's existence. And because Käsemann remains, by conviction, an exegete first and foremost, one who has struggled long and hard to think Paul's thoughts after him, his work remains fascinating, powerful and dramatic, even for those like myself who, as though born out of due time, are unable to feel the last war as part of their own experience. For those who *can* remember, and for those who wish to continue to relate the New Testament to what Barth called 'theological existence today', his lifework has already provided a great stimulus and will no doubt continue to do so.[9]

Before launching into an exposition and critique of Käsemann's theological position, some remarks are in order about his commentary as a book and as a tool for studying Romans.[10] Perhaps the most telling thing that can be said about it is that its tone is very reminiscent of Barth's famous commentary. It is more like a theological treatise, which happens to follow the text of the epistle, than a commentary as usually understood; but because it *does* follow the text of the epistle it is a difficult treatise to read. (This is of course the result of the tension we noted earlier between historical work and theological results.) Important theological discussions jostle with minor textual

[7] Käsemann 1972, 29; see too, e.g., pp. 46ff., 64, 81, etc.

[8] See the remarks of Barton 1980, 572f.

[9] Cf. Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976. I shall note below, *en passant*, several of the thirty articles, all of which are in German except for two English ones. The volume as a whole is a magnificent collection of work, and a worthy tribute.

[10] See too my brief review '*Commentary on Romans* by Ernst Käsemann' (complementary to this one) in *Churchman* 96 (1982). For other important reviews of the commentary, see, e.g., Riches 1976; Sauter 1976; Donfried 1981. See too Lewandowski 1974.

or verbal notes, without any signposts or crossheadings within the long sections into which Käsemann divides the epistle. Forgoing the writing of excursuses has some merit in giving apparent priority to exegesis; but there are plenty of shadowy excursuses-in-all-but-name, confusing in their unheralded appearance. There is no introduction or conclusion; nor are there any indices, and the running heads are very inadequate. In order to be able to *use* the book one really needs to scribble in one's own headings, and to complete indices as one goes along. And – another trait reminiscent of Barth, who has perhaps been more influential for Käsemann than a pupil of Bultmann would care to acknowledge – there are many passages both evocative and cryptic, teasing and paradoxical. Contrast this with (say) Cranfield; at least with the latter you know that if you concentrate, think hard, and read the sentence again, light will dawn. With Käsemann, as often with Barth, there is no such guarantee. Perhaps both would claim that this is a virtue in theology.

[**9**] At the same time, the book is an exegetical tool of great value. Its grasp of detail, as well as of whole arguments, is massively impressive: Käsemann has not only wrestled with Paul but also with a wide range of commentators ancient and modern, as witnessed by the very full bibliographies at the head of each section (with English translations, where available, duly noted). The translation is not flawless, but Bromiley, who must be now vying with John Bowden for the *Guinness Book of Records* entry under 'Quantity of German Translation', has done a wickedly difficult job as well, perhaps, as anybody could have hoped.[11] For those who wish to discover what technical term underlies such peculiarities as 'his cosmic fallenness to the world' (p. 199), the page numbers of the German original are conveniently printed in the inner margin (the answer in this case is *Weltverfallenheit*). It is to be expected that the book will make a lasting mark on New Testament studies, raising new questions and re-opening old ones in fresh and helpful ways. However much one might disagree, one will find (as T. W. Manson said of Bultmann) that we learn not least when we are forced to articulate *why* we disagree.[12] And taking on Käsemann is like disagreeing with a mountain: there is a grandeur, a stature, an integrity about this total theological scheme. It will not do to niggle about details here and there, as though a few cheap exegetical disagreements or theological question-marks would undermine the whole thing. We must deal, as Käsemann himself emphatically does (in contrast with many English-speaking writers on Paul) with the large issues and their correlation.

The Background: Apocalyptic

The overall task which Käsemann has set himself, both in his commentary and his other writings on Paul, is clear: to place the apostle against the proper

[11] I have my doubts about words like 'noninterchangeable' (p. 384) (especially as applied to God!): and, though it may sound somewhat incongruous to describe a Greek word as a barbarism, that is how I feel about 'exhomologesis' (pp. 386, 394).

[12] Quoted (from a review in *The Guardian*) on the back of the 1965 paperback edition of Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*.

background in the history of religions, in such a way that his theological emphases stand out and can be heard afresh today. And as soon as we ask what the 'proper background' is, we realize just what a change has come over historical critical orthodoxy in the last generation. Paul used to be regarded as the great Hellenizer, the man who found Christianity Jewish and left it Greek, the apostle who translated the gospel into terms that the non-Jewish world could understand, into concepts that broke free from legalistic Jewish shackles. This model dominated German research all through the 1920s and 1930s (providing incidentally a silent support for quite different movements of thought), and continued to do so until W. D. Davies registered his protest in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*.[13] Since then the lines have not been so easy to draw. Already, however, Albert Schweitzer had attempted to set Paul against a background neither Hellenistic nor rabbinic, but strictly *apocalyptic*. This suggestion, scorned at the time, has now come to roost in the work of the new Tübingen school, namely Käsemann and his followers. Though some of Paul's ideas (e.g. his baptism-theology in Romans 6) are still held to derive from the mystery-religions, the great emphases can only be understood in terms of apocalyptic. Käsemann has already outlined this position;[14] now the commentary shows us just what it means in practice, namely that 'Christianity is not just a Jewish sect which believes in Jesus as the Messiah. It is the breaking in of the new world of God characterized by the lordship of the Spirit' (p. 191). Käsemann finds in the apocalyptic writings a vision of God's triumph over the rebellious world, and of God's righteousness as *both* his saving power *and* his gift of salvation; and this understanding provides the key with which he unlocks the main theological problems of Romans.

Before developing this, it is important to note how the picture of early Christianity is thus modified. The problem remains as it ever did ('How could the doctrinal system of Paul arise on the basis of the life and work of Jesus and the beliefs of the primitive community: and how did the early Greek theology arise out of Paulinism?');[15] but instead of the old answer, that Paul Hellenized the early Jewish kerygma (and so provided a bridge between Jesus and second-century Christianity) Käsemann is offering a new solution, that Paul exploited hidden depths in Jewish apocalyptic to break out of the early Jewish–Christian mould and create a gospel for the world. Unlike Schweitzer, who from an apocalyptic background deduced that 'being in Christ' (which he called, perhaps misleadingly, 'Christ-mysticism') **[10]** was the centre of Paul's thought, Käsemann from the same background puts forward a view of 'God's righteousness', focused on the crucified Christ, as the chief point in the whole scheme.[16] The link with the post-Pauline church

[13] First edn, 1948; 4th edn, with new introduction, W. D. Davies 1980.

[14] See particularly 'The Beginnings of Christian Theology' and 'On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic' in Kasemann 1969a, 82–107, 108–37. For the immediate controversy these writings and others aroused, see the papers in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 (1961) translated in *Journal for Theology and the Church* 6 (1969). For Schweitzer's classic statement, see Schweitzer 1931, and next note.

[15] Schweitzer 1912, v.

[16] On Schweitzer's achievement, see W. G. Kümmel in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, and Thiselton 1979.

then requires a toning down of Paul's polemic, and Käsemann finds this in the 'deutero-Pauline' and 'early Catholic' writings.[17] Questions remain about the viability of this whole outline; but there should be no doubt that it is a thesis of this scope and breadth, and originality, which is being advanced.

The Righteousness of God

The most striking result of Käsemann's position is the reinterpretation of *dikaiosynē theou*. Just as he initiated a new phase of gospel study with his essay on the historical Jesus, so Käsemann launched a whole research programme with his short paper on 'The Righteousness of God', originally delivered in Oxford on 14 September 1961.[18] Teaching experience suggests that, even though several accounts of Käsemann's position are available,[19] English-speaking students still find it difficult to grasp. Yet another attempt at explanation may therefore be in order.

Käsemann develops his view in sharp contrast to the more usual one. This latter, associated with Bultmann, Conzelmann, Cranfield and others, holds that *dikaiosynē theou* in Paul usually refers to that 'righteousness', i.e. that righteous status, which the believer has as a result of God's action in Christ and on the basis of faith. The 'righteousness' is predicated of the believer, and *theou* is either a genitive of origin (righteousness *from God*) or an objective genitive (the righteousness *which counts before God*). Käsemann rejects this, along with the whole individualistic soteriology which he sees as its context. In its place he suggests a new meaning for *dikaiosynē* and a new understanding of *theou*, based (quite consistently with *his* soteriology) on an apocalyptic phrase now reinterpreted by Paul in the light of Christology. This phrase, found in the Scrolls and elsewhere (e.g. 1QS 11.12; CD 20.20; *Test. Dan.* 6.10) is, according to Käsemann and his followers,[20] a technical term, and refers neither to a moral quality of God nor to a status or relationship which someone now has from God or with God, but to God's 'salvation-creating power'. This somewhat compressed phrase denotes God's saving activity seen both as *power* (God's own power with which he conquers evil and establishes his rule over the whole cosmos) and as *gift* (the same power, now given to the believer so that he is recaptured for radical obedience to God). *Dikaiosynē* is thus basically an activity of God, and *theou* is therefore a *subjective* genitive.

This leads inevitably to a new view of justification[21] and faith. If 'The revelation of God's righteousness' means God's triumph over the world in

[17] See Käsemann 1972, 122ff. etc.: 'An Apologia for Primitive Christian Eschatology' in Käsemann 1964, 169–95 (ET of articles from *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, I [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960]). Also 'Paul and Early Catholicism' in Käsemann 1969a, 236–51.

[18] Now published in Käsemann 1969a, 168–82.

[19] Especially M. T. Brauch's appendix on 'God's Righteousness in Recent German Discussion' in Sanders 1977, 523–42. See too Riches 1976 and my doctoral thesis, 'The Messiah and the People of God', 56–85.

[20] Such as Müller, Stuhlmacher, etc.; see Brauch 1977.

[21] See O. Betz in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 17–36, on justification at Qumran: an interesting discussion of law and grace, and present and future justification, in the Scrolls.

the cross of Christ, faith is the (liberating)[22] acknowledgment of that triumph and of the consequent Lordship of Christ.[23] As for Bultmann, faith and radical obedience are really the same thing; though, in sharp contrast to Bultmann, the meaning of that faith and obedience is understood in the context of cosmic, apocalyptic theology rather than that of individualistic existentialism. 'Justification' is therefore that action of God by which the believer is brought into this new position of faith/obedience.

Christology

Underneath all this is Christology. Käsemann uses this word not primarily to refer to the question of Jesus' 'divinity' and/or 'humanity', but rather as a shorthand for the *theologia crucis*, the revelation of God's righteousness in the cross, by which the world is defeated, and because of which the believer is challenged, and enabled, to live by faith rather than in the false confidence of piety and religious respectability. Just as the cross was, for Luther, the weapon to be used against all human righteousness and cleverness, so for Käsemann it [**11**] becomes the centre of his whole polemical position.[24]

Christology stands over against anthropology and ecclesiology. By 'anthropology', Käsemann refers to Bultmann's reduction of Paul's message to the analysis of 'how one is justified/saved': by 'ecclesiology' he seems to mean theological positions which move towards Roman Catholicism. Here again a certain amount of background knowledge may help. Käsemann is very conscious of the fact that some of his fellow-pupils under Bultmann have made a different pilgrimage from his own, and have found Roman Catholicism the only alternative to Bultmann's version of Protestantism. Heinrich Schlier, himself the author of a large recent commentary on Romans, is the most obvious example.[25] Käsemann sets out a third alternative which enables him – indeed, requires him – to remain a radical Protestant while avoiding the many dangers which he, like Schlier, sees in Bultmann. Here we encounter Käsemann's characteristic Reformation battle-cries; his understanding of the modern theological situation in Germany is that the radical historical critics such as himself

[22] See Wilckens 1974; and G. Strecker in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 479–508 – a traditio-historical analysis of justification ideas in pre-Pauline and Pauline thought. Strecker finds different layers embedded in Paul, and (to my mind unsuccessfully) proposes to differentiate between them critically, emphasizing the centrality of justification as *liberation*.

[23] See the work of H. H. Schmid, represented in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976 by an essay on the Old Testament entitled, characteristically, 'Rechtfertigung als Schöpfungsgeschehen' ('Justification as Creation-Event'), 403–14.

[24] This theme crops up frequently in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976. See particularly D. Lührmann, 'Christologie und Rechtfertigung' (pp. 351–64) and P. Stuhlmacher's 'Eighteen Theses' on Paul's theology of the cross (pp. 509–26). M. Hengel's massive article 'Mors Turpissima Crucis' (pp. 125–84) has now been amplified still further and translated as a separate book (Hengel 1977), all the more harrowing for its sober historical tone. It is dedicated, significantly, to the memory of Käsemann's daughter Elisabeth, who died in 1977, aged 30, as a 'freedom fighter' in the Argentine.

[25] See the typically cryptic Käsemann 1972, 91. Schlier's best known commentaries are his works on Ephesians (1957: he holds the epistle to be Pauline and indeed representative of true Pauline thought), Galatians (1965), and now Romans (1977). Sadly, none of these works is available in English.

represent the genuine Lutheran tradition, protesting against a *theologia gloriae*, a theology of the church triumphant, of worthy devotional practices, of bourgeois religiosity such as Käsemann sees not only in Catholicism but also in many churches – not least those which in England would be called 'evangelical' – which like to consider themselves within the Reformation heritage.[26]

Thus the basic human problem, which in Käsemann's theology takes the place occupied, in Bultmann's, by the analysis of man's inauthenticity, is that man *precisely in his religion* is in rebellion against God:

> Here is the heart of Paul's teaching. It is not just that the creature repeatedly comes up against its limits after the fall, but precisely the religious person crashes and the pathway under man fails . . . he becomes entangled in his own desire for life which tries to snatch what can only be given and thus falls subject to the powers of the world. The pious person typifies as no one else can the nature of self-willed, rebellious, perverted and lost creation.[27]

This radical stance has not a little in common with the Barthian view of Christianity as something other than a religion, and with the protest of Bonhoeffer (and J. A. T. Robinson) in favour of 'religionless Christianity'. Indeed, it could be seen as an attempt to give this theological position a firm grounding in exegesis. This is the clue not only to much of Käsemann's exegesis but also to further broad issues in his theological position. Most significantly, it enables him to bring back into the picture Paul's discussions of Israel, which Bultmann's scheme had simply squeezed out. For Käsemann, Israel's problem is that she is a type – perhaps *the* type – of *homo religiosus*. Romans 9—11 then becomes important in that Israel provides (not a main theme in herself, but nevertheless) the crowning example of God's strange dealings with 'religious man', characterized by judgment and grace which in turn are of course grounded in Christology. Only at the end of Romans 11 is this picture distorted by 'apocalyptic dreaming' which allows Paul to imagine a final conversion of Israel at the parousia.[28]

Paul is thus made to fight, like Luther, against 'nomism', against the great victorious religious establishment, against human righteousness of all sorts. This is why, though Käsemann is far too good an exegete to deny any place to 'salvation history' in Paul, that perspective is to be seen very definitely in the light of Christology, and of the justification (not of those who stand in the 'right' tradition or succession, but) of the ungodly. And (also suspiciously like Luther) Paul has a second running battle on his hands: that against the 'enthusiasts'. This convenient category, with its German overtones of the radical reformation, is perhaps as hard to transfer to the English-speaking world as the word *Enthusiasmus* is to translate. It would be very interesting to find out just which English Christians, if any, Käsemann would put in this

[26] See Käsemann 1972, ch. 3; Barr 1980, 30–51, and his introduction to Stuhlmacher 1979, 9–12.

[27] P. 209, ad Rom. 7.14ff.

[28] See the argument of O. Kuss, in his article on Rom. 9.5 (Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 291–303), regarding the whole argument of chs. 9—11 as significant for the meaning of the verse. Passages in Galatians also become important in this discussion: C. K. Barrett provides a very useful fresh study of Gal. 4.21–31 in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 1–16. (Barrett and his wife are the dedicatees of the ET of the Romans commentary.)

category. I suspect it would be a sort of [**12**] blend of 'fundamentalists' and 'charismatics': the characteristic marks of his 'enthusiasts' are not merely outward things such as glossolalia but the more fundamental belief that salvation is a present possession to be enjoyed in triumph as though all battles, including that with sin and death, can be regarded as past.[29] Against this triumphalism, just as against the 'pious' or 'ecclesiastical' sort, the *theologia crucis* must be used ruthlessly, by Paul in the first century and by Käsemann in the twentieth. (We might raise the question at this point, whether there is in the last analysis any theological difference between being a 'nomist' and being an 'enthusiast'; and, if the answer is that they do indeed appear to be different varieties of the same breed, how Käsemann can justify this in terms of a history-of-religions analysis of both positions.)

The Spirit and the Letter

This analysis of Christology and the battles to which it commits the theologian goes some way towards explaining a constant theme of Käsemann which often puzzles those brought up in a different sort of Protestantism. For Käsemann, as we have already hinted, radical historical criticism is not a necessary evil, undertaken in response to the apologetic need to trim one's sails to modern thought or out of a desire to eliminate the supernatural elements in Christianity. It makes a virtue out of the demolition of 'historical grounds for faith', seeing such grounds as the attempt to base faith on history and so turn it into a 'work', or as the claim of the 'devout' to stand within a particular historical tradition and thus to be automatically justified. The 'acid bath of criticism' (into which young theological students are to be plunged) is a *purifying* baptism, a death to 'pious' or 'secure' theological positions – not least a high view of the whole of Scripture, which Käsemann sees as attempting to imprison God's word, to shut up the Spirit in the letter.

This emerges particularly in Käsemann's exposition of God's answer to the human plight. On the one hand, God justifies the *un*godly – those who, like Abraham, simply hear and believe the bare word of the promise in the teeth of the evidence. No attempt must be made to base faith elsewhere. On the other hand, the Spirit gives true and radical freedom, freedom under the sign of the cross, freedom for radical obedience which sits loose to all ecclesiastical pressures and comforting structures, freedom from reading the Scriptures as *gramma*, 'letter'. With this last move, the whole scheme ties some of its own loose ends together: the Jewish scriptures are read by Paul as a radical historical critic would have them read, with a healthy dose of *sachkritik* ('material criticism', i.e. the sifting of the material on the basis of a central theme, a *sachmitte*).[30] In one of his most significant non-excursuses,

[29] See J. Jervell's article on Paul as the 'Weak Charismatic' in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 185–98.

[30] See particularly Morgan 1973, 42ff., and W. Schrage's review of 'The Canon in the Canon' in recent German discussion, in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 415–42.

placed under the heading of 10.5–13, Käsemann states his position at some length. These pages (284–8) would be a good passage to study closely if one wishes to make a start in understanding the writer and his thought: here we see how, for him, Paul's hermeneutic of the Old Testament functions *both* as one aspect of his whole critique of Israel and the law *and* as part of his view of the freedom of faith and the Spirit:

> We stand here at the commencement of a theologically reflected Christian hermeneutics. Its mark is that it is not satisfied with the 'it is written'. It demands critical exposition, with the message of justification as the decisive criterion . . . Since what is at issue in [the message of justification] is not just the salvation of the individual but the lordship of God over the world, Israel's history is also seen from this standpoint.[31]

And the antithesis of the last sentence is further expanded in another passage, this time in the exposition of 8.18–22, speaking of 'the pledge of eschatological liberation':

> If Marcion was forced by the inner logic of his theology to cut out vv. 18–22, he is followed today by an existentialism which individualizes salvation and thereby truncates Paul's message by describing freedom formally as openness to the future. In fact it is a term for the earthly reality of Christ's lordship . . . The truth in the existential interpretation is that it recognizes in pride and despair the powers which most deeply enslave mankind. Its theological reduction derives from a world view which no longer knows what to do with Pauline apocalyptic, allows anthropological historicity to conceal the world's history, obscures the antithesis of the aeons in 1.20ff by natural theology and here through the assertion of mythology, and for this reason can no longer speak adequately of the dominion of Christ in its worldwide dimension.[32]

Here is the issue between Käsemann and Bultmann (and, with Bultmann, a good deal of what in English we call evangelicalism, though it would use different language). And here, too, is Käsemann's basic theological position. In the cross of Jesus Christ God has triumphed over the [**13**] world: on that basis the ungodly can be justified and set free to hear God's word in a new way and to serve him in a new sort of obedience.

The Coherence of Romans

Possibly the most striking exegetical achievement to result from this theological understanding of Paul is that Käsemann integrates the Epistle to the Romans in a way quite impossible from a strictly Bultmannian position. Even if we may conclude that the job is still not complete, it is good to see programmatic statements like these:

> Until I have proof to the contrary I proceed on the assumption that the text has a central concern and a remarkable inner logic that may no longer be entirely comprehensible to

[31] Pp. 287f. See too the article 'The Spirit and the Letter' in Käsemann 1971, and the articles by J. Blank and F. Lang in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 37–56, 305–20. Cf. too n. 26 above.

[32] P. 236.

> us . . . Viewed as a whole, the Epistle to the Romans reveals a closely knit argumentation which is hidden only to those who do not exert enough effort over it.[33]

We have already seen how this is worked out in relation to the question of Israel, which becomes relevant for justification because Israel is the classic example of 'religious man'. The same holistic approach, characterized by the apocalyptic interpretation of Paul, enables Käsemann to integrate the Adam–Christ framework of thought into the whole scheme of chapters 1—4, and to incorporate also the sacramental language of chapter 6;[34] and the apocalyptic vision of chapter 8 clearly belongs in the same world of thought. In particular, this hermeneutical key gives Käsemann a base on which to build his version of the Kümmel–Bultmann view of chapter 7. This view, often misunderstood by English critics who think that the main question the Germans are asking is 'who is here being spoken of', holds that the 'I' of Romans 7 is the typical *homo religiosus*, the Jew-as-the-typical-Adam, thinking to find life in 'religion', in the law, and finding instead only death. The 'good' and 'evil' spoken of in the passage, including even the 'passions of the flesh' in 7.5, are not 'morally right and wrong actions': the 'good I want' is life, or salvation, and the 'passions of the flesh' are the desires for self-justification which lead the religious man to attempt to earn that justification by doing what the law requires (pp. 194–204).

According to this view, chapters 9—11 then recapitulate the train of thought of the first eight chapters, in order to show in the case of Israel how God deals with the problem of religious man.[35] Chapters 12—16 apply the theological positions thus outlined to problems in the community – not least the danger of self-assertive 'enthusiasm', which according to Käsemann is the real theme of 12.3ff.

Within this framework, Käsemann gives a positive wealth of detailed exegesis. In the absence of an index, my own home-made one runs to several hundred entries of passages to refer back to for useful discussions. Among the particularly interesting passages we can only indicate a handful. The proposal of a liturgical *and* an anti-enthusiastic background for parts of 8.13–30 will surprise many: and, if Dodd found the Achilles heel of Romans in 9.19ff., for Käsemann the weak spot is 10.18, where Paul (he thinks) has deceived himself into constructing a salvation-historical programme as the framework for his own mission – a programme which was never carried out and which, consequently, indicates theological misjudgments which cannot be adopted by those who come after him. Here is the paradox both of Paul and of Käsemann's exposition of him: Pauline theology must itself be treated

[33] Pp. viii, 324.

[34] See also the article on Baptism and Justification by F. Hahn (Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 95–124). Hahn, like Strecker (above, n. 22) fails to convince me with his traditio-historical analysis which, in the nature of the case, is inevitably highly speculative. Ch. 6 also raises, of course, the question of the integration of the Pauline ethic with the doctrine of justification: on this, see the useful article (in English, keeping Barrett company) of L. E. Keck in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 199–209.

[35] See especially G. Klein's article on Paul and the Jews in Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976, 229–43. Klein strongly re-asserts the standard view of Paul's anti-Jewish polemic against those who, since the Second World War, have been trying to see Paul in a different light.

critically, since it contains profound inconsistencies – and yet even when this is done it remains a dynamic thing. 'Paul has left us a theological concept which cannot be maintained as a unity but whose parts, even when they have fallen apart, have again and again had an impact on world history.'[36] Thus the Adam–Christ picture of 5.12–21, and the vision of the final restoration of 'all Israel', are the remains of pre-Pauline apocalyptic speculation which the apostle should, for the sake of consistency, have forsworn – just as the (hypothetical) formulae in 1.3f.; 3.24f. reflect a pre-Pauline understanding which the apostle has now radically modified by supplying both internal alterations and a new context. Exegetical details thus reflect, at point after point, the basic history-of-religions thesis and polemical theological position. Paul's theology is only comprehensible, for Käsemann, in terms of Jewish apocalyptic thought now radically reworked in the light of the cross. Glimpses of that process of rethinking are visible within the epistle itself, and indicate both the fragile nature of the solutions which Paul himself propounded and the need for *sachkritik* in present-day exegesis of his writings.

[14] Questions and Problems

It would not be difficult to point to exegetical details which lay themselves open to challenge. But more important, and more interesting, are the pressing questions which Käsemann's large ideas force upon us – not least in their *effect upon* exegetical details.[37]

To begin with, there are all sorts of questions to be asked about Käsemann's use of the term 'apocalyptic' itself. It becomes clear (though only gradually) that this word has a particular *theological* meaning for Käsemann: it is, in fact, more a hermeneutical term than an historical one.[38] That is, it does not refer to a literary form, nor to the belief (shared by most Jewish apocalyptists) that God would act soon and decisively *on behalf of the Jew*s. Nor does it include such well-known features of 'apocalyptic' as visions and interpretations, or metaphysical dualism (except in the sense implied by the 'two ages' doctrine). Rather, in Käsemann's writings it comes to mean a particular belief about God, namely, that he is the Lord of the world and is establishing that lordship in and through the cross of Christ. But in asserting this theological position, and in labelling it 'apocalyptic', intending thus to use it as a means of demonstrating Paul's worldwide vision over against a particularist or covenantal Jewish idea, Käsemann has in fact thoroughly demythologized the very background literature to which he is appealing (just as Bultmann's demythologizing programme was the servant of a larger hermeneutical concern). In so doing he invites the question: what if a central, *and non-negotiable*, feature of 'apocalyptic' as it actually was was in fact just such a

[36] P. 296.

[37] I have explored several of the relevant areas in my doctoral thesis, 'The Messiah and the People of God'.

[38] See Sauter 1976, 86.

nationalistic hope? What if the vision of God as Lord of the world in the apocalyptic literature was invoked precisely in order to guarantee *Israel's* eventual triumph over her national enemies? The question has only to be put for the answer to be clear. It was just such a vision, and hope, that motivated the Jewish writers of 'apocalypses'. If Paul shared the apocalyptic hope, the question of God's plan for Israel cannot be merely an example of something else. It begins to look as if Käsemann has pressed the idea of 'apocalyptic' into service in order to perform the same task that the earlier Bultmann school had undertaken with the help of the category 'Hellenism' – namely, that task of showing how Paul's theology transformed a Jewish–Christian message into a gospel for the world. And the apparent rationale behind this – the vision of God as not only Israel's Lord but also the world's – is in fact irrelevant for this, because it belonged specifically in a nationalistic context. God's sovereign lordship is not revealed (according to the apocalyptists) in order to *save* the world, but precisely to condemn it and to deliver Israel. The very history-of-religions background to which Käsemann appeals in fact tells heavily against him. It begins to look as if his 'cosmic' theology is simply Bultmann's anthropology writ large. The actual concerns of first-century Jews are in both cases pushed into the margin.

This becomes especially apparent in Käsemann's interpretation of *dikaiosunē theou*. He is well aware that a natural meaning of the phrase in early Christianity would include God's covenant faithfulness; and he thinks that Paul deliberately altered the sense of the phrase so as to exclude that element, appealing to a supposed 'technical' use of the concept in the apocalyptic writings. But precisely this meaning of 'God's faithfulness *to his covenant with Israel*' was (arguably) uppermost in the many instances cited by Käsemann and others in the background literature as evidence of the meaning 'God's salvation-creating power'; in fact, God's righteousness is that because of which he is seen to be in the right in his strange dealings with Israel and with the world, *and* that to which Israel can appeal for help in time of need. And Paul, in rejecting the *nationalist* view of the covenant, does not reject covenant theology itself. On the contrary, the purpose of Romans 4 is not merely 'proof from scripture of justification by faith'; it is a re-examination of the meaning of the covenant, aimed at demonstrating that God is faithful to his Word precisely in calling gentile and Jew alike, on the basis of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, into true membership in Abraham's family.[39] The difference between Paul and the Jewish writers who appeal to the same concept is that Paul claims to understand the covenant correctly now that he sees it in the light of Christ. I agree with Käsemann that the 'apocalyptic' background is all-important, and that it has been vitally modified by Christology: but I think that this suggests a richer view than his, a view which treats Israel and the covenant with continuing seriousness. And within this context the way is opened for a rather different exposition of **[15]** justification and of Paul's whole critique of Israel.[40] Can it be that Käsemann, when he uses the phrase 'God's righteousness', is really

[39] See Caird 1978.

[40] See my 'Justification: The Biblical Basis and its Relevance for Contemporary Evangelicalism' [reprinted as chapter 2 of this volume].

referring to something else? God's sovereign and saving rule over the world is surely his *kingdom*, not his righteousness (and however closely the two are correlated, as in Matthew 6.33, they are hardly to be identified); and the gift, and power, that *creates* salvation is surely, for Paul, the Spirit. Käsemann has perhaps been using a Pauline phrase to refer to a *different* (Pauline) concept, or even two different concepts. Hence there follow both the initial plausibility and appeal, and the subsequent puzzles, in his account.

A fuller understanding of the apocalyptic background would have also pointed towards a more satisfactory solution of the *religionsgeschichtlich*, theological and exegetical problems of 5.12–21. The point about Adam is that, in Jewish writings such as the Scrolls, *Adam's* glory would be inherited by the true Israel.[41] By saying that it is in *Christ* that Adam's sin and its effects are undone, Paul is saying that God's plan for Israel has been fulfilled in the achievement of Jesus. Abraham's people (Romans 4) have indeed been the place, and the means, of God's dealing with the problem of Adam's sin (3.23): but this people of Abraham are now to be understood not *kata sarka* but as the people who believe in Jesus Christ. And from this perspective the difficult and complex blend of 'anthropology', 'sacramentalism' and the problem of the law in Romans 6—8 all fall into place. Chapter 7 deals, not with the 'pious' man whose fault is attempting to keep the law, but with the Jew who, despite the great privilege of possessing the law, finds, like Adam, that the commandment is the place where sin gains a foothold (cf. 5.13f.). The problem is not 'the hidden Jew in all of us' (there are, perhaps, some ghosts of pre-war Germany that even now need to be exorcized here), but rather the hidden 'Adam' in Israel.

Thus Romans 5—8, by transferring to the Messiah and thence to his people all that the apocalyptists hoped would be true of Israel (notice how this, unlike Käsemann's analysis, provides a unifying theme for 8.12–30), complete Paul's argument about God's dealings with humanity's sin and death, and precisely in so doing raise the question: what, then, about Israel? (The same sequence of thought occurs in 2.17–29 and 3.1–9.) And from that perspective new solutions to the problems of 9—11 become apparent. The conclusion of the argument (11.25–27) is no apocalyptic dream (nor, I believe, does it refer to the parousia);[42] Paul is arguing from the premise that Israel is still the people of the Messiah, even though 'according to the flesh' (9.5), and that she must follow her Messiah through the 'death' of the flesh to *zōē ek nekrōn*. Once more, Israel is not merely an example of *homo religiosus*: she is the bearer of God's promises, in whose paradoxical fate we see, reflected on a large screen, both the problems of Adam (as Käsemann sees) and the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ (which perhaps he does not see). And, just as the world will be renewed when Adam is renewed (8.18ff.), so Israel's re-acceptance (whatever that means) will signal untold blessing for the gentiles (11.11ff.). This view arguably ties the whole epistle together much more tightly than Käsemann is able to do.

[41] See, e.g., 1QS 4.23; CD 3.20; 1QH 1.15; 17.15; 4QpPs37 3.1f.; for the whole position, see my 'The Messiah and the People of God', 34ff.

[42] See my 'The Messiah and the People of God', 200–10.

Conclusion

It is a measure of the stature of Käsemann's achievement that it has succeeded in raising, in a new form, almost all the basic questions about Pauline theology. I have indicated that I disagree with many of his detailed solutions; but that he has posed the questions in the right way – by seeing Paul against the background of Jewish apocalyptic thought, and by placing the cross, and the revelation of God's righteousness, at the centre – seems to me now beyond dispute. The largest question, for me, is whether Käsemann has in fact done justice to his own statement, itself admirable as a programme for exegesis: 'History is the field of reconstructions, and whether these are right or not depends on how far they overcome the problem posed.' I have suggested that the loose ends which remain in Käsemann's scheme are there because he has not carried through his apocalyptic understanding to its natural conclusion. Seeking to make Paul relevant by abstracting him from the context of *Israel's* hope, Käsemann (like Bultmann) has laid himself open to the charge of letting Paul say only what the exegete wishes to hear. To restore the 'Israel' dimension, both in the background material and in Paul, will not make the apostle less relevant for the twentieth century, but more. Nor will the 'cosmic' vision be lost, or even modified, since it is precisely Israel's hope for herself (that the world will be renewed with herself in the position of Adam, under God and over the world) [**16**] which has now been transferred to, and fulfilled in, Jesus Christ. And within this new, and old, vision we can hold together, as Käsemann never quite does, both the characteristically Pauline critique of Israel and the law, and the equally characteristic affirmation that, in the revelation of the righteousness of God, the law itself – the charter of God's true covenant purposes for Israel – is not abolished, but rather (though always under the sign of the cross) fulfilled.

Chapter Five

ON BECOMING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD: 2 CORINTHIANS 5.21 (1993)

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The apparent chronological gap between the essay on Käsemann and the present piece is easily explained: everything I wrote about Paul between 1982 and 1993 found its way into *The Climax of the Covenant*. The present essay was my first attempt at articulating a fresh reading of a famous verse; I have returned to the puzzle at various later dates, and have now I think strengthened the argument considerably (see, e.g., *Justification*, chapter 6, part 3, and *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, chapter 10, part 3, section (iv) (a)). The long-term question with which I was wrestling in this essay goes back to my slight puzzlement, when writing my thesis, that whereas it was clear to me that in Romans the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* denoted God's faithfulness to his covenant, the same phrase in the present verse seemed not to mean the same thing. In a meeting of Professor Morna Hooker's Cambridge seminar in, I think, 1979, I argued for my understanding of the Romans passages, only to be met with an objection from Bishop John Robinson to the effect that I seemed to make Paul very clear and consistent whereas we all knew he was unclear and inconsistent! I responded at the time, only slightly tongue in cheek, that 2 Corinthians 5.21 showed he could use the same phrase differently elsewhere; but once I had put it like that I remember making a mental note that sooner or later I would have to go back and think the passage through once more. What helped in that task was being invited to do some Pauline expositions to the Canadian House of Bishops in the mid-1980s; I took 2 Corinthians 2.14—6.15, which I still regard as one of the most important texts on Christian ministry. That made me realize just how much the whole passage was actually about Paul's apostleship, which created the context for a fresh reading. Though my proposal remains controversial, I remain impenitent. The question must always be not, 'what does the tradition say this verse means?' but 'what does the verse itself, in its context, actually say?' The present paper was given at a meeting of the SBL Pauline Theology seminar, which had decided on the excellent self-denying ordinance of treating each letter, for the moment, as if it were the only one in existence (though of course I had to mention Romans as well). For a while, when people asked (as they do) for my favourite Bible verse, I would give them this one. I chose

the passage as the text for my inaugural sermon as Dean of Lichfield in January 1994; the sermon is published in *For All God's Worth*. Professor Morna Hooker recently published a study reaching similar conclusions to mine (see Hooker 2008).

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[200] Introduction: The Problem

2 Corinthians 5.21 poses several problems for the interpreter; I shall here focus on one in particular. What does Paul mean when he says 'that we might become the righteousness of God'? The text reads as follows:

> *ton mē gnonta hamartian hyper hēmōn hamartian epoiēsen, hina hēmeis genōmetha dikaiosynē theou en autō.*

The NRSV translates this as follows:

> For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Many discussions of the verse assume one particular meaning for *dikaiosynē theou* here and work backwards to discuss what they see as the real problem, namely, the meaning of *ton mē gnonta hamartian hyper hēmōn hamartian epoiēsen*. I wish to examine, instead, the precise meaning, in this context, of the key final phrase.

The Regular Usage

There are two related reasons why this is problematic: the first to do with the regular meaning of the phrase in Paul, the second with the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5.21 in its context. First, I regard it as an increasingly firm conclusion that Paul's other uses of the phrase (all in Romans) treat *theou* as referring to a *dikaiosynē* that is God's own, rather than a *dikaiosynē* that he gives, reckons, imparts, or [**201**] imputes to human beings. The debate has often been muddled, not least by misleading labeling of alternative views, but the following summary may help to clarify matters. The first question to be addressed concerning *dikaiosynē theou* is: is the 'righteousness' in question God's own, or is it a status or quality which, though relating to God in some way, is predicated of humans? Each possible answer divides into two further alternatives, (i) If the righteousness is, and remains, God's own, the genitive (*theou*) could then be seen as either possessive or subjective, depending on the meaning attached to *dikaiosynē*. If this 'righteousness' is in some sense or other a quality or *attribute* of God, the genitive *theou* would be possessive, but if the 'righteousness' is in some sense or other an *activity*, the genitive would be subjective. (This is often misunderstood, but it should be

clear that a 'subjective' genitive implies that the noun governed carries a verbal sense, without which the genitive lapses into its more regular possessive sense.) (ii) If the righteousness is, eventually at least, a status or quality attributed to humans, then the genitive *theou* could be seen either as objective or as a genitive of origin, depending once more on the sense attached to *dikaiosynē*. If the 'righteousness' is something about humans (say, their faith) which somehow commends them before God, then the genitive is 'objective', 'a righteousness which counts before God', but if the righteousness is, rather, simply the human status which results from God's gracious action, the genitive is a genitive of origin, being equivalent to *hē ek theou dikaiosynē* as in Philippians 3.9. (This too is often misunderstood, with the phrase 'objective genitive' sometimes being used to designate the genitive of origin. Again, it should be clear that the phrase 'objective genitive', strictly speaking, denotes a genitive which functions as the object of the verb implied in the noun which it governs.)[1]

Within the debate all four basic positions have been espoused. Luther's starting point was (what he saw as) the medieval view that the righteousness in question was God's *iustitia distributiva*, his even-handed rewarding of virtue and punishing of vice. Luther's classic response to this (which, he says, he subsequently discovered to have been Augustine's view as well) was that the righteousness of God was not a righteousness with which he himself is righteous, but rather a righteousness with which he makes others righteous. This, in other words, was a shift from *possessive* reading of the genitive, and a 'quality' understanding of *dikaiosynē*, to a grammatically complex double reading: it combined (a) the subjective/activity reading of the whole phrase (the 'righteousness' remains God's, and denotes the activity whereby God reckons humans to be righteous), and (b) the genitive of origin/human status reading of the whole phrase (Luther could sometimes, not least with [**202**] 2 Corinthians 5.21 in mind, refer to *dikaiosynē theou* as the status which humans have as a result of this reckoning).

The modern debate has reflected Luther's wrestling in several ways. The majority position until comparatively recently, expounded classically by R. Bultmann, H. Conzelmann, and C. E. B. Cranfield, was that the genitive denoted the origin of the status which humans then possessed as the result of God's gracious action in Christ.[2] E. Käsemann, on the other hand, pioneered the 'subjective genitive' position in his paper 'The "Righteousness of God" in Paul', subsequently published in his *New Testament Questions of Today*;[3] for him, clearly, *dikaiosynē theou* was to be understood as an activity, namely, God's 'salvation-creating power' by which he defeated the rebellious cosmos. This has become increasingly popular with scholars, though it is not well represented in modern English translations.[4]

[1] On these and other genitives, see BDF §§89–100.

[2] For the debate, see Müller 1966; Stuhlmacher 1966; Brauch 1977; Wilckens 1978, 202–33; Cranfield 1975a, 92–9. The true 'objective genitive' is rarely held today; an example is O'Neill 1975, 38–9, 72, etc.

[3] Käsemann 1969a, 168–82; see too Käsemann 1980, 23–30.

[4] NIV persists in a most confusing rendering of Rom 3.21–26, in which *dikaiosynē theou* is rendered 'a righteousness from God' in vv. 21–22, while v. 26 still clearly refers to God's own righteousness ('justice'!).

My own view, suggested in various places and to be expanded elsewhere,[5] is that Käsemann is right in his critique of the prevailing reading (though even he does not see that Philippians 3.9 should be excluded from the discussion), but wrong in his precise proposal. The righteousness does indeed remain God's; but this 'righteousness' never leaves behind the all-important sense of *covenant faithfulness*. Nor does it need to, as Käsemann imagined, thinking thereby to defend Paul against the possibility of retaining any sense of Jewish particularism. [**203**] Paul's contention, supremely in Romans, is that in Christ Israel's God has indeed been faithful to the covenant made with Abraham, but precisely not in the nationalistic way which Israel imagined. A significant part of his whole argument in that letter is, I believe, that the nonethnic people of God in Christ really is, despite initial appearances, the family promised to Abraham. Into this picture fit, comfortably, not only the explicit references to *dikaiosynē theou* as such (1.17; 3.5, 21, 22; 10.3) but also the many other passages which attribute *dikaiosynē* to God in one way or another, or which discuss such attribution (3.25, 26; 9.6–29; etc.). There is thus, I contend, an excellent case to be made out for reading the phrase as a clear Pauline technical term meaning 'the covenant-faithfulness of [Israel's] God'.

To this apparently clear case 2 Corinthians 5.21 offers an apparently clear exception. The phrase is the same as that in Romans – that is, *dikaiosynē theou* itself – but the reference seems to be, unambiguously, to a status of *dikaiosynē* which is credited to 'us', that is, Paul himself and, perhaps, his co-workers. Is this, then, the correct reading? If so, does it perhaps raise a question as to whether the emerging consensus on the usage in Romans is wrong, suggesting that we should after all read *dikaiosynē theou* there as a human status bestowed by God (the 'genitive of origin') or perhaps a human status which counts before God (the 'objective genitive')?

2 Corinthians 5.21 in Context

This would not itself, perhaps, be a very serious problem. It is important to stress that Paul is quite capable of using what seem to us technical terms in subtly different ways, as anyone who has studied his use of *sarx* ('flesh'), for instance, knows only too well. I would not, for my own part, go to any lengths to overturn the usual reading of 2 Corinthians 5.21, merely because of a search for a spurious harmony – which simply does not exist, at a terminological level, in the Pauline letters. But the second reason forces the question upon us. The verse has traditionally been read as a somewhat detached statement of atonement theology: we are sinners; God is righteous, but in Christ what Luther called a 'wondrous exchange' takes place, in which

[5] See my 'The Messiah and the People of God', 57–85; also 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' [reprinted as chapter 7 of the present volume]. For the Jewish background, see *New Testament and the People of* God, 271f., showing that though the phrase was in some sense a technical term in biblical and post-biblical Judaism, it never left behind (*pace* Käsemann) its sense of 'covenant faithfulness'. For *dikaiosynē theou* in Rom. 9—11, see *Climax of the Covenant*, 234–46. For a fuller version of these discussions see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 10.

Christ takes our sin and we his 'righteousness'.[6] And the difficulty with this, despite its being enshrined [**204**] in a good many hymns and liturgies, as well as in popular devotion, is (a) that once again Paul never actually says this anywhere else;[7] (b) that here it is God's righteousness, not Christ's, that 'we' apparently 'become'; (c) that there seems to be no good reason why he suddenly inserts this statement into a discussion whose thrust is quite different, namely, a consideration of the paradoxical apostolic ministry in which Christ is portrayed in and through the humiliating weakness of the apostle (4.7—6.13); and (d) the verse, read in this way, seems to fall off the end of the preceding argument, so much so that some commentators have suggested that the real break in the thought comes not between 5.21 and 6.1 but between 5.19 and 5.20.[8]

Proposal: Covenant and Apostleship

I suggest that these issues can be addressed simultaneously, and the problems resolved, by a consideration of the wider context within which the passage falls. From 2.14 on, Paul has been addressing the question of his own apostleship, and in chapter 3 in particular he has done so in relation to the *new covenant* which God has established in Christ and by the Spirit. I have argued elsewhere for a particular way of reading this chapter; the detail of this argument is incidental to my present purpose, since the overall drift, which is the important thing here, is less controversial.[9] Paul's argument, in a nutshell, is that he, as an apostle, is a minister of the new covenant (3.6) and that this ministry is not impugned by the fact that he suffers but is rather thereby enhanced (4.7–18), since Christ is in this way revealed the more clearly. This, he explains, is why he can use great 'boldness' (*parrēsia*) (3.12–18).

The discussion of Paul's covenantal ministry then continues into chapter 5 (a fact sometimes obscured because much study of 5.1–5 has concentrated on it as an isolated fragment about personal eschatology, rather than as part of the sustained argument). It should be clear from the *oun* ('therefore') in verse 11 that verses 1–10 contribute, as far as Paul is concerned, to the thrust of what follows: since all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, with the prospect, for those who are Christ's, of receiving the 'further clothing' of the glorious resurrection body, the apostle is spurred on to do the work of 'persuading human beings'. The link between 5.12 ('We are not commend-[**205**]ing ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us')

[6] See, e.g., Bultmann 1985, 165 (commenting on this passage); also Barrett 1973, 180–1; Hooker 1990 frequently, e.g., 17, 181. Victor Paul Furnish seems to accept this reading (Furnish 1984, 351–3).

[7] 1 Cor. 1.30 is sometimes suggested as an exception, but there Paul sees not only *dikaiosynē* ('righteousness') but also *sophia* ('wisdom' – the controlling category), *hagiasmos* ('sanctification'), and *apolytrōsis* ('redemption') as attributed to those 'in Christ'; and, most importantly, the *dikaiosynē* in question is not spoken of as the *dikaiosynē theou* ('righteousness of God').

[8] E.g. Furnish 1984, ad loc.

[9] *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 9.

and 3.1; 4.2; and 6.4[10] makes it clear that we are still in the same ongoing argument: Paul is not 'commending himself' in an unacceptable fashion, but merely explaining what it is that apostleship involves. Specifically, he is unpacking what it means, as he said in chapter 3, to be a 'minister of the new covenant'. The statements of 5.14–15, on the one hand, and 5.16–17, on the other, are not to be detached from this argument and treated as mere snippets of traditional soteriology. Both contribute directly to the statement of verses 18–19; this is what gives Paul's whole activity its specific focus:

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

Here, then, is the focal point to which the long argument has been building up. Paul, having himself been reconciled to God by the death of Christ, has now been entrusted by God with the task of ministering to others that which he has himself received, in other words, reconciliation. Verse 20 then follows from this as a dramatic double statement of his conception of the task: 'So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God'. That is to say, when Paul preaches, his hearers ought to hear a voice from God, a voice which speaks on behalf of the Christ in whom God was reconciling the world. Astonishingly, the voice of the suffering apostle is to be regarded as the voice of God himself, the God who in Christ has established the new covenant, and who now desires to extend its reconciling work into all the world. The second half of the verse should not, I think, be taken as an address to the Corinthians specifically, but as a short and pithy statement of Paul's whole vocation: 'On behalf of Christ, we make this appeal: "Be reconciled to God!" '

In the light of this exegesis of chapters 3—5, and this reading of 5.11–20 in particular, the thrust of 5.21 emerges into the light. It is not an aside, a soteriological statement thrown in here for good measure as though to explain how it is that people can in fact thus be reconciled. It is a climactic statement of the whole argument so far. The 'earthen vessel' that Paul knows himself to be (4.7) has found the problem of his own earthiness dealt with, and has found itself filled, paradoxically, with treasure indeed: 'for our sake [**206**] God made Christ, who did not know sin, to be a sin-offering for us, *so that in him we might become God's covenant-faithfulness*'. The 'righteousness of God' in this verse is not a human status in virtue of which the one who has 'become' it stands 'righteous' before God, as in Lutheran soteriology. It is the covenant faithfulness of the one true God, now active through the paradoxical Christ-shaped ministry of Paul, reaching out with the offer of reconciliation to all who hear his bold preaching.

[10] 3.1: 'Are we beginning to commend (*synistanein*) ourselves again?' 4.2: 'We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend (*synistanontes*) ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God'. 6.4: 'But as servants of God we have commended (*synistantes*) ourselves in every way'.

What the whole passage involves, then, is the idea of the covenant ambassador, who represents the one for whom he speaks in such a full and thorough way that he actually *becomes* the living embodiment of his sovereign – or perhaps, in the light of 4.7–18 and 6.1–10, we should equally say the *dying* embodiment. Once this is grasped as the meaning of 5.21, it appears that this meaning fits very well with the graphic language of those other passages, especially 4.10–12. This in turn should play back into our understanding of chapter 3: the paradoxical boldness which Paul displays in addressing the Corinthians is organically related to his self-understanding as the 'minister of the new covenant', the one who has 'become the righteousness of God'. Indeed, we can now suggest that those two phrases are mutually interpretative ways of saying substantially the same thing.

Conclusion

This conclusion may initially appear striking, even startling. However, one must insist that Paul has himself prepared the way for 5.21 with his metaphor of 'ambassador' in the preceding verse. The whole point of the ambassadorial system, in the ancient as in the modern world, is that the sovereign himself (or herself) speaks through the agent. Paul stresses this: 'God is making his appeal through us'. It should therefore be no surprise that in his summing-up he should refer to himself as 'becoming' the 'righteousness', that is, the 'covenant faithfulness', of God. If that covenant faithfulness was revealed climactically in the death of Jesus Christ, as Paul says in Romans 3.21–26, it is natural that the work of one who speaks 'on behalf of Christ' (5–20 [bis]) should also be such a revelation, especially when the one so speaking is also acting out, in his own physical body, that same death (4.10, etc.). If Paul as an ambassador has any inadequacies, they are dealt with in the death of Christ; if he has a message to deliver, it is because he has become, by the Spirit, the incarnation of the covenant faithfulness of God. Indeed, it is Paul's strong pneumatology, coming on top of his strong *theologia crucis*, that rescues this striking idea from being in any way triumphalistic, except in the (highly paradoxical) sense of 2.14.[11]

[**207**] This way of reading the verse, I submit, makes excellent sense of the overall context, answering the second of our original puzzles by showing that the verse is not an extra, added comment about something other than the subject of the previous paragraph. It also, by linking the discussion directly with that in chapter 3, actually emphasizes the meaning 'the covenant faithfulness of God' for the key phrase *dikaiosynē theou*. This means that, so far from the verse proving to be a counterexample to the emerging consensus on the meaning of the phrase in Romans, it firmly supports the possessive or subjective reading of the genitive *theou* and suggests that *dikaiosynē* itself firmly retains its Jewish and covenantal associations. The 'righteousness of God' is the divine covenant faithfulness, which is both a quality upon

[11] See Moule 1987.

which God's people may rely and something visible in action in the great covenant-fulfilling actions of the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit.

It should again be emphasized that this does not collapse Pauline theology into a 'Jewish Christianity' of the sort from which E. Käsemann sought to free Paul when he argued that the phrase had lost its covenantal overtones and had become a technical term denoting God's 'salvation-creating power', his victory over the cosmos. Rather, Paul's covenantal theology was thought through at every point, not least in our present passage, in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, which revealed that God's covenant faithfulness was precisely the ground of the salvation of the whole world. As Romans 3 leads eventually to Romans 8, and to the renewal of all creation, so 2 Corinthians 3 (the new covenant) leads to 2 Corinthians 5.17 (*kainē ktisis*, 'new creation'). The two are, actually, inseparable: it was through the covenant with Abraham and his seed that God always intended to reconcile the world to himself, and in Christ that plan is now complete.[12] All that remains is for the apostolic ministry to be put into effect, through which this divine covenant faithfulness can become effective for any and all who will listen to the message.

Three final reflections. First, this way of reading the second half of the crucial verse *may* perhaps provide an additional reason for taking the second occurrence of *hamartia* in the verse as a reference not just to 'sin' in general but to the 'sin-offering'.[13] I have argued elsewhere for this meaning for *kai peri hamartias* in Romans 8.3, and I think it is likely, granted the more context-specific reading of the verse which I am proposing, that Paul would intend it here too.[14] This, if correct, would not water down the striking impression of the [**208**] first half of the verse, as is sometimes suggested, but would rather give it more specific direction. The verse is not an abstract, detached statement of atonement theology (Paul nowhere offers us such a thing); rather, it focuses very specifically on his own strange apostolic ministry. Insofar as this ministry is a thing of shame and dishonor, it is so despite Paul's intention, and the sin-offering is the right means of dealing with such a problem. Insofar as it is the means of the divine covenant faithfulness being held out to the world, it is because, in Christ, Paul has 'become' the *dikaiosynē theou* ('righteousness of God'). This is only a suggestion, which could perhaps be taken up in subsequent discussion.

Second, some will no doubt object that I have missed the point entirely. Paul, it will be suggested, was here simply drawing on a traditional formula, only loosely integrated into his own flow of thought. In reply, I think it is certainly possible that behind our verse there lies a regular early Christian way of expressing something about Jesus' death and its effect. Almost all things are possible within the very shadowy world of pre-Pauline early Christian history. But I do not think it is very likely. The verse as I have read

[12] See now *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 9, esp. 259–79.

[13] Against, e.g., Barrett 1973, 180; Hooker 1990, 13–14.

[14] *Hamartia* is of course a regular LXX way of rendering the various phrases for 'sin-offering'; see, e.g., Lev 4.8, 20, 24, etc.; see *Climax of the Covenant*, 221 n. 10, and, for the general argument, ch. 11.

it fits so closely into Paul's argument, and employs such characteristic language in a characteristic way, that I think it far more probable that we have here an instance of something which scholars, even those who spend their lives in his company, are singularly slow to grant that Paul may have possessed: the ability to produce a pithy phrase on his own account and to draw together a complex line of thought in a telling and memorable epigram. We scholars, so often preferring learned obscurity to pungent clarity, sometimes project this image, among others, on to the apostle. It is not only the Corinthian church that tries to insist on the apostle's coming up to its ill-conceived expectations.

Third, this reading of 5.21 has tied it in quite tightly, I think, to the whole argument of chapters 3—5. This suggests to me that, although of course the first half of chapter 6 grows organically out of just this conclusion, it is misleading to treat 5.19 as though it were the conclusion of the long preceding argument and 5.20 as though it were the start of the new one. When it is read in the way I have suggested, 5.20–21 forms the natural climax to the entire argument of the preceding three chapters, with 6.1 being the point where Paul turns to address a specific appeal to the Corinthians. They have, after all, already been reconciled to God (5.20);[15] now they need to be urged not to receive this grace in vain (6.1). Moreover, they now have a significant new motive to heed this appeal: the one who speaks is not simply an odd, shabby, battle-scarred jailbird, but one who, however surprisingly, is a revelation in person of the covenant faithfulness of God.

[15] It is wrong to import 'you' into the translation as the object of *deometha* ('we appeal'). The point Paul is making is general: 'this is the appeal we make'. See above.

Part II

Lichfield and Westminster

Chapter Six

GOSPEL AND THEOLOGY IN GALATIANS (1994)

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I had wrestled with the question of Paul's use of *euangelion* for quite some time and, having promised an article for the Festschrift for Richard Longenecker, was determined to find something to say about it. As the final moment came for submission I had still not worked it out to my satisfaction, when, with the adrenaline rush that sustains journalists, the present argument emerged, got itself down on paper, and squeaked into the volume at the last minute. I remain grateful to the editors for stretching their deadline to let me in. The piece is memorable particularly in that it represents the beginning, together with a paper on 'Paul and Paganism' which found its way into *What Saint Paul Really Said*, of that exploration into Paul's confrontation with his non-Jewish context which has subsequently become a major feature of my research.

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[222] Introduction

The word 'gospel' has had a chequered career in the course of Christian history. During the first century, as we shall see, it could refer both to a message proclaimed by word of mouth and to a book about Jesus of Nazareth. In more recent times it has been used to denote a particular sort of religious meeting (a 'gospel rally') and as a metaphor for utterly reliable information ('gospel truth'). Many Christians today, when reading the New Testament, never question what the word means, but assume that, since they know from their own context what 'the gospel' is. Paul and the others must have meant exactly the same thing.

The trouble is, of course, that though there are obviously difficult concepts in the New Testament, which send any intelligent reader off to the commentaries and dictionaries, there are others which are in fact equally difficult but which are not recognized as such. 'We turn to the helps only when the hard passages are manifestly hard. But there are treacherous passages which will not send us to the notes. They look easy and aren't.'[1] Part of the purpose of

[1] Lewis 1967, vii.

scholarship, within both the academy and the church, is to expose the frailty of regular assumptions, to ask the unasked questions and to sketch out alternative possibilities. Whether or not he agrees with the proposals I shall advance, I know that Richard Longenecker shares this vision of the purpose of scholarship. Indeed, it is partly because he and others have carved out ways of pursuing this vision that I, in company with a good many today, now have the courage to do so as well. I am therefore confident that he will [**223**] be as happy to entertain, and perhaps to controvert, my arguments as he has been to engage in debate on many previous occasions, which, whether formal or informal, have always been warm and cheerful.

In order to arrive at the meaning of 'gospel' within the confines of the letter to the Galatians, we must go back to the old question: where did the idea come from and what echoes did the word in consequence carry both for Paul and for his readers? I shall suggest that the two normal answers to these questions have been wrongly played off against one another, and that when we examine them both more closely we will discover convergences which have not hitherto been explored. This will enable us to survey the occurrences of 'gospel' within Galatians, with our ears retuned to the nuances which may after all have been present for both Paul and his hearers. We shall thus discover an emphasis within the letter which is not normally given the weight which, in my judgment, it deserves.

Isaianic Message or Imperial Proclamation?

The two backgrounds regularly proposed for Paul's use of *euangelion* and *euangelizomai* are, predictably, the Hebrew scriptures on the one hand and pagan usage on the other. The line between the two tends to follow the old divide between those who suppose Paul to be basically a Jewish thinker and those who see him as having borrowed his fundamental ideas from Hellenism.[2] The evidence has been rehearsed [**224**] often enough,[3] though it is my impression that the right lessons have not always been learned from it. We must set out the main features briefly.

The LXX occurrences of the relevant root include two well-known verses from Isaiah:

> Get you up to a high mountain,
> O Zion, herald of good tidings (*ho euangelizomenos Ziōn*);
> lift up your voice with strength,
> O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings (*ho euangelizomenos Ierousalēm*);
> lift it up, do not fear;
> say to the cities of Judah,

[2] In favour of the OT background: see esp. 'The Pauline Gospel', in Stuhlmacher 1991, 149–72 for citations of other literature and discussion of the debate; Wilckens 1978, 74–5. In favour of pagan usage: above all 'Das Evangelium Jesu Christi', in Strecker 1975, 503–48; also Stuhlmacher 1991, 151–2; G. Friedrich, '*euangelion*', *TDNT*, II, 721–36, pp. 724–5; and Schneemelcher and Wilson 1963, 71–5. It is remarkable that there is no article on 'Gospel' in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. On the history-of-religions debate which underlies all this, see Neill and Wright 1988, 367–78.

[3] See above all Stuhlmacher 1968.

'Here is your God!' (40.9)
How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace (*hōspodes euangelizomenou akoēn eirēnēs*),
who brings good news (*ho euangelizomenos agatha*),
who announces salvation.
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'. (52.7)

These passages, in company with others,[4] are among the climactic statements of the great double theme of the whole section (Isaiah 40—55): YHWH's return to Zion and enthronement, and the return of Israel herself from her exile in Babylon. They are not simply miscellaneous 'good news', a generalized message of comfort for the downcast; they are very specific to the plight of Israel in exile. That they were read as such in the second-Temple period is clear from two post-biblical passages which echo or evoke them. The first is *Psalms of Solomon* 11:

Sound in Zion the signal trumpet of the sanctuary;
announce in Jerusalem the voice of one bringing good news,
for God has been merciful to Israel in watching over them.
Stand on a high place, Jerusalem, and look at your children,
from the east and the west assembled together by the Lord.
From the north they come in the joy of their God;
from far distant islands God has assembled them.
He flattened high mountains into level ground for them;
the hills fled at their coming.
The forests shaded them as they passed by;
God made every fragrant tree to grow for them.
[**225**] So that Israel might proceed under the supervision of the glory of their God.
Jerusalem, put on the clothes of your glory,
prepare the robe of your holiness,
for God has spoken well of Israel forevermore.
May the Lord do what he has spoken about Israel and Jerusalem;
may the Lord lift up Israel in the name of his glory.
May the mercy of the Lord be upon Israel forevermore.[5]

This psalm is regularly, and rightly, referred to as evidence that the theme of the Isaianic herald was alive and well in the first century. Its significance for our purposes, however, goes further. The psalm speaks of the *return of Israel from exile*. It is generally agreed that it dates from a time several centuries after what is normally thought of as the 'return'; and yet it still appeals to YHWH to fulfil at last his ancient promises of 'return' – specifically, the promises of Isaiah 40. It is evident that for this writer, as for many others in second-Temple Judaism, the 'return from exile', predicted by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others, had not yet taken place.[6]

[4] 60.6; 61.1; the Hebrew root *bsr*, which underlies these, occurs in a similar passage in 41.27.

[5] Cited according to Charlesworth 1985, 661–2. The *Psalms of Solomon* are usually dated to the mid first century BC.

[6] Cf. *Climax of the Covenant*, 268–70. See also Ezra 9.8–9. Josephus, in *Ant*. 11.64–65, speaks of Zerubbabel announcing (*euēngelisato*) to the Jews in exile the good news that Darius was allowing them to return from exile; one textual variant gives this as 'he gave them the good news *about* [rather than "from"] the king'.

The second and third passages from our period which echo the Isaianic tradition of 'good news' are from Qumran:

> [that he might be], according to Thy truth,
> a messenger [in the season] of Thy goodness;
> that to the humble he might bring
> glad tidings of Thy great mercy,
> [proclaiming salvation]
> from out of the fountain [of holiness
> to the contrite] of spirit,
> and everlasting joy to those who mourn.[7]

> [**226**] This is the day of [Peace/Salvation] concerning which [God] spoke [through Isa]iah the prophet, who said, [How] beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion: Your ELOHIM [reigns]. Its interpretation; the mountains are the prophets . . . and the messenger is the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Dan[iel] said, [Until an anointed one, a prince . . .] [And he who brings] good [news], who proclaims [salvation]: it is concerning him that it is written . . . [To comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion]. To comfort [those who mourn: its interpretation], to make them understand all the ages of t[ime] . . . in truth . . . will turn away from Satan . . . by the judgment[s] of God, as it is written concerning him, [who says to Zion]; your ELOHIM reigns. Zion is . . . those who uphold the Covenant, who turn from walking [in] the way of the people. And your ELOHIM is [Melchizedek, who will save them from] the hand of Satan.[8]

Here again it is clear that, within the second-Temple period, some Jews at least were still looking earnestly for a fulfilment of the Isaianic promises. The 'good news' or 'glad tidings' would be the message that the long-awaited release from captivity was at hand. And, as the last passage clearly shows, within this expectation Isaiah 40 and 61 could be combined with each other, and with a passage from Daniel (9.25) interpreted Messianically.

For some, this evidence is quite sufficient to win the verdict: this is the background against which the New Testament 'gospel' is to be understood. Others, however, still insist upon the non-Jewish background as the vital one. In the Greek world, '*euangelion* is a technical term for "news of victory"'.[9] More specifically, it refers to the announcement of the birth or accession of an emperor. Not least at the time of Augustus, who became the first Roman emperor following a long period of civil war, the coming of a new ruler meant the promise of peace, a new start for the world:

> The providence which has ordered the whole of our life, showing concern and zeal, has ordained the most perfect consummation for human life by giving to it Augustus, by filling him with virtue for doing the work of a benefactor among men, and by sending in him, as it were, a saviour for us and those who come after us, to make war to cease, to create order [**227**] everywhere . . . ; the birthday of the god [Augustus] was the beginning for the world of the glad tidings that have come to men through him . . .[10]

[7] 1QH 18.14–15, cited according to Vermes 1987, 200.
[8] 11QMelch., cited from Vermes 1987, 301.
[9] Friedrich, *TDNT*, II, 722. For the whole field of pagan usage, cf. esp. Stuhlmacher 1968, 180–206.
[10] Inscription dated to 9 BC: quoted from U. Becker, 'Gospel, Evangelize, Evangelist', *NIDNTT*, II, 108.

Which of these backgrounds, then, is the appropriate one against which to read the New Testament evidence? Is 'the gospel', for Paul, an Isaianic message or an Imperial proclamation? I suggest that the antithesis between the two is a false one, based on the spurious either–or that has misleadingly divided New Testament studies for many years.[11]

The trouble with history-of-religions study is that it regularly fails to see that what matters is not so much where an idea has *come from* as where it is *going to*. The problem is not merely that we now know that 'Jew' and 'Greek' in the first century did not live in watertight worlds – though this itself ought to make us wary of a strict either–or. It is, rather, that the Isaianic message always was about the enthronement of YHWH and the dethronement of pagan gods; about the victory of Israel and the fall of Babylon; about the arrival of the Servant King and the consequent coming of peace and justice. The scriptural message therefore pushes itself of its own accord into the world where pagan gods and rulers stake their claims and celebrate their enthronements.

A further aspect of the problem has lain in the insistence (not least in influential articles such as that of Friedrich in *TDNT*) upon a strict division between 'religious' and 'secular' meanings of the root words.[12] The Isaianic meaning is supposed to be 'religious', and the imperial one 'secular'. But matters were not so clear-cut in the first century. The exchange between Bultmann and Schneemelcher as to whether *euangelion* was a sacral term in the imperial cult likewise misses the **[228]** point:[13] once the emperor was venerated as a god (a development already well advanced, at least in the East, by Paul's day), any proclamation of his rule had clear 'religious' connotations, even if a particular word within that proclamation did not happen to feature in the more narrowly 'cultic' setting. And it was precisely against such 'religious' connotations – the boasting of pagan emperors from Babylon and Egypt, through the megalomania of Antiochus Epiphanes, and on to Imperial Rome – that the Jews of Paul's day had set their face. When their god,[14] YHWH, acted within history to deliver his people, the spurious gods of the heathen would be defeated. If and when YHWH set up his own king as the true ruler, his true earthly representative, all other kingdoms would be confronted with their rightful overlord.

Once we grasp the historical setting of Paul's gospel, therefore, we discover something for which the abstract categories of traditional history-of-religions research had not prepared us. *The more Jewish we make Paul's 'gospel', the*

[11] One writer who has attempted to combine the two backgrounds is Cranfield 1975a, 55; see below.

[12] Friedrich, '*euangelion*', 708, claims to detect a transition from the one to the other, and declares that 'in the OT *bšrh* is used only in a secular sense. There is no religious use of the subst. whatever' (p. 721). To project the modern distinction between religious and secular onto material from ancient Israel seems to me quite anachronistic. Another problem that has bedevilled the discussion, as with so many others, is an over-use of precise lexicography, as though the connection between two areas of discourse lay in verbal identity rather than content; a good example is Wilckens' dismissal of the analogy with the emperor-cult on the grounds that there the plural *euangelia*, not the 'technical' singular, is found (Wilckens 1978, 75).

[13] Bultmann 1951, I, 87; Schneemelcher and Wilson 1963, 72–3.

[14] Use of the lower case for 'g' in god is deliberate; for a full explanation see *New Testament and the People of God*, xiv–xv.

more it confronts directly the pretensions of the Imperial cult, and indeed all other paganisms whether 'religious' or 'secular'. It is because of Jewish monotheism that there can be 'no king but god'.[15] In the history of ideas, and in lexicography, derivation is important; but so should be confrontation. The all-embracing royal and religious claims of Caesar are directly challenged by the equally all-embracing claim of Israel's god. To announce that YHWH is king is to announce that Caesar is not. Thus even the apparently 'secular' uses of *euangelizein* in the LXX are brought into the immediately relevant background: again and again, the 'news' that is brought has to do with the royal house, whether for good or for ill.[16] The death of one king [**229**] means the accession of another; the acclamation of a would-be king spells a dire threat for the present one.

This, however, forces us back to the question: to what extent did Paul participate in this confrontation? What contribution, in particular, does the letter to the Galatians have to make to this exegetical, historical, and above all profoundly theological question?

God, Messiah and Gospel in Galatians

Two elements in Pauline theology which are normally underplayed, even supposing they are noticed at all, come into crucial relevance here. First, Paul's gospel is a message about the true god as opposed to the false gods. Second, Paul's gospel is a message about the Messiah, the true king of Israel, and hence of the world. In both cases, this 'gospel' only makes sense against the Jewish background sketched briefly above; in both cases, the 'gospel' confronts directly the claims of other gods and lords.

These claims are of course controversial. Remarkably enough, the meaning of 'god' in Paul's theology has regularly been passed over. Equally remarkably, in my view, the Messiahship of Jesus has often been ignored, it being assumed that Paul left such categories behind in announcing his message to the non-Jewish world who would not be interested in Jewish concepts. Partly as a result of these two omissions, the confrontation between the gospel Paul preached and the 'powers' – the other gods and lords of the pagan world – has also regularly been marginalized. I have raised the first and third of these questions elsewhere, though I have not explored them fully in relation to Paul himself.[17] In regard to the second, I have argued elsewhere that Paul did indeed regard Jesus as Messiah, and that this remained a vital and central category for him.[18] In what now follows I shall attempt to explain, within the brief compass of this essay, how the 'gospel' functions in Galatians as an announcement about the true God and about the Messiah, and hence as a challenge to the 'powers' of the world. The Pauline *euangelion*, I suggest,

[15] Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 170–81, 302–7.

[16] Cf., e.g., 1 Sam. 31.9; 2 Sam. 1.20; 4.10; 18.19, 20, 27, 31; 1 Kgs. 1.42. It is not true that 'in pagan and Jewish literature the term designates *any kind of message*' (italics added) (*pace* Koester 1990, 4).

[17] *New Testament and the People of God*, passim, esp. ch. 9.

[18] *Climax of the Covenant*, passim, esp. chs. 2, 3.

is based firmly in Judaism; at the same time, and indeed precisely for this reason, it functions as the royal announcement which challenges the pagan principalities and powers. Galatians is, as it happens, an excellent example of this whole train of thought.

[**230**] We may begin by considering Gal. 4.1–11. The word *euangelion* and its cognates are absent from the passage, but it will not be doubted that 4.1–7 states in one particular form the content of 'the gospel' which Paul preached; or that 4.8–11, in referring to the time when the Galatians did not 'know God', and then to their present state in which they do 'know God', describes substantially the context and effect of that gospel's preaching. The passage stands, in fact, at a fairly climactic moment in the whole letter, drawing together the argument of the preceding chapter (this is the force of *legō de* in 4.1), and laying the foundations for what is to come; it may thus fairly be seen as a summary of 'the gospel' which is so clearly stated as a main theme in the opening section of the letter (1.6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 16). In particular, the note in 4.4 that God sent forth his son 'when the time had fully come' corresponds quite closely to the link in Mark 1.15 between the 'fulfilment of the time' and the preaching of the gospel. We shall return to this point later on.

In terms of Galatians 4.1–7, the message of the Pauline gospel is this: the true god has sent his son, in fulfilment of the prophecies of scripture, to redeem his people from their bondage to false gods (described here as the *stoicheia tou kosmou*, 4.3, 9); he now sends his own spirit to make his people truly what they were before only in theory and hope – his own children, heirs of his world. Equipped with this gospel, the Galatian Christians now *know the true god*; or rather, as Paul quickly corrects himself, they are known by him (4.9).[19] That is, they have received the great blessing promised by Isaiah throughout chapters 40—55: the one true god has revealed himself in saving them, routing the idols of the nations in doing so. The message of good news decisively confronts the power of the spurious gods.

This raises the old question, whether the regular Pauline phrase 'the gospel of God', *to euangelion tou theou*, should be read as 'the gospel *concerning* God' or as 'the gospel *from* God'.[20] While I agree with Stuhlmacher and Strecker that it is difficult to divide them up completely, the present passage suggests that the *content* of the gospel is [**231**] not merely 'Christ' but also, and perhaps primarily, God himself.[21] The Pharisee who, by his own obliquely autobiographical admission in Romans 10.2, had been zealous for the one true god, looking for his victory over paganism on behalf of his ethnic people Israel, had become convinced that the victory had after all been won in Christ, and that the one true god was thereby revealed. The Shammaite who had believed that there should be 'no king but god' did not cease to

[19] Cf. 1 Cor. 8.4–6.

[20] These are sometimes described as the 'objective' and 'subjective' genitives respectively; but this is misleading. Object and subject only strictly apply when the noun governed by the genitive denotes an activity (as in 'the love of God'). What we have here are the genitives of *content* and of *origin*. Cf. BDF § 163: 'the division of the gen. into obj., subj. etc. is really only an attempt to set off several special types among the manifold possibilities . . .'

[21] Against Stuhlmacher 1991, 153.

believe it upon becoming a Christian. He now at last understood who that god really was. The god now revealed in the sending of the son and the spirit (4.1–7) is the god beside whom the defeated principalities and powers pale into insignificance (4.8–11). That is why, in 1.6, Paul can speak of the Galatians turning away from 'the one who called you in the grace of Christ' to 'another gospel'. The 'gospel' is for Paul first of all a message about the true god as opposed to the false gods.

But the gospel is also, of course, *to euangelion tou Christou* – a phrase which, less controversially, focuses attention on the content of the gospel without denying a reference to its origin (as in Galatians 1.12).[22] The gospel concerns the Christ, the Messiah; it is through him that the true god has made himself known. Paul's preaching of the gospel involved him in portraying Jesus Christ publicly as the crucified one (3.1).

Here I part company completely with the majority of the tradition, and explicitly with Stuhlmacher's recent treatment. In his analysis of 'the content of the Pauline gospel', Stuhlmacher states that 'in his Damascus vision Paul saw Christ exalted to the right hand of God . . . and installed as Son of God in the position of "Lord" '.[23] This simply cannot be right as it stands. Until his Damascus experience, Paul did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the 'Christ'. What then? Are we to say that 'in his Damascus experience Paul saw *Jesus* exalted . . . as Lord'? Are we, in other words, to go from the human Jesus to the exalted Lord, bypassing the step of Messiahship altogether? This would, I believe, be a travesty of Paul's experience and Pauline theology. 'Christ' is not a cipher for Paul, a kind of specialized surname for Jesus of Nazareth. It refers, as I have argued elsewhere, to Jesus as the Messiah, the one who sums up Israel in himself. It is because the [**232**] crucified Jesus is the Messiah that all the trouble in Galatia occurs, trouble which Paul insists on speaking of in terms of 'the gospel'. What happened on the road to Damascus, I suggest, was something like this: Paul realized that the crucified Jesus was indeed risen from the dead; that in him the hope of Israel had thus been fulfilled; that he was therefore that which his supporters had claimed, namely, Israel's Messiah; that this Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah of Israel, was now enthroned as Lord of all, Jew and gentile alike; that these events were indeed the inauguration of the 'age to come', though not in the form for which he, as a zealous Pharisee, had been longing; and that, as a result of this whole complex of thought (complex for us, reconstructing it; plain sailing for a first-century Pharisee), the pagan idolatry of the world had been decisively defeated, and those who adhered to it – that is, the gentiles – were to be summoned to give allegiance to this strange and subversive Jewish Messiah. Hence, 'the gospel of Christ'.

My proposal at this point, then, is that, for Paul writing Galatians, 'the gospel' or 'the gospel of Christ' refers to this complex of belief and announcement. 'The gospel' is not, for Paul, a message about 'how one gets saved', in an individual and ahistorical sense. It is the announcement

[22] Cf. R. N. Longenecker 1990, 16.

[23] Stuhlmacher 1991, 154. Other similar statements occur frequently in the article.

1 that the God of Israel is the one true God, and that the pagan deities are mere idols;
2 that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen one, is not merely 'Lord' in some cosmic sense, but is actually King – King of Israel, and hence (on the Davidic model of passages such as Psalm 89) the King before whom all the kings of the earth shall bow;
3 that Israel's destiny has been fulfilled, her exile finished, her salvation won, but in a manner which undermines the Jewish ethnic and nationalistic hope that Paul had formerly espoused; and
4 that the rule of the pagan idols, which have kept the pagan nations in their iron grip, has been broken, and that those who follow and serve them are now summoned to share in the blessings of Israel's 'age to come'.

Each aspect of this fourfold announcement is, I believe, vital if we are to understand what Paul means by 'gospel' at all, and particularly in Galatians. It is because Paul sees his Galatian opponents failing to grasp [**233**] this sequence of thought that he accuses them of purveying 'another gospel'.

This proposal, I suggest, has three merits in particular.

1 It holds together the two backgrounds sketched above as part of the meaning of 'gospel'. It is *because* the Isaianic prophecy has come true that Jesus is now proclaimed as the new King, the King of kings. The Jewish background and the pagan context are not antithetical. One is not 'religious' and the other 'secular'. Both have to do with ultimate worldview issues; in the Jewish case the aspects which Enlightenment thought would consider more obviously 'religious' are firmly anchored to the national hope for restoration, and in the pagan case the aspects which Enlightenment thought would consider more obviously 'secular' – the enthronement of a monarch – are of course inextricably bound up with pagan views of national deities, and already by Paul's time with pagan views of the divine emperor. The Isaianic hope was always conceived as a challenge to paganism at every level; the pagan context always envisaged the new monarch as a gift from, and perhaps in expression of, the divine. Paul's gospel, in declaring that Israel's hope is fulfilled in her Messiah, *ipso facto* declares also that the pagan world is confronted with a new ruler.
2 This proposal explains why it is that Paul sees the 'gospel' as a challenge to the principalities and powers. The *stoicheia* of 4.3, 9 are best understood as the tutelary deities that hold the nations in captivity. The irony of Paul's exposition at that point of the letter is of course that Israel has used the (god-given) Torah in the same way, locking herself up hereby inside her own nationalism, not realizing that the design of her god was that the covenant should be the means of his saving the world, and that she too needed liberating from the quasi-paganism involved in the idolization of nation, soil, and blood. That is why, in 4.8–11, the ex-pagan Galatian Christians are warned that if they become circumcised, that is, become ethnically Jewish, they will in effect be reverting

to paganism. They will be embracing again a religion of the *stoicheia*. The gospel stands over against any such attempt. Precisely because Israel's hope has been fulfilled, and the Isaianic promises accomplished, *in the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth*, Israel's specifically ethnic aspirations are set aside, all paganisms are confronted with the message of the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all pagans, as well as all Jews, are invited to discover true liberty through allegiance to the new king, the Messiah.

3 [**234**] This proposal explains why the references to 'the gospel' in Galatians are so apparently flexible, covering what, on any other scheme, are quite a wide range of issues. A brief survey of the various occurrences of the *euangelion* root in Galatians should make this clear.

As we saw, in 1.6 the gospel is a message about the true god. In 1.7 it is the announcement of the Messiah. In 1.11–12 it is that which Paul received on the way to Damascus. In 1.16 it is the announcement of the son of the true god to the gentiles. In 1.23 (where the verb occurs, but clearly within the same broad semantic field) it is the message of 'faith' (as also in 3.23–25, where 'faith' is more or less personified); here my own guess is that this is a shorthand for 'faith-in-the-god-who-raised-Jesus'.

In 2.1–5, the mention of Titus's circumcision (or not), and the opposition from 'false brethren' in Jerusalem (2.2–4), is sandwiched between the statements that Paul laid 'the gospel which [he] preached among the nations' before the 'pillar' apostles (2.2a), and that, by his opposition to the 'false brethren', what he calls 'the truth of the gospel' might be preserved for his gentile converts (2.5). This juxtaposition is best explained on the assumption that the same 'gospel' itself decisively confronted and overthrew the pagan powers that had dominated the Galatians before, whereas, if the 'false brethren', or for that matter the Galatian 'agitators', had had their way, the gospel would have become simply an inner-Jewish message, inviting people to get circumcised and to join present Judaism. And Judaism in Paul's day, as all Jews knew, *had not in fact been redeemed within its own terms of expectation*. The only redemption, the only fulfilment of the Isaianic return-from-exile prophecy, which had occurred, was the resurrection of the crucified Jesus; any attempt to purvey a 'gospel' which ignored the implications of this central event was a non-gospel (1.6–9), for the very good reason that it had no good news to offer.[24] It could only ever be a Jewish proselyte movement; it could not declare that the great promised day had arrived.

In 2.7 the 'gospel of the uncircumcision' and that of the circumcision [**235**] are clearly not two different messages altogether. If I send a circular letter to several different friends, it makes perfectly good sense to speak of my sending 'the letter to Brian and Sylvia' by air mail and 'the letter to Andrew and Lis' by surface; it need not at all imply that the letters themselves are different.

[24] I find it strange that B. R. Gaventa should suggest that there is no implicit reference to the resurrection when Paul speaks of the cross. If we are to think truly historically, without the resurrection the cross could only herald another failed Messianic mission (Gaventa 1991, 147–59, 157).

In Paul's case, 2.2 indicates clearly enough that the letters, the 'gospels', were not different; in any case, he has already declared in 1.6–9 that there cannot be two gospels. The division is one of geography, not content: Paul goes to the gentile world (though his method, according to Romans 1.16, remains 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek'[25]); Peter, to the Jewish world.

The issue of 'the truth of the gospel' is again at stake in the discussion of 2.11–14 (the phrase occurs in 2.14). Here the 'truth' in question is not simply a set of correct propositions, but an entire worldview, seen graphically in its characteristic praxis. Paul's reconstrual of the Jewish worldview necessarily involved one aspect of praxis which broke the bounds of previous Jewish ways: those who hailed the Messiah Jesus as their Lord formed a single family, whose common table functioned as a vital symbol. Remove that symbol, cease that praxis, and the entire worldview is under threat. Unless they are in place, the 'gospel' which he has announced is a lie. The powers have not been defeated; there is no new king, no lord of Jew and gentile alike, no new family from Jew and Greek alike.

This is why Paul can speak of scripture 'preaching the gospel in advance' to Abraham (3.8). 'The gospel' which is thus 'preached' is, once more, not the summons to a new dimension of religious experience (that might make Christianity into simply another mystery religion); not the invitation to a private experience of salvation, either in the present or the future (that might simply create a new sense of shut-in privilege in place of that which Paul had renounced); but the message that *all the nations would be blessed in Abraham* (3.8b). The gospel narrative, the story of Jesus the Messiah, is the story of how that promise has come true. It tells of how Israel's own exile at the hands of the pagans, which might have seemed to block the promises for good, has been dealt with in the execution of the Messiah (3.10–14).[26] It tells of how the single **[236]** 'seed', the one family promised to Abraham, has been created, despite the division between Jew and gentile which the Torah, if absolutized, would have maintained (3.15–22, 28, 29).[27] In other words of how a new family has come into being, a family composed of Jews and gentiles alongside one another.

This family, uniquely among families (in a world where family and racial loyalty were all-important in a way of which the post-Enlightenment West knows little), bore only one distinguishing mark, and that was *pistis*, faith. 'Justification by faith' was not, for Paul, a doctrine about how people could 'find a gracious god' without moralism. Nor does it speak merely, as the Romantic movement has encouraged some Protestants to speak, of the difference between outward and inward religion (a difference well enough known to first-century Jews in any case). Nor is 'justification by faith' to be equated with 'the gospel' itself; it is, rather, its direct corollary. 'The gospel' is the announcement of the kingship of Jesus; 'justification by faith' reminds those

[25] Cf. too Rom. 15.8–9.

[26] Cf. *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 7. I hope that the fuller exposition of the 'end of exile' theme in *New Testament and the People of God*, 268–71, and the primary and secondary sources referred to there, will help to convince those who were puzzled by that earlier statement.

[27] Cf. *Climax of the Covenant*, ch 8.

who, abandoning their varied idolatries, have given their allegiance to Jesus, that this very allegiance is the only distinguishing mark by which the renewed and united family of Abraham is to be known. All other possible distinguishing marks undermine the gospel itself, implying that the crucified and risen Jesus is not after all the one true king. Allegiance and loyalty to Jesus, 'faith' in this full and rich sense, is not the gospel itself; it is what the gospel is designed to produce and, by the power of the spirit, does produce.

For this is where Galatians has its equivalent of the statement in Romans that the gospel is 'the power of God for salvation to all who believe' (Romans 1.16). When the message of King Jesus was announced it brought forth faith, and the only explanation of this is that the spirit works as and when the message is proclaimed. That, at least, is how I believe Galatians 3.2–5 should be read, not least in light of 1 Thessalonians 1.4–10 and 2.13. The royal proclamation is not simply the conveying of true information about the kingship of Jesus; it is the putting into effect of that kingship, the decisive and authoritative summoning to allegiance. That is why it challenges the powers. That is why to retain, or to embrace, symbols and praxis which speak of other loyalties and other allegiances is to imply that other powers are still being invoked. And that is to deny 'the truth of the gospel'.

[237] Concluding Reflections

I have proposed, all too briefly, a way of reading 'gospel' in Galatians which, it seems to me, does more justice both to the history-of-religions background and to the exegetical content of the term than the various alternative views currently available. This generates, for me at least, several concluding reflections, of which I confine myself to three.

First, I suspect that this conception of Paul's 'gospel', which is of course considerably more wholistic than some others, goes a lot further than competing analyses in explaining why this gospel provoked opposition, including violent opposition. Offering people a new religious mode of being, in a private sense, is not particularly threatening. It becomes so, and provokes violence, the minute it challenges the life and worldview of a community; this is so just as much in the modern 'Christian' western world as in first-century Asia Minor. The message of the cross was, as Paul ruefully noted, a scandal to Jews (1 Corinthians 1.23; Galatians 5.11); the entire gospel was also a scandal to gentiles, inviting them to abandon their long-held, and sometimes politically useful, allegiances and to give allegiance only to the still-very-Jewish, and therefore scandalous, Jesus. The idea that the early preaching of the gospel carried no particular political implications only shows, I think, how far we have gone in projecting the privatized nature of western Christianity back onto Paul.[28]

[28] Against, for example, Wilckens, who writes: 'in der Fruhzeit der Entstehung des urchristlichen Wortgebrauchs jeglicher politisch-polemische Bezug fehlt' (Wilckens 1978, 75). Cranfield 1975a, 55, sees in principle the point I am making, but generalizes it away from the immediate political context: it is not a matter simply of 'the pretentious claims of self-important men', but of the political claim of worldly rulers.

Secondly, I suggest that if we read Galatians in this way we discover a new coherence in the letter, and by implication in Paul's theology as a whole. There is a current fashion in Pauline studies for playing off 'covenantal' categories against 'apocalyptic' ones. Since I have myself stressed the importance of 'covenant' in Paul, let it be said here, and backed up by the argument of this essay, that I believe in the essentially apocalyptic nature of Paul's covenantal theology, and vice versa. 'Apocalyptic', rightly understood, is not about the destruction of everything that happened before Jesus and the ushering in of a totally **[238]** new world. It is about the new creation breaking into the old.[29] Paul speaks at the start of Galatians about the true god 'rescuing us from the present evil age' (1.4), and at the close of the letter about the 'new creation' which was the only thing that mattered, over against the questions of circumcision and uncircumcision (6.15). This cosmic and apocalyptic vision, however, is in no way antithetical to covenant theology rightly understood, or at least Paulinely understood. For Paul as for the Isaiah passages he knew so well, it is when the true god acts to fulfil his covenant to Israel that the new world order will be ushered in. As in the sequence of thought in 2 Corinthians 3, 4, and 5, it is the new covenant (chapter 3) that, proclaimed by the suffering apostle (chapter 4) brings about the new creation (chapter 5). The gospel of the true God, of the Messiah Jesus, announces this total message. The real 'apocalypse' has taken place in the resurrection of the Messiah Jesus (compare Galatians 1.13); but that event can only be understood, and its significance elaborated, through an exploration of the Abrahamic covenant (Galatians 3—4).[30] What has been left behind in the revelation of the new world through the gospel is not covenant theology itself, but the restriction of covenant membership to 'those of the Torah'.

Thirdly, the significance I have posited for 'gospel' in Galatians may have something to say about the relationship between 'gospel' as Paul's own term for the message he announced and 'gospel' as an early-church term, so far as we can tell in the period later than Paul, for books like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The detailed history of this transition is a subject for another time.[31] Suffice it to say here that once we reinstate the Pauline emphasis, there is far less of a strange break between Paul's 'gospel' and the written 'gospels' than there is if we suppose the former to be the announcement of a new, non-historical, way of being religious, or of finding a non-historical salvation, and the latter to represent a failure of nerve, an attempt to ground the supposedly ahistorical gospel in history after all. If we take Paul's **[239]** 'gospel' to denote the announcement that the true god has acted in fulfilment of his promises, sending the Messiah to die and be raised, and so ushering in the new world order in which the false gods are confronted and confounded and their adherents summoned to a new and liberating allegiance, then we

[29] Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 10.

[30] The rarity of the word *diathēkē* (cf. 3.15) is of comparatively little importance here, except to those who cannot see beyond the pages of the concordance. What matters is that, as in Rom. 4, Paul is dealing again and again with whole passages (Gen. 12.15; Dt. 27, etc.) that speak of the covenant and relate it to Israel's history and future.

[31] Cf. Schneemelcher and Wilson 1963, 71–5 and Koester 1990.

may realize that that description would do fairly well for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as well, for all their obvious differences from one another and from Paul.[32] Mark's Jesus ('the time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel')[33] is quite at home with Paul ('when the time had fully come, God sent forth his son . . .').[34]

Whether this would do so well for the *Gospel of Thomas* is a different matter altogether. But then, Paul has always been a problem for those in the ancient and modern worlds who have sought to advance seriously gnosticizing interpretations of the message of Jesus. Despite the claims sometimes advanced to the contrary, to enter the enclosed little world of *Thomas* is not to confront the real issues of the real world, or the real questions of theology or even history, but to avoid them. Paul's gospel, like Isaiah's, confronts the tyrants and summons their victims to freedom.[35] If history, theology, and exegesis can join hands at this point, perhaps together they might persuade the contemporary church to rediscover aspects of Paul's message to the world which we, like his opponents, have often enough found it convenient to ignore.

[32] I am thus approaching, from a different angle, the same set of issues as Hays 1983, with an arguably similar result. Cf. too Gaventa 1991, 154.

[33] Mk. 1.15.

[34] Gal. 4.4.

[35] On the theme of freedom in Paul, see R. N. Longenecker 1976.

Chapter Seven

ROMANS AND THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL (1995)

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This was another product of the SBL Pauline Theology seminar. By the time we reached Romans we were up and running with all kinds of questions on the table, questions which are still with us in the discipline. This article represents a kind of mid-point between my doctoral dissertation (1980) and my Romans commentary (2002).

* * *

[30] On Reading Romans Theologically

A Jewish theology for the gentile world, and a welcome for gentiles designed to make the Jewish world jealous. That, I suggest, is what Paul offered his Roman readers, and I suspect it puzzled them as much as it puzzles us, though perhaps in different ways. This paper addresses these puzzles by means of a theological reading of the letter; that is, a reading of the letter drawing out its main theological line of thought, and a summary of the theology that thus emerges, showing how, and perhaps why, it was deployed in this fashion. This, I take it, is my assigned topic; I have not forgotten rhetorical analysis, narrative criticism, historical setting, and so on, but I cannot give them full measure here.

Since this essay is part of an extended conversation, I shall use most of my space for exposition, not for annotation, which could of course proliferate *ad infinitum*. History of research is important in this subject, but must here be assumed, not elaborated.[1] Suffice it to say that different ways of reading [31] Romans usually reflect different understandings of Paul's whole theology and his place within a history-of-religions scheme, and the

[1] Dialogue throughout could be carried on with the major recent commentaries of Cranfield 1975a; Käsemann 1980; Wilckens 1978; Dunn 1988a, 1988b; the following monographs: Hays 1989; G. N. Davies 1990; Elliott 1990; Jervis 1991; B. W. Longenecker 1991; and D. A. Campbell 1992; and the wider discussions of Paul in Sanders 1977, 1983, 1991; Beker 1980; Räisänen 1986; Watson 1986; Westerholm 1988; Dunn 1990; Segal 1990; and of course many others. This dialogue must in most cases be inserted by the reader into the intertextual space left implicitly blank in what follows. At the same time, I shall try and achieve brevity here and thereby reference to my own previous work, esp. *Climax of the Covenant*.

ways in which those two interact. The weight of the letter is deemed to fall where the interpreter's theology finds its *locus classicus*: for Albert Schweitzer, this was chapters 5—8; for F. C. Baur, chapters 9—11; for various Lutherans, chapters 1—4; for Minear and others, chapters 12—16. Sometimes a fresh reading of Romans has itself generated a new way of reading Paul as a whole; or, at least, the reading of Romans has played a vital role, interacting of course with other factors, in producing a totally new understanding. Ernst Käsemann, I think, provides an example of this. Ultimately, the best argument for any exegesis ought to be the overall and detailed sense it makes of the letter, the coherence it achieves. Solutions that leave the letter in bits all over the exegetical floor do not have the same compelling force (as hypotheses) as does a solution that offers a clear line of thought all through, without squashing or stifling the unique and distinctive contribution of the various parts.

But what do we mean by *theology* itself, in this context? Our many previous discussions have set a context in which I have developed the following broad scheme.[2] All societies, and subgroups within societies, have what may loosely be called a worldview, a set of assumptions about the way things are, which can be studied in terms of its four constituent elements: symbols, praxis, stories, and assumed questions and answers (the latter may be itemized: Who are we? Where are we? What's wrong? What's the solution?). These form the grid through which reality is perceived and experienced; they them-[**32**]selves, like the foundations of a house, normally remain unexamined and indeed unnoticed. They generate ways of being in the world that emerge into the public gaze: on the one hand, *aims and intentions*; on the other hand, closely related to the first, sets of *basic and consequent beliefs*. These can be, and often are, discussed. Serious debate usually takes place at this level, not at the level of worldview, since then there would be no fixed point on which debaters could agree to stand. 'Theology', as a topic to be studied or an activity to be engaged in, normally operates at this level of explicit discourse about basic and consequent beliefs. It concerns beliefs relating to a god, or gods, and the world. It is organically and dynamically related to the worldview. This is where so many of our problems of method have arisen. Explicit 'theology' is out in the open, but if studied piecemeal it remains unintegrated. Some like it like that, preferring atomistic exegesis to question-begging *a priori* theological schemes. I can see why I take it, nevertheless, that the present exercise must involve the tricky attempt to make inferences about Paul's worldview, and about the large-scale belief system he held; in other words, not simply to study Romans as a rag-bag of loci or topoi within Paul's hypothetical *Compendia* or *Summa*, but to show how the letter belongs within, and indeed acts as a window upon, Paul's symbolic world, his nonreflective praxis, his assumed narrative framework, and his fundamental answers to the key questions. In what follows I shall regularly distinguish between the actual argument of the letter, which has its own rhetorical force, and the wider worldview and belief system on which Paul draws. I shall refer to these

[2] See further *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 1; and *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 5.

two hypothetical entities, in Norman Petersen's terms, as the 'poetic sequence' and the 'narrative sequence' respectively.[3]

As an example of this abstract model, and as the necessary historical and theological background to Paul and Romans, we may take a broad description of Second Temple Judaism. I have elsewhere argued in detail both for the propriety of this exercise (alongside more atomistic treatments) and for the detail of the following rough sketch.[4]

The symbolic world of Judaism focused on temple, Torah, land, and racial identity. The assumed praxis brought these symbols to life in festivals and fasts, cult and sacrifice, domestic taboos and customs. The narrative framework which sustained symbol and praxis, and which can be seen in virtually all the writings we possess from the Second Temple period, had to do with the history of Israel; more specifically, with its state of continuing 'exile' (though it [**33**] had returned from Babylon, it remained under gentile lordship, and the great promises of Isaiah and others remained unfulfilled) and the way(s) in which its god would intervene to deliver it as had happened in one of its foundation stories, that of the exodus.[5] Its fundamental answers to the worldview questions might have been: we are Israel, the true people of the creator god; we are in our land (and/or dispersed away from our land); our god has not yet fully restored us as one day he will; we therefore look for restoration, which will include the justice of our god being exercised over the pagan nations.

This worldview, which (I stress) concentrates on that which was assumed by a majority of Jews in the period, and which of course could be modified within different branches, generated a wide variety of aims and intentions on the one hand, and on the other a more or less settled-core of theology. Many Jews aimed to keep their heads down and remain faithful to their god as best they could, in some cases by intensification of Torah. Others aimed to hasten the coming of restoration by political, and sometimes by military, action. As for theology, belief in the one true god remained basic (the creator god, hence the god of the whole world), as did belief in Israel's election by this one god (who can therefore be given a capital letter, 'God'; the fact that scholarship uses this form unthinkingly has not been healthy for discussion of ancient theology). The *purpose* of this election is not so often noticed, but is, I suggest, vital. Israel's controlling stories sometimes ended simply with its own vindication, but more often than not they included the idea that its god, in vindicating it, would *thereby* act in relation to the whole world, whether in blessing or in judgment or both (e.g. Tobit 13—14). Israel's vocation had to do, in other words, with the creator's plan for the whole creation. God called Abraham to deal with the problem of Adam. This theme, marginalized in many contemporary discussions and some ancient ones, is central to (e.g.) Isaiah 40—55, and is visible also in the final redaction of the Pentateuch. Both, clearly, are passages on which Paul drew heavily.

[3] Cf. Petersen 1985.

[4] *New Testament and the People of God*, Part 3. Cf. Sanders 1992.

[5] On the idea of continuing exile, see, e.g., Baruch; Tob. 13–14; CD; *1 En.* 85–90; and elsewhere, studied in, e.g., Steck 1967, 1968, 1980; and many other writers.

Both, in particular, focus attention on the *righteousness of god*. Here I think the main thrust of Käsemann's point is established, that in Jewish literature the phrase refers to the creator god's own righteousness, not 'a righteousness which comes from/avails with god'. But Käsemann's subsidiary point (that the phrase formed a technical *and noncovenantal* term within Second Temple Judaism) is misleading. This divine righteousness always was, and remained throughout the relevant Jewish literature, the *covenant faithfulness* of god. The [**34**] fact that, as Käsemann observed, this 'righteousness' includes the idea of the justice of the creator being put into effect vis-à-vis the whole cosmos does not mean that the covenantal idea has been left behind. It should remind us that the covenantal idea itself always included in principle the belief that when the creator/covenant god acted on behalf of Israel, this would have a direct relation to the fate of the whole world, to the rooting out of evil and injustice from the whole creation.

Paul's Christian theological reflection begins, I suggest, from within exactly this matrix of thought, with the realization that *what the creator/covenant god was supposed to do for Israel at the end of history, this god had done for Jesus in the middle of history*. Jesus as an individual, instead of Israel as a whole, had been vindicated, raised from the dead, after suffering at the hands of the pagans; and this had happened in the middle of ongoing 'exilic' history, not at its end. This by itself would have been enough, I think, to propel a Jewish thinker to the conclusion that Jesus had somehow borne Israel's destiny by himself, was somehow its representative. When we add to this the early Christian belief in Jesus' messiahship, and Paul's own exposition of this theme, there is every reason to suppose that Paul made exactly this connection, and indeed made it central to his whole theology. The creator/covenant god has brought his covenant purpose for Israel to fruition *in Israel's representative, the Messiah, Jesus*.[6] The task I see before us now is to show how the actual argument of Romans, the 'poetic sequence' of the letter, relates to this underlying 'narrative sequence', that is, the theological story of the creator's dealings with Israel and the world, now retold so as to focus on Christ and the Spirit.

The Poetic Sequence of Romans: Introduction

Resisting (of course) the temptation to treat Romans as Paul's systematic theology, it is vital that we consider the question of what Paul was actually arguing for. After going round and round this question for two decades, I find myself in the following position, each element of which is of course controversial but which, I think, makes sense in itself and in its exegetical outworkings.[7] The Roman church, initially consisting most likely of converted Jews and proselytes within the capital, had been heavily affected by Claudius's banishment of Jews in 49. Many of the Christians who were left would

[6] On incorporative messiahship in Paul, see *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 2, 3.
[7] On the debates, see above all Donfried 1991.

undoubt-[**35**]edly have been erstwhile godfearers or proselytes. Unlike the Galatian church, these gentile Christians were not eager to keep the Jewish law, but would be inclined, not least from social pressures within pagan Rome, to distance themselves from it, and to use the opportunity of Claudius's decree to articulate their identity in non-Jewish terms. When the Jews returned to Rome in 54 upon Claudius's death, we may properly assume that the (gentile) church leadership would not exactly be delirious with excitement. Even though, as we must stress, not all Jewish Christians were ardent Torah observers, and even though the church was most likely scattered in different small groups around the large city, internal tensions, reflecting at least in part a Jew–gentile split, were inevitable.

But such internal tensions alone do not explain the letter that Paul actually wrote, any more than it is explained when treated as an abstract book of systematics. All the inventive mirror reading in the world has not yet produced a convincing account of Romans in terms purely of the internal problems of the church, except of course for chapters 14—15. I suggest that the far more plausible setting for the bulk of the letter, and its theological thrust, is the tension that Paul can see as at least a possibility in relation to his *missionary strategy*. He intended to use Rome as his base of operations in the western Mediterranean, as he had used Antioch for the eastern Mediterranean. Antioch had, certainly on one occasion and possibly thereafter, virtually stabbed him in the back, undermining the theological foundation of his mission by insisting on the continuing separation of Jews and gentiles within the Christian fellowship. The so-called Antioch incident of Galatians 2 reflects Paul's opposition to any sense that Jewish Christians are superior to gentile Christians.

What Paul faced as a serious possibility in Rome was the mirror image of the problem he had met in Antioch. In making Rome his new base, there was always the danger, as the rise and popularity of Marcion in the next century was later to show, that local anti-Jewish sentiment would lead gentile Christians not only to isolate Jews within the Christian fellowship but also to marginalize a mission that included Jews. Paul, therefore, wanted to insist that the gospel was 'for the Jew first and also, equally, for the Greek'.[8] How to do this without (a) reinstating exactly that Jewish superiority which he had resisted in Galatians, and (b) giving any opportunity for proto-Marcionism: that, I suggest, was the problem that called forth the letter we now have and explains the outline and the detail of its argument. The strategy that Paul adopted was that of expounding his own fresh understanding of the terms of the covenant, the original divine answer to the problem of Adam. What did the promises to [**36**] Abraham and his family actually say and mean? How were they intended to work out in practice? The technical term for this whole theme is, of course, that which he announces programmatically in 1.17: in the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, is revealed the *covenant faithfulness of god*, the *dikaiosynē theou*. What Paul needed, in order to address the problem of his new home church failing to understand his missionary

[8] For this emphasis in 1.16 (*te prōton kai* ['both first . . . and']), see Cranfield 1975a, 90–1.

strategy, was a large-scale map of the righteousness of god, on which he could locate the Romans' particular situation, and in the light of which he could address other issues, not least those tensions within the church itself which were, so to speak, the internal reflection of the tensions Paul saw within the church's external attitude.

The poetic sequence of Romans, therefore, consists of a major argument, as is now regularly recognized, running not just as far as chapter 8 but all the way to chapter 11. A good deal of this argument, like a good deal of this paper thus far, is a matter of setting up the terms of the discussion so that they can then be used quite directly when the real issue is confronted head on. Once the great argument is complete, Paul can turn to other matters in chapters 12—16. These are not to be marginalized: 15.7–13, for instance, has a good claim to be considered the real summing-up of the entire letter, not merely of 14.1—15.6. But the division between chapters 1—11 and 12—16 is clear enough to allow us to treat the two sections separately for our present purposes.

Romans 1—4

The sequence of thought in chapters 1—11 follows a line that is thoroughly comprehensible within a Jewish covenantal scheme of thought, granted that the latter has been rethought in the light of the belief that its future hope has already in principle come true in the Messiah, Jesus, and is now being implemented by the Spirit.

The full force of the introduction (1.1–17) can best be seen when all else is clear, and will therefore be left until near the end. This introduction, though reaching a climax in 1.16–17, merges in fact directly into the first main section (note the repeated *gar* ['for'] in 1.16–18, continuing, with the occasional *dioti* ['since'] to verse 21). Paul's reason for coming to Rome, which grows out of his self-introduction (1.1–5) in terms of the divine plan, is that he is in the service of the divine covenant faithfulness; but, since the divine covenant with Israel always envisaged, and indeed was the intended solution to, the dark backdrop of human sin, Paul's own exposition of it must restate (and in doing so reshape) the problem that the covenant itself addresses. The standard Jewish critique of paganism (idolatry and immorality) is repeated, intensified, and turned back on to Israel itself (1.18—2.16; 2.17–29). This was [**37**] pretty much standard practice in Jewish sectarianism, as is clear from the Dead Sea Scrolls. At this point Paul's worldview question, What's wrong? seems to require the answer: Not only are pagans idolatrous and immoral, but the people who were supposed to put the world to rights have themselves gone astray. In 2.17–24 Paul is not trying to prove that every individual Jew is immoral etc., but simply that, in view of the existence of some immorality within Israel, the *national* or racial boast cannot be sustained. Nor does Paul deny that Israel is called to be a light to those in darkness, and so forth; only that the present parlous state of Israel means that it is incapable of fulfilling that role.

In Israel's regular tellings of the world's story, such an exposé of paganism (and renegade Judaism) would of course be followed, logically and perhaps textually (i.e., in both the narrative sequence and the poetic sequence), by an account of the true people of the covenant god in and through whom the evil of the rest of the world would be undone.

For Paul, whose critique of Israel is more biting still than that of the Essenes, a second-order problem has been raised. If the covenant was put in place to deal with evil in the world (this is the presupposition Paul shares with his imaginary opponent in 2.17–24), then the failure of the covenant people to be the light of the world means that the covenant itself seems to be under threat. This explains the questions of 3.1–8, which thus anticipate directly those of 9.6, 14, 17, and 11.1, 11. Israel was *entrusted* with the oracles of the creator god (3.2); that is, it was to be the messenger through whom the creator's saving purpose would be carried to the whole world. What is the covenant god to do about the failure of his covenant people (3.2) to be faithful, on their part, to this covenant? Somehow, this god must be faithful nonetheless; and, unless the covenant itself is to be dissolved (which would evoke a strong *mē genoito* ['may it never happen'] from Paul) this means, logically, that there must somehow, after all, be an Israel that is faithful to the covenant, so that through this Israel the creator/covenant god can deal with the evil of the world, and with its consequences (i.e. wrath, as in l.18ff.). What is provided in 3.21–31 is just such a solution. 'The works of Torah', that is, those practices which mark Israel out from among the nations, cannot be the means of demarcating the true covenant people; they merely point up the fact of sin (3.20, looking back to 2.17–24 and on to 5.20 and 7.7–25). Instead, the covenant faithfulness of the creator of the world is revealed *through the faithfulness of Jesus*, the Messiah, for the benefit of all, Jew and gentile alike, who believe.[9]

[**38**] Romans 3.21–31 then expounds this revelation of the divine covenant faithfulness. The central emphasis of this passage, I suggest, lies not on the human faith/faithfulness, which, in place of works-of-Torah, becomes the badge of covenant membership, but on the faithfulness of the Messiah, Jesus, as the means through which the covenant faithfulness of the creator is enacted.

The means of expounding this double theme is thoroughly Jewish. The supreme moment when the covenant god acted to deliver his people, because of the covenant promises, was the exodus. Paul alludes directly to this by saying that people are justified (that is, are reckoned to be within the people of god) 'through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus'. 'Redemption', of course, evokes the slave-market metaphor, but this lies at the surface of the word's meaning. More fundamental by far, for a Jew, was the historical slave market of Egypt, from which Israel's god had liberated it. Now, Paul declares, there has been a new exodus, in which the same god has revealed the full

[9] I here presuppose, of course, one particular answer to the now notorious question *pistis Christou* (faith 'in' or 'of' Christ). I think, actually, that the success of this way of reading this passage is the best argument in favor of the subjective genitive (faith 'of' Christ) in some at least of the key passages.

depth of covenant faithfulness. The covenant was put into place to deal with evil, and that has been accomplished in Christ the *hilastērion* ('propitiation'). Just as regular Jewish discussions of the divine righteousness included the theme of the divine forbearance, so Paul's exposition here envisages the covenant god as waiting patiently, not punishing sin as it deserved (cf. 2.1–6). Alongside the fundamental covenantal meaning of the whole *dikaiosynē theou* complex, there is, of course, the second-order lawcourt metaphor, derived not least from the Hebrew scriptures' image of the righteous judge: the judge must decide the case according to the law, must be impartial, must punish sin, and must vindicate the helpless. Romans 1.18—3.8 made it look as though the creator was faced with an impossible task: these various requirements are apparently mutually exclusive. Romans 3.24–26 claims that in Christ the apparently impossible has been achieved.

Two important results, one exegetical and one theological, follow from this. First, although I think it quite possible that in this passage Paul is drawing on earlier traditions, the main reason why that suggestion has been made in modern scholarship is to be ruled out. If there was a pre-Pauline Jewish-Christian topos about the covenant coming true in Christ, Paul is not opposing it. He is affirming it. The compressed nature of the passage owes more, I suggest, to the fact that Paul has imposed a self-denying ordinance at this point. The main thrust of the letter is not, in this sense, an exposition of the meaning of Jesus' death, of what we would call atonement theology. Paul is content to refer briefly to the achievement of the cross, and pass on.

Second, the divine 'righteousness' (covenant faithfulness) is emphatically not the same as the 'righteousness' that humans have when they are declared to be covenant members. That idea, despite its often invoking the 'forensic' [**39**] setting of the language, fails to understand what that forensic setting means. In the Hebrew lawcourt the judge does not give, bestow, impute, or impart *his own* '*righteousness*' to the defendant. That would imply that the *defendant* was deemed to have conducted the case impartially, in accordance with the law, to have punished sin and upheld the defenseless innocent ones. 'Justification', of course, means nothing like that. 'Righteousness' is not a quality or substance that can thus be passed or transferred from the judge to the defendant. The righteousness of the judge is the judge's own character, status, and activity, demonstrated in doing these various things. The 'righteousness' of the defendants is the status they possess when the court has found in their favor. Nothing more, nothing less. When we translate these forensic categories back into their theological context, that of the covenant, the point remains fundamental: the divine covenant faithfulness is not the same as human covenant membership. The fact that the same word (*dikaiosynē*) is used for both ideas indicates their close reciprocal relationship, not their identity.[10]

[10] The case of Phil. 3.9, often cited as if it were an example of 'god's righteousness' seen as a human status, is not to the point; it is the status of covenant membership that is *ek theou*, '*from* god'. 2 Cor. 5.21, conversely, speaks of the apostles as being themselves the embodiment of the divine covenant faithfulness (cf. 2 Cor. 3), not as having 'god's righteousness' as their own status. On Rom. 10.2–4, see below.

The paragraph concludes (3.27–31) with a similarly brief account of the immediate result of the divine covenant faithfulness being revealed in this way. Specifically, it rules out a revelation according to the model expected within Judaism, that is, national vindication. The ethnic 'boasting', of which Paul had spoken in 2.17–24, is eliminated, in a fashion that leaves two main pillars of Judaism undamaged. Monotheism and Torah, Paul claims, are enhanced, not undermined, in this paradoxical fulfillment of the divine righteousness. Romans 3.30 shows that the *Shema*, the basic Deuteronomic confession of faith which serves as a summary of Torah, is emphatically upheld when the one true god declares Jew and gentile alike to be within his covenant family on the same terms.

Seen from this perspective, the place of Romans 4 in the argument is natural and completely coherent. It is not an 'Old Testament proof' of 'justification by faith', a mere prooftexting exercise resulting from Paul's ransacking of his mental concordance to produce occurrences of the roots *dikaiosynē* and *pistis* ('faith') side by side. Within the poetic sequence of the letter, Paul moves on from the specific claims of 3.21–31 to the wider claim: all this has taken place precisely *in fulfillment of the covenant*. Genesis 15 was the chapter in which the creator god entered into covenant with Abram and promised him not only a large family but also that this family would be delivered in the exo-[**40**]dus (Gen. 15.13f.). If Paul's claim is to be made good, that in Jesus Christ the covenant has been fulfilled, it is vital that he should return to the fundamental covenantal passage and argue in detail for a meaning to the promises that has now come true in the death and resurrection of Jesus. In this case the focus is clear: Abraham is indeed the 'father' of the covenant people of the creator god, but he is not the father 'according to the flesh'. He is the father of all, gentile and Jew alike, who believe in the god who raised Jesus.

I therefore follow Richard Hays in reading 4.1: 'What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?' (Implied answer: No.)[11] But I diverge from his reading in terms of what this question *means*. Hays suggests that the 'we' refers to Jews: 'Do you think that we Jews have considered Abraham our forefather only according to the flesh?' I suggest, rather, that the whole of Romans 4 hinges on the question: does this (i.e. 3.21–31) mean that we Christians, Jews and gentiles alike, now discover that we are to be members of the fleshly family of Abraham? It is the question, in other words, of Galatians, which explains why there are so many echoes of that letter just here. Paul imagines that some Roman Christians will want to say: if you are right, and the covenant faithfulness and promises of Israel's god – yes, and the Torah itself – are fulfilled in Jesus, then you must be saying that Christians belong to the *physical*, fleshly family of Abraham. Romans 4 gains a new coherence, I think, when read as the answer to precisely this question. Verses 2–8: no, since 'works of Torah' are clearly not involved as demarcating Abraham (or, for that matter, David) as god's covenant people. Verses 9–15: no, for Abraham was declared to be in the covenant when uncircumcised; after all, Torah was not involved in the process,

[11] Hays 1985; 1989, 54f.

and could not have been, since it would nullify the promises by calling down wrath. Verses 16–22, whose thesis, the real thrust of the chapter, is stated emphatically and cryptically in verse 16: 'therefore by faith, so that according to grace, so that the promise might be valid for *all the family*, not only "those of the Torah" but also those by the faith of Abraham, *who is the father of us all*'. We have not found Abraham to be our father 'according to the flesh', but rather 'according to grace'; the *kata charin* ('according to grace') of 4.16 is the direct answer to the *kata sarka* ('according to the flesh') of 4.1. Abraham's faith was in the life-giving god; 4.18–21 echoes 1.18–25, showing by implication how Abraham's faith is the genuinely human position, over against the Adamic refusal to give glory to the creator. This clears the way for the QED (*quod erat demonstrandum*) in 4.23–25: since 'we', that is, Christians of all racial backgrounds, share this same faith, we will all, like Abraham, be [**41**] reckoned as covenant members, on the basis of what the creator/covenant god has done in Jesus. Looking back to 3.21–31 (i.e. not merely echoing a randomly chosen pre-Pauline formula), Paul states that Jesus was given up 'for our sins' and raised 'for our justification'. Sin has been dealt with on the cross (3.24–26); the resurrection of Jesus is the vindication for which Israel, the people of Abraham, had been waiting on the basis of the covenant promises; and now all those who belong to Jesus' people, who are characterized by faith in the god who raised him from the dead, are assured that the same divine verdict is pronounced over them, too.

This reading of Romans 4 suggests that the discussion of 'works', 'reward', 'debt', and so forth in verses 3–4 functions as a metaphor within the wider categories of 'works of Torah' (i.e. badges of Jewish ethnic covenant membership). Romans 4.3–8 is sometimes cited as evidence that Paul did after all occasionally write as though he agreed with Martin Luther, as though (that is) the real issue he faced was the possibility of people trying to 'earn' justification by 'good works', by successful moral effort. The *gar* ('for') at the start of verse 2 suggests otherwise. The 'justification by works' of which verse 2 speaks is clearly an explanation of something in verse 1; and verse 1, as we saw, raised the question not whether or not Abraham was a good moralist but whether those who are in Christ have become Abraham's family according to the flesh. I suggest, therefore, that the metaphor of 'earning' by 'working', which Paul exploits in verses 3–8, is secondary, occurring to Paul's mind not because he is thinking about the propriety or otherwise of moral effort, but because he has been speaking of 'works' in connection with 'works of Torah' in the sense already outlined, and now sees a way of ramming the point home.

From this perspective we can see how, in Romans 1—4, Paul has set out the three tenses of justification. Justification is the *future* verdict in 2.1–16: there will come a day when the righteous creator will put the world to rights, and on that day some will be declared to be in the right, even though at the moment, within the poetic sequence of Romans, it is not exactly clear who will come into this category (2.7, 10, 14–16).[12] Justification is also the

[12] I agree with Cranfield 1975a that 2.14–16 indicates the same category that appears in 2.26–29, that is, gentile Christians. But I think that in 2.14ff. Paul leaves this deliberately vague for good rhetorical reasons.

past verdict pronounced over Jesus in his resurrection: as the resurrection declared that Jesus was indeed god's son (1.4), so it declares in principle that he is the true Israel, the vindicated people of the creator. The famous doctrine of 'justification by faith', as articulated in 3.27–30 and undergirded in 4.1–25, consists in the *present* justification (cf. 3.26, *en tō nun kairō* ['in the present time']) in which the past verdict over Jesus is brought forward and applied to [**42**] those who have faith in the god who raised Jesus, and in which the future verdict is brought backwards with the same application and result (cf. 8.1: there is therefore *now* no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus).

At the end of Romans 4, then, just as in principle at the end of chapter 2, Paul has argued that the covenant people now consists of a group that is demarcated not by the badges that signify Jewish ethnicity but by their faith/faithfulness/belief in Jesus, himself the faithful one. More fundamentally, he has argued that the creator god has indeed been true to his covenant with Abraham, in that in Jesus the Messiah the covenant faithfulness which Israel should have offered, through which the dark world would have been enlightened, has now been put into effect. The 'oracles of god', entrusted to Israel, have come true in Jesus.

Romans Seen from the End of Chapter 4

From here we gain one of the most important vantage points from which to view the rest of the letter and its argument. It is not too difficult to see certain *theological* questions that need to be raised and that can in principle be answered, from this standpoint. They can be itemized: (a) How can this verdict properly be announced over a people that is still not in fact completely renewed and morally whole? (b) What does this then say about the divine purpose for Israel itself? (c) What are the implications for the church's life? It is then (apparently) easy to see what happens: (a) is answered in chapters 5—8, (b) in chapters 9—11, (c) in chapters 12—16.

This is all very well; but does it do justice to the letter itself? The sequence we have set out may in some respects correspond, in Petersen's terms, to the *narrative sequence* which underlies the *poetic sequence* of the letter, though this remains to be discussed. But the ease with which we draw up such lists deceives us into thinking that we have thereby solved the problem of the *rhetorical needs* of the letter, that we have automatically understood its *poetic sequence*, as though it were after all simply an abstract theological treatise. If we had lost chapters 5—16, it is by no means clear that we would necessarily have come up with such a list of topics as the right or appropriate way to continue and complete the argument. And without a better understanding of these rhetorical needs, and the way in which Paul has addressed them with this actual letter, we are on dangerous ground in deducing a theological underlying narrative.

Here we must put together our awareness of what Romans 5—16 actually contains with various possible hypotheses about the rhetorical needs. This

could take a lot of space, which we do not have; so I shall cut the corner and [**43**] suggest the hypothesis, and rhetorical strategy, of which I have gradually been convinced over the years. Paul's main purpose, I think, is to demonstrate to a largely gentile Christian audience that (a) although it is true that the covenant promises, and the Torah itself, cannot now be read in terms of the validation of Jewish ethnic covenant membership, and that therefore (b) Jews who have not believed the gospel are therefore, for the moment at least, putting themselves outside covenant membership, (c) this does *not* mean that the Torah was a bad thing, or that the creator god has cut off Israel forever, so that the species 'Jewish Christian' will shortly become extinct. Paul's strategy in arguing this, I suggest, is as follows:

(1) In chapters 5—8 he shows that the full restoration of humankind, and of the cosmos, has in principle been achieved, and that those 'in Christ' are the beneficiaries. This has come about because all the privileges of being the family of Abraham, the chosen people of the creator god, have been given to the Messiah, and to those who are 'in him'; yet, at the same time, the Torah can be vindicated even in its negative task and function. This section is not an abstract exposition of 'the result of justification'; if it were that, the detail of several passages, not least the crucial 7.1—8.11, would be inexplicable. Rather, it is the groundwork for the vital appeal that is to come in chapters 9—11, which is later alluded to in the very revealing remark of 15.27: the gentiles have come to share in the spiritual blessings of Israel, and therefore have a continuing obligation toward ethnic Jews. That this line of thought is present in chapters 5—8 is strikingly confirmed when Paul, summing up the privileges of Israel in 9.4, produces a list of the blessings he has just ascribed to Christ and his worldwide people in chapters 4—8: sonship (8), glory (5; 8), covenants (4; 8), lawgiving (7—8), worship (5.1–5; 8), promises (4), patriarchs (4). The Messiah himself (9.5) is the crowning blessing; and it is the Messiah himself who now belongs not merely to Israel according to the flesh, but also, and primarily, to the community of all who believe the gospel, Jew and gentile alike.

(2) In chapters 9—11 Paul uses the categories developed in chapters 5—8 in order to expound the divine covenant faithfulness, the *dikaiosynē theou*. The purpose of this exposition, as suggested earlier, is to show that the divine intention was from the beginning that Israel according to the flesh should be cast away in order that the world might be redeemed. What has happened to Israel is not an accident (its god simply lost control of the situation, or changed his mind in mid-plan because of its recalcitrance), nor is it a sign that the covenant god has obliterated Jews from his purpose forever. Israel's rejection of the gospel and its 'rejection' by the covenant god are to be seen, as the cross is to be seen, as the strange outworking of the divine plan to deal with the evil of the world; and, if that is so, Jews can and must be welcomed back into the covenant family at any time when they believe the gospel, and such a return [**44**] must be celebrated as a sign of resurrection. Here, I suggest, is the main rhetorical thrust of the whole letter. Romans 11.11–32, focused on verses 18 and 25, states the point toward which Paul has been driving all along: you gentile Christians in Rome will be tempted

to boast over the Jews, but this temptation must be resisted. Yes, they have stumbled; yes, the Torah has been their undoing rather than their salvation; yes, the divine covenant faithfulness paradoxically involved them in being cast away so that the world might be reconciled (11.15). But all these things, so far from meaning that gentile Christians are now the truest sort of covenant members, means rather that gentile Christians owe the Jews an incalculable debt, cognate indeed with the debt they owe the Messiah himself, the Jew *par excellence* whose casting away meant reconciliation for the world. And that debt must be discharged in terms of a continuing mission to unbelieving Israel; indeed, the very gentile mission itself has this as one of its sidelong purposes (11.13f.). Thus it is that the 'gospel' – that is, the announcement about Jesus the Jewish Messiah and his death and resurrection – becomes the power of the creator god for the salvation of all who believe, the Jew first and also, equally, the Greek; thus it is that the covenant faithfulness of this god is revealed in this message, on the basis of, and for the benefit of, 'faith' (l.16f.). This overview gives, I hope, the flavor of what is to come. We must now plunge into some details.

Romans 5—8

Romans 5

As is often noted, 5.1–11 anticipates the conclusion of the whole section, 8.31–39. Its central thrust may be stated simply: if the creator god has acted in the death of Jesus on behalf of people who were then sinners, he will certainly act again at the last to deliver them, now that they are already his people. This draws into the center of Paul's focus the great theme of the *love* of this god. A moment's thought will reveal that this is every bit as much a *covenantal* theme as 'righteousness'; indeed, it may be the case that Paul implicitly recognizes that *dikaiosynē* does not carry all the overtones of *ṣĕdāqâ* ('righteousness'), and now moves into the realm *agapē* ('love') in order to redress the balance. Not, I hasten to add, that he is simply working in the abstract; again, it is rather that the rhetorical needs of his argument demand that this aspect of the divine covenant faithfulness be brought out more strongly, without leaving the other behind.

If 5.1–11 gives a foretaste of the conclusion to the present argument in the end of chapter 8, so 5.1–5 contains the sum of chapters 5—8 in a pair of tight-[**45**]packed sentences. Indeed, 5.1–2 says it all even more compactly: being justified by faith (chapters 1—4 summed up), we have peace with this god through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to the grace in which we presently stand (the cultic blessing previously associated with Israel's temple worship), and we rejoice in the hope of the divine glory (which Adam lost, 3.23; which is to be restored in Christ, 8.17–30). Already the great transfer has begun – the transfer according to which Israel's hope is made over to the Messiah and thence to his people. It was a characteristic claim of sectarian Jews that the glory of Adam would belong

to them at the last.[13] Paul fastens on this hope as the ultimate restoration of genuine humanity which, anticipated in the resurrection of Jesus, will be given to all the Messiah's people. The Jew-plus-gentile church has now inherited this supposedly Jewish privilege; Paul's stressing of it throughout this section is aimed both at showing gentile Christians where their roots lie and, though perhaps not by means of this letter itself, 'making my fellow Jews jealous and so saving some of them' (11.14).

The same is true, paradoxically, of 5.3–5, in which suffering itself is claimed as a sign of hope. The present suffering of the people of the true god, as they await their divine vindication, is also a Jewish theme now transferred, via the Messiah, to all his people. The hope that arises out of suffering is certain, because the love of god has been poured out in our hearts by the Spirit (5.5); not here, I think, the divine love for his people (Paul comes to that in 5.6–10), but the love of the people for their god, as in 8.28, within the same sequence of thought (compare 1 Corinthians 2.9; 8.3). The *Shema* is at last fulfilled: in Christ and by the Spirit the creator/covenant god has created a people that, in return for redemption, will love him from the heart. The people defined as god's people by faith are the true covenant people, inheriting all the covenant blessings.

Chapter 5 thus unfolds, in characteristic Pauline fashion, from its tight initial statement of this *result* of justification (5.1–2), through a broader development (5.3–5), into a full statement of the position reached now in the epistle as a whole (5.6–11). This last draws out, in particular, the correlation between present justification, based on the death of Jesus, and the future verdict in which the justified people will be rescued from final wrath. The echoes awakened here include 2 Maccabees 7.37f.; *4 Maccabees* 17.20–22: the death of Jesus has achieved what the martyrs (within those retellings of the story) had hoped to achieve, namely, the turning away of divine wrath from the people of god. The difference, of course, is that the community thereby rescued is not now the nation of Israel, but the Jew-plus-gentile family as set out in 3.21—4.25. [**46**] And the result is that the boast that was disallowed to the nation of Israel (2.17–24) is restored to the people thus created: 'we boast in god through our Lord Jesus Christ' (5.11). At every point in these eleven verses, that which is predicated of the true family of Abraham, those who are 'justified by faith', is that which would have been seen as the privilege of Israel. The great second paragraph of chapter 5 (verses 12–21) can therefore at last tell the story of the world at its widest level. In Jewish retellings, Israel, or some subset of Israel, emerged as the people through whom the sin of Adam would finally be defeated. In Paul's retelling, as we might have anticipated on the basis of 3.21—4.25, it is in Christ, not in national Israel, that Adam's trespass is finally undone.

Two key modifications in the normal tellings of the story result from this. First, there is actually an imbalance between Adam and Christ: before Paul can move into the direct comparison (5.18–21), he must spell out the ways in which Christ does *more* than Adam (5.15–17). This is one of Paul's most

[13] E.g. 1QS 4.22f.; CD 3.19f.; 1QH 17.14; 4QpPs37 3.1f.

complex passages, grammatically as well as theologically, but I think the right way through it is as follows. Israel's obedience/faithfulness should have been the means of undoing the problem of Adam, of humanity as a whole (2.17–24; 3.2f.); as we saw, the death of Christ (which is clearly the subject throughout this paragraph) functions as the true obedience/faithfulness of Israel through which this purpose is achieved. Romans 5.12–21 thus restates, in multiple and overlapping ways, what had been argued in 3.21–26. Christ has offered not merely Adam's obedience, but Israel's, the 'obedience' that was to begin where the 'many trespasses' of Adam left off (5.16). Christ, in other words, did not start where Adam started, but where Adam (and Israel) finished. Coming into the reign of death, he reinstated the divinely intended reign of human beings (5.17).

Second, the place of the Torah in the scheme is radically modified. Israel's normal tellings of the story would have included Torah as part of the means whereby Israel, defined as the people of the creator god, were enabled to escape the entail of Adam's sin and find themselves constituted as the true humanity. In Paul's summary, completely in line with 2.25–29; 3.20, and 4.14f., the law functions to *intensify the sin of Adam*: *nomos de pareisēlthen hina pleonasē to paraptōma* ('the law came in on the side in order that the trespass might increase', 5.20). The story is now complete in Christ 'apart from Torah' (3.21); the Torah functions *within* the critique of humanity as a whole, just as it had done in 2.17ff. within 1.18—3.20. This point is vital for understanding chapter 7 when we come to it in due course. Torah, instead of lifting up Israel to a level above the rest of the human race, simply throws a bright spotlight on the fact that Israel, too, is 'in Adam', is 'fleshly', is 'sold under sin'.

[**47**] Is the Torah, then, to be cast off as useless, as a bad thing now happily got rid of? *Mē genoito* ('May it never happen!'). 'In the very place where sin abounded, grace also abounded.' Here is the rhetorical argument of the letter in a nutshell. Yes, the Torah simply intensifies the sin of Adam in the people of Israel. No, this does not lead to Marcionism. How this is so is yet to be explained; it will take all of 7.1—8.11, and chapters 9—11 as a whole, to do so. Paul, as ever, states cryptically that which he will later elaborate.

It seems to me that 5.12–21 thus functions *both* as the place where the 'poetic sequence' of the letter is summed up *and* as the place where the underlying 'narrative sequence' of Paul's theology finds its most fundamental statement. Taking the latter first, and looking forward to our later summary: the story of the creator and the creation, of the covenant purpose of salvation, of the strange twist that this purpose has apparently included, and of how that twist is finally resolved, are all here summed up. Taking the former (the 'poetic' or rhetorical intention of this specific letter), it seems that Paul has deliberately summed up chapters 5—8 in 5.1–11 in order that, by thus assuming for a moment the conclusion he will reach by the end of chapter 8, he can now offer this bird's eye view of the whole story. This will then enable him to develop specific aspects of the story in chapters 6—8. His design at this stage is to give the (predominantly gentile) Roman Christians exactly this perspective on the story of salvation, so that they may understand

the positive purpose hidden within the apparently negative purpose of Torah and so may come to understand the positive divine purposes for the Jews at present hidden under the negative purpose of which the Roman Christians are at the moment somewhat too enthusiastically aware.

We should notice, most particularly, what Paul has achieved rhetorically and theologically at this point. Adam's story is the pagan story (1.18–32); and paganism, seen from the Jewish/Christian perspective, is the attempt to grasp at a form of human fulfillment, at a form of exploitation of the riches of the created world, without seeking to do so in the context of gratitude to the creator god, and so without proper responsibility. As a result, the end of the story is death; those who do not worship the life-giving god in whose image they are made come to share the corruption and decay of the present created order that they have worshiped instead. Paul's retelling of Adam's story, implicitly throughout Romans 1—4 and explicitly in 5.12–21, is therefore, as well as everything else, a way of saying: the true fulfillment you seek, the true human life, is to be found in Jesus Christ. He is the creator's means of rescuing and restoring, not simply of condemning, the world of humans and the wider creation. He is the way to recapture the lost glory (3.23). And he is this because he is the climax of the Jewish story. The glory is regained by the Jewish *route*, [**48**] though not by the Jewish *means*. Adam's race, like Israel itself, has been in exile; Jesus has drawn that exile on to himself. In offering to the covenant god the obedience that should have characterized Israel (3.22; 5.15–17), he has become the means of Adam's rescue. Thus, to look ahead to the rest of chapters 5—8, Jesus is the means of Adam's exodus (chapter 6); he is the means of Adam's Sinai, Pentecost (8.1–11); he is the means of Adam's entering at last upon his promised land (8.17ff.). All through, Paul is telling the Jewish story as the true-Adam story, in such a way as to undercut the stories both of paganism and of non-Christian Judaism. All that paganism itself had to offer, or sought to grasp, is relativized by the Jewish story, so that no pagan can boast; and all that non-Christian Judaism had to offer, or sought to grasp, is relativized by what Paul now tells as the true-Jewish story, so that no Jew can boast. The consonance of this conclusion with Romans 11.28–32 provides initial confirmation that it may be a thoroughly Pauline way of reading the text.

Romans 6

From this perspective, we can see that chapter 6 is not a detached treatment of 'the basis of Christian ethics', nor indeed simply a warding-off of the standard response that was made to Luther's gospel ('if we are justified by faith, not good deeds, shall we therefore not do good deeds?'). Rather, it is in effect the opposite question-and-answer to 4.1. If 3.21–31 could have been taken to imply that Christians were to be regarded as physical members of Abraham's family, 5.12–21 could be taken to imply that Christians were simply a new variety of pagans. If the Torah-defined people of god had been shown to be as Adamic as everybody else, does this not mean that one is simply left in the category of 'sinners', confidently expecting that grace will

come and find one there? Of course not, replies Paul: the people of god in Christ are marked out not by Torah but by the death and resurrection of Christ, which can be summarized, in the light of 3.21—5.21, as 'righteousness' (6.16, 18, 19, 20) or, in the light of 5.12–21, as 'obedience' (6.16). Resurrection, the great Jewish hope, has already happened; in other words, the entail of Adam's sin has already been broken, and those who are baptized have entered into the community of those for whom this was true, and can be 'reckoned' as true, not by a supreme effort of moral will but by calculating what is in fact the case (that is the meaning of 'reckon' in 6.11).

This has, of course, the force of a general moral appeal: no longer live like pagans, since you are no longer 'in Adam'. But the overall rhetorical purpose of the passage is much wider. The 'sanctification' or holiness which Israel had [**49**] thought was its in virtue of its election is now to be found in the risen Christ and in his people (6.19, 22). There can be no slide back into paganism, but it is not Torah that checks such a slide. It is the fact and meaning of baptism itself. Baptism has accomplished, graphically, the statement of present justification: the death and resurrection of Christ are brought forward into the present, and the verdict of the last day is truly anticipated. The 'old human' (6.6), which seems to mean 'the old Adamic identity', has been put to death. A new identity is given in Christ. Those who are thus 'in Christ' (which I take to mean 'belonging to the people of the Messiah') are to be regarded as those who have already died and been raised. In the context of first-century Judaism, this means that they are the eschatological people of the covenant god.

Torah has had nothing to do with their being defined in this way. Romans 6.14b ('Sin will not have dominion over you, *since you are not under Torah but under grace*') appears intrusive in the argument – until it is realized that the whole of chapter 6 stands under the rubric of 5.20–21. Paul is simply locating the church on the outline map of the divine purpose which he had sketched at that point. Torah, it there appeared, had been the divine instrument in confirming Israel under sin. Here, since (as the Roman church would have readily agreed) Christians are not under Torah, the rule of sin need have no dominion over them. Paul, in allowing this to stand, is of course letting the argument build up to the moment when he will need to mount his major defense of Torah, that is, in 7.7ff. At this stage he is stressing the general point that coming out from under Torah does *not* mean that one is therefore simply a pagan all over again, a 'sinner' without the law (6.1f., 15; cf. Galatians 2.17). This is the fundamental point from which he will argue, in chapter 11, his much more sharp-edged case, that one specific variety of pagan attitude, namely, anti-Judaism, has no place within the church.

Romans 7.1—8.11

If the material of chapter 6 is drawn from 5.12–21, the same is even more obviously true of 7.1—8.11. The way through the complex little argument of 7.1–4 is found by reading 5.20 in the light of 6.6 and 6.14f.: Torah binds 'you' to Adam; Adam, the 'old you', dies in baptism; 'you' are therefore free

to belong to another – namely, Christ – without Torah having anything to say about the matter. The problem, of course, is that the word 'you' is made to do double duty; there is a 'you' that is bound to Adam by means of Torah, so that this 'you' cannot but bear fruit for death, and there is a 'you' that is now set free from this bondage. For the full import of this to come out, [**50**] we must remind ourselves again of how Israel would normally have told its own story. Adam's sin has infected the whole world; but (so Saul the Pharisee would have said) the creator god has given his Torah to Israel, so that Israel, married to this god – with the Torah as her marriage covenant – may be his people, his redeemed humanity. Putting this story beside Paul's, we see the following picture. Israel embraces the Torah as the divinely given covenant charter; but it also, in doing so, is embracing its covenant with Adam, and hence with sin and death.

This, to be sure, is complex. But such complexity cannot count as an argument against the exegesis *for we meet the identical complexity in the rest of the chapter*. In 7.13–20 we find the double 'you', only now in the first person instead of the second. And in 7.21–25 we find the double Torah: Torah, on the one hand, recognized as the god-given law; Torah, on the other hand, recognized as the bond with sin and death. The picture is the same as in 7.1–4.

What, then, is Paul saying by means of this highly rhetorical picture of Israel, Adam, and Torah? Seven things seem to me to emerge, all of immense importance for Pauline theology in general and that of Romans in particular.

First, as to the purpose and internal division of the passage. The chapter is a defense of Torah against any suggestion that it is identical with 'sin' (7.7–12) or that by itself it was the ultimate cause of death (7.13–20). These are the most appropriate paragraph divisions (despite Nestle–Aland, and some other texts which insert a paragraph break after verse 13), because of the clear question-and-answer format of 7.7, 12, 13, 20. One should translate 7.21a: 'this, then, is what I find about Torah': verses 21–25 are the conclusion to the argument, in which it becomes apparent that the Torah *bifurcates*, exactly as, by implication, in 7.1–4. The result is that Torah, the thing after which 'I' strive when wanting to do what is right, *also* brings evil 'close at hand' (7.21b). We should stress that *nomos* means 'Torah' throughout. Nothing is gained, and everything lost, by flattening it out into a general 'principle' – as though Paul were not discussing Torah itself in every line of the passage. The same is true as we move into 8.1–7, where it becomes clear that the Torah is vindicated in and through the action of god in Christ and the Spirit.

Second, the flow of the argument from 7.7 on may be grasped by seeing it, in its two main sections, as the demonstration of what happens to Israel as a result of Torah. Romans 7.7–12 deals with the *arrival* of Torah as a one-time event; hence the aorist tenses. Romans 7.13–20 deals with the *continuing state* of Israel 'living under Torah'; hence the present tenses. In each case what actually happens could be deduced from 5.20. In the first case, Israel, upon Torah's arrival, acts out the fall of Adam; hence the clear echoes of Genesis 3 in verse 11. In the second case, Israel, continuing to live with Torah,

acts out the death of Adam. Whether or not it is true, as I have cautiously suggested elsewhere, that **[51]** in 7.13–20 there are hints of the story of Cain,[14] it is clearly the case that the Israel that lives under Torah continues to carry about the mark of sin and death that results from being the child of Adam.

Third, the rhetorical 'I' is best explained as an advance hint of the position Paul will take up in chapters 9—11. It might have seemed all too easy for Paul to speak of 'Israel' as though he himself were not personally involved, as though he had not himself lived in the position of which he here speaks. That would have been to play into the hands of the Roman church, ready to pick up any direct anti-Israel or anti-Torah argument and build their own construct upon it. Rather, he identifies himself with the Israel thus spoken of; this is his story, the sad tale of the *autos egō* ('I myself'; compare 9.3). This does *not*, however, mean that it is what we would call 'autobiography'. As is often pointed out, Philippians 3.6 pretty certainly rules out any suggestion that Romans 7 describes 'what it felt like at the time'. Rather, the passage is (as its derivation from chapters 5 and 6 should make clear) a specifically *Christian* analysis of the plight of Israel under Torah.

Fourth, the frequently remarked parallel between 7.13–20 and passages in various pagan writers, describing the puzzle whereby virtuous persons find themselves unable to accomplish the moral good that they approve with their minds (e.g. Ep., *Discourses* 2.26[15]), is perhaps best explained as follows. Paul's argument all along has been that Torah, in paradoxical contrast to its apparent intention, binds Israel to Adam, that is, to ordinary 'sinful' pagan humanity. I suggest that in this passage, as a rhetorical flourish designed to appeal not least to a Roman audience that would have known this topos within pagan literature, Paul says, in effect: those who live under Torah have as their crowning achievement just this, that they come up to the level of – the puzzled pagan moralists. If this is the correct reading, it is actually not just a matter of a clever bit of rhetorical flourish, designed to put Torah adherents firmly in their place by showing that they do not in fact get beyond Epictetus, Ovid, or Aristotle himself. Rather, it also makes the point to the Roman ex-pagans, the point that prepares the way for 11.18, 25: Do not imagine that your pagan tradition makes you any more special than these noble Jews, who rightly embrace the Torah only to find that it becomes the unwitting vehicle of death. If they fail, the level to which they fall *back* is the level that, outside of the divine grace revealed in Christ, you yourselves would be proud to *attain* as the summit of your moral progress.

Fifth, Paul has so analyzed the failure of Israel and/or Torah that the solution to the problem lies close at hand. I have elsewhere shown that the refer-**[52]**ence to the sin-offering in 8.3 is exactly suited to the plight outlined in 7.13–20.[16] The sin-offering was designed to deal with sins that were committed either in ignorance or unwillingly; and that, Paul has said, is exactly the sort of sin of which Israel is here guilty. As in 10.3, he claims Israel's

[14] *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 12.

[15] Cf. also 1.20.17, where Epictetus argues against the Epicureans, who say that 'the good' resides 'in my flesh' (cf. Rom. 7.18).

[16] *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 11.

ignorance as part of the reason why it may now be rescued. It has not sinned 'with a high hand', deliberately going against the covenant plan of its god. On the contrary, it has honestly believed that it is following it to the letter. In the same way, the failure of Torah does not lead to Marcionism. Torah remains 'holy and just and good' (7.12), even though it cannot give the life it promised (7.10). When the creator god achieves, in Christ and by the Spirit, what Torah by itself could not do, this functions as an affirmation, not a denial, of Torah and its validity (8.1–11).[17]

Sixth, the underlying purpose of Torah, the reason why the covenant god gave it in the first place, knowing that it would have these negative consequences, is here at last made clear, in a way that, like so much else in chapter 7, points on directly to chapters 9—11. This is what I have sometimes called 'the good side of the bad side of the law': instead of dividing the functions of Torah up into negative and positive, as is sometimes done, it seems to me that, *within* what is regarded as the 'negative' side of Torah's work, Paul sees the most positive role of all. This sixth point needs to be elaborated in a sequence of moves, as follows:

(a) The covenant, we must remind ourselves, was put in place to deal with the sin of the world. If Torah is the initial seal of the covenant, this must be its ultimate purpose.
(b) Torah, Paul said in 5.20, came in *in order that* sin might abound. That is, the divine purpose in the giving of Torah was in order to draw Adam's trespass to its full height precisely in Israel.
(c) This puzzling 'in order that' is repeated and amplified in 7.13. Sin, *in order that it might appear as sin*, worked death through the Torah, *in order that sin might become exceedingly sinful*.
(d) I suggest that in all of this Paul sees the hidden divine purpose, in a manner not unlike that hinted at in 1 Corinthians 2.8, where the 'rulers of this world' did not realize what they were doing in crucifying the Lord of glory. God's covenant purpose, it seems, is to draw the sin of all the world on to Israel, *in order that it may be passed on to the Messiah and there dealt with once and for all*. 'Sin' is lured into doing its worst in Israel, in order that it may exhaust itself in the killing of the representative Messiah, after which there is nothing more that it can do. Romans 8.3f. is the great conclusion to this line of thought, pro-[**53**]viding one of the most thoroughgoing statements of the achievements of Jesus' death anywhere in Paul. Torah could not of itself condemn sin in the flesh in such a way that it (sin) was fully dealt with. It could only heap up sin in the one place. Nor could Torah of itself give the life which, tantalizingly, it held out. In Christ the covenant god has done the former; in the Spirit this god has done the latter. The death of Jesus, according to 8.3, was the means whereby sin was condemned. (It is not strictly Pauline to say that *Jesus* was condemned; rather, *sin* was condemned *in his flesh*.) The resurrection

[17] *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 10.

of Jesus is the guarantee that the Spirit, by whom this was accomplished, will also raise to life all those who are in Christ (8.9–11).

(e) The apparently negative purpose of Torah, therefore, takes its place within what is essentially the most positive of purposes: the divine plan to deal with sin once and for all. This line of thought depends, of course, on the nexus between the Messiah and Israel: as Israel's representative, the Messiah takes on to himself the weight of heaped-up Adamic sin which Torah had left hanging over Israel's head. This, I suggest (at the level of the underlying narrative sequence of the letter), is the central significance which Paul here wishes to attach to Jesus' death. The 'failure' of Israel is cognate with, and indeed designedly preparatory for, the crucifixion of the Messiah, without which, for Paul, there would be no covenant renewal (Galatians 2.21).

(f) Israel's 'failure', therefore, was part of the strange covenant plan of the creator god whereby this god intended to deal with the world's sin. This, I suggest (looking ahead once more to chapters 9—11), is the theme that emerges at two crucial points: the 'predestinarian' passages in 9.14–29, and the theme of Israel's casting away in 11.11–15. In the first of these, the 'hardening' of ethnic Israel is seen as the strange means whereby the whole people of the creator god can be saved, just as Pharaoh's 'hardening' was the necessary precondition for the exodus. In the second, Paul speaks of Israel's stumble as somehow instrumental in the salvation of the world. The two belong closely together, and both point to the eventual thrust of his argument to the Roman church: if *this* is why Israel has 'stumbled' – so that you gentiles can obtain the salvation won for you in the death of the Messiah – then you have no room to boast, and Israel has no reason to regard itself as forever cut off. Its stumble was necessary as part of the preparation for the crucifixion, both historically and theologically; now that this has been accomplished, Israel itself can once again be rescued, and indeed attain an honorable (and not a second-class) position within the renewed people of god. The gospel is 'to the Jew *first*, and also equally to the Greek'.

These six points about Romans 7.1—8.11 lead to a final, seventh, one. The action of the creator/covenant god in raising his people from the dead (8.11) is to be seen as the final great act of covenant renewal and vindication. **[54]** Resurrection is not, as it were, merely the glad human destiny for the members of a new religion that has left Judaism and Torah thankfully behind. In declaring that Israel's god will raise all those in Christ on the last day, Paul is explicitly transferring to this Jew-plus-gentile family one of the greatest of all Jewish expectations.

Romans 8.12–39

All of this clears the way for 8.12–30, in which the themes of the letter so far are caught up and developed within a new argument: if the creator has

thus dealt with the problem of Adam, this same god will thereby deal with the problem of all creation. In many first-century Jewish retellings of Israel's story, as in many subsequent Christian ones, this dimension of the covenant purpose was often forgotten; but Paul keeps it firmly in mind.

Before he can turn (in chapters 9—11) to the specific issue he wishes to address to the Roman church, he must in this way show them that the entire covenant purpose is thus fulfilled in Christ and by the Spirit. The Christ-people are indeed the children of this god (8.12–17), inheriting the title ('son of god') Israel was given at the exodus; as a result, they are not to 'go back to Egypt', but to go on through the present sufferings to the glory that is yet to come, the renewal of all creation, which will follow as a direct consequence of the resurrection of those in Christ (8.15, 17–25).[18] Here is the note of *hope* which has been sounded by implication so often since it was introduced in 5.2: hope for the renewal of all creation, in a great act of liberation for which the exodus from Egypt was simply an early type. As a result, all that Israel hoped for, all that it based its hope on, is true of those who are in Christ. Those he foreknew, he predestined; those he predestined, he called; those he called, he justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Likewise, all that paganism had to offer, in its deification of the created order, is shown up as a great parody of the true Christian understanding. The creation is not god, but it is designed to be flooded with god: the Spirit will liberate the whole creation. Underneath all this, of course, remains christology: the purpose was that the Messiah 'might be the firstborn among many siblings' (8.29). Paul is careful not to say, or imply, that the privileges of Israel are simply 'transferred to the church', even though, for him, the church means Jews-and-gentiles-together-in-Christ. Rather, the destiny of Israel has devolved, entirely appropriately within the Jewish scheme, upon the Messiah. All that the new family inherit, they inherit in him.

[**55**] Romans 8.31–39, like a musical coda, picks up the themes of the entire letter thus far and celebrates them in good rhetorical style. The divine love, which has been under the argument ever since 5.6–10, reemerges as the real major theme of the entire gospel message. This is covenant love, promised to Abraham and his family, a family now seen to be the worldwide people who benefit from Jesus' death. Since this love is precisely the creator's love, it remains sovereign even though the powers of earth and heaven may seem to be ranged against it. Since it is the love of the covenant god, it rests on his unbreakable promise. The language of the lawcourt and the language of the marriage contract thus merge (8.33–34, 35–39), with both of them now revealed as vital metaphorical aspects of the one more fundamental truth, which can be expressed both as *dikaiosynē theou* ('righteousness of god') and as *agapē theou* ('love of god'): the covenant faithfulness of the creator god, revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah and the gift of the Spirit.

[18] I am grateful to Sylvia Keesmaat for drawing my attention to aspects of the exodus imagery in this passage that I had not hitherto noticed.

I have stressed that much of Romans 5—8 must be understood, within the poetic/rhetorical sequence of the letter, as deliberate and explicit preparation for what is to come in chapters 9—11. Paul is never, in this passage, simply celebrating the Christian hope (or whatever) for its own sake. The exhilaration of chapter 8, though clearly genuine and wholehearted in itself, is also at the same time a brilliant rhetorical device. The Roman readers, like any sensitive modern reader, could not but be swept up and carried along with the flow of Paul's discourse and its magnificent conclusion. Reading this passage (or, more likely to begin with, hearing it read), there could be no thought for them of lapsing back into the old paganism of 1.18–32. The glory of the genuine humanity, created in Christ and guaranteed finally by the Spirit, is here presented with the greatest literary and theological power. This is quite deliberate and prepares the way for the next section, totally different in mood and yet so intimately connected in theme. The stark contrast has nothing to do with different sections of the letter being loosely stitched together, or with a different theme inserted after a long lapse in dictation. The shift in mood is as much a feature of rhetorical skill as the sustained drama of chapter 8. As we have already seen, the underlying force of this whole section has been to say: all these blessings that you have, you have because the creator promised them to Israel, and has now given them, in Christ, to you. Therefore . . . what are we to say about Israel itself?

It is thus no denial of this poetic/rhetorical point to suggest that, in terms of the underlying narrative sequence, or theological story, of the letter, Romans 8 stands out as one of Paul's greatest, fullest, and most mature summaries of the gospel. Almost any Pauline topic that one might wish to discuss would lead to this chapter sooner or later. Just because we are rightly com-[**56**]mitted to reading it in context, we should not fail to notice as we do so the way in which it says, concisely, so many different things that Paul spells out in more detail elsewhere, and does so with a rhetorical force and flourish unparalleled even by Paul's own standards. We may suggest with some plausibility that we have here a sequence of argument and preaching which the apostle had used on many occasions, and which he adapted for its present purpose. If anything, it is Romans 8, not Romans 9—11, that gives us a hint of the sort of well-used sermon that Paul carried around in his head, or even (as C. H. Dodd suggested) in his knapsack.

Romans 9—11

If we came 'cold' to Romans 9—11, one of the first things that might strike us would be its story line.[19] Paul begins with Abraham, continues with Isaac and Jacob, moves on to Moses and the exodus, and by the end of chapter 9

[19] I have written in detail about these chapters in *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 13. I am deliberately not attempting to summarize what I have said there, but to take a fresh run at the passage and see what emerges in the light of this paper so far.

has reached the prophets and their predictions of exile and restoration. Then, in 10.6f., he expounds that passage in Deuteronomy (chapter 30) which predicts the return from exile, and in 11.1ff. develops this in terms of the 'remnant' idea, before reaching, toward the end of chapter 11, the great predictions of covenant renewal from Isaiah and Jeremiah. He narrates, in other words, the covenant history of Israel, in a way that, at least in outline, is parallel to many other great retellings of this story in Jewish literature.

This is already enough to alert us to a feature often ignored by scholars: that the whole passage is about the *covenant faithfulness of Israel's god*. Discussion of this cannot be limited to the occurrences of the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* (10.3 twice); when that phrase occurs in that context, its force is to sum up the whole argument so far. Israel was 'ignorant of the righteousness of god'; that is, Israel did not understand or recognize what its god was doing within its history *in fulfillment of his covenant purposes*. Since Paul has already spoken of the divine righteousness being revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus, it is therefore no surprise that this 'ignorance' of Israel is directly correlated with its failure to believe the gospel, which is, of course, the material starting point of the whole section (9.1–5) as well as the focus of passages such as 9.30–33. The divine covenant purposes, it appears, are those that have been put into operation throughout the story. Israel's god has been narrowing it down to a point, choosing this son of Abraham and not that, choosing some of the wilderness generation and not others, making Israel, in fact, the vessel [**57**] of his wrath even as Pharaoh himself had been (9.21–23). This raises the question of the justice of such divine action (9.14, 17), which is, of course, the question of the *dikaiosynē theou*.

This, I suggest, is where the theme of 7.1—8.11 comes most strikingly to our aid. Paul is not talking about a double predestination of the Calvinist type. He is speaking of the way in which Israel's vocation to be the people of the creator god, including specifically its calling to be the 'vessels of wrath', was the focal point of this god's plan to save the world. He can then sum up this theme in those often-puzzled-over phrases in chapter 11: 'by their trespass, salvation has come to the gentiles' (11.11); 'their trespass means riches for the world, and their failure riches for the gentiles' (11.12); 'their casting away means the reconciliation of the world' (11.15); 'you have received mercy because of their unbelief' (11.30); 'they have disbelieved on account of your mercy' (11.31). This repeated emphasis is clearly a major theme of 11.11–32.

It can scarcely be a new idea introduced at that point; it seems to refer to something already spelled out, which Paul there summarizes. I suggest that it all makes sense, in itself and within Romans in particular, if we envisage Paul's train of thought as running something like this:

(a) Israel's vocation to be the covenant people of the creator always envisaged that it would be the means of rescuing the whole world.
(b) This vocation could be, and was, distorted into the idea of Israel's privileged position over against the rest of the world, but in Christ this distortion has been shown up for what it is.

(c) The divine intention was, always, to deal with the evil of the world ('sin', personified as in chapter 7) by heaping it up into one place and there passing and executing a sentence of judgment upon it.
(d) This 'place' was always intended to be the Messiah himself.
(e) The necessary precondition for this judging of sin in the person of the Messiah was that Israel, the people of the Messiah, should itself become the place where sin was gathered together, in order that this burden might then be passed on to the Messiah alone.
(f) Israel was thus, as part of its covenant vocation, called to be the 'vessels of wrath', the place where the wrath of the creator against the wickedness of the whole creation would be gathered together in order that it be dealt with.
(g) This was never intended to be a permanent condition. Israel was like a bomb disposal squad called to take the devastating device to a safe place to be detonated, and *then to leave it there*. If Israel clings to its status of privilege, refusing to give it up, it is like the members of a bomb squad who are so proud of their important mission that they become reluctant to leave the bomb behind.
(h) There can therefore be no covenant future for those Israelites who refuse to abandon their 'own', that is, their ethnic, status of covenant membership [**58**] (10.3). Christ is the end of that road, the final goal of the covenant purpose which always intended to deal with sin and its effects (10.4, with all its deliberate ambiguities in play).
(i) But those who see, in Christ, the clue to what the creator/covenant god has righteously been doing in Israel's history, and who grasp this in faith – these Israelites can always regain their full covenant status, and when this happens it is to be a cause of great rejoicing within the community as a whole (11.11ff.).

This, I suggest, is perhaps the main underlying theme of chapters 9—11, and it shows as well as anything else the close integration of the passage with the line of thought in the earlier parts of the letter. Building on the detailed analysis of the purpose and effect of Torah in chapter 7, Paul has told the covenant history of Israel in such a way as to bring out the strange truth of Israel's being cast away so that the world might be redeemed. This, I suggest, is simply in fact the writing into larger history of the truth of the cross. Israel is the Messiah's people according to the flesh (9.5); it has acted out on a grand scale what that means, namely, that it has become the place where sin has been drawn together in order to be dealt with. Beneath 9.5 lies 1.3f.: Jesus is the Davidic Messiah 'according to the flesh'. What is true of him was necessarily true also of his people 'according to the flesh'. This, I suggest, is at the heart of 9.6—10.21, and is the theological reason for the echoes of 5.10 in 11.15 (Christ's 'casting away', like Israel's, means reconciliation; his new life, like that of Israel, means new life for others) and of 5.15–19 in 11.12 (Israel acts out Adam's *paraptōma* ['trespass'], just as in 7.7–12; it must then follow the Messiah through the Adamic death-in-the-flesh to new life).

But Paul has not told this story 'in a vacuum'. He has set out his material in such a way as to make the point that *the gentile mission grows precisely out of this strange covenant purpose*. Romans 10.14–18, anticipated already in 9.24, 30, emphasizes that the apostolic mission to the nations and the incorporation of gentiles within the covenant people of the creator god (9.30: 'they have found "righteousness", even though they were not looking for it'), are the positive result of Israel's being 'cast away'. The inclusion of gentiles is one of the features of the 'return from exile' that takes place after Israel, the servant of the Lord, has borne the sins of the many. (Though Paul does not discuss Isaiah 52f. in these chapters, the occasional references such as 10.15 [Isaiah 52.7] and 10.16 [Isaiah 53.1] are, in my view, symptoms of a deep meditation on the whole passage as a major clue to the divine covenant purposes for Israel.) As a result, the rhetorical force of the entire exposition of the failure of Israel is not to give gentile Christians a sense of smugness or self-satisfaction at their contrasting success, but to highlight and emphasize the fact that they owe the Israelites a huge debt of *gratitude*. This, of course, is precisely what Paul says in [**59**] 15.27: the gentiles have come to share in Israel's spiritual blessings, so it is right that they should reciprocate in terms of material blessings. It is also the theme that leads directly to the major thrust of 11.11–32, which ought now to be recognized as the rhetorical sharp edge of the whole letter. If I am right, the whole apparently negative emphasis of Romans 9 and 10 is to be read as an appeal for a sympathetic understanding, on the part of the gentile church in Rome, of the plight of the Jews. Romans 9.1–5 and 10.1–2 are not merely personal intrusions into a devastating catalogue of Jewish failure. They are indications of the attitude Paul wishes his readers to adopt as they come to understand and appreciate the strange covenant plan whereby, for the sake of the world's salvation, Israel has stumbled over the stumbling-stone which had been placed in its path by its own covenant god (9.33). Paul, as in 7.7–25, sees 'his flesh' in rebellion against the gospel (9.3; 11.14) and understands that rebellion in terms of the strange, but ultimately positive, saving plan of the covenant god, which will deal with Israel's unwilling and ignorant sin and so bring it, too, to salvation (8.3; 10.3).

The double movement of thought which comes together in 11.11–32 is therefore as follows. On the one hand, the Jews' 'stumble', in accordance with the strange covenant plan, was part of the appointed means by which the Messiah would do his strange work of dealing with sin, and hence part of the means by which the world would be saved. Thus, the gentile church in particular cannot look down on the Jews, but must recognize, as I have just argued, a great debt of gratitude. This builds exactly on chapters 5—8, in which, as we saw, the privileges and blessings of being in Christ were so described as to make it clear that they were *Israel's* privileges, given to the Messiah and thence to all his people. On the other hand, the very fact of this transfer of privileges from Israel according to the flesh, to the Messiah, to the Jew-plus-gentile church, means that Israel according to the flesh ought to be *jealous*. This is a major motif of chapters 10—11, picked up by Paul in 10.19 from his favorite section of Deuteronomy (the covenantal passage in

chapters 30—32) and then developed in 11.14ff. Indeed, this motif only makes sense within the argument if the logic of the whole letter is more or less as I have described it. Gentiles have inherited Israel's blessings: this ought to make gentile Christians grateful, and Jewish non-Christians jealous. What is more – since Paul is not, in chapter 11, addressing Jewish non-Christians, but still aiming rhetorically at gentile Christians, as 11.13 makes clear – the prospect of this 'jealousy' on the part of Jewish non-Christians ought, in turn, to heighten the gentile Christians' awareness of the Jews' plight and of the appropriateness of Jews leaving their present state of 'unbelief' and finding themselves to be valued and celebrated members of the one Jew-plus-gentile family of Abraham [**60**] (3.30; 4.16f.; and now 11.23).The 'olive tree' allegory is designed, I suggest, to make just this complex of points.[20]

What then of the 'normal' reading of Romans 11, in which critical scholarship and fundamentalism have, for once, joined forces, suggesting that Paul here predicts a large-scale last-minute salvation of (more or less) all ethnic Jews? I have argued at length against this reading in *The Climax of the Covenant*,[21] and here wish to make two points only.

First, the rhetorical thrust of the passage seems to me clearly to have to do with Paul's missionary plans (cf. 10.14–18). His whole argument, I have suggested, is that the gospel is 'for the Jew first and equally for the Greek'. He is stressing, to a potentially anti-Jewish Roman church, that there can be no lapsing back into an inverted system of national privilege. He desires above all that the Roman church should understand his mission (for which he wanted Rome as his new base) in terms of the Jew-plus-gentile strategy he intended to adopt, through which alone there could spring up the Jew-plus-gentile church, through which alone the new, united humanity, about which Paul cared so passionately, could be evidenced.[22] The Roman church must not allow the latent, and sometimes visible, anti-Jewish sentiment in the proud pagan capital to infect them as Christians. The creator has not cut off his ancient people so that now there would only be a dwindling Jewish remnant, and soon a gentiles-only church. The remnant is emphatically not a small minority clinging successfully to ethnic privilege but a remnant 'chosen by grace' and hence not 'by works [of Torah]' (11.5f.). If such a remnant exists, it can increase; Israel's god longs for it to increase; Paul's very gentile mission is designed partly to help it increase, by the process of Israel's 'jealousy' at seeing its own privileges being enjoyed by others. Paul's great hope, in writing Romans, is (negatively) to quash any potential gentile-Christian arrogance against Israel, and (positively) to enlist the Roman church's enthusiastic and comprehending support for the fully orbed missionary program which he intends to implement both in the capital itself and also around the western Mediterranean.

[20] Which explains some of its apparent peculiarities. Paul was not the only first-century writer to have an interesting time with horticultural metaphors; see also Ep., *Discourses* 4.8.34–40. Compare too Ezek. 17. Paul is not just using a 'homely illustration', which could then be criticized if it does not work properly, but stands in a long prophetic/apocalyptic tradition of varied imagery.

[21] *Climax of the Covenant*, 246–51.

[22] Cf. Gal. 3.25–29; Eph. 2.11–22; 3.8–13 (usual caveats about authorship taken for granted).

Second, the salvation of 'all Israel' (11.26) does not refer to an event expected to take place at the 'parousia'. It has become customary to say, with E. P. Sanders, that Paul took the normal Jewish expectation and reversed it. [**61**] Jewish 'restoration eschatology' envisaged that Israel would be restored first, and that then the gentiles would come to share the blessing. According to Sanders, Paul pragmatically reversed this order: now, it seemed, the gentiles would come in first, and *then* Israel. What this reading ignores is that, for Paul, the restoration of Israel *had already happened* in the resurrection of Jesus, the representative Messiah. The texts he calls upon are the very ones that speak of gentiles hearing the word of the Lord consequent upon the restoration of Israel. He evokes, in Romans 11.26b, not only Isaiah 59.20 but also, and perhaps more importantly, Isaiah 2.3 and/or Micah 4.2. When Zion is restored, the word of the Lord will flow from it to the nations: now, Zion has been restored in Jesus the Messiah, so that the word of salvation consists of Jesus himself, as Redeemer, coming *from* 'Zion' to bless the nations. And the quotation from Jeremiah 31.33 that appears in 11.27 is emphatically a prediction of the new covenant. Paul is not suggesting for a moment that Jews can enjoy a private covenantal blessing which still depends on a special, privileged, ethnic state. Rather, he is insisting that, within the renewed covenant now established in Christ and the Spirit, Jews are of course welcome alongside gentiles. The *kai houtōs* at the start of verse 26 does not mean 'and *then*', but 'and *so*', 'and in this manner'. This, Paul is saying, is how the covenant god will save his (polemically redefined) 'all Israel'. As a result of the gentile mission, Israel will be brought to see 'its' blessings, focused on its Messiah according to the flesh, now given freely to gentiles; and Israel will want to come back and share in them itself.

Rhetorically, that is, in terms of the 'poetic sequence' of the letter, Paul's main point is now made. He has told the story of the creator and the world as the story of the covenant god and his people, now understood in a new way on the basis of the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. The message about this Messiah, as he said in 3.21, is the revelation-in-action of the covenant-faithfulness of this god: from this point of view, one can understand the plan according to which Abraham became the father of a worldwide covenant family, the plan according to which also Israel, after carrying out its fearful mission, can and must be invited to share in the blessings of covenant renewal. Gentile Christians, in Rome and elsewhere, cannot lapse into that anti-Judaism which refuses to see Jews as legitimate beneficiaries of the creator's action in Christ: the only story within which their own standing as Christians makes sense is precisely the Jewish story. They do not support the root; it supports them. Paul has placed the quite proper gentile rejection of an ethnic-based people of god, the correct repudiation of Torah as the final charter of covenant membership, on to the larger plan of the divine covenant, in such a way as to undercut any possibility of Marcionism, of a rejection of Torah as less than god-given, of an anti-Judaism that would fit all too easily [**62**] into the social pattern of pagan Rome and all too badly into a genuine covenantal understanding of the gospel. The

sequence of thought of the letter so far is summed up in the 'real' conclusion of its theological exposition (15.8f.):

> For I say that the Messiah became a servant to the circumcised, on behalf of the truthfulness of god, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, and that the gentiles might glorify the true god for mercy. (My translation.)

Romans 12—16

Like many writers and lecturers on Romans, I have used up most of my space on chapters 1—11 and have little left for the very important chapters that remain. I confidently expect, however, that, within the rhetorical setting of this paper itself, expectation and controversy will inevitably cluster around the first eleven chapters, rather than the last five, so that the imbalance, for all its risks, may correspond to the reality of our ongoing discussion. Something, nevertheless, must be said about the place of these chapters within the rhetorical design, the poetic sequence, of the letter itself.

Chapters 12—16, I think, turn from an argument that focuses on the *mission* of the church to an argument that focuses on its own internal *unity*. Having set out the covenant plan of the creator god, and having located the Roman (largely gentile) church on that map, Paul can address both general and particular instructions to the church, the general preparing the way for the more particular. The appeal for unity-in-diversity in 12.5ff., following naturally from the appeal for the 'presentation of the body' in 12.1, itself prepares the way for the more directed appeal of 14.1—15.13, where the main thrust of chapters 12—16 undoubtedly lies. In the same way, the much-debated passage 13.1–7 makes a good deal of sense when read against the background of the Roman situation. If the Jews had been expelled from Rome within recent memory because of riots *impulsore Chresto* ('at the instigation of Chrestus'), the last thing the church needed was to live up to the bad reputation thus implicitly earned. The contemptuous references in Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny show only too well how Romans would naturally regard a cult like Christianity: a reputation for antisocial behavior was almost automatic, and the church should take care not to live up to it.[23] No pagan behavior was to infiltrate the church, who should live as the people of the daytime even though the night was for the moment still dark (13.8–14).

[**63**] In this context, 14.1—15.13 makes its own clear point. If the riots referred to by Suetonius were indeed the result of problems within the Jewish community caused by some synagogues and/or individuals becoming Christian, and/or by Christian Jews coming from elsewhere to Rome and engaging in evangelism within the Jewish community, it was vital that the church itself should learn to live at peace along the 'fault lines' that would most naturally develop. What Paul does, of course, is explicitly *not* to discuss these issues in terms of 'Jewish Christians' and 'gentile Christians' but to line

[23] Tac., *Annals* 15.44; Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4; Pliny, *Letters* 10.97.

them up in terms borrowed from his (somewhat different) discussion in 1 Corinthians 8, where he had spoken of the 'strong' and the 'weak', both of which categories almost certainly included gentile Christians, and both of which likewise may well have contained Jewish Christians. Paul refuses to reinforce a potential split by addressing different groups within the church in terms of their ethnic origins, but instead sorts out the issues as though they were simply a matter of private options.

This, of course, was in fact truer to life than some in the Roman church might have cared to admit. Paul himself was a 'Jewish Christian' who took the 'strong' viewpoint; presumably Prisca and Aquila (16.3) were too. And, underneath the whole argument specific to this particular setting, there runs constant reference to the narrative of the Messiah and his achievement, and a sense of overriding loyalty to him rather than to any other standard (14.4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18; 15.3–6; and above all 15.7–13). The covenant that the creator made with Abraham has been fulfilled in Christ, and a multiethnic people is the result; one must not, for the sake of human regulations, destroy this unique and climactic work of the creator god. Romans 14.1—15.13 is thus, like the rest of the letter, grounded in the basic christology of the gospel, the fundamental narrative sequence of Paul's thought.

With this appeal, Paul's theological task is over, and it remains to spell out the reasons for his coming to Rome (15.14–29), which we have already discussed. The request for prayer (15.30–33), the long list of greetings (16.1–16, 21–23), and the sharp extra warning (16.17–20) all make sense within this context. Even the closing greeting (16.25–27), sometimes regarded as secondary, seems to me at least a fitting conclusion. If we have grasped the subtlety and flexibility of Paul's thought in the epistle to date, excising such a passage looks suspiciously like straining out a gnat after swallowing a camel, taking revenge for the hard work of grappling with the rest of the text by dismissing a short passage that cannot, as it were, speak up for itself. In particular, there are a few hints in 16.25–27 which suggest that it belongs quite closely with the prologue to the letter, to which we must now return in concluding our study of the poetic sequence.

[64] The Prologue (1.1–17)

With the letter as a whole now spread out before us, we may be able to understand more precisely why Paul wrote its introduction in the way that he did. He introduces himself in terms of the 'gospel' by which his ministry is defined; and the 'gospel' is not 'justification by faith', not simply a message about how humans get saved, but the announcement of Jesus as the Son of god in emphatically Jewish categories (1.3–4). Paul may perfectly well be quoting an earlier formula, conceivably of his own earlier devising, but we should reject any attempt to marginalize 1.3–4 within his thought, or within the flow of the letter, on the grounds that it is too Jewish. It is precisely these categories (the Davidic and representative messiahship of Jesus, and his being marked out as Son of god through the resurrection) that are to dominate so

much of the letter. It is this gospel of Jesus, representing Israel 'according to the flesh', doing on its behalf and hence for the world what it had failed to do, that gives theological coherence to all that he is going to say.

The apostolic mission is the direct result of this proclamation (1.5–7). Its aim is 'the obedience of faith'; 'faith' is not, in Paul, starkly opposed to 'moralism' in the way that, for contextual and polemical reasons, it came to be in later theological thinking. Though, of course, there is no sense of faith or obedience forming a human initiative which puts the creator under a debt; nor is there any idea that 'faith' is not also, and does not lead further to, 'obedience' in terms of 12.1, the glad offering of an entire human life to the service of the creator and covenant god in free response to mercy received.

Romans 1.8–15, leading naturally out of 1.6–7, then explains initially Paul's longing to come to Rome, anticipating the fuller statement in 15.14–29. This account of Paul's intention should not be split off from 1.16–17, even though it seems clear that those two verses form a short and pithy summary of the argument of the letter itself; in their context, they are offered as the explanation of why a visit to Rome, and by implication a mission that starts from Rome, are necessary developments of the apostolic mission.

Romans 1.16–17 then forms the statement of theme for the *poetic sequence* of the letter. Since Romans has often been seen as Paul's *Summa Theologica*, 1.16–17 is also often seen as the thematic statement for his whole theology, but this would be a mistake. In themselves, these verses refer back to the more fundamental entity of 'the gospel', which, stated already in 1.3–4, is here presupposed. 'The gospel' – that is, the Jewish message of a crucified and risen Messiah as the fulfillment of the covenant plan of the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – was of course multiple foolishness in the ancient world: not only a Jewish message, but such a bizarre one too! Yet, Paul declares, as in 1 Corinthians 1.18—2.5, it is within this strange and foolish gospel that there lies hid-[**65**]den the power of the creator god by which all humans, from whatever racial background, can be saved.

The reason why this gospel contains this power for these people is hidden *in the covenant faithfulness of the one god*. Here, in 1.17a, we can now see the theological dynamic of the entire letter, and with it the full meaning of *dikaiosynē theou*. The term is, and remains, based firmly in the covenant which was established with Abraham and with which Israel wrestled in succeeding generations, not least in the time between the Maccabees and Bar Kochba. But it always envisaged, at least as Paul sees it, not merely the divine faithfulness to ethnic Israel, but the choice of ethnic Israel as the ones who would bear the creator's saving purposes for the whole world. Here is the true thrust of Ernst Käsemann's point, that the divine righteousness has to do with the divine victory over the entire rebel cosmos; but this is achieved through the means that Käsemann never grasped, namely, the fact that in Jesus the Messiah the covenant purpose of the creator for Israel was finally fulfilled.

The covenant faithfulness of Israel-in-Christ, then, results in the revelation of the covenant faithfulness of the creator god. I therefore read *ek pisteōs* ('from faith') in 1.17 in the light of 3.22, as referring to Christ's faithfulness,

which in turn results in blessing for all those who are characterized by 'faith' of the sort which will be further defined all through the letter. Habakkuk 2.4 is drawn in, not as a proof text wrenched from its original context, but as a key passage dealing with the radical redefinition of the people of god through a time of turbulent crisis. In the midst of wrath and confusion about the covenant purposes of the one god, the prophet clung on to the saying that 'the true covenant members would find life in their faith'. Paul, in a time of even greater wrath, and even greater confusion about the covenant purposes of the same god, grasps the same point: covenant membership now has, as its worldwide badge, not those 'works' which mark out Israel according to the flesh, but the faith which was Abraham's faith: belief in the god who justifies the ungodly, belief in the god who raises the dead.

Romans and Pauline Theology

There is clearly no space for even an outline of the theological points that might be drawn out after this theological exegesis of Romans. But some concluding, somewhat unsystematic, observations may be made which will, I hope, sharpen issues for our continuing discussion.

First, a case has been made for seeing Paul not just as 'a covenantal theologian', but as a very particular sort of covenantal theologian. He held on to the central Jewish doctrines of monotheism, election, and eschatology, seeing [**66**] them all redefined in Christ and the Spirit. He rethought the entire worldview of ancient Judaism, not least his own former Pharisaism, without the slightest suggestion that in doing so he was selling out to, or borrowing indiscreetly from, the surrounding pagan environment. His theology and his place within the history of religions are characterized by his central belief that the creator god was also the covenant god, that the covenant with Israel was always intended as the means of setting the entire cosmos to rights, and that this intention had now in principle come true in Jesus and was being implemented by the Spirit.

Second, the reading of Paul's critique of Judaism which has been made popular by Sanders and others, in contrast to the 'normal' Lutheran reading, has in principle been upheld by the details of theological exegesis. Paul's critique of Israel was aimed not at proto-Pelagianism or 'moralism' but at ethnocentric covenantalism. What is not so often seen, though, is the way in which the theology of the cross, so dear to the hearts of Lutheran expositors as it is so close to the center of Paul, lies at the heart of this critique as much as it ever did in the old scheme. To read Paul in a post-Sanders fashion is not (as is sometimes suggested) to marginalize this central emphasis, but actually to give it its full measure.[24]

Third, however, Sanders's rereading has not, in my view, gone far enough. It still seems to assume, with the old model, that 'justification' is a 'transfer term' describing 'how people get saved', and in consequence that Paul has

[24] I have in mind, e.g., the polemic of Hengel 1991, 85f.

actually pulled the Jewish theological language system out of shape. This is actually unnecessary, as is the continuing divide between 'forensic' and 'incorporative' readings of Paul's theology. Both of these latter categories are in fact outworkings of the central covenantal emphasis: once that is put firmly in the middle, all else falls into place around it, and the different metaphorical ideas that Paul evokes from time to time can find their proper places without getting in each other's way. 'Justification' is not, for Paul, 'how people enter the covenant', but the declaration that certain people are already within the covenant. It is the doctrine which says (cf. Galatians 2.16–21 with Romans 14.1—15.13) that all those who believe the Christian gospel belong together at the same table. It is the basis for that unity of the church, across racial barriers, for which Paul fought so hard.

Fourth, we have seen all along that behind the *poetic sequence* of Romans, answering to the particular rhetorical needs of the situation Paul was addressing, there is a particular *narrative sequence* which shows, clearly enough, the overall shape of Paul's theology, and which, indeed, provides a window onto [**67**] the stories that characterized his entire worldview. The implicit narrative is the story of the creator and the creation; of the covenant with Abraham as the means of restoring creation and humans; of the paradoxical failure, and yet the paradoxical success, of this covenant purpose; of its fulfillment, both in failure and in success, in the death and resurrection of Jesus; of its implementation by the Spirit and through the apostolic mission; and of its final consummation in the renewal of all things. Romans is, perhaps, as good a text as any upon which to try out this two-level (or perhaps multilevel) way of reading Paul, and through which therefore to address our ongoing methodological issues concerning what sort of a thing 'Pauline Theology' is, and how we might know when we have found it. Thus, it seems to me quite clear that Romans 5—8 is not the central thrust of Romans itself; but it may turn out to be one particular telling of the story which is at the center of Paul's narrative world. Likewise, Romans 1.3–4 is not the statement of the theme of Romans, but it is one particular statement of 'the gospel' which, lying at the heart of his whole belief system, generated the specific argument of this letter, summed up proleptically in 1.16–17.

The proof of all these puddings will be in the eating. If I am right, or even partially right, Romans itself ought to gain in theological and situational coherence; and light ought to be shed on all the other letters, and on our various constructs about Paul's self-understanding and mission. This latter possibility is too vast to contemplate for the moment. I hope that this paper offers at least a step toward the former: in other words, that the text of the great letter itself can now be seen to hang together and to make both theological and situational sense, expressing exactly what Paul wanted it to express, addressing one particular context with one particular message, and at the same time drawing wholeheartedly on a consistent core, on a worldview and a belief system, in the midst of which Paul knew himself to be the servant of the Messiah, Jesus, called to be an apostle, and set apart for the gospel of the creator and covenant god.

Chapter Eight

TWO RADICAL JEWS: A REVIEW ARTICLE OF DANIEL BOYARIN, *A RADICAL JEW: PAUL AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY** (1996)

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Daniel Boyarin is a Jewish scholar with astonishing range and penetration, who from his own expertise in Judaica has frequently made forays into early Christian literature. This review was commissioned for a panel at the SBL annual meeting, and it was a privilege to engage with Danny on that occasion and sense his passionate involvement with the multiple and complex issues involved.

* * *

[**15**] This is an incredible book. I can't believe the range, the skill, the *chutzpah* of it. I can't believe the learning, the easy grasp of complex ideas, the integration of exegesis and politics, of culture and philosophy. I can't believe the daring, the readiness to go out on a limb and then make it work. Unfortunately, I can't quite believe the thesis itself, either; but we shall come to that presently. Sometimes, when I read a book in the field of Pauline studies, I think 'I wish I had written that'. Sometimes I think 'If I had had the time and the energy, I *could* have written that'. But with this book I can only stand back and admire. There is no way that I could have written this book. I salute an astonishing achievement. Everything that I say from here on should have that as an implied running head above it.

Like Paul himself, Daniel Boyarin (Professor of Talmudic Culture at the University of California, Berkeley) shows himself master both of the big argument and of the fascinating detail; both of the polemical 'aside' and of the evocative, almost poetic, appeal; both of the passionate argument for a contentious position and of the re-reading of old texts in new and creative ways. This suggests to me another parallel which Boyarin will find less congenial, but which at the level of style and stimulus, if not of content, is in my vocabulary a great compliment: I was several times reminded of reading Käsemann's commentary on Romans. It, too, is exciting, difficult, breathtaking, maddening, a *tour de force* of scholarship and passion, of head and heart. It,

* Boyarin 1994. Page references otherwise unmarked are to this book.

too, makes the great majority of Pauline scholarship look pale, parochial and pedestrian by comparison. It, too, creates its own genre as it goes along, so that working out how best to approach it, let alone respond to it, let alone critique it, is like working out how to *respond* to Mount Everest. Trying to climb it, let alone to critique it, is a frightening business.

And yet the book cries out for critique. It appeals to the community of Pauline scholars to engage with its central thesis. It woos us by insisting, again and again, that it is not offered as a criticism of Paul. It isn't an attempt to put him down. It is just as well we have these repeated assurances, otherwise we might have wondered. Boyarin argues that Paul was a Platonist, three parts of [**16**] the way to Philo; that his aim was to produce One Single Family, a Grand Universal Idea, out of the untidy multiplicity of the human race; and that to achieve this he embraced a nuanced dualism in which flesh and spirit, letter and spirit, body and soul, belonged in a dualistic relation – not in opposition, however, but in a strict hierarchy of signifiers and signifieds. All this would, for many others, be a way of *evaluating* Paul as well as *describing* him. For the Bultmann school, describing Paul in this thoroughly Hellenized way (Boyarin by no means follows Bultmann, but at the level of *Religionsgeschichte* there are clear affinities) was a means of applauding him. Paul broke (it was thought) with wicked Jewish legalism by drawing fresh inspiration from a different culture altogether. Since the war, however, those who have made Paul a Hellenizer have done so to damn him. Schoeps accused him of only knowing, and reacting to, a second-rate form of Judaism, the Hellenized version he would have met in the Diaspora rather than the pure Palestinian version.[1] Maccoby, more recently, has made Paul out to be more or less entirely non-Jewish, and has saddled him with responsibility for what Maccoby sees as the legacy of Christian anti-Semitism.[2]

It is to Boyarin's great credit that he will have none of this. He insists many times over that all first-century Judaisms are Hellenistic; that the Platonism he sees in Paul was common coinage throughout the Jewish world as well as the Greek; that Paul was a cultural critic of Judaism, emphatically a critic *from within* (do we hear a trace of autobiography at this point?); that he was guilty neither of anti-Judaism nor of anti-Semitism; that even where he is clearly 'supersessionist' in some sense or other, this cannot be taken in an anti-Jewish sense, since from Paul's point of view he is being loyal to God's intentions precisely for Israel herself. (We might compare the 'supersessionism' inherent in the Qumran scrolls: the sect undoubtedly believed that they and they alone were the 'true Israel', but nobody in their right mind would accuse them of anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism.) For all this, and much more, I am deeply grateful.[3]

Boyarin's own preference emerges, of course (e.g. p. 260). He prefers pluriformity and differentiation where Paul insists on the unity of all human beings in Christ. He prefers an ontological monism of flesh and spirit, body

[1] Schoeps 1961.

[2] Maccoby 1986, 1991.

[3] On these points, Boyarin's Paul is far more credible than that of Gager and Gaston, who – rightly, in my view – come in for criticism, especially in ch. 2.

and soul, where Paul (according to him) expresses a dualism. He prefers a midrash, in which history and particularity are not devalued but rather celebrated, to what he sees as Paul's allegorizing, which is fundamentally dehistoricizing. (He does admit [p. 264 n. 7] that this analysis of midrash is a **[17]** difficult case to make.) In short, he prefers the Rabbis to the Christians, the Talmud to the Fathers. But this clear preference does not lead him to caricature, nor to insist that his reading of the texts is the only possible one. For this, too, I am profoundly grateful; though I am not sure what criteria Boyarin himself would approve of as fixed points for the discussion to proceed, which leaves one dangerously placed, wanting to argue but aware that, in the postmodern climate whose air the book breathes from first to last, all argument can be reduced to mere counter-assertion, and counter-assertion can be misread as *ad hominem* polemic.

What I would like to do, ideally, is to sit down for several hours with Boyarin, with the text of Paul between us, and work our way through the key passages – both the ones Boyarin builds his case upon, not least Galatians 3.28, and the ones he does not. But, since I am committed to living in the real rather than the ideal world, I shall instead go for the big picture. There are five issues that clamour for attention.

1. The first is a question of *method*. It seems to me that Boyarin has done to Paul precisely what he says Paul has done to Judaism. He has abstracted certain sets of *ideas* out of their historical context, reading between the lines and producing an essentially *allegorized* Paul. Paul's own very specific and concrete mission, suffering, writing, preaching, plans, hopes – *and* his personal pre-history as a zealous Pharisee – are here treated as *signifiers* for the real thing, the *signified* – which is 'Paul', *seen as* a critical moment in an essentially Platonic scheme, a history of ideas. In this history Paul, as a cousin of Philo, prepares the way not just for the fathers of the church but for a figure such as Plotinus; and, thence, for the history of an 'idea' in which the archetypal human being, the one who encapsulates the One, is a white, male, European person. With great dexterity Boyarin manages to draw this history without implying that Paul is the responsible parent for this great symbol of political incorrectness; but clearly, when the tip of the argument is peeled back just a little, there is a firm protest against this line of thought which 'has had the effect of depriving continued Jewish existence of any reality or significance in the Christian economies of history' (p. 32).

Boyarin then, I suggest, has himself produced (to use his own language) an allegorized and ahistorical reading of Paul, a Platonic or more precisely a Hegelian scheme in which the thesis of 'Paul' (ecclesiological monism and ontological dualism) is answered by the antithesis of 'the Rabbis' (human pluralism and ontological monism), producing the synthesis of Boyarin's own bracing and daring contemporary cultural critique, with all its raw agony and **[18]** brutally realistic assessments of current problems and possibilities, particularly vis-à-vis feminism and Zionism. Ironically, I suggest that Boyarin himself, in his overall argument, has in principle done, with Paul at least, what he says Paul did with his traditions. Like Boyarin, I do not make this a matter of praise or reproach; merely of interested comment.

2. This brings us to Paul's attitude to three crucial topics: history, eschatology and allegory. (It might in some ways have been easier to separate these, but they form such a tight nexus in Boyarin's exposition of Paul that I have concluded otherwise.) For Boyarin's Paul, history is the realm of signifiers which point to the Platonic realm of signifieds. Boyarin's Paul is, again, in several ways quite like Bultmann's: Christ is the end of history as he is the end of the law. Hence Paul's reading of the Hebrew Bible is not historical, not even really typological, but allegorical. Everything has been shifted onto the plane of the spirit, away from the letter. This is, in many ways, a liberal protestant Paul, whose objection (for instance) to circumcision was that it was a physical ritual. To that extent, though only to that extent, this portrait also belongs, despite Boyarin's assertions to the contrary, in the pre-Sanders world of Pauline studies.

In reply, I grant of course that Paul uses the language and the form of allegory in Galatians 4. I grant that he speaks of letter and spirit in three key passages which Boyarin unerringly picks out for extended treatment – 2 Corinthians 3, Romans 2.25–29, and Romans 7.[4] I grant that there are passages, like 1 Corinthians 10, in which Paul uses the language of typology, of a spiritualized reading of an Old Testament narrative or theme. But I submit that the major themes of the letters, in themselves and in their historical settings, offer a very different scheme, which forms the overarching context *within which* these and similar elements are to be held in place. In this scheme, Paul, like many other Jews of his day, held in his mind *the actual history of Israel*, stretching from Abraham through Moses through David through the prophets to the exile; and then, from the exile, through the deeply ambiguous story of the Second Temple period and on into the future. Paul thought he belonged within that history. And this, for him, was reality: the real, flesh-and-blood story of God and God's people. It was not a code, a mere signifier for something else, for a timeless, ahistorical or static scheme (of salvation, for instance[5]). And, for Paul, this story is still in process. It has not stopped. It has reached its God-given and God-intended climax [**19**] in Jesus Christ; but this has not prevented it continuing as real history. Paul is engaged in the very concrete and specific tasks of the gentile mission precisely because he is living within the continuing history according to which (in some accounts at least) when Israel is redeemed the nations will come to share in the blessing. For the same reason, he looks ahead not to the abandonment of the space–time universe, but to its exodus, its transforming liberation (Romans 8.12–27). This, I suggest, holds together Romans, Galatians, Philippians, both Corinthians letters, and a good deal besides, far better than the ahistorical scheme which Boyarin offers. It is set out most fully in Romans 9 and 10, but emerges, I suggest, all through. We would, of course, need to examine the passages in detail for the point to emerge properly.

[4] On the last of these Boyarin offers the intriguing suggestion: the tension for which the chapter is notorious is between the Adamic command to 'be fruitful and multiply' and the Mosaic command against lust. On this my comment coincides with Boyarin's on my own exegesis of the chapter, in *Climax of the Covenant*: 'This is an exceedingly clever, even brilliant, [suggestion], but I am simply unconvinced by it' (305 n. 1).

[5] A word which Boyarin does not define, though to do so would be quite important for continuing debate.

3. The next point, though linked organically to all the others, is for me more of a puzzlement than an argument. It concerns the post-structuralist integration of sexual language, imagery and indeed practice with the wider scheme Boyarin is proposing. I understand him to be saying that Paul's desire for the One Single Family produces some kind of essentially phallic image; whereas the differentiatedness of Jews from the rest of humankind (and, in principle, the differentiatedness of all peoples from one another) is symbolized by the circumcised penis, the phallus having been cut. Boyarin does not, in this book, argue in any detail for the appropriateness of this analysis; he assumes it, though of course it offers itself as a neat explanation (among other things) of Paul's polemic against circumcision, especially in Galatians. I don't know if other theorists of social and psychological symbolism would support this kind of analysis. To one who is a babe in such matters – a babe, moreover, of less than eight days – I admire the *tour de force* of the position, but I just wonder if it will really stand up. After all, as Sigmund Freud himself said, a cigar is only a cigar – though I suspect he, too, still snipped the end off before smoking it.

4. We turn now to a serious matter of history. Boyarin offers a winsome and poignant revisionist account of Paul's conversion. I like it, but find it historically unfounded and completely implausible. He thinks of Paul as already an *ideas* man, walking around trying to resolve in his own mind the puzzle of how the specialness of Israel and the oneness of God are to be reconciled. The Damascus Road experience is then the 'revelation', the 'apocalypse', of an *idea*: ecclesiological monism, supported by ontological dualism.

Now I submit that all we know of Paul, and all we know of zealous pharisees in the early first century, militates against this. I have argued elsewhere that Paul was a Shammaite pharisee; that [**20**] the Shammaites' zeal was not for theories, nor even for ritual or racial purity *per se*, but for liberation, for the great political and social change that the true God would righteously bring about within history. (This Shammaite strain continues, in constant debate with its moderate Hillelite partners, through into the post-70 period, as witness the stand-off between Johanan ben Zakkai and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.) Paul, I suggest, did not have an *intellectual* problem before his conversion, any more than, as C. H. Dodd and others used to imagine, he had a great moral problem. (Boyarin's analysis of Paul's conversion strikes me as a somewhat Platonized and intellectualized version of Dodd's position.) What he had was a political and hence a theological problem: when and how would Israel be free, and (the other side of the same coin) how would the true God vindicate his great name and manifest his righteousness?

This fourth question, of course, integrates particularly with my first two, because I do not think that Paul's conversion was the ahistorical, ideational thing that Boyarin suggests. I think Paul saw it as an historical event; I think he would have insisted that it be understood as part of the history of the true God and his people, revealing, in fact, the divine answer to the social, political, cultural and above all theological problem faced not so much by speculative Platonists within first-century Judaism but by (among others) revolutionary Shammaites.

5. All of this leads to the final point. Boyarin warns us in the preface that his Paul, unlike that of Richard Hays, one of his constant discussion partners, has no very great place for the Jesus Christ of history, 'the Rabbi from Nazareth'. Boyarin does not, of course, simply leave a Christ-shaped blank in the book. He knows as well as anyone that Christ is enormously important for Paul. But, in line with the rest of his analysis, he dehistoricizes this 'Christ'-figure fairly completely; we are once again reminded quite forcibly of Bultmann. This shows up in Boyarin's very rare mentions of the resurrection, which he regards as being, for Paul, the revelation of the heavenly Christ, the Christ 'according to the Spirit' rather than according to the flesh: the 'allegorical, risen Christ' (p. 29). This, I have to say, flies in the face of what I take to be the fairly standard meaning of resurrection-language in the first century. Resurrection is not about someone's truth going marching on while their body remains in the grave, but about bodies coming out of tombs.[6] I suggest that at the heart of Paul's theology, and of his Damascus Road experience, there lay not an idea, but a person; that the historical human being Jesus, not merely some abstract [**21**] Christian idea, was what grasped the historical Paul and set him about an historical task; that this task was, as far as Paul was concerned, to establish and maintain not philosophical academies but historical communities in which love would be historically lived out, awaiting the historical moment when the world of space and time would be flooded with God's presence as the fulfilment, not the abrogation, of history itself.

All of this points, of course, to the cross. Boyarin says sometimes (e.g. pp. 76, 107, 116) that it was the crucified Christ that lay at the heart of Paul's thought; yet he never attempts to elucidate what precisely the cross meant for Paul, or how it functioned within his whole theology, let alone his life. This, for me, is the biggest single weakness in the book. It creates a vacuum which is then filled by other things. For the Paul of history, the Paul of the letters, it was the love of Christ which 'left him no choice' (2 Corinthians 5.14); this, not a Grand Idea, was his ruling passion. Again and again, when he draws his thoughts together, they focus on Jesus and the cross – not as an idea to excite the mind but as a fact to soften and kindle the heart. 'The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me'; 'Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'.[7] Nor is this an incidental point, however large in itself, simply bolted on to the rest of Paul's thought as an extra. It integrates with, and (I would say) gives rise to, all the others. It is because of this love that Paul is impelled to declare the love of the one God to the nations; not to obliterate distinctions between different people, or different types of peoples, but to announce the good news that the ground is even at the foot of the cross. That, I suggest, is what Galatians 3.28 is all about – the text which Boyarin makes so central to his presentation as to have it printed boldly on the front of the dust-jacket. It is not about androgyny, nor about a Great Universal Idea in which all differences cease

[6] Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 10.
[7] Gal. 2.20; Rom. 8.39.

to exist altogether. It is about the integration of differentiated persons and communities within a many-sided, mutually accepting, community.

Had we allowed Ephesians into the argument, we could have found a much better framework for unity and diversity. 'Through the church, the many-coloured wisdom of God [*hē polupoikilos sophia tou theou*] might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places' (3.10) – the powers that, as Boyarin sees so clearly, use human *differentiation*, just as much as human *identification*, as a tool and means of oppression. The One Family, called into existence by God's love in the gospel message of Jesus Christ, is not, therefore, the potentially oppressive regime which **[22]** Boyarin sees – though I can well understand why he sees it that way. It is precisely the servant community. I grant that church history shows this ideal more often ignored than pursued; though that may be partly due to the fact that historians, including church historians, find it easier to write about a few masters than about many servants. But, just as in his conclusion Boyarin advocates a Diaspora of slaves as the only possible way forward for Judaism in the twentieth century, so Paul, I suggest, not only advocated but worked to create a Diaspora of servant communities in the first century. And he created them in history, not in the mid-air of an ahistorical 'true Israel' or 'Israel according to the spirit', phrases which are vital to Boyarin's case but which Paul himself, significantly, never uses. I know as well as anyone, and I grieve as much as anyone, that Paul's historical goal has often, and massively, been subverted by recrudescent paganism, using the idea of the One to crush the manifestations of the Many, using the rhetoric of 'spirit' to deny the god-givenness of 'flesh'. Paul, like so many, has had to

> . . . hear the truth [he'd] spoken
> Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools.[8]

But there is, none the less, a very much differentiated and yet still unified Christian family today. The white European male is very much the exception, rather than the rule, among the millions of Christians in the contemporary world. And, if I read Paul aright, he would rejoice in African Christians being African Christians, not European clones; in female Christians being female Christians, not pseudo-males; and, yes, in Jewish Christians being Jewish Christians, not in the sense that they form a group apart, a cut above all others, but because 'if their casting away means reconciliation for the world, what will their acceptance mean if not life from the dead?'[9]

Paul, in short, would I believe approve totally of our having this discussion. He would welcome the cut and thrust, the text and counter-text, the politics and the passion that we now have on the table, as a result of Boyarin's daring and creative work. And he would hope that in our dialogue, as well as in our theology and exegesis, the central place would be taken by love. The love to which Paul refers seeks neither to absorb the beloved into itself (forming

[8] Kipling, 'If –'; in Kipling 1927, 560.
[9] Rom. 11.15.

an artificial Oneness), nor so to affirm the differences between them as to remain at arm's length. It is a love which, modelled on the love of the true God, in whose image male and [**23**] female were created, seeks differentiated union with the beloved, and therefore affirms and celebrates, as part of the very longing for union, that essential differentness through which union will be consummated.

Chapter Nine

THE LAW IN ROMANS 2 (1996)

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This was a paper given at a memorable conference in Durham at which almost everyone who had recently written a book on Paul and the law was present – with one notable exception; some of the German participants were still so cross with E. P. Sanders for what he had written about Joachim Jeremias that if Sanders had been coming they would have stayed away. Most of the issues about the so-called New Perspective were, however, very much on the table, and there were many mediating positions attempted. My own paper, reprinted here, represents an early attempt which points forward to the fuller treatment in the 2002 Romans commentary. My recent essay on Romans 2.17—3.9 [reprinted as chapter 30 of the present volume] represents a further move on those verses which introduces a quite new reading which had not occurred to me until after writing the commentary and which implies some significant adjustment to my earlier views as represented here.

* * *

[131] Introduction

Romans 2 is the joker in the pack. Standard treatments of Paul and the law have often failed to give it the prominence that one might expect it to have, judging by its position within his most-discussed letter. But generations of eager exegetes, anxious to get to the juicy discussions that surround 3.19–20, 3.21–31, and so on, have hurried by Romans 2, much as tourists on their way to Edinburgh hurry through Northern England, unaware of its treasures.

There are at least two reasons for this, which are worth considering as we set the scene for brief discussion and some proposals.

The first reason for the neglect of Romans 2 has to do with a powerful consensus about the flow of the argument in Romans, or at least Romans 1—8, as a whole. One commentary after another has set out the scheme, according to which these chapters deal with human sin (1—3), the divine remedy in Christ, and justification by faith (3—4), and, one way or another, the new life the Christian enjoys (5—8). The epistle thus far, in other words,

is imagined to follow and expound some sort of *ordo salutis*. Within this, Romans 2 has no business speaking either of how one is justified or of the results of justification. It is part of a section (1.18—3.20) about which there has been an unusually strong consensus: the passage is supposed to say, neither more or less, that all human beings are sinful. The various twists and turns in the actual argument of chapter 2 must somehow fit into this scheme. Part of the reason why there has been such a strong consensus is, of course, because it has a strong grain of truth in it. But I shall suggest that at certain points it needs quite severe modification. 'Big picture' exegesis that loses sight of the details is always in danger.

The second reason for the neglect of Romans 2 is that, even where the consensus has been challenged, the challenge has not so far penetrated as far as a fresh contextual exegesis of the chapter. Notoriously, Sanders in *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* declared that the passage was not a legitimate part of Paul's argument; it was an old synagogue sermon, with minimal Christian updating. I suspect that Sanders here said out loud what a lot of exegetes have thought privately, but it still comes as something of a shock to be told that the [**132**] second chapter in a major theological letter must be put in brackets. My hunch is that Sanders' reforms in Pauline studies have not yet, in fact, gone far enough; that, when they are taken further, there will be more room for a chastened Protestant exegesis than is currently imagined, either by Sanders or his Lutheran objectors; and that Romans 2, for so long the Achilles heel of schemes on Paul and the law, may make a vital contribution to some eventual solutions, both to the theological questions which surround all of Paul's writings and, of course, to the exegesis of Romans itself.

There are three particular issues which must concern us in this paper, corresponding to the three paragraphs in the chapter in which Paul speaks of the law. I propose to take them in reverse order, for the very good methodological reason that one should start from the clearer parts and build towards the less clear. The first question has to do with the meaning, as especially the referent, of 2.25–29, and of the role of the law within this dense little package. The second concerns the nature of the critique launched in 2.17–24: what is Paul saying about 'the Jew', and how does the law fit into this critique? The third question, in my view the hardest, concerns 2.12–16, and divides into two subquestions: first, what is the role of the law in the justification spoken of in 2.12–13? and second, who are these gentiles in 2.14–15 who 'do the things of the law', and in what sense are they 'a law to themselves', with the law 'written on their hearts'? (There is a fourth question, but it does not so directly connect with the question of the law: who is being addressed in 2.1–16?)

These questions are no more new than they are easy. I have spent years, on and off, reading and writing about them.[1] In what follows, I shall try not to repeat what I have said elsewhere, though some overlap will be inevitable.

[1] For a recent treatment of Romans as a whole, cf. 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' [reprinted as chapter 7 of the present volume]. For more general reflections on Pauline theology, esp. the law, cf. *Climax of the Covenant*.

Further, at the risk of failing to address some turns and twists in the discussion, I shall not attempt to enter into debate with colleagues who have written, often at great length, about this chapter. I have learnt a great deal from commentaries and monographs, but there is no room to cite and engage them here.

Beginning at the End: 2.25–29

One of the peculiarities of Romans is the number of times when it is by no means clear, to contemporary readers, who Paul is talking about at given points in the letter. This problem is, of course, notorious in Romans 7. But it is, I think, no less acute in the end of Romans 2. In both cases the passage has to do [**133**] with the law; and indeed it may be because of our theological confusions about the law that we find it hard to identify the people referred to, who stand in each passage in a particular relation to the law. If, in this case, we can discover who is being spoken of, we ought to arrive at some quite clear conclusions about the law. The two questions are not separable.

The passage sets up a running contrast between two categories of people. The first should not be in doubt: it consists of Jews who do not keep the law.

> If you transgress the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision . . . (2.25) . . . they will condemn you, the one who through letter and circumcision transgress the law . . . (2.27)

> . . . the [Jew] in manifest visibility is not the Jew; [circumcision] in manifest visibility and in the flesh is not circumcision . . . (2.28)

The singular ('the Jew') is a rhetorical device, through which Paul addresses all Jews to whom this applies, presumably including his own pre-conversion self. And the offence with which he charges 'the Jew' is, in this passage, clearly not 'boasting' in the law, or the attempt to keep the law and so earn status, or 'righteousness', or indeed anything else, through the law. The offense with which he charges 'the Jew' is *breaking* the law. This, of course, must ultimately be set within the wider context of Pauline passages in which the charge is amplified – indeed, not least alongside 2.17–24, on which see below – but at least in this passage the matter is clear. As in 7.7–25 (despite some continuing opinion to the contrary), the problem with 'the Jew' is that the person is *parabatēs nomou*.

This understanding of the reason for the condemnation of 'the Jew' is exegetically confirmed by, and may indeed have been the logical reason for, Paul's statements about the person with whom 'the Jew' is contrasted:

> If then the uncircumcision keeps [*phylassē*] the commandments of the law, will not his uncircumcision be reckoned as circumcision? And the uncircumcision by nature [*ek physeōs*] which fufills [*telousa*] the law will condemn you . . . (2.26f.)

> But the [Jew] who is in secret is the Jew, and [circumcision] is circumcision of the heart, in the spirit not the letter; the praise of the one is not from humans but from god. (2.29)

Clearly in 2.26f. the person – again the singular is obviously to be read as collective – is a gentile. (In 2.29 Paul has widened the category, and his 'real Jew' could of course be Jewish or gentile; but the purpose of 2.28f. is to assert the larger point, which entails the statement in 2.26f.; hence the *gar* in 2.28.) The question is: is he (it is pointless to say 'or she', since the question concerns circumcision) a Christian or not? Upon this hinge what precisely is meant by 'keeping the commandments of the law', and by 'fulfilling the law'.

The reading suggested by the old consensus about Romans 1—3 is that this person is a non-Christian. Since these chapters describe humankind under the **[134]** grip of sin, why would Paul suddenly throw in a description of a Christian? Clearly, on this view, all that he indicates is that, *if* such people as law-fulfilling gentiles were to be found, they could condemn law-breaking Jews. But the only point of the argument, on this theory, is to assure the Jews that they are indeed condemned, not to assert that such people as law-fulfilling gentiles exist; so there is no need to hypothesize them to make sense of what he says. Alternatively, Paul may be thought here to envisage momentarily that there might after all be some gentiles who by the light of nature (i.e. without Christian faith) do in some sense 'keep the law', but that then he reverts to his normal bleak view of humankind and declares everyone condemned anyhow in 3.9–20. The class of law-keeping gentiles is a possible one, but, according to this view, it turns out in fact to have no members.

One of the comparatively few points agreed on by those two great modern commentators on Romans, Charles Cranfield and Ernst Käsemann, is that this line of thought is wrong. Paul here speaks of Christian gentiles. In fact, I think this is the easiest point to prove of all the contentious things I wish to argue about Romans 2, and this is why I have started with this paragraph. Out of the numerous arguments that have run back and forth, I select the following as particularly important.

1. The language of 2.29 is closely reminiscent of three other passages in which Paul is clearly talking about Christians:

a. Romans 7.6: *nuni de katērgēthēmen apo tou nomou apothanontes en hō kateichometha, hōste douleuein hēmas en kainotēti pneumatos kai ou palaiotēti grammatos*. The spirit/letter contrast belongs closely, in Paul's mind, with the contrast between the life in Christ on the one hand and the life in the flesh, and/or life in Judaism, on the other. The context is somewhat different, not least because in Romans 7 Paul speaks of those who are 'freed from the law'; this was unnecessary for gentiles, since they had never been 'under the law' in the first place. The idea of fulfilling the law, likewise, is not present in 7.6, though it is, arguably, in 8.4–9 and elsewhere (see below). But the critical thing is the letter/spirit contrast. Unless Paul is using his own terminology extremely loosely (which cannot be ruled out from the start, of course, but the methodological assumption must be that he means more or less the same thing by the same words within the same letter), 7.6 should be enough to indicate that the gentile in 2.29 is a Christian.

b. 2 Corinthians 3.6: *hos kai hikanōsen hēmas diakonous kainēs diathēkēs, ou grammatos alla pneumatos. To gar gramma apoktennei, to de pneuma zōopoiei*.

Within the context of the whole passage,[2] there can be no doubt of Paul's intention. The letter/spirit contrast is directly linked to the contrast be- [**135**] tween the ministry of Moses and of the Jewish law on the one hand and the gospel ministry of Paul on the other.

c. Philippians 3.3: *hēmeis gar hē peritomē, hoi pneumati theou* [verse 1. *theō*] *latreuontes . . . kai ouk en sarki pepoithotes . . .* Circumcision; spirit; not trusting in the flesh: we are observing a cluster of terms which clearly belong closely with one another in Paul's mind. Here, as before, Paul contrasts Christians, himself and his gentile converts included, with his own former self, in 'the flesh', as an unconverted Jew. We may note that, as in Romans 2.29, he does not say 'true' circumcision, though this is the implication. Grammatically, of course, *hē peritomē* is the subject of the first clause, and *hēmeis* the complement: 'Circumcision – that's us!'

These parallels (to which we might add that between Romans 8.3f. and 2.26) are quite sufficient in themselves, I believe, to compel the conclusion that the gentiles in question in Romans 2.25–29 are Christians, to whom Paul is ascribing what is essential *covenant* language (explicit in the 2 Corinthians text, strongly implicit in the others). But there are other arguments to back this up.

2. This language and concepts Paul uses in 2.25–29 evoke biblical and extra-biblical Jewish texts in which the explicit subject is the renewal of the covenant. Thus:

> I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezek. 36.24–28; cp. 11.19f.[3])

Ezekiel, of course, envisages these people coming 'from the nations' as Jews, returning from exile. Paul may perhaps have taken this in an extended sense, seeing gentiles themselves as the ones coming 'from the nations', who are, in the process, cleansed from their idolatry. But, whether that echo should be heard or not, there should be no doubt that this passage is in mind; not least because, the verse before our present section (2.24), Paul refers to the passage immediately preceding, namely Ezekiel 36.20, 'the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you'.[4] The rest of the themes fall into place, despite the superficial mismatch between the 'heart of flesh' in Ezekiel and Paul's rejection of 'the flesh'. The new heart, the new spirit, the following of [**136**] the statutes and ordinances (nb. 36.27: *kai poiēsō hina en tois dikaiōmasin mou poreuēsthe kai ta krimata mou phylaxēsthe kai poiēsēte*;

[2] On which see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 9.

[3] Other refs., and discussion, in *New Testament and the People of God*, 301 (and the whole chapter).

[4] Paul's exact words quote Isa. 52.5, but there the context is so similar that the allusion to the Ezekiel passage is perfectly natural as well.

Paul is not quoting this directly in 2.26, but it is difficult to doubt the deliberate allusion) – all these add to the impression that Paul is describing *the 'returned exiles', the people of the new covenant.* This is not a hypothetical category, soon to be proved empty. It is alive and well. It consists, not least, of gentile Christians.

3. Third, a small point, sometimes overlooked. In 2.26 Paul speaks of uncircumcision being 'reckoned' as circumcision. The other passages where Paul uses this language are of course those dealing with justification, e.g., 4.3ff. The language denotes a change of status; the passive indicates, presumably, divine action. It is of course possible that Paul has used this language to describe two quite different transactions, but it is simpler to see them both as part of the same event. The people here described are those whom God also declares to be 'righteous'.

4. The fourth argument undermines the assumption upon which the 'non-Christian' reading was based, namely that throughout this passage Paul's sole concern is to declare that all are sinners. That, of course, is one major point he is indeed making; but it is not the only one. I think it is increasingly recognized within the discipline of Pauline studies that Paul is quite capable of interjecting into a letter hints of things yet to come, suggestions of themes to be developed later on. An excellent example is to hand in the next chapter, where in verses 1–9 Paul anticipates, so briefly as to be decidedly cryptic, a good deal of the argument of chapter 9. It is quite wrong to suppose that Paul's specific *argument* follows the line of the *theological* scheme which we may or may not be able to reconstruct from his letters. Like a symphonic composer, he is well able to state part of a theme a good way in advance of its full introduction. This, I suggest, is what has happened here.

I conclude therefore that in 2.25–29 Paul is principally describing the contrast between the Jew who breaks the law and the gentile Christian who apparently 'keeps' or 'fulfills' the law. Such a person has somehow been included in the 'new covenant' category, designated simply as 'Jew' and 'circumcision'. We, to make this point clear, might explicate these words with the adjective 'true', while recognising that Paul, with more consequent polemic, simply transfers the titles themselves. This category ('Jew'/'circumcision') is of course, for Paul, made up of both Jews and gentiles who are in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit. But the point of the critical turn in the argument, 2.25–27, is that there now exists a highly paradoxical category of persons: gentiles who, despite remaining uncircumcised, seem to have (to put it in general terms for the moment) a highly positive relation to the Jewish law. It is this puzzle that must now occupy us for a few minutes, as we home in on the theme of 'Paul and the law' in this passage.

[**137**] We have already seen that the problem faced by the Jew in this passage is not the wrong use of the law, not the attempt to keep it and thereby to earn a status before God, but simply the breaking of the law. What can Paul mean by the 'keeping' of the statutes of the law (2.26) and the 'fulfilling' of the law (2.27)?

He clearly cannot mean that these gentiles have now become law-observant Jews. Not only is that the position against which the whole of Galatians launches

its fierce polemic. Not only is the argument of Romans, from its very different point of view, hostile to such an idea. It is clear from the context of this very passage that they cannot be observant Jews, since *ex hypothesi* they are not circumcised. As in the notorious 1 Corinthians 7.19, Paul is expressing a sharp paradox, and must have known it. It would be quite wrong to press this passage for a full exposition of how he conceived, and indeed justified, such an oxymoron as an 'uncircumcised law-keeper'. But the allusion to Ezekiel 36, and hints throughout the rest of Romans, may give us a suggestion as to how his mind worked on this issue, which remains near the heart of the question of Paul's view of the law. To see this clearly we must take a step back from the argument for a moment.

It has been argued, by Sanders and Räisänen in particular, that Paul's mind moved 'from solution to plight' instead of vice versa. According to them, the old view of Paul starting with a problem and receiving the answer on the road to Damascus will not hold water. Rather, Paul's new experience caused him to lash out with what looks like a reasoned 'critique', but which in fact is a series of scattered and inconsistent remarks, charging the Jews with anything that comes to hand. I regard this as very misleading, as I have argued elsewhere. But I do think that something somewhat analogous may have happened when it came to what Paul said about the way in which Christians, including gentile Christians, 'keep' or 'fulfill' the law.

Several times Paul says, more or less, that Christians do keep the law. The most obvious passage is Romans 13.8 (not to mention 1 Corinthians 7.19, already referred to). But we should note, as in fact more important, three other passages.

First, there is Romans 8.4–9, in which it is the mind of the flesh that 'does not and cannot submit to God's law'. The clear implication is that the mind of the Spirit can and does.

Second, there is Romans 10.4–11. Without providing a fuller exegesis than is here possible, we may suggest that Paul is using Deuteronomy 30, another 'new covenant' passage, as his basis for saying that when someone believes the Christian gospel, that person is thereby 'keeping the law', whether or not they have heard it, and despite the fact that in several points such as circumcision they are not doing what the law apparently required.

Third, there is the equally vexed *nomos pisteōs* in Romans 3.27. This is of course likewise controversial, but I am increasingly persuaded that the best [**138**] course is to treat *nomos* as referring to the Jewish law throughout, and to see this passage as another hint of what is to come. Putting 2.26–29, 3.27, 8.4–9 and 10.4–11 in a sequence, I believe we have something of a crescendo of passages in which Paul says, sometimes very cryptically (whatever we do with 3.27, it will never cease to be cryptic!) and sometimes with more elaboration, that Christians do in fact fulfill the law, even though, if they are gentiles, they have not done what to a Jew was one of its most basic commands. What did he mean by this? Why did he say it?

I think he said it because he knew it *a priori*. This is the point where he is making an assertion, reaching out into unknown (because not previously charted) realms of new theological possibilities. He knows (a) that those who

are members of the new covenant fulfill the law; Ezekiel said so, backed up by Jeremiah 31 and Deuteronomy 30. He also knows (b) that the new covenant now has bona-fide members who have not been, and do not need to be, circumcised; that is the whole argument of Galatians, and the evidence is that these people have the Spirit and believe in the gospel. Therefore, without needing either to have a previously existing Jewish category of 'keeping the law' in some attenuated or limited sense to draw upon, or to have worked out the implications of what he is saying in more than rudimentary detail, he is able to assert as a matter of theological logic (compare *logisthēsetai* in 2.26) that (c) uncircumcised gentile Christians do in fact 'keep the statutes of the law', as Ezekiel said. The prophecies of covenant renewal and blessing upon the gentiles have come true. The beneficiaries *must be* 'fulfilling the law' by their very existence. The question of an ethical 'fulfilment' such as that of 13.8 (corresponding very broadly to Luther's *tertius usus legis*) is not yet in view. The fulfilment of which Paul speaks is, I think, first and foremost a matter of status.

It is also involved, and indeed stressed by repetition, in this passage because Paul is using this theological deduction as a polemic tool. Does 'the Jew' break the law? Very well, he shall be contrasted with the gentile Christian, who 'keeps the law'. This contrast, again, comes straight out of Ezekiel 36 and similar passages. There, the Jews in exile, guilty of idolatry and of all manner of evil through which God's name is dishonoured, are contrasted with the exiles who will return, with whom God will re-establish his covenant. My suggestion is that Paul has not worked out in detail, and I think in fact nowhere works out in great detail, exactly what this 'keeping the law' involves. Like 'circumcision', which becomes for him a polemical title, snatched from the physically circumcised, for Christians whether circumcised or not (Philippians 3.3), he refers to Christians as 'law-keepers', not because they have observed every one of the Torah's commandments, but because, as he says in 8.3, that which the law intended but could not do has been brought to fulfilment in them. This will only appear illogical to those who have not grasped the covenantal context and dimensions of Paul's thought.

[**139**] I am proposing, therefore, that in 2.25–29 (1) we should understand Paul's critique of the Jews in terms of their law-breaking; (2) we should see the gentiles in question as gentile Christians; (3) we should hear the overtones of the whole passage in tune with Ezekiel 36 and similar passages; and that (4) the 'keeping of the law' which Paul ascribes to these gentile Christians should be seen as a new sort of theological category, derived from the 'new covenant' theme, ranged polemically against the failed Jewish 'law-keeping', but yet to be worked out fully. It is a matter, not of achievement, nor yet of ethics, but of status.

Boasting in the Torah: 2.17–24

Is not the first of these conclusions at once undermined by the immediately preceding paragraph? *Mē genoito*. As we work backwards into the centre of

the chapter, Paul seems to be charging the Jews not, or not primarily, with breaking the law, but with boasting in the law. Is this not the legalism, the 'nomism', with which we are familiar from so much exegesis, not least within the Protestant tradition?[5] Does it not mean that the charge of breaking the law is therefore misplaced?

No; or not exactly. I have argued in various places that Paul's basic critique of Israel was double-edged. As we have seen, and indeed as 2.17–24 bears ample witness, he accuses his fellow Jews of breaking the law (2.21–23, with several examples). But the wider category, within which this law-breaking is to be seen, is what I have termed 'National Righteousness'. This is not the attempt to use the law as a ladder of good works up which to climb to a moral self-righteousness. It is the attempt to use the law as the covenant badge which would keep membership within that covenant limited to Jews and Jews only. It is this, I believe, which drives Paul's argument in this controversial little passage.

Verses 17–20 set out the Jewish claim – which, we may suppose, Paul would have known quite well, having made it on his own behalf somewhat stridently in the past. But this claim would be quite misunderstood if we were to imagine that it referred to the *individual* Jew, boasting in his (or, less likely, her) moral achievements. Indeed, Paul will argue that the lack of moral achievement vitiates the boast (2.23). The boast, rather, here and elsewhere, consists in the belief that ethnic Israel is inalienably the people of the one true god, and that her possession of the law, quite irrespective of her keeping of it, demonstrates this fact. Paul's list of the Jewish status-markers and privileges in 17–20 reads [**140**] as though it were an allusion, say, to the implicit boast made throughout the Wisdom of Solomon or Ben-Sirach: that Wisdom/Torah has been given to Israel, setting her for all time in a superior position to the gentiles round about her.

The start of the paragraph (*ei de su Ioudaios eponomazē*) makes a *kuklos* with 2.29, and this, as well as reinforcing the conclusion reached in the previous section, suggests that 2.17–24 is intended as one half of a fuller statement of which 2.25–29 is the second half. Instead of the Jews being the teachers of the gentiles, gentiles (i.e. gentile Christians) will be judges of the Jews! This again points us to the correct way of reading the passage. *Paul's charge against his fellow-Jews is not that they are all immoral, nor yet that they are all self-righteous legalists, but that they seek to claim for themselves the status of being the true, final people of God, while they are in fact still in exile.*

The quotation from Isaiah 52.5, with its overtones of Ezekiel 36.20, highlights the theme, which I am convinced is crucial, of Israel's exile. Contrary to popular assumption, most Jews of the Second Temple period did not believe the exile was really over. I and others have argued this point at some length in various places, based on such passages as Nehemiah 9.36f., Ezra 9.8–9,

[5] Lest I seem dismissive of the Protestant tradition, let me add that, as an Anglican, it is one I too claim to share. Equally, Anglicans, like first-century Jews, encourage at least in theory the principle of critique from within. We are, or aspire to be, *ecclesia catholica semper reformanda.*

CD 1.3–11, Tobit 14.5–7, Baruch 3.6–8, and 2 Maccabees 1.27—9.6.[6] Since that argument has not, apparently, been properly understood, it may be worth indicating its main line once more.

The Jews had, of course, returned to the land of Israel after the exile. But nowhere in all Second Temple Jewish literature do we have the slightest suggestion that the great promises and prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the rest – including those of Deuteronomy 30, which were important for Paul – had been fulfilled. Israel had not been restored to her proper position; she was not ruler in her own land; the Temple was not properly rebuilt; YHWH had not returned to dwell in the midst of his people; justice and peace were not yet established in Israel, let alone in the rest of the world. The 'post-exilic' prophets such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi indicate pretty forcibly that things are still in poor shape; Israel is not yet all she should be, and a further great act of YHWH will be necessary. Qumran proves the point exactly: the self-understanding evident in (e.g.) CD is precisely that of people who see themselves as the advance guard of the real return from exile, which means that everybody else is still in exile, and that they are the first, secret 'returnees', who will be vindicated as such when YHWH finally acts.

Few will doubt, in fact, that the great majority of Jews in Jesus' day were looking for a major action of their god within history to liberate his people. Even those who want to minimize this have to allow for a huge groundswell of this belief bursting out in the mid 60s of the first century. The point here is **[141]** that, in thinking about and longing for this event, they did not merely draw upon patterns and types, such as the Exodus, culled at random, allegorically or typologically, from a past conceived as a scattered bunch of unconnected events. Rather, they saw themselves *in sequence with*, and continuing, Israel's whole past story, waiting for that story to reach its promised goal. They were not living in an ahistorical mode, in which the only question of weight were timeless salvation or ethics, with such issues being 'illustrated' by ideas taken in a fairly random fashion from her distant past. Rather, they read that past not least as a story; as a story which was continuing, and in which they themselves were characters; as a story with an ending, which can variously be characterized as 'return from exile'; 'return of YHWH to Zion'; 'salvation'; 'forgiveness of sins'; 'new covenant'; 'new exodus'; and perhaps even, for some at least, 'new creation' and 'resurrection'. And one of the greatest concentrations of all these themes in biblical literature is of course Isaiah 40—55, from which Paul quotes in Romans 2.24. Anyone who supposes that first-century Jews thought that any or all of those great events had already taken place has simply not, I think, understood the texts (with, again, Qumran being the exception that proves the rule). Anyone who supposes that 'return from exile' is thus, so to speak, one metaphor among many others for an essentially ahistorical 'salvation' has not, I

[6] Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 269ff., with refs., esp. to Knibb, Scott and Steck; and several works by Dr Paul Garnet of Concordia University, Montreal. The whole theme cries out for further serious attention.

think, grasped the whole worldview which Saul of Tarsus shared, and which his letters still reflect.

To suggest, therefore, as some have done quite stridently, that Saul of Tarsus did not have a 'problem' which needed a 'solution' is to abandon history and engage in fantasy. To suggest, however, that this 'problem' had to do only, or chiefly, with the state of his soul, the question of salvation after death, or the attempt to gain justification in an individual or private sense, is again strictly non-historical. The problem, rather, faced by every serious Jew of Paul's day, and not least by those who, as he seems to have been, were on the more extreme wing of the Pharisaic party,[7] was the tension between the glorious future promised by YHWH to Israel and the gloomy fate she currently experienced. Israel needed a Messiah; Israel needed redemption; Israel needed the forgiveness of sins – not simply as a nation composed of sinful individuals, but because 'forgiveness of sins' was a shorthand for 'return from exile'. Paul did not need to reason backwards, after the Damascus Road experience, that there must have been a problem somewhere within Judaism, if only he could work out what it was. Of course there was a problem. The only Jews who blinded themselves to it were the Chief Priests, and perhaps the Herodians.

Part of this problem, as all the biblical prophets and most of the surviving post-exilic literature perceived, was the further tension between the vocation of [**142**] Israel to be the true people of the creator god and the actual condition of Israel as a people deeply compromised with law-breaking. One of the great looked-for blessings of the end of exile was that Israel would no longer be a sinful nation. Ezekiel promised the moral renewal of the nation; so, in various ways, did Isaiah and Jeremiah. It had not yet happened, as Ezra and Nehemiah had complained. Or rather, from Paul's point of view, it had not yet happened *to ethnic Israel*. Paul's claim, advanced briefly in 2.25–29 and developed more fully elsewhere (not least in Romans 6—8) was that it had indeed happened – in Jesus Christ, and through his Spirit. But where did that leave ethnic Israel?

According to Romans 2.17–24, it left ethnic Israel making an *ethnic* boast, and using the Torah to support that boast, while the Torah itself in fact rendered that boast null and void. The charge against Israel in this passage is not that all Jews steal, commit adultery, and rob temples. That absurd suggestion, and its equally absurd triumphant refutation by some scholars, are quite beside the point. The point is that if Israel was truly redeemed, *none of these things would be happening at all*. The charges of 2.22f. are not individualistic, because the passage is not simply about the sinfulness of every human being. It is about the impossibility, granted universal sinfulness in the gentile world at least, of Israel's claiming a 'favoured nation clause' on the grounds of the Torah-based covenant. The claim is impossible for this reason: that the existence within Israel of any thieves, adulterers or

[7] On the Pharisees in this period, particularly their 'zeal', cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 189–95, with refs. I incline strongly to the view that the pre-conversion Paul was a Shammaite, despite his Hillelite teacher Gamaliel.

temple-robbers shows that Israel cannot be affirmed as she stands. The exile has not ended, at least not in the way that had been expected. Israel as an ethnic nation has not been redeemed.

The quotation from Isaiah 52.5 in Romans 2.24 sums this up. The chapter as a whole is precisely about exile: Israel has been exiled for her sins, as a result of which the gentiles have had cause to blaspheme YHWH. Now, however, YHWH is doing a new thing; his kingdom is being announced; the people are to be redeemed. Paul believes, clearly, that all this has come true in Jesus Christ; but the significance of this is not always fully grasped. For Paul, *in Jesus Christ the exile has come to an end*. That is for him, perhaps, the primary significance of the resurrection. But if this is so, it means that the problem of which Paul was already aware – the continuing exile of Israel – is not avoided by intensifying Torah-observance, or by acting with 'zeal' to bring in YHWH's kingdom. All such efforts fail to take account of the fact that ethnic Israel cannot be affirmed as she stands. The only way forward is in the spirit, not the letter; in the secret of the heart, not in the badge of circumcision; in the praise of the true god, not the praise of humans. Nor is this (as has recently been argued) to shift away from history into Platonism, to move simply from the material to the 'spiritual'.[8]

[**143**] What role, then, does the Torah play within the sequence of thought of 2.17–24? First, it is the apparently secure base upon which Israel builds her 'boast in god', that is, the boast that the creator god is the god of Israel. This Torah-base, upon which she 'rests' (*epanapauē*, verse 17), is not the legalist's ladder of merit. It is Israel's national charter. Second, it is the repository of wisdom, possession of which means that Israel, through it, possesses 'the form of knowledge and truth' (verse 20). There is no need to suppose that Paul was insincere or sarcastic in making this comment. The law is, after all, 'holy, just and good' (7.12). Thirdly, the 'boast in god' of 2.17 becomes the 'boast in the law' of 2.23. We might illustrate this from (e.g.) Ben-Sirach 24: Wisdom, identified as Torah, looks for somewhere to live among human beings, and chooses Israel. But, fourthly, the law cannot effect among Israel the wisdom, the holiness, the utterly human life, which it holds out. The problem of Israel, in Paul in general and Romans in particular, is not that there is, as is sometimes said, a 'hidden Jew in all of us'. Rather, it is the hidden Adam in the Jew. The Jew, called to be the people of the true god, dishonours her god by breaking his holy law. Israel is the people of the Messiah, but only 'according to the flesh' (9.5).

I suggest, therefore, a reasonably radical re-reading of 2.17–24. The passage has to do with the nation as a whole, not with a collection, even a complete collection, of individuals. Paul does not want to unsay any of the fine words in 2.17–20. Indeed, he reaffirms them in 3.1f. The problem is that they do not accurately describe the still-exiled nation. They describe only the one who will be faithful to the nation's vocation, the one through whom YHWH will do what the law could not.

[8] Cf. Boyarin 1994, with my 'Two Radical Jews' [reprinted as chapter 8 of the present volume].

Written on the Heart: 2.12–16

It goes against the grain to cut off a Pauline sentence beginning with *gar* from that which precedes it, but for the sake of brevity and clarity we may turn now to the paragraph which precedes 2.17 in the Nestle-Aland text, i.e., 2.12–16. This is, as far as I am concerned, the hardest part of the chapter, and the place where most uncertainty may still lurk about the place and meaning of the Torah in Paul's argument.

It is the addition of the law to the argument already in progress, in fact, which marks out these verses from 2.1–11. Up until now, the chapter has set up a picture of general judgment, in which some will be justified and others condemned. At this point Paul introduces the law into the picture. Some have the law, others do not: all will be judged, but only according to where they have been on this scale.

It is vital to note, first, that the justification and the judgment spoken of in this paragraph are inalienably *future*. This is not *present* justification; Paul will [**144**] come to that in chapter 3. Nor can the two be played off against one another. They belong together: present justification, as Romans makes clear, is the true anticipation of future justification. And in Romans, as elsewhere in Paul, it is present justification, not future, that is closely correlated with faith. Future justification, acquittal at the last great Assize, always takes place on the basis of the totality of the life lived (e.g. Romans 14.11f.; 2 Corinthians 5.10). It is because the relation between the two has by no means always been understood (that is not the only thing that is not understood about Paul's doctrine of justification, but that is the subject of another paper) that exegetes have glossed uneasily over this passage, and have flattened it out into a general treatment of the sinfulness of all human beings.

Verse 12 provides a typically Pauline general statement, in two parts. Sinning without the law means destruction without the law; sinning under the law means judgment by the law. Verse 13, to explain this, offers a more specific assertion: it is not the hearers, but the doers, of the law who will be justified (at the future great judgment; i.e. the future tense is temporal, not merely logical). But who are these 'doers of the law'? Verse 13 is at once further explained (*gar*) by verse 14: 'when gentiles, who do not possess the law, do the things of the law, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not possess the law.' I have deliberately omitted to translate the word *physei*, which occurs in the middle of the verse, since it is precisely the point at issue, the little rudder around which the whole ship of Paul's argument here will turn. Who, we repeat, are these gentiles who 'do the law'?

The reader may guess that I would prefer to give the same answer as I gave to the similar question in 2.25–29, and this guess would be correct. But it is important, before we reach the conclusion of the argument, to examine the more usual answer. Most exegetes still support some form of the following conclusion: that Paul here hypothesizes an imaginary category (gentiles who, in their pagan state, somehow 'do the law by nature'), which he will later show to be void. Alternatively, some have suggested that Paul here allows the mask of severity to slip for a minute from his exposition of universal human

sinfulness, revealing a more liberal approach in which, despite the conclusion of 3.19f., some gentiles are recognized as being quite reasonable people, living up to their consciences and being, in the best sense (rather than in the bad sense in which the phrase is now regularly used) 'a law to themselves'.

These two alternatives both belong with the usual belief that chapters 1—3 are simply designed to demonstrate the universality of sin. Either Paul is saying 'supposing there were gentiles who did what was right; they would be judged favourably; but of course there aren't any'. Or he is saying 'despite what I said above, and what I shall say below, I know perfectly well that some of my pagan neighbours live perfectly decent moral lives, and that God is quite [**145**] pleased with them'. Both of these readings are inadequate. The critical word, again, is *physei*.

The majority of exegetes have taken *physei* with what follows, *ta tou nomou poiōsin*. These gentiles 'do by nature the things of the law'. But the next use of the word in the letter, a mere thirteen verses later, suggests strongly that this is the wrong way to take it. In 2.27 the gentiles are described as *hē ek physeōs akrobustia*, 'that which is by nature uncircumcision'. Here 'nature' refers clearly to that which the gentiles are/have, as we say, 'by birth'. Their *physis*, their 'natural state', is that they are uncircumcised.[9] I suggest that this strongly supports taking *physei* with what precedes, *ta mē nomon echonta*, 'who do not have the law'. The point about the gentiles is that they are 'lesser breeds outside the law'. They are, in that strict technical sense, 'sinners', *hamartōloi* (cf. Galatians 2.15). By 'nature', that is, by birth, they are outside the covenant, not within Torah. And yet they 'do the things of Torah' (verse 14).

The most forceful objection to this way of reading the verse has to do with word-order. If Paul had meant 'gentiles who do not by nature have the law', why did he put *physei* after *ta mē nomon echonta*, instead of writing *ta physei mē nomon echonta*? We may grant that the latter feels more natural. But Paul is quite capable of using a substantive participle followed, rather than preceded, by its modifying dative, as in Romans 14.1: *ton de asthenounta tē pistei proslambanesthe*, where *tē pistei* is naturally taken with *ton de asthenounta*, not with *proslambanesthe*.[10]

If this argument is still resisted, the main alternative is that now articulated in Fitzmyer's commentary:[11] 'Following the guidance of *physis* [in the sense of "the regular, natural order of things"], Gentiles frame rules of conduct for themselves and know at least some of the prescriptions of the Mosaic Torah.' This is, of course, possible, but seems to me far weaker as a contribution to the argument of 2.12–16, and of the chapter as a whole, forming more of an aside than an integrated stage in the discussion. Paul is, of course, capable

[9] We may compare the other uses of the word in Paul: 1.26; 11.21, 24 (three times); 1 Cor. 11.14; Gal. 2.15; 4.8; Eph. 2.3. Of these, only 1 Cor. 11.14 (cited by e.g. Fitzmyer 1993, 310 in favor of 'do by nature') points in the direction of an abstract 'nature'; in all the others, it refers to the status people have by birth or race. In addition, every time Paul uses *physei* it is adjectival rather than adverbial (so Achtemeier 1985, 45). On the whole question, see Cranfield 1975a, 156 n. 7.

[10] Cranfield op. cit., I, 157 n. 2 lists several occurrences of substantival participals with dependent words following, but in most of them the dependent word is the direct object of the participle, which is hardly a direct parallel to 2.14.

[11] Op. cit., 309–11, here at 309.

of asides, but if in doubt we are, I suggest, justified in going for the meaning which ties the argument more tightly together.

[**146**] I suggest, therefore, that 2.13–14 should be taken quite closely with 2.25–29, as described above. There are, however, two further points on the passage which need to be added.

First, we may consider the peculiar situation of those described here. 2.13 and 2.14, taken together, indicate quite clearly that those described in the latter as 'doing the law' will, according to the former, be justified (remembering, again, that we are here dealing with future, not present, justification). This is clear from putting together 2.13, *hoi poiētai nomou dikaiōthēsontai*, with 2.14, *ethnē . . . ta tou nomou poiōsin*. The 'doing of the law' spoken of here and in 2.26f., then, has to do with nothing less than justification, albeit in the future. But why then will there be uncertainty, as suggested in the very strange passage in verse 15b ('with their conscience also bearing witness with them, and their conflicting thoughts accusing or perhaps excusing them . . .')? One possible answer might run as follows, and this answer, I think, considerably strengthens my case.

Paul has just stated that those who do not have the law will be judged without the law, while those who have the law will be judged by means of the law. But at once he faces an exception; and the fact that this is an exception demonstrates more clearly than before that we must indeed be dealing with Christian gentiles at this point. If those who are a 'law to themselves', because 'the law' (presumably the Jewish law) is written on their hearts, are non-Christians, then Paul has been talking nonsense in verse 12 when he suggested that gentiles, not having the law, would be judged without the law. But if they are Christians, then they are in a sense neither fish nor fowl. They are not simply lawless gentiles; but the Jewish law, which is now in some sense or other written on their hearts, and which in some sense they 'do', nevertheless has a sufficiently ambiguous relation to them for them still to be concerned that the eventual issue might be in doubt. Hence, as judgment day approaches, they may well find inner conflict as they reflect on their situation. They would not have this inner conflict were they not Christians. The situation would then be the simply one of verse 12.

We might supplement the argument further by pointing out that the warning of 2.13 ('it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who shall be justified') anticipates almost exactly the charge of 2.23 ('you who boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?'). But there is another argument which strongly supports the conclusion that the people here described, as towards the end of the chapter, are indeed Christian gentiles – and actual ones, not merely hypothetical figures. This is verse 15a: they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. It has been pointed out often enough that this is a direct allusion to Jeremiah 31.33:

> This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

[**147**] This, however, has not always been thought of particular relevance, since, for all sorts of reasons too complex to unravel in an exegetical paper, Paul has been thought to have little or nothing to do with covenantal theology, within which of course the Jeremiah passage so clearly belongs. But again the rest of the chapter comes to our help.

We have seen that the context of 2.17–29 is inescapably covenantal and exilic. Israel is in exile, longing for the renewal of the covenant, and seeking to grasp at a covenant membership that would be for Jews and Jews only. Paul asserts, on the basis of his whole theology, that in fact the covenant has already been renewed in Christ, and that gentiles have found themselves among its beneficiaries; so that they, in some surprising and paradoxical sense yet to be explained, 'keep the statutes of the law'. In the present passage, they show that the law is 'written on their hearts'. I find it next to impossible that Paul could have written this phrase, with its overtones of Jeremiah's new covenant promise, simply to refer to pagans who happen by accident to share some of Israel's moral teaching. More likely by a million miles that he is hinting quietly, and proleptically, at what he will say far more fully later on: that gentile Christians belong within the new covenant. In short, if 2.25–29 is an anticipation of fuller statements, within the letter, of Paul's belief that Christian gentiles do indeed fulfill the law even though they do not possess it, 2.13–14 looks as though it is a still earlier statement of very nearly the same point.

Very nearly; but not quite. Paul does not just repeat points ten verses later for the sake of emphasis. The sequence of thought that runs between the two halves of chapter 2 now comes into play, and we must stand back a little and observe how it functions.

The presuppositions of all Paul's thought, as of more or less all serious Jewish thought, is that in some way or other Israel is the solution of the creator god, YHWH, to the problem of the world. The problem of the world is highlighted, if not even constituted, by gentile idolatry and sin. But Israel is herself sinful; so said all the prophets, and, in case there had been any doubt on the matter, Babylon settled it once for all. The nation that should have been the solution became part of the problem. The trouble with Israel was that she too was in Adam. The physician succumbed to the disease. What Israel now needed (as Isaiah 40—55 already saw) was a physician's physician, one who could do for Israel, and hence for the world, what neither could do for themselves or for each other.

The sequence of thought of Romans 2 catches this theological outline more or less exactly. The general opening in 2.1ff. is to be taken as exactly that, a general opening, not as a covert way of attacking Israel before the open assault in 2.17. It addresses all humans, Jew and gentile alike, who might consider themselves exempt from the strictures of Romans 1.18–32. The turn in the argument at 2.17 thus functions like the well-known turn at Amos 2.6: the peo-[**148**]ple who thought to escape the charge levelled against everyone else find the spotlight turned, revealingly and uncomfortably, upon themselves. The chapter then works like this: (a) (2.1–11) the general statement of coming judgment upon all humans, Jew and gentile alike;

(b) (2.12–16) Torah will not affect the fairness of this judgment, since those who have it will be judged by it, and those who do not, will not. However, there is a strange category of people who 'do the things of the law', in a sense yet to be explained, even though by birth they do not possess it; they will find themselves surprisingly vindicated at the judgment. (c) (2.17–24) Surely Israel is the solution to this problem of universal sin? Is she not the creator's means of bringing light into his dark world? Yes; but, alas, Israel has so far brought only darkness. The nation that was to lighten the pagan world has herself succumbed to pagan darkness, and the Torah, so far from alleviating the problem, instead intensified it. (d) (2.25–29) Nevertheless, YHWH is renewing the covenant, and the Torah is finding a strange new fulfilment. There is now in existence an Israel created by the Spirit, finding its validation from the creator god himself.

Conclusion

What then shall we say about Paul and the law in Romans 2? Is Paul inconsistent? By no means. The charge of inconsistency falls to the ground once the actual sequence of thought, and the underlying theology, are allowed to come into view. Part of the trouble, I think, in recent Pauline scholarship is that a false polarization has occurred, between the attackers of an assumed (but not always well understood) older orthodoxy and the would-be defenders of orthodoxy against assumed (but not always well understood) detractors. I would like to urge my colleagues on either side of this great divide, and in the sundry other positions that are currently being taken up, to consider Romans 2 not just as a difficult passage to be fitted in somewhere and somehow in a scheme of Pauline theology – or even in an exegesis of Romans, though frankly it has not always received its proper due in that context either – but as a potential jumping-off point for fresh work on Paul.

In particular, Romans 2 introduces us to Paul's covenant theology. We should not be surprised by this, as though the apostle of justification by faith would be compromised for a single moment by continuing to think Jewishly. Nor should we imagine that his theology is the mere unthinking reflex of a religious or psychological experience. What we observe here, as elsewhere in his writings, is the apostle wrestling with the implications of his basic conviction: that in Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit, the creator god had acted to redeem his people and so to redeem the whole world. His charge against Israel was not that of 'legalism', or 'self-righteousness' in the older sense. But nor was it a [**149**] mere random firing of shots into the air in the hope of hitting some target somewhere. It was a measured, careful critique, built upon the prophetic critiques, and in any case not expecting rebuttal: almost no Jew, certainly not Paul himself before his conversion, would have denied that Israel as she stood remained in need of redemption.

And what about the law in all of this? Pulling the 'law' threads of the discussion together into a quasi-systematic form, we might deduce the following:

1 The law, *nomos* in Paul, is the Jewish law. Gentiles do not possess it by birth.
2 The law defines Israel over against the nations, and moreover indicates that Israel is designed by the creator god as a light to the nations.
3 The law sets the standard by which Israel will be judged; gentiles will be judged without reference to it. However, there is one class of gentiles who in a sense will be judged with reference to Torah. This class consists of gentile Christians; though by birth they do not possess the Torah, they are now in the strange position of 'doing the law', since the Spirit has written the 'work of the Torah' on their hearts.
4 Israel boasts in her possession of the law; it sets her apart from the nations.
5 The boast is not made good, because that could be so only if Israel kept the law perfectly; and this is not the case. Israel is still in exile, still 'in her sins'. She is still guilty of law-breaking.
6 The category of gentiles mentioned above in connection with the final judgment is invoked again, this time to demonstrate how far ethnic Israel is from being affirmed as she stands. The covenant *has* already been renewed; its beneficiaries now 'fulfill the law', even though, in the case of gentile Christians, they do not possess it. This 'fulfillment' seems to be of a different order from the fulfillments thought of within Judaism. Nor is it simply the (Lutheran) *tertius usus legis*. It is without precedent, for the simple reason that it has not happened before, and the manner of covenant renewal was not anticipated. As Paul says in Romans 8, 'what the law could not do . . . God has done'.
7 The way is now clear for chapter 3, with its exposition of the cross, and of justification by faith in the *present* as a direct result. Paul will go on, later in the letter (chapter 8), to declare that there is no *katakrima* for those who are *en Christō*. But this is no more than a recapitulation, and a filling out, of what has already been said in principle in chapter 2. It is greatly to the detriment of the doctrine of justification by faith that exegetes have frequently not taken the trouble to notice what Romans 2 is actually about, as opposed to what it is usually supposed to be about.

Romans 2 thus takes its place both within the developing actual argument of the letter – as opposed to the imagined argument in which Paul simply sets out a systematic *ordo salutis* – and within a potential systematic account of Paul's [**150**] whole theology, not least his theological reflections on the law. Thus equipped, exegesis should be able to proceed beyond the sterile 'either/or' of some recent debates, and move cheerfully toward the creative 'both/and' which reflects, in terms of method, the intricate but perfectly balanced theology which Paul bequeathed to his readers. Whatever we want to do with Paul's theology when we finally discover it, let us at least do justice to a mind, and a letter, that continue to instruct even as they fascinate, and to educate even as they inspire.

Chapter Ten

PAUL, ARABIA AND ELIJAH (GALATIANS 1.17) (1996)

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This essay represents one of those flashes of insight that all exegetes hope for but which come all too rarely in a crowded and overworked field. One of the advantages of Cathedral life (I was Dean of Lichfield from 1994 to 1999) is that one is exposed to significant amounts of scripture on a daily and weekly basis, meaning that one is seldom more than a few months away from hearing any given part of the Bible. I must have had 1 Kings 19 in recent memory because when, one morning in my private readings, I read Galatians 1.17 I heard the echo of what God said to Elijah on the mountain: 'return again to Damascus'. At first I thought this must be a purely random and insignificant 'echo', but when I went to the Septuagint of the passage I realized it was anything but. This passage, read in the way I now read it, seems to me crucial for understanding what sort of Pharisee Saul of Tarsus actually was.

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[**683**] We don't know, say most of the commentators, why Paul went to Arabia or what he did there. We aren't even sure which bit of 'Arabia' he visited.

In what is, for Paul, an unusually long autobiographical section (Galatians 1.11—2.21), he describes the events leading up to and following from his dramatic experience on the road to Damascus, including two visits to Jerusalem, his confrontation with Peter at Antioch – and his trip to Arabia. Whatever precise reasons one gives for this lengthy account, it clearly has something to do with reinforcing the basic point he enunciates in 1.11–12: he received his gospel message not from other human sources (to whom, by implication, his hearers might appeal, over his head, for a more accurate version) but rather by 'a revelation of Jesus Christ' (1.12).

What comes next is particularly significant. He first describes his 'former life in Judaism', a life characterized by 'extreme zeal for the traditions of my fathers' (*perissoterōs zēlōtēs hyparchōn tōn patrikōn mou paradoseōn*), which zeal led him 'to persecute and ravage the church of God' (1.13–14; see also Philippians 3.5–6). He then continues:

> But when the God who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his son in me, so that I might be his herald among the nations, at once I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. (Galatians 1.15–17)

Why Arabia? Some think it was a time of solitary meditation, in preparation for the gentile mission; others, that it was Paul's first attempt at gentile evangelism.[1] Where was 'Arabia', anyway, at that time? No really precise or attractive [**684**] answers have been forthcoming to these quite natural questions.[2] Most agree that the main point Paul is making in the passage is that he did not go to Jerusalem. But the question of Arabia is still a puzzle. I wish to propose a solution to it.

Paul indicates in 1.14 that he belonged, before his conversion, to the tradition of 'zeal for the law'. This zeal led him not just into zealous study and prayer but into violent action.[3] Zeal of this sort was part of a long tradition within Judaism, looking back to particular scriptural and historical models. Of these, the best known was Phinehas, whose brief moment of glory appears in Numbers 25.7–13, when he intervened to kill a Jewish man consorting with a Moabite woman. As M. Hengel has shown in considerable detail, Phinehas remained as a model for subsequent 'zealous' activity, not least in the Maccabean period, when the same issue (compromise with pagans and paganism) was perceived to be at stake.[4] In these developed traditions, the other figure [**685**] who emerges prominently is Elijah. The reason is again obvious: Elijah, too, acted zealously, killing the prophets of Baal who were leading Israel into paganism.[5] So strong, indeed, is the connection between Phinehas and Elijah in the popular consciousness of 'zeal', not least in the

[1] On the meditation hypothesis, see, e.g., Burton 1921, 55–7 (arguing that the trip to Arabia is governed by the previous phrase, in which Paul denies that he 'communicated with flesh and blood'), Rohde 1989, 62–3. On the evangelism hypothesis, see Betz 1979, 74 (admitting that this is an assumption); Bruce 1978, 81–2; 1982, 96; Fung 1988, 86; followed now by Murphy-O'Connor 1993, 732–7; Cummins 1997, 175–6. A commonly repeated argument is that this explains the subsequent hostility to Paul from the Nabatean king Aretas (2 Cor. 11.32–33).

[2] They are left open, e.g., by Schlier 1971, 58; R. N. Longenecker 1990, 34; Dunn 1993a, 70. On Arabia, see Schürer 1973, I, 574–86, and the discussions, with other literature, in Betz 1979, 73–4; Murphy-O'Connor 1993.

[3] Against, e.g., R. N. Longenecker 1990, 29–30, who opposes Lightfoot 1884, 81–2, despite Longenecker's citing at length passages about 'zeal' that show that its regular meaning was 'violent action, defending Israel's purity'. See too Burton 1921, 47; Schlier 1971, 51; Bruce 1982, 91. Lightfoot, as often, seems to have gotten the measure of the historical situation, in which the more 'zealous' wing of the Pharisees merged without difficulty into the general movement, part of which later took the name 'Zealot'. See *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 7; Dunn 1993a, 60–2; 1993b, 67–9.

[4] Hengel 1989, 149–77. The link between the Maccabean revolt and Phinehas is made explicit in 1 Macc. 2.26; in the next verse Mattathias summons his followers with this cry: *ho zēlōn tō nomō kai histōn diathēkēn exelthetō opisō mou*. See too Sir. 45.23. Josephus in his parallel passage (*Ant*. 12 §271) has omitted the reference to Phinehas (for reasons discussed in Hengel 1989, 155–6), and has Matthias cry, *ei tis zēlōtēs estin tōn patriōn ethōn kai tēs tou theou thrēskeias epesthō*. On the traditions of 'zeal' in the second-Temple period, see the convenient summary in David Rhoads, 'Zealots', *ABD* VI, 1044. A striking passage is Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.253: one who commits perjury is unlikely to escape human punishment, 'for there are thousands who have their eyes upon him full of zeal for the laws (*zēlōtai nomōn*), strictest guardians of the ancestral institutions (*phylakes tōn patriōn akribestatoi*), merciless to those who do anything to subvert them'.

[5] 1 Kgs. 18; cf. 1 Macc. 2.58, where Elijah's 'zeal for the law' is the reason for his being taken up into heaven.

first century, that the two figures are actually merged in several traditions, with Phinehas-like attributes being credited to Elijah and vice versa.[6]

Elijah, too, was clearly a man of 'zeal'. 'I have been very zealous for YHWH of Hosts', he says (LXX: *Zēlōn ezēlōka tō kyriō pantokratori*) (1 Kings 19.14). His zeal, of course, had consisted precisely in slaying the prophets of Baal, as recounted in the previous chapter. But he had been stopped in his tracks, confronted by Ahab and Jezebel with a threat to his life (19.1–2); and he had run away 'to Horeb, the mount of God' (19.8), apparently to resign his prophetic commission.[7] There, in the famous story, he was met by earthquake, wind, and fire, but YHWH was in none of them. Finally he heard 'a still, small voice', inquiring why he was there.[8] His explanation, as we just saw: great zeal, and now great disappointment. 'I alone am left, and they seek my life'. Back comes the answer:

> Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. (1 Kings 19.15–18)

What has this to do with Galatians?

Saul of Tarsus, prior to his conversion, was a 'zealous' Pharisee. As I have [**686**] suggested elsewhere, this means that he belonged to the Shammaite school and was ready to take the law into his own hands and act even when the official authorities were apparently negligent.[9] One who had 'advanced beyond most of his contemporaries' in his study and knowledge of Jewish law and lore would undoubtedly have been well aware of the Phinehas/Elijah tradition; one who had come to the conclusion that 'zeal' was the only proper response to the crisis facing Israel would have been ready to follow the Maccabees in imitating Phinehas/Elijah. This did not mean that Saul was a member of something called 'the Zealot party', for at that time it is quite likely that things were not so formalized.[10] It does mean that he sympathized, and acted in tune, with those who were choosing the route of violence against Jews who were regarded as traitors. Someone in this position would naturally choose certain appropriate styles of action, based on scriptural and traditional models, in the belief that Israel's God would vindicate such action. That, it appears, is what Saul of Tarsus did.

Saul saw himself, I suggest, acting out the model of Phinehas and/or Elijah. His zeal led him into physical violence against those whom he saw as the heirs and successors of the compromised Jews of Numbers 25 and the Baal

[6] For details, see Hengel 1989, 156–71; see, e.g., *Ps.-Philo* 48.1. Among the remarkable things attributed to Phinehas is his 'making atonement' for Israel; his zealous activity, it was believed in some quarters, turned away the divine wrath (see below).

[7] See Nordheim 1979, 153–73; Jerome T. Walsh, 'Elijah', *ABD* II, 465.

[8] MT: *hāqad hāmāmĕd lôq*; LXX: *phōnē auras leptēs* (the translation is disputed).

[9] *New Testament and the People of God*, 192, 202. On Saul's 'zeal', see too Ac. 22.3; Phil. 3.6. See too the Philo reference in n. 4 above.

[10] See *New Testament and the People of God*, 177–81.

worshipers of 1 Kings 18 (see Acts 22.3–5). He 'was persecuting the church with great violence and was trying to destroy it' (*kath' hyperbolēn ediōkon tēn ekklēsian tou theou kai eporthoun autēn*) (Galatians 1.13). However, when stopped in his tracks by the revelation on the road to Damascus, he again did what Elijah did. He went off to Mount Sinai.[11] The word 'Arabia' is very imprecise in Paul's day, covering the enormous area to the south and east of Palestine; but one thing we know for sure is that, for Paul, 'Arabia' was the location of Mount Sinai. Indeed, Galatians 1.17, our present passage, and 4.25, 'for Sinai is a mountain in Arabia', are the only two occurrences of *Arabia* in the whole New Testament.[12] Saul of Tarsus then 'returned to Damascus' (*kai palin hypestrepsa eis*[**687**] *Damaskon*), just like Elijah in 1 Kings 19.15, where he is told *Poreuou anastrephe eis tēn hodon sou kai hēxeis eis tēn hodon erēmou Damaskou*.[13] And, in case this remarkable coincidence of themes is still unconvincing, we may note that in the same passage Paul describes his call in 'prophetic' terms: 'the God who set me apart from my mother's womb . . .' (Galatians 1.15; cf. Isaiah 49.1; Jeremiah 1.5). Even though the Hebrew scriptures are silent about Elijah's birth or call, this locates Paul firmly within the prophetic tradition of which Elijah was one of the supreme members.

If this is correct, Saul certainly did not go to Arabia in order to evangelize. He might have been doing what a puzzled zealous prophet might be expected to do: going back to the source to resign his commission. Alternatively, and perhaps preferably, he might be conceived of as doing what a puzzled, newly commissioned prophet might do, complaining (like Moses, Jeremiah, and others) that he is not able to undertake the work he has been assigned.[14] And whatever still, small voice he may have heard, it was certainly not underwriting the life of zeal in which he had been indulging up until then. His zeal was now to be redirected (Galatians 4.18; see also 2 Corinthians 11.2). He was to become the herald of the new king.

At this point, of course, the parallel with Elijah suddenly ceases to be exact. Saul of Tarsus was being told, through his whole Damascus Road Christophany, that the way of zeal was not the way by which the eschatological mission was to be accomplished. Nevertheless, a parallel still holds. Elijah was sent

[11] Bruce allows for the possibility that Saul 'communed with God in the wilderness, where Moses and Elijah had communed with him centuries before', but seeing no reason for this he prefers to think of the Arabian trip as evangelistic (Bruce 1982, 96).

[12] The only occurrence of *Araps* is of course Ac. 2.11. The place-name *Arabia* occurs in Gal. 4.25, the preferred reading being *to gar Sina oros estin en tē Arabia* with ℵCFG, Origen, and others (so T. Zahn and Lightfoot, following Bentley and Lachmann); P46 has the same, only with *de* instead of *gar*. The other readings in this textually confused verse are easily explicable from this, emanating (no doubt) from scribes who had not grasped Paul's meaning. Expecting to see the word *Agar*, a scribe, faced with *TOGARSINA ktl*., would easily write *TOAGARSINA*; puzzled by the lack of a connective, another scribe would write *TODEAGARSINA*, thus producing the reading of ABD and many others, favored by Nestle-Aland; recognizing that *de* was the wrong connective another would add a *gar* to replace the one the first erroneous scribe had personalized, producing TOGARAGARSINA, the reading of Ψ and the majority. Lightfoot's discussion, both of text and meaning, is still worth consulting (Lightfoot 1884, 180–1, 192–3). For the main alternative view, see Metzger 1971, 596, and the discussions, e.g., in Betz 1979, 244–5; Dunn 1993a, 250–2. On the meaning of this compressed verse, see below.

[13] Thus, the argument that if Paul had gone so far south a return to Damascus would have been improbable misses the point (see Burton 1921, 58).

[14] See Habel 1965; Hubbard 1974. I owe these references, and this point, to Professor C. C. Newman.

with a message to anoint Hazael king of Syria and Jehu king of Israel; they, and Elijah's own successor Elisha, would complete the work that Elijah's zeal had begun. Saul was sent back from Arabia to be the herald of the newly anointed Messiah, Jesus (1.16, 23). His was the kingship that would challenge all pagan powers (4.1–11), that would create the true community of the people of God.[15] Saul, having taken the Elijah of 1 Kings 18 as his role model in his persecuting zeal, took the Elijah of 1 Kings 19 as his role model when confronted, after his zealous triumph, with a totally new reality that made him [**688**] question his whole life and mission to date.[16] If R. B. Hays is right that Paul saw Isaiah 49.1–6 as setting out his apostolic agenda,[17] Paul may here be indicating that he had exchanged the role of Elijah-like zeal for the role of the servant. Instead of inflicting the wrath of YHWH on rebellious Jews, he would become the light of the nations.[18] He now had a new role model, a new job description.

Supporting evidence that this train of thought, this intertextual echo, was indeed intended by Paul comes, as often enough with Galatians, in a parallel in Romans.[19] In Romans 11.1–6, Paul faces the question: granted the failure of Israel to believe in its Messiah, is salvation now impossible for a Jew? Paul replies with an indignant denial. He is, himself, the living proof to the contrary. But, though he may sometimes feel totally alone, he has heard the Sinai oracle that assures him this is not the case. He quotes from 1 Kings 19.10 (repeated in 19.14): 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and thrown down your altars; I alone am left, and they seek my life'. Paul stands as Elijah stands, the lonely representative of the true Israel. But he has discovered, as Elijah discovered, that this was in fact a considerable exaggeration: 'I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal' (1 Kings 19.18; Romans 11.4). Even so, he says, in the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace (11.5; the last phrase presumably expounds 'I have left for myself'). But, he concludes, if it is by grace, it is no longer by works, otherwise grace would not be grace (11.6). In other words, the parallel with Elijah must be understood in a way quite different from how Saul of Tarsus would have read it. The true, loyal people of YHWH are not, after all, defined by their allegiance to 'the works of Torah', the badges of Israel's distinctiveness.[20] That is the route Paul has just described in Romans 10.2–4: [**689**]

[15] See 'Gospel and Theology in Galatians' [reprinted as chapter 6 of the present volume].

[16] Professor Charles F. D. Moule, in a letter of 18 October 1995, suggests that Paul might have meant 'going to Arabia' metaphorically. If his awareness of Elijah as a role model was sufficiently strong, he might have used the phrase to denote, simply, a period of Elijah-like questioning and, in a sense, recommissioning. I think this is unlikely. The whole context is anything but metaphorical; it purports to describe actual journeys to actual places. If Saul of Tarsus could set off hot-foot to Damascus (roughly 130 miles, as the crow flies), he could presumably travel to Sinai (roughly 240 miles, admittedly with less inhabited terrain en route).

[17] Hays 1989, 168–73, 225–6 n. 48.

[18] Gal. 1.16b reflects Isa. 49.6, increasing the probability that Paul's reference to his 'prophetic call' has Isa. 49, not Jer. 1, as its primary reference. See esp. Newman 1992, 205–6.

[19] For what follows, see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 13; 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' [reprinted as chapter 7 of the present volume]. On 'intertextual echo', see Hays 1989, 70: 'Paul's sentences carry the weight of meanings acquired through earlier narrative and liturgical utterance.'

[20] For this understanding of 'works', see *New Testament and the People of God*, 238, and other references there.

> *marturō gar autois hoti zēlon theou echousin all' ou kat' epignōsin. Agnoountes gar tēn tou theou dikaiosunēn kai tēn idian dikaiosunēn zētountes stēsai, tē dikaiosunē tou theou ouch hypetagēsan. Telos gar nomou Christos . . .*

We are surely right to catch here an autobiographical echo, looking back to Galatians 1.14. The Christian Paul's verdict on the pre-Christian Saul is this: he had a zeal for Israel's God, but it was an ignorant zeal, seeking to establish a covenant *membership for Jews and Jews only*, and to see that identity marked out by the works of Torah. What Saul learned on the road to Damascus, and perhaps on Sinai too as he reflected on Elijah's post-zeal humiliation, was that the true remnant was a remnant defined by the divine call, not by works.[21]

How then does this reading of Galatians 1.13–17 clarify the developing argument of the letter? Like so many of Paul's deliberate intertextual echoes, it undergirds and gives added depth to the surface meaning of the text. On the surface, Paul is saying:

> I did not learn my gospel from other human beings, but from the one true God, through the revelation of his son. You Galatian ex-pagans need not suppose that you must go over my head to a message from Jerusalem, a message about Jewish ethnic identity, zeal for Torah, and the victory of the true God against paganism. I know all about that battle, and it was that that I renounced because of the gospel revelation.

Underneath this, the Elijah motif is saying:

> I stood in the tradition of 'zeal' going back to Phinehas and Elijah, the tradition that the Maccabean martyrs so nobly exemplified.[22] Indeed, my persecution of the church was inspired by exactly this tradition. But the God of Israel called me, like Elijah, to step back from this zeal and to listen to him afresh. When I listened, I heard a voice *telling me that the messianic victory over evil had already been won*, and that I and my fellow Jewish Christians were the true remnant, saved by grace and marked out by faith, apart from ethnic identity and works of Torah. I therefore had to renounce my former zeal, and announce the true Messiah to the world.

The tension between Paul and Jerusalem then looks forward, as is often **[690]** enough observed, to the allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in chapter 4. In the middle of that we arrive at Sinai at last, not by an intertextual echo but, this time, on the surface:

> Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman, one by the free. But the slave woman's son was born according to the flesh; the free woman's, through promise. Which is an allegory: for these two women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, born for slavery, which is Hagar. For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia; and [Sinai] corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is the mother of us all. (Galatians 4.22–26)[23]

[21] See Rom. 9.12. Is it a coincidence that Paul uses the motif of 'making jealous' (*parazēloun*) in the same passage as his charge of 'zeal' and his explicit evoking of 1 Kgs. 19? See Rom. 10.19, quoting Dt. 32.21 (*egō parazēlōsō hymas ep' ouch ethnei*), and 11.11, 14.

[22] For the fusion of horizons between Maccabean martyr cult and the message of Galatians, see Cummins 1997.

[23] On the reading of v. 25, see n. 12 above.

In setting up the allegory of the two sons, Paul puts Mount Sinai, the place of Torah, along with Hagar, the Arabian woman. 'For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia'; that is, Sinai is located in the Hagar country. Sinai, with these Hagar overtones, then corresponds to 'present Jerusalem', that is, the city from which, as the erstwhile Saul of Tarsus knew only too well, the children 'according to the flesh' mounted persecution against 'the Israel of God' (6.16). Small wonder, then, that he did not go to Jerusalem to get his gospel investigated or validated. That, ironically, would have been to court a new sort of compromise. Paul's own trip to Sinai, still more ironically, had taught him that the regular appeal to Sinai – the appeal to Torah and all that it had come to stand for within the traditions of 'zeal' – was standing in the way of the fulfillment of the very promises for which that tradition thought it was fighting. There was, to be sure, still something to be 'zealous' about, but it did not correspond to the zeal either of Saul of Tarsus or of the 'troublers' in Galatia:

> *zēlousin hymas ou kalōs, alla ekkleisai hymas thelousin, hina autous zēloute. Kalon de zelousthai en kalō pantote kai mē monon en tō pareinai me pros hymas, tekna mou, hous palin ōdinō mechris hou morphōthē Christos en hymin.* (Galatians 4.17–18)[24]

As with several other aspects of his thought (such as, for instance, the famous *dikaiosunē theou*[25]), Paul was able to reuse the concept of 'zeal' within his reworked theology and praxis.

If this overall hypothesis about Paul, Arabia, and Elijah is correct, three concluding reflections may be in order. First, the picture of the pre-Christian Paul comes into considerably clearer focus. He was on the 'zealous' wing of the Pharisees: a Shammaite, in fact, despite the gentler Hillelite leanings of his [**691**] teacher Gamaliel. Saul belonged to the majority party among the pre-70 Pharisees, who, when given a chance, were prepared to use violence to defend the honor of their God and his Torah. Like many others in this movement, he looked back to the great heroes of zeal, Phinehas and Elijah, and almost certainly to Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus as more recent representatives of the same tradition. Actually, this not only sheds light on Saul of Tarsus but, by bringing Galatians 1.13–17 into clearer focus, also illuminates the complex story of *first-century Pharisaism itself*.[26]

Second, Saul's reasons for persecuting the young church are likewise clarified. It was not just that early Christianity followed a crucified Messiah, blasphemous though that idea would have seemed.[27] It was, more specifically, that the (Jewish) Christians, by denouncing the Temple and going soft on the Torah, were behaving in the compromised and traitorous way associated in Jewish tradition with the wilderness generation in the time of Phinehas, the Baal worshipers in the time of Elijah, and the Hellenizers in the Maccabean

[24] The punctuation is, of course, controversial. See too 2 Cor. 11.2; and, for the tensions implicit in the early church at this point, see Ac. 21.20.

[25] Rom. 1.17; 3.21–26; and esp. 9.14; 10.3–4. See 'On Becoming the Righteousness of God' [reprinted as chapter 5 of the present volume].

[26] See *New Testament and the People of God*, 181–203.

[27] Gal. 3.13 is regularly cited in this sense (Hengel 1991, 83–4), though the matter is actually more complex than that (see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 7).

period. Jesus was, for them, taking on the role of Temple and Torah; he was the place where the living God was made known. They were thus renegade Jews of the worst sort. They were, in Saul's eyes, no better than Baal worshipers. It was the divine mission of the zealous Shammaite to cut them off, root and branch. We may refer again to 4.17–19, and to the warning against 'devouring one another' in 5.15.[28]

Third, the Phinehas/Elijah tradition has interesting implications for the early Jewish atonement-theology that may have influenced Paul and others. As we saw, Phinehas's action was interpreted in an atoning sense within various rabbinic traditions. His zeal had the effect of 'turning wrath away from Israel'; *Sipre Numbers* connects his action with Isaiah 53.12, 'because he exposed his life to death'.[29] So too Elijah, according to Sirach 48.10, is destined to turn away the divine wrath before it breaks out in fury. Thus might zealous actions in any age be seen as part of the divine purpose, dealing with sin and so saving the people of God. But, for Paul, it was the death of Jesus at the hands of the pagans, not [**692**] the defeat of the pagans at the hands of the heaven-sent zealous hero, that defeated evil once and for all: 'he gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil age' (1.4). The cross offered the solution to the problem that 'zeal' had sought to address. The revelation of the crucified, and now risen, Messiah was therefore sufficient to stop the zealous Saul in his tracks, to send him back like his role model to Sinai, and to convince him that the battle he was blindly fighting had already been won, and indeed that by fighting it he had been losing it. This gloriously paradoxical conclusion has, I submit, such a typically Pauline ring to it that it might even be regarded as an extra argument in favor of the hypothesis as a whole.[30]

[28] This article was conceived, and the first draft written, before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995. For students of the first century, not least of the internecine 'zeal' of 66–70 CE, it was shocking and tragic, but not, alas, very surprising, to discover that a zealous young Torah student would kill someone offering peace with Israel's traditional enemies at the cost of a major Jewish symbol (in this case, land).

[29] See G. F. Moore, who points out that this intertextual echo 'is meant to bring up the following context, "and was numbered with the transgressors; he bore the sin of many, and intervened on behalf of transgressors"' (Moore 1927, I, 549; III, 165 n. 252).

[30] I am grateful to Professors C. F. D. Moule, R. B. Hays, and C. C. Newman for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. They are not, of course, responsible for its contents.

Chapter Eleven

NEW EXODUS, NEW INHERITANCE: THE NARRATIVE SUBSTRUCTURE OF ROMANS 3—8 (1999)

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These reflections are a further exploration of the theme of Exodus in Romans 8 that was undertaken by Sylvia Keesmaat in her doctorate. One of the difficulties of being over-familiar with Paul (or any other text) is that one gets into a rut of 'how I normally read this passage'; one of the excitements of working with bright graduate students is that they can joggle you out of those ruts and into new ways of seeing things. This is one of those.

The essay found its way into the Festschrift which Sven Soderlund and I edited for Gordon Fee (actually, Sven did most of the work but I was glad to be involved). The only way we could organize a party to present the book to Gordon without his guessing the reason was for Regent College to organize a week in May 1999 in which Gordon and I would co-teach a course for pastors, at the end of which I would give a public lecture which Gordon would chair. The whole elaborate plan worked a treat. Gordon wondered why so many of his old friends had turned up for my lecture! I cherish the memory of his face when we presented him with the book at the end of the event.

* * *

[**26**] An essay presented to a colleague is a poor substitute for a face-to-face discussion, much in the way that a Pauline letter was a poor substitute (though sometimes an effective one) for the apostolic presence. My only regret about offering this essay to Gordon Fee in this setting is that I shall be bound not to mention it to him until its publication. One of the joys of our friendship has been the fact that at any moment of sudden meeting, at a conference, over a meal, or in a coffee break between classes at a summer school, we have been able to pick up complex and intricate discussions of Paul where we left them a day or a year before, and to offer new suggestions to one another in the knowledge that one will receive instant understanding, sharp and well-informed critique, and further insights or modifications that one had not thought of for oneself. I can only hope that when Gordon has had

a chance to digest this essay we will be able to build it into our future friendship as one further element among many.

The topic that I propose has to do with the large-scale question of Paul's argument in a central and lengthy section of Romans. There is no chance, of course, of interacting with all the scholarly literature on even some parts of the topic, let alone (though Gordon will regret this) considering the textual variants that might make crucial little differences along the way. In line with some recent studies, I want to explore the way in which Paul makes implicit and explicit use of the story of the Exodus throughout Romans 3—8, and to draw some [**27**] conclusions from this for our understanding of the letter, and the theological issues which it raises, as a whole.[1]

My starting-point for this train of thought – the actual point which set me thinking, not the point I choose for rhetorical advantage in this presentation – is the question of the place of baptism, and hence of Romans 6 as a whole, within the argument of the letter. This question has often been expressed in terms of an antithesis between two types of theological thought supposed to underlie the different sections of the letter: 'juristic' in Romans 1—4, 'participationist' in 5—8, and so on – a distinction which, as is well known, goes back in the present century to Albert Schweitzer, and has been reinforced by the work of E. P. Sanders and others.[2] Has Paul in fact changed gear from one style or theology to another, and if so which is more central both to his thought and to this letter? Or, to sharpen it up another way, what has baptism to do with justification by faith, the promises to Abraham, and the revelation of God's righteousness, as set out in 3.21—4.25? And, to complete the set of initial questions, how does the entire argument of Romans 5—8, in which (obviously) chapter 6 plays such a vital role, relate to that of 1—4?

My overall proposal is that throughout this section of the letter Paul has not just the story of Israel, but more specifically the redeeming story of the Exodus, in mind, and that both in the large-scale shape of his presentation and in many details of actual arguments this emerges into the light of day, making fresh sense of passages which otherwise remain opaque, and holding together the different sections of the argument in a way which transcends the distinctions just mentioned. This proposal has on the one hand some analogies to Frank Thielman's very suggestive paper about the story of Israel in Romans 5—8, though he does not make anything like the specific suggestion I am offering. It also draws on Sylvia Keesmaat's fascinating work on the Exodus-language of Romans 8, though she, too, is not responsible for this particular flight of fancy – though I perhaps would not have been nudged to think in this direction without the stimulus of her work.[3] Standing behind all of this is of course the [**28**] major pioneering work of Richard Hays on Paul's echoing of scriptural passages and themes.[4]

[1] I have published a very brief preliminary statement of the same point under the title 'The New Inheritance According to Paul' in *Bible Review* 14, no. 3 (June 1998) 16, 47.

[2] Schweitzer 1912, 1931; Sanders 1977.

[3] Keesmaat 1994; Thielman 1995.

[4] Hays 1989.

I am well aware, of course, that there is enormous resistance within some branches of the New Testament studies guild to any proposal of this sort. This is partly due, I think, to a proper caution about grand overarching patterns, and a preference for small-scale exegesis – a caution which, though laudable and necessary, often owes more to personality than to scholarship, and in any case always runs the risk of not seeing the forest but only the trees, and hence of not understanding the trees either. It is also partly due to an unwillingness to countenance the possibility that Paul might well have been alluding all over the place to the story of Israel, on the theological grounds that he was doing something new, leaving covenantal categories behind, expounding the new life in Christ in antithesis to Judaism. What I have to offer will not convince those who on other grounds are never prepared to recognize the existence of such themes and patterns. But the fact that some people cannot see certain objects does not mean they do not exist. The case for the reading I propose is cumulative. As often with such readings, individual parts can be controverted in isolation, but when the proposal is seen as a whole its strength should be apparent.

My initial specific proposal is to explore the possibility that when Paul speaks of baptism in Romans 6 he has in mind the crossing of the Red Sea at the Exodus. He makes exactly this connection, of course, in 1 Corinthians 10.2, where it forms an important part of his exhortation to the Corinthian church that they should see themselves as the heirs of the scriptural narrative, as God's true-Exodus people now engaged in their homeward-bound wilderness journey. 'Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea . . . Now these things were examples to us, that we might not desire evil as they did.'[5]

The primary strength of this proposal lies in the sense it makes of Romans 6 as a whole. Baptism, and that which it embodies and symbolizes (the death of the 'old man' and the new life in Christ), is here expounded specifically in terms of the liberation of the slave:

> [**29**] Thanks be to God that you who once were slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were committed, and, being set free from sin, have become enslaved to righteousness. (6.17–18)

There is no question that in Judaism in general any story about slaves and how they come to be free must be seen at once as an allusion to the events of the Exodus. When, in that context, we discover that the critical event in the story of the great liberation, the new exodus, is when the Christian passes through the water of baptism, we have (I suggest) a prima facie reason for making the same connection. 'Sin', conceived here as an independent power, takes of course the role of Egypt and/or Pharaoh; 'righteousness', suggestively, seems to be almost a periphrasis for God. To this we shall return.

What effect does this reading of chapter 6 have on 6—8 as a whole? If 6 tells the story of the Exodus, or at least the crossing of the Red Sea, the next

[5] 1 Cor. 10.1–2, 6. See Hays 1997, 159–73. See also Hays 1999.

thing we should expect is the arrival at Sinai and the giving of the Torah. This is, of course, exactly the topic of Romans 7.1—8.11, with all its attendant puzzles. Paul is not, of course, operating a slavish typology in which he merely reproduces the earlier story point by point in its new guise; and in the present case particularly this could not be so, precisely because the Torah given to the freed slaves in the first Exodus has now become, paradoxically, part of the enslavement from which the second Exodus frees the people of God (though one of Paul's main tasks in Romans 7 is to show how the law is not at fault in this, being an unwilling accomplice of sin and the flesh).

We could summarize the narrative sequence as follows: those who were enslaved in the 'Egypt' of sin, an enslavement which the law only exacerbated, have been set free by the 'Red Sea' event of baptism, since in baptism they are joined to the Messiah, whose death and resurrection are accounted as theirs. They are now given as their guide, not indeed the law, which, although given by God, is unable to do more than condemn them for their sin, but the Spirit, so that the Mosaic covenant is replaced, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel said it would be, with the covenant written on the hearts of God's people by God's own Spirit. At this point 7.4–6 and 8.1–11 look back, within the larger logic of the letter, to 2.25–29.

This brings us to the place within the whole section where, as Keesmaat has shown, Exodus-language is most obvious on the surface of the text. In 8.12–17, Paul treats the Christians as precisely God's new-Exodus people. They are led by God through their present wilderness (compare again 1 Corinthians 10.6–13). Their guide is the Spirit, who here takes up the role of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; were there world enough and time, this would be worth exploring in terms of its implications for Paul's overall view of the Spirit within a Christian vision of God. They are 'the sons of God', echoing the language [**30**] used by God, through Moses, to Pharaoh (Exodus 4.22). They must not slide back into the state of slavery; they must not, that is, go back to Egypt. And if they are God's children, currently being led through the wilderness, they are assured that they are also God's heirs: the concept of 'heir', and the correlated concept of 'inheritance', are of course repeated over and over in the Pentateuch in reference to Israel's promised inheritance of the land, the land to which their wilderness wanderings were leading them.

The Christian inheritance, however, is not a matter of one piece of geographical countryside. It is nothing less than the renewed, restored creation. Paul's spectacular picture of creation groaning in birth-pangs, longing to share the freedom of the glory of God's people (8.16–27), owes a great deal on the one hand to the image of the 'Messianic woes', but on the other hand to the scriptural sense in which the fate of the land is bound up with the fate, and the covenant behaviour, of Israel.[6] When Christians are finally redeemed, Paul is saying, then the land – only now, in this case, the whole cosmos – will be redeemed. The specific argument of chapter 8 then winds to its glorious close, held in place and given coherence and theological power by the Exodus story, now rethought in and through Jesus and the Spirit.

[6] For the positive side, see, e.g., Isa. 35; for the negative, compare the suggestive Lev. 26.24, 43; 2 Chron. 36.21.

How does this reading of Romans 6.8 help with the wider question of the relationship between Paul's argument in these chapters and that in 1—4? The answer is found in two sometimes neglected features of Romans 4.

First, Paul is working throughout the chapter with Genesis 15 as his base. He brings in other Abrahamic passages as well, of course, not least Genesis 17 and 22, but it is to chapter 15 that he returns time and again. I propose that he had in mind, in using this chapter, not simply the text about Abraham believing God, and this being 'reckoned to him as righteousness' (Genesis 15.6, quoted in 4.3 and frequently), but also the conclusion of the chapter, in which God establishes his covenant with Abraham. Here (Genesis 15.13–14) there is a specific prediction of the slavery in Egypt, God's rescue of Israel after four hundred years, and the gift of the promised land. Within the narrative structure of the Pentateuch, this complex prediction and promise looks ahead to the events described in the remainder of the Five Books, indicating that these events are to be understood as the fulfilment of God's covenant promises to Abraham. Paul is very much aware of this aspect of the chapter, as Galatians 3.15–18 reminds us.[7] And he believes, and in Romans 4 he emphasizes, that in Christ God has fulfilled his [**31**] covenant promises to Abraham. We should not therefore be surprised to find in Romans 6—8 an exposition of the Christian's status, hope and vocation (it is more than that, but not less) which not only employs terms which evoke the story of Israel but which follows in its structure the path of the people of God from slavery in Egypt to inheritance in the land of promise.

Second, Paul gives an indication within chapter 4 that his thought is going to move in exactly this direction. In verse 13 he says 'the promise to Abraham and his seed, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith'. His point in context is that the promises belong to all Abraham's family, not merely to those who are defined by possessing the Torah, i.e., Jews (4.13–17). But the revealing explanation of what God promised to Abraham, included here almost as a throwaway line, is a clear indication that he already has in view the way in which God's fulfilment of his promises in Christ and by the Spirit will result in God's renewed people receiving as their inheritance not merely one piece of territory but the whole restored cosmos. Paul was not the first Jew to suggest that God promised Abraham more than just the holy land.[8] But within his argument it is more than just a pious hope or expression of nationalist territorial expansionism. It goes with his whole theology, to which we shall turn presently, of how God's intention in the beginning of creation itself is now fulfilled through Christ and the Spirit, and how this was likewise God's intention when he called Abraham.

We can trace the Exodus story in Romans, then, not only through Romans 6, 7 and 8, but back to chapter 4. What about the earlier part of the argument of which Romans 4 is an integral part, namely 3.21–31? And what about

[7] Admittedly, when Paul tells the same story in Gal. 3, he follows the chronology of Ex. 12.40, in which the period in question is 430 years (Gal. 3.17). The Genesis figure of 400 years is quoted in Ac. 7.6.

[8] Cf., e.g., Sir. 44.21 and *Jub.* 19.21, looking back to, e.g., Gen. 15.18; Ex. 23.31; Ps. 72.8, and Zech. 9.10; cf. *2 Bar.* 14.13; 51.3.

chapter 5, the bridge between the promise in chapter 4 and the fulfilment in 6—8?

3.21–31 forms Paul's majestic statement of the revelation of God's righteousness. Every verse is of course controversial, often for several reasons simultaneously. I have elsewhere argued at length that 'the righteousness of God' must here be understood as God's faithfulness to the covenant, specifically the covenant with Abraham; this is why chapter 4 is to be seen as the full exposition of what Paul announces as his theme in 3.21, not simply a miscellaneous, or politically advantageous, 'proof from scripture' of some other more detached doctrinal point.[9]

[**32**] To explain more fully, we must glance for a moment even further back in the letter. In 1.18—3.20 Paul has analyzed the problem of the world and of Israel in terms not only of universal sin, and the wrath of God which it incurs, but more specifically of the way in which the people called to provide God's solution, namely Israel, have themselves become part of the problem. God remains faithful to the covenant, which always envisaged blessing for the world; but the people through whom this blessing was intended to reach the world have been unfaithful. That is the point of the dense little argument at 3.1–4. Precisely because God remains faithful, and does not change his mind about his call to Israel to be the light of the world, what is required at this point, if a solution is to be found, is precisely a faithful Israelite. This, declares Paul, is what we have in Jesus: as Messiah, he brings Israel's intended covenant obedience, covenant faithfulness, to birth at last, not just being as an example of a faithful Jew, but the climactic and decisive faithful Jew. 'God's righteousness is revealed, *through the faithfulness of the Messiah*, for the benefit of all who believe.'[10]

But in what does this covenant faithfulness consist? In Romans 5, Paul summarizes what he has said about the death of Jesus in terms of his 'obedience'. This, to be sure, is partly in order to contrast Jesus with Adam in his disobedience. But it is also a concept which, already in the letter, is closely aligned with faithfulness: when Paul speaks of 'the obedience of faith' in Romans 1.5, he brings together two ideas often separated in Christian theology but often held closely together in Judaism. I propose, not least with Philippians 2.5–8 in the background, that Paul can speak of Jesus' death (and his life insofar as it led to his death) as his 'faithfulness' and/or his 'obedience' – his faithful obedience, that is, to the whole saving plan and purpose of God, to that plan which Israel was called to implement but in which she failed.

The details of how this works out in 3.21–31, though extremely interesting in themselves, need not concern us, except for one particular. In 3.24 Paul

[9] Cf. 'On Becoming the Righteousness of God' [reprinted as chapter 5 of the present volume]; and *What Saint Paul Really Said*, ch. 6.

[10] I regard this as the most compelling reason for reading some if not all of Paul's linguistically ambiguous references to *pistis Christou* as denoting 'the faithfulness of the Messiah'. It would take us too far afield to develop this further; on the whole debate, see recently B. W. Longenecker 1998, ch. 5, with references to copious other secondary literature. I am in broad agreement with Longenecker, though in what follows there are implicit differences of emphasis as well.

introduces his dense statement of the meaning of Jesus' death by saying that justification has come about through the 'redemption' that is in the Messiah, Jesus. 'Redemption', to a Jew, again means one thing principally: the act whereby God went down to the slave-market called Egypt and bought there his [**33**] enslaved people in order to set them free.[11] Paul is here putting down a marker, as in 4.13 and indeed many other passages in the early parts of Romans, for the theme he is subsequently going to explore in more detail.

All of this forces us to abandon any idea that Romans 3—4 embodies or expresses a different sort of theology to that which we find in 6—8. We can go further. It has often been remarked as odd that, despite this supposed change in theological substance, Paul still uses the language of 'righteousness' in 6—8. We can now give a satisfying explanation of what is going on. As a result of 3.21—4.25, 'righteousness' can stand as a synechdoche for God himself, the God who in Jesus Christ has revealed his covenant faithfulness. The new Exodus is the result precisely of this God being faithful to what he promised to Abraham. Thus in 6.13–20, where the word *dikaiosynē* occurs no fewer than five times, all its overtones of covenant faithfulness (that of God, and that of God's people) are still to be heard; an older flattening out of these nuances into the either/or of 'forensic' and 'ethical' meanings simply fails to catch what Paul is talking about. When, in 6.18, Paul writes that 'having been liberated from sin, you have become slaves to righteousness', 'righteousness' stands once more for the covenant God himself, whose demands of absolute covenant loyalty from his people include but far transcend what we mean by 'ethics'. The proof of this point comes in verse 22, where, after speaking for the previous several verses of 'righteousness' as the new master of the freed slaves, Paul finally abandons the trope and declares that now, 'having been set free from sin, you were enslaved to God'.

A reflection is therefore in order about the different categories with which Paul's thought has been analysed. Schweitzer's distinction of 'mystical/eschatological' and 'forensic', Sanders's similar one of 'participationist' and 'juristic', and the more recent distinction between 'covenant' and 'apocalyptic', are all ultimately beside the point. The story of the Exodus, as Paul uses it, overlaps and enfolds all these categories. The Exodus is the fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham; it is that which constitutes those 'in Christ' as the people of God; it is that which declares that those who share Christ's faithfulness are the true, sin-forgiven people of God; it is that through which God has broken in to the world, and to the sorry history of Israel, unveiling his faithfulness in a radically new way in the death and resurrection of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit.

What then about the place and role of chapter 5 within this structure of thought? As is well known, 5.1–11, and within that 5.1–5, anticipates in many respects the thought of chapter 8. Paul is once again putting down a marker for where his argument is going. In these paragraphs he is summing up where

[11] The fact that the primary metaphorical overtone is the Exodus, not some hypothetical slave-market, shows that the older systematic discussion concerning the ransom-price, and the question to whom such a price was paid, is beside the point.

the [**34**] argument has so far taken him: now that, by faith, we are declared to be in the right, the inheritance of glory is in view, and the present life is characterized by hope in the midst of suffering – the theme which will be expanded in chapter 8 in terms reminiscent of the wilderness wanderings of Israel. And whereas in Deuteronomy the astonishing love of God for Israel was evidenced by the events of the original Exodus, the same point is now made with overwhelming power through the death of Jesus, which has not simply rescued those to whom God was already bound in a familial covenant but has reconciled to him those who were 'enemies' (5.6–11).[12]

5.12–21 can then take its place as the overarching narrative through which the whole of 1.18—8.39 is comprehended, summing up what has gone before and laying foundations for what is to come. By means of the faithful obedience of Israel's representative, the Messiah, not only has all the glory, all the inheritance, of Adam accrued to the people of God, as the Qumran sect already claimed for themselves;[13] all the evils that accrued from Adam's disobedience are undone. Within this large-scale historical story, the arrival of the Torah strikes a negative, not a positive, note (5.20, pointing ahead to 7.7–12); the new Exodus is not simply to be a repeat performance of the old, but must itself undo the extra problems that arose through Israel's being 'under the law'. Through his faithful obedience, the Messiah has brought with him out of the Egypt of sin and death a great multitude who now live under the rule, and in the hope, of grace, righteousness, and life (5.21). This then sets the context for the question of 6.1, bringing the argument of this paper back where it started.

There are several further lines of enquiry that cry out to be pursued, but must be patient for another occasion. Three brief concluding remarks must suffice.

First, it is obvious that if Paul is retelling the story of Israel in this way in Romans 3—8 this simply intensifies the anguish of 9.1–5. The list of Israel's privileges in 9.4f., in any case, has a strong 'Exodus' ring to it: sonship, glory, covenants, lawgiving, worship, promise and 'the fathers' all evoke the story of the Exodus.[14] The opening of chapter 9 thus confirms the reading I have offered, and is itself given added poignancy by the connection.

[**35**] Second, when discussing the future hope of Christians it is important that Romans 8, seen as Paul's reworking of the Exodus-shaped 'inheritance' theme, is given full weight. It is not sufficient, that is, to speak of 'eternal life', on the basis of, e.g., Romans 5.21 and 6.23, and to assume that this refers to a generalized 'heaven' such as characterizes much common Christian tradition. Paul's expectation was more specific: 'the life of the coming age' (an expanded translation of *zōē aiōnios*) was to be enjoyed, not in 'heaven' as

[12] Cf. Dt. 4.37; 7.7–8; 10.15.

[13] Cf., e.g., 1QS 4.23 (glory); 4QpPs37 (= 4Q171) 3.1f. (inheritance [despite the translation 'glory' in Vermes 1987 (4th ed., 1995), 488; the word *nhlth*, 'inheritance', is clearly visible in Plate XVI of Allegro 1968]).

[14] In 1 Cor. 10.1 Paul speaks of 'our fathers' in reference not to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or even Jacob's twelve sons (as the RSV, NRSV, NEB, REB etc. translation 'patriarchs' in Rom. 9.5 might suggest), but to the Exodus generation.

opposed to 'earth', but in the renewed, redeemed creation, the creation that has itself shared the Exodus-experience of the people of God.

Third, we may reflect that this reading joins together that which Paul's interpreters have often put asunder. It was always dubious, in view of the combination of the same themes in Galatians 3—4, especially 3.23—4.7, to separate out faith and justification on the one hand, and baptism and the Spirit on the other, and to suppose that they belonged, in Paul's mind, to distinct universes of discourse. As John the Baptist would no doubt have agreed, baptism and Spirit speak of new covenant, new Exodus, and thereby of the renewal, however unexpected, of the people of Abraham.[15] And the Exodus is itself the action whereby God justifies as well as liberates. It is the action, bursting in upon the world ruled by the principalities and powers (in the one case, Pharaoh and Egypt; in the other, sin and death), which declares: these are my people. And that declaration, constituting the liberated ones as God's true people, sets before them the inheritance to which they must now make their way, and promises them the presence of God, in the person of the Spirit, to guide and strengthen them on the journey.

[15] Cf. Mt. 3.9/Lk. 3.8, on which see *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 248.

Chapter Twelve

PAUL'S GOSPEL AND CAESAR'S EMPIRE (2000)

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The 1990s saw an explosion of interest in a field almost nobody had thought existed before. A combination of the Lutheran two-kingdoms theology and the post-Enlightenment separation of religion and politics had allowed most Pauline scholars to suppose that Romans 13.1–7 represented the sum total of everything Paul had to say about 'politics'. Though the sudden enthusiasm, and not least its context within American political and cultural life, has rightly generated some resistance and counter-questioning, I have remained convinced that there is something important to be explored, even if none of us has yet got it quite right (see now *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 12). The second footnote in the essay explains the specific origin of this piece. When I told Krister Stendahl I was working on this topic he replied at once, 'Ah: curious about the kyrios, are you?' It was a characteristic remark; returning once from the lavish celebration of a friend's son's bar-mitzvah, he remarked to me, 'Rather more bar than mitzvah, I fear'.

* * *

[**160**] The most exciting developments today in the study of Paul and his thought are not, I think, the recent works on Paul's theology (though I have contributed to such an enterprise myself, and still believe in it in principle).[1] I highlight, instead, the quite fresh attempts that are being made to study the interface, the opposition, the conflict between Paul's gospel – the message about the crucified Jesus – and the world in which his entire ministry was conducted, the world in which Caesar not only held sway but exercised power through his divine claim. What happens when we line up Paul's gospel with Caesar's empire?[2]

[1] See, recently, Dunn 1998; the four volumes of *Pauline Theology* emerging from the Pauline Theology Seminar at the SBL; and, among my own works, *Climax of the Covenant*.

[2] This chapter owes its origin to a lecture given at the Princeton Center of Theological Inquiry on Wednesday 18 November 1998. It was originally published, in a more abbreviated form, in *Center of Theological Inquiry Reflections* 2: 42–65. I am very grateful to my hosts in Princeton both for their hospitality and for their readiness to allow me to reprint this. I offer it gladly now in tribute to Krister Stendahl, whose collegial friendship over twenty-five years has been a delight and inspiration.

I begin with a brief sketch of a recent work that pinpoints exactly these issues. I shall then comment on this discussion, locate it within the wider world of Pauline studies, and explain why I think this is really the leading edge of the subject. This will clear the ground for four exegetical studies, three quite brief and one somewhat fuller, which will state my basic case and lead to four concluding reflections.

Paul and Empire: Current Thinking

I had already been thinking thoughts like these for about four or five years, and had indeed attempted to express them briefly in various publications, [**161**] when in November 1997 I discovered Richard Horsley's *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman lmperial Society*.[3] As with most exciting discoveries, my own hunches were not only reinforced but developed in ways I had not imagined. Horsley's fascinating collection of essays brings together between two covers, in a way that happens all too rarely, specialist studies from the world of Greco-Roman historiography and New Testament theology, liberation theology and detailed exegesis. Horsley himself, as the editor, provides substantial and important introductions to each section of the book and offers his own exegetical study of 1 Corinthians as a conclusion.

One thesis of this important book stands out starkly in my mind, and should challenge all students of early Christianity to fresh thought. The evidence now available, including that from epigraphy and archaeology, appears to show that the cult of Caesar, so far from being one new religion among many in the Roman world, had already by the time of Paul's missionary activity become not only the dominant cult in a large part of the empire, certainly in the parts where Paul was active, but was actually the means (as opposed to overt large-scale military presence) whereby the Romans managed to control and govern such huge areas as came under their sway. The emperor's far-off presence was made ubiquitous by the standard means of statues and coins (the latter being the principal mass medium of the ancient world), reflecting his image throughout his domains; he was the great benefactor, through whom the great blessings of justice and peace, and a host of lesser ones besides, were showered outwards upon the grateful populace – who in turn worshipped him, honored him, and paid him taxes. In all this, the book asks pertinently, were the emperor's subjects doing something religious, or something political? Surely both. But does not this answer make nonsense of the great divide between sacred and secular, religion and society that has run through not only scholarship but also whole societies?

With this rhetorical question ringing in our ears, the book invites us to approach what has been called Paul's theology, and to find in it, not simply a few social or political 'implications', but a major challenge to precisely that imperial cult and ideology which was part of the air Paul and his converts

[3] Horsley 1997. One of the other recent books in this area on which Horsley draws for two of his chapters is Elliott 1995.

breathed.[4] His missionary work must be conceived not simply in terms of a traveling evangelist offering people a new religious experience, but of an ambassador for a king-in-waiting, establishing cells of people loyal to this new king, and ordering their lives according to his story, his symbols, and [**162**] his praxis, and their minds according to his truth. This could not but be construed as deeply counter-imperial, as subversive to the whole edifice of the Roman empire; and there is in fact plenty of evidence that Paul intended it to be so construed, and that when he ended up in prison as a result he took it as a sign that he had been doing his job properly.

So far, I am in more or less complete agreement with the thesis that the book propounds, and am grateful to Horsley and his colleagues for pointing us in this direction. Our own time (our contemporary culture, and the present state of scholarship) is ripe for a reconsideration of the imperial cultic context of Paul's work and thought, not simply as one topic among others but as a theme that will color and redirect the whole. I have a hunch that it is because these questions were almost entirely screened out that the lengthy discussions of Pauline theology that took place at the Society of Biblical Literature in the late 1980s and early 1990s remained quite inconclusive. I wish to open the question up in a way which I hope will stimulate further thought, fresh exegesis, and fresh constructions of Paul's agenda and theology.

I do have several reservations about some of the book's subtexts, however, and flag them here before returning to them at the end of the essay. First, by no means have all the contributors abandoned what seems to me the quite misleading method of study whereby the classical world is combed for parallels to Paul which are then used to 'explain' him.[5] Many Pauline scholars gave this up many years ago, but the alternative has not always been helpful either: a combing of the Jewish world, instead, for parallels that can then 'explain' Paul. Paul himself explains himself rather differently; he is a Jewish apostle to the gentiles, a man 'in the Messiah' who believes the Messiah to be the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth. Unless we simply relativize Paul's self-description, neither of those simplified history-of-religion models will do; Paul's own self-understanding speaks of radical innovation from within a tradition, and of radical head-on confrontation with other traditions. The rather static explanatory models offered by traditional history-of-religions work, which seek to produce an almost evolutionary diagram for everything, screen out precisely such new moves. Indeed, if we are to be true to the vital insight that the modernist split between sacred and secular is fantastically distorting for understanding any first-century movement, we cannot be content merely to plot Paul's place on something that calls itself, or operates under the old rules of, history of religion. The early Christians, Paul among them, would not have recognized themselves and their movement under the

[4] Cf. Dunn 1998, 674–80. The index to Dunn's book does not mention Caesar, empire, imperial cult, politics, power(s), or state. This highlights the danger of treating a specific text (in this case Romans) as a template for one's systematic treatment – though, as we shall see, the main sections of Romans might perhaps have suggested a very different ordering of the subject.

[5] A protest against this procedure was registered long ago by Sandmel 1962; similar protests should be lodged against the Hellenistic equivalents.

Enlightenment's shrunken definition of 'religion'. Why not history of empire? Of humans? Why not simply 'history'?[6]

[**163**] Second, the book's blurb, and many of its contributions, emphasize that this way of reading Paul avoids the continuance, even within the so-called post-Sanders 'new perspective' on Paul, of the way of understanding Paul's major emphases that appears to set him over against Judaism.[7] Paul emerges within Horsley's construct as someone opposed not to Judaism but to Caesar's empire. In this light, Sanders does not appear to have gone far enough in opposing the Lutheran model of Paul; Paul may not have had as much of a critique of Judaism as Protestant thought had supposed, but he was still to be understood, in Sanders's model, as fundamentally in dialogue with, and hence in a sense over against, the Jewish tradition, whereas he was in fact first and foremost in confrontation with the Roman world. I suspect that Sanders might have some comments to make on this by way of reply, but one can acknowledge an important point. However, this emphasis of Horsley and the other contributors, easily comprehensible within the sensitivities of a post-Holocaust Western world, and to my mind fundamentally right-minded in that it takes Paul's self-description as apostle to the gentiles at face value, allowing it to determine and shape our view of how his thought actually works, still does not do justice to Paul's view of non-Christian Judaism and his own project in relation to it.

Just because some people have overdrawn and wrongly highlighted Paul's challenge to his own tradition, that does not mean that he did not challenge it at all. And just because his fundamental target was paganism and empire, and just because he used Jewish-style weapons to attack that target, that again does not mean that he did not challenge his fellow (but non-Christian) Jews.

One more question before moving rapidly to the central substance of this essay. While mainstream studies of Paul in the last generation have attempted to read him within his Jewish tradition, a good deal of work has still continued to locate him within the wider Greco-Roman world. One thinks, of course, of Wayne Meeks and Abraham Malherbe, and more recently the continuing project of Gerald Downing, and of other similar work.[8] But this has tended to focus on the location of Paul within a historical setting, rather than specifically on the confrontation between Paul and the pagan world [**164**] he addressed.[9] Again, a fundamental issue in the historical study of Paul emerges here. For most of the last century it has been assumed that when a writer alludes to or echoes a theme or idea, this must imply agreement. Paul himself, of course, explicitly states the opposite ('taking every thought captive to obey Christ', 2 Corinthians 10.5), but the steamroller of would-be deterministic historiography has rumbled on, insisting either

[6] This puts a question mark against a recent, very stimulating book: Stark 1996. Stark writes as a sociologist of religion, proposing hypotheses on that basis, which he then seeks to back up from historical sources. For a well-informed protest against splitting the ancient world up in the regular fashion, see the seminal work of Price 1985, ch. 1.

[7] Famously expressed in Sanders 1977.

[8] Meeks 1983; Malherbe 1989; Engberg-Pedersen 2004; Downing 1998.

[9] Meeks 1983, ch. 6, is a partial exception to this. I have myself begun to address the question in *What Saint Paul Really Said*, ch. 5.

that Paul employed non-Jewish ideas because he was a non-, or even an anti-Jewish thinker, or conversely that because he was a Jewish thinker he must have only used 'Jewish' concepts. Theological and hermeneutical issues are never separable from the historical task, of course, but when the wires get crossed in this fashion we are simply no longer hearing what is being said.

It is, of course, much easier to highlight Paul's confrontation with some aspect of his world when the aspect in question is one that is currently so very deeply out of fashion. To say that Paul opposed imperialism is about as politically dangerous as suggesting that he was in favor of sunlight, fresh air, and orange juice. What we are faced with throughout his writings, however, is the fact that he was opposed to paganism in all its shapes and forms; not, however, as we shall see, with a dualistic opposition that could recognize nothing good in non-Jewish or non-Christian humans and their ways of life but with the settled and unshakeable conviction that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was now revealed in and as Jesus of Nazareth, stood over against all other gods and goddesses, claiming unique allegiance. Paul, in other words, was not opposed to Caesar's empire primarily because it was an empire, with all the unpleasant things we have learned to associate with that word, but because it was Caesar's, and because Caesar was claiming divine status and honors which belonged only to the one God. This is not to say that Paul would have approved of that of which we disapprove; only that his political sensibilities were driven by his theological ones, not vice versa. All of which leads us to the text of Paul, and to our four specific issues.

Jesus Christ Is Lord: Exegetical Studies in Paul's Counter-imperial Gospel

Gospel

I begin with the word gospel itself. As I have argued at some length elsewhere, it should now be a commonplace that the word gospel carries two sets of resonances for Paul.[10] On the one hand, the contexts within which [**165**] the word is used indicate that for Paul the gospel he preached was the fulfillment of the message of Isaiah 40 and 52, the message of comfort for Israel and of hope for the whole world, because YHWH, the god of Israel, was at last returning to Zion to judge and redeem. On the other hand, again and again the context into which Paul was speaking was one where gospel would mean the celebration of the accession, or birth, of a king or emperor; and, though no doubt petty kingdoms might use the word for themselves, in Paul's world the main gospel that might be heard was the news of, or the celebration of, one or another of the Caesars.

[10] 'Gospel and Theology in Galatians' [reprinted as chapter 6 of the present volume]; *What Saint Paul Really Said*, ch. 3. The main evidence for the pagan use of *euangelion* is the famous inscription from Priene (quoted frequently in the secondary sources: primary text in Dittenberger 1903–5, II, no. 458, lines 30–52). The relative scarcity of other occurrences should not obscure the importance of this one.

Despite the way Protestantism in particular has used the phrase – making it refer, as Paul never does, to a supposed proclamation about justification by faith – for Paul 'the gospel' is the announcement that the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth is Israel's Messiah and the world's Lord. It is, in other words, the thoroughly Jewish (and indeed Isaianic) message that challenges the royal and imperial messages abroad in Paul's world.

It is not difficult to see how this 'gospel' functions for Paul. Theologically, it belongs completely with Isaiah's ringing monotheistic affirmations that YHWH and YHWH alone is the true god, the only creator, the only sovereign of the world, and that the gods of the nations are contemptible idols whose devotees are deceived, at best wasting their time and at worst under the sway of demons. Politically, it cannot but have been heard as a summons to allegiance to 'another king', which is of course precisely what Luke says Paul was accused of saying (Acts 17.7). Practically, this means that Paul, in announcing the gospel, was more like a royal herald than a religious preacher or theological teacher. The appropriate response to this 'gospel' can be stated in terms of 'belief': after all, the announcement included the claim that the true God had raised Jesus from the dead. Or it can be stated in terms of 'obedience'; after all, it was a direct summons to abandon other allegiances and give total loyalty to this Jesus. Or, as in Romans 1.5 and elsewhere, these two can be combined, as Paul speaks, without feeling the need to cover his back against misinterpretation, of 'the obedience of faith', *hypakoe pisteōs*.

How, then, does this 'gospel' cohere with Paul's teaching of 'justification by faith'? This is an important topic to which we shall return. For the moment we must look to the more basic content of the gospel, specifically, the claims Paul is advancing in it about Jesus himself.

[**166**] Jesus: King and Lord

The question of Paul's Christology has regularly been raised in terms of whether or not Paul thought Jesus was 'divine', and if so in what sense. This is important, but no more important than the prior question: did Paul think that Jesus was Messiah, and did he make this thematic in his theology? For generations now the received wisdom has been that Jesus' messiahship plays little or no role in Paul's thinking. Granted, he uses the word *Christos* all the time, but most have reckoned that it had become for him a mere proper name, with only one or two occurrences, such as Romans 9.5, where the old Jewish meaning peeped out of hiding. This essentially de-judaized reading of Paul's use of *Christos* gained its apparent force from the following history-of-religions argument, explicit or implicit: Since Paul was the apostle to the gentiles, and since the gentile world was looking for a cult figure, a *kyrios*, a Lord, there would have been no interest in a Jewish Messiah, and Paul himself had in any case left such Jewish notions, bound up as they were with a narrow ethnocentric theology, far behind. Even those who in other respects have challenged similar history-of-religions arguments often seem happy to let this one stand.[11]

[11] E.g. Hengel 1976, 1995.

Alternatively, it is easy to suggest that, because the notion of messiahship carried overtones of violent military struggle, Paul wanted nothing to do with it.

I have elsewhere argued in some detail that this construal is entirely wrong.[12] It makes far better sense of passage after passage to understand *Christos* as specifically 'Messiah', and to see, for instance, Paul's use of 'in Christ' and 'body of Christ', and similar language, in terms of membership within the royal family, the Messiah-people. Israel's king sums up his people in himself; what is true of him is true of them. Out of many arguments and many passages I here select only one of each: an argument from Paul's adoption of a central piece of Jewish self-understanding, and a passage in which Paul tells us in clear and unambiguous terms what precisely his 'gospel' actually is.

The argument goes back to Isaiah and the Psalms, including some passages that Paul himself uses at key points in his arguments. What the older history-of-religions argument failed to reckon with was the Jewish understanding that, precisely because of Israel's status within the purposes of the creator god, Israel's king was always supposed to be the world's true king. 'His dominion shall be from one sea to the other; from the River to the end of the earth.'[13] 'The root of Jesse shall rise to rule the nations; in him shall [**167**] the nations hope'.[14] This is part of the general eschatological scheme, familiar from many Jewish writings: because Israel's god is also the creator, when Israel's god finally does for Israel that which Israel longs for, the nations will be brought into the action, either for judgment or blessing – or both. There is every reason to suppose that Paul endorsed this train of thought and believed it to have been fulfilled in Jesus. However much, then, Paul knew perfectly well that Jesus of Nazareth was quite unlike the other would-be Messiah figures who flit to and fro through the pages of Josephus – think of Simon and Athronges, or Simon bar-Giora, or, from the next century, Simeon ben-Kosiba[15] – it is precisely part of the peculiar and characteristic tension of his whole theology to claim that this crucified Jesus was and is the Jewish Messiah promised in scripture. And this, for the reasons stated, is actually not a hindrance, from his point of view, to the gentile mission, but in fact its starting point. What the gentiles need and long for, whether they know it or not, is the Jewish Messiah, who will bring the just and peaceful rule of the true God to bear on the whole world.

Romans 15.12, where the Isaiah passage just mentioned is quoted, is right at the final climax of the long argument of Romans. This is often ignored, partly because Romans 12—16 often receives short shrift from expositors already exhausted by the previous eleven chapters, but also because of the assumption that messiahship is irrelevant to Paul's theology. The quotation, however, closes the enormous circle that began with Romans 1.3–4, where

[12] *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 2, 3. It should perhaps be noted that, for Paul as for the rest of Second Temple Judaism, 'Messiah' carries no connotations of 'divinity'.

[13] Ps. 72.8, looking back to Ex. 23.31, and to such 'fulfillments' as 1 Kgs. 4.21–24: and across to other passages such as Pss. 80.11; 89.25–27; Zech. 9.10.

[14] Isa. 11.10; cited in Rom. 15.12 (see below).

[15] On these, see *New Testament and the People of God*, 170–81.

Paul looks for all the world as though he is giving a deliberate summary of what his 'gospel' actually contains.

This passage, too, is often marginalized, for a similar reason: expositors are eager to get into what has been seen as the real meat of Paul's argument. The fact that the passage is so obviously messianic has caused it to be set aside, with frequent though very inconclusive speculation about whether the verses are or contain a pre-Pauline formula. The impression is given that Paul might have quoted such a thing, with or without his own modifications, not in order to say what he himself believed but in order simply to capture his audience's attention and perhaps goodwill. Leaving aside the peculiar logic of such a suggestion, I want to emphasize that the text as it stands summarizes, in formulaic terms no doubt, what Paul means by 'the gospel'; and that, at the heart of this announcement, we find the Davidic messiahship of Jesus.

The phrase 'son of God', though pregnant with other themes that Paul will explore later, has Davidic messiahship as its primary meaning, with echoes of Psalm 2.7 and 2 Samuel 7.14 in the background. The resurrection has installed Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel, Paul insists, and [**168**] therefore also the Lord to whose allegiance the world is now summoned. That is the burden of his song, the thrust of his *euangelion*. However unexpected, however shocking, however scandalous to Jews and foolish to gentiles, this is the royal announcement that, from Paul's point of view, fulfills the prophecies of scripture and subverts the imperial gospel of Caesar. I propose that this reading of Romans 1.3–4, though always in fact exegetically the most likely, receives substantial support when we set it in the wider context of the realization that Paul's gospel was a royal proclamation aimed at challenging other royal proclamations. Put Paul's theology in its political context, and it will make a lot more sense than if it is put merely within something called 'religion'. Religion is thrown in, of course, and soteriology, spirituality, and all sorts of things; but if the matter is approached from the other end the reader may well omit – and many in our traditions have indeed omitted – something that was fundamental to Paul himself.

If Jesus is Messiah, he is also Lord, *kyrios*. It should now be apparent that the proper contexts for this term, too, are its Jewish roots on the one hand and its pagan challenge on the other. Taking them the other way around for the moment: the main challenge of the term, I suggest, was not to the world of private cults or mystery religions, where one might be initiated into membership of a group giving allegiance to some religion's 'Lord'. The main challenge was to the lordship of Caesar, which, though 'political' from our point of view as well as in the first century, was also profoundly 'religious'. Caesar demanded worship as well as 'secular' obedience: not just taxes, but sacrifices. He was well on his way to becoming the supreme divinity in the Greco-Roman world, maintaining his vast empire not simply by force – though there was of course plenty of that – but by the development of a flourishing religion that seemed to be trumping most others either by absorption or by greater attraction. Caesar, by being a servant of the state, had provided justice and peace to the whole world. He was therefore to be hailed

as Lord and trusted as Savior. This is the world in which Paul announced that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, was Savior and Lord.[16]

We shall presently examine a key passage, Philippians 3.20–21, in which that claim is made in all its starkness. Before we get to that, however, we must note the Jewish setting which forms one of the 'echo chambers' within which Paul uses the word lord of Jesus. At one level he is drawing on the biblical portrait of the truly human one. In 1 Corinthians 15.25–28 he combines Psalms 110.1 and 8.7 in order to predicate of Jesus the Messiah that which Psalm 8 says of the human being. God has put all things under the feet of the human figure; so, too, of the Jewish Messiah. But the Lordship that Jesus has thereby attained is not simply that promised to humans in the beginning.

[**169**] It is quite clear in several passages that, when Paul ascribes Lordship to Jesus, using the word *kyrios*, he has in mind very specifically the Septuagintal use of the word to stand for the unsayable Tetragrammaton, YHWH. Again and again Paul quotes biblical passages in which 'the Lord' is indubitably YHWH, but of which, for him, the subject is now indisputably Jesus.[17] And, in a justly famous passage to which we shall return, Paul declares, through a deliberate quotation of Isaiah, that what YHWH had claimed as unique, the prerogative only of the creator and covenant god, was now shared with Jesus. 'To me, me alone', says YHWH, 'every knee shall bow, every tongue swear'. Maybe, says Paul, but now 'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow'.[18]

Was the clash with Caesar, then, the cause of Paul's elevation of Jesus to this extraordinary position? Non-Christian Jewish apologists have long maintained that Paul's high Christology is a function of his break with Judaism and his borrowing of categories from paganism; does the confrontation with Caesar provide a new version of this charge? By no means. It is not that, in order to oppose or upstage Caesar, Paul has invented a non-Jewish divine Jesus. The way he develops his Jesus-and-God language elsewhere rules this out completely.[19] Rather, Paul has arrived, on quite other grounds, at the belief that in Jesus of Nazareth, who has been shown to be Israel's Messiah in the resurrection, the one God of Israel has been personally revealed, such that Jesus himself is now part of the meaning of the word *God*. It is precisely in order to express this, a new and unexpected flowering from within Jewish monotheism, that he develops the father–son language, which prior to this point in Jewish tradition had to do, if anything, with Messiahship but which now becomes the vehicle of a new, high and deeply Jewish Christology.[20] Paul's most frequent language for Jesus, then, remained rooted in his Jewish traditions, asserting on the one hand that Jesus was the Messiah, long promised in the prophetic scriptures, bringing Israel's destiny to its God-ordained climax, and on the other that Jesus was Lord, both in the sense that he had embodied God's appointed destiny for the human race and in the sense that

[16] A further theme that could have been tackled here, if space had allowed, is that of the 'parousia', which, as Koester points out (Horsley 1997, 158–9), is itself replete with imperial/political overtones.

[17] E.g. Rom. 10.13, quoting Joel 3.5 LXX.

[18] Phil. 2.10, alluding to Isa. 45.23. On the passage see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 4, and below.

[19] *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 4—6.

[20] Unless we are to count Jesus' own usage; see *Jesus and the Victory of God*, ch. 13.

in him Israel's unique God had become personally present, accomplishing that which in scripture only God can accomplish. Simultaneously, and precisely because of the inner dynamic of this same Jewish tradition, Paul was announcing that Jesus was the true King of Israel and hence the true Lord of the world at exactly the time in history, and over exactly the geographical spread, where the Roman emperor was [**170**] being proclaimed, in what styled itself a 'gospel', in very similar terms. The mainstream Jewish monotheistic critique of paganism, of all its idolatry and immorality, found in Paul's day a more focused target and in Paul's theology a sharper weapon.

God's Justice Revealed in the Gospel: Romans

The third of our exegetical studies takes us once more to Romans, this time to address the question left over earlier: in what way does the gospel, seen now as the royal announcement of Jesus as Messiah and Lord, lead to Paul's doctrine of justification by faith? The answer Paul himself supplies is this: because in the gospel God's righteousness is unveiled. The long-awaited apocalypse, the revelation of God's future, has occurred in Jesus, and occurs again whenever the gospel is proclaimed. What is revealed, as the curtain is drawn back by the gospel announcement, is 'the righteousness of God'. Rooted totally in Paul's world of apocalyptic Judaism, it stakes a claim to be the reality of which Caesar's world offers the parody.

In Romans 1.16–17, Paul declares that the gospel unveils God's righteousness, the *dikaiosynē theou*. The Jewish context of Paul's work makes it absolutely certain[21] that he here refers not to a status that God imputes, imparts, or otherwise bestows upon humans, but to God's own righteousness, meaning God's faithfulness to the covenant with Israel, the Abrahamic covenant reaffirmed in Deuteronomy and elsewhere. (The question of the Mosaic covenant is, notoriously, one of the points of inner tension in his thinking, but we do not advance this discussion by denying his deliberate rootedness in the Abrahamic covenant.) According to this covenant faithfulness, as we can see in the analogous theological wrestlings of *4 Ezra*, the God of Israel must somehow not only be true to the covenant promises but also remain impartial, with no favorites. This God must also not only deal properly with evil but rescue the helpless.[22] This God must, in other words, act as the righteous judge in the cosmic law court. Things must be put to rights.

But this shows that the other obvious meaning of *dikaiosynē*, namely 'justice', is not so far away as has often been supposed. We may doubt, in fact, whether Paul would have seen very much of a hermeneutical gap between what we mean by 'righteousness' and what we mean by 'justice'. Not only did the same Greek word cover both. The sense of covenant faithfulness and the sense of things being put to rights belong together in the [**171**] mind of a

[21] 'On Becoming the Righteousness of God' [reprinted as chapter 5 of the present volume]; see also *What Saint Paul Really Said*, ch. 6; and 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' [reprinted as chapter 7 of the present volume].

[22] On *4 Ezra* and its parallels with Paul see B. W. Longenecker 1991.

Jew like Paul – however much they were held apart within both Reformation and Enlightenment thought, under such headings as 'theology and ethics' or 'salvation and politics'. Just as the Messiah was destined to be Lord of the world, so, and for the same reasons, God's covenant with Israel had always been intended as the means of putting God's world to rights. In the rabbinic saying, God called Abraham to reverse the sin of Adam.[23] When, therefore, God's righteousness was unveiled, the effect would be precisely that the world would receive justice, that rich, restorative, much-to-be-longed-for justice of which the Psalmists had spoken with such feeling.[24]

But we need to remind ourselves where Paul's great letter was sent.[25] Debate about the situation of Romans has oscillated between those who suppose it to be simply 'Paul's Last Will and Testament', summing up his gospel and theology before making his last great journey, and those who search in the Roman church, or in its relations with its non-Christian neighbors, for specific issues that Paul may have been addressing.[26] I have taken part in those debates, and I think the latter solution is broadly correct. But looming up behind all such discussions is quite a different issue, though commentators do not normally notice it. Paul was coming to Rome with the gospel message of Jesus the Jewish Messiah, the Lord of the world, claiming that through this message God's justice was unveiled once and for all. Rome prided itself on being, as it were, the capital of Justice, the source from which Justice would flow throughout the world. The Roman goddess Iustitia, like the Caesar-cult itself, was a comparative novelty in Paul's world: the temple to Iustitia was established on 8 January AD 13, and Iustitia was among the virtues celebrated by Augustus's famous *clipeus virtutis*, the golden shield set up in the Senate-house and inscribed with the emperor's virtues (27 BC). So close is the link between the new imperial regime and the virtue Iustitia that this goddess sometimes acquires the title 'Augusta'.[27] So, without losing any of its deep-rooted Jewish meanings of the covenant faithfulness [**172**] of the creator God, with all that this means for God's dealing with sins and justification of those who believe, Paul's declaration that the gospel of King Jesus reveals God's *dikaiosynē* must also be read as a deliberate laying down of a challenge to the imperial pretension. If justice is wanted, it will be found not in the *euangelion* that announces Caesar as Lord but in the *euangelion* of Jesus.

[23] *Gen. Rab*. 14.6. I have explored this theme in various places, e.g., *Climax of the Covenant*; *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 9.

[24] Pss. 67.4; 82.8, and so on.

[25] This point, though it was developed independently, has close analogies with the argument of Elliott 1995, 190–2. See too Georgi 1991, ch. 4, excerpted in Horsley 1997, 148–57. Georgi seems to me to underplay the point about Iustitia in favor of other points equally worth further exploration, such as about *fides/pistis*. Perhaps his translation of *dikaiosynē* as 'solidarity', and the rejection of its meaning of 'justice' within the Jewish Bible as relevant to Paul, has led him to overlook the point. I agree with him (Georgi 1991, 85) that Paul's *dikaiosynē* has its roots in the Jewish Bible, but one of my main themes here is that there is no need to refuse a concept of a Greco-Roman setting or target just because its history-of-religions origin is Jewish.

[26] See the discussions in the commentaries; and, e.g., Donfried 1991.

[27] On Iustitia, the Roman equivalent of the Greek *dike*, see, e.g., Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.6.25; the *Acts of Augustus*, ch. 34.

Nor is this just a hint, a shot across Caesar's bow, to be quickly forgotten as the theme of the letter winds through its remarkable course. If Romans 3.21—4.25 concludes that God has been faithful to the covenant with Abraham, Romans 5—8 concludes that God has thereby been true to the implicit covenant with the whole of creation. It is in 8.18–27 (more or less ignored, significantly enough, in much standard Pauline theology) that Paul finally shows how what God has done in Jesus the Messiah, in fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham, has addressed and in principle solved the problem of the whole world. God's covenant faithfulness has put the world to rights. Nothing Augustus or his successors could do, bringing their much-vaunted Pax Romana wherever they went, could compete with that; this is real justice, justice flowing from the throne of Jesus to the whole world. Seen from this point, Romans 9—11, while having as its main theme the paradoxical ways in which God's covenant faithfulness to Israel has worked out, are also concerned to bring a proper and just balance to the relationships within the wider community, advocating in particular a proper respect by Christians for their non-Christian Jewish neighbors. And Romans 14—15 is best read as urging a proper balance in the Christian community between Christians of different backgrounds.[28]

The problem of Romans 13.1–7, seen within this wider context, is not so difficult as it has sometimes appeared. Paul's main aim, within the broad-brush ethical exhortations of chapters 12—13, is to point out that loyalty to Jesus does not mean anarchy in the state, and that however much the emperor may proclaim himself to be sovereign, without rival in the divine as well as the human sphere, he remains answerable to the true God. Despite what has often been suggested, reminding the emperor's subjects that the emperor is responsible to the true God is a diminution of, not a subjection to, imperial arrogance.[29]

The gospel of the true God, then, unveils the covenant faithfulness of this God, through which the entire world receives health-giving, restorative justice. That is the context within which, according to Romans, those who believe the gospel – who respond to the proclamation, that is, with 'the obedience of faith' – are marked out by that faith, and by nothing else, as the eschatological people of God, the people whose sins have been dealt [**173**] with on the cross, the people now assured of salvation/glorification. Nothing that I have said about what we might call the political dimension of Paul's argument in Romans should obscure for a moment that the message of the gospel is good news for sinners.

Rather, that emphasis should be highlighted and celebrated within the framework of God's triumph in Christ over all the principalities and powers. Nothing, not even Caesar's system, can separate us from God's love shown in the Messiah, Jesus.

All of which leads us to my fourth and final exegetical study. I have referred or alluded more than once to the third chapter of Philippians. I now want to propose a new way of reading that chapter as a whole.

[28] Another theme we could study at this point is that of *pax/eirēnē* see Georgi 1991, 96–8 (though Georgi does not develop this very far).

[29] On Rom. 13 see Elliott 1995, 214–26 (= Horsley 1997, ch. 11).

Paul's Coded Challenge to Empire: Philippians 3

The third chapter of Philippians presents the exegete with at least five interlocking puzzles. What is the target of Paul's polemic? How, more specifically, does the critique of the Jews in verses 2–7 cohere with the use of imperial language to describe Jesus in verses 20–21? Why does Paul tell the Philippians to imitate him (verse 17), since they, not being Jews, cannot travel by the route he has described as his own in verses 4–11? How does verse 1 belong with the chapter as a whole, if it does? And how does chapter 3 as a whole, which should probably be taken to include 4.1, belong with the letter as a whole, if it does?

I want to offer a reading of the chapter that I think throws a striking light on all these problems, and advances considerably the thesis I have been arguing overall about Paul's gospel and Caesar's empire, as well as the broader discussion about Paul's agendas vis-à-vis Caesar on the one hand and Judaism on the other.[30]

We may begin with the point that is frequently made (though not yet by all commentators) about 3.20: 'Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah.' These are Caesar-titles. The whole verse says: Jesus is Lord, and Caesar isn't. Caesar's empire, of which Philippi is a colonial outpost, is the parody; Jesus' empire, of which the Philippian church is a colonial outpost, is the reality.[31] And the point of having 'citizenship in heaven' is not that one might eventually retire and go home to the mother city; no Roman colonial expected to do that, since one of the reasons Rome established colonies was overcrowding in the capital and the desire to spread Roman civilization in the rest of the empire. The point was that, if things were getting difficult in one's colonial setting, the [**174**] emperor would come from the mother city to rescue and liberate his loyal subjects, transforming their situation from danger to safety.[32] Paul's description of Jesus, and his future saving activity, thus echoes what can be called imperial eschatology, even while being obviously derived from the same Jewish sources as was 1 Corinthians 15.25–28. Indeed, verse 21 carries multiple echoes of several other Pauline passages (cf. Romans 8.29; 1 Corinthians 15.43–53; 2 Corinthians 3.18; Ephesians 1.19–22). As so often, when Paul sums up a train of thought, particularly when it concerns Jesus, he brings together a familiar range of topics in a glittering finale to the argument.

What was the immediate significance of this Jesus-and-Caesar contrast? It was a challenge to an alternative loyalty. Jesus was the reality, Caesar the parody. It was the legitimation of the Christian church as the true empire of the true Lord. And it was the outworking of the great poem in the previous chapter; indeed, the very close linguistic and thematic links between 2.5–11 and 3.20–21, and the way the latter builds so naturally on the former,

[30] In addition to the commentaries, I have been much helped on Philippians (despite some continuing disagreements!) by the work of my former student Peter Oakes (see Oakes 2001).

[31] Cf. Horsley 1997, 141: 'The Philippians would hardly have been unaware that since the battle of Actium they already had a savior who was their lord.'

[32] Cf. Elliott 1995, 197; Georgi 1991, 72–8; Horsley 1997, 140–1.

constitute one of the many good reasons for seeing Philippians, despite its jerkiness at certain joining points, as a single letter.[33] The poem in chapter 2 has exactly the same shape as some formulaic imperial acclamations: Jesus, not Caesar, has been a servant and is now to be hailed as *kyrios*. The fact that the poem, in its context in chapter 2, undergirds what we have been accustomed to call an ethical appeal should not blind us to the fact that Paul is here setting up themes he will later exploit. In any case, of course, the unity of the church for which the first half of chapter 2 is such an eloquent appeal is far from being a mere secondary question for Paul. If Jesus is Lord of the whole world, those who give him allegiance must be united, otherwise the claim will be seriously compromised. But if chapter 3 thus concludes with such a clear evocation of and challenge to imperial ideology and eschatology, how does this fit with the earlier parts of the chapter, for so long simply read as just another Pauline outburst against Jews in general or Jewish Christians in particular? Generations of exegetes have puzzled over this; we now hear less than once we did of the way in which Paul's eschatology challenges something called 'perfectionism', and the way in which proto-gnostic ideas flit to and fro through the polemic, but the puzzle remains.[34]

The solution I propose is that Paul, for neither the first nor the last time, has Judaism and paganism, particularly, in this case, the Caesar-cult, simultaneously in mind, and is here using warnings against the former as a code for warnings against the latter. Paul's main concern here is not to warn the Philippians against Judaism or an anti-Pauline Jewish-Christian mission. [**175**] We have, after all, no hard evidence that this danger threatened the churches in Greece as it had those in Asia. His concern is to warn them against the Caesar-cult and the entire panoply of pagan empire. But his method of warning them, and of encouraging them to take a stand for the counter-empire of Jesus, is given for the most part in code. He tells them his own story, the story of how he had abandoned his status and privileges in order to find the true status and privilege of one in Christ, and he encourages them to imitate him. Read this way, the chapter gains both in coherence and in subtlety.

First, coherence. 'To write the same things', he says in verse 1, 'is no trouble for me, and it is safe for you.' Why 'safe'? Because nobody reading verses 2–16 would at once deduce that the recipients of the letter were being encouraged to be disloyal to Caesar. This is the coded message of subversive intrigue. The main thrust of the chapter is not to present a stark contrast between the two Lords of the world but to provide the Philippians with a powerful train of thought and to encourage them to live within it. 'Join in imitating me', Paul says in verse 17; but, not being Jews, they cannot. Indeed, even if they had been Jews, they could hardly match Paul's top-drawer level of Jewishness (verses 4–6). The rhetoric of the chapter does not simply give them orders; it encourages them to think their way into Paul's situation and

[33] See *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 4 – though I managed in that entire chapter to ignore the Caesar dimension of Phil. 2.6–11, which now seems to me of great importance.

[34] See Koester 1961.

then to transfer what he says about himself and his own privileges to their own position and status. Paul is not, in fact, shifting his target; he is using a warning about one thing as a way of issuing a different warning, all the more powerful for its being coded.

Second, subtlety. Paul builds up in verses 2–11 the argument that will then resound through to verse 21, with 10–11 anticipating the final climax of verses 20–21. There follows the famous warning against complacency, the danger to which recognition of the future hope is the antidote, in verses 12–16, to be followed by the final appeal, negatively in verses 17–19 and positively in verses 20–21. By this time, of course, both themes, 'the warning against Judaism, and the warning against Caesar's empire and its blasphemous parody of Jesus' Lordship', have come together, so that, as expositors have noticed, it is possible to read verses 17–19 almost equally well as a scathing denunciation of non-Christian Jews (with 'belly' and 'shame' being perhaps euphemisms for the genitals which, from Paul's point of view, seemed to play an inordinately large role in non-Christian Jewish self-definition)[35] or, of course, as a more obvious denunciation of the pagan world that was all too familiar both to the Philippians and to the well-traveled apostle to the gentiles.

All this raises some huge questions. First, what precisely are verses 2–11 [**176**] saying? Against whom are they warning, overtly as well as covertly, and what is the more precise logic of that warning?

The old debate as to whether Paul was opposing Judaism per se or a form of Jewish Christianity akin to that of the Galatian 'agitators' is skewed in recent discussion[36] by the anxious attempt to protect Paul from saying anything apparently derogatory about Jews, and the equally eager attempt in some quarters to have him say as many snide things as possible about some of his fellow Christians. These contemporary concerns have often obscured the underlying thrust, which is both interestingly subtle in itself and fascinating when we come to apply it to the wider polemic the chapter is offering. Once again, part at least of the clue is found in the way in which these verses, too, look back to 2.5–11. There should be no doubt that Paul intended the first level of meaning of verses 3.2–6 to be about Jews, rather than Jewish Christians. Of course, the Galatian 'agitators' would have come into the frame as well, but as a subset of a larger group: the dogs, the evil workers, the mutilation people. The first two of these epithets could have applied to pagans, of course, not least Cynics, as some have suggested. But the third, though clearly a pagan term, by generating the counter-assertion of verse 3, shows that it is Jews who are in mind. Yes, but Jews seen now as a form of paganism.

The shock that greets such an announcement in our contemporary world should be blunted by two compelling factors. First, this is by no means the only time where Paul makes exactly this move. In Galatians 4.1–11, in line

[35] See Mearns 1987. But cf. Fee 1995, 317 n. 36, who describes Mearns's view as 'a massive misreading of the evidence'.

[36] See my recent essay, 'The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology' [reprinted as chapter 13 of the present volume].

with the letter as a whole, he warns the young church that if they submit to circumcision they will not only not escape from the paganism they have rejected in becoming Christians, but will actually be returning to it in a subtler form. They will be returning to the realm of the flesh, of the principalities and powers. In Colossians 2, Paul warns the young church, not indeed against an actual syncretism or threatening new religion, but against Judaism described in terms of paganism.[37] This is a familiar trick. From Paul's Christian point of view, those Jews who do not embrace Jesus as their Messiah are thereby embracing instead an identity marked out by blood and soil, by ancestry and territory, in other words, by the 'flesh'. They are, therefore, subject to the same critique as paganism. Nor is this a Pauline invention. Before we pick up the stones of our post-Enlightenment sensibilities to throw at Paul, or at any interpreter who dares to suggest that he might have done any such thing, we should recall that [**177**] precisely this move was a standard way in which many Jewish groups in the Second Temple period would define themselves over against one another. We are the true Jews, say the Pharisees, say Qumran, say this or that revolutionary group; you are compromisers, *apikorsim*, no better than *goyim*. One example must suffice. When the original enthusiasm for the Maccabean revolt, and the resultant Hasmonean regime, had given way to disillusionment, some unknown writer appended to the Book of Daniel a further story, that of Susannah, in which the villains are now not the pagan rulers but the new Jewish ones, who are no better than pagans. This is simply the other side of the coin of doing what Paul is manifestly doing, despite our desire that he should not, in verse 3, namely, defining Christians not even as 'the true circumcision', but simply as 'the circumcision', *he peritomē*, in contemptuous contrast to 'the cutoff people', the 'mutilation', *he katatomē*. Paul is thus not only located on the map of Second Temple history, but, by employing an inner-Jewish rhetorical strategy in which one's opponents were cast as pseudopagans he is able to use the device in a quite new way, setting up precisely this polemic so as to serve a new purpose, namely, his anti-Caesar message.

Within this overall strategy, however, Paul is by no means saying, as some might too quickly conclude, that Judaism per se is bad and to be rejected. This is where the model of 2.5–11 becomes so important. The crucial point is that the Messiah did not regard his equality with God as something to be exploited; he did already possess equality with God and did not abandon it, but interpreted it as committing him to the path of suffering and death, a decision that was then vindicated in his exaltation and Lordship.[38] The fact that 3.7–11 is modeled on 2.5–11 suggests that we read Paul's autobiographical account as follows. Paul did not regard his covenant membership in Israel as something to be exploited. It did not entitle him to adopt a position of effortless superiority over the lesser breeds without the law. But nor did he therefore regard covenant membership itself as unimportant or to be

[37] I do not share the opinion that this is post-Pauline, and indeed the attempts within the new reading of Paul to suggest that Colossians and Ephesians represent a softening of Paul's opposition to Caesar strike me as absurd. See *Colossians*; Dunn 1996.

[38] Cf. *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 4.

jettisoned. He was not opposed to the idea of Judaism per se, nor indeed could he be; he was claiming the high ground that this, indeed, was what Judaism had always been supposed to be, the historical people whose identity and destiny were now revealed in the crucified Messiah. Just as the Messiah had obeyed the covenant plan of God and was now identified as the Lord of the world, so the Messiah's people were to find their covenant identity precisely 'in' the Messiah, in his dying and rising, in his faithfulness, in the covenant membership that would be God's gift bestowed upon faithfulness.[39] Verses 10 and 11 sum up the train of thought; this, Paul is saying, is what it means to be the Israel of God, the circumcision. The fact [**178**] that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Messiah has unveiled the truth about God's covenant plan for God's people.

Paul's warning, then, is not against so-called Judaizers, better perhaps simply described in terms of the Galatian situation as 'agitators'. It is a comparatively straightforward exposition of a standard Second Temple Jewish position; God has redefined Israel through certain climactic and revelatory – in other words, apocalyptic – events, and all forms of Judaism that do not recognize this and conform are at best out of date and at worst dangerous compromises and parodies.

This is not the central point of the chapter. The central point is now to argue: as I, Paul, have rethought my Jewish allegiance in the light of the crucified and risen Jesus, so you should rethink your Roman allegiance in the same light. The transitional passage, verses 12–16, turns the self-description of verses 4–11 into an example and exhortation, with the key transition coming in verses 15–16.

Eschatology is indeed the key here, but not in the way it is sometimes imagined. Just as Paul's covenant pilgrimage, his following of the Messiah through suffering and death to resurrection, is not yet complete, nor is the pilgrimage of the Philippians. This does of course rule out certain types of superspirituality, but I see no need to postulate that this is Paul's primary concern or even an important side issue. The important point is that the Philippians, like Paul, must find their whole identity in the crucified and risen Messiah and nowhere else.

The final appeal, in verses 17–21, is then to be understood as follows. It is, to begin with, primarily a warning against sheer paganism. The fact that verses 18 and 19 can be read as a coded warning against some types of Judaism may well be deliberate, but I do not think it is the main thing Paul is aiming at.[40] Rather, he is building up to saying: do not go along with the Caesar-cult that is currently sweeping the Eastern Mediterranean. You have one Lord and Savior, and he will vindicate and glorify you, if you hold firm to him, just as the Father vindicated and glorified him after he had obeyed.

But the model of Paul's self-description in verses 2–11 does not allow us to treat this appeal as a simplistic rejection of everything to do with Caesar's empire. Paul is no dualist. Think for a moment of his regular ethical appeals;

[39] Note the very close parallel to this in Gal. 2.19–21.
[40] See, e.g., Oakes 2001.

just because all things are new in Christ, that does not mean that Christians do not share with their non-Christian pagan neighbors a broad perception of things that are good and things that are evil (Romans 12). Just as it is wrong to suppose that either Paul was anti-Jewish or he had no critique of any other Jews, so it would be wrong to suppose that either he was opposed entirely to everything to do with the Roman empire or he was a quisling, a compromiser, going with the flow of the new regime. Once again, things are [**179**] not so straightforward. Here, too, the logic of his argument shows that, as in Colossians 1, the Paul of Philippians would be quite prepared to say that the creator God has made all things in Christ, including the principalities and powers that then need to be defeated and reconciled. Paul himself used his Roman citizenship to good advantage, not to set himself up as superior to noncitizens, nor yet, like Naaman the Syrian, to excuse a bit of paganism on the side, but as a way of getting to Rome to announce the revelation of God's justice in the Messiah, Jesus. Perhaps we might, then, treat his appeal as follows.

God has unveiled in Jesus his true kingdom, his true empire. It stands to all other empires, Caesar's included, somewhat as true covenant membership stands to that Judaism which remains opposed to the gospel message of the Messiah. The parallel may be uncomfortable for us at both ends, but we must follow it through; only so can the code, which is 'safe' for the Philippians, have its full force. There is nothing specifically wrong with being a citizen of a country or of its wider extension, just as there is nothing wrong with being Jewish. But when the gospel of Jesus is unveiled it reveals the true empire, the true citizenship, and in that light all the pretensions of empire, not least the arrogant and blasphemous claims of the emperor himself, are shown up, just as those who pride themselves on their circumcision are shown up as being 'the mutilation'. This is neither complimentary nor dualistic – a position in which Paul's interpreters have always found it hard to imitate him. But the closing exhortation of the passage says it all: this is the way you are to stand firm in the Lord (4.1).

What then does Paul want his hearers to do? Should they renounce their citizenship? Presumably not; Paul did not renounce his. In any case, as sociological studies of Philippi have shown, by no means all the residents of the city and its surrounding area would have been Roman citizens, and hence it is likely that many of the young church there would not have had that privilege.[41] But the city as a whole prided itself on its colonial status, and even noncitizens might expect to derive benefit from such an intimate association with Rome, and hence with Caesar, the lord, the savior, the great benefactor. Paul is warning them not to compromise their allegiance to Jesus, and to be prepared, by refusing to take part in cultic and other activities, to follow their Messiah along the path of suffering, knowing that Jesus, the one true Lord, was the true Savior who would rescue them and give them the

[41] Even if 'belly' and 'shame' are to be read as euphemisms, the natural primary application would be to the phallic symbolism of some pagan cult, not to a spurious emphasis on circumcision (or, for that matter, on sexual libertinism).

only glory worth possessing. Verse 21 indicates clearly enough, partly by its close association with 2.10–11 and partly by its parallel with the fuller statement in 1 Corinthians 15.23–28, that the time will come when Caesar and all who fol-[**180**]low and worship him will be humbled before the throne of the true Lord of the World.

What then can we say about the passage in Philippians 3 which has normally been the focus of attention, namely verses 2–11? Have we, by arguing that it functions as a coded warning and summons to a church faced with a different threat, thereby relativized its surface value, both as critique of non-Christian Judaism and as a statement of Christian identity? By no means.

First, there can be no doubt that here Paul is denying, in the strongest terms, that membership in the eschatological people of God can be demarcated by the regular boundary markers of non-Christian Judaism. Equally, there is no doubt that Paul is affirming that Judaism – he does not even say *true* Judaism or *fulfilled* Judaism (cf. Romans 2.29) – is now defined in terms of the Messiah, Jesus. This is clearly a classic piece of Second Temple Jewish self-definition, claiming the high ground of the true fulfillment of God's purposes and denying that ground to all others. In particular, of course, Paul is denying it to his own previous mode of existence, his Pharisaic past. But we should note both what he does not say and the grounds for the claim he makes. He does not say that Pharisaic Judaism is silly, guilt-ridden, the wrong sort of religion. Rather, he says that it is a way of life characterized by *sarx*, flesh, and by trust in such flesh. We need the fuller statements of Galatians and Romans, of course, to make sense of this critique. But the key thing is that the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah have inaugurated the new, messianic age in which the messianic events of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are now the defining characteristics of his people. Paul's argument, then, is basically eschatological and messianic: the events concerning Jesus have God's stamp upon them, declaring that the long-awaited new age has begun. Being the people of God is no longer defined according to the flesh, but according to the Messiah. Though this is as strong a critique of non-Christian (perhaps we should say, nonmessianic) Judaism as Paul offers at any point in his writings, it is essentially a critique from within. It is not a criticism of Judaism per se, merely of what happens when the Messiah comes and some Jews fail to acknowledge him.

Second, how does Paul's statement of Christian identity function? It is again notably Messiah-centered. Verses 7–11 are often cited in discussions of 'justification by faith', to which topic indeed they contribute. But their primary emphasis is on being in Christ, belonging, that is, to the people of the Messiah. It is when one is 'in the Messiah' (verse 9) that one possesses already the status of being the righteous people of God, a status which has nothing to do with possession of Torah, and hence nothing to do in and of itself with being ethnically Jewish, and everything to do with covenant faithfulness. Again we need the fuller statements of Galatians and Romans to understand the dense statement of verse 9; indeed, the dense and unexplained nature of this statement is itself an indication that Paul is not [**181**] intending here to tell his audience something they do not in principle know already. In the

light of fuller explanations elsewhere, I regard it as likely that *dia pisteōs Christou* in verse 9 should be understood as 'through the faithfulness of the Messiah', and that the last phrase of the verse should be glossed as 'the covenant status bestowed by God upon faithfulness'. This messianic faithfulness is not, ultimately, something other than the 'obedience' of the Messiah, outlined in 2.5–8. As verses 10 and 11 of the present chapter make clear, the messianic events of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are the defining, because redeeming, features of the people of God; to belong to God's people is to be defined in terms of them. This definition can be stated in terms of knowledge (8, 10), gaining the Messiah (8), being found in him (9), being conformed to him (10), and attaining his resurrection (11).

Paul's doctrine of justification is not simply about how individuals find salvation. It is not about the rejection of an abstract moralism or Pelagianism and the embracing of an alternative scheme of abstract trust, nor about rejecting ritualism and relying on a purely spiritual approach to God. It is about the definition of the community by Jesus the Messiah.

We may note, in concluding this brief study of Philippians 3, that if verses 2–11 are really intended to function as a coded challenge to Caesar's empire, telling Paul's story of renouncing his past and embracing the Messiah in order to encourage the Philippians along an analogous path, they also function sequentially within the consecutive logic of the chapter. It is precisely because they are assured that they are indeed the people of the one true God, formed in the Messiah through his death and resurrection, that the Philippians will have courage and confidence to trust him as savior and lord and so to renounce the imperial claims of Caesar. And in doing so they will find the warnings of Paul resonating at various levels. If he can renounce his unrivalled privileges, so can they.

Concluding Reflections

First, we may stress that Paul's critique of Caesar's empire was firmly grounded in his Jewish heritage. Discovering the pagan history-of-religions parallels to Paul does not mean suggesting that Paul did not remain a thoroughly Jewish thinker. What he does with the Caesar-cult stems directly from what Isaiah does with the Babylonian cult, which in turn looks back to Deuteronomy's rejection of all paganism in favor of the stern monotheism of the creator and covenant god. The rediscovery in our day of the pagan context and target of Paul's thinking should not mean for one minute that we go back on the great gain of the last generation, the rediscovery that Paul was and remained a thoroughly Jewish thinker.

Second, the Jewish thinking that formed the center and driving force of his rejection of Caesar's empire was expressed in terms of Paul's very high Christology. Philippians 3.20–21 is based firmly on 2.5–11, which [**182**] articulates in poetic formulations, unlikely to have been composed then and there, a view of Jesus that claims for him nothing less than equality with, and thereby identity with, the one God of Jewish monotheism. In this passage

and several others Paul therefore marks the beginning of the process that led eventually to what we know as Trinitarian theology, that view that marks differentiation within the one God. There has been a fashion in some circles for regarding later trinitarianism as one sign of the process whereby, so it is said, the church climbed down from its earlier political confrontation with the empire and arrived at a compromise, an accommodation. Whatever the truth of that, Paul's opposition to Caesar and adherence to a very high, very Jewish Christology were part of the same thing. Jesus was Lord – *kyrios*, with all its Septuagintal overtones – and Caesar was not.

Third, neither the recognition that Paul's main target was paganism, and the Caesar-cult in particular, nor the equal recognition that he remained a thoroughly Jewish thinker, should blind us for a moment to the fact that Paul still held a thorough and stern critique of nonmessianic Judaism. Though based on Paul's eschatological belief that the God of Israel had acted in Jesus to fulfill the covenant and usher in the long-awaited new age, this critique was not simply a matter of Paul's thinking that, since salvation was in Christ, it seemed not to be in Judaism after all. Paul remains at this point on the map of Second Temple Judaism. Believing that God had acted to remodel the covenant people necessarily and Jewishly meant believing that those who refused to join this remodeled people were missing out on God's eschatological purpose. As post-Holocaust thinkers we will be careful how we say all this. As historians of the first century we will recognize that it must be said. As Pauline theologians we will recognize that it contains no shadow, no hint, of anything that can truly be called anti-Judaism, still less anti-Semitism.

Fourth, the argument I have mounted indicates clearly enough that whatever it was Paul was heralding as he went around the Mediterranean world, our post-Enlightenment category of 'religion' is far too restricted to handle it. Since that category was designed to exclude politics, among other things, and since Paul's proclamation clearly carried a political message at its heart, not merely as one 'implication' among many, we should refuse to allow the study of Paul to be confined within what is normally thought of as the history of religion. This has large-scale implications for the organization of our disciplines. Was the Caesar-cult a matter of religion or politics? Perhaps Paul should be taught just as much in the politics departments of our universities as in the religion departments.

Fifth, if Paul's answer to Caesar's empire is the empire of Jesus, what does that say about this new empire, living under the rule of its new Lord? It implies a high and strong ecclesiology in which the scattered and often muddled cells of women, men, and children loyal to Jesus as Lord form colonial outposts of the empire that is to be: subversive little groups when seen [**183**] from Caesar's point of view, but when seen Jewishly an advance foretaste of the time when the earth shall be filled with the glory of the God of Abraham and the nations will join Israel in singing God's praises (cf. Romans 15.7–13). From this point of view, therefore, this counter-empire can never be merely critical, never merely subversive. It claims to be the reality of which Caesar's empire is the parody; it claims to be modeling the genuine humanness, not least the justice and peace, and the unity across traditional

racial and cultural barriers, of which Caesar's empire boasted. If this claim is not to collapse once more into dualism, into a rejection of every human aspiration and value, it will be apparent that there will be a large degree of overlap. 'Shun what is evil; cling to what is good.' There will be affirmation as well as rejection, collaboration as well as critique. To collaborate without compromise, to criticize without dualism – this is the delicate path that Jesus' counter-empire had to learn to tread.

On the day I sat down to draft this essay, an editorial came to my eye that nicely summed up the first of these: what is desired is 'a model for churches and theologians to contribute to the ordering of society, without being Christianly imperialistic'.[42] Equally, we need a model for churches and theologians to contribute to the critique of society, without being Christianly dualistic. Paul points the way to this finely balanced agenda, and we who live with the legacy of two thousand years of the church getting it sometimes right and often wrong would do well to return to our roots to learn fresh wisdom.

[42] Jacob 1998, 402.

Chapter Thirteen

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS: EXEGESIS AND THEOLOGY (2000)

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I have for several years been promising to write the 'Two Horizons' commentary on Galatians. While that is held up in the queue behind other projects, this essay represents an early attempt to summarize some of what I hope to explore more fully in that book. Of course, since this piece was written, a great deal has happened in Galatians scholarship, not least the gradual impact of, and the various responses to, the massive (but in my view seriously flawed) commentary of J. L. Martyn, to whom I only made one reference in this piece. Galatians remains one of the most explosive pieces of Christian writing of all time, and my excitement in writing this essay has not dimmed in the decade and more since then.

* * *

[**205**] The dense and dramatic argument of Galatians excites and baffles by turns. Sometimes perceived as a flamboyant younger sister of the more settled and reflective letter to Rome, this epistle has provoked endless controversy at all levels, from details of exegesis to flights of systematic theology. Nobody reading it can be in any doubt that it all mattered very much indeed to Paul. But what it was that mattered, and why, and why it should matter to anyone two thousand years later – these are far harder questions to answer. Nor can this chapter do more than restate the questions and hint at possible answers. Our aim here is not to solve the problems in question but to discuss and illustrate the task.

Our aim is to discuss, particularly, what might happen when we allow questions of exegesis and theology to stare each other in the face. It is of course generally recognized that anyone grappling with the exegesis of Galatians must do business with 'theological' questions. One must, that is to say, know something of the grammar of theological concepts, how God-language works (particularly, how it worked in the first century), how justification might relate to law and faith, and so on. One must, in particular, be familiar with how Paul uses similar ideas in other letters, in this case especially Romans. It is not that one should allow Paul's meaning in one place to

determine ahead of time what he might have said elsewhere, but that even if development, or a change of mind, [**206**] has occurred, we are still dealing with the same person talking about more or less the same things. Equally, no systematic or practical theology that would claim to be Christian can ignore the central and foundational texts of the NT. Particularly, anyone offering a theological account of, say, justification would feel bound at least to make a visit to Galatians and to fit it somehow into the developing scheme. And anyone wanting to offer a serious Christian account of central topics on contemporary applied theology – liberation, for instance, or postmodernity – ought, if such theology is to be fully Christian, to ground their reflections in the NT.

However, a good deal of historical and exegetical scholarship on this letter, as on others, has in fact proceeded in recent decades with only minimal attention to theological discussion – an omission sometimes justified on the grounds of maintaining historical neutrality, though sometimes in fact masking the historian's unawareness of the deeper issues involved. Likewise, many systematic theologians, in this and other fields, have become impatient with waiting for the mountain of historical footnotes to give birth to the mouse of theological insight, and have proceeded on the basis of an understanding of the text that simply reflects, it may not be too unkind to say, either the commentary that was in vogue when the theologian was a student or the pressing contemporary issues that condition a particular reading of the text.[1]

I intend in this essay to approach the problem from both ends, and to examine the bridge that might be thrown between these two now traditional positions. This task is not to be thought of as one element in the wider project of bridging Lessing's Ugly Ditch. Such a project presupposes that which ought to be challenged – namely, the existence of such a ditch in the first place. To be sure, a ditch between the historical and the theological task does indeed exist within Western consciousness, and the rise of historical scholarship owes something to it, since in that context the ditch has acted as a moat, protecting the historian from the prying eye and the heavy hand of the theological censor. But the question always arises as to who is being protected from whom. The ditch is equally useful to those who want to maintain a traditional faith within a pure ahistorical vacuum. But the idea that there is a great gulf fixed between historical exegesis and Christian theology – this Enlightenment presup-[**207**]position is precisely what ought to be challenged, not least when commenting on a biblical text.

One way of hinting at answers to the wider problems is to read a particular text without bracketing off any of these questions – or, to put the matter another way, one might propose putting to the text the questions that have accrued, and those that are newly emerging, out of the long history of the church's engagement with its own faith (and, one should say, with its God) – and giving the text a chance to answer them, or at least to insist on their rewording. With this in mind, I offer here (1) a brief account of the major

[1] Cf. the remarks of Karl Barth in the preface to the second edition of his famous commentary on Romans (K. Barth 1933, 2–15).

exegetical issues that meet us in Galatians; (2) a suggestion of which major theological questions might profitably be put to the letter, and what answers might arise; and (3) some proposals about how these two tasks might be brought into fruitful interaction with one another through the work of a commentary and the further work (not least preaching) that a commentary is supposed to evoke.

Exegetical Issues

The basic task of exegesis is to address, as a whole and in parts, the historical questions: what was the author saying to the readers; and why? These questions ultimately demand an answer at the broadest level in the form of a hypothesis to be tested against the verse-by-verse details. One may, perhaps, allow the author some imprecision, particularly in such a heated composition, but if even a small number of details do not fit the hypothesis, it will be called into question. Exegetes of course have ways of making things fit. A puzzling verse can be labeled as a pre-Pauline fragment or an interpolation, or perhaps a mere '*topos*' in which a well-worn phrase, whose history-of-religions ancestry can be shown with an impressive footnote, should not be pressed for precise or powerful meaning. (As though Paul, of all people, would be content to write a letter that was merely a set of conventional noises whose meaning could thus be reduced to a set of evocative grunts!) Failing that, one can suggest that a puzzling verse simply reflects a moment where either Paul or his amanuensis lost the train of thought. But I take it as a general rule, consonant with the wider rules for hypotheses and their verification, that the more moves like this one makes, the more one's hypothesis stands condemned for lack of appropriate simplicity. One must assume that there is a train of thought, 'that the text has a central concern and a remarkable inner logic that may no longer be en-[**208**]tirely comprehensible to us'.[2] One must get in the data, and one must do so without undue complexity, without using that brute force which swaggers around the byways of a text arm-in-arm with ignorance.

At the level of large-scale exegesis, this problem meets us when we ask the questions normally thought of under the heading 'Introduction'. What was going on in Galatia that made Paul write the letter? Which 'Galatia' (north or south) are we talking about anyway? When did Paul write the letter? What relation, if any, did the episode have to the so-called 'apostolic conference' of Acts 15? Who were Paul's opponents, the shadowy 'agitators' who flit to and fro through the undergrowth of the epistle?

One well-worn path through these thickets has been made by those who insist that the agitators are legalists: proto-Pelagians who are trying to persuade the Galatians to seek justification by performing good moral deeds. Among the many problems this view faces is the question: why then does Paul spend so long, in chapter 5 in particular, warning the Galatians against

[2] Käsemann 1980, viii.

what looks like antinomianism? It will scarcely do to say (though many have) that he has suddenly focused on a quite different problem, with perhaps a quite different set of opponents or agitators. A different basic analysis seems called for – one that will hold the two emphases of the letter (if that is what they are) in a single larger context, and that will perhaps question whether what appear to our post-Enlightenment and post-Reformation eyes as two separate, almost incompatible, emphases, would have appeared like that to either Paul or his readers. And any such analysis must face the question from the theologian, and from those (such as preachers) who look to theologians' work for help: of what use are these 'introductory' questions for theology? Since two hundred years of research has failed to solve them, is there not something to be said for bracketing them and going straight into reading the text?

A similarly large-scale question to be addressed is: why does Paul spend so long recounting his early visits to Jerusalem and his meeting with the apostles there? Almost one-quarter of the letter (1.10—2.21, 36 verses out of 149) is devoted to this subject, and there may be further echoes of the subject elsewhere (e.g. 4.25). Many readers have, of course, bypassed this question, regarding material prior to 2.11 as an 'introduction' and seeing what follows as the beginning of a systematic theological exposition of the doctrine of justification. But Paul at least reckoned it necessary to preface [**209**] the body of the letter with *this* introduction rather than something else; and, since his introductions are normally good indicators of the main thrust of the letter, we should at least make the attempt to investigate the possible integration of the first two chapters with what follows.

A question that relates to this but has recently taken on a life of its own (particularly since the appearance twenty-five years ago of the commentary by H.-D. Betz) is: to what rhetorical genre does the letter belong?[3] Is it deliberative, apologetic, or what?[4] It has, I believe, been good for Pauline exegetes to be reminded that Paul wrote from within the wider world of Greco-Roman late antiquity, where there were well-known literary forms and genres that would, in themselves, give off clues as to what the writer thought he (or, less likely, she) was doing. But it is important not to let the literary tail wag the epistolary dog. Paul was an innovator, living in two or more worlds at once, and allowing them – in his own person, his vocation, his style of operation, and his writing – to knock sparks off each other (or, as it might be, to dovetail together in new ways). Consideration of literary genre must always remain in dialogue with the question of what the text actually says. Neither can claim the high ground and dictate to the other. The same is true of the various forms of structural, or structuralist, analysis.

Similar points need to be made about the current burgeoning of social-scientific reading of Paul's letters.[5] To be sure, Paul and his readers lived within a social context in which all sorts of pressures and presuppositions

[3] Betz 1979.

[4] On this see now Witherington 1998, 25–36; he argues strongly against Betz that Galatians is an example of deliberative rhetoric, designed to convince its audience to take a particular line on an issue currently facing them.

[5] See the (to my mind overstated) claims of Esler 1998.

operated that are quite unlike those in modern Western society. A good many things that have traditionally been read as abstract ideas or beliefs did in fact come with heavy agendas attached in the areas of social grouping, organization, and culture, and we ignore this at our peril. Equally, recognizing the existence and nonnegotiable importance of the social-scientific dimension of Paul's letters does not mean denying that these same letters set out a train of thought that cannot, or at least cannot [**210**] *a priori*, be reduced to terms of cryptic social agendas. Just because every word and phrase carries a social context and dimension does not mean that Paul is not setting out a train of thought, a sequence of ideas. We must beware, here as elsewhere, of false antitheses.

These are exactly the sorts of questions, once more, that will tend to make the theologian impatient. Of what relevance, people sometimes say and often think, are these questions for the major and urgent issues that crowd in upon the church and its proclamation to the world? The answer is that each of them demonstrably affects how we read the key texts for which the theologian or preacher is eager. The question of justification by faith itself is intimately bound up with them. Ernst Käsemann's caustic remark, that those eager for 'results' should keep their hands off exegesis, comes uncomfortably to mind.[6]

The influence of social context upon exegesis and theology is most obviously the case with the passage where many will feel that the letter finally 'gets going' – namely, 2.11–21. The brief and dense statement about justification in 2.15–21 is part of Paul's description of what happened between Peter and himself at Antioch; we cannot assume, as many have done, that because we think we know ahead of time what Paul meant by 'justification', we can deduce that precisely this was the subject of the quarrel (imagining, for instance, that Peter was arguing for a semi-Pelagian position on the question of how people go to heaven after death). Paul's description of the altercation pushes us in quite another direction. The question at issue was not, how can individual sinners find salvation? but rather, are Christian Jews bound, by the Jewish kosher laws, to eat separately from Christian gentiles, or are they bound by the gospel to eat at the same table with them? We may and must assume, indeed, that reflection on these questions would not only be influenced, in the minds of Peter and the others, by 'pure' intellectual and theological arguments; Paul was asking them to break the habits not only of a lifetime but of a tightly integrated social grouping that had survived, precisely by maintaining these habits, for hundreds of years. The detailed exegetical debates that have swirled around these verses have, as often as not, been caused by a sense that the traditional reading does not quite work, does not quite fit the words that Paul actually used. Attention to the wider context on the one hand, and to theological issues of how the basic concepts function in general and in Paul in particular, may provide fresh ways forward. And if that is so, a care-[**211**]ful reading of this passage in Galatians might well send shock waves through the reading of other Pauline texts, such as Romans 3—4 and Philippians 3.

[6] Käsemann 1980, vii.

The long argument of 3.1—5.1, which forms the solid center of the letter, offers almost endless puzzles for the exegete, down to the meaning of individual words and particles and the question of implicit punctuation (the early manuscripts, of course, have for the most part neither punctuation nor breaks between words). And it is here that the larger issues of understanding Galatians, the questions that form the bridge between exegesis, history, and theology, begin to come to light. Where does Paul suppose that he stands in relationship to the covenant that Israel's God made with Abraham? And to that with Moses? And to the Torah, the Jewish law, which, though giving substance to the historical Mosaic covenant, seems to have taken on a life of its own? What, in short, does Paul wish to say about what he himself, surprisingly perhaps, calls 'Judaism' (1.13)? Does he see it as an historical sequence of covenants and promises that have now reached their fulfillment in Jesus? Or does he see it as a system to the whole of which the true God is now saying 'no' in order to break in, through the gospel, and do a new thing? A further important question, not usually considered sufficiently: does Paul's actual handling of the Jewish Scriptures, in terms of quotation, allusion, and echo, reflect the view he holds, or do the two stand in tension?[7]

These questions can, of course, only be resolved by detailed examination of the text, verse by verse and line by line. But it is important to notice here the way in which, classically within the discipline of Pauline scholarship, two questions, in principle separable, have in fact been fused together in uncomfortable coexistence. (1) What is Paul's *theological* relationship to Judaism? (2) What is Paul's *historical* relationship to Judaism? The two questions have often been allowed to spill over into each other. Thus, if Paul is perceived to have criticized 'Judaism' (e.g. for its belief in justification by works of the law), it is assumed that he cannot have derived his basic ideas from Judaism – and that therefore the historical origin of his theology is to be found not in Judaism at all, but either in the Christ event as a totally new and essentially non-Jewish irruption into the world or in the pagan systems of religion, cult, and moral philosophy. Conversely, if Paul is [**212**] perceived to stand in a positive relation to Judaism at the historical level – i.e., if one supposes that Paul's basic thought structure and beliefs remained Jewish after his conversion – it is often assumed that therefore he can have had no real critique of 'Judaism'. Both of these questions, of course, need integration with wider issues, not least Paul's actual practice in its social setting.

Anyone who wishes thus to skate to and fro between history of religions and theological analysis should be warned that the ice here is dangerously thin. Among the key characteristics of Paul's Judaism were precisely critique from within on the one hand and confrontation with paganism on the other. The fact that Paul criticized some aspects of his native Judaism and that he announced a gospel to the gentiles does not mean that he broke with Judaism in order to do so. On the contrary; by his own account (to hint for a moment at the solution that I prefer), he claimed to be speaking as a true Jew, criticizing – as did many who made similar claims – those who embraced other

[7] On these questions see, among recent literature, B. W. Longenecker 1998.

construals of Judaism, on the basis that Israel's God had now acted climactically and decisively in Jesus, the Messiah. For the same reason, he was now announcing to all the world that the one true God was addressing, claiming, and redeeming it by the Jewish Messiah, the Lord of the world.

This discussion should be sufficient to show the way in which the exegetical and theological issues that arise from Galatians 3 and 4 are bound so closely together that it is impossible to separate them. But we should also note the way in which such deliberations have also invoked, from various angles, the wider contexts both of theology and of contemporary meaning. In the church's preaching, the assumption that Paul was straightforwardly distancing himself from 'Judaism' has had, notoriously, disastrous effects at social, cultural, political, and theological levels. Equally, if it is supposed for a moment that Paul simply saw himself as a good Jew who merely knew the name of the Messiah, but otherwise had nothing to add to his Jewish heritage, all chance of understanding him is lost. The only way of dealing with Galatians 3 and 4 is for all these issues to be on the table at the same time.

The exegetical problem(s) of Galatians 5 and 6 grow out of, and contribute further to, these questions, but add extra ones of their own. Lulled perhaps by a belief that Paul follows the Enlightenment's division of theory and practice, of theology and ethics, many have simply supposed that the 'theology' of the letter is now finished and that all that remains are some guidelines as to how to behave. But to approach the chapters thus is **[213]** to be further puzzled. Paul does not say quite what (from this perspective) we would expect. His key statements are not of the form 'this, then, is how to behave', but instead things like 'if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law' (5.18) and 'those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh' (5.24). The detailed instructions of 6.1–10 (which, if they have a connecting theme, are still not so tightly sewn together as the previous argument) continue to refer not to a general need for the Galatians to behave in a proper fashion, but rather to a particular social situation within which certain styles of behavior are particularly appropriate. And the letter closes with a strong statement of the basic point that, arguably, Paul has been making all through: Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, since what matters is new creation. What, then, does Paul's 'ethics', if we should call it that, have to do with the fundamental thrust of the letter as a whole? This exegetical problem is of course of huge interest to theologians, but it will not be solved by broad generalizations that sit loose to the detail of the text, or to its historical and social origins.

Contributions to Systematic Theology

After this brief review of the exegetical problems of the letter, it is now time to approach the matter from the other end. What theological issues might we hope to see advanced by the study of this text, and what problems face us as we press such questions? We shall maintain, for the purpose of this article, a traditional distinction between 'systematic' and 'practical' theology,

although in today's practice such things are increasingly merged together. In both cases all we can do is to note some possible questions out of the many that could arise, and to suggest some possible answers. The object of the exercise here is to be exemplary rather than in any way exhaustive.

We have already mentioned justification, and the interrelation of theology and ethics (with its subset, the interrelation between justification by faith and life in the Spirit). These are not the major questions that systematic theologians have struggled with throughout the history of the church; indeed, Paul himself is capable of writing letters in which one or both play little or no role. But we cannot imagine Paul writing a letter in which Jesus Christ played no part, or in which the purpose and nature of the one true God were not under consideration; and these are of course the central subject matter of traditional Christian systematic theology.

[**214**] What, first, does Paul have to say in Galatians that will address the traditional questions about God? Such questions concern, for instance, the identity and description of God, or a god; how knowledge of this god is to be had (whether innate in humans, specially revealed, or whatever); the relationship of this god to the world; the power and operation of the god, not least his or her activity within the world; what one can say about evil in the world, and what (if anything) this god might be doing about it; the nature of human being and existence; the question of appropriate human behavior. Allowing Paul to address these questions from his own angles, we can at once make the following observations, which, though quite obvious, are not always highlighted.

First, the god of whom Paul speaks is without question the one God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This God is the creator of the world, and pagan idols are shams, or demons in disguise. Even if Paul sometimes seems to be saying that the God of Israel has behaved in an unforeseen, perhaps an unpredictable, maybe even an unprincipled, fashion, it is still the God of Israel he is talking about. We should expect Paul therefore to be on the map of first-century Jewish thought about God – and this is indeed the case, though not always in the ways one might imagine. When we glance across at the other Pauline letters, and out into the rest of the NT, we find at this point a remarkable unanimity. Despite two millennia of Jewish protest to the contrary, the NT writers, with Paul leading the way chronologically, firmly believe themselves to be writing about, worshiping, and following the will of the one God of Israel, and rejecting paganism.

Second, in line with this, Paul believes that this God has a purpose for the created world. More specifically, he believes that 'the present evil age' will give way, in God's good time, to 'the age to come', in which Israel and the world will be redeemed from the power of the false gods. This apocalyptic belief was widespread in Paul's Jewish world, certainly in sectarian Judaism but also in groups that would not have thought of themselves in that way. This belief is not, or at least not necessarily, 'dualistic'; indeed, insofar as it envisages the present world being set to rights rather than being abandoned, it emphasizes the goodness and God-givenness of creation, while allowing fully, perhaps too fully sometimes, for creation's having been invaded,

taken over, distorted, and deceived by forces of evil and destruction. Paul's understanding of God in Galatians includes the belief that the true God has broken into the world, in the person of Jesus and the power of the Spirit of Jesus, to usher in the long-awaited new age and [**215**] so to redeem Israel and the world (cf. esp. 1.4). Here too Paul is in fundamental agreement with the other NT writers.

Third, this God is revealed and known in the Jewish Scriptures, in actions within history through which the scriptural promises are fulfilled, and climactically in the coming of the Messiah. The apocalyptic intervention of God in Israel and the world, sweeping aside all that stands in the way of the dawning new day, is paradoxically for Paul the completion, the fulfillment, and the climax of all that God had done and said to and for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[8] The dense and difficult discussions of the Jewish law in Galatians owe their very existence to the fact that Paul is unwilling to declare, as many theologians since his day have done, that the Jewish law was shabby or second-rate, or even demonic and dangerous. He is determined to insist, despite the problems he is storing up for later readers, *both* that God gave the law and accomplished his purposes through it *and* that the Galatians must not submit to it, *since it was given a specific role for a certain period of time that has now come to an end*. Eschatology, not religious critique, is what counts. To dissolve the resultant paradox one way or another is a sure way of misunderstanding Paul.

It is sometimes said that Galatians has a negative view of the law, and Romans a positive one; it would be truer to say that in both letters Paul wrestles mightily with this paradox, to address very different situations and contexts. It would be truer, thus, to find a deep compatibility within the two that, when discovered, will reach out further to embrace such other statements as 2 Corinthians 3 and Philippians 3. This eschatological reading of Paul's understanding of the Scriptures in general and the law in particular is the necessary corrective to any idea that Paul is speaking in the abstract, either about 'law' in general or about the Jewish law in a timeless way. His thought is controlled throughout by the sense of God's purpose within and beyond history, and of where he and his readers belong within that story.

All of this leads, of course, to the second area of major importance for systematic theology to which Galatians might be supposed to make some contribution. What does Paul say about Jesus? Merely collecting the relevant isolated verses does not address the question. We need to discover [**216**] what role Jesus plays within Paul's ongoing *arguments*. As I have urged elsewhere, the basic answer for Paul is that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, in whom the promises made to the patriarchs have finally come true.[9] In particular, his death has solved the problem of evil that lay heavily upon the world in general and, because of the warnings and curses of the covenant, upon Israel in particular. Though Paul mentions the death of Jesus dozens of times in his

[8] The sense in which, according to Paul, Jesus also brings to fulfillment the Mosaic covenant is exceedingly complex, and is, more or less, the subject of *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 7—13.

[9] *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 2—3.

writings, he never says exactly the same thing twice (though the phrase 'died for us' or something similar is a regular refrain); he allows the specific needs of each argument to determine what particular meaning he will draw out in each case. Underlying each of these, however, is Paul's deeper meaning of messiahship, visible in (for instance) Galatians 2.17–21: The Messiah represents his people, so that what is true of him becomes true of them. His death becomes their death, and they find their new life within his. Underlying this, and I believe foundational for Paul's thinking about what we call 'atonement' theology, is the belief that what God does for Israel is done not for Israel only, but for the whole world. Israel's Messiah is the world's Lord; the crucified, saving Messiah who brings Jews out of their real exile is the crucified Lord who by the same means rescues pagans from their bondage to nongods. This, I suggest, is the clue to that 'incorporative' Christology that is so frequently discussed, and of which 3.23–29 provides such a good, though complex, example.

Hidden within the category of messiahship, in Paul's construction of it, is a deeper belief about Jesus which, so far as we know, was not held by any non-Christian Jews in relation to any of the would-be Messiahs who make their brief appearances in the tragic story of first-century Judaism. Drawing on the occasional but important biblical statements about the Messiah being the adopted son of Israel's God (e.g. Pss. 2.7; 89.27; 2 Sam. 7.14), Paul describes Jesus as the unique son of God, sent from God to effect the divine purpose – i.e., the purpose that in Scripture Israel's God reserves to himself – of redeeming his people and thereby saving the whole world from destructive demonic powers. Thus, almost casually within this letter, written within at most twenty-five years of Jesus' crucifixion, we come upon what with hindsight we may see as the first steps toward trinitarian language (4.1–11). The God whom Christians worship is the Jewish God, the God of Abraham, of the exodus (exodus language, and the retelling of the exodus story, permeate this context), and of Wisdom (the figure of 'wisdom' is of course in some Jewish texts – e.g. Wis. [**217**] 10.15–21 – a way of talking about the God of the exodus); but this God is now to be known as the God who sends the Son and who then sends the Spirit of his Son. And it is to this God alone that the Galatians must give full allegiance; otherwise they will slide back to a state similar to what they were in before. You must either have the triune God, Paul is saying, or you must have a form of paganism.

This early form of proto-trinitarian theology thus appears *as a variant within Jewish monotheism*, not a form of crypto-paganism. Exactly like classic Jewish monotheism, it stands opposed both to paganism and to dualism. Just as Israel's God made himself known as such in the exodus, fulfilling the promises to Abraham and calling Israel his son, so this same God has now revealed himself fully and finally in the new exodus of Jesus' death and resurrection, fulfilling the promises to Abraham in their widest sense, challenging and defeating the pagan powers that had kept humanity as a whole under lock and key. To go back to allowing one's self-understanding, corporately or individually, to be determined by ethnic boundary markers rather than by the new life given in the Messiah is therefore to embrace again a form of

paganism, however paradoxical this may seem when what one thought one was doing was taking on the yoke of the Jewish Torah. A good case can be made for seeing this critique underlying many of Paul's other statements about the Torah, not least in Romans.

Talking about God and Jesus in relation to Galatians has thus inevitably embroiled us in talking about the plight of Israel and the world. Paul, in this letter and everywhere else, takes it as axiomatic that all human beings are under the power and rule of sin, and that the Jewish Torah, so far from releasing people from this state, merely exacerbates it. It is quite wrong to say, as has often been done in recent scholarship, that Paul's thinking about Jesus preceded his thinking about the plight from which people needed rescuing. To be sure, the revelation of the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus gave new shape and direction to his thinking, on this and on everything else; but the pre-Damascus Paul was well aware that there was a 'problem' to be addressed. This was not, perhaps, the problem of an unquiet conscience wished on him by theologians from Augustine to Luther and beyond, but it was, certainly, the problem of the pagan world under the power of evil, and the problem that so much of the Jewish world seemed hell-bent on compromising with paganism. For himself as a zealous Pharisee, there was the very specific problem that, even if he and some others were 'blameless concerning the law' (Philippians 3.6), Israel's God had so far not acted within their history to send the Messiah, to fight the decisive [**218**] battle against evil, to reveal his 'righteousness' – that is, his faithfulness to the covenant promises with Israel, to redeem his people, to judge the wicked world, and to set up the long-awaited kingdom of justice and peace. That was the problem the pre-Christian Paul possessed. His conversion deepened it, pointing at himself the accusing finger that he would formerly have pointed at almost everyone else; but it did not create a problem out of nothing.

The solution Paul embraced, which emerges clearly though briefly in Galatians, to be elaborated in different situations in the other letters, can be summed up in two closely related words: 'Christ', 'Spirit'. In Jesus the Messiah Israel's God has dealt with sin and established the new world, the 'age to come', calling the gentiles to belong to his renewed people. Paul's theology of the cross, which receives repeated emphasis in Galatians, stresses both the solidarity of Jesus with his people and the unique weight of sin and its effects which were borne by Jesus himself. Though, as we saw, Paul never articulates a single 'theology of atonement', his many rich statements of Jesus' death, in this letter and throughout his works, together form a many-sided doctrine that must be seen as central to his whole thinking.

One of the many ways Paul can refer to this whole achievement of Jesus is in terms of Jesus' 'faithfulness' to the covenant; this, I think, is the correct interpretation of the much-controverted *pistis Christou* problem.[10] As with so many issues, linguistic study by itself will not solve the problem of whether, when Paul says *pistis Christou*, he means 'faith *in* the Messiah' or 'the

[10] See the commentaries on Gal. 2.16; 3.22, etc., and discussions in most recent monographs on Galatians. For the debate, see Hays 1991; Dunn 1991.

faith(fullness) *of* the Messiah'. Both ideas play a role in his thought. In Galatians 2.16, after all, he does say 'we believed in the Messiah, Jesus', and in Romans 5.15–19 the 'obedience' of Jesus the Messiah is the key category that sums up all that Paul said about Jesus' death in 3.21–26 (Philippians 2.5–8 confirms that this is the correct interpretation). Romans is, indeed, the key to understanding the concept; in Romans 3.1–8 the problem that faces God, as well as the whole human race, is that Israel has been 'faithless' to the commission to be the light of the world (cf. 2.17–24). How then is God to reveal his own covenant faithfulness? Paul's answer is that God's faithfulness is revealed in and through the faithfulness of Jesus the Mes-[**219**]siah, the representative Israelite. Confusion arises not only because this is not the train of thought readers of Romans in much church tradition have been expecting – it is too Jewish by half for that – but also because Paul also says, sometimes in the same breath, as in Romans 3.22 and Galatians 2.16; 3.22, that the beneficiaries of this covenant faithfulness of the Messiah are precisely those who in their turn 'believe' or 'are faithful'.

By the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, this God has called and is calling Jews and gentiles alike to belong to the one family of Abraham, and equipping them to believe the gospel (such faith being the one identifying badge of membership within this family) and to live in love one to another and in witness to God's love to the world around. Like the texts from Qumran, Paul's letters articulate an inaugurated eschatology in which the new age has already begun but is yet to be completed. 'We by the spirit and by faith wait for the hope of righteousness' (5.5). The Spirit is the power of the new age breaking into the present, but future hope remains vital for the complete picture. This, though briefly stated in Galatians, points toward wider statements of the same theology elsewhere in Paul (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15) and indeed, though sometimes differently stated, in the rest of the NT. For Paul, of course, as most Christian theology has always insisted, the Spirit is the same Spirit through whom God spoke and acted in the history of Israel; the key difference in the new thing that has come about through Jesus is that the Spirit is now poured out on all God's people, Jew and gentile alike.

God, Jesus, Spirit, plight, and solution: the final question the systematic theologian might want to put to Galatians would be about theology and ethics. Here again the letter restates the question, and answers it in its own way. Earlier readings of Galatians, particularly in the Reformation tradition, had so emphasized the wrongness of 'justification by works', understanding that phrase in a Pelagian or Arminian sense, as to make it difficult to articulate any sense of moral obligation or moral effort within the Christian. There are signs that Paul faced similar problems (e.g. Romans 3.7–8; 6.1, 15), but this does not seem to be why, in the final two chapters of Galatians, he provides such a lengthy discourse on Christian behavior (the term 'ethics' is itself loaded, belonging already to the too-sharp distinction between theory and practice of which I spoke earlier). Though he undoubtedly wants his converts to avoid what he calls 'the works of the flesh' and to exhibit what he calls 'the fruit of the Spirit', the actual argument in which those phrases and the things they denote occurs is more subtle than simply exhortation. It has

various overtones and echoes of that classic pas-[**220**]sage on the law, Romans 7, and may, like that passage, be deliberately doing several things at the same time (see, e.g., Galatians 5.17: 'spirit and flesh fight against each other, so that what you wish you cannot do'). It is an argument about the law, and about how, though the law is God's law, it cannot give the thing to which it points, and about how, nevertheless, those who discover that to which it points are in line with what the law intended, even though they may be neither possessors nor, in its boundary-marking sense, keepers of it.

He is saying, in effect, 'If you insist on embracing the Jewish law, and particularly on getting circumcised, you are declaring that you belong in the realm of the "flesh"; but if you go and live in that realm, you must look at the company you will be keeping, and the sort of life into which you will be drawn'. (The only sort of 'fleshly' behavior he thinks the Galatians are actually exhibiting is factional fighting, as 5.15, 26 suggests; these angry divisions in their community, he is saying in effect, are a sign that they are in fact living according to the flesh, confirming the analysis he is offering of their desire to get circumcised.) The pagans who live in that fashion are heading for destruction, but those who live and walk by the Spirit, whose first fruit is love, find that although they are not behaving this way in order to conform to the Jewish law, so that they may thereby be defined as ethnically the people of God, they are not condemned by the law. 'Against such there is no law' (5.23). With this we are back once more at 2.17. Just because we have come out from under the rule of the Torah through baptism and faith, through dying and rising with Christ, this does not mean that the Torah (by which Paul presumably means the God who gave the Torah) is displeased with us. That Paul is working with this same train of thought is indicated in 5.24: those who belong to the Messiah have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (compare 2.19–20; Romans 7.4–6).

'Ethics', then, understood as Paul's arguments about Christian behaviour, function within Galatians not as an appendix to 'theology', nor simply (as in Luther) as a *tertius usus legis*,[11] nor as an awkward concession after an antilegalistic 'justification by faith', but rather as part of the inner working of the gospel itself. Through the gospel events of Jesus' messianic death and resurrection, the God of Israel delivers Israel and the world from the rule of evil and the 'powers' who perpetrate it. Through the Spirit-[**221**]inspired proclamation of the good news of Jesus as Messiah and Lord, this same God calls into being the redeemed family he had promised to Abraham, whose distinguishing mark, over against those of Judaism, is 'the faithfulness of Jesus' – i.e., Jesus' own faithfulness, reflected now in the faith/faithfulness (would Paul have distinguished these two?) of Christians. Precisely because this family is the Christ-and-Spirit people, they are set free from the destructive powers and solidarities (including social solidarities) of evil, and are under the obligation of freedom, namely, to sustain this life by Spirit-given love for one another. That they are free to do so is given in the fact that they

[11] The 'third use of the law' was a way of rehabilitating the OT law as a moral guide once one had firmly rejected it as a way to justification. (The 'second' use was in relation to civil government, etc.)

have been crucified with the Messiah (5.24; 6.14; 2.20). This is Paul's answer in Galatians to the question of 'ethics', and it conforms well to his other similar treatments elsewhere.

Galatians, the Church and the World

What then has Galatians to say to the large debates that concern Christian theologians today, living often at the interface of church and world? Again, we can present some sample questions only, with some tendentious possible answers.

The question that hangs over all contemporary intellectual discourse in the Western world concerns the very foundations of all knowing and being. The great project of the last two or three hundred years, sometimes known as 'modernity', has given way in many quarters to 'postmodernity'. Modernism claimed to know things objectively, at least in principle; postmodernism applies a ruthlessly suspicious understanding to all such claims, showing in case after case that, as Nietzsche argued a century ago, claims to knowledge are in fact claims to power. The correlate of this was that modernism claimed that there was a real world independent of the knower. Postmodernism collapses this claim; all we are left with are the prejudices of the would-be knower.

Likewise, modernism told a great story of progress, enlightenment, and development, and insisted that this story – in which, of course, the Western world of the eighteenth century and subsequently was the hero – be imposed on the rest of the world, in a secular version of the Christian missionary enterprise that was burgeoning at exactly that time. Postmodernity declares that all such large stories – 'metanarratives' is the word usually employed to denote the stories that stand behind or above the smaller stories people tell and live – are destructive and enslav-[**222**]ing, and must be deconstructed. All we are left with are the various smaller stories by which individual communities order their lives, and even they are constantly under suspicion.

What about the individual himself or herself? Modernity vaunted the great individual, the lonely and lofty 'I' – the master of my fate, the captain of my soul. Postmodernity has deconstructed this figure, too. Each of us, we are now reminded, is a shifting mass of impulses and feelings, without a stable center that can be held up and inspected. Impressions to the contrary are just so much posturing. These are the main elements of postmodernity, which filter through into popular consciousness in thousands of ways even among those who know nothing of the technical terms of the discussion.

How can a Christian theologian, with Galatians open before her or him, address these questions? Galatians is, after all, concerned with truth (2.5, 14; 4.16; 5.7); with claims and counter-claims to knowledge, including knowledge of God (e.g. 4.8–9); with a great story that began with Abraham, climaxed in Jesus the Messiah, and is moving outward to embrace the world (3.6—4.11; etc.). The most fundamental answer, I believe, is that in Galatians Paul is concerned precisely with the breaking of the bonds of slavery and the setting

free of captives. He retells the exodus narrative, in 4.1–7 in particular, showing how in Jesus the Messiah and by the Spirit those who were enslaved to nongods have been liberated (4.8; cf. 1.4). The story he tells certainly is a grand overarching narrative, beginning with Israel and reaching out to embrace the world, but it is a story that leaves no human being, organization, or ethnic group in a position of power over others. It is the Jewish story, but it is not the typical Jew who says, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me'. This is the story precisely of how those who were kept as second-class citizens are now welcomed in on equal terms. This is a metanarrative like no other.

The same text (2.19–21) is Paul's answer to those who would see the individual deconstructed into various shifting forces and impulses. Paul goes further. The individual, especially individuals who pride themselves on their status, must die in order to live. And the new life they are given is not their own, is nothing to be proud of, is nothing to give them status over others; it is the life of the crucified and risen Messiah. This is an individuality like no other.

And the result of the gospel is that those who are liberated from slavery have come 'to know God' (4.9) – or rather, as Paul quickly modifies it, to be known by God (cf. 1 Corinthians 8.1–6). Just as the Israelites were granted [**223**] a fresh revelation of the true God in the exodus, so the events of the new exodus have truly revealed this same God in a new way. But the whole idea of 'knowledge', and with it of truth itself, is hereby set on a new footing. No longer is it the brittle and arrogant knowledge of the post-Enlightenment world, making the hard sciences its primary paradigm and 'relationships' simply a matter of 'feeling'. Nor is it the soft and fuzzy knowledge of the postmodern world, where 'feeling' and 'impression' are all that there is. The primary knowledge, declares Paul, is the knowledge of God – God's knowledge of you, and yours of God in grateful answer. This is a relationship, one that produces the deepest feelings ever known, but it is true knowledge nonetheless – both in that it is knowledge of the truth and in that it constitutes the truest mode of knowing. All other knowing is first relativized and then, when and as appropriate, reaffirmed in new ways from that point. This is a knowing like no other, because it is knowledge of a reality like no other.

This account is, of course, so brief as to be no more than a signpost. But it makes the point that the issues Paul is addressing in Galatians can provide us with starting points to address the major issues of our own day. The opponents, after all, whoever they were, were seeking to establish a way of being, a grand story, a form of knowing, a type of identity, upon the converts. The pressure to get circumcised was precisely an insistence on establishing one kind of ethnic or para-ethnic identity over against others. Paul deconstructs these claims, showing that they themselves are dehumanizing, based on 'the flesh'. In particular, he shows – a point that must be reemphasized both in the clash between modernity and postmodernity and in the dawning of a new millennium – that the single moment by which history was changed forever was the moment when Jesus the Messiah died and rose again. Modernity, postmodernity, and various sorts of millennial speculation all

offer their own counter-eschatology, but to take Galatians seriously is to insist that the real turnaround, the real moment of liberation, occurred not with some great cultural shift in the Western world of the last few centuries, but when Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead, having 'given himself for our sins' (1.4).

Of course, it is fatally easy for Christians to embrace Paul's gospel as a new way of being in control of the world, a new power game, a new way of establishing one's identity as a matter of pride. To what extent this has happened and does happen in different churches and their claims is a question that cannot be ignored. But the key thing about Paul's gospel is not power, but love: the Son of God 'loved me and gave himself for me' (2.20); 'faith [**224**] working through love' is the sign of true life (5.6); love is the first fruit of the divine Spirit, a love that leads to mutual service (5.22, 13). Paul offers no encouragement to those who want to go back to modernity. He agrees with the postmodern critique of all human pride; but when all is said and done, God is creating in Christ a new world built on love and characterized by love. Postmodernity preaches a stern and judging law against all human pride, but those who walk by the Spirit 'are not under the law' (5.18).

One of the great crises in the contemporary world, which brings to a head the sense of uncertainty within the formerly all-too-certain Western world, is the situation of global security on the one hand and long-running tribal or geographical conflict on the other. A century ago many in the West believed that war was a necessary part of human development, leading through conflict at the societal level to the survival of the fittest, on a loose analogy with Darwin's theory of evolution. Two world wars and hundreds of smaller ones later, few believe this anymore; and the 'Cold War' that hung over the world for nearly half a century reflected this growing uncertainty. But the modernist paradigm still remained in place, and when the West effectively won the Cold War, a victory symbolized by the destruction of the Berlin Wall, there was a widespread assumption that this would mean the worldwide triumph of so-called 'Western' values. What has happened, of course, is very different. The Balkans, the Middle East, many African countries, and many other parts of the world are a grim reminder that hatred and violence based on tribe, race, and geography have not disappeared overnight, and remain deep-rooted. The world is full of evidence for Paul's warning: 'If you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not destroyed by each other' (5.15).

It will not do simply to say that into this world must be spoken the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel Paul articulates and defends in Galatians. This is of course true, but what will it say to the Serb and the Croat, to the Tutsi and the Hutu, to the Palestinian and the Israeli? Will it simply say, If only you would all believe in Jesus, none of this would be necessary? (If it did, it might find further problems: the Serb and the Croat, the Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland, all in theory believe in Jesus; and to modify the statement to say 'if only you would believe *in Jesus the same way I do*' would stand revealed as a new sort of tribalism.) The most powerful statement it can make must be made symbolically, through the coming together in a single worshiping family, eating at the same table, of all those

who belong to Jesus the Messiah, despite their apparently irreconcilable racial, tribal, or other tensions. That is the powerful message of Galatians 2.15–21. That is a first step.

[**225**] But second, the gospel as articulated in Galatians points to the hard double-task described brilliantly in a recent book by Miroslav Volf.[12] Himself a Croatian, reflecting on the conflict in his native land, Volf wrestles mightily with the gospel imperative toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and inclusion, on the one hand, and the absolute need to name and expose evil, and to deal with it, on the other. One cannot have the embrace of reconciliation without also having the exclusion of evil. The older liberal agendas that insisted only on the former, and the tribal agendas that name as 'evil' all that the other tribe does or seeks to do, must be challenged by a larger vision, a harder agenda. And those who read Galatians must, I suggest, be in the forefront of those presenting this agenda and vision to governments and policy makers, often at a loss as they are to know where to turn for guidance now that the old rules of modernity have let them down. The church must not only symbolize in its own life God's victory over all the powers of evil, the powers that keep peoples locked in their own separate stories, fighting all others. The church must present the world and its rulers with ways of 'excluding' that will lead to 'embrace' – just as Paul, confronting Peter and the others at Antioch, and the opponents in Galatia, named as clearly as he could the antigospel forces to which he saw them succumbing, with the aim that all those who named the name of Jesus should be able to share in the one family meal.

The particular conflict in our world to which Galatians must be addressed is, of course, that which disfigures to this day the land of Jesus' birth. The story is so complex, presenting analysts with a huge tangled ball of wool to unravel before a coherent solution can even be thought of, that it is presumptuous, almost dangerous, even to raise the question in a context like this.[13] Yet there are two points on which Galatians would insist, and which could have a profound effect on the way people regard the situation and act, individually and corporately, in relation to it.

The first is the insistence, once again, that all Jesus' followers belong together in worship and table fellowship. In the Middle East, at the moment, it is sadly true that most indigenous Christianity seems to be dying out. The old monasteries, many of which have maintained unbroken their traditions of worship for fifteen hundred years or more, are almost empty, [**226**] and many have been demolished by hostile authorities.[14] The small Palestinian Christian communities, which trace their roots back to the first century and have lived in the land ever since, find themselves caught between the self-righteous 'settlers' on the one hand – Paul would, I think, have called them 'unsettlers' – and the increasingly strident Islamic militants on the other. Many have simply

[12] Volf 1996.

[13] For a somewhat fuller statement on the Palestinian/Israeli question, see the epilogue to my *The Way of the Lord*.

[14] For a moving account of the whole situation, with some deeply telling comments on the Palestinian problem in particular, see Dalrymple 1997.

left, and do not expect to return. The tiny Israeli Christian communities live, theoretically, in daily risk of losing their citizenship for renouncing their Judaism. There are reports of many meeting in secret. But there are few, very few, places where Israeli and Palestinian Christians can meet and worship together and share in trusting fellowship. And the immigrant Christians – the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox, with their multiple subdivisions – are no better, but instead play similar territorial and other battles with one another. How can one even glance at Galatians and shrug one's shoulders at this situation? Jesus is not Lord where churches divide along ethnic, tribal, or geographical lines. That was 'the truth of the gospel' for which Paul contended in the first century, and it remains the truth of the gospel today.

The second point is that, despite the extravagant claims of some, there is no biblical warrant whatsoever for the suggestion that the reestablishment of the state of Israel in the 1940s constituted the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and that, as such, it should be supported by right-thinking Christians. Galatians is one of the biblical books that most strongly gives the lie to this. Paul is at pains throughout to distance himself from any geographical or territorial claim; these things are done away with in Christ. 'The present Jerusalem is in bondage with her children; but the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is the mother of us all' (4.25–26). Nor is this a mere assertion. Paul's whole argument is that 'the Israel of God' (6.16) consists of all those, Jew and gentile alike, who believe in Jesus the Messiah.[15] 'If you belong to the Messiah, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise'. How then can the 'inheritance' of the 'heirs' be translated back into terms of a few square miles of sacred land, kept for the descendants of Abraham 'according to the flesh'?[16]

[**227**] The greatest question, of course, which hangs over all Christian thinking and speaking in our day, and which poses an equal challenge to systematic and practical theology, is: how can we speak truly and appropriately of God within a world that has forgotten most of what it thought it knew about God and has distorted much of the rest? and what weight, what 'authority', can such speaking command?

We may remind ourselves of the problem. Most people rooted in contemporary Western culture assume, unless they have been specifically shaken out of this way of thinking, that the word 'God' refers, more or less univocally, to a being who is detached from the world, living at some great ontological remove (most know that Christians and others do not believe in God as a being literally 'up in the sky', but most assume a similar detachment in some other mode of being). They then tend to assume that when Christians talk about God becoming human in Jesus, about God addressing individuals or the world, or about God active within the world, this must be a matter of God's 'intervening' from a distance. They assume, moreover, that all religions are basically trying to be about the same thing; this idea is frequently

[15] See the similarly strong statements in, e.g., Rom. 2.27–29.

[16] Were we to bring Romans into the argument as well, there would be more points to make. See *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 13; for a more popular-level statement, see *For All God's Worth*, ch. 13.

supposed to be a very recent innovation or discovery, but was of course the common coin of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and indeed has roots much further back in some aspects of classical paganism.

And they assume that this general thing – which may as well be called 'religion' for want of a better term, though that word is so over- and ill-used that one wonders if a moratorium would not be a good idea – has basically failed. It has collapsed, so it is thought by those who think about these things, under the critique of Marx, who said that talking about God was what those in power did to keep the rest quiet; of Darwin, who said that we were all descended from the apes anyway, and that the world could be understood successfully without a creating or sustaining God, since it works on the basis of competition; of Freud, who said that God-language was projection of a latent father image; and of Nietzsche, who despised Christianity for being wet and wimpish while also exposing its truth claims as power games. Of course, as C. S. Lewis used to say, if people really *thought* about these things, it might become clear that the attacks, though sometimes interesting and important, are not ultimately valid. But most people in western Europe, and many in North America, do not think very hard about such issues. They assume, not least because the media tell them so, that 'God' and 'religion' are somehow out of date. Within the postmodern world it is feelings that count, not arguments; and there is a [**228**] general feeling, widespread in much (though not all) Western culture, that all that sort of thing has had its day – certainly in any form that the culture has known for the last several hundred years.

Of course, this is not the only side of the story. New Age movements have brought 'religion' of a sort back into fashion; and the oldest form of Christianity in Britain at least, that of the Celts, who evangelized much of Britain before the Romans arrived and effectively took over, has had a revival as well. Celtic Christianity was earthier, less authoritarian, more in tune with the created order than the Roman variety, and this has made its appeal powerful. But at a time when hardly anybody thinks about the niceties of theology (they are prepared to think about nuclear physics, about economics, about anything the media bombard them with, but not usually about theology), it is difficult for many to sort out the difference between the God-language of the New Age movement and the God-language of mainstream Christianity.

The God of whom Paul speaks in Galatians, of whom I have already written at the start of the previous section, is not a private God, to be worshiped by initiates but kept secret from the outside world. This God must be spoken of in the public arena. This God claims the allegiance of all, because this God is both creator and lover of all. This God is the reality of which the idols of the world are the parodies (4.8–11). But how can one speak of this God without being instantly misunderstood? If one uses the word 'God', people will suppose one is speaking of the detached, deist God of popular supposition. If one even pronounces the name and title 'Jesus Christ', one will at once send half one's hearers off down the wrong street. Among those to whom the phrase is not simply a meaningless swearword, many will simply hear it as another signal of that 'religion' which is assumed to be out of date and irrelevant.

Paul, we know from Acts, faced similar problems, and he got around them by telling the story of Jesus, perhaps with visual aids to show what he was talking about ('You before whose eyes Jesus the Messiah was publicly portrayed as crucified' [3.1]; did Paul draw one of the first-ever 'crucifixes' as an aid to evangelism?).[17] The story itself, climaxing with Jesus' death and resurrection, and his enthronement as Lord of the world, carries its own power (Romans 1.17; 1 Corinthians 1.18—2.5). The story must be told faithfully, accurately, and Jewishly (it only makes the sense it does in its Jewish [**229**] context).[18] However, even this needs a hearing. Paul seems to have obtained his not least because of his original appearance in Galatia, which aroused the Galatians' sympathy and showed them that he was already living by a different way when compared to other teachers and wandering philosophers they might have met.[19] Paul was *embodying* the message he was announcing. The story of Jesus was being recapitulated through his own actual life – which was why, Paul would quickly have said, the power of the Spirit of Jesus was at work when he told them of the Jewish Messiah, the Lord of the world. If there is a lesson for Christians today in all this, it is the one that is both obvious and also still sorely needed. Those who name the name of Jesus must be seen to be living the life that results from worshiping the true God. Their own genuine humanity, resulting from worshiping the God in whose image they are made, must be recognizable. The fruits of the Spirit, when we meet them, are impressive, particularly in our cynical age. If we are to get a hearing to tell the story of Jesus, this is the only way to start.

But there is more. The church must be active at the places where the world is in pain. The church must be in the forefront of work in the world to alleviate hunger and poverty, to remit major and unpayable international debt, to make peace and prevent war. The church must be on the front line in the fight against crime and the fight for proper punishment and rehabilitation of those convicted of crime, as well as for the rights of the victims of crime. Christians must be active not only in advocacy of the moral standards in which all are treated as full human beings, not as toys or as trash, but also to stand alongside and help those who, having been treated like that themselves, treat others the same way because that is the only way they know. In these and many, many other ways, those who would tell the story of Jesus must first live it, bearing a measure of the world's pain as they do so.

In the process, though the words of the story remain important and ultimately nonnegotiable, the actions themselves will speak. They will provide, as it were, the grammar book and the dictionary that will enable people to understand that when we speak of God today we are not using the [**230**] word in the normally accepted sense; that when we speak of Jesus we speak of a real human being in whom the living God was and is personally present, in whom the love of God was fully acted out. If the story is told with those

[17] This is what the word in question means; despite most commentators, we should not be too ready to read the word metaphorically.

[18] On the narrative substructure of Paul's theology in Galatians, see above all Hays 1983.

[19] Without prejudice to the meaning of 4.13–15 (was Paul unwell, or did he bear the marks of recent persecution?); see esp. 6.17 ('I bear the marks of Jesus on my body').

lexical aids to back it up, it will be understood. People may not like it, but the message will be plain. And to those who respond, the challenge will come to continue with this God: 'Then, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. But now that you know God, or rather have come to be known by God, how can you turn back?' (4.8–9).

Galatians: Exegesis and Theology

We have now arrived back at the point where the detailed historical exegesis of Galatians and the wider theological reflections may, in some measure and very briefly, be joined together. My overall contention, as will by now be obvious, is that they belong closely with each other, need each other, and are mutually illuminating. It will take an entire commentary to demonstrate this point, but four major features may at least be outlined in conclusion.

First let me raise a point of method. Galatians offers itself to the reader as a text emerging from, referring constantly to, and intending to have serious effect upon a highly complex and many-sided social situation. At no point can we abstract Paul's ideas from this setting; and this, within an incarnational religion such as Christianity, has almost always been and is undoubtedly a strength, not a weakness. To suppose that one must boil off doctrinal abstractions from the particularities of the letters in order to gain material that can be usable in different situations is at best a half-truth; it always runs the risk of implying that the 'ideas' are the reality, and that the community in which they are embodied and embedded (Paul's community on the one hand, ours on the other) is a secondary matter. Those who, like the present writer, work as theologians within actual ecclesial communities for which they have pastoral, organizational, and teaching responsibilities know otherwise. It is in taking seriously Paul's struggles with authority, with other apostles, with agitators in a congregation, with division and reconciliation within a community, that we discover what the 'doctrines' he seems to hold actually mean. This in no way reduces theology to sociology. Nor does it suggest that theological argument is shadow-boxing, pretending to reason something [**231**] out when what is going on is in fact disguised power play. It is a way of doing justice to Paul's intention not least, but not only, in the first two chapters of Galatians: to enable his readers to understand what the gospel is, what his own relation to it is, and where they, his converts, belong on this map.

This intention, second, is expressed in Paul's major concern throughout the letter but particularly in its central two chapters, 3 and 4. Here he tells the story of Israel, the people of God, as the story of Abraham and exodus. God made promises to Abraham, promises that (as in Genesis 15, to which, here and in Romans 4, Paul refers repeatedly) envisaged God's future rescue of his people from Egypt. God has now fulfilled those promises, Paul says, in Jesus Christ. His aim throughout is to persuade his hearers to understand themselves within this narrative structure, which I have elsewhere characterized as 'covenantal'. He wants them, that is, to think of themselves as the

children of Abraham, the heirs of the entire Jewish narrative.[20] A good example is 1 Corinthians 10.1–13, written of course to an ex-pagan congregation; the foundation of the argument is Paul's reference to the wilderness generation as 'our fathers'.

His deep-rooted negation of the Jewish Torah as the mode or badge of membership in this family is, of course, the central problem he faces, and hence the central problem of the letter; this rejection of the Mosaic covenant has influenced many contemporary writers to deny that Paul held any 'covenantal' theology at all.[21] This, I am persuaded, is a radical mistake. Paul utterly discarded the ethnic and Torah-based shape of Judaism in which he had been so deeply involved before his conversion, and to this extent his theology is radical, apocalyptic, innovative, dialectic, and so forth. But all this is held within his conviction that the God whom he now knows in Jesus Christ and the Spirit is the God of Abraham, whose purposes have now taken a decisive turn in which the character of the community as defined by Torah is left behind (not, it should be noted, criticized as theologically repugnant). He tells the story of Abraham, Israel, Moses, Jesus, and himself – Paul himself becomes a character in the narrative, since he is the unique apostle to the gentiles, a point that is foundational for Galatians – in order to help his readers understand where they in turn belong within the same narrative.

[**232**] Because the letter indicates this as a very basic aim of Paul all through, I am persuaded that he has not simply introduced Abraham, and allusions to other biblical passages and stories, in order to meet points raised by his opponents. Indeed, even if his opponents had never mentioned Abraham, perhaps especially if they had not, Paul would have wanted to tell this story to address and controvert the point the agitators were urging, that gentiles who wanted to join the people of Israel had to be circumcised. His way of telling the story of Abraham makes it abundantly clear that the promises God made to the patriarch cannot be fulfilled through Torah. According to Galatians 3.10–14, God promised Abraham a worldwide family, but the Torah presents Israel, the promise bearers, with a curse. God deals with the curse in the death of Jesus, so that the promise may flow through to the world, renewing the covenant with Israel as well. According to 3.15–22, God promised Abraham a single worldwide family, but the Torah would forever keep Jews and gentiles in separate compartments (exactly the problem of 2.11–21 and, we may assume, of the Galatian congregations). God has done in Christ and by the Spirit what the Torah could not do (3.21–22; 4.1–7; cf. Romans 8.3–4), so that there now exists the single promised multiethnic monotheistic family, God's 'sons' and heirs.[22] According to Galatians 4.21–31, insofar as Abraham has two families, they can be characterized as the slave family and the free; and it is the multiethnic people defined by faith, the people formed through Christ and the Spirit, who are the Isaac children, the free people of God. Paul has other ways of telling the story of Abraham and his

[20] *Climax of the Covenant*, passim.
[21] Cf., e.g., Martyn 1997a.
[22] Cf. *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 8.

family as well (e.g. Romans 9.6—10.4), but it is this narrative, however articulated, that provides the theological grounding for the formation and maintenance of the community he believes himself called to address.

Third, we can now see that the regular theological dichotomies that have been used in debates about Paul for the last hundred years are in fact inadequate to the task. Schweitzer and Wrede insisted on 'being in Christ' as a more central category than 'justification by faith'. Sanders, similarly, prioritized 'participationist' categories in Paul over 'juristic' ones. More recently, Martyn and others have urged 'apocalyptic' readings of Paul against 'covenantal' ones. Granted that these broad-brush categories are imprecise, there is clearly a strong feeling among Western readers of Paul that one is faced again and again with different kinds of emphases, which may not always be strictly compatible. This works out in Romans, for in-[**233**]stance, in terms of the playing off of one of its clear sections (chapters 1—4; 5–8; 9—11; 12—16) against the others.

I believe, and I hope that detailed exegesis will support this hypothesis, that in each case these dichotomies have failed to grasp the more fundamental structures of Paul's socially contextualized and literarily structured theological thought. Once we grasp the covenantal narrative that Paul sets out in Galatians as the world he invites his readers to inhabit, we discover that these elements – which appear disparate when seen from a post-Reformation, post-Enlightenment, or post-romantic viewpoint – belong together within the much richer tapestry he is weaving. The story of the new exodus in Christ, and the homeward journey of God's people led by the Spirit, provides the setting for incorporative and participationist language to have its full meaning and weight simultaneously with the juristic meaning of justification. Because of sin, and the distortion of Torah by the people to whom it was given, the fulfillment of the covenant cannot but come about as an apocalyptic event, declaring God's judgment on what has gone before and God's new creation of what is now beginning. But when the dust settles and God's renewed people look around them, they discover that this apocalyptic event is indeed the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. This is how God is faithful to the covenant. It will take all of the letter to the Romans to set this out in full detail and most of the rest of the NT to explore the point from a variety of other angles, but the major components of the argument are already complete in Galatians.

What, fourthly and finally, about justification by faith? This is the subject that most expositors of Galatians have found to be central to the argument of the letter itself. But what is it actually about? There is no space here for a full exposition of the doctrine. Rather, I wish to pose the question thus: what particular emphases does Galatians, read historically and exegetically, provide in this central matter?

The first point we have already noted. Paul's initial introduction of the topic is embedded within, and seems to be the sharp edge of, the question that was at issue between himself and Peter in Antioch and, we may assume, bears some close relation to the dispute between himself and the 'agitators' in Galatia. This was not the general, abstract theological issue of, shall we say,

how to go to heaven when one dies. It was not part of a theory of soteriology, understood in this way. It was the question of whether Christian Jews ought or ought not eat with Christian gentiles. In other words, it addressed the question of the *identity* and *demarcation* of the people of God, now redefined in Jesus Christ – a question that is both so-[**234**]ciological, in the sense that it has to do with a community and its behavior, which can itself be understood by the proper application of sociological methods, and theological, in the sense that this community believes itself to be the people of a God who has drawn up quite clear conditions precisely for its communal life.

Paul's answer to the question is complex and dense, but its heart is simple. Because he, and all Jewish Christians, have 'died to the law' through sharing the messianic death of Jesus, their identity now is not defined by or in terms of the Jewish law, but rather in terms of the risen life of the Messiah. The boundary marker of this messianic community is therefore not the set of observances that mark out Jews from gentiles, but rather Jesus the Messiah, the faithful one, himself; and the way in which one is known as a member of this messianic community is thus neither more nor less than (Christian) faith.

Although this account (Galatians 2.15–21) is not itself about soteriology per se, it carries, of course, huge soteriological implications. If one has already died and risen with the Messiah, and if one has been grasped by the grace of God and enabled to come to faith and (by implication, brought into daylight in) baptism (3.26–28), then one is marked out thereby precisely as a member of the renewed, eschatological community of Israel, one for whom the act of God in the Messiah has dealt finally with one's sinful past, one who is assured of God's salvation on the Last Day. But the point of justification by faith, in this context, is not to stress this soteriological aspect, but to insist that all those who share this Christian faith are members of the same single family of God in Christ *and therefore belong at the same table*. This is the definite, positive, and of course deeply polemical thrust of the first-ever exposition of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith.

I have already provided a summary account of Galatians 3 and 4, seen as a narrative, or part of a larger implicit narrative, about the promises of God to Abraham and the way in which these are fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah. It remains here simply to note the way in which justification emerges within this structure of thought, which itself is grounded in Paul's sense of the community he is addressing.

His emphasis throughout is that the true people whom God promised to Abraham are defined by their faith. He is not here concerned with how one enters the family, but with how, once one has entered, the family is then defined, assured of its status as God's people. The arguments in chapter 3 about the curse of the law, and how it is exhausted in the death of [**235**] Jesus, and about the apparent tension between the promise and the law, are not primarily abstract statements about the atonement on the one hand and about the existential or spiritual superiority or preferability of trusting promises rather than keeping moral codes on the other. No doubt they contribute to discussions at these more abstract levels, but such matters were not what Paul was basically talking about. And in the great climactic passage at the

end of chapter 3 and the start of chapter 4, the question of justification is set within the narrative about slavery and sonship – that is, the exodus story, in which the key interlocking categories for the present status of Christians are incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit. These are not 'about' something other than justification. Rather, justification by faith itself, in the letter to Galatia, is all about the definition of the community of the people of the true God.

This is, of course, a puzzling conclusion for those who have learned the word 'justification' as a technical term for the way in which someone becomes a Christian. But it is noticeable that when Paul discusses that question (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 1), he does not use the language of justification. He talks about the way in which, through the gospel proclamation of the crucified and risen Jesus as Messiah and Lord of the world, God's Spirit is at work to bring people to faith, a faith specifically in the God now known in this Jesus. *This process, though, is not what Paul means by 'justification'.* Justification, to offer a fuller statement, is the recognition and declaration by God that those who are thus called and believing are in fact his people, the single family promised to Abraham, that as the new covenant people their sins are forgiven, and that since they have already died and been raised with the Messiah they are assured of final bodily resurrection at the last. This, of course, is the argument of (among other passages) Romans 5—8, and in a measure also Philippians 3. In Galatians it is hinted at but never spelled out, for the good reason that Paul's eye is on one thing principally – namely, the unity of the single Jew-plus-gentile family in Christ and the consequent impossibility of that family being in anyway defined by the Jewish Torah.

Fully to grasp this, I realize only too well, will demand of those who wish to be in tune with Paul, on the one hand, and to continue to preach the gospel and thereby to evoke and sustain Christian faith, on the other, that they think through afresh the language they use, the passages upon which they draw to make their point, and the detailed theology they are presupposing. But I am quite convinced that this essentially 'new-look' reading of justification in Galatians does not undermine the traditional theology and spirituality that former generations, and other ways of reading Paul, have for so long built upon this text. Indeed, when the bricks of the house are taken down, cleaned, and reassembled in the right order, there is every hope that the building will be more serviceable and weather-proof than before.

There are of course many other issues that cry out to be discussed. I have said very little, for example, about the Spirit in Galatians, and the relation of what Paul says on this topic to other NT evidence. But I hope to have shown that the task of bringing together exegesis and theology is valid and fruitful, if demanding, and that a commentary series that attempts such a task has every chance of providing fresh stimulation and insight to a new generation for whom neither dry historical exegesis nor flights of theological fancy will do by themselves. Galatians is a wonderful example of a text that needs history and theology to be working at full stretch and in full harmony. But there is every reason to suppose that the rest of the NT will respond excellently to the same treatment.

Chapter Fourteen

THE SHAPE OF JUSTIFICATION (2001)

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As the note from *The Paul Page*, below, makes clear, this piece was a quick, shooting-from-the-hip response, written in 2001, to an attack which took me somewhat by surprise (since I had known Bishop Paul Barnett on and off for some years and had not expected that he would say the kind of things he had). We had the chance to debate these issues face-to-face in March 2006 when I was in Australia, but sadly the debate did not really take off. No doubt there is much more to be said, but this may serve as a kind of interim report, from that period, of where some of the issues seemed to stand.

* * *

> Wright submits the following response to Paul Barnett with the caveat that he is not entirely happy being part of what could appear a monochrome 'new perspective,' since it's a complex phenomenon. What follows was written during the 2001 Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and printed in part as the April 2001 column of Bible Review. Though he writes with Barnett's criticism in mind, Wright addresses the most serious allegations made by a variety of authors.

Just before Christmas, a friend told me that an Australian Bishop – Paul Barnett, himself a New Testament scholar – had placed an article on his website, entitled 'Why Wright is Wrong'. (He has since toned this down to 'Tom Wright and the New Perspective'.) The question at stake is: what did Paul mean by 'justification'? This topic has again become a storm centre, though perhaps not equally in all teacups.

In a minute I shall go through Barnett's piece and show where I find it mistaken, both in what it says about me and in what it says about Paul. What I want to do first is to show how Paul's statements about justification fit together and make sense, and how they relate to the questions of personal faith, salvation and pastoral practice which Bishop Barnett rightly raises.

1. It's best to begin at the end, with Paul's view of the future.

(a) The one true God will finally judge the whole world; on that day, some will be found guilty and others will be upheld (Romans 2.1–16). God's vindication of these latter on the last day is his act of final 'justification' (Romans 2.13). The word carries overtones of the lawcourt.

(b) But not only the lawcourt. Justification is part of Paul's picture of the family God promised (i.e. covenanted) to Abraham. When God, as judge, finds in favor of people on the last day, they are declared to be part of this family (Romans 4; cf. Galatians 3). This is why lawcourt imagery is appropriate: the covenant was there, from Genesis onwards, so that through it God could deal with sin and death, could (in other words) put his creation to rights.

(c) This double declaration will take the form of an event. All God's people will receive resurrection bodies, to share the promised inheritance, the renewed creation (Romans 8). This event, which from one point of view is their 'justification', is therefore from another their 'salvation': their rescue from the corruption of death, which for Paul is the result of sin. The final resurrection is the ultimate rescue which God promised from the beginning (Romans 4).

2. Moving back from the future to the past, God's action in Jesus forms Paul's template for this final justification.

(a) Jesus has been faithful, obedient to God's saving purposes right up to death (Romans 5.12–21; Philippians 2.6–9); God has now declared decisively that he is the Son of God, the Messiah, in whom Israel's destiny has been summed up (Romans 1.3f.).

(b) Jesus' resurrection was, for Paul, the evidence that God really had dealt with sin on the cross (1 Corinthians 15.12–19). In the death of Jesus God accomplished what had been promised to Abraham, and 'what the law could not do' (Romans 8.3): for those who belong to the Messiah, there is 'no condemnation' (Romans 8.1, 31–39).

(c) The event in which all this actually happened was, of course, the resurrection of the crucified Jesus.

3. Justification in the present is based on God's past accomplishment in Christ, and anticipates the future verdict. This present justification has exactly the same pattern.

(a) God vindicates in the present, in advance of the last day, all those who believe in Jesus as Messiah and Lord (Romans 3.21–31; 4.13–25; 10.9–13). The lawcourt language indicates what is meant. 'Justification' itself is not God's act of changing the heart or character of the person; that is what Paul means by the 'call', which comes through the word and the Spirit. 'Justification' has a specific, and narrower, reference: it is God's declaration that the person is now in the right, which confers on them the status 'righteous'. (We may note that, since 'righteous' here, within the lawcourt metaphor, refers to 'status', not 'character', we correctly say that God's declaration makes the person 'righteous', i.e., in good standing.)

(b) This present declaration constitutes all believers as the single people, the one family, promised to Abraham (Galatians 2.14—3.29; Romans 3.27—4.17), the people whose sins have been dealt with as part of the fulfilled promise of covenant renewal (Jeremiah 31.31–34). Membership in this family cannot be played off against forgiveness of sins: the two belong together.

(c) The event in the present which corresponds to Jesus' death and resurrection in the past, and the resurrection of all believers in the future, is

baptism into Christ (Galatians 3.26–29; Romans 6.2–11). Baptism is not, as some have supposed, a 'work' which one 'performs' to earn God's favour. It is, for Paul, the sacrament of God's free grace. Paul can speak of those who have believed and been baptized as already 'saved', albeit 'in hope' (Romans 8.24).

Among the remaining questions, three matters stand out at the moment.

The 'faith' in question is faith in 'the God who raised Jesus from the dead'. It comes about through the announcement of God's word, the gospel, which works powerfully in the hearts of hearers, 'calling' them to believe, or indeed (as Paul often puts it) to 'obey' the gospel (Romans 1.16f.; 1 Thessalonians 1.3f.; 2.13; 2 Thessalonians 1.8). This faith looks backwards to what God has done in Christ, by means of his own obedient faithfulness to God's purpose (Romans 5.19; Philippians 2.6), relying on that rather than on anything that is true of oneself. For Paul, this meant refusing to regard the badges of Jewish law-observance ('the works of the law') as the decisive factor (Philippians 3.2–11). And it looks forward to the final day: because this faith is the first sign of new God-given life, it is the appropriate anticipation of the final verdict, which is guaranteed by the same Spirit who inspired faith (2 Corinthians 1.22; Philippians 1.6).

By 'the gospel' Paul does not mean 'justification by faith' itself. He means the announcement that the crucified and risen Jesus is Lord. To believe this message, to give believing allegiance to Jesus as Messiah and Lord, is to be justified in the present by faith (whether or not one has even heard of justification by faith). Justification by faith itself is a second-order doctrine: to believe it is both to have assurance (believing that one will be vindicated on the last day [Romans 5.1–5]) and to know that one belongs in the single family of God, called to share table-fellowship without distinction with all other believers (Galatians 2.11–21). But one is not justified by faith by believing in justification by faith (this, I think, is what Newman thought Protestants believed), but by believing in Jesus.

'Justification' is thus the declaration of God, the just judge, that someone is (a) in the right, that their sins are forgiven, and (b) a true member of the covenant family, the people belonging to Abraham. That is how the word works in Paul's writings. It doesn't describe how people get in to God's forgiven family; it declares that they are in. That may seem a small distinction, but in understanding what Paul is saying it is vital.

The three tenses of justification have often been confused, causing some of the great problems of understanding Paul. If we keep them simultaneously clearly distinguished and appropriately interrelated, clarity, and perhaps even agreement, might follow. If justification is about belonging to the single family, it would be good if that family could try to agree about what it means.

To that end, let me now offer my comments on Barnett's original article. I am aware that in doing so I am putting my head in a noose. Every few months some friend, or even some stranger, tells me that people in Sydney, and some in America, are declaring me an outcast, a distorter of the true gospel, or whatever. Considering how little I have published on the subjects they are talking about, this is remarkable.

Bishop Paul first gives a review of the rise of the 'new perspective' on Paul in the work of Ed Sanders. His brief summary needs nuancing here and there, but it's not far off track. What is interesting, though, is that even in his brief summary he shows that the 'new perspective' has this in common with traditional Reformed readings of Paul (from Calvin to Cranfield): it sees the Jewish law as a good thing now fulfilled, rather than (as in much Lutheran thought) a bad thing now abolished. This should be borne in mind, not least because I came to my own view, already outlined in 1976, before Sanders' book was published, from being dissatisfied with Cranfield's Reformed position but knowing that, out of sheer loyalty to the God-given text, particularly of Romans, I couldn't go back to a Lutheran reading. (Please note, my bottom line has always been, and remains, not a theory, not a tradition, not pressure from self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy, but the text of scripture.) When Sanders' book was published I found further reasons for the position I had already moved towards, even though there are problems with his overall account of Judaism, and though I found, and still find, his reading of Paul very unconvincing.

This already shows that, though obviously I have some things in common with Sanders, and some with J. D. G. Dunn, I am by no means an uncritical 'new perspective' person. Frankly, many of the criticisms of Sanders at least, if applied to me, are not just wide of the mark but on a different playing field altogether. With that, I come to Barnett's specific points.

First, method. Barnett says that I first tease out what a word, or a worldview, 'would have meant' at the time. Well, yes. That is what all historians, all lexicographers, all serious readers of texts from cultures other than their own, are bound to do. If we just started with a set of documents in a language and culture other than our own, and refused to take into account what other writers in that language and culture meant by the words, we would be in the position I would be in if I picked up a book in Japanese, of which I know not a word. Nor are my reconstructions speculative and unprovable. I spent two hundred pages in *The New Testament and the People of God* establishing my positions inch by inch, and what I have said about Paul builds on all that. It is false to say that I suggest that Paul would have seen the hopes of Israel in 'political' terms; in our world, that word carries the overtones of 'and therefore not religious'; whereas my point is that, as is easily provable from almost any second-Temple Jewish writing, the 'religious', the 'political', and for that matter the 'personal' and the 'communal', are cheerfully mixed up together in ways that baffle post-enlightenment readers (and so much evangelicalism is, alas, still in complete thrall to the enlightenment), but were obvious to people in that day. When it comes to the word *dikaiosynē* and its cognates, it isn't a matter of 'what Wright thinks the word would have meant then', but what serious historical lexicography tells us.

Of course, Paul has the right to use words in his own way. I insist on this in my writings, for instance when I argue step-by-step that Paul retains the shape of his Jewish theology but fills it with new content. I have often struggled to make this sort of point clear against people who force him into a lexical straitjacket – and against those who think, à la Marcion, that he abandoned

everything Jewish and invented a new message from scratch. But unless Paul's usage had a fair amount of continuity with what people of that day would have expected the words to mean – these were letters, after all, and he wouldn't be there to explain it if when he said 'righteousness' he meant 'Sydney Harbour Bridge' – he would be incomprehensible. We can never, in other words, begin with the author's use of a word; we must begin with the wider world he lived in, the world we meet in our lexicons, concordances, and other studies of how words were used in that world, and must then be alive to the possibility of a writer building in particular nuances and emphases of his or her own.

Let me risk labouring this point by adding the following. What I am doing, often enough, is exactly parallel, in terms of method, to what Martin Luther did when he took the gospel word *metanoeite* and insisted that it didn't mean 'do penance', as the Vulgate indicated, but 'repent' in a much more personal and heartfelt way. The only way to make that sort of point is to show that that's what the word would have meant at the time. That's the kind of serious biblical scholarship the Protestant Reformation was built on, and I for one am proud to carry on that tradition – if need be, against those who have turned the Reformation itself into a tradition to be set up over scripture itself.

Moving to the particular point about 'righteousness' and 'salvation', Barnett in fact hits his own wicket when he says they are synonyms. That's the sort of trouble you get into if you insist on not seeing what words mean lexically. They do not mean the same thing, and actually the passage Barnett quotes from Romans 10 shows Paul making a careful distinction between them, as he does throughout his writings. 'Righteousness' in Paul is partly a courtroom status and partly a covenantal status, the former being a metaphor to help understand the significance of the latter. 'Salvation' in Paul means, of course, rescue from sin and death. Of course, the two go hand-in-hand, but they are not synonyms, and nobody is helped by suggesting they are.

Is justification then a 'process', as Barnett says I say – with the result that he suggests my view ends up destroying 'assurance'? Absolutely not! What seems to have happened here – and, to be blunt, in more than one North American attempted rebuttal of my work – is that criticisms regularly made by Protestant evangelicals against either Catholics or Liberals have been wheeled out as though they somehow 'must' be applicable to me as well. This is bizarre. My short sketch of justification above should put the matter straight.

The central point that Barnett makes has to do with the relationship between 'the gospel' and 'justification'. I have just finished writing a popular commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and it was interesting to do so, this last month, with Barnett's questions in my head. Let me make it clear that I do not, in any way, drive a wedge between 'the gospel' and 'justification'. They belong intimately together, like fish and chips or Lindwall and Miller (I am trying, you see, to contextualize myself in the world of my readers). But they are not the same thing. 'The gospel', for Paul, is the proclamation that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord of the world. When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, or Athens, or Corinth, or wherever, we know what he announced, because he tells us: the Messiah died for our sins and rose again (1 Corinthians 15.3–8; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4.14, where he is summarizing

the same thing). Again and again in the Thessalonian correspondence Paul declares that this word, this gospel, worked with power in his hearers' hearts, with the result that they came to faith: just as, in Romans 1.16, the gospel (which Paul has summarized in 1.3–5) is God's power to effect salvation. This moment is what he describes frequently as God's 'call'. Paul's own 'ordo salutis' goes like this: God loved, chose, called and glorified (2 Thessalonians 2.13–14), or, in the fuller terms of Romans, God foreknew, foreordained, called, justified and glorified. This sequence is very interesting. The 'call', for Paul, is what happens when the gospel is preached: God's word in that gospel works powerfully upon hearts and minds, and people find that they believe it – the crucified Jesus really is Israel's Messiah, the world's Lord! But – and this is my central point here, an exegetical point with large theological implications – Paul does not call this event 'justification'. 'Justification' is the declaration which God at once makes, that all who share this faith belong to Christ, to his sin-forgiven family, the one family of believing Jews and believing gentiles together, and are assured of final glorification.

I do not, then, 'interpose' extraneous elements between the effectual call and God's declaration 'righteous'. I never have, never would, never (please God) will. I merely insist on Paul's scheme rather than our traditional evangelical ones, because I believe in the primacy of scripture rather than that of tradition. In Paul's terms, 'call' and 'justification' are not the same thing. If centuries of theological tradition have used the word 'justification' to mean something else, that is another matter; but if that tradition leads us to misread Paul (as, in my view, it manifestly has), then we must deal with the problem at the root, and not be scared off from doing so by those who squeal that this doesn't sound like what they heard in Sunday school. Barnett of course doesn't do that, but he certainly misstates my point when he says that, according to me, 'justification' is 'a badge of membership'. It isn't, and I never said it was. Faith is the badge of membership, and, as soon as there is this faith, God declares 'justified'. For Paul, faith is the result of the Spirit's work through the preaching of the gospel (read 1 Corinthians 12.3 with 1 Thessalonians 1.4–5 and 2.13); this is not driving a wedge between gospel and justification, but explaining how the gospel works to produce the faith because of which God declares 'righteous'.

And the classic Pauline way in which God makes this declaration, stating publicly and visibly that this person is indeed within the family, is through baptism – which obviously, in the situation of primary evangelism, follows at a chronological interval, whether of five minutes or five years or whatever, but which simply says in dramatic action what God has in fact said the moment someone has believed. Nothing is 'interposed'; no 'wedge' is driven between the gospel and justification. You might as well say that because I declare that the starter-motor of the car is not the same thing as the petrol engine I am driving a wedge between the one and the other. The two are designed to work in close correlation; but if the mechanic doesn't know the difference between them he won't be able to fix your car.

And the car needs fixing. Even though I am not an uncritical exponent of the 'new perspective', I cannot understand how a scholar like Barnett can

criticize it, as he does at the end of his piece, as though it were a form of Pelagianism ('surely I am good enough', etc.). Sanders's whole point was that that was not what Judaism was saying: you may disagree with his analysis, but his point was that the law and works were not appealing to the Jews as the basis of their salvation. If the New Perspective is pastorally naïve (Sanders was of course trying to be historical, not pastoral; those who opposed Martin Luther said he was being pastorally naïve, but he opposed them on the grounds of what Paul really said and meant), it is not for those reasons.

There are other major issues we haven't touched on, and I am grateful to Bishop Barnett that he has raised things in such a focussed way. We haven't, for instance, discussed the meaning of *dikaiosynē theou*, 'God's righteousness', nor the vexed question of imputation. But I hope I have said enough at least to hit the ball firmly back across the net. If we are to keep the rally going, I hope it will be centrally focussed on the exegetical details, since, as I have said more than once, it is the text of scripture itself, rather than later traditions about what it is supposed to mean, that matters to me. By all means let's look at the theological, evangelistic and pastoral questions, but let's be clear where our authority lies.

I have spent most of my professional career in debate with scholars a million miles outside the evangelical tradition – people like Sanders, Vermes, Crossan, Borg, and semi-scholars like A. N. Wilson. I hope my fellow evangelicals realize what is involved in this, and how many people have expressed their gratitude to me for showing them a way to retain and celebrate Christian orthodoxy with intellectual integrity. It feels odd now to be debating the other way round, so to speak, but if it's necessary I shall do it. And I hope and pray that those from within the household of faith who want to take issue with me on this or other topics will do me the courtesy, which I promise I shall do to them, of discussing criticisms with me first, so that we can clear up misunderstandings, before going public. I think that, too, is biblical.

Chapter Fifteen

COMING HOME TO ST PAUL? READING ROMANS A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER CHARLES GORE (2002)

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When I moved to Westminster Abbey as Canon Theologian in January 2000, I inherited a file from my predecessor, Canon Anthony Harvey, detailing arrangements that he had made for various lectures and seminars which were part of the Canon Theologian's brief. One of these lectures was the annual Gore Lecture. Charles Gore, a leading Anglican theologian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had been Canon of Westminster as a young man (1894–1902) before going on to a distinguished career as bishop first of Worcester, then of Birmingham and finally of Oxford. The annual Abbey Lecture, timed to coincide with the Church of England's autumn meeting of General Synod, was held in his memory. Anyway, the arrangements for the 2000 lecture fell through for various reasons, and I was left with the option of doing the lecture myself rather than invite someone else at the last minute. (I seem to be fated to this kind of decision; the Lichfield 'Selwyn Lectures', which I did in 1996, and which formed the basis for *What Saint Paul Really Said*, should have been given by Jürgen Moltmann, who withdrew at the last minute because of illness.) I had had Gore's two-volume commentary on Romans on my shelves for some years and I decided that, since it was a century since the lectures had been published, it was a good opportunity to reflect on them, and to set out my own stall a bit in terms of the Pauline theology which I have been exploring all these years. I rather enjoyed the irony, as I think Gore would have done, of raising the questions about Christ and Caesar within Westminster Abbey, the most visible symbol of the most obviously 'established' church in the world. So the lecture was given in November 2000.

Gore was a fascinating character, and not without humour. He loved showing visitors around the Abbey, as I myself did in my turn, and I used to copy him in pointing out one memorial which, describing the virtuous life of some great lady, declares that she had followed the two great commandments upon which, in Our Lord's words [and then, as a single sentence on the final line of the monument], 'Hang all the law and the prophets'.

* * *

[392] Introduction

My title reflects a famous conversation between Charles Gore and William Temple. Temple himself describes it like this: 'Bishop Gore once said to me that he paid visits to St. John as to a fascinating foreign country, but he came home to St. Paul. With me the precise opposite is true.'

But which Paul was it to whom Charles Gore came home?

A hundred years ago Gore was a Canon of Westminster, living with his small community at no. 4 Little Cloister. In addition to his many other interests, he gave himself energetically during his eight years as a Canon to the public exposition of scripture. He published the results in books on the Sermon on the Mount, on the Epistle to the Ephesians, and then, in 1899 and 1900, his two volumes on Romans. He was in his middle forties, a seasoned scholar, a passionate preacher, a controversial figure in church and theology, with a Christian social conscience of unusual intensity. We don't have to hunt far in his commentary on Romans to discover the principles from which such a life sprang.

Gore himself would urge us not to focus on his writings for their own [**393**] sake, but to learn afresh from Paul. This is a task many Anglicans find daunting, and many downright distasteful. As Gore says on the first page of the commentary, Romans 'is still . . . viewed with discomfort and neglected by those who most value the name of Catholic' – and, we would have to add, a good many others as well. I wish this was because, like Temple, they visited Paul with a sense of strange beauty but came home to St John; I fear it is rather because today people visit both Paul and John with a sense of reluctant duty and come home to the television.

In this lecture I shall describe the main points of Gore's commentary on Romans, calling attention to three features of his interpretation where, I shall argue, he had rightly guessed at Paul's deeper meaning without yet seeing how the text of the letter could actually get him there. I shall then suggest, with a very broad brush, that advances in Pauline scholarship since Gore's day help us to do with more exegetical thoroughness what he was wanting to do. When we in turn 'come home' to St Paul a century after Charles Gore, we find in the Apostle more, but not less, than the Canon had seen. We may, perhaps, in the words of a poet twelve years old when Gore wrote his commentary, arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time.

Gore's Romans: Issues and Questions

Gore's commentary is written at a popular level. It is lively, occasionally sermonic, and peppered with illustration and application. The underlying scholarship peeps out in the notes: he knows the Fathers, and has read Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, and of course the then recently published Sanday and Headlam. He refers to Ritschl and other Germans from time to time. He makes use of inter-testamental Jewish texts. But none of this troubles the general reader. The line of exposition is clear and forthright.

Gore had been grasped by one of the main thrusts of Romans, and was determined that his readers be grasped by it as well. Whenever he comes near the subject of the grace of God freely given to sinners in Jesus Christ and him crucified; whenever he can say something about God being not a hard taskmaster but a loving father; whenever Paul suggests to him the question of whether we save ourselves by our moral efforts or whether all our moral effort is but a feeble response to God's sovereign love – then the staunch Anglo-Catholic catches fire, his prose becomes elevated, and he preaches the gospel of God's love and grace as well as any Protestant or Evangelical. He names, shames and demolishes the characteristically English [**394**] Pelagianism, along with all attempts to rely on past traditions, including Evangelical and Catholic, instead of scripture. He is aware of much nominal Christianity, and knows that Paul will have none of it. His own personal devotion to Jesus Christ, and single-minded determination to serve him, shines through page after page.

Early in the commentary, and repeatedly throughout it, he raises the question: is the Paul of Martin Luther the real Paul? Last week a learned Italian theologian accused Martin Luther of being the patron saint of the fast-food hamburger; we should be wary of attributing all our *bêtes noires* to the German reformer. We must distinguish Luther himself from Lutheran tradition, and later low-grade caricatures. But was Paul, Gore asks, really advocating a standard Protestant individualism? He is anxious to be fair to Luther, and to explain why his protest was necessary in its day. But he is still more anxious to wean his hearers off any assumption that what they know as Protestantism will do justice to the depth of Paul's thought. 'St. Paul', he writes, 'has for us undercut and antiquated the theological standing-grounds of the sixteenth century, and substituted for them something both truer, completer, and freer.'

Gore's question anticipated by nearly eighty years one of the greatest shifts in Pauline studies to have occurred since critical scholarship began. In 1977 E. P. Sanders published his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, whose aim was to rebut what had become a four-hundred-year long tradition, especially associated with Lutheran theology and exegesis, of how to understand the Judaism to which Paul was reacting and hence of how to expound Paul himself. Despite some weaknesses, I regard Sanders's central thesis as secure: the Judaism of Paul's day was not a kind of primitive version of Pelagianism, of a self-help morality which seeks to justify itself by the unaided performance of moral good works. Judaism bases itself upon the grace of God which established the covenant with Abraham and brought Israel out of Egypt. Observance of Torah flows from gratitude. Sanders did not succeed in working out a new way of reading Paul to match this insight; that task remains unfinished among scholars today. But the old Protestant picture of Paul opposing self-help moralism or ritualism, the doing of good works to [**395**] earn God's favour, with the gospel of grace and faith simply will not stand up historically. To this we shall return. Gore had on his side the very structure of Romans itself, and some of its inner logic.

It has become notorious in the century since he wrote that one of the hardest things to do with Romans is to explain the relationship between its different sections. How do chapters 9—11 relate to the rest? And how do

chapters 1—4 belong with 5—8? What is the connection between justification in chapters 3 and 4 and baptism in chapter 6? When, twelve years after Gore's commentary, Albert Schweitzer published his book *Paul and His Interpreters*, he elevated the difference between these two sections of Romans into his central organizing principle, making them represent two different types of theology which Paul had brought together, only one of which represented the heart of his thought. Schweitzer called these two types the 'juridical', represented by the law-court language in chapters 3 and 4, and the 'mystical', represented by the 'being-in-Christ' thought of chapters 6—8. But for Gore no such split was necessary. One does not have to play off justification against incorporation into Christ; theologically one can, and Gore does, hold them together – as indeed of course Paul himself does elsewhere, for instance in Galatians 3.21—4.7.

Gore answers his own question by insisting that though one is justified by faith alone, the faith which justifies is never in fact alone. It goes with a lively incorporation into the body of Christ, and with all that is meant by baptism, through which one comes to live the communal and sacramental life. Gore emphasizes that each Christian must make this real for him- or herself; there are no passengers on this boat; but individualism is out of the question. Justification is, says Gore, all about 'membership in the sacred people, the Israel of God'.

Gore's exposition of what we may call the ecclesiological dimension of Paul's thinking issues in a robust exposition of Romans 12—15. Romans 12, he points out, is not simply a set of individual ethics but the description of what it takes to live together as a community – something which Gore had himself been endeavouring to do, in Pusey House, in Radley, then in Westminster, and which was to bear remarkable fruit in the newly formed Community of the Resurrection. His treatment of chapters 13, 14, and 15 bear the same stamp. Precisely because he holds together justification and the life of the church, these chapters do not fall off the back of the [**396**] commentary as they do so often. However, in my view he fails to follow through his own insights about the roots of Paul's ecclesiology within the Jewish covenant theology of the Old Testament and of the first century.

In particular, he falls back – as, granted his theology, he scarcely needed to do – on the view that chapters 9—11 are an 'episode', a discussion without which the letter would still flow perfectly well. Explaining that he had originally been put off these chapters because of their Calvinist misuse, he offers a careful though not very deep exposition of what they are actually about, namely, the plight of unbelieving Israel. What he never sees – but would have been helpful to his whole theme – is the organic connection of chapters 9—11 to all that had gone before, especially chapters 3 and 4. He sees that the church needs warning against anti-semitism – he is aware of writing immediately after the *affaire Dreyfus* – but he can still declare that the twin climaxes of the letter are chapters 3 and 8, not, as it would seem to most today, chapters 8 and 11.

Thus Gore, though he uses the idea of the church as the community of the renewed covenant as a principal means of tying together individual faith

and the life of the church, points beyond what he exegetically achieves. The same is true in the other emphasis which his followers would not be surprised to see: a strong note of social protest against oppressive systems and structures. As with the warmth of his personal devotion, one senses that he had only to get a whiff of social justice in a text before he was on to it, calling (for instance) for a new sense not just of sin but of social sin. And, though he does not develop the connection very far, this belongs closely with his splendid exposition of the groaning of creation and its promised renewal (8.18–25). He not only sees the Jewish roots of Paul's thought at this point, and his close awareness of the pain at the heart of creation itself; he sees that here Paul stands over against all false and one-sided spiritualism and materialism. 'The religion of the Incarnation', he writes, 'as represented by St. Paul, recognizes [the material world] as God's creation and the temple of His presence'. For Gore that phrase, 'the religion of the Incarnation', said it all. That was, for him, the heart of Christology and [**397**] hence the heart of the revelation of God, and it inspired alike his Pauline vision of the eventual renewal, as opposed to the abandonment, of all creation, and his lifelong passion for social justice, at a time when such a theme was far less common than it is today.

But once again, at least in his commentary, he did not tie the two together. Here too I believe we can point beyond where he got to, and offer a reading of Romans which, from an unexpected angle, gives fuller grounding to his concerns.

The Paul, then, to whom Charles Gore came home was a man of passionate devotional allegiance, theological conviction, ecclesial commitment, sacrificial holiness, and social concern. What I now wish to propose is that exactly this Paul was in fact more present in the very text Gore was expounding than he himself had seen, and that when we offer a more tightly knit and historically grounded exegesis we find that these themes, so far from being left behind, are more securely based and suggestively worked out. I turn, then, first to Paul's exposition of the new covenant in Christ, and second to his exposition of the challenge to paganism in general and, perhaps to our surprise, to Caesar in particular.

Paul and the New Covenant

When we come home to Paul, the man we discover is a first-century Jew. For the last half-century most scholars have seen Paul as a Jewish thinker, rather than one who swapped Jewish categories for gentile or Hellenistic ones. We stand on the shoulders of W. D. Davies's 1948 book *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, which took the elements of Paul that had been used in the Hellenistic hypothesis and showed that they were better explained by seeing Paul as a Rabbi who believed the Messiah had come. Significantly, this was just when theologians were becoming aware, after the Holocaust, of the dangers of treating Judaism as the wrong sort of religion. Since then most of the 'Pauls' offered by scholarship have been Jewish, though, as with Jesus, the further question, what sort of Jew, remains controversial.

The so-called New Perspective on Paul, launched by Ed Sanders in the mid 1970s, has developed this further. But neither Davies, nor Sanders, nor their followers, have advanced a satisfactory new picture of Paul as a whole – religion, theology, exegesis, and contemporary application. I want to suggest a reading of Paul and Romans, building on the work of Davies and Sanders while modifying some of their proposals, through which we can do more fully what Gore was trying to do, namely, hold together the warm [**398**] personal faith by which one is justified and membership in the church, the covenant people promised by God to Abraham. This will lead on to the two other concerns, the moral and the social.

Four interlocking points form the foundation.

The first is Paul's understanding of the purpose of God's covenant. In line with much Jewish thinking, he believed that God's covenant with Israel was itself designed to put the world to rights, to bring justice to the entire cosmos. Israel is the light of the world, carrying God's commission to bring that light to the pagans. Part of Paul's critique of Israel is precisely that they have turned this commission into a mere privilege. In Gore's stringent language about Christian leaders, they wanted to shine rather than to serve.

The second is that when Paul says 'Christ' he regularly intends us to hear, not a proper name merely, but the title 'Messiah', meaning by that not least 'the one in whom Israel's identity is bound up'. The Messiah represents Israel, so that what is true of him is true of them, and vice versa. The Messiah's death and resurrection is therefore the means whereby, and the sign that, Israel according to the flesh has passed under judgment, and the new covenant has been constituted whereby all who belong to the Messiah – Jew and gentile alike – are part of God's people. Jesus' messianic death and resurrection is his faithful obedience to the covenant purposes of God; through him, God has now accomplished what he always purposed. Put together the first two points: because of the meaning of the covenant, God's achievement in Christ cannot be restricted to the salvation of individual souls, but must reach out to the bringing of God's eventual justice to the cosmos.

The third point is the meaning of 'the righteousness of God' – one of the key phrases in Romans. This righteousness, in line with the Jewish background, is not the status which God gives, imputes or imparts to faithful humans; nor is it a moral principle or energy which God places within us. It is God's own faithfulness to the covenant. Jews of Paul's day wrestled with the question, how can God be faithful to the covenant, granted all that has happened? What will this covenant faithfulness look like when it is finally unveiled? Paul's answer, decisive for the shaping and theology of Romans, is that God's righteousness, his covenant faithfulness, has been unveiled once for all in Jesus the Messiah, and in the gospel announcement of his death and resurrection.

[**399**] The fourth point is that the Exodus story forms the narrative substructure of much of Paul's writing. The Exodus was the great redeeming action, accomplished in fulfilment of God's covenant promises to Abraham. Paul now uses Exodus-language to explain the significance of the Messiah's death and resurrection. He shapes the whole of Romans 4—8 around a long

retelling of the story: the promise to Abraham in chapter 4, the passage through the baptismal water by which freedom is attained in chapter 6, the giving of the Spirit to do what the law could not in chapters 7 and 8, finally reaching the inheritance, the whole redeemed creation, at the climax of chapter 8.

The Paul of Romans is thus a deeply Jewish thinker, rethinking his Jewish categories around his belief that the crucified and risen Jesus is Israel's representative Messiah. Within this scheme of thought, the key focal points stand out. Jesus' obedient death is the central covenant action, revealing God's love and grace in decisive and climactic action, dealing with sin by condemning it in his flesh (8.3). Justification by faith is the juridical declaration in the present time which anticipates the verdict of the last day: faith that Jesus is Lord, and that God raised him from the dead, is the result of the Spirit's work through the gospel – and what God has thus begun, he will certainly complete. Justification is not merely lawcourt language, however; if it were, it would be isolated from the life of the church and from Christian morality. Justification is also covenant language, as in Romans 4 (a sustained exposition of Genesis 15, where God establishes his covenant with Abraham), and has to do precisely with God's setting up of the single family, consisting of Jews and gentiles together, characterized by faith rather than by possession or keeping of Torah. It is a measure of Gore's insight that he glimpsed some of this at least, even though he did not follow it through.

Romans 9—11 is not, then, an extraneous aside, but a necessary and intrinsic part of the letter. It addresses questions Paul cannot avoid, which he has indeed noted earlier. It is also, arguably, the first point of immediate relevance he wants to get across to the predominantly gentile Christians in Rome. He wants them to see how God's righteousness, God's covenant faithfulness, works out in practice; he tells the entire covenant story in Romans 9 and 10, from Abraham right through to the Messiah and, beyond, to the gentile mission whereby they themselves have come to faith. But that same covenant faithfulness means that unbelieving Jews will always remain [**400**] within the scope of God's love. God has not cut them off for ever, and if gentile Christians suppose he has, they are making the same mistake of ethnic superiority which Paul had made in his pre-Christian days and now saw in many of his fellow Jews.

In the same way, chapters 12—15 focus on the question of how Christians from different cultural backgrounds should live together in a single community – a question of particular relevance to Rome, where groups from different backgrounds often lived separately, as in some modern cities. This reaches its climax in an often-ignored passage, 15.1–13, the final theological and practical paragraph before the lengthy closing material. The main purpose of the letter is not, after all, simply to tell Rome that all have sinned and can be justified by faith through the death of the Messiah; it expounds those truths, as the centre of the unveiling of God's righteousness, in order to build on them these great arguments about the mission and unity of the church.

When, therefore, we come home to Paul as a first-century Jewish covenant theologian, expounding his belief that in Jesus Christ the faithfulness of God

has burst unexpectedly upon Israel and the world, we discover a way of doing more securely what Gore was determined to do in holding together justification by faith and membership in the church. The larger story of Israel within which Paul lives, which I have labelled with the word 'covenant', enables both of these to be held with equal force and appropriate correlation. As Gore himself exemplified, warm personal faith and strong membership in Christ's body belong together.

Paul, Paganism and Caesar

This brings us to the other two areas in which Charles Gore was eager to explore Paul's thought, but was not able to substantiate his hunches. First, how does Paul integrate justification by faith with his strong moral teaching? Second, what does Paul have to say on what we loosely call 'social justice'?

At the heart of Paul we find his opposition, not to Judaism, but to paganism. Precisely because he remains a deeply Jewish thinker, believing that the God of Abraham is the one true God, now revealed in Jesus the Messiah, he stands firmly and Jewishly opposed to paganism of every sort. On the cross, the true God has defeated the false gods, and this victory must now be worked out in Christian lives and Christian communities.

Paul, then, did not derive his ideas from paganism. There are parallels, cross-over points of theme and language. But Paul intends to confront the world of paganism – with the news that the God of Abraham is its rightful God, the Jewish Messiah is its rightful Lord, and that those who give [**401**] allegiance to this God and Lord are the true heirs of the world, the truly human people. As in the Areopagus speech, Paul declares to the pagan world that what it has been groping after all along is now revealed by the true God in the gospel of Jesus.

The basic challenge of Paul's gospel is not, therefore, against self-help moralism – though if Paul had ever met proto-Pelagians, which is unlikely, he would have put them straight. There were pagan moralists, and Paul has words for them too, but his main challenge is against idolatry and the dehumanization that results from it. Humans are made in God's image, to reflect his glory; those who worship that which is not God find that their image-bearing capability, their glorious humanness, begins to unravel. Those, however, who worship the true God (this is what Paul means by 'the obedience of faith') will rediscover their genuine humanness. All sinned, and lost God's glory; those whom God justified, them he also glorified. If Romans 3 and 4 are about justification, Romans 5—8 are not so much about sanctification as glorification, with sanctification as a sub-category. Christian holiness, for Paul, means becoming more truly human. And the faith which justifies, itself the gift of God by the Spirit and the response to God's grace in the gospel, is also the core of that worship in which humanity is renewed.

Watch how this works in the four main sections of Romans. In the first four chapters, Paul demonstrates that, through the death and resurrection of the Messiah, God has established the community he promised to Abraham,

the single family of Jews and gentiles together, characterized by faith in the gospel. At the close of chapter 4 he describes Abraham's faith: it was his belief in God's promise to give him and Sarah a son in their old age. Paul here deliberately contrasts this faith with the faithlessness described in Romans 1.18–32, where idolatry in the pagan world results in the fracturing of the glory, the image bearing, that was humanity's vocation. This naturally leads on to Romans 5, in which Christ is seen as the true Adam, the source of genuine humanity, generating by the Spirit a renewed human life of holiness and hope. In the climax of Romans 8, Paul sees the whole creation, not as itself divine – that's the mistake of paganism – but as God's good creation which is designed to be flooded with God, renewed by the Spirit, to experience its own Exodus when the children of God are themselves raised from the dead. That which paganism has wrongly worshipped will one day share the freedom of the glory of God's children. Paganism is, after [**402**] all, a parody of the truth, wanting to steal the beautiful empty chalice instead of waiting for it to be filled with the wine of God's love.

Then, in 9—11 and 12—16, Paul challenges the Roman church not to behave as pagan society around is behaving. Roman anti-Judaism is well known in classical literature. The church had been largely gentile after the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in the late 40s, and now had to face the question of its attitude to the large number of recently returned non-Christian Jews, and also its attitude to Jewish Christians. His appeal in both cases is that the church should learn to live as God's true humanity, in accordance with his covenant faithfulness and the call to unity in Christ. The main thrusts of the letter, therefore, can be seen all through to flow from Paul's essentially Jewish understanding, rethought in Christ, and to tell against paganism in general, and any attempt on the part of Christians to go with its flow. All of this continues to tie together the emphasis on justification by faith with that on Christian holiness, without confusion or muddle. If faith is genuine, the attachment to God in Christ which it expresses cannot but issue in a searching and serious holiness of life. Gore's exposition of Romans 6.1–11 and 12.1–2 makes it clear both that the huge moral demands made by the gospel are simply a response to grace, being in no way an attempt to place God in human debt, and that the demands are indeed total.

Within this, however, one particular emphasis is emerging in very recent study, and it provides the other missing link which joins Pauline theology closely with the vocation to social critique and to work for God's justice in the world – the very thing Charles Gore was eager to do. Romans, I suggest, indicates that Paul intended his gospel to subvert not merely paganism in general but the imperial cult in particular.

The imperial cult – worship of the emperor, and of Rome – was the fastest-growing religion in Paul's world. The early emperors drew back from claiming actual divine honours for themselves in Rome and Italy during their lifetime. But there was no such restraint further east. In any case, being styled 'son of god', following the apotheosis of the previous emperor, was almost as good – especially when, from Augustus onwards, emperors were able to claim that their dynasty had brought peace and justice to the warring world.

New temples to Caesar and Rome were springing up; some city centres were redesigned to give them maximum prominence. Paul could not have missed it. Nor could he have dismissed [**403**] it as of merely political rather than religious importance; he would not have made that distinction. Whereas almost all works on Paul assume that Romans 13.1–7 is his only comment on Caesar, this is far from the truth.

Recent studies of Philippians have shown that Paul was capable of addressing this issue sharply and subversively. The Christ-poem in Philippians 2.5–11, though its sources and theology are Jewish, parodies some aspects of the Caesar-cult; when Paul says Jesus is Lord, he means that Caesar is not. The end of Philippians 3, likewise, refers to Jesus as Saviour, Lord and King in a way which certainly intends a contrast with Caesar. Similar hints are found in 1 Thessalonians and elsewhere.

But it is in Romans itself, written to Christians right under Caesar's nose, that the subversive theme emerges most strikingly. Caesar claimed to be 'son of god'; his accession day, or birthday, was hailed as 'good news', *euangelion*; he was regarded as the Lord of the world, the one to whom all nations owed allegiance. Through his powerful rule Justice and Salvation had come to the world: Roman 'justice', Iustitia, first became a goddess under Augustus. With all that in mind, think through the famous first paragraph of Romans (1.1–17), which by common consent introduces the themes of the whole letter, and watch it come up in three dimensions. Paul introduces himself as the apostle of God, commissioned to announce the gospel of God's son, who was now the rightful lord of the whole world and who claimed obedience and loyalty from all. Through this gospel, God was powerfully at work to produce salvation, because in the gospel God's righteousness, his justice, had been unveiled. That is why, says Paul, he is not ashamed to be coming to preach in Rome. The gospel of Christ, by strong implication, upstages the gospel of Caesar.

The same point is stressed at the end. In the final climax, urging Christians of different backgrounds to unite in worship of the one true Lord, Paul quotes from the royal prophecy of Isaiah 11. The root of Jesse shall appear, the one who rises to rule the nations; in him shall the nations hope. Paul's hearers knew that there was already a king who ruled the nations. The opening and theological closing of Romans declare that Caesar is a parody of the true lordship of Jesus.

Once we understand how the theme of God's justice unveiled in the gospel actually works, the rest of the letter will fall into place. The renewal of all creation in Romans 8 can be seen as the climax it really is, instead of being sidelined as in so many individualized readings of Romans. Caesar's attempt to bring the world into new peace and harmony are to be upstaged by God's great act of liberation. Caesar, of course, ruled the world by sheer force, with crucifixion both as his primary weapon and as a regular symbol of his authority. Paul's theology of the cross, as the secret means whereby [**404**] God has defeated the powers of the world, comes into its own in a new way, standing on its head this symbol of imperial arrogance and making it instead the symbol of all-powerful divine love. Romans as a whole, by expounding God's

creation of the single family of faith in which Jew and gentile come together in one body, provides the charter for what we must call a counter-empire: a worldwide, multi-ethnic family owing allegiance to Jesus as Lord rather than Caesar, and looking forward to inheriting the renewed creation.

Within this framework, Romans 13.1–7 can be seen for what it is. It is a Jewish-style statement that rulers are not divine, but owe allegiance to the one God. When this is realized, the rulers are to be obeyed, because God desires that evil should be checked, that anarchy should be resisted, that laws should be enacted through which societies can live in order and peace. Paul inherited the tradition of, among other things, Jeremiah, in which the Israelites are instructed to pray for the welfare of Babylon as long as they are living there, and of Daniel, in which, though the rulers of the world are regularly warned, judged, condemned and demoted, Daniel and his companions are promoted to high ranks of Services within the imperial household. God desires order, it seems, not chaos; when the rulers discover they are not divine, they can once more be God's agents, whether knowingly or not, to promote good order in the world.

Paul did not suggest to the Romans, a tiny and fragmented church in a huge pagan capital, that they should begin to campaign for better laws and more effective justice. He might as well have told them what sort of aeroplanes they should be building for the next stage of his mission. But, just as elsewhere he laid the foundation for revolutions yet to come, so in his subversive, almost cheeky, upstaging of Caesar's claims with those of Jesus, I believe he laid the foundations for a fully integrated and theologically coherent Christian social agenda which we today ignore at our peril. Just as justification by faith and the life of the church are held together with Paul's wider covenant theology, and just as grace, faith and moral effort belong together, so the whole theology of salvation and the responsibility to promote God's justice in the world are held together, within that same covenant theology, by Paul's high Christology and by his grand vision of the eventual renewal of all creation, the bringing of God's healing justice to bear on the cosmos as a whole. Once again, in learning to see in Paul things that Charles Gore never dreamed of, we are nevertheless meeting a figure to whom he would have been happy to come home.

[405] The End of Our Exploring

Time permits only the briefest of conclusions. I allow myself three points only, corresponding to the three main points I have made.

First, when we locate Paul's theology of justification within his larger covenant theology, we see that it is not simply a controversial doctrine which we might now be able to agree on, but is the doctrine which itself commits us to ecclesial membership and hence ecumenical endeavour. Justification means not simply that God accepts us by grace through faith; it means that all who believe in Jesus Christ belong together in one worshipping family, sharing at the same table. When we integrate Romans 3 and 4 with the

incorporative theology of Romans 5—8 and the practical instructions of Romans 14 and 15, we discover that this ecumenical work is never a matter of one side giving the orders to the others, but of all working together, preferring the way of tolerance of things indifferent to an insistence on solving all problems before we can unite in shared worship. Paul has so often been a sign of division, but when we come home to him he offers us ways to grow into real union.

Second, the integration of Paul's ethics with his theology, such as Gore glimpsed in Romans and we have developed further, suggests that mainstream western churches need to look hard at some of today's familiar assumptions. Justification means, at one level, that God accepts us as we are. But God's acceptance is always the transforming acceptance of holy love, demanding from us not a slack acquiescence in whatever state we happen to be in, but serious and Spirit-helped moral effort in becoming what God intends for us. Without this, we slip back into the worst of both worlds, holding the form of a bare and caricatured Protestant justification-theology but without any of the lively devotion that has traditionally accompanied it. An integrated Pauline ethic never says, 'Because God has accepted me, I can stay as I am'. It always says that the mercy of God invites me to present my body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. It never asks, 'What am I allowed to do? Can I get away with this?' It always asks, 'How can I live according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh? How can I be transformed by the renewing of my mind, rather than being conformed to the present age?'

Third, the social and political implications of reading Romans against the background of the Caesar-cult need to be teased out in more detail. As with many aspects of post-Enlightenment thought, we have tended to assume that there are really only two possible positions, the quiescent and the revolutionary. Most have assumed that Romans 13 means that Paul was politically quiescent; you might suppose that my new proposed reading means he was straightforwardly revolutionary. As with the Enlightenment [**406**] splits between sacred and secular, and between individual and community, this is far too simplistic. Paul stands in the tradition of apocalyptic and covenantal Judaism that includes Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel: earthly powers must learn that they are not divine, but once that lesson is learned they have a positive place and purpose in God's will for the world.

The church has found it difficult to maintain this balance. From the second-century Apologists, who both appealed to rulers and suffered martyrdom, through the Constantinian settlement, through the many different models of church/state relationship essayed in the Middle Ages, the Reformation and thereafter, in this country and elsewhere, the church has struggled to hold together its double responsibility: to live by the gospel of Jesus which proclaims him as the world's true Lord, and to live as good citizens of a state which may or may not acknowledge that Lordship. Here at Westminster that balance is symbolically maintained by our crowning of monarchs right in front of the text from Revelation, written in gold above the high altar: 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his

Christ'. Confrontation and collaboration are both appropriate expressions of this responsibility; it may result in martyrdom, as with Bonhoeffer, or it may result in partnership, as with (to think of our roots) Aidan and Oswald. Here again this Abbey symbolizes both, with its royal tombs and its martyrs' memorials.

What this responsibility rules out, I think, are Erastianism at one end and dualist disengagement at the other. Few today want the former; but the clamour for disengagement is loud, particularly in the press. Some argue for disengagement on Christian grounds; but what is really driving the agenda is the secularist desire that the church should mind its spiritual business and leave the state to look after society and politics – in other words, that the church should not even think of saying that Jesus is Lord and Caesar isn't. But Pauline Christianity is not about discovering a way of being religious or spiritual, or a private route to salvation. It is about announcing, and living by, the message that Jesus is Lord of all. To retreat into the private world of our own religious life is not a way of keeping ourselves pure from the non-Christian world; it is, ironically, a way of compromising with the world, giving in to its sacred/secular split.

We must of course look hard at how our present Establishment correlates with our ecumenical collaboration, and indeed our relation to quite different worldviews. But to disengage because such questions exist is to scrap the car because the steering needs adjusting. If Daniel had not been at Belshazzar's court, no-one would have been able to read the writing on the [**407**] wall. Precisely at this time of massive worldview-confusion in the country and the wider world, we need all the engagement we can get if we are to play the same prophetic role, announcing the gospel of Jesus and living by it within Caesar's world.

Who then is Caesar in a modern liberal democracy, a tradition which is itself profoundly though ambiguously influenced by Christianity? That is a harder question. Caesar does not live in either Buckingham Palace or Downing Street, nor yet in the Stock Exchange or Fleet Street – though each possesses some Caesar-like attributes. But there are powers in our world that want to become Caesar, and the church of Jesus Christ is one of the main obstacles in their way. As readers of Paul we will be unwilling to stand aside and give them a free run: not because we seek political power for ourselves, but because we believe that if, in the old pietist phrase, Jesus Christ is not Lord of all he is not Lord at all.

The call to social justice in the present, in the light of God's promised recreation of the whole cosmos, stands in parallel to the call to Christian holiness. Christians are called to live in the present in the light of God's future; it won't do to say God will make us holy hereafter, we must make it real right now. Similarly, it won't do to say that God will one day solve the problems and there's nothing we can do in the meantime. Precisely because God will one day put the whole world to rights by the Spirit, we Christians, indwelt by that same Spirit, should go to work today, as Charles Gore did, to inaugurate as far as possible that world-renewing justice which will do what Caesar's justice claims to do but cannot.

A fresh reading of Romans, then, grateful to Charles Gore but determined to press on beyond, can invigorate Christian discipleship and mission like little else. The end of our exploring is to come home to the Paul from whom we started, and know him for the first time. As we do so, we may find fresh ways towards an integrated and challenging Christian worldview: to fold again the tongues of flame into the crowned knot of fire, so that the fire and the rose may be one.

Chapter Sixteen

PAUL AND CAESAR: A NEW READING OF ROMANS (2002)

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I returned to the theme of 'Christ and Caesar' once more, this time more explicitly in relation to Romans, at a conference based on the work of my old friend Oliver O'Donovan. Oliver himself raised some sharp questions about what I had said. I have tried to take these into account in subsequent explorations. As the first footnote indicates, this piece is a development of the Manson Memorial Lecture I gave in 2000, and which was published in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 83, no. 1 (2001) 21–39. As with other essays of this period, the present piece looks on to the fuller development of various theological themes in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.

* * *

[173] Introduction

We have moved away quite rapidly in recent years from the old split, which was assumed by and built into the fabric of western biblical studies, between 'religion' and 'politics'. We have come to see that trying to separate the two in the ancient world, not least in the Middle East, is as futile as trying to do so in certain parts of the modern world. There is a quantum leap now being made from the old way of reading the Bible, in which certain political 'implications' could be drawn here and there from texts which were (of course) about something else, and the occasional concentration on rather isolated texts – one thinks of the 'Tribute question' in the synoptic tradition, and of the notorious first paragraph of Romans 13 – as being the only places in the New Testament at least where real 'political' issues came to the fore. (Until recently, Revelation remained outside the implicit canon of many New Testament scholars; and even when it was considered, its striking political significance was often limited to reflections on its thirteenth chapter.)

Now, however, we have all been alerted to the fact that the kingdom of God was itself, and remained, a thoroughly political concept; that Jesus' death was a thoroughly political event; that the existence and growth of the early

church was a matter of community-building, in conflict, often enough, with other communities. There is of course a danger, not always avoided in recent studies, of seeing the New Testament now simply the other way up but still within the Enlightenment paradigm: in other words, of declaring that it's all 'politics' and that to read it as 'religion' or 'theology' is to domesticate or privatize it. The fact that for some that might still be so doesn't excuse us from doing our best to reintegrate what the Enlightenment had pulled apart, both in the name of serious ancient historical study and in the name of responsible biblical study for today's world.

[**174**] I want in this paper to introduce, by means of a sharply focused piece of exegesis, the question of how to rethink and remap Paul within this new world.[1] I have a proposal to make which I have been developing for the last few years in dialogue with a group of scholars, mostly American, who are working in this area, whose most obvious leader is Richard A. Horsley of the University of Massachusetts, the editor of two volumes of collected essays entitled *Paul and Empire* and *Paul and Politics*.[2] To understand where this proposal is coming from and going to, we need to back up for a moment and consider what's been happening in Pauline studies over the last generation.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, Pauline studies received a shot in the arm which still continues to invigorate – or, depending on your point of view, a deep wound from which it is still trying to recover. In his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, E. P. Sanders offered what one writer called a 'new perspective on Paul'.[3] Sanders' main thesis, which I regard as securely established in outline if not in all its details, is that the picture of Judaism assumed in most Protestant readings of Paul is historically inaccurate and theologically misleading: first-century Jews were not proto-Pelagians, and Paul did not attack them as such. Sanders' thesis was explicitly advanced as a case about the religion of Judaism and of Paul; this was always a partial proposal, screening out or downplaying large areas of Pauline theology, so that the responses to Sanders from aggrieved Protestant theologians have sometimes missed the target.[4] Sanders' proposal had its own agenda at the level of the study of religions; it was not the same sort of thing as the Lutheran perspective it controverted, and indeed it was in some ways a plea to see Christianity from a modernist comparative-religion perspective rather than a classic theological one. These questions invite further reflection for which this is not the place.

The subsequent debates as to the validity of the 'new perspective' as a whole and in its parts (with such related matters as the interplay between covenant and apocalyptic, and the phrase 'the faith of/in Jesus Christ') have

[1] What follows is a lightly revised version of my 2000 Manson Memorial Lecture, for whose publication details see the introduction to the present chapter.

[2] A more general and wide-ranging treatment which shows the way these winds are blowing is Horsley and Silberman 1997. See also Elliott 1995.

[3] See Dunn 1983.

[4] Gundry 1985; Schreiner 1985; Seifrid 1992, 2000a, 2000b. A major new project is under way to refute Sanders, of which the first volume had appeared at the time of this article's original publication (Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid 2001).

continued to engage scholars and to inform different readings of the text.[5] I do not wish to [**175**] suggest that this phase of work could or should now come to an end. I wish rather to complicate matters by suggesting that there is a whole further dimension to Paul which both old and new perspectives have ignored, and which must be factored in to subsequent discussion.

A Fresh Perspective?

I begin with a fact that I confess I had not appreciated until very recently, which is itself revealing about the directions in which New Testament scholarship has been looking and not looking. In the Mediterranean world where Paul exercised his vocation as the apostle to the gentiles, the pagans, the fastest growing religion was the Imperial cult, the worship of Caesar.[6]

In Rome itself, as is well known, the Julio-Claudian emperors did not receive explicit divine honours until after their deaths, although being hailed as the son of the newly deified Julius was an important part of Augustus' profile, and that of his successors, at home as well as abroad. But in the East – and the East here starts, effectively, in Greece, not just in Egypt – the provinces saw no need for restraint. With a long tradition of ruler-cults going back at least to Alexander the Great, local cities and provinces were in many cases only too happy to demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor by establishing a cult in his honour, and indeed by vying for the privilege of looking after his shrine.[7]

This feature of the Roman empire has been extensively studied, and the continuing debates – on, for instance, the precise relationship between this cult and that of earlier Eastern rulers – do not affect the basic point I am making. The religious world of the day was of course thoroughly pluralistic, and there was no expectation that this new cult would displace, or itself be threatened by, the traditional Graeco-Roman religions in all their variety. Indeed, frequently the two were combined, as demonstrated by statues of the emperor in the guise of Jupiter or another well-known god.[8] But, whereas traditional books and lecture courses that cover the religious world of late antiquity tend to add the emperor-cult simply as one element within a treatment of the multiple religions, philosophies and theologies of the ancient world, giving students the impression that it was a relatively insignificant addition to more important aspects of pagan thought and life, it is increasingly apparent that to many ordinary people in Greece, Asia Minor, the Middle East and Egypt – with the exception of the last, the focal points of

[5] On the convergence of covenant and apocalyptic in Paul's thought, see especially Martyn 1997a. On the basic arguments surrounding the 'faith of Jesus Christ' versus 'faith in Jesus Christ' debate, see the interchange between Richard B. Hays and J. D. G. Dunn in Johnson and Hay 1997.

[6] Price 1985, 1–22; Zanker 1988, 1–4; see also my 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire' [reprinted as chapter 12 in the present volume].

[7] For the direct impact of this on Corinth around the time of Paul's establishment of the church there, cf. Winter 2001, ch. 12.

[8] See Zanker 1988, 318.

Paul's [**176**] missionary work – the Caesar-cult was fast-growing, highly visible, and powerful precisely in its interweaving of political and religious allegiance. As various writers have recently urged, you don't need such a strong military presence to police an empire if the citizens are worshipping the emperor. Conversely, where Rome had brought peace to the world, giving salvation from chaos, creating a new sense of unity out of previously warring pluralities, there was a certain inevitability about Rome itself, and the emperor as its ruler, being seen as divine. Rome had done – Augustus had done – the sort of thing that only gods can do. Rome had power: the power to sweep aside all opposition; the power, in consequence, to create an extraordinary new world order. Rome claimed to have brought justice to the world; indeed, the goddess Iustitia was an Augustan innovation, closely associated with the principate.[9] The accession of the emperor, and also his birthday, could therefore be hailed as *euangelion*, good news (we should remember of course that most of the empire, and certainly the parts of it where Paul worked, were Greek-speaking). The emperor was the *kyrios*, the lord of the world, the one who claimed the allegiance and loyalty of subjects throughout his wide empire. When he came in person to pay a state visit to a colony or province, the word for his royal presence was *parousia*.

With all this in mind, we open the first page of Paul's letters as they stand in the New Testament, and what do we find?[10] We find Paul, writing a letter to the church in Rome itself, introducing himself as the accredited messenger of the one true God. He brings the gospel, the *euangelion*, of the son of God, the Davidic Messiah, whose messiahship and divine sonship are validated by his resurrection, and who, as the Psalms insist, is the Lord, the *kyrios*, of the whole world. Paul's task is to bring the world, all the nations, into loyal allegiance – *hypakoē pisteos*, the obedience of faith – to this universal Lord. He is eager to announce this *euangelion* in Rome, without shame, because this message is the power of God which creates salvation for all who are loyal to it, Jew and Greek alike. Why is this? Because in this message (this 'gospel of the son of God'), the justice of God, the *dikaiosynē theou*, is unveiled. Those of us who have read Romans, written essays on Romans, lectured on Romans, preached on Romans, written books about Romans over many years, may be excused if we rub our eyes in disbelief. Most commentators on Romans 1.1–17 insist that it forms the thematic introduction to the whole letter. None that I know of (myself included) have suggested that it must have been heard in Rome, and that Paul must have intended it, as a parody of the imperial cult.

[**177**] If we go for a moment to the other end of Romans, the impression is the same. The thematic exposition concludes with 15.7–13, where the mutual welcome of Jewish Christian and gentile Christian in the one family of God in Christ, producing united worldwide worship in fulfilment of scriptural prophecy, is the goal of the whole gospel. Paul builds up a careful sequence of scriptural passages to make the point, emphasizing on the way the universality of the rule of Jesus Christ, the *kyrios* (Psalm 117.1, quoted

[9] See, e.g., Ovid, *Epistuale ex Panto* 3.6.25; *Acts of Augustus*, ch. 34, and *OCD*, s.v., Iustitia (791).
[10] More details on all of the following may be found in my forthcoming commentary on Romans.

in verse 11, repeats 'all': all the nations, all the peoples). The final quotation is from Isaiah 11.10, one of Isaiah's great messianic passages, and Paul has chosen a passage which, in its Septuagintal form, looks right back to Romans 1.3f.: 'The root of Jesse shall appear, the one who rises up (*ho anistamenos*) to rule the nations; in him shall the nations hope.' Jesus' Davidic messiahship, once more, is confirmed by his resurrection, and means that he is the true ruler of the nations. This cannot, I suggest, be other than a direct challenge to the present ruler of the nations, Caesar himself.

Austin Farrer, when lecturing on Romans in Oxford in the early 1950s, used to read Romans 1.8–15 aloud, and run straight on to 15.14 and the following passage. He would then ask his hearers: why did Paul break off and include all that other material? In similar fashion I want to pose the question: if Paul has framed this great letter with an introduction and a theological conclusion which seem so clearly to echo, and thus to challenge, the rule of Caesar with the rule of Jesus Christ, is the rest of the letter in some sense about this as well, and if so, how? And what does this do to all our traditional readings of Paul, in both old and new perspectives?

Before I can address this, some initial comments are in order on where we have come so far.

Initial Comments

First, a note about scholarly treatment of Romans 1.3–4. When I was first working on Romans in the mid 1970s, I was conscious of what I can only call a powerful undertow in scholarship that resisted any attempt to allow Paul to be interested in, let alone to affirm or make central, the Davidic messiahship of Jesus. Romans 1.3–4 was regularly seen as a pre-Pauline formula – not so much, I suggest, for reasons of its structure and phraseology, but because messiahship, especially with an explicit reference to David, was deemed to be extraneous to Paul's theology.[11] Commentators then regularly hurried on to 1.16–17, which was seen as the real statement of the theme of the letter, and [**178**] indeed of 'the gospel'. I thought then, and think still, that this represents part of a de-Judaizing of Paul, an insistence that he cannot have thought in categories like messiahship; and I have argued extensively for the opposite point of view elsewhere.[12] I now realize that this tendency also represents part of a depoliticizing of Paul, a desire to move his theology away from confrontation with the powers of the world and into the safer sphere of a faith, a religion, a theology in which the only thing one needs to say about the rulers of the world is that God has ordained them and that they must in principle be obeyed. (I shall return to Romans 13 in due course.) The roots of this de-Judaizing and depoliticizing of Paul are outside the scope of this paper, but I suspect they would not be hard to find.

[11] See, e.g., Käsemann 1980, 5, who states that messianism is a category which Paul 'does not emphasize'. Similarly Jewett 1985, 101.

[12] *Climax of the Covenant*, 18–55.

My second comment is to note that Romans is by no means unique in having this apparent covert reference to, and subversion of, Caesar.[13] I have written elsewhere of how Philippians 2.5–11 and 3.19–21 can be seen to have explicit reference to the imperial cult and theme, with, once more, the main thrust that Jesus Christ is the true *kyrios* of the world, so that of course Caesar is not. Indeed, I have argued that the whole of Philippians 3 can and should be read as a covert anti-imperial exhortation: as Paul had abandoned his Jewish privileges to find Christ, so the Philippians should be prepared, at least, not to take advantage of their belonging to a Roman colony, with the same end in view (finding Christ). Philippi was, of course, a Roman colony (not all of the Philippian Christians were Roman citizens, but all will have gained, or might have expected to gain, as a result of being part of the colonial city).[14] It can be shown that some hints in 1 Thessalonians run the same way: when people say 'peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them unawares (1 Thessalonians 5.3). And 'peace and security', it has been argued, was part of the Roman propaganda of the first-century empire.[15]

Third, while highlighting the imperial context of Paul's writings, and proposing that at least at some points Paul is consciously parodying and subverting imperial ideology, I do not at all suggest that Paul derived his theology, either in outline or in detail, from the world of Graeco-Roman paganism in general or the imperial cult in particular. We must not confuse derivation with [**179**] confrontation. Some who have made these connections seem to be using them as a way of rolling back fifty years of work, from W. D. Davies to E. P. Sanders and beyond, of locating Paul within the world of second-Temple Judaism, and returning history instead to an earlier history-of-religions project in which Paul derived his central themes from the non-Jewish world of late antiquity.[16] As I hope I have already indicated, but here wish to emphasize, my reading depends precisely on Paul being and remaining a Jewish thinker, addressing the pagan world with the news that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the true God, and that this God has now proved the point by raising from the dead Jesus, who is thereby the Jewish Messiah *and therefore* the Lord of the whole world. This, indeed, is the logic underneath the whole gentile mission: not that Paul was abandoning Judaism, but claiming to fulfil it. Here, not for the last time, we find fascinating parallels between Paul and the roughly contemporary Wisdom of Solomon, which addresses the rulers of the world with the news that Israel's God is the true God who not only gives wisdom to rulers, but who will vindicate his people against pagan oppression.[17]

[13] I gratefully acknowledge the work of Dr Peter Oakes of Manchester University, whose studies of Philippians first alerted me to this whole theme, though he should not be held responsible for the larger picture I am trying to draw, with all its dangers and loose ends. See Oakes 2001.

[14] See 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire' [reprinted as chapter 12 in the present volume]. I do not see Paul's occasional exploitation of his own Roman citizenship in Acts as in fundamental conflict with this position.

[15] Georgi 1991, 28; Hendrix 1991, 109; Koester 1997.

[16] See, e.g., Georgi 1991; Koester 1997.

[17] See Wis. 6.1–11, 15–19.

Fourth, if there is indeed a reference to Caesar and his cult in Romans, Philippians and elsewhere, it would be a mistake to universalize this, and suppose that Paul is covertly opposing Caesar in all sorts of other places as well. The theme is not so obvious in the Corinthian correspondence, though a case has recently been made for seeing it there too.[18] It is even harder to see this theme in Galatians – though there, too, a recent writer has attempted to do so.[19] Rather, I suggest that Paul's anti-imperial stance is part of a wider strain in his thinking which has also been marginalized in many systematic treatments of his thought, but which should be acknowledged and rehabilitated: the confrontation between the gospel and the powers of the world, between the gospel and paganism in general. Paul's gospel remained thoroughly Jewish: his critique of idolatry and immorality, again paralleled in the wisdom tradition, is the standard wide-ranging Jewish critique, sharpened up but not significantly modified through the gospel of Jesus. The fresh perspective I am proposing, that we take seriously Paul's subversive references to Caesar, is part of the larger point I have made in various places: that we take Paul seriously as the Jewish apostle to the pagan world, and think through his theology and religion not just as the [**180**] outworking of a Jewish history-of-religion in the abstract, but as confrontation with paganism in its many varieties – the Caesar-cult being one of the most powerful, high-profile, fast-growing and usually ignored in scholarship.[20]

Fifth, and perhaps most important, I am not proposing that we give up looking at Paul as a theologian and read him simply as a covert politician. There is a danger, which Horsley and his colleagues have not always avoided, of ignoring the major theological themes in Paul and simply plundering parts of his writings to find help in addressing the political concerns of the contemporary Western world. To be sure, Paul has not been much used in Christian political thinking, and much work remains to be done in this area. But we would be foolish to suppose that we could substitute a one-dimensional political reading for a one-dimensional theological one. On the contrary: my proposal is that we recognize in Paul, in full integration, what post-Enlightenment Western culture has pulled apart. Our struggles over the integration of faith and history, of church and society, of natural and supernatural, simply did not look like that in the first century. The question is, rather, how we can appropriately describe what appear to us as 'different dimensions of Paul's thought' in ways that will do justice to the exegesis of the text, and that will also, perhaps, give to the early twenty-first century a lesson in joined-up thinking. It is perhaps ironic that theologians and exegetes

[18] Winter 2001. On the imperial cult in Corinth, see Chow 1992. See 'Rhetoric and Empire – and 1 Corinthians' in Horsley 2000, 72–102. It may be that we should explore further in this respect the conflict between the gospel and the powers in 1 Cor. 2, the reign and victory of Christ in 1 Cor. 15, and other themes as well (a point made to me in conversation by Dr Andrew Goddard).

[19] Cf. Winter 2000. See Winter's forthcoming monograph, *Sharing the Throne of God: The Imperial Gods and the First Christians*.

[20] As Horsley ('Introduction', in Horsley 1997, 3) puts it: 'Since so little attention has been devoted to the Roman imperial context of Paul's mission and his relations to it, we are only at the point of attempting to formulate appropriate questions and provisional research strategies.' On my own wider proposals, see *Climax of the Covenant* and also *What Saint Paul Really Said*.

should find themselves discovering the importance of serious political thought just when politicians themselves seem finally to have abandoned it.

Towards a Multi-dimensional Fresh Reading of Paul

Once all these issues are raised, it should be clear that we shall not do justice to Paul simply by arranging bits and pieces of his letters according to the doctrinal schemes of regular dogmatic theology – God, humankind, sin, salvation, and so forth – or according to the patterns of religion (getting in, staying in, and the like). Doctrinal belief matters; religious theory and practice matter; but they matter as part of a larger whole, and I am suggesting that this larger whole must include Paul's sense of the conflict of the gospel with the principalities and powers in general and with Rome, and Caesar, in particular. How can we describe all of this coherently without allowing one element to gain a false prominence over the others?

[**181**] I have elsewhere proposed a method of worldview analysis, which I have employed on a large scale in my historical treatment of Jesus.[21] Worldviews, I have suggested, can be understood as a combination of praxis, story, symbol and theory, which give rise to, and are expressed within, a set of aims and motives on the one hand and of specific beliefs, at various levels, on the other. Without entering into a full exploration of this, I will offer a bird's-eye view of some of these elements, attempting to show how the fresh perspective I am proposing not only finds a place alongside other elements, but changes the shape and balance of the whole. This will lead me back, in my final main section, to some further reflections on the parts of Romans between 1.1–17 and 15.7–13.

The passages I have just mentioned, and the rest of Romans 15, offer quite a full statement of Paul's aims and motivations, which are backed up by what we know of his actual habitual praxis (in other words, we have good reason to think that what he says to the Romans about his overall goals is not just a rhetorical smokescreen, but really does represent the way he thought). He believed himself to have a unique vocation from the God of Israel, the creator and covenant God, which put him in debt to the whole world, since it was his task to bring to the world the announcement that Jesus was Lord and that God had raised him from the dead. His developed strategy for obedience to this vocation involved the sustained work of proclamation and church development in Greece and Asia Minor, with Jerusalem and Antioch as his back markers; now it was time to move to Italy, Spain, and presumably (though he does not mention it) Gaul. His aim was to extend the rule of Jesus, the world's true Lord, planting cells of people loyal to Jesus, whose loyalty would be evidenced not least by their unity across traditional ethnic and cultural lines. To that end, he had taken a collection from gentile churches and was on his way to Jerusalem to give it to the Jewish Christians there; it was a powerful symbol that Jesus is Lord and that the principalities and

[21] See *New Testament and the People of God*, Part II, chs. 3—5; and *Jesus and the Victory of God*.

powers, who kept the world divided up into separate categories and allegiances, were not.

Paul's symbolic praxis as outlined in Romans 15 thus points to the controlling narrative out of which he was living, which can of course be checked against the various stories he tells, explicitly and implicitly, throughout his writings. We may trace six interlocking stories, working from the largest scale to the smallest. In each case, the story is about the one true God, revealed in climactic and decisive action in Jesus and the Spirit, challenging and defeating gods. It is, in other words, a Christian variation on regular second-Temple Jewish stories, confronting, as did many such stories, the world of paganism.

[**182**] The outer story that Paul tells frequently, not least in Romans, is the story of creation and new creation. This is the Jewish story of a good creator God bringing to birth a good creation, and then, when creation has been spoiled by the rebellion of humankind, accomplishing its rescue not by abandoning the old and starting afresh, but as an act of new creation out of the old. The resurrection of Jesus is, for Paul, the prototype of the new creation; the Spirit is the agent, already at work. Paul applies to the creation itself the motif of the exodus, of redemption from slavery.

The second story is the covenantal narrative from Abraham, through Moses and the prophets, to the Messiah, and on to the mission of the covenant God to the wider non-Jewish world. Again, this is seen classically in Romans, particularly in 9.6—10.21, but is everywhere presupposed and frequently alluded to. As with the story of creation, the covenant story is of God's original design spoiled by sin, this time by the rebellion of the covenant people, highlighted and exacerbated by the law. But, once more, God's solution is not to destroy and start from scratch, but to redeem through the new exodus, which has been accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit.

The third story is that of Jesus himself. Paul notoriously has little to say about the life of Jesus prior to the crucifixion, but there should be no doubt that he regarded Jesus' public career as messianic; the resurrection alone would not have been sufficient to convince him that someone was the Messiah unless it vindicated what had gone before. Every time Paul tells the story of Jesus' death and resurrection it comes out differently, but the constant note is, as he says in the summary tradition in 1 Corinthians 15, that it took place 'according to the scriptures'. What he means by this is not just that these events fulfilled a few specific prophecies, but that they brought the long story of Israel to its God-ordained climax and goal, in both its positive aspects (focused especially on the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham) and its negative aspects (focused especially on the ambiguous role of the law). The narrative of Jesus is, for Paul, the supreme revelation of the one true God. In the gospel, God's justice and love are revealed definitively and decisively. This is again, of course, central to Romans (3.21–26; 5.6–10).

In the complex relation of this third narrative to the first two we find the heart of what can loosely be called Paul's atonement-theology; but we also find, in one of the most powerful moves within the fresh perspective I am

proposing, Paul's treatment of the cross as the means of the defeat of the powers. As everyone in the Roman world knew well, the cross already had a clear symbolic meaning; it meant that Caesar ruled the world, with cruel death as his ultimate, and regular, weapon.[22] For Paul, throughout his writings, the cross is far more than simply the means whereby individual sins are forgiven, though of [**183**] course it is that as well. It is the means whereby the powers are defeated and overthrown (1 Corinthians 2.6–8; Colossians 2.13–15). The resurrection demonstrates that the true God has a power utterly superior to that of Caesar. The cross is thus to be seen, with deep and rich paradox, as the secret power of this true God, the power of self-giving love which (as Jesus said it would) subverts the power of the tyrant (Mark 10.35–45).

The fourth story Paul tells is the story of the church, the renewed people of God in Christ. In one sense, of course, this is an aspect of the second story: the church is not something other than the multi-ethnic family God promised to Abraham. But Paul also, I think, tells this story as complete in itself, because in the present age of inaugurated eschatology, living between Jesus' resurrection and his final reappearing, the church goes through its own complete cycle of call, mission, suffering, struggle and vindication. The very existence of the church is an affront to the principalities and powers in general (Ephesians 3.10) and to Caesar in particular, because here within his empire is a growing group of people giving allegiance to a different lord – as Luke says, to 'another king' (Acts 17.7). The church, through its exodus-shaped life (1 Corinthians 10.1–13), is also a revelation of the true God. Paul's strong pneumatology, which he does not retract in the face of muddle, sin and rebellion in the Corinthian church, ensures that he sees the very existence, let alone the obedient life, of the church as a vital sign to the world of who its rightful God and Lord now are.

The fifth story is that of the individual Christian. (We may note in passing how narrow has been the focus of much study of Paul, limited to stories 3 and 5, with only occasional glances at 1, 2 and 4.) The call of each person to hear the gospel, and to respond in believing obedience, is vital to Paul, even though what he means by 'justification' is hardly what the majority of Christian theologians have meant by that term since at least Augustine. The story Paul tells about how people become Christians is clear at several points. The gospel is preached – that is, Jesus is announced as the risen Lord of the world – and God's power is thereby unleashed, through the Spirit, who causes some hearers, no doubt to their surprise, to believe it (see, e.g., 1 Corinthians 12.3; 1 Thessalonians 1.4–5; 2.13). Their submission to Jesus as Lord is expressed in the new-exodus symbolism of baptism, which by its link to Jesus' death and resurrection is understood as bringing them 'into Christ', that is, into the Messiah's people (Romans 6.1–11; 1 Corinthians 10.1–2; Galatians 3.26–29). They are thereby not only given secure promises of future salvation (Romans 8.29–30; Philippians 1.6), but also charged with responsibilities and obligations in the present, including that of undergoing the suffering which

[22] See, e.g., Hengel 1977.

will result from thus standing with the true God against the powers (Romans 8.31–39; Philippians 1.29–30; 1 Thessalonians 3.3). And at every moment in this story they are turning away from the idols of their pagan past to serve a living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1.9–10); which must have meant, for many of Paul's hearers as for his successors in the following centuries, turning away from the Caesar-[**184**]cult and worshipping Jesus instead. Finally, all must appear before the *bēma tou theou* or *tou Christou*, the 'judgment seat', at which the true Lord, as opposed to Caesar and his delegated officers, would preside, justice would be seen to be done, and those who had already been declared to be God's people on the basis of faith alone would have that declaration ratified in the final act of their being raised from the dead, and so 'saved' from the ultimate powers and 'justified', found to be in the right, before the final court.[23]

Controversially but crucially, when Paul uses the language of 'justification' he is not referring to this whole process, this *ordo salutis*. Rather, he is referring to God's declaration about those who believe the gospel (confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead, as in Romans 10.9; cf. 4.24–25). This faith is the solitary badge which marks out who belongs to God's renewed, eschatological people; any attempt to propose other badges leaves the 'powers' still in charge. This divine declaration in the present only makes sense because it is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus in the past, and because it looks forward to the future judgment at which there will be 'no condemnation' for these same people because of what the Holy Spirit has done in their lives.[24] Those whom God justified, God has also glorified (Romans 8.30). This is the basic meaning of justification by faith; this is how, in Romans, Galatians and elsewhere, it can be integrated with the fresh perspective I am proposing. The 'faith' because of which God justifies (in this sense) is a believing loyalty which upstages that demanded by Caesar; the 'judgment' which will be issued at the last day, and which is anticipated in present 'justification', is by the one God, through the one Lord, as opposed to that meted out within Caesar's system. The 'gospel' through which the Spirit works powerfully to bring people to this believing obedience, this loyalty, and so to justification, is the true gospel as opposed to that of Caesar. The true gospel focuses on the crucifixion of the Messiah as opposed to being backed up by the crucifixion of Caesar's opponents.

The sixth story I have already told, but I recapitulate to make it clear. It is the story of Paul himself as, at one level, an agent of new creation; at another, the minister of the new covenant; at another, a member of Christ's body; at another, the founder of the gentile church; at another, a classic example of both a converted Jew and a converted human being, the unique apostle to the gentiles. Paul sees his own story of mission and suffering, and his expectation of vindication, as revelations in action of the true God, and as embodiments of the exodus, through both of which the false gods – including now the idolatry of Israel's own ethnic status and pride – are confronted and rebuked.

[23] Rom. 2.1–16; 14.10–12; 2 Cor. 5.9–10.
[24] See again Rom. 2.7, 10, 26–29; 8.1–17.

[**185**] Paul's narrative world thus integrates what theologians and historians of religion have regularly held apart, including indeed aspects which both have marginalized or ignored completely. The hardest question for the fresh perspective to face is: how can this be integrated with the traditional topics of Pauline theology (justification, the law, Christology, and so forth)? I believe that through this means, of worldview analysis and particularly narrative analysis, a way may be found towards a fuller answer, to which I shall presently return. Paul's stories are all God-stories, confronting and subverting the stories of other gods; they all focus on Jesus and the Spirit, and on the new exodus, itself the unveiling of God's sovereign power over the gods.

The symbols of Paul's worldview are the outward and visible points at which the characteristic stories and praxis find expression. Preaching the gospel, baptism, the eucharist, the collection, the coming together of Jew and gentile in one body – all of these and more must count as symbols, signs within the world that a different God is at work, warnings to the powers that their time is up. That is why each of these arouses fierce opposition. To explore this would take us too far afield, but we must note that just as the Lord's Supper was seen by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10—11 as the reality of which the pagan temple meals were the parody, so the summons to Jew and gentile alike to worship Jesus as the ruler of all nations must be seen, from Paul's point of view, as the reality of which Caesar's grandiose claims were also the parody. And since that summons was absolutely central to all that Paul was and did, we must also declare that at the symbolic level, as well as at the level of praxis and narrative, his challenge to Caesar was central and decisive. When Polycarp of Smyrna refused the oath a hundred years later, he was being a true follower of Paul.[25]

How would Paul answer the five key world-view questions that comprise the level of theory?

1 Who are we? We are the people of God in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit. We are the renewed Israel, the people of the new covenant. We are those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead. And this defines us over against those who worship other gods, and other lords.
2 Where are we? We are in God's good creation – citizens now not of a particular country so much as of the world that God is going to make, where we shall share the rule of the Lord Jesus. We are living, as it were, in a house that is being rebuilt around us, though there is yet to come a final moment of rebuilding on a scale hitherto unimaginable. We are part of the Jewish movement designed by God to spread to the ends of the earth. Our location is defined not by Caesar's empire but by God's creation and covenant. [**186**]
3 What's wrong? Though Jesus' resurrection has ushered in the new creation, we live between that event and the redemption still awaited by ourselves and the rest of the world; and, since most of the world still

[25] See *Mart. Pol.* 8–12.

does not acknowledge Jesus as Lord, we are persecuted. We ourselves, too, are not yet perfect, but live in the tension between what we are already, in Christ and by the Spirit, and what we shall be when Jesus appears again and when his work in us is complete. Caesar still rules the world, despite Jesus' enthronement as its rightful Lord.

4 What's the solution? The work of the Spirit, in the present and the future, will put into practice, for us and for the whole cosmos, what has been accomplished in Christ. God will put the world to rights, achieving at last what Caesar claimed to have done.

5 What time is it? We live in the overlap of the ages: the age to come has already broken in in Jesus, but the present age still continues. A great crisis is looming shortly, involving fierce suffering and worldwide convulsion, from which the church will emerge stronger; and one day, though nobody knows when, Jesus will reappear, when God finally remakes the cosmos. The Roman world is tottering; only God's kingdom will last.

Out of praxis, story, symbol and theory there emerge not only aims and motivations, at which we have already glanced, but also explicit beliefs, or theology. Paul's theology can best be understood as the radical revision, in the light of Jesus and the Spirit, of the triple Jewish beliefs of monotheism, election and eschatology. Just as each element of the Jewish theology Paul is modifying already stood over against the principalities and powers, so too, in his revision, each element continues to confront the powers of the world.

The Jewish belief in one God was always a polemical doctrine over against pagan idolatry. In some of its greatest expressions this opposition is explicit: the exodus was God's victory over the gods and pharaoh of Egypt, and the revelation of God's saving righteousness in Isaiah 40—55 meant the overthrow of Babylon, its rulers and its gods. Jews of the first century, especially hard-line Pharisees, would have had no difficulty in rereading these texts and others like them in relation to the victory of the true God over first-century paganism in general and the Caesar-cult in particular. The Wisdom of Solomon offers an instructive parallel. Paul, drawing upon these sources and rereading them around Jesus Christ and the Spirit, has given them new focus and application, and has thereby launched a movement in which the heirs of Israel's scriptures would confront paganism with a new weapon, looking for a new kind of victory. Paul's high Christology and pneumatology, controversially forming the basis of the later doctrine of the Trinity, were designed as a way of giving Jewish monotheism a new focus and polemical power against the pagan gods, especially Caesar. Recognizing this raises interesting [**187**] questions about what is really going on in the regular attempts to deny Paul's high Christology.[26]

The Jewish belief in the election of Israel to be the people of the one true God was always, likewise, a polemical doctrine over against pagan idolatry. The Torah, Israel's covenant charter, is from one point of view a lengthy

[26] Cf., again, 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire' [reprinted as chapter 12 in the present volume].

elaboration of what it means to have no gods but YHWH alone. Paul's radical revision of the doctrine of election, focusing on justification by faith apart from works of Torah and on the creation in Christ and by the Spirit of the one body, the worldwide church, is simultaneously a challenge to all the powers, from Babylon to Rome, that tried to create new empires which gave unity, peace and justice to the wider world. For him, the intention of Torah is fulfilled in Christ and by the Spirit; those who are defined as God's people in this renewed way are thereby defined over against the peoples who give allegiance to false gods, emperors included. The reflex of Paul's revision – the continuing debate and sometimes bitter controversy with unbelieving Judaism, and with right-wing Jewish Christians – must be seen as just that, the reflex of his mission to the world, not as the centre in its own right of his theological understanding and endeavour.

Finally, the Jewish belief in the coming age when God's righteousness would be unveiled in action, vindicating Israel, defeating pagan wickedness, and putting the whole world to rights, was always likewise a polemical doctrine over against paganism. One only has to think of Daniel to see how this played out. For Paul, the decisive revelation had already taken place in Jesus Christ, and his death and resurrection, through whom the age to come had been inaugurated; and the Spirit was now at work to complete what had been begun (through the resurrection) in the world, and (through the preaching of the gospel) in human beings. The Day of the Lord had split into two: the day which happened at Easter, and the day which was yet to come when Jesus reappeared and the cosmos was finally liberated.[27] This radical revision of the Jewish doctrine was, like the rest, designed to enable Paul and his hearers to stand boldly and cheerfully as Christians despite the rage of the powers, including Caesar's henchmen.

The fresh perspective I am proposing is not, then, an odd extraneous feature which might have crept in by accident, or might be read in by mistake, in Paul's thinking. Polemic against the powers, and against the blaspheming emperor-cult in particular, is to be expected precisely because of those Jewish traditions to which Paul was heir and which he reshaped around the gospel.[28] How, finally, might this work out in a reading of Romans, with which we began?

[188] New Creation, New Covenant: The Heart of Romans

In conclusion, I want to draw attention to key features of Romans which show, I believe, that the initially surprising fresh reading of its opening and closing are not accidental, but inform the whole – without detracting in any way from all the other things that Romans is about.

The centre of Romans, arguably, is the double climax of chapters 8 and 11. I cannot here go into the complex relation between the different sections

[27] Cf. 1 Cor. 15.20–28.

[28] On continuing subversive themes within Jewish mystical literature, see Alexander 1991.

of the letter; I simply comment that chapters 5—8 are a kind of formal centre, the tightly compressed driving motor for the rest, which energizes the discussions of major issues facing the Roman church in 9—11 and 12—15. Chapters 1—4 prepare the way for 5—8 in one way, and for 9—11 and 12—15 in other ways.

There should be no doubt that Romans 8 forms one of the climactic moments of all Paul's writing. It stands to the letter, and perhaps to his thought as a whole, like the climax of the Jupiter symphony to the preceding movements and, in a measure, to Mozart's oeuvre as a whole. And the main thrust of Romans 8 – marginalized, ironically, in much Protestant exegesis! – is the renewal of all creation by God's great act of new exodus. The cosmos itself will be redeemed, set free from slavery, liberated to share the freedom of the glory of God's children. God's children in turn have their inheritance, the new covenant equivalent of the promised land, in this entire new world. They will therefore, as Romans 5 stresses, share the reign of Jesus over the whole new world.[29] This, I suggest, cannot be other than subversive when set as the climax of a letter to the small struggling church in Rome, whose emperor claimed to rule the world, whose poets had sung of the new age of peace, freedom and prosperity that had come to birth through Augustus' defeat of all enemies. Though of course the vision of new creation is far more than a mere political polemic, in its context it must be seen as offering a vision which was bound to make other visions of world empire pale into insignificance as the cheap imitations they really were. God will put the world to rights; the *dikaiosynē theou* is that covenant faithfulness by which God will accomplish the new creation in which justice will triumph.

All is achieved, in Romans 5—8, by the love of God. David Aune has recently suggested, in his commentary on Revelation, that some Roman thinkers saw their city as having a secret name, the name of Rome spelled backwards, forming the word AMOR, love.[30] If this is so, Romans 5 and 8 could be more subversive again, claiming that true love is found in God's self-giving in [**189**] Christ, not in any aspect of Rome's civic pride or imperial achievements. But even if this is irrelevant, or at best an unproveable possibility, the theme of God's victory over the powers through his love revealed in Jesus, which forms the substance of the final paragraph of Romans 8, remains not only pastorally powerful but, in a world where crucifixions proclaimed that the power of death was the way to rule the world, politically of enormous importance. Anyone taking Romans 8.31–39 as their motto would be able to stand up to Caesar, knowing that he could only do that which tyrants normally do, while the true God had already revealed a weapon more powerful still, in the love seen on the cross and in the power seen in the resurrection.

Romans 1.18—4.25 is, of course, the classic statement of the revelation of God's covenant faithfulness, his saving justice, in and through the death of

[29] We should not overlook, in this context, the remarkable promises that God's people in Christ will 'reign' (*basileuein*) (5.17). To be sure, the main contrast here is with the reign of death; but any hint at a *basileus* other than Caesar is fighting talk in the Roman empire, as Luke knew well (Ac. 17.7).

[30] Aune 1998, 926–7.

Jesus, against the background of a world in rebellion and of the failures of God's covenant people. By itself this does not appear to be explicitly subversive, except in the general sense that if this is how the creator God has accomplished his purpose, he has clearly upstaged the ambitions of Caesar. (We might note that in 4.13 Paul speaks almost casually about Abraham's family 'inheriting the world', anticipating the conclusion of 8.18–27.)[31] But since this is one of the passages in which 1.1–17 is spelled out more fully, and a key move on the way to Romans 8, we may say that the saving death of Jesus, for Paul, unveils not just the plan of salvation for individual sinners, but God's overthrow of all the powers of the world. That, indeed, is why already in 3.21–31 and 4.1–25 a major emphasis is the unity of Jew and gentile in the covenant family on the basis of the same faith, the same loyalty to God's action in Jesus.

Romans 9—11 deals, of course, with a very specific issue, to which questions of Caesar and Rome seem at first sight irrelevant. We must not become so keen on coded meanings that we miss the main thrust of the text.[32] However, the long argument that God has in fact done, in Christ and through the gentile mission, that which he promised all along in the Scriptures is in itself, as we saw, a version of that Jewish election-theology which was designed to show that Israel is the true people of the one creator God. And the story of Abraham's two sons, and then of Isaac's two sons, and of tracing the true lineage through the right ones in each case, could not but strike a Roman hearer as remarkably similar to the great founding stories of Rome itself, going back to Romulus and Remus.[33] Paul is telling a much older story; like Josephus, he is suggesting that Rome's stories are upstaged by the far more antique Jewish story of origins.

[**190**] Thus, though his main purpose is to explain to gentile Christians in Rome that they must not look down on Jewish non-Christians, part of that very argument, weaning them away from any latent pride in being Roman rather than Jewish, is so to tell the Jewish story, albeit then with its radical Christian modification, that the great story of Rome itself is subverted.

A final word is necessary about Romans 13 in particular. Romans 13.1–7 has of course long been regarded as the one point at which Paul nods in the direction of Caesar, and the nod appears quite respectful. This, obviously, I consider radically misleading. There are six points to be made.[34]

First, the fact that Paul needs to stress the need for civil obedience itself tells fairly strongly, if paradoxically, in favour of my overall case. It implies that, without some such restraining counsel, some might have heard his teaching to imply that the church was to become a Christian version of the Jewish 'fourth philosophy', owing allegiance to no one except God and

[31] See 'New Exodus, New Inheritance: The Narrative Substructure of Romans 3—8' [reprinted as chapter 11 in the present volume].

[32] On coded political polemic within first-century theological writing, see esp. Goodenough 1967.

[33] On the connection between Esau and Rome, see, e.g., Hengel 1989, 309; Feldman 1993, 493.

[34] It is sadly impossible to enter here into debate with the many scholars, including some in this book, who have written importantly on this passage. A fuller statement of my present position is found in my NIB commentary.

therefore under obligation to rebel violently against human rulers, and to refuse to pay taxes. The paragraph can therefore be seen, not as evidence that Paul would not have been saying anything subversive, but that he had been, and now needed to make clear what this did, and particularly what it did not, imply.[35]

Second, to say that the ruler is answerable to God is itself a Jewish point over against pagan ruler-cult. Caesar did not, normally, owe allegiance to anyone except himself, and perhaps, though at a surface level, the traditional Roman gods. Paul declares, with massive Jewish tradition behind him, that Caesar is in fact responsible to the true God, whether or not he knows it. This is an undermining of pagan totalitarianism, not a reinforcement of it.

Third, the power and duty of the ruler *qua* ruler is emphasized in the context of the prohibition against personal vengeance at the end of the previous chapter (12.19–21). What Paul says at this point belongs on the map of one of the regular theories as to why magistracy matters: without it, everyone will take the law into their own hands. This fits closely with the following points.

Fourth, Paul's underlying point is that the victory of the true God is not won by the normal means of revolution. Rome could cope with revolutions; she could not cope, as history demonstrated, with a community owing imitative allegiance to the crucified and risen Jesus. God did not intend that the church should be the means of causing anarchy, of refusing normal civic responsibilities; anarchy simply replaces the tyranny of the officially powerful with the tyranny of the unofficially powerful, the bullies and the rich. The real overthrow of pagan power comes by other means.

[**191**] Fifth, if in Romans 9—11 Paul is concerned with Christian attitudes to non-Christian Jews, in 12—15 he is concerned with mutual relationships within the church itself. He almost certainly knew of the riots in the late 40s, *impulsore Chresto*;[36] this kind of behaviour, he says, is to be avoided. Though the church does indeed give allegiance to another king, this allegiance must not be seen by the watching powers to result in civic disturbance, in strife between different sections of a community. God is the God of order, not chaos; the Christian response to tyranny is not anarchy but the creation of a community worshipping Jesus as Lord.

Sixth, as the succeeding passage makes clear, Paul wants the Roman Christians to live appropriately in the tension between present and future. This does not mean, as Paul's own example bears out, that one must be politically quiescent or repressed until the final reappearing of Jesus. Preaching and living the gospel must always mean announcing and following Jesus, rather than Caesar, as the true Lord. But the eschatological balance must be kept. The church must live as a sign of the coming complete kingdom of Jesus Christ; but since that kingdom is characterized by peace, love and joy it cannot be inaugurated in the present by chaos, hatred and anger. This, I think, is what motivates Paul in Romans 13.1–7.

[35] I owe this point to Dr David Wenham, in conversation.

[36] The phrase is from Suetonius, *Claud*. 25.4. Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 354.

Conclusion

When we set Paul's gospel, not least the letter to the Romans, against the context of the widespread and increasing Caesar-cult of his day, with all that it implied, we discover a fresh perspective, a new angle on familiar passages, which informs and to an extent modifies traditional readings.

This is not to suggest in any way – to anticipate the most obvious criticism! – that the major theological or religious subject matter of Romans has been set aside or relativized. On the contrary. The critique of the powers which Paul has in mind depends precisely on a thoroughgoing and well worked out theology, not least a very high Christology and a strong doctrine of justification, and is fortified by the explicitly Christian religion from which and to which Paul writes. To show how this works out – to integrate Paul's explicit and implicit polemic against paganism in general, the powers in particular, and the Caesar-cult especially, within his wider theology and exegesis – is a long and complicated task. I hope I have shown that it is both necessary and fruitful.

Chapter Seventeen

COMMUNION AND *KOINONIA*: PAULINE REFLECTIONS ON TOLERANCE AND BOUNDARIES (2002)

Originally delivered as a paper at the *Future of Anglicanism Conference*. Oxford 2002. Not previously published.

This piece was given as a lecture to a conference, and I have allowed it to remain in the oral form, complete with some very specific remarks about the situation faced by Anglicans at the point of archiepiscopal transition between George Carey and Rowan Williams. I was then a member of the International Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, through which I became aware that in many of the issues facing the Anglican Communion people were simply talking past one another, and that reference to scripture, not least to the writings of Paul, was regularly missing points which seemed to me then, and seem to me still, of great importance. I should perhaps add that my discussion of contemporary culture here is very much oriented to the 'first world' of the modern West. One African participant in the conference took me severely to task for the implicit cultural imperialism of describing modern Western culture as though it was the only thing that mattered. My only possible response was, and is, that we can only understand the pressing problems which the Anglican Communion (in company with many other churches) is currently facing if we see how they emerge from within, and bear the marks of, that modern Western culture. Of course, my comments on specific issues here are likewise in the mode of a lecture, not of a full academic discussion.

* * *

Introduction: Paul's Context

From the very beginning, the church was faced with the problem of different cultures coming together. Even in the earliest days, when all Christians were Jews, there were Greek-speaking Jews and Hebrew- (or Aramaic-) speaking Jews, and problems arose between them. Even during the public career of Jesus, there were different reactions to him, including among his own followers, and we may suppose that these were sometimes to do with what we would call culture just as much as they may have been to do with

personality, preference, temperament, level of faith, and so forth. Once the Christian message reached the gentile world, not least in a swirling pluralistic metropolis like Antioch, all the cultures of the Orient would be jostling together, and the impact of this rich mixture on the church was bound to be considerable.

Coping with a pluralist environment was not, of course, anything new for Jews, and early Christianity remained very firmly Jewish. Diaspora Judaism had faced the challenge of the pagan environment for many centuries; nor was there an iron curtain screening off Palestine from pagan influences. 'Galilee of the gentiles' may have been home to many zealous and Torah-observant Jews, but it also contained many gentile institutions, and, ever since the time of Alexander the Great, Hellenistic culture had been the backdrop for ordinary life in the Middle East. Sometimes this culture had forced itself on Judaism, as under Antiochus Epiphanes, persuading some to compromise their Judaism, to go along with the pagan ways, and others to take to the hills, plot revolt, and prepare for martyrdom. The folk memory of this and other clashes was alive and well in the first century, not least among those who, like Saul of Tarsus, were 'zealous for Torah'.

The problem of what counts as compromise, what is perfectly acceptable, what must be resisted at all costs, and what you may get away with for a while but should expect to tidy up sooner or later – all of this is therefore familiar ground to most Jews of the first century, certainly those who did any travelling. And that, of course, is what Paul spent a lot of time doing, living for a while not only in Antioch but also in Ephesus and Corinth, with shorter stays in other places around the Mediterranean and Aegean seaboard. He was thoroughly familiar with the different customs of different places, and with the problems of Christian behaviour that arose from them. His letters, particularly those to Corinth, reflect exactly this set of questions, and are a goldmine for those prepared to work at finding out what he really had to say.

One theme of Paul's letters, particularly those to Corinth and Rome, is his emphasis on the need to tolerate, within the Christian fellowship, those who have different opinions on contentious issues. First Corinthians 8—10 and Romans 14 stand out here; though, from a somewhat different angle, Galatians 2 is also extremely relevant, and as we shall see Colossians 2 and 3 need to be factored into the picture as well. But it clearly will not do to simply say that Paul advocates 'tolerance' and leave it at that. In the same letters there are a good many passages in which he shows himself robustly intolerant of all kinds of types and modes of behaviour. How can we give an account of this? Was Paul just inconsistent, trying to get people to put up with one another's foibles but insisting that his prejudices at least were sacrosanct?

This highlights our central theme, which is *koinonia*, 'fellowship' or 'partnership', and what it means in practice. Paul is our earliest Christian writer. He preached the gospel in a radically plural world, with every variety of culture, religion, politics, and ethics. He did indeed insist on justification by faith, and on the unity of Jew and gentile, and by implication everyone else too, in Christ. What did he mean by this? What was the basis of his

'tolerance'? How do we explain the times when, despite urging tolerance and unity, he lays down firm rules, even to the extent of insisting that people who break them should be put out of Christian fellowship?

Perspectives on Paul, the Law, 'Tolerance' and Ethics

As most of you will know, there has been a remarkable shift of opinion in Pauline scholarship over the last generation. The massive though uneven work of Ed P. Sanders, mainly in his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), heralded what was quickly called 'the new perspective on Paul'. The very phrase has become something of a red rag to several bulls over the last two or three years, and this is not the time to enter into the current debate in any detail. I want to state two things very clearly: first, that the so-called New Perspective on Paul, with its main exponents as Sanders and Dunn, has made two or three important, accurate and theologically fruitful points; second, that it has also got quite a lot of things wrong, and has in certain cases not followed through its own insights where they properly should have gone. I am thus a critical insider to the New Perspective, supporting some of its main thrusts but remaining deeply critical at certain other points. If you want to see how this works out in practice, read my new commentary on Romans in volume 10 of the *New Interpreter's Bible*. It simply won't do to wave the New Perspective away, as some have tried to do, and to go back to Martin Luther as though he solved all our problems. Luther got some things gloriously right and other things gloriously wrong. If, for instance, you have to choose between Luther and Calvin in New Testament theology, in my judgment you should normally go with Calvin; that, in fact, was where I myself came in, wrestling with Charles Cranfield's essentially Calvinistic interpretation of Paul and Romans, knowing that it was superior to the Lutheran and evangelical commentaries I was used to, but discovering at an exegetical level it didn't quite work. It was in that context, in the mid 1970s, that I read Sanders, and found that, though there was much I didn't agree with at the time and still don't, there was also much that was helpful in the essential task: allowing the text to speak for itself, instead of imposing our traditions upon it.

So what are the true insights of the 'New Perspective', and how may they help us in thinking about *koinonia*, tolerance, and related issues?

The main thrust of Sanders's work, which I endorse, is that first-century Judaism was not a system of Pelagian-style works-righteousness. First-century Jews were not imagining that they had to earn 'righteousness', that is, basic membership in God's people, membership in the covenant, through doing moral good deeds. They did not regard the Torah, the Jewish law, as a ladder of good works up which they had to climb, with salvation as the reward at the top. On the contrary. As any good Calvinist could have told Sanders, they regarded the Torah as a good, lovely, God-given thing, not a ladder of good works for eager merit-earners, but the way of life for the people already redeemed. God chose Israel; God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt by an act of sheer grace and power; and God then gave Israel the Torah, not to

earn their status with God but to demonstrate it. Now it is true, of course, that the Mishnah and Talmud, the codified commentaries and elaborations on Torah-keeping which grew up over the half-millennium after Paul's day, do indeed look like the kind of casuistical law-mongering which many people think of today when they hear the word 'legalism'. But Sanders's point here stands, despite many attempts to dislodge it. The main motive for keeping the law in Judaism was not to earn membership in the people of God, or justification or salvation, but to express one's gratitude for it, to demonstrate one's membership, and ultimately to become the sort of person God clearly intended you to become. In Lutheran terms, it was *tertius usus legis*. In Calvinist terms, this was why God gave the law in the first place.

What then about the famous Pauline phrase, 'works of law'? Here the second insight of the 'New Perspective' comes into play, which I shall argue is the key one for discussion we need in today's Anglican communion in discussions of *koinonia*, tolerance, and boundaries. James Dunn has argued strongly, following the line of thought which I myself pioneered but taking it a stage further, that 'the works of the law', which Paul declares do not justify, are not general moral principles (a 'law' in that sense), but 'the works of the law' which marked out Jews from their pagan neighbours. They are, in other words, circumcision, the food laws, and the sabbaths – the three things which every Jew in the ancient world, and many pagans in the ancient world too, knew were the boundary-markers between Jews and pagans. The point in keeping these was to say, 'We are Jews, not pagans outside the Torah. We are God's people; he has made his covenant with us; we are called to be the light of the world, and by keeping God's law we will keep ourselves separate from the world and show the world who God really is'.

The third insight which I myself bring to, and take from, the New Perspective has to do with Paul's critique of Israel. Paul's critique of Israel is not that Israel is guilty of the kind of legalism of which Augustine criticized Pelagius, or Luther criticized Erasmus. Certainly Paul is not accusing Israel of the half-hearted moralistic Pelagianism of which, it used to be said, the average Englishman was guilty most of the time, doing a few good deeds now and then and hoping God would notice and give him a pat on the back at the end of the day. (There aren't so many people like that around today, as you may have noticed.) Rather, Paul is criticizing Israel, his own former self included, for saying that God was exclusively Israel's God. Israel, he says, is ignorant of God's righteousness, and is seeking to establish her own, a 'righteousness' which would be for Jews and Jews only; whereas, in Jesus the Jewish Messiah, and by the cross and resurrection, God has thrown open covenant membership, 'righteousness', to all who believe (Romans 10.1–4).

This is a very brief account of three points where I believe the New Perspective has its finger on a key issue which is of enormous help exegetically and theologically. It does not, as is sometimes suggested, mean losing anything from the cutting edge of the gospel as we have traditionally understood it; on the contrary, it sharpens it up. But there is no time to develop this here. Rather, I want to indicate the enormous gain, precisely for the debates which face us in the Anglican Communion, in understanding Paul

this way. The point is this: when Paul appeals for 'tolerance' in the church, the issues over which he is saying there should be no quarrels are precisely the issues where there were cultural boundary-markers, especially between Jewish and gentile Christians. He is not being arbitrary in selecting some apparently 'ethical' issues to go soft on, while remaining firm on others. The things about which Christians must be prepared to agree or disagree are the things which would otherwise divide the church along ethnic lines.

This point is sometimes missed because of the clever writing of the key chapter, Romans 14. Nowhere does Paul mention the words 'Jew' and 'gentile', though it eventually becomes explicit in the next chapter. He doesn't want them to focus on the fact that some of them are Jewish and others of them are gentile. He wants them to say to themselves, 'Some of us in this new movement are happy eating any meat at all, others prefer to stick to vegetables'. (If all the meat you could get in a pagan city had been sacrificed to idols, and if all the cheap meat you could get was pork, obviously people with Jewish scruples, or with tender consciences of young ex-pagan Christians converted after years of assiduous idol-worship, might well decide to go the vegetarian route instead.) 'Some of us', he wants them to say, 'like to observe special days in honour of the Lord; others of us are happy to treat all days the same way'. Then, in 1 Corinthians 7, he says, in effect, 'Some of us are circumcised and are happy to be that way; others of us are uncircumcised and should be happy to stay that way'. In all these things he wants Christians to stop thinking of themselves as basically belonging to this or that ethnic group, and to see the practices that formerly demarcated that ethnic group from all others as irrelevant, things you can carry on doing if you like but which you shouldn't insist on for others.

This, too, is what underlies the debate about justification and circumcision in Galatians 2. The question underneath the passage is not, 'do we have to perform good moral deeds in order to get to heaven?', but rather, 'are Jewish Christians allowed to sit down and eat at the same table as gentile Christians, when the latter have not been circumcised?' For Paul this is a central issue; the heart of the gospel is at stake. When Jesus Christ died and rose again he transformed the covenant people of God into a single, worldwide family for whom the only defining badge is faith, not just any old faith but the very specific faith that Jesus is risen from the dead as Messiah and Lord of the world. This, indeed, is the meaning of 'justification by faith'; that it is this faith, and this faith alone, that marks out God's people in the present time.

Making this distinction between 'works' in general, 'lawkeeping' in general if you like, and the more specific 'works' which mark the distinction between Jew and gentile, frees us once and for all from the tyranny of that vague liberalism which holds that Paul played 'faith' off against 'law' or 'works', and which then uses that as a way of avoiding the sharp edges of every ethical issue in sight. If you want to know why Paul insisted on tolerating some differences of opinion and practice within the people of God, and on not tolerating others, the answer is that the ones that were to be tolerated were the ones that carried the connotations of ethnic boundary lines, and the ones that were not to be tolerated were the ones that marked the difference between

genuine, living, renewed humanity and false, corruptible, destructive humanity. This is my shorthand for a range of issues which he deals with in several passages. I take one classic example, from Colossians.

In Colossians 2 Paul insists that the Jewish law has nothing to say to you if you are in Christ. If with the Messiah you died to the elements of the world, why should you submit to mere human regulations – touch not, taste not, handle not! These, he says, all have an appearance of wisdom and of promoting ascetic discipline, but they are of no real value. You don't need Jewish law, particularly food laws, in order to define who the people of God are and build them up as God's truly human people.

What then? Shall we do as we please? Certainly not! In Colossians 3 Paul instructs us to 'seek the things that are above'; and when he spells out what this will mean in practice the list in verses 5–11 boil down to two areas of life in particular: sexual malpractice, and anger, malice and so on. (It is interesting, and important for debates within our Communion that we note how he places these two side by side; there are many churches where immorality would not be tolerated but where anger and malice reign unchecked, just as there are many which are full of sweet tolerance and people being nice to each other but where immorality is rife and never rebuked.) The key to it all comes in verses 9–10: you have stripped off the old humanity with its practices, and have put on the new humanity, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. At this point there can be no dispute, no room for divergent opinions: no room, in other words, for someone to say 'some Christians practice fornication, others think it's wrong, so we should be tolerant of one another', or to say 'some Christians lose their tempers, others think it's wrong, so we should tolerate one another'. There is no place for immorality, and no place for anger, slander and the like. And then, immediately, as though to emphasize the point I'm making, Paul concludes the passage by saying (verse 11) that 'in that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but in Christ is all in all'. Paul is absolutely clear about the standards expected of the new humanity, and equally clear that distinctions relating to ethnic, social and cultural origin become irrelevant.

Of course, if someone were to say, 'Because I'm a Scythian, and we Scythians simply lose our tempers a lot, that's part of our culture', Paul would respond, 'Not now you're a Christian you don't'. If a Corinthian were to say, 'Because I'm a Corinthian, I have always had a string of girl-friends I sleep with, that's part of our culture', Paul would respond, 'Not now you're a Christian you don't'. This is where the word 'culture' lets us down, because it covers so many things. We need to make a clear distinction between the aspects of a culture which Paul regards as morally neutral and those which he regards as morally, or immorally, loaded. And we need to note carefully what Paul's reaction is when someone disagrees at either side of his balance. When Peter and the others tried to insist on keeping their Jewish distinctives, that is, only eating with other circumcised people, in Antioch, Paul resisted him to his face. The word 'tolerance' runs out of steam at this point. What mattered was the gospel, the message of the cross, the doctrine of justification by faith, the

promises to Abraham, the single family God intended to create in the Spirit. Like a great chess player, Paul saw all those pieces on the board threatened by this one move of Peter's to insist on maintaining Jewish boundary-markers, and he moved at once to head it off. And when someone disagreed with Paul's clear rules on immorality or angry disputes, the matters he deals with in Colossians 3.5–10, he is equally firm, as we see dramatically in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6. There is no place in the Christian fellowship for such practices and for such a person. Not for one minute does he contemplate saying, 'some of us believe in maintaining traditional taboos on sexual relations within prescribed family limits, others think these are now irrelevant in Christ, so both sides must respect the other'. He says, 'throw him out'.

I hope it is clear from all this that Paul is thinking with entire consistency. Of course, if we come to him with a less than adequate frame of reference, such a low-grade Protestant understanding which has downgraded free grace into cheap grace, it is easy to get muddled and then, projecting our problems onto Paul, to accuse him of the muddle, as though he had simply decided to hold onto some bits of an ethical code and go soft on other bits. No: when we get to know Paul better we see what is going on.

In particular, we may remind ourselves of the towering significance, in his thought, of Romans 6.1–11. Having just expounded the gospel of grace, God's rich, welcoming and forgiving love meeting us helpless sinners where we are (5.6–10), he faces the question: if God's grace meets while we are sinners, must we therefore stay as sinners so that God's grace can go on meeting us there? He knows the answer as soon as he has asked the question, but a great many people in today's church do not know it and cheerfully answer 'Yes!' instead. It is one of the most important principles of biblical ethics, and one trampled in the mud again and again in contemporary debate: that God's grace meets us where we are, but God's grace, thank God, does not leave us where we are; that God accepts us as we are, but that God's grace, thank God, is always a transforming acceptance, so that in God's very act of loving us and wooing our answering love we are being changed; and, more dramatically, in baptism and all that it means we are actually dying and rising, leaving one whole way of life and entering upon a wholly different one.

Let us hear no more, then, of the sub-Pauline idea that since we are justified by grace through faith there is no need for a life of holiness, and that to insist on one is to smuggle 'works' in by the back door. Another potential great gain of the so-called New Perspective, though not usually worked out by its major exponents, is the fact that it allows Paul's own emphasis on final judgment according to works, which he insists on again and again, to emerge into its proper light without damaging or endangering in any way the basic principle of justification by faith itself. (See, for instance, Romans 2.1–16; 14.10–12; 2 Corinthians 5.6–10; and compare, e.g., 1 Thessalonians 3.19–20; see my Romans commentary on the key passages.)

This, indeed, is the principle that underlies some of the most subtle and joined-up thinking in that subtle and joined-up letter 1 Corinthians. When Paul writes a long chapter on the resurrection of the body (chapter 15), this is not simply because he has been working through a long list of topics and

has now decided to deal with this one. It is because the resurrection of the body has been basic to his understanding throughout, not least his understanding of ethics, not least his view of sexual ethics. The argument of 1 Corinthians hinges on the fact that what you do with your body matters, since God intends to raise it from the dead. Paul faces moral relativism in this chapter and names it for what it is: it is dehumanizing and degrading. The body of the Christian is already the temple of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit will be God's agent in raising the body from the dead. The continuity, therefore, between the present body and the transformed, resurrected body lies at the heart of Paul's appeal here and elsewhere in the letter. When final judgment occurs, it will not be arbitrary; it is not the case that God has made up a list of rules upon some kind of whim. Final judgment will be according to genuine humanness, and genuine humanness is what truly reflects the image of God. That is why the language of image-bearing, and other related concepts, are found in Paul, at several key points. We have already noted Colossians 3.10, which is itself dependent on Colossians 1.15–20; and we should add Romans 8.29 and 2 Corinthians 4.1–6 as other obvious examples.

My argument, then, is that if we learn to read Paul aright, taking the best of contemporary scholarship while refusing some of the follies into which it sometimes falls, we have a sharp tool with which to understand why Paul says what he does about tolerance of different viewpoints on the one hand and why he says what he does about not tolerating immorality on the other hand. And this leads to my final section, in which I want to reflect on where we are as a culture in handling these issues, and then to say some Pauline things about three issues currently before us.

Current Issues in Pauline Perspective

Let me first reflect on our own cultural climate. The fact that our early twenty-first-century instinct is to analyze Paul in terms of prejudices and inconsistency shows well enough what sort of intellectual – or perhaps we should say anti-intellectual – climate we now live in within the Western church at least. We have allowed ourselves to say 'I feel' when we mean 'I think', collapsing serious thought into knee-jerk reactions. We have become tolerant of everything except intolerance, about which we ourselves are extremely intolerant. If someone thinks through an issue and, irrespective of his or her feelings on the subject, reaches a considered judgment that doing X is right and doing Y is wrong, they no sooner come out and say so than someone else will accuse them of phobia. If someone says stealing is wrong, we expect someone else to say, 'You only say that because you're kleptophobic'.

You will see easily enough where this argument is going. In order to have any serious discussion about ethical issues, we need to remind ourselves the whole time of the importance of Reason (along with, and obedient to Scripture and Tradition) as one strand of the classic threefold Anglican cord. The current

fashion for substituting 'experience', which all too easily means 'feeling', or 'reported feeling', is simply not the same sort of thing. Experience matters, but it doesn't belong in an account of authority; put it there, and the whole notion of 'authority' itself deconstructs before your very eyes.

Another major feature of our contemporary culture must be put on the table from the start. We are in the middle of a painful and complex transition, in the Western world at least, from what is often called 'modernism' to what is loosely called 'postmodernism'. In very broad, general terms, modernism was the philosophical and cultural movement that came from the European Enlightenment, and produced not only the French but also the American revolution. One of its primary moves was rebellion against authority – in the French case, against the church and crown, in the American case against England – and the proclamation of freedom against constraints of systems, including ethical systems, that were perceived to be outmoded, unnecessary or repressive. A great deal of our prevailing cultural, moral and political rhetoric still appeals to this matrix of thought, within which one of the greatest terms of abuse is of course 'mediaeval'.

This modernist/Enlightenment movement has produced large syntheses of thought, including the split, inherited from Deism, between God and the world, making religion a matter of private opinion and ethics a matter of private feeling (see above), and insisting that everybody's religion, and way of life, was more or less as good as everybody else's. At least, the Enlightenment insisted on this in theory; many prejudices remain intact in practice. That is another story. Equally, modernism has bequeathed us what now appears to most people a standard mode of political discourse, with a right/left split in which all kinds of political and even theological judgments are ranged across a spectrum in which, once you have discovered where someone is located on one issue, you can more or less guess what other views he or she will hold. This suggests, in fact, that these are not views which have been thought through, but are simply the assumed posture for someone who 'feels comfortable' (note the language) at that point. The Age of Reason has thus begotten the Age of Feeling, as Romanticism has taken a ride on the back of revolutionary thought. 'What Many of Us Feel' is thus elevated to the moral high-ground, without noticing that the Holocaust itself, that ethical (or anti-ethical) benchmark of the twentieth century, was perpetrated by people who were doing What Many of Them Felt.

Romanticism in turn has undergone a transition into existentialism, where the quest for personal authenticity has become self-justifying. Being true to oneself, discovering 'who I really am', 'getting in touch with my inner identity' and phrases like this have also become ways of claiming a moral position to which there is no allowed answer. If a murderer or child-molester turns out, on careful interviewing, to have been expressing and living out who he or she truly was, then of course we quietly demur and hope that there is a psychiatric ward secure enough, if it cannot cure them, to keep them off the streets. Our society does not choose to notice that there is no obvious break in this respect between different types of behaviour, some of which are deemed completely unacceptable socially and some of which are not. And we should

not be surprised that the rhetoric of existentialism has made room for a sharp rise, in the West, of a now very fashionable neo-gnosticism. Discover that you have an inner spark, underneath the layers of learned or imposed morality or convention, and then you must be true to it, whatever it takes, so that you can be truly free, truly yourself. Why do you think that the *Gospel of Thomas* has suddenly returned to vogue?

All of these – the age of reason, romanticism, existentialism – are in their various ways the products of the Enlightenment, and the revolutionary subtexts they carry continue to be powerful. Don't try to stop us going this way, they all say, or we will declare that you are taking us back to the feudal age, trying to imprison us within old-fashioned categories. You are being 'mediaeval'. It is important to say, right from the start, that none of these interesting lines of thought have very much to do with Christianity, with the gospel of Jesus Christ or with Christian behaviour. And it is also important to say that many people, not least in the Western world and church, do not realize this.

Over recent decades, modernism has had a bad press, particularly (and in my view rightly) because its grand scheme has allowed two centuries of Western imperialism to proceed unchecked, on the assumption that since we have come of age it was our duty to bring the benefits of our new-found wisdom to the rest of the world. This, it has now been said, times without number, has simply served to underscore the arrogance and greed of empire. The so-called masters of suspicion who arose within the Enlightenment project – Marx, Nietzsche and Freud – stuck pins into what looked like objective statements of facts and truth and discovered that they could usually be accused of being in someone's interests, whether sexual, political or financial. We now distrust everything, and indeed the erosion of trust within Western society has become such a feature that this year's Reith Lectures were devoted to the subject. The remarkable revelations about large-scale financial irregularities of some of the West's major companies makes one wonder how much further we have to go before we hit rock bottom and admit that we are all living simply by the law of the jungle.

Within this world, postmodernity has come to birth, overturning grand narratives ('metanarratives') by which people have ordered their lives and celebrating instead the small narratives, the little stories of this group or that, of this culture or that, claiming the right for them that they need not fit into anyone else's pattern, they must just be themselves. This too has become a fixed point of would-be moral discourse in Western culture: if I can claim that this is the way my culture does something, you have no right of reply. Hence the anguished debates among feminists, for instance, about female circumcision, with the feminist instincts all being to say that such a practice is degrading and damaging to women's rights and the postmodern instincts all being to say that if that's how they do things in that culture, we have no right to criticize. This is not to say, of course, that postmodernity has not elevated its own moral standards into high, lofty principles, to offend against which is to be instantly outcast. But that, though ultimately very relevant to our subject, must wait for later.

All of these cultural forces shape the way that Western persons have, for some time, been conditioning themselves to think and behave. These values are reinforced daily and hourly by the media, the movies, and the iconic celebrities of our culture. We should not be surprised when many within the churches conduct their discourse by appealing to these norms; it would take very serious Christian moral teaching to enable people to stand upright amidst these swirling hurricanes of fashionable opinion, and (with some notable exceptions) serious Christian moral teaching is not something we have had very much of in the West in recent years. In particular, much of the Western church has learnt, partly by explicit teaching and partly, I think, by a kind of happy-go-lucky blend of bits and pieces of Christian teaching and bits and pieces of the surrounding culture, a general attitude to faith and morals which functions as a low-grade, watered-down version of the gospel announced by Jesus himself and applied by Paul. I hardly need to quote anyone in particular on this, because you have all met it again and again: every other day in newspapers someone comes out with it. Jesus, people say, was a very inclusive person; he never excluded anyone. He preached, therefore, a grand tolerance and acceptance of people. He welcomed sinners and outcasts. He found the people on the margins and brought them in. This is brought together into the standard street-level version of liberal Protestantism, which in North America at least owes a certain amount to the half-understood (or perhaps more than half-understood?) Paul Tillich. 'Accept that you are accepted' is the gospel message: God loves you as you are, God accepts and welcomes you as you are. And the powerful second-order message for the church is therefore, 'God accepts people as they are, therefore you should accept them as they are'. You shouldn't impose artificial, old-fashioned, unnecessary, let alone (heaven help us!) 'mediaeval' restrictions on people.

If, within this culture, people think to appeal to the apostle Paul, which they often do not, they will not have much difficulty bringing him onside. Justification by faith was what Paul preached, after all, as opposed to justification by works of the law; therefore Paul cannot have intended that the old moral rules and regulations would clog up the works of the free-and-easy Christian church, celebrating its freedom in Christ and discovering its true identity. Justification by faith clearly means, once more, that God accepts us as we are; so the church has no right to impose anything else on people. They must be allowed to be themselves, to find themselves, to do their own thing, and we must indeed learn from their 'experience' as they do so. They must maintain the unity of the church at all costs. That is what Paul is supposed to stand for. And, if proof of this remarkable thesis is required, it can, it seems, be found: Paul insisted, after all, in both 1 Corinthians and Romans, that the 'weak' and the 'strong', those with radically different opinions about various different issues, should learn to defer to one another, and ultimately to live together in fellowship within one family. I hope I have said enough in the main section of this lecture to show that this way of reading Paul and early Christianity is entirely without foundation. We desperately need fresh and clear biblical thinking if we are to take on the casual assumptions of our culture, in both church and world, and point the way forward.

So to our three issues; and first, the issue of homosexual behaviour. It is, of course open to anyone to say, on the basis of my argument so far, that they regard the distinction between homosexual and heterosexual behaviour as one of those cultural distinctives which are irrelevant in the gospel; that homosexual behaviour simply is part of some cultures today, and that the church must respect, honour and bless it. You will not be surprised to know that I do not share this view. I am not an expert on current debates, and defer to two splendid books: Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, and Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. But I may perhaps, as a long-time specialist on the letter to the Romans, put in my small contribution.

Paul's denunciation of homosexual practice in Romans 1 is well known but not so well understood, particularly in relation to its place in the argument as a whole. It is too often dismissed as simply firing some Jewish-style thunderbolts against typical pagan targets; and it is regularly thought to be dealing only with the deliberate choice of heterosexual individuals to abandon normal usage and indulge in alternative passions. It is often said that Paul is describing something quite different from the phenomenon we know today, for example, in large Western cities.

This is misleading. First, Paul is not primarily talking about individuals at this point, but about the entire human race. He is expounding Genesis 1—3, and looking at the human race as whole, so here he is categorizing the large sweep of human history as a whole – not, of course, that any individuals escape this judgment, as 3.19f. makes clear. Second, the point of his highlighting of female and male turning away from natural usage to unnatural grows directly out of the text which is his subtext, here and often elsewhere: for in Genesis 1 it is of course male plus female that is created to bear God's image. The male-plus-female factor is not of course specific to humanity; the principle of 'male plus female' runs through a great deal of creation. But humans were created to bear God's image, and given a task, to be fruitful and multiply, to tend the garden and name the animals. The point of Romans 1 as a whole is that when humans refuse to worship or honour God, the God in whose image they are made, their humanness goes into self-destruct mode; and Paul clearly sees homosexual behaviour as ultimately a form of human deconstruction. He is not saying that everyone who discovers homosexual instincts has chosen to commit idolatry and has chosen homosexual behaviour as a part of that; rather, he is saying that in a world where men and women have refused to honour God this is the kind of thing you will find.

The fascinating thing is what Paul then does with this analysis of the plight of humankind. In Romans 4.18–22, when describing the way in which Abraham believed God and so was reckoned as righteous, Paul carefully reverses what has happened in Romans 1.18–23. Abraham believed that God had power to give life to the dead; he honoured God and did not waver in unbelief. That is why he is reckoned within the covenant, as 'righteous'. And the result, of course, is that Abraham and Sarah become fruitful. Romans 1 is not a detached denunciation of wickedness in general. It is carefully integrated into the flow of thought of the letter. (See too 7.4–6 for the contrast

between sinful lives which do not bear fruit, and life under the new covenant which does.) In particular, we may note the strong ethical imperatives of chapters 6, 8 and 12, in each of which, but particularly in 6.1–11 and 12.1–2, there are echoes both of Romans 1 and Genesis 1—3 which underlies it. Paul clearly believes that the application of the gospel to human lives produces new behaviour, renewed human behaviour, newly image-bearing behaviour. It is not using Romans 1 as a proof text, but as part of the tightly woven fabric of Paul's greatest letter, to say that he certainly regards same-sex genital behaviour as dehumanized and dehumanizing.

A footnote on sexual behaviour in Paul's world. If one looks at the ancient world there is of course evidence of same-sex behaviour in many contexts and settings. But it is noticeable that the best-known evidence comes from the high imperial days of Athens on the one hand and the high imperial days of Rome on the other (think of Nero, and indeed Paul may have been thinking of Nero). I have argued elsewhere against the view that Paul was quiescent politically, that he held a strong implicit and sometimes explicit critique of pagan empire in general and of Rome in particular; and clearly denunciation of pagan sexual behaviour was part of that (e.g. Philippians 3.19–21). I just wonder if there is any mileage in cultural analysis of homosexual behaviour as a feature of cultures which themselves multiply and degenerate in the way that great empires are multiply degenerate, with money flowing in, arrogance and power flowing out, systemic violence on the borders and systematic luxury at the centre. Part of that imperial arrogance in our own day, I believe, is the insistence that we, the empire, the West, America, or wherever, are in a position to tell the societies that we are already exploiting in a thousand different ways that they should alter their deep-rooted moralities to accommodate our newly invented ones. There is something worryingly imperial about the practice itself and about the insistence on everybody else endorsing it. It is often said that the poor want justice while the rich want peace. We now have a situation where two-thirds of the world wants debt relief and one-third wants sex. That is, I think, a tell-tale sign that something is wrong at a deep structural level.

Second, more briefly, a comment about authority in the church. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians he seemed to be able, quite cheerfully, to tell the church what to do, including giving instructions about expelling a notorious offender. Subsequently, according to 2 Corinthians, he made a painful visit to the church, and clearly found things not as he would have liked (2 Corinthians 1.23—2.11). Subsequently again, or perhaps at the same time, he became aware that there was a substantial body of opinion in the church, egged on by some newly arrived teachers, who were stirring up trouble and opposition against him. He addresses this issue in 2 Corinthians; and I want to tell you, having recently completed a translation of both the Corinthian letters, that 2 Corinthians is so different in writing style that I am quite surprised some enterprising scholar doesn't argue that Paul didn't write it. He has clearly been shattered in the exercise of his authority, but is continuing to exercise it through tears and prayers, with warning and irony. He has, of course, no official standing that would give him the legal means, in local

courts, of forcing his will on the church. He can only use moral persuasion. That puts him in a not dissimilar position to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has no official jurisdiction outside England – and precious little actual executive power here, if it comes to that. I grieve for George Carey; he has been put in a virtually impossible position, where all a bishop's instincts for unity are matched against all a pastor's proper instincts for holiness, but where he is able to act neither as bishop nor as pastor, but only as long-distance persuader. [This was of course in summer 2002; the same then had to be said of Rowan Williams, and may now need to be said about Justin Welby.] It seems to me that we are being called in our day to rethink, hammer out afresh, what precisely authority consists in, and how it works within differences of tone and style rather than of theological content. This gives me pause for thought as I reflect, too, on the difficult issues of authority and *koinonia* that we face in our community today. Let us not imagine that we simply have to quote 1 Corinthians and all will be well. We may have to live through the pain of 2 Corinthians as well.

This leads me, thirdly and finally, to plead with you that in taking a biblical line, as I hope you will in your consultations, you maintain the wisdom of the serpent as well as the innocence of the dove. We cannot and dare not rely on the old shibboleths of Left and Right, of radical and conservative, that we have assumed over the last two centuries. They are breaking down. In particular, I appeal to my American friends to realize the political spectrum within which they live is not the same as the many different ones within which the rest of us live. Do not assume that if you are what is called right-wing on this issue you will be what is called right-wing on everything else too. Do not make this part of a package of issues which will mean that many who might otherwise join with you find they cannot. There is a real danger that if those who campaign on the issue of homosexual behaviour are heard to be also denouncing moves to remit third-world debt, or are known to be staunch opponents of women's ordination, many who are eager to join you on this issue will turn away. As the Lambeth voting figures made clear, there must be many first-world bishops on both sides of the Atlantic who are not hard-line right-wingers, who are not 'the usual suspects' on every political issue that comes up, but who are heartland Episcopalians who know in their bones that the gay agenda is leading in the wrong direction and will quietly oppose it. There is such a thing as strident right-wing agenda, and if we tackle this issue as one aspect of that we will lose support, and understandably so.

Instead – I don't want to finish on a negative note, since I've been talking about Paul, who is always positive and always gospel-oriented – I cast my vote for a fresh and biblically based way forward towards a *koinonia* characterized by faith, in which ethnic distinctions become irrelevant precisely because, together, we are becoming one body, one new humanity, in Christ. Our Communion is at a crisis point which should also be a growth point. We clearly need to learn new things, and like a child growing to adulthood we may have to put away childish things and acquire some more adult ways of going about how we 'do' *koinonia*. We may have to renounce our somewhat easy-going and informal structures. It is clear that not many people in North

America want anyone east of the Atlantic to tell them what they can and cannot do, but they still want to be in Communion with Canterbury, and part of the task of the International Doctrine Commission, which I and others here belong to, is to hammer out what that means. But, as I say, I regard the present crisis, with its various different dimensions, as the kind of thing a Christian must expect from time to time, and must meet with courage, prayer, celebration of the gospel and a holy boldness in going forward to places we may not yet have been. I don't know whether I am optimistic or pessimistic about where we are, and indeed I think those categories, like left and right in politics, may be far too over-simple. The late great Lesslie Newbigin was once asked whether he was an optimist or a pessimist about the future of the church; and I close with his reply, which I make my own. I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist, he said; Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

Part III

Durham

Chapter Eighteen

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PAUL (2003)

Paper delivered at the 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 25–28 August 2003. Originally published in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges* (ed. Bruce L. McCormack; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 243–64. Reprinted with permission.

This conference took place in between my consecration as Bishop of Durham and my enthronement in Durham Cathedral, and a few days after I had walked the final stretch of 'Cuthbert's Way', the path my distant predecessor had taken to get from Melrose in the Scottish Borders to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. I mention this not just because it was slightly surreal to find myself seen by many in the Anglican Communion as a new and fairly 'conservative' appointment to the episcopate at the same moment that I was to be grilled, as a dangerous liberal, at a gathering of reformed theologians in Edinburgh. The latter context explains the note of *apologia pro theologia sua* in some of what follows. Another explanation: we were in the middle of moving house, and I did not have access to my books, so I decided to write this paper off the top of my head and with only a single footnote. Some of the imagery I use bears the signs of its origin in the middle of the so-called Second Gulf War.

The personal references in the opening paragraph are to David Searle, the conference organizer, and Tony Lane, an old friend who presented a paper on the discussions of justification at Regensburg in 1541 and at the Council of Trent in 1546–7. I should also make it clear – correcting a misunderstanding which appears to have arisen – that when I spoke of 'fuzzy thinking' as highlighted among some of the other contributors (p. [279]) I was referring to the fuzzy thinking, not of the contributors, but of the Latin theologians they were discussing.

* * *

[243] Introduction

I am grateful for the invitation to this conference, and for the sensitive way in which the organizers responded to my comments on the intial outline of the programme. I am aware that fresh interpretations of Paul, including my own, have caused controversy in evangelical circles, and particularly reformed

circles. My own name has been linked with proposals which have been variously dismissed, scorned, vilified and anathematized. Having heard the papers yesterday morning and afternoon, I suggested to David Searle that I should take two hours not one to say what needs to be said just now; but when I heard Tony Lane last night I realized I would need, like Cardinal Seripando at Trent, two days to establish my own orthodoxy. We shall see.

There are several different agendas coming together at this point. The issue is sometimes treated as a variation on old modernist controversies, at other times as a clash between a Christian absolutism and a religious relativism, and at other times as a variation on a perceived Protestant/Catholic divide (or even a high-church/low-church divide), with the so-called New Perspective focussing on ecclesiology rather than soteriology and being condemned for so doing. And that's just the beginning. From time to time correspondents draw my attention to various websites on which you can find scathing denunciations of me for abandoning traditional Protestant orthodoxy and puzzled rejoinders from people who have studied my work and know [**244**] that I'm not saying what many of my critics say I'm saying.[1] Faced with that kind of problem, it would take a whole book to unpick the strands, to disentangle them from other issues, to explain what the so-called New Perspective is and isn't, and to argue exegetically step by step for a particular reading of Paul. Clearly I can't do that here. What I shall do instead is to make two opening remarks about my aim and method on the one hand and the problem of the New Perspective on the other, and then to attempt once more to say briefly what I think needs to be said about Paul and justification, sharpening up the issues here and there.

First, as to aim and method. When I began research on Paul, thirty years ago this autumn, my aim was to understand Paul in general and Romans in particular better than I had done before, as part of my heartfelt and lifelong commitment to scripture, and to the *sola scriptura* principle, believing that the better the church understands and lives by scripture the better its worship, preaching and common life will be. I was conscious of thereby standing methodologically in the tradition of the reformers, for whom exegesis was the lifeblood of the church, and who believed that scripture should stand over against all human traditions. I have not changed this aim and this method, nor do I intend to. Indeed, the present controversy, from my own point of view, often appears to me in terms of a battle for the Reformers' *aims and methods* – going back to scripture over against all human tradition – against some of their theological positions (and, equally, those of their opponents, since I believe that often both sides were operating with mistaken understandings of Paul). I believe that Luther, Calvin, and many of the others would tell us to read scripture afresh, with all the tools available to us – which is after all what they did – and to treat their own doctrinal conclusions as important but not as important as scripture itself. That is what I have tried to do, and I believe I am honouring them thereby.

[1] Cf. at <www.amazon.com> the comments that anonymous correspondents have appended to some of my books.

Allow me, if you will, a moment of autobiography, for reasons similar to those of Paul in Galatians 1 and 2. In my early days of research, before Sanders had published *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977 and long before Dunn coined the phrase 'the new perspective on Paul', I was [**245**] puzzled by one exegetical issue in particular, which I here oversimplify for the sake of summary. If I read Paul in the then standard Lutheran way, Galatians made plenty of sense, but I had to fudge (as I could see dozens of writers fudging) the positive statements about the law in Romans. If I read Paul in the Reformed way of which, for me, Charles Cranfield remains the supreme exegetical exemplar, Romans made a lot of sense, but I had to fudge (as I could see Cranfield fudging) the negative statements about the law in Galatians. For me then and now, if I had to choose between Luther and Calvin I would always take Calvin, whether on the law or (for that matter) the eucharist. But as I struggled this way and that with the Greek text of Romans and Galatians, it dawned on me, I think in 1976, that a different solution was possible. In Romans 10.3 Paul, writing about his fellow Jews, declares that they are ignorant of the righteousness of God, and are seeking to establish 'their own righteousness'. The wider context, not least 9.30–33, deals with the respective positions of Jews and gentiles within God's purposes – and with a lot more besides, of course, but not least that. Supposing, I thought, Paul meant 'seeking to establish *their own* righteousness', not in the sense of a *moral* status based on the *performance* of Torah and the consequent accumulation of a treasury of merit, but an *ethnic* status based on the *possession* of Torah as the sign of automatic covenant membership? I saw at once that this would make excellent sense of Romans 9 and 10, and would enable the positive statements about the law throughout Romans to be given full weight while making it clear that this kind of use of Torah, as an ethnic talisman, was an abuse. I sat up in bed that night reading through Galatians and saw that at point after point this way of looking at Paul would make much better sense of Galatians, too, than either the standard post-Luther readings or the attempted Reformed ones.

The reason I'm telling you this is to show that I came to the position I still hold (having found it over the years to be deeply rewarding exegetically right across Paul; I regard as absolutely basic the need to understand Paul in a way which does justice to all the letters, as well as to the key passages in individual ones) – that I came to this position, not because I learned it from Sanders or Dunn, but because of the struggle to think Paul's thoughts after him as a matter of obedience to scripture. This brings me to the complexity of the so-called New Perspective and of my relationship to it.

[**246**] When Sanders's book was published in 1977, I devoured it with both eagerness and puzzlement. Eagerness, because his exposition of first-century Palestinian Judaism supported in all kinds of ways the picture to which I had been coming through my reading of Paul (I was not, then, well up in Judaism itself). Puzzlement, because when he came to Paul Sanders seemed muddled and imprecise. This is partly, I now realize, because he was not dealing with theology (and so seemed confused about basic things like justification and salvation), but rather with religion, and patterns of religion in particular. His

agenda, there and elsewhere, included a desire to make Christianity and Judaism less antithetical; in other words, to take a large step away from the anti-Judaism of much Pauline scholarship. I need hardly say that I never embraced either Sanders's picture of Paul or the relativistic agendas which seemed to be driving it. Indeed, for the next decade much of what I wrote on Paul was in debate and disagreement with Sanders, not least because his proposals lacked the exegetical clarity and rootedness which I regarded and regard as indispensible. For me, the question has always been 'But does this make sense of the text?', not 'But will this fit into some abstract scheme somewhere?'

Lots of those who joined the Sanders bandwaggon, not least in America, did so because they shared his post-Holocaust re-evaluation of Christian–Jewish relations, and the implicit relativism which that engendered. I have spent considerable energy arguing against this position, and explaining that Paul's critique of Israel is not based on, or productive of, anti-Judaism as such, still less anti-semitism, but involves a far more delicately balanced and nuanced theology which cannot be reduced to such slogans.

Likewise, when Jimmy Dunn added his stones to the growing pile I found myself in both agreement and disagreement with him. His proposal about the meaning of 'works of the law' in Paul – that they are not the moral works through which one gains merit but the works through which the Jew is defined over against the pagan – I regard as exactly right. It has proved itself again and again in the detailed exegesis; attempts to deny it have in my view failed. But Dunn, like Sanders (and like some other New Perspective writers such as John Ziesler), has not, I think, got to the heart of Paul. Again, much of my writing on Paul over the last twenty years at least has been in at least implicit dialogue with him, and I find his exposition of justification itself less than satisfying. For one thing, he never understands what I take to be Paul's fundamental covenant theology; for another, his typically Protestant anti-sacramentalism leads him to miss the point of Romans 6. I could go on.

[**247**] I say all this to make it clear that there are probably almost as many 'New Perspective' positions as there are writers espousing it – and that I disagree with most of them. Where I agree is as follows. It is blindingly obvious when you read Romans and Galatians – though you would never have known this from any of the theologians we discussed yesterday – that virtually whenever Paul talks about justification he does so in the context of a critique of Judaism and of the coming together of Jew and gentile in Christ. As an exegete determined to listen to scripture, rather than abstract my favourite bits from it, I cannot ignore this. The only notice that most mainstream theology has taken of this context is to assume that the Jews were guilty of the kind of works-righteousness of which theologians from Augustine to Calvin and beyond have criticized their opponents; and, though Sanders's account of Judaism needs a lot more nuancing, I regard the New Perspective's challenge to this point as more or less established. What I miss entirely in the Old Perspective but find so powerfully in some modern Pauline scholarship, is Paul's sense of an underlying narrative, the story of God and Israel, God and Abraham, God and the covenant people, and the way in which that

story came to its climax, as he says, 'when the time had fully come' with the coming of Jesus the Messiah. How all this works out is still very controversial within the New Perspective. But at these points, for good exegetical and historical reasons, I find myself saying 'Here I Stand'.

What has happened, then? Like America looking for a new scapegoat after the collapse of the Cold War, and seizing on the Islamic world as the obvious target, many conservative writers, having discovered themselves in possession of the Pauline field after the liberals got tired of it, have looked around for new enemies. Here is something called the New Perspective; it seems to be denying some of the things we have normally taught; very well, let us demonize it, lump its proponents together, and nuke them from a great height. That has not made a pretty sight. Speaking as one of those who is regularly thus carpet-bombed, what I find frustrating is the refusal of the traditionalists to do three things: first, to differentiate the quite separate types of New Perspective; second, to engage in the actual exegetical debates upon which the whole thing turns, instead of simply repeating a Lutheran or similar line as though that settled matters; and third, to recognize that some of us at least are brothers in Christ who have come to the positions we hold not because of some liberal, modernist or relativist agenda, but as a result of prayerful and humble study of the text which is and remains our sole authority. Of course, prayer and humility before the text do not guarantee exegetical success. We all remain deeply flawed at all levels. But that is precisely my point. If I am *simul iustus et peccator*, the church, not least the church as the scripture-[**248**]reading community, must be *ecclesia catholica semper reformanda*. Like Calvin, we must claim the right to stand critically within a tradition. To deny either of these would be to take a large step towards precisely the kind of triumphalism against which the Reformers themselves would severely warn us. But if we are siblings in Christ, there are, I think, appropriate ways of addressing one another and of speaking about one another, and I regret that these have not always characterized the debate.

There is much more that I could say under both these initial headings, but this must suffice for now. I turn to what I regard as the central issues around which the debate ought to turn.

Understanding Righteousness in Paul: The Central Issues

Let me, as a good Calvinist, offer you five points about Paul which I regard as crucial in the present debates, justification itself being the fifth. There are of course many other things vital to Paul, not least Christology, about which I have written much; all of these need careful integration into the picture, for which now is not the time. Ideally, one would walk slowly round the piece of the Pauline jigsaw labelled 'justification', commenting on each other piece of the jigsaw and noting how justification fits into it. Obvious examples, each of which is dear to my heart and most of which I have written about elsewhere, are the cross, the resurrection, the spirit, the Jewish law, union with Christ, the sacraments, election, and love. Please do not think that because

there is no time to expound any of these I am forgetting or marginalizing them. And, again because of time, I simply state each point in the barest outline, relying on my other works, not least my recent Romans commentary, to back me up with details.

1 The Gospel

I begin where Romans begins – with the gospel. My proposal is this. When Paul refers to 'the gospel', he is not referring to a system of salvation, though of course the gospel implies and contains this, nor even to the good news that there now *is* a way of salvation open to all, but rather to the proclamation that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead and thereby demonstrated to be both Israel's Messiah [**249**] and the world's true Lord. 'The gospel' is not 'you can be saved, and here's how'; the gospel, for Paul, is 'Jesus Christ is Lord'.

This announcement draws together two things, in derivation and confrontation. First, Paul is clearly echoing the language of Isaiah: the message announced by the herald in Isaiah 40 and 52 has at last arrived. Saying 'Jesus is Messiah and Lord' is thus a way of saying, among other things, 'Israel's history has come to its climax'; or 'Isaiah's prophecy has come true at last'. This is powerfully reinforced by Paul's insistence, exactly as in Isaiah, that this heraldic message reveals God's righteousness, that is, God's covenant faithfulness, about which more anon. Second, since the word 'gospel' was in public use to designate the message that Caesar was the Lord of the whole world, Paul's message could not escape being confrontative: Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord, and at his name, not that of the emperor, every knee shall bow. This aspect lies at the heart of what I have called 'the fresh perspective on Paul', the discovery of a subversive political dimension not as an add-on to Paul's theology but as part of the inner meaning of 'gospel', 'righteousness', and so on.

For Paul, the announcement or proclamation of Jesus as Lord was itself the 'word of God' which carried power. Putting together the various things he says about the preaching of the gospel, the word, and the work of the Spirit, we arrive at the following position: when Paul comes into a town and declares that Jesus is Lord, no doubt explaining who Jesus was, the fact and significance of his death and resurrection, and so on, then the Spirit is at work, mysteriously, in the hearts and minds of the listeners, so that, when some of them believe in Jesus, Paul knows that this is not because of his eloquence or clever argument but because the announcement of Jesus as Lord functions as (in later technical language) the means of grace, the vehicle of the Spirit. And, since the gospel is the heraldic proclamation of Jesus as Lord, it is not first and foremost a suggestion that one might like to enjoy a new religious experience. Nor is it even the take-it-or-leave-it offer of a way to salvation. It is a royal summons to submission, to obedience, to allegiance; and the form that this submission and obedient allegiance takes is of course faith. That is what Paul means by 'the obedience of faith'. Faith itself, defined conveniently by Paul as belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised

him from the dead, is the work of the Spirit, accomplished through the proclamation. 'No-one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.' But this already jumps ahead to my fourth point, and before we get there we must take in the second and third.

[**250**] 2 The Righteousness of God

The second point concerns the phrase 'the righteousness of God', *dikaiosynē theou*. I became convinced many years ago, and time and exegesis have confirmed this again and again, that Paul always uses this phrase to denote, not the status which God's people have from him or in his presence, but the righteousness of God himself. This is not to say that there is no such thing as a righteous status held by believers. There is. It is to deny that this is the referent of Paul's phrase *dikaiosynē theou*. Here a Pauline exegesis rooted in Paul's own understanding of Jewish scripture and tradition must challenge the fuzzy thinking that, listening to yesterday's papers, I discover characterized most of the great, but basically Latin-speaking, theologians.

The main argument for taking *dikaiosynē theou* to denote an aspect of the character of God himself is the way in which Paul is summoning up a massive biblical and intertestamental theme, found not least in Isaiah 40—55, which I have argued elsewhere is vital for him. God's *dikaiosynē*, his *tsedaqah*, is that aspect of his character because of which, despite Israel's infidelity and consequent banishment, God will remain true to the covenant with Abraham and rescue her none the less. This 'righteousness' is of course a form of justice; God has bound himself to the covenant, or perhaps we should say God's covenant is binding upon him, and through this covenant he has promised not only to save Israel, but also, thereby, to renew creation itself. The final flourish of Isaiah 55 is not to be forgotten, especially when we come to Romans 8. Righteousness, please note, is not the same thing as salvation; God's righteousness is the *reason why* he saves Israel.

But this covenant-fidelity, this covenant-justice, is not purely a matter of salvific activity. As Daniel 9 makes clear, it is a matter of God's severe justice upon covenant-breaking Israel, and only then a matter of God's merciful rescue of penitent Israel. This is why the gospel – the announcement that Jesus Christ is Lord – contains within itself, as Paul insists in Romans 2.16, the message of future judgment as well as the news of salvation. What God's righteousness never becomes, in the Jewish background which Paul is so richly summing up, is an attribute which is passed on to, reckoned to, or imputed to, his people. Nor does Paul treat it in this way. What we find, rather, is that Paul is constantly (especially in Romans, where all but one of the occurrences of the phrase are found) dealing with the themes which from Isaiah to *4 Ezra* cluster together with [**251**] the question of God's righteousness: how is God to be faithful to Israel, to Abraham, to the world? how will the covenant be fulfilled, and who will be discovered to be God's covenant people when this happens?

This is precisely what Romans 9—11 is about, not as an appendix to the letter but as its proper climax. And this is anticipated in several earlier parts

of the letter conveniently screened out by the great tradition in its quest for a non-Jewish soteriology, not least the second half of Romans 2, the first nine verses of Romans 3, and the fact that in Romans 4 Paul is demonstrably arguing about God's faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant, not simply using Abraham as an example of someone justified by faith.

Part of the tragedy of reformation exegesis, not least Lutheran exegesis, is that this entire line of thought was screened out. Thus even Käsemann, who sees clearly that *dikaiosynē theou* must refer to God's own righteousness, cannot allow that it has anything to do with the covenant, but insists, against the evidence, that it has become a technical term denoting 'God's salvation-creating power', with a cosmic reach. He fails to notice a point I have come to regard as central and crucial: that the covenant with Israel was always designed to be God's means of saving and blessing the entire cosmos. You get the cosmic reach, as in Genesis 12, as in Isaiah 40—55, as in the Psalms, as in Romans 8, as in 1 Corinthians 15, not by bypassing the covenant but by fulfilling it.

What then can we say about the status of 'righteous' which, in many Pauline passages, is enjoyed by the people of God in Christ? For Paul, there is a clear distinction. God's own righteousness is *dikaiosynē theou*. The status of 'righteous' which people enjoy as a result of God's action in Christ and by the Spirit is, in Philippians 3.9, *hē ek theou dikaiosynē*, the righteous status which is 'from God'. Ignoring this distinction, and translating *dikaiosynē theou* as 'a righteousness from God' or something like that, makes nonsense of several passages, most noticebly Romans 3.21–26 (as, for instance, in the appalling and self-contradictory NIV!), where the great theme is the way in which God has been faithful to the covenant, the astonishing way whereby all alike, Jewish sinners and gentile sinners, are welcomed, redeemed, justified.

You can see this most clearly if you remember the context of the Jewish lawcourt which forms the background for Paul's forensic use of the *dikaiosynē* theme. Despite some odd recent attempts to deny this, if you want to understand forensic justification you must go to the law-court and find how the metaphor works. In the Jewish lawcourt Paul would have known, there is no Director of Public Prosecutions; [**252**] there is a judge, with a plaintiff and a defendant appearing before him. When the case has been heard, the judge finds in favour of one party and against the other. Once that has happened, the vindicated party possesses the status 'righteous' – not itself a moral statement, we note, but a statement of how things stand in terms of the now-completed lawsuit. As someone said to me yesterday, it all depends what you mean by 'righteous'. But this status of righteousness has nothing to do with the righteousness of the judge. For the judge to be righteous, it is necessary that he try the case fairly, refuse bribes or other favouritism, uphold the law, and take special note for the helpless, the widows, and so on. When either the plaintiff or the defendant is declared 'righteous' at the end of the case, there is no sense that in either case the judge's *own* righteousness has been passed on to them, by imputation, impartation, or any other process. What they have is a status of 'righteous' which comes *from* the judge. Let me stress,

in particular, that when the judge finds in favour of one party or the other, he quite literally makes them righteous; because 'righteous' at this point is *not* a word denoting moral character, but only and precisely the status that you have when the court has found in your favour. If this had been kept in mind in earlier centuries a great deal of heartache and puzzle might have been avoided.

What then about the 'imputed righteousness' about which we are to hear an entire paper this afternoon? This is fine as it stands; God does indeed 'reckon righteousness' to those who believe. But this is not, for Paul, the righteousness either of God or of Christ, except in a very specialized sense to which I shall return. There are only two passages which can be invoked in favour of the imputed righteousness being that of God or Christ. The first proves too much, and the second not enough. The first is 1 Corinthians 1.30f., where Paul says that Christ has become for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Wisdom is the main point he is making, and the other three nouns come in as a way of saying 'and everything else as well'. 'Yea, all I need, in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come'; that line sums it up well. I doubt if this will sustain the normal 'imputation' theology, because it would seem to demand equal air time for the imputation of wisdom, sanctification and redemption as well. The second passage is 2 Corinthians 5.21, which as I have argued elsewhere is not, as a matter of good exegesis, a statement of soteriology but of apostolic vocation. The entire passage is about the way in which Paul's new covenant ministry, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, is in fact God's appointed means for establishing and maintaining the church. 'So that we might become God's [**253**] righteousness in him' means that in Christ those who are called to be apostolic preachers actually embody God's own covenant faithfulness. I do not expect to convince you by this microcosmic summary of the point, but I submit that it deserves careful exegetical consideration, not dismissing with a wave of the hand and a reference to Brother Martin.

Is there then no 'reckoning of righteousness' in, for instance, Romans 5.14–21? Yes, there is; but my case is that this is not God's own righteousness, or Christ's own righteousness, that is reckoned to God's redeemed people, but rather the fresh status of 'covenant member', and/or 'justified sinner', which is accredited to those who are in Christ, who have heard the gospel and responded with 'the obedience of faith'. But this, too, is pushing towards my fifth point, and I must proceed with the third.

3 Final Judgment According to Works

The third point is remarkably controversial, seeing how well founded it is at several points in Paul. Indeed, listening to yesterday's papers, it seems that there has been a massive conspiracy of silence on something which was quite clear for Paul (as indeed for Jesus). Paul, in company with mainstream second-Temple Judaism, affirms that God's final judgment will be in accordance with the entirety of a life led – in accordance, in other words, with works. He says this clearly and unambiguously in Romans 14.10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5.10.

He affirms it in that terrifying passage about church-builders in 1 Corinthians 3. But the main passage in question is of course Romans 2.1–16.

This passage has often been read differently. We heard yesterday that Augustine had problems with it (perhaps the only thing in common between Augustine and E. P. Sanders). That is hardly surprising; here is the first statement about justification in Romans, and lo and behold it affirms justification according to works! The doers of the law, he says, will be justified (2.13). Shock, horror; Paul cannot (so many have thought) have really meant it. So the passage has been treated as a hypothetical position which Paul then undermines by showing that nobody can actually achieve it; or, by Sanders for instance, as a piece of unassimilated Jewish preaching which Paul allows to stand even though it conflicts with other things he says. But all such theories are undermined by exegesis itself, not least by observing the many small but significant threads that stitch Romans 2 into the fabric of the letter as a whole. Paul means what he says. Granted, he redefines what 'doing the law' really means; he does this in chapter 8, and again in chapter 10, with a codicil in chapter 13. But he makes the point most compactly in Philippians 1.6: he who began a good work in [**254**] you will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. The 'works' in accordance with which the Christian will be vindicated on the last day are not the unaided works of the self-help moralist. Nor are they the performance of the ethnically distinctive Jewish boundary-markers (sabbath, food-laws and circumcision). They are the things which show, rather, that one is in Christ; the things which are produced in one's life as a result of the Spirit's indwelling and operation. In this way, Romans 8.1–17 provides the real answer to Romans 2.1–16. Why is there now 'no condemnation'? Because, on the one hand, God has condemned sin in the flesh of Christ (let no-one say, as some have done, that this theme is absent in my work; it was and remains central in my thinking and my spirituality); and, on the other hand, because the Spirit is at work to do, within believers, what the law could not do – ultimately, to give life, but a life that begins in the present with the putting to death of the deeds of the body and the obedient submission to the leading of the Spirit.

I am fascinated by the way in which some of those most conscious of their reformation heritage shy away from Paul's clear statements about future judgment according to works. It is not often enough remarked upon, for instance, that in the Thessalonian letters, and in Philippians, he looks ahead to the coming day of judgment and sees God's favourable verdict not on the basis of the merits and death of Christ, not because like Lord Hailsham he simply casts himself on the mercy of the judge, but on the basis of his apostolic work. 'What is our hope and joy and crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus Christ at his royal appearing? Is it not you? For you are our glory and our joy' (1 Thessalonians 3.19f.; cp. Philippians 2.16f.). I suspect that if you or I were to say such a thing, we could expect a swift rebuke of 'nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling'. The fact that Paul does not feel obliged at every point to say this shows, I think, that he is not as concerned as we are about the danger of speaking of the things he himself has done – though sometimes, to be sure, he adds a rider, which proves my point, that

it is not his own energy but that which God gives and inspires within him (1 Corinthians 15.10; Colossians 1.29). But he is still clear that the things he does in the present, by moral and physical effort, will count to his credit on the last day, precisely because they are the effective signs that the Spirit of the living Christ has been at work in him. We are embarrassed about saying this kind of thing; Paul clearly is not. What on earth can have happened to a *sola scriptura* theology that it should find itself forced to screen out such emphatic, indeed celebratory, statements?

[**255**] The future verdict, when it is positive, can be denoted by the verb 'justify'. This carries its full forensic sense, rooted in the ancient Jewish belief that the God of Israel, being the creator of the world and also the God of justice, would finally put the world to rights, in other words, that he would conduct a final Assize. On that day there will be 'glory, honour, immortality and the life of the age to come' for all who do right (Romans 2.7); in other words (verse 13), they will be justified, declared to be in the right. This ought to have highlighted long ago something which I believe has played too little part in discussions of Paul: justification by faith, to which I shall come in a moment, is the *anticipation in the present* of the justification which will occur in the future, and gains its meaning from that anticipation. What Augustine lacked, what Luther and Calvin lacked, what Regensburg lacked as a way of putting together the two things it tried to hold on to, was Paul's eschatological perspective, filled out by the biblical fusion of covenantal and forensic categories. But before we get there I want to address a question which Paul seldom touches explicitly but about which we can reconstruct his thought quite accurately. This is just as well because it has played an important role in Protestant discussions of soteriology and lies, I think, at the heart of today's controversies about justification.

4 *Ordo Salutis*

I refer to the question known as *ordo salutis*. I take this phrase to refer to the lining up in chronological sequence of the events which occur from the time when a human being is outside the community of God's people, stuck in idolatry and consequent sin, through to the time when this same erstwhile sinner is fully and finally saved. This question has been closely bound up with that of justification, but I shall suggest in this and the next section that when Paul uses the word and its cognates he has in mind one step only within that sequence, and – critically, as you will see – not the one that the word has been used to denote in much Christian dogmatics. At this point I am implicitly in dialogue with a general trend, at least since the sixteenth century, to make 'conversion' and 'justification' more or less coterminous; a trend which has been sped on its way when 'conversion' is understood as 'the establishment of a personal relationship with God', and justification has been understood in a 'relational' sense with the meaning, not of membership in the covenant as in the Old Testament, but of this personal relationship between the believer and God. I have already described how Paul understands the moment when the gospel of Jesus as Lord is announced and people come to

believe it and obey its summons. Paul has a regular technical term for this moment, and it is [**256**] neither 'justification' nor 'conversion' (though he can use the latter from time to time): the word in question is 'call'. 'Consider your call', he says to the Corinthians; 'God called me by his grace', he says of himself. (This is why, incidentally, Krister Stendahl's suggestion that we should think of Paul's 'call' as opposed to his 'conversion' misses the point. For Paul, the word 'call' denoted not merely a vocation to a particular task but also, more fundamentally, the effective call of the gospel, applied by the Spirit to the individual heart and life and resulting in a turning away from idolatry and sin and a lifelong turning to God in Christ in believing allegiance.)

But if the 'call' is the central event, the point at which the sinner turns to God, what comes before and after? Paul himself has given the answer in Romans 8.29–30. Though he does not often discuss such things, he here posits two steps prior to God's 'call' through the gospel: God's foreknowledge, and God's marking-out-ahead-of-time, the mark in question being the mark of the image of the Son. (I translate with a paraphrase because of the problems associated with the word 'destiny' within the word 'predestination'.) These serve to emphasize, of course, the sovereignty of God in the call itself, while Paul never engages with the questions we want to ask about how precisely these things work out. (The closest he comes is of course Romans 9, which simply restates the problem for us; the parallel statement in Ephesians 1.3–14 is a celebration rather than an explanation.)

But what matters for our purposes even more is the question of what comes *after* the 'call'. 'Those he called, he also justified.' In other words, Paul uses 'justify' to denote something other than, and logically subsequent to, what we have often thought of as the moment of conversion, when someone who hasn't before believed the gospel is gripped by the word and the Spirit and comes to believe it, to submit to Jesus as the risen Lord. Here is the central point in the controversy between what I say about Paul and what the tradition, not least the Protestant tradition, has said. The tradition has used 'justify' and its cognates to denote conversion, or at least the initial moment of the Christian life, and has then debated broader and narrower definitions of what counts. My reading of Paul indicates that he does not use the word like that; and my method, shared with the reformers, insists that I prefer scripture itself to even the finest traditions of interpretation. The fact that the Christian tradition has since at least Augustine used the word 'justify' to mean 'become a Christian', whether broadly or narrowly conceived, is neither here nor there. For Paul, 'justification' is [**257**] something that *follows on from* the 'call' through which a sinner is summoned to turn from idols and serve the living God, to turn from sin and follow Christ, to turn from death and believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. This points on to my fifth and final point, to which we shall come shortly.

But before that, we note that the final verb in Paul's sequence is not 'sanctified'. He would say that this has already happened to all baptized believers (see 1 Corinthians 6.10f.). It is 'glorified'. Paul regards it as a fixed point that those who belong to the Messiah by faith and baptism already share his glorious life, his rule over the world, and that this rule, this glory, will one

day be manifest. There is no time to develop this here, but I note, as a point which much dogmatics has yet to come to terms with, the fact that both Paul and John the Seer place great emphasis not just on being saved, not just on being raised from the dead, but on sharing the glorious rule of Jesus Christ as Lord over God's new world. What this role will consist of, who or what will be in subjection under this rule, and so on, are questions which have fallen off most people's radar screens. I suggest it's time we got them back on.

I hope I have said enough in this short section to convince you of two things. First, my understanding of how Paul supposed someone became a Christian is, I think, basically orthodox and indeed reformed. God takes the initiative, based on his foreknowledge; the preached word, through which the Spirit is at work, is the effective agent; belief in the gospel, that is, believing submission to Jesus as the risen Lord, is the direct result. My central point is that *this isn't what Paul is referring to when he speaks of 'justification'*. But the substance of what reformed theology, unlike Paul, has referred to by means of that word remains. Faith is not something someone does as a result of which God decides to grant them a new status or privilege. Becoming a Christian, in its initial moment, is not based on anything that a person has acquired by birth or achieved by merit. Faith is itself the first fruit of the Spirit's call. And those thus called, to return to Philippians 1.6, can be sure that the one who began a good work in them will complete it at the day of Christ.

Second, it is simply not true, as people have said again and again, that I deny or downplay the place of the individual in favour of a corporate ecclesiology. True, I have reacted against the rampant individualism of Western culture, and have tried to insist on a biblically rooted corporate solidarity in the body of Christ as an antidote to it. But this in no way reduces the importance of every person being confronted with the powerful gospel, and the need for each one to be turned around by it from idols to God, from sin to holiness, and from death to life.

[**258**] 5 Justification

What then is 'justification', if it is not conversion itself, not the establishment of a 'relationship' between a person and God, but something which is, at least logically, consequent upon it? This is where confusion inevitably creeps in. I have argued again and again that Paul uses *dikaioō* and its cognates to denote something other than conversion itself; but several critics have not listened to this, but have imagined that what I say about Paul's use of the *dikaioō* word-group is my proposed description of his theology of conversion; and they have then charged me with all kinds of interesting heresies. To make this clear, let me use instead a near-synonym, and speak here not of 'justification' but of 'vindication', recognizing that this is itself controversial.

My proposal has been, and still is, that Paul uses 'vindication' language, i.e. the *dikaioō* word-group, when he is describing, not the moment when, or the process by which, someone comes from idolatry, sin and death to God, Christ and life, but rather the verdict which God pronounces consequent

upon that event. *dikaioō* is after all a declarative word, declaring that something is the case, rather than a word for making something happen or changing the way something is. (Nor do we need to get round this, as many have done, by saying that when God declares something to be the case he brings it into being; that's not the point here.) And if we work backwards from the future vindication I spoke of earlier I believe we can see what this declaration amounts to, and why Paul insisted on it, especially in Romans and Galatians.

The language of vindication, the *dikaioō* language, is as we've seen lawcourt language. Lawcourt imagery is appropriate because God is the God of justice, who is bound to put the world to rights, has promised to do so, and intends to keep his promises. But the means by which he will do so, from Genesis 12 onwards, is through the covenant he has made with Abraham, so that God's covenant faithfulness on the one hand, and God's justice on the other, are not two quite different things, but closely interlinked. Both are indicated, as we have seen, in the phrase *dikaiosynē theou*. When we talk of God's vindication of someone we are talking about God's declaration, which appears as a double thing to us but I suspect a single thing to Paul: the declaration (a) that someone is in the right (their sins having been forgiven through the death of Jesus) and (b) that this person is a member of the true covenant family, the family God originally promised to Abraham and has now created through Christ and the Spirit, the single family which consists equally of believing Jews and believing gentiles.

[**259**] I submit that this way of lining things up draws together the various categories which are otherwise left untidily around the place: forensic in Luther versus adoption in Calvin, lawcourt versus incorporative in Schweitzer and Sanders. Once you grasp Paul's underlying covenantal theology these dichotomies are overcome. My first main point in this subsection is therefore that these two things – declaring sinners to be in the right, with their sins forgiven, and declaring someone to be a member of the single multi-ethnic covenant family – go very closely together in Paul's mind, and that to point out the importance of the latter (belonging to the family) in passages like Romans 3 or Galatians 3 in no way undermines the importance of the former (being one of those now declared 'in the right' in God's lawcourt). The underlying point here is crucial: the reason God established the covenant with Abraham, according to scripture in general and Paul in particular, was to undo the sin of Adam and its effects and thereby to complete the project of the good creation itself. Thus God's declaration of forgiveness and his declaration of covenant membership are not ultimately two different things. I freely grant that some of those who have highlighted the importance of the Jew-plus-gentile point in Paul have used it as a way of saying that Paul is therefore not after all interested in God's dealing with sins and putting sinners in a right relation to himself. But just because people draw false inferences one way, that is no reason why we should draw them the other way. Let me take two obvious examples.

First, in Romans 3.21–31, by anyone's showing a vital and central passage, Paul makes what most commentators in the reformation tradition regard as a strange shift in verse 29, when he asks 'Or is God the God of the Jews only?'

(Notice how the NIV, for instance, omits the word 'Or'.) If he had been talking all along simply about individual sinners being put right with God, we should indeed regard this as a sudden intrusion of ethnic questions. But he hasn't. As chapter 4 will reveal, when we allow it to play its full role, he has been talking about God's faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham, and about God's creation of a single family from both halves of sinful humanity. God's declaring that sinners are now in a right relation to himself and God's declaring that believing Jews and believing gentiles belong in the same family are inextricably bound up with one another.

The same point emerges in Galatians 2.11–21. Here, beyond cavil I think, the point of vindication is not 'how someone becomes a Christian' but the question of table-fellowship: with whom may I, indeed must I, share table-fellowship? Peter's action in separating himself from Christian gentiles was not implying that they needed to perform moral good works; it was implying that they needed to become physically Jewish. Paul's argument against him was not to do with the mechanism of how people come [**260**] from being sinful idolaters to forgiven members of Christ's people, but with the equality within the people of God of all who believe the gospel, Jew and gentile alike. That controversy, indeed, dominates the entire letter in a way that, alas, I think Martin Luther never saw (though specialists may correct me).

What then is this vindication, this *dikaiōsis*? It is God's declaration that a person is in the right; that is, (a) that their sins have been forgiven, and (b) that they are part of the single covenant family promised to Abraham. Notice that opening phrase: 'God's *declaration that*'. Not 'God's bringing it about that', but God's authoritative declaration of what is in fact the case. This is the point, of course, where some have accused me of semi-Pelagianism. That might be so if I intended to denote, with the word 'justification', what the tradition has denoted. But I don't. Paul, I believe, uses vindication/justification to denote God's declaration about someone, about (more specifically) the person who has been 'called' in the sense described above. Vindication is not the same as call.

And we now discover that this declaration, this vindication, occurs twice. It occurs in the future, as we have seen, on the basis of the entire life a person has led in the power of the Spirit – that is, it occurs on the basis of 'works' in Paul's redefined sense. And, near the heart of Paul's theology, it occurs in the present *as an anticipation of that future verdict*, when someone, responding in believing obedience to the 'call' of the gospel, believes that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. This is the point about justification by faith – to revert to the familiar terminology: it is the *anticipation in the present* of the verdict which will be *reaffirmed in the future*. Justification is not 'how someone becomes a Christian'. It is God's declaration about the person who has just become a Christian. And, just as the final declaration will consist, not of words so much as of an event, namely, the resurrection of the person concerned into a glorious body like that of the risen Jesus, so the present declaration consists, not so much of words, though words there may be, but of an event, the event in which one dies with the

Messiah and rises to new life with him, anticipating that final resurrection. In other words, baptism. I was delighted yesterday to discover that not only Chrysostom and Augustine but also Luther would here have agreed with me.

Traditional Protestants may not like this much, but it is I submit what Paul is saying. And I want you to notice right away, before I draw some broader conclusions from all this, three things that follow. First, Paul's doctrine of what is true of those who are in the Messiah does the job, within his scheme of thought, that the traditional Protestant emphasis on the imputation of Christ's righteousness did within that scheme. In other words, that [**261**] which imputed righteousness was trying to insist upon is, I think, fully taken care of in (for instance) Romans 6, where Paul declares that what is true of the Messiah is true of all his people. Jesus was vindicated by God as Messiah after his penal death; I am in the Messiah; therefore I too have died and been raised. According to Romans 6, when God looks at the baptized Christian he sees him or her in Christ. But Paul does not say that he sees us clothed with the earned merits of Christ. That would of course be the wrong meaning of 'righteous' or 'righteousness'. He sees us within the *vindication* of Christ, that is, as having died with Christ and risen again with him. I suspect that it was the mediaeval over-concentration on righteousness, on *iustitia*, that caused the Protestant reformers to push for imputed righteousness to do the job they rightly saw was needed. But in my view they have thereby distorted what Paul himself was saying.

Second, it emerges that justification, for Paul, is not (in Sanders's terminology) how one 'gets in' to God's people, but about God's declaration that someone *is* in. In other words, it is all about assurance – as we should have known from reading Romans. I've said it before and this is the place to say it again: if we are thinking Paul's thoughts after him, we are not justified by faith by believing in justification by faith. We are justified by faith by believing in the gospel itself – in other words, that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. If, in addition, we believe in justification by faith itself, we believe that, amazingly considering what God knows about us, we are now and for ever part of the family to every member of which God says what he said to Jesus at his baptism: you are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased.

Third, it follows at once that justification is the original *ecumenical* doctrine. The first time we meet justification, that is, in Galatians 2, it is about people from different cultures and traditions sharing table-fellowship on the basis of nothing other than their shared faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Once we relocate justification, moving it from the discussion of how people become Christians to the discussion of how we know that someone is a Christian, we have a powerful incentive to work together across denominational barriers. One of the sad ironies of the last four hundred years is that, at least since 1541, we have allowed disputes about how people become Christians – that which we thought was denoted by the language of justification – to divide us, when the doctrine of justification itself, urging us to unite across our cultural divides, went unheard. Not that there are not large and important problems in ecumenical relations. I am horrified at some of

the recent Anglican/Roman statements, for instance, and on things like the Papacy, purgatory, and the cult of saints (especially Mary), I am as Protestant as the next person, for (I take it) good Pauline reasons. But justification by faith tells [**262**] me that if my Roman neighbour believes that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead then he or she is a brother or sister, however much I believe them muddled, even dangerously so, on other matters.

Conclusion

I have, I suspect, said enough to put the cat among the pigeons, but not enough to get it back into its basket. That will have to come, if at all, in question and answers. But let me conclude with four brief propositions about the importance of taking at least this version of the New Perspective seriously, and one flagrantly homiletic plea.

First, to restate the point of method. I remain committed to understanding Paul in his own right and his own terms against all traditions about him, including my own. I remain convinced that Luther and Calvin would say Amen to that point of principle. And I believe, and have argued in my various exegetical works, that this reading of Paul makes far more sense of his letters, in whole and in their various parts, and in their mutual relations, than all other readings known to me. Part of that exegetical task is to relate Paul to the Jewish world of his day, and this reading I believe does that far better than the traditional one, though debates naturally remain about many aspects of the Jewish context.

Second, this reading of Paul allows fully for the challenge to each person to hear and believe the gospel and live by it, while at the same time allowing fully also for three other contexts, each of which is vitally important to Paul, to have their place. These three other contexts are the cosmic, as in Romans 8; the ecclesiological, as in his constant emphasis on the unity of Jew and gentile in Christ; and the political, as mentioned earlier. Many have tried to play these off against each other; I believe they are instead mutually reinforcing. The united multi-ethnic church is a sign of God's healing and remaking of the cosmos and also thereby a sign to Caesar and his followers that his attempted unification of the world is a blasphemous parody. This is part of what Ephesians and Colossians are all about, though that is another story. It is also, I believe, a point in urgent need of emphasis today.

Third, this new-perspective reading of Paul enables us to understand, crucially for some current debates in my church at least, why Paul is very tolerant of differences on some points (particularly food, drink and holy days) and completely intolerant on others (particularly sexual ethics). The boundary lines he insists on blurring (in, for instance, Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8) are precisely those between different ethnic communities, particularly Jew and gentile. The boundary lines he draws the more firmly are those between the holy lifestyle required of those who have died and been raised with the Messiah and the unholy lifestyle of [**263**] those who behave as if they had not, but were still living 'in the flesh'. This, too, is urgent today.

Fourth, I discover an irony in the anti-New Perspective reaction in specifically Reformed circles. The New Perspective launched by Sanders and taken up eagerly in many American contexts was always a reaction, not to Reformed readings of Paul, but to Lutheran ones and the broader Protestantism and evangelicalism that went along for the Lutheran ride, particularly in its negative assessment of Judaism and its law. Had the Reformed reading of Paul, with its positive role for Israel and the law, been in the ascendancy rather than the Lutheran one, the New Perspective might not have been necessary, or not in that form. For myself, it may surprise you to learn that I still think of myself as a Reformed theologian, retaining what seems to me the substance of Reformed theology while moving some of the labels around in obedience to scripture – itself, as I have suggested, a good Reformed sort of thing to do.

I end with a plea. I have lived most of my life in and around evangelical circles in which I have come to recognize a strange phenomenon. It is commonly assumed that Luther and Calvin got Paul right. But often when people think of Luther and Calvin they see them, and hence Paul, through three subsequent lenses provided by Western culture. The Enlightenment highlighted the abstract truths of reason over against the messy facts of history; many Protestants have put Lessing and Luther together and still thought they were reading Paul. The Romantic movement highlighted inner feeling over against outer, physical reality; many have thence supposed that this was what Paul, and Luther and Calvin, were really saying (hence the knee-jerk Protestant anti-sacramentalism). More recently, existentialism has insisted that what matters is being true to my inner self, rather than being conditioned by history, mine or anyone else's; many people, not only Rudolf Bultmann, have read Paul and Luther in that light.

At a popular level, this mess and muddle shows up in a general sense that anything inward, anything to do with strong religious emotion, anything which downplays outward observance, must be striking a blow for the Pauline gospel of justification by faith. This is as worrying as it is absurd. All these movements are forms of dualism, where Paul believed in the goodness and God-givenness of creation, and in its eventual promised renewal. Together they reinforce that gnosticism which is a poison at the heart of much contemporary culture, including soi-disant Christian culture.

It is time to turn away from all this; to rub our eyes, and look clearly at the path by which we and our culture have come. It is time to turn back again, following the old *sola scriptura* principle, to the source and origin of one of the great doctrines of the New Testament: that when, through [**264**] God's effective call (*sola gratia*) in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ (*solus Christus*), someone comes to believe that he is the risen Messiah and Lord, God thereupon (*sola fide*) declares in advance what he will declare on the last day when he raises that person from the dead: this person is in the right, their sins have been forgiven, they are part of the single, true, worldwide covenant family promised to Abraham, the sign of the coming new creation and the counter-sign to the boast of Caesar. Justification is ultimately about justice, about God putting the world to rights, with his chosen and called

people as the advance guard of that new creation, charged with being and bringing signs of hope, of restorative justice, to the world. Let's put the justice back in justification; and, as we do so, remind ourselves whose justice it is, and why. *Soli Deo Gloria!* Having thus stolen Luther's slogans, I thought I might end with 'Here I stand'; but let me rather say it in Paul's language. *hōde hestēka; allo ou dynamai.*

Chapter Nineteen

REDEMPTION FROM THE NEW PERSPECTIVE? TOWARDS A MULTI-LAYERED PAULINE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS (2004)

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I was delighted to be invited to one of the splendid conferences hosted by Stephen Davis, Dan Kendall and Gerry O'Collins, held at St Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, some miles north of Manhattan. My brief, as one of the few New Testament scholars present, was to address the conference theme of 'redemption' while offering some reflections on the 'New Perspective'. I also developed here the notion of multiple narratives within Paul, which I have continued to explore. At the heart of these many stories we find Paul's account of the cross, and of what we may call 'atonement'; this has continued to be controversial, and this account is part of my attempt to hold together elements that are often seen as conflicting. The title of the essay was, of course, deliberately ambiguous.

* * *

[69] Introduction

Calling something 'new' is always risky, and the 'New Perspective' on Paul, now a quarter of a century old since it was introduced by Ed Sanders in 1977, is starting to look rather frayed around the edges. Others have written its history; some are now trying to write its epitaph.[1] I come neither to bury Sanders nor to praise him, but to do two things simultaneously: to look at Paul's doctrine of 'redemption' from (one version of) the perspective Sanders proposed, and in so doing to see what if anything can be redeemed from his proposal. I am conscious that the current wave of gravediggers are making room for more than one coffin, and that some of them at least want to bury N. T. W. along with E. P. S. (and indeed J. D. G. D.). But I am inclined to believe that the rumours of my theological demise have been exaggerated, and that the modified and developed version of the [**70**] 'New Perspective'

[1] Representative works of the New Perspective include Sanders 1977 and Dunn 1990. See also my *What Saint Paul Really Said*. Among recent, critical responses, see Kim 2001; Das 2001; Gathercole 2002.

(hereafter NP) which I adopt possesses not only life but considerable explanatory and exegetical power.

A few brief introductory notes on the various topics thus introduced. First, as to the NP. Sanders's proposed reading of Paul had at its heart a massively argued proposal about first-century Judaism, in which Sanders substantially followed the protest of H.-J. Schoeps a generation before and G. F. Moore a generation before that. Judaism was not, basically, a religion of self-help moralism, a kind of early Semitic Pelagianism, but was a religion in which the keeping of the law mattered not because people were trying to earn their membership in God's people but because they were eager to demonstrate it. Law-keeping was not part of 'getting in' but of 'staying in' – two categories which become thematic for Sanders. Keeping the law within the 'staying in' mode is what he calls 'covenantal nomism', another thematic technical term.

This proposal cuts most deeply against the Lutheran readings of Paul which have been common coin in New Testament scholarship for a long time, and also in many non-Lutheran parts of the church which have assumed that its account of Judaism (enshrined in such monumental works as Strack–Billerbeck and the Kittel *Wörterbuch*) was historically accurate. Sanders is clearly motivated by the desire to do justice to first-century Judaism rather than caricature it in the interest of Christian apologetic. Painting the 'background' dark in order to make the jewel of the gospel shine more brightly – the very word 'background' has become taboo, carrying as it does the implication that one might be studying Judaism not for itself but in order to contrast it with Christianity to the advantage of the latter – must be abjured in the interests of objective study of the different 'patterns of religion'. As in all his work, Sanders belongs within the post-Holocaust movement of scholarship, trying to get away from a polarization between Judaism and Christianity and to show their many convergences. Indeed, though Sanders does acknowledge that Paul held a critique of Judaism (in this he does better than his teacher, W. D. Davies, who in other respects paved the way for him), this critique is minimal and simply a reflex of Paul's new experience: Paul has found salvation in Christ, and so deduces that there must have been a problem with Judaism. He begins with the solution and then postulates a plight, rather than the old theory in which Paul began with a problem (variously described) to which he found the answer in Christ. The implicit conclusion from a good deal of [**71**] Sanders's work, as in many other contemporary writers, is that these two religions at least are more or less equally valid paths to salvation. Sanders is clear that Paul does not say that himself, but he constantly hints that it will not take a large step beyond Paul for us to do so.

As the subtitle of his book indicates, Sanders's proposal is about religion, not theology. Indeed, when it comes to theology both his initial book and his subsequent ones are unsystematic, and do not address in any sustained way the major topics of Pauline theology (christology, justification, the cross, etc.). If anything, Sanders simply assumes that the big words like justification, atonement, salvation, redemption and so on all converge in meaning. His major proposal about interpreting Paul himself does not need to explore that territory too far, because the emphasis lies elsewhere: he divides Paul's thought,

in a traditional fashion, between 'juristic' categories and 'participationist' categories, and, following Schweitzer and Davies, declares that the latter are primary and central, and that the former are ancillary and more situational or polemical. Thus he regards 'being in Christ' as central, and 'justification' as more peripheral. This has obvious exegetical spin-offs (e.g. reading Romans 5—8 as more central to Paul's thought than Romans 1—4), though as Sanders has published no commentaries we cannot see exactly how it might all play out. It is noticeable, however, that he has difficulty in fitting Romans 2.1–16 into the mind of Paul, and that he is forced to dismiss the complex Romans 7 as tortured rambling.

Second, the relation of my own reading of Paul to the NP. Perhaps the most important point is this: had the dominant view of Paul prior to Sanders been Reformed rather than Lutheran, the NP might never have been necessary. I began my graduate work on Paul with just such a Reformed standpoint, and in many respects found Sanders an ally rather than an adversary. Since this will be counter-intuitive to some, an explanation is needed.

From (at least) Calvin onwards, reaching something of a climax in the Romans commentary of Charles Cranfield, exegetes in the Reformed tradition found in Paul a view of the Jewish law which was far more positive than Lutheran exegesis had assumed. I am not sure that this tradition ever did full justice to second-Temple Judaism, but at least it did not start from the assumption that the law itself was basically a bad thing ripe for abolition. (Notice how this works out in exegesis of the notorious crux at Romans 10.4: is Christ the abolition, end, completion, goal, or fulfilment of the law? Or what?) After all, in **[72]** Reformed Theology the Torah was given in the first place within a historical scheme, not to enable the Israelites to keep it and so earn their membership in God's people, but to enable them, *as a people already redeemed through the Exodus*, to demonstrate and work out the implications of their membership and vocation. The (at least partial) convergence of Sanders's reading of Judaism with a Reformed view of the law makes it all the more ironic that the anti-NP movement is today centred not least in Reformed circles such as the Presbyterian Church of America and Westminster Theological Seminary; but this sort of thing is frequent in the history of ideas. What I am concerned with at the moment is to stress that there were various readings of Paul and Judaism already on offer and that Sanders's protest was directed against one (albeit the mainstream one) among them, one which was already under attack (not that most Lutherans noticed) from the Reformed side.

I arrived at my own understanding after some years of struggling to make Cranfield's reading of Romans fit with what Paul actually says in Galatians – something Cranfield, I think, never achieved. I was not satisfied with the shallow developmental analyses offered by various scholars, according to which Paul was opposed to the law in Galatians and in favour of it in Romans, and so on.[2] I found the clue in Romans 10.3: Paul's fellow Jews, he says, 'were ignorant of God's righteousness, and were seeking to establish their own, and

[2] Drane 1975; Hübner 1984.

so did not submit to God's righteousness'. *Their own*: not a 'righteousness', a status of membership in God's people, which might be obtained by assiduous and moralistic self-help Torah-keeping, but *a covenant status which would be for Jews and Jews only*. It would be what I called a 'national righteousness'. Dunn followed this with his proposal, which I fully endorse, that the 'works of the law', against which Paul warned in both Galatians and Romans, were not any and every legal 'work' done out of a desire to earn good marks in some heavenly ledger account, but were the 'works of Torah' which marked out Jews over against their pagan neighbours: sabbath, circumcision and food laws. I have shown in considerable detail that this proposal works exegetically, verse by verse and line by line, through Romans, and I have sketched out the way it works in Galatians.

[**73**] In particular, it makes sense of first-century Judaism. A recent attempt to prove that there was a 'variegated nomism' in the second-Temple period has indeed succeeded in bringing out various nuances which go beyond what Sanders had said.[3] But, despite the attempt in the book's final summary to suggest otherwise,[4] it has not basically undercut the overall emphasis of his work or mine. Nobody has succeeded in proving that Judaism was after all the kind of proto-Pelagianism which it would need to have been for the normal Lutheran (and, in some circles, 'evangelical') understanding to be correct. In particular, remarkably, nobody in the entire project noticed that the one second-Temple passage in which 'works of Torah' were thematic (4QMMT section C) referred not to 'works of the law' as something to be done in order to *earn* membership in the community, or salvation, or justification, but as things to be done in order to *mark out in the present* the community that would be vindicated in the future. The question being addressed is not 'how do you *become* a true Jew?', but 'how are you *marked out in the present as* a true Jew?' The parameters of the discussion are eschatological, looking ahead to the last day: the assumption is that at the last day some Jews but not all will be vindicated by God; the question is 'how can you tell here and now who it is that will be vindicated in the future?' This has exactly the same *shape* and *form* as Paul's doctrine of justification, but, as we shall see, different *content*, appropriate for his Jesus-shaped construal of both problem and solution.

But this is to run ahead of myself. Two more remarks, one on a major weakness of Sanders's proposal, and one on a strength.

First, the weakness. Sanders declares that prior to his conversion Paul had no problem – no unquiet conscience, no difficulty keeping the law, no existential angst of the kind normally imagined within the ruling paradigm. Here Sanders, like Stendahl before him, rightly emphasized Philippians 3.2–6.[5] As a result, he says, Paul moved not 'from plight to solution', first being aware of a problem and then finding Christ as the answer to it, but 'from solution to plight', first finding 'salvation' in Christ (what this word would mean if

[3] Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid 2001.
[4] Ibid., 543–8.
[5] Stendahl 1976.

there was no sense of plight is not clear) and then deducing that there must [**74**] have been some kind of 'plight' to which this 'salvation' was the answer. This explains, according to Sanders, the seemingly muddled nature of Paul's critique of Israel: he is flailing around, accusing Judaism and the Torah of various inconsistent things because this was not the real centre of his thought.

But this ignores the enormous problem, like the elephant in the living room, of which every first-century Jew – and particularly a Pharisee – would be aware. Israel was not free. The Torah was not being observed. The wrong people were running the Temple. The promises had not yet come true. YHWH had not yet returned to Zion. The Messiah had not appeared. The gentiles were not coming to Jerusalem to learn wisdom from the true God, but were coming there instead to impose their will, their 'justice', their way of life. All of this is what I, drawing on many strands in second-Temple Judaism, have characterized in terms of 'continuing exile': despite the geographical 'return' several centuries earlier, Israel found herself living in a story whose last major marker was destruction at the hands of Babylon, a destruction only superficially reversed in the geographical return. The main exception to this reading of the second-Temple period must be Ben-Sirach, and I suspect that Saul of Tarsus would have had little time for that work, with its near-idolization of the pre-Hasmonean high priest. Thus I believe we must say that Saul of Tarsus had a 'problem' all right: not so much the 'problem' often imagined within pious Protestantism, but the problem that Israel was still unredeemed, still in exile.

This enables us to locate Sanders's proposal about Paul moving from solution to plight as the second half of a two-stage movement of thought. I agree that Paul offers an analysis of 'the problem' (Israel's problem, and the world's problem, the problem of all humankind) which bears all the marks of retrospective understanding. He has rethought the problem in terms of the gospel, in terms of the God-given solution. (He is, to that extent, a good Barthian, learning to look at everything, including the world and sin, in the light of Jesus Christ.) But he has precisely rethought the problem. He has not invented it from scratch. *Paul's analysis of the problem of Israel, the world, and humankind is his revision, in the light of the gospel, of the problem of which he was already thoroughly well aware.* He already knows that Israel was 'still in exile': as a Christian, he understands that in a still deeper sense, witnessed in Romans 2.17–24 and 7.7–25. He already knows that the gentiles were idolaters [**75**] and that idolatry was destructive of genuine image-bearing humanness; as a Christian, he understands that in a still deeper sense, witnessed in Romans 1.18—2.16. What is more – and this lies close to the heart of his freshly worked theology of the cross, the main subject of this paper – he may already have glimpsed, as Jesus and the prophets before him had done, the dangerous truth that Israel's problem was related to the world's problem, in the sense not just that Israel was the innocent victim and the world was the guilty aggressor, but that Israel herself was composed of human beings who, despite being given Torah and Temple, were themselves still sinners. Whether he has already thought of it like that or not, this is the point he now offers as the most profound analysis: *Israel too is in Adam*. This is

one of the driving insights that carries him forward from Romans 2.17–24 to 7.7–25 and on, crucially, to 9.30—10.21. Thus, over against Sanders's proposal that Paul moved simply 'from solution to plight', I suggest that we can watch Paul as he moves from his earlier understanding of 'plight', to the 'solution' offered in Christ, and thence to a deeper, but not a totally new, understanding of the 'plight' of Israel and the world. And, since it is to this 'plight' that the cross and resurrection of the Messiah are the answer, this points us clearly on to our main theme.

Second, the strength of Sanders's proposal. The NP enables us, at a stroke, to make sense of one area which has long been controverted in Paul. Why does Paul insist, in 1 Corinthians 8—10 and Romans 14, that one must not divide the community over issues of what you eat and which holy days you keep, while also insisting, in several places, including 1 Corinthians 5 and 6, that there are certain types of behaviour for which there must be zero tolerance? This has been a problem for those who think that the key issue in his theology is 'keeping rules' over against 'trusting God'. But when we line up the matter in a post-NP way, the answer is: because food and holy days are things which threaten to divide the community along ethnic lines, whereas sexual ethics (or their non-observance) would divide the community in terms of what it means to be a renewed-in-Christ human being. Personal holiness matters even more for the Christian than it did for the Jew, because in Christ we have died to sin and come alive into God's new world; but personal holiness has nothing to do with the 'works of the law' by which ethnic Israel was demarcated. I thus agree with several aspects of Sanders's proposal while differing from it in some ways and going beyond it in others. I am [**76**] not surprised that some conservative Christians have found Sanders's proposal not to their taste. It contains a strong streak of relativism, and that was bound to be unwelcome. He shows little appreciation of Paul's view of either God, Jesus, or the Spirit. But I am saddened that many have imagined they have nothing to learn from Sanders's massive scholarship and have run howling back into the arms of Luther. In some cases – these are, I think, the saddest of all – they have been reduced to appealing over the head of the New Testament to the tradition of the sixteenth century, which is all the more ironic when we reflect that Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin and the rest would certainly have advised us to read the New Testament even better than they did, not to set up their own work as a new authoritative tradition, a fixed lens through which the Bible would have to be viewed for ever afterwards. And what has been on offer in post-Sanders scholarship, including my own, has not been a slavish following of Sanders, but an insistence on rereading Paul with our eyes and ears open to the many-sided nature of second-Temple Judaism, and a recognition that none of our traditions may yet have learnt all that the apostle has to teach us.

Our present summit need not concern itself, I guess, with the detail of these debates. But it has been important to sketch them out, because the theme of redemption is clearly central to some of them at least. I hope it will be clear that a (not uncritical) post-Sanders reading will enable us to take huge strides forward in our understanding of redemption, which has itself

of course been contentious in various areas, not least ecumenical discussion. (I think of the perennial squabbles about justification, and also of the echoes of the Jansenist controversy in some Roman rejection of anything approaching penal substitution.) Sanders did not himself attempt to locate and explicate Paul's theology of redemption within his overall argument. Can we do so, and what will happen to the NP if we do?

Before I move to positive statements, though, a word about two other movements which I regard as vital for a proper, historically and theologically sensitive, reading of Paul. First, there is the *narrative* reading of Paul which, pioneered by Richard Hays twenty years ago, has been found increasingly fruitful, and goes with Hays's equally important stress on Paul's fresh reading of scripture. Basically, Paul grounds his theology again and again not in isolated prooftexts (one of Sanders's many weaknesses was to suggest this) but in a reading of scripture which, like many second-Temple Jewish [77] readings, picked up its fundamental quality as the story of the creator and covenant God with the world and with Israel. It is central to Paul's worldview that this long story has now come to its climax in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah (another failing of Sanders is that he does not explore the significance of *Christos* in Paul), and that the church, not least his own apostolic ministry, is called to implement that achievement in a continuation of the same story in a new mode. This, I suspect, is one of the main things that recent anti-NP writers have objected to, which is the more ironic in that it was not part of Sanders's platform: that when Paul is talking of salvation, he, like his Jewish contemporaries, was thinking in terms of the eschatological scheme in which 'the present evil age' would give way to 'the age to come', seen as a dramatic turn-around within a continuing history, rather than a snatching of God's people out of the space–time world altogether. (Notice how, within the traditional paradigm, Romans 8.18–28, which is structurally one of Paul's most emphatic passages, becomes marginalized in favour of a supposed message of individual salvation away from the world.) When Paul draws on scripture, whether it be Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah or Habakkuk, he is more often than not aware of, and intending to resonate with, the place of the scripture in question within a longer narrative. This is where the motif of 'return from exile' is so important, though still so controverted. The best example is the use of Deuteronomy 30 in Romans 10.5–8, exactly parallel to the use of the same passage in 4QMMT. Paul believes himself to be living in a story, the real story of the real world, which stretches back to creation, and comes forward, through Abraham, the exodus, the monarchy, the prophets, to the exile, which in the political and theological sense has continued to his own day. He believes that the real return from exile, which is also the new 'exodus', has taken place in Jesus the Messiah, and that this has brought to birth the 'new age', the 'age to come', by freeing God's people from 'the present evil age'.

Within this new age, there are new tasks, of which Paul's gentile mission, in all its many facets of evangelism, church planting and maintaining, is a central one. The story will continue until God is finally 'all in all', when the cosmos itself has been set free from its bondage to decay and God's people

are finally given the new, resurrection bodies that correspond to that of Jesus himself. As I said, the real objection to the NP within certain conservative circles seems actually to be an objection to this reading of Paul as the theologian of [**78**] a salvation which is not *away from* the world but *for* the world. Narrative readings of Paul are thus not simply a new fad, a postmodern trick played on an ancient text, an attempt to award Paul an honorary Doctor of Letters from Yale. They reflect, at a very deep level, the fact that he is as much a theologian of creation as of redemption, and alert us to the fact that his theology of redemption is precisely a theology of renewed, redeemed creation. They reflect, also at a deep level, the fact that (though he seldom mentions the word) he is a theologian of *covenant*, expounding Genesis 15 and wrestling with the apparent tension between the foundational covenant promises to Abraham and the subsequent covenant with Moses (Romans 4; Galatians 3). The two are intimately related: God's covenant promises to Abraham always were the road towards the redemption of humankind and creation as a whole (e.g. new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3 leading to new creation in chapter 5; and the argument from Abraham back to Adam in Romans 4—5). I use 'covenant' in this sense as a shorthand way of drawing attention to the fact that, though of course Paul believes that God's purpose has been achieved through the dramatic, apocalyptic event of the cross, cutting across all human pride and immanent process, this is nevertheless the fulfilment precisely of that larger, longer purpose. What God did in the cross and resurrection of the Messiah, and the gift of the Spirit, was what he had promised Abraham he would do: that is what I meant by referring to those events as 'the climax of the covenant'. Paul does not think in detached aphorisms or theological slogans, but in large stories, including the story within which he believes himself to be playing a vital role. That is the framework for the various narratives that we find embedded, and fruit-bearing, within his letters.

The second movement which must be factored in to any fully fledged reading of Paul is the new awareness of the *political* dimension of all his thought.[6] Though there are many flaws in the work of Richard Horsley on this subject, he has pioneered the way for us to see what I have called 'the fresh perspective on Paul', according to which the gospel of Jesus the Messiah impinges directly on the other 'gospel' which was making great inroads into the same world, namely, that of Caesar. As I have argued elsewhere, for Paul it was central that if Jesus was 'Lord' then Caesar was not. This, too, has an [**79**] inescapable narrative dimension, and indeed a recognition of the narrative and historical nature of Paul's thought, as above, precipitates us into the political arena: the story of Rome, with its vivid eschatology of empire (a thousand years of preparation, and now – Caesar!), was to be subverted by the story of Israel, climaxing in Jesus. Paul fell heir to the long tradition of Jewish critique of pagan empire, stretching back to Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. This was never a dualist rejection of every aspect of empire (think of Cyrus, of Jeremiah telling the exiles to settle down in Babylon, of Daniel confounding the pagans and then resuming his senior position in the civil

[6] See my 'A Fresh Perspective on Paul?', with full references.

service). Paul is equally emphatic on God's desire for good government and policing (Romans 13); this has nothing to do with a right-wing or *laissez-faire* political attitude, but in the Jewish tradition sits perfectly well alongside a statement of God's sovereignty over all human kingdoms.

In particular, if we are to have any historical sensitivity to the meaning of the cross in Paul's thinking, we must place at the very centre the awareness of the cross that every first-century person, Jew and pagan alike, would share. This is where the political meaning of Paul's gospel bites most deeply, where the 'fresh perspective' in its turn offers insights on a Pauline view of redemption. Granted that crucifixion was widespread as a punishment for all sorts of people, especially at the lowest end of the social scale, it was particularly used – and had been used in Palestine in Jesus' lifetime – as a way both of punishing revolutionaries and of warning those who might imitate them. The cross already said, with all its violent symbolic power, that Caesar ruled the world, and that those who stood in his way would be both shamed and obliterated. To get at this today we might draw on a variety of images: the world-famous photo of a small, naked Vietnamese girl, terrified and tearful; the demolition of a Palestinian home; the burning of a synagogue in 1930s Berlin, or of a church in today's Sudan; imperial tanks sweeping into a resistant city (Russian ones, in Prague; Chinese, in Tiananmen Square?). Brute force, dehumanizing humiliation, shameful death: that was the symbolic message of the cross, and that was the symbol that came, from Paul onwards, to speak of the love of the true God, the love which had somehow conquered the principalities and powers.

I propose, then, that the true insights of the NP should be blended with a narratival and political reading of Paul, and that when we do [**80**] this we find the possibility of a multi-faceted theology of redemption emerging from his writings. There are several ways of approaching this topic: for present purposes I shall do so by considering the place of the cross within seven implicit narratives in Paul's writings.

Redemption in Paul

Overview

What do we mean by 'redemption'? I take it that for the purposes of the Redemption Summit we are using the word in a broad sense, to denote the action(s) whereby God rescues human beings, and (if we are being biblical) the whole cosmos, from the state of sin, decay and death to which they have become subject. This broad sense includes, but goes beyond, the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion on the one hand and the 'application' of redemption ('call', faith, justification, glorification, to use some of Paul's terms) on the other. It is thus very nearly coextensive with 'salvation', seen also in a broad sense.

These big, somewhat floppy terms can get in the way, not least because Paul uses them in a much more precise sense, so that most of them fit together snugly in his mind like adjacent, but not identical, pieces of a jigsaw. Thus,

with regard to 'redemption', Paul seems clearly to have in mind not just the often-noted slave-market metaphor in which someone buys the slave his or her freedom but the more specifically Jewish meaning in which God rescues Israel from the historical slave-market of Egypt. As I have argued elsewhere (that phrase applies to most of what will now follow), the context of Romans 3.24 and 8.23, two of Paul's key uses of *apolytrōsis*, strongly suggests an Exodus-interpretation: human beings in the present, and the whole creation in the future, are rescued from their slavery under the rule of sin and death as Israel was rescued from slavery in Egypt. Paul uses the word again in 1 Corinthians 1.30, in a string alongside *sophia*, *dikaiosynē* and *hagiasmos*, which tells us little about the precise meaning he attaches to the word, though later in the letter he does speak of 'Christ our Passover' being sacrificed for us (5.7). Two of the uses in Ephesians (1.7 and 4.30) reflect the same present/future balance as the two in Romans; the third (1.14) seems to be a more restricted metaphor, part of the picture of a 'down-payment' guaranteeing 'full possession'. The one remaining Pauline [**81**] use of the word, Colossians 1.14, belongs with Romans 3.24 and Ephesians 1.7.

But of course our topic is wider than simply the occurrences of the word normally translated 'redemption'. Part of the difficulty now emerges: God's action to rescue humans and the world is such a constant topic in Paul's letters, and he says so many different things about it in so many different contexts, that without launching into a full exegesis of most of the letters I cannot really do justice to the multi-faceted nature of his thought. Nevertheless, I may attempt a proposal, at least for the sake of discussion. My proposal is that Paul's thought about Jesus as Israel's Messiah, the one in whom God's promises to Israel and, through Israel, to the world are fulfilled, functions as the vital turning point in no fewer than seven interlocking narratives which form the backbone of all his thought. Understanding how the cross in particular functions in each of these will take us close to a presentation of the heart of his theology.

Biblical Narratives in the Background

Standing over all the stories that make up the narrative substructure of Paul's thought, we find frequent reference to the Exodus. Romans 8 uses Exodus-language of the whole creation, and of the people of God travelling through the wilderness towards their 'inheritance'. Similarly, Galatians 4.1–7 speaks of God's people as being enslaved, and then, at the right time (the time for the Abrahamic promises to be fulfilled, as in Genesis 15 which Paul has been expounding in the previous chapter), God sending forth his Son and his Spirit to rescue those who are 'under the law'. This is of course heavily ironic in that, in the original Exodus-story, the law is God's good gift to the newly redeemed people, whereas here it is a force or power from whose enslavement people need to be freed. Perhaps the most obvious point (at least, thus it seems to me) is Romans 6, where those in Christ come through the waters of baptism, symbolizing the dying and rising of and with Christ, and so pass from the slavery of sin to the new life of sanctification.

The story of the Exodus is re-used in various ways both in the OT and NT, and in the latter, as in some other second-Temple contexts, it gives shape in particular to stories and prophecies about the 'return from exile'. As indicated above, I use this as a shorthand way of referring to the widespread second-Temple belief (as in Daniel 9) that [**82**] the true 'exile' continued long after the geographical return, leading to speculation about when the real 'redemption', in other words, the New Exodus, would take place. Israel was once again enslaved to the pagans, as in Egypt, and God would act decisively on her behalf. This is, to choose a couple of examples at random, the message of the last chapters of the Wisdom of Solomon, or of the final segments of Tobit. Just as in 4QMMT and Baruch, Paul draws on the passage in Deuteronomy 30 which prophesies this 'real return from exile' (Romans 5—9); and I have argued that the same theme is also present in his use of Leviticus in Galatians 3.12.[7] The 'curse' of the Torah is not an abstract threat hanging over all who break some abstract moral law, an early version of Kant's Categorical Imperative; according to Deuteronomy, it is the historical and physical punishment which consists of disaster within the land and finally expulsion from it. Israel's continuing shameful exile (see Romans 2.17–24, quoting Isaiah 52.5 and Exodus 36.20) needs a new act of God's covenant faithfulness, as in Daniel 9:16, to bring Israel and hence the world through to the long-promised and long-awaited state of renewal, restoration and redemption.

If exile is the problem, the servant is the answer – at least according to Isaiah 40—55. Though this remains controversial, I now regard it as a fixed point that Paul made extensive though subtle use of the servant songs at several places in his writings, and, we may infer from his almost casual references, at considerably more places in the thinking that lay behind the writings we have. An obvious example is Romans 4.24–25, where the entire train of thought of 3.21—4.25 is summed up in a formulaic sentence which clearly evokes Isaiah 53 and to which Paul refers in his statements about the 'obedience of the one man' in 5.12–21. Not that Paul has removed the servant from his wider Isaian context: chapters 40—55 are all about the righteousness of God through which the powers of the world are defeated and God's people in consequence rescued – the New Exodus, in other words. And, within the servant story itself, but obviously going much wider in Jewish thought as a whole, we cannot ignore Paul's regular use of sacrificial terminology. Our difficulty here is not so much in recognizing that Paul sees Jesus' death as a sacrifice as in working out what he might [**83**] have meant by this, since our knowledge of how second-Temple Jews understood the theology of sacrifice is remarkably thin.[8] This is bound to remain a question mark within this chapter as a whole: how precisely did Paul understand Jesus' death as a sacrifice, and how does this integrate with all the other things he says? If we could answer this more satisfactorily we would take another large step,

[7] See my *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 7.

[8] On the clear reference to the 'sin-offering' in Rom. 8.3 see my commentary and the other works there cited: *Romans*. See also Jean-Noel Aletti's remarks below about the difficulty of knowing how Paul and contemporary Judaeans understood the Day of Atonement.

I think, to integrating several other aspects of his thought. These are the narratives – the exodus, the return from exile, the offering of sacrifices – which help to frame and shape the seven key stories which Paul is telling, in each of which the redeeming death of Jesus the Messiah is the central point. I must now set them out one by one before attempting integration.

The Seven Key Stories, and the Cross within Them

The *first story* Paul tells, by implication throughout, is that of *creation and new creation*. A consistently Jewish thinker, Paul never imagines that creation is evil; it is the good creation of the good God, and to be enjoyed as such. But, in line with much apocalyptic thought, Paul believes that God is planning to renew creation, to bring it out of its present state of decay and death and into the new world where it would find its true fulfilment. The classic passage for this is of course Romans 8.18–27, which as we saw offers one of the rare occurrences of the word 'redemption' itself. Paul does not mention the cross in that passage itself, but the sufferings of Christians, which are, for him, the sharing of Christ's sufferings, hold the key to the current state of affairs through which the world must pass to attain its final deliverance from decay.

This explains why, at the end of Galatians (6.14–15), Paul can suddenly broaden the horizon of what has been up till then a sharply focused discussion. I suspect that many at the Redemption Summit sang a few days earlier Isaac Watts's version of redemption:

> Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
> Save in the cross of Christ my God;
> All the vain things that charm me most,
> I sacrifice them to his blood.
>
> [**84**]Were the whole realm of nature mine
> That were an offering far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine.
> Demands my soul, my life, my all.

A wonderful statement of Christian devotion; yet, as with other hymns from the same period, we may question whether it does full justice to the scope of what Paul actually says: 'through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world; for neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation'. The 'to me' is clearly important, and the 'new creation' is focused on the new creation that consists in the Spirit-called people defined by faith as opposed to membership in ethnic Israel; but what Paul is saying about himself, and about all God's people in Christ, is not just that *they* have changed, but that they live in a landscape which has decisively changed. The world as a whole has been crucified in the crucifixion of the Messiah, and a new world has been brought to birth. This is presumably why he can say in Colossians 1.23 that the gospel has already been proclaimed to every creature under heaven: when Jesus died and rose again, the cosmos as

a whole became a different place. This is also closely linked to the famous 2 Corinthians 5.17: 'anyone in Christ is new creation – the old things have gone, and look, new things have come into being'. That passage, too, belongs closely with a massive statement both of the cross of Jesus and of the way the cross has worked its way through Paul's apostolic ministry, as we shall see later. What seems to be happening is that Paul understands the death of Jesus, and the continuing resonances of that death in the suffering of the church, as the hinge upon which the door of world history turns. From that moment, the forces of decay and death have suffered their major defeat, and from now on new creation is under way, with its first signs being the new life of those who believe the gospel. 'New creation' thus refers to the actual people concerned, not over against the rest of the world but as the sign of the new life that will one day flood the entire creation.

The *second* great *narrative* which Paul has in mind throughout his writing is the story of Israel. This is more complicated, because Israel is the people called to bear God's solution to the problem of the world and yet now ensnared, themselves, within the same problem. Paul shows dozens of signs that he is following through the Israel-story in the same way as many other second-Temple writers: the Abrahamic promises as God's solution to the problem of the world, the Exodus as [**85**] the first great fulfilment of those promises, the Torah as God's good gift to his redeemed people, designed to stop them going to the bad until the final fulfilment . . . and then the catastrophe of exile, with Torah itself turning against Israel and condemning it. What can God do now about the promises? What will happen to the divine plan to bless the whole world through Israel?

This is exactly the way Paul sets up the problem in two classic passages, Romans 2.17—3.9 and Galatians 3.6–12. The answer, in both cases, is the death of Jesus, bursting through the blockage in the historical fulfilment of the divine purposes. In Romans, Jesus appears as the Messiah, the faithful Israelite, whose redeeming death (3.24–26) is the means of God's now declaring that all who share this faith are 'righteous', that is, members of the sin-forgiven family (3.27–31), and that this is how God has fulfilled the Abrahamic promises (4.1–25). In Galatians, more specifically, the curse of exile which had bottled up the promises and prevented them getting through to the gentiles, leaving Israel itself under condemnation, is dealt with by the death of Jesus: he takes Israel's curse on himself (and thus, at one remove, the world's curse, though this is not what is in view in this passage, despite efforts to employ it as a generalized statement of 'atonement theology'), making it possible at last for 'the blessing of Abraham to come on the gentiles' and also that 'we' (in other words, Jews who had been under the very specific 'curse' of Deuteronomy) might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. In other words, the covenant has been renewed at last – through the death of Jesus as Israel's representative Messiah.

In other words, I do not think that Paul's train of thought ran, as so many have suggested: (a) Jesus was crucified, therefore he was under God's curse, therefore he cannot have been the Messiah; and then (b) God raised him from the dead, therefore he cannot have been cursed, therefore his death

must have been redemptive. Paul is quite clear that Jesus *did* bear the curse, not that he didn't.

This explains, among many other things, why Paul says at the start of Galatians (the point in the letter when we might expect a thematic statement) that 'our Lord Jesus the Messiah gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of God our Father' (1.3–4). And this in turn brings into view the central statement of the common early creed quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.3: the Messiah 'died for our sins according to the scriptures'. Galatians 1.4 shows very clearly what this means, [**86**] offering once more a historical understanding rather than a dehistoricized atonement-theory. For a second-Temple Jew, soaked in passages like Daniel 9, the present parlous state of Israel, which (following Daniel and many other writers) I have characterized as 'continuing exile', was the result of Israel's sins. The ancient Israelites had sinned, and had gone into exile; now their successors, even those living back in the land, had continued to sin, and as a result the final redemption, the real 'return from exile', was delayed. (Think, for instance, of Malachi.) The problem of sin is thus not simply that it separates the individual from God in his or her existential spirituality (true though that is as well). The problem is that Israel's sins are keeping Israel in exile. Conversely, if somehow Israel's sins were to be dealt with, finished with, and blotted out, then exile could be undone and the people could go free – and with them the whole world, waiting for Israel to be redeemed (as in, e.g., Isaiah 55, not by coincidence as we shall see). Thus, for the moment, Israel languishes in 'the present evil age', waiting for 'the age to come' to arrive, the time of redemption and forgiveness. And this forgiveness will not mean simply that individuals can now enter into a happy and intimate relationship with their heavenly Father, true again though that is. The point is that, if sins are forgiven, exile will be over, the rule of the evil powers will be broken and Israel – and the rest of the world – will be summoned to enjoy, and take part in, God's renewed world. This is what Paul believes has happened with the death of Jesus. In neither passage does he explain how it is that the death of Jesus delivers us from the evil age; the equation depends on two other things, which he supplies plentifully elsewhere, not least in 1 Corinthians 15 itself: (a) Jesus was and is Israel's representative Messiah; (b) God raised him from the dead (note 1 Corinthians 15.17: if the Messiah isn't raised, your faith is futile, *and you are still in your sins*; in other words, the new age has not begun).

The story of the crucified Messiah is thus at the heart of Paul's way of telling the story of how Israel has been brought to the very depth of exile and has now been rescued to live as God's new creation. The sharpest statement of this comes at the end of Galatians 2:

> I through the Torah died to Torah, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with the Messiah; however, I am alive, yet it is not me, but the Messiah lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify God's [**87**] grace; for if covenant membership came by Torah, then the Messiah died for no reason. (Galatians 2.19–21)

This spills over into the next story (and all these stories are in any case interlocked); yet I cannot resist putting it here. The point of all that Paul is saying, to Peter at Antioch and, through the telling of that incident, to the Galatians as they 'overhear' the Paul/Peter debate, or at least Paul's side of it, is not that he, Paul, has had a particular spiritual experience or that he now enjoys a particular kind of spiritual life. The point of it all is that Paul is here standing, as in one or two other places, as the typical Israelite. He has stated the general principle in Galatians 2.15–16: though we are by birth Jews, not 'gentile sinners', we know that God declares 'righteous' not those who rely on 'works of Torah', but those whose status depends on the faithfulness of the Messiah. Paul's point, in other words, is that through the faithful death of the Messiah God has acted to *transform the category of 'the righteous'*, so that it now denotes not those who are defined by Torah but those who are defined by the Messiah. And 'those who are defined by the Messiah' means those who have died and come to life in and with him; those, in other words, who have been co-crucified with him (verse 19). Here the cross determines the death of the old identity: the Messiah, Israel's representative, dies, therefore Israel dies according to the flesh. And, by implication, the resurrection determines the new life of the new identity: the Messiah, Israel's representative, 'lives to God' (Galatians 2.19, cf. Romans 6.10), and those who are 'in him' possess this same new life. That which was said in the plural in Galatians 1.3–4 is now brought into the sharp singular, not (once again) because Paul is special but because he is paradigmatic: 'the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2.20). The final verse sums up the effect of the cross on the story of Israel: if Torah could have defined covenant membership, the Messiah would not have needed to die, but (so Paul clearly implies) the fact that the Messiah *did* need to die indicates that Israel, as defined by Torah, needed to die and to come through to a new sort of life, a life in which the promises would at last be fulfilled.

The *third* great *narrative* which Paul offers is embedded within the second, as the second is in the first: it is the story of Torah. Torah is almost personified in some Pauline passages, and its multiple ambiguities have precipitated a huge secondary literature. The crucial passages are again in Galatians and Romans. In Galatians 4.1–7, [**88**] Paul tells the story of Israel being redeemed from Torah as though Torah were a new sort of Pharaoh, an enslaving power. Torah has become, in fact, identified as one of the *stoicheia tou kosmou*, the 'elements of the world', which I take to mean the shabby line-up of the tutelary deities of the nations, the subdivine beings to whom the world has been entrusted until the time of fulfilment. This explains how Paul can say that in their former state the ex-gentile Galatians had been enslaved to beings that by nature were not divine, but had now been set free by God's 'knowing' of them (4.8–9). Paul can then chide them with turning *back* to the 'elements' once more (4.9b), when what they were seeking to do was to embrace Torah, presumably in the hope of getting 'further in' within the people of the true God than they had been able to do by believing in Jesus and being baptized. The only way we can make sense of this is to remind ourselves, from 3.21–25, that the God-given Torah had a *deliberately negative*

purpose, to shut up Israel under a new kind of slavery until the ultimate redemption, which has now been accomplished through 'the son of God', his sending, his birth and his 'being under Torah' (4.4). Though Paul does not mention Jesus' death at this point we should surely infer it.

We should do so not least in the light of the parallel in Romans 7.1—8.11. Once again I refer to my commentary for fuller treatment. The main point to be drawn out here is found in two seminal statements, Romans 7.4 and 8.3–4.

Paul's advance summary in 7.4 is very close to Galatians 2.16–21: 'You died to the law through the body of the Messiah, so that you could belong to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, so that you could bear fruit for God.' Briefly, the point is this: Torah had bound Israel, not to God as had been thought, but to Adam (see Romans 5.20; 6.14; 7.1–3). The death of the Messiah is then to be counted as the death of his people; so those who, formerly under Torah, die with the Messiah to the Torah are set free from the bond that binds them to Adam (the 'former husband' of 7.1–3, like the 'old man' of 6.6). As a result, they are free for a new life, a life in the risen Christ, a life of 'being fruitful' as Adam had originally been commanded. This points the way forwards into the exposition of chapter 7, where Torah demonstrates that Israel is indeed in Adam (7.7–12), and that Israel, even though possessing Torah as God's gift and rejoicing in it as such, finds that all Torah can do is condemn and kill, not because there is anything wrong with Torah but because [**89**] there is something right about Torah – it must point out sin and condemn it. That's what it's there for. Israel's ultimate problem is not the fact of possessing Torah, but the fact of possessing it *while being a sinful people, a people in Adam*.

Torah, however, has throughout this process had an important and God-given negative purpose: to draw sin onto one place, luring it forwards to concentrate all its efforts at one spot. That is the meaning of the otherwise puzzling 5.20. And when this has been done, then the trap can be sprung: sin, the real culprit (does Paul in personifying 'sin', take a step towards identifying it with the serpent in the garden, and hence with 'the satan'?), must be condemned. This is the closest Paul comes to saying in so many words what so many of his interpreters have attributed to him: that the death of Jesus was the ultimate moment of judicial condemnation, of God's punishment; 'God, sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin-offering, condemned sin in the flesh'. This is strongly penal language. However, Paul does not say either that God punished Jesus or that God punished Jesus for 'my sins'; much of the previous chapter has been devoted to demonstrating that. For the pious Jew under Torah, 'it is not I that do it, but sin dwelling in me'. What Paul says is that God punished *sin* in the flesh, that is the flesh of Jesus. Of course, this amounts to the same thing in practice; Jesus' crucifixion was not one whit less horrible, shameful, disgusting and agonizing for the fact that God was punishing sin rather than punishing Jesus, since of course the point was that he had come 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. But this theological analysis of the event indicates well enough, I think, how close the traditional penal theories of the atonement come to Paul's meaning while

yet not allowing for its subtlety. The point within this third story is that Torah, God's agent in the necessarily negative period between Moses and Jesus, was used to draw sin onto one place – Israel, and thence to Israel's representative, the Messiah – so that in his crucifixion, it could be punished at last as it deserved. And in that punishment – here the penal substitutionary theory makes its perfectly valid point – 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (8.1). No condemnation for Christ's people because God has condemned sin in the flesh of Christ: that is the perfectly Pauline point underneath the substitutionary language that has proved so powerful for some and so problematic for others.

[**90**] This leads us to the *fourth story*, which is that of the human race. This is central to the whole presentation and, though this treatment is still very brief, it will be somewhat longer than that of the other stories. 'All sinned, and came short of the glory of God; and they are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Messiah Jesus' (Romans 3.23–24). Redemption is the means of justification. How can we understand this? 'Justification' has, since Augustine at least, often been understood as more or less coterminous with 'conversion'. Traditional Reformed Theology has spelt things out in more detail in terms of an 'ordo salutis' which comes close, in my view, to the substance of what Paul is saying without always reflecting his use of key terms. My contention here – and this explains the anger directed against my view in some circles – is that Paul does not use the verb like this. This is where I not only agree with Sanders in seeing that Paul is talking about the coming together of Jew and gentile in Christ, but go beyond him into a far more precise definition of 'justification'.

When Paul speaks of the initial hearing-the-gospel-and-coming-to-faith he speaks of the 'call' of God (see 1 Corinthians 1.26; Galatians 1.15; spelt out in 1 Thessalonians 1.4; 2.13). In the decisive, crystal-clear summary at the end of Romans 8 he distinguishes 'call' from 'justify' within the sequence of God's actions. Thus, despite generations who have read it this way, I conclude that Romans 3.21–26 *does not describe how someone becomes a Christian*, but describes rather the grounds on which God declares that certain persons, despite their all alike being sinful, are declared to be members of his covenant family. This declaration is not what brings people into the family; it is what certifies – against the expectation of those who might still assume that the Jew/gentile distinction operates in perpetuity – that all who are 'of the faith of Jesus' are full members, circumcised and uncircumcised alike. That this is Paul's meaning ought to have been clear long ago from verses 29 and 30, which explain the nature of the 'boasting' in 3.27–28; but the Lutheran reading of the passage, according to which 'boasting' meant 'self-righteous legalism, trying to earn God's favour', has been so strong that even good exegetes have been content to see verse 29 as a transition to a different theme. God 'justifies' all alike on the basis of faith; that is, exactly as in Galatians 2.15–21, God regards all the faithful alike as fully members of the same single family, and as belonging side by side at the same table.

[**91**] Thus, despite generations of zealous evangelistic use of Romans 3.21–26 as describing and facilitating 'conversion', I do not think this is what the

passage is basically about. 'Justification' is not about 'entry', about 'getting in'; this is where Sanders, I think, failed to draw the appropriate conclusion from his own thesis. Nor is it exactly about 'staying in'. It is about God declaring that someone is in. It defines the community.

In the light of this, what can we say about the cross in verses 24–26? How does Paul explain more precisely the meaning of 'the redemption which is in Messiah Jesus'?

The main thing to say is that it is *cultic*. God 'put him forth' – the word is used in the LXX of the shewbread – as a *hilasterion*, through his faithfulness (i.e. his obedience-to-death, as in 5.12–21), by means of his blood. Much debate has poured forth on the precise meaning of *hilasterion*, and much has been invested in making this the vital turning point in atonement theology. By itself the word probably cannot bear that weight. Strong indications point to a propitiatory significance, but this is not enough to force the whole passage into the normal straitjacket of 'we sinned; God punished Jesus instead; we go free'. The main point is that, as with the sacrifices of the OT, the death of Jesus is the means whereby the God of infinite justice can nevertheless declare that certain people truly are his people, are *dikaioi*: that is, they are covenant members, and their sins are forgiven. That was what the covenant was always designed to do, and in Jesus the Messiah the object has been attained. I have argued in my commentary that Paul is here drawing on ideas connected to the sacrificial death of the martyrs, which in turn point back to second-Temple readings of Isaiah 53; and the fact that Paul refers to that passage when summing up the place of Jesus' death in the argument of this section (4.24–25) gives this strong support. The servant dies 'for our trespasses/iniquities', in order to put into effect God's righteousness and salvation.

There can be no question but that Isaiah 53 has in mind some kind of substitution: the servant is innocent, yet bears the fate of the guilty. (See too Romans 8.3, discussed briefly above.) Paul has made it very clear in his initial statement of human guilt that the characteristic human position is to know God's decree that certain types of behaviour deserve death, and yet to practise and approve them. Now he describes the Messiah dying 'on behalf of' the weak, the sinful, as the outworking of God's love (Romans 5.8), resulting in people being [**92**] 'justified', that is, declared to be in the right, in the present, and being assured of final salvation (Romans 5.9). (Paul here draws on the same seam of thought as we saw in Galatians 1.3–4 and 1 Corinthians 15.3.) And, as the paragraph reaches its climax in Romans 5.10, Paul speaks of enemies being reconciled, and of those now reconciled then being saved the more easily. The fact that he has just spoken of God's wrath (Romans 5.9) ought to warn us against too readily assuming that 'enemies' describes only the subjective state of rebellious human beings; the mystery is that God simultaneously was turned against the human race in wrath (Romans 1.18) and turned towards it in love (Romans 5.8). The day we fathom that mystery will be the day we understand Paul's atonement theology.

Where has this taken us in following the fourth story? The whole human race, sinful and unable to defend itself (Romans 3.19–20), finds itself addressed by a love which declares that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, has died for it and

risen again. When this message is preached, and the Spirit works powerfully through this gospel, this constitutes the 'call' (Romans 1.16–17; 1 Corinthians 12.3; Galatians 1.15; 1 Thessalonians 2.13), resulting in the faith that Jesus is indeed Lord and that God raised him from the dead (Romans 4.24–25; 10.9). This 'call' is itself possible because of what Jesus has already done, because of the new world that has come into being through his dying and rising (see story 1 above); but as it is applied, through the word and the Spirit, to the individual heart it invites the surprised, newly believing person to reflect on the status he or she now has. This is the status of 'righteous', and it is grounded in what has been achieved on the cross. By only a small expansion of Romans 5.6–10 we can see the point. Those who were weak are now strong; those who were unaware of God's love are now grasped by it; those who were sinners are now accounted such no longer; those who were unrighteous are now righteous; those facing wrath are now rescued from it; those who were enemies are now reconciled and, once more, rescued. All this has taken place because of the death of Jesus, and the new life which flows from it. All of this constitutes 'the redemption which is in Messiah Jesus'. And all of this points on, in the argument of Romans 5—8 and the theology of Paul as a whole, to the climax in Romans 8: those who share Christ's sufferings will share his glory, his dominion over the redeemed cosmos.

At the heart of this we find the strange combination of two apparently opposite ideas: the Messiah dies, therefore his people die **[93]** with him; the Messiah dies, therefore his people do not die. Though these are often played off against one another ('representation' versus 'substitution'), I have already said enough to show that they belong closely with one another. Substitution (he dies, we do not) makes sense within the context of representation (the Member of Parliament *represents* the constituents, and therefore is qualified to act, particularly to speak and vote, *in their place*). Representation is important not least because it creates the context for substitution. Within the story of the human race as a whole we find the Pauline story of the individual human being, summarized in Romans 8.29–30. When someone becomes a Christian, this is rooted in God's inscrutable will, not in their own initiative; Paul has little to say about this, but (here and in, e.g., 1 Thessalonians 1.4–5) it is clear that when the gospel works powerfully to change hearts and lives, Paul traces this not to the worthiness of the hearer but to the grace of God (he may well, of course, have in mind passages like Deuteronomy 7.6–8). For our purposes the key events are the three final ones in Romans 8.29–30: those God called, he also justified; those he justified he also glorified.

This should make it clear that when Paul wants to refer to the initial event of someone's becoming a Christian he does not use the term 'justify' and its cognates. He uses 'call', and he glosses this, as we saw, with a theology of the preaching of the gospel, the 'word', in the power of the Spirit. 'Call' denotes the event that people often refer to as 'conversion', though of course whereas 'conversion' draws attention to the change of heart and mind in the person concerned, the word 'call' draws attention to God's action and hence places that change of heart and mind already in the category of 'obedience' as well

as 'faith' (see, e.g., Romans 1.5). The 'call' thus does indeed evoke faith, faith that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead.

The verb 'justify' does not, then, denote the initial moment of coming-to-faith, but (when used in the present – see below) the declaration which God makes on the basis of that faith. Justification in the present is God's declaration, based on that faith alone rather than anything in the ethnic, gendered, moral or social background of the person concerned, that this person is indeed a member of the covenant family, one whose sins are forgiven and for whom there is 'no condemnation'. Justification thus points forwards to 'glorification', Paul's larger term for the eventual goal. I note that this is a larger category than 'sanctification', though it includes it en route (not least by means of baptism; there is, unfortunately, no space for [**94**] Romans 6 in this chapter). I also note that the concrete referent is the final resurrection (Romans 8.9–11), not simply a post-mortem life of bliss in 'heaven' or wherever, something about which Paul has almost nothing to say.

What, then, does Paul mean by 'justification'? Once we clear our minds of the referent the word has had in much of the last 1600 years, and listen carefully to what he says, we discover three things. When we listen to its OT echoes, the word is *covenantal*: it refers to the declaration that these people are members of God's true people. But because this declaration is always made in the face of the accusation of sin, and in the light of God's determination to put the world to rights precisely through the Abrahamic covenant, the word is also *forensic*: the 'law-court' categories are not simply snatched from a different and perhaps conflicting metaphorical home base, but rather explain how it is that the covenantal purpose is worked out. And the word is also, especially, *eschatological*. It can be used in both past and future as well as present, and indeed the past justification and the future justification determine the meaning of the present. This will become clear if we lay these senses out.

In Romans 2.1–16 Paul speaks of 'justification' in the future: those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality will be given the life of the age to come, and this is to be seen as 'justification', that is, God's final declaration that they are his people. This future 'declaration' will consist in God's raising these people from the dead; this same event can thus properly be described, also, as 'salvation', since it will be the means of rescuing people from the state of death; and, as we saw, as 'glorification', stressing the new role for God's redeemed humanity within God's new world.

In Romans 4.25 Paul declares that Jesus was 'put to death for our trespasses, and raised for our justification'. The connection implied by 'for' in this double statement is highly contested, but for present purposes the point is that Paul is looking back to a past event which somehow grounds the justification that we enjoy in the present. It is the event which he can sum up as the 'act of obedience' of Jesus Christ, or as his 'faithfulness'.

Thus Romans 3.21–31, and indeed Romans 4 which roots it in God's covenant promises, speaks of a *present* justification which is based on the action of the faithful Messiah in the past and which *anticipates* the verdict of the future. When someone believes the [**95**] gospel – when, in other words, the 'call' takes place, as above – then the verdict of the future is brought

forward into the present. As in 4QMMT, this is how that which will be revealed on the last day – namely, who God's true people really are – is known in advance. But whereas in 4QMMT the evidence was to be the performance of certain specified 'works of Torah', namely the regulations which marked out the Essenes from other Jews, and whereas for the Pharisees (or their Christian analogues whom we can assume to have been Paul's partners in controversy) the evidence was to be the performance of the 'works of Torah' which marked out Jews from their pagan neighbours, that is, sabbath, food-laws, and circumcision, for Paul the evidence is simply Christ-faith: belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. This faith, the obedient response to God's call, is the appropriate evidence for this declaration, both because it is the sign of the Christ-life (note how the faith of the believer mirrors the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah in Romans 3.22) and because, since it is the work of the Spirit through the gospel, it is the sign of that upon which final assurance is based. 'The one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of the Messiah' (Philippians 1.6). This is where Paul's whole theme of the Spirit as *arrabon*, 'down-payment', makes its contribution to a fully blown theology of justification.

I thus note that, despite the loose language (and theology) we often find in this area, Paul does not speak of 'salvation by faith' (except for Ephesians 2.8, which raises other questions). Once we free 'justification' from meaning 'conversion' or anything like it, we cut loose from the sterile and often tortuous debates about 'faith and works' that have taken place in an environment many miles removed from second-Temple Judaism, namely the European controversies of the sixteenth and some subsequent centuries. Paul would, of course, have scoffed at Pelagian-style self-help moralism, but this is not what Romans and Galatians are about. He believed, like most Jews of his day, in a final judgement which would be 'according to works', and did not in any way see that as compromising his position on justification, God's declaration in the present that all believers belong to his true people. 'Justification' is a technically precise way of saying something Paul was eager to say and many of his readers have completely missed: that all those who believe in Jesus as the risen Lord belong in the same family, no matter what their social or moral status or background.

[**96**] So much for the fourth story Paul is telling. I turn *fifthly*, much more briefly, to a very specific outworking of the same narrative, namely the story of Paul's apostolic vocation. Two passages are particularly significant: Philippians 3.4–11 and 2 Corinthians as a whole. In Philippians Paul applies the pattern he has set out in 2.6–11 to his own life. Whatever gain he had, he counted as loss because of the Messiah. His goal is 'to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead'. I have argued elsewhere that this is not said for the sake of autobiography, but in order to highlight the pattern of Jesus' dying and rising as being etched into Paul's apostolic work so that it may serve as a pattern. He wants the Philippians to imitate him; they cannot do this directly, since none of them had been zealous Pharisaic Jews as he describes himself to have been. The

solution is found at the end of the chapter, where Paul's description of Jesus seems deliberately to echo Roman imperial rhetoric about Caesar. Paul is hinting, I suggest, that the Philippians, some of whom at least will have been Roman citizens, and all of whom may have found benefit in the city's status as a Roman colony, must sit as loose to their privileges as he has to his.[9]

Paul's second letter to Corinth reveals the cross not so much etched into Paul's apostolic work as burnt deep into it with a branding-iron. Passage after passage makes it clear that the cross is not only the means whereby the Christian obtains initial forgiveness, the new start of the gospel, but also the way and pattern of life, especially for those to whom the gospel is entrusted. It is at the heart of this exposition of Paul's apostolic ministry that we find one of the most famous statements of his *theologia crucis*, in 2 Corinthians 5.20–21: 'We act as ambassadors for the Messiah, as though God were making his appeal through us. On behalf of the Messiah we entreat people: be reconciled to God! God made the one who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in him we might become God's righteousness.'

Again, I have argued elsewhere for a different interpretation to the normal one.[10] Start from two fixed points. First, it is highly probable [**97**] that when Paul writes *dikaiosynē theou*, as here and in several passages in Romans, he is not referring to the status which he and all Christians have, the status of 'righteous' which is God's gift. That he describes as the righteous status which comes *from* God (*hē ek theou dikaiosynē*, Philippians 3.9). Rather, he refers to God's own covenant faithfulness. (This is strengthened further by the oddity of saying 'become', had he meant that this righteous status was 'reckoned' to them, as in Romans 4 or Galatians 3.) Second, reading the verse the normal way, as a statement of abstract atonement theology in which our sins are credited to Jesus and his righteousness is credited to us (something Paul says nowhere else), destroys the force of the passage, in which Paul is building up to a crescendo not about soteriology but about the inner logic of his apostolic ministry. In fact, the normal reading of the passage often results in verse 21 falling off the end of the discussion; or, sometimes, in the treating of verse 20 as if it were a direct appeal to the Corinthians themselves (by the unwarranted addition of 'you'), rather than a broad statement of Paul's apostolic activity. These two fixed points suggest the following reading: that the cross of Jesus the Messiah is (among many other things) the means by which the failings and limitations of the apostle and his work, and particularly his personal sins, are dealt with, setting him free to *become*, to embody, to encapsulate and show forth in his own work, that covenant faithfulness of God whose initial unveiling in the faithful death of Jesus (Romans 3.21–26) stands behind everything Paul believes, writes and attempts. I therefore read verse 21 not as a statement of God's righteousness, still less Christ's righteousness, being imputed, imparted or otherwise transferred to the believer, but as a statement of God's own covenant faithfulness being embodied in the apostolic work which is causing Paul so much grief throughout the letter.

[9] See 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire' [reprinted as chapter 12 in the present volume].
[10] 'On Becoming the Righteousness of God' [reprinted as chapter 5 in the present volume].

This still leaves, however, the first half of the verse: 'For our sake [God] made [the Messiah], who knew no sin, to be sin for us'. Though Paul does not mention the death of Jesus specifically, the wider context has been full of it (especially, e.g., 4.7–15), and the mention of God's reconciling work in the Messiah (5.18–19) fits closely with his cross-shaped reconciliation theology in Romans 5.9–10 and Colossians 1.20–22. Once again there may be cultic overtones: to make something to be 'sin' could be a way of referring to the sin-offering. But this should not take away from the central statement: God's making the sinless one to be sin on our behalf. Once again the **[98]** closest OT passage seems to be Isaiah 53, where the innocent one is wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. It may be, though, that Paul is not simply explaining that in his death Jesus has borne 'our' sin, that is, including that of the apostles themselves, in order that they might be fit embodiments of God's covenant faithfulness. He may also, or even primarily, be referring to Jesus' sin-bearing death as the model for, and the locus of, the suffering which the apostle must now undergo as he brings the message of reconciliation. It is 'in him', after all, that the apostles 'become' God's covenant faithfulness. Once again the parallel with Colossians 1 suggests itself: Paul fills up in his own flesh what was lacking in the Messiah's afflictions for the sake of his body, the church (1.24).

Colossians 1 points us to the *sixth story* which Paul is aware of telling throughout his work: that of the powers of the world. Briefly, and confusingly, the powers – every single one of them, in heaven and earth – are created in, through and for the Messiah, God's beloved son (1.16), and then are reconciled through him (1.20). The reader of Paul's great poem is puzzled: why, if they were created by him, did they need to be reconciled? The poem clearly presupposes some sort of 'fall', or rebellion of the powers. This is confirmed in Colossians 2.15. The cross of Jesus, instead of being as one might suppose the place where the powers celebrated a triumph over him, stripping him naked and holding him up to public contempt, is to be seen as the place where Jesus celebrated *his* triumph over *them*.

This victory over the powers, and their consequent reconciliation, sets the stage for Paul's reworking of the ancient Jewish theme of the one sovereign God and the powers of the world, spiritual and political (a modern distinction to which, notoriously, neither Jewish nor Pauline thought corresponds). Alongside Colossians 1 we must place 1 Corinthians 2.8: 'None of the rulers of this age knew [the hidden wisdom of God]; if they had, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory.' Three things are going on here, points at which Paul is picking up Jewish political theology where the Wisdom of Solomon left off and taking it forward. First, he implies that the wisdom of Israel's God is what the world's rulers really need, if they are to do their job properly and avoid judgement from the world's true Sovereign. Second, he implies that had they recognized Jesus himself as wisdom incarnate, they would have done him homage rather than executing him. Third, he implies that their killing of Jesus was in fact their acquiescence in their own demise, since his death was (as in **[99]** Colossians 2) the means whereby their stranglehold over the human race was broken at last.

This is where, I suggest, Paul's theology of the cross confronts, in principle, the power of Rome. As I have argued in various places, both in structure and in detail Paul ranges the gospel of Jesus against the gospel of Caesar, and the place of the cross within the Jesus message offers a wonderful subversion of the place of the cross within Caesar's empire. I cannot go further into this here, but unless this is taken seriously one whole aspect of Paul's understanding of Jesus' death is in danger of being ignored.

The *seventh and last story* we note is that of God himself. It may seem a step too far towards process theology to imagine God himself having a 'story'; yet when Paul tells the story of Israel this is really the obverse of the other story looming up behind, the story of the creator and covenant God. This is, surely, what Romans 9—11 is all about; were there more space, I would try to demonstrate that that entire section of the book is radically shaped around the cross of Israel's Messiah. Israel follows the Messiah into judgement, and is now free, if it wants, to abandon unbelief and find new life. But Romans 9—11 is itself based on the earlier sections of the letter, and in 5—8 we find God as the subject of the story all through, implicitly or explicitly, particularly as the one whose love is embodied and exemplified in Jesus' death (5.6–10; 8.31–39). We must not miss the importance of this: over against all kenotic christologies that flirt with the idea of the Son of God somehow 'stopping being God' for a while in order to become incarnate and die, Paul insists that when Jesus dies what we are seeing is the love of God in action. If the one who died on the cross was not somehow identified with the one true God, then his death would reveal, not how much God loved, but how much God managed to escape the consequences of genuine love.

In fact, the passage traditionally quoted in favour of a 'kenotic' christology makes this point very well. Philippians 2.6–11 turns on the little word *dio* at the start of verse 9: *therefore* God has given him the name above every name, that every tongue should confess that Jesus, Messiah, is *kyrios*. The LXX references, especially to Isaiah 45.23, indicate what is in mind: the One God, who will not share his glory with another, has shared it with Jesus – precisely because he has been 'obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross'. For Paul in Philippians, the crucifixion of Jesus is not something which [**100**] happened despite the fact that he was God incarnate, but because of it. He has done what only God can do.

Conclusion: The Cross within Paul's Storied World

I have tried to show, in all too incomplete a fashion, the role that the cross played in seven of the key interlocking stories which contribute to the rich texture of Paul's theological and practical writing. Ideally, I should now work through the material from one or two more angles, establishing some cross-sectioned references and so homing in the more accurately on the way Paul's mind and arguments worked. But I have said enough to show, I think, both that the New Perspective, by highlighting key aspects of second-Temple Judaism and by loosening the grip of a wooden Lutheran-style analysis, has

opened up all kinds of new possibilities, even though within the NP itself these were not followed up in the way I have now done. I have also tried to indicate how the fresh perspective plays out, though there again there is much more to be said. Certainly Paul believed that through his costly apostolic work (story 5) and through the creation, by the gospel, of a renewed non-ethno-specific human family (story 4), Caesar's grandiose claim to bring justice, freedom and peace to the world (story 6) was being challenged by God's counter-claim, which, like Caesar's, hinged decisively on the cross. This coming together of soteriology and 'political theology' may indeed be the most important proposal of this chapter.

But I have tried to show, in particular, how narrative readings of Paul can shed fresh light on well-known and contentious areas. I do not think I have made these areas less contentious, but I hope I have conveyed something of the excitement and drama that they had for Paul himself and can, I believe, still have today. 'Redemption' is one of those heavy, stodgy words that sit amongst Christian vocabulary the way suet puddings sit amongst the other food on the plate. I hope I have indicated that for Paul this was a word which spoke of promise fulfilled, of freedom attained, of the faithful love of God and the journey home to the 'inheritance' – in other words, of exodus. In a world ringing once more with the familiar imperial rhetoric of freedom, it is good to be reminded that there is another way of telling the story.

Chapter Twenty

PAUL AS PREACHER: THE GOSPEL THEN AND NOW (2007)

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Visits to Ireland are usually special occasions, and this one was no exception. The only problem is that, as with other such trips, my main memory is not of the academic component but of the wonderful hospitality my wife and I enjoyed. As with some other essays written during my time as Bishop of Durham, there was no time for detailed annotation, and I concentrated on trying to summarize large and complex areas of Paul's thought and preaching into an accessible format.

* * *

[**131**] What was Paul doing when he was 'preaching' the gospel? He was a pioneer missionary, whose message must have sounded very Jewish and very politically subversive. He was announcing news that was challenging at a public, not merely a personal, level. He was telling a story about the whole world, and about its creator revealing himself in a dramatically unexpected way. In Jesus, this God had put the world to rights, and was summoning all people to join in the community of those who hailed Jesus, not Caesar, as the true Lord. To announce this gospel in today's world means confronting postmodernity, postsecularism and the new forms of empire with the same challenging word, the overarching narrative of new creation, and the generation of fresh community, to let today's Caesars know that Jesus is Lord.

When England won the Rugby Union World Cup, nearly two years ago now, I was at a conference in Atlanta, Georgia. When I heard the result it was six o'clock in the morning, Atlanta time. I was thrilled to bits and eager to share the good news. But nobody in the hotel had the slightest idea what rugby was, let alone how important England's victory was. I tried it out on the conference later that morning: I began my lecture by saying, 'I've got good news!' (which woke them all up) and then explaining 'England have just won the Rugby World Cup!' And the blank looks said it all. I might as well have walked out onto O'Connell Street in Dublin and announced to a startled audience that Hang Chow province had just won the Chinese inter-provincial table tennis tournament.

That picture gives you a sharp idea of what Paul was doing in his preaching. By way of introducing my theme, let me put it like this: when Paul arrived in, say, Thessalonica and announced that Jesus was Lord, it must have felt like someone telling an audience about a game they didn't play being won by a team they didn't know. Announcing that the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth is Israel's true king and therefore the world's true [**132**] Lord would make no sense at all to a first-century pagan. It was bad enough for a first-century Jew; but Paul was primarily the apostle to the gentiles, to the non-Jews, the pagans, and to them it was, as he says in 1 Corinthians 1.23, straightforward folly. To suppose that a Jew could become the lord of the world was ridiculous to citizens of Rome, or for that matter to the heirs of the great culture of Greece. To imagine that a crucified man might be anything other than shamed and degraded was offensive. But, to add an ultimate insult, to suggest that anyone, let alone such a person, had been raised from the dead – not, please note, exalted to heaven like a hero or an emperor in popular mythology, but resurrected to a new bodily life – everyone knew that this was utterly ridiculous. The belief that dead people do not rise was not something first discovered in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Homer and Aeschylus knew it just as well as Hobbes or Voltaire.

And yet it was this proclamation that constituted Paul's central preaching activity: to proclaim, like a royal herald, that this Jesus was the true Lord of the world, that the one creator God had vindicated him after his shameful death, so that even that death itself had an astonishing new meaning. Of course, there was a good deal of explaining to do, but when Paul describes his initial preaching of the gospel (not that he does so very often, which makes our task harder), he insists that the gospel itself, the basic announcement, did not require clever argumentation or sophisticated theological explanation. Paul can argue and explain with the best of them, as he says in 1 Corinthians 2.6–10; once people have got the point, there is plenty of fresh wisdom that he can teach them at real depth. But the gospel itself must carry its own power, and human rhetorical skill must stand back and give it room to operate.

Already, still by way of introduction, we notice three crucial points. First, the word 'preaching' in my title can't mean what it means in most mainline churches today. To us, the word 'preaching' denotes something that happens briefly within the liturgy, comprising some reflections to help our eucharistic devotions, our lives this coming week, our prayers for the world, and so on. But if we are to think of Paul as preacher, we need to think of pioneer missionaries to people completely outside the faith, whether it's Jesuit missionaries in Latin America, Whitefield and Wesley with miners and plantation workers, or, further back, Patrick, Columba, Aidan and Cuthbert, who form the bedrock of your tradition and mine. Yes, Paul taught people the faith in more detail both (we must assume) during worship and at every other time possible, when working in his tentmaking business or speaking in a hired hall. But his 'preaching' itself, his primary proclamation, was a different sort of thing, and one which we today in the West at least, but whether Catholic and Protestant and Anglican, don't often find ourselves doing, or get rather

hot and bothered if we do. His preaching, in short, was less like one of our sermons and more like a royal proclamation. 'The world has a new Lord; and it's Jesus, the crucified and risen Jewish Messiah.'

[**133**] This highlights my second introductory point: Paul must have sounded very Jewish. He didn't translate the early Jewish message into Hellenistic thought-forms to make them relevant. He saw that what the non-Jewish world needed was the specifically Jewish message about the one true God and what this God had done in Jesus the Messiah. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Paul insisted, was the one true God, the world's creator, who revealed himself to Israel in order to reveal himself through Israel, who acted in and as Jesus in order to act through Jesus for the whole world. As Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1.9f., he summoned his hearers to turn from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his son, the deliverer, to reappear from heaven. This is an essentially Jewish message to a pagan world.

The third introductory point has been emphasized in recent scholarship, and I shall return to it later. When Paul declared that Jesus was Lord, one of his primary meanings was that Caesar was not. The hard and fast line between what the Western world has called 'religion' and 'politics' didn't exist in Paul's day; it certainly didn't for the Roman empire, where the Caesar-cult was the fastest-growing religion. We inherit our categories of 'religion' and 'politics' from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment; but we need a larger category, a larger worldview, in which what you say about God and what you say about social ordering and authority belong close together and in constant interaction. If that makes us uncomfortable, it's probably a sign that we are actually hearing the text rather than simply using it as a wall off which to bounce the echo of our own voices. Actually, when it comes to the Enlightenment, I cherish a remark of one of my Irish-American friends, Dominic Crossan, with whom I have cheerfully crossed swords for many years. Ireland, he said recently, never really got the Enlightenment; but they got the British, which they found most enlightening in other ways.

Hearing the text, rather than the echo of our own voices, is of course the basic task of exegesis: to discover again and again what scripture really says, over against what we have casually assumed it says, or even what some of our venerable traditions have said it says. My tradition has stressed this for over 100 years, and I am delighted that your tradition has caught us up in the last generation and is now matching us stride for stride.

Paul's Preaching of the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ as Lord

So to the first main part of this lecture, and with it to my main thesis, which has four points that I shall then apply more briefly in the second part to our own preaching of the gospel today. First, Paul's proclamation was challenging news to people who weren't expecting it. Second, his message belonged within the storied world of Jewish apocalyptic and eschatology, and can only be properly understood there. Third, this message went to work (Paul believed) in human hearts and lives to generate [**134**] new community. Fourth, this

preaching of Jesus, and the communities it generated, posed an inevitable and deliberate challenge to the burgeoning empire of Caesar.

The Challenging News

Paul's message was and remained an essentially Jewish message, announced to a surprised pagan world that didn't know it needed it and often felt, when offered it, that it didn't want it. Of course, many pagans in Paul's day attached themselves to the synagogue communities of the diaspora, deeply attracted by the message of the one God and the call to a life of holiness, contrasting with paganism's muddled theology and messy lifestyles. But though Paul did appeal to such people, he wasn't primarily trying to build on a half-way commitment gentiles already had; he was doing something bolder and more uncompromising. Nor was he, as is sometimes suggested, simply producing a watered-down version of Judaism, a Torah without circumcision and food-laws, to make it easier for gentiles to accept. When he says he has become all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9.22), he is not suggesting that he is trimming his message to make it acceptable. Despite what people have sometimes concluded from a superficial reading of the Areopagus address in Acts 17, Paul wasn't simply finding 'points of contact' with his pagan audience; one of the main points of that speech is that idols and temples are a waste of time, and saying that in Athens is rather like arriving in Dublin and declaring that God doesn't like Guinness.

Nor, as people have often imagined, was Paul simply saying 'Here is a new way of being religious; here is a style of spirituality which would help you to re-order your private spiritual world; here is a system of salvation which will get you to heaven more effectively than the other ones you've known'. What I have written elsewhere about the canonical gospels in contrast to the so-called *Gospel of Thomas* applies as well to Paul: he was offering good news, not good advice. Of course, he has plenty of good advice, scattered liberally throughout his letters. But his basic preaching was news about something that had happened, something that had changed the way the world was. Something had happened as a result of which the cosmos was in fact a different place even though so far not many people had noticed; that is why he can say, in that remarkable passage in Colossians 1.23, that the gospel has already been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and that he, Paul, has become its servant. His claim is that in the death and resurrection of Jesus a cosmic event has taken place which now has to be announced explicitly, much in the way that the accession of a new emperor in Rome would already constitute a fact relevant to the whole Roman world, even though it might take the heralds weeks or even months to ride to the furthest corners of the empire to announce that Claudius, or Nero, or whoever, had become lord and emperor.

[**135**] The Overarching Story

The news which Paul preached made the sense it did within an overarching story that belongs within the current Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. That

shorthand needs a double unpacking, partly because the words are dense and partly because the content is often misunderstood. By 'eschatology' I understand the sense, which is frequent throughout second-Temple Judaism, that world history, human history and particularly Jewish history were going somewhere, and that where they were going was the utter determination of Israel's God, who was after all creator of the whole world, to put that world to rights once and for all. Quite how he would do this was not entirely clear; that he would do it followed inexorably from the fact that he was a just and powerful God who had the responsibility to sort out the world from the mess it had got itself into. It followed even more clearly from the fact that, having entered into covenant with Israel, God was obliged to rescue Israel from its own predicament. 'Eschatology' is not, then, as in some misreadings of the first century, a way of referring to the forthcoming end of the world. Nor is it, as in some existentialist theology, a fancy way of saying 'spiritual'. Rather, it is a shorthand way of flagging up the belief that ongoing events, particularly climactic and decisive God-given events, had to be understood in terms of a larger narrative about the creator God, the world and Israel, a narrative that would reach its appointed and appropriate goal at the right time, the fullness of time. It is Paul's contention that 'at the right time' the Messiah died for the ungodly (Romans 5.6), that 'when the fulness of time had come' God sent forth his son and the spirit of the son (Galatians 4.4–7). Eschatology is not about the end of the world, but about the redemption and transformation of the world, as Romans 8 ought always to have told us.

What do we add with the word 'apocalyptic'? Simply this: that in Jewish thought there is an overlap between two worlds, and an overlap between two times, and that things from the other world, and the other time, can sometimes be unveiled – that's what 'apocalypse' means – within this one. The two worlds may be called 'heaven' and 'earth', God's space and ours; the two times are the future and the present, where the future is God's future, the ultimate desired goal. And the point of 'apocalyptic' is that sometimes, and under certain circumstances, things that are true within God's world (heaven) can be unveiled, disclosed, within our world (earth). And apocalyptic is also about glimpsing the future already in the present; not just that the visionary is granted knowledge of events far ahead in time, but that in some sense the future actually comes forward into the present and happens, or happens in part, in advance.

When you put together 'apocalyptic' and 'eschatology', this is what you get: a narrative world within which it makes sense to speak of the one God, creator of heaven and earth, unveiling on earth things which are true in heaven, and unveiling in the present things which will become gloriously [**136**] true in the future. Paul belongs in this world; and yet his particular way of retelling the story is without precedent there, for the obvious reason that nobody else in his period had to wrestle, even in prophetic anticipation, with the fact of a crucified and risen Messiah. For Paul, rethinking the great narrative around this central fact, and then announcing and preaching this central fact as the sharp focal point of this great narrative, the effect was electrifying: when he announced to the pagan world that the crucified Jesus

had been raised from the dead, and was declared thereby to be Israel's Messiah and the world's true Lord, he was saying (i) that this was the great eschatological event for which Israel had been waiting, even though it didn't look like Israel had thought it would, and (ii) that this eschatological event itself constituted a decisive unveiling on earth of what was in fact true in the heavenly places, so that now at last, and only now, the age-old plan of the creator God for the world's salvation could be seen in the revelation and saving death of God's son, and (iii) that in this event the ultimate future, God's putting of the cosmos to rights, had been unveiled, so that, however the future might play out, the ultimate goal had already been glimpsed. This eschatological narrative thus contains, more strikingly than in any non-Christian Jewish writing though in line with their general tenor, the apocalypse, the unveiling, both of the heavenly reality on earth and of the present in the future. All of that is contained by implication in the little nutshell of Paul's basic gospel, for instance as he states it in formulaic form in 1 Corinthians 15: the Messiah died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

Thus, though for Paul's hearers the idea of a man being crucified and raised from the dead, and the idea that this man was the world's rightful lord and master, was ludicrous and offensive, within Paul's own worldview this made the ultimate sense. According to the eschatological vision by which he lived, Israel's history was the hinge on which world history, cosmic history, would turn; and the Messiah's history and fate were the hinge on which Israel's history would turn. Now that the Messiah had died and been raised, Israel's history had reached its startling climax, and with it the great door of world history had swung open once and for all. Paul's job, through his preaching, was to announce that this had now happened and to summon all people everywhere to believe it and to come on board with God's new project.

The Powerful Word Creates Community

Once we understand how Paul's challenging news functioned within the overarching story, we glimpse as well the fact that he believed that the apocalypse, the revelation, continued to happen. Heaven had not simply been unveiled for a moment in Jesus; the future had not burst into the present only that once. Central to Paul's own vision of what happened when he preached the gospel is his belief that the proclamation of the crucified [**137**] and risen Jesus as Messiah and Lord was itself an apocalyptic event, so that when he announced Jesus in this way the unveiling took place once more. For this, we return to 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Corinthians 1.17ff. Paul speaks with great eloquence of the fact that the preaching of the cross has nothing to do with eloquence: it is the cross itself that carries the power (verses 17f.), the preaching of the cross that is God's chosen instrument for salvation (verse 21), the message of the Messiah which is in itself the power of God and the wisdom of God (verse 24). Paul's initial preaching, described very personally in 2.2–5, is not the work of a mighty rhetorician or spellbinding philosopher, but rather the work of one who knows that he's

talking rubbish and that people will be offended, but who continues because through what he is saying God's power is unleashed, the power of God's spirit (2.5). This is directly cognate with three other key passages. In 1 Thessalonians 2.13 he describes the Thessalonians' receiving of the word which he had proclaimed as an acceptance not of the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God which is at work in you believers; this ties in, of course, with the regular theme in Acts of God's word spreading and growing and doing its own work. Then, in Romans 1.16f., he speaks of the gospel (which, by the way, is set out in formulaic fashion in the earlier passage, 1.3–5, to which we shall return) as the power of God for salvation to all who believe. Then, in Galatians 3, he speaks once more of his initial preaching in terms of the powerful work of the spirit and the concomitant 'hearing with faith'. Finally, in Colossians 1, writing to a church he hasn't visited, Paul speaks of the word of truth, the gospel, as doing its own work, bearing fruit and multiplying. Note the echoes of Genesis 1: Paul is talking about new creation, the life of heaven appearing on earth, God's future breaking into the present. And the sign of this, the evidence that the preaching of this word is itself part of the same apocalyptic eschatology, is that in Colosse there has appeared that remarkable phenomenon, a community in which love for one another has sprung up across the normal barriers of Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, male and female. Epaphras has told us, says Paul (Colossians 1.8), about your love in the spirit. That doesn't happen accidentally. It is the result of the further apocalyptic and eschatological event which we call, in shorthand, the word of God, the preaching of the Messiah Jesus as Lord.

Let me spell out a couple of stages further what Paul envisages as the process, the unfolding event, of this preaching. God's word, that is, the message about Jesus as the climax of God's saving plan, the unfolding of God's future putting-to-rights of all things, is announced. Foolish and scandalous though it is, when you tell this story, the story of the great eschatological apocalypse that has taken place in Jesus, God's spirit goes to work in a new apocalyptic event, itself part of the inaugurated eschatology. Human hearts and minds, to their own great surprise, are opened, warmed, challenged, broken and healed and remade, all through the word and the Spirit. And the immediate result, as any reader of Paul will know, is faith: discovering that the creator of the world is our very own Abba, father; believing, against [**138**] all other evidence and wisdom, that Jesus really was raised from the dead, and that his death was therefore not a nonsensical disaster but really did deal with sin; hailing him gladly as lord. 'If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord', says Paul in Romans 10, 'and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' Granted, each time he defines Christian faith it comes out slightly differently, but that passage sums it up pretty well. The preaching says, Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead; the Spirit works through that preaching, so that (although it's scandalous nonsense) faith bubbles up, the faith which is thus the sure sign that the word has done its work and which is for that reason the single badge, the only badge, by which Christians are to be identified. That is the heart of the Pauline

doctrine of justification by faith, over against the various other versions regularly on offer.

Along with faith, as its natural expression and outworking, go of course hope and love. Hope, because the whole point of announcing Jesus as Lord is that what God did for him at Easter is the foretaste of what God will do for the whole cosmos, and this final event will be in fact the moment when God sends Jesus again from heaven to rescue his people and the world from the grip of corruption, to transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body (Philippians 3.21), to make God's kingdom finally come on earth as in heaven. And love, as we have seen, because the family of God's people has been redefined around Jesus as Messiah and Lord and all those who belong to him belong to one another and are, in addition, commissioned to be agents of his healing love in the world. The powerful word generates and sustains the community of the renewed people of God.

Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire

I have argued elsewhere that when Paul declared that Jesus was Lord, one of the most obvious corollaries was that Caesar wasn't. This emerges quite clearly in several passages, not least in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 and Philippians 2 and 3. For our present purposes, let me highlight Romans 1.3–7. In writing to Rome of all places, and in offering a close-packed definition of what 'the gospel' actually consists of, Paul heaps up phrases about Jesus which again and again would carry imperial overtones for many people in the Mediterranean world and not least for readers in Rome itself. Let me stress, by the way, that it is these verses that say what 'the gospel' actually is: as in verse 3, it is 'God's gospel concerning his son', a message from the creator God about Jesus. When we then turn to 1.16–17, what we find is a statement of what the gospel does, not of what it is in itself. In other words, 'the gospel', the thing which Paul fundamentally announced, is not 'here is how to be saved', or even 'here is how to be justified by faith', but rather 'Jesus the Messiah is Lord, and God raised him from the dead'. The gospel is not a message about me, dependent on one about Jesus; it is a message about Jesus, with immediate implications for me, for us, for the world. What we find in [**139**] this passage is the royal lineage of Jesus (a longer line than that of Romulus or Remus); his god-given power; his title, 'Son of God', which was of course the title claimed by emperors ever since Augustus had his adopted father Julius Caesar deified; his title of world rulership, *kyrios*, 'lord'; his summons to loyal obedience (*pistis*, normally translated 'faith', can just as well mean 'loyalty', and was what Caesar demanded from his subjects); the worldwide scope of his rule and his name. In the light of all these imperial echoes, when we reach verses 16 and 17 and discover that through this proclamation there arises salvation and justice – two key elements of the Roman imperial promise to the world – we realize that Paul is quite deliberately stacking up the imperial overtones so that nobody in Rome can miss them. And when we then turn to the end of the theological exposition in Romans (15.12) we discover that he has rounded off his argument with the same set of echoes. Isaiah declares that the root

of Jesse, in other words the royal son of David, is the one who 'rises to rule the nations'; in other words, his resurrection is the reason why he is now to be hailed, and worshipped by his multi-ethnic family, as lord of the world. He is the world's ruler; Caesar, by clear implication, isn't. This doesn't mean the ordinary sort of revolution, as Paul warns in Romans 13; you must for the moment pay Caesar's taxes, and respect the fact that even bad rulers in the present age do instantiate a measure of God's intended eventual justice. What it means is that God has established, through the preaching of the gospel, the powerful community-creating word, a network of communities within Caesar's empire who give their loyalty to 'another king', as Paul was charged with preaching in Acts 17.7.

We should note, in particular, that the word 'gospel', the very word which Paul used of course to denote the preached message about Jesus, was in use in exactly this period to denote the message which said 'Caesar is Lord', or 'Tiberius has become Emperor', or to announce the emperor's birthday. A famous inscription speaks of the gospel, the *euanggelion*, of Caesar's rule through which the world has gained benefits such as salvation, justice and so on. The Ara Pacis in Rome, the Altar of Peace, declares that, through Caesar's rule, peace, the famous *pax Romana*, has spread into all the world. Paul has taken a word rooted deep in the Jewish traditions about God's renewing word and work – Isaiah 40 and 52 come especially to mind – and, in using it to denote his message about Jesus, has confronted, exactly as Isaiah himself had done in relation to Babylon, the great world empire of his day with the news that Israel's God is the creator and judge of the world and that he has unveiled his justice, his salvation and his peace.

This, then, is an all too brief sketch of Paul's gospel, the preaching with which he went out to tell the world something it wasn't expecting, didn't want and mostly didn't like. We must never forget that Paul regularly got into trouble for what he said, and I hope it's now clear why this was. His message, his preaching, was deeply subversive at several levels. He warned his communities, as we can see in 1 Thessalonians 2.13f., that precisely when the preached word did its work in them they would face persecution. That is [**140**] what happens when something is unveiled which shows the whole world in a different light and enables people to live in a counter-cultural way. And it is that which propels us forwards to ask, in the second and shorter half of this lecture, what it might look like if preaching today could learn something, in our very different situation, from the preaching of Paul.

Preaching the Gospel in a Postmodern, Postsecular and Neo-imperial World

We could argue all night about the right way to characterize the confusing world of today. I choose to describe it in terms of postmodernism and postsecularism, though the modern and secular worlds have still a good deal of vitality, and also in terms of neo-imperialism. Let me quickly define my terms.

By 'postmodernism' I basically mean the collapse of a shared sense of truth: the hermeneutic of suspicion which dominates the media, the rule of spin over substance, the elevation of feeling over argument, the deconstruction of all grand narratives, not least those which speak of progress. By 'post-secularism' I indicate a sense that the straightforward denials of secular modernism – the assumption that metaphysics is bunk, that the world has three dimensions and only three, that religion is for wimps and weaklings, and so on – that these denials have themselves been challenged in a new, restless hunger after spirituality which, while it still usually assumes that Christianity is based on a mistake, nevertheless tries to attain what the Christian tradition in fact should be offering in terms of a sense of other dimensions, of other possibilities. By 'neo-imperial' I draw attention to the fact that there is a new kind of empire at work in the world, quite like other empires from Babylon and Rome to nineteenth-century Britain, but with some significant differences due to the electronic world of communication and financial transaction, but nevertheless real and powerful: the empire which determines, and that isn't too strong a word, that the rich shall get richer while the poor stay poor and get poorer, that whatever it takes to make big business thrive must be done even if it means endangering the planet, and so on. You know what I'm talking about, and you also know that it's a far more complex and intricate phenomenon than I have space to analyze here.

My question then is: how can we announce Jesus as Messiah and Lord within this world, as Paul did within Caesar's world, the world of swirling hellenistic currents and strong Jewish affirmations? And I answer my own question, far too briefly but I hope suggestively, with a reprise in modern dress of the four sections of my analysis of Paul's own preaching.

The Challenging Word

We must not assume, as generations of liberal theologians have assumed, that the way to make the message acceptable is to water it down to suit what people in this or that generation are ready and able to believe. One still [**141**] meets this in rather pathetic forms, the bleat of those whose modernist worldview is under siege on all sides. We must accept the fact that the Christian message makes its way despite its being shocking folly, and even because of that. Since today's Western world is in fact looking more and more like the Graeco-Roman world of the first and second centuries, we should shrug our shoulders and get on with doing and saying the kinds of things Paul and his contemporaries found themselves doing and saying, and take the consequences.

But how? I take it for granted that we are not here talking about the way those charged with homiletics will preach to those who still attend church services. That, as I indicated earlier, is another topic entirely. There is still a vital place not only for the homily or sermon but also for the serious Christian education of all worshipping Christians of all ages and stages. But preaching in the Pauline sense is something different. We must rediscover ways of addressing those in the marketplace, those on the street corners, those whose

only openness to new ideas comes through the newspaper and the television. Today's preachers, in the sense of Paul's preaching which we have been studying, are more likely to be found speaking into a microphone for a few minutes on the radio, or snatching the opportunity for a comment column in a newspaper. Somehow, the word has to get out; out, not in. The seed has to be sown, not where it is already growing but where it isn't.

In particular, this provides a challenge to those involved in the worlds of the arts. One of the great things about postmodernity is that people are once more prepared to consider the arts not as the pretty but irrelevant decoration around flat modernist statements of fact or truth, but as themselves part of the message they encode. Visual art, drama, music and poetry all provide a platform for today's evangelist to speak the truth about Jesus, even if it is in language that we traditional theologians don't at once recognize. The music of James MacMillan provides an obvious example today; the poetry of Micheal O'Siadhail, a near neighbour of yours, offers another. People are prepared to listen to music, or read or listen to poetry, who wouldn't come near a church and would turn off the television if you or I appeared on it talking about Jesus. Please note, I am not saying that the arts are therefore a kind of sugaring of the pill, a making familiar of the strange and often offensive gospel. I am saying that they are, or can be, one of today's equivalents of the soap box or the wayside pulpit. And I am saying that the message will remain strange, incomprehensible to many, unwanted by many, offensive even. If Jesus' message caused many of his followers to turn back, we shouldn't be surprised if the message about him does the same. But those who seek to embody and express the truth that he is the world's true lord, rather than the pagan gods and goddesses of Mammon, Mars and Aphrodite – all of whom are of course big business right now – must expect to have to do it the same way that Paul did, by prayer, and fear and trembling, by seizing every opportunity but also by facing puzzling problems and obstacles.

[**142**] The Overarching Narrative

In particular, those who would announce the good news of God in Jesus in today's world need to recapture the true overarching narrative within which this message continues to make sense. This is where the church and particularly the theologian have their part to play in rethinking and reshaping the story we have told. All too often our story about what Christianity is has collapsed into a version of Platonism, in which the end and goal of it all is to leave this world of space, time and matter and go off to a disembodied place called 'heaven', which is the ultimate destination. The New Testament knows nothing of this. It speaks of an overarching story which is about the creator God planning to rid his creation of that which distorts, defaces and destroys it, of this plan being launched with Abraham and reaching its climax in Jesus, and of the plan then being worked out at last through the renewal of all things, the liberation of the whole created order from its bondage to decay. The trouble is that all too often we have announced Jesus not as the one who rules the world and rescues it from disaster, but as the one who

rescues us from the world of creation in order to take us away safely elsewhere. The overarching story we have told – which at this point also, significantly, tends to lose sight of the irreducibly Jewish nature of the message – has actually falsified what it means to say that Jesus is Messiah and Lord, and has reduced the meaning of Jesus' resurrection simply to the assurance of a blissful life beyond, which is not at all what the resurrection narratives say. Instead, if Christian theology today is to resource the preaching of the actual gospel, we must hammer out once more what it means to say that world history really did turn its crucial and vital corner when Jesus of Nazareth died and rose again, and that his Spirit is at work to implement that victory and thereby to anticipate the time when God will put all things to rights. Our message, like Paul's, is about the victorious justice of God, and that justice will succeed at the last in renewing creation, not in throwing it away.

Of course, any such overarching story must come face to face with its two great contemporary challengers. First, secular modernity contends precisely that world history turned its decisive corner, not when Jesus came out of the tomb on Easter morning, but when humankind came out of the darkness of superstition into the bright light shone by Hume and Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant, Feuerbach and Darwin and Freud. The Enlightenment is bitterly opposed to the Christian narrative, and has done its best, quite successfully I might add, to seduce it into compliance, not just because there are elements of the Christian narrative which seem not to stand up against the Enlightenment's own canons of historiography, but because the Enlightenment had and has a rival eschatology. It, too, tells a story about history reaching its climax and about us in the West living in the light of that, doing our best to implement it. Every time anyone says, as they often [**143**] do, 'Now that we live in the modern world', or even 'in this day and age', they are appealing implicitly to the Enlightenment's narrative about world history, which cannot recognize or authorize the Christian one without cutting off its own foundation. This is the point at which we have to remind one another that the Enlightenment began with thousands of guillotinings, continued with unfettered and dehumanizing industrial and imperial expansion, celebrated its own internal trials of strength in the First World War, and reached its climax in Auschwitz and the Gulag.

At that point we are making common cause, of course, with postmodernity, but postmodernity will challenge us as well. All metanarratives, the Christian one included, come under the hammer of Derrida, Lyotard and the rest. All claims to tell a great story, they say (following Nietzsche) are claims to power, the Christian metanarrative no less than the others; and of course there is a great deal of evidence that can be adduced for this. Some would even instance the presence of bishops in the British House of Lords, though speaking as one of them I can assure you that there isn't much power there, but rather the danger of being swept along in a string of semi-Erastian compromises. That's another story. What matters, rather, is to speak, and even more to live, the truth that the Christian story, the story Paul told which we too must tell, is not a power-story, but a love-story. It is not insignificant that when Paul talks in 1 Thessalonians about the power of the word of the gospel, he talks

at once about suffering. The suffering love of which we speak when we tell the story of Jesus, when we announce that it is precisely the crucified Jesus who is Lord of the world, is the love which must be embodied in the community that wants to be a gospel-speaking community. And that brings us to the third point.

The Powerful Word that Creates Community

One of the privileges of being a bishop is that I get to meet a much wider range of ordinary down-to-earth Christian folk than ever I did when teaching in the university. Nine days ago I was confirming some young adults in a parish in Gateshead, and one of them was asked to say what she had found through joining the church. She struggled for a minute or two, and then blurted out that the church was like a 'spare family'. She then, alarmed, asked if she should have said that; and I assured her that it was the best thing I could have heard. The church in that place, God be thanked, is acting as a church should: a community created not by social pressures or desires but by the word of the gospel which draws people together and generates a life of mutual care and responsibility which is more or less what Paul meant by *agapē*.

Such a community will also be one from which the work of justice and mercy, of peace and hope, goes out into the wider world; and this in turn creates a context, rather as the arts can do in fact, within which the strange [**144**] and offensive word of the gospel begins to make sense. Again, I do not say that the work of the church in the world makes the gospel more believable, though it can do that; the gospel retains its own proper unbelievability, so that like Tertullian we still find ourselves concluding that one of the best reasons for believing it is that it is completely absurd. But once the gospel has been grasped in faith, the work of the community generates a surrounding ambience within which it becomes imaginable that Jesus did after all rise from the dead, just as genuine Christian work for justice in the world can make people rub their eyes and believe that maybe, after all, the creator God will one day put all things to rights. And part of that imaginability, if I can put this delicately but I hope clearly, is what happens when Christians from different social and cultural and even theological backgrounds come together in worship, demonstrating before the principalities and powers of the world that Jesus really is the Lord in whom all things come together. The doctrine of justification by faith is precisely – according to Galatians 2, where it came to birth – that all those who believe in Jesus belong at the same table. I believe we must do our best to realize that goal – and you would perhaps expect me to say this, but I say this as a Pauline scholar more than as an Anglican theologian – not as the extra bonus when unity on other fronts has been achieved, but as part of the stony but glorious path to that full unity.

Gospel and Empire

One of the Pauline texts that has continued to inspire me as I reflected on these themes is the one which forms the transition to my final topic, the

confrontation between Paul's gospel and Caesar's empire. In Ephesians 3.10, Paul writes, as the climax of a wonderful passage about the apocalyptic unveiling of the gospel, that God's eventual design is that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. In other words, the polychrome nature of the church, its unity and diversity in appropriate balance, is itself the key sign to the powers of the world that Jesus is Lord and that they aren't. In this light, we need to recognize in a clear-eyed fashion that the gospel of Jesus always did, and always will, cut across the powers of the world, all human empires, in a variety of ways. Of course, Romans 13 is there to remind us that the creator God does not desire or intend anarchy. While evil is still at large in the world, rulers and authorities are part of God's design to bring even into the present a measure of that ultimate putting-to-rights which he has promised. But the problem then is that those charged with bringing that measure of justice into the world all too easily pervert it into suiting their own ends. That is the political point of postmodernity, to preach the fall to arrogant modernity. But after the preaching of the fall comes the proclamation of the gospel, something postmodernity, both [**145**] political and philosophical, never allowed for; and with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus crucified and risen as Lord of the world, a new challenge emerges to the Caesars of our day.

They are not as obvious as the Caesars of Paul's day. Western political leaders may be figureheads, but the real power is often hidden way behind, out of sight, in the business and banking interests which lobby for policies which the politicians then implement without appreciating their ramifications, only their vote-winning and fund-raising potential. Somehow, the gospel of Jesus has to be announced as the good news over against all the self-serving power-broking of our day. This won't be easy. But the start for us, as it was for Paul, is without a doubt the creation of communities, cells of people under Caesar's nose but loyal to Jesus as Lord and committed to living by faith, hope and love. The call to worship and prayer, to invoking the powerful name of Jesus and to applying his victory to the sometimes dehumanizing structures and power games of our day, remains at the top of the list of Christian priorities, of gospel priorities.

Conclusion

It is time, and more than time, to sum up and conclude. The serious study of what it actually meant in the first century for Paul to preach, to announce, Jesus Christ and the crucifixion has led us to see in a many-sided way how that proclamation, rooted in the Jewish world and its narratives, confronted the pagan world and its ideologies, particularly the rampant ideology of empire. The more we examine what it meant and means to say that world history reached its climax in Jesus, that his cross was the defeat of evil and his resurrection the launch of God's new world, and that he has thereby already been enthroned as the world's true Lord, the more we discover that

this message is every bit as relevant to the twenty-first century as it was to the first. Its inevitable unpopularity, and the fact that people will try to shout it down from all sides for a variety of reasons, ought to encourage us to persevere. And in that perseverance, as I hope my presence here in this august institution symbolizes, we need one another. We need one another to help with all the varied tasks of exegesis and historical understanding, without which we are always in danger of ceasing to speak about Jesus and beginning instead to speak of an idol by the same name. We need one another for mutual support, not least in prayer and encouragement. And, above all, we need one another as members of the same family. If we are to preach, as Paul did, the one God over against the idols, the one Lord Jesus over against all the lords of the world, we need to celebrate in performative actuality the one body, one spirit, one faith, one table and one baptism which in Paul's thought are part of the same package deal. If we really begin to preach Paul's gospel, we might rediscover Paul's ecclesiology. In cheerfully announcing Jesus as Lord, we might the more readily recognize one another as fellow servants for his sake.

Chapter Twenty-One

4QMMT AND PAUL: JUSTIFICATION, 'WORKS' AND ESCHATOLOGY (2006)

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I remember the excitement when 4QMMT was finally published, after many years in which the scholarly community had been increasingly frustrated at the delays that had held it up. It had been revealed that the phrase 'works of Torah' was to be found in the text, but it was only when that phrase (very rare in second-Temple Judaism outside Paul) could be studied in its actual context that its meaning might become clear. I worked my initial reading of that Scroll into a Tyndale Lecture on Justification in 1994, which then found its way, in revised form, into *What St Paul Really Said*. I returned to it again in a paper I gave to the Biblical Archaeological Society (summarized in an article in *Bible Review* for October 1998), and then at the 1999 meeting of the SNTS in Copenhagen. I intended to work up the argument into an article, but with other projects crowding in the task was put off until, happily, I was invited to write for Earle Ellis's Festschrift.

As readers of my more recent writing on Paul will know, I regard 4QMMT, and this exposition of it, as very important, not least for our understanding of Paul's use of Deuteronomy 30 in Romans 10. This paper supplies the necessary exegetical detail to which I refer back in several more recent works, including *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.

* * *

[104] The Question

The topic of justification has been central, and often divisive, in many debates throughout church history. Though recent ecumenical documents have a more eirenic tone, and mutual understanding may have improved, it is not clear that there has been significant progress in understanding what Paul himself, to whom everyone appeals, was talking about. Meanwhile, Pauline scholarship has gone its own way. Released from the straitjacket of post-reformation controversy, discussion has focussed on other issues. No major

advance has been made, within the so-called New Perspective, on the question of what Paul meant by 'justification'.[1]

Insufficient attention has been given in this area to the Dead Sea Scrolls. A few fragments found in a cave might seem a small rudder with which to turn the large ship of Paul's theology, but careful consideration of one text in particular gives support for a way of reading Paul that locates him within the world of second-Temple Judaism, gives depth and coherence to some of his key passages, and provides food for thought on wider issues. I am delighted to offer these reflections in honor of a friend and colleague whose work at the interface between the New Testament and second-Temple Judaism has been influential and inspirational.

In some of the best-known translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 'justification' features prominently:

> As for me,
> my justification is with God.
> In His hand are the perfection of my way
> and the uprightness of my heart. [**105**]
> He will wipe out my transgression
> through his righteousness . . .
>
> As for me,
> if I stumble, the mercies of God
> shall be my eternal salvation.
> If I stagger because of the sin of flesh,
> my justification shall be
> by the righteousness of God which endures for ever . . .
>
> He will draw me near by His grace,
> and by His mercy will He bring my justification.
> He will judge me in the righteousness of His truth
> and in the greatness of His goodness
> He will pardon all my sins.
> Through His righteousness He will cleanse me
> of the uncleanness of man
> and of the sins of the children of men,
> that I may confess to God His righteousness,
> and His majesty to the Most High.[2]

The word for 'justification' here is regularly *mšpt* not some cognate of *ṣdq* as one might have imagined if the language was to prefigure Paul's use of the *dikaiosynē* root in Romans and elsewhere. This, however, is not a problem. *Mšpt* is often translated as 'judgment', but in the Hebrew lawcourt 'judgment' is given not only against the person who loses the case (as the English word

[1] On the history of the doctrine see above all McGrath 1986. Among recent ecumenical products, cf. 2nd Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission 1987. The major work on Paul that changed the climate of opinion (not with universal approval) was Sanders 1977. My own post-Sanders discussion of justification is in *What Saint Paul Really Said*, ch. 7, and at various points in *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*. This last work must serve in place of interaction with the secondary literature of the last three years, for which my current duties have left me no time.

[2] 1QS 11.2–3; 12; 13–15 (trans. Vermes 1997, 115f.). The Qumran hymns (1QH, etc.) are full of similar sentiments. On all this see now Bockmuehl 2001.

sometimes implies) but in favour of the person who wins. It is thus a positive decision by the court, leaving the winner 'vindicated' (not necessarily 'acquitted', since the same word describes a successful plaintiff as well as an acquitted defendant). These texts, then, remain important for understanding Paul's background; and this reflection reminds us of an important theme, namely the way in which such language functions within an ancient Hebrew lawcourt context, actual or metaphorical.[3]

[**106**] These texts have been known since the early days of Qumran studies. It has become commonplace to point them out as partial parallels to Paul – partial in that, though they attribute 'justification' to the grace and righteousness of God, and reveal nothing of the self-righteous and boastful 'legalism' which used to be thought characteristic of Jews in Paul's day, they clearly envisage a justification only for those who belong to an extreme and highly disciplined sect within Judaism, not to a group of people from the ungodly gentiles. Now, however, we have a scroll which provides more material for reflection both on the similarities and dissimilarities between Paul's thinking and that of the Scrolls, and on the meaning of Paul when seen within this context. I refer to 4QMMT, or MMT for short.[4]

MMT became notorious for non-academic reasons even before it was published.[5] Subsequent discussions have concentrated on the identity of the sender and recipient(s), the sectarian groupings to which they belonged, the historical situation and dating of the document, and the nature of the halakhah at Qumran in general and in this text in particular.[6] The Scrolls belong within the world of second-Temple Judaism; anchoring them there is a primary task.

[**107**] This can be undertaken, moreover, without much reference to early Christianity. However, most editors and commentators on MMT have noted that it appears to offer a striking comparison with a central aspect of Pauline theology. In the penultimate line of the document the writer declares that those who follow the halakhah he sets out will have this activity 'reckoned' to them 'as righteousness':[7]

> **26**Now, we have written to you **27**some of the works of the Law, those which we determined would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen that **28**you possess

[3] Not a modern courtroom, as Seifrid 2000b, 59 curiously criticizes me for suggesting. The passage he cites (*What Saint Paul Really Said*, 96–9) makes the point very clear.

[4] 'MMT' is the transliterated acronym of the phrase 'some of the works of the law', *mqṣt m'śy htwrh* (C27). MMT is reconstructed from six Qumran fragments, none of them complete (4Q394–399). It seems to be a letter, written in the mid second century BCE, from the leader of the Qumran group to the head of a larger group, of which the Qumran sect was once a part. For the text, translations, and preliminary discussions, cf. Qimron and Strugnell 1994; Vermes 1997, 220–8; Wise, Abegg, and Cook 1996, 358–64; García Martínez and Watson 1994, 77–85. The latter translation is modified, not least in the passage studied here, in García Martínez and Tigchelaar 1998, 790–805.

[5] The Biblical Archaeology Society (Washington, DC) was sued by the Israeli scholar Elisha Qimron for copyright infringement when its publication, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, reprinted a page from a Polish journal that contained a photocopy of a tentative reconstruction of MMT that Qimron had handed out at an academic conference. The Israeli court found in favour of Qimron, and the Israeli Supreme Court upheld the decision, following an appeal, in late summer 2000.

[6] See Sussmann 1994 (a shortened form of an earlier article); Strugnell 1994; and, among many other studies, Kampen and Bernstein 1996.

[7] *nḥšbh lk lṣdqh* C31. This phrase, of course, echoes the well-known passages in Gen. 15.6 (*ṣdqh wyḥsbh lô*, referring to Abraham) and Ps. 106.31 (*wtḥšb lô lṣdqh*, referring to Phinehas).

> insight and knowledge of the Law. Understand all these things and beseech Him to set **29**your counsel straight and so keep you away from evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial. **30**Then you shall rejoice at the end time when you find the essence of our words to be true. **31**And *it will be reckoned to you as righteousness*, in that you have done what is right and good before Him, to your own benefit **32**and to that of Israel.[8]

It is stating the obvious to say that this looks like precisely the sort of thing that Paul was opposing in his doctrine of justification by faith *apart from* 'works of the law'. Several scholars simply make this point, and pass on. I intend here to go further.[9] I want to examine the meaning, in its present context, of C31, already quoted, compare this with some Pauline discussions of justification, and see what emerges.[10] I shall presume a wider discussion of the Pauline passages, for which there is limited space in this article.[11]

[108] Preliminary Observations

Putting 4QMMT alongside Paul raises general questions about the relationships between different second-Temple Jewish groups. There has been intensive debate over the identification of sender, recipients, and also the other Jews, adhering to neither group, to whom the text refers (e.g. C7, 'the multitude of the people'). Several scholars see these 'others' as at least including the Pharisees; attempts to identify the recipients of the letter themselves as Pharisees are probably to be resisted.[12] The sender seems to assume some degree of authority over the recipient, even if this assumption is a rhetorical ploy rather than indicating any official relationship. It is therefore unlikely that they belong to completely different parties, or that they were already at loggerheads.

[8] MMT C26–32 (the conclusion of the text), from the translation of Wise, Abegg, and Cook 1996, 364. Italics added. I find this translation in certain respects superior to that of Qimron and Strugnell; see below.

[9] In line, e.g., with Hafemann 1997; Wagner 2002, 166, 256f.

[10] A start was made on this investigation by Grelot 1994; Abegg 1994; Flusser 1996; Kampen and Bernstein 1996, at 138–43; Dunn 1997; Bachmann 1998 (with copious bibliography, including other works by Bachmann himself). Subsequent references to these authors without further annotation refer to these articles. The present paper was researched independently; though there are some obvious points of convergence, I reach significantly different conclusions about the nature of justification in Qumran and Paul. I am grateful to Professor Bachmann, and others in the Society for New Testament Study 'Qumran and the New Testament' seminar for stimulating discussions on this topic at the meeting in Copenhagen in August 1998. In what follows I am also in dialogue with Ithamar Gruenwald, '4QMMT: Its Significance for the Study and Understanding of Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity' (paper presented at the SNTS seminar in Copenhagen). A heavily abbreviated version of one part of the present article was published as 'Paul and Qumran', *BR* October 1998, 18, 54. Another parallel investigation is that of Witherington 1998, 351–4.

[11] See *Romans*, especially the comments on 10.5–13. Earlier versions of the present article were presented at the Center of Theological Inquiry (Princeton, NJ) and at the Biblical Archaeological Society's annual meeting, both in November 1998. I am grateful to participants at both meetings for their comments.

[12] For all this, see Qimron and Strugnell 1994, 109–21; and, recently, Deines 2001, at 461–74. Even if this identification is accepted, Deines' claim (474) that MMT thus offers 'important, early and decisive . . . evidence for the popularity of that position which generally is identified as Pharisaic' seems very slim.

All this forms an interesting parallel with the situation between Paul and his addressees, who must likewise be mapped within the broad cartography of second-Temple Judaism. Paul writes, he claims, with apostolic authority; but when writing to churches he founded himself, like that in Galatia, the authority is more marked. When writing to those he had not himself founded, like that in Rome, he adopts a rather different tone, not too far removed, I suggest, from that of MMT. What is interesting in the parallel, of course, is that none of the four groups so far mentioned – author and recipients of MMT, author and recipients of Paul's letters – can be identified as Pharisees. Paul was at most an ex-Pharisee, and the degree of differentiation implied by that 'ex-' is controversial. Paul's readers were not Pharisees, though some of [**109**] them may have come under the influence either of Pharisees or of Pharisaically inclined Jewish Christians, that too being a matter of dispute.

This introduces some necessary caution into the discussion of parallels. Even if MMT is in some ways parallel to Paul, it will not necessarily be the case that it states exactly the sort of thing Paul had believed before his conversion, or the sort of beliefs or practices his converts were being pressed to accept (or which Paul thought they were being pressed to accept). It might be the case that MMT's doctrine of 'justification by works' (if that is what is being offered in section C; see below) corresponded to that held by a wider band within second-Temple Judaism, including the Pharisees but excluding Pauline Christians. It might be the case that what differentiated Pharisees from MMT and its recipients was not a belief in justification by works per se, but the precise definition of which 'works' it was that justified. But, equally, it might not. Since there is no evidence that either MMT or its recipients represented a branch of second-Temple Judaism which Paul knew at first hand, we cannot assume without more ado, as some scholars seem to, that, just because this text speaks of justification by works of the law, it must mean the same thing as Paul means when he speaks of the same thing (e.g. when he describes his own past in Philippians 3.2–11). The question, then, of the relationship between section C of MMT and Paul's polemic on justification and 'works' demands more detailed investigation.

Before we proceed with this, some brief observations are in order on passages in MMT which awaken echoes in the mind of a reader of Paul.

Section A consists of calendrical instructions, listing special sabbaths and festivals. These might be the sort of thing that Paul had in mind when complaining to the Galatians that they 'observed days and months and seasons and years' (4.10) – an activity which made Paul fear that he had laboured over them in vain (4.11).[13] But it is actually more likely that the observances which Paul declared indifferent (as in Romans 14.5–6) were simply the regular Jewish feasts and fasts, the Sabbath in particular. There is no suggestion in Galatians or elsewhere that Paul's converts were being urged to accept a particular sectarian calendar with detailed local variations. Nor does MMT mention 'seasons and years'.

[13] Dunn 1997, 152.

Section B opens with purity regulations, relating specifically to the avoidance of gentile grain, gentile vessels for sacrifice, and gentile sacrifices themselves (B3–5; B5–8; B8–9). It is of course axiomatic for Paul that, since the true people of God consists of both Jews and gentiles who believe in Jesus as Messiah, such laws are now not only irrelevant but actually damaging to Christian fellowship, to the unity of the body of Christ. This is **[110]** what is at stake, among other things, in Galatians 2.11–21, an important observation for our purposes since this is the first Pauline passage to discuss justification. Other regulations designed to protect the ethnic or familial purity of Israel are found in B39–49.

Already some important caveats are in order. 'Works of the law' in Paul are not, as is often supposed, wrong in themselves; Paul has no objection to people obeying the law. The problem is, notoriously, that one cannot be justified by such works (Romans 3.20; Galatians 2.16). What then does he mean? J. D. G. Dunn has pioneered the view that the 'works of the law' to which Paul was opposed were those which distinguished Jews from gentiles – that is, sabbath, food laws, and circumcision.[14] Some of the 'works' referred to in section B fit with this (e.g. the avoidance of gentile grain and the abhorrence of gentile sacrifice, B3–9), but others emphatically do not (e.g. regulations about streams of liquids, B53–58); most of them serve to separate one group of Jews from another, a very different thing.[15] There is no reason, either, to suppose that the Galatian Christians had come under pressure to obey detailed regulations of the sort found in MMT.[16] Further (against Bachmann in particular), Paul was not opposing 'halakhah' (the detailed post-biblical elaboration of biblical law), but the insistence on what appeared to be biblical law itself: circumcising gentile converts, and the maintenance thereby of the Jew/gentile divide within the church. 'Halakhah', insofar as the word is not anachronistic in the second century BCE, consists of detailed oral explication and application of precepts in the written Torah. The halakhah of MMT is, of course, written down, not oral; the writer seems innocent of the later (and, by the way, Pharisaic) sharp distinction of 'written' and 'oral' Torah (this might in itself be an extra argument against the recipients being Pharisees, if such were needed). What Paul was objecting to was the imposition upon his converts of practices which are mandatory in scripture itself. All these are significant points to which we shall return.

There follow some regulations concerning unlawful sexual unions. Here Paul, in giving similar instructions, seems to take a comparable line to MMT. Though, for him, the 'holy people' are redefined, no longer by race but by grace, he is still strongly in favour of the holy people not intermarrying with **[111]** those outside (2 Corinthians 6.14—7.1).[17] However, just as in MMT the conclusion seems to be that the offspring of illicit unions are to

[14] See now Dunn 1998, 359–66, with references to his earlier works.

[15] Dunn (1998, 358) notes this in passing but does not see it as a weakness in his case.

[16] So, rightly, Witherington 1998, 353f.

[17] Assuming with most commentators, against Betz 1973, that this is indeed Pauline and not an anti-Pauline passage which has found its way into Paul's text.

be considered genuine Israelites, so Paul argues that the children of a Christian/non-Christian marriage are 'holy'.[18]

Though Paul would disagree strongly with the author(s) of MMT on the two questions of who the 'holy people' were, and what behaviour constituted 'holiness', he would have been just as insistent that 'holiness', once redefined, mattered vitally for the 'holy people', once redefined. That, indeed, is one of the main reasons why 1 Corinthians was written. But what is the place of the halakhah (if that is the best term for it) within MMT, and indeed in Qumran as a whole? Does Paul, giving practical instructions to his churches, accord these instructions the same theological place that the Qumran halakhah (if that is what it is) seems to have occupied?

In order to answer this question, we must turn it round and set it in a wider context. How did Paul's 'ethics' relate to his teaching on justification? And how does this compare with the relation in Qumran between justification and 'works'? This leads us to the main focus of this article, namely, the point raised at the end of MMT section C. What did the writer of C31 mean by saying that when his hearers followed his halakhah, it would be 'reckoned to them as righteousness'? How does this relate to Paul's views on the same topic? And what light does this throw on what Paul actually meant?[19]

[112] The Context of Justification: Eschatology and Covenant in MMT and Paul

Let me state my proposal at the outset in six propositions, for which I shall then argue. The first and third form the heart of my contention.

1 The context within which the key line C31 may best be understood is explicitly *covenantal* and *eschatological*.
2 The halakhic precepts offered in the text are intended to function as indicators, boundary-markers, of God's eschatological people; this is the meaning of 'justification by works' in the *present* time, anticipating 'the end of time'.

[18] MMT B75f.: *hzwnwt hn'sh btwk h'm whmh b[ny zr'] qrš mšktwb qwdš ysr'l*. The lacuna leaves some doubt as to the meaning: I follow Wise, Abegg, and Cook ('concerning the fornication which has been done in the midst of the people, their children are holy. As it is written, Israel is holy'), and García Martínez ('and concerning the fornications carried out in the midst of the people: they are members of the congregation of perfect holiness, as it is written, "Holy is Israel" '), against Qimron and Strugnell (who paraphrase the key passage as '[this practise exists] despite their being sons of holy seed'). For Paul cf. 1 Cor. 7.14: *hēgiastai gar ho apistos en tē gynaiki kai hēgiastai hē gynē hē apistos en tō adelphō. Epei ara ta tekna hymōn akatharta estin, nyn de hagia estin.* This parallel may perhaps even strengthen the case for the translation (and meaning) which I have followed: literally, 'they are sons of the holy seed, as it is written, Israel is holy'.

[19] Remarkably little attention has been given to this question; even the recent 600-page volume on justification in second-Temple Judaism (Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid 2001) never addresses it head on. Seifrid 2001, 433 describes MMT C31 as 'now-famous', but does not discuss it, let alone its wider context. The other articles in this book, too, manage to avoid any discussion of this text, which is the more strange considering that the book's stated purpose is to map out the Jewish context of Paul's theology of justification by faith apart from works, and that MMT provides the one clear instance in all second-Temple literature of 'works of the law', and of justification in relation to such works.

3 Paul, arguably, held a version of the same covenantal and eschatological scheme of thought; but in his scheme the place MMT gave to 'works of Torah' was taken by 'faith'.
4 Paul's doctrine, like that of MMT, was not about 'getting in' but about *community definition*.
5 The Pauline halakhah, if that is what it is, plays a quite different role within his community definition to that which halakhah plays in MMT.
6 MMT is written neither by nor for Pharisees. Just as the 'works' it prescribes are not those of the Pharisees, so we cannot assume that the form and structure of its doctrine of justification are identical, or even similar, to that of the Pharisees, or of the Galatian 'agitators', or of Peter in Galatians 2.

I shall now elaborate each of these.

(1) The context within which the key line C31 may best be understood is explicitly *covenantal* and *eschatological*. The writer has in mind a sequence of historical events, promised in advance in scripture, leading to a foretold climax (hence 'eschatological' in that sense), through which the covenant between God and Israel was now being renewed. 'Justification' and 'works' form part of this scheme of thought. This is my central contention in the present article.[20]

In the early and fragmentary section C6–9, the writer reminds his readers that 'we' (his own group? his group and that of his readers?) have separated themselves from the multitude of the people and their impure [**113**] practices. They are, that is, a sect: a community within Israel believing themselves to be the people with whom the one God is now renewing the covenant.[21]

The writer then repeats an earlier exhortation to study the scriptures (C10). The scriptures he has in mind are the covenantal passages from the end of Deuteronomy (30—31), in which the blessings and the curses of the covenant are invoked upon those who keep or reject Torah. But these passages are not merely covenantal; they are also to be read (as, arguably, they ask to be read) historically and eschatologically.[22] They do not merely hold out a timeless blessing and a timeless curse to anyone, anywhere, who keeps or does not keep Torah. They offer a historical sequence, which Israel as a nation will follow through, first experiencing blessing, then pulling down on herself the curses, and then, at the end of days, discovering the way to blessing once more:

> **11**And in the book (of Moses) it is written [. . . . .] not **12**[. . .] and former days [. . .] And it is written that [you will stray] from the path (of the Torah) and that calamity will meet [you]. And it is written **13**'and it shall come to pass, when **14**all these things

[20] Dunn 1997, by separating his discussion of MMT's eschatology from his discussion of justification, fails in my view to observe, and hence to discuss, the integration of these themes both in Qumran and in Paul.

[21] It is important to note, with Bockmuehl 2001, that the Scrolls use 'Israel' to refer to the nation as a whole, seeing the sect not as a replacement 'true Israel', but a representative remnant. See too Meyer 1979, 233.

[22] So, rightly, Dunn 1997, 149. Dunn does not, however, follow through on this suggestion in his subsequent interpretation.

> [be]fall you', at the end of days, the blessings **15**and the curses, ['then you will take] it to hea[rt] and you will return unto Him with all your heart **16**and with all your soul', at the end [of time, so that you may live . . . . . .] **17**[It is written in the book] of Moses [and in the books of the Prophets] that there will come [. . .] **18** [the blessings have (already) befallen in . . .] in the days of Solomon the son of David. And the curses **19**[that] have (already) befallen from the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and up to when Jerusalem and Zedekiah King of Judah went into captivity **20**that He will bring them [. . .]. And we know that some of the blessings and the curses have (already) been fulfilled **21**as it is written in the bo[ok of Mo]ses. And this is at the end of days when they will return to Isra[el] **22**[forever . . .] and not be cancelled, but the wicked will act wickedly, and [. . .][23]

This is the true 'Deuteronomistic view of history': an interpretation of the hundreds of years between Moses and the writer's day in terms, not of individuals or individual generations being either obedient (and so blessed) or disobedient (and so cursed), but of a single historical sequence from Moses to the eschaton, within which blessing is followed by curse, and **[114]** eventually curse by final blessing.[24] Thus C12–16 quotes from Deuteronomy 31.29 and 30.1–2 to establish the following sequence of events: first, Israel will turn from the path, and evil will befall her; then, in the last days,[25] she will return to her God with all her heart and soul, and will find life.

Before the fatal turning away from the path, however, the initial covenant blessings had already come upon Israel. In C17 Solomon is cited, not as an 'example' of a person who at some time or other happened to obey Torah and thus to receive Deuteronomically promised blessing, but as the king in whose days the promised blessing of Deuteronomy was first fulfilled.[26] Immediately after the days of Solomon, however, came Jeroboam, cited frequently in subsequent Judaism, biblical and nonbiblical, as the great sinning king who brought trouble upon Israel.[27] From his days onwards, says C18–20, the promised curses have come as a result; and the climax of this curse, as in Deuteronomy 28—31 and the Deuteronomistic history, was of course exile, mentioned explicitly in C19 in connection with Zedekiah. Again, the kings listed here are not merely examples of good or evil persons **[115]** who, as

[23] MMT C11–22, trans. Qimron and Strugnell 1994, 59–61.

[24] Against Deines 2001, 454, 495, who dehistoricizes the 'Deuteronomistic view of history' into something which any individual, or any generation or group, could as it were tap into at any time. Similarly Abegg 1997, 122f.: Abegg suggests that the lacuna at the end of C22 should be filled with a threat that the wicked will once again be taken into captivity. When he says 'it is logical to assume that the writer warned his reader that the pattern for the "Last Days" would be the same: the wicked would again be exiled from the land of promise' (122), the 'logic' in question assumes that Deuteronomy is being cited to support a repeated pattern rather than, as appears to be the case, a single historical sequence towards the eschaton.

[25] *b'ḥryt hymym* C14; cf. C16, C21, C30 ('the end of time', *b'ḥryt h't*). 'In the last days' in C14 is the writer's explanatory gloss on Dt. 30.1, making it clear that the text is to be understood, despite anticipatory fulfilments such as that in the case of David (C25f.), as prophecy for the time of eschatological fulfilment, which the writer sees as being inaugurated in his own days.

[26] Against, e.g., Wise, Abegg, and Cook 1996, 364, in their structural division and headings for the passage.

[27] The story of Jeroboam is in 1 Kgs. 11.26—14.20; his sins are already seen as the provocation for YHWH's wrath in 15.30, as his children copy him (15.26, 34; 16.2, 7, 19, 26, 31); this is repeated like a proverb thereafter (21.22; 22.52; 2 Kgs. 3.3; 9.9; 10.29, 31; 13.2, 6, 11; 14.24; 15.9, 18, 24, 28; 17.21, 22). Rabbinic legend has Jacob brought up short, when about to bless Ephraim, because the Holy Spirit enables him to see his descendant Jeroboam seducing Israel to sin (Ginzberg, Szold, and Radin 1998, II, 136, with refs.; cf. IV, 180–3. On the later traditions see esp. Aberbach and Smolar 1968; Evans 1983.

individuals, reaped blessing or curse as a result, but rather historical markers, showing the times when the Deuteronomic prophecy (first blessing, then curse) was fulfilled.[28]

The writer draws two lessons from this historical/prophetic scheme. First, in C20, he deduces that the promised blessing and curse have already come upon Israel: this must mean, he supposes, that it is nearing the time for Deuteronomy 30.1–2 (cited as we saw in C15) to be fulfilled ('when these things come to pass . . . then the fulfillment will occur'). Second (C21f.), what must now happen is the Return: 'at the end of days they will return in Israel, and will never turn away again'.[29] This locates the writer's own intended position within an eschatological scheme, prophesied in Deuteronomy, as follows: (a) blessings under Solomon; (b) curse from Jeroboam to Zedekiah, climaxing in exile, which is still continuing; (c) the return to God and to Israel, now being inaugurated.

The exhortation is thus aimed at persuading the readers to join those who are, in the present time, turning to God with all their heart, and so experiencing the eschatological covenant blessing, the real return from exile promised in Deuteronomy. This eschatological blessing was, importantly, anticipated by the righteous kings of old (C23–25), and especially by David (C25–26). It is important to stress that these kings are, once again, not ahistorical moral examples, or isolated examples of a merit-and-reward system, but markers within an historical and eschatological sequence.

Within this scheme, the writer intends his readers to hold fast to the particular precepts of Torah as he understood it. It should now be clear that [**116**] this is not because of a theologically or historically detached moralism. The point is not that by keeping these precepts the readers will show that they are morally or ethically superior to other Jews, or that they have gained more merit by moral effort. Rather, it is because *these works of Torah will mark them out in the present time as the true, returned-from-exile, covenant people of Israel*. These 'works' will not *earn* them membership in God's eschatological people; they will *demonstrate* that they are God's people. The key line here is C30, in the context of C28–29:

[28] For a positive view of Zedekiah see 4Q470, with the introduction of Wise, Abegg, and Cook 1996, 402f.; in one rabbinic tractate, 'the generation of Zedekiah' are the cause of judgment, but Zedekiah himself mollifies the divine wrath (*b. Arak.* 70a). Josephus, in *Ant.* 10.120 (not 6.213 as Wise, Abegg, and Cook 1996, 403), describes Zedekiah as 'kind and just' – despite having earlier (10.103) declared that he was 'contemptuous of justice and duty'. This still leaves MMT, to my knowledge, as the sole witness to a second-Temple tradition in which Zedekiah is the marker of the time when the curse was finally implemented.

[29] The translation is made problematic by a lacuna, but the reference back to the already-cited Dt. 30.1–2, with its prophecy of a returning to God and thus a return from exile, is clear enough. Dunn 1997, 148 is right to stress, despite some earlier translations such as Qimron and Strugnell 61, that the text says 'in Israel' (*byšr[']l*), not 'to Israel', but the Deuteronomic context and allusion makes it clear that 'the return' does indeed indicate 'the return from exile', following the curse which consists precisely in exile itself (despite Qimron and Strugnell 1994, 87, who say that the meaning cannot be determined because of the lack of context). In Deuteronomy itself and in the numerous texts dependent on it, 'turning' or 'returning' regularly refers both to 'returning to the Lord with all your heart' and 'returning from exile'. The text probably means that 'people who belong to Israel' will 'return' in both these senses.

> **28** . . . Consider all these things and ask Him that He strengthen **29**your will and remove from you the plans of evil and the device of Belial **30**so that you may rejoice at the end of time, finding that this selection of our practices is correct.[30]

In other words, if through prayer and the moral strength which God supplies (C28–29) you keep these precepts, you will rejoice at the end of time, in finding that the advice given herein, this selection of commands, was on the right track. That is when (C31) 'it will be reckoned to you as righteousness when you perform what is right and good before him'. 'Righteousness', in context here as in the biblical passages quoted, must mean more than simply 'a moral or virtuous deed'. The whole point of MMT is that those who keep the precepts it urges are thereby marked out as God's covenant people, part of the true, returned-from-exile, eschatological community.[31] The practice of Torah according to this interpretation will signify, in the present time, that the practitioners are 'righteous' in this sense: they are the people with whom Israel's God is in covenant, the people who, like David, have their sins forgiven. This is what MMT has to say on the subject of 'justification'.[32]

[**117**] (2) We now come to a critical point in the discussion – critical not just for understanding MMT and its relation to Paul, but for a true understanding of 'justification' itself. In using the term 'justification' in this context we have seen that it refers to something other than its normal referent in mainstream Christian theological discussion, not least since the Reformation.

In that tradition, 'justification' refers to the event or process by which people come to be Christians, sometimes conceived in a narrower sense, sometimes in a broader. But the 'reckoning of righteousness' in this text is not about how someone comes to be a member of the sect. It is the recognition, the indication, that one is already a member. It is what marks someone out as having already made the transition from outsider to insider, from (in the sect's eyes) renegade Jew to member of the eschatological people.

Of course, in the case of one who had not practiced these 'works' before, starting to do so might be a sign of the beginning of one's membership. But *the language of C31 is not about entry into the community, but about being demonstrated to be within it.* In the terminology made famous by E. P. Sanders, the works of Torah here are about 'staying in', not 'getting in'; they are not designed as ways of entering the covenant, but as ways of being confirmed

[30] Trans. Qimron and Strugnell 1994, 61, altering 'some of our practices are' to 'this selection of our practices is' (see below).

[31] Vermes 1997, 228. García Martínez's earlier translation ('it shall be reckoned to you as in justice', 79) has been changed in the Study Edition (see n. 3 above) to 'reckoned to you as justice'. Qimron and Strugnell 1994, 63 offer 'and this will be counted as a virtuous deed of yours', and Gruenwald (11) gives 'this will be counted as an act of righteousness on your part'; these are clearly possible linguistically, but, in view of the deliberate scriptural resonances on the one hand, and the whole sequence of Deuteronomic thought I have been exploring on the other, they are far less likely than a covenantal meaning.

[32] Gruenwald (10) rightly stresses that 'Halakah constitutes a language . . . [and] reflects the shared identity that sets any meaningful disputation in the context of diverging configurations'. These patterns of behaviour mark out the sect as the true people of God: 'the practice of rituals becomes the major discourse in articulating the differences that are at stake'. On ritual boundary-markers, see Christiansen 1995, which seems to have been completed before MMT was available.

as members of it. 'Works of the law' function here, in other words, *within* the broader covenantal and eschatological scheme which has been set out. They cannot be abstracted from it either into a more generalized system of timeless halakhah or into a wider 'legalism' to which Paul's doctrine of justification, in its traditional Reformation sense, could then be opposed.

The halakhic precepts included in MMT are by no means exhaustive. They are, it seems, intended to clear up disputed points within a much larger assumed scheme. The writer did not suppose that anyone who kept only the somewhat recondite precepts listed here, and ignored the rest of Torah, would be counted a true Jew. These are indeed 'some' of the precepts of Torah, implying a much longer and fuller potential list.[33] Why these ones were to be highlighted is a matter of continuing historical speculation concerning **[118]** the identity and context of the author and the recipients. What is clear is that they were regarded as the key *differentia* of the sect.[34]

The 'works' commended in MMT, then, are designed to mark out God's true people *in the present time*, the time when the final fulfillment of Deuteronomy has begun but is not yet concluded. They are designed (C30) 'so that you may rejoice *at the end of time*, finding these words of ours to be true'. These extra-biblical commands will thus enable the sect to *anticipate* the verdict of the last day, when it will be clearly revealed that those who follow this particular halakhah are indeed the true, renewed people of God.

(3) This brings us to the key comparison between MMT and Paul. Paul, arguably, held a version of the same covenantal and eschatological scheme of thought as MMT; but, in his scheme, the place taken by 'works of Torah' in MMT was taken by 'faith'. Paul, like MMT, believed (a) in a coming 'last day' when all would be revealed, and (b) that the verdict of that last day could be anticipated in the present when someone displayed the appropriate marks of covenant membership. For him, though, the appropriate marks were not 'works', either of the biblical Torah or of post-biblical halakhah, but faith: more specifically, faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

Like the author of MMT (and the Qumran writers in general – and, for that matter, much of second-Temple Judaism), Paul believed that he and his contemporaries were living, not as historically isolated individuals attempting to enter into or sustain a relationship with God that bore no relation to Israel's long story and the prophecies that shaped it, but as Jews within a continuing saga of prophesied history. They were part of a story, a drama: the drama of promise and fulfillment, and more particularly of exile and (at least potential) restoration.

This point remains, it seems, contentious in some quarters of New Testament studies, though in my experience most scholars intimate with Jewish apocalyptic

[33] Following Wise, Abegg, and Cook in the last phrase. Qimron and Strugnell, García Martínez, and Vermes translate *mqṣt* as 'some'; but in English this would carry a different connotation, implying that only some of the precepts would turn out to be correct – which we may safely say is not what the writer intended. So, rightly, Abegg 1994, 52, suggesting 'some important' or 'pertinent' as a translation in C27. This will not work in C30, however, where the point could be expressed 'finding that this selection of our precepts [sc. 'like the rest, of course',] are on the mark'.

[34] On particular halakhoth as the key to sectarian differentiation, cf. Qimron, in Qimron and Strugnell 1994, 175f.; Sussmann 1994, 197–9.

and sectarian texts recognize it.[35] The perspective of MMT is exactly that of CD 1.5–8: the emerging sect is the advance guard of the real 'return', which implies both that the 'exile' has continued up to the [**119**] present moment and that the rest of Israel is still experiencing it. The objection frequently raised (that many Jews were living in the land, worshipping in the Temple, etc., and so could not have thought of themselves as 'in exile') misses the point, which is that 'exile' had become an all-embracing metaphor, and indeed controlling narrative, expressing the deeply held and widespread belief that, despite the geographical 'return' and the rebuilding of the Temple, Israel had not yet in fact been 'redeemed' from the fate she had suffered at the time of Zedekiah. The curse of Deuteronomy was still operative. As Ezra declared (Ezra 9.9; Nehemiah 9.36–37), the Jews were still slaves, even though they were back in their own land. The language and concept of 'exile' functioned as a theological metaphor to *denote* a continuing socio-political reality and to *invest it* with its theological, particularly its covenantal, significance. What slaves needed was of course a new Exodus, a new redemption. Those who described the condition of Israel in terms of slavery were thereby expressing, also, the undying hope that Israel's God would soon act to accomplish this new and greater liberation at last, in line with the classic promises of Isaiah and the other prophets.

The real objection to this construal, I have begun to think, comes from those who are unwilling (for whatever reason) to face the prospect that many second-Temple Jews saw the whole history of Israel as a single great story, and understood 'salvation' not as an individualistic rescue *from* history, nor even as an event within history for which there were detached historical precedents and foreshadowings, but as the great coming act whereby God would bring the entire history of Israel to its climax. Since this seems to be exactly Paul's perspective (e.g. Romans 10.4 as the explosive climax of the story that began with 9.6), it seems to me that we can neither ignore it as a genuine second-Temple viewpoint nor marginalize it when fitting Paul into that context.[36]

For the Qumran community, the story of God and Israel had reached its turning-point, in all probability, with the work of the Teacher of Righteousness. For Paul, the covenantal story of God and Israel had reached its climax with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. The new age had now dawned, the time when the promises were at last to be fulfilled – though not in the way he, as the pre-Christian Saul of Tarsus, had anticipated. There was a 'last day' yet to come, at which final judgment would take place (Romans 2.1–16). However, since the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, had been raised,

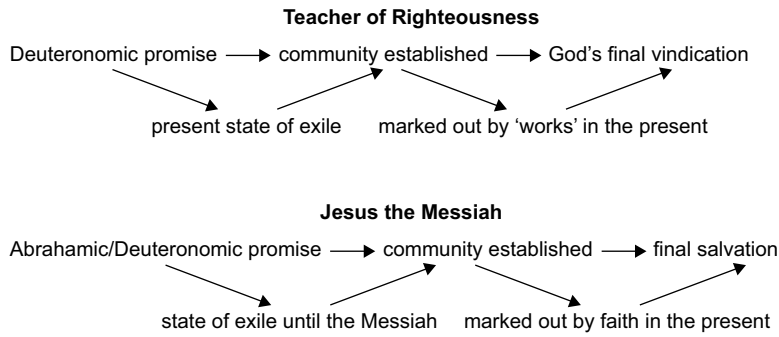
[35] I have argued the case in various places; e.g. in 'In Grateful Dialogue', in Newman 1999, 244–77, at 252–61. Among much other relevant literature, see in particular Scott 1997; within this, cf., e.g., VanderKam 1997; e.g. at 94: 'A common portrait of exile in the apocalyptic literature envisages it as a state of affairs that began at some point near the end of the kingdom of Judah and continued to the author's day and even beyond.' A recent attack on this perception is that of Carson 2001, 546, though it is not clear to me that Carson has understood the position he is criticizing.

[36] For further reflections on the narrative context of second-Temple Judaism and Paul, cf. *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, esp. chs. 1—3.

inaugurating the new age but not yet bringing it to full conclusion (the point Paul sets out at length in 1 Corinthians 15), the [**120**] verdict of the last day could already be known in the present (Romans 3.21–26). The sign that marked out in the present those to be vindicated at the future judgment was nothing more nor less than faith: faith in the God who raised Jesus, the God who had made promises to Abraham and had now, in the Messiah, kept those promises (Romans 4).

This is exactly the context within which Paul himself quotes the phrase used in MMT C31: Abraham believed God, *and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness* (Romans 4.3, quoting Genesis 15.6). He alludes to this phrase, and repeats it, several times in the chapter (verses 6, 9, 11, 22–24). Similar things could be said about the quotation of the same text in Galatians 3.6, which likewise dominates the chapter which then follows. Paul's view is that when people believe in the gospel of the Messiah, Jesus, they are for that reason assured in the present time of that membership in the covenant family promised to Abraham whose identity will be publicly revealed, as MMT would put it, 'at the end of days'. The verdict of the last day – God's vindication of the eschatological people, the people of the renewed covenant – has, in their case, been brought forward into the present.

The shape of the scheme is the same, the content different. We may set this out in a diagram as follows:



Paul's doctrine has exactly the same *shape* as that of MMT. Justification (to use the shorthand term which MMT does not employ, and which Paul uses only rarely) is God's verdict,[37] the verdict of the last day. This verdict can be brought forward into the present, and thus known ahead of time, when certain identity markers are present. In other words, with this evidence you can tell in the *present* who will be justified in the *future*. For MMT, that [**121**] evidence is the adoption of a particular halakhah. For Paul, it is faith in Jesus Christ.

Though Paul could use a wide range of scriptural exegesis, echo and allusion to make this point and tell this story, he could and did use the explicitly Deuteronomic scheme highlighted in MMT. It becomes thematic above all

[37] For which, of course, *mšpt* would be a suitable Hebrew term; see the discussion near the start of this article.

in Romans 9—10. This is a vital passage, not yet brought into the discussion of MMT and Paul; attention has focussed, for some reason, only on Galatians.

To recognize the Jewish exegetical context of Romans 9—10 may, indeed, help us towards a fuller understanding of that dense argument.[38]

The key passage is 10.5–10:

> **5**Moses writes, of the righteousness of the law, that 'the one who does them shall live in them'. **6**But the righteousness of faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, who will go up into heaven?' (that is, to bring the Messiah down), **7**or, 'Who will go across the great deep?' (that is, to bring the Messiah up from the dead). **8**But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' – that is, the word of faith which we preach: **9**for if you confess with your mouth *Kyrios Iēsous*, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10**For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses unto salvation.[39]

Having told the story of Israel from Abraham, to the exile, and to the Messiah in Romans 9.6—10.4, leaving Israel as a whole in the disobedience which Deuteronomy had envisaged,[40] Paul here expounds Deuteronomy 30.9, 12–14 in such a way as to indicate that the new covenant membership which it holds out as a promise, to those who turn back to Israel's God with all their heart, is to be claimed not by those who observe Torah (or any particular interpretation thereof), but by those 'who confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead' (10.9, summing up 10.6–8).

The details of how Paul arrives at this exegesis are not my present concern. My point is simply that Romans 10.6–9, like MMT C12–16, reads Deuteronomy 30 as a promise about the real return from exile, to be accomplished in the writer's own day at the end of the period of blessing and (particularly) of curse, the curse of 'exile'. That is the story which Paul has set out in 9.6–29. But, whereas the sign of such a 'returned' community was for MMT obedience to specific precepts of (extra-biblical) Torah, for Paul the sign was faith in Jesus the Messiah as the risen Lord. And the immediate corollary is of course that, whereas for MMT 'the precepts of Torah' meant [**122**] drawing carefully and tightly the boundary lines between Israel and the gentiles, and more particularly between the true Jews and those who, though Jewish, did not obey this set of precepts, for Paul this 'faith' was open to all, Jew and gentile alike (10.11–13). Paul's theology, like that of MMT, is covenantal and eschatological in form. But within the form there is radically different content.

Interestingly, the other obvious place where Deuteronomy 30.11–14 is used in second-Temple Jewish literature lends clear support to the same point. Baruch 1—3 is an extended meditation on continuing 'exile', written quite possibly in the second century BC.[41] It makes extensive use of the closing chapters of Deuteronomy, which supply the clue to what this still-exiled

[38] See *Romans*, 658–6.

[39] My translation.

[40] 10.19, quoting Dt. 32.21 to re-emphasize the point of 9.31–33, 10.2–3.

[41] See too *Ps. Sol.* 9.4–5, in an explicit context of exile (9.1) and the hope of return (9.10) – a context ignored, for instance, by Seifrid 1992, 120.

Israel needs: Torah, in the form of 'wisdom' (3.9–37), unattainable by humans going up into heaven or across the sea (3.29–30), but offered freely by God 'to Jacob his servant, and Israel his beloved' (3.36). MMT and Baruch, for all their differences of style and content, reflect similar understandings of how God is at work in Israel's history, and what is required to be a faithful, true Jew at this moment. Both take Deuteronomy 30 as pointing to what will happen when God restores the fortunes of Israel after exile. MMT urges a particular halakhic intensification of Torah; Baruch encourages his readers to seek the divine wisdom which embodies Torah. Both see this as the way to attain the end of 'exile', the 'salvation' in that sense, which God long ago promised would succeed the time of desolation and devastation. Together they create a second-Temple context of meaning within which Paul's fresh understanding, generated by his understanding of the Christian gospel, makes sense.

There is a final point in which the parallel between MMT and Paul needs to be nuanced and modified. MMT presupposed obedience to the biblical Torah itself, and added extra commands as a further interpretation of how precisely one should keep Torah. Paul, by placing 'faith' at the crucial point of community definition, clearly intends that neither possession nor practice of either Torah itself or particular sectarian halakhoth would be of any importance in defining the eschatological covenant community. For Paul, in other words, faith is not something which is simply added on to existing Torah-observance; it supplants Torah-observance, denying it any importance. At the same time, as Romans 3.31, 8.3–7, and other passages indicate, Paul does believe that when someone exhibits this faith, that person is in fact fulfilling the Torah in an extended or theological sense, even though he or she may **[123]** neither possess nor observe the written Torah itself. This is exactly the point of Romans 10.5–10.[42] At this level, the structural parallel holds between the 'works' commanded in MMT and the faith sought by Paul: both provide the key interpretative grid which explains what Torah really wanted. The fact that in the one case ordinary Torah-observance is presupposed, and in the other it is not required, stands in tension with this parallel, a tension to be explained exactly by the difference between MMT's and Paul's visions of the new community and the events through which it was founded.

(4) If 'faith' for Paul does the job within his scheme of thought that 'works' does in MMT, does not this raise the spectre, so well known in discussions of justification, of 'making faith a work', treating faith as something one must 'do' in order to earn justification? No: because Paul's doctrine of justification, like that of MMT, is not about 'getting in', not about 'qualifications' or 'achievement', but about *the eschatological definition of the true community*. Of course, if someone who has not previously believed the gospel comes to do so, that event (caused, Paul would be quick to say, by the power of the Spirit at work through the preaching of the gospel[43]) forms a beginning, an entry point.

[42] It stands, too, almost oxymoronically, behind such statements as 1 Cor. 7.19: neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, since what matters is keeping God's commands!

[43] Cf. Rom. 1.16; 1 Cor. 12.3; Eph. 2.8–10; 1 Thess. 1.4–5; 2.13.

But the language of 'justification' itself does not, for Paul, describe or denote that entry, but rather the definition of the community that has thereby come about. That is why, in Galatians 2.11–21, the first place where the issue is raised in his letters, what is at stake is not 'how someone becomes a Christian', but 'who one is allowed to eat with'. Faith is not, in other words, the thing one 'does' in order to earn acceptance with God. It is the gift of God, and it forms the badge – the one and only legitimate badge – of membership in the true family of Abraham.

Nowhere does Paul, in his exposition of this scheme, mention Solomon, Jeroboam, or Zedekiah. He does, though, mention David, in a very similar fashion to MMT C25f. In Romans 4.6–8, he cites David in support of his primary contention, that the family of Abraham is marked out by faith, not works of Torah. David, he says, speaks of the blessing that comes on one to whom God 'reckons righteousness apart from works', and he quotes Psalm 31.1 (LXX) to prove the point: in the Psalm, David speaks of forgiveness, of God not 'reckoning' or calculating one's sin. Forgiveness is mentioned in MMT C24–26 in connection with righteous kings in general and with David in particular. They were forgiven, says the writer, because of their works. No, says Paul; despite their lack of works. Once again the point Paul is driving at **[124]** is the polar opposite of the central concern of MMT. Instead of highlighting legal precepts which define Israel over against the gentile world, or which mark out one group of sectarian Jews over against another, he claims to have found the way in which the biblical promises themselves marked out the family of Abraham, making room as they did so for that family to include believing Jews and believing gentiles side by side (e.g. Romans 4.9).

What, then, is Paul attacking under the label 'works of the law'? Not, we must insist, what one might call proto-Pelagianism, the belief that one must earn one's justification and salvation by unaided good works. (Of course, had Paul met Pelagians, real or proto-, he would have given them short shrift. But there is no evidence that he did.) Nor, we note, is he attacking the idea that true religion is about outward observances rather than inward attitudes. That caricature of Paul has become so popular that Paul is still sometimes criticized as though he had anticipated Luther, or even Kant.[44] But nor, more importantly for the present discussion, is he attacking the sort of extra-biblical *halakhoth* which feature in most of MMT: detailed commands concerning animal fetuses, observing certain purity laws relating to streams of liquid, and so on. These go beyond anything in the written Torah, and serve to define one group of Jews over against all others. Rather, Paul is denying that the basic biblical commands, which in his day were the most obvious defining marks of Israel over against the nations, are of any continuing relevance in defining the true people of God, the people in and for whom the

[44] Gruenwald, in an unpublished paper given at SNTS meeting in Copenhagen in August 1998, speaking of halakhah as 'the Judaic concomitant of ritual', envisages arguments against it as coming 'in the wake of Paul, Kant, and modern enlightenment and secularism'. On the post-enlightenment misunderstandings of Paul's gospel and the appropriate response, see my 'Freedom and Framework, Spirit and Truth: Recovering Biblical Worship'.

promises of Deuteronomy, and for that matter the promises to Abraham, were now coming true.

We should note in the same breath, of course, that for Paul the basis of this critique of 'the works of Torah' is not that the Torah, or its commands, were evil, stupid, wrong-headed, demonic, or any of the myriad other things that Paul has been thought to say about the law (often by those in the Reformation or Enlightenment tradition who wanted him to say such things about 'law' in general, about medieval catholic superstitions, or whatever). Rather, the basis for the critique is *eschatological*. Torah has done its primary job, a job designed for the period before the time when Deuteronomy 30 would be fulfilled. Now, in the new age ushered in by Jesus' death and resurrection, Torah is relativized, and in particular is of no [**125**] use, as it stands, when it comes to defining the eschatological people of God.[45]

The same point can be made if we observe that MMT's regulations have to do primarily with the Jerusalem Temple and its purity. (This makes sense if, as most imagine, both writer and readers were priests.) This relates only very obliquely to the issues addressed by Paul. The agitators in Galatia may have claimed authority from the Jerusalem apostles. Certainly Paul distances himself not only from the city but also from the Christian leaders based there (Galatians 1.15–21; 4.25–26). But neither he nor his opponents mention the Temple itself in this context, or the purity codes required for its proper functioning. Indeed, by calling the Jerusalem apostles 'pillars' (Galatians 2.9), Paul downgrades the physical Temple in favour of the newly constituted Christian community. This move is unlike anything envisaged in MMT, although the Qumran sect did see itself as in some sense a replacement for the Temple, thus forming a partial parallel with Paul's view of the Christian community.[46] But the point remains: Paul is not attacking that which MMT is urging.

It is therefore clear, despite previous studies, that in Paul's sustained expositions of justification and/or the law – in Galatians, Romans, Philippians 3, and 2 Corinthians 3 – he is not attacking the 'works' that MMT is commending. From a historical point of view, things were just not that simple. Insofar as there is a parallel between MMT and Paul it concerns the way in which both were seeking to define, in the present time, the newly inaugurated *covenantal* and *eschatological* community that would be manifest 'at the end of time'. The point of contact between Paul and MMT is to be found in the form and structure of their respective eschatological [**126**] schemes, not in the 'works' that the one was urging and in the 'works' that the other was resisting.

[45] True, Paul sees Christian faith itself, and thereafter Christian love, as in some sense 'fulfilling Torah': see Rom. 2.27; 8.3–8; 10.5–10; 13.8–11, on all of which see *Romans*.

[46] Most works on Qumran deal with the sect's Temple-based self-understanding: see, e.g., Gärtner 1965, and the suggestive discussion of Bauckham 1995, at 442–50. For Paul's Temple-based ecclesiology cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 3.16; 6.19; 2 Cor. 6.16; Eph. 2.11–22; and (not so often recognized) Rom. 8.5–11 (where the exposition of the 'indwelling' Spirit owes much to Jewish 'Shekinah' theology). It is misleading, however, to suggest that a major difference between the Galatian 'agitators' and MMT is that the former wanted close ties with Jerusalem while the latter wanted to break them (so Witherington 1998, 353f.). MMT appears to come from a period when the sect not only were still in touch with the Temple authorities, but were concerned for the purity regulations that obtained there. They do not appear to have written it off.

(5) What place, then, does Paul give to what may be called 'halakhah'? It has become commonplace in some circles to say that Paul, too, has a halakhah; and a strong case can of course be made out.[47] Qimron and Strugnell, in their edition of MMT, suggest that, just as MMT moves from one topic to another within section B by means of the opening phrase *w'p'l*, so Paul lists different topics by means of his *peri de tōn*.[48] The key point to be made, though, is that halakhah plays no part *in Paul's theology of justification*. He does not give rulings on contentious issues in order thereby to define the community ethnically or in any other way. He gives rulings in order to persuade those who are already defined by their faith as members of the eschatological covenant community that this membership carries with it an obligation, and a new possibility, to behave in a particular way. But this behaviour, this halakhah, is never linked to justification.[49]

It might be thought that this is simply a Qumran-sensitive way of making the point traditionally flagged in Reformation theology as the *tertius usus legis*. There is, of course, a formal analogy. But two points must be made. First, since I have argued for a new understanding of Paul's doctrine of justification, not as 'entry terminology' ('how someone becomes a Christian') but as 'community definition' ('how you can tell who belongs to the community of God's eschatological people'), the other questions that circle around justification all need consequent realigning, at which we can only glance here. It is sufficient to note that for Paul neither the written Torah nor the post-biblical halakhah had any role either in a person's becoming a member of the community in the first place or in the ratification of that status. That is why, for instance, Romans 14 insists on mutual recognition within a community in which different halakhoth seem to obtain (some observe food laws, others don't; some keep sabbaths, others don't). Second, however, it is true that when in 1 Corinthians Paul wrestles with (what we might call) ethical issues, some of which threaten to break the community [**127**] apart, he lays down severe and boundary-defining regulations which have to do not with faith but with behaviour. The best example is, perhaps, 1 Corinthians 5.9–13: those who transgress in the matters listed there are to be ejected from the community. One must not eat with them (5.11). And the key text is taken from Deuteronomy: 'drive out the wicked person from your midst'.[50]

How then might Paul reconcile what may still appear to some an inconsistency, namely that, even when justification has been redefined as I have suggested, he is capable of backing off from 'faith alone' as the definition of the community and replacing it with some kind of 'works'? I suspect (on the basis of the rest of 1 Corinthians, not least chapter 6) that Paul would insist that we are still working with inadequate categories. For him, the point of faith is its object; and the object of true faith, for Paul, was Christ. To say

[47] Cf., e.g., Tomson 1990; and especially Bockmuehl 2000.

[48] *DJD* 113f. Qimron and Strugnell overstate the point: this is a feature largely of 1 Corinthians, and is not particularly frequent even there (7.1, 25; 8.1; 12.1; 16.1; cf. 2 Cor. 9.1; 1 Thess. 4.9; 5.1). The discussions that follow, also, are quite unlike MMT's halakhic rulings in form as well as in content.

[49] The question of *final* judgment is a separate issue: see below.

[50] Dt. 17.7, quoted in 1 Cor. 5.13.

that faith defines the community is really to say that Christ defines it, since Christ is the object of faith; and, if Christ defines the community, then that which is incompatible with Christ is incompatible with faith, and so with community membership.[51] Though from one point of view, as we have seen, this Christ-faith is in a sense a fulfilment of Torah, what Paul has in mind is not halakhah in the MMT sense, a scheme of Torah-commanded behaviour which defines one as a Torah-observant Jew, separate from gentiles and from non-observant, or differently observant, Jews. As far as Paul is concerned, it is the exploration of the new covenant community, defined by Jesus Christ and hence manifested by the faith through which one is joined to him.[52]

(6) Does MMT nevertheless correspond in outline – in form, if not in content – to that which Paul was arguing against? Here we must distinguish two issues: Paul's rejection of the position he had held as a Pharisee, and his opposition to the 'agitators' in Galatia. (His opposition to Peter in Antioch, [**128**] the subject of Galatians 2.11–21, is related to the latter, but may not be identical with it.) Each must be considered on its own merits.[53]

Although MMT is written neither by nor for Pharisees, the shape of its doctrine of justification (covenantal and eschatological) may well have been similar to that of the Pharisees, since, as we have seen, it corresponds closely at a structural level to that which Paul expounds, and Paul may well have retained the shape of Pharisaic thinking while filling it with new content. The difference between MMT's view and that of the Pharisees would then be at the level, not of form or theological structure, but of detailed content. Both would have believed in something Paul would have recognized (and rejected) as 'justification by works', namely the definition of the eschatological people of God in terms of particular halakhah; but they would have disagreed with each other on what precisely those works were to be.

However, a caveat must be entered at this point. We do not know if the Pharisees held any form of inaugurated eschatology corresponding to that which MMT assumes for Qumran. We do not know, in other words, if the Pharisees believed that they themselves were the already-inaugurated new covenant people of Israel's God, or, if so, what defining event (corresponding to the founding of the Qumran community, or at least its refounding by the Teacher of Righteousness) had brought such a movement into being. It may be that the Pharisees believed that adhering to their interpretation of Torah constituted them as such a renewed community, but we have no clear evidence for saying so. Neither Hillel nor Shammai was regarded in Paul's day as having

[51] Cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 6.15.

[52] I cannot here go into the question of *pistis Christou*, though my sympathies are with those who see the phrase as referring to 'the faithfulness of the Messiah' rather than 'faith in the Messiah' (see, e.g., Hays 2002, Appendix 2 [272–97]; B. W. Longenecker 1998, ch. 5). This does not mean, of course, that there is no room for the individual believer's 'faith' as the appropriate, and indeed defining, response to God's action through the messianic faithfulness of Jesus; rather the reverse. It means that this response, when it occurs, is already marked as 'messianic-type faithfulness'. It occurs 'in Christ'. Paul's exposition of the 'new covenant' in 2 Cor. 3 is linked to several other passages in his writings, e.g. Rom. 2.25–29, indicating that, despite the comparative scholarly neglect, this constitutes a major theme.

[53] On the Pharisees, see *New Testament and the People of God*, 181–203; Deines 2001. On the 'agitators', cf., e.g., Martyn 1997a, 117–26.

brought a new age into being, even secretly or partially. The fact that Paul the Christian, with his own form of inaugurated eschatology, rejects his former self-understanding and that of the agitators in Galatia (who we have no reason to think held views identical or even similar to Paul's own pre-Christian ones), does not mean that either he (before his conversion) or the 'agitators' held an inaugurated eschatology.

What about the 'agitators' themselves, then? They most likely did believe that Jesus was the Messiah, so to that extent they may have believed that the new age had been inaugurated, though the prominence Paul gives to 'deliverance from the present evil age' through Jesus (Galatians 1.4) may indicate that they did not. One way or the other, though, it is important not to jump to conclusions. Paul, MMT, the Pharisees (including the pre-Christian Paul), Peter in Antioch, and the 'agitators' may well all have held significantly [**129**] different positions, and the differences may have extended to form as well as to content.

In particular – the point that needs to be stressed – there is no reason whatever to suppose that either Paul in his pre-Christian days, or Peter in the Antioch incident, or the Galatian 'agitators', had ever encountered the particular halakhoth which MMT is at pains to lay down.[54] Nor can we be sure that they encountered, let alone commended, MMT's basic theology of justification. The pre-Christian Saul of Tarsus certainly believed that God's true people would be vindicated at the last day, and that the way in which this true Israel was to be known in the present time was by keeping the whole biblical Torah (Galatians 5.3). The 'agitators' were of course keen on getting the Galatians to embrace certain works of biblical Torah, circumcision in particular, with a similar motive, defining them as true children of Abraham. But none of this adds up to more than a vague and loose parallel to what we find in MMT. Paul the Pharisee might have added nonbiblical halakhoth to the observance of Torah; according to Galatians 1.14 he was an expert in such matters. But he at least claims that the 'agitators' did not do so; he suggests that they were not requiring the whole written Torah (Galatians 5.3), and even that they were not observing it themselves (6.13).

To be precise, the problem Paul meets in Galatia is not that a particular extra-biblical halakhah is being taught, to which he objects as one sectarian Jewish group might object against another ('your halakhah says this, my halakhah says that'). Nor is it that he regards the 'agitators' as teaching a moralistic 'self-help' soteriology, or a reliance on religious ritual rather than inner spirituality (the classic Protestant view of what Paul's protest was about). The fundamental issue is Paul's eschatological claim that Israel's God has now acted in Jesus, demonstrating him through the resurrection to be Israel's Messiah (Romans 1.4), and so declaring that the new age has been inaugurated, the age promised in Deuteronomy 30, the age of 'return' in which gentiles will now come in to full membership in God's renewed people. The true people of God are now, as a result, no longer definable in terms of Torah, the peculiar possession of Israel, but only in terms of faith – not a general

[54] Dunn is therefore wrong to conclude that 'MMT preserves the sort of theological attitude and halakhic practice which in the event determined the attitude and action of Peter' (Dunn 1997, 152, cf. 153).

religious faith, either, but the very specific faith in Jesus as Lord and in God's raising of him from the dead (Romans 4.24–25; 10.6–10). All who have this faith, Paul declares, belong equally in God's family, no matter what their racial origin. What he objects to in the agitators' attempt to redefine the Christian community (and in Peter's implicit attempt to do the [**130**] same thing, as in Galatians 2.14) is not that they are trying to impose on the converts a particular halakhah, a special set of sub-topics defining the written Torah more closely. He is objecting to their attempt to get ex-pagan Galatians (still-pagan Galatians, in the agitators' view!) to submit to the most basic and Israel-defining precepts of the written Torah itself: sabbath, food laws, circumcision.

Now, insofar as MMT (particularly section B) is designed to make the boundary between Israel and the gentiles more precise and sharply defined, it belongs loosely alongside the theology of the agitators – though the agitators, as we have seen, not only may not have held an inaugurated eschatology, but also were not interested in imposing even the complete biblical law, let alone extra halakhoth. In particular, the 'works' which MMT commends were designed to mark out one group of Jews from the rest, whereas the agitators' 'works' were designed to mark out Jews from pagans. For Paul, it is 'faith' that marks out God's true people *both* from unbelieving Israel *and* from idolatrous paganism. 'Works of Torah' of either sort – those works that define Jew against Jew, or those that define Jew against pagan – cannot do this.

What MMT adds to the discussion, apart from a strong reinforcement of a covenantal and eschatological understanding of justification, is the fact that 'justification by works of Torah', in the broad sense described, was not just a Pharisaic doctrine, nor simply something that the Galatian 'agitators' were urging. It characterized sectarian Judaisms of various sorts, and perhaps mainstream Judaism (insofar as there was such a thing) as well. Once we understand how such sectarian Judaism functioned, within a prevailing eschatological scheme in which the inaugurated 'last days' were in the process of bringing about the real return from exile, the real forgiveness of sins, the renewed covenant, this is not surprising.[55]

Conclusion: Justification in Qumran and Paul

What is surprising, perhaps, is that, if it has taken a remarkably long time for MMT to see the published light of day, it has taken a lot longer for scholars, even those committed to understanding early Christianity in terms of its Jewish contexts, to grasp the thoroughly Jewish, covenantal, and eschatological nature of Paul's doctrine of justification. Perhaps those writers [**131**] who in their own day would have remained implacably opposed to one another

[55] Interestingly, neither MMT nor the 'agitators' seem to have taught the de-eschatologized halakhah which we find in the Mishnah. To explore this would take us too far away from our present topic, as would the question whether the pre-70 Pharisees would have been in line with the Mishnah on this point or whether the Mishnah represents a de-eschatologization precisely of pre-70 Pharisaic belief.

may today join forces to reveal, both by their mutual incompatibility and by their family resemblance, that the history of religions concerns confrontation as well as derivation, critique and innovation from within as well as polemic from without. In that hope, some brief conclusions are in order.

When all has been said and done in distancing Paul and his controversies from those visible within MMT, we are left with substantial support for the view I have argued elsewhere, namely that Paul's discussions of justification are to be seen within a *covenantal* and *eschatological* framework. The God of Israel had now, at last, unveiled his covenant plan, a point Paul expresses in 'apocalyptic' language: *dikaiosynē theou apocalyptetai* (Romans 1.17). Israel's God has now fulfilled his covenantal promises, specifically those to Abraham and in Deuteronomy. The promises were initially fulfilled, in some sense, in David; but then, as it were, they ran underground through the time of Israel's desolation and exile (itself part of God's fulfillment of the covenant, this time of which the covenant had warned[56]), to emerge into the light again in God's new messianic day.[57]

Within the covenantal and eschatological structure of Paul's justification-theology, the metaphor of the lawcourt, to which I referred near the start of this article, comes into its own. This metaphor has usually been the dominant one in Christian theological discussions of 'justification', and it is important that it be given its due *within the proper context*, which I have now amply illustrated through MMT. Indeed, all the foregoing discussion can be seen in a sense as a roundabout way of insisting that, though the lawcourt metaphor is vital within justification, it is neither the only nor the controlling universe of discourse within which the subject is to be understood – if, that is, we are to retain any contact with the second-Temple Jew called Paul whose writings are the regular court of appeal in Christian discussions of justification.

The comparison and contrast between Paul and MMT, in short, highlights for us today the way in which Paul's writing on justification belongs firmly within its Jewish context, and the significance of the new thing Paul was saying precisely within that context – exactly the sort of point [**132**] for which Earle Ellis has become famous. On the one hand, we only understand Paul if we see that, like the author of MMT, he was making the comprehensible second-Temple Jewish point that the eschatological moment had arrived, that the community of the new covenant had been established, and that the proper definition of this community in the present was a matter of the utmost urgency. On the other hand, by contrasting Paul with MMT we can see the difference it made when the eschatological event in question consisted of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah. No longer would the new covenant community be defined in terms of a sub-set of ethnic Israel, marked

[56] Dt. 28.15–68; 29.10–29; Ezra 9.13; Neh. 9.33; Dan. 9.11–14.

[57] It should be noted that in thus characterizing Paul's theology in terms of 'the climax of the covenant' I do not mean at all the covenant focussed on the Sinai law and revelation, but rather that made with Abraham. I should have thought this was too obvious to need saying, were it not for the remarkable misunderstanding perpetrated by Esler 1998, 190–1. Paul, after all, specifically distinguishes between the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants, framing his major theological problem in terms of the one being apparently blocked by the other (Gal. 3.10–14).

out by 'works of Torah', defined this way and that with a developing halakhah. The new covenant community formed through the death and resurrection of the Messiah, and the gift of the eschatological Spirit, would be known by the faith which that same Spirit evoked through the gospel, the faith that acknowledged Jesus as the risen Messiah and Lord. And that meant that the community was open to all. Herein lies the deep Jewishness of Paul, and his greatest innovation.

Chapter Twenty-Two

READING PAUL, THINKING SCRIPTURE: 'ATONEMENT' AS A SPECIAL STUDY (2007)

Originally published in *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Alan J. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 59–71. Reprinted with permission.

This paper, in its original form, was given as a lecture in the series that Markus Bockmuehl and Alan Torrance organized in St Andrews in 2007. (I little thought that I would myself be teaching there three years later.) As with other material produced during that period, it was written in a hurry for the occasion, being revised on the computer as I was travelling up on the train from Durham to St Andrews (hence, I assume, the reference to the Forth Bridge). I was eager, however, to pursue some of the lines of thought considerably further, and so developed the paper beyond its early (and then its published) form. The central part of this paper is thus published here for the first time. The page numbers refer to the shorter version, and a note is added to indicate where the previously unpublished material begins and ends. Several of the points I here make about the nature of doctrine, and of the atonement in particular, I regard as important and seminal, but have not had the leisure to develop elsewhere, though my recent book *How God Became King* (London: SPCK; San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011) addresses the key point about the ambiguous relationship between the Creeds and the Canon, especially the gospels.

* * *

Scripture, Doctrine and Life: Some Initial Reflections

1 The Puzzle of Perception

For many in today's church, 'doctrine', especially when labelled as 'dogma', is the dry, lifeless thing that seemed important once but doesn't now send people out to change the world. For some such people, it is scripture that brings them to life: the book where they meet Jesus and find him speaking to them. They read, or listen to, scripture in the way that they would listen to a favourite symphony or folk song. It recreates their world, the world

where they and God get it together, the world where all things are possible to those who believe.

But not everybody sees things like that. For some, scripture itself has become, except for highly select verses and passages, as dry and dusty as dogma itself. It is full of problems and puzzles, alternative readings and private theories of interpretation, and seems to them like a black hole which can suck down all the energy of otherwise good Christian people (exegetes and preachers) and give nothing much back in return. For them, what matters is invoking the Spirit, worshipping for longer and longer, extended prayer and praise meetings, telling others how wonderful it is to have a living relationship with Jesus. Such people assume (since the background of their tradition is broadly evangelical) that scripture remains in some sense normative, but how it exercises that [**60**] normativity, or how it 'exercises' anything at all, or engages with their life and faith, remains unclear.

The third category completes the circle. There are some for whom the books of devotion appear stale, but for whom, as C. S. Lewis once put it, the heart sings unbidden when working through a book of dogmatic theology with pipe in teeth and pencil in hand. For such people, as well, the endless and increasingly labyrinthine productions of the Great Exegetical Factory, especially the older Germans on the one hand and the newer Americans on the other, leave them cold. The lexicographical, historical, sociological and rhetorical mountains of secular exegesis all move, and every so often there emerges a ridiculous mouse that squeaks some vaguely religious version of a currently popular self-help slogan. Meanwhile the real mountains – the enormous, looming questions of God and the world, of church and society, of Jesus then and now, of death and resurrection – remain unaddressed. Salieri, in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, looks at Mozart's operas and declares that Mozart has taken ordinary people – barbers, servant girls, footmen – and has made them gods and heroes. He himself, however, has written operas about gods and heroes – and he has made them ordinary. A similar verdict awaits the contemporary 'secular' exegete who dares to look into the mirror.

Does it have to be this way? asks not only the theologian, but the bishop. Where are the so-called 'ordinary people' in all of this? Is there a better way not only of understanding the relationship between scripture and doctrine but of allowing either or both to bear fruit in the postmodern church and world?

2 Scripture and Narrative

To say that I want to begin to address this with some remarks about scripture and narrative may provoke a sigh from at least some dogmaticians. That is *so* last century, so postliberal, they're even giving it up in Yale now; can any good thing come out of narrative? Well, as a reader of scripture it seems to me not only that the canon as it stands is irreducibly narrative in form, enclosing within that of course any number of other genres, but displaying an extraordinary, because unintentional to every single individual writer and redactor involved, overall storyline of astonishing power and consistency. You

could say, of course, that this is all down to those who chose the books and shaped the canon, but if you look at the ones they left out you would either have to say that even if you put them all in you would still have the same narrative or that if you put some of them in (the Gnostic gospels, for instance) you would precisely deconstruct what would still be a huge, powerful narrative, and offer instead a very different one from which, ultimately, you would have to exclude more or less everything else that's there. The Gnostic gospels, if [**61**] made canonical, would eventually act like the baby cuckoo in the nest, kicking out all the native chicks, but if the chicks got together where they'd landed on the ground they would still have a massive family likeness. You see what I'm saying: you can't, in the end, take the anti-canonical rhetoric of much contemporary writing to its logical conclusion, or you end up having the canon again, only now as the alternative narrative. No: what we have, from Genesis to Revelation, is a massive narrative structure in which, though Paul, the evangelists and John the Divine are of course extremely well aware of the earlier parts, no single author saw the whole or knew about all the other parts of it. It is as though engineers from different workshops were all invited to produce bits and pieces of cantilevers and they ended up, when put together without the different workshops knowing of it, producing the Forth Bridge. And the case I have made elsewhere, to bring this into sharp focus for today's official topic, is that Paul was aware of enough of this large story at least to add his own bit and point to the completion, even though other writers like the Apocalypse finish the narrative sequence with a different metaphor – marriage, in Revelation 21, rather than birth, as in Romans 8. But with Paul we are 'thinking scripture' all the way, and that means 'thinking narrative'.

I am thus taking the phrase 'thinking scripture' in, I think, two ways. First, that as we read Paul we should be conscious that he, Paul, is 'thinking scripture' in the sense that his mind is full of the great scriptural narrative and the great scriptural narratives, and that he is conscious of living in the climactic and newly explosive continuation and implementation of the first and also of living with the echoes and patterns of the second. But, second, part of the point is that as we read Paul we should be conscious not only of 'Paul said this, that or the other', but also, 'how can Paul's saying of this *be scripture for us*, how can it, that is, function as the word which addresses, challenges, sustains us, putting us to death and bringing us to new life?'

Now of course, within the grand narrative from the first garden to the new city, there are multiple smaller narratives, some of them pulling this way and that with, and perhaps apparently against the trend of, the larger one. That is to be expected, and actually it's only if we shrink the grand narrative from its full proportions that this becomes a problem. And of course, since the narrative itself is precisely about God's extraordinary, vibrant and multifaceted creation, we find poetry, prophecy and wisdom firmly embedded, embodying what the story is saying about creativity and procreativity, about humans bearing God's image, about God's generous overspilling love, and so on. And within this narrative, and sometimes within its sub-genres, there are statements of overarching truth or inalienable moral duty: the Ten

Commandments come within the Exodus narrative (and are themselves prefaced by, and sometimes refer back to, bits of the larger narrative), and the huge yet simple statements like 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures', to which we shall return, is framed within the implicit narrative of Paul's [**62**] ongoing relationship with the feisty and factious Corinthians. And because, speaking personally, I hold as I always have done a very high view of scripture, not only as dogma but as method, I find myself bound to ask whether doctrine, including be it said doctrine *about scripture itself*, has really taken on board this element. It isn't simply a question of 'How can a narrative be authoritative?'; I have written a book about that already. It is, rather, how can a narrative, or more specifically this narrative, relate to the abstract questions, cast frequently in non-narratival mode, which have formed the staple diet of doctrine and dogma?

Is this even the right question to be asking? Might it not seem to imply (a) that it's doctrine that really matters, that will give life and energy and focus to the church; (b) that scripture is the authority for our doctrine, since that is itself a foundational doctrine, but (c) that scripture as we find it seems singularly unsuited for the purpose (as Winston Churchill said about a golf club in relation to the task of conveying a ball into a small and distant hole)? And, granted that modern and often postmodern exegesis has left scripture in bits all over the floor, each labelled 'early Q' or 'deutero-Paul' or 'Hellenistic moral *topos*' or whatever – as though that settled anything – will it help (and if so how?) to draw attention to scripture's most prominent characteristic, or will this too collapse into another pile of mere narrative theories, with actantial analyses like the spars of the skeleton ship in *The Ancient Mariner*, giving the initial appearance of being seaworthy but actually carrying only Death and Life-in-Death?

3 Doctrine as 'Portable Story'

I think not. I want to propose what may be a way forward: not a particularly original one, but one I have found helpful in reflecting recently on that strange doctrine called 'the atonement'. I want to propose that we see doctrines as being, in principle, *portable narratives*. What do I mean?

When I am at home, my clothes live in wardrobes and my books on bookshelves. But when I need to be away from home I put them in bags and suitcases. It's not easy to carry suits, robes and shoes, let alone books and notebooks, computers, iPods and so on, all loose, on and off the London Underground. The bags and suitcases perform a vital function. But when I get to the other end, even if I'm only there for a single night, I get almost everything out, hang up the clothes and robes, and arrange the books on a desk or table, not because the suitcases weren't important but because they were. The bits and pieces have got where they were going and have to be allowed to be themselves again.

[**63**] This model suggests a to-and-fro between scripture and doctrine which goes something like this. It may be very important for the internal life of the church, or for the church's witness to the world, that we address a

question about the meaning of Jesus' death which has come up at some point in debate. How are we going to do it? It is hard, each time you want even to refer to Jesus' death itself, to quote even a few verses from Mark 15, Matthew 27, Luke 23 or John 19. If, each time I wanted to refer in a discussion to the Archbishop of Canterbury, I had to spell out the complete biography of that great and good man as set out in Who's Who, the discussion would get impossibly clogged up. The title – the phrase 'Archbishop of Canterbury' – is a portable version of this, implying it all without telling the full story; but at any point it might be important that people were aware that this title refers to someone who was born in Wales, to someone who once held a chair in Oxford, to someone who has written a book on the resurrection and so on. The narrative is implicitly carried within the title; at any point, you can reach in and get the bit of the story you need. Thus, in the same way, and thinking about Paul and the cross, it is quite cumbersome, each time you want to refer to the atonement, to have to say something like 'Paul's teaching that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures"'. So we bundle all of this, and the much fuller statements as well, up into a suitcase labelled 'Atonement', which we can carry on and off the trains and buses of our various arguments and discussions, and which really do perform a vital function in enabling discourse to proceed. *But when we get to the other end we need to unpack it all again*, so that what we are left with is not a single word, 'Atonement' or 'Reconciliation' or *Versöhnung* or whatever it might be, but the whole story, John 18 and 19 as it stands, Romans 3, Galatians 3, 2 Corinthians 5 and so on. Such passages, I suggest, are the ground-level reality. The word 'atonement' itself and its near equivalents, and the various theories about atonement, are only of service insofar as they enable us to bundle up the passion narratives and the key New Testament witnesses to the meaning of the cross – not in order to muzzle them, or only ever to 'live out of a suitcase', snatching an item here and there but keeping everything else crumpled up and invisible inside the zipped-up leather dogma, but to bring them out again *and live off them*, live with them, put them on and wear them, line them up and use them.

At this point, already, I must introduce a further element; because the conviction has been growing on me that when Jesus wanted to explain to his followers what he thought would be the meaning of his death, he didn't give them a theory, he gave them a *meal*. And the meal itself, by being a passover-meal-with-a-difference, already indicates a massive and complex implied narrative: a story about a long history reaching a new, shocking and decisive fulfilment; a story about slavery and freedom, about Israel and the pagans, about God fulfilling his promises, about covenant renewal and forgiveness of sins. And this encoded story, this meal-as-narrative, works by doing it. Breaking the bread [**64**] and drinking from the cup are not *about* something else, unless that something else is simply called 'Jesus'. Rather, we might better say that *theories about atonement are at their very best abstractions from the eucharist*, which is itself the grid of interpretation we have been given – by Jesus himself! – for Jesus' death. This makes life much more complicated, of course, since we have suddenly introduced a third and disturbing element

into the scripture-and-doctrine debate, but at least in the case of the atonement I don't think we have any choice.

4 Creeds as Portable Story – and Therefore as Symbol

I shall come back to this presently, because it might be that the atonement is, in this respect and perhaps in others, something of a special case. But I want first to state the obvious and then develop it a little. The idea that doctrines are portable stories is of course already present in the classic statements of Christian doctrines, that is, the great early Creeds. They are not simply checklists which could in principle be presented in any order at all. They consciously tell the story – precisely the scriptural story! – from creation to new creation, focussing particularly of course on Jesus and summing up what scripture says about him in a powerful brief narrative (a process we can already see happening within the New Testament itself). When the larger story needs to be put within a particular discourse, for argumentative, didactic, rhetorical or whatever other purpose, it makes sense, and is not inimical to its own character, to telescope it together and allow it, suitably bagged up, to take its place in that new context. Just as long as you realize that it will get mildewed if you leave it in its bag for ever.

One of the things that creeds enable scripture to do, by being thus compressed into a much, much briefer narrative framework, is for the entire story to function as *symbol*. It is no accident that that was one of the words the early Christians used to denote their creeds. They were not simply a list of things that Christians happened to believe. They were a badge to be worn, a symbol which, like the scholar's gown that tells you what this person is about, declares 'this is who we are'. That is, of course, why the creeds are recited in liturgy; not so much to check that everyone present is signed up to them, but to draw together, and express corporately, the church's response to the reading and praying of scripture, in terms of 'Yes! As we listen to these texts, we are renewed as *this* people, the people who live within *this* great story, the people who are identified precisely as people-of-this-story, rather than as the people of one of the many other stories that clamour for attention all around.' And this, I think, is the role of doctrine, or one of its crucial and central roles: to ensure that when people say the Creeds they know what they are talking about and why it matters, and to ensure, also, that when [**65**] some part of the larger story is under attack, or is being distorted, we can not just come to the rescue and as it were put a finger in the dyke, but can discern why the attack has come at this moment and at this point, and can work to eliminate the weakness that has allowed it to gain access.

Part of my general point today about Paul is precisely that he is constantly doing this packing and unpacking, compressing and expanding, hinting in one place and offering a somewhat fuller statement of the same point elsewhere. A good example of this is in 1 Corinthians 15.56–57, where Paul says (bewilderingly, since he hasn't been talking about these things), 'The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'. By itself this is more

or less incomprehensible, since nowhere else in his writings to date has Paul said anything about the law being 'the power of sin'. We might just about have inferred it from Galatians 3, but it would be stronger than anything there. But in Romans 7 Paul explains precisely this point at much greater length, ending with the same shout of triumph. In other words, it isn't simply the case that scripture gives miscellaneous teaching about various topics which the church can codify into portable statements and then de-codify back into scripture again. We can see the same process going on within scripture itself, not least in Paul himself, and not least at this point, when we are thinking about sin, the law and the victory of Christ – in other words, about atonement.

All this leads us to another important general point about the nature of doctrine, scripture and narrative.

5 Checklists and Follow-the-dots

It dawns on me uncomfortably that it is possible to treat doctrines, not (as the Creeds do) as basically a narrative, but simply as a kind of abstract checklist, dogmas to which one must subscribe but which don't really belong at all within a story, or, more insidious perhaps still, do belong within a story but within a story which, because it isn't usually seen as such, is quietly doing its powerful work of reshaping *what these admittedly true doctrines will now mean* and why. In other words, simply putting a tick beside all twenty-nine (or however many) true doctrines isn't good enough. It could be that, like a child faced with a follow-the-dots puzzle, and realizing that you have to join up the dots but not understanding what the numbers are there for, you can indeed draw a picture in which all the dots are connected but which bears no relation to the picture that was intended. You can, in fact, join up all the dots not only in the classic early creeds and most of the later ones (for instance, the post-Reformation Confessions and Articles) and still be many a mile away from affirming what the biblical writers, all through, were wanting people to affirm. You can connect all the dots and still produce, shall we say, a thistle [**66**] instead of a rose, an elephant instead of a donkey. To take a different but related example: if I come upon the letters BC written down somewhere, it is only the larger context, the larger implicit narrative, that can tell me whether they mean Bishop's Council (if it's a note in my diary), British Columbia (if it's a note of my cousins' address), Before Christ (if it's in a book about ancient history) or the two musical notes which bear those names (if it's about the end of Sibelius's Seventh Symphony). Implicit narrative is all. If you affirm a doctrine but put it in the wrong implicit narrative, you potentially falsify it as fully and thoroughly as if you denied it altogether.

This point is not dissimilar to the one made by Robert Jenson in his recent article in the Princeton Center bulletin *Reflections*,[1] though I think he has not done enough to ward off the suspicion that his own proffered solution comes under the same critique as he has offered of other theories. Writing

[1] Jenson 2007.

about the doctrine of the atonement, he suggests that what is wrong with the three main models – Anselm, Abelard and Christus Victor, to put it bluntly – is that all of them are placing the death of Jesus within a narrative other than the one which scripture itself proposes. Scripture is not talking about the honour or shame of a mediaeval nobleman, or about a programme to educate people in how to love God or about monstrous mythical powers and how they might be defeated. I think, actually, that scripture is more obviously talking about the last of those, but that's another question to which we may return. My difficulty with Jenson, and I suspect he is building up to addressing this in a fuller work for which the article is a brief flyer, is that his alternative narrative, which is about the relationships between the three persons of the Trinity, while very interesting and not at all unrelated to the story scripture tells, is still not that story itself, and still avoids the really important part of the whole thing, the thing to which the church has persistently given far too little attention (including, I believe, the classic creeds themselves), namely *the story of Israel*.

It is this story that drives the whole of the New Testament, which is not surprising because it is what drove Jesus himself. When Paul says that 'the Messiah died for our sins *according to the scriptures*' he does not mean that one can find a few helpful proof-texts if one looks hard enough. What he means – and what we see in the great sermons in Acts, particularly chapters 7 and 13 of which many subsequent summaries are just that, summaries of the longer biblical narrative – is that the story of Israel from Abraham to the Messiah is seen as *the plan of the one creator God to save the whole world*. It is remarkable how difficult it is to get this across to people who are deeply embedded in a rather different story, namely one which reads simply 'creation–sin–Jesus–salvation'. Interestingly, of course, if you miss out the 'Israel' stage of the story you not only become a de facto Marcionite, as many alas in both Protestant and Catholic traditions seem to be, but also leave yourself, most likely, without an ecclesiology, or with [**67**] having to construct one from scratch far too late in the narrative. There are of course all kinds of clues in the New Testament to indicate that something is badly wrong here, and the story of exegesis, not least in the Protestant and Evangelical worlds, has sadly included several quite clever moves for rendering these clues (e.g. Romans 9—11) irrelevant. The story of Israel is assumed to be at best exemplary and at worst irrelevant except for odd flashes of prophetic inspiration, rather than having anything to do with the meaning of the story of Jesus himself. And with this all pretence of actually paying attention to scripture itself has vanished.

The question presses, of course, as to how paying attention to the story of Israel enables us to understand what the NT writers are saying about the cross, not to mention yet how we might, having understood, work towards a more biblical formulation; not to mention, either, how all this integrates, as it must if it is to be true to Jesus and the NT authors, with the eucharist and the life of the community that is formed around it. But the same point could and perhaps should be made in relation to other doctrines, not only the atonement. Christology, for instance, has in my view suffered in the

Western tradition because of people simply ticking the box saying 'Jesus is divine' without really stopping to think which god they are talking about, what it means within the biblical narrative to say such a thing, and how this integrates properly, not merely accidentally as it were, with the other box that people will usually tick, the one that says 'Jesus is human'. The signs that all is not well include, on the one hand, a kind of 'superman' theology, where Jesus is 'the man from outside', coming to 'zap' everything that's wrong with miraculous, 'supernatural' power, all conceived within a strictly dualistic view which ends, not surprisingly, in his followers being miraculously 'raptured' up to join him in 'heaven'; and, on the other hand, an official acknowledgment that Jesus was human which nevertheless leads to no engagement whatever with the question of what it meant to be *Jesus of Nazareth*, to live and think as a first-century Jew longing for God's kingdom, to be possessed of a deep and radical vocation and to construe that in terms and stories available to a first-century Jew, and so on. The enormous resistance, in fact, to this latter project tells its own story, which cannot be reduced in my view simply to reaction against, say, the Jesus Seminar and some of their sillier forebears.

That mention of the 'rapture' points to a further example of how not to join up the dots. For many Christians, asking 'do you believe in the second coming' means, quite simply, 'do you believe in the dispensationalist Rapture doctrine', and indeed there are some who would love to believe in the genuine NT doctrine of the second coming who feel obliged not to tick the box because they cannot and will not swallow the Rapture. Rapture theology is what you get, in other words, when you take the doctrine ('he will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and of his kingdom there will be no end') and put it, first, within [**68**] a heaven-and-earth dualism in which the only point of human existence on earth is to work out how to leave it with a ticket to the right destination, and, second, within a very localized nineteenth-century reading of one particular set of texts, especially 1 Thessalonians 4.17, which flesh out, within that larger (wrong) story, what the 'second coming' might look like. Again, there is enormous resistance to any attempt, within these supposedly 'biblical' circles, to tell the genuinely biblical story about heaven and earth, and new heavens and new earth, and about the good creator God who has promised to unite them into one in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1.10, which itself stands at the heart of a prayer-story which is a Christ-and-Spirit-shaped version of a Jewish creation-and-exodus celebration).

Many other examples could be given but I trust the point is taken. This leads me to a final preliminary remark.

6 What Does 'Listening to Scripture' Actually Mean?

Part of the long-term debilitating result of a moribund and over-footnoted exegetical tradition – somewhat, we may suppose, like the endless annotations-on-annotations of the late mediaeval period – is the apparent failure, in many parts of today's church, actually to engage with scripture or to listen to it

with any seriousness. Here, of course, the normal *locus* might be thought to be the sermon; but, in many Western churches, the exegesis offered from the pulpit is bare and uninspiring, and often either rather obvious or just plain eccentric. No doubt there are noble exceptions in every direction, but I have an uncomfortable suspicion that most Western Christians, at least in mainline denominations, will know what I am talking about. And if that pushes the emphasis elsewhere, where is that 'elsewhere'? In small bible study groups? Fine, but do they produce fresh, vibrant readings of scripture which then can be passed up the food chain to the larger community? In other groups of clergy and other ministers? Fine, but is this an exercise in mutually assisted devotion, or a real grappling with key passages and issues with a view to doing something about it? In Synods? We draw a discreet veil over the mere suggestion. In Doctrine Commissions and other similar groups? Well, perhaps; but I have to say, as one who has been a member of several such bodies, that the best one can normally hope for is flashes of insight mixed with much heavily negotiated compromise statements that end up reflecting not only last century's exegesis, but *the wrong bits* of last century's exegesis.

Yet most churches include in their formularies and/or statements of intent, and regularly refer back to in Synod debates and the like, something about 'listening to scripture' or even 'listening to scripture together'. Yes, sometimes noble efforts are made, such as for instance at successive Lambeth Conferences, where serious Bible Study has, thank God, been [**69**] a major, important and cross-cultural feature. But my concern, granted that that is an exception, is twofold. First, ought we not to be thinking hard about what *could* and perhaps should be done in this area, aside from what we are currently doing (and not doing very well)? Second, is it not at this point that there is a real danger of those who want to get the church refocussed and renenergized trying to do so by as it were going behind the back of scripture (lest we get bogged down in that moribund exegetical tradition again!) and leaping straight for something called 'doctrine' instead?

That may be a false fear, but it should perhaps be named just in case. I shan't attempt to answer it, but, in answer to the former question, it is worth drawing attention, within the more catholic end of the church, to two phenomena. First, there is the 'Ignatian method' of reading scripture, normally individually and normally for personal devotional engagement and enrichment, but sometimes perhaps in groups and with more wide-ranging results. I am not aware that people tend to emerge from an Ignatian meditation eager to go and put some fine-tuning into one or other of the church's doctrines, but perhaps they should. Second, there is the liturgical reading of scripture, and particularly of the gospel as the climax and focus of scripture, *seen as one mode of the personal presence of Jesus with the worshipping congregation*, symbolized by the signing with the cross at the Gospel during the eucharist and at the 'gospel canticle' in Morning and Evening Prayer. I suspect that this phenomenon remains inarticulate for most worshippers even in the traditions where it is the norm, but it is likewise worth drawing out and reflecting upon.

Moreover, since I am suggesting that the eucharist is in fact the primary and indeed Dominical grid for understanding Jesus' death – and recognizing

that the word 'understanding' is actually changing in meaning as I say that, so that it is forced to encompass physical and social actions and realities as well as mental states and abstract ideas – it is perhaps germane to my more focussed question to contemplate the eucharistic reading of scripture in terms of that reading being *one part of the necessary and formative action within which the eucharist means what it means* and thus enables God's people to 'understand', in this deeper sense of being grasped by the reality at every level, who Jesus the Messiah was and is and what his death really did accomplish.

[beginning of previously unpublished section]

All this brings us back to the atonement in particular, on which I offer now some further preliminary reflections.

Atonement: Narrative, Doctrine, Life

1 Introduction

It seems to me axiomatic that 'atonement', at least, is a 'doctrine' which by its very nature is self-involving. Actually, I think all Christian doctrine is in the last analysis self-involving, because if you can say 'I believe in the second coming' but live as someone without hope you obviously haven't understood what you were saying, and if you say 'I believe in Jesus . . . our Lord' while giving primary allegiance to some other Lord then there is a similar gap. But the atonement still seems to me special: to be a doctrine which not only happens to be self-involving, as all doctrines perhaps are, but which by its very nature is *about* self-involvement with the love, healing and forgiveness of God, and which therefore, though it might I suppose be stated truly by a well-taught parrot or even a theologically literate computer, can hardly be stated *authentically* without being oneself thus involved.

It seems to me, further, that everything we know about atonement in the Bible cries out to be seen in terms of narrative. The word implies, at its narrowest, a *story* in which two parties have become estranged and then find reconciliation, however that is further elaborated. And in the Bible, of course, there are a thousand small narratives in which that happens in a thousand different ways, but also one larger, sustained narrative, to which the gospels at least think they are providing the climax, telling the story of Jesus-going-to-the-cross precisely as the story of how God's long-running soap opera with Israel was coming to its divinely ordained destination, and remembering all the while, which today's readers find so hard to do, that the soap opera with Israel was itself the means of God's dealing with the larger problems of all people and indeed the whole created order. Once those narrative connections are hard-wired into our reading of the Gospels, not only do those documents spring to life in quite a new way, but we see, too, how futile it is to imagine that there could ever be a single formula which caught the meaning of the whole – other than, perhaps, the catch-all 'Christ died (i.e. the Messiah, Israel's

representative, died) for our sins (i.e. for the entire plight of the human race in general and of Israel in particular) according to the scriptures (i.e. as the completion of this massive and multiply meaninged narrative)'. And the only way we can properly focus the microscope more tightly on the words 'died for', and try to understand what precisely that means, as theories of atonement have typically tried to do, is not to put them within some alternative narrative. That, at best, short-circuits the process, giving us a bright flare of apparent new understanding followed by a dull bang, and then darkness, as the proposal, unable to cope with the theological electricity it was trying to carry, explodes, quite possibly tripping other doctrinal fuses around the house at the same time. The only way we can properly focus on 'died for', and indeed 'died for *our*' (one of the problems is always how to understand the connection between the Messiah and ourselves, the connection which in turn makes sense of the 'for'), is to look in more detail at the relation between the Messiah and Israel, and the relation between Israel and the rest of the world. For that, of course, we need the Old Testament, seen as *this* kind of narrative, and as this kind of narrative *reaching its climax in Jesus*.

My point here is that all this story-telling, this necessary and ever-deepening exploration of 'died for us', is, and is meant to be, self-involving, not just at the level of mental attention, emotional engagement ('the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me'), internal resolve to be more grateful, to live more clearly as one 'bought with a price' and so on. The exploration is, and is meant to be, self-involving *at the level of eating and drinking*. It is to become, quite literally, food and drink. The eucharist is therefore a reminder of that element which much Western Protestant thought has screened out for so long that it hardly knows it's there any more: the renewal of all creation, beginning with the life of actual Christian communities and individuals. Christian ethics is the bringing into newness of parts of God's created order, which is why it can't be reduced to bare rules without remainder, useful though the rules are, like doctrines, precisely as *portable stories* about what it means to be a renewed human within the world which is claimed by God through Jesus the Messiah. Christian mission in the world is the bringing of God's kingly rule to bear on communities and individuals whether or not they presently believe in Jesus, seeking that transformation which shares in the mystery of new creation launched at Easter and thus anticipates the final restoration and renewal of all things (Acts 3.21), the coming together of new heavens and new earth, and so on. And the eucharist, not as an extra visual aid of something else, but as itself a primary meaning-bearing activity, makes all this real for *this* community and *these* individuals, here and now. 'This is my body, given *for you*'; the 'for' in the eucharistic words is one of the main hermeneutic keys to 'Christ died *for* our sins'. It is, after all, to repeat, the key which Jesus himself gave his followers.

Does all this mean that atonement is a 'special case' among doctrines? No other doctrine translates so obviously into a physical action. Or do they? That's one question worth addressing, I think. Perhaps all doctrines are 'special cases', which we are in danger of forcing onto a Procrustean bed simply by calling them 'doctrines' as though they were all the same *kind* of thing. Thus,

for instance, is the resurrection of Jesus a *doctrine* in the same sense that Trinity, or within that the double (or as it may be single) procession of the Spirit, is a 'doctrine'? I think not; and I think that by treating everything doctrinal in the same way we are perhaps in danger of flattening things out, of making it harder to unpack the suitcase at the other end of the journey, or at least that if and when we try we may discover that the pot of marmalade we were carrying has broken and oozed out on to the best suit.

2 The Cross in Paul

(a) Where shall 'atonement' be found?

A textbook answer to the question, where we might locate Paul's doctrine of the atonement (not to mention, what we should do with it once we've found it, how we might 'pack it up' into something dogmatically useful and be sure to 'unpack' it again, put it back into its scriptural context at the end of the day), would go of course to Romans, Galatians, Philippians and 1 and 2 Corinthians, and, if you were feeling historically generous, Ephesians and Colossians as well. And at once you would encounter a puzzle. Nowhere does Paul write a sustained treatment of 'the atonement' in the same way that he writes a sustained treatment of, say, speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12 or the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. He mentions the cross (of course) repeatedly, but almost never repeats himself, so that there is no sense (as with some of his regular topics) of a 'gramophone record' that always comes on at this point. Indeed, there is a problem of description here, namely that for Paul the cross of Jesus the Messiah is woven tightly into more or less everything that he thinks about, so that we may need to make a distinction between (a) what Paul says about *the crucifixion of Jesus* and (b) what he says *on the topic that later church writings have loosely called 'atonement'*. Otherwise, we would have to say that all his mentions of the cross are in some sense 'about' the atonement, which seems absurd, especially when we consider 2 Corinthians, where the cross is woven in most obviously throughout, but where he says almost nothing at all about what is normally called 'atonement' except for 5.21 ('for our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become God's righteousness'), and 8.9, with a similar 'wondrous exchange' ('you know the grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich'). But we note, precisely and paradoxically perhaps, that these two statements of what appear to be 'nuggets' of atonement-type reflection are speaking of his apostolic new-covenant ministry of reconciliation on the one hand and the Collection on the other. In neither case does the statement form part of an extended discussion of the topic we know as 'atonement'.

Does this matter? Is this, perhaps, simply a way of saying that there are many important topics which Paul undoubtedly spoke about but which only crop up tangentially in his letters? After all, Acts is undoubtedly to be believed when it says that Paul's primary preaching to gentiles included a typically Jewish critique of pagan idolatry, but in the letters themselves

the only place we find this with any direct clarity is 1 Thessalonians 1.8–10 and Romans 1.18–32. And, notoriously, if we didn't have 1 Corinthians we wouldn't have any evidence that Paul even knew about the eucharist, whereas with that letter we know that the absence of mention elsewhere is due, not to the fact that it is marginal and irrelevant, but to the fact that it is central and can be taken for granted. So, although a high doctrine of scripture itself – another doctrine which is I suspect sui generis, because of its apparently circular reference to its own ground – might suggest that the balance of scripture gives us at least some indication of what the church should think of and live off, if I can put it like that, we are not straining any particular point when we say that Paul could well have written an entire letter on what we think of as 'atonement'. The fact that he didn't is interesting but perhaps not that important.

But it ought to give us pause before we take the plunge and scoop up all his references to the cross, or even all his more subtle reworkings of it, such as we find in the bloodstream of 2 Corinthians and arguably also in Romans 9—11. In particular, there is something suspicious – precisely from the standpoint of a high doctrine of scripture – in the sketching of a grand narrative about creation, fall and redemption which is manifestly not the same as any of the grand narratives that Paul seems to be employing. We cannot simply read the question to which our doctrines of atonement are the answer into the framework of Romans, in the hope that we will then find, say, 3.24–26 to be a statement of such a doctrine. Indeed, Romans might be thought to be a peculiarly tricky case, since it doesn't take too much watering down and ignoring of larger frameworks to get to something like the traditional statement of problem and solution. But if we are to take this argument further we must now plunge into some exegesis, starting with the great epistle itself.

(b) Romans: reading and misreading the cross

Romans is about the *dikaiosynē theou*, which as I have argued elsewhere doesn't simply mean 'the righteousness of God' in the various senses bandied about in post-reformation theology, but the *covenant faithfulness* of God, as in a good many second-Temple contexts and, behind that and informing it, in Isaiah and the Psalms. The 'problem' which the main argument addresses is not simply, then, the problem of the sin of humankind, but far more specifically *the failure of Israel to be the solution to this problem*, as, in the covenant plan of the creator God, Israel should have been. It is very noticeable that mainstream readings of Romans traditionally marginalize 2.17–29, treating it as simply a sharpening of the general point of 1.18—3.20 which is itself seen as a general indictment of the whole human race, and that similarly they have no idea what to do with 3.1–9, for the same reason. Thus the main point of 3.21—4.25, which is that God has fulfilled the promises he made to Abraham precisely through the sending of Jesus and his death and resurrection, with the result that God's promised blessing now reaches, as God always said it would, to gentiles as well as Jews and on the same basis, i.e. grace and faith alone.

Because neither the mediaeval nor the reformation tradition were particularly interested in this, the central subject-matter of Romans 1—4 and especially Romans 3—4, but were intent on answering subtly different questions about atonement and justification and were eager that Paul should address and answer them too, the key statements about the cross itself, and much besides, have been pulled out of shape. It is noticeable that throughout Romans 1—4 the *only* mentions of the cross are 3.24–26 and 4.25, the latter being obviously a traditional summary placed here deliberately to show where the underlying groundwork of the preceding argument is to be found, but not arguing that point itself. Paul is taking for granted the traditional statement that 'he died for our sins', here in the form of 'was handed over for our trespasses', which may be a way of saying the same thing but alluding more directly to Isaiah 53 as one does so, in order to show that the forgiveness of sins does indeed underlie his argument about God's covenant faithfulness to the Abrahamic promises. Without providing a way by which sins can be forgiven, in other words, God could only be faithful to the promise to give Abraham a worldwide family by tacitly ignoring what had gone before; but this would itself be incompatible with the point of the covenant in the first place, which was that through it God would put the world to rights, not confirm it in its wrongs.

That gives us something of a clue towards the admittedly dense 3.24–26. The problem Paul thinks he is addressing, I repeat, is the failure of Israel to be the light to the gentiles, landing up *not only* with the problem that all humans happen to be sinful *but also* with the double bind that God's rescue operation, demanding an Israel that would be faithful to his saving purpose, has apparently collapsed precisely because of the annoying fact of universal sin. This already leads us to a strong argument for saying that *pistis Iēsou Christou* in verse 22 almost certainly denotes the faithfulness of Jesus as Messiah, the Israelite who at last *is* faithful to God's plan, the one who can do and be for Israel and therefore for the world what Israel had failed to be for the world and what Israel needed for herself as well. The point Paul is making is the free justification that is available to all (verse 24a), and the exposition of the meaning of the crucifixion in verses 24b–26 is an explanation of *that* point – not *in the first instance*, therefore, an exposition of 'atonement' in traditional terms, but an exposition of *how God is in fact being faithful to his covenant when he justifies Jew and gentile alike*. The general statement of 3.24b introduces the point: what God has accomplished in the Messiah is the *apolytrōsis*, the 'redemption', that is, the true Exodus, the Passover in which the slaves are set free (see chapter 6). Verses 25–26 then explain as it were how this redemption works, specifically how it supplies God's own solution, 'put forward' as the climactic and decisive display of his covenant faithfulness, providing the *hilastērion*, through Jesus' faithfulness on the one hand and by means of his blood, that is, his sacrificial death, on the other. We note that Paul does not explain what sacrifice is, or what sort of a sacrifice Jesus' death supplies; he merely alludes to it as a given and continues with the argument he is making, which is about the decisive display of the *dikaiosynē theou*. God has indeed 'passed over' the former sins, perhaps

an allusion to the point Paul makes, interestingly, in Acts 14 and 17 (God not taking account of the earlier times when the gentiles lived in ignorance, contrasted with the 'but now' of the command to repent because of the revelation of Jesus). When he repeats the point about the display of God's covenant faithfulness in verse 26 it is presumably in order to stress the added *en tō nun kairō*, 'in the present time', echoing verse 21 and perhaps the *ta nun* in Acts 17.30. The point, in any case, is not to explain 'atonement' in general, not even to explain how 'the wrath of God' (hanging over all human heads since 1.18) has been dealt with, but to explain more specifically how it is that 'in the present time' God is now welcoming gentiles and Jews alike as sin-forgiven members of his covenant family. That this is the true sequence of thought is strongly confirmed not only by 3.27–31 (which is not to be read as a miscellaneous statement about the overcoming of human boasting with an attached note about Jews and gentiles but as a strong reinforcement of the point already outlined), but also by the whole sweep of chapter 4, which is essentially part of the same argument.

Some proponents of traditional doctrines of atonement might say, So what? So what if Paul has a more nuanced aim, namely to explain about equal gentile membership in God's people? Granted that what needs to happen for this to be the case is the forgiveness of sins, and granted that 3.24–26 give some explanation at least of how this happens, does it matter that the traditional doctrine has ignored Paul's specific context and gone for the heart of the thing? Well, yes, it does, for two reasons which are general points worth considering in a book like this. First, if you read a passage of scripture as offering a statement of a doctrine in which you are interested, a portable story you are eager to tell, when in fact the narrative logic of the passage is actually about something else, you run the strong risk of forcing what the passage actually says onto the Procrustean bed of your own assumptions, and end up 'deducing' a doctrinal statement which will only breed confusion. Second, by doing this you ignore of course something else which *is* in the scriptural context but for which your eagerness for doctrine, and for a particular type and formulation of doctrine, has no place: in this case, the question of Jews and gentiles in Christ, in which Paul is exceedingly interested, especially in Romans, but for which both the mediaeval tradition and its reformation and post-reformation inheritors had little time or interest. And when a tradition necessarily screens out a good bit of what a key text in scripture – the text indeed to which that tradition tends to appeal above all! – actually concentrates on, then, again however paradoxically, a strong doctrine of scripture itself must protest, on behalf of the church's fidelity to scripture above tradition, against its own tradition insofar as it has pulled scripture out of shape.

Time would fail to go right through the rest of Romans and inspect all the relevant texts, but we may note two sets of passages in particular about which specific things germane to our subject need to be said. First, there is the theme which is stated in 5.6–10 and then recapitulated in 8.32–39: the death of Jesus demonstrates the sovereign love of the Father, because of which we can be assured that 'those he justified, them he also glorified' (8.30). In

other words, the death of Jesus demonstrates the underlying love and grace of God ('while we were yet sinners', 5.8; 'he who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all', 8.32, echoing the 'given up' of 4.25); therefore from that same love we can also deduce our final rescue from wrath and death, in other words, our sharing in the world of the resurrection. Here again, obviously, Paul refers back to a basic statement of what might be called 'atonement' or 'reconciliation', and does so indeed more fully than in 3.24–26 (ironically in terms of how the tradition has read the letter). In stating, and repeating, the presuppositions of his actual argument, he gives us far more detail: 5.6, while we were weak, at the right time the Messiah died for the ungodly; 5.8, while we were sinners, the Messiah died for us; 5.9, we have been justified by his blood (we note here that salvation from wrath is something *future*, an interesting point in view of some of the dogmatic formulations around 3.25f.); 5.10, we were enemies but were reconciled to God through the death of his son. And we note how all this is then summarized in 5.12–21 in terms of a single 'act of righteousness' (5.18) of the Messiah, and in terms of his 'obedience' (5.19), reflecting of course the central point of Philippians 2.5–11 ('obedient unto death, even death on a cross').

This again compels some reflections on the scripture/doctrine fault line. I suspect that what we are seeing throughout Romans, seen from this point of view, is the Pauline theme of which the reformed emphasis on the 'active obedience of Christ', which constitutes a repository of 'righteousness' which can then be 'imputed' to the believer, turns out to be something of a parody. Perhaps this, indeed, is why the emphasis on the covenant faithfulness of God, resulting in the Jew-plus-gentile single family, is so fiercely resisted from within the Reformation (and especially the Reformed) tradition. There is an implicit recognition, perhaps, that this theme will actually trump the 'active obedience' theme, not least because it draws so deeply both on what Paul actually says and on the biblical roots from which he is arguing; and that it will lead to a higher and clearer ecclesiology than the Reformation tradition, particularly in its modern forms, has wanted. In other words, if you take the route I am advocating through Romans, you don't lose the reality of which the 'active obedience' dogma was an attempted expression, but you get it back within a larger framework which then in turn challenges some of the other dogmas which have grown up around 'imputation' and all that.

We could go on, of course, and note the role that the death of Jesus plays within Romans 6, where it is very much a matter of inclusion and incorporation: the Messiah dies, therefore we die with him in baptism, therefore all that is true of him in his death is now true of us; and 7.4, 'you died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead' – which stands as part of the advance summary of what Paul wants to argue throughout 7.1—8.11 and on into 8.12–17. But I want to focus, rather, on 8.3 and its specific role within Paul's specific argument. It is clear that he is speaking here of God passing judicial sentence on sin itself, on *hamartia*, not just individual sins but the dark power which drives them all, and which in Romans 7 is very nearly equivalent to Satan or indeed the snake in Genesis (7.11 with Genesis 2.17). This, I have argued

elsewhere, is perhaps the clearest statement of substitution, indeed penal substitution, in Paul: there is 'no condemnation' for those who are in Christ (8.1), *because* God has passed judicial sentence of condemnation on sin itself (8.3). But how has this happened? What is the larger argument within which this statement plays its vital role? Once again, it is not the normal Reformation dogmatic framework of human sin, the threat of divine wrath and the turning away of that wrath through Jesus' death, though of course it carries many features of that. Rather, it is the Pauline argument about *what has happened in Israel* through the arrival of Torah, which stands behind *nomos* throughout 7.1—8.11. The divinely ordained function of Torah, Paul argues in chapter 7, was precisely to draw the sin of the whole world, the power of *hamartia* itself, on to one place where it might do its worst; this is the force of the *hina* in Romans 5.20 (the Torah came in, *in order that* sin might abound in that place), picked up in the double *hina* of 7.13. God's purpose, it appears – a point never glimpsed, I think, in the dogmas, but central to Paul – was (1) to call Israel to be his people in order to address the problem of Adam and so of the whole cosmos; (2) to make Israel the place where sin would do its worst, would raise itself to its full height; (3) to give Israel the Torah so that, despite and indeed through Israel's perfectly proper longing to fulfil that Torah, rightly seeing it to be life-giving, sin would in fact grow to its full height through that strange 'gift', since Israel, being also in Adam, would break even the good Torah, turning mere *hamartia* into *paraptōma*, 'transgression'; and then, astonishingly but climactically and decisively, (4) to send his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh *and as a sin offering*, and so to pass sentence once and for all on 'sin' at the very point where it had gathered itself together, and thus (5) to bring into effect the larger purposes, not merely 'forgiveness of sins' but the 'righteous decree' (*dikaiōma*) of Torah, its full intention to give life. The cross stands right at the centre of a large story, indeed *the* large story that Paul is telling throughout Romans 5—8, but this large story is more complicated, and we may suppose ultimately more interesting, and certainly more biblical(!), than the story which traditional doctrine has told, into which it has inserted the cross as, of course, its own necessary turning-point, but through which it has systematically belittled a good deal of what Paul, in the very passages the tradition usually appeals to, was actually talking about.

Once again I can hear the tradition, through the mouths both of dogmaticians and preachers, protesting. Surely, they will say, the question of what God was up to through the long and tortuous history of Israel, the fine-tuned way in which Torah went to work in pre-Christian Judaism – all that is irrelevant and boring to the sinner who today needs to know that he or she *is* a sinner and that they can be saved by grace through faith? In a sense yes, but in a sense no. There is no hint that Paul would say any of what he says in Romans 7—8 in his primary preaching to either Jews or gentiles – though some of it, I suspect, would certainly have come out in synagogue discussions, and might well indeed have contributed to the bad and undeserved reputation he had for being a law-rejecter. Obviously, when I preach in a parish church, at a confirmation or the licensing of a new ministry, I do not normally say

very much about the Israel-dimension of the Pauline gospel. And if I am counselling someone on their deathbed I do not normally expect to discuss the question of why God gave Israel the Torah – though I might actually talk about Abraham and the fact that God's faithfulness to Abraham is near the bedrock of how we know he will be faithful to us even through death itself. But again I insist, precisely because of the doctrine of the primacy and authority of scripture itself, that these things are vital and non-negotiable and that we simply do not have the right to abstract key statements from an argument in which they play a central, vital and finely tuned role and use them within a different line of thought. We will distort them and, equally important, we will ignore something scripture is eager to tell us but which we seem, for whatever reason, eager to avoid. And if I say that I suspect that part of what we are seeing is the deep-level roots of the ecclesiological deficit in much Protestantism, especially since the Enlightenment, coupled with the implicit Marcionism or downright anti-Judaism of much of the same tradition, I hope I will not be accused, as I sometimes am, of smuggling a crypto-catholic agenda into exegesis.

It would be fascinating to go on and explore the way this works out, necessarily, within the full argument of Romans 9—11. Though the cross is not itself mentioned, I have a sense that it hovers over the entire argument, as Paul explores what it means that Israel is at one and the same time the people of the Messiah and the people of the Messiah *according to the flesh*. As I have suggested elsewhere, Romans 9—11 works out in a long historical narrative what was said more densely in 7.1—8.11, with 9.6–29 being as it were the development of 7.7–25. But again, without going into this in any detail, the point may be clear: the cross is far, far wider in its meaning, for Paul, than any particular account, in general, of how human beings are reconciled with their creator. That question remains *our* summary, our statement of what our Western tradition has been particularly interested in, and there is no reason why we should not go on talking about it; but we should pay much, much more attention as we do to the fact that in the central letter where the reformation tradition has seen its 'theology of the cross' most fully worked out Paul is in fact concerned with much larger themes which we ignore at our peril.

(c) Galatians: the cross, the promise and the people of God

The other letter which stands at the centre of Reformation dogmatics is Galatians. But here again, without taking too much time, we find the central statements of the cross both more specifically focussed than the doctrinal tradition has allowed and also more wide ranging. Take the wide-ranging ones first. 'God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, *through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world.*' Granted that that is a wonderful rhetorical statement, going beyond the main detailed argument of the letter, it indicates that when Paul thought of 'the cross' he didn't simply think of 'Jesus dying in my place, bearing my punishment', however much he *did* think that at various points *within* the larger picture. The cross was for Paul, in various senses, an apocalyptic event,

transforming the entire cosmos and making it impossible for anyone who stood at the foot of it to go on living within the old one any more. Again, as with Romans 8, there is always a danger within the Reformation tradition not just of belittling the cosmic scope of Paul's gospel but of simply failing to notice it at all – and, just as the ignoring of the Israel-dimension of the gospel has led, in the long term, to a thinned-out ecclesiology and to forms of Marcionism, so the ignoring of the cosmic dimension has of course colluded with the negative attitude of Western modernity towards the whole created order. At this point the church desperately needs not new or refined dogma, but a fresh listening to what scripture is actually talking about.

Coming to the fine tuning of Paul's argument, I have explained elsewhere that Galatians 3.11–14 demands to be seen as far more than a detached statement of atonement theology in which a generalized curse hangs over the human race and is borne by Jesus Christ so that we can all be free of it. It must be understood, rather, as a sharp-edged statement within the overall exposition of the Abrahamic promise which proclaims itself as the main argument of the chapter (3.6, 29), of *how that promise has reached the gentiles despite the fact that Israel was disobedient* – a very similar point, in fact, to the underlying argument of Romans 2, 3 and 4. The 'curse' hung specifically over *Israel* because of its Torah-disobedience; the Messiah has taken that curse on himself; and the result is not 'so that we might be free from the guilt and penalty of sin', but 'so that the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles', and, in case we thought that now only the gentiles would inherit that blessing while Israel itself remained outside, 'and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'. In other words, Christ's curse-bearing death has removed the road block which was preventing the Abrahamic promises reaching to the gentiles. That promise can now proceed unchecked for the benefit of all who believe, gentile and Jew alike.

It is at this point in (my) argument that we realize the importance of the theme which, working back in Galatians, underlies chapter 2, and points on to the theme of the 'stumbling block to Jews' in 1 Corinthians. Cognate with his point in Romans 6.1–11 and 7.1–6, Paul argues in Galatians 2.15–21 that *a crucified Messiah means a crucified Israel*: 'I through the Torah died to Torah that I might live to God'. The point of the paragraph, reporting the confrontation between Peter and Paul in Antioch, is that withdrawing from table-fellowship with gentile Christians is not just a minor infringement of a reworked taboo, but represents a failure to understand the cosmic shift that has happened with the death (and resurrection, but Galatians doesn't stress that) of Jesus. Paul uses the 'I', here as in Romans 7, as 'I, the archetypal Jew', a place he claims of course in Galatians 1 and Philippians 3. Torah erected a fence around ethnic Israel; but in being co-crucified with the Messiah 'I' died to that entire universe, and came alive with the Messiah into a new world, God's new world, in which all who are in Christ belong at the same table. It is in that context *and, I suggest*, *only in that context* that we should hear the spectacular statement of 2.19f.: the Messiah *loved me and gave himself for me*. The love not just of God but of the Messiah, as indeed in the summary in Romans 8.38f., is of course at the heart of it all, for Paul, but

his point here is not 'therefore I am so grateful for his dying in my place', though that is of course true as well, but, 'therefore I will not allow anything to prevent me from following him through his death for me into the new life which he has opened up, in which I find myself gladly sharing fellowship with all his people'. To think otherwise is 'to nullify the grace of God' (2.21).

Once again, as in Romans, it turns out that what the tradition has regularly looked for in Paul's statements about the cross, namely the central point in a narrative about sin and our rescue from it, about the punishment due to our sin and/or the estrangement from God we suffer because of our sin, and how God provides either substitution or reconciliation or both, is not what Paul is primarily arguing about. Nor, actually, is he addressing in Galatians the question which the traditional doctrinal formulations of 'justification by faith' have been interested in, though that is another question too far afield for today. It is undoubtedly true that if we were to ask Paul, 'Granted that all humans are sinful, how can they be reconciled to God and the effects of their sin (on them and on God!) fully and satisfactorily dealt with?', he would of course speak deeply and movingly about the death of Jesus as Messiah, representing Israel and therefore the world and therefore able to be the appropriate substitute for all. (Representation and substitution are not mutually exclusive alternatives, we note, but rather mutually supporting realities, as in 2 Corinthians 5.11–21.) But anyone who holds a high doctrine of scripture must allow that this question, and this answer in these terms, is not something which Paul himself, to whom all 'doctrines of atonement' naturally look back, articulated in the way the tradition has supposed.

Scripture, Exegesis, Dogma and Church: Some Pauline Proposals

Leaving aside the other letters which could receive similar treatment, I turn to some concluding reflections.

[end of previously unpublished section]

I know only too well, from both sides of the table as it were, the frustration for the preacher or dogmatician to be told by the exegete that 'the text doesn't actually say that'. I hope the dogmatician also recognizes the frustration that the exegete feels when, precisely in his or her effort to be obedient [**70**] to one of the primary Reformation dogmas, about scripture itself, one is told, in effect, 'don't give us that exegetical mish-mash; we want results, good solid doctrines we can use and preach from'. (Käsemann commented on this point in a typical statement about those who are concerned only with 'results' needing to keep their hands off exegesis, because it was no use for them nor they for it. I understand the point he was making but insist that we must keep on trying.) I return, rather, to the category of *narrative*, which I have been using at least implicitly throughout this exegetical section. Rather than trying to filter out the actual arguments Paul is mounting in order to 'get at' the doctrines which, it is assumed, he is 'expounding', I have

stressed that we must pay attention to those larger arguments, and the great story of God, the world, Israel and Jesus – giving especial attention to the Israel-dimension which is regularly screened out in dogma but regularly vital for Paul – within which the cross means for him what it means for him. And I have concluded, in a preliminary way but I think importantly, that what the tradition has usually called 'the atonement', that 'portable story' within which so much implicit exegesis and dogma has been baggaged up, sometimes uncomfortably, is not a suitcase which Paul employs. It is, perhaps, a sub-suitcase, a compartment within his larger luggage – rather, perhaps, as Schweitzer saw justification as a *Nebenkrater* within the 'main crater' of 'being in Christ', though of course I disagree importantly if obliquely with his particular point. But it is not the main thing Paul is talking about.

Where does that leave us in terms of the questions we posed earlier on? To begin with, it means that we must constantly struggle to hear Paul within the world of his implicit, and often explicit, narratives, especially the great story which starts with Abraham (itself understood as the new moment within the story which starts with Adam, and indeed with creation itself), and which continues through Moses to David and ultimately to the Messiah. Protecting Paul from that story – the phrase is not too strong – has been a major preoccupation both of some academic exegetes who have wanted to locate him solely within a Hellenistic world and of some dogmaticians and preachers who have wanted to make sure he is relevant to, and addresses clearly, the pastoral and evangelistic issues of which they are aware. But it is precisely at this point, as I have stressed, that the doctrine of scripture's own authority presses upon us. By what right do we take scripture and find ways of making it talk about the things we want it to talk about?

I suggest, in fact, that the key point is to develop more particularly our reflections on the way in which scripture is used, heard and lived with within the actual life of the actual church. The belittling of scripture into a short and puzzling noise which intrudes upon our liturgy here and there is dangerous and destructive, especially of course in churches where there isn't even much strong dogma to take its place. And the use of scripture as the peg to preach [**71**] sermons which the tradition, even the Evangelical or Protestant tradition, has decreed we ought to preach is always in danger of self-delusion. In short, we have to discern and attempt ways of letting scripture be heard not only when it says something we understand but want to disagree with (that's where 'the authority of scripture' normally bites) but when it says something we don't understand because we have carefully screened out, or never even imagined, the narrative world within which it makes sense.

One of the main ways this needs to be done is of course by sustained teaching by preachers and teachers who are themselves soaked in scripture. Fair enough. But I do think our churches and para-church organizations could and should do more to help people understand the great narrative of scripture, by sustained readings, public and private, by drawing attention to the great narrative themes and encouraging people to explore them, by discouraging the non-narratival or deconstructive songs which have swept in through today's cheerful and unthinking postmodernity, and by encouraging

and creating new words and music to get the great themes into people's heads and hearts. All that remains a great challenge at the level of pastoral and ecclesial practice. But I think, as well, that at the academic level we need to see far more open exchange between serious historical exegesis – not done in a corner or by bracketing out questions of meaning, doctrine and life, but engaging with the realities of which the text speaks – and a dogmatic theology which itself remains open to being told that it has misread some of its own key texts; a dogmatic theology, in other words, which itself does not hide in a corner or bracket out questions of history, text and original sense. We are once again at the fault-line bequeathed to us by our Western culture, not only in modernity but going back at least as far as the mediaeval period; and if we are ever to have any hope of straddling that crack without falling down into it, the doctrine called 'authority of scripture' (which declares that scripture is the way through which God the Holy Trinity activates, through the Spirit, the authority which the Father has delegated to the Son) insists that it is by paying attention to scripture itself that we shall find not only the bridges over the chasm but the means to make the earth move once more and bring back together what should never have been separated in the first place. If reflecting briefly on Paul's doctrine of reconciliation helps us to glimpse a pathway towards the reconciliation of two camps within the church which have been circling one another suspiciously for far too long, and perhaps two personality types which have projected themselves a little too enthusiastically into that polarization, I think Paul himself would heave a sigh of relief and suggest that now, reunited, it might be time to get on with the task of coherent living and preaching the gospel.

Chapter Twenty-Three

'CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY' (COLOSSIANS 1.27): ESCHATOLOGY IN ST PAUL (2008)

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The autumn of 2008 was a busy time for me. It was not long after the Lambeth Conference, and many of us were still digesting that event and pondering how the Anglican Communion might go forward. But I was then sent to Rome for three weeks in October as the Anglican 'ecumenical observer' to the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops, a conference whose single theme ('the word of God'), and whose structure and style (three weeks of mostly plenary sessions in which each member was allowed precisely one short speech, with some small groups to lighten the load) contrasted sharply with Lambeth. But in the middle of that conference (as well as an extraordinary two-day trip to San Francisco, though that is another story) I was spirited away again, this time to Istanbul, to take part in the Pauline Symposium organized by His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch. It was a wonderful occasion, with the relaxed informality of approach, timetabling and other things providing yet another revealing contrast with both Lambeth and Rome.

As sometimes happens, when I was given my topic I thought I knew what I might say about it, but as soon as I began to work on the lecture I realized there was something new waiting to be uncovered which not only made Pauline sense but also threw a bridge across the ecumenical divide. The Eastern Orthodox churches are characterized, if I have understood them aright, by a holistic, cosmic eschatology which corresponds well, in my judgment, to what we find in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15, though that element has often been screened out in Western exegesis whether Catholic or Protestant. Once we factor that element back in, we find it joining up with various other strands of thought, and I think Colossians 1.27 expresses one such. Working on this lecture helped me greatly when I came to work on *Paul and the Faithfulness of* God, chapter 11; the differences between that chapter and its precursor in *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, chapter 7 are partly explained by the fact that this work stands in between them.

* * *

[19] Introduction

It was a great honour as well as a privilege for me to be invited to lecture to the august gathering in October 2008, and my wife and I are very grateful for the generous hospitality of the Ecumenical Patriarch and his colleagues.

I was particularly excited to be asked to speak about the eschatology of St Paul, a subject that has occupied me, one way and another, for most of my adult life.[1] The invitation specified a particular reference to the Letter to the Colossians, especially a key verse, 1.27. The whole chapter is in any case relevant to our theme, as we shall see. In some of my previous writing I have tended to concentrate on Romans, especially chapter 8. Since there is another lecture on that subject I may be excused from more than a passing reference to that great passage.

Let me say something about the problematic word 'eschatology'. When I published my book *Jesus and the Victory of God* in 1996,[2] I gave a copy to my parents, as I always do. A few days later my father, who was a businessman not a theologian, telephoned me with a problem.

> 'I keep on looking up "eschatology" in the dictionary,' he said, 'and I keep on forgetting what it means.'
>
> 'Ah yes', I responded; 'but that's because the dictionary will say "death, judgment, heaven and hell".'
>
> [**20**] 'You're right,' he said. 'That's what it does say.'
>
> 'But,' I replied, 'that's not how scholars use it today.'

And I pointed him on to the place in the book (pp. 202–9) where I explain the different senses the word has come to bear in scholarly discussion of the New Testament.

Now it may be that there is still some confusion here today on the same topic. The problem goes to the root of our understanding of Christian hope. Many today, in the Western church at least, have more or less given up the biblical hope of bodily resurrection, of new heavens and new earth, of the renewal of all things and the setting free of creation itself from its slavery to decay. They have embraced instead a view of salvation in which the only hope is to leave behind the world of space, time and matter, and to go off, as a permanently disembodied soul or spirit, into 'heaven'. My sense is that this is a particularly Western phenomenon, heightened by the mediaeval insistence on purgatory as a preparation for 'heaven'. The strong Eastern emphasis on resurrection has, I hope, protected your tradition against this shrinking of the biblical hope.[3]

But what you believe about God's ultimate future for the world relates directly to what you believe about the path by which we too may arrive at that final point, that *eschaton*. Here I want to insist that Paul stood firmly

[1] See, in particular, *Climax of the Covenant*; *What Saint Paul Really Said*; *Romans*; *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*. These all look back to my Oxford D. Phil Dissertation, 'The Messiah and the People of God'.

[2] *Jesus and the Victory of God*.

[3] See particularly my books *For All the Saints?*; and especially *Surprised by Hope*. These are both based on the research done for *Resurrection of the Son of God*.

within the Jewish tradition; and that this Jewish tradition of hope was not the hope for a disembodied heaven, nor the hope for the end of the space–time universe (as has often been wrongly supposed, particularly with Albert Schweitzer and others); and that this Jewish tradition was, on the contrary, the hope that God would act in a new way *within* the space–time continuum, within the world of creation itself, to put all wrongs right and to bring justice, peace and mercy to the whole created order. This fresh, long-awaited act of God would be simultaneously (a) the fulfilment and climax of the steady progression of providentially ordered history and (b) the radically new event of judgment and mercy that Israel knew was necessary if the world – the whole world, not just Israel itself – was to be put right. This is central to Jewish belief: if Israel's God was the creator of the world, he had an obligation to put the world right at last. [**21**] Creation and judgment – judgment in a positive as well as a negative sense – are essential parts of Jewish monotheism.

This essentially Jewish perception – as we shall see, it was not shared by the pagan world at large, though important echoes of it occur from time to time – is linked particularly to the idea, prominent and widespread throughout the second-Temple period, of a *continuing exile*, as predicted by Daniel chapter 9. Jewish thinkers calculated and re-calculated when the 'seven times seventy years' mentioned in Daniel would be finished so that a whole plethora of events might take place: the new exodus from slavery, leading to the renewal of all things, the judgment of the wicked, the resurrection of the dead, the 'Day of the Lord', the victory of God over paganism and idolatry, the appearance of the Messiah himself to be the agent of some or all of the above, and, towering above even this list, the final revelation of the 'glory of the Lord'. I have written about all of these at some length elsewhere.[4] I must now focus on the final one as our central theme.

The questions around which the rest of this essay will be structured are as follows. First, what is 'the hope of glory' within second-Temple Judaism? Second, how has Paul reworked this Jewish hope around his freshly coined trinitarian theology? – or, to put it another way, granted that for Paul the one God of Jewish monotheism has now been made known as Father and Lord, or God, Lord and Spirit, or Jesus Christ, God and Spirit (Paul never puts it the same way twice, but he keeps coming back to these proto-trinitarian formulations, as in, e.g., 1 Corinthians 8.6; 12.4–6; Galatians 4.4–7; 2 Corinthians 13.13; Romans 8.3–4, 5–11) – how has this fresh Christ-and-Spirit type of monotheism generated modifications within his still essentially Jewish expectation of the glory of God? Third, how does this fresh Christian understanding of Jewish eschatology impinge afresh on the pagan world of Paul's day? And, finally but importantly, how does this vision of Paul's eschatology relate to the concerns with which we come today, in this millennial Year of St Paul and facing all the questions and challenges of our post-modern world? I shall look at these four questions with the first chapter of Colossians particularly in mind. Obviously it will be impossible to say more

[4] See particularly *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 10, and *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, ch. 7.

than a little about each topic, but I hope [**22**] I shall at least stimulate you to further reflection, and indeed to prayer and mission.

The 'Hope of Glory' within Second-Temple Judaism

A classic formulation of the second-Temple Jewish hope may be found in Isaiah 40.5: 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it'. To understand this passage we have to remind ourselves that part of the Jewish understanding of the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians was precisely that the glory of the Lord, which had dwelt in the Temple ever since Solomon's consecration of it in 1 Kings 8, as before in the wilderness tabernacle as in Exodus 40, had disappeared, abandoning the Temple to its fate. This picture of the Shekinah glory leaving the Temple is presented classically in Ezekiel 10, a direct result of the idolatry of the priests within the Temple. And one of the fascinating features of second-Temple Judaism, the Judaism following the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, is that nowhere are we told that the Lord and his glory have at last returned. Indeed, we are told the opposite. Ezekiel says, at the end of his book, that when the Temple is finally and properly rebuilt, the Shekinah will return, but there is no sign in this period that he has yet done so. The priests are finding their Temple service wearisome because the Lord has *not* returned; so the prophet Malachi assures them that 'the Lord whom you seek *shall* suddenly come to his Temple' – while warning them as well that they may not be able to stand before him when he does come back (Malachi 3.1–4). This prophecy of the returning glory, the glory of the Lord, is quite widespread in later Jewish literature. It will have conjured up memories and echoes of those earlier moments of revelation such as Isaiah 6, when the prophet sees the Lord shrouded by smoke and attended by seraphim.

But it is not only the glory of the Lord himself that is to be restored in the coming new age when God brings his judgment and mercy to bear on the world afresh. It is also the glory of humankind. In a theme particularly noticeable in the Dead Sea Scrolls, [**23**] we find promises that 'all the glory of Adam' shall belong to the penitent, and/or the righteous, within Israel.[5] This belongs of course to the ancient Jewish notion of humankind made in the image of God, made to reflect God not only back to God but also out into God's world. 'The glory of Adam' includes, it seems, the dominion exercised by Adam over all God's creation. This theme, so it appears to me, remains in parallel, almost in tension, with the theme of the final revelation of God's own personal glory. I do not think that second-Temple Judaism finds a way to bring them together.

There is, however, a pointer towards an integration of these two themes in some of the reflections about the coming Messiah. In 2 Samuel 7 David proposes to build a house for the Lord, but he is told that instead the Lord

[5] E.g. 4QpPs37 3.1f. On this, and for other similar references, see *Climax of the Covenant*, 24.

will build him a 'house'. Playing on the double meaning of the word 'house', the king's intention to build a physical Temple where the glory of the Lord can dwell for ever is trumped, superseded one might say, by the promise that God will give David a son to sit on his throne, a son who will turn out to be God's own son. But how can this be an *answer* to David's intention, that there will be a permanent place for God to dwell amongst his people? Only if, in some sense, the coming king will be the reality towards which the Temple will turn out to be a mere signpost. Somehow, the king will be the place where, and the means by which, the living God comes to dwell amongst his people. This notion may be discerned, albeit cryptically, with the so-called Servant Songs in Isaiah 40—55, where the work of the Servant seems to answer, however paradoxically, to the prophecy, already cited, about the reappearance of the glory of the Lord. 'Who would have thought,' muses the prophet, 'that he was the Arm of the Lord?' (53.1). But then, like so much else, these prophecies seem to be in abeyance from the time of the geographical return of the Jews right through, past the Maccabaean period which promised so much but produced so little, to the time when John the Baptist appeared announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God and promising, in line with Isaiah and Malachi, that the Lord himself was on the way and would shortly appear in judgment and mercy. And with that we find ourselves in the opening pages of the gospels . . .

[24] Paul's Reworking of the Jewish Eschatology

There is no time today to explore the way in which these second-Temple expectations are taken up by the evangelists and their sources and re-applied to Jesus himself. I and others have written about that elsewhere.[6] Nor is there time to show the several ways in which Paul picks up, one by one but also integrated together, the many other themes of Jewish eschatology and reworks them around Jesus and the Spirit. Jesus, for Paul, is the Messiah, the resurrection in person. He has won the victory over the forces of evil; he is the bringer of the new age. Even the phrase 'the Day of the Lord' has become 'the Day of Christ' or 'the Day of the Lord Jesus'.[7] None of this is accidental. Paul knows what he is doing from within his own deep-rooted Jewish tradition. He is saying, from several different angles, that the very things for which second-Temple Judaism had longed had all now come to pass. But, in particular, he was clear that the great promise itself, the promise of glory, had come to pass as well. And this, too, was rethought in Christ and the Spirit. This is a point which, to my own surprise, I seem to have largely passed over in chapter 7 of *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, and I am delighted to have this opportunity to fill it in further.

When we consider the Jewish background to the notion of divine glory, it is not enough merely to note passages in which the word *doxa* itself occurs.

[6] See especially *Jesus and the Victory of God*, ch. 13.
[7] E.g. 1 Cor. 1.8; 2 Cor. 1.14; Phil. 1.6, 10; 2.16.

The point of God's glory, in Jewish expectation, was that this glory would once again come to dwell in the renewed, restored Temple. Thus when we find, in Paul, the theme of God's indwelling, we are dealing with the same notion, even though the word *doxa* itself may not occur. And, classically, we find just this in the first two chapters of Colossians. At the climax of the wonderful poem in chapter 1, Paul declares that in Jesus Christ *eudokēsen pan to plēroma katoikēsai*, 'all the Fullness' – in other words, the Fullness of divinity – 'was pleased to take up residence'. This answers to the theme we find, for instance, in Psalm 132.13f.: 'The Lord has chosen Zion for his own own habitation (*eis katoikian heautō*); This is my resting place for ever, here will I dwell (*hōde katoikēsō*), for I have desired it.' Paul then repeats the same point in Colossians 2.9f.: 'in him all the Full-[**25**]ness of divinity dwells (*katoikei*) bodily, and you are fulfilled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority' – echoing again, of course, the poem in chapter 1. As far as Paul is concerned, then, Jesus Christ is himself the fulfilment of the long hope of Israel that God's glory would dwell in the renewed Temple. He is himself the Temple, the physical place on earth where the Shekinah has come to take up residence.

This is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 4.1–6, which like many passages in that letter is closely parallel to themes in Colossians. (Perhaps I should say at this point that, unlike several Western scholars, I believe that Paul himself wrote Colossians. I regard the prejudice against Pauline authorship as largely driven by a particular kind of Western theology. Certainly the parallels with 2 Corinthians form part of a case for supposing Pauline authorship.) We cannot go into this passage in detail, but we just note that here Paul speaks of those whose eyes are blinded so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. This time, not content with indicating the background to this glory in the expectation of the renewed Temple, he goes all the way back to creation itself: 'the God who said "let light shine out of darkness" has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'.

We note, too, that the mention in both letters of Christ as the 'image' of God is emphasizing Christ as the truly human one. In that light it is not surprising that in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 Paul speaks of Christ in relation to Adam: he is the Second Man, the Last Adam. The mystery of Jesus Christ, for Paul, is that in him is revealed not only the glory of the one creator God but the true glory of humankind, lost at the fall.

For Paul, then, the coming restoration of God's glory has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. This is at the heart of his solidly inaugurated eschatology, as well as of his nascent trinitarian monotheism. But this is only one part of Paul's redefinition of the Jewish eschatology of the return of God's glory. For the other part we look to his teaching on the Spirit.

Here of course the classic passage is 2 Corinthians 3, where Paul contrasts the state of heart of those who heard the message [**26**] of Moses with the state of heart of those who hear and receive the gospel message of Jesus. The latter group are the new covenant people, and if the Mosaic covenant was a dispensation of glory, how much more is the new covenant. And Paul's point in the decisive verse, 3.18, is that Christians stare at the glory of the

Lord – when they look, with open and unveiled face, at one another.[8] Paul is defending the boldness, the *parrēsia*, of his apostolic style, and is doing so in relation to the theological fact – a fact visible to the eye of faith, not the naked eye, otherwise he would hardly have needed to argue it in this way! – that the ministry of the gospel is a ministry of glory.

This *present* glory therefore anticipates the *future* glory of those who are 'in Christ'. In Romans 5.1–5 Paul states in miniature the argument he will develop throughout the whole section, reaching its climax in chapter 8. In 5.2 he says 'we rejoice *in our hope of the glory of God*'. He does not mention this again until 8.17: if we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with him', which leads him to the picture of the new creation, and of our place within it, in 8.18–25, pointing to the final summary in 8.30: those he justified, them he also glorified. So, we might want to ask: is this future 'glory' the glory proper to God himself, now shared with his people in a kind of *theōsis*? Or is it 'the glory of Adam', as we might expect from the exposition of the two forms of humanity in 5.12–21? The answer, I believe, is that it is both. The Spirit – a major theme, of course, in chapter 8 – pours out the love of God in our hearts (5.5), so that we cry 'Abba, Father', and thus, being ourselves filled with the divine life, become more truly and genuinely human. The idea, popularized in the Western 'enlightenment' which itself built on the dualistic world of European Deism, that there was a radical incompatibility between God and humankind, has led generations of Western exegetes to deny what seems to me obvious throughout Romans 5—8, namely the fact that when Paul speaks of 'the glory of God' as an eschatological gift he is also consciously speaking of a double fulfilment. There is, first, the fulfilment of the promise that God's own glory would return to dwell in the Temple. There is, second, the fulfilment of the promise that humans – God's [**27**] people – would inherit 'all the glory of Adam', would become genuine human beings, ultimately of course in the resurrection of the body.

If this is so – and now I begin to work my way back once more to Colossians 1 – we should expect that for Paul it is not only Jesus who is the Temple where God's glory is revealed, but also the church; and that is of course exactly what we find. In 1 Corinthians 3.9–17 and 6.19f. he speaks both of the church as a whole, and of individual Christians, as God's Temple, indwelt by God's Spirit. The language of 'indwelling' (as also of course in Romans 8.9–11) picks up again the promise of God's return to the Temple. This theme has sometimes been ignored by exegetes, or treated as a mere illustration without further significance. This is partly, I think, because of a wilful turning away from the Jewish roots of Paul's thinking, and partly because of a typical Protestant unwillingness to contemplate an ecclesiology as high as Paul's. It is for that reason, too, that Ephesians, like Colossians, is often deemed to be post-Pauline, but there is of course a direct link between these passages in 1 Corinthians 3 and 6 and Ephesians 2, where Paul develops the point specifically in relation to the coming together of Jews and gentiles into a single structure – a New Human Being (2.15), fulfilling the promise about

[8] For this interpretation see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 9.

Adam, but also a new Temple, with the Messiah, Jesus as the cornerstone (again, we note the echoes of the Psalms).

This new Temple is a structure created so that God can dwell there: 'You', says Paul, 'are built into it "for a dwelling place of God", *eis katoikētērion tou theou*, in the Spirit' (2.22). Here, just as in 1 Corinthians though now developed further, Paul's pneumatology enables him to articulate the inaugurated eschatology in which what Israel had longed for – the return of the glory of God, and the eschatological gift of glory to humans – had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ and was in the process of being fulfilled, by the Spirit, in the fact and in the life of the church itself. It is this that grounds the wonderful celebration that Paul then pours out in Ephesians 3, which has as its centre point the prayer 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith', again using the same root, *katoikēsai*. This in turn leads to the prayer that you, like Christ himself in Colossians 1.19 and 2.9, 'may be filled with all the fullness of God' (Ephesians 3.19).

[**28**] What we find here in Ephesians is the necessary bridge to understanding our central passage, Colossians 1.26 and 27. Paul's letters are short and 'occasional', and he does not trouble to spell out in every passage all the technical theology he might have done. In Colossians there is, remarkably enough, almost no mention of the Spirit (1.8 is the obvious exception), and in our key phrase it is not, as we might have expected, 'the Spirit in you' which is the hope of glory, but 'Christ in you'. But, as in Ephesians 2.22 alongside 3.17, and also in Romans 8.9–11, we find that these are more or less functionally interchangeable. This is important because of the inaugurated nature of the eschatology, as we shall see.

But now at last we are able to understand what is being said in Colossians 1.26 and 27. Paul has been entrusted with a mission and ministry, which is 'to fulfil the word of God', and the word of God turns out to be 'the mystery which was hidden from past ages and generations', which God has now revealed to his saints, those to whom God wanted to make known 'the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'. It has been easy, of course, for readers – particularly within a Western individualized setting, and in languages where no distinction is made between the second person singular and plural – to think of the 'you' here as singular. The promise is then shrunk to the dimensions of the individual Christian and his or her own personal hope for glory. This is not of course undermined, but what Paul has in view is far larger, in line with the cosmic vision both of the poem in 1.15–20 and the remarkable statement of 1.23 that the gospel 'has already been preached to every creature under heaven'.[9]

What is the result? Let me put it as starkly as I can. For second-Temple Jews, the hope of glory was the hope that God's own glorious presence would return to the Temple in Jerusalem, thus exalting the people of Israel over the nations. For Paul, this hope has been realized in Jesus Christ and the Spirit, but has also thereby been turned completely inside out. For Paul, the whole creation is now God's holy land, hearing the good news of the victory of the

[9] Most commentators suggest that Paul is simply exaggerating at this point: e.g. Moo 2008, 147.

creator God over all the powers of evil. And for Paul [**29**] the eschatological truth – the thing God always intended to do in the end but had kept secret until this point – is that instead of coming to live in a temple made of stone located in one particular city, God has decided now to dwell not just in Jesus Christ *but in his people spread throughout the world*. The church is the strange fulfilment of the ancient Jewish promise, but it is a fulfilment for and among all the nations of the world. Because the Messiah lives in the hearts, lives and the worship of his people, wherever they are, that people constitute the true eschatological Temple, the place where the glory is revealed.

In this light, along with the cosmological frame of reference once more from 1.15–20 and 1.23, we may even suggest that 'the hope of glory' in 1.27 is not only the hope of glory for the whole church, as in Romans 5.2, but also the hope of glory *for the whole world*, as in Romans 8.21, where the whole creation will share 'the freedom of the glory of the children of God'.[10] God's presence will in the end be manifest throughout his creation; and the life of the church in the present time is the advance sign of that, and perhaps also the means towards it. Paul has rethought his Jewish eschatology of the glory of God thoroughly in the light of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit. The result is a cosmic eschatology of future glory anticipated in the fact of the church.

It might be possible to hear this wonderful statement in a straightforwardly triumphalistic fashion. No doubt part of the reason why this vision has been resisted by so many is the sad awareness of the failings and the shortcomings, the disobedience, rebellion, headstrong wilfulness, idolatry, pride and sin of the church. (I frequently find that when I try to re-express the New Testament's own vision of the church I meet howls of protest from those who see all this only too clearly. Anyone who imagines that a bishop is not also aware of the problem must be remarkably unimaginative.) But what I now want to stress is that, for Paul, all that is taken on board as well. For him, the eschatology of glory is certainly inaugurated, but it is emphatically not yet completed, and stands in enormous tension with the continuing realities of present existence. Paul, after all, is writing this letter from prison. [**30**] When he says that all the powers in heaven and earth were created in, through and for Christ, defeated on his cross, and then reconciled to him, he knows perfectly well that this statement stands in obvious and probably bitter tension with his own present situation. More: all this is, for Paul, something which is only visible in the light of the cross itself, both the cross of Jesus himself and the cross which Jesus' followers are called to bear. This is not a theme 'added on' to what we have just been studying. It is woven tightly into its very structure.

Once again this is perhaps clearest in 2 Corinthians and Colossians, though also constantly evident in Romans 5—8. In 2 Corinthians, right after the passage we have already studied, Paul insists that 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels' (4.7–12), and goes on to speak of the appalling sufferings

[10] The commentaries I have consulted do not consider this possibility (in line with the reading of 1.23 as an exaggeration, as above). The phrase 'the hope of glory' ought not to be flattened out into 'the glorious hope' as is done, e.g., by M. Barth and Blanke 1994, 265. The partial parallel in Rom. 5.2 tells strongly against it, as does Col. 3.4.

which he as an apostle has had to face, sufferings in which he has felt himself crushed and destroyed but has discovered that he is not after all abandoned to his fate. Paul returns to this theme in chapter 6 and again, in a wonderful flight of rhetorical appeal, insists that being an apostle, someone charged with revealing God's glory, means 'dying, and behold we are alive' (2 Corinthians 6.9). This is what it means (4.10) to 'bear about in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also appear in our mortal body'. Here is the inaugurated eschatology of glory: God works in his grace through the strange process of apostolic suffering, so that his glory may abound (4.15). This is at the heart of Paul's major theme throughout this letter: the weakness through which God's power is revealed.

In Colossians it is clear that the 'theology of glory' which is rooted in Paul's high Christology is given particular expression through the death of Jesus himself. When God's 'fullness' dwelt in him (1.19) it was in order to reconcile all things to him, making peace by the blood of his cross (1.20). And, just as in 2 Corinthians, the apostolic ministry of unveiling God's glory is to be undertaken through suffering, suffering undertaken not merely as the accompaniment to this ministry but as its necessary means: 'I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up in my flesh the afflictions of the Messiah on behalf of his body, the church' (1.24). That is how the glory is revealed, because, just as in the Gospel of **[31]** John, it is in the self-giving death of Jesus the Messiah that God's eschatological glory was revealed in the form of utter love.

The tension between the present inauguration of glory and the present suffering is only to be resolved when heaven and earth come together at last, and the Messiah himself finally reappears. Then the 'glory' will be revealed without paradox or tension: 'When the Messiah appears, who is our life, then you also will appear with him in glory' (3.4). And this eschatological promise, still to be realized, gives energy and motivation to what we loosely call 'ethics'. It would actually be better to say that Christian behaviour, the living out of the dying and rising of Jesus in one's own personal choices and behaviour, is itself part of the inaugurated eschatology of glory. 'You also will appear with him in glory' is immediately followed by 'put to death *therefore* all that is earthly in you . . .' The implication is that, once again, the way the glory is to be seen is through self-denial on the one hand and positive moral effort on the other. In fact, this is in my view the way to a fully Christian reappropriation of the classical ideal of virtue.[11] Instead of anticipating an Aristotelian 'happiness', and developing the moral muscles necessary for that to come about, the Christian, already incorporated into Christ through baptism and faith (2.12), is to anticipate the Christ-life, the life of glory, of genuine humanity on the one hand and being filled with the life of God on the other, through strenuous moral living in the present. As he insists in 1 Corinthians, looking ahead to the final resurrection provides the primary motive for how one behaves in the body at the present time (1 Corinthians 6.18–20).

[11] See my 'Faith, Virtue, Justification and the Journey to Freedom'.

Paul's Eschatology in Its Pagan Context

I have now presented my main contention, that we can understand Paul's eschatology of glory when we see it as the thorough reworking, through Christ and the Spirit, of his fundamental Jewish belief that the living God would return to his people and to his Temple in glory, and would enable them to be his image-bearers, sharing the glory of genuine humanity. It should be obvious at a [**32**] moment's thought that this set his entire theology apart from the worldviews and the lifestyles of his pagan contemporaries.

This would have been most obvious to the casual observer in terms of what Paul and his followers did and did not do. They must have stood out sharply from a pagan world where people were constantly offering sacrifices to various deities and celebrating all kinds of cults. What we call their ethical stance differed sharply, of course, as well. These are subjects for much fuller exploration on other occasions. But I want now, briefly, to point to two areas where the particular Jewish eschatology of glory which Paul embraced and reworked stood out sharply from the prevailing pagan world in which he lived and worked.

First, though there were many popular philosophies in Paul's day one of the most obvious, and widely embraced in various forms, was Stoicism. Stoicism was one of the few philosophies which actually had something that can be called an eschatology: pagans who had not taken up some form of Stoicism do not seem to have had much idea of inhabiting a large-scale linear narrative that might be moving towards some kind of climax, conclusion or goal. For the Stoic, however, as we know from many sources, all world history was ultimately going round in a cycle. The ages and generations were doing, on a vast scale, what the hours, the days, the weeks and the years were doing on their regular basis. The whole cosmos would dissolve into fire and then be reborn, at which point the entire course of human history would happen again exactly as before. Since all things were ultimately pre-determined by an inexorable Fate, there was no reason why they should be any different next time round, and every reason why they should not be.

It is not difficult to imagine the impact of Paul's rethought Jewish eschatology on someone who had previously viewed the life of the world through this lens. Not only was there a future for the world, a future in which something genuinely new would come to birth, full of healing and new life. This was a future of *glory*, of a life full of value, weight and worth, a genuinely and gloriously human existence suffused with and hence sustained by the energy of the creator God himself. The multiple and frustrated strivings [**33**] of pagan philosophers and moralists are effortlessly upstaged by Paul's vision of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. The fact that the 'end' had already occurred through Jesus Christ meant that the linear narrative of classic Jewish expectation had been made more complex, and in that new complexity one might find, indeed, further overtones of the cyclic eschatology of Stoicism (as indeed of some kinds of Hinduism). But these remain modifications within the larger, and essentially linear, Jewish worldview, rooted in the belief in a good creator God utterly committed to putting all things right at last.

There is a final, further twist to the story. Many pagans in Paul's day had been treated to an eschatology in the process of being realized, in the form of the imperial ideology. Poets and historians had written of the long narrative of Rome's ancient glory, which had now given birth to a new regime of kingdom, power and glory concentrated in the person of the Emperor.[12] All that remained was for this power to be consolidated, for the world to acknowledge that Caesar was lord, and justice, peace, prosperity and worldwide human unity would follow. In the absence of other models of hope, and in the undoubted presence of massive military might, engineering skill, administrative competence and artistic flourishing, many around the known world gave allegiance to Caesar as Lord.

The early Christians stood once more in line with the ancient Jewish views of empire. God did indeed raise up human powers and authorities; as Paul declares in the Colossians poem, they are all created in, through and for Christ, and are reconciled through the blood of his cross. But that reconciliation follows their dethronement, the moment when they are stripped of their power and led as bedraggled captives in Christ's triumphal procession (Colossians 2.15). In several passages Paul speaks contemptuously of the rulers of this age, and in several others, cryptically but to my mind powerfully, speaks of Christ as the true 'Lord' and Caesar as the parody. It is in the 'gospel' of the true 'son of God' that justice and peace are to be found.[13]

It is here that we find the one element of Paul's eschatology which seems to have emerged from his engagement with the **[34]** pagan world rather than his developing of substantially Jewish themes. The notion of *parousia*, of the 'royal appearance', of the Messiah, is brought in by Paul on the back of his Christological redefinition of 'the day of the Lord' and similar concepts. It is not a Jewish notion. *Parousia* was used both to designate the arrival of a royal personage, and to indicate the manifestation of a god.[14] For Paul it is both, and in both ways it is polemical. Jesus is the reality, not Caesar, and his 'appearing' will establish his sovereign rule over all his subjects (Philippians 3.20f.). Jesus is the one in whom God's fulness dwells bodily, and his 'appearing' will bring, fully and finally, what Christians already know personally and partially: 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4.6).

Conclusion

It is time to sum up and conclude with some brief reflections. We live in a world where once again all kinds of pagan philosophies, hopes and aspirations are flourishing. The complex contemporary culture which through the mass media is increasingly a worldwide phenomenon presents as many

[12] The best-known instance of this 'imperial eschatology' is the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil. The theme dominates the remarkable 'Ara Pacis' on display beside the Tiber in the centre of Rome; see Rossini 2007.

[13] For a powerful contemporary restatement of Paul's vision at this point, see Walsh and Keesmaat 2004.

[14] See *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, 142f.

challenges to the gospel today as the pagan world did in Paul's day. What is more, we have seen in recent years the awful consequences of classic idolatry. Those who have worshipped Mars, the god of war, have run into more trouble than they imagined in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those who worshipped Aphrodite, the goddess of erotic love, have had to face the crisis of AIDS and the break-up of families and the social order that is rooted in them. Those who worshipped Mammon are in the middle of a crisis of apocalyptic proportions in which, as usual, those who get hurt are just as likely to be innocent bystanders as those whose reckless gambling has brought us to the brink of ruin. And we must do more, faced with all this, than simply say 'Jesus is the answer'. We need theologians and commentators who will relate the very specific challenge of Paul's eschatology, his vision of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory', to the concrete realities of our day.

[**35**] As we contemplate this task, I may perhaps be allowed to suggest, in conclusion, that what we have seen in Paul represents the reuniting of elements which have been thought of as particularly Eastern and those which are more often associated with the West. It is sometimes said that Eastern theology does not have much of a 'theology of the cross', certainly in the sense that the West understands it. Equally, much Western theology has so lost sight of the resurrection, the renewal of the whole world and the suffusing of God's people and all of creation with the glory of the creator God, that we westerners must often appear to our Eastern cousins as mere dualists. I hope my brief exposition of these aspects of Paul's theology have at least suggested some ways in which this traditional, and of course not entirely accurate, perception might be overcome. It is precisely within Paul's theology of God's glory in Christ and the Spirit that we find some of his greatest statements of the meaning of the cross. To speak of glory is not to underplay or ignore the cross, or the problem of radical evil to which the cross is God's radical response – just as to take evil seriously is not to deny, but rather to look for, the promise of God's glory. The whole church needs the whole Christ, Christ the Lord of glory, Christ the Lord of the world, Christ in us the hope of glory. May we learn wisdom from St Paul to launch us on an unknown and troublesome future with the genuine Christian hope that will draw us together and enable us to bear true witness to the world in the power of the Spirit.

Chapter Twenty-Four

ROMANS 9—11 AND THE 'NEW PERSPECTIVE' (2009)

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I was delighted to be invited to take part in an international symposium on Romans 9—11 in Göttingen in the spring of 2009, and particularly to be able to give one of the major conference presentations. I came away with the impression that the German participants were being far too polite to this British guest at least; I did not receive the sharp or detailed critique that I had expected. However, this essay is a pointer towards the discussion of the same passage in chapter 11 of *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. One significant memory: part of this essay was written on the dining table of my colleague and dear friend, Bishop Mark Bryant of Jarrow, while we were in between meetings. The support I received from Mark and other colleagues in my attempt to continue at least some scholarly work during my years in Durham is beyond praise.

* * *

[37] Introduction

Labelling something 'new' is dangerous: it invites mockery from built-in obsolescence. By common consent the so-called 'new perspective on Paul' dates from the publication of Ed Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977. It is no longer new. Moreover, in the past thirty-one years it has become clear that the New Perspective (hereafter NP) is actually a family of different though related views. The common factor is a determination to re-read Paul within the context of actual first-century Judaism, according to the massive research of the last sixty years, not least since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, rather than an imagined 'Judaism' created partly at least by Christian prejudice. Among other things, this necessarily requires a re-reading of Paul's critique of unbelieving Israel, a fresh emphasis on what he says about the coming together of Jews and gentiles in Christ, and, not least, a reappraisal of his relation to the Old Testament in general and to the Jewish law in particular. But beyond that we find many variations and sub-branches. Just as there is no single thing that might be called 'the old perspective on

Paul' – take, for instance, the major differences between traditional Lutheran and traditional Calvinist understandings – so there is no single 'new perspective'.

In addition, it may be questioned whether Sanders's apparently revolutionary perspective was actually as 'new' as is sometimes imagined. He was consciously echoing previous protests from G. F. Moore and H.-J. Schoeps. His attempt to read Paul with the grain of rabbinic Judaism looked back to Sanders's own teacher, W. D. Davies. And his proposal to understand the centre of Paul in terms of 'incorporation into Christ' rather than 'justification' (with its implied critique of the law) was essentially a restatement of the position of A. Schweitzer and W. Wrede. As with Davies, a certain amount of the energy going into this fresh viewpoint came from a reaction to the Holocaust and a recognition of the social, cultural and political forces that led to it, as well as a realization of the way in which some styles of would-be Christian theology were perceived to have colluded with those movements. It has increasingly become clear, [**38**] however, that this cannot in itself predetermine answers to exegetical questions. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more relevant than in Romans 9—11.

It was always likely, for obvious reasons, that a fresh reading of Paul's relation to Judaism (and, within that, to the law and the Old Testament as a whole), such as lies at the heart of the NP in its various forms, would generate fresh understandings of Romans 9—11. This applies both to the inner logic and detailed exegesis of the section and to the question of its place and thrust within the argument of Romans as a whole – something which, to speak autobiographically for a moment, has concerned me since the first days of my doctoral research in 1973. I pay homage here to the work of Bishop Krister Stendahl, another of Sanders's predecessors, whose own concerns with the same problems were similarly the interest of a lifetime, whose personal kindness to me goes back over almost all the same period, and whose recent death we mourn with sadness. I am glad to see that recent discussion has returned to Stendahl's key debate with Käsemann, which was the subject of my first serious Pauline essay (1978). Needless to say, my gratitude to Stendahl does not extend to agreement with his conclusions. As a scholar one is more deeply indebted to those who have pressed and sharpened the key questions rather than to those whose correct answers leave no room for further work.

There has, of course, been an increasingly sharp and full reaction to the NP, which has taken various forms too numerous even to mention. My impression of this reaction, so far, is that though in some cases valid points have been made about oversimplification and distortion in Sanders's characterization of Judaism, most of the main points that the NP has made have simply not been taken on board. An antithesis has been set up between the 'old perspective' as a Pauline system of salvation from sin and death and the 'new perspective' as a system of social reorganization, which is simply not true to most exponents of the NP. Fears of a serious departure from the genuine Pauline doctrine of justification are mostly unwarranted. What the opponents of the NP routinely fail to notice is that the NP is rooted, not only in a re-reading of first-century Judaism, but in Pauline exegesis itself, and that it is the failure of the old perspective to meet the exegetical

questions – not least about the interrelation of incorporative Christology and 'righteousness' terminology – that has driven many of us in the direction of the NP. It should also be noted clearly that much of the theological emphasis of the NP has been similar to that which was already found in the Reformed, as opposed to the Lutheran, tradition, in terms of a positive view of the law and its interrelation with the gospel (symptomatic of which would be a reading of *telos* in Romans 10.4 as 'goal' rather than 'end'). Had the Reformed viewpoint been the majority [**39**] tradition in Pauline interpretation, one wonders if the NP would really have been necessary.

There is no space here to debate these issues. Nor is there space, sadly, either for any kind of *Forschungsgeschichte*, or even, alas, the usual scholarly apparatus. I have noted in the Bibliography a small selection of those works on which I have drawn and with which I am by implication interacting, as well as my own relevant publications. Even if this paper had space for detailed debate, the constraints of my own current occupation have made it impossible for me to keep up with any more than a little of the recent work since my large commentary (2002). Fortunately, there are major recent volumes which cover the field more than adequately (Dunn 2005; Bachmann [ed.] 2005, with, happily, a more nuanced debate than the American one referred to in the previous paragraph). Further, I shall not attempt a full exegetical survey of each sub-section of this remarkable piece of writing, but concentrate on my own, admittedly subjective, selection of what seem to me to be key topics in Romans 9—11 in relation to the New Perspective. (Thus, for instance, I pass over Christology.)

The strategy I propose, then, is to begin with some remarks on the origin and thrust of the NP in relation to the key text 10.3; this will introduce one key element of the NP, namely the question of first-century Judaism and Paul's critique of it. I will then place this passage within the narrative flow that begins with 9.6; this introduces another element of the NP, or rather one sub-branch of it, namely the question of Paul's retelling of the *narrative* of Israel, and with it the NP question of 'plight and solution'. This will lead to a study of Paul's exegesis of Deuteronomy 30 in Romans 10.6–11, which introduces a third element of the NP, or again one sub-branch of it, namely the nature of Paul's often allusive engagement with the Old Testament. This in turn leads naturally to the question of the relationship between Jews and gentiles within the Christian community, a fourth and this time central and obvious element of the NP. Emerging from all this, however, we will discover three features which the NP has not usually allowed for: first, the strong theme of 'salvation', so central to 10.1–11 but so often marginalized in the over-sociological NP context; second, Paul's *covenantal* theology, which generates a particular *ecclesiology* – again, themes not normally found within NP work; third, Paul's *eschatology*, often marginalized by Sanders and others, who have approached him simply in terms of 'religion'. I hope it will become clear that, while the NP has contributed much of vital importance to a fresh understanding of Romans 9—11, we need to move beyond it if we are to take things further, towards a full theological exegesis of this most vexed of passages.

[40] 'Seeking to Establish Their Own Righteousness': Romans 10.3 and the Origin of the New Perspective

Romans 10.3, upon whose fresh interpretation hinges a crucial move in the 'new perspective', is not without its own problems. First, what is the meaning of *dikaiosynē theou* here and elsewhere in Romans? This presents a familiar circular difficulty: we need some idea of what the phrase means in order to approach the passage, but the passage itself offers what could be vital clues to that meaning. Second, there is a textual problem not unrelated to the question of meaning: should the second occurrence of *dikaiosynē* in most manuscripts be allowed to stand, or should it be omitted? Both of these questions nest within the larger one, which is a defining moment in the NP: what is Paul's charge against his fellow Jews? Of what are they 'ignorant'? What are they trying to 'establish'? What is the 'submission to the *dikaiosynē theou*' which they should have performed but did not? We should note that here Paul is speaking, as it were, post-autobiographically: he is describing people who are in the position he himself had been prior to his meeting with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus.

The normal, old perspective answers to these questions are reasonably obvious. The unbelieving Jews are ignorant of 'the righteousness that comes from God', that is, of the status that is available to them as a gift of grace to be received by faith. In this reading, *theou* is a genitive of origin, equivalent to *ek theou* in Philippians 3.9. They are trying to establish a status of 'righteousness' by performing the moral duties enshrined in the law – trying, that is, to put God in their debt. They should have submitted to the free gift of 'righteousness' offered in the gospel, receiving that status by grace rather than attempting to establish it by works. There are of course many variations on this theme (e.g. reading *theou* as an objective genitive, 'the righteousness which counts with God'), but the shape remains reasonably constant within the old perspective.

The fresh reading of this single verse upon which I stumbled in 1976 encapsulates, for me, what the New Perspective is all about. First, I take *dikaiosynē theou* to mean, always and everywhere in Paul, 'God's own righteousness', meaning by that 'righteousness' God's own 'justice', including his determination to be faithful to the covenant promises through which he would bring salvation to the world. The case for this reading of *dikaiosynē theou* has been made elsewhere. Paul's first charge against the unbelievers among his fellow Jews is that they are ignorant of *the way that God is just*, including specifically the way that God is faithful to the covenant. They are unaware of the way in which God's covenant plan is working out, with Jesus the Messiah as its climax. This unawareness, as [**41**] we shall see presently, includes by implication a failure to understand the story of Israel – or rather, the story of God's just dealings with Israel – in the way that Paul has laid it out in Romans 9.6–29. It echoes, in addition, Paul's own exposition of God's righteousness, revealed in Jesus Christ, in 3.21–31.

Second, the unbelieving Jews are 'seeking to establish their own righteousness'. One of the main reasons why I think the second *dikaiosynē* in this verse

is original is that the sense requires a subtle difference of meaning between God's *dikaiosynē* and that of his people, reflecting the inequality of balance in the covenant relationship. This is already apparent in 3.21—4.25: God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the result is the 'reckoning' of a status of 'righteousness' to those who, like Abraham, believe. These two 'righteousnesses', though of course correlated, are not the same thing. But the unbelieving Jews, declares Paul (remembering only too well his former life, as in Philippians 3.5f.), were 'seeking to establish *their own righteousness*', that is, a status of covenant membership *which would be for Jews and Jews only*. This is the charge of what I called 'national righteousness', the attempt to confine grace to ethnic identity, ignoring what for Paul had become critical, namely that the call of God in the gospel, in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham, was to *all*, Jew and gentile alike. At a stroke, this exegetical move explains (among many other things) the apparently negative approach to the law in Galatians by contrast with the apparently positive approach in Romans. In addition, it explains Paul's constant emphasis on 'all, Jew and gentile alike' in, for instance, Romans 3 as well as here in chapter 10, and of course regularly in Galatians.

Third, what should Paul's fellow Jews have done? What does he mean by 'submit to God's righteousness'? Presumably this *denotes* submitting to, or obeying, the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, as Paul himself had done and as he indicates in Romans 10.9–11: confessing with the mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in the heart that God raised him from the dead. Here, 'God's righteousness' becomes a roundabout, allusive way of referring to 'the gospel of Jesus Christ', on the basis of 3.21–31. But why, then, has he put it this way? What is *connoted* by referring to believing the gospel in terms of 'submitting to God's righteousness'? In part this is explained by 3.21—4.25: the gospel unveils God's covenant justice, so that to believe in the former is to submit to the latter. But there is more substance here than merely a kind of mathematical replacement of one formula by another. Paul has spent 9.6–29 telling the story of God's paradoxical faithfulness, which always, it seemed, involved the promises being fulfilled by the whittling down of Israel to a remnant: starting with the choice of Isaac rather than Ishmael, God has constantly carried forward [**42**] his covenant purposes by a process of choice which should have made Israel realize that God remained sovereign and that grace remained grace.

It is this story, thus interpreted, that unbelieving Israel is choosing to ignore – that Paul himself had ignored in his pre-conversion state.

Though I regard this alternative reading of Paul's critique of Israel as a cornerstone of the 'new perspective', it hardly registered in the initial presentation of Sanders himself. Sanders's famous line, 'This is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity', though a neat and teasing epigram, did not actually catch Sanders's own highlighting of Jewish exclusivity in Paul's critique. But this alternative reading goes extremely well with Sanders's insistence that Judaism was, at its heart, a religion of grace, not moralistic legalism. The trouble was that, in celebrating God's grace in his covenant with Israel, the unbelieving Jewish people were trying to keep that grace for themselves, rather than seeing it flowing through them to the rest of the

world. About that there has been, of course, considerable further debate. But before we can get to that, and with it the question of 'plight and solution', we must turn to our second topic.

The Covenant Story of God's People

Romans 10.3 points back, as I have indicated, to the long narrative of Israel in 9.6–29, a narrative which, as I shall now suggest, continues in a new mode through much of chapter 10 as well. But the first thing to establish is that Paul is indeed telling the story of Israel in this passage. I had thought that this was fairly obvious, but since some have tried to deny it we had better make the point again.

Paul lived of course in a world where there were many retellings of the story of Israel. We think, obviously, of Sirach 44—50; or, in parallel ways, those retellings within the NT, such as the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, or, in a different genre, the list of heroes in Hebrews 11. In these examples there is a sense both of the individual persons in the history making their own contribution and of the historical sequence leading up to a focal point. So it is with Paul. It is no accident that he moves from Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob (and the rejection of their older brothers in each case), to Moses and the Exodus, and from there to the prophets and, in particular, the warnings of exile and of Israel being trimmed down to a bare remnant. This is the covenantal history of Israel, told as always from one point of view, but instantly recognizable in the first century as the sort of story one might tell in order to say, 'Now comes the moment of fulfilment'. And that, of course, is what Paul provides: *telos gar nomou Christos* (Romans 10.4).

[**43**] But before we look at that fulfilment we must notice that, within the broadly 'new perspective' world, we discover the importance of *narrative*. Though this is not usually highlighted as a feature of the NP, I think it belongs there, since the turn to narrative readings of Paul is itself part of the retrieval of an essentially Jewish way of doing theology. But this is not to be reduced (as some might try to reduce it) to a mere figure of speech, a way of decorating abstract thought, sugaring the pill of dogmatic theology with attractive but merely illustrative stories. It is a matter of insisting that *the story of Israel*, and out beyond that the actual story of the world, of creation itself, are of fundamental theological importance, far more than being, as it were, the arbitrary stage on which the issues of individual human (otherworldly) salvation are worked out. One of the things that is going on in the NP, in fact, though I don't think Sanders himself ever dreamed of this, is the retrieval of a non-dualist understanding of salvation itself. The importance of history is one aspect of the goodness of creation. The telling of Israel's story is a way of taking seriously the covenant God made with Abraham, the covenant to which, according to Paul, God has been faithful in and through Jesus Christ.

This way of reading the letter suggests a particular answer to the 'new perspective' question of 'plight and solution'. Put simply, the 'old perspective' believed that Paul had begun with a problem (either his awareness of sin, or

his struggle to 'find a gracious God', or some combination thereof), and discovered in Jesus Christ the 'solution' to that 'plight'. According to Sanders, following Stendahl, Paul had had no such problem: as we see in Philippians 3, he had regarded himself as a good Jew, and there are better ways of reading Romans 7 than regarding it as a transcript of how Paul thought of himself before his meeting with the risen Jesus. Sanders therefore saw Paul's movement of thought, not from an already known 'plight' to a new 'solution', but the other way round: discovering Jesus, he realized that Jesus was the 'solution' to a 'plight' he had not known he was in. This allows Sanders to explain the peculiarities of what Paul says about the law: Paul had not thought this through systematically, but was flailing around to give impressionistic accounts of a 'plight' which was, for him, simply a reflex of the 'solution' he had found.

I have argued elsewhere that this is an inadequate account. Saul the Pharisee was aware of living within a long and deeply unresolved narrative. Being a Jew was not, for a first-century Pharisee, a matter of 'a pattern of religion' by which an individual might find a satisfactory way of life and be assured of future 'salvation'. At this point, I suggest, Sanders has not gone nearly far enough in ridding his framework of thought of post-enlightenment Western presuppositions. Rather, for the first-century Pharisee, the question was essentially eschatological: how and when would [**44**] Israel's God be faithful to his promises? And, within that, the more personally focussed question: when God thus reveals his 'righteousness', his powerful and salvific covenant faithfulness, who will be the beneficiaries? And, within that again, the bringing of that eschatological question forward into immediate relevance: how can you tell, in the present, who will be vindicated as members of God's family on that final day? To these questions, the Pharisee might well have answered: (a) God will reveal his faithfulness in a great act of liberation, led perhaps by the Messiah, defeating the pagan enemy, rebuilding the Temple, and enabling Israel to keep the Torah properly at last; and he will do so soon, when the 490 years spoken of in Daniel 9 are fulfilled; (b) those who will benefit, who will inherit 'the age to come', will be those who have been loyal to Torah; therefore (c) you can tell, in the present, who will benefit from this future vindication because they are the people who keep Torah and thus mark themselves out as true Israelites, true covenant members. That is the 'justification in the present by works of the law' which, I suggest, is presupposed in all of Paul's polemic on this topic. It is not about Jews trying to earn covenant membership by performance of good moral deeds. It is about them anticipating the verdict of the future by their present adherence to the ancestral code which functioned as the key badge of national, and hence covenantal, identity. This is at the heart of (my version at least of) the NP.

This offers a clear path through the sometimes tangled jungle of Romans 9.30–33. Paying close attention to what Paul actually says, as opposed to what various traditions might have preferred that he had said, we read the passage thus: gentiles have attained to membership in God's people (i.e. *to dikaiosynē* taken as 'covenant status'), even though they had not been seeking it. Israel, however, pursuing 'the Torah of *dikaiosynē*' did not attain to Torah (not, we

note, 'to righteousness'). Here Paul is suggesting, not for the first time, that 'attaining Torah', or 'fulfilling Torah', is actually the desired goal: there was nothing wrong with Torah, but rather with the means by which Israel was pursuing it. Israel pursued it 'not by faith, *all' hōs ex ergōn*' – in other words, 'as though the Torah were to be fulfilled by works', which by implication it never was. Here we meet, of course, one of the other well-known features of the NP, highlighted especially by Dunn: the 'works' in question are not the works of good moral effort which establish someone, Pelagian-style, as a morally upright person deserving of God's approval, but the 'works' *which mark out Israel as the unique people of God, distinct from the gentiles*. In other words: food laws, sabbath, and especially circumcision. This was what Galatians was all about. This, too, makes the most sense of [**45**] the single passage in Second Temple Judaism which speaks of 'works of Torah', namely 4QMMT, on which see below.

This leads naturally to Romans 10.2–4, which shows that the problem, the 'plight', which Paul wishes to highlight, does indeed belong in this framework. The patriarchs, the Exodus, the prophets, and now the exile: how would Israel be saved? Israel has 'stumbled over the stumbling stone' (9.33). That is the problem from which Christ has provided the rescue (10.4).

Within that, to be sure (though Paul does not address this in Romans 9—11) we find Paul's analysis according to which all, Jew and gentile alike, are under the power of sin. This is where, for a complete account, we need to factor in five passages which stand in the background of our present chapters: 2.17–29; 3.1–20; 4.15; 5.20; and above all 7.7–25. We cannot go into this here: suffice it to say that, whereas Paul would have earlier said that Israel's possession of Torah enabled it to escape the entail of sin that had infected the whole human race, he now said that Torah simply intensified the problem of sin, magnifying it precisely within Israel itself. *And this meant that Israel could not claim a privileged status over against the gentiles*, could not establish a 'righteousness', a status of law-circumscribed covenant membership which would be for Israel alone. The question of 'plight and solution' is to be answered thus: the 'plight' of which Saul of Tarsus was undoubtedly aware had been *intensified* and *radicalized* through his meeting with Christ. The 'plight' which he describes as that of Israel is the *fresh Christian perspective* on the covenantal problem of which he had previously been aware.

But the covenantal story does not end with Jesus Christ. As usual, the enigmatic *telos* of 10.4 has to be faced: is Christ indeed, as Bultmann thought, the end of history (not least Jewish covenantal history!) as he is the end of the law? By no means. As I shall now argue, Paul believes that the covenant has been renewed through the work of Jesus Christ, and that this renewal forms the basis of the apostolic mission to gentiles as well as Jews.

Covenant Renewed: Romans 10.6–11

A covenantal reading of Romans 9.6–33, and a covenantal summary in 10.2–4, leads Paul to a demonstration of covenant renewal in 10.6–11. For this he

needs to present a fresh reading of Deuteronomy 30 – a reading, however, in line (*mutatis mutandis*) with the other readings of that passage we know from Baruch and 4QMMT. Basically, Paul reads the Deuteronomy passage as a prediction of covenant renewal following judgment and exile, and he [**46**] explains that this renewal is what is happening now through the gospel of Jesus Christ and through the faith in that gospel shown by Jews and gentiles alike. This is not arbitrary or fanciful exegesis, but actually 'historical' in the sense that Paul is setting out an understanding of Israel's history. The exile had continued, as Daniel 9 had predicted, much longer than the geographical exile in Babylon. The covenantal 'exile' predicted by Deuteronomy had gone on right up to the time of the Messiah; that is the meaning, it seems, of Romans 9.27—10.4. Now, through the Messiah's work, that time of covenantal exile had been brought to an end, precipitating the long-promised covenant renewal of Deuteronomy 30. And now the mark of membership in this renewed covenant is, very precisely, the faith that confesses Jesus as Lord and believes that God raised him from the dead. Paul is here making a move similar to the one he makes at the end of Romans 4, where he explains that Christian faith is the same as Abrahamic faith. Christian faith, open to all, Jew and gentile alike, marks the believer out as part of the covenant renewal predicted in Deuteronomy.

In particular, of course – and this is another typically 'new perspective' move, anticipated in Reformed theology but inimical to the largely Lutheran 'old perspective' – the Mosaic law is thereby fulfilled, not simply abrogated. Of course the new covenant revelation is 'apart from the law' (Romans 3.21). But Paul has given several hints earlier in the letter that he regards Christian faith as in some sense 'doing what the law required', as 'submitting to the law' (2.25–29; 3.27–31; 7.4–6; 8.5–8; and even, as we saw, 9.31), and now at last we see what he seems to have had in mind. Deuteronomy 30 speaks of the *law* as being 'not up in heaven, or across the sea' so that it would be out of reach and impossible to keep. Paul takes what was said of the law and applies it to the Messiah: *he* has come down from heaven, *he* has been brought back from the abyss of death, so that when the word about *him* is 'on your lips and in your heart' it is the sign that God has done the new-covenantal work within the believer. Christian faith is the 'fulfilment of Torah' which Deuteronomy had prophesied.

This is neither arbitrary nor fanciful (as some have thought). Paul (like the authors of Baruch and MMT) is understanding the curses of Deuteronomy 28—29, up to and including exile, as having now fallen on Israel. As a first-century Pharisee, he would not have said that the blessing of covenant renewal promised in Deuteronomy 30 had yet arrived. How could it have, as long as Israel was ruled by pagans and most Jews did not keep Torah? Now, however, the moment of covenant renewal had come. If Jesus was the Messiah – and it was central to Paul's life and thought, from his conversion forward, that Jesus' resurrection had established him to be Israel's true Davidic King – then Israel's God had in fact renewed the covenant through him. The present passage is one of the central pieces of evidence, [**47**] along with Romans 4, Galatians 3, and 2 Corinthians 3, for reading Paul's theology as essentially

covenantal, in the sense that he believed that God had fulfilled the covenant promises to Abraham, and the promise of covenant renewal in Deuteronomy, in and through Jesus Christ. And this passage is therefore also central to Paul's understanding of Israel's history through to his own day: now, at last, exile (as in Deuteronomy 29 and Daniel 9) was being undone. Though this reading of the text falls within a broadly 'new perspective' framework, it clearly goes beyond what most NP exponents have thought, and indeed Dunn has more than once expressed his incomprehension of such ideas. I regard it as a natural, exegetically grounded, and theologically fruitful extension of the basic NP insights.

To put this point more sharply: Romans 10.6–11 is a classic example of what Richard Hays has described as Paul's regular use of the Old Testament. He quotes a few words and phrases, but has the much larger context in mind. This passage, however, goes beyond what Hays himself has supposed, because in alluding to Deuteronomy 30 Paul has in mind the whole narrative of the later chapters of Deuteronomy, *which he sees as a prophetic description of the entire story from Moses to his own day and even beyond*. He does not imagine himself to be living in a typological 'fulfilment' of a disconnected story whose original playing out took place many hundreds of years before. Like the author of MMT, Paul believed that the exile of Deuteronomy 29 had continued until his own day, and that he was experiencing, at long last, the unique restoration promised in Deuteronomy 30.

That is why the relation between Romans 10.5 and 10.6–8 must be understood not as a mere antithesis but in terms of paradoxical fulfilment. We remind ourselves that the whole paragraph (10.1–13) is asking and answering the question how Paul's fellow Jews can be saved (10.1, 9, 13). Paul's answer is: through the true 'attaining of the law' (9.31), or even the true 'doing of the law' (2.27–29; 3.27; 8.5–8). Yes, indeed: 'Moses writes that the person who does the things of the law will live in them.' But what does 'doing the law' mean? The *de* of 10.6 is not, I suggest, a way of saying 'but that system is swept away through a different system, that of faith', but rather, 'but this "doing" is to be understood in a particular fashion, as Moses himself went on to say'. In Deuteronomy 30, the Torah is not, for those with whom the covenant is renewed, 'high up in the heaven' or 'far away over the sea'. They will not need somebody to go and get it, and bring it near to them, 'so that they may do it'. Rather, 'the word is near you, on your lips and in your heart, *so that you may do it*'. Deuteronomy thus offers a fresh vision of 'doing the law', a new-covenantal vision in which, as in Romans 8.3f., what the law by itself could not do is performed in Christ and by the Spirit. As is implied in 8.5–8, although the 'mind of the flesh' cannot fulfil the law, the 'mind of the Spirit' can and does.

[**48**] Christian faith – confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead – is thus, for Paul, the sign that Deut 30 is happening at last and that those who profess and believe Christ as the risen Lord are the new-covenant people, the people who will be saved (Romans 10.9f.). This is his fundamental answer to the question of 10.1. The unbelievers among his fellow Jews are to be confronted with the news that the Messiah

has come, the covenant has been fulfilled, and that their ambition for a status of mono-ethnic covenant membership has been overtaken by God's fulfilment of his promises to Abraham, promises of a worldwide family without distinction (10.12). 10.1–13 thus recapitulates, at this fresh stage in the argument, the sequence of thought in 3.21—4.25, and indeed in 7.7—8.11.

All this compels a fresh reflection on the important NP theme of 'covenantal nomism'. Ed Sanders used this phrase to denote what he took to be the characteristic 'pattern of religion' of first-century Judaism, and though there may well be exceptions to his rule I regard his point as, overall, well made. The irony is that Sanders never reckoned with Paul, too, having a covenantal theology. Perhaps that is partly because Sanders did not work out the *eschatological* nature of 'covenantal nomism'. The point, for a first-century Pharisee, was that keeping Torah out of gratitude for God's electing and covenantal grace was the sign, in the present, of ultimate covenant membership when God eventually revealed his faithfulness in covenant-renewing and rescuing action. For Paul, this action had already taken place; and the characteristic of the Christian, as in 10.6–13, is *new covenantal fideism* – not in the sense that faith has *replaced* the Torah in a negative sense, but that faith in Jesus as the risen Lord is the paradoxical and surprising *doing of Torah* indicated in Deuteronomy 30. And this, in turn, locates 'justification by faith', as in Romans 10.10, within its larger framework of Pauline theology. The status of *dikaiosynē* is reckoned to someone when he or she believes, because that belief is the sign of covenant membership. And that status in the present points to salvation in the future, as Paul rounds off the argument with reference to Joel: all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (10.13). Perhaps, to be fully accurate, we should characterize this position as *new covenantal fideism*, or perhaps most fully as *new covenantal, eschatological, Spirit-driven, fulfilling-Torah fideism*. And we might suggest that this is part at least of what Paul has in mind in the dense and evocative statement in 10.4: *telos gar nomou Christos eis dikaiosynēn panti tō pisteuonti*.

[49] Membership for All: Romans 10.12–13; 11.11–32

It should by now be clear that the (developed) NP account of Paul's critique of his fellow Jews, as in Romans 10.3, correlates exactly with the emphasis in 10.12f. on 'all', i.e. 'Jew and gentile alike'. This picks up, of course, the same emphasis, at the equivalent point in the argument, in 3.27–31, where again Paul is dealing with a paradoxical fulfilment of Torah. This is not an incidental add-on to his doctrine of justification. The point of justification by faith is that faith is open to all, whereas the law would have confined it to Jews alone (and, within that, would have rendered it impossible for anyone by condemning those within the law for having broken it). Justification is freely available for sinners and (supposedly) 'righteous' alike, for Jew and gentile alike. Nor is it true, as has been ridiculously suggested, that the NP stress on the coming together of Jews and gentiles in Christ reduces Paul's glorious doctrine to a matter of mere convenience, simply intended to spare

gentile converts from the uncomfortable business of being circumcised. Rather, Paul's doctrine of justification was always in service of the larger purpose of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant through the creation of the single family which God had promised, the point at which the world, divided at Babel, would be brought together at last (Galatians 3). This is not, as is sometimes suggested, to exalt 'ecclesiology' over 'soteriology', though it does indeed indicate that Paul's view of the Christian community is more than merely functional (the assembly for specific purposes of those who happen to believe). That is why, incidentally, the NP should demand a fresh look at the now traditional prejudice against Pauline authorship of Ephesians and Colossians, though that is too large a topic for the present.

This links Romans 10.1–13 closely, as is right and proper, with the final large argument of the letter, in 14.1——15.13. My understanding of that passage is that Paul is concerned to urge the unity of the church across the boundaries of traditional ethnic (and perhaps other) customs and habits. As becomes increasingly clear in chapter 15, the point is that the united worship of all the nations is the sign that Israel's God is God, that Jesus is the world's true Messiah and Lord (note the use of Isaiah 11.10 at the climax of the passage in Romans 15.12, picking up the Davidic theme announced in 1.3f.). One of the strengths of the NP is that it brings Romans back into closer harmonic unity rather than leaving it as a torso about individual salvation with extra appendixes about the Jews and about the life of the church.

But to read Romans 10.1–13 and 14–15 in this way is to raise more sharply the question, what then does Paul say about the coming together of Jews and gentiles in chapter 11? Has he, after all, left open a further option of [**50**] salvation for Jews in some different scheme? Within the NP there has been something of a push in this direction (explicitly in Sanders and some of his followers). The NP grew, after all, out of a sense that the Jewish roots of Paul's thought had not been properly understood, and this in turn was heightened not simply by new discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls but by the sudden post-war awakening to the horrors of the Holocaust and the uneasy awareness of the various ideologies that, in differing degrees, had contributed to it. Does an NP reading of Romans 9—11 then push the exegete towards, say, a 'two-covenant' solution, in which Christ is the way of salvation for gentiles while Jews continue on their own (saving) path?

Here we raise, of course, the spectre of so-called 'supersessionism', a word which is now waved around as a magic wand to cast a spell of guilty silence over any suggestion that Paul might have meant what he said in 10.1–13, namely that the answer to Jewish salvation is the new covenant established through Jesus Christ. Like all theological slogans, however, 'supersessionism' can mean subtly different things, and it becomes less and less useful in proportion to the slipperiness between these varied meanings. At its sharpest and perhaps most useful, I take the word to refer to that which Paul is manifestly opposing in Romans 11: the belief on the part of gentile Christians that Jews have been cast off irrevocably, so that the church, albeit founded on the Jewish Messiah and with an early base of Jewish members, was now an exclusively gentile family. Over against that, the natural reading of 11.11ff.

is to have Paul say: that is the kind of belief that the Jews themselves had, the attempt to confine grace to race – and if you make that kind of presumption, God will deal with you in the same way (11.21)! But now, paradoxically, the word 'supersessionism' is being applied by some to any attempt to suggest that Paul believed Jesus to be the fulfilment of the covenant and the promises, so that the community of those who believe in Jesus is, for him, the single family promised to Abraham, able to be referred to in a shockingly straightforward manner as *Ioudaioi* (2.29), 'sons of Abraham' (Galatians 3.29), 'the circumcision' (Philippians 3.3), 'sons of God' (Romans 8.12–17), and similar Israel-titles. Ironically, it is because we have rediscovered much more of Paul's rootedness in Jewish thought that this theme stands out the more clearly. We cannot avoid the conclusion: for Paul, the community of those who believed in Jesus as the risen Messiah and Lord were the true inheritors of the promises God made to Abraham. That, indeed, is the force of Romans 1.8 as a whole, as I have argued elsewhere, generating exactly the set of questions raised in 9.1–5. And it is on this larger exegetical basis that we can go forward and propose, precisely in 9.6f. and 11.26, that Paul uses the word 'Israel' itself, as he does in Galatians 6.16, in a paradoxical and polemical way, to refer sometimes to 'Israel according to the flesh' and [**51**] sometimes to that larger company of believing Jews and believing gentiles.

That tension between two meanings is the whole point of Romans 9.6b: not all those who are *ex Israēl* are in fact 'Israel'. To begin with, this distinction is between the full company of Abraham's physical family and those within that family who are taking forward the saving purpose: in other words, the second 'Israel' is to begin with a subset of the first. But all this changes with 9.24: God is now 'calling' not only Jews but also gentiles, and this 'calling' (9.24) echoes the 'call' of 9.7. This is the conclusion firmed up in 9.30–33: gentiles are attaining *dikaiosynē*, the status which Israel wanted to keep for itself on the basis of Torah. And, as we have seen, in 10.6–13 the faith through which the Deuteronomic new covenant membership is demarcated is open to all, Jew and gentile alike. When, therefore, in 11.23 Paul states that presently unbelieving Jews can be grafted in *if they do not remain in unbelief*, we should take this at face value, and understand him to be ruling out any suggestion that Jews are to be 'grafted in' by some other means, just as he is, more explicitly, ruling out any suggestion that presently unbelieving Jews have been cast off forever.

This then poses a stark alternative for the reading of 11.26. Either Paul is suddenly declaring a new point, which undercuts more or less all he has been saying to this point. Or we are forced to read *pas Israēl* in the same way as 'the Israel of God' in Galatians 6.16, that is, as the full company of God's believing people, Abraham's complete family, Jews and gentiles alike. Time forbids the full discussion of this point that might be desirable. I simply note here that it should not be assumed that the NP propels one to the 'two-track soteriology' that some have tried to find here. It is equally a corollary of the NP that, taking seriously Paul's emphasis on the coming together of Jews and gentiles into the single family, one takes *pas Israēl* here to refer to the entire believing community. This conclusion and its implications pose questions

for another occasion. But I do not think it is appropriate to let embarrassment about even raising such questions deter us from what appears to me the most obvious meaning for the passage.

Beyond the New Perspective: Salvation, Covenant, Eschatology

Critics of the NP have attacked it on the grounds that it avoids the (obviously Pauline) question of salvation from sin, wrath, and death and concentrates merely on sociological categories: how people are incorporated into the family. This may have been a distortion in some expressions [**52**] of the NP, but it is not at all entailed by the basic NP insights concerning the nature of first-century Judaism and of Paul's critique. In fact, in my own work I have increasingly been conscious of the need to re-examine some traditional categories of 'salvation' that have been endemic not only in Western Protestantism but in the entire Western church for well over five hundred years. Basically, in the New Testament 'salvation' does not mean 'going to heaven when you die', just as 'eternal life' is not 'disembodied post-mortem bliss'. Rather, 'salvation' means rescue *from* death, which must mean resurrection itself, a newly embodied life *after* whatever form of 'life' follows immediately after death. 'Going to heaven' while leaving a body behind is not the *overcoming of death*; it is simply the *description* of death. And 'eternal life' is *zōē aiōnios*, 'the life of the age', in other words, of the 'age to come' – which Paul describes most vividly in Romans 8.18–26 and 1 Corinthians 15.20–26, in terms not of escaping the world of space, time, and matter but of God rescuing the created order itself from its slavery to decay and enabling it to share the freedom of the glory of God's children, so that God is all in all. One of the weaknesses of the NP in its regular forms, I suggest, is that it has not rethought traditional Western Christian categories, including 'salvation', nearly far enough in the light of first-century Judaism. Once we make the effort to continue that rethinking process all the way, further 'new perspectives' come to light.

In particular, it should be clear that Paul is indeed, even on the most radical NP viewpoint, dealing directly with salvation from death itself (i.e. with resurrection) and with that which leads to death, i.e. sin itself and, behind that as its ultimate root, idolatry (Romans 1.18–32). To factor in NP insights into the reading of 3.21–31 is not at all to undermine this, but to place it in its proper context. To repeat a point I have made frequently elsewhere: in the canonical shaping of Genesis, the purpose of God's call of, and covenant with, Abraham was to deal with the problem of humanity and thereby with the problem of all creation, the problem described from Genesis 3 to 11. That problem – idolatry, pride, sin, the wrath of God, the fracturing of human community, the futility of creation, and death itself – is that from which the covenant was designed to free humans and the world. There is no question but that this is what Paul is talking about throughout Romans 1—8. What the NP has done is to highlight *how* he is talking about it. He is not outlining a scheme whereby some humans are rescued *from* the world, from history, from all things Jewish, from the law, or whatever. He is setting out

the OT-based covenant narrative through which, when brought to its climax in the Messiah, God is rescuing humans, both Jewish and gentile, from the complex problem which has come to light through the gospel and is thereby taking forward his purpose of new creation, of which the Jew-plus-gentile church is a sign, a foretaste [**53**] and an instrument (hence the close link of this reading with Ephesians and Colossians). This is the context, then, in which we read Romans 9—11 from a 'new perspective': Paul indicates that it is about 'salvation' (10.1, 9f., 13; 11.26), and we should not be shy of letting that have its full (not merely its late-Western) force.

But all this takes place, as I have stressed, in the context of Paul's own reading of what I have called 'covenant theology'. I have noted already the oddity that Sanders himself, having analysed Judaism in terms of its implicit covenantal framework, did not do the same for Paul. But Romans itself, to look no further, is the most solid argument for doing so. The narrative of the covenant underlies (in different but closely related ways) 2.17–29; 3.1–9; 3.21—4.25; 5—8 as a whole and within that especially 7.1, 8.11, and not least 9.6—10.13. This is the story of *the faithfulness of God to his Abrahamic promises*, and thereby the faithfulness of God to the whole creation: in other words, the saving, powerful, restorative justice of God, the *dikaiosynē theou.* I do not expect everyone to be convinced by this, but I hope I have at least raised a question which can be pursued in other ways at more leisure.

Finally, it is a truism to say that Romans 9—11 is concerned with eschatology and that the NP has not usually made very much of this vital element. I have tried to join these back together, but in doing so I have of course insisted on a post-NP reading of 'eschatology' itself. Without ignoring the many vital sub-topics of Jewish eschatology and their translation into Paul's own thought (which I have described elsewhere), I have stressed that for Paul, as for his Jewish contemporaries, eschatology and history were not separated by a great gulf. History continued to matter. The story of God and his people had continued through the long exile prophesied by Deuteronomy and was now breaking out into its new mode, its returned-from-exile mode, its covenant-renewal mode, its Jew-plus-gentile mode. *Telos gar nomou Christos*: the Messiah is the goal towards which the Torah itself had pointed as it had indicated the long coming history of God's people. And in that inaugurated eschatology, and the theology of justification which is framed by it, we find that everything that the 'old perspective' had really wanted to say is taken up and, I believe, enhanced within a larger framework, a more historical framework, a more theologically and missionally fruitful framework. The New Perspective did not say everything that needed to be said. It did not get everything right. But it has opened up new possibilities in reading Paul, not least in reading Romans 9—11, which, with proper critical discernment, should now be used as building blocks for the next generation of exegesis and theology.

[**54**] [A select bibliography, now incorporated in the bibliography at the end of this volume.]

Chapter Twenty-Five

WHENCE AND WHITHER PAULINE STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH? (2010)

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It was a rare privilege to have an entire conference devoted to discussion of my work, and I remain very grateful to Nick Perrin and his colleagues at Wheaton College for a memorable and highly instructive few days in the spring of 2010 – at a time when I knew I was going to be moving from Durham to St Andrews but hardly anybody else did. Part of the price of the week, for me, was having to give two substantial papers on the study of Jesus and Paul respectively. In this one I attempted to summarize what I was trying to say in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, much of which had been written in the previous autumn while on sabbatical at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, and whose still incomplete state in early 2010 was the prime mover in my decision to take up an academic appointment once more.

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[**262**] I am uncomfortably aware of the bishop who said, 'Everywhere St. Paul went there was a riot; everywhere I go they serve tea'. It's a good question as to why we don't have riots about St Paul today (the 'riots' on certain blog-sites don't count, and anyway they are usually for the wrong reason). What is Paul about? Why did he cause such trouble in his own day, and what might he mean for ours?

Let me begin with a word of autobiography. On 2 June 1953, I was four and a half years old. It was my mother's birthday; it was the day the Queen of England was crowned; and my parents gave to my sister and me a Bible each. It was a small but fat King James Version; that's all we knew in our church at that time. My sister, a year older than me, could read reasonably well; I had just learnt to do so. I remember the two of us sitting on the floor, leafing through this great fat book and being rather appalled at the size of it. (It was quite a step up from *Thomas the Tank Engine*.) We had a feeling we should read something from it but didn't really know what. So, having searched through the apparently endless books of Kings and Chronicles, and the gospels and Acts, we came to one much shorter book and we decided

we'd read that. It was the first time I'd ever read anything in the Bible, let alone a whole book right through; and the book we chose was the letter to Philemon.

[**263**] Philemon is a great place to start. Few Pauline theologies, I think, start with Philemon. But perhaps we should; I am doing so in the book I'm trying to write at the moment. The little letter to Philemon gives us a bird's-eye view of what's going on throughout Paul.

Consider the situation. Here we have a slave and a master, who in anybody else's worldview in the first century would be pulled apart by the social and cultural forces which insisted that they remain in separate compartments. And Paul brokers a new kind of deal, the vulnerable deal by which the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon is to be restored. Onesimus has to go back to Philemon, not unlike the Prodigal Son going back to face his father. Paul is sending him back to where the trouble had happened. But Onesimus will not go back jauntily, with his head held high and a smirk on his face, saying 'Paul says you've got to set me free – ha, ha, ha!' No; this is a deeply serious and vulnerable moment, and Paul wants Philemon to know just how serious this is for both of them. And the way Paul writes that letter is magnificent as a piece of practical theology. He stretches out one hand and embraces Onesimus: 'Here he is, he's my child, my very heart, I've begotten him in my imprisonment. I'd much rather keep him with me, but I really have to send him back.' And then he stretches out the other hand and embraces Philemon: 'You are my partner, my fellow-worker, we're in this together – and by the way, remember you owe me everything.' Then, standing there with outstretched arms, he says to Philemon: 'if he owes you anything, put it down on my account'.

You see what's going on. Paul does not mention, in this letter, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. But it is the cross of Jesus Christ, exemplified and embodied in Paul's ministry, which is bringing the master and slave together. Paul is doing the unthinkable, bringing about what he says in Galatians 3, close-up, sharp and personal: in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, no male and female. This is what it means in practice. The cross is the place where the unreconcilable can be reconciled.

And if you start there, you have to ask, as a historian: what on earth is going on? Nobody else in the ancient world thought you could do that kind of thing. There are hints throughout the letter of the answer: [**264**] there is a special, different God at work; not like the gods of the empire who dominated the horizon, and believed in keeping the social structure of the world exactly as it was, so that slaves had to stay as slaves, and if they tried to have it otherwise they might get crucified. Rather, this is the God who sets slaves free; this is the God of the Exodus, at work in a new way. This is the God who says 'I have heard the cry of my people, and I've come to do what I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to set the slaves free'. And he does it through – being crucified. If you want the theology underneath the letter to Philemon, look at 2 Corinthians 5.11–21, climaxing in that final verse 21: God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become, might embody, the covenant faithfulness of God.

So the question presses: what is this new worldview? How do we describe the worldview of Paul the Apostle? It clearly isn't the worldview of second-Temple Judaism, yet in another way it clearly is. My friend Professor John Barclay wrote a book about second-Temple Judaism a few years ago (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*) in which, in the final chapter, he wrestles with the puzzle of Paul. Paul looks so much like a classic Jew, quite strict and orthodox in many ways, and yet in other ways disturbingly free from his tradition: he sits light to the sabbath, to the food laws and so on. Barclay, I think, sets this up as a tease; he wants to provoke fresh thought on the question of where Paul fits, of how to categorize him. He hasn't yet written the subsequent volume, which he has promised, to show how it all works out. But I think the answer is clear. Paul's worldview has shifted dramatically because of Jesus the Messiah. From one point of view, the story has been fulfilled. From another point of view, the symbols have been relativized. It's the same story – the story of how the one God is fulfilling his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so that through that fulfilment he might accomplish the wider purpose of rescuing the whole world. That's where the story was going. But precisely because it is now for the benefit of the whole world, it cannot be contained or captured within the enclosed world of Judaism. It cannot be defined in terms of the Judaism's ethnic symbols. It is not the case, then, that Paul is cavalierly seeking to overthrow tradition for the sake of it. He is not just some kind of a [**265**] liberal, thinking *Well, we're doing something new, let's forget some of those old scriptural requirements, they're a bit out of date after all*. It's nothing whatever to do with that. It is rooted in a theologically worked-through principle: 'I through the law died to the law so that I might live to God' (Galatians 2.19). The Torah itself is both fulfilled and, in its fulfilment, set aside; not because the Torah was a second-rate, shabby system and we were glad to get rid of it, but because it was a gift for a purpose, and the purpose has now been accomplished. The Torah wasn't a strange, stupid first attempt of God to save people, enticing them to try to keep it and earn their own salvation, so that only after a millennium and more of unsuccessful attempts God would decide to wave it away and try a different plan. No: the Torah was a wonderful, glorious thing, as far superior to the codes of other peoples as the sun is to the moon. It was holy, just and good, given for a purpose, for a time; and with the Messiah the time was up. All that was there in Torah that God intended to be of permanent value and intention has been transformed into the life of Messiah and Spirit.

What then are the symbols of Paul's own worldview? They are the symbols which speak of Jesus Christ. They include the acted symbols of baptism and the Lord's Supper. But I have come to the conclusion that the central symbol of Paul's worldview is the united community: Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female: the one family of Abraham, the family for the world, the single family created anew in Jesus Christ from people of every kind. I begin here as a kind of thought-experiment; I am trying to work through Paul in the same way that I worked through questions about Jesus in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, analyzing worldviews not least in terms of symbols and stories.

The Central Symbol: The United Family

When you go to the shelves and pick off a volume on Pauline theology, the chances are there will be a chapter on 'the church', but it will probably come some way towards the back of the book. When the writer has exhausted the topics of God, humans, sin, salvation, Jesus Christ and his [**266**] death and resurrection, the Spirit and so on – finally they may get to a chapter on the church. And within that, as one subsection among many, you will find, perhaps, 'the unity of the church', with an exploration of Paul's different metaphors, the body of Christ, the new Temple and so on. I think that is just the projection onto Paul of certain types of Western Protestant thinking. When we read Paul in his own terms, we find that for him the one, single community is absolutely central. The community of Christ, in Christ, by the Spirit, is at the very heart of it all.

I love the doctrine of justification. It is hugely important. But it only really occurs in Romans and Galatians, with little flickers elsewhere. But wherever you look in Paul, you see him arguing for, and passionately working for, the unity of the church. We've seen it, close up and personal, in Philemon. In Galatians, the real thrust of the whole letter is that Jewish Christians and gentile Christians should sit at the same table together. That's not incidental; it's the main point of the argument. And in 1 Corinthians, of course, the unity of the church is one of the main themes of the letter, all through, not just in chapter 12. 'Is Christ divided? Of course not.' The exposition builds all the way to the picture of the single body with many members in chapter 12. And then, in case you wondered how that could happen, Paul writes that majestic poem on *agapē*, love. Then, in 1 Corinthians 14, we see what that must look like in the worshipping life of the church; God is not the God of chaos, but of order. And then, in chapter 15, all of this is rooted in the gospel which speaks of new creation, of the kingdom of God, because of the resurrection of Jesus himself from the dead.

Then, in Philippians, the question is raised: how are you going to 'let your public life be worthy of the gospel of Christ' (Philippians 1.27)? Answer, in chapter 2: 'make my joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind' (verse 2). Have you ever tried that, in a group of three or four? Have you ever tried it in a group of fifteen or twenty? In a group of a thousand or more? It is very, very difficult. Don't imagine it was any easier in the first century. But don't imagine that just because we all find it difficult we can go soft on this central imperative. Rather, recognize that the only way to do it is through what Paul says next.

> [**267**] Let this mind be in you, which you have in the Messiah, Jesus: he was in the form of God, but didn't regard his equality with God as something to exploit, but emptied himself, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the father. (Philippians 2.5–11)

There's the secret, the living heart of this new, revolutionary way of being human. That's why Paul can at once go on to urge: 'do all things without grumbling or questioning, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in a dark world among whom you shine like lights' (Philippians 2.14–15). You see the point: the unity of the church, the new way of humble unity lived out by the followers of Jesus, is to be the sign to the church that there is a different way of being human.

Or one could consider the letter to the Ephesians. The unity of Jew and gentile in Christ (2.11–21) is the direct outflowing of that exposition of justification in 2.1–10. And then in chapter 3 this explodes in the glorious truth that *through the church*, the multicoloured, many-tongued family, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. It is the fact of a new family that declares to Caesar that he doesn't run the show any more, because Jesus Christ runs it instead. It is the fact of a new, single, united family that tells the powers of the world that Israel's God is God, that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not. As long as we continue to collude with things that no Paulinist should ever collude with – fragmentation, petty squabbles, divisions over this or that small point of doctrine – the powers can fold their arms and watch us having our little fun while they really still run the show. But when there actually is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ephesians 4), then the powers are called to account, and they will know it. Something new has happened, and the gates of hell shall not shall prevail against it.

And there's a cost; the cost of being different. That's why we have the challenge of marriage in Ephesians 5, in which the coming together [**268**] of male and female – and what a challenge that always has been, and still is – symbolizes once more the coming together of Jew and gentile, which symbolizes again the coming together of heaven and earth. That is why it's so important that in our generation we struggle again for the sanctity and vitality of marriage, not for the sake of maintaining a few outmoded ethical concepts and taboos but because this is built deep into creation itself, now to be renewed in Christ and the Spirit.

Then consider the ecumenical imperative in Romans itself. Many of you have lectured or preached on Romans, and you will know what happens. You have the schedule organized; you know how you want it to go, and somehow the exposition of the first eight chapters eats up the time allotted for chapters 9—11, and then when you've dealt with those chapters in turn you hardly have any time left for chapters 12—16. But actually in chapters 14—15 we have some of the most profound teaching anywhere in scripture on the unity of the church and how to maintain it. It isn't a detached topic; it grows directly out of all that has gone before in this most majestic of letters. The hard-won, complex unity of the church, which results in the church glorifying the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one heart and voice: that's what it's all about. 15.7–13 is the climax of the theological exposition of the whole letter, and it insists on the *united* worship of the multi-cultural church as the ultimate aim of the gospel. That is the heart of Paul's ecclesiology.

And it's a 'new-Temple' ecclesiology. You are the temple of the living God; that's there in 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, and it's there in Romans 8 too, where the 'indwelling' of the Spirit has the same temple-resonance, though it's not usually noticed. So, similarly, in Colossians 1.27: where he says 'Christ in you, the hope of glory', he doesn't just mean my individual hope of glory and your individual hope of glory. The 'you' is plural, in any case, but the point goes further than simply stressing that this is more than a sum total of individuals. Look at it like this. God intends to flood the whole cosmos with his glory. There is coming a time when the most Spirit-filled person in this room will be just a pale shadow of what God intends to do for the entire world. But that is anticipated when a roomful of people in Colosse, a dozen or two in Ephesus, [**269**] maybe fifty or so in Rome, are worshipping and praying in the Spirit: this is a sign of the time that is to come when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. The Messiah is in *you, now*, as the sign of the hope of glory for all creation. That is the point which flows directly from Romans 1.15–20 and that remarkable verse 1.23, where every creature under heaven has already heard the word.

We are therefore the people of the renewed covenant, the line that runs from Deuteronomy and Jeremiah in to the New Testament. Deuteronomy has a forward look; the covenant is not an abstract, steady-state constitution. You are a people whose story is going somewhere – but where? If you disobey the covenant, you will go into exile; that's the warning of Deuteronomy 28 and 29. But then, when you're in exile, if you return to the Lord with all your heart and your soul he will circumcise your heart so that you can love him with all your heart. And then will come to pass the promise that the 'word' will be not far from you, up in heaven or across the sea, but 'very near' to you, on your lips and in your heart, so that you can do it. People won't say 'this covenant is so difficult for us to keep; how can we possibly do it?' No: the word will be near you, in you and with you, so that you can do it. And Paul picks up exactly that: not just in Romans 10 where he quotes Deuteronomy 30 explicitly, but by implication in Galatians 3, in Romans chapters 2, 7 and 8: again and again, his message can be summed up as 'You, the people of God in the Messiah, are the people of the renewed covenant'. The long story of Israel, of Abraham and his family, has found its goal, its telos, at last. It has had its explosive fulfilment in Jesus as Messiah, the *Christos*: take away the idea of Jesus as Messiah, as some readers of Paul still try to do, as though 'Christ' was simply a proper name, not a title – do that, and you will never get the point. The Messiah is the one who sums up Israel in himself, so that what was true of Israel is true of him. And now the new covenant has been inaugurated; and the people who are in Christ discover that when they confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised him from the dead they are wearing the badges which say, 'We are the people of this renewed covenant'. They are in fact 'doing the Torah in the deepest sense that God always intended, that Deuteronomy always held out.

[**270**] And therefore they are also the renewed humanity through whom God is now rescuing and ruling the world and putting it to rights. We often screen out this stuff, but have you noticed that odd little bit at the start of

1 Corinthians 6? When Paul is saying that you shouldn't have lawsuits among yourselves, he challenges them: don't you know that we are to judge angels? Our response to this will probably be, 'Er, no, Paul, actually we didn't know that; where do you get that idea from?' I think he gets it from the apocalyptic traditions in Daniel and elsewhere, which have God's people exalted to a place of sovereignty over the world, sharing God's rule through which justice comes to the world at last. They are to be under God and over the world. That's what 'reigning with Christ' actually means; we talk about it, we sing about it, but we too infrequently reflect on the reality of it. It comes again in Romans 5.17. Just when you expect Paul to say 'as death reigned through the one man, so grace reigns through the one man', he says something different: 'those who receive the gift of righteousness *will reign in life (basileusousin)* through the one man Jesus Christ'. They will be *kings*. Paul lived in a world where there was already a *basileus*, a king. But no: we shall be 'kings'. And so in 1 Corinthians 15: the kingdom of God, which is over all the powers of the world, will be established not only *for* God's people but *through* God's people. We are the human beings who are designed to play the key role in God's renewal of all things. Don't so stress the doctrine of your own salvation that you fail to see what we are saved *for*.

In and through all of this, we are the people of God *in the Messiah*. We have been radically redefined and reformed through our incorporation into his death and resurrection. 'I am crucified with the Messiah; nevertheless I live; yet not I but the Messiah lives in me; and the life I now life in the flesh I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' The 'faithfulness' of the Messiah? I know this has been controversial; so let me just explain very briefly how I see it. In Romans 3 Paul says that it looks as though God's plan for Israel and through Israel has gone totally wrong. God has promised to save the world through his people Israel, but Israel as a whole has gone off the rails, has failed to be faithful to God's commission. Israel has not failed simply at 'believing'; no, Israel was given a commission. [**271**] You understand what a commission is. Supposing I give you a letter and ask you to deliver this letter to such-and-such a professor. If you were to be faithful to that commission, you would deliver the letter to the right person. You wouldn't keep the letter for yourself. Paul says that Israel is greatly privileged to be God's messenger, the nation through whom God has promised blessing for the world; but Israel, despite that privilege, has failed to be faithful. They were *entrusted* with the 'oracles of God', for the sake of the world, not given them for themselves. So when Paul says that Israel has been faith*less*, he doesn't just mean that they haven't 'had faith' in the sense of 'believing in him'; he means they have been faithless *to that commission*. They haven't done what they were supposed to do. I have orthodox Jewish friends who will admit, with real humility, that ethnic Israel has indeed failed to bring the news of the true God and his covenant to the gentile nations. And of course that is said without an ounce of anti-Jewish feeling; rather the reverse. It is simply the case that, if Israel's vocation was to be the light of the world, Israel has failed in that vocation.

So what is God going to do? Is God going to scrap the whole Israel-idea altogether? There's a whole swathe of Western thought which has said that: has said, in effect, that since the first plan has gone wrong, God has decided to do something quite different, to send his own Son to die for sinners, so we can forget about all that Israel-stuff. Not a bit of it. That is the way to misread Romans and to misunderstand Paul at his very heart. Instead, Paul declares in Romans 3.21 that God's covenant faithfulness has now been revealed *through the faithfulness of the Messiah for the benefit of all those who are faithful*. He, the Messiah, is 'Israel in person'. That's why 'faith' is not an arbitrary badge of membership in the Messiah's people. We are to be the people marked out by *pistis*, 'faith' or 'faithfulness' or, better, both, because he himself is the faithful one, the one who embodied the covenant faithfulness of God by offering to God the covenant faithfulness of Israel. And we, in him, are to be known by our own answering *pistis*, faith, faithfulness.

So we return to Galatians where all this comes back full circle. In Galatians 2, all who believe in Jesus the Messiah belong at the same table. This, then and now, is the challenge to the powers.

[**272**] This is the full context of the doctrine of justification. God will put the world right one day. He has promised to do so. He has launched that project in Jesus Christ; he is going to do it. How? Through human beings. Creation is longing for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God. Why? Because creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but of the will of him who created it; because creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay, to share the liberty of the glory of the children of God. When the children of God are glorified, creation will give a huge sigh of relief and say 'I'm so glad you lot have finally got your act together'. Creation is longing to be wisely stewarded by the gentle, wise governance of human beings.

And therefore God puts human beings right, against the day when he will put the world right. Justification is not designed to take you out of the world but to qualify you to be God's putting-right people for the world. That's why between present justification and future justification comes the entire theology of justice. Unless you make those connections, you're not thinking Paul's thoughts after him. But how does that happen? It happens because then he sends his Son, as the faithful Israelite, who takes the weight of the world's sin on himself, in order then, once it's been defeated and dealt with, to launch his new creation. That is how it works.

So the centre of Paul's worldview, in terms of symbolism, is this community. It's about Philemon and Onesimus getting it together. It's about Euodia and Syntyche getting it together in Philippi. It's about Jew and gentile learning to sit at the same table in Antioch or Galatia. That is the centre: the united community. But how can that community be generated and sustained? How can such a fellowship keep going, when living in a world from which the normal symbols which define the various constituent communities have been taken away? The only way this community can be sustained, I believe, is through what we call *theology*. I believe when we are reading Paul we are seeing the birth of a discipline, which we now call Christian theology.

The New Task: A New Kind of 'Theology'

If you force Jews to do theology, these are the three things they will come up with: monotheism, election, eschatology.

[**273**] Monotheism Revised

You see, if you asked Jews of Paul's day what they believed about God and the world, about the future hope, about humankind and so on, they could give you answers. But that wasn't their central discipline. That wasn't what they habitually did. These things were not in dispute, and they were not primary community boundary-markers. Jews will tell you to this day that 'theology' isn't a characteristically Jewish subject of study. It's a Christian discipline. But if you take away the worldview-markers of Paul's original Jewish setting – circumcision, sabbath and food-laws in particular – then you are left with a vacuum. Or, changing the metaphor, you will be left with a tent without guy ropes to hold it up in the winds of cultural, social and political pressures and challenges. Theology plays the key role within Paul's worldview. Theology has to grow from its previous size and role, to take on a new size and role, to be a new sort of task. The prayerful, wise contemplation of *who God really is*, and the reflection on and invocation of this God, has to be undertaken in quite a new way, in order that the united community, through its own worship and prayer and witness, can be rooted in this God and so sustained in its common life. That's why Paul says in Romans 12, as he summons people to obedient worship, that we have to be transformed by the renewal of our *mind*. It's not enough to coast along, doing this and that and hoping it will all work out.

Christians have always been in the forefront of education, within world history. There's a reason for that. Christians have always wanted to teach people to read. There's a reason for that. Christians have always wanted to love God with the *mind*, as well as with heart, soul and strength. There's a reason for that. God wants us to be, in Christ, people who can *think through* who he is and what therefore it means to worship and serve him. Unless every generation is doing that, the church will divide, the church will go squadgy in the middle, and the principalities and powers will say, 'Oh good; we were worried for a minute; but now they're in disarray again, and we can go on running the world the way we want'.

Who is this God of whom Paul speaks, and why does believing in this God have this effect?

[**274**] He is the one God of Abraham. Jewish monotheism is absolutely basic for Paul. But it's a monotheism that has been radically redefined around Christ and the Spirit. Paul in several passages takes the Jewish statements of monotheism themselves and discovers Jesus in the middle of them. 1 Corinthians 8.6 is perhaps the best-known example. Paul has taken the Jewish daily prayer, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one', and has rephrased that prayer so that by 'God' we mean 'the father', and by 'Lord' (*kyrios*, YHWH) he means 'Jesus Christ'. 'For us there is one God, the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ.'

Notice what this means. When I was younger people used to say that the early Christians were all Jewish-style monotheists, who couldn't possibly think of Jesus too as in some sense 'divine'. Incarnation couldn't have been envisaged until the church moved away from its early Jewish roots. That's absolute rubbish, and here is the evidence, and in other passages too. Jesus is, for Paul, at the heart of re-envisaged Jewish-style monotheism. And the Spirit, too: in 1 Corinthians 12, just at the point where Paul is saying that all Christian life is basically one, that there are many varieties of Christian life and expression but the same divine force behind it all – at the very point where he wants to say that it's all one, he says it in three different ways: varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; varieties of service, but the same Lord; varieties of working, but the same God who works it all in all. It's all one; but it's Spirit, Lord and God.

The same point emerges in Galatians 4.3–7. God sends the Son, and the Spirit of the Son. And then he says, 'Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God' – in other words, with this Son-and-Spirit dispensation, we see clearly for the first time who the true God really is. The passage is a piece of Exodus-theology, rooted in the narrative through which the slaves are freed by the redeeming power of God. But the Exodus was the time at which, and the event through which, Israel came to know in a fresh way who the God of Abraham actually was. And Paul makes exactly the same claim. 'Now, with the Messiah and the Spirit, you have come to know God – so how can you turn back to what are in effect pagan idols once more?' If the [**275**] doctrine of the Trinity hadn't existed, it would be necessary, on the basis of these passages, to invent it.

The result of having this God for our God is – renewed humanness. You are remade in the image of God; and one of the basic spiritual laws is that you become like what you worship. You've got to serve somebody; and when you worship *this* God, a new, genuine humanness emerges. A humanness which knows what resources are there for and how to deal wisely with them. A humanness that knows what relationships are all about and how to handle them; difficult though they are, in Christ they can be healed. A humanness that knows about responsibility and how to shoulder it wisely for the good of all. A humanness, in other words, which isn't going to do what people normally do, and diminish resources, relationships and responsibilities into money, sex and power. We talk about those three because we live in a shrunken world. And our vocation is so to worship the creator God, so to reflect his image, that we are to grasp afresh the meaning of resources, relationships and responsibilities.

All this takes place within Caesar's world. There are 'many gods, many lords', but you'd better watch out because Caesar is a pretty powerful one. And in that world money, sex and power are rampant.

Election Revisited

Who are Israel? They are the circumcision; they are the family of Abraham, the seed of Abraham. And now they are refocussed on the Messiah. The

Jewish doctrine of election is rethought around the Messiah. This is new covenant theology.

This is difficult to state, because these days if you get anywhere near what I've just said somebody will use the 'S' word: supersession. 'The church has superseded Israel;' that's what people will say I am saying. Actually, this is completely wrong, and the charge frequently rebounds onto the heads of the accusers (notoriously, those who claim to be reading Paul as an 'apocalyptic' theologian, who imagines that God has swept away everything in the past and launched something totally new. This is not how 'apocalyptic Judaism' functions, and such a scheme is worryingly close to that of Ernst Käsemann, who allowed himself to speak of 'the hidden Jew in all of us'.) But to discuss this in any detail we would need a full treatment of Romans 9—11, for which there is no [**276**] time here. But let me just say this. In Romans 9.6—10.13 Paul tells the covenant story of Israel, the 2000-year story of the people of God, all heading on to the arrival of the King, the Anointed One (10.4). He is the goal, the *telos*, the climax of the whole narrative. That is the point. How can it be anti-Jewish to celebrate the coming of Messiah at the climax of Israel's long history and the fulfilment of her ancient prophecies?

But Paul tells this story in a letter to Rome – precisely at the time when the Roman story was being told in a new way. The court poets and historians had been telling the story of Rome as a 700-year saga which had now at last exploded into new life through the arrival of the King, the Emperor, the Savior, the Son of God, the one who had brought justice, peace and prosperity to the world. From the beginning, from Romulus and Remus, there was a hidden purpose moving forwards through the time of the Republic, but now the new day had arrived. Through this man, Augustus, a new age had dawned, an age which they announced with the word *euangelion*, gospel. Paul knows exactly what he's doing when he writes this particular letter to Augustus's capital city.

So, just as monotheism confronts the idols of the world in a new way when redefined in Jesus Christ and by the Spirit, so it is with the redefined doctrine of election. Perhaps it's because our world is afraid of this challenge that whenever we get anywhere near this point the world shouts 'Supersession'! Caesar is quite happy with that move. It removes the church, at a stroke, from being a *political* challenge.

Because, as in Ephesians 3, the task of the church, to be the united community in Christ, is meant to be the standing rebuke to the powers. We are to be the people of reconciliation, the people of responsibility – and so the people who look at the powers of the world, who carve up the world and ill-treat it, and we hold them to account. Not because we're anarchists. Not because we are a Christian version of eighteenth-century left-wing philosophy. Far from it. God wants the world to be ordered. All the powers and principalities are created in and through and for Christ (Colossians 1). God is the God or order, not of chaos. This is the foundation of a Christian political theology. But as soon as you give [**277**] anyone any power or responsibility you give them the temptation to abuse that for their own privilege, prestige and so on. Not least in the church. And when that happens they need to be

dethroned; not so that there can then be a holy anarchy but so that there can be wise order. We go round this cycle again and again. Politics is the constant to-ing and fro-ing between tyranny and chaos. But we believe in Jesus Christ and in the sovereign, saving rule which he exercises through his cross, resurrection and spirit. And we have the task of modelling before the world what that sort of *polis* would look like.

This challenge can never be undertaken as an independent thing, where we hide away from the world, keeping the light to ourselves, saying how dark the rest of the world is. Well, of course it is, if you're not shining your light into it! Paul says you've got to shine the light into the world, and you've got to hold the powers to account by what you are, and then and only then by what you say. That is the context for the apostolic task of mission.

Eschatology Re-imagined

Thirdly, after monotheism and election, there is eschatology. The great Jewish hope, that one day God would flood the world with his knowledge and love and glory, so that the wolf will lie down with the lamb, and a little child will lead them; because the earth will be full of *da'ath 'adonai*, 'knowing-YHWH'. There will be a deep knowing of the creator from every blade of grass, from every whale and every waterfall.

That's the Jewish hope. And to serve that Jewish hope there is the promise of the land. There is the hope that the land will be fruitful and prosperous. The land will turn out to be an advance metaphor for the renewal of the whole world. Then there is the hope of the rebuilding of the Temple; but actually the hope is that one day God is going to do for the whole world what he was going to do for the Temple. The Temple is already a cosmic image. And all this will involve the rescue of Israel from her enemies; and this will involve the defeat of tyranny and evil in every form. And this means ultimately the defeat of death itself. And that means resurrection. And it will involve, above all, the return of YHWH to Zion. He will come back and dwell in his world and with his people forever.

[**278**] This is the Jewish hope; and Paul sees every bit of that Jewish hope fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah and implemented by the Spirit. And again, he articulates this over against the rather hope-less philosophies of his day.

Stoicism believed that the world did have a narrative, but that in that narrative the world would go on and on and then one day it would dissolve into fire, and then be reborn and everything would happen all over again.

Epicureans believed in random process. They were the Darwinians of the first century, if you like, believing that the world consists of molecules doing their own thing, and if there is a god he's so far away he's not really worth bothering about. Not much hope there unless you have money, land and slaves and can have a comfortable life.

But this eschatology is to be articulated in particular in the face of Caesar, and the imperial hope of his 'arrival'. *Parousia* ('second coming' or 'appearing') is not an Old Testament technical term. It is an imperial technical term. It's what happens (for instance) when Caesar has been away from Rome and

comes back, and his royal and perhaps divine appearing is expected (by this time, some of the Caesars started to give themselves divine honors); and everyone goes out to meet him, to welcome him back into the city.

That's what is going on in 1 Thessalonians 4 and Philippians 3. Jesus is coming back, and it is at *his* name that every knee shall bow. In Philippians 3, Paul invites his readers to give up their privileges as he has given up his. How? They are not Jews. But some at least of them are Roman citizens, and all the city benefits from Roman patronage. And Paul says, 'I want you to sit loose to your privileges'. He upstages their Roman status by pointing to the true coming King. Please note, when Paul then says 'our citizenship is in heaven', he does not mean 'that's our real home and one day we'll be going there'. That ignores the way in which the whole logic of citizenship actually works. Rome had founded colonies all round the Greek world, partly at least to cope with the fact of thousands of veteran soldiers who had fought Rome's battles, especially in the civil wars of the first century BC, but for whom there wasn't anything like enough room back in Italy, let [**279**] alone in Rome itself. The last thing Rome wanted, in fact, was all those old soldiers returning to the mother country or city. So they founded colonies, whose inhabitants were to be citizens of Rome, but colonizing Greece (or wherever) with Roman culture. So when Paul says 'you are citizens of heaven', he means, 'You are the people who are bringing the civilization of heaven into the world'. And he doesn't say 'one day you will be going away from here to the mother city', but '*from* heaven we expect the Savior, the Lord, Jesus the King' – those are all Caesar words, by the way – and he will come *here*, not to snatch us away but to change our humiliated state and body to be like his own. Paul, as often, quotes Psalm 8: 'you crown him with glory and honour, putting all things in subjection under his feet'. That is the Adam-picture and also the Jesus-picture. It's because of that – the biblical picture of human sovereignty over creation, fulfilled now in Jesus the Messiah – that we know that Jesus is Lord and Caesar isn't.

And within that eschatology, as in Romans 8, prayer is that bit of anticipated eschatology which we do even though we don't understand it, but which holds heaven and earth tightly together with the struggle and the groaning of creation. When we pray at the places where the world is in pain, we sense its pain in ourselves; and then, if we have faith, we sense the Spirit groaning within us. Where is God in all of this? God is not outside the pain, outside the mess. God is there at the heart of the mess. That's why Paul says we are chosen so that we might be 'conformed to the image of his son'. Back to Philemon, or to 2 Corinthians 5.21. Prayer stands cruciform at the place of the world's pain, to hold together Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female; to hold together a battered and bleeding world, and say, 'No: there is a different way to be human'. Think of Desmond Tutu in South Africa with the 'Commission for Truth and Reconciliation', and think of the enormous suffering this has cost Desmond personally. That is gospel work.

We need theology, then. We need it, not because it's a nice thing to get our ideas sorted out and our heads organized so that we can do the jigsaw

of all these wonderful ideas. We need it because without prayerful reflective investigation of who God is, who the people of God are, [**280**] and what is the hope that belongs to our calling, without that prayerful, wise investigation the worldview whose central symbol is the one church of Jesus Christ will not be sustainable. Think of churches that have given up theology, and you'll see what I mean.

Conclusion

The aim is, as Paul says in Romans 15, 'that you may with one heart and voice glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Paul comes back at the end of his argument, in Romans 15.12, to Isaiah 11, to the Messianic portrait, the great eschatological scene. But this is how he leads up to it, from verse 7: 'Therefore welcome one another, as the Messiah welcomed you, to the glory of God.' There is the ecumenical imperative: shared worship, across traditional ethnic divisions. This is then at once explained by verses 8 and 9, which together form quite a complete summary of Paul's gospel: 'The Messiah became a servant to the circumcised, because of the truthfulness of God, to confirm the promises to the Patriarchs, and so that the gentiles should glorify God for his mercy'. There is an enormous amount of central Pauline teaching packed into those clauses.

Then Paul quotes from the Psalms, again urging the united praise which arises from the world. But he finishes with Isaiah 11 . . . (If you've ever written anything careful and structured, you will know that you put your strongest points at the beginning and the end. That's exactly what Paul does here.) At the start of Romans, he describes his 'gospel' in terms of Jesus as the risen, powerful Son of God and Lord (1.3–5), and he contrasts this, by strong implication, with the 'son of god' who lives just up the street from where his Roman audience live. That 'son of god', Caesar, demands your complete allegiance; and Paul says, 'No; it's Jesus who does that'.

So he reaches his final emphasis, making a huge circle around the whole argument of Romans, to the Messianic point: 'the root of Jesse, who rises to rule the nations; and in him the nations shall hope'.

But I don't want to end there. I want to end with the longest short journey in the world. We come back where we started: the journey home for a runaway slave. All that theology has to be focussed, now on [**281**] this church, now on these two people who are having such a difficult time, now on the crisis where Jews and gentiles are separating at table, and now, perhaps, on the great political questions of the day and the challenge of the church to navigate its way through and bear witness to the light of Christ in a darkened world.

When you're working at these Philemon-type tasks (and most of us probably spend most of our lives working at that kind of task rather than the big, flashy, grandiose things that look so much fun), we are to be people who put into effect the Exodus which Jesus Christ has achieved through his death. We are to be people who stand there between the Philemons and the Onesimuses

of the world and say, 'In Christ you are reconciled; and here's how it might work out. *This* life, *this* community, here, now, is where it matters'.

May God give us grace so to study Paul prayerfully and wisely, that this worldview-symbol of the united church will say to the principalities and powers of the world of our own day that Jesus is Lord and they are not. And may God give us courage to face whatever riots may come as a result.

Chapter Twenty-Six

JUSTIFICATION: YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER (2010)

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I had not intended, after completing *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, to write anything more substantial on Paul, let alone on one of his key doctrines, until I was able at last to set things out fully in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Even when John Piper published the book in which he attempts to refute my view – it is a strange honour to have a book devoted to one's own work, even of that sort! – I initially decided I would let it pass without further comment, and wait until the larger book could take shape. But then I began to notice people saying things like, 'Well, since Wright is wrong about justification (see Piper) . . .', and I realized something at least had to be said. So, with the usual pressure on episcopal time, I produced my response, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* in the spring and summer of 2008, writing the last chapter in the middle weekend of the Lambeth Conference while my fellow bishops were taking time off. Needs must. But then the Evangelical Theological Society invited me to debate with Dr Piper himself in November 2010, and for two reasons I accepted: first, that I had never met Dr Piper, and second, that I would not want anyone to think I was afraid to debate him (or anyone else) in person. Sadly from my point of view, Dr Piper then decided upon a sabbatical, so we have still not met, or debated in person; however, his place was taken by the ever-gracious Professor Tom Schreiner of Southern Seminary. (The third member of the panel was Professor Frank Thielman, whose paper was, I think, the most interesting of all.)

It occurs to me, working through this long collection of essays, that it must make me look over-defensive, particularly about justification. There are three things to say about that. First, most of my writing is not defensive at all; the overall balance of my work, as opposed to this collection, will make that clear. Second, I have discovered that if I do not defend myself, I am accused of avoiding the criticism, sometimes with the implication that I am tacitly conceding the point at issue. Third, I have often been invited to give presentations at conferences specifically in order to explain my views, and the ETS conference in November 2010 was one such occasion.

As with some other papers, I have left this one in the form in which it was delivered – including the remarks about the ethics (or lack thereof) of supposedly Christian blog-sites and similar forums.

[49] Introduction

I am grateful for the invitation to be with you at this meeting and to take part in a further discussion of justification. I cherish the hope that we will be able this morning to sort out one or two key questions and see where the disagreements of recent years really lie. You may recall that John Henry Newman – who himself said some interesting things about justification – made a distinction between two different types of disagreement. Sometimes, he said, we disagree about words, and sometimes we disagree about things. Sometimes, that is, our disagreements are purely verbal: we are using different words, but underneath, when we explain what we mean, we are saying the same thing. Sometimes, though, we really are disagreeing about matters of substance – even though, confusingly, we may actually be using the same words. I suspect there is something of both types of disagreement going on in current debates, and it would be helpful if we could at least get some clarity there.

You might have thought, perhaps, that my title reflected the fact that this debate seems to be going on and on, yesterday, today, and perhaps for ever. I hope that will not be the case, though I am not particularly optimistic. The title is intended to do two things. First, it is intended to flag up the fact that justification is anchored firmly and squarely in Jesus the Messiah, the crucified and risen Lord, who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Though that is a quotation from Hebrews 13.8, it could stand as a summary of Paul's view of Jesus, too. And the point about justification is that what God says of Jesus the Messiah, he says of all those who belong to the Messiah. He said it yesterday, when Jesus died and rose again. He says it today, in and through Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us. And he will say it tomorrow, when Jesus returns to judge and save, to complete his kingdom work on earth as in heaven. So the first point is that justification is anchored and rooted firmly in Jesus himself.

The second point to which my title refers is the triple tense of justification. Justification has, as we all I think know, three tenses in Paul's writing. He can speak of past justification; he can speak of it as a present reality; and he can speak of it as still in some sense future. He can do all three in close proximity. This is not carelessness. He thinks eschatologically: God *has acted* in Jesus the Messiah, he *is at work* presently affirming that all who believe [**50**] are justified and so giving them assurance, and he *will act* through Jesus when he comes again in glory. Theologians have often spoken of the three tenses of salvation, but not always, or perhaps not clearly enough, of the three tenses of justification. (Nor are justification and salvation the same thing, despite the confusions of popular usage.) That is the structural framework to which I shall return at the end of this paper.

First, however, there are several preliminary matters. My time is short, and I cannot say everything. That should not be a problem in an academic context – we all know we have to abbreviate – but it is often a problem in a blog-site context. We badly need a new ethic of blogging, particularly Christian blogging. It is not healthy to come to a lecture or conference regarding the

papers as simply raw material for the blog one will write later in the day. That is like the tourist who stalks the streets with camera to eye and never really experiences the foreign city because the photograph, and its display back home, has become the reality. Nor will it do to pull statements out of context, draw false conclusions from them, and then attack someone for holding views they do not hold. This, sadly, is all too common. It happens more widely, too. I have seen footage of public discussions of my work in which people referred to views which I hold, declared that someone who believes such things must also believe certain other things, and then criticized me for believing those certain other things. Since I do not believe those other things, I naturally regard this procedure as both unscholarly and uncharitable. One of the things that has been said about me is that I have not responded to criticisms people have made. It would be tedious to go through a list, but I hope today to say something about some of them at least. One is, of course, damned both if one does and if one does not; if I do not defend myself against charges, I am failing to respond, but if I do I am being 'defensive'! I hope any who have come to this session eager to find further examples of Tom Wright's heretical views will pay close attention to what I actually say, as opposed to what some people have guessed I must really think. A good example: as with Newman, sometimes (surprise, surprise) theologians and exegetes use the same word in different senses. We must be sure to ascertain what someone means by a particular term (I have in mind, for instance, the word 'basis', to which we shall return) before assuming they are using it in the sense with which one is oneself familiar.

Preliminary Considerations

I have four preliminary considerations. They are, first, the question of Scripture and tradition; second, the question of Paul's context and later contexts; third, the methodological issues of words and stories; and fourth, the understanding of Second Temple Judaism.

First, let us make no mistake: this debate is about Scripture and tradition, and about whether we allow Scripture ever to say things that our human traditions have not said. Here there is a great irony. It has often been said of the so-called New Perspective that in criticizing the Protestant reading of Paul it is pushing us back towards Roman Catholicism. That is already silly: has Ed Sanders become a Roman Catholic? Has Jimmy Dunn? Has any **[51]** single person gone to Rome as a result of the New Perspective? The point is not that the Reformers had a faulty hermeneutic, therefore the Catholics must be right. Get the hermeneutic right, and you will see that the critique is all the stronger. Just because they used a faulty hermeneutic to attack Rome, that does not mean there was nothing to attack, or that a better hermeneutic would not have done the job better. But here is the irony. I was the Anglican observer at the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops two years ago, when for three weeks the cardinals and bishops were discussing 'The Word of God'.

Some of the bishops wanted to say that 'the word of God' meant, basically, Scripture itself. Others wanted to say that it meant Scripture and tradition. Others again wanted to say, 'Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium'. I, naturally, wanted to hold out for a sense of 'word of God' in which Scripture held the prime place and was allowed to question tradition and magisterium alike. That, I take it, is the historic Protestant position. Now I discover that some from what I had thought were Protestant quarters are accusing me of something called 'biblicism'. I'm not sure what that is, exactly. What I am sure of is what I learned forty years ago from Luther and Calvin: that the primary task of a teacher of the church is to search Scripture ever more deeply and to critique all human traditions in the light of that, not to assemble a magisterium on a platform and tell the worried faithful what the tradition says and hence how they are to understand Scripture. To find people in avowedly Protestant colleges taking what is basically a Catholic position would be funny if it was not so serious. To find them then accusing me of crypto-Catholicism is worse. To find them using against me the rhetoric that the official church in the 1520s used against Luther – 'How dare you say something different from what we've believed all these centuries' – again suggests that they have not only no sense of irony, but no sense of history. I want to reply, how dare you propose a different theological method from that of Luther and Calvin, a method of using human tradition to tell you what Scripture said? On this underlying question, I am standing firm with the great Reformers against those who, however Baptist their official theology, are in fact neo-Catholics.

Second, following from this, it is always important to remember that the NT Scriptures are the original, first-century, apostolic testimony to the great, one-off fact of Jesus himself. The doctrine of the authority of Scripture is part of the belief that the living God acted uniquely and decisively in, through, and as Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's Messiah, to die for sins and to rise again to launch the new creation. Again, it is a central Protestant insight that this happened once for all, *ephhapax*. It does not have to happen again and again. At the time, in the early sixteenth century, some Roman Catholics were implying that Jesus had to be sacrificed again in every Mass; the Reformers insisted that, no, the unique event happened once only. But that once-for-all-ness plays out directly in the way Scripture summons us to attend to its own unique setting and context, at that moment when, as Paul says (following Jesus, of course), 'the time had fully come'. The problems faced by the early church, the controversies Paul and the others had to address, are not therefore merely exemplary. We cannot strip them away in order to get down to something else, something that corresponds more closely, less obliquely, to the questions we ourselves have come with. That is the route of demythologization. No: Paul's **[52]** letters were themselves part of that great life-changing, world-changing, Israel-transforming event. It is therefore vital that we pay close and strict attention to the actual detail of what the NT says rather than assuming that we have the right to abstract bits and pieces and make them fit quite different scenarios *and then be absolutized in their new form*. Of course what Paul said in his context needs

to be applied in different contexts. That is what Luther and Calvin and the others did, while being very clear that *historical* exegesis, not allegorical or typological, was the rock bottom of meaning to which appeal had to be made.

Now of course it is true that some people in the first century were asking some questions which have some analogy with those of Luther. The Rich Young Ruler wants to know how to inherit the age to come (not 'how to go to heaven', by the way). But Jesus does not answer as Luther would have done. He sends him back to the commandments, and tops them off by telling him to sell up and become a disciple. Part of the problem is that Luther's question was conceived in thoroughly medieval terms about God, grace, and righteousness. Put the question that way, and Luther's answer was the right one. The fact that the words are biblical words does not mean that theologians in 1500 meant what writers in AD 50 meant by them, or rather by their Greek antecedents.

This leads to my third introductory point. I have been accused of doing word studies and then forcing meanings of particular words onto the rest of the text. I have also been accused of coming to the text with a large, global narrative and then reading the text in the light of that. These seem to be opposite charges, but the truth of the matter is this. Yes, I do think lexicography matters; unless we pay close attention to the meaning which words had at the time we will read other meanings into Paul's sentence. Yes, the big story matters, and the problem is that most Western Christians, Catholic as well as Protestant, liberal as well as evangelical, have had an implicit big story, so big they never even noticed it, but it was not – it demonstrably was not – the story which Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul had in their minds and hearts. So it is not a matter of me bringing a big story to the text and everyone else just reading the text straight. The question is: are we prepared to own up to our big stories and allow them to be checked and challenged in the light of history?

One word, in particular, about the big story of Scripture – the story which is presupposed throughout the NT. How much clearer can I make this? The big story is about the creator's plan for the world. This plan always envisaged humans being God's agents in that plan. Humans sin; that's their problem, but God's problem is bigger, namely that his plan for the world is thwarted. So God calls Abraham to be the means of rescuing humankind. Then Israel rebels; that's their problem, but God's problem is bigger, namely that his plan to rescue humans and thereby the world is thwarted. So God sends Israel-in-person, Jesus the Messiah, to rescue Israel, to perform Israel's task on behalf of Adam, and Adam's on behalf of the whole world. He announces God's kingdom, and is crucified; and this turns out to be God's answer to the multiple layers of problems, as in the resurrection it appears that death itself has been overcome. It all fits – and it all shows that the point of the covenant is organically and intimately related at every point to the particular concern of sinful, guilty [**53**] humankind. *The point of the covenant with Israel, in the whole of Scripture, is that it is the means by which God is rescuing the children of Adam and so restoring the world*. It is not a side issue

or a different point. I am surprised to hear of late that I have downplayed Adam. That, perhaps, is part of the attempt to make out that really I'm a dangerous liberal in disguise, going soft on sin. Ask people in the Church of England about that! On the contrary, Adam is vital. Adam's sin is the problem: God's covenant with Abraham, which will be fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah, is the solution. If you forget Abraham and the covenant – as so much Protestantism, alas, has done – you will be forced to interpret the solution, which is Jesus the Messiah, in some other way. And when you do that you will introduce major distortions.

And let us be clear. No other 'New Perspective' writer, I think, has said anything like what I just said. This version of the 'New Perspective' gives you everything you could possibly have got from the 'old perspective'. But it gives it to you in its biblical context.

But if the promise to Abraham was also a promise that *through* Abraham God would rescue Adam (which is not to diminish God's love for Abraham and his people but rather to enhance and ennoble it), then God's intention to rescue Adam was also an intention that *through* Adam God would bless the whole of creation, restoring the original intention of Genesis 1 and 2. That is why, in Scripture, God's redeemed are to be 'a royal priesthood'. I have recently been accused, for saying this, of implying that God does not really love us, he merely wants to use us; and, on the basis of that strange smear, I have been accused myself, as a pastor, of not really caring for people but only wanting to use them in some purpose or other. This is ridiculous and insulting, but more importantly it is unbiblical. Read Revelation 5: the love of God, in the death of the Lamb, ransoms people *and makes them kings and priests to God*. Is the love any less because of the grand purpose in store? Of course not. When Jesus, showing his continuing love for Peter, tells him to feed his sheep, does that mean he does not really love Peter, he only wants to use him? Of course not. If a great composer has a child who is a brilliant musician, and the composer, out of sheer love for the child, writes a magnificent concerto for her to play, is he merely using her? Or is his love not expressed precisely in this, that he wants to celebrate and enhance her wonderful gifts?

Fourth and last preliminary point: It is of course true that all variations of the so-called 'New Perspective' on Paul look back as an historic marker to Ed Sanders's 1977 book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. But, as I had assumed was now well known, there are as many variations within the 'New Perspective' as there are scholars writing on the subject, and I in particular have spent almost as much time disagreeing with Sanders on many things, including his analysis of Judaism, as I have in a different context with Dom Crossan. I had already reached a point in my own research, before I read Sanders, where I had begun to read Romans 10.3 very differently from the traditional reading, indicating that Paul's critique of his fellow Jews was not that they were legalists trying to earn merit but that they were nationalists trying to keep God's blessing for themselves instead of being the conduit for that blessing to flow to the gentiles. 'Seeking to establish their own righteousness', I came to believe, meant that they were seeking to maintain a status of covenant membership

[**54**] for themselves and themselves only. Then, when Sanders published his book, I saw at once that its basic line was sympathetic to this. I do not think, however, that Sanders got first-century Judaism entirely right. Sanders himself has gone on to make many nuances, though he is not a theologian, and it shows. I wrote the entire middle section of *The New Testament and the People of God* in order to sketch my own very different picture. However, it simply will not do to cite those volumes called *Justification and Variegated Nomism* as though they have disproved Sanders's reading of Judaism. Carson's summary at the end of the first volume is disingenuous: most of the authors have not drawn the conclusions he wanted them to draw. Notably, the main discussion of Qumran failed even to mention the most important text, 4QMMT. A lot more work needs to be done. But, in particular, we need to pay much more attention once more to the controlling narrative within which most first-century Jews were living. Sanders does not do this; his critics do not do it; I and others have tried to do it. No doubt it can be done better, but let us at least try.

So much for my four preliminary points. Now to more substantial matters: context, language, exposition, and systematic overview.

Justification in Context

Paul's letters, obviously, arise from a wide variety of different needs. In most of his letters, justification is barely mentioned. Where it is, apart from the one-liners like 1 Corinthians 1.30 and 2 Corinthians 5.21, the context in the letter indicates a particular set of questions. In Philippians 3, Galatians 2 and 3, and Romans 3 and 4, the wider question at issue is not first and foremost about how I get saved, how I find a gracious God, how I go to heaven, or whatever. I'm not saying any of that is unimportant or irrelevant. I am merely pointing out, which anyone can see if they look at the texts, that the basic question has to do with *membership in the people of God, in Abraham's family, in Israel*. This is obvious in Philippians 3, where 'the righteousness of my own' which Paul forswears is not his legalistic self-achievement. It is, explicitly, his membership in physical Israel: circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; when it comes to the law, a Pharisee; when it comes to zeal, a church-persecutor; when it comes to righteousness under the law, blameless. Of course there is a sense in which that contains something that could be called 'legalism', but it is not the detached legalism of the proto-Pelagian. It is the covenantal legalism of the Jew for whom the law is the way of demonstrating and maintaining membership in the ethnic people of God. That is where Paul started. That is what he gave up by discovering that the Messiah was the crucified Jesus and that, in him, God had radically redefined the terms of covenant membership.

The same is true for Galatians. I have heard it said, in a tone of wondering scorn, that I believe that Paul is speaking in chapter 2 about the question of who you are allowed to eat with. There is, among my critics, a rolling of the

eyes at this point, as though to say, How weird can you get? Well, but does the text not say exactly that? Here is Peter at Antioch, first eating with the gentiles, and then, when people come from James, separating himself. It **[55]** simply will not do to generalize this problem, to demythologize it, to transform it into the modern formulation according to which Paul's opponents were offering a message of 'Christ and . . .' – Christ and a bit of law, Christ and a bit of self-help religion, whatever. Of course in a sense that is true, but what mattered was that the Galatian agitators were doing it the other way round. They were saying, 'Ethnic Jewish covenant membership *and Jesus*'. They were not adding something extra to Jesus. They were trying to add Jesus on to the thing they already had. And Paul's whole point is that it cannot be done: 'I through the law died to the law that I might live to God; I am crucified with the Messiah.'

What has this got to do with 'the gospel'? Exactly what Ephesians 3 makes clear (I hope, among evangelicals, I do not have to argue for the Pauline authorship?). 'The mystery of the Messiah' (Ephesians 3.4), which was secret for a long time but is now revealed, is 'that the gentiles are fellow-heirs, sharers in-the-body, partners in the promise in Messiah Jesus through the gospel, whose servant I became' (Ephesians 3.6–7). The point of the gospel, the revelation of Israel's Messiah as none other than the crucified and risen Jesus, now Lord of the whole world, is that the promise made to Abraham – which, remember, was the promise to deal with the sin of Adam, that is, the promise of forgiveness and new life – is now made available to all. I should not have to point out that this is precisely what is going on right across Galatians 3, which ends with the solid line: if you belong to the Messiah, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. That was what was at stake in the context.

I leave aside Romans 3 for the moment. I have said enough to remind you that the context of Paul's major 'justification' passages is not the individual search for a gracious God but the question of how you know who belongs to God's people. And belonging to God's people – call it 'ecclesiology' if you like – is not something detached from 'soteriology', as in so much low-grade Protestant polemic. The vital and central questions of forgiveness, of peace with God, of assurance of salvation in the age to come – these are not questions to be detached from the OT, from the promises God made to Abraham. They are contained within them. As Paul insists in Romans 9 – notice, by the way, how the normal Protestant reading or misreading of Paul always tends to leave chapters 9—11 to one side – it is to Israel that the promises belong, the promises now fulfilled in the Messiah. My main point, then, about the context of Paul's justification-language is that the question of justification is always bound up with the question of Israel, of the coming together of Jews and gentiles in the Messiah. Of course, in some parts of the 'New Perspective' – I think, for instance, of the extraordinary *tour de force* recently offered by Douglas Campbell – the two are played off against one another. I believe this is totally mistaken. Only by paying close attention to the scriptural context can the scriptural doctrine be scripturally understood.

The Language of Justification

This brings me to the question of the specific language involved. What does 'righteousness' mean – in particular, what does the phrase 'reckoned as [**56**] righteousness' mean? That phrase only occurs twice in the OT. Genesis 15 is well known and is part of the question. But in Psalm 106.31 it says that after Phinehas's act of intercession it was 'counted unto him for righteousness from generation to generation for ever'. What does this mean? Granted that the Psalmist is summarizing the story quite loosely – 'intercession' is an interesting word for what Phinehas did, killing a couple *in flagrante* – it is clear from Numbers 25.10–13 that what was granted to him from generation to generation for ever was 'a covenant of peace' and 'a covenant of perpetual priesthood', because of his zeal and his making atonement for Israel. It would be a bold exegete who declared that zeal, atonement, and reckoning as righteousness had nothing to do with one another in Paul's writings: think of Galatians 1, 2, and 3, or Romans 10. What we have here, I suggest, is a telltale indication of what 'reckoning as righteousness' was taken to mean within Scripture itself (not within some dodgy Second Temple text upon which I am sometimes accused of relying!). It is about the establishment of a covenant with that person and their descendants.

Exactly that is at stake as well in the more famous passage from Genesis 15.6. The whole passage to that point is about Abraham's continuing family. God promises Abraham a great 'reward', but Abraham asks how this can be since he has no heir of his own. God promises him a massive, uncountable family; Abraham believes the promise; and God 'reckons it to him as righteousness'. The rest of the chapter explains what this means: God makes a covenant with Abraham, to bring his descendants up from Egypt and give them their land. That this covenantal meaning of 'righteousness' is not a trick of the light is confirmed in Romans 4.11, when Paul says that Abraham received circumcision as a sign and seal of 'the righteousness of faith' which Abraham already had when uncircumcised. But in the passage which Paul is echoing, Genesis 17.11, it says that Abraham received circumcision as 'a sign of the *covenant*' between God and Abraham's descendants. Here is my primary, inner-biblical evidence for understanding *dikaiosynē*, in these contexts and phrases, in terms of God's covenant.

A footnote to this. I was surprised to hear it said elsewhere that I understand *dikaiosynē* to mean 'covenant faithfulness'. Of course, that is (part of) what I think it means as applied to God. But as applied to humans the best rendering is 'covenant *membership*'. Of course, that membership is marked precisely by *pistis*, faith or faithfulness. But for Paul *dikaiosynē*, like its Hebrew background *tsedaqah*, is easily flexible enough to mean, if you like, 'covenantness', with the different nuances appropriate for different contexts flowing from this.

What then about the lawcourt scenario which is constantly implied in the OT? Once again I have been accused, absurdly, of importing a modern idea of the lawcourt into Paul's ancient context. Not so. It is precisely the ancient Hebrew lawcourt that is envisaged, in which two parties appear before

a judge – precisely and explicitly unlike the modern court where, in my country at least, there is a Director of Public Prosecutions to bring criminal charges. All cases in the Hebrew lawcourt are what we call civil cases, one person against another, before a judge. That is the picture in so much of Scripture: God is the judge, and Israel is coming before him pleading (as with the Psalmists) for [**57**] vindication against the enemy. The problem is that Israel, too, is guilty. How then can God be faithful to the covenant with Abraham? That is the problem in Romans 3.

That is why it is wrong to invoke, as some have done, the scenario in (for instance) the book of Job, where God seems for a while to be one of the parties in the lawsuit. That is a possibility which Paul explicitly examines, in Romans 3.5–6. If God were simply one of the parties in the lawsuit, then he would be shown to be in the right by our being in the wrong, so he would then be unjust to inflict wrath! Not so, he says; or how could God judge the world? The fictive prophetic scenario of God as the adversary-at-law is possible, but it is not the main picture, and it is not Paul's picture. In his picture, as in most of the OT, God is the judge.

The different layers of metaphorical meaning then all nest snugly and appropriately together, without forcing or straining. All humans are in the dock before God, the impartial judge. All have sinned and come short of God's glory. But God has made covenant promises to and through Israel; that is what Romans 2.17—3.9 is partly all about. How is he to be faithful to those promises? Answer: through the Messiah, Jesus, who has been the one and only faithful Israelite, embodying God's covenant faithfulness and hence evoking, through his death as an act of sheer divine grace, the answering faith which is the recognizable badge of a renewed covenant people, the people who turn out to be the people God promised Abraham in the first place, the people composed equally of believing gentiles and believing Jews. This is the action – the sinbearing 'obedience' of the last Adam to the Israel-vocation as in, for instance, Isaiah 53 – through which God's faithfulness to the covenant generates that forgiveness of sins because of which there can now be a sin-forgiven people.

What then does it mean, within the lawcourt setting, for someone to be 'righteous'? Simply this: that the court has found in their favor. It means that they have been declared to be 'in the right'. They have not been granted or imputed a 'righteousness' which belongs to someone else. The judge's 'righteousness' consists of his trying the case fairly and in accordance with law, showing no favoritism, punishing the wrongdoer and upholding the widow, the orphan, and the defenceless. *When the court finds in favor of one of the two parties at law, there is no sense in which their 'righteous' status carries any of these judge-specific connotations*. The 'righteousness' which they have is their right standing in the lawcourt, now that the verdict has been announced. In the same way, when God as the God who made the covenant with Abraham declares that someone is a member of that covenant, the covenant faithfulness because of which God sends his own son to take upon him the sins of Israel and the world is not at all the same thing as the covenant membership which is demarcated by faith. The 'righteousness' which God has in this case

is simply not the same thing as the 'righteousness' (covenant membership) of those who have faith. *To think otherwise – to insist that one needs 'righteousness', in the sense of 'moral character or repute' or whatever, in order to stand unashamed before God, and that, lacking any of one's own, one must find some from somewhere or someone else – shows that one is still thinking in medieval categories of* iustitia *rather than in biblical categories of lawcourt and covenant.*

[**58**] I have thus, by drawing in the covenant, anticipated the next point. The lawcourt in question is the covenantal one in which God's promises to Abraham are at stake, The 'right standing' of those in whose favour the court has found is at the same time the *covenantal* status they enjoy as members of Abraham's true family – which includes among its privileges, as I have insisted, the assurance of sins forgiven and of the promise that 'those whom God justified, them he also glorified'. The lawcourt setting, in other words, is not just one illustration among others. It is the theologically apt and appropriate metaphor through which we see what has happened to God's covenant promises. The covenant was established in the first place in order to set the world right. This is how the language works. And it works without equivocation in passage after passage throughout Paul. That, for a biblically faithful Christian, is what counts. We are not at liberty to pick and choose in God's word. We are bound to search it all, to study it all, to make sure we interpret each element in the light of the whole and the whole in the light of each element.

Exegesis and Exposition

This brings us nicely to the exegesis of particular passages. I have always insisted that this must be the heart of the question. It is often frustrating to find that discussion has taken place at one or two removes from the actual text.

I have written about the relevant passages at length, of course, in various places (a fairly complete list may be found in the bibliography for my book *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* [2009]). I have drawn attention repeatedly, for instance, to the single-letter word '*e*' in Romans 3.29, which indicates that for Paul, though not for the current 'old perspective' proponents, there is a close and unbreakable link between justification by faith and the inclusion of gentiles within God's people. I have drawn attention to the difference between Paul's phrase 'a righteousness from God' (*dikaiosynē ek theou*) in Philippians 3.9, referring to the righteous status of the covenant member, and the more usual *dikaiosynē theou* (the righteousness of God himself) in Romans 1.17; 3.21–26; 10.3, and I have shown how these precise verbal distinctions are an exact index of exactly what Paul wants to say. Once again, it is strange and even amusing to find people whose main claim is that they are faithful to Scripture ready to twist and bend Paul's actual and specific language to fit the traditional schemes with which they start, especially when the precise meaning of the words offers an excellent and coherent sense. But I want to home in now on what seems to me one of the most important,

and often misunderstood, passages: the first few verses of Romans 4. Here I have something more to add to what I have written earlier. This may be of particular interest.

It has sometimes been suggested that Romans 4.4–8 is the 'smoking gun' which shows us that Paul did, after all, have an 'old perspective' vision of justification. He is, on this view, contrasting someone who works for a 'reward' and someone who does not do that, but simply trusts in 'the God who justifies the ungodly'. I wish to offer a new view of this passage which strongly and strikingly confirms the reading of chapter 3 which I have given often enough elsewhere. The question may be put: why does Paul suddenly introduce the notion of 'reward'? Where has that come from?

[**59**] The answer, which one or two commentators notice though none, I think, explore, is that the word 'reward', *misthos* in Greek, comes from Genesis 15.1. 'Fear not, Abraham', says God, 'I am your shield; your reward (*ho misthos sou* in the LXX) shall be very great'. But what does this notion of *misthos* lead to in Genesis 15? As we just noted, Abraham's answer to that initial promise is to ask a puzzled question about his inheritance: he has no heir. Never mind, comes the answer, explaining what the *misthos* is going to be: your seed will be like the stars of heaven. That is the promise (the promise of a *misthos* which consists of an uncountable family of 'descendants') which Abraham then believes, so that it is then 'reckoned to him as righteousness' – in other words, he is granted a covenant, to him and his seed hereafter.

This explanation of *misthos*, tying it tightly in to the meaning both of Genesis 15 as a whole and Romans 4 as a whole, has quite an explosive result on the reading of the rest of those opening verses of Romans 4. 'What shall we say, then? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?' – in other words, by coming to faith in Jesus the Messiah, has this new family of Jews and gentiles together come to a position where it must regard Abraham as its physical, ethnic ancestor? (I know that most commentators resist the repunctuation of 4.1 in the way that Hays proposed and I modified; but looking at their counter-arguments gives me the impression that they have not understood the point being made. Romans 4 is not about Abraham as example of a soteriological scheme; it is about Abraham as the father of the worldwide covenant family.) The question about whether Abraham is to be considered 'our father according to the flesh' is the question of the Galatian agitators, who would have answered it 'yes': now that you have come to faith, you must join the physical, 'fleshly' family. Paul then explains this in verse 2: if Abraham was found to be in the covenant on the basis of his works, his badges of membership according to the flesh, he has something to boast of (note the proximity of this to the 'boasting' of Paul in Philippians 3.4–6). But not, says Paul, before God; because, when Scripture declares that 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness', that is, that God established his covenant with him and his family, that was on the basis of his believing of the promise, the promise precisely of a massive, uncountable family. Verse 4: if he had performed works already, this 'reward' would have been his by rights, something earned, not by grace.

Then verse 5 comes up in a sudden new light: 'but to the one who does not work, but *trusts in him who justifies the ungodly*', his faith is 'reckoned as righteousness'. Who are the 'ungodly' for whose justification Abraham is trusting God? The normal answer, I take it, is to say that it is Abraham himself who is 'ungodly', so that in this passage Abraham is trusting God to justify *him*. No doubt that is an element in it. After all, the rest of the chapter emphasizes that Abraham's call was prior to his circumcision, and prior to the giving of the Torah. But the emphasis, exactly as in Galatians 3, is on the gentiles who are to come in to the family. That is what Abraham believed: not that God would justify him, but that God would give him a worldwide family, *which could only come about if God were to bring the 'ungodly', that is, the gentiles, into the family by an act of sheer grace*. That faith – faith in this future family-creating act of grace – is the faith because of which the [**60**] covenant is established with Abraham. And that same grace which reaches out to the ungodly gentiles is recognizable because it is the blessing and grace which Israel itself knows in the forgiveness of sins, as in Psalm 32.1. Forgiveness for sinning Jews, welcome (with forgiveness thrown in) for ungodly gentiles: that is the theme of the whole chapter. That, I suggest, is what Paul means by his interesting variation of expression in Romans 3.30: God will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised *through* their faith, bringing them in as it were from the outside. And that resonates exactly with the conclusion of a not unrelated argument in Galatians 3.10–14.

I wish there were more time for exegesis, but there is not. This must stand, part for the whole, as a sign and seal of the reading of Paul which, I have argued, makes more sense of the big sweep and the tiny details than any other. I turn, rapidly, to my conclusion.

Synthesis and System: Past, Present and Future

One of the key charges against me, in the human lawcourt which, if I were Paul, would not bother me (see 1 Corinthians 4.3), is that I have said that final justification, the verdict of the last day, will be in accordance with 'works'. Sometimes I have been quoted as saying 'on the basis of works', with the meaning – at least, this is the meaning that has apparently been heard – that 'works' are thereby a kind of independent 'basis', something entirely of my own doing which takes the place, on the last day, that is occupied in present justification by the finished work of Jesus Christ. When writing the first version of this paper, surrounded by cardboard boxes and other paraphernalia of moving house, I did not have the means to check, but because I have never intended to say what was there being heard, I was puzzled. It appears that the word 'basis' is being used in different senses, just as within the Pauline corpus the word 'foundation' can be used in different ways – in 1 Corinthians 3.11, for Jesus himself; in Ephesians 2.20, for the apostles and prophets, with the Messiah as the cornerstone. I repeat what I have always said: that the final justification, the final verdict, *as opposed to the present justification, which is pronounced over faith alone*, will be pronounced over

the totality of the life lived. It will be, in other words, *in accordance with* 'works', with the life seen as a whole – not that any such life will be perfect (Philippians 3.13–14) but that it will be going in the right direction, 'seeking for glory and honor and immortality' (Romans 2.7). When I have spoken of 'basis' in this connection, I have not at all meant by that to suggest that this is an independent basis from the finished work of Christ and the powerful work of the Spirit, but that within that solid and utterly-of-grace structure the particular evidence offered on the last day will be the tenor and direction of the life that has been lived.

(There is, of course, a similar problem in talking of 'faith' as the 'basis' of present justification. From one point of view, that sounds as though 'faith' is something which we do to earn God's favor, and there have indeed been some who have expounded it exactly like that. But no, declares Reformed theology: the basis is God's grace and love in the finished work of Christ. Fine; if we want to keep the word 'basis' for that, let us do so, but let us not forget Newman: maybe this debate is about words rather than things. This [**61**] kind of discussion, in fact, is in danger of collapsing under the weight of its own post-biblical language. Not that there is anything wrong with post-biblical language, as for instance in the doctrines of the Trinity, but that when we find ourselves tripping over words like 'basis', or indeed 'center' or 'heart', in relation to Pauline theology, we should perhaps stop and ask ourselves what, in full sentences rather than shorthand formulae, we are actually saying.)

This view of mine – which I take also to be Paul's – has been seized upon as evidence that I do not believe in the firm, solid assurance of justification by faith in the present; that I believe in justification as a gradualist process; that I am undermining assurance; or – a bizarre charge, this, but I heard it just the other day – that I am encouraging people to trust in the Holy Spirit as well as in Jesus Christ, whereas in the Creed, when we say 'I believe in the Holy Spirit', we do not mean that we *trust in* that Spirit, but merely that we acknowledge its existence. Final justification by works? Must be something horribly wrong!

This is a classic example of people saying 'Tom Wright says x; x must entail y and z; y and z are clearly wrong, or dangerous; we will therefore attack him for those'. But in this case x does not entail either y or z. If it did, it is Paul himself who is in the dock, not me. 'It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God', he says, referring to the future justification, 'but the doers of the law who will be justified' (Romans 2.13). He is there summing up what he said a few verses earlier, that on the day of God's righteous judgment he will give to each according to their works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality he will give eternal life, and its opposite to those who disobey and disbelieve.

Ah, you say, but that is hypothetical, and Paul is about to declare it null and void and to show a different way altogether. I respond that it is you, O exegete whoever you are saying such things, that is making the word of God null and void through your tradition. Did you never read in 2 Corinthians 5 that we must all appear before the Messiah's judgment seat, so that we may

each receive what was done in the body, good or bad? Who wrote that verse? Ed Sanders? Tom Wright? No: Paul. Or, back in Romans, what about 14.10–12, where each of us will give an account to God, at his judgment seat? How do you fit that into your system? Unless you can, you have stopped reading Paul and have instead imposed your own scheme onto him. For Paul, future justification will be in accordance with the life that has been lived. He does not say we will earn it. He does not say we will merit it. He says we will have been 'seeking for it' by our patience in well-doing. And the whole of Romans 5—8 – which generations of anxious exegetes have struggled to fit with a Protestant reading of chapter 3 – is there to explain how it works: how it works in theory, how it works in practice. The theory involves baptism and the Spirit, neither of which feature that much in normal Protestant schemes of justification. The practice involves reckoning that if one is in the Messiah, one is dead to sin and alive to God; and then, on that basis, and in the power of the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body. If that is not happening, then according to the logic of Romans 8.5–11 it must be questioned whether one really belongs to the Messiah at all.

The future justification, then, will be in accordance with the life lived, but the glorious conclusion of chapter 8 makes it clear that this is no ground for [**62**] anxiety. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' This is looking to the future, trusting that the Jesus who died, who rose, and who now intercedes for us will remain at the heart of the unbreakable bond of love with which God has loved us. And when we read this wonderful passage, as we must, in the light of the whole of the preceding argument, especially Romans 5.1–11 and 8.12–27, it is clear that it is precisely the Spirit who enables us to be the people who can celebrate in that way, the people of patience, the people of hope, the people in whose hearts love for God has been poured out. This is why it is so utterly foolish to separate out trust in Christ alone from trust in the Holy Spirit. In my tradition, at least, when we are asked 'do you believe in and trust in God the Father', we respond 'I believe and trust in him'; and we give exactly the same response in relation to Jesus the Messiah and to the Spirit. 'I believe and trust in him'. Trusting in the Spirit is not something other than trusting in Jesus the Messiah, since he is the one whose Spirit it is, and through whom and because of whom the Father gives it to us.

The final, future justification, then, is assured for all who are 'in the Messiah'. Some of you will have heard Kevin Vanhoozer's splendid paper at the Wheaton College Conference in the spring (now published as Vanhoozer 2011), and I am fully in agreement with his proposal that incorporation and adoption are key categories with which we might effect a reconciliation between the different 'perspectives'. That has always been my own belief as well, though not always expressed as elegantly as Kevin did that day. But I want now to emphasize particularly that this future justification, though it will be in accordance with the life lived, is not for that reason in any way putting in jeopardy the present verdict issued over faith and faith alone. Precisely because of what faith is – the result of the Spirit's work, the sign of that Messiah-faithfulness which is the proper covenant badge – the verdict of the present is firm and secure. 'The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a

pardon receives.' Of course. Nothing that Paul says, or that I say, about future justification undermines that for a moment. The pardon is free, and it is firm and trustworthy. You can bet your life on it. It is everlasting. It will be reaffirmed on the last day – by which time, though you will not be fully perfect even at your death, the tenor and direction of your life, through the Spirit's grace, will have been that patience in well-doing which seeks for glory, honor, and immortality. Following that final verdict, to quote another great hymn, we will be 'more happy, but not more secure'. That is the truth of justification by faith *in the present time*, as Paul stresses in Romans 3.

Today and for ever, then; what about 'yesterday'? All that I have said looks back to the finished work of the Messiah, representing Israel and hence the world, and so able fittingly to substitute for Israel and hence for the world. His obedience unto death, the death of the cross, is the once-for-all act of covenantal obedience through which God did, in and through Abraham's family, what needed to be done for Adam's family (Romans 5), and so, through the renewal of Adam's family, for the whole creation (Romans 8). When God raised Jesus from the dead, he declared him to be the Messiah, reversing the verdict of both the Jewish and the Roman courts. That act constitutes God's judicial declaration: 'He really is my son.' That is what Paul says in Romans 1.3–4; that is where [**63**] his great argument begins. And that, with all its proper overtones in play, is more or less what Paul means by 'the gospel': the royal announcement that the crucified and risen Jesus is Israel's Messiah and the Lord of the World. (I have been criticized for making a somewhat abbreviated statement about 'the gospel', by contrast with the fuller and more detailed statements of others. I can be as detailed as you like, but there is also a time for brevity.) He is in charge. And to the challenge that this would only be good news if you knew that he had died for *your* sins, I respond that for Paul the announcement of this Jesus as Lord is, ontologically and absolutely, good news for the cosmos, posing the challenge to everyone to discover that it can be good news for themselves, but existing as good news antecedent to that response. To the further challenge, that Tom Wright has forgotten what the gospel is, or – as some have absurdly charged me with saying – that I would not know what to say to a dying person, I respond that whether in proclamation from the housetops or in whispering into a dying ear, it is the name of Jesus, Jesus the crucified and risen one, that must be spoken and that will bring healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and hope. By all means accuse me of fanciful exegesis here and there. I will fight my corner. But do not accuse me of forgetting the gospel of Jesus or not knowing its power to save and heal.

'Yesterday', then, is the ground for 'today'. When, in Romans 8, the Spirit enables us to call God 'Abba, father', we discover the inner, adoptive logic of justification itself: through the Spirit-inspired faith, we show that God's verdict over us is the same. This one, too, declares God in baptism, is my child, my son, my daughter. That is Romans 6. And 'tomorrow', our own resurrection will constitute the final declaration which will correspond to those already given. It will still be God's statement about Jesus the Messiah; it will still be God's statement about us, and about who we are in the Messiah;

and then it will be powerfully, visibly expressed not just in hopeful faith but in glorious, bodily reality. In this sense, and only in this sense, I would be happy to think of Paul thinking something which, in my view, he never explicitly says anywhere: that the verdict 'in the right', 'righteous', which God issues over Jesus at his resurrection, becomes the verdict God issues over us when we believe – in other words, that we are incorporated into the 'righteous-verdict', perhaps even the 'righteous-ness', of Jesus himself. That is not, of course, what the tradition has meant by 'the righteousness of Christ' and its 'imputation'. But I suspect it may be the Pauline reality to which that noble tradition, in which so many have found so much help, was rightly pointing as best it could. My hope and prayer as we go forward is that we will be so cheerfully grounded in those once-for-all events, so firm in our present faith, and so zealous in the Spirit to be patient in well-doing, that we may together find we can read Paul afresh and that he will make more and more sense to us all.

Perhaps the right way to conclude this lecture is to say: Yesterday we had all sorts of puzzling disagreements; today we are finding that our shared reading of Scripture is drawing us together; one day, we shall enjoy fellowship in the Messiah for ever; so why not try to anticipate, in the present, that glorious future reality, so that with one heart and voice we may glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah? That, it seems to me, would be an appropriately Pauline exhortation with which to finish.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

PAUL AND EMPIRE (2010)

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This was the last piece I wrote as Bishop of Durham. Indeed, I wrote it extremely early in the morning on the day the workmen were coming to pack up the books for our move to Scotland. That was already some weeks, if not months, after the official deadline, and I am very grateful to Professor Stephen Westerholm for his patience in awaiting what was the final contribution to his volume.

This essay is simply an attempt to summarize where nearly two decades of debate about Paul and empire had reached by the summer of 2010. It looks forward to chapter 12 of *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.

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[285] The Setting

The Roman World

When Augustus Caesar died in AD 14, he left behind him a world transformed. Previous generations of Roman leaders had extended the rule (*imperium*) of Rome around the Mediterranean world, to the point where the earlier democratic republic, full of checks and balances to stop any individual becoming too powerful, was in danger of collapsing under its own weight. This, in fact, had more or less happened fifty years earlier, when Augustus's adoptive father, Julius Caesar, had been assassinated by republican traditionalists who saw him, rightly, as a direct threat to the centuries-old Roman system. This precipitated several years of complex civil wars, played out on foreign soil, with the super-efficient Roman military machine turning on itself in support of one would-be leader or another. Augustus, the last man standing in this deadly contest, returned to Rome and declared that he had brought peace to the world. A grateful city, and system, was happy to ignore the irony. The *imperium* of Rome had become the empire of Caesar.

Augustus extended the irony with great care: he had, he said, restored the Republic, being himself 'elected' to the chief offices and outwardly deferring

to the ruling body, the Senate. Under his rule, as his propaganda claimed, not only peace but also 'justice' had come to the world (*Iustitia* became officially a goddess in the time of Augustus). Rome possessed 'freedom' and was glad to be able to share it with the rest of the world. The 'good news' of Caesar's sovereignty was hailed across his wide domains; he had instituted a new era of prosperity and plenty. The *Ara Pacis* ('Altar of Peace') in Rome [**286**] solemnly celebrates a new fruitfulness for all creation. Romans as a whole, wisely, went along with this convenient fiction, hailing Augustus and then his successors as 'saviour' and 'lord'. Declaring that his adoptive father had been deified after his death, Augustus himself was styled as 'son of god'.

How far people actually believed all this is open to question. More pressing business was at hand, not least the running, and extending, of the huge network of government, law, administration and infrastructure stretching from the Atlantic coasts of Europe in the west to Egypt, Syria and 'Asia' (more or less modern Turkey) in the east. The Roman army was deployed in keeping the peace and maintaining secure borders, not least to enable the safe passage of grain from Egypt to Rome. Central Italy could not produce nearly enough food to sustain the swollen population of its capital, and as more and more people poured into the city in search of money, or indeed power, grain from Egypt became for Rome what Middle-Eastern oil is for the Western world today – a necessary adjunct to a way of life, to be protected in whatever way was required. The lands immediately beyond Turkey and Syria, then as now, continued (from the Western point of view) to pose problems, which Augustus's successors did their best to address.

The most obvious predecessor for Augustus was Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC, whose empire had stretched from Greece in the west to the borderlands of India in the east. Augustus, shifting the focus westwards, put the notion of a single empire on a far more stable footing, so that whereas Alexander's brief empire had broken up more or less at once after his death into different kingdoms, that of Augustus continued, and developed, for four hundred years. It survived various disasters such as the 'year of the four emperors' (AD 69), when, following Nero's suicide, military commanders from the corners of the empire claimed the throne in quick, bloody succession. But the earlier achievement of Alexander, the heartland of whose empire (Greece, Turkey and not least Egypt) became central to that of Augustus, provided more than just a rough model. For millions of inhabitants of what we now know as the Roman world, it offered far more: a way of making sense of things, a worldview, an ideology, expressed in symbol and cult.

Alexander and his successors tapped into older ideas of divine kingship, formalizing them in various ways and integrating them into the various systems of classical theology (Zeus/Jupiter and his Olympian colleagues) as well as local religions and cults. Rome already had its own eponymous goddess, 'Roma', to whom troops swore allegiance, and who was symbolized in the eagle that adorned their military standards. Now there began to appear new gods and goddesses: Augustus himself, whose adoptive father Julius Caesar had, after his death, been declared to be divine, and then various members of the imperial family. Augustus was careful not to claim divine

honours in Rome itself, but in the eastern provinces there was no need for such restraint. Indeed, the locals would not have understood it. Especially in Egypt, but not only there, rulers had been divine as long as anyone could remember. Cities like Corinth in Greece and Ephesus in Asia, already major centres of Roman power and influence, became major centres also of the imperial cult – not as a strange new idea, but as the natural focal point of the massive, all-embracing presence and authority of Rome and its supreme ruler. One of the great gains in historical understanding over recent years has been the recognition that 'religion' in the ancient world was not, as in post-Enlightenment modernity, set [**287**] over against 'politics' and other aspects of ordinary existence, but was integral to everything else. Business, taxes, art, marriage, travel, war, farming – wherever you looked, 'religion' was part of it. And the cult of the emperor, stitched into the fabric of everyday life through coins, buildings, statues (including members of the imperial family carved to resemble the classic pagan deities), regular games, sacrifices and military ideology, became the fastest growing 'religion' within the Mediterranean world of the first century.

Ancient Judaism and Pagan Empire

Already by the first century the Jewish people had spread far beyond their native land into the further recesses of the worlds both of Alexander and Augustus. This itself is telling, in that the main reason for this 'diaspora' was the displacement (or 'exile') they had suffered at various times at the hands of stronger nations. Ancient Judaism told its own story in terms of a perplexing struggle between the global claims of their own god and the global realities of pagan power, whether that of Assyria in the eighth century BC, Babylon in the fifth, or then the succession of other powers – Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria and finally Rome – that followed in quicker succession. The Jewish scriptures presented, from many angles and in many genres, the challenge of the Jewish god to the 'idols' of the nations, not simply as a 'spiritual' battle involving the inner life of worshippers and their post-mortem destiny, but as a contest to be played out in the realities of the created order and the actual fortunes of the people who claimed this god, the creator, as their own. The inner dynamic of Judaism, stretching back to its earliest memories in Genesis and Exodus and bearing fruit in many different movements and subcultures, was that of a people who invoked the presence, power and promises of the world's creator to give them hope and purpose as they were surrounded, and often overwhelmed, by the world's present human rulers. Their god had promised to rescue them from Egypt, and had done so; he would do so again. A great deal of Jewish life revolved around the festivals and other practices which symbolized and re-expressed this narrative. The well-known parties or pressure groups in the first century (Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and the group Josephus refers to as the 'fourth philosophy', the militant revolutionaries) can be understood as embodying different ways of telling this ancient story, different ways of being true to the ancestral traditions within a confusing and dangerous world. The Jews were known in

the world of Greece and Rome as a people fiercely loyal to these traditions, keeping themselves distinct from other peoples, not least in refusing – uniquely in the world of their day – to worship either the regular pagan divinities or the newer imperial ones.

The particular traditions in which this ancient worldview was expressed and through which it was sustained were of course rooted in the Jewish scriptures. The Psalms, sung and prayed day by day, were not just a handbook of personal or private piety: the second Psalm, for example, celebrates the sovereignty of Israel's god over the warring and threatening nations and their rulers, and summons those powers to humble allegiance. The prophets, likewise, were not just telling people how to behave in their private lives. The great book of Isaiah, and especially the central section (chapters [**288**] 40—55) which forms one of the finest sustained poems from any language or culture, declares majestically that the gods of the nations are mere idols and that Israel's god will show himself to be king over them all, returning to his chosen city and restoring his people after their tragic exile in Babylon. The book of Daniel, shaped through the Maccabean crisis of the 160s BC (in which the Jews took on the might of Syria, and won), spoke both of the vocation of Israel to resist the blandishments of pagan idolatry and of the coming of a new divine kingdom through which the kingdoms of the world would be called to account and their power humbled.

So far as we can tell from first-century writings such as '*4 Ezra*' and Josephus, these and other books gave shape and energy to Jewish life and expectation, generating various movements and encouraging various speculations about how and when these promises would be fulfilled. In particular, many Jews searched their scriptures for insight as to the human leadership under which this would happen. Psalm 2 spoke of the coming king as the 'son' of Israel's god; Isaiah, of a strange 'servant' through whom the divine purposes would be put into effect; Daniel, of 'one like a son of man' who would be vindicated by the creator god and exalted to a supreme position over the nations. The expectation, more specifically, of an anointed king (i.e. a 'Messiah') took many forms in the first centuries BC and AD. Some tried to calculate, on the basis of the detailed prophecies of Daniel 9, when this figure would appear, arriving at widely different results. But there was no question that if and when a 'Messiah' might emerge, his primary tasks would include the inflicting of divine judgment on the wicked world of paganism and the rescue and restoration of the ancient people who were loyal to the creator god and to the traditions they had received from him. The multiple other concerns of ancient Judaism – not least the development of Torah as the special way of life, especially in the diaspora where the Temple and its system of worship and sacrifice were not available – never displaced this hope, that one day Israel's god would be king of all the world, and that Israel itself would be seen to be his people. In the meantime, even the continued sufferings of the faithful could become, in some strange way, part of the eventual divine purpose of rescue and restoration.

The ancient traditions of Israel thus continued to put the Jewish people on a collision course with the all-embracing claims of human empire. During

the Maccabean crisis, the Jewish people had looked to Rome as a friendly but far-off foreign power, whose help might be useful against the much closer enemy, Syria. But as Rome grew more powerful, this possibility became more ambiguous, and the political machinations of the first centuries BC and AD reflect this, creating a context for the horrible show-down which took place in the 60s AD. Rome, eager as ever to keep the Middle East quiet in order to secure the grain shipments, ruled their outlying districts through local officials, giving power both to the Sadducees as the supposed local aristocracy and then to Herod the Great as a leading local warlord, not realizing the extent to which the power of either would be resented as out of keeping with proper Jewish tradition (Herod was not even fully Jewish). Trouble flared, too, through the Roman practice of taking a census to determine tribute: those who, reading Daniel and the Psalms, believed that Israel's god alone should be their king saw this as a call to resistance. When Rome tired of indirect rule and sent 'prefects' or 'procurators' to govern Judaea, their cynical indifference to local scruple, coupled with the threat that Jews might be compelled to worship the [**289**] emperor himself, stirred up the fires of ancient devotion and loyalty. 'Zeal' for Israel's god and his Torah meant, for many, zealous resistance to such pagan arrogance – and to anything that appeared to collaborate with it, to compromise the pure Jewish way of life, and so to endanger the coming of the ancient hope, the dawning of the long-awaited day of justice and peace, of rescue for Israel, of the divine kingdom.

The long, slow build-up of Roman rule, from its first beginnings to the full flowering of empire under Augustus and his successors, thus ran side by side with the long, slow build-up of Jewish aspiration and expectation. The clash between the two could not be put off forever. It came in the devastating war of AD 66–70, in which, after early successes had given the revolutionaries the hope that a new version of the Maccabean triumph – a new version of the Exodus itself – might be imminent, the Roman legions under Vespasian came on relentlessly, doing what Rome did best, crushing and crucifying the rebel forces, and finally reducing Jerusalem itself to a smouldering heap. Vespasian left the final triumph to his son Titus, since he himself had gone to Rome as the fourth of the 'four emperors' of 69. Josephus, who had been a Jewish general in the early days of the war, went over to Rome, and declared afterwards that Israel's god had done so as well. As the chief priests had said in John's account of Jesus' trial before Pilate, 'we have no king but Caesar' (19.15).

Paul within the First Century

Introduction

We cannot understand the early Christian movement, or Paul as part of it, unless we locate it firmly and centrally within the map of these converging and explosive forces. When we consider 'Paul and empire', we are not talking about a political sideshow, a sub-category of 'Pauline ethics' ('what about the

State?'). We are talking about the kingdom of God and the lordship of Jesus the Messiah. Along with the already-noted great gain of contemporary scholarship, emerging from the false perspectives of modernity to recognize the all-pervasiveness of 'religion' in the everyday Roman world, we have a further and consequent gain: the recognition that for Paul, too, 'religion', or 'salvation', was not separated off from the questions with which his contemporaries had been struggling – questions which he, too, as a zealous young Pharisee, had regarded as vital. His early loyalty to Israel's god, to the ancestral traditions and particularly the Mosaic law, and his embrace of Israel's hope of the kingdom of this god and of the resurrection of the dead through which this god, as the creator, would restore his ancient people to life in a new creation – all of this spoke directly to the issues we have been noting. When, after ten or more years of travelling round the Mediterranean world, he returned to Jerusalem to bring financial help to the struggling group of Christians there, he walked into a city where the talk of the day was not about how to go to heaven but about how Israel's god was going to become king – and about what it meant, at such a moment, to be loyal to him and to his law.

Reading Paul in this way demands, of course, a radical change of perspective for those whose own world has neatly separated out 'religion' and 'politics' (a modern fiction which has enormously influenced today's Western world but which was unknown before the eighteenth century and remains unknown in most of the world). [**290**] In particular, it flies in the face of the (until recently) dominant paradigm of Pauline theology, that of a Lutheran conception of 'two kingdoms' which itself may have influenced the split world of Enlightenment theory. Within that world, for instance, the word *Christos* in Paul was held to be a mere name, not a title, and certainly not a reference to Jesus as the fulfilment of the world-ruling aspirations of ancient Judaism. But there are several signs, not only that *Christos* in Paul retains its full 'messianic' significance, but that it does so as a central part of Paul's entire vision of the true god and the fulfilment of his purposes. Paul's gospel, arguably, remained firmly rooted in the soil of ancient Jewish expectation. He believed that in Jesus, and particularly in his death and resurrection, Israel's god had been true to his promises. It was therefore time for the world to be brought under the lordship of this god and of his anointed king.

But what might that mean? The attempt to explore the political meaning of Paul's letters, which has suddenly flowered within New Testament scholarship in the last couple of decades, is itself of course firmly contextual. In part it relates to the demise of the existentialist interpretations which had themselves pushed into the background earlier explorations such as those of Deissmann (1912); until recently, Georgi (1991) was something of a lone voice exploring the continuing possibility of political meaning in Paul. Earlier studies of 'principalities and powers' explored the relation between what in modern terms count as 'spiritual' and 'temporal' powers, pointing to the conclusion that the distinction was far more fluid in Paul's world (Caird 1956; Wink 1984). In part it relates to the increased study of Paul by those outside the world of seminaries and ministerial formation, who have brought social-scientific and other perspectives to bear. In part it has to do with a

reawakening of interest in reading Paul within his wider philosophical context, both ancient (e.g. Blumenfeld 2001) and modern (e.g. Taubes 2004; Agamben 2006). In part, to be sure, it relates to the sudden awareness, in North America, of what many see as a new kind of global empire, and of the multi-layered challenges this poses. This, and the wider context of post-colonial discourse, relates particularly to the seminal work of Horsley (1997, 2000, 2004) as well as writers like Elliott (1995) and Cassidy (2001), and the more popular work of Borg and Crossan (2009). Frequently these explorations have maintained the split world of the Enlightenment, perpetuating the either/or (*either* 'politics' *or* 'religion'/'theology'), and merely shifting the focus (Paul as political activist *rather than* theologian or 'spiritual writer'), and making him speak with a suspiciously direct relevance to contemporary American concerns (more nuanced and multi-layered in Walsh and Keesmaat 2004). This has precipitated a reaction from those who protest that Paul was after all writing about spiritual realities (Kim 2008) and those who insist on a more nuanced reading of the Roman world and Paul in its context (Bryan 2005). The time is ripe for further mature and integrated reflection, not least on the philosophical and cultural underpinnings of imperial ideology on the one hand and Paul's response on the other.

One might note, of course, that Jesus himself is hardly to be separated out from the clash of civilizations which was taking place. The phrase 'king of the Jews', written up over his head on the cross, says it all: this is what Rome does to would-be rebel leaders. Jesus' vision of Israel's god and his kingdom, and his radical expression of it in deed and word, is not our present subject. But it is increasingly recognized that whatever [**291**] Jesus was about, he was not offering either a spirituality or a salvation which left the present world irrelevant and untouched. His was a message, and a mission, of cataclysmic challenge and transformation, not of detachment and abandonment. And Paul believed that Israel's god had raised Jesus from the dead, thereby retrospectively validating his kingdom-bringing mission, and declaring that he had all along been the one of whom Psalm 2 had spoken: the son of God, the true Lord of the world, the one who had defeated evil and now offered forgiveness freely to all, the one at whose name every knee shall bow. And with that we arrive at exegesis.

Counter-imperial Messages in the Letters?

Until very recently it was possible for scholars to deal with Paul's view of politics and the Roman empire with a quick reference to Romans 13.1–7, as though that was the only time such ideas crossed his mind (and as though his view of Caesar and all his works was that he was welcome to run the 'secular' world as long as Jesus could run the 'religious' one). Ironically, the very word 'Romans' has become synonymous, for theologians and exegetes, not so much with the inhabitants of the ancient city of Rome and their culture, but with a nest of exciting theological and spiritual questions, debates and possibilities. Justification; faith; sanctification; the Holy Spirit; the question

of Israel; Christology; community life: all these are there, and they are important. But the question of how Paul's letter might be *heard in Rome itself*, the city that ruled the world, has until recently hardly been addressed (see now Oakes 2009).

In the same way, earlier studies of potential counter-imperial language in the letters tended to focus, as was the habit of the time, on particular words like *kyrios*, *sōtēr* and *euangelion*. Debate then concerned questions of *derivation*: did Paul derive his ideas from the imperial cult? A negative answer was frequently driven by a concern to stress the Jewishness of Paul's thought over against a supposed Hellenizing tendency. But it is equally possible that Paul, however much he derived his key concepts and structures of thought from his native Judaism, was concerned (as was that Judaism) with *confrontation*, with the challenge to express his new-found (and, he would say, still essentially Jewish) faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah within the polemical context necessitated by the new imperial reality. It is important, then, to look not only at key terms but at actual arguments, combinations of ideas and above all the flow of thought in particular letters and passages.

In the light of our earlier exposition of empire, the opening 'salutation' of Romans awakens echoes that, arguably, would not have been missed by its intended recipients:

> God's good news concerning his son, who was descended from the seed of David according to the flesh and was marked out as son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus, the Messiah, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostolic commission to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus the Messiah; to all God's beloved in Rome. (Romans 1.3–7)

[**292**] Good news about the all-powerful son of God who, coming from the ancient Israelite royal family, claims universal allegiance! The echoes of Psalm 2 and similar passages are matched by the echoes of Roman imperial rhetoric. Here as elsewhere, the question presses: if Paul does not mention Caesar by name, can he be taken to be alluding to him, and to his imperial world? As with political cartoons in the modern world (and, for that matter, with the book of Revelation), it is dangerous to assume that readers would be unable to pick up allusions to the structures of power and those who embodied and enforced them. Often, in fact, such allusions are the only way, or perhaps the best way, to get the point across (as, e.g., Scott 1990). But in the case of Paul, the echoes of imperial language (not necessarily explicitly 'cultic' language, though as we have seen the cult merges into, and flows out from, the wider ideology) are strong: 'good news', 'son of God', universal allegiance, Jesus as part of an ancient royal family and as *kyrios* ('lord'), and then, in what is generally reckoned the thematic statement of the letter, this 'good news' as being the means of 'salvation' and 'justice' (*dikaiosynē*, 'righteousness'). The fact that these notions have been given very different, and essentially non-political, meanings in some Christian theology ought not to make us deaf to the echoes they would almost certainly have awakened in Rome.

How does the rest of the letter relate to such a reading? Granted necessary brevity, one might suggest that the climax of the first half, in Romans 8, demonstrates that it is the God of Israelite scripture (not, by implication, other divinities) who brings about the great renewal of creation, the outflowing of 'peace' (Romans 5.1). It is the ancient Jewish story, now having reached its climax in Jesus the Messiah (Romans 10.4), that carries the universal divine purpose, rather than the not-quite-so-ancient story of Rome. And it is the Christian community of Romans 14—15 who embody the genuine universalism which Caesar had attempted. The main exposition of the letter concludes with an echo of its opening, and a direct reference to Jesus as the one foretold by psalms and prophets (especially here Isaiah 11.1) as the coming world ruler: 'the root of Jesse rises to rule the nations, and in him the nations shall hope'. The resurrection, in other words, constitutes Jesus as the true lord of the world, the reality of which Caesar is a mere parody.

This reading of Romans (which of course needs to be filled out by, and not played off against, the traditional understandings of the letter as concerned with justification, salvation and so forth), points us on to a similar understanding of the 'apocalyptic' exposition of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul's argument for the future resurrection of believers is set within a global context of the kingdom of God and the sovereign lordship of Jesus the Messiah, again echoing the Psalms, this time Psalm 8 where the 'son of man' has everything put in authority under his feet:

> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet'. But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection', it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15.24–28)

[**293**] The delicately balanced Christology is not our concern. What matters for us is that here Paul quite explicitly evokes the whole ancient Jewish tradition of God's universal sovereignty, exercised through the Davidic king, as in several Psalms (8; 72; 89; 110, etc.) and in the royal predictions from Isaiah. For Paul, the risen and ascended Jesus is *already* installed as the ruler of the world, and the present time is to be understood as the interval between his attaining that status and it having its full effect. The fact that 'death' is cited as the 'last enemy' should not make us imagine that the 'rulers and authorities' who are brought into subjection have nothing to do with actual rulers; rather, death is the weapon by which tyrants rule, so that its abolition in the resurrection draws the sting of their power. Paul has modified the Jewish tradition of God's kingdom, not by spiritualizing it but by putting the crucified and risen Jesus into the middle of it. We now know not only the name of the universal lord but also the means of that lordship: the paradoxical power of suffering love, acted out in the cross, as expressed earlier in the letter.

It has recently been argued (Hardin 2008) that Galatians shows direct evidence of the imperial cult in the cities where Paul's first churches in Asia took root. Following Winter (1994), Hardin sketches a possible scenario in which the gentile Christians were being seduced into claiming Jewish status by becoming circumcised so that they could then claim the Jewish privilege of being a 'permitted religion' and would not have to take part in the (otherwise mandatory) festivities associated with the imperial cult. Getting circumcised would thus be a way of avoiding persecution, not from Jews anxious about earning their own salvation by good works, but from Romans anxious about maintaining imperial standards – and perhaps also from Jews who were anxious about being associated with gentile lawbreakers. This fascinating possibility remains a matter of debate, but Hardin's study of the spread of imperial cult in central Asia demonstrates the existence of a key context that has normally been ignored.

Philippians has long been recognized as a key text for assessing Paul's relation to the world of Caesar. In particular, studies of the 'hymn' in 2.6–11 have suggested that it was composed, and used by Paul in this context, with at least half an eye to the pretensions of divine rulers from Alexander onwards and particularly the Caesars (Oakes 2001). It is Jesus, not Caesar, who has been a 'servant', and has now been given 'the name above every name', so that at his name every knee should bend and every tongue confess *Kyrios Iēsous Christos*, 'Jesus Messiah is Lord'. And he has come to that place of universal acclamation, not by self-aggrandisement after the manner of Hellenistic or Roman potentates, but by the self-abnegation of incarnation and cross. In this light, we might be correct to read the controversial verse 2.12 in terms of the contrast between the imperial 'salvation' and the Christian version: '*work out your own salvation* in fear and trembling' may not, perhaps, refer to 'salvation' in the normal Western sense but to the mode of life proper for those who hail Jesus, rather than Caesar, as *sōtēr*, 'saviour'.

It has often been pointed out that Philippians 3 is built up rather carefully on some of the material in 2.6–11, and the climax of chapter 3 produces a further flurry of what may be read as anti-imperial polemic. Some in Philippi probably prided themselves on their Roman citizenship, and on the fact that if the colony was in trouble Caesar could come from the mother city to rescue them and restore their status [**294**] and prestige. For us, says Paul, 'our citizenship is in heaven': not, that is, a place to which we return after our present life as 'colonials', but a place from which there may come the one who is already in charge, already ruling the whole world. 'From there we await the Saviour, the Lord, Jesus the Messiah' – the one, that is, who claims as of right titles which Caesar had usurped – and it is he who 'has the power to subject all things to himself', and so will transform our bodies from their present humiliation to a glory (which includes the notion of sovereignty, not just splendour) like his own. Here Paul brings together his scriptural background (Psalm 8 again) and the rhetoric of present empire: derivation on the one hand, confrontation on the other.

It is possible that this covert polemic has coloured, too, the exhortation of Philippians 3.2–16. In verse 17 Paul invites the Philippians to 'imitate' him;

but the pattern of life he has described in verses 2–16 is the giving up of outward *Jewish* privilege in order to gain the Messiah. The Philippians, we assume, are not Jews; in what way can they then imitate him? Perhaps, he may be hinting, by at least sitting loose to their privileges in an imperial city. This kind of thing is notoriously hard to prove, but may perhaps suggest a 'hidden transcript', suggesting more than can be said explicitly.

Other letters to northern Greece contain further possible imperial allusions. In the climax of 1 Thessalonians, Paul expounds an apocalyptic vision of the *parousia* of Jesus. The word *parousia* is not derived from the LXX, but carries rather the double overtones of 'royal visitation' (as when Caesar might arrive at a city, or perhaps back in Rome itself) and 'divine manifestation' (as when a god or goddess might suddenly appear). Obviously, if Caesar is divine, the two can be combined; but, for Paul, the real 'parousia' is not that of Caesar but that of Jesus, on the day when he returns in visible power to take full control of the world, to raise the dead and to judge the nations. This polemical context for 4.13–18 (routinely ignored, of course, by those who see here the inappropriate idea of a 'rapture' away from the earth; the language is classic apocalyptic metaphor) then gives birth to one of the most direct allusions to first-century imperial rhetoric. 'When they say "Peace and Security", then sudden destruction will come upon them . . .' (5.3). But 'peace and security', as we know from various sources, was a standard imperial slogan, with the empire posing as a kind of global protection racket (we give you peace and security, you give us money and obedience). Paul's vision of devastating future events seems to be directed not least at the Roman empire in its power and pretension. Had he lived to see the 'year of the four emperors', he might have thought that this was one manifestation at least of the 'sudden destruction' in question, though of course the situation would then be complicated by the fall of Jerusalem and the rise of Vespasian.

The second letter to the Thessalonians has long been regarded with suspicion, not least (we may suppose) because the vision of Paul which inspired an earlier generation of liberal or existentialist theologians did not include apocalyptic or imperial elements. But actually 2 Thessalonians 2.1–12 is best read as a classic piece of counter-imperial rhetoric, not least for one who had fresh memories of the attempt of the emperor Gaius to erect a huge statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem, demanding that the Jews worship it. However we understand the rest of this difficult passage, there should be no doubt about its principal polemical target.

[**295**] By the same token, scholarly study of Paul has long been content to accept the verdict of an earlier generation, motivated by quite different theological interests, that Ephesians and Colossians are not by Paul himself. Since the paradigm which produced this theory is now largely discredited, it is surely time for the theory itself to be re-examined. But however that may be, it would be a mistake to see these letters as any less counter-imperial than the others at which we have glanced (a point sometimes argued on the basis of the supposedly socially conformist 'household codes' in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3). Ephesians holds out an astonishing vision of Jesus as the lord of the whole cosmos, 'far above all rule and authority and power and

dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come' (1.21 [NRSV]). To invite people to worship the God who has been revealed in and through this Jesus cannot but be politically subversive. In fact, the coming together of Jews and gentiles into the single family of the Messiah (2.11–22) is to be the sign to the powers of the world that their time is up: 'so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places' (3.10 [NRSV]). The cosmic battle against the spiritual forces of evil (6.10–17) does not exclude a struggle with earthly authorities (Ephesians, like Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, claims to be written from prison), but indicates their proper context.

In the same way, Colossians offers a vision of the lordship of Jesus over all structures of human authority (1.15–20), and includes the striking note that on the cross it was not the rulers and authorities who were disarming Jesus and making a public example of him, but the other way round (2.15). This goes closely with 1 Corinthians 2.8, which suggests that the rulers of the present age would not have crucified Jesus had they realized both who he was and what would be the effect of that execution upon their own power. The counter-imperial overtones of Colossians have been suggestively and creatively explored by Walsh and Keesmaat (2004).

We return in conclusion to the famous passage, Romans 13.1–7. This is not, as used to be thought, a plea for a quietist theology in which 'the state' can get on with its own business and the church simply has to do what it is told. It fits, rather, within the Jewish world in which, as part of creational monotheism, the creator god intends that the world be ordered and governed through human authorities. The risk from tyranny is great, but the risk from chaos is worse – a point often ignored by comfortable democratic westerners, but well known elsewhere. Followers of Jesus the Lord are not exempt from the ordinary structures of human life, and part of the thrust of Romans 13 may be to curb any over-excited early Christians who might imagine that by hailing Jesus as Lord they could simply ignore the need to pay taxes and give ordinary obedience to ordinary civic regulations. But the main thrust is more subtle. If Caesar is giving himself divine honours, Paul will remind the early Christians that he is not in fact divine, but that he receives his power from, and owes allegiance to, the one true God (compare the striking John 19.11). The passage constitutes a severe demotion of Caesar and his pretensions, not a charter for him to do as he pleases. This passage continues to disappoint those who want Paul to articulate their favourite form of left-wing social protest, but it continues to remind us of the basic substructures of Jewish thought which underlie his thinking, as well as their transformation in Jesus.

[296] Conclusion

Other passages and themes could be added. What we have tried to do here is to indicate some of the ways in which Paul may be seen in the context of the imperial world of his day. It is of course possible to state these things

excessively, and it may take some while before scholarship attains a proper historical perspective, balance and nuance. But it is equally possible to omit such things altogether and thereby to miss a key dimension of Paul's thought and strategy. Much remains to be done, not least to demonstrate the integration of these elements of his writing with the more traditional topics of his 'theology' (justification, Christology, and so forth). As a start, we might note the way in which both the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, so obviously central to traditional theological analyses, are also central here: it is the cross that defeats the powers, and it is the resurrection that declares that Jesus is, and always was, the true 'son of God'. This suggests a much tighter integration of Paul's theology, soteriology and spirituality with questions of (what we think of as) 'politics' than has usually been attempted. The question of 'Paul and empire' remains one of the most fascinating, if sometimes frustratingly elusive, of current questions about the apostle and his world.

Part IV

St Andrews

Chapter Twenty-Eight

MIND, SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY: ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL – REFLECTIONS ON PAUL'S ANTHROPOLOGY IN HIS COMPLEX CONTEXTS (2011)

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This paper was a surprise, as the opening sentences make clear. Much as I enjoy philosophy, I have not had the time or space to engage with philosophical issues beyond what has been immediately necessary for my historical and exegetical work. What is more, I have often been puzzled when I hear Christian philosophers trying to expound this or that aspect of Christian faith without (so it seems) reference to scripture itself. It sometimes feels as though Lessing's ugly ditch still runs between the eternal truths the philosophers are trying to expound and the historical investigation of the founding documents of the faith. So when I received an invitation out of the blue to give this paper, I naturally wanted to accept it (quite apart from all the other reasons one might have to welcome an invitation to New York). I am grateful, too, to my colleague Alan Torrance for some very helpful conversations as I tried to think my way into the question as philosophers might be approaching it. I hope this paper will provide at least some encouragement to philosophers and theologians on the one hand, and to exegetes on the other, to build more bridges across that unpleasant and unnecessary ditch.

I had not expected, when I agreed to give the paper, that my father would die, aged 91, the day before I was due to fly to the conference. I thought about cancelling, but my mother and my siblings insisted they would manage the initial arrangements and that, since the funeral would not take place for a week, I had plenty of time to go there and back. It gave a deep poignancy to my reflections on what we can and must say about the Christian between death and resurrection.

* * *

An exegete among philosophers! I don't know whether that is more like a Daniel among the lions or like a bull in a china shop. We shall see.

When I was teaching in Oxford twenty years ago, I had a student who wanted to study Buddhism; so I sent her to Professor Gombrich for tutorials. After a week or two he asked her to compare the Buddhist view of the soul

with the Christian view. She replied that she didn't know what the Christian view was. He wrote me a sharp little letter, saying, in effect, 'You've been teaching this young woman theology for a whole year and she doesn't know what the soul is'. My reply was straightforward: we had spent that first year studying the Old and New Testaments, and the question of the 'soul' simply hadn't arisen.

Now of course that was a slightly polemical stance, but I still think it was justified. The problem is that there are a great many things which have become central topics of discussion in later Christian thought, sometimes from as early as the late second century, about which the New Testament says very little; but it is assumed that, since the topic appears important, the Bible must have a view of it, and that this view can contribute straightforwardly to the discussions that later thinkers, up to the present day, have wanted to have. The most striking example of this is the referent of the word 'justification': as Alister McGrath points out in his history of the doctrine, what the great tradition from Augustine onwards was referring to with that word is significantly different from what Paul was referring to when he used the word. That's fine; we can use words how we like and, with that character in *Alice in Wonderland*, can pay them extra on Thursdays; but we must then be careful about importing back into our reading of scripture the new meanings which we have assigned to technical terms which, in the first century, simply didn't carry those meanings. We should also pay attention to the question of whether the word may, in its original scriptural context, carry other meanings which we may simply be screening out.

This came home forcibly to me eight years ago when I published a little book called *For All the Saints?*, a precursor to *Surprised by Hope.* The book was basically explaining why I didn't believe in 'purgatory', and didn't agree with the practices that have grown up around 'All Souls Day'. I pointed out that in scripture ultimate salvation is not in heaven but in the resurrection into the combined reality of the new heaven and new earth. I also pointed out that, again in scripture, the word 'soul' is not normally used to refer to someone in the intermediate state. A review of the book appeared in the London *Times*; the reviewer saw the point, but the headline-writer didn't. The headline read: 'New Bishop Abolishes Heaven and the Soul'. That, of course, was precisely what I hadn't done, but I can see why the misunderstanding arose – though it was frustrating to get a flood of letters complaining against the liberalization of the church. I hope this more sophisticated audience today will not make the same mistake. But I'm afraid I do regard the traditional Christian preaching about everyone having a 'soul' which needs 'saving' as now almost hopelessly misleading. When the New Testament uses this language – which it very, very rarely does, by the way – it didn't mean anything like what westerners since the Middle Ages have supposed. There is indeed a reality to which that language is trying to point. But continuing with the language when it is bound, now, to convey a very different meaning from that genuine reality is perverse.

I want in this paper to propose a view of the human person which you might call eschatological integration. Just as the Pauline view of God's ultimate

future for the cosmos is the joining together in the Messiah of all things in heaven and earth, so I believe that Paul's view of God's ultimate future for the human person is the full integration of all that we are made to be. Just as in my recent book *After You Believe* I have tried to reinhabit the Aristotelian virtue-tradition by substituting this Pauline eschatological vision for Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, so I believe that by looking to the goal, the *telos*, we gain insight as to how to develop and sustain an appropriate Christian anthropology for the present. God, says Paul, will be 'all in all'; and for Paul it is the body, not just the soul, the mind or the spirit, which is the temple of the living God. The body is meant for the Lord, he says, and the Lord for the body.

One more preliminary remark. The Western tradition, Catholic and Protestant, Evangelical and Liberal, charismatic and social-gospel, has managed for many centuries to screen out the central message of the New Testament, which isn't that we are to escape the world and go to heaven, but rather that God's sovereign, saving rule would come to birth 'on earth as in heaven'. The story of all four gospels is not the story of how God came in Jesus to rescue souls for a disembodied, other-worldly heaven. It is the story of how God, in Jesus, became king on earth as in heaven. Ultimately, any would-be Christian view which doesn't serve that central vision is, in my view, either folly or idolatry, or possibly both. I realize that's quite a serious thing to say about a very large swathe of would-be orthodox theology, but I am afraid it may be true. I believe therefore that a Christian anthropology must necessarily ask, not, what are human beings in themselves, but, what are human beings called to do and be as part of the creator's design? Not to ask the question that way round, and to think simply about ourselves and what we are, risks embodying, at a methodological level, Luther's definition of sin: *homo incurvatus in se*.

Before my constructive proposal, however, I have several questions to put to the broadly dualist paradigm that seems to be dominant among many Christian philosophers today. There are many sub-variants within this position and of course I can't deal with them individually. But I hope this will be helpful as a framing of the question.

Questions to the Dominant Dualist Paradigm

Let me first say that of course I understand the impetus which has driven many, perhaps many of you, towards what has called itself dualism. Faced with a strident, sometimes even bullying, modernism in which humans are just naked apes or even just random bundles of atoms and molecules, it is important to protest. Many wise atheists would agree. There is much about human life, even without God in the picture, which rebels against that radical reductionism. As many have shown, even the reductionists listen to music and believe in human rights and other things which might call their stated position into question. There is more to life than the chance collision of particles. But is 'dualism' the right way, indeed the Christian way, to describe this 'more'?

I have four questions or challenges; the third one subdivides.

My first question is to wish that we would locate our modern debates more explicitly within the strongly prevailing Epicurean climate of the post-enlightenment world. Lucretius would, I think, be delighted at his late victory, with the gods banished to a distant heaven and the world doing its own thing, developing by its own inner processes. That view, of course, has allowed all kinds of political as well as scientific developments. But whereas most westerners today suppose that we have discovered self-perpetuating secular democracy as the ultimate form of government and a self-caused evolution as the ultimate form of the development of life, thus setting ourselves apart from lesser superstitious mortals who still believe otherwise, what has in fact happened is simply the triumph of one ancient worldview at the expense of others. And the trouble is that we have allowed our debates to take place within that framework, so that we have accepted the terms, for instance, of 'nature and supernature' and have done our best to hold out for the two rather than the one, for 'supernaturalism' rather than just 'naturalism'.

This has conditioned, for instance, debates about causation: does a putative God 'intervene' in the world or doesn't he, and does a putative soul cause events in the body or doesn't it? It is, basically, the same question: and just as I believe that we are wrong to look for a god-of-the-gaps, hiding somewhere in the unexplored reaches of quantum physics like a rare mammal lurking deep in the unexplored Amazon jungle, so I believe we are wrong to look for a soul-of-the-gaps, hiding in the bits that neuroscience hasn't yet managed to explain. What Descartes and others tried to do to the person, then, has the same shape to what Enlightenment Epicureanism did to the world; and I regard both as highly dubious projects. The points which have to be made against naturalism, physicalism and reductionism will need to be made without accepting that framework of debate. (Even at the level of ancient philosophy, it would make a huge difference to assume, as perhaps we should, a Stoic worldview as Paul's principal conversation partner: see below.)

My second question has to do with the word 'dualism' itself. This is one of those terms that I wish we could put out to grass for a long time. In *The New Testament and the People of God* I listed no fewer than ten significantly different uses to which the word 'dualism' was being put within biblical studies, and I pointed out the muddle which this linguistic and conceptual slipperiness has occasioned. (I should say that Philo of Alexandria is a special case in all this, representing a Platonic face of ancient Judaism which seems to me a major turn away from not only the Old Testament but most of his Jewish contemporaries.)

So let's run through these types of dualism or duality, beginning with four types that would be comfortably at home within ancient Jewish thought:

(a) a heavenly duality: not only God exists, but also angels and perhaps other heavenly beings;
(b) a theological or cosmological duality between God and the world, the creator and the creature;
(c) a moral duality between good and evil;
(d) an eschatological duality between the present age and the age to come.

All of these dualities a first-century Jew would take for granted. But none of them constitutes a dual*ism* in any of the following three senses:

(a) a theological or moral dualism in which a good god or gods are ranged, equal and opposite, against a bad god or gods;
(b) a cosmological dualism, à la Plato, in which the world of space, time and matter is radically inferior to the noumenal world; this would include, perhaps, dualisms of form and matter, essence and appearance, spiritual and material, and (in a Platonic sense) heavenly/earthly (something like this would be characteristic of Philo);
(c) an anthropological dualism which postulates a radical twofoldness of soul and body or spirit and body (this, too, would be familiar in Philo).

Then there are three more which might be possible within ancient Judaism:

(a) epistemological duality as between reason and revelation – though this may be problematic, since it's really the epistemological face of the cosmological dualism which I suggest ancient Jews would mostly reject;
(b) sectarian duality in which the sons of light are ranged against the sons of darkness, as in Qumran;
(c) psychological duality in which the good inclination and the evil inclination seem to be locked in perpetual struggle, as in Rabbinic thought.

As I say, faced with this range of possible referent it seems to me hopeless simply to say 'dualism' and leave it at that. That is why, to try to bring some order into the chaos, I have used 'duality' for bifocal conceptions which fit comfortably within ancient Judaism, and 'dualism' for those which don't. The radical rejection by most ancient Jews, in particular, of what we find in Plato and in much oriental religion, and the radical embrace of space, time and matter as the good gifts of a good creator God, the place where this God is known and the means by which he is to be worshipped – all this remains foundational, and is firmly restated and underlined in the New Testament. Creational, providential and covenantal monotheism simply leave no room for those four dualisms in the middle. In particular, I argued that such dualisms tend to ontologize evil itself, whereas in first-century Judaism evil is not an essential part of the creation, but is the result of a radical distortion within a basically good created order.

Now of course you might say that within contemporary philosophical discourse you all know that you are using the word 'dualism' in a very restricted and specialized technical sense which, in context, carries none of these confusions. I take that point, but I submit that it isn't really good enough. As in Keith Ward's sparkling new book, *More than Matter*, Christian philosophers seeking to re-establish a non-reductive anthropology are turning back to a kind of Kantian idealism, and I know I am not alone in finding this very suspicious territory if we're trying to be loyal to the New Testament in its original Jewish context and setting.

You might then say that the NT itself demonstrates a turn away from Judaism and towards the wider world of Hellenistic philosophy. Well, many have argued that. My view remains that the engagement with the Hellenistic world comes under Paul's rubric in 2 Corinthians 10.5 of 'taking every thought captive to obey the Messiah'. He knows very well the worlds of the Stoics, the Epicureans and the Academic, perhaps particularly the first, but though he's engaging with them he is doing so in confrontation, not derivation. It simply won't do to demonstrate that the NT shows awareness of aspects of human life which appear to be non-material and to conclude from that that some kind of 'dualism' is therefore envisaged, or the 'soul' thereby proved. In particular, as I shall shortly show, it seems to be almost ridiculously arbitrary to lump together such things as soul, mind, consciousness, sensation as though they are all part of the same second, non-physical reality. Why 'dualism'? Why not five, ten, twenty different 'parts'? And – a key question – is 'parts' really the right image in the first place?

This leads to my third question. Many Christian philosophers appeal to the New Testament in support of what they call 'dualism'. But there are several quite serious objections to this, focussed particularly on the word *psychē*, normally translated as 'soul'. I note, by the way, that in Paul's engagement with the Corinthians in particular, there is good reason to suppose that his audience at least would have heard his references to *psychē* and *pneuma* in terms of different kinds of material substance: within Stoic pantheism, everything was in principle material and everything was as it were god-bearing. I'm not saying (though some have) that Paul was adopting a form of Stoicism. I'm warning against reading him within an implicitly Epicurean framework.

First, though there have been age-old debates about whether Paul's anthropology was bipartite or tripartite (with the famous 1 Thessalonians 5.23 – spirit, soul and body – being cited in favour of the tripartite view), both of these seem to me to miss entirely what's actually going on with Paul's anthropological terms. Paul uses over a dozen terms to refer to what humans are and what they do, and since he nowhere either provides a neat summary of what he thinks about them or gives us clues as to whether he would subsume some or most of these under two or three heads, it is arbitrary and unwarranted to do so on his behalf or claim his authority for such a schema. In particular, I note that three terms commonly used interchangeably to refer to the non-material element within dualist anthropology – mind, soul and spirit (*nous, psychē* and *pneuma* – are emphatically not interchangeable. Paul urges the Romans to be transformed by the renewal of the *mind*, not the soul or the spirit. Jesus warns against gaining the whole world and forfeiting the *psychē*, not the mind or the spirit. And so on. And when Paul speaks of the conflict between the spirit and the flesh, the *pneuma* and the *sarx*, he certainly isn't referring to a conflict between the non-material element of the person and the material element. As has repeatedly been pointed out, most of the 'works of the flesh' in Galatians 5.19–21 could be practised by a disembodied spirit (jealousy, etc.). So, too, when Paul thinks of the *pneuma* at work he does not restrict its operation to non-material activities.

Second, when Paul and the gospels use the word *psychē*, it is clear that they are not using it in the sense we'd find in Plato or Philo, or in the sense which is assumed by many today who advocate what they call dualism. Paul's, and the gospels', usage is far closer to the Hebrew *nephesh*, which is the living, breathing creature: God breathed into human nostrils his own breath, the breath of life, *nishmath hayyim*, and the human became a living creature, *nephesh hayyah* (Genesis 2.7). When the Septuagint translates this as *psychē zōsa*, we should not expect *psychē* here to carry Platonic overtones, though presumably some Jews, not least in Philo's Alexandria, subsequently read it thus. *Psychē* here simply means 'creature', or perhaps even (in modern English) 'person'. There are several other references indicating the same thing (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 2.8; Philippians 1.27; 2.30; Romans 2.9; 11.3; 13.1; 16.4; 2 Corinthians 1.23). All refer to the ordinary human life.

Several features of NT usage back this up. For a start, there is no sense, anywhere in the NT, of people who are now humans having had a life prior to their conception and birth. There is no pre-existent soul. Jesus himself is the only exception in the sense of having existed prior to his human conception and birth (1 Corinthians 8.6; 2 Corinthians 8.9; Philippians 2.6–7; Colossians 1.15–17) – but Paul does *not* say that this pre-human existence was that of Jesus' 'soul'. When 1 Timothy 6.7 says 'we brought nothing into the world, and will not be able to carry anything out', I regard this as a rhetorical flourish, not as indicating a hint towards a pre-existent soul. (Indeed, it might be taken as a denial precisely of our 'possession' not just of any material wealth but also of any 'immortal part'; see below). Further, there is never a hint of the *psychē* being immortal in and of itself. 1 Timothy 6 again, this time verse 16: God alone possesses immortality. When Paul speaks of humans having immortality in the future, it is the whole mortal being to which he refers, not the *psychē* specifically (1 Corinthians 15.54): 'this mortal thing', he says, 'must put on immortality', without being more specific. When he says, a few verses earlier (verse 50) that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom', the phrase *sarx kai haima* functions as a composite technical term precisely for corruptible, mortal existence.

In particular, there is no reference anywhere in the NT to the *psychē* as the carrier or special vessel of what we would now call spirituality or openness to God. When Paul talks about being carried up to the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12, he doesn't know whether he was embodied or not, but he never suggests that, if he wasn't embodied, it was his *psychē* which made the journey. The fact that he is uncertain about whether this experience was or wasn't 'in the body' indicates that, for him, it wouldn't have been problematic if the body *had* been involved. For him, the body could just as well have been carried up to heaven. Had that been the case, it wouldn't have caused Paul to revise any dualistic conceptions he might have had that would have assumed that the body should stay on earth where it belonged. Equally, of course, the fact that he can consider the possibility that the experience might *not* have been 'in the body' does indeed indicate that he can contemplate non-bodily experiences, but as will become clear I don't think one can straightforwardly argue from this to what is now meant, in philosophical circles, by 'dualism',

or, in particular, to the conclusion that it is this other non-bodily element which is the crucial, defining part of the human being.

There are other distinctions, too. When Paul discusses praying in tongues, he makes a distinction, but not between soul and body. The spirit prays, he says, but the *mind*, the *nous*, is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14.13–19).

Most important for these discussions, Paul is of course clear about ultimate resurrection, and hence about an intermediate existence. He certainly doesn't suppose that, as some have suggested, the dead proceed straight to the ultimate future, being as it were fast-forwarded straight from bodily death to bodily resurrection. Since the new world is to be a *creatio ex vetere*, not a fresh *creatio ex nihilo*, it doesn't make sense to think of it as already in existence, and certainly Paul seems not to think of it like that. But he never names the *psychē* as the carrier of that intermediate existence. Actually, though the question 'where are they now' is of course a common one at funerals, the New Testament remains largely uninterested in it, and Paul himself only mentions it in passing, once to refer to his own future 'being with the Messiah, which is far better' (Philippians 1.23) and once to refer to those who have 'fallen asleep through Jesus' (1 Thessalonians 4.14). The rest of the NT is likewise reticent: there are the famous 'many dwelling-places' of John 14, and there is the equally famous 'with me in Paradise' of Luke 23.43. But in none of these passages is there any mention of the *psychē*. The only place we find it in this connection is in Revelation 6.9, where the 'souls under the altar' ask God how much longer they have to wait until God completes his just judgment on the world. Had the earliest Christians wanted to teach that the 'soul' is the part of us which survives death and carries our real selves until the day of resurrection, they could have said so. But, with that solitary exception in Revelation, they never do.

The one book in the biblical tradition which does say so, up front as it were, is the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon. (In my Anglican tradition, the 'apocrypha' are read, as Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles puts it, for 'example of life and instruction of manners', but not 'to establish any doctrine'; and the way in which a book like Wisdom diverges from the rest of the biblical tradition at a point like this gives substance to that position.) There, in chapter 3, 'the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, where no torment shall touch them'. A passage of great comfort and hope, not least because, despite what many have thought, it goes on to explain that these persecuted and now dead righteous ones will rise again: 'at the time of their visitation they will shine forth and run like sparks through the stubble; they will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever' (Wisdom 3.1, 7–8). But there are signs, later in the book, that this use of 'soul' to denote the person between death and resurrection has come at a (Platonic) price. Wisdom 8.19–20 speaks first of acquiring a good soul, and then, appearing to correct a wrong impression, of the good soul entering into an undefiled body. Wisdom 9.15 then speaks of the perishable body 'weighing down the soul' (*phtharton gar sōma barynei psychēn*). Here – and perhaps in chapter 3 as well – we have taken a small but significant step towards a genuine anthropological body–soul dualism, even though still held

within a Jewish framework. And the interesting thing is that, though clearly this was easy to do, the New Testament never does it. Wisdom stands out conspicuously.

Other variations occur, too. In the 'song of the Three', appended in the LXX to Daniel chapter 3, the key verse (verse 86) invokes the 'spirits and souls of the righteous', *pneumata kai psychai dikaion*, perhaps indicating that both terms were in use as general heuristic pointers to those in the intermediate state. Within the NT, the remarkable passage in Acts 23.6–9 stands out, with Paul affirming the resurrection and Luke commenting that the Sadducees deny the resurrection, 'neither angel nor spirit', but that the Pharisees affirm 'them both'. As I have argued in *Resurrection of the Son of God*, the best way of understanding this passage is to assume that belief in the resurrection entails belief in some kind of intermediate state, and that the Pharisees used the words 'angel' and 'spirit', again as somewhat vague heuristic terms rather than implying well worked out categories, to denote those who were in such a state. Verse 9, where the Pharisees question whether 'an angel or a spirit has spoken to him', indicate that, though they are not prepared to believe Paul's stronger claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead, they were ready to allow that Paul might have received a communication from someone in this intermediate state.

Other New Testament passages all point in the same direction, to *psychē* as meaning 'human beings', 'living beings' and so forth. In the chilling conclusion to the list of Rome's trading materials in Revelation 18.13, after the cinnamon and the spice, the incense and the myrrh, the cattle, sheep, horses and chariots, we find, bringing up the rear and making the whole thing taste sour: *kai sōmatōn, kai psychas anthropōn*: and bodies, and human beings. I suppose one could suggest that *psychē* here was a reference to the slaves being owned, as we would say, 'in soul as well as body', but that isn't how most commentators take it. *Psychai anthropon* is simply a way of saying 'living human beings'.

The same is true in the gospels. What shall it profit, asks Jesus, for you to gain the whole world and forfeit your *psychē*? What will you give to get that *psychē* back? Clearly this implies that the *psychē* is something that can be gained or lost; but what does the sentence mean? Who is this 'you', this person who might lose or gain a *psychē*? What's left when that *psychē* is lost? I'm not sure that these questions necessarily make much sense, but they might seem to indicate that there is a more fundamental 'I' involved for which the *psychē* is a secondary element. More particularly, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount challenges his hearers not to worry about their *psychē*, what they shall eat or drink, or about their *sōma*, what they shall wear. This distinction is clear, and has nothing whatever to do with Platonic or quasi-Platonic dualism. The body is the outward thing that needs clothing; the *psychē* is the ongoing life which needs food and drink (Matthew 6.25 // Luke 12.22f.).

What about the famous Matthew 10.28, where Jesus warns his followers not to fear the one who can kill the body but can't kill the soul, but to fear the one who can destroy soul and body in Gehenna? The point Jesus is making is, I think, a redefinition of the Messianic battle: the real enemy is not

Rome, but the satan, the dark accusing power that stands behind both Rome and the other powers of the world. It could be argued that Matthew's version of the saying betokens some kind of anthropological dualism in which the soul survives the body's death to face a further fatal challenge in another place; though it's strange, if this is meant, that Jesus speaks of the one who can destroy soul *and body* in Gehenna. And I note that in the Lukan version of the saying, Luke 12.4–5, the word *psychē* is missing from the whole passage. Luke simply has, 'Don't fear those who can kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. I will show you who to fear: fear the one who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into Gehenna.' Perhaps Luke knew that the word *psychē* at that point would send his Hellenistic audience in the wrong direction.

Certainly this would have been Paul's view. To return to him, and to 1 Corinthians in particular: here the word *psychē*, and particularly the cognate adjective *psychikos*, is not used to denote the special, open-to-God, secret second part of the human as opposed to the bodily, the material, the outward part. On the contrary: every time *psychikos* is used, it denotes something that is 'merely human' as opposed to *pneumatikos*, 'animated by spirit', normally referring to the Holy Spirit. In 2.14 it is emphatic: the *psychikos* person doesn't receive the things of God's spirit; they are foolishness to such a person, and cannot be known, because they are spiritually (*pneumatikos*) discerned. For the *pneumatikos* person, however, there is the striking promise: we have the mind of the Messiah, *noun Christou echomen*. The *psychikos* person is in fact more or less the same as the *sarkinos* person of 3.1. These terms can easily be confusing, but I believe Paul uses them quite consistently.

This then is carried over into the discussion of the resurrection body in chapter 15. Here we face the problem of the disastrous translation of the RSV, perpetuated in the NRSV, where we find the contrasting present and future bodies translated as 'physical body' and 'spiritual body' (15.44, 46). Generations of liberal readers have said, triumphantly, that Paul clearly thinks the resurrection body is spiritual rather than physical, so there's no need for an empty tomb. But that's emphatically not the point. For Paul, as for all Jews, Christians and indeed pagans until the rise of the Gnostics in the second century, the word 'resurrection' was about bodies. When pagans rejected 'resurrection', that's what they were rejecting. Paul's language here, using Greek adjectives ending in *–ikos*, is not about the *substance* of which the body is *composed*, but about *the driving force that animates it*. It's the difference between, on the one hand, a ship *made of* steel or timber, and a ship *powered by* sail or steam. For Paul, the *psychē* is the breath of life, the vital spark, the thing that animates the body in the present life. The *pneuma* is the thing that animates the resurrection body. This is where the link is made: the *pneuma* is already given to the believer as the *arrabon*, the down payment, of what is to come, since the Spirit who raised the Messiah from the dead will give life to the mortal bodies of those who belong to the Messiah (Romans 8.9–11). In Paul's discussion, the *psychē* is simply the life-force of ordinary mortals in the present world, emphatically *not* a substance which, as a second and non-material element of the person, will then carry that

person's existence forward through the intermediate state and on to resurrection itself. On the contrary: the *psychikos* body is mortal and corruptible. The new, immortal self will be the resurrection body animated by God's *pneuma*, the true Temple of the living God (or rather, one particular outpost, or as it were franchise, of that Temple). To speak, as many Christians have done, of the body dying, and the soul going marching on, is not only a travesty of what Paul says. It has encouraged many to suppose that the victory over death is the escape of the soul from the dead body. That is a dangerous lie. It is resurrection that is the defeat of death. To think of the body dying and of something, the soul or whatever, continuing onwards isn't a victory over death. It is simply a description, however inadequate, of death itself. Let us not collude with the enemy.

Nor does the picture change when we move from 1 Corinthians to 2 Corinthians. In the famous passage 4.16—5.10 we find the contrast between the outer person and the inner person, the *exo anthropos* and the *eso anthropos*, but this does not denote a Hellenistic dualism of body and soul. The whole discussion is framed in terms of the new covenant in which, though the Messiah's people will share his suffering and death, God will bring about that new creation, a new *physical* creation, as always promised. Within this, the point of the new 'tent' which is 'eternal, in the heavens' is not that it is a heavenly body we shall acquire when we die and go to heaven. As I have often pointed out, here and in (for instance) 1 Peter 1.4–9, heaven is the place where God's future purposes are stored up *in order then to be brought to birth on earth*. If my wife leaves me a note saying 'your dinner is in the oven', she doesn't mean that I have to get into the oven to eat my dinner, but that it's safe there, nicely cooking, so that it will be ready for me to take out of the oven and eat at the table as usual, at the proper time. When Paul speaks of a body ready and waiting 'in heaven', he doesn't mean that we go to heaven to put that body on, but that it will be brought out of its heavenly store-cupboard at the right moment. Paul does indeed envisage the possibility of a bodiless intermediate state in which one will be 'naked' (5.3), but he does not use the word 'soul' in connection with that state, which in any case he regards as undesirable and unwelcome. Rather, he wants to be 'more fully clothed', so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. The 'down payment' of the spirit guarantees, not a disembodied immortality, but a re-embodiment in which the body will be more solid, more substantial than the present one. Within the context of the 'new creation' theme, Paul thus envisages a fractured, fragmented human existence as a possible but unwelcome eventuality, but insists that the eschatological reality will be a fully integrated and renewed humanity, the ultimate reality towards which even present healthy bodily existence is a mere signpost.

Throughout the whole New Testament, actually, the questions that have so preoccupied philosophers seeking to hold out for some non-reductive, non-materialistic account of human nature are simply not discussed. Where the earliest Christian authors come close to such discussion, they never use the word *psychē* in the way which has become common from at least the third century. This ought to give us considerable pause before we make claims

about the biblical foundations of what we want to call 'dualism'. It is unwise to claim biblical authority for a view which is nowhere discussed, let alone promoted, in the Bible. If there is some version of non-reductive anthropology which is taught in the Bible, we had better try to discern what it is, rather than assume it will conform to what much later tradition (such as the Cartesian philosophical tradition) has said or thought. What the New Testament teaches, rather, is the powerful work of God's spirit bringing about the new creation in which the body will be reaffirmed and glorified.

One fourth and final question or challenge to the popular dualistic paradigm. To begin with, however much we may deny it, an anthropological dualism tends to devalue or downgrade the body. We see this in ethics. Yes, much discussion of things like embryo research, not least in Roman Catholic circles, has concentrated on the question of whether the embryo possesses a soul. But I regard this as the wrong tactic. The important thing is that it is already a *body*, a human body, and as such possesses dignity and worth. To imply that dignity and worth will only come about if we can postulate a soul is a dangerous hostage to fortune, and falls back into that soul-of-the-gaps problem I mentioned earlier. For Paul, faced with a different ethical challenge – Corinthian men who saw no reason why they shouldn't continue to visit prostitutes – the point is not that this will damage the soul (though he would probably have thought that as well), nor even that it will grieve the spirit (though he would certainly have said that too, as in Ephesians 4.30), but that it damages the *body*, which is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6.13). The resurrection will give new life to the body, so that what you do with it in the present matters. It is Gnosticism, not Christianity, that focuses attention on the soul; and it is precisely the post-enlightenment Gnosticism of much Western culture which has produced the moral morass we see all around us, where the cultivation of the soul allows, and often encourages or even insists upon, a relentless bodily hedonism.

By the same token, a Christian should I believe resist attempts to reinstate a Kantian or similar dualism in which 'mind' becomes the significant reality rather than 'body'. In the New Testament 'mind' – *nous* or *dianoia* – is not the name of a superior or more 'real' element. The mind and the understanding can be 'darkened', distorted, unable to grasp reality and so encouraging all kinds of dehumanizing behaviour. Of course, this still assumes that the mind does exercise a controlling function over the body, and to that extent even a darkened or distorted 'mind' is still, ontologically, in charge. But the implicit devaluation of the body and over-evaluation of the mind has been a major problem in the Western world for many generations and I would hate to think of this being simply pushed further. Indeed, it might encourage that rationalism which still persists in much Western thought, including some Christian thought, splitting off absolute from relative, objective from subjective, reason from emotion, and indeed reason from sense. All of this fits only too closely with other dichotomies such as sacred and secular and even grace and nature. And all these split-level worlds, the cosmologies they postulate and the epistemologies they encourage, are in my view leading us away from a truly biblical perspective.

By contrast, I wish to propose a differentiated unity in terms of cosmos and of the human person, both rooted in a fully blown biblical understanding of God and of humans in his image. Such an ontology is the root for what I have elsewhere called an epistemology of love, which transcends these epistemological dichotomies and reaches out for a truth which comes to fullest biblical expression, I think, in the gospel of John. This brings us to the second, and shorter, main part of my paper.

New Testament Anthropology in Eschatological and Cultural Context

I now wish to propose a kind of thought-experiment, in line with the experiment I offered in *After You Believe*. There I suggested that we should take Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* and replace it with the biblical vision of resurrection into the newly integrated new-heaven-and-new-earth reality. If we did that, I argued, we would find that Aristotle's notion of virtue, the character-strengths you need in order to work towards that *telos*, would be transformed into the more specific, and in some ways significantly different, Christian virtues, not only of faith, hope and love but also of such surprising innovations as patience, humility and chastity. Now, in line with this, I want to suggest that the way to discern and articulate a genuinely biblical anthropology is not to start where we are and try to tease out a soul-of-the-gaps, but to start at the promised end and work backwards.

We begin with the obvious *telos*. Paul, the author of Revelation, and other early Christian writers point to the final goal of an immortal physicality, an emphatically bodily body (if I can put it like that) beyond the reach of sin, pain, corruption or death. The body of the Christian is already a Temple of the Holy Spirit, and as God had promised in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and elsewhere that the Temple would be rebuilt after its destruction, so Paul envisages the rebuilding of the body-Temple after its bodily death (Romans 8.5–11; the language of 'indwelling' is Temple-language). This body, as we have seen, will no longer be merely *psychikos*, soulish; it will be *pneumatikos*, spirit-ish, animated by and indwelt by God's spirit. The fact of fluidity in Paul between the human spirit and the divine spirit ought to alert us, I think, not to a confusing linguistic accident but to the possibility that Paul may envisage the human spirit in terms of the human as open to God – but, within his essentially biblical mindset, as the *whole* human open to God, not the human with one 'part' only available to divine influence or transformation.

What we see in Paul, I propose, is the anthropological equivalent of what he says about the cosmos itself. In Ephesians 1.10, he envisages all things in heaven and earth united in the Messiah. This is realized in advance in Ephesians 2.11–21 in the coming together of Jew and gentile within the single new Temple, the new body; and then in Ephesians 4 in the many gifts which contribute not to the fragmentation of the church but to its unity and maturity. This is then worked out in Ephesians 5 in the differentiated unity of male and female in monogamous marriage. What I propose is that just as in all these ways there is a present reality which anticipates and points

towards the eschatological unity of all things, so within the human being itself we find something similar. The 'new creation' of 2 Corinthians 5.17 and Galatians 6.15 means what it says, and in Ephesians 4 and elsewhere we can see it being worked out. And, let me stress, this is not primarily a matter of *analysis* but of *vocation*. We discern this differentiated unity not by inspection, particularly not by introspection, but by paying attention to God's call to humans to worship him and to reflect his glory and power and love into the world. This is what is meant by humans being made in God's image: not that we simply are like God in this or that respect, but that as angled mirrors we are called to sum up the praises of creation, on the one hand, and to rule as wise stewards over the world, on the other. This is the vocation known as the 'royal priesthood', kings and priests. (I have spelled all this out in much more detail in *After You Believe*.)

For this task, we need to be 'filled with the fullness of God', and that is what is promised in Ephesians 3.19. The whole paragraph, Ephesians 3.14–19, sums up in the form of a prayer what Paul says elsewhere, for instance at the end of 2 Corinthians 3 and the start of 2 Corinthians 4. There Paul takes language which in the Old Testament is used of the filling of the whole cosmos with the powerful and glorious presence of YHWH – the whole cosmos, in other words, as the true, ultimate Temple – and applies it to those who are 'in the Messiah'. Isaiah (11.9) spoke of the world being full of the knowledge of YHWH as the waters cover the sea; Habakkuk (2.14) of the world being full of the knowledge of the *glory* of YHWH as the waters cover the sea. Paul repeats the substance, omitting the simile, but anchoring the reality in Jesus himself: the God who said 'let light shine out of darkness' has shone in our hearts, 'to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus the Messiah'. Jesus is the new creation in person, flooded with God's glory as the waters cover the sea; and, as ourselves new creations, part of and pointing to the ultimate new creation, our hearts have been flooded with the same knowledge and glory, like light flooding a previously dark room. Here, as frequently, Paul designates the heart, *kardia*, as the locus of the spirit's work, not – precisely not – in order to differentiate it from the rest of the person, but because, I suggest, the *kardia* is the place from which life and energy go out to the whole of the rest of the person, body and mind included. There is a question still on the table about just how much the *kardia* in Paul is a metaphor and how much it is, in passages like this, intended as the concrete reality. John Wesley was not the only one to experience, and to speak of, a strange but actual warming of the heart.

This enables us to read passages such as Ephesians 4.17–24 as the anthropological correlate of what is said elsewhere about Jews and gentiles in the church or male and female in marriage. Left to itself, humanity fractures, fragments and disintegrates. The gentiles walk in the foolishness of their mind, darkened in their understanding, separated by ignorance from the life of God through the hardness of their hearts, giving themselves over to all kinds of dehumanizing bodily practices. There is, I suppose, some sort of integration there. Mind, understanding, heart and action are all, in a sense,

synchronized, even though they are all looking in, and going in, the wrong direction. But it is an integration of death.

In contrast, Paul urges the proper, life-giving re-integration of the human being, in terms of the 'new human', the *kainos anthropos*, who is to replace the 'old human', the *palaios anthropos*. In verses 20 to 24 we find the elements of the human person put back together again properly, and this time reflecting God into the world. This 'new humanity' is the messianic humanity into which believers are incorporated, modelled by Jesus himself ('as the truth is in Jesus', verse 21). They are to 'put off the old humanity which is corrupt according to the lusts of deceit' – note the point that this false model of humanity is deceived, tricked into colluding with its own destruction – and are 'to be renewed in the spirit of your mind', the *pneuma tou noos hymōn*, and to put on the new human, which is created 'according to God', *kata theon*, in justice and holiness of truth. Truth, we note, is here contrasted with the deceit of the old human. Justice, we note: the new human is not as it were only accidentally concerned with justice, but ontologically and necessarily oriented towards the image-bearing task of putting the world to rights. Spirit and mind, we note: they are not separate elements to be combined only with difficulty, but each as the *whole* human being *seen from one angle*. The *kata theon* of verse 24 is cognate with the more explicit Colossians 3.10, where the new humanity is 'renewed in knowledge', *eis epignōsin*, 'according to the image of the one who created it', *kat'eikona tou ktisantos auton*. Paul refuses to propose an anthropology on its own, self-analyzing, looking at itself in a mirror. He will only propose the genuine article, the humanity which, worshipping the creator, reflects his image into the world. This is the sharp edge of Paul's theology of the present kingdom of the Messiah.

The same point is visible in many passages, but perhaps most strikingly in Romans 12.1–2. 'I beseech you therefore, brothers and sisters, through the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; this is your *logikē latreia*, your spiritual or logical worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, *tē anakainōsei tou noos*, so that you may discern God's will, what is good and acceptable and perfect (*teleios*).' And then, as in Colossians 3.11 and in the verses immediately preceding Ephesians 4.17, Paul launches into a description of the differentiated unity of the church, here seen as the one body in the Messiah. I suggest that his anthropology takes precisely the same form: many aspects, one single reality. We note that in Romans 12.1–2 we have, not the flight of the soul to its eternal non-bodily destiny, but rather the delighted and celebratory offering of the body in God's service. This is to happen as the mind is renewed so that it can, in the words of one of my favourite Anglican collects, 'both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same'. I note, too, that neither in Ephesians nor Colossians nor Romans is there, at this point, any mention of the *psychē*. The *psychē* is not a bad thing; but its goodness does not consist in its being either the locus of present spirituality or the bridge into future heavenly life.

How then – supposing Paul asked himself the question – does he envisage the causative role played by the renewed mind in calling the body to its new role of sacrificial service? I'm not sure that Paul would have bothered about this problem, but if he had he might have said something like this. (This is one of the points where Bultmann got Paul at least partly right.) The word 'body' doesn't denote a particular part of the human being; it denotes the whole human being as a material object within the present space–time continuum of the world, an object which is present to itself, to the world and to other people. Likewise, the 'mind' isn't a particular part of the human being to be set off against others. I don't know how much Paul knew about brain science, but he might have agreed with us that the brain itself is linked so intimately to the heart and the body that the word 'mind' ought not to be thought of as referring to a different entity but to the whole entity seen now from the point of view of thinking, reflecting and (clearly, here) deciding. (Paul can sometimes use the word 'will', *thelēma*, but here and elsewhere it seems to be subsumed under *nous*: a possible counter-example to my earlier remark about Paul not categorizing his anthropological terms.)

What then can we say about Paul within his own contexts? He uses language familiar from the debates of the time, but as I have hinted his primary conversation partner is likely to have been some sort of Stoicism. Stoicism was, of course, a pantheistic worldview, which offered a radically different outlook from any sort of Platonism – and indeed from Epicureanism, whether ancient or modern. In Stoicism, so far as we can judge from rather disparate sources, the *pneuma* was thought of as the 'fiery air', the physical substance which inhabited all things – which animated humans through the *psychē*, plants through their *physis*, and inanimate things through their *hexis*. Paul's usage, demonstrably in passage after passage, may be addressing this pagan context but is doing so with the conceptualities of his Bible, not least the promise of the Spirit in Joel 2 and the promise of the new covenant in Ezekiel 11.19 and 36.26. In the latter passages, the gift of the Spirit will result in the replacement of the 'heart of stone' with the 'heart of flesh', an allusion Paul picks up in 2 Corinthians 3.3. Paul is, obviously, no pantheist, but he is no Epicurean either: he is a Jew, renewed in the Messiah and still affirming the goodness of the created order, holding together its essential goodness (against Plato and Epicurus) and its createdness, its other-than-godness (against the pantheists). And, again as a good Jew, he believes that one discerns and discovers in practice what it means to be human not by introspection but by obedience. We could at this point glance at the Areopagus address, though there isn't space for this here. Nor, sadly, is there space to consider Romans 7, which I don't actually think is as specifically relevant to the questions of this paper as some people suppose.

I therefore read Paul's various summary statements, not least the famous tripartite one in 1 Thessalonians 5.13, not as a trichotomous analysis, but as a multi-faceted description of the whole. His language there is, in any case, holistic: may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, *holoteleis*, and may your spirit, soul and body be preserved (*tērētheiē*) whole and entire (*holoklēron*) unto the royal appearing of our Lord Jesus the Messiah. If Paul had wanted

to say that he saw these three aspects of humanity as separable, or, particularly, as to be ranked in importance over one another, he's gone about it in a very strange way. It seems to me, then, taken all together, that when Paul thinks of human beings he sees every angle of vision as contributing to the whole, and the whole from every angle of vision. All lead to the one, the one is seen in the all. And, most importantly, each and every aspect of the human being is addressed by God, is claimed by God, is loved by God, and can respond to God. It is not the case that God, as it were, sneaks in to the human being through one aspect in order to influence or direct the rest. Every step in that direction is a step towards the downgrading of the body of which I have already spoken. And that downgrading has demonstrably gone hand in hand, in various Christian movements, with either a careless disregard for the created order or a careless disregard for bodily morality. Or both.

But, after all, faced with this richly diverse and yet richly integrated vision of being human, why would one want to argue for something so thin and flat as dualism? Of course we must resist something even thinner and flatter, namely the monochrome reductionism of materialists and the like. But we don't have to choose between stale bread and stagnant water. A rich meal is set before us, and every course and every wine contributes to the complete whole.

A Biblical Contribution to the Mind/Body Problem

So, to conclude, some remarks on a possible biblical contribution to the mind-body problem as it has appeared in philosophy over the last few hundred years. Here, as often, I have the distinct impression that philosophical problems are the two-dimensional versions of what in theology are three-dimensional questions, and that once we grasp the three-dimensional version we see how to hold on to the apparent antinomies of the two-dimensional version. The problem has been, if I can be provocative, that the philosophers are often sharper thinkers than the theologians, so that they can tell you exactly how perplexing their two-dimensional puzzle is while the theologians and exegetes, who have the tools first to give the problem depth and then to solve it or at least address it creatively, either aren't aware that the philosophers are having this debate or can't see how to solve it for them.

My basic proposal, as is already apparent, is that we need to think in terms of a *differentiated unity*. Paul and the other early Christian writers didn't reify their anthropological terms. Though Paul uses his language with remarkable consistency, he nowhere suggests that any of the key terms refers to a particular 'part' of the human being to be played off against any other. Each *denotes* the entire human being, while *connoting* some angle of vision on who that human is and what he or she is called to be. Thus, for instance, *sarx*, flesh, refers to the entire human being but connotes corruptibility, failure, rebellion, and then sin and death. *Psychē* denotes the entire human being, and connotes that human as possessed of ordinary mortal life, with breath and blood sustained by food and drink. And so on. No doubt none of the terms is arbitrary; all would repay further study.

What then about the problem of causation, and the related problem of determinism and free will? Here again we have the two-dimensional version of a three-dimensional theological puzzle – that of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. I think it's important that Christian theologians give a fully Trinitarian account of God's action in the world, in which, though God may be thought of as a pure spirit, it is vital for our knowing who God is that he is the father who sends the son and who sends the spirit of the son (Galatians 4.4–7). He is *capax humanitatis*, because humans were made in his image. His action in the world is not to be thought of as invasive, intrusive or (still less) 'interventionist'. All of those words imply, or even presuppose, a latent Epicurean framework: the divinity is normally outside the process of the world, and occasionally reaches in, does something, and then goes away again. But in biblical thought heaven and earth – God's sphere and our sphere – are not thought of as detached or separate. They overlap and interlock. God is always at work in the world, and God is always at work in, and addressing, human beings, not only through one faculty such as the soul or spirit but through every fibre of our beings, not least our bodies. That is why I am not afraid that one day the neuroscientists might come up with a complete account of exactly which neurons fire under which circumstances, including ones that might indicate the person as responding to God and his love in worship, prayer and adoration. Why should the creator not relate to his creation in a thousand different ways? Why should brain, heart and body not all be wonderfully interrelated in so many ways that we need the rich language of mind, soul and spirit to begin to do justice to it all? And – a quite extra point but not unimportant – if in fact we humans are much more mysterious than modernist science has supposed, there might be further interrelations of all kinds. I am fascinated by Rupert Sheldrake's work on all this (e.g. *Dogs That Know When their Owners are Coming Home* and similar works, exploring the reality of intersubjective communication where physical links are demonstrably absent).

In particular, and coming home to what for me is very poignant just now, we do not need what has been called 'dualism' to help us over the awkward gap between bodily death and bodily resurrection. Yes, of course, we have to postulate that God looks after those who have died in the Messiah. They are 'with the Messiah, which is far better'. But to say this we don't need to invoke, and the New Testament doesn't invoke, the concept of the 'soul', thereby offering, like the Wisdom of Solomon, a hostage to platonic, and ultimately anti-creational, fortune. What we need is what we have in scripture, even though it's been bracketed out of discussions of the mind–body problem: the concept of a creator God, sustaining all life, including the life of those who have died. Part of death, after all, is the dissolution of the human being, the ultimate valley of humiliation, the renouncing of all possibility. Not only must death not be proud, as John Donne declared, but those who die cannot be proud, cannot hold on to any part of themselves and say 'but this is still me'. All is given up. That is part of what death is. To insist that we 'possess' an 'immortal part' (call it 'soul' or whatever) which cannot be touched by death might look suspiciously like the ontological equivalent of

works-righteousness in its old-fashioned sense: something we possess which enables us to establish a claim on God, in this case a claim to 'survive'. But the God who in Jesus the Messiah has gone through death and defeated it has declared that 'those who sleep through Jesus' are 'with the Messiah', and he with them. This 'withness remains an act, an activity, of sheer grace, not of divine recognition of some part of the human being which can, as it were, hold its own despite death. At and beyond death the believer is totally dependent on God's sustaining grace, and the NT's remarkable reticence in speculating beyond this is perhaps to be imitated. The New Testament speaks of this state as a time of 'rest', prior to the time of 'reigning' in God's new world. 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord', says John the Divine. Amen, says the Spirit (Revelation 14.13).

One closing remark, if I may, about epistemology. I have argued for an ontology of differentiated unity as both eschatological reality and as given in the Messiah, restoring and recapitulating the goodness of the original creation. Within that reality, humans are called to a particular vocation of obedient image-bearing, summing up the praises of creation on the one hand and ruling wisely over God's creation on the other. Part of that praise, and part of that rule, is I believe to be construed as truth-telling: telling the truth about God in praise, speaking God's justice, his wise ordering, into the world in stewardship. In John's gospel, truth isn't simply a correspondence between words and reality. Nor is it a matter of coherence within a whole system. Truth is a dynamic thing; it *happens*. And it happens when human beings, attentive and perceptive with every fibre of their multifaceted god-given being, speak words through which the inarticulate praise of creation comes into speech, and words through which God's wise and just desires for the world are not just described but effected. And, in this speech, reason and emotion, objective and subjective, absolute and relative are all transcended in the reality which John sometimes calls truth and sometimes calls love. When Paul writes about 'speaking the truth in love', perhaps this is part of what he means. We perceive in order to praise: epistemology, ultimately, serves worship. We perceive in order to speak: epistemology serves truth, which serves justice. And all of this is what is meant by love. And love is what is meant by being human.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

PAUL IN CURRENT ANGLOPHONE SCHOLARSHIP (2012)

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This essay is a kind of tiny précis of the companion volume to the present one, *Paul and his Recent Interpreters*. There is something to be said for giving a bird's-eye view of the whole map – or, at least, as much of the map as I have myself glimpsed in the attempt to keep up with an increasingly complex field.

* * *

[367] **Abstract**

Current Anglophone research on Paul has gone in different directions, following the break-up of an older consensus: the 'New Perspective' and reactions thereto, particularly examining Paul's relation to scripture and narrative; Paul's supposedly 'apocalyptic' theology; Paul's relation to the Roman empire; to contemporary philosophy, particularly Stoicism; and substantial explorations of Paul's socio-historical context. The central task of interpretation, that of historically and theologically coherent exegesis, is more challenging than before but no less exciting.

Introduction

Paul has always been tricky. So many images of him have flashed across the scholarly screen that it is sometimes hard to imagine them all referring to the same person. Hard, too, for a seasoned scholar, never mind a research student or a busy parish minister, to get a handle on what has been happening. What follows is an attempted bird's-eye view; but this bird is conscious of flying mostly over the limited fields of Anglophone scholarship. There is plenty of writing about Paul in the rest of the world which doesn't fit these categories and from which, in the fullness of time, we might all learn.[1]

[1] Among recent surveys, Zetterholm 2009 is interesting though not entirely on target; Westerholm 2004 is thorough, but caricatures his opponents. See too, recently, Thiselton 2009. Seesengood 2010's survey of Pauline interpretation is embarrassingly unreliable.

A partial excuse for Anglophone concentration is the new dominance, in biblical studies as a whole, of North America. In the 1970s Germany still led the way. We might disagree, but it was Bultmann, Jeremias, Käsemann, and the rest we were disagreeing with. Sadly, just as older German scholars seldom cited non-Germans, the Anglophone world has often reciprocated. The sheer volume of publications, not to mention the Internet, makes it hard to address this unhealthy situation.[2]

A further crucial element, again American, is the implicit claim to scholarly high ground from the supposedly 'objective' research in 'departments of **[368]** religion', as opposed to the supposedly 'subjective' or faith-driven study in seminaries. Postmodernity should have washed away these suppositions: neutrality is impossible. But once the centre of scholarship migrated to a country whose church/state split was carved in stone, the myth of 'objectivity' was bound to loom large.

The revolution in Pauline studies symbolized by Ed Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977 was a symptom of this double phenomenon: the turn from Germany to America and from theology (particularly Lutheran theology) to the secular study of 'religion'. The earlier protest of Stendahl (1976, 78–96), and the debate with Käsemann (1971, chapter 3) that followed, could still be regarded as a clash between a Swedish Lutheran and a German one.[3] But with Sanders all that was gone. Luther himself, and his twentieth-century followers, were now the problem. Despite the older appeal to the 'historical-critical method', history itself, particularly the study of first-century Judaism, would undermine the learned German constructions. Thus, whereas one of the major features of earlier German scholarship had been the attempt to rescue Paul from Judaism (anything too Jewish, or 'covenantal', in his writings was seen as a pre-Pauline formula or a mere response to opponents),[4] a major recent feature has been the enthusiastic attempt to place Paul once again in his Jewish world. This reflects a further contemporary element: a horrified reaction to the Holocaust, and to anything reminiscent of the ideologies that led to it. Nobody wants to be anti-Jewish, still less anti-Semitic. This has generated its own distorting and moralizing rhetoric.[5]

Sanders embodied two major features of current Pauline studies: historical analysis as opposed to a pseudo-history 'projected' by theology, and a reassessment of Paul's place within Second Temple Judaism. In the latter task, Sanders looked back to his own teacher, W. D. Davies, and beyond that to Albert Schweitzer.[6] Like Davies, Sanders lined Paul up alongside the Rabbis (though, unlike Davies, his aim was comparison, not hypothetical

[2] On the web, see especially <www.thepaulpage.com>.

[3] A comment to me from The Very Revd David L. Edwards, in private correspondence. Käsemann expresses surprise (Käsemann 1969b, 61) that a Swedish Lutheran could say such things. Stendahl responded to Käsemann in Stendahl 1976, 129–33. See my 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith' [reprinted as chapter 1 of the present volume], which Dunn 2005, 7 cites as the first use of 'New Perspective' in this context (see too Watson 2007, 4 n. 3). Dunn was sitting in the front row when I gave the original 1978 lecture.

[4] Cf., e.g., Rom. 1.3f.; 3.25f.

[5] E.g. W. S. Campbell 2008; Harink 2003.

[6] On Davies and Schweitzer, see Neill and Wright 1988, 403–15.

derivation).[7] Like Schweitzer, Sanders privileged 'participationist' theology over against 'juristic' (though, unlike Schweitzer, he played down Paul's apocalyptic framework). This polarization, often (in my view) misunderstood and misstated, still haunts the field. But already the task is set: where do we place Paul historically, and how do we understand the inner coherence (or lack thereof) in his theology? History and theology then interact not only with exegesis (how do we understand *this* verse, *this* chapter, *this* letter?) but also with questions of contemporary relevance: what might Paul say to us today (or, perhaps, how should we distance ourselves from him)? I deal here mainly with questions of history and theology, despite the plethora of commentaries on the one hand (including those that, importantly but controversially, analyse the text according to the canons of ancient rhetoric) and the constant question of 'relevance' on the other.[8]

Like a tornado flattening one house but leaving its neighbours intact, the recent shift has wiped out some earlier hypotheses, but not all. Nobody now, I think, imagines Gnosticism to have been important for Paul, whether as an influence to follow or a danger to oppose. Käsemann tacitly rejected that Bultmannian presupposition, though his substitution of 'apocalyptic' has not been altogether helpful, as [**369**] we shall see. But other features of F. C. Baur's liberal Protestant paradigm remain largely unchallenged in Germany and mainstream America, despite the collapse of Baur's paradigm and presuppositions. Ephesians and Colossians were regarded as secondary because of their high Christology and ecclesiology; 2 Thessalonians, because of its high-octane apocalyptic. Galatians was seen as late, and addressed to north Galatia (against the historical, archaeological and topological evidence), because it thereby anchored Baur's hypothetical Paul/Peter split. Few seem to have noticed that Ephesians fits well with the 'New Perspective'; that if Paul was an 'apocalyptic' thinker 2 Thessalonians ought to be central; and that a 'New Perspective' reading of Galatians fits well with the historically plausible early date and south Galatian destination.[9] The pseudo-historical grin on the liberal Protestant Cheshire Cat remains, long after the Cat itself has vanished.[10]

The New Perspective and Beyond

Much has been written about the so-called New Perspective, a phrase James Dunn picked up and made his own.[11] The movement was disparate from the start. Sanders, Dunn, and the present writer, often cited as representatives, always disagreed on basic points. In terms of historical theology, the 'New

[7] See Sanders 2008, making it clear that it was never his intention to suggest that Paul derived his views from the Rabbis.

[8] On the rhetorical analysis of Paul's letters, see the various commentaries of Witherington, e.g. Witherington 1998.

[9] See Stanton 2004, 36, with other references.

[10] Other reasons are then invented for maintaining the tradition (e.g. the extraordinary accusation that Ephesians and Colossians are politically conservative).

[11] See Dunn 2005, esp. ch. 1.

Perspective' contained elements of a *Reformed* protest (Judaism and the law as positive and God-given) against a *Lutheran* theology (Judaism as the wrong sort of religion, the law as negative). Had Reformed scholars like Herman Ridderbos been listened to, the protest might never have been necessary.

The 'New Perspective', inevitably, oversimplified. Realizing that the earlier protests of G. F. Moore and others had been cited but sidelined, Sanders determined on a frontal assault against the ruling paradigm. In doing so, he flattened Judaism and Paul into religious systems concerned with 'getting in and staying in'; this may have been important in, say, Qumran, but not in, say, the Enoch literature, Josephus, or the Wisdom of Solomon. Furthermore, Sanders assumed a basically Protestant value-laden analysis of 'grace and works', classifying Judaism with the former rather than the latter. It isn't just that this analysis can be challenged as it stands.[12] The problem is that, despite his own critique of reformational analyses, Sanders still assumed such a position on the underlying issue.[13] And Sanders himself, with characteristic frankness, admitted that though he saw 'participation' as Paul's fundamental category, he did not have an explanation for how that notion 'worked'.[14] Nevertheless, the basic elements of the 'New Perspective' – an alternative reading of Second Temple Judaism as 'covenantal nomism', an analysis of Paul in terms of 'solution' preceding 'plight' and of 'participation' trumping 'justification', and a more positive evaluation of Paul's stance vis-à-vis Judaism – have been key subsequent reference points.

The most obvious reaction to the first claim, with implications for the others, has been the attempt to undermine the 'New Perspective' in its own terms. Two large volumes have tackled this head on, accusing Sanders and his followers of errors both historical ('Judaism really was a religion of "works-righteousness" in the traditional sense') and theological and pastoral ('the "new perspective" undermines justification by faith and leads to an uncertain and relativized gospel'). The jury is still out on this, and as myself **[370]** one of those in the dock all I had better say here is that some of the prosecution witnesses need to read their own favourite texts a bit more closely, and to realize that quoting Luther, though no doubt entertaining to the home crowd, carries little weight when discussing what Paul meant sixteen centuries earlier.[15] A different sort of attack has come from some Jewish scholars who disagree with Sanders's account of the Pharisees themselves (it is widely agreed, with only minor dissent, that we should believe Paul's claim to have been a strict Pharisee).[16] No doubt, since study of many of the Jewish texts involved is still in comparative infancy, we should expect a good deal more nuancing of the first 'New Perspective' claim. In any case, what is at stake is not primarily how *we* characterize first-century Judaism but how Paul himself saw it. Of course, we need then to ask if he was right; but let us first be

[12] See, e.g., Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid 2001, 2004.

[13] See Watson 2007, and a forthcoming work by John Barclay.

[14] See Sanders 1977, 522f., 549, on which see Hays 2008; Stowers 2008.

[15] See, e.g., Westerholm 2004; Seifrid 1992, 2000b; also, more exegetically grounded, Gathercole 2002. Initial response in *Justification*.

[16] Paul's claim: Phil. 3.2–5; cf. Gal. 1.13f. Reaction to Sanders: e.g. Neusner 1991.

clear what he meant in (for instance) Romans 10.2: 'I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but it is not based on knowledge.'

To the second question, 'plight and solution', there has been a variety of answers. Sanders claimed, following Stendahl, that Saul the Pharisee did not have a 'bad conscience' needing to find forgiveness.[17] He therefore had no 'plight' requiring a 'solution'; so his own train of thought must have proceeded in the other direction, accounting for some scatty statements about sin and the law.[18] This, however, seems too hasty. Not only can it be attacked in its own terms.[19] It seems clear, whether from Qumran, Josephus, *4 Ezra* or anywhere else, that, however zealous and holy a first-century Jew might be, there was still a 'problem': not Martin Luther's personal problem, but the national problem of Jews under Roman rule, with scriptural promises unfulfilled. Israel was unredeemed; Israel's God had not returned in glory and power.[20] This is the kind of quarry that Sanders's net of 'getting in and staying in' was not designed to catch. A further weakness: Sanders assumed not only a sixteenth-century view of 'grace', but also an eighteenth-century view of 'religion'. First-century Judaism embraced land, family, politics, and above all Torah and Temple, not because it was 'works-righteousness' but because of the God of the Bible, whose 'righteousness' meant, among other things, his faithfulness to covenant and promise.[21]

The third question, Sanders's Schweitzer-like subsuming of justification under participation, we shall postpone. The final question, Paul's relationship to Judaism, remains central and controversial. There has been a flurry of Jewish writing on Paul, offering several further 'perspectives'. Daniel Boyarin's learned, profound but quirky portrayal comes to mind, as do the innovative works by Mark Nanos.[22] A predictable spectrum emerges, from Jewish writers who want to reclaim Paul and suggest that he was never really a 'Christian' in any meaningful sense[23] through to those who, like Schoeps in an earlier generation, declare that Paul knew little about Palestinian Judaism, and was a renegade, hating his ancestral religion and perhaps himself as well.[24] Meanwhile, both Christian and secular attempts to locate Paul within Judaism have reflected other concerns: not only the rejection of Holocaust-laden ideology, but also a relativistic or universalistic impulse.[25] This joins up with another, prevalent in American [**371**] fundamentalism: the idea that Romans 11, linked to the 'rapture' in 1 Thessalonians 4, predicts end-time Jewish conversion. Thus American left and American right assume, without adequate exegetical grounding, that Paul believed in an ultimate Jewish salvation. This then plays back into Paul's critique of Israel in Galatians and Romans as well

[17] Phil. 3.6.
[18] This was developed further by Räisänen 1986.
[19] E.g. Thielman 1989.
[20] See, e.g., Mal. 3.1f.
[21] See B. W. Longenecker 1991.
[22] Boyarin 1994; Nanos (e.g.) 2002; and see Langton 2010.
[23] Eisenbaum 2009: her title, *Paul was* Not *a Christian* (since Christianity hadn't been invented then), invites the response: No, and Moses wasn't a Jew, either.
[24] E.g. Maccoby 1986.
[25] See, e.g., W. S. Campbell 2008; and many commentaries.

as Philippians 3 and 2 Corinthians 3. Exegesis has reflected these concerns rather than reframing them.

Three major developments within the broad 'New Perspective' now emerge. First, I still regard Dunn's proposal about 'works of the law' as correct: Paul is concerned, not with a proto-Pelagian attempt to save oneself by ethical energy, but with the Jewish attempt to define God's people in terms of traditional boundary-markers. Qumran offers a parallel (one of the very few non-Pauline instances of the phrase 'works of law') in which a similar point is made to define one Jewish group over against others.[26] To caricature this, as is sometimes done, in terms of minor issues of table manners (the food laws) or going easy on awkward entry requirements (circumcision), simply misses the point.[27] If the big, gnawing first-century Jewish question was, 'When and how will our God keep his word and liberate and vindicate us, and who will be his true people when he does so?' (the question of 'God's righteousness', as in *4 Ezra*), then the question of loyalty to the symbols which marked out the Jew from the pagan becomes all-important. It does not seem to me that Dunn's (and my) critics have begun to take this point seriously.[28]

The second major development came with Richard Hays's groundbreaking *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. For Sanders, Paul simply invoked scripture as proof-text. To expound 'justification by faith', he searched his memory for texts combining 'righteousness' and 'faith'; finding Genesis 15 and Habakkuk 2, he dropped them into the argument.[29] (Sanders was at least taking seriously Paul's deep scriptural knowledge; many, still, suppose that Paul only quoted scripture under constraint, looking up passages in a written text.[30]) Hays, by contrast, demonstrated that Paul regularly quotes scripture with the entire passage in mind. This remains a leading edge in the field.[31] Others, however, claim that Paul could not have intended detailed reference to texts unknown to most hearers, and that he quoted scripture simply for rhetorical effect.[32]

Hays was also partly responsible for the third new wave within the 'New Perspective': the turn to narrative. Even when texts such as Paul's do not appear to be telling a story, we can detect an implicit narrative: the story both of Israel (especially the Exodus) and of Jesus himself (focussed on his saving death and resurrection).[33] There is, however, a tension here not resolved even by Hays himself: was Paul's retrieval of the scriptural narrative a matter of typology, setting ancient and recent events in parallel? Or was Paul appealing to a *single continuous narrative*, running from Abraham, and even Adam,

[26] On 4QMMT, see my '4QMMT and Paul' [reprinted as chapter 21 of the present volume].

[27] I have already mentioned Westerholm 2004 as a striking example.

[28] A recent example is the brisk dismissal of Dunn and the entire 'New Perspective' by Hultgren 2011 (on Rom. 9.30–33).

[29] See Rom. 1.17; 4.3; Gal. 3.6, 11.

[30] E.g. Schnelle 2005, 110f.

[31] Cf. now Wagner 2002; Keesmaat 1999; and many others.

[32] See Stanley 2004. On the larger issue: Moyise 2010; and, towering above, the remarkable study of Watson 2004.

[33] Hays 2002; cf. B. W. Longenecker 2002.

through the exile and the long, dark years that followed, eventually arriving at the place 'when the fullness of time arrived' (Galatians 4.4)?

Within this, a particular storm centre has been Hays's proposal that Paul saw Jesus' death in terms of Jesus' own 'faith' or 'faithfulness'. The key phrase *pistis Christou* has usually been translated 'faith in Christ', but it can also mean, and according to Hays and others does mean, [**372**] '[the] faith of Christ' or '[the] faithfulness of Christ'.[34] Nobody doubts that Paul could and did speak in terms of believers putting their faith in Christ, or in 'the God who raised Jesus from the dead'. The question is whether this particular phrase, in its contexts, refers to that human faith or to the 'faithfulness' of Jesus himself to God's saving plan (in parallel with the 'obedience' mentioned in Romans 5 and Philippians 2). Here paths diverge. Many of us now read Paul as saying that Jesus, as Messiah, took upon himself the faithful obedience which Israel should have offered but did not. (This, in relation to Romans 2.17—3.31, is what convinced me.) Dunn, in company with most 'old perspective' readers, still insists that Paul is referring to the believer's own faith. What counts, in the last analysis, is the coherent sense any proposal can make of Paul's actual arguments.[35]

Two further post-new perspective works come from different angles. Francis Watson has bravely revised his earlier work *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles* so that, avoiding the polarizations of his original stance (theology *or* sociology) it incorporates many new insights and angles of vision.[36] Michael Gorman has developed an analysis in which, looking towards Eastern Orthodoxy, he focuses not simply on the participation of the believer in the life of Christ, but on the transformation of the believer by the life of Christ within. This has undoubtedly been a neglected theme in much Western thought. Whether it is sufficient to carry the weight Gorman places on it – including a revised doctrine of justification – remains to be seen.[37] These scholars are typical of many who have refused to remain content with the dichotomy of 'old perspective' and 'New Perspective', and have pushed towards fresh historical, theological, and exegetical understanding.

Re-enter Apocalyptic

In parallel to the 'New Perspective' is a quite different approach to Paul, recently taken root in America. In a remarkable commentary on Galatians, dedicated to his teacher Käsemann, J. L. Martyn re-reads Paul in terms of what he calls 'apocalyptic'.[38]

I say 'what he calls' because, though Martyn's debt to Käsemann is obvious, he does not follow the Tübingen master in the meaning of this central, though slippery, term. For Käsemann, 'apocalyptic' meant simply the imminent expectation

[34] Hays 2002, including the debate with Dunn (249–97).
[35] See Bird and Sprinkle 2009.
[36] Watson 2007.
[37] Gorman 2001, 2009.
[38] Martyn 1997a; see his many articles in Martyn 1997b.

of the Parousia and, with it, the end of the world. This opened up, for Käsemann, a cosmic vision of God and the world, as opposed to Bultmann's individual, 'anthropological', focus. (This goes with their respective analyses of *dikaiosynē theou*: for Bultmann, this is the righteousness which God credits to the believer's account, but for Käsemann it is God's own saving power.) Käsemann was here following the early Barth, who looms large over the current North American theological scene. Like Barth, Käsemann had opposed the Third Reich, whose theory of immanent historical development sustained the Nazi ideology. Barth's famous 'No!' echoes loudly in Martyn's reading of Paul.

Martyn, however, locates the 'apocalyptic' moment, not at the Parousia, but at the death of Jesus. That was where God 'invaded' history: everything before, all other features of the world including particularly its 'religion', are at best irrelevant and at worst demonic. Paul's protest against the Galatian 'teachers' was thus that of Barth against bourgeois *Kulturprotestantismus*: the teachers were offering a salvation history, a narrative which one might join, but Paul was announcing God's invasion of the world.

Martyn was extending and modifying the work of J. Christiaan Beker.[39] Beker, sticking closer to Käsemann, did not see Galatians (which doesn't mention the Parousia) as fitting **[373]** the scheme. Both Beker and Martyn seem to have been protesting against comfortable American religiosity, expressed not least in widespread evangelicalism and fundamentalism. If God's victory over the world, either past (in the cross) or future (in the Parousia) demolishes and remakes the world, then the self-obsessed, soul-searching fussiness of standard 'saved-and-lost' teaching can be put aside. Thus, instead of 'justification' as traditionally conceived, we have 'rectification', the putting-right of all things, humans included. As with Barth, this raises the question of universalism, the regular Western reaction to traditional hell-fire teaching. But what exactly is going on when we transplant an early twentieth-century German protest against bourgeois liberalism to an early twenty-first-century American protest against bourgeois conservative evangelicalism – and use the combination to read a first-century text?

A similar 'apocalyptic' protest has now come from Douglas Campbell, in one of the largest and most tendentious books on Paul ever written.[40] Campbell's breathtaking construction combines Martyn's 'apocalyptic' reading with Sanders's privileging of 'participation' theology over 'justification', and proposes a victory not only over the world but over 'justification theology' itself, requiring him to dismiss large sections of Romans 1—4 as a 'speech in character' which Paul puts into an opponent's mouth. It is, of course, easy to solve a jigsaw if you sweep half the pieces off the table. But Campbell's strong points, particularly his insights on 'apocalyptic' and 'participation', will need to be taken seriously in any alternative reconstruction.

There are several sharp questions to be addressed to this whole 'apocalyptic' paradigm. How come it is so different from what the leading analysts of first-century Jewish apocalyptic describe? Where else do we find evidence of

[39] Beker 1980, 1982.

[40] D. A. Campbell 2009, following several earlier studies. This book really deserves a whole article to itself.

the split between two types of 'apocalyptic' theology which Martyn, following his former student Martinus de Boer, predicates as characterizing Paul and his opponents?[41] Does not Jewish apocalyptic regularly tell the story of Israel, reaching a climax – the very thing Martyn will not allow to Paul? Is not apocalyptic deeply covenantal – again, rejected by Martyn? To what extent is Martyn's view simply a new version of (Käsemann's version of) the old perspective? Why do neither Martyn nor de Boer, despite their location near the heart of contemporary American scholarship, wrestle more directly with the 'New Perspective'? (This is one version of a worrying trend: multiple different movements of scholarship make it very difficult to engage with more than one part of the field at a time, and conversations develop in different self-contained groups.) The closest Martyn gets to the 'New Perspective' is his agreement with Sanders that Paul's thought moved from plight to solution. But he says this, not from a fresh reading of Pharisaism, but from his Barthian *a priori*. Everything must now be known, and can only be known, through the fresh revelation in Christ.[42]

Despite Martyn's enthusiastic following, especially in North America,[43] I find his position deeply flawed. By attributing to Paul's opponents views which were in fact central to Paul himself – the centrality of the promises to Abraham and their fulfilment in the Messiah – he makes it impossible to hear what Paul is actually saying. What is more, by seeing Paul as sweeping away all previous 'religion', particularly the Jewish-Christian teachers and their scripturally based theology, Martyn cannot escape the charge levelled by Sanders against the more common forms of the 'old perspective'. He has rendered Paul radically unJewish, even anti-Jewish. Scholars too readily toss around the word 'supersessionism', but if it belongs anywhere it is right here.

[**374**] Two other features of first-century 'apocalyptic' call for comment here. Take, first, any Jewish apocalyptic text that (implicitly at least) tells the long story of God's people. If, at the point of fulfilment, we find a key figure executing God's purposes, we should expect that figure to be Israel's Messiah. When we find such a figure in Paul, and when Paul calls him *Christos*, we can no longer collude with the old belief that this was simply a proper name. Jesus' Messiahship has been a sleeping element in Pauline studies for so long that many scholars seem not to know what to do with it if it was proved. But proved it can be, and major revolutions must follow.[44]

The second feature is that Jewish apocalyptic is essentially *political*. Some 'apocalyptic' texts are concerned mainly to explore heaven itself (at which point 'apocalyptic' shades off into what we now call 'mysticism'), but the great texts (Daniel, Revelation, the Enoch literature, *4 Ezra*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, and so on) are describing, and often intending to affect, the actual political situation of Israel, caught among the empires of the world. *Fourth Ezra*, reinterpreting Daniel 7 after the devastating events of AD 66–70, sees the Lion of Judah confronting and overthrowing the Eagle of Rome. If we

[41] De Boer 1989; see now his own commentary (de Boer 2011).
[42] See Martyn 1997a, 266 n. 163.
[43] E.g. Gaventa 2007; Harink 2003.
[44] See Novenson 2012.

invoke 'apocalyptic', we must expect to arrive in the world of first-century politics. Martyn and his followers, by and large, do not make this connection, while those who write about Paul and politics often steer clear of 'apocalyptic'. It is time to put genre and context back together again.[45]

Paul and Politics

As recently as twenty years ago, scholars (including the present writer) could write about Paul with little thought for the political realities of the day. In Romans 13, Paul appeared comfortable with the political status quo, and that was the end of it. Part of the turn away from a dehistoricized theology (including the Lutheran 'two kingdoms' theory) and back to a many-sided historical reality has been the upsurge of interest in Paul's implicit, and sometimes explicit, political stance. To be sure, this new turn has its own context. Many Americans appear pleased with their neo-imperialism, and look to Rome as a model,[46] but others, horrified by the same thing, look to Paul for a critique of Rome and hence of right-wing America. Others again, seeing this reaction, dismiss the whole thing as a fad. What counts, as ever, is history. And first-century history is full of Roman imperial symbols, from coins to temples, from the Ara Pacis to the Arch of Trajan, both expressing an imperial ideology under which the Jews, like many others, had suffered so much.[47]

Once we line up central motifs in Paul's theology against imperial ideology and propaganda, it is astonishing that this theme was neglected for so long. The word 'gospel' itself, rare (though important) in Israel's scriptures, announced the emperor's accession or other celebrations. The word 'Lord', Paul's central acclamation for Jesus (echoing, in many passages, the Septuagintal *kyrios*), was a central Caesar-title, as of course was 'son of God'. These points, made a century ago by Deissman and others, were held at bay by the dominance, not of 'theology' as is sometimes said (a good 'theology' ought to include a full, critical account of all creation, politics included), but by a particular kind of post-Enlightenment 'theology'. Anyway, it was against this that Richard Horsley launched his protest in the 1990s, followed by others including Neil Elliot and the present writer.[48]

Among the products of this new wave we find a controversial account of Galatians.[49] Supposing the real trouble in Galatia was that the (ex-pagan) Christians were, explicitly or [**375**] implicitly, claiming the Jewish exemption under Roman law, hoping to escape without penalty for no longer worshipping local deities, Caesar included. Suppose, then, that the civic authorities put pressure on the local Jews, and they on the Jewish Christians, to bring

[45] See now Portier-Young 2011.

[46] Kaplan 2003.

[47] See esp. Zanker 1988. Those who have argued against the newer 'political' readings include Kim 2008 and Bryan 2005.

[48] Horsley 1997, 2000, 2004; Elliott 1995; and my *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, ch. 4.

[49] Kahl 2009; compare Nanos 2002; Hardin 2008; Winter 1994 ch. 7; 2002.

these gentile Christians into line by having them circumcised. Does that explain the text? This proposal remains highly controversial. But it is not easy, except by putting on Lutheran blinkers once more (or suggesting that Paul rose above such concerns), to see where it goes wrong.

Though Horsley and others have written as though this way of reading Paul was 'political' or 'historical' as opposed to 'theological', the counter-imperial reading of Paul requires a full and high Christology. This has been challenged over the years, most recently and memorably by James Dunn (1996 [1980]); but the counter-arguments are strong, and it may be that these different aspects of Paul will join up and produce a combined theo-political portrait which will commend itself in actual exegesis. Think of Romans 1.1–17 being read in a city where the 'good news' of the all-powerful 'son of God', his claim of allegiance upon all the world, and his gift to his people of 'justice' and 'salvation', all pointed to Caesar. Had Paul wanted to avoid confrontation, he could hardly have made a bigger blunder.

One of the key tasks facing any proposal about 'Paul and politics' will be to locate the discussion, not within a retrojected version of modern Western politics, but within Paul's own world. It would be silly, having spotted the danger of retrojecting Luther's question into the first century, to do the same with today's questions about empire. This, in my view, is where one needs a further integration of normally separate topics. Where does Paul belong on the map of ancient philosophical schools, especially the then dominant Stoicism?

Paul and the Philosophers

I have often recommended graduate students to read straight through Epictetus. When I first did it myself, I kept thinking that he and Paul must have lived in the same street. The tone of voice, especially in the 'diatribe' sections with an imaginary interlocutor, comes over very similarly. This surface impression has challenged interpreters to wonder, with some previous generations, whether Paul has anything in common with the Stoics. Here, too, there has been a major project in recent years, spearheaded by the Danish scholar Troels Engberg-Pedersen.[50]

Of course, Paul's subject-matter is very different from that of the Stoics. Or is it? Granted, Paul quotes Israel's scriptures, focusses attention on Jesus the Messiah and his death and resurrection, and insists upon a holiness of life which looks much more like (a version of) Jewish Torah-obedience than a Stoic 'natural law'. And yet. Supposing these are simply the surface noise from Paul's ethnic background and particular circumstances. Could it be that, even so, he has developed a programme for how people should change their lives which reflects the shape and anthropological agendas of the ruling philosophy of the day? Like all proposals, this one needs testing against actual exegesis, and my judgment is that ultimately it fails that test. But, on the way, it has pointed out many features of Paul's thought which mean

[50] See Engberg-Pedersen 2000.

something subtly different, granted a Stoic resonance, than they do in post-Enlightenment Western thought.

Consider, for example, the notion of 'spirit' (*pneuma*). In the modern West, not least since Hegel, this word is directly contrasted with 'matter', so that, notoriously, a 'spiritual body' in 1 Corinthians 15 is thought of as a 'non-material body'.[51] But for the Stoic *pneuma* was a substantial reality: a different kind of 'physicality', but a bodily substance none the less.[52] The idea of the community itself as a 'body', with its coherent, though different, parts, was [**376**] familiar in Stoicism. And what about those passages – Philippians 4 comes to mind – in which Paul seems to use the Stoic themes of 'virtue' and of *autarkeia*, self-sufficiency? Is he simply parodying, saying in effect 'anything the Stoics can do, we can do better'? Or is he acknowledging the legitimacy, within his robust creational monotheism, of the aspiration and moral struggle he sees in the best non-Jewish thinkers of the day?

There is a danger, with questions like these, that the discipline will be pulled back into the old Jewish-or-gentile history-of-religions analysis – despite the opposition of some.[53] But that is the problem with historical analyses, of whichever sort, that fail to pay sufficient attention to the thoroughly double-edged theology which Paul actually articulates: a Jewish message *for* the pagan world, one which 'takes every thought captive to obey the Messiah',[54] claiming the high ground in a world created 'through' the Jewish Messiah himself.[55] More work remains to be done here, not only to pursue the questions from the newer 'Stoic hypotheses', but to see how they might cohere with other accounts of Paul.

In particular, to return to the previous topic, how does the implicit political critique some find in Paul cohere with the Stoic account of how a *polis* ought to work? If Paul thinks of Jesus as the true monarch not only of Israel but also of the world, is he borrowing from ancient political theory to articulate this theme, or is he undermining the rhetoric of politics and empire with a different account, based on Jesus as the *crucified* Messiah? How does his view sit within the ancient Jewish critique of pagan empire, from Isaiah 40—55 through to Daniel, and all the way to *4 Ezra* and beyond? Has Paul produced a layered account, with some elements more loadbearing and others built on at a surface level, or can we perceive a deeper integration still? These questions emerge from today's different movements in Pauline scholarship, from post-new perspective writing to 'apocalyptic', 'political', and 'philosophical'. Is any integration possible?

Some brave contemporary philosophers are now trying to re-read Paul within the context of their own modern or postmodern questionings.[56] This should be good news: when the Greeks asked to see Jesus, it was a sign that

[51] This is a mistake: adjectives like *pneumatikos*, 'spiritual', indicate the thing which animates a body, not the material of which it is composed. See *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 351f.

[52] Cf. Martin 1995; Engberg-Pedersen 2010.

[53] See Engberg-Pedersen 2001.

[54] 2 Cor. 10.5.

[55] 1 Cor. 8.6; Col. 1.15–20.

[56] Agamben 2006; Badiou 2003; Taubes 2004; cf. Harink 2010; Milbank, Žižek, and Davis 2010.

the great moment was dawning.[57] There are, however, puzzles: if one starts, as these philosophers do, with the assumption that Jesus was not raised from the dead, and indeed that there is no 'god' in the first place, will they ever understand Paul himself, rather than just hearing the echo of their own voices rebound from his texts? Those who have been quickest to engage with these new voices seem little concerned with actual exegesis. But flashes of insight emerge in unexpected places, as with Agamben's insistence that Paul really did regard Jesus as Israel's Messiah, or Taubes's exploration of political themes. And for those who look to Paul for a contemporary Christian apologetic, there will be much to learn. If serious thinkers are bringing their questions to the text, how might students of the text help them towards better answers?

Paul and 'Social History'

One of the most important books on Paul written in the last fifty years is Wayne Meeks's *The First Urban Christians*. Meeks's patient, unfussy analysis and his deadpan style – the very antithesis of Sanders's combative approach – could fool the reader into thinking that he was just pottering about, rearranging the historical furniture without adding much to the overall picture. This would be a serious mistake. Like Sanders, Meeks was determined to ask the historical questions, [**377**] though in his case they concerned the communities which Paul founded and maintained, and then, by reflex, the message with which Paul founded them and the teaching with which he tried to maintain them. In Meeks's hands, the young urban churches appear in three dimensions, with all the puzzles and possibilities of their corporate (and quite Jewish-like) life in a pagan environment. And, though characteristically Meeks does not make a fuss over it, the theology which emerges is not a sociologically reduced 'bare minimum', but a sociologically grounded maximum: Paul's own variant on the central Jewish doctrine of monotheism. One God, one Lord: Meeks rightly (in my view) goes for 1 Corinthians 8.6 as a tell-tale symptom of what it was that held Paul's communities together.

Meeks's approach has been followed, and his thesis advanced, by younger scholars who have filled out his paradigm. The so-called 'context group' at the Society of Biblical Literature has worked on this for years. One of the most important works has been David Horrell's *Solidarity and Difference*, a sophisticated and many-sided account of Paul in terms of his attempts both to hold his communities together as a single family and to allow for differences of practice in key areas. Ground-breaking work has also been done by Peter Oakes, whose modelling of actual communities, at Philippi and at Rome (via the excavations at Pompeii), allow us to enquire how the texts might be heard by real human beings in multi-faceted real-life situations, not simply by comfortable but anachronistic nineteenth-century pietists.[58] John Barclay

[57] Jn. 12.20–24.

[58] Oakes 2001, 2009. See too the work of Esler, from his larger studies (Esler 1994, 2004) to his exegetical and topical studies (Esler 1998, 2003, 2011, etc.).

has produced a detailed study of Jewish life in the wider Mediterranean world, and has promised a further volume placing Paul himself in that context.[59] The wealth of contemporary historical, not least archaeological, work now available for the entire Greco-Roman world creates a setting in which such study ought to flourish for many years to come – not as an alternative to the traditional questions about placing Paul historically and analyzing him theologically, but precisely as its proper and necessary context. There will be surprises, and fresh illumination, to be had at every turn.[60]

The Theological Task

And for all this, theology is never spent. As Meeks saw so clearly, whether we set Paul in the market-place or in the tentmaker's shop, his picture of God, recentred upon Jesus and active through the Spirit, remains central – demonstrably central in relation to his practical agendas for his churches, arguably central in relation to the other major theological themes which clamour for their position in an implicit hierarchy ('Christology'? 'justification'? 'being in Christ'? 'salvation history'? 'reconciliation'?).[61] Do we have to prioritize? Is there a way of articulating Paul's core beliefs which does not depend on arranging these and other themes in a tight structure, but will allow each to play its contributory part in a larger whole than scholarship has yet imagined? Can such a theology be laid out in such a way as to make coherent sense of the contingent letters themselves? – always the acid test, as we can see when theological agendas force exegetes to declare this or that verse or theme to be an interpolation, or at least the quotation of a viewpoint Paul himself did not share.[62] Can such a theology explain Paul's complex relationship [**378**] to the Judaism of his birth, to the philosophical climate of the day, and also to the political challenges faced by his churches in a world where 'son of God' and 'Lord' straightforwardly and unambiguously denoted Caesar?

I believe this can in principle be done. Of course, the contemporary mantra is that 'Paul was not a systematic theologian'. Insofar as this reminds us to follow the line of thought of each letter in its own terms, and not imagine that Paul was writing successive editions of something like Calvin's *Institutes*, this is obviously right. However, the mantra has often been invoked against coherence of any sort, as scholars react against the sterile systems of the Sunday School or the Systematics department. It may, however, simply mean that we *want* Paul to be 'inconsistent' so that we need no longer take him seriously. Beker's famous proposal of 'coherence and contingency' goes some

[59] Barclay 1996; see too Trebilco 2012.

[60] Many independent spirits have produced stimulating work: see, e.g., Griffith-Jones 2004.

[61] Among the most remarkable studies of particular themes in Paul are the enormous books on Christology and the Spirit by Gordon Fee. The laying out of Paul's theology by Dunn 1998; Schreiner 2001; and Schnelle 2005, while important, implicitly indicate that there is plenty more work to be done.

[62] There is a long tradition of this, from the texts Bultmann saw as 'glosses' to Campbell's designation of substantial parts of Romans as 'speech in character'. Compare the extraordinary proposals of the method known as *Sachkritik*, 'material criticism', which attempts to stop Paul breaking out of the strait-jacket of our own small and culture-bound understandings.

way towards alleviating this, but not (in my view) far enough. What, after all, counts as 'coherence'? The challenge to let Paul state his own terms, and reorganize familiar concepts around them, is well known and still central. There are, I suggest, ways forward here which will sit well within the contextual history of the first century, ways in which the apparently varied emphases of the 'New Perspective', the turn to 'apocalyptic', and the political and philosophical strands, can be tied together in an unforced and exegetically fruitful manner. It is time for Paul's own watchword of *dikaiosynē theou* to come back into its own, in its second-Temple Jewish sense of 'the faithfulness of God'.

[**378–381**] [An extensive bibliography, now incorporated in the bibliography at the end of this volume.]

Chapter Thirty

ROMANS 2.17—3.9: A HIDDEN CLUE TO THE MEANING OF ROMANS? (2012)

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This essay grows out of seminar papers that I gave in Durham in the spring of 2010 and Edinburgh in January 2011. I tried to say too much in those papers, including much of the present material in shorter form and also a shorter version of the essay, 'Paul and the Patriarch', which concludes the present volume. I therefore reworked the present material in order to set the argument out more fully.

In some ways this is the most important essay in this volume. My reading of Romans 2.17—3.9, which developed into its present form through my work in Princeton in the autumn of 2009, highlights the proposal which I now regard as essential: that Paul was picking up the idea of Israel's vocation, to be the light of the world, and was explaining, in terms of Israel's own scriptures, not so much that all Israelites were sinful (though he believed that too) but that Israel had failed to be faithful to its commission. Here 3.1–2 is crucial, though regularly skimmed over. From this there flows a particular reading of *pistis Christou* in Romans 3.22, a particular understanding of Romans 4, and not least a particular reading of Romans 9—11.

* * *

Introduction

Can any new thing come out of Romans? That variation on Nathanael's question to Philip presses upon any exegete who turns once more to Paul's greatest letter. Every syllable has been worked over; how could we possibly hope for more? And yet the new angles of vision which have emerged in the post-New Perspective discussions may offer fresh insights. This article reflects on one such.

The insight in question is near the heart of my main book on Paul, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.[1] Central to this book's thesis, making more explicit

[1] *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 4, expected from SPCK/Fortress Press in 2013. Earlier discussions of some related points appear in *Climax of the Covenant* and *Justification*. The present article expands and considerably develops suggestions made in *Romans*, ad loc.

[**2**] what I have tried to argue in earlier works, is my conviction that Paul strongly affirms, and then works from within, the ancient Israelite and Jewish belief that the creator God is not only committed to rescuing his whole created order, but also to doing so, in some sense or other, *through Israel*. This theme has, I think, scarcely been glimpsed, let alone thought through, within New Testament studies. I believe it is an idea whose time has come.

This idea finds classic expression, and then development, in a passage in Romans which has traditionally been given fairly short shrift. In Romans 2.17–24 Paul is usually thought to be attempting to demonstrate that Israel, like the gentiles, is a nation of sinners under judgment; this charge, and the arguments used, still seem puzzling. In Romans 3.1–9 Paul is often supposed to be musing, in a to-and-fro kind of way, on wider issues of human unfaithfulness and divine faithfulness. I propose, rather, that in both passages he is addressing a subtly but significantly different point: that Israel, rightly aware of the vocation to be the light of the world, has failed in that vocation. The linch-pin for the whole thing is found in 3.2–3, which will then play out into a reading of 3.1–9 and back to a fresh analysis of 2.17–24. This will facilitate, in turn, a significantly different reading of 2.25–29, and a different angle of vision on several passages in the remainder of the letter.

Israel's Vocation

I begin with the single word which provides the tell-tale clue. Some expositors have seen the basic point, but none, I think, has followed it through in the way I now propose.[2] In Romans 3.2 Paul appears to be starting a list of Israel's privileges, much as he does in 9.4–5, but here he never gets beyond the first one. That, however, turns out not just to be a privilege, but a *vocation*: *prōton men gar hoti episteuthēsan ta logia tou theou*. There is no question what *episteuthēsan* means, but even among exegetes who have seen the point, few have drawn the necessary conclusion. 'To begin with', Paul says, 'the Jews were *entrusted with* God's oracles.'[3] Remarkably, many have seen this as simply a statement of inner-[**3**] Jewish privilege: Israel was given God's personal, verbal revelation, 'entrusted' with Torah as a way of life, but failed to live up to it. But that is simply not what 'entrust' means. If I 'entrust' Jim with a letter to Jane, the letter is not for Jim, but for Jane: I am *trusting* Jim to deliver the

[2] See particularly Williams 1980, a wide-ranging article which proposed more new angles of vision than most readers were willing to swallow at a gulp, and which has had little or no visible effect on the main lines of exegesis over the last thirty years. Williams does not follow through his reading of 3.2f. in the way I shall do; in particular, he does not notice its potential effect on a reading of 2.17–24. My train of thought here is similar, though not identical, to that of Stowers 1994, 166–9; Keck 2005, 90. Though Stowers's point is sometimes noted by later commentators (e.g. Jewett 2007, 243) it has not affected analysis and exegesis. Moo 1996, 180–5 is typical of the normal reading: the passage concerns 'God's continuing care for and commitment to his people' even though they have not been faithful to the oracles that were given to them.

[3] Here and elsewhere, unless otherwise noted, New Testament translations are from Wright, *The New Testament for Everyone* (published in the US under the title *The Kingdom New Testament*) (London: SPCK; San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011). For the Old Testament I use the NRSV, though rendering the divine name in its traditional four consonants.

letter to Jane. If Jim is trustworthy, if he is *faithful* to my trust, he will do so. If he hides the letter, or tries to keep it for himself, he will have been *unfaithful* to my trust, to my commission, to the vocation I have laid upon him.

This is what the key term means, every other time it occurs in the Pauline letters.[4] Here it must mean that Israel has been 'entrusted' with God's *logia* on behalf of others: specifically, of course, the gentiles. There should be no two ways about this. It is not merely a possible reading of *episteuthēsan ta logia tou theou*; it is the only one that pays attention to the meaning of the word. Israel, Paul is saying, has been entrusted with a commission, namely, to convey *ta logia tou theou* to the rest of the world.

Before proceeding further with the central train of thought, we may note the excellent sense this provides for this rather strange way of referring to the divine word.[5] Nowhere else in early Christian writings are Israel's scriptures designated as 'God's oracles'. I suggest that the meaning here has to do, very specifically, with the way the designated recipients might have been supposed to see whatever revelation of God Israel might have provided. When the gentile nations looked for divine illumination, they went to Delphi or some other famous site seeking 'oracles', words of wisdom, warning, or guidance. That, Paul is suggesting, is how they might have perceived the divine revelation that Israel was commissioned to offer them: Israel was 'entrusted with [what the gentile nations might have perceived as] divine oracles'. But the appointed messenger has failed; the oracle has remained silent – and, according to 2.24, worse than silent. Israel has kept the oracle to herself. She has been (that is to say) faithless to the commission.

That is the point of 3.3.[6] When Paul asks the question *ti gar; ei ēpistēsan tines, mē hē apistia autōn tēn pistin tou theou katargēsei*; he is not speaking of [**4**] Israel's 'unbelief' in general terms. He is not saying 'Israel was supposed to believe the oracles that had been given to her, but failed so to believe'. Nor, I think, is he here alluding to Israel's failure, in Paul's own day, to see that in the gospel God was now doing what he had always promised, namely, reaching out to gentiles.[7] He is saying 'Israel was supposed to be *faithful* to the commission regarding the oracles that had been *entrusted to her for someone else*, but has failed in that trust'. And the question then emerges, the question which will dominate later parts of the letter: does this mean that God himself is to be charged with unfaithfulness?

This highlights in turn the very specific nature of this hypothetical divine unfaithfulness. If the messenger has failed, the sender might choose to scrap

[4] In Gal. 2.7 Paul is 'entrusted' with the gospel of uncircumcision; in 1 Thess. 2.4 God has 'entrusted' him with the gospel; cf. too 1 Cor. 9.17; 1 Tim. 1.11; Tit. 1.3.

[5] For background on the expression, see Jewett 2007, 243 n. 36; among older literature, Doeve 1953 remains important, though his view that *logia* referred to both law and promises given to Israel takes no account of *episteuthēsan*. Hays 1989, 48 reads the 'oracles' as words of God addressed to Israel, and suggests that the unusual expression is due to the 'oracular' nature of scripture, i.e. that it needed an interpretative key. This is ingenious but in my view unnecessary.

[6] Das 2003, 87, failing to see what Paul is talking about, suggests that he here 'changes tack'.

[7] Against Williams 1980, 268. Williams also suggests that Paul might have in mind Jewish attempts to prevent him speaking to gentiles. Though there is evidence of this (e.g. 1 Thess. 2.14–16) I do not think Paul has it in view at this point.

the plan to use that messenger, and decide on a different way of getting the word through. But in this case the sender has *promised* to send the message *through this messenger*. That is part of the promise – which includes, one might say, a promissory element within the messenger's vocation: the sender has promised the messenger that he will send the message at this messenger's hand. The sender is irrevocably committed to working in this way. God's faithfulness is not simply his faithfulness *to* Israel, as many assume (or, in more general terms, his reliability in keeping promises once made). It is his faithfulness to the promise *to bless the world through Israel* – a harder concept to grasp, it seems, but absolutely central to the argument of this passage and, in a measure, the whole letter. If God decides to do things differently now, to bless the world in a way which bypasses Israel, then he stands convicted of unfaithfulness: unfaithfulness, we stress again, not in relation to his promises *to* Israel, but to his promises *through* Israel for the world; promises to bless the world *by this means rather than some other*.[8]

We cannot emphasize this too strongly, because of course much of the Christian church has tacitly assumed that, if there ever was an Israel-plan, it has long since been abandoned. This forms, as it were, a kind of corporate parallel to the old, low-grade theological construct which imagined that God first of all gave people the law and then, discovering they could not keep it, decided to save them by some easier method, namely, faith.[9] In this corporate version, God tried to get the message through to the world by means of Israel, but when that failed he scrapped the Israel-plan and devised a more direct route, through Jesus. But these various forms of Marcionism[10] are all blown away by what Paul [**5**] actually says in 3.3 and 3.4: does their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? Certainly not! Let God be true, and every human being false! God will be shown to be in the right, even if all humans, like David in Psalm 51 (quoted here), have gone wrong. In other words, Israel's failure in the 'commission' of 3.2 will not make God change his mind. If he is charged with making promises but not keeping them, he will be vindicated.

This sets the context for verse 5, where God's justice is at stake, and where there is no question as to what *dikaiosynē theou* means, as sadly there is in most other occurrences.[11] If our injustice, 'our being in the wrong', merely demonstrates and confirms that God is in the right – in other words, if our (Jewish) failure to be the light of the world throws into sharp relief the fact that God will nevertheless complete his covenant plan in the way he has said, that is, through his ancient people – does this mean that God is to be accused of injustice on another count, namely his bringing of wrath on those who disobey? No: God is the judge, and must do that work of judgment, otherwise

[8] The point is well seen by Achtemeier 1985, 55.

[9] E.g. Sanday and Headlam 1902, 278: 'while the old method was hard and difficult the new is easy and within the reach of all'.

[10] I am reminded of Charles Cranfield's splendid riff (Cranfield 1975a, 867) about semi-, crypto-, and unwitting Marcionites.

[11] Here Williams 1980, 260–70, seems to me spot on: Paul is providing a clear statement of what *dikaiosynē theou* will mean in the letter from now on. It denotes God's faithfulness to his promises to bring gentiles into his family. Cf. 15.7–9, on which see below.

he would be accused of injustice on yet another count. And so on, with the argument repeated (in effect) in verse 7, in terms of 'truth' and 'falsehood'.

3.1–9 is thus anything but a 'digression'.[12] It is a necessary, even though clipped and curt, summary of the key moves that Paul will continue to make throughout much of the letter: (a) the divine plan to rescue humanity and the world really was entrusted to Israel; (b) Israel has not been faithful to the commission; (c) God will nevertheless be faithful to this plan. Rhetorically, of course, this functions as a kind of tease, a provocation: how in the world can God be faithful, granted the failure of Israel? Recognizing this should not, of course, be an argument against taking the passage in this way, since what Paul is doing at this point is precisely building up the tension on various fronts simultaneously, to the point where the declaration of the good news in the section beginning with 3.21 can burst in upon minds now prepared for its many-layered significance. But among the fronts Paul has built up, and hence among the many layers of subsequent significance, this stands out as the certain and incontrovertible point of 3.2: Israel was *entrusted* with God's oracles, not for her own sake, but for the sake of the world.

[**6**] The point of the passage is not, then, simply that all Jews have sinned just as much as gentiles have done. I have come to regard the superimposition of this theme on top of Romans 2.17—3.9 as among the most profound, if nearly universal, misreadings of the letter. Of course, Paul does believe, as he says in 3.19–20, that with the scriptural catena of sin pointing the finger at those 'under the law' it is not only the gentile world that is in the dock, with nothing to say by way of self-defence, but also the Jewish world.[13] But this normal reading of Romans 1.18—3.20, as the (attempted) demonstration that all are sinful, has failed to spot the quite different strand of thought which Paul is in fact building in, and working out, at the same time. Other passages can be read this way or that, but 3.2 ought to stand like a granite boulder in the way of the rushing stream of normal Western Christian thought ('all sinned, God sent Jesus, problem solved'). For Paul, all sinned, *God called Israel* . . . problem complexified. The solution unveiled in 3.21—4.25 is the solution to *that* complex problem, not simply to the one normally imagined.

Three further important points stand out in 3.1–9 as a whole. First, the main topic is God: God's faithfulness (3), God's truth (4, 7), God's *dikaiosynē* (4, 5), God's judgment (6), and God's glory (7). The first three of these seem to be almost mutually defining:[14] God's faithfulness is his being true to his word, meaning that if he were to be put on trial (3.4, quoting Psalm 51.4) he would be vindicated. Our 'unrighteousness' (*adikia*, verse 5) thus merely shines a bright light upon the *dikaiosynē theou*, the fact that God is in the right: he has been true to his word, faithful to his plan and promise. But

[12] Contrast the usual view (Watson 2007, 219, lists those who see the passage as a 'digression'), of which Dodd's version (Dodd 1959, 71) – that the letter would go much better if 3.1–9 were simply omitted – is merely the most crass extreme. Watson sees the passage as 'the key to Paul's whole argument'; I agree, but disagree as to what that argument is.

[13] Cf. too, e.g., Eph. 2.1–3.

[14] Rightly, Williams 1980, 268.

dikaiosynē, here as in the ancient scriptures, refers both to God's faithfulness to his covenant and to his 'justice', his 'judgment', in calling the world (and Israel within it) to account.[15] The centrality in this paragraph of the *dikaiosynē theou*, granted the thematic status of the same phrase in 1.17 and 3.21, ought long ago to have alerted exegetes to the fact that the present discussion, though dense and tricky, cannot be skipped or short-circuited if the whole line of thought is to be grasped.[16]

[7] Second, the questions Paul raises here are substantially the same questions that he raises in Romans 9.[17] Romans 9 is structured around questions to do with God's word (9.6), God's faithfulness to his promises (9.7–13), God's justice (or injustice) (9.14, and the climax of the line of thought in 10.2–3), God's judgment (9.22), and his glory (9.23). There is even a very similar objection: why does God still condemn people (3.5, 7; 9.19–23)? All this points ahead to some concluding suggestions about the way in which a fresh reading of 3.1–9 (and indeed of 2.17–29, below) might help with chapters 9—11 as a whole.

Third, the paragraph moves interestingly from the third person plural ('What . . . if some of *them* were unfaithful', verse 3) to first person plural ('if *our* being in the wrong proves that God is in the right', verse 5), and then to the first person singular ('if God's truthfulness grows all the greater . . . in and through *my* falsehood', verse 7). The subject is the same: the failure of Israel to be faithful to God's commission. But the way Paul chooses to talk about it anticipates another very tricky passage, namely Romans 7.7–25. As I have argued elsewhere, among the various reasons why Paul chooses the quasi-autobiographical form there is at least this, that he does not wish to speak about the plight of Israel under Torah as though it concerned somebody else.[18] This was the way Paul himself had come. We find the same shift from first person plural to first person singular at a similar point in Galatians:

> Well, then; if, in seeking to be declared 'righteous' in the Messiah, we ourselves are found to be 'sinners', does that make the Messiah an agent of 'sin'? Certainly not! If I build up once more the things which I tore down, I demonstrate that I am a lawbreaker.[19]

[15] Williams 1980, 260–3 is in my view certainly right to insist that the scriptural occurrences of 'God's righteousness' and near equivalents (mostly in the Psalms and in Isa. 40—55) denote, not merely God's saving deeds or actions, closely correlated though those of course are, but 'that aspect of God's nature' which is revealed in those deeds, specifically his steadfast adherence to what is right and, more particularly, his faithfulness to his promises.

[16] Käsemann 1980, 79 points out that the relation between this text and Paul's doctrine of justification 'has seldom been recognized or adequately investigated'. That, I think, remains the case. Watson 2007, 227 suggests that the meaning of the phrase here is significantly different from that in 3.21, and that the reversal of the order of the two words (*theou dikaiosynē* here, *dikaiosynē theou* there) is indicative of this. But Paul is discussing, not a technical formula, but a *topic*, which concerns the interrelation of 'our *adikia*' and God's *dikaiosynē*, and the further question of whether God is after all *adikos* (v. 5). See too 9.14, where the question of whether there is *adikia* on God's side is part of the puzzle of the *dikaiosynē theou* in 9.6—10.21 as a whole. See 10.3, where the phrase is repeated now this way, now that.

[17] This indicates, among many other things, that we are right to see 2.25–29 as in some ways a long-term anticipation of Rom. 5—8, since both give rise to the same questions; but we cannot explore that here.

[18] See *Romans*, 567–72.

[19] Gal. 2.17–18.

This 'I' is not offering an account of Paul's own, perhaps unique, experience. The point, here and in what follows ('Through the law I died to the law', etc., in 2.19–21), is that Paul is describing what happens to 'the Jew'. Paul has chosen this moving, evocative, and self-involving way of setting out the strange result, for God's ancient people, of the fact of a crucified Messiah.

Romans 3.1–9 is not, then, a general set of questions about God and human beings. It is, very specifically, about the failure of Israel to carry out the commission with which they had been 'entrusted', and about the fact that God's plan to save the world through Israel is going ahead anyway – though Paul has not yet explained how that can be the case. The question of 3.9 shows well enough that this is indeed where he has got to: if God is, despite Israel's failure, going [**8**] ahead with the Israel-shaped plan, one might well ask, 'Are we in fact better off?' Has God, in other words, shrugged his shoulders and decided to ignore Israel's failure and pretend that everything was all right? The response of 3.9b, and of the catena which follows, answers that with an emphatic negative. Nor is it merely a matter of all Jews and gentiles committing actual sins; all are *hyph' hamartian*, 'under the power of sin'.

Paul now faces a second-phase problem. If the sender of the message has discovered the messenger to be unfaithful to the commission, and yet is determined to stick to the plan to get the message through *by means of this chosen messenger*, what is required is for the messenger – somehow – to be faithful after all. Underneath the declaration of universal sin in 3.10–20, then, there stands the nagging question, not only of how any human beings can be rescued from this plight, but of how any human beings can be rescued from this plight *through Israel*. Once Israel according to the flesh has well and truly joined the gentiles in the dock, with nothing to say in their own defence – and that of course is the picture Paul sketches in 3.19–20 – then God's problem, so to speak, is not simply how to save anyone, but how to do so *in the specific way he had always promised*. Will he not, after all, bless all nations through Abraham?

This reading of 3.2–3, and more broadly of 3.1–9, ought to send us back to 2.17–24 with at least a hint of a reading significantly different from the normal one. Here, I suggest, Paul is sketching the vocation, and Israel's failure in relation to it, which he then sums up in 3.2–3. The 'boast' of 'the Jew' in 2.17 is not the boast that says, 'I am not a sinner like these gentiles'. It is the boast which says, 'I am the God-given solution to their problem'.[20]

Romans 2.17–24: A Light to the Gentiles

Romans 2.17–24 has long puzzled commentators, since they have (a) read it as an attempt to demonstrate the sinfulness of all Jews and then (b) observed

[20] Even this point – that 3.3 looks back to 2.21–24 – is missed by most commentators (though cf. D. A. Campbell 2009, 573).

that the case is not well made. The traditional reading of 1.18—3.20 as a whole, of course, is that here Paul is simply demonstrating the universality of sin, prior to expounding the God-given solution in 3.21–26.[21] Whether or [**9**] not he has hinted in 1.18–32 or 2.1–16 at the inclusion of Jews in this indictment (here opinions differ[22]), there is no question that he turns, in a sharp second-person singular address, to *You* in 2.17: 'Supposing you call yourself a "Jew"'. According to the normal reading, he then lists the 'boast' of 'the Jew' in terms of moral superiority, as though the 'boast' were simply, 'But we are not like that; we have the law, we know God's will, so we are exempt from the charge of idolatry and wickedness'. Paul then, it seems, attacks this 'boast' with what we might now call an 'arm-waving' set of charges: 'If you say people shouldn't steal, do you steal? If you say people shouldn't commit adultery, do you commit adultery? If you loathe idols, do you rob temples? If you boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?'[23] Come come, Paul, say the critics: you surely know that plenty of Jews don't steal, don't commit adultery, don't rob temples, and keep the Torah in the way you say you did yourself, as one of the extreme 'zealous-for-Torah' people, as maintaining (presumably through repentance and the sacrificial system) the official status of 'blameless' under the law.[24] Paul's argument is thus deemed to be inadequate, almost [**10**] embarrassingly so, in relation to

[21] R. N. Longenecker 2011, 355–63 lists, and discusses, several problems in Rom. 1—3, but does not question the traditional reading. Keener 2009, 46 regards the imaginary interlocutor here as 'hyperbolic, perhaps even reduced to the absurd', though he does allow (47 n. 18) that the boast of moral superiority might have included a missionary dimension. See too Keck 2005, 83. Schreiner 1998, 127, is typical of the standard assumption about the section: '. . . the Jews cannot evade the implications of his previous argument . . . Mere possession of the law and circumcision will not shield them from God's judging righteousness.' Jewett 2007, 220 sums up the section in terms of Paul 'overturning claims of cultural superiority' and of 'the non-exemption of Jews from impartial judgment'. He goes on to speak of Paul's attack on 'the bigot' who is 'intent on demonstrating his superiority over gentiles' (230). Gathercole 2002, 200f. correctly notes the vocational theme of 'light to the nations', but immediately reverts to reading the passage in terms of the supposed Jewish confidence that 'Israel (as opposed to the gentiles) will be vindicated at the *eschaton*', and speaks (211) of Paul's aim being to demonstrate 'Israel's sinfulness'. Bird 2010, 133f. sees the possibility of taking 2.17–24 in the sense of a Jewish mission to gentiles, but dismisses it by saying that 'the purpose of 2:17–24 is to highlight the universal sinfulness of humankind as affecting the Jewish people and to show that mere possession of the law does not guarantee divine favour . . . [I]t is the nationalistic privilege of the Jewish people as custodians of God's law over and against the lawlessness of the pagan masses that is the central matter in Rom. 2:17–24.' This is in danger of allowing tradition to trump text.

[22] See the regular discussions in the commentaries; and cf. particularly the ref. to Ps. 106.20 in 1.23, which is rightly taken as a hint that, though Paul is echoing standard Jewish critique of paganism, he intends to include Israel within that critique. If my suggestion is correct, then it is possible, but not necessary, that Paul has indeed included coded warnings against Jewish presumption at various points in 1.18–32, though the main focus there remains on gentile idolatry and sin. 2.1–16 obviously includes reference to Jews as well as gentiles, but that doesn't mean that 2.1 represents straightforwardly a 'turn to the Jew' so much as a broadening of the focus.

[23] 2.21b–23.

[24] Cf. Gal. 1.14; Phil. 3.6. See, e.g., Sanders 1983, 123–35, esp. 125: Paul's case is 'internally inconsistent and it rests on gross exaggeration'; Watson 2007, 201 n. 22: 'this is, of course, polemic rather than objective description'; Bryan 2000, 95: 'His "Jew" is an obvious caricature'. Similarly Räisänen 1986, 110; Bird 2010, 133 n. 1 ('hyperbolic and rhetorical'), etc. Cranfield 1975a, 169 tries to evade this by suggesting that Paul is 'thinking in terms of a radical understanding of the law', in the light of which 'all are transgressors'. K. Barth 1959, 37 goes further: 'The Jews are thieves, adulterers, desecrators by what they did to Jesus Christ on the day of Golgotha and which, in spite of his resurrection they continue to do . . .'

the apparent conclusion in 3.9 (that 'Jews as well as Greeks are all under the power of sin') and of course 3.19 ('. . . that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be brought to the bar of God's judgment'). Even the catena of biblical passages on the universality of sin (3.10–18), presumed to be addressed to 'those in the law' (3.19), might be thought inadequate: devout Israelites penned those accusations, and presumably exempted themselves. But my particular point here is that, if 2.21–24 is supposed to be a kind of empirical demonstration of universal sin among the Jews, it seems almost laughably inadequate.

The reason for this, I suggest, is not that Paul's argument is in fact faulty, but that he is not making the point which has almost universally been assumed. In line with some major misreadings of the New Testament to which I have drawn attention elsewhere,[25] it has been assumed that Paul's version of 'the Christian narrative' goes like this: (a) everybody sins, (b) God sends Jesus, (c) sins can be forgiven. The implicit Marcionism of this narrative is scarcely redeemed by a back reference to Abraham or David (as in Romans 4) as mere types or promises, or by earlier examples of people who were 'justified by faith'. Something much deeper is missing – missing from classic Catholic as well as classic Protestant readings, from the 'New Perspective' as expounded by Dunn or Sanders as well as, more predictably, from the 'old perspective'; missing, too, more predictably still, both from the current so-called 'apocalyptic' school of Pauline interpretation and from the attempts to make Paul into a kind of Stoic *manqué*.[26] And, as in any scientific enquiry, when we discover an element that has been missing from previous hypotheses, it may well be that factoring it back in will shed light on a number of related topics. My suggestion here is that the meaning we have discerned in Romans 3.2–3, anchored solidly through the unambiguous meaning of *episteuthēsan* there, may help us discern what was really going on in 2.17–24 – and, with that, may provide a hidden clue to the meaning of the letter as a whole. It may also be part of the clue to the continuing puzzle of Pauline theology as a whole, namely, the question of how to integrate what are commonly, if misleadingly, regarded as his different types of thought, sometimes labelled 'juristic' and 'participationist', or indeed 'apocalyptic', 'covenantal', and 'salvation-historical'. I shall be following up those suggestions in my forthcoming book. Here I focus on the exegetical detail.

[**11**] The point Paul is making in 2.17–24, I suggest, is not that 'all Jews are sinful', but that the specific 'boast' of 'the Jew', namely, *that Israel was called by God to be the solution to the problem of humankind*, is rendered invalid by that failure of Israel to which the prophets had long ago drawn attention. For the 'boast' to be valid, Israel would need to present to the world the flawless image of a perfect people; and that, to put it mildly, has not been the case – as the scriptural writers insisted, more or less unanimously.

[25] Most recently, in relation to the gospels, in *How God Became King*.

[26] On these and other trends in current Anglophone Pauline scholarship, see 'Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship' [reprinted as chapter 29 of the present volume].

Paul is not denying this outward-looking vocation of Israel.[27] On the contrary, he is affirming it, thereby creating (so it seems) a second-order theological problem, to which he will give attention not only at the start of chapter 3 but frequently thereafter. It might of course have been easier to have said, 'Well, yes, there was an old idea that Israel was called to be the light of the world, but of course that hasn't worked, so God has scrapped the plan and opted for a different one instead'. That kind of short-circuiting proposal does no justice to what Paul is trying to say. Nor does it help to 'park' the question of Israel in terms of God's people being an example either of 'faith before Christ' (a more positive line, but still completely inadequate) or of *homo religiosus*, the self-satisfied bourgeois religious type so abhorrent to neo-orthodox and existentialist theology alike.[28]

On the contrary. Paul in this passage is quoting, summarizing, *and strongly affirming* the sense of Israel's vocation which we find in various strands of Jewish tradition: that Israel was the means chosen by the creator God through which to rescue the world from the plight described in Genesis 3—11. To make this point, I have frequently quoted *Genesis Rabbah*, where a sage from the third century puts into God's mouth the words, 'I will make Adam first; and if he goes wrong I will send Abraham to sort it all out'.[29] This vocation is seen in the narratives both of Abraham's call ('in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed') and of the giving of Torah ('the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation').[30] Sometimes, to be sure, it looks in the later writings as though this simply means that Israel is to be permanently **[12]** favoured while the foreign nations are, at best, subservient vassals.[31] But at other times the vocational vision extends in what, to our hindsight, appears a more generous mode: 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'[32] Perhaps the most graphic passage comes in the first of the Isaianic 'servant songs':

> I am YHWH, I have called you in righteousness,
> I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
> I have given you as a covenant to the people,

[27] Often the 'vocation' of Israel has been shrunk into simply its call to 'obey God and thereby sanctify his name' (Fitzmyer 1993, 319). Paul reflects the more outward-looking purpose seen in Isaiah etc. (below). This is seen by K. Barth 1959, 37 but immediately set aside as irrelevant. D. A. Campbell 2009, 560 envisages 'the Teacher' whom Paul is addressing as someone who claims to be able to 'bring the illumination, wisdom and maturity of the law to those who currently lack it'; but he sets this within a very specific historical context (561, following Watson 2007, 203–5 in referring to Josephus, *Ant*. 18.81–84) rather than seeing it as an affirmation of the principle of Israel's mission to the world.

[28] See esp. Käsemann, e.g. Käsemann 1980, 311, where Israel is the representative of 'pious humanity'.

[29] *Gen. Rab.* 14.6; see discussion in *Climax of the Covenant*, 21–6; *New Testament and the People of God*, 251f.

[30] Gen. 12.3 (cf. 18.18; 22.18; 26.4); Ex. 19.5f.

[31] E.g. Isa. 61.5f.; and cp. the traditions expressed in, e.g., Ps. 2.

[32] Isa. 49.6; cf. Isa. 60.3, 'nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn'. For the idea of Israel as 'guides' to the nations, cf., e.g., *1 En*. 105.1; *Sib. Or.* 3.194f. Josephus claims that the Jewish people 'have introduced to the world a very large number of beautiful ideas' (piety, justice, social harmony, etc.) (*C. Ap.* 2.293).

> a light to the nations,
> to open the eyes that are blind,
> to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
> from the prison those who sit in darkness.[33]

These and similar passages generated a subsequent tradition within Judaism, which has been extensively studied.[34] To the recent objection that this point of view 'instrumentalizes' Israel,[35] I reply that it does so to the extent, and only to [**13**] the extent, that we find in Genesis, Exodus, the Psalms and Isaiah. In other words, the idea of Israel as the means through whom God will achieve a wider purpose is scarcely to be seen as demeaning, or indeed as a Christian innovation, but is rather rooted in Israel's scriptures themselves. We could no doubt debate the extent to which this perspective on Israel's vocation was widespread among first-century Jews. But we can still glimpse it even when, as in the *Psalms of Solomon*, the question seems to be of Israel bringing not light and salvation to the world but rather condemnation, with the Messiah of Psalm 2 dashing pagans in pieces like a potter's vessel.[36]

I here presuppose this tradition; my purpose is not to explore it further, but to demonstrate that Paul was here referring to it. Once the question is raised, this is not difficult. The echoes of Isaiah 42 are clear in what Paul writes:

> Supposing you believe yourself to be a guide to the blind, a light to people in darkness, a teacher of the foolish, an instructor for children – all because, in the law, you possess the outline of knowledge and truth.[37]

As elsewhere when Paul addresses 'the Jew' in terms like this, we are right to assume that he is addressing his own former self, to whom he refers with the 'I' of 3.7, 7.7–25 and Galatians 2.18–21, as also in Romans 10.2–3 and Philippians 3.4–6. After all, the Psalmist had claimed that Israel knew the will of the creator while the rest of the world was in ignorance; what more noble vocation than to be the means of spreading the word?[38] We may then

[33] Isa. 42.6f. Earlier verses in the passage promise that the Servant will 'bring forth justice to the nations' (42.1), and 'establish justice in the earth' (42.4), echoing the programme set before the royal figure in 11.4 and various passages in the Psalms (e.g. 72, noting particularly its echo of Gen. 12.3 at 72.17, and the promise that, through the work of the king, the divine glory will 'fill the whole earth' [72.19]).

[34] See, recently, Bird 2010; Goheen 2011, chs. 2, 3; and, earlier, McKnight 1991; Bird 2006; C. J. H. Wright 2006. I am not here concerned with the question of whether first-century Jews actually attempted to carry out this 'mission', but with the view of Paul's imagined interlocutor – Paul's own former self, perhaps – that this is at least in theory how things ought to work out. The pagan world is in a mess; Israel's Torah-observance will teach it better ways.

[35] See the shrill and distorted polemic of Kaminsky 2007. Kaminsky wants (69) to hold on to the biblical view that 'Israel's election is bound up with Israel's special responsibilities of divine service, which are of benefit for the world as a whole' (which is, I think, quite close to what 'the Jew' in 2.17–20 is thought to be saying), but he angrily rejects 'Christian' reconstructions of Israel's vocation on the basis of, e.g., Isa. 40—55 (147–58, where the discussion of 'instrumentalization' is found). This is not the place to engage further with such polemic; except to recall the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Lord Jonathan Sacks, saying to the two thousand bishops at the Lambeth Conference in 2008 that the presence of millions of Christians in China, where there are less than a dozen Jews, showed that, in his words, 'You have done what we were supposed to do'.

[36] E.g. *Ps. Sol.* 17.21–25, etc.

[37] 2.19f.

[38] Ps. 147.19f., echoing, e.g., Dt. 4.7f.

read Romans 2.17–20 as saying: 'So, your vocation as a "Jew", made firm by the fact that the creator God has given you his Torah and has thereby established you as someone who knows his will and can discern moral distinctions, is to lead the nations out of their darkness and blindness into the light of the divine will. Torah has, indeed, given you the platform from which to do this.' As we shall see presently, Paul is very much aware that the word 'Jew', in the original Hebrew of the patriarch Judah's name, means 'praise': the point of being a Jew, then, is to call forth from the nations a song of praise for Israel's God. And since the worship of the true, creator God is the primary human vocation, as opposed to the idolatry which produces all kinds of dehumanized behaviour (1.18–32), if 'the Jew' can enable humans to praise the true and living God instead of turning away to abominations, will that not solve the problem set out in 1.18—2.16?

Well, it might – were it not the case that Israel is, ultimately, part of the same problem. Here (though this will not be fully apparent until 5.12–21 and [**14**] 7.7–25) Paul sits exactly alongside *4 Ezra*, though for different reasons: the apocalyptist, faced with the cataclysm of AD 70, produced, as at least a partial explanation, the fact that the entail of Adam's sin had affected Israel as much as anybody else.[39] Israel's vocation appears to have come to nothing. And there is nothing arm-waving or generalized about this charge: Paul is simply agreeing with what the prophets had said many centuries before. The nations were supposed to be praising Israel's God when they looked at his people; instead, they are blaspheming him. 'Because of you, God's name is blasphemed among the nations': the Isaianic charge, echoed elsewhere, reduces any chance of the national 'boast' to nothing.[40] This is not, then, the charge that somehow the Isaiah text demonstrates universal Jewish sin, as has often been supposed (and for which Paul has often been criticized). It is the charge that the Isaiah text undermines any possibility of Israel being the means of the nations coming to praise Israel's God. That was the 'boast'; Isaiah has declared it impossible.

Paul is thus affirming the truth of what he says in 2.19–20. Israel really was called to be a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, a teacher of the foolish, an instructor for children; and Israel really did have, in Torah, 'the outline of knowledge and truth'. Paul is not saying 'what a silly boast'. He is not speaking 'against the law'. This really was Israel's vocation. Here, I believe we have the clue to the real purpose of 2.17–24. Paul is addressing 'the Jew' who would read 1.18—2.16 and would respond, not just 'we Jews, or some of us at least, *are exempt from this charge*', but the much stronger and more interesting proposal: 'We Jews, or some of us at least, *are the divinely appointed solution to this problem*.' We are the ones who guide the blind and

[39] *4 Ez.* 3.20–27; 4.30–32; 7.48.

[40] Isa. 52.5; cf. Ezek. 36.20, 23. Hays 1989, 45 accuses Paul of a 'stunning misreading' of the Isaiah text which, originally part of an oracle of comfort, is here used as a condemnation, albeit with hints, developed later in the letter (see below), of the promise of redemption which emerges almost at once. See too Käsemann 1980, 71: Paul changes the text's meaning 'into its exact opposite'. Cp. the more nuanced view of Wagner 2002, 176–8. My view is that, as with Ezek. 36 where similar things might apply, the promise of comfort does not at all undermine the force of the actual words: comfort is offered precisely for people who have let Israel's God down so badly. Upcoming comfort does not lessen the offence.

so forth, because, possessing Torah, we know what human life should be like. We have the requisite moral insight. Torah has taught us how to distinguish things that differ, and thus to understand what God wants.

This point will stand irrespective of whether any Jews of roughly this period did actually engage in active 'mission' – however we define that slippery term. Josephus, quoted above, seems to think that the nations have learned piety and justice simply by observing these character traits within Israel. This, indeed, is probably the best explanation for such evidence as there is of gentiles becoming God-fearers and/or proselytes: not that [**15**] there had been much in the way of 'mission', in the later Christian sense, but that the Jewish way of life had appealed to many in the pagan world.[41] But the 'boast' of which Paul is speaking, though not of course ruling out pre-Christian missionary activity on the part of zealous Jews, does not presuppose it. 'The Jew' in question is simply one whose way of life *ought in principle* to show the nations how to behave and thus to bring them to their senses, with or without 'mission'.

How then are we to read 2.17 itself? There seems to be a deliberate *kyklos* between 2.17 and 2.29. In the latter verse, Paul rounds off the argument with the bilingual pun on *Ioudaios*: the *Ioudaios* is the one in secret, and such a person's 'praise' comes not from humans but from God.[42] This seems to offer an answer to an implied earlier statement, that the *Ioudaios* is seeking praise, for himself and for his God, from human beings. This suggests, in turn, a more fine-tuned reading of the rest of verse 17. 'Supposing you call yourself a "Jew" ': in other words, supposing you claim to be one of those to whom other human beings should look up in admiration, in 'praise'. Then the verb *epanapauē*, in relation to Torah, indicates not merely 'resting upon Torah', but rather 'sit back, confident in the praise of others, because of your possession of Torah'. Then, in turn, it looks as though *kauchasai en theō* would mean, not simply 'boast of your relation to God' (in other words, give yourself airs of superiority because God is your God, in covenant with you), but more specifically 'set yourself up as the one who occupies a special position within the *purposes* of God' – the boast, in other words, not merely of status but of vocation. Paul himself boasts not of what he is in himself but of what God has done *through* him.[43]

The point Paul is then making in 2.17–24 is that it is this specific boast, of being the bearers of God's saving purposes for the world, that is undone by actual sin within Israel. He is not, as in the puzzle of the normal reading, claiming that *all* Jews commit adultery, steal or rob temples. Nor is he, I think, referring to the scandalous Jewish teacher in AD 19, referred to by Josephus.[44] The point is that for the boast to be made good – for Israel actually to be the light of the world, and so forth – there should be no such sin in

[41] See, again, Bird 2010, and other works cited there.

[42] The Greek, *epainos*, does not of course make the pun, but the underlying Hebrew does. See the discussion in Jewett 2007, 237; Käsemann's point (Käsemann 1980, 77), that a Roman audience would not have picked this up, even if it were true, is irrelevant. Since when is a good writer compelled to forswear allusions that not everybody will understand?

[43] 2 Cor. 1.14; Phil. 2.16; 1 Thess. 2.19.

[44] See n. 27 above.

Israel at all. The exile never should have happened. The presence of such sin, as Isaiah said, results in God's name being blasphemed rather than being praised. Israel is indeed the middle term in God's relation to the world, but if Israel fails in her task that equation turns horribly sour. Paul is careful here to say only what Israel's scriptures themselves said. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a devout first-century [**16**] Jew disagreeing with his analysis. That is part of the agony that impels books like *4 Ezra*.

Romans 2.25–29

This opens up new possibilities for how we read 2.25–29, though this is not our main focus here. It is striking that in verse 27, the central point of verses 25–29, Paul speaks not simply of this or that person being morally upright or not, but of *the instrumental role that person occupies in God's purposes*. After setting up a surprising new category in verses 25 and 26, the category of uncircumcised people who keep the law's requirements,[45] Paul gives to this new category, this by-nature-uncircumcision-which-fulfils-Torah group, a key role within the coming divine purpose. This group of people *will condemn you*, you who transgress Torah 'through letter and circumcision'.

The contrast here with 2.1–3 is very striking. There he declares that 'you have no excuse, *ō anthrōpe pas ho krinōn*, whoever you are, who sits in judgment!' That line of thought reaches its conclusion in 2.16, where God 'will judge the secrets of humans according to my gospel through the Messiah Jesus'. Now here, ten verses later, there is after all a people who 'will judge' others – and they appear to be a sub-category of gentiles, who are to judge a sub-category of Jews.[46] That is remarkable in itself. But my main point is this: Paul is continuing to speak, in this paragraph as well as in 2.17–24, of people *through whom God acts in relation to others*. Only this time, instead of acting through *Jews* in relation to *gentiles*, God is now, astonishingly, acting through *gentiles* in relation to *Jews*. (Some will already detect anticipatory echoes of part of Romans 11; I shall come to that presently.)

The explanation of verse 27 is provided in verses 28 and 29, where Paul sketches out a new category of human being: a *Ioudaios* who is 'in secret' as opposed to 'in the open', with a circumcision 'of the heart' as opposed to the flesh, 'in the spirit rather than the letter'.[47] Paul is here clearly drawing on

[45] How that can be, since circumcision is itself one of those requirements, Paul does not say, but this is not the only time he makes the point; cf. 1 Cor. 7.19, which is so sharp an oxymoron that we may properly wonder whether Paul intended it to sound funny.

[46] The closest parallel to this in Paul is, I think, 1 Cor. 6.2–3. This looks back to Dan. 7.18, 22, 27, when *hoi hagioi* will receive 'the kingdom' at the judgment. Nb. too Rom. 5.17, where those who receive God's gift of righteousness will 'reign in life'. The apparent tension between Rom. 2.1–2 (warning against 'judging') and this promise that a certain category of people will nevertheless sit in judgment on others (2.27) is matched by the apparent tension between 1 Cor. 4.5 ('don't pass judgment on anything before the time when the Lord comes!') and 1 Cor. 6.2–3 ('Don't you know that God's people will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you really incompetent to try smaller matters? Don't you know that we shall be judging angels? Why not then also matters to do with ordinary life?').

[47] The close parallel with 7.6 and 2 Cor. 3.3–6 indicates, if proof should be required, that Paul is here referring to Christians; see *Romans*, 448f.

the new covenant theology of Deuteronomy 30.6, which, as is well known, is echoed in Jeremiah [**17**] and elsewhere.[48] But the point he is emphasizing, with echoes of Galatians 1.10 and 2 Corinthians 5.11, is that such a person gains 'praise' – gains, that is, the status of being a *Ioudaios* – not from humans but from God.

Romans 2.25–29 thus clearly anticipates the much fuller statements, from 3.21 onwards and particularly in chapters 7 and 8, of what we might call the 'Christian anthropology' whereby a non-Jew may be regarded by God as a Jew, in spirit as opposed to letter. This in turn leads the eye up to the greatest statement of all, in Romans 10.1–13, where again Paul uses Deuteronomy 30, only this time much more fully. But the point I wish to stress is that the entire section, from 2.17 to 2.29, has as its primary theme the question of the human beings *through whom God will accomplish his purpose*. It is not, then, about who is saved, or indeed justified, and who isn't. It is not about whether some human beings manage to earn salvation by doing good works, and if not why not. It is about who is instrumental in taking forward the intentions of God, whether to shine light on the world or to pronounce its judgment.

When we then put 2.17—3.9 together, I suggest that we have a key passage which, read in this way, offers new angles of vision on the rest of the letter. Obviously there is no space to work this out in detail, but some preliminary suggestions may be in order.

Israel's Vocation in Romans: A Sketch

To begin with, we move to 3.21—4.25. Here we see the immediate payoff for this analysis, in terms of a fresh reading of 3.21–22. What was at stake in 3.1–8 was God's faithfulness and truth, and above all that *dikaiosynē* through which, as 'justice', the world would be rightly judged, but through which, as 'covenant faithfulness', the rescue-plan for which Israel was central would be fulfilled. Both come together through the work precisely of *the Messiah in whom Israel is summed up*. Once we grant that by *Christos* Paul really does mean 'Messiah'[49] (so that Israel's royal and representative figurehead is there to act on behalf of his whole people, like David fighting Goliath), then 3.21–22 jumps into fresh coherence: God's righteousness is revealed *through the faithfulness of the Messiah*. Sam Williams, who has come as close as anyone to the line of thought I am proposing, looks for a moment as though he will say this, but stops just short, arguing for the meaning of Jesus' trustworthiness and 'complete obedience to the divine will'.[50] I agree, but I think Paul's point is that the *pistis* of Jesus is precisely his faithfulness to God's Israel-shaped purpose; it is the faithfulness that, in 3.3, Israel had failed to offer – the Israel-faithfulness, in other words, which was required for God's original plan to go forward at last. [**18**] 'God's covenant justice has been

[48] Jer. 4.4 cf. 9.26; Lev. 26.41; Dt. 10.16.

[49] On this, see now Novenson 2012, following up and developing in quite new directions the proposals I made in *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 2 and 3.

[50] Williams 1980, 273–6.

displayed quite apart from the law; it comes into operation through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah, for the benefit of all who have faith.' I do not intend to go into the labyrinthine debates about *pistis Christou*, which have got more complex and elaborate over recent years and which mostly miss this particular (and, for me, central) point.[51] I am not saying that every occurrence of *pistis Christou* (for instance, those in Galatians 2 and 3) needs to have this significance, only that, once we understand 3.2 in the light of 2.17–29 in the way I have outlined, this sense for 3.22 seems to me inevitable. Actually, for the moment, I am more interested in the notion of Israel's instrumentality in the purposes of God than I am in the particular senses of *pistis Christou*, though these are important too and interlock with the instrumental (i.e. the 'covenantal') theme. My point then remains that what I have seen as the instrumentalizing of Israel now emerges as the instrumentalizing of Jesus himself: his death is the supreme faithfulness-to-God (which Israel should have offered but did not), through which God's saving plan for the world is now put into effect.

As is often pointed out – this is really an aside to square away an important detail – though Paul does not elsewhere in Romans describe Jesus' death in terms of 'faithfulness', that is exactly what he does in the climactic Philippians 2.8, which then, through the implicit Adam-reference, is also cognate with the theme of 'obedience' that he uses to summarize Jesus' accomplishment in Romans 5. We should not be surprised, then, at the argument reaching this point, that the Messiah's faithfulness is the critical move through which Israel's faithlessness is turned at last into faithfulness, and God's righteousness (his faithfulness to his covenant promises) is accomplished and unveiled. No doubt more light would emerge if, in this context, we gave close examination to the dense statement of Jesus' sacrifical death in 3.24–26. But the main point, emphasized in 3.26, is that God has revealed his own righteousness, meaning that he is himself in the right (this, of course, is very close to 3.3–7), and that he declares that one who is *ek pisteōs Iēsou* to be 'in the right'.

Where then is boasting? That question in 3.27 is normally read in terms of nations or individuals claiming a place of moral superiority and hence of 'justification by works'. In context, this would of course refer to the 'boast' of the Jew in particular. But in the light of my reading of 2.17–24 I wonder if Paul is making a slightly but significantly different point in 3.27, either instead of or in addition to the usual one. Perhaps one could put it like this: the fact that all alike are to be justified by faith alone not only means the equality of Jew and [**19**] gentile, at least in their destination if not their point of origin.[52] It also means, more particularly, that the Jew cannot 'boast', as in 2.17–20, of the privilege of being God's instrument in rescuing the world from the plight of 1.18—2.16. By itself one might not have deduced this from 3.27 alone, but in the wider context of chapters 2—4 I think it is plausible.

[51] See particularly Hays 2002 (including the debate with James Dunn); Bird and Sprinkle 2009. De Boer 2011 creates a more or less total equation between *pistis*, even when not explicitly *pistis Christou*, and the 'apocalyptic' event of Jesus' crucifixion.

[52] See *Romans*, 483, on the variation of *ek* and *dia* in verse 30.

A similar meaning can then be proposed for Romans 4. I shall be arguing elsewhere that Paul's mention of Abraham's 'reward' in 4.4 is a direct and deliberate allusion to Genesis 15.1 (the whole of Romans 4 is an extended meditation on Genesis 15, so this is hardly surprising) in which the 'reward' in question is not justification or salvation but rather *the enormous worldwide family promised him by God*. Abraham's faith in this promise required him to believe that God would justify the gentiles (the very point Paul makes in Galatians 3.6–8): in other words, that God would 'justify the ungodly'. But if this is so – and once again I submit that it offers a powerful and highly plausible reading of the whole passage – then something similar needs to be said about Abraham's putative *kauchēma*, his 'boast'. 'If Abraham was reckoned "in the right" on the basis of works', says Paul in introducing the topic, 'he has grounds to boast – but not in God's presence!' (4.2)

Normally, once more, this 'boast' is seen in terms of Abraham's putative moral effort and/or achievement, enabling him to justify himself by his 'works'. But if the 'boast' of 2.17–20, and perhaps also of 3.27, is not about the possibility of moral superiority, but about the possibility of an earned or deserved *agency in God's purpose*, then a subtly different possibility emerges. I have argued elsewhere that the right translation of 4.1, and with it the interpretation of the whole chapter, has to do not with Abraham's achievement (or lack of it), but with the question of what sort of paternity Abraham is found to have, and hence the question into what sort of family Abraham now welcomes believers. 'Have we found Abraham to be our ancestor in a human, fleshly sense?'[53] If we discover that Abraham, simply in virtue of being the ultimate patriarch of a human family, can thereby hold his head up and say that his family is after all the means by which the world is to be rescued from its plight and indeed blessed, as originally promised in Genesis 12, then he at least has a *kauchēma*, a ground for boasting. 'But not in God's presence!' responds Paul hastily. On the contrary: God promised Abraham this family, a family in which, precisely, the 'ungodly' would be welcomed and put in the right; and Abraham believed this promise, the promise of this great 'reward'. It was not a boast, but a gift. The *kauchēma* [**20**] which Paul is denying is not about Abraham's possible moral superiority, such that Abraham might have performed moral good works, or indeed been the discoverer of 'monotheism', and so might have possessed a status which enabled him to avoid the need to be, himself, justified or saved. The *kauchēma* in question – the thing Paul is denying – is any suggestion that Abraham's instrumental position in God's worldwide saving purposes was his by right, exemplified by 'works', rather than by grace.[54]

The chapter's opening question can then be construed: 'Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh? Because, you see, if Abraham himself was marked out as God's covenant partner, as the starting-point of the family who were the appointed means of the world's salvation,

[53] *Romans*, 489f., following (and modifying) Hays 1985 (now in Hays 2005, 61–84). The dismissal of this option in recent commentaries (e.g. Jewett 2007, 307f.) does not seem to me to reflect a fair assessment of what Hays's proposal (still less my modification of it, which Hays has accepted) is actually about.

[54] Cf. esp. 4.16.

by or in relation to his possession of or adherence to Torah, as in 2.17–20, then the *kauchēma* begins right there.' If that were the case, to put it the other way round, 'the Jew' of 2.17 could look back at Abraham and say, 'Well, there you are, I come from the family which started off the history of salvation, because I am a child of Abraham, who was marked out by his circumcision (4.9–12) and his possession of Torah (4.13–15); and that's the family I still belong to'. I submit that the rather full answer Paul offers in 4.16–25 goes better as an answer to *that* implied position rather than to the suggestion that circumcision and Torah qualify one for a status that does not need justification by grace through faith (see, again, 4.16). The 'boast', here too, in other words, may be about *instrumentality within God's purpose*, rather than *status before God's moral tribunal*.

If our fresh reading of 2.17–24 generates these possibilities in chapter 4, what about Romans 9—11? I have already noted the remarkable parallels between 3.1–8 and the much fuller line of questioning that begins with 9.6. The argument that Paul there mounts reflects once again the notion of *instrumentality*, of the vocation of peoples within the purposes of God: specifically, the way in which the vocation of Israel appears to have been reshaped, shockingly, and the way in which the church itself now appears to have its own kind of corporate vocation, both in the apostolic ministry of gospel-preaching, reflecting the original Isaianic promises, and also in its very existence. The instrumentality *both* of Israel *and* of the church comes into play, but not in the way one might imagine.

The first point is striking and unexpected, but by the time Paul has said it four times we can hardly ignore it. Israel is cast away so that salvation can come to the gentiles:

> By their trespass, salvation has come to the nations . . .
> Their trespass means riches for the world . . .
> Their casting away, you see, means reconciliation for the world . . .
> You . . . have now received mercy through their disobedience . . .[55]

In other words, *God has after all rescued the world through Israel; if not through their faithfulness, through their unfaithfulness*. The plan has not faltered **[21]** for a second. God said he would save the world through Abraham's family, but not in the way anyone had imagined. No: it is the messianic way, the Jesus-way, the way of being cast away that the world might be redeemed.[56] The one-off act of messianic faithfulness, whereby Jesus was 'handed over because of our trespasses and raised because of our justification' (4.25), is played out in the people of the Messiah, who through the law die to the law that they may live to God (Galatians 2.19). This is the ultimate secret of God's plan, the 'mystery' which has been unveiled in the gospel (11.25).

Or rather, this is the first half of it. The second half is that, once gentiles are incorporated into Abraham's family, they too have an 'instrumental' role to play: that of *making Paul's fellow Jews jealous, and so saving some of*

[55] 11.11, 12, 15, 30.
[56] On the parallels between 11.11–15 and Rom. 5, see *Romans*, 679–81.

them.[57] This equally startling notion is rooted in Deuteronomy 32.21, quoted in 10.19: 'I will make you jealous with a non-nation', says YHWH to recalcitrant Israel, 'and stir you to anger with a foolish people.' In other words, Paul (like Josephus) sees Deuteronomy 32 as a long-range prophecy of Israel's future, and interprets it in terms of God's drastic dealings with his wayward people.[58] He will take their own refusal to believe in their promised Messiah, and use even that as the means of spreading salvation to the nations. And he will then use those nations, in turn, as the means of shocking his ancient people into faith, and so into salvation (11.14). Instrumentalization is what God does. It implies neither a lack of love nor a loss of dignity for those through whom the divine purposes are accomplished; rather the reverse. This, after all, seems to be how, in Israel's scriptures, God intended to look after his world in the first place.[59]

A classic statement of this instrumentalization comes in the passage which is increasingly and rightly seen as the theological climax of the whole epistle, namely 15.7–13.[60] The glory of God is to be advanced in the present both by the mutual welcome of different (presumably ethnic) groups among the followers of Jesus and more specifically by their shared, united praise (15.6). The mutual welcome itself is rooted in the Messiah's own welcome to all people (15.7). Reading the explanation which follows in verses 8–9 in the light of my earlier exposition of 3.1–9 and 2.17–29, I am struck by the fact that Paul is not confined to saying the same things in the same words. He uses language as an artist, not as an artisan. He does not have to say *pistis Christou* here for the same point to emerge as we suggested for 3.22. The echoes of 3.1–9, and its resolution in 3.21–31 and 4.1–25, are there in plenty: 'The Messiah became a servant of the [**22**] circumcised people in order to demonstrate the truthfulness of God – that is, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, and to bring the nations to praise God for his mercy.' The including of the gentiles within the praises of Israel, as predicted in the Psalms and Isaiah, especially in the glorious vision of new creation under the Messiah's rule in Isaiah 11 (quoted in 15.12), is where the whole argument has been going. And the means to that end is not the abandonment of God's Israel-project, not a change of mind on God's part, a going back on his word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. No: the Messiah's servant-work – which I see as a direct reference to the 'servant' vocation in Isaiah 40—55, with the Messiah completing Israel's appointed task on Israel's behalf – has demonstrated God's truthfulness (as in 3.4, 7), confirming the promises to 'the fathers'.[61] Verses

[57] 11.14. Paul actually says 'make "my flesh" jealous'; he is still thinking in terms of the corporate solidarity of 9.1–5. On this motif, see Bell 1994.

[58] Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 4.303, 320.

[59] On the human, image-bearing vocation in Gen. 1, see, e.g., Middleton 2005. Links between Rom. 3.1–3 and 11.17f. are traced by Stowers 1994, 168.

[60] On 15.8–9 in particular, see Williams 1980, 285f.

[61] As is often pointed out, Paul can use this word quite broadly: e.g. 1 Cor. 10.1. But in the light of Rom. 4, and 9.6–13, it seems that here and in 11.28 it probably refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in particular. Objecting to the 'servant' reference on the grounds that the Isaiah texts do not use the word *diakonos* (Jewett 2007, 891, following Hooker) is irrelevant; had Paul used the word *pais*, the translation of *ebed* in Isa. 42.1 etc., it would have steered the thought in quite a different direction.

8 and 9 are linked causally; it is not the case that Paul thinks Jesus accomplished one thing in regard to the Jews and then, having as it were got that out of the way, accomplished something quite different in regard to the nations. We should, perhaps, remove the comma between the verses: '. . . to confirm the promises to the patriarchs and to bring the nations to praise God for his mercy'. If that is right, the 'and' might be glossed 'and so' or 'and thus'. God's purpose for Israel always was that they should be 'a light to the nations', with the nations coming to share their status as God's people. That was what God promised to 'the fathers'; and that, Paul has argued throughout the letter, is what is accomplished in the messianic events concerning Jesus. 'The inclusion of gentiles is precisely one of the central patriarchal promises Paul highlights, not least in chapter 4.'[62] Once we allow 15.7–9 to be seen as a deliberate summing up of the theology of the letter, the link with 3.1–9, and particularly with the Israel-vocation now fulfilled in the Messiah, offers striking confirmation of the proposal advanced earlier, namely that 3.1–9 and 2.17–24, read in the way I have suggested, do indeed provide a normally hidden clue to the meaning of Romans as a whole. Israel was called to be God's means of rescuing and blessing the world, but Israel itself needed rescuing for this to happen, and Israel's representative Messiah has come to be the 'servant' for Israel in order that Israel, in and through him, might be the means of bringing God's mercy to the wider world.

[**23**] The apostle himself, in the middle of this process, finds himself called to continue precisely this Israel-work, this covenant work, of bringing God's light to the world. The missionary mandate spelled out in 10.14–17 reflects just that sense of Israel as the servant-people. Paul quotes, in fact, from Isaiah 52.7, a mere two verses after the devastating quote with which he had slammed the door on any chance of the ancient 'boast' being made good. The name of God may have been blasphemed among the nations because of his unfaithful people (52.5); but now, 'how beautiful are the feet of the ones who bring good news of good things' (52.7). This is Isaiah's glorious message of God's kingdom, of YHWH's return in triumph and glory to Zion – in the form of the Servant who was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (53.5), leading the prophet to say, and Paul to echo, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'[63] As usual in Paul, there is a regular to-and-fro between the Messiah as the Servant and Paul himself as the (missionary) servant.[64] In Paul himself, and his mission – not least, in prospect in Romans, to Spain! – the original task of Israel is now being fulfilled.[65]

This, it seems, is why Paul can speak, the further side of Romans 3.27, of his own *kauchēma*. This is what Israel's God has done through him for the

[62] *Romans*, 747 (noting a different view in Wagner 1997, followed now by Keck 2005, 354–6); similarly, Achtemeier 1985, 225. Jewett's affirmation of this point (892) undercuts his own objection to understanding God's truthfulness in terms of 'covenant faithfulness' (891); the point of Rom. 4 was precisely that the covenant always envisaged Abraham having an eventual worldwide family.

[63] Isa. 53.1; Rom. 10.16.

[64] On the use of Isaiah in Romans, see esp. Wagner 2002. See too the use of Isa. 49.1 in Gal. 1.15; 49.4 in Phil. 2.16 (and cp. Gal. 2.2; 1 Thess. 3.5); 49.8 in 2 Cor. 6.2; and elsewhere.

[65] Paul, indeed, envisages the whole church now exercising this Israel-vocation; see the tell-tale citation of Isa. 45.14 (cp. Zech. 8.23) in 1 Cor. 14.25 (cf. Hays 1997, 239).

salvation of the world.[66] The vocation of Romans 2.17–20 had to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, the death of the Messiah as the ultimate act of covenant faithfulness, of obedience to God's saving plan. But, once that had happened, the vocation could as it were be reactivated, and Paul has come to see his own apostolic task in exactly that light, with the extra twist provided in Romans 9—11.

Perhaps, too, this sense of renewed vocation stands behind the use of *kauchaomai* in Romans 5.2, 3 and 11:

> We celebrate [*kauchōmetha*] the hope of the glory of God. (5.2)
>
> We also celebrate [*kauchōmetha*] in our sufferings. (5.3)
>
> We even celebrate in God [*kauchōmetha en tō theō*, an almost exact counterpart to the 'boasting' which was disallowed in 2.17]. (5.11)

We do not need to press the point for the overall case to be made. To read Romans 2.17–24 as outlining God's vocation to his ancient people – a reading which, in turn, is brought to life by considering the precise meaning of what Paul says, in summary fashion, in 3.2–3 – is not only to resolve, at a stroke, the peculiarities which have again and again been observed in those passages when read in the traditional way. It is also to uncover a theme of enormous theological significance, **[24]** which resonates through several key passages in the rest of the letter, bringing, in my view, a multidimensional coherence.

The full ramifications of this are yet to be felt. To put Israel's vocation at the centre of the picture, seeing it worked out in and through Israel's representative Messiah, is to draw together into a single coherent whole the usually separated elements of Paul's theology, particularly its supposed 'juristic' and 'participationist' emphases, and for that matter its 'apocalyptic', 'covenantal', and/or 'salvation-historical' dimensions. There is, of course, no space here to explore this further. But to grasp what Paul is actually saying in Romans 2 and 3 is, I submit, to bring all sorts of other things into a new, sharp focus. The passage may turn out to be a hidden clue not only to the meaning of the letter as a whole, but also to the central elements in Paul's theology.

[24–25] [A bibliography, now incorporated in the bibliography at the end of the volume.]

[66] See above, n. 43.

Chapter Thirty-One

MESSIAHSHIP IN GALATIANS? (2012)

Paper delivered at the *4th St. Andrews Conference on Scripture and Christian Theology*, St. Andrews, 10–13 July 2012. To be printed in *Galatians and Christian Theology* (eds M. W. Elliott, S. J. Hafemann and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, forthcoming). Reprinted with permission.

When we decided to make Galatians the topic of the fourth St Andrews Conference, I was at a loss, to begin with, to know which topic to take for my own lecture. Galatians has continued to be such a storm centre of scholarship that wherever one enters the discussion one will quickly meet a dozen other issues, all interlocking. However, reading some of the mountain of recent literature on Messiahship among second-Temple Jews and early Christians made me realize that the case needed to be made, against the majority view, not only that Messiahship was a vital category in Paul's thought overall, but that it was a vital concept within the argument of Galatians. This paper thus brings forward by twenty years the case I argued about Messiahship in Paul in *The Climax of the Covenant*, chapter 3. At the conference itself I shortened the paper to a size suitable for delivery as a public lecture; this is the somewhat fuller version.

* * *

Introduction

Question and Method

Some years ago the Canadian New Testament scholar Lloyd Gaston gave a conference paper entitled 'Lobsters in the Fourth Gospel'. It was, of course, a tease, drawing attention to a familiar topic from an unfamiliar angle. Everyone knows that Torah forbids pork; fewer remember that the ban extends to crustaceans.[1] So what would John say to his community in Ephesus about the continuing relevance or otherwise of Torah, in terms not only of pork in the market but of lobsters by the harbour? A good question. Perhaps John and lobsters have more to say to one another than we had thought.[2]

[1] Lev. 11.9–12; Dt. 14.9f.

[2] The paper was published as Gaston 1993.

My question in this article is neither so recondite nor so teasing, but it nevertheless brings together two things in what many will see as an unlikely combination. Most scholars who write about Galatians pay no attention to the concept of Messiahship; most who write about Messiahship spend little time on Galatians. A long tradition of Pauline scholarship has assumed that the word *Christos* was, for Paul, more or less straightforwardly a proper name, and even those who have allowed Paul some residual messianic sense in his use of the word (in other words, he knew what it originally meant even though he doesn't exploit that meaning himself) have not usually seen such things in this letter. Most have not supposed that this required explanation. In fact, most would think that any explanation would need to be the other way round: why would this letter in particular, rejecting any attempt to drag Paul's gentile converts into the world of Judaism, make use of such an obviously Jewish notion as Messiahship? That presupposition, in fact, lies near the heart of the rejection of Messiahship as a significant category in Paul, though to explore that would take us into vast regions of *Forschungsgeschichte* for which there is no space here.[3] One remark only in that direction: between those who have suggested that Paul did not in fact believe that Jesus was Israel's Messiah and those, like me, who have argued not only that he did but that this category played a major role in his thought, there are several others who are content to say that Paul of course knew what *Christos* meant, and that he did believe Jesus to be the Messiah, but that since this notion plays little or no role in his constructive thinking it can safely be set aside as an interpretative tool.[4]

There are, of course, *prima facie* reasons for doubting whether Messiahship is as significant in Galatians as it is in a passage like 1 Corinthians 15.20–28. There Paul quotes, as vital steps in his central argument, messianic Psalms like 8 and 110 in order to affirm that the *Christos* is already enthroned as lord of the world, and that he is engaged in a long war against his ultimate enemies, a war whose decisive battle has already been won. That sounds quite like a Jewish Messiah, but it doesn't sound much like Galatians, where we

[3] A case could be made for seeing the rejection of messianic categories in much of the NT as a direct result of the split-level world of the Enlightenment as it has impinged on NT scholarship, coupled with the 'two-kingdoms' theology, and the latent distrust or dislike of Jewish categories in general, within the Lutheran tradition that has dominated NT scholarship, now buttressed from an unexpected angle in those like Gaston and Gager who want Paul to be unJewish in order to avoid any hint of supersessionism (a self-defeating project, of course). The history of research is well set out in Novenson 2012, on which see below; in particular, it is time Kramer 1966, a remarkable example of the triumph of effort over insight, was placed firmly in the library basement. The present paper builds on and fills out my earlier proposals in *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 2, 3, esp. 41–9. On Gal. 3.16, 19f. I presuppose my argument in *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 8 (which has regularly been set to one side because the passage has been read in ways which my present argument challenges on a larger scale).

[4] This, I take it, is the position of Hengel 1983, 76f.: 'it makes little sense to seek to discover in Paul the use of the name as a title' – after quite a full and often sensitive survey. 'Why', he asks (71), 'does the original significance of the title fail to come out more clearly – one might even say, never come out clearly – in his letters, although he himself must have been quite familiar with it?' So too, a decade later: for Paul 'a few texts may retain, at most, a glimmer of [the] titular use', which 'no longer retains a direct significance for Paul'; since it was an 'earlier formal and ambiguous' word, so that even in Rom. 9.5 it is better to translate *ho Christos* not as 'the Christ' but as a name, 'since Paul nowhere else uses the word as a title'; thus, though Paul knows quite well what the word means, as in 2 Cor. 1.21, so that Paul does indeed

find no messianic Psalms and no messianic battle.[5] Nor do we find, as we do in Romans 1.3–4 (whatever we think of its role within Paul's thought), the idea that Jesus, as the seed of David, has been publicly declared to be son of God – in other words, Messiah – through his resurrection, alluding to the Septuagint of the Davidic promise in 2 Samuel 7.12, *kai anastēsō to sperma sou*, 'and I will raise up, resurrect, your seed'.[6] These and similar ideas (e.g. the strong Davidic statement in Romans 15.12, quoting Isaiah 11.10) are by no means the only indicators of messianic content elsewhere in Paul, but they are significant, and they are absent from Galatians.[7]

I nevertheless propose now that the Messiahship of Jesus is a central and vital element in Paul's entire argument in Galatians. It isn't the key that unlocks all the doors, but in my view it explains a great deal that otherwise remains opaque.

I am encouraged in this proposal by Matthew Novenson's recent book, *Christ among the Messiahs*.[8] Novenson has made a strong case for seeing *Christos* in Paul neither as a name (with denotation but no particular theological or ideological connotation[9]) nor exactly as a 'title', but as an 'honorific', somewhat like the word *Epiphanēs* in 'Antiochus Epiphanes', or, with more obvious relevance for Galatians, *Augustus* in the triple phrase *Imperator Caesar Augustus*, where *Imperator* is the title, originally 'general' and then 'emperor', *Caesar* is the personal name,[10] and *Augustus* is an honorific, a word which adds lustre, a kind of halo of meaning, to the first two words. Granted, *Augustus* came to be used virtually as a name by later emperors, but it arguably retained titular significance both in Latin and in its Greek equivalent *Sebastos*. Novenson argues that *Christos* works for Paul in a similar fashion. He wisely restricts himself to certain key texts, and though Galatians

believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the concept plays no positive role in his thought other than that of a background presupposition (1995, 1, 2, 3, 4 n. 3, 7). It was this to which I was referring in *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 554f., which Chester 2007b, 118 n. 49 describes as 'completely misleading', and in Chester 2007a, 102 n. 228 as 'misrepresent[ing] . . . in a quite extraordinary way'. When Chester suggests (2007a, 103 n. 228), that I have in fact argued the same as Hengel, not the opposite, it seems he has simply not understood my own argument at all. Hengel is clear (as in the quotes above) that though Paul knows and believes Jesus to be Israel's Messiah this plays no constructive role in his theology. As Chester says, summarizing Hengel, the idea of messiahship 'no longer forms part of what Paul needs to emphasize', with the additional point that '*Christos* would not, in a Greek setting, best convey the distinctive Christian message'. See too Chester 2007a, 310: 'with very few exceptions, [*Christos*] is used as a proper name rather than as a title'. This is precisely what I am challenging. Hengel 1983, 72 seems to me to be trying to have his cake and eat it when he says, 'it is precisely as a "proper name" that *Christos* expresses the uniqueness of Jesus as "eschatological bringer of salvation" '. Zetterholm 2007, 37 sums up the normal assumption: the word *Christos* 'has become a proper name and . . . has lost its messianic overtones almost entirely'. That is perhaps a sharper position than that of Hengel and Chester, but it is the natural conclusion of the same line of thought, and well expresses the point against which this paper is arguing.

[5] The only Psalm references listed in Nestlé–Aland for Galatians are 143.2 in Gal. 2.16; 87.5 in Gal. 4.26; and 125.5 and 128.6 echoed in Gal. 6.16.

[6] Against, e.g., Chester 2007a, 111 n. 16.

[7] Zetterholm 2007, 37 suggests, remarkably, that traditional scriptural messianic texts play no role in Paul.

[8] Novenson 2012.

[9] Though, as Novenson is well aware, 'proper names' in the ancient world, as sometimes in the modern, can carry all kinds of connotations.

[10] Which, admittedly, was already carrying connotation (heir to the divine Julius Caesar) as well as denotation by the time Augustus was putting it on coins.

(particularly 3.16) naturally features in his book he does not venture far into its complexities.

We had better note from the start that there is a problem of method in making the kind of argument I am proposing. Paul never hints, anywhere, that he needs to affirm, let alone to argue, the Messiahship of Jesus against possible doubters. He never says 'How can some of you say that Jesus is not Israel's Messiah', as he does with the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15.12. If Acts is right, Paul regularly argued in synagogues that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, but he never does this in his letters. That must mean either that the idea is absent, or – which I shall try to demonstrate – that it is so strongly assumed by all parties that Paul has no more need to argue or even affirm it out loud than he needs to explain the Jewish food taboos. But when someone in my position then wants to argue not only for the presence of a particular idea, and more especially its importance in a particular argument, against those in our own day who affirm its absence, one cannot proceed by deduction or induction, but only by abduction. This is the Sherlock Holmes method – and actually the regular scientific method: offering a hypothesis about the larger picture which Paul has in mind, and demonstrating that the data fit within this picture better and more satisfyingly than they do in alternative proposals. Those who try to stick to deduction or induction regularly suppose that abduction begs the question, but it doesn't. It means recognizing what sort of question it is.[11]

This brings me to a further peculiarity in the present argument. Many scholars, over many years, have taken for granted what I think Paul takes for granted: that Jesus was Israel's Messiah, and that it was Jesus' Messiahship which explained the incorporative Christology which has otherwise proved so opaque. Since my own doctoral supervisor, the late George Caird, was one of those who made these assumptions, I was myself lulled into supposing that these ideas needed less detailed argumentation than, in the light of the scholarship of the last twenty years, I now see that they do.[12] New Testament scholarship has had a dangerous though perhaps inevitable tendency to operate in silos, inside each of which some things are assumed which are elsewhere controversial, and other things elsewhere taken for granted seem to make no sense.[13]

What, then, are we discussing under the heading 'Messiahship'? Quite a bit of the recent literature on this topic, not least in relation to Paul, has swirled around a question which I regard as largely irrelevant, namely the question of the divinity of Jesus in Paul. I am quite clear that Paul sees Jesus as embodying the presence of the one true God, but I do not think he uses the word *Christos*, or any pre-Christian Jewish ideas about a Messiah, to convey or explain this. First-century meanings of 'Messiah' were varied and

[11] Against Chester 2007a, 114. For the point of method, cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, Part II, esp. ch. 2. I am grateful (as in many things) to Carey Newman for enlightening discussions of this point.

[12] See Caird and Hurst 1994, 309: 'Just as David *was* the people of Israel and represented them before God, so Jesus incorporates the people he had come to save . . . It was because Jesus had died and risen *as Israel's representative* that he was now thought to reign over God's people at the right hand of God' (italics original).

[13] See, e.g., Martyn's puzzled response (Martyn 1997a, 310 n. 84) to *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 7: 'ingenious but unconvincing'. One could respond in kind, but this would merely leave the unhelpful silos intact.

complex; but incarnation was not among them. Of course, since I think Paul believed Jesus *both* to be Messiah *and* to be the embodiment of Israel's God, there is a very close correlation, to which we shall return. But we shall only confuse the question (as many have done) if we approach his use of *Christos* with those questions in mind.[14]

We come to the question, rather, with the assumption, from a wide range of recent scholarship, that first-century meanings of 'Messiah' were varied and complex. There was no single 'model'.[15] Nor was it the case that all Jews of the period were expecting a 'Messiah', of whatever sort; one of the fascinating features to which Novenson has drawn attention is that most first-century uses of 'messianic' language are from the early Christian texts rather than from the non-Christian Jewish literature. This emphasis on a wide variety of expectation is surely right, though as with all reactions it can go too far. However, as I have argued repeatedly myself, we should look not simply at the key texts, important (and varied) though they are, but at the actual men and movements, from the Maccabees to bar-Kochba, who seem to have grabbed such royal expectations that were around and bent them this way and that to their own purposes.[16] When we do this, we see not only considerable variety; we see, more particularly, that expectation was focussed primarily on the nation, not on an individual. When an individual came into focus, generalized and scripture-rooted ideas could be redrawn in several different ways to fit. 'The main task of a Messiah, over and over again, is the liberation of Israel, and her reinstatement as the true people of the creator God'; how this happens varies considerably.[17] We see, too, that a wide variety of scriptural texts was available for use in support; no one set of texts turns up all the time.[18] This national focus and scriptural basis made inevitably for a 'political' dimension. However, once again, though we must assume that messianic movements or near equivalent were inevitably 'political', in the sense that they were looking for a radical change in the running of the Jewish homeland at least, on the basis of ancient promises, this does not make them monochrome. Everything was, in that sense, 'political' in the ancient world. A movement that beats its ploughshares into swords and marches on Jerusalem is 'political'; so is a movement that symbolically re-enacts the Exodus, and the entry into the land, by plunging people into the Jordan.

How then can one make the case for the presence of something that might be thought of as messianism in Paul? We may set aside for the moment the arguments that hinge on the different cases of *Christos*, which are anyway

[14] Against, e.g., Horbury 1998. Horbury does, however, have much important discussion.

[15] Neusner (e.g. Neusner 1987) and other contemporary writers seem to me to be reacting, in post-modern fashion and perhaps for reasons best explained within the context of a post-Holocaust Judaism, to earlier Jewish expositions of 'messianism' such as those of Klausner. The theme was always more complex than the older writers made out, but perhaps also more coherent than one would guess from the reaction.

[16] Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, ch. 7.

[17] Cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 307–20, esp. the conclusions in 319f. (quote from 320). See too *Simply Jesus*, ch. 9. I resist, therefore, Novenson's suggestion (3 n. 6) that I have simply picked up from earlier scholarship a monochrome messianic portrait and applied it to Paul.

[18] E.g. Gen. 49.10 (the 'sceptre'); Num. 24.17 (the 'star'); 2 Sam. 7.4–17 (the 'seed of David'); Pss. 2; 8 and 110; Isa. 11.1–10.

usually a function of the governing preposition, and also the presence or absence of the definite article, which in any case works differently in Greek from the way it does in English, a fact not always sufficiently recognized. We leave aside, too, the interesting inversions of *Iēsous Christos* and *Christos Iēsous*, though they are far more significant than is usually recognized.[19] I take for granted, as well, other detailed studies, for instance on Philemon 6.[20] I want to concentrate on two more large-scale features of the landscape, one which I merely reaffirm since I do not think it has been in any way answered, and the other which needs making much more fully and is of particular relevance to Galatians.

The Landscape

First, I am encouraged, in a negative sort of way, by the fact that I have seen no rebuttal of the case I made twenty years ago: that the idea of Jesus as Messiah seems to be alive and well in every other form of Christianity we know in the first century, including Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts, John, Hebrews, Revelation, and also the Apostolic Fathers.[21] Scholars who suggest that Paul must have abandoned messianic belief because he was communicating with the wider gentile world where such Jewish ideas would be irrelevant or even repellent do not seem to notice that the same ought then to be true for Luke, or John, or Ignatius of Antioch; and it obviously isn't.[22] This shows, I think, what is really going on in such scholarship: a resolute attempt to rescue Paul from his Jewish roots, an attempt in which Galatians has frequently been a prime weapon. We may remind ourselves, also, of the strange incident where the emperor Domitian arrests and investigates some of Jesus' blood relatives because he assumes they are part of a royal family.[23] The notion that Jesus was Messiah is still current when Josephus, writing the *Antiquities*, refers to James as 'the brother of the so-called Messiah'; had the word been simply a name, one would not need to write 'so-called'.[24] We may assume that the notion of Jesus' Messiahship was strongly present in the earliest Jerusalem church, and indeed that this belief, powerfully affirmed in the resurrection, was central to the first Christians.[25] If, therefore, Paul has effectively set aside the full messianic

[19] Cp., e.g., Fitzmyer 2007, 137.

[20] On Philemon: see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 3. On the relevant passages in Romans, see *Romans*.

[21] I assume that the 'gospel of Thomas' and similar texts come from the second century at the earliest; see my *Judas*.

[22] This theme has been repeated with monotonous regularity from Deissmann a century ago (Deissmann 1912, 133: 'The dogmatic Messiah of the Jews is fettered to his native country. The spiritual Christ could move from place to place . . .') to several in our own day, e.g. Zetterholm 2007, 40. Even Dunn 1993a, 26f. cheerfully repeats this view.

[23] See *Climax of the Covenant*, 41–3. The Domitian story is in Eus., *HE* 3.19f.

[24] *Ant*. 20.200; cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 353f. We leave out of account here the famous, but controversial, passage about Jesus himself in *Ant*. 18.63f.; cf. *New Testament and the People of God*, 354 and *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 439f.

[25] One can also cite the use in Antioch of *Christianoi* (Ac. 11.26), which, *pace* Hengel 1983, 72, does not mean that the word had been 'firmly established . . . as a "proper name" over a fairly long period of time'. We note, and emphatically reject, the view of K. Barth 1966 [1949], 73: 'He was not named Jesus Messiah by the first community, but Jesus Christ. Therein is revealed, therein is opened the door into the world.'

significance of the word *Christos*, we have to conclude that he represents an odd blip in an otherwise universally continuing messianic movement.[26] It is then the more peculiar that he should use the word *Christos* so frequently and distinguish it so carefully (as, despite many exegetes, he demonstrably does) from both *Iēsous* and *Kyrios*. All this I now take for granted.

Second, however, I want to highlight the role that *Christos* plays, for Paul, within the implicit and often explicit narrative of Israel. To explain this, it would be good to give an account of the widespread and diverse Jewish practice of retellings of the ancient biblical stories. This, however, I have provided elsewhere, and must here presuppose.[27] Suffice it here to say that the later biblical and second-Temple Jewish writings give dozens of examples of retellings both long and short, in several different genres, with different highlights, and a variety of conclusions. This second point subdivides into a further five, which we again simply summarize.[28]

First, these fresh tellings of the biblical story are of many types, shapes, sizes, and emphases. There is no standard model.

Second, however, they always get the historical order right; whichever heroes or villains they choose, they know and use the full implicit narrative. Only in writers such as Philo do we find the stories treated as mere repositories of potential allegories and nuggets of wisdom.

Third, however they tell this story, they always perceive it not merely as an ancient story from which one might cull types and patterns, examples and warnings, but as a *single continuous story* in which *they themselves are now living*. The story has not stopped. It is continuing, and those who are telling it afresh are doing so to highlight, explain and energize the calling of God's people in their own day as the currently running act in the drama.

Fourth, and most important, almost all these retellings of Israel's story are more about Israel's rebellion and sin, and God's judgment upon them, particularly in the exile, than they are about a smooth upward journey towards the light. (Obvious exceptions might be Psalm 105 and Ben-Sirach.) The nineteenth-century idea of a smooth immanent development, against which so many have reacted sharply over the last half-century, has no foothold in these texts; as usual, squashing ancient material into modern thought-patterns produces gross distortions. Ancient Judaism regularly told its story in terms of persistent failure and God's fresh redemptive actions; the Abrahamic covenant

[26] Cp. Collins 2010, 2, describing as 'astonishing' the claim of Gager and Gaston 'that Paul did not regard Jesus as the messiah'. Collins cites Rom. 1.3f., but it is precisely the obviously messianic meaning of that passage that has led many to discount it as a statement of Paul's own position; cf. Chester 2007a, 111 n. 16.

[27] See *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2.

[28] See the fuller account of these points in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2. Hays 2000, 279 points out both that 'Paul reads Scripture as a narrative with a plotline', 'a story in which we are to find our place', unlike, e.g., Philo for whom it is simply a source of timeless allegories. This seems to me to be a step beyond where Hays left the argument in Hays 1983 (repr. 2002), where the continuity of Abraham and Christ is that of 'prefiguration and fulfillment' (Hays 2002 [1983], 198). Nor does Hays draw the conclusion that the goal of the single continuous plotline is likely to be Israel's Messiah. B. W. Longenecker 1998, ch. 5 seems to me to be pointing in the right direction, in suggesting that Gal. 3 does envisage some sort of a covenantal narrative (against, e.g., Martyn), but he only takes a few tentative steps down that line.

was invoked not as the start of a triumphalist progression but as the ultimate hope for grace when otherwise the story had become a nightmare. The 'apocalyptic' message of most of these extremely varied Jewish texts nests within the solid and unbroken covenant theology they all evince. Where, however, we find a writing which treats Abraham as the point of origin, which describes the curious and dark events of subsequent generations, and which points on to a moment when the promises to Abraham are fulfilled, we should have no hesitation in recognizing this as one such retelling. It is sometimes debated whether the figure who arrives at the conclusion of such a narrative is Israel's Messiah.[29] But if a writer in Greek, apparently telling such a story, were to refer to this figure as *Christos*, that debate would be settled.

Fifth, and most obviously relevant to our topic, these stories frequently point forward to a coming climactic figure, and that figure is often, admittedly not always, messianic: the warrior king in the *Psalms of Solomon*, the lion in *4 Ezra*, the fountain and vine in *2 Baruch*, arguably also the large white bull in the Animal Apocalypse, and not least the world ruler who, in first-century readings of Daniel, would arise from Judaea. One could, indeed, turn the point around. Not all Israel-stories climax with a Messiah. Not all Messiahs, when they are there, look alike. But all Messiah-narratives come at the resolution of an implicit Israel-narrative, fulfilling the ancient promises, especially those to Abraham, and rescuing the nation from the appalling mess into which its many rebellions have landed it, and thereby suddenly unveiling God's long-awaited mercy and faithfulness.

Here we discern another twist. Where there was no obvious candidate at a given time, any messianic expectation that might be present would be expressed as a function of the national hope. But when, as with the 'messiahs' of the first century, or with bar-Kochba in the second, there was a clear present candidate, the picture could reverse, and the scriptural basis and national expectation could be redrawn around the figure in question.

It is worth adding to these many and varied Jewish retellings of the story of Israel the remarkable set of early Christian variations on the same theme. The New Testament as a whole has not abandoned the Jewish tradition of fresh tellings of the biblical story, but has brought it to new clarity and focus because of Jesus. Leaving Paul aside for the moment, we simply go to the most obvious places. The early Christians, however varied their contexts, theologies, and missionary motives, never abandoned the Jewish habit of telling the story of God's people as a covenantal narrative that, having passed through many dark and catastrophic times, was now reaching its goal.

Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy which is structured around Abraham, David, and the exile, and reaches its natural goal – the seventh seven in the count of generations – with the Messiah. Luke puts on the lips of Mary and Zechariah songs which celebrate the coming of the Messiah as the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham and David. John, more subtly, weaves into his narrative not only the repeated affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah (or rather, that the Messiah is Jesus), but that this Messiah

[29] As, e.g., with *1 En.* 90.37f.

fulfils the promises to Abraham and also, though more strangely, the revelation to Moses. Hebrews offers a list of men and women of faith which, right up to the climactic point, would not have looked out of place in many of the writings we have already surveyed (though interestingly David seems to appear as a prophet rather than a king). But then the list reaches its goal, of course, in Jesus himself. As in Ben-Sirach, he is in Hebrews the great high priest, but as the earlier chapters make clear this is fused, via Psalm 110, with his role as the king from the house of Judah.

The book which most obviously retells the story of Israel so as to reach its fulfilment in Jesus is Acts. Two of the long speeches do this dramatically. First, there is Stephen's speech in Acts 7.2–53, which like many Jewish retellings of the story is more of a 'damnation-history' than a 'salvation history', and which ends with the rejection of Jesus seen as parallel to the earlier rejection of Moses.[30] Then there is Paul's speech in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13, which tells the classic story of Abraham, the sojourn in Egypt and the exodus, the settlement in the land, the rejection of Saul, and the choice of David. The speech then emphasizes that Jesus, from David's line, has been demonstrated to be Messiah. Addressing his hearers as 'Abraham's family' (13.26), Paul draws on well-known messianic passages – Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, and Psalm 16 – to back up the claim, and echoes the 'servant' promises in Isaiah.[31]

Three smaller stories in Acts make the same point. In Acts 2.22–36, Peter emphasizes that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah. In 4.23–31 the disciples, facing persecution, invoke Psalm 2 as they pray for protection and continuing boldness to preach the word. In 5.30–32 Peter answers the authorities by claiming that 'the God of our ancestors' raised up the crucified Jesus and exalted him as 'leader and saviour'. Luke and Acts are regularly seen as writings for a wider Hellenistic readership. But the narratives of Israel, reaching their climax in Jesus as Israel's Messiah, are as much in evidence here as anywhere in the early Christian movement. This is supremely so in the famous ending of Luke's gospel, when the risen Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, explains to the two on the road to Emmaus all the things about himself, and then repeats this in the upper room, emphasizing that all the things in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms, had to be fulfilled. In both passages the point is explicitly drawn: the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and this was the point towards which the entire scriptural narrative had been leading. In the second passage it is stressed that the consequent message is for all the nations.[32]

A couple of brief reflections on these Israel-narratives in the New Testament and their messianic goal. What strikes us, by contrast with the pre-Christian stories whether biblical or later, is their sharp clarity and definite assertion.

[30] Wischmeyer 2006 correctly reads the 'history' of Stephen's speech as a 'history of guilt', but is in my judgment wrong to suggest that Stephen thus 'abandons the history of Israel as a shared area of recollection' (348). It is precisely because it remains a shared recollection that the accusation, and the parallel between Jesus and figures like Joseph and Moses, mean what they do.

[31] Ac. 13.16–41. 13.47 echoes Isa. 49.6; 45.22.

[32] Lk. 24.25–27; 44–47. Some have suggested that there are 'embedded' scriptural narratives in James (e.g. 5.10f., 17f., and the mention of Abraham and Rahab in 2.21–25). But this seems to me far-fetched.

There is no 'messianic secret'; the narrative has arrived at its destination. Indeed, so the writers insist, it is the fact that the narrative can and should be told in this way that constitutes the foundation of this unexpected fulfilment. And of course – especially if we keep Isaiah 53, and perhaps Psalm 22, out of the picture for the moment – the sharp clarity is focussed on something which was absent from the pre-Christian Jewish sources. There is radical innovation. Nobody had imagined that the Messiah would rise from the dead. I have elsewhere explored this in relation to the sudden sharpness of the early Christian vision of resurrection, by contrast with the various feelings after clarity in second-Temple writings.[33]

But if there is radical innovation, there is also continuity. Like their pre-Christian models, the storytellers of early Christianity know the narrative: Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, exile . . . and then? Not everybody drew on all elements of the larger potential narrative. The absence of Noah in much of the New Testament is interesting in itself.[34] But they are not freewheeling, scooping up types and patterns at random. It is undoubtedly the scriptural story, the second-Temple Jewish story, that they are telling, but they are telling it in a surprising, in fact a shocking and scandalous way. But it is still the same narrative, going back to Abraham, and indeed in some cases (Luke 3, for example) to Adam.

It is a story of this sort that Paul tells in Romans 9 and 10. This point is often missed, indeed sometimes scorned. But it cannot be gainsaid. When a writer in this period takes us from Abraham to Isaac (with a glance at Ishmael), then to Jacob (with a mention of Esau), then to Moses and Pharaoh, then to the age of the prophets, then to the time of Israel's being narrowed down to a remnant, and then to the wonderful promise of Deuteronomy 30, which was in Paul's day taken by some to be about the ultimate return from exile and the ingathering of God's scattered people – we should know by now what we are dealing with.[35] And when, at the vital moment in the narrative, Paul says that at the goal, the climax, the *telos* of the whole narrative, the Pentateuchal narrative whose goal is Deuteronomy 30, we find *Christos*, we should find it astonishing that anyone should doubt his meaning. The person who comes at the climax of Israel's narrative, to rescue his people and usher in the long-awaited age to come, must be the Messiah. When Paul calls him *Christos*, it is hard to see how he could make the point any clearer.[36] When this statement comes at the centre of a carefully structured argument which had been introduced with a list of Israel's privileges climaxing in *ho Christos*, we can only gasp at the refusal of so many readers to see the obvious.

From all this I draw two points which contextualize our present discussion. First, there was a long and varied Jewish tradition of telling the story of Israel, with many options and possibilities but frequently including the covenant with

[33] Cf. *Resurrection of the Son of God*, chs. 3 and 4, and the summary of the point at, e.g., pp. 578–83 and esp. 604–7.

[34] As was noted, and interestingly discussed, by Barrett 1962, 22–6.

[35] On second-Temple readings of Deuteronomy, see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2 (MMT, Josephus, etc.).

[36] Cf. too the shorthand narrative in Rom. 15.8f., on which see *Romans*, ad loc.

Abraham and the kingship of David. These retellings regularly looked to the immediate future, the point where the story ended and where the readers would be expected to find themselves. Sometimes, when they did so, they ended with a royal or redemptive figure, and when that happens we are usually on safe ground in saying that this is the Messiah. Second, the early Christians, from the first days after Easter to well into the second and third generations, went on telling the story in very similar ways, but with a new focus and clarity centred, of course, upon Jesus himself. There is no sign that they stopped thinking of him as Messiah, or regarded that as an earlier Jewish formulation which they could now flatten out or leave behind, perhaps in the interests of making the Jewish message more 'relevant' to the non-Jewish world. If anything, as with Luke and Acts, the reverse is the case: the claim becomes more explicit as it goes forward, not least as it goes out into the pagan world where so many scholars imagined the missionaries would quietly leave such Jewish categories behind. The odd incident with Domitian makes the same point. The early church continued to think of Jesus in royal terms, as the Davidic Messiah in and through whom God's long story, stretching back to Abraham and frequently needing to be told in highly unflattering terms, had at last reached its redemptive goal. If we were to think of 'salvation history' as a smooth upward continuum, most of the scriptural and second-Temple models would protest. It is anything but that. But if we were to think of Jesus emerging out of nowhere, denying any previous story, sweeping Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest out of the way as so much misleading 'religion', the scriptural and second-Temple writers, and the New Testament writers with them, would accuse us of Marcionism. And they would be right.[37]

It will by now be clear where this argument is going. But before we move to exegesis let us look at some statistics.

Vital Statistics

Where then might we begin to look at the question of Messiahship in Galatians? Well, perhaps with some word-statistics. We have all learned to beware of such things, which can lead to mere concordance-worship, or the left-brain attempt to turn theology into mathematics. Complex concepts are often expressed periphrastically; as in rabbinic arguments, or chess matches, the key moves may be left unstated. Sometimes words which encapsulate the heart of an argument occur infrequently but decisively, like the single clash of cymbals at the climax of a symphony. Nevertheless, the word-usage in Galatians does, I think, offer at least a straw in the wind.

If you were to ask someone reasonably biblically literate what Galatians is about, they might say 'salvation from sin', or 'Paul's gospel of grace', or 'justification by faith'. They might perhaps say 'Paul's theology of the cross' or 'Paul's critique of the law'. Those have all been major themes in the tradition

[37] Cf. Dahl 1991, 78, warning against a triumphalistic post-Enlightenment liberalism whose general trend 'was to abandon the argument from fulfilled prophecy in favor of a concept of Christianity as the universal and superior religion, in comparison with which paganism and Judaism represented inferior stages of religious development'.

of interpretation of this letter. Conversely, Galatians has regularly been invoked in discussions of soteriology, in which those ideas cluster together. But the sheer numbers raise at least a question-mark against this tradition. Paul never uses *sōzein*, *sōtēr*, or *sōtēria* in Galatians. He only mentions *hamartia* three times,[38] one of these in close relation to the two occurrences of *hamartōlos*,[39] suggesting that his concern there is as much with the question of gentile status as actual sin. The *dikaios* root, likewise, is comparatively infrequent: one use of *dikaios* itself, four of *dikaiosynē*, and eight of *dikaioō*. The cross, *stauros*, is mentioned three times; the verb *stauroō* likewise three times.[40] The gospel, *euangelion*, is found seven times, as is the verb *euangelizomai*, with all but one of these fourteen in the first two chapters.[41] Paul uses *charis*, 'grace', seven times, including the opening and closing greetings.[42] The important word *epangelia*, 'promise', is found ten times, with one use of the cognate verb, almost all in the second half of chapter 3.[43]

A much higher strike rate occurs for *pistis*, 'faith' or 'faithfulness', which occurs twenty-two times, and for the law, *nomos*, which is found thirty-two times, almost as many as *ou*, *ouk*, and *ouch* which together occur thirty-six times, or Paul's vital connecting word *gar*, which is found thirty-seven times.[44] Even *theos* is found only thirty-one times, and *pneuma* a mere eighteen. Out beyond them all is *Christos*, forty times or more (depending on variant readings), and backed up with a couple of key references to Jesus as 'son of God', arguably here in a messianic sense.[45] By contrast, the title *kyrios* is found only five times, two in the opening and closing greetings and one in the reference to James, 'the Lord's brother'.[46] Even the proper name 'Jesus' is found only eighteen times, again allowing for variant readings. *Christos*, in other words, is far and away the most frequent term in Paul's theological vocabulary in this letter. We might contrast Romans, where we find 155 uses of *theos* to sixty-eight of *Christos* and thirty-four of *pneuma*, most of the latter in chapter 8.[47] To find words in Galatians that occur more frequently than *Christos* we have to look to examples like *hymeis* in all its cases (forty-seven times) and, inevitably, *kai* and *de* (fifty-eight times each[48]). And *Christos* is not far behind even these.

[38] 1.4; 2.17; 3.22.

[39] 2.15, 17.

[40] *dikaios*: 3.11; *dikaiosynē*: 2.21; 3.6, 21; 5.5; *dikaioō*: 2.16 × 3, 17; 3.8, 11, 24; 5.4. *stauros*: 5.11; 6.12, 14; *stauroō*: 3.1; 5.24; 6.14. We might note that the resurrection is mentioned only in the opening greeting (1.1), though it is arguably present just below the surface of the argument in many passages in the letter: see *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 219–25.

[41] *euangelion*: 1.6, 7, 11; 2.2, 5, 7, 14; *euangelizomai*: 1.8 × 2, 9, 11, 16, 23; 4.13.

[42] 1.3, 6, 15; 2.9, 21; 5.4; 6.18. There are no uses of *charizomai* or *charisma*. Romans, by contrast, has 25 uses of *charis*, six of *charisma*, and one of *charizomai*.

[43] *epangelia*: 3.14, 16, 17, 18 × 2, 21, 22, 29; 4.23, 28; *epangellomai*: 3.19.

[44] Two other regular connectives, *ara* and *oun*, appear only six times each; *alla*, 'but', is found twenty-three times; the preposition *dia* occurs fourteen times.

[45] Son of God: 2.20; 4.4, 6.

[46] 1.3, 19; 5.10; 6.14, 18. The reference in 4.1 is part of the illustration of the young 'master' of the household, which could count as an oblique advance hint to the arrival of the 'son of God' in 4.4.

[47] On which see Morris 1970. Cp. too 1 Corinthians: *theos* = 106, *Christos* = 65; 2 Corinthians: *theos* = 79; *Christos* = 47; 1 Thessalonians: *theos* = 36; *Christos* = 10 (all these are taken from MG, and leave textual variations out of consideration).

[48] Counting the contracted form *kagō* for *kai egō*.

Now one might say that this means almost nothing at all; that Paul is talking about this figure whom he variously and interchangeably calls *Iēsous* or *Christos*, and that the high frequency of the latter was a mere stylistic chance, since *Christos* was by now simply a proper name. Thus Andrew Chester, representing the majority of scholars: 'The sheer quantity of usage of *Christos* in itself proves nothing'. His next sentence, however, is a challenge: 'What matters', he says, 'is the way (and contexts) in which it is used, and these suggest hardly anything specifically messianic.'[49] Well, that depends. When a scholar resolutely puts the telescope to a blind eye, there is no knowing what signals may go unnoticed.[50] And there are in fact enough scholars who have insisted, against the trend, that in Paul *Christos* does indeed retain *active and not merely residual* messianic significance, and that his arguments do in fact turn on this, that we should be encouraged to look afresh at the way, and the contexts, in which the word is used.[51] That is the task to which I now turn, in respect of Galatians in particular. I shall argue, first, that *Christos* does indeed mean 'Messiah' in Galatians, and that this meaning is active within the argument, not merely a residual memory; second, that the word *Christos* seems to be at the heart of Paul's incorporative ecclesiology in Galatians; and third, rather obviously granted the first two but not granted the history of scholarship, that the first of these explains the second.

Christos as 'Messiah' in Galatians

The Fulfiller of the Story

What evidence might there be in Galatians that Paul does indeed here see *Christos* as 'Messiah'? My first and most important move here has to do with the implicit and frequently explicit *narrative* which dominates Galatians. The very idea of such a narrative has often, of course, been ruled out, or ascribed to Paul's opponents rather than to him. But I persist.[52] Paul regularly, throughout the letter, sees Jesus as the one in whom Israel's long, strange, and sometimes dark narrative has come to surprising, but after all appropriate, fulfilment. And the point is this. In the light of our earlier survey of biblical, second-Temple and early Christian retellings of the story of Israel, if we discover a sense of implicit narrative starting with Abraham, continuing with Moses and the law, finding itself in some kind of deep trouble, but then discovering a god-sent deliverer through whom promises are after all fulfilled and God's

[49] Chester 2007a, 114, cf. 111 etc.

[50] The master at this is Kramer 1966, e.g. 209 on *Christos* with the article: 'in no case can we discover an appropriate reason for the determination'. Of course not, granted that an understanding of Paul's wider theology seems to have been ruled out from the start.

[51] Cf. Dahl 1991, ch. 1, though he seems almost to give away the farm with his first sentence: 'Paul's Christology can be stated almost without referring to the messiahship of Jesus.' By the end of the essay, however, he is clear that 'Jesus' messiahship actually had a fundamental significance for the total structure of Paul's Christology' (22). Among Germans, interestingly, cp. Bornkamm 1969, 76; Cullmann 1963, 134 (though neither develops the idea in the way I am doing); Oepke 1973, 201 (= 2nd ed. 159).

[52] See *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 7.

new age is ushered in – then, almost whatever words might be used for such a figure, one easy and natural assumption would be that this person was Israel's Messiah. When we find, in a letter which tells or alludes to that story over and over again, that the person whose arrival has brought this narrative to its appointed goal and has accomplished the promised deliverance is referred to as *Christos*, we ought to say: game over. This is the Messiah. And his messiahship means what it means *in relation to that narrative*, just as the narrative now means what it means in the light of its surprising and freshly revealed goal. For Paul, the latter clearly takes priority; there is no sense that, prior to his conversion, he had been expecting Israel's great story to reach its denouement in the crucifixion of the Messiah and a fresh telling of the narrative in which the God-given Torah had become part of the problem. But this certainly does not mean that his idea of the Messiah was now free-standing, with no narrative basis. It is still the *telos*, the goal of the story, even though precisely by *being* the goal it compels a fresh telling of that story – precisely in the long and noble Jewish tradition of telling the story differently according to fresh visions of what Israel's God might be up to.

So where in Galatians do we find this narrative? Answer: in chapters 3 and 4 particularly, but alluded to at many other points. (I hold off from chapter 2 for the moment.) The attempt of some, notably J. L. Martyn and his followers, to say that Paul is referring to the story of Abraham only because his opponents have forced him onto their preferred territory, and that he gives no positive sense to Israel's long history, is now well known, but I regard it as demonstrably flawed.[53] That is not – to use the category to which Martyn, however peculiarly, regularly appeals – how 'apocalyptic' works. In 'apocalyptic' literature, as I have shown elsewhere, we frequently find a retelling of Israel's story, taking it through dark and gloomy pathways but pointing on to a sudden and surprising but utterly appropriate eventual resolution. So it is here: Paul is indeed an 'apocalyptic' theologian, but 'apocalyptic' does not mean 'non-historical'. If the word 'apocalyptic' has any useful referent in the study of second-Temple Judaism, it must have the book of Daniel as one of its primary examples; and what we find in Daniel, repeated again and again, is a strange and dangerous historical sequence reaching its climax in the sudden and fresh divine action to set up a kingdom which cannot be shaken, whether this is through the 'stone' in chapter 2, the 'one like a son of man' in chapter 7, or the anointed one who will bring about the real return from exile in chapter 9. We know from Josephus and *4 Ezra* that these passages were being read messianically in the first century.[54] Paul does not refer to Daniel (except perhaps in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15), but the idea of

[53] Cf., e.g., Stanley 2004, 120. Martyn 1997a, 348 claims that in Gal. 3.16 Paul specifically 'denies the Teachers' linear, redemptive-historical picture of a covenantal people, affirming instead the punctiliar portrait of the covenantal person, Christ'. What, we might ask, is this 'covenantal person, Christ', if not a Messiah? For Martyn to deny (348 n. 186) that Paul sees gentile Christians being taken into an already-existent people of God, in the face of 3.29, not to mention the narrative from 3.6 onwards of which that is the conclusion, is a breathtaking example of theory triumphing over evidence.

[54] Thus whatever the original meanings of Dan. 2, 7, and 9 (see Collins 2010, 42–6) the key question is: how is Daniel being heard in the time of Paul?

a long and dark history coming to its surprising and basically messianic conclusion is in fact one of the most central characteristics of genuine 'apocalyptic'. To rule out narrative readings and messianic conclusions in Paul on the grounds that he is an 'apocalyptic' thinker is like saying that you cannot include violins and French horns in your composition because you are writing 'classical' music.

For Paul, as we know from Romans and 1 Corinthians, the narrative can run all the way back to Adam (again, as in *4 Ezra* and many other texts), but in Galatians he takes it back to Abraham. Galatians 3 offers a sustained and detailed engagement with Genesis 15, the chapter in which God makes the covenant with Abraham, which solidifies and clarifies the original vocational promise in Genesis 12 that in Abraham all the nations would be blessed. The question of how this can come about, granted all the barriers that appear to be in the way, is precisely the question with which Paul wrestles throughout chapter 3, until the eventual resolution in verse 29: if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. In terms of the logic both of Paul's argument and of the underlying biblical narrative, this is the QED moment. We therefore have a miniature version of the story of Israel, working forward from Abraham, through the puzzles and problems of the law, and ending with *Christos*. How can this not be the Messiah?

The same is true of the further fresh telling of the story, this time echoing the exodus-traditions, in 4.1–7. This story nests within the earlier one, a link made explicit in Genesis 15 itself with the promise that Abraham's seed would be slaves in a foreign land and would eventually be redeemed; in other words, the exodus story is itself part of the fulfilment of the covenant promise. Here the resolution to the problem of slavery is the sending of God's son and then the sending of the spirit of the son. If we may invoke the obvious parallel in Romans, this too is clearly messianic: in Romans 8 Paul draws on Psalm 2, where the son's promised inheritance consists of the whole world.[55] Though Paul does not mention Psalm 2 in Galatians, it is interesting that the theme of *klēronomia*, 'inheritance', which here belongs with the promise to Abraham (3.18), comes at what we might call the messianic moment in the narrative in 3.29, being then reaffirmed at the 'inheritance' moment in the miniature exodus-narrative of 4.1–7: if a son, then an heir through God (4.7).

By itself, an exodus-narrative would not generate a messianic fulfilment. It was Moses who brought the people out of Egypt, under the ultimate leadership of the pillar of cloud and fire. However, given the way in which, in second-Temple Judaism, the ultimate redemption (which might or might not involve a messianic figure) was seen as a new exodus, a clear echo of exodus might well point to messianic fulfilment, as in Isaiah 40—55 and indeed Daniel 9. There is of course a considerable tension here, since Moses is the one who, in Galatians 3 and 4, is being courteously set aside; as throughout the letter, the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham is set in counterpoint with the problem of Torah and the way in which it has been overcome – again, through *Christos*. But in any case, in second-Temple literature, whether

[55] Rom. 8.17–25.

'apocalyptic' or not, if we found a passage promising a new exodus and highlighting the role of one man as instrumental in bringing it about, there is a fair chance that this might be the Messiah. When the Messiah comes, Israel's hopes will be realized and her destiny fulfilled. If Paul is saying that those hopes are now realized and that destiny fulfilled, and refers to *Christos*, and/or God's son, as the person through whom this has come about, it is hard to say that he did not mean the word to carry this meaning, or that this meaning was merely residual but basically irrelevant to the point he was making.

A more detailed survey of Galatians 3 and 4 would fill out this point. The single argument we think of as 3.6—4.7 divides itself into four parts, each one of which tells the same story in miniature.[56] In each case the story begins with the earlier history of Israel, faces the problem which that history has run into, and postulates *Christos* as the one through whom the problem has been resolved, and the original purpose fulfilled. In each case, too, there are much stronger echoes of Genesis 15 than is usually brought out. Of course, the passage is regularly regarded as a *tour de force* on Paul's part, making texts and words dance and spin about in what appears to us a fanciful and unhistorical manner. This is normally (and sometimes patronizingly) explained in terms of Paul's rabbinic methods of exegesis; though, even if this were the right way to approach the passage, the result would still stand. The more rabbinic we make Paul, the more we would know that when he wrote *Christos* he meant 'Messiah'.[57]

In fact, the context in Genesis offers many clues to a different and less apparently arbitrary way of reading the chapter, and we shall return to this in the third section of this paper. For the moment we glance at the three stages of Galatians 3.

The first stage is 3.6–14. Here, Paul states the promise and then poses the problem: God's purpose is to bless the world through Abraham, but the curse of the Torah has intervened to block this intention. We do not need to explore here the details of how this works. For our purpose it is sufficient to note that, in 3.10–14, it is *Christos* who has come to set it all right, to enable the original divine purpose to be fulfilled despite the blockage.[58]

The same is true in the still more complicated passage 3.15–22, about which I have again written more fully elsewhere.[59] Here the key is to have a firm grasp on the chapter Paul is expounding, Genesis 15. God promises

[56] There is no space here to explore the structural balance of the segments, but it is noticeable that 3.6–14 comprises 150 words, 3.15–22 156, 3.23–29 a much shorter 87 and 4.1–7 a further 100. Did Paul perhaps think of 3.23—4.7 as a unit, making three similar units (150; 156; 187 words) flanked by an introduction (3.1–5: 62 words) and conclusion (4.8–11: 51 words)? Or four units (150; 156; 87; 100) with that introduction and conclusion?

[57] See, e.g., Deissmann 1912, 105; Esler 1998, 193. W. D. Davies, at the conclusion of his great attempt to locate Paul within 'rabbinic' thought, makes Jesus' Messiahship central (W. D. Davies 1980, 324). Even Hays (2000, 264), who sees the link between 3.16 and 3.29, indicating that Paul is well aware of the collective sense of *sperma*, suggests that his style here is 'formally reminiscent of rabbinic exegesis', linking the promise of Abraham's 'seed' to that of David's in 2 Sam. 7.12–14 and Ps. 89.3f. That link is undoubtedly important, but the key is the incorporative meaning of *Christos* itself.

[58] See *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 7.

[59] See *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 8.

Abraham a very great reward; Abraham understands 'reward' in terms of his inheritance (*klēronomia*), both human and geographical. The promise is then spelled out and repeated (15.4): Abraham's physical offspring will inherit from him, *klēronomēsei se*. God then invites Abraham to contemplate the stars, and declares 'so shall your seed be', *houtōs estai to sperma sou*, in other words, your family will be uncountable. This is the promise which Abraham believed, with the consequence that 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness' (Genesis 15.5, quoted already in Galatians 3.6). The theme of *klēronomia* is repeated again and again in Genesis 15 (many translations fail to bring this out), and this is the point of the covenant that is then made. Abraham's *sperma* will be slaves for four hundred years, but they will then be rescued, and will finally gain their *klēronomia*. When therefore Paul speaks of a *diathēkē* in Galatians 3.15, and continues to speak of the *sperma* and the *klēronomia* in the following verses, and of a length of time between promise and Torah, it seems perverse to deny that he is expounding the themes of covenant, seed, and inheritance as we find them in Genesis 15. Especially when we glance ahead to 3.29 and see that those are the terms in which he sums up the whole chapter.

We should then interpret Galatians 3.15–22 in parallel to 3.6–14: God makes promises, the Torah gets in the way, but God's initial purpose will be realized. And the point of all this for our present argument hits us in the face in verse 16: the terms of the covenant do not specify a plurality of families, but a single family, *hos estin Christos*.[60] I postpone for the moment the puzzles this verse creates, and merely note that here again *Christos* is the final moment in the implicit narrative. This is then picked up at the conclusion of the complex paragraph in 3.22, where the *Christos* that inherits the promise is further defined in terms of *pistis*, picking up of course the *pistis* of Abraham in 3.6–9. But again we should be clear that we are looking at a narrative, from Abraham to Paul's present time, which (like so many of the second-Temple retellings of the story) passes through a dark and puzzling phase but arrives at resolution. For Paul, the marker of that resolution is *Christos*. In terms of the implicit Jewish narrative, there is no reason why this should not mean 'Messiah', and every reason why it should. The reason so few scholars have seen the significance of Messiahship in Paul has a lot to do with the fact that so few of them have seen the significance of his retelling of the scriptural story.

What is more, the argument of 3.15–22 has drawn attention to a double feature of Genesis 15 which will then come to the fore in 4.1–7, namely, slavery and freedom. Abraham's home-born slave may have looked as though he was to inherit, but in fact Abraham's own son will do so; Abraham's descendants, his *sperma*, will be slaves in a foreign land and will then be brought out and given their inheritance at last.[61]

[60] This is the point, not least, of the much-puzzled-over 3.19f., on which see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 8.

[61] On the other puzzle at this point, the question of what has happened to the promise of the land, see 'Paul and the Patriarch' [reprinted as chapter 33 of the present volume]. Paul hints at his solution in 6.15 (new creation), and spells this out in Rom. 4 and 8.

The point for our purposes ought again to be clear. Despite the blockages put in its way, the Abrahamic promise has reached its strange fulfilment in a figure whose presence enables us to understand the otherwise puzzling extension of a localized promise into a global one. The figure so designated in the scriptures is the son of David who is the son of God; in Galatians, it is the *Christos* who is the son of God. It becomes increasingly difficult to deny not only that Paul means 'Messiah' when he here writes *Christos* but also that this meaning is more than a mere background acknowledgement of a now irrelevant reality. Paul's argument only makes the sense it does on the basis that this *Christos* really is Israel's Messiah, the anointed Davidic king. Take that away, and we are left with apparently problematic proof-texts for an argument which is about something else.

All this comes to a head in 3.23–29. This time Paul does not begin with Abraham, but with the blockage that has stood in the way both of the promises and of their *pistis*-fulfilment as in 3.22. The Torah kept Israel under lock and key (3.22), under the close supervision one might give to a young and unruly child (3.25), until the eschatological moment. And the arrival at the eschatological moment is described as *eis Christon* (3.24). Again, faced with an implicit Jewish narrative that arrives at an eschaton and finds a particular character there, we might expect that character to be either the Messiah or someone approximating thereto, and when the word used to designate this figure is *Christos* it is perverse to cast about for alternatives. It makes no sense to deny that for Paul here this word means 'Messiah', or to suggest that Messiahship plays no significant role in Paul's argument.

The final step in this part of our own argument is provided in 4.1–7. We have already seen that Paul has prepared the way for this further move in his hinting at the slavery–freedom move in chapter 3, echoing the double slave–free move in Genesis 15. Now he tells the new version of the Exodus narrative, in order (among other things) to work towards his designed conclusion in 4.8–11 where, as in the Exodus itself, the redemptive action unveils the full and true character of God himself, over against all pagan idols.[62] And, for a fourth and final time, the narrative comes to its climax with a particular figure. This time, however, the figure is not called *Christos*; he is called *hyios theou*, son of God; and he bestows 'sonship', *hyiothesia*, on those who receive 'the spirit of the son', so that they are no longer slaves, but sons. And, in case we might forget, 'if sons, then heirs', *klēronomoi*. Like the Abrahamic promise which would come true when the sins of the Amorite were at last full,[63] so this promise came true 'when the fulness of time had come', *hoti de ēlthen to plērōma tou chronou*. Paul is not embarrassed, as some of his readers have been, at a chronological sequence which leads to a final fulfilment.[64] Indeed, he has been developing the idea, in line with Genesis and Exodus, on and off throughout the chapter. But for our purposes the point is this:

[62] Cf. Ex. 3.6, 13–15. Note that Ex. 3.16–22 harks back to Gen. 15: the promise of the land of the Canaanites etc., the rescue from the enslaving nation, and the coming out with great possessions.

[63] *anapeplērōntai*, Gen. 15.16.

[64] De Boer 2011, 262 manages to make the phrase mean its opposite: 'the "fullness of time" thus signifies a clean break with the past'.

when the chronological sequence of Israel's history, starting with Abraham and surmounting all the problems and challenges on the way, reaches its fulness, any second-Temple Jew would know that the figure who emerged as the agent of that fulfilment might well be the Messiah. When Paul calls this figure *hyios theou*, a messianic title, we should take him seriously.

Other Messianic Indicators

Even if this argument, based on the implicit narrative from Abraham through Torah to the messianic fulfilment, is not accepted without a struggle, there are small-scale straws in the wind scattered throughout the letter which point in the same direction. The opening greeting speaks of God the father raising *Iēsous Christos* from the dead, which in the opening greeting of Romans is cited as evidence that this 'seed of David' really was 'son of God', a clear evocation of 2 Samuel 7.12–14 as well as Psalm 2. And this *Christos*, as the opening remarks of Galatians continue, has through his death accomplished the ultimate rescue, this time from 'the present evil age', in fulfilment of the divine purpose. A *Christos* who has been raised from the dead having rescued his people and ushered in God's long-intended new age looks pretty much like a Jewish Messiah.

The same point comes out with a bang in Galatians 5.1: 'for freedom *Christos* has set us free!' There were, no doubt, some freedom-fighters in the period who were not looking for a Messiah.[65] But if a group claimed to be fighting for freedom, or even to have already gained it, and if they called their freedom-winning leader *Christos*, they would of course mean Messiah. Freedom, and the victory which has brought it, has of course been redefined, but none the less Jesus has done what the Messiah was supposed to do. This brings into sharper focus Paul's earlier reference to 'the freedom we have *en Christō Iēsou*' (2.4).

The concluding flourish in chapter 6 likewise points to a messianic deliverance. Here, unusually for this letter, Paul gives Jesus the full triple designation, *Kyrios Iēsous Christos*, and says that through his cross 'the world is crucified to me, and I to the world', so that there is now neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but 'new creation'. This dramatic fulfilment of the age-old apocalyptic dream of a new world is, once more, the stuff of messianic hope. Whether or not we want to call Paul's language here 'millenarian', it designates a worldview within which we might well expect a Messiah as the final agent of deliverance.[66]

Our preliminary conclusion, then, is that *Christos* in Galatians really does refer to Jesus as Israel's Messiah, through whom the One God has accomplished the long-awaited liberation. The word cannot be reduced to the status of a name, or even of a name with residual memory of an earlier titular meaning. One might work through Galatians, or any of Paul's letters,

[65] On the varied movements of the period, see *New Testament and the People of God*, 170–81.

[66] Meeks 1983, 176f. sees Paul here as some kind of millenarian prophet; this makes it all the more likely that he would speak of a Messiah.

and try substituting *Iēsous* for *Christos*, or vice versa, and see what would happen. It would quickly become clear, unless we are truly deaf to his writing, that Paul has used these two words in precise ways which are simply not interchangeable;[67] and that *Christos* was carrying, again and again, meaning which has to do with a specific messianic role.

This leads to my second basic point: that *Christos*, whether or not it carries positive messianic meaning, is certainly in Galatians the vehicle for Paul's *incorporative* or *participatory* vision of the people of God.

Christos and 'Incorporation' or 'Participation'

Galatians contains some of the best-known statements of what has long been seen as Paul's theology of 'incorporation' or 'participation'. This category, perhaps misleadingly called 'mysticism' by Albert Schweitzer, is increasingly recognized as one of the central motifs, if not *the* central motif, in Paul's soteriology and perhaps his thought as a whole, though scholars have found it notoriously difficult to explain how it works. My own proposal on that front will follow from my central argument in this paper, but for the moment we simply need to note the way in which, within the argument of Galatians, this incorporation or participation focusses on *Christos*. Again, I hold off from chapter 2 for the moment, and return to chapter 3. We begin at the end, where Paul, like Mozart at the end of the 'Jupiter' symphony, suddenly brings several themes together in a rush.

Galatians 3.24–29, in fact, offers a whole range of *Christos*-based incorporative language. Beginning with verse 24, we noted earlier that the long-awaited eschaton, the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises, has arrived through a historical sequence which leads *eis Christon*. This results in justification on the basis of faith, in being no longer under the *paidagōgos* of Torah (3.25).[68] But this is explained, not here in terms of a forensic scheme, but in terms of *incorporation into 'Christos'*, as a result of which believers are said to be 'sons of God' (3.26).[69] This in turn is further explained (*gar*) by the fact that they have *entered this incorporative reality* by being baptized *eis Christon*, and by *putting on 'Christos'* (3.27), also presumably at the time of baptism. It is as though *Christos* is for Paul a kind of flexible receptacle into which people come, whether by plunging into the water which (as in Romans 6) symbolizes his death or by putting him on like a suit of clothes. Once that has happened they are then 'in him'. Some scholars make heavy weather of the different prepositions and cases, but so far this seems to me relatively straightforward.

This composite statement of the eschatological identity of believers (3.24–27) then gives rise to a new point, the real sharp edge of Paul's argument. Or rather,

[67] In the textual tradition, of course, interchangeability happens, as scribes in later centuries did indeed flatten out the meanings in question.

[68] This move from a kind of slavery to implicit freedom is of course the same move that we note in 4.1–7 and again in 4.21—5.1.

[69] I use the apparently gender-specific 'sons', rather than, say, 'children', to resonate with Paul's exposition especially as it arrives in 4.1–7, and with, e.g., Ex. 4.22.

it is two intimately related points, one negative and the other positive, both vital for and central to the whole argument of the letter, both again being incorporative, and both again having *Christos* as the focus of that incorporation. Negatively (3.28), the distinctions of Jew and Greek and slave and free are irrelevant, and even the two-sided creation of male and female is likewise beside the point; Paul, obviously, is referring both to the divided table-fellowship in Antioch and the threatened imposition of the male-only rite of circumcision in Galatia.[70] These divisions have been left behind, he says, because 'you are all one in *Christos*' (3.28b), *pantes gar hymeis heis este en Christō Iēsou*. Once you have entered into *Christos* you are all on the same footing. Then comes the positive point in 3.29, building on that explanatory clause of 3.28b: *ei de hymeis Christou*, if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's *sperma*, and in accordance with the promise you are *klēronomoi*, heirs. This obviously picks up the key points of 3.16–22 and with it the meaning of Genesis 15: the promise of the single *sperma*, a promise that was not to be thwarted by Torah's introduction of divisions, and then the resulting Abrahamic, and messianic, inheritance. And the fulcrum of this dense final statement, too, remains *Christos*: the *ei de* at the start of verse 29 indicates that Paul intends the genitive *Christou* to carry the same meaning as *en Christō* at the end of 3.28. Paul's whole argument has been that the Galatian Christians are already part of the family of Abraham. He has made the point by telling the story from Abraham to the present, from one angle after another, always bringing that great biblical narrative to its goal in terms of *Christos*.

If we stand back for a moment from this tight-packed argument, we should be able to see, in a preliminary way, what has happened. The narrative sequence of the Abrahamic promises and their fulfilment has expressed that fulfilment in terms of *Christos*, not simply in the sense of an individual Messiah whose arrival and achievement marks the goal of the story and the accomplishment of redemption and liberation, but in the sense of an incorporative body, a whole in whose identity people participate. The single family, the *klēronomia* promised to Abraham, was the goal towards which the promises had been aiming all along. Paul has given that single Abrahamic family a name: *Christos*. How does this work?

As we saw, Paul in Galatians 3 as a whole is expounding Genesis 15 in its entirety. He is reading it in the light of other passages such as 12.3, quoted in Galatians 3.8,[71] and the various repetitions of the promise concerning the 'seed' which will inherit the land.[72] The 'seed', indeed (*zera*' in Hebrew, *sperma* in Greek) carries much of the load both in Genesis 15 and in Galatians 3, and it is here, particularly in Galatians 3.16–22, that a double problem has occurred to which my proposal offers an exact solution.[73]

First, it is routinely forgotten, including in many translations, that the collective noun *sperma* (or *zera*') throughout the Genesis passages means not

[70] Might it also have been the case that several of the gentile converts were slaves, while the Jewish believers were free?

[71] Cf. too Gen. 18.18.

[72] Gen. 13.15; 17.8; 24.7.

[73] For what follows see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 8.

simply 'descendants', as though the *sperma* were simply a collocation of individuals, but more specifically 'family'. We have, in other words, a perfectly good English collective noun that corresponds to *sperma*, and one might speculate on why this has been avoided; perhaps it is because of the assumption that Galatians as a whole is only talking about the salvation of individuals, not the identity of the church. Ironically, commentators regularly take Paul to task for his apparent individualizing exegesis of *sperma*, and then continue to read the passage as being about something else, as though *hos estin Christos* is simply a fancy and (to our eyes) fanciful way of getting from the distant patriarch to the all-important saviour. Perhaps it is we who have individualized Paul's meaning.

Second, however, commentators on 3.16 have also usually ignored the fact that here Paul is building up towards the chapter's climax, which we have just studied, in which the word *Christos* is used in a thoroughly incorporative sense six times in the final six verses. The meaning of *Christos* here really does seem to be 'the people of God', 'the people promised to Abraham', and, tellingly in the final verse, 'the promised *sperma*'. My proposal is that these two problems – ignoring the meaning 'family' for *sperma*, and ignoring the obvious incorporative meaning of *Christos* at the end of the chapter – cancel one another out, pointing us instead to an excellent, if striking, exegesis of 3.16. Paul is well aware of, and intends, the collective meaning of *sperma*, and lines it up precisely with the incorporative meaning of *Christos*. But if that collective meaning is 'family', it can also of course have its own plural, 'families'. This offers a straightforward reading of 3.16: the promises did not say 'your families', as though referring to two or more families, but to one, 'to your family' – *hos estin Christos*, which is *Christos*. The end of the chapter should leave us in no doubt that this does not mean 'which is the single person Jesus', but rather 'which is the single *Christos* in whom the people are now incorporated'.[74] The fact that Paul can say this in verse 16 seems to indicate that he expects his hearers to know already, without the later explanation, that *Christos* carries this incorporative meaning. He is, to be sure, capable of teasing people by saying something cryptic and explaining it only later, but since verses 17–22 depend on this point being grasped (hence the confusion among commentators who misunderstood 3.16 when they then get to 3.19–20!) we must assume that he thinks the point will be clear.

I submit, in fact, that if it had not been for that final phrase *hos estin Christos* – and for the useful role it has played in the regular scholarly sneering at Paul's apparently bizarre exegetical habits! – there need have been little controversy about 3.16, and about Paul's whole sequence of thought.[75]

[74] Contra most exegetes; and cf. Tobin 1995, 449, 451, who suggests that the singular meaning in Gal. 3.16 would appear to exclude Jews from being Abraham's children at all, whereas in Rom. 4 they are included. The fact that so careful a reader as Schreiner could write that '*Jesus* is the seed of Abraham' (Schreiner 2001, 159, my italics), quoting this passage, indicates the extent to which *Christos* has been treated as an alternative proper name, even when on the next page Schreiner suggests, rightly, that 'Paul likely merged the idea of Abraham's seed with the promise of a Davidic heir'.

[75] Cf. Stanley 2004, 183: 'Did Paul really expect the Galatians to be impressed by his argument from the singular form of the Greek noun "seed" in Gal 3:16?' Contrast the more thoughtful and nuanced approach of Barrett 1962, 78–83.

God made the promises to Abraham and his family, not his 'families', plural. This is of obvious and immediate relevance both to the Antioch incident in chapter 2, where the action of Peter and Barnabas implied that there were after all two families, and to the specifically Galatian situation, where the actions of the agitators likewise implied that uncircumcised gentile Christians were part of a separate family to that of Jewish Christians. Thus, instead of taking fright at *hos estin Christos* and assuming that Paul must suppose that *sperma* refers to an individual when he quite obviously (as in 3.29) knows it to be collective, the proper answer, which will now take us in the right direction for our own argument, is that, to the contrary, we must suppose that Paul is happy to use the word *Christos* to refer to *a collective, an incorporative whole*.[76] Anything, meanwhile, that might create a plurality of families, as the Jewish law obviously did in Antioch and is now threatening to do in Galatia, must stand in opposition to the promises God made to Abraham. That is the point of 3.19–20. Forget the frantic and irrelevant attempts of many commentators to speculate about an angelic 'mediator' to represent the larger heavenly host; forget, too, the complex ideas about one person being chosen to give the law to the plurality, namely, the Israelites. These are only two of the literally hundreds of suggestions which have been called forth by commentators not grasping the quite simple point Paul is making: that when God made promises to Abraham, these promises concerned *one family, not two or more*. Torah, given by God through the hand of Moses, the mediator, could not by itself create the single seed. It was bound to separate Jews from everyone else. Moses, therefore, cannot be the mediator through whom God is bringing 'the one', the single family, into existence, a statement which Paul compresses into the laconic sentence, 'He, however, is not the mediator of the one' (*ho de mesitēs henos ouk estin*). The single *sperma* cannot be brought about through his mediation; look what happened in Antioch, you might say! 'But God is one', declares Paul, with the implication, which is spelled out in Romans 3.29, that God therefore desires *a single family of Jews and gentiles together, as he had always promised to Abraham.* God will therefore deal with the blockage which Torah places between the Abrahamic promises and their fulfilment. The result is that now, as in 3.22, the promise is given *to believers* on the basis of the *pistis Iēsou Christou*. If there were any doubt that this is the right sense for 3.19–20, one should consult again 3.15–16 on the one hand and 3.27–29 on the other.

This explanation of the incorporative or participatory sense of *Christos* is confirmed elsewhere in the letter. There are the typical uses of *en Christō*, as in 1.22.[77] There are the sharp warnings of 5.1–6, where Paul speaks of the benefits which *Christos* gives which would be lost if one were to be separated *apo Christou*, and where he repeats in a different form the point of 3.29: *en Christō Iēsou* neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, but rather

[76] B. W. Longenecker 1998, 133 contrasts this passage with Rom. 4.16, but the meaning is in fact functionally identical. At 163 Longenecker suggests that the usage here is 'far from natural' and forms an instance of Paul 'finding scripture to say Pauline things'.

[77] The *ekklēsiai* of Judaea which are *en Christō*, differentiated presumably from the ordinary non-Christian Jewish synagogues in the region.

'faith working through love'.[78] And the genitive in 3.29a is repeated in 5.24: '*hoi tou Christou*, those who belong to *Christos*, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires'. What we are faced with, I suggest, is the incorporative or participatory sense of *Christos* coming to be used as a shorthand for 'the church' or 'the people of God' – though of course the people of God have been radically redefined in Paul, and not least here in Galatians, precisely because the Messiah has been crucified and raised from the dead. The fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises has been no smooth crescendo, no easy ascent into the light, no immanent process, no straight path leading to glory. It has been a matter of shocking, startling, world-changing divine action – as the promises had always envisaged, and as the prophets had always said it would be. The only way the covenant can be fulfilled is through apocalypse, though the converse of this is that the One God, when unveiling the new reality, makes it clear that this was what had been in mind from the start.

So how does this notion of 'incorporation' or 'participation' actually work? And what on earth must we say about the relationship between the two points we have now established, on the one hand that Paul says *Christos* because he is thinking of Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah, and on the other hand that when he says *Christos* he is thinking of this figure as the one in whom God's single family, promised to Abraham, is now summed up? The obvious answer is one that has long been resisted but now, I suggest, should be irresistible: for Paul, the Messiah represents his people. They are summed up 'in him'. When God looks at the *Christos*, he sees all those who belong to him, who have come 'into him' in baptism, who are 'clothed with him', who are 'one in him'. To risk an over-used word, he constitutes their *identity*. They are, in other words, 'Israel', Abraham's family.[79] Incorporation and participation are central Pauline ways of speaking about the church; the church, for him, is Israel; and that identity is focussed on Israel's Messiah. To expound this we need a new section.

Messiah and Israel: The Heart of Paul's Participatory Soteriology

These themes have been largely ignored for two reasons. First, the subject of Galatians has been assumed to be soteriology, whereas it is in fact ecclesiology, the definition of God's single family and the struggle to maintain that identity in the face of sharp pressure. (This does not mean that Paul is uninterested in soteriology! – merely that this is not the main subject of the letter in the way that it is in part at least of Romans.) Second, Pauline soteriology, especially here, has been identified in terms of 'justification by faith', and so has been defined as the polar opposite of a Jewish scheme of thought identified in terms of 'justification by works', with the result that 'Paulinism' itself has been seen as the polar opposite of 'Judaism'. In consequence, Jewish

[78] 5.2, 4, 7.

[79] See Dahl 1991, 21: 'Because Jesus is the Messiah, the ones who believe in him are the "saints" of the end of time, the *ekklēsia* of God, the true children of Abraham, and part of the "Israel of God".'

categories of thought – Messiah, patriarchs, covenants, 'Israel' itself – have been seen as part of 'the problem', the thing Paul is reacting against. My whole argument, here and elsewhere, offers a very different model. What we have here in Galatians, and elsewhere in Paul, is in fact *a radically redefined Jewish ecclesiology* – something which, on both counts ('Jewish' and 'ecclesiology'), Protestant exegesis has neither wanted nor recognized.

Soteriology is of course presupposed. That is clear in passages like 1.4 and 2.20, and in the declaration, unique in the letter, that 'we by the spirit await the hope of righteousness' (5.5). We note, in particular, that Romans, a kind of senior cousin to Galatians, is also partly about ecclesiology but equally and emphatically about soteriology in a way that is simply not true of Galatians. The word-statistics, noted above, already provide a straw in this wind. But the matter which is pressing on Paul's mind and heart in Galatians, the matter his young churches are facing here, is the question of ecclesiology: who are the people of God? Is the answer basically 'the physical family of Abraham, marked out by circumcision'? If so, then either God has two families (and so, perhaps, does Abraham!), or gentiles must join that one fleshly and circumcised family if they are not to risk being shut out altogether. That threat, indeed, seems to be implied in 4.17: the agitators want to shut you out, so that you may come eagerly courting their favour.

What then is the connection between *Christos* as 'Messiah' and *Christos* as 'the one in whom God's people are incorporated, the one in whom they participate'? Here again what seems the obvious answer, to me and to many, has been massively resisted. The obvious answer, I submit, is that in Paul's mind at least the Messiah *represents* Israel, represents the family of Abraham. As I said earlier, it is fascinating that in the actual movements of the time we see various leaders shaping their *individual* profiles and propaganda to the *national* aspirations. Messiahship varied according to the type of national hope of which it was a function. There is indeed a fluidity of thought between the one and the many, between the king and his people. If we had no other evidence for this, Galatians 3.16 in the light of 3.24–29 should have provided enough to be going on with. In particular, the mention of the 'seed' joins together the Abrahamic and Davidic promises in a way characteristic both of ancient Judaism, reading the promises of Genesis in the light of Psalm 72, and of Paul himself in Romans. Once again we proceed by abduction: stand *here*, look at the texts in *this* light, and they make excellent sense. Try out *this* hypothesis, and see if the data do not settle down and make themselves at home in a new and satisfactory manner. Answer: yes, they do.

Part of the problem, I think, is that after earlier attempts to understand something that was called 'corporate personality', associated with writers such as Wheeler Robinson, a reaction has set in, and scholars, especially within an individual and Protestant mind-set, have been reluctant to admit anything that might provide support and back-up for such a proposal. The long-running investigations of Paul's 'in Christ' language have not produced any startling successes, though the promise to Abraham ('*in you* all the nations will be blessed'), echoed in the promises to Isaac and Jacob, has been plausibly suggested as a possible source, especially when 'in your seed' is added

to 'in you'.[80] Some have suggested that Paul had already made some such connection, and that it was because he saw the *Christos* as the true *sperma Abraam* that he was then able to develop his distinctive *en Christō* and related language from that Abrahamic beginning.

This seems to me, however, to hang several heavy weights by a slender thread. I suspect the line of derivation may if anything have gone the other way, from (i) an awareness of God's purposes for his people being summed up in the Messiah, to (ii) a way of highlighting their original basis in the Abrahamic promises. The reason I say this is that the most obvious link in Paul's mind between the Messiah and the people of God is the resurrection. What Paul had expected God to do for all Israel at the end, God had done for Jesus in the middle of history, the Jesus who had been crucified as a messianic pretender.[81] The demonstration at Easter that Jesus really was and is Messiah is thus simultaneously the demonstration that he really was and is Israel in person.[82] It was this realization, I suggest, which sparked off Paul's view of Jesus *both* as Messiah *and* as the incorporative representative of Israel. It would be satisfying to be able to anchor this meaning more widely in second-Temple messianic texts. I would be happy to see indications of fluidity between king and people anywhere in ancient Judaism. But with such evidence either absent or controversial I would settle for the hypothesis that the resurrection itself generated this link in Paul's mind. We should not, after all, be afraid of postulating radical innovation, especially since Jesus' Messiahship in the New Testament as a whole is so clearly bound up with belief in his resurrection – not that he only became Messiah at Easter, but that Easter confirmed the claim that had already been made – and the resurrection was itself of course a total shock, the shock of a partially inaugurated eschatology. Part of the 'end' had come forward into the middle of history. God had done for Jesus what he had been expected to do for Israel.

Without that extraordinary event, it is historically out of the question that anyone would have thought of the crucified Jesus as Messiah.[83] If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, there would have been nothing to distinguish him from Simon bar-Giora after his execution at the climax of Titus's triumph, or Simeon ben-Kosiba after (we presume) his death at Roman hands in AD 135. But if, as I say, it thus appeared that Israel's God had done for Jesus what he had been supposed to do for the people as a whole, we should not be surprised if that were to generate, simultaneously, (i) a belief that he was Messiah after all and (ii) a new manner of incorporative speech, with a long-range analogy to Abraham on the one hand and a more specific analogy to David on the other. Abraham; David; Messiah. That implicit narrative has

[80] Wedderburn 1985 (see *Climax of the Covenant*, 46 n. 15). Gen. 12.12: 'in you'; 18.18 'in him'; 22.18 'in your seed'; 26.4 (to Isaac) 'in your seed'; 28.14 (to Jacob) 'in you and in your seed'.

[81] On the 'messianic' charge against Jesus, see, e.g., Hengel 1995, 41–58; and e.g. *Jesus and the Victory of God*, ch. 11; *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 559–63.

[82] The almost complete absence of resurrection in Chester's article on messiahship (and his linking of resurrection with other, non-messianic themes in his monograph) seems to me cognate with his failure to see the point of messiahship itself, and hence to recognize it in Paul.

[83] On the link of resurrection and Messiahship, see esp. *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 726–31.

a lot going for it, not only in Paul. When therefore, in Galatians, we meet at the same moment (i) a *Christos* in and through whom God's eschatological rescuing purposes are effected and (ii) a *Christos* in whom God's people participate and are summed up, one who is the *sperma Abraam*, one in whom his people become 'inheritors' of the promise, we are entitled to say our own QED It is *because* Jesus is the anointed king of Israel that he thus represents and incorporates the single family of Abraham. Messiahship is central, and theologically loadbearing, for the entire argument.

In *The Climax of the Covenant* I argued for a possible Davidic background for this notion, through the passages which speak of people having 'shares' (*cheires*) 'in the king', so that '"in David" we have more than you'; which then leads the rebels to declare that they have no 'part' (*meris*) or 'inheritance' (*klēronomia*) 'in David', or 'in the son of Jesse'.[84] The latter phrase is picked up in the rebellion of Jeroboam against Rehoboam: again, no *meris* or *klēronomia* 'in David', or 'in the son of Jesse' – which is the more interesting in that of course Rehoboam was David's grandson, so 'David' here is being used to mean 'the Davidic king'.[85] These passages are obviously remote from Paul's day, though their evidently proverbial nature may mean that they continued to be well known. They do not have, so far as I know, any significant footprint in the linguistic usage of second-Temple texts concerning a coming Messiah. But I still think they may be significant, if not as a direct influence on Paul's own thought and language, then perhaps as an indication of a fluidity between king and people in an earlier period.

This fluidity is seen, after all, in various other texts concerning David, not least Isaiah 55, which specifically 'democratizes' the Davidic covenant and extends it – exactly as in Romans 8! – to the renewal of the whole creation.[86] Paul can elsewhere take a specific Davidic promise, the well-known word about the coming 'seed' who will be 'raised up', and apply it to the whole church, as he does with 2 Samuel 7.14 ('I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son') in 2 Corinthians 6.18, substituting 'you' for 'he' and 'him'. Something similar occurs in Qumran. In one text, the promise of the coming Davidic king in Amos 9.11 is transferred to the congregation (*qahal*) of the new community.[87] In another, the messianic 'Branch' of Isaiah 11 is linked with Genesis 49.10, producing the following interpretation:

> Whenever Israel rules there shall [not] fail to be a descendant of David upon the throne. For the ruler's staff is the covenant of kingship, [and the clans] of Israel are the feet, until the Messiah of Righteousness comes, the branch of David. For to him and to his seed was granted the covenant of kingship over his people for everlasting generations.[88]

[84] 2 Sam. 19.44; 20.1.

[85] 1 Kgs. 12.16.

[86] Isa. 55.3, 10–13.

[87] So CD 7.13–18: 'All the apostates were given up to the sword, but those who held fast escaped to the land of the north; as God said, *I will exile the tabernacle of your king and the bases of your statues from my tent to Damascus* [Amos 5.26f.]. The Books of the Law are the *tabernacle* of the king; as God said, *I will raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen* [Amos 9.11]. The *king* is the congregation; and the *bases of the statues* are the Books of the Prophets whose sayings Israel despised . . .' (trans. Vermes).

[88] 4Q252, as quoted in Collins 2007, 9.

'Israel rules', but David's offspring is on the throne; there is just that fluidity between people and king which I am suggesting Paul was able to exploit. Further evidence for this might be found in the link between the Davidic promise in 2 Samuel 7.12–14, concerning the royal 'seed', and the promises of the 'seed' of Abraham, and echoes of this elsewhere may indicate that it is in Paul's mind in Galatians as well.[89] Support for this may be found in Qumran.[90]

Out beyond these examples are the well-known phenomena of the Isaianic servant, who exhibits royal traits on the one hand but on the other seems to be, or to represent, the people of Israel;[91] and the 'one like a son of man' in Daniel 7, who in the passage itself is clearly interpreted to mean 'the people of the saints of the most high' but who equally clearly is understood in the first century to be the Messiah. Standing behind all of these, finally, is the fact that in the scriptures the same title, 'son of God', is used both for Israel itself and for the Messiah. And when Paul uses this title, as he does sparingly and always with heavy significance, it is in contexts which resonate with both meanings together. Galatians 4.4–7 is the best example. Here 'the son of God' is clearly Jesus, whom the previous chapter has insisted is Israel's Messiah. But the context of what Paul is saying is a retold exodus-narrative in which it is of course Israel that is God's son, God's firstborn.[92]

It seems to me, therefore, that Paul clearly thinks of *Christos* as the Messiah who, in bringing Israel's story to its unexpected but nevertheless long-promised goal is at one and the same time the one in whom Israel itself is summed up. And it seems to me that this is central to the actual argument of Galatians.

I therefore propose that we are in a position, simply on the basis of Galatians (but this would be strongly backed up by a wider survey), to answer the question posed famously by Ed Sanders towards the end of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. There he says that, on the one hand, Paul's thought hinges on 'participation in Christ', but that, on the other hand, he does not understand how this concept works.[93] The answer lies partly in Paul's Israel-shaped ecclesiology and partly in the incorporative meaning which Paul gives to *Christos*, and wholly in the combination of the two. To belong to the Messiah is to belong to Israel, and vice versa. That is more or less exactly what Paul says in Galatians 3.29: if you are the Messiah's, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

We can therefore, at last, bring into play the vital passages in which Paul includes within this participatory and messianic ecclesiology the fact that the Messiah has been crucified (and, by clear and constant implication, raised from the dead, though apart from the opening greeting this is not mentioned explicitly).[94] If the Messiah represents Israel, to belong to this 'Israel' one

[89] See, e.g., Rom. 1.3 with Rom. 4.16 etc., 9.7. On the link of the Abrahamic promises to the coming David 'seed', possibly an individual Messiah, see Williamson 2000.

[90] 4QFlor. 1.10–13 emphasizes the single 'seed' promised to David in connection with the coming vindication of Israel.

[91] Walton 2003.

[92] Ex. 4.22. On 'son of God' in Qumran etc., see, e.g., 4QFlor., and *Climax of the Covenant*, 43f.

[93] Sanders 1977, 522f. At 547 Sanders seems to me to come very close to the right answer without realizing it, only to turn away again.

[94] Cf. Gal. 1.1; and, e.g., 2.19f., which clearly presupposes Jesus' resurrection.

must follow the Messiah; that, to be sure, would have made sense in all the would-be messianic movements of the first two centuries. However, if the Messiah has died and been raised, then there is a powerful and central sense in which Israel has died and been raised, so that to belong to 'Israel' one now has to follow this Messiah through death and resurrection. This is the ultimate answer, too, to those who may still suppose that our emphasis on the continuous narrative from Abraham to the Messiah is far too smooth and easy, an unbroken path into the light rather than an apocalyptic invasion, a *deus ex machina* moment. Not so. As, arguably, in Romans 9—11, Paul's way of telling the story of Israel is shaped all through by the devastating and humiliating death of the Messiah.

The Faithful, Crucified, Incarnate *Christos*

This comes to its fullest expression in the short, dense passage 2.15–21, often rightly seen as a quintessential summary of Paul's theology and indeed spirituality, which Paul has placed at the conclusion of his introduction and hence as the launching-pad and presupposition for all that will then follow.[95] Paul here reports what he said to Cephas, with whom he had a head-on collision over the question of uncircumcised participation in the single shared table of Christian fellowship. But he is not reporting this conversation simply to show the Galatians that he was right and Cephas was wrong (in other words, he is not just saying 'you can't appeal over my head to Jerusalem', though he may well be saying that too). He tells the story because of the close analogy to the Galatian situation: this is what he would say, too, to the 'agitators' who are 'troubling' the Galatians, who are doing explicitly what Cephas was doing implicitly, trying to 'compel gentiles to judaize' (2.14).

The question at stake here is not primarily how individuals get saved, or even in fact how they get justified. The question is: who are the people of God? Who are the family of Abraham? More especially, *Who is allowed to share table-fellowship, and on what basis?* Clearly this altercation and theological discussion has been precipitated by Peter's behaviour, separating himself from gentile Christians and leading the other Jewish Christians to do the same. Paul sees this as anticipating the problem faced by the gentile Christians in Galatia: will they have to get circumcised in order to belong to Abraham's family, in order to have a place at the inner table of the people of God?

It is important to notice that, if certain current scholars were right, Paul could much more easily have answered the latter question by saying 'Why would you want to join Abraham's family in the first place? Don't you know that God has done something radically new, has swept away all previous "religion", and has broken into the world with an utterly new creation unrelated to any earlier narrative?' That sweeping supersessionism, wrongly calling itself 'apocalyptic', has been popular, but it is not the line that Paul takes.[96]

[95] As we can see by the way in which the same themes return towards the end of the letter: 5.2–7; 6.11–16.
[96] On different types of 'supersessionism', see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 10.

For him, the whole point of what God had done in Jesus was that it was the fulfilment, however surprising and shocking, of the original patriarchal promises. But this fulfilment, as he argues step by step in chapter 3, has involved the coming into being of a single worldwide family. Paul sees this as the direct implication of the death and resurrection of Jesus, of the gospel itself. So he addresses Peter in 2.14: you have been living 'like a gentile', *ethnikōs*, and not 'Jewishly', *Ioudaikōs* – presumably referring to the fact that Peter had, until then, been happily sharing table-fellowship with uncircumcised believers, paying no heed to the Jewish principle of *amixia*.[97] So then, asks Paul, stating the question in such a way as to create an overlap with the Galatian situation: how can you now compel gentiles to Judaize, to make themselves Jews?[98]

The argument which follows is as dense, important, and loadbearing as anything in Paul. To keep our own argument clear I concentrate on the fourfold 'messianic' point.

First, the extended parallel in Romans 3, and the line of thought I have so far expounded, indicates that when Paul says *pistis Iēsou Christou* in 2.16 he is referring to *the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah*, that 'faithfulness' being the Messiah's faithfulness to the age-old plan in which Israel was to be the people through whom God would bless all the nations.[99] Speaking of the Messiah's *pistis* does not, as some have supposed, eliminate the need for or the importance of an answering human faith. Paul is clear about that in 2.16. On the contrary, as I have argued elsewhere, the faithfulness of the Messiah creates the context in which *pistis* can now be seen as the appropriate badge of membership in this renewed family.[100] Paul's point in Galatians 2 is that all those who 'believe into Messiah Jesus', as he puts it in 2.16b, belong at the same table, because their *pistis* identifies them as Messiah-people, as being 'in him', as he says in verse 17. This brief and clipped, almost shorthand, statement of 'justification by faith' is thus set in the context of, and sustains Paul's argument about, *ecclesiology*, the question of who the people of God really are. Paul's answer is: they are the Messiah's people, those who exhibit, in their own *pistis*, the badge of membership which corresponds to the *pistis* by which he has accomplished God's purpose. They are the seed of Abraham, even if they are not so by physical descent. They are, dare we say – as Paul does say in 6.16 – 'the Israel of God'.[101]

Second, however, the means by which the Messiah has accomplished that purpose is, obviously, through his self-giving death. When Paul speaks of this in 2.19–20 he is making explicit what was implicit in *pistis Christou* in 2.16.[102]

[97] See *New Testament and the People of God*, etc. and *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2.

[98] For this use of 'Judaize' cp. the use of 'Hellenize' at the time: Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 21f.

[99] See esp. Rom. 3.2–3 with 3.21f., on which see 'Hidden Clue' [reprinted as chapter 30 of the present volume]. The ongoing debate on *pistis Christou* has functioned as a lightning rod for several other issues, a fact which has sometimes muddied the waters.

[100] See *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 10.

[101] On which see the helpful exposition of Schreiner 2010, 381–3, referring to earlier literature.

[102] Thus far, I am with de Boer at one level; though he of course ignores messiahship, and rules out any sense of a narrative reaching a climax. This leads him to push the idea much further than, to my mind, it can properly go, making every reference to *pistis* in the letter a direct and univocal reference to Jesus' death.

Indeed, in this dense paragraph as in so many of Paul's, the points he makes in successive verses are not so much additional as explicatory, unwrapping the tight-packed opening statement. Thus we should, I believe, read verses 19–20 as an *expansion* of verse 16. We should not, in other words, play off verse 16 (justification by faith) against verses 19–20 (dying with the Messiah and 'the Messiah living in me') as though the former was 'juristic' language and the latter 'participatory', and thereby inhabiting different universes of discourse. They are part of the same thing. To this I shall return.

The first thing to note about the death of Jesus in this passage is that what is true of the Messiah is true of the one who belongs to him. This is fully in line with Paul's language about being baptized *into* the Messiah, and so coming to be 'in Messiah', *en Christō*. Specifically, the Messiah's death has become Paul's own: *Christō synestaurōmai*. The *syn-* compound, as in Romans 6 and 8, operates from within the messianic reality which one enters through baptism, as in Romans 6.2–11 and Galatians 3.27: you come *into* Messiah in baptism, clothing yourself with him, so that you are now *in* him, and so that, because of this new identity, what happened to him (death and resurrection) happens to you *with* him. Result: the Messiah was crucified, so – because the Messiah represents his people – Paul has been crucified.

But not just Paul. The transition to the first person singular in 2.18, as its link with the first person plural in 2.15–17 indicates, has a particular rhetorical purpose. Paul is not highlighting his own 'experience' as though this were different from that of others. What he is saying is precisely not special to Paul; it is true for all who are now 'in the Messiah'.[103] Paul's argument, in fact, would not work if he were here describing a special or unique thing that had happened to him personally. Cephas needed to realize that the same was true for him as well. Cephas was living in the situation described in 2.18, building up again the walls he had recently torn down, and thereby coming back into the realm of Torah and finding that it proved him to be a *parabatēs*. He needed to rediscover what it meant to die with the Messiah. But Paul, as in Romans 7, will not describe this as something that happens to somebody else. He will not say 'you', as though Cephas needs a specially humiliating change of mind. Nor will he say 'they' as though this was about an 'Israel' with which he himself had as it were cut his ties. The 'I' avoids all this, and enables him also to bring the dense argument to a high emotional climax: the Messiah 'loved me and gave himself for me'.

The Galatians, of course, do not need to 'die to Torah'. They were never in it or under it in the first place. To be sure, they, like all believers, must die to sin. All who belong to the Messiah, Jew and gentile alike, 'have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (5.24). Paul is telling them all this, as we noted before, because what he said to Cephas is more or less what he would say to the 'agitators'. The Galatians need to know that, in the Messiah, Jewish ethnic identity has been turned inside out. 'If you belong to the Messiah, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.' The end of chapter 3 is already in view from the climax of chapter 2.

[103] So rightly Hays 2000, 243.

This may conceivably help a little with one of the many classic problems posed by these verses. Why does Paul say that he not only died *to* the law but that this death happened *through* the law? Nothing in the immediate context clarifies this compact statement. But once we work through chapter 3 in the way we have done, the most likely explanation seems to be that Paul understands the God-given role of Torah in Israel as being precisely to imprison Israel within its own sin, and to condemn it, in order to deal with sin. This draws together the idea of the law's curse (3.13), of its being added 'because of trespasses' (3.19), and of its role in 'shutting up everything under the power of sin' (3.22). For a fuller explanation we would need to invoke Romans, where a similarly dense statement in 5.20 ('the law came in alongside, so that the trespass might be filled out to its full extent') is expanded into the full treatment of 7.7—8.11. This would not be the only place where a dense and unexplained reference in one letter may be clarified through another.[104]

The central point here is stark, the cutting edge of what happens when representative Messiahship is fused with crucified Messiahship and applied to the question of unity in the church: *a crucified Messiah means a crucified Israel*. The Paul who was 'extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers' (1.14), and who was well aware of being 'Jewish by birth, and not a gentile sinner' (2.15), had discovered that because of the faithful Messiah he had a covenant status no longer defined by works of Torah, but by the Messiah himself and that central characteristic, *pistis*.[105] He has had to tear down the walls that had separated him from gentiles, and must not rebuild them (2.18).[106] The Messiah's death has drawn a line across any path that would extend the Torah-based division of Jew and gentile forwards into the new community. The reality of *Christos* is the reality of the new people who are 'found in him' (Philippians 3.9). That 'location' is the ground of their table-fellowship, to deny which is to deny him, to pretend that his death was unnecessary and irrelevant (2.21). Here, at the sharpest point of the argument, Paul declares that since the Messiah is the focus of Israel's identity, and since the Messiah has been crucified, his own identity ('Paul the Jew') has shared that fate. This is exactly borne out by the equally cutting remarks, and their Christological content in particular, in 5.2–7 and 6.11–16.

But now, third, even at this late stage in the argument, Paul brings in two apparently quite different meanings, or at least implications, of *Christos*. The new life which the believer possesses is not a return to the previous identity. 'Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *the Messiah lives in me*'. Despite what is still sometimes suggested, this is not at all the same thing as 'being in the Messiah'. To be in the Messiah is a matter of status, of who one is in God's eyes. To have the Messiah living within one is a matter of actual, personal, one might say ontological change.[107] This is a change which involves, it seems, a progressive transformation. Paul knows that the Galatians are already *en Christō*.

[104] On the point in Gal. 2.19, see Hays 2000, 242f.

[105] 2.16; cf. Rom. 10.2–4; Phil. 3.2–11.

[106] Paul may perhaps have the Temple structure in view, as in Eph. 2.14–18.

[107] A long list of scholars, going back at least to Deissmann 1912, 123–8, have seen the expressions as interchangeable; but this, in line with Deissmann's overall project, is to collapse 'theology' into 'religion'.

They are that by baptism and faith; nothing can increase that absolute state. But Paul can still speak of himself like a mother being in labour with them once more, not until they come right into Messiah, but 'until Messiah is fully formed *in you*' (4.19).[108]

What does this mean? Elsewhere Paul says the same thing by talking of the Spirit, or the Spirit of the son.[109] This transformation ('*theōsis*', indeed, if you will) is vital for Paul, and it is effected through the Messiah's transformative indwelling. But I do not think it is the same thing either as 'being in Christ' or as the 'justification' which takes place through that new status.[110] There is, to be sure, a vital correlation between 'in Christ' and 'Christ in me'. The latter provides the inner reality, the transforming energy of Messiah-life, of Israel-life,[111] through which those who already and fully possess the *status* of being the people of God are also given the *inner reality* of that status, a point which Paul elsewhere unpacks in terms of the new covenant, of God writing his laws on people's hearts.[112] But the status does not wait upon the inner transformation, except for its first fruit, which is *pistis*. Otherwise one would never be quite sure who belonged at the table, whereas Paul is quite sure. This is the ecclesial, and indeed the social, correlate of the traditional Protestant doctrine of the *extra nos*. Once more, this makes the sense it does precisely because the Messiah *is* faithful Israel. The new identity shared by baptized and believing Jews and baptized and believing gentiles, without circumcision or uncircumcision making any difference, is the Messiah's crucified and risen identity, the 'new creation' whose characteristic sign is *pistis*, 'faith' or 'faithfulness'.[113]

There remains, however, a fourth and final messianic meaning which has been underneath this argument all along and emerges at last, in verse 20, into the light. 'The life I do still live in the flesh, I live within the faithfulness of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' Here, as in 4.4, there should be no doubt that 'son of God' means 'Messiah', as in Psalm 2 and the other well-known passages. Equally, again as in 4.4 and Romans 8.3, the son is the one who, sent from the father, embodies and enacts the father's own love. This is central to the very similar argument in Romans 5.6–9, especially 5.8: God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died for us while we were still sinners. Sometimes Paul can speak, as here, about the Messiah's love; sometimes, about God's love expressed in the sending and death of the Messiah.[114]

This only makes sense with an implicit but very high Christology. It is nonsense to say that God loved people so much that he sent someone else to do the difficult job. This does not mean that we collapse Paul's much more interesting argument into a coded way of ticking two dogmatic statements,

[108] See Gaventa 2007, 29–39.
[109] In this letter: 4.6; elsewhere: e.g. Rom. 8.9–11.
[110] Against, e.g., Gorman 2009.
[111] Cf., e.g., Rom. 2.25–29; 8.1–17, 28–30; Phil. 3.2–11.
[112] Rom. 2.25–29; 2 Cor. 3.
[113] Cf. 5.6; 6.15; and again Rom. 2.25–29; Phil. 3.2–11.
[114] Cp. Rom. 8.31, 35, 37, 39.

that Jesus was after all both 'human' and 'divine'. Paul would have seen that as hopelessly abstract. The point was, as in Romans 9—11, that Jesus was Israel's Messiah according to the flesh, and also 'God over all, blessed for ever', and that in that dual but still totally messianic identity he was the one who was both the *telos nomou* and the *kyriospantōn*.[115] None of this, in Galatians 2 or elsewhere, is said simply for the sake of defining who Jesus really was and is, vital though it is to get that clear. It is said here, as in 4.4, in order to ground the new messianic reality, the Israel-reality, the reality of Abraham's single family, in the action and the very life of Israel's God.[116]

One further word at this point. Certain scholars have attempted to explain the rise of incarnational Christology on the basis of sundry figures in Jewish writings who seem to have occupied a suprahuman status: angels, other mediator figures, maybe even Messiahs.[117] I do not find this helpful. The Jewish texts in question are not so clear. There is no sense in the New Testament that anyone was saying, in effect, 'Ah, well, if Jesus was or is Messiah then perhaps that means he's God incarnate'. The evidence points in the other direction. The forgotten element in New Testament Christology is the forgotten element in second-Temple eschatology: Israel's God himself had promised that he would come back in person, to deal with Israel's exile and the world's injustice. The 'second coming' of Jesus borrows biblical and Jewish language about the coming of Israel's God; so, I suggest, does the 'first coming'.[118] I do not see, in pre-Christian Judaism, any indication that people were anticipating a divine Messiah. I see two things: I see many of them longing for Israel's God to return in rescuing power and judgment; and I see some of them hoping for a Messiah who would, at the most, be the specially accredited agent of this God at that moment. Perhaps bar-Kochba and/or his supporters made a connection between those two hopes. But my view of Paul's incarnational Christology is that he has creatively combined these two strands, and that the title 'son of God', up to this point indicating either Israel or the Messiah, is the place where we can watch this happening. It is not a matter of earlier figures who might conceivably stretch upwards towards some kind of divinity. It is a matter of Israel's God 'sending forth his son', revealing – as part of the shocking apocalypse! – that Messiahship, like image-bearing humanness itself, was all along a category as it were designed for God's own use. I see no indication that anyone had thought like this in pre-Christian Judaism. I see every sign that Paul had grasped this point and had woven it into the heart of his highly charged and passionate letters.

But discussions of this sort can be a distraction from the real thrust of Galatians 2.20. This is where the debates about *pistis Christou* have often obscured the tight solidity of Paul's argument in the whole paragraph, by appearing to pose the either/or of *either* 'the faithfulness of the Messiah' *or* 'the faith of the believer'. Paul's point throughout is that the *only* badge by which members of God's family are now to be identified, and hence the only

[115] Thus: Rom. 9.5 (with echoes of 1.3f.); 10.4, 12.
[116] NB 4.8: 'now that you have come to know God, or rather be known by him . . .'
[117] See particularly Horbury 1998.
[118] See *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, chs. 9, 11.

certificate which guarantees them a place in the table-fellowship, is *pistis*. The apparently bewildering to-and-fro in 2.16 between the two meanings – the Messiah's *pistis* or that of believers – is deliberate, and is heading towards this resolution in verse 20. What actually defines the family, the people of God, is the Messiah himself, and specifically his own 'faithfulness', his 'obedience unto death'. He is the genuine heart and centre of God's people. When, therefore, someone whether Jew or gentile comes to 'believe into Messiah Jesus' (2.16), this is not, as in so many low-grade would-be versions of Paul's thought, an act which, by embodying or expressing a kind of true and inner human spirituality (as opposed to 'outward works' or whatever), somehow earns God's favour ('the righteousness which avails before God'!). The reason why *Christian* faith is the one and only badge of membership is that it is the sign that this person is *en Christō*, living within and in turn animated by the faithful life of the Messiah himself.[119]

Thus the multiple interlocking meanings of *Christos* in Galatians, all held within the basic meaning of Messiahship in terms of bringing Israel's narrative to its god-ordained climax and summing up God's people in himself, hold together what later theology would see as the objective and subjective poles of God's saving action. Those categories, though, like 'divinity' and 'humanity', are far too abstract and bloodless to do justice to Paul's passionate prose. Once we recognize that throughout Galatians Paul really does mean 'Messiah' when he calls Jesus *Christos*, and that with that meaning he has specifically in mind *both* the Messiah's bringing of Israel's long story to its strange, revolutionary, and indeed 'apocalyptic' climax *and* his representative summing up of his people in himself, we see how a great many otherwise puzzling features of his theology fit together in mutual support.

For that, however, we need a final concluding section.

Conclusion: Messiahship and Pauline Theology

The first thing to say by way of conclusion is that by rehabilitating Messiahship as a central theme in Galatians we have avoided at a stroke that creeping Marcionism which sees Torah in Paul as a bad thing, and which sometimes even suggests that it was given, not by Israel's God, but by wicked angels. This has resulted, too, in the idea that the curse of Torah, as in Galatians 3.10–14, was wrong: that Torah was wrong to pronounce it, and that the resurrection of Jesus has somehow demonstrated that Torah did indeed, so to speak, get it wrong. That is a way of trying to get to Paul's conclusion (a law-free gospel in the sense of gentiles being welcomed into the family on equal terms) without appreciating the substructure of Paul's thought (that Paul saw Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah in whom God's long-term plans and promises were at last fulfilled). Such short-circuits in the electric wiring of Paul's arguments lead inevitably to exegetical explosions and theological darkness.

[119] See fuller exposition in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 10. On this text see Hays 2000, 244.

But with that out of the way, we can highlight the more important issues. First, Galatians is the standing example of the fact that there is no distinction in Paul's mind between two types of thinking, 'juridical' on the one hand and 'participationist' on the other. That debate has played itself out in different forms over the years, ever since Schweitzer's cheerfully polemical analysis of Pauline scholarship in terms of lawcourt theologies on the one hand and 'mysticism' – his own label for his own favoured type – on the other. Hence his *bon mot* about justification being a *Nebenkrater* within the larger crater made, on the lunar landscape of Paul's mind, by the idea of 'being in Christ'. Most Lutheran scholarship to this day has responded by simply reversing the categories, privileging 'justification' theology (and, often, one particular type of 'justification' theology) and seeing 'being in Christ' as simply a consequence, an outworking, reflecting the location of ecclesiology a long way down the agenda of post-enlightenment Protestantism (a location whose disastrous results are only too clear in the church today). Schweitzer's choice has been repeated by Sanders in one way and by some in the contemporary so-called 'apocalyptic' school, Campbell in particular, in other ways.[120] I have tried to show that, from the perspective I have set out, we can at least answer Sanders's question: 'participation', for Paul, is ecclesiological, and his ecclesiology is based on his fresh messianically reworked understanding of the family of Abraham, that is, Israel.

But Galatians stands out firmly against any division between 'participation' or 'being in Christ', on the one hand, and 'justification' or 'lawcourt' theology on the other. That great divide, of course, reflects one popular way of reading Romans, with chapters 1—4 being 'about' justification and chapters 5—8 being 'about' participation in Christ. Those sections do not in fact come away clean like that, for the same reason that in Galatians (and for that matter in Philippians 3.2–11) these themes are woven so tightly together. Just as it is false to Paul to split up 'apocalyptic', properly so called, from 'covenantal' (or indeed 'salvation-historical') theology, so it is completely false to Paul to separate out 'justification' and 'participation' and to play them off against one another. They belong intimately together. These labels are at best signposts pointing inwards to this or that element in the dense, rich centre of Paul's thought. Paul says it clearly in 2.17: we are seeking to be 'justified in Messiah'. And the reason we are 'justified by *pistis*' is because the Messiah has himself been 'faithful': that is why *pistis* is the badge which says that we 'belong to him', and are therefore 'Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise'. Justification, in its first Pauline exposition in Galatians, is all about the question of who belongs at the Messiah's table.

Paul will later, in Romans, integrate that discussion into the larger one, of how Israel's God, the creator, is rescuing humans from sin so that through them he can bring about his purposes of new creation. In that process he will emphasize some points differently, though without, I believe, any change of mind or indeed any change in the way he understands Israel's scriptures. Theology has for too long projected later categories back on to Paul. If we

[120] See the discussion of D. A. Campbell in my *Paul and His Recent Interpreters.*

are to allow him to dictate his own, and are prepared to follow him in making the Messiahship of Jesus one such central category, his varied expressions of the meaning of Jesus' Messiahship will be seen to fit together. Take that away, and they will once more fall apart.

One other theological strand which has recently come to the table of Pauline theology is that of *theōsis* or indeed *Christōsis*: 'deification' or 'Christification'.[121] There is no doubt, granted Paul's strong pneumatology, that this plays a vital role in the overall construct. We observed this strand in Galatians 2.20: 'the Messiah lives in me', and indeed the 'me' is 'no longer I', so that the innermost reality of Paul's being is actually the Messiah's own life – and Paul, we must remember, is writing this not to present a unique autobiography but to be the representative of all who are now 'in the Messiah'. And, granted the high Christology of the fourth messianic point above, this means – to put it bluntly – *theōsis*. Yes. But – against Gorman at least – I do not think that this is what Paul meant by 'justification'; nor, even, what he means by 'participation'. *Theōsis* is the constant companion of the complex of justification/participation, but it is not the same thing. Collapse justification/participation into *theōsis* and something is lost – just as, for many years, a good deal has been lost by screening out *theōsis*, and even sometimes marginalizing the role of the spirit, and trying to collapse everything in Paul back into either justification or participation. Though there is much more to be said about all this, Galatians 2.15–21 does indeed demonstrate that 'the Messiah in me' belongs intimately with 'justified in Messiah'; but they are not the same thing. Inner transformation is vital. Without it the gospel ceases to be 'the power of God for salvation'. But if people are to know who their table companions must be – and without that there is no 'ministry of reconciliation', no 'all one in Messiah Jesus' – what matters is being 'justified in Messiah'.

The Messiahship of Jesus has another, perhaps unexpected, consequence, which there is no space here to pursue. If Jesus really was Israel's Messiah, and if Paul in any way followed Psalm 2 (and its developed readings in second-Temple Judaism) in his idea that the Messiah was destined to inherit the nations, so that, as Josephus indicates, Jews in the middle of the first century were convinced that at that time a world ruler would arise from Judaea,[122] then we are bound to raise the question of Messiah in a political sense. Galatians does not emphasize Jesus as *kyrios*. But it does warn against 'another gospel' (1.6). The only 'other gospel' for which we have any evidence in the world of first-century Anatolia was the gospel of Caesar and Rome. Whether it was Ancyra or Pisidian Antioch that was at the centre of Paul's 'Galatia', the title of the most recent archaeological survey of the latter says it all: 'Building a New Rome'.[123] Once we have got 'justification' and 'participation' properly related to one another, perhaps it is time to ask about 'gospel' and 'empire' . . .[124]

[121] Gorman 2009; Blackwell 2011; Litwa 2012.

[122] See the discussion in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2.

[123] Gazda and Ng 2011.

[124] See, e.g., Hardin 2008; Kahl 2009; and an increasing number of others, though not without some strong protests, e.g. Barclay 2011, ch. 19, on which see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 12.

Chapter Thirty-Two

ISRAEL'S SCRIPTURES IN PAUL'S NARRATIVE THEOLOGY (2012)

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This originated as a short paper at the SBL meeting in San Francisco, California in November 2011. Since one of my main intentions was to illustrate the way in which allusions and echoes function, as well as to argue for their use in Paul's writing, I allowed myself the indulgence of a similarly allusive style. The fact that (to judge by their reaction) comparatively few in my original audience picked up all the resonances reinforces the case. I did not attempt, however, to embody or illustrate the fundamental point, which is that Paul's allusions and echoes regularly function within his overall (admittedly complex) narrative theology.

* * *

[**323**] In sundry times and divers manners the apostle Paul has been examined as a reader, and perhaps a misreader, of Israel's scriptures. Many have concentrated on the explicit quotations, analysing intensively the exact text-forms which Paul uses and the precise formulae with which these are introduced. Many, now, have studied allusion and echo, and have replayed the great concerto in which Paul plays the solo part with all the instruments of the scriptural orchestra providing the harmony and counterpoint.[1] Some have proposed, as a warning note, that much of this is mere rhetorical fireworks, a power-play to trick the unlearned.[2] And so on.

But we still lack one thing. Forgetting what lies behind, we should strain forward for what lies ahead: a renewed awareness not only of allusion and echo, not only of rhetoric and verbal trickery, but of *narrative*: a single narrative, the narrative many second-Temple Jews carried in their heads and their praying hearts. This narrative looked back to Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets not merely as random examples, not merely as establishing patterns to be imitated at [**324**] some indefinite future date (I am reminded of Mark Twain's suggestion that history never repeats itself, but sometimes it rhymes), but which told a single story that was, they believed, reaching its decisive moment at that time.

[1] Notably Hays 1989.
[2] E.g. Stanley 2004.

That phrase – 'at that time' – is crucial. Josephus speaks of a scriptural oracle which drove the Jews to revolt in the first century, because it said that *at that time* a world ruler would arise from Judaea.[3] The only passage which fits this mention of a chronology of fulfilment is Daniel, whose famous 490 years (9.24) were being calculated and recalculated throughout our period. Josephus elsewhere says that only Daniel not only foretold the future but gave a precise time-reference.[4] When Paul speaks of the time having fully come (Galatians 4.4), there is every indication that he is thinking of this long historical story which, in true 'apocalyptic' style, had had such an unexpected and cataclysmic conclusion.

The idea of a long story finally reaching its destination has nothing to do with the kind of 'salvation history' in which a smooth crescendo finally reaches full strength. It is much more like what we find in the genuine 'apocalyptic' of Daniel itself and many similar second-Temple books: terrible times for Israel, until in a dramatic reversal Israel's God acts to condemn the wicked pagans and to vindicate and exalt his people. Here is the paradox of apocalyptic, ignored by many who claim that word today in favour of non-narratival novelty: God acts suddenly and surprisingly, *as he always said he would*, and as the actual though unanticipated climax of Israel's (and the world's) history.

The apparent near-absence of Daniel from Paul's extant writings is interesting, though not for present purposes. Nevertheless, Paul would I think urge us, not so much in Daniel's presence but much more in his absence, to work out our own scriptural hermeneutic with fear and trembling, since for him the same narrative was at work, not as a mere backward glance, a rhetorically motivated proof-text, but as a living story which, having reached its climax, was continuing forward in a new but still scripturally energized mode.

Paul does, after all, make clear and definite use of the other great passage which, in the second-Temple period, constituted a narrative of prophecy yet to be fulfilled: the closing chapters of Deuteronomy. Here too Josephus is revealing. These chapters, he says, contain a prediction of future events, in accordance with which all has come *and is coming* to pass.[5] We can back this up from *Jubilees*, the *Psalms of Solomon*, and even Philo, who says of Deuteronomy 33 that it contains prophecies, some of which have come to pass while others are still looked for in the future.[6] The two classic passages here are Baruch 3 and 4QMMT section C, where Deuteronomy 30 is invoked in what we might be so bold to say is its natural sense, the prediction of the restoration of Israel after the disaster of rebellion and the curse of exile – a restoration which the authors of Baruch and MMT believed was happening, at last, in their own day.

Plenty of evidence thus points us to the phenomenon which we could in any case have deduced from works like Pseudo-Philo, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ben-Sirach, and indeed Acts and Hebrews. The overall narrative of Israel was well known, and could be told in various ways, with different selected

[3] *War* 6.312.
[4] *Ant.* 10.267. On this theme, see *New Testament and the People of God*, 312–14.
[5] *Ant.* 4.303.
[6] *Leg. All.* 2.288.

highlights, but always as a [**325**] story in search of an ending, an ending sketched in many prophecies including the explicitly historical schemes of Daniel and Deuteronomy.

This narrative might well contain within it other, less narratively located, patterns, types, allusions and echoes. The paradigmatic Exodus story appears frequently like a theme in a symphony, echoing back and forth within the larger and still single musical line. To use a more mundane example, the overall narrative is like the track in the snow made by a single wheel whose every revolution is both another retelling of its own particular circular story and also the means by which the larger story of its journey moves forward towards its goal. This is not, then, a matter simply of returning to the place where one started and knowing it for the first time. It is rather, in terms of present discussions of Paul and scripture, a matter of taking the road less travelled by, and its making all the difference.

Three key principles. First, as I have heard Ed Sanders say: Paul didn't need to lug around scriptural scrolls, or look up passages to quote. He kept his Bible in the best place: in his heart and mind. He knew the scriptures from childhood and could, and did, quote them freely. To expend energy studying his introductory formulae or precise wording, as many have done, is therefore to miss the point. The question ought to be: what world of thought is he evoking? Which parts of the great narrative is he opening up?

Second, he often refers to scripture, or to its great themes, in passages where there are no specific quotations. (We might compare Revelation, which has no actual biblical quotations but is soaked in scripture from start to finish.) When Paul speaks of Abraham or Sarah, he is referring to scripture. When he tells a story with Abraham at the start, Moses in the middle, and the Messiah at the end, he is referring to scripture, even if he never quotes its actual words. His explicit quotations, and implicit allusions, are not free-standing. They are the tips of a much larger iceberg, the massive but often submerged scriptural narrative which Paul believed came to the surface dramatically with Jesus and thereby caused havoc to the Titanics, both Jewish and pagan, of the day.

Third, it is beside the point to try to assess the reader-competence of Paul's audience. Even if we could be sure how familiar or unfamiliar Paul's hearers were with Israel's scriptures, a major feature of early church life was precisely *teaching*. And the content of that teaching was, to my mind obviously, Israel's scriptures. New Christians, from whatever background, needed to know the scriptures in order to understand the significance of the Jesus they were meeting in preaching and prayer, in service and sacrament.[7] In any case, it's a poor writer who does not put into the text considerably more than the first audience, or even the hundred and first, will pick up straight away. Think of Shakespeare; or J. S. Bach; or T. S. Eliot. Reducing Paul's compositional options to the limits of hypothetical reader-incompetence is an example of that left-brain rationalism, allied to a hermeneutic of suspicion, from which biblical studies has suffered for too long.

[7] See Hays 2005, 1–24.

So, briefly, to the text; and, first, Romans 4. When Paul quotes Genesis 15.6 ('Abraham believed God, and it was calculated in his favour, putting him in the right') in verse 3 this is not a mere proof-text plucked out of context.[8] The whole of [**326**] Genesis 15 is present to his mind throughout Romans 4. And the point of Genesis 15 is that this is where God establishes the covenant with Abraham, the covenant through which, as in Genesis 12.1, God will bless all the nations after the disaster of Babel. This is, for Paul, the beginning of the long story of God's purposes which comes to its goal in the Messiah: what God promised to Abraham, he has fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus. Abraham in Romans 4 is thus not merely a telling example of someone who was justified by faith. He is the start of the story of the covenant, the covenant to which God has been faithful, so that the unveiling of God's 'righteousness' in the gospel is precisely the revelation of how God has done, however shockingly and surprisingly, what he always promised. About these things we cannot now speak in detail.

But one crucial point in Romans 4 has been missed. In verse 4, Paul declares that to one who works, their 'reward' (*misthos*) is not calculated on the basis of generosity but on the basis of what they are owed. Ah, declare the anxious opponents of the 'New Perspective on Paul': here is the sign that Paul is really thinking about, and opposing, a kind of proto-Pelagianism.[9] Not so. He is reading Genesis 15; and in 15.1 God says to Abraham, Don't be afraid; your *reward* (*misthos*) will be very great. What is this reward? The context makes it clear: the 'reward' is the massive, uncountable, worldwide family. The promise which Abraham believed, as Paul indicates in 4.18, was not 'I will justify you even though you are ungodly', but 'I will give you a great family'. The ungodly state is presupposed with Babel; the promise speaks of the family in which Babel is reversed. Abraham thus 'believes in the God who justifies the ungodly', not in the sense that he is believing in *his own* 'justification without works', but in the sense that he is believing *that God will justify the gentiles*. Get the story right, and the scriptural quotations will make sense.

That, I suggest, is how we should read Paul's use of Psalm 32 as well (4.7–8). David is pronouncing a blessing on anyone out there, gentiles as well as Jews, whose sin is covered. I am a bit suspicious of the familiar claim that Paul is here imitating the Rabbinic technique of lining up two texts with the same catchword, as commentators often say. Rather, he is hinting at the classic narrative: Abraham, David, Messiah (compare Matthew 1). This ties Romans 4 tightly together as an exposition of the founding of the covenant in which Jew and gentile come together as forgiven sinners through faith in the God who raised Jesus. Have we found Abraham to be our ancestor in a human, fleshly sense?' he asks in verse 1. No: we have found him to be the father of all, the entire single 'seed' (verse 16). This in turn plays back into fresh possible readings of Romans 2 and 3, for which there is no space here.[10]

[8] For NT quotes I use my own translation, *The New Testament for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2011).
[9] E.g. Gathercole 2002, 244–6.
[10] See 'Hidden Clue' [reprinted as chapter 30 of the present volume].

Turning away from Romans for a minute, we find in 1 Corinthians 15 one of the few Pauline hints of Daniel. Paul believes that in Jesus and his messianic resurrection the apocalyptic promise of God's kingdom has been realized. Daniel 2.44, in the Theodotion version, repeats the verb *anastēsein*: God will 'raise up' a kingdom through which all other kingdoms will be overthrown. This fits in with the Adam–Christ theme of 1 Corinthians 15.21 and thereafter, and opens the way for Paul's [**327**] characteristic citations of Psalms 110 and 8, combining prophecies about the Messiah's victory and the sovereignty of the 'son of man', ultimately under the rule of God himself. Daniel, as Josephus says, was read in the first century as a prophecy of a coming world ruler. Josephus said it was Vespasian; Paul says it's Jesus.

The other passage cited by Josephus as offering long-range prophecies being fulfilled in the first century is the closing section of Deuteronomy. That takes us back to Romans, and particularly to chapter 10. This point seems obvious, yet such is the present state of reader-incompetence that it must be spelled out again.

First, Romans 9.6 to 10.21 constitutes *a retelling of the story of Israel*, in close and obvious parallel with other second-Temple retellings. This isn't a matter of the actual quotations, which have their own point. It is that if a biblically literate second-Temple Jew tells a story which moves from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Moses and Pharaoh to the prophets and the exile, and then speaks of a *telos* (an end or goal) which involves the *Christos*, and then invokes Deuteronomy 30 which involves covenant renewal, it ought to be a no-brainer to say: this is Israel's story, retold from yet another angle, but still ending up with the Messiah. And the particular angle from which it is here being told is the angle of God's covenant faithfulness, his 'justice'. The question of God's *dikaiosynē* is raised again and again, in 9.6, 9.14, 9.19 and then decisively in 10.3. *This is the story of how Israel's God was all along faithful to his covenant justice*, even though that narrative of faithfulness was also the story of how Israel got it wrong, misunderstood, disobeyed and ended up as a remnant, failing to 'attain to the Torah' (9.31). But, for Paul, the narrative has found its goal, its *telos*. As the *Psalms of Solomon* and many other texts would insist, when the Messiah comes he will sort out the mess once for all. That is how the story works.

What, then, will God do next? Deuteronomy 30 provides the answer, and was seen in Paul's day as providing the answer. After the covenant curse of exile comes the covenant renewal in which Torah will be 'near you, on your lips and in your heart'. In Baruch, the Torah of Deuteronomy 30 is translated into 'wisdom'. In MMT, it is the specific selection of commandments, the *miqsath ma'ase haTorah*, which will mark out the people who, fulfilling Deuteronomy 30 in the present, will be declared *tzaddikim*, 'righteous', in the future. For Paul, since 'the goal of the law is the Messiah', it is *Christos* who, in his resurrection and lordship, is 'on your lips and in your heart'. So far from this being (as many have imagined) an odd, awkward midrash which makes an obscure text dance on its hind legs to an unfamiliar Pauline tune, it is, I suggest, exactly the right text at the right moment in the narrative of Romans 9 and 10. Paul has, in a measure, retold the Pentateuchal

story, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, via Exodus and with a hint of Leviticus. The quotation from Joel 2.32 (3.5 LXX) in verse 13 rounds off the point, indicating that he is indeed thinking of the ultimate, eschatological renewal of the covenant.

Through all this, my general point is sustained: the explicit quotations nest within the larger biblical narrative which Paul is retelling. We have to learn to read the quotations in the light not only of their own original larger context, but of [**328**] the still larger context which is the implicit narrative presupposed by many second-Temple Jews; and then of the Pauline context, which is never simply an exposition of 'doctrine' or 'ethics', supported by detached proof-texts, but always, rather, a fresh telling of Israel's story in the light of its shocking messianic fulfilment and the covenant renewal brought about by the Spirit.

Finally, in that light, a note about Israel's scriptures in Paul's own theological self-understanding. It has often been pointed out that he draws on Isaiah's picture of the servant, especially the second 'song' of chapter 49, where the servant wonders (49.4) if he has run in vain or laboured in vain.[11] But I draw attention in particular to 2 Corinthians 6.2, where Paul quotes Isaiah 49.8, still in reference to his own ministry, right after expressing once more the challenge about receiving God's grace *eis kenon*, 'in vain'. 'I have heard you', says the prophet, 'at an acceptable time, and I helped you on a day of salvation.' This is all part of the covenant ministry of the servant, and of the apostle; the very next line reads 'I gave you as a covenant to the nations', *eis diathēkēn ethnōn*, echoing 42.6. This is picked up in the next Servant Song, at 51.5–8, where God's *dikaiosynē* and his *sōtēria* are set in regular parallel. All this firmly underscores the proposal which I and others have made about 2 Corinthians 5.21: that Paul there speaks, not of a soteriology in which a 'righteous status' is imputed or transferred to God's people, but of the work of the apostle, in which God has given him as a covenant to the people. That is why he writes *genōmetha*, 'become': 'so that in him we might *become*, embody, God's faithfulness to the covenant'. Understand the story, and the use of scripture comes up in three dimensions.

What more shall we say? Time would fail me to tell of Genesis 1, 2 and 3; of Exodus 34; of Psalms 18, 69 and the rest, and the rich and dense way Paul employs them. I have offered here, of course, only a sketch, but perhaps enough to indicate a paradigm which is not usually prominent in discussions of Paul and his Bible. There are a thousand shades of usage, from direct quotation to echo and allusion, from hints half guessed to gifts half understood. But at the heart of it all – not as an occasional added extra, but as the living force within the whole thing – there lies Paul's fresh reading of Israel's scriptures as the unfinished narrative of creation and covenant which, attaining its *telos* in the Messiah, now reaches out, still as Israel's story, to embrace the whole world, as Israel's story always aimed to do. The types and patterns fit within this larger framework. The playful allegories and poetic reworkings give it further, sometimes paradoxical, embodiment. But the story remains the story.

[11] E.g. Gal. 2.2; Phil. 2.16; 1 Thess. 3.5.

Paul is not interested in atomized proof-texts, because his theology does not consist of detached doctrines. For him, 'theology' – the new discipline which I believe he invented as the necessary support for the single family created by the gospel – was always about discerning and living out the vocation of Israel, in obedience to Israel's one God, at the new moment when the covenant promises in Genesis, Daniel and Deuteronomy had been fulfilled. Paul's theology, at its heart, consists of a freshly worked allegiance to Israel's God, a fresh understanding of the people of God, and a fresh grasping of Israel's hope, each of these freshly [**329**] understood in terms of Jesus and the Spirit. And, at each level and stage of that complex but tightly integrated whole, we find Israel's scriptures, neither as proof-texts, nor as detached illustrative echoes, nor as rhetorical flourishes or gestures, but as the great narrative which had now arrived at its intended destination. Not the intense moment, isolated with no before and after, as many today are eagerly suggesting; rather, a lifetime burning in every moment. The purpose, no doubt, is beyond the end they figured, and is altered in fulfilment. Scripture, for Paul, is the unknown, remembered gate through which we pass to discover that which was the beginning.

Chapter Thirty-Three

PAUL AND THE PATRIARCH: THE ROLE(S) OF ABRAHAM IN GALATIANS AND ROMANS (2013)

Paper delivered at the *Society for New Testament Studies Annual Meeting*, Leuven, 1–3 August 2012. Shorter version published in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35, no. 3, 2013, 207–41. Reprinted with permission.

This is the considerably expanded second half of the paper I gave in Durham in spring 2010 and in Edinburgh in January 2011 (see above, 'Romans 2.17—3.9: A Hidden Clue to the Meaning of Romans?'). As with that paper, I regard the material here as foundational for a good deal of my exposition of the heart of Paul's theology. I was glad to be able to present it at the *Society for New Testament Studies* meeting in Leuven in August 2012, and am grateful to John Barclay, Beverly Gaventa and Martinus de Boer, the co-ordinators of the seminar on Pauline Theology, for including it in their programme, and to colleagues at the meeting – especially John Barclay himself – for helpfully sharp and pointed criticisms. I have expanded the paper further in an attempt to take account of some at least of the points which were made in discussion. A shorter version of this paper, dropping the account of Galatians, was published in *JSNT*. The material on Galatians has been inserted at pp. 571–8 below. An asterisk attached to the original *JSNT* page numbering indicates that some adjustment to the original published version, which dealt only with Romans 4, has been made.

* * *

Introduction

A full discussion of the place of Abraham in Paul's theology would include not only Romans 4 and Galatians 3, but also Romans 9—11 and 15.8–9, and Galatians 4.21–31. I shall allude to these, but I think it is important to make the case I want to make on the basis of the two most obviously central chapters. I shall therefore structure this paper in terms of an argument concerning Romans 4, bringing in Galatians 3 as part of the supporting evidence, and only at the close will I point on towards Romans 9—11 and Galatians 4.21–31, with Romans 15.8–9 providing a tail-piece. Even in my two principal chapters many issues will have to be left to one side to concentrate on

the key points.[1] I am very much aware – in case there should be any doubt! – that the arguments of Galatians and Romans are not the same. I shall suggest towards the close a fresh way of describing the differences between them. In a full picture one cannot simply elide passages from the two letters in an easy synchronicity. The parallels and overlaps are, however, sufficiently clear for it to make sense to bring them into conversation with one another, with due respect to their own idiosyncrasies. Just as we cannot assume that Paul in one letter agrees with everything he says in another, we cannot assume that he disagrees, either.[2]

[**208**] Almost every section of Romans is loadbearing, holding up some of the weight of Paul's overall argument. But with many sections there is no agreement as to what the load in question might be, or how this passage might be bearing it. In the case of Romans 4, this problem is acute. The question of Abraham brings into sharp focus several key questions about the shape of Paul's thought. We could construct a kind of spectrum of possibilities, which would work for Galatians 3 as well: (a) Paul only refers to Abraham because his opponents have done so and he must defeat them on their own ground, but left to himself he would not have mentioned the patriarch;[3] (b) Paul is happy to introduce reference to Abraham, but only because this provides him with a convenient but random scriptural proof-text for a doctrine, in this case 'justification by faith', whose real ground is elsewhere;[4] (c) Abraham is a kind of 'test case' for Paul's doctrine, not just a proof-text; Paul needs to be able to show some continuity with Israel's founding fathers;[5] (d) Abraham is the 'narrative prototype' whose faith prefigures the faithfulness of the Messiah;[6] (e) Paul is expounding the covenant-making chapter (Genesis 15) in order to show that the revelation of God's righteousness

[1] This paper grows out of and develops ideas that were tried out in the graduate seminars in Durham in the spring of 2010, in Edinburgh in spring 2011 and in St Andrews in autumn 2011, and especially the Pauline Theology seminar at the meeting of the SNTS in Leuven in August 2012. I am grateful to colleagues in all of these meetings for their comments and discussion. I am here developing, in some cases taking further and in other cases significantly modifying, positions I have argued earlier in *Climax of the Covenant*; *Romans*; *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*; *Justification.* English translations of OT in what follows are from NRSV unless otherwise specified; for the NT I use my own.

[2] Udo Schnelle, who issued a stern warning against synchronicity in the SNTS seminar, himself of course writes synchronically in the second half of his Pauline theology, having set out the diachronic picture in the first half (Schnelle 2005) As Schnelle rightly points out, Paul's overall work 'possesses a systematic quality' that the frequent accusation of inconsistency 'does not take into account' (391 n. 7).

[3] Sometimes backed up by the point that Abraham is only mentioned in Galatians and Romans (as well as the less relevant 2 Cor. 11.22). There are, of course, many other possible explanations for this (as for the similar phenomenon that Paul does not directly cite the OT in, e.g., Philippians); each letter has unique elements, and one cannot assume that these are all occasioned by the need to respond to opponents who have raised points that were not anyway in Paul's basic theological repertoire.

[4] Conzelmann 1969, 169f., 190; Sanders 1983, 21 with 53 n. 25 (Sanders has often said that Paul simply ran through his mental concordance looking for passages which linked 'righteousness' and 'faith', and, having located Gen. 15 and Hab. 2, dropped them into his argument here and there); Tobin 1995, 442, 'an extended scriptural example and proof'. Cf. too R. N. Longenecker 2011, 367: 'the illustration of Abraham as the exemplar of faith'.

[5] See, e.g., Käsemann 1980, 105; Dunn 1988a, 194; 1993a, 159–61; Gathercole 2002, 233: Abraham 'is not *an* illustration from the Old Testament; rather, presupposing in the ancient . . . world that children imitate their parents, as "our forefather" he is *the* example. If Paul's theology cannot accommodate him, it *must* be false' (italics original).

[6] Hays 2005, xii f.

in the gospel is (however shocking and paradoxical it may be) the fulfilment of this ancient promise. I can imagine a sixth, though I know of nobody who holds it: (f) that Paul envisages a smooth, continuous, salvation history in a crescendo all the way from Abraham to Jesus. Since I hold (and shall here expound) (e), and since this is often mistaken for (f) and criticized on those grounds, it may be worth making this clear from the start.

There are at least three problems here, each affecting the others. First, what are Romans 4 and Galatians 3 really saying? Second, what place do they have in the developing arguments [**209***] of their respective letters? (How does Romans 4 relate, that is, to the flow of 1—4 and in particular to the dense argument of 3.21–31? And how does it help 1—4 prepare the way for 5—8, 9—11 and 12—16? And how, *mutatis mutandis*, does Galatians 3 do the same in its context?) Third, how is Paul using scripture here?[7]

Somewhere in the middle of this triangle, we meet some sharp exegetical problems. In Romans 4: how are we to understand and translate the opening verse (4.1), for a start? What has happened to the argument at verses 16 and 17, where many translations bracket off a passage which, to other interpreters, looks central rather than peripheral? And, as a particular focus, why does Paul speak of a 'reward' in verse 4? In Galatians 3: what sense can we make of Paul's use of the collective *sperma* in 3.16? How does Abraham function in the several significantly different sections of the chapter?

Finally, hovering over the whole thing, but whether as vultures or doves remains to be seen, there are larger questions of Pauline interpretation: the question of 'old' and 'new' perspectives; of 'justification' and 'incorporation' ('juridical' and 'participationist' patterns of thought); of 'apocalyptic', 'covenant' and 'salvation history'; of soteriology and ecclesiology.[8] My hope is that, by exploring some usually ignored exegetical possibilities, we might be able to get a new angle on all these matters, though of course the present paper will not have space to follow them up.

My proposal, then, is a variation on (e) above. I shall propose and argue (1) that in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 Paul expounds the story of Abraham, especially in Genesis 15, the whole of which he has in mind, in terms of God's establishment of the covenant which always envisaged a single world-wide family; (2) that in Romans this forms part of Paul's demonstration that God has been faithful to the covenant, in the gospel and its forming of a multi-ethnic family, while in Galatians it forms part of his argument that the people of Abraham is a single family and cannot therefore be demarcated by the ethnically divisive Torah-works (these two arguments are of course complementary); (3) that Paul's use of *dikaiosynē* language is closely related to the idea of 'covenant' to which God has been faithful and into which believers are incorporated; (4) that Paul speaks of 'reward' (*misthos*) in Romans 4.4, not because he is after all thinking in 'old perspective' terms about people earning (or not earning) their 'justification', but because he is

[7] Radically different views are still held on Paul's use of scripture; see the summary in 'Israel's Scriptures in Paul's Narrative Theology' [reprinted as chapter 32 of the present volume].

[8] This relates not least to the old debates as between, e.g., Wilckens and Klein; see the summary in Moo 1996, 257.

thinking of the whole of Genesis 15, which is all about the *misthos* of a huge family promised by God to Abraham;[9] (5) that this opens up a better way of reading the difficult but related passages 4.1 and 4.16–17; and (6) that this reading of Romans 4 and Galatians 3 points to a fresh and satisfying reading of the other patriarchal references in Galatians 4, Romans 9 and 11 and Romans 15. There is no space here for a seventh point, which would be to show how [**210***] this reading of the relevant chapters provides a better account of the flow of thought in both letters, but this would indeed follow, as I have argued elsewhere.[10]

How Paul Read Genesis 15

We begin with Genesis 15 itself and the question of how Paul was using this chapter as a whole.[11] I take it he *was* using the chapter as a whole, since as well as quoting 15.6 in Romans 4.3 and 4.22–23, and referring back to it in 4.5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, he refers to God's promise in Genesis 15.5 in 4.18, and gives every appearance of wrestling with the message of the whole chapter, looking at it from one angle after another. In verses 10–11 he relates Genesis 15 sequentially to Genesis 17 (the command to circumcise), making the historical sequence between them a key point in his argument, and then quoting 17.5 at 4.17 and alluding to 17.17 at 4.19. There are other echoes as well, notably of Genesis 18 and 22 in verse 13. It looks, then, as though Paul is not plucking out a proof-text (Genesis 15.6) without regard for its context, but merely on the basis that he has ransacked his mental concordance for passages which happen to bring together the key terms 'righteousness' and 'faith'.

The same point emerges from Galatians 3. Paul quotes Genesis 15.6 in 3.6 and at once (3.7–9) expounds it with reference to 12.3 and 18.18, highlighting the 'blessing' which God promised Abraham, which is then the goal of the next paragraph too (3.10–14, where *hē eulogia tou Abraam* coming upon the gentiles is the triumphant conclusion in verse 14). Galatians 3.15–22, at the centre of the chapter, works with the idea of the 'promised seed' as in Genesis 13.15; 15.5; 17.8; 22.17–18; 24.7 and concludes, like 3.14, with the promise being fulfilled. The final paragraph of the chapter does not mention Abraham till the end, but there (3.29) it is clear that this has been the point of the whole discussion: if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's *sperma*, heirs

[9] Jewett 2007, 312f. has a wonderful exposition of the possible senses of *misthos* in the Hellenistic world but never even notices the occurrence, let alone the relevance, of the word in Gen. 15.1.

[10] See *Romans*, passim, and *Climax of the Covenant*, chs. 7 and 8. My proposal (earlier outlined in 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' [reprinted as chapter 7 of the present volume]) has several analogies to that of Cranford 1995, but also several significant differences, some of which I shall note below. Borrell 2006 seems to me to point in the right direction, away from seeing Abraham as a mere model of faith or paradigm of justification and towards his universal fatherhood, but he does not develop the theme very far, and in particular pays no attention to Paul's exegesis of Gen. 15 itself.

[11] I presuppose the criteria for 'echoes' etc. advanced by Hays 1989. Since Paul explicitly quotes Gen. 15 several times in Rom. 4 and Gal. 3, and discusses these and related chapters of Gen. explicitly, it makes good sense to explore the possibility that there are echoes and allusions as well as direct citations.

according to the promise. It looks for all the world as though Paul is indeed appealing, not to a miscellaneous proof-text, not to a sense of 'scriptural authority' as a mere rhetorical move ('I can appeal to some ancient texts!'), but to the actual context of Genesis, and particularly to chapter 15.

So what is that context? The context is of God's promise to, and covenant with, Abraham.[12] God had made promises to Abraham before, at the start of Genesis 12; Paul quotes 12.3 in Galatians 3.8, and indeed seems in Romans 4 to presuppose that promise, that God will bless all the nations in Abraham. But in Genesis 15.1 the promise is repeated, though in a particular form: God will be Abraham's shield, and his reward shall be very great (*ho misthos sou polys estai sphodra*). But what is this 'reward'? What is it that God has promised to Abraham?[13]

[**211**] To answer this we must take a step back. At the end of Genesis 14 Abraham has just returned from defeating the pagan kings and rescuing his nephew Lot. That is when (15.1) God promises him a 'very great reward', which puzzles Abraham because he has no heir. He clearly (15.2) understands 'reward' in terms of the inheritance, both human and geographical, which he has been expecting on the basis of God's earlier promises. 'O Lord God', he says, 'what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' In other words, he assumes that his 'reward' ought to consist of his family and their inheritance. Without such a physical family to inherit, the inheritance will go to 'a slave born in my house', an *oikogenēs*.[14] The prominence of the theme of slavery later on in both Romans and Galatians should make us prick up our ears at this, but that is not for now.

Abraham then expands his puzzled question in 15.3, though now it is not so much a question as a statement of the apparently impossible situation: 'You have given me no offspring (*sperma*), and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir (*kleronomēsei me*)'. Abraham, in other words, assumes in a quite uncomplicated fashion that the promise of 'reward' means that he is to have a family, heirs to inherit from him. This way of reading the passage is confirmed by God's answer in verses 4 and 5. 'This man' [i.e. Eliezer of Damascus] shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue (*hos exeleusetai ek sou*) shall be your heir.' That is what the conversation is about. Abraham's own physical offspring will indeed inherit from him, *klēronomēsei se*; the phrase is repeated.

Then, taking him outside, God invites Abraham to look up at the stars and to try to count them (15.5). Then comes the amplified promise, which

[12] Or 'Abram', as he then was. I shall follow Paul in giving him the longer name, even though this is anachronistic before 17.5; whether this carries some subtle significance for Paul is an interesting further question, but not for now. Detailed analysis of Gen. 15 and comparison with the other 'covenant' chapter, Gen. 17, are provided by Williamson 2000 (on the change of Abram's name: 101 n. 77), arguing among other things that Ps. 72 focusses the Abrahamic promises onto the single 'seed' of the coming Messiah.

[13] AV/RV, exploiting ambiguity in the Hebrew, have God himself as the reward ('I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward'); but RV mg goes with LXX etc., as in NRSV: 'your reward shall be very great'. It is frustrating that Philo's treatise on *ta peri misthōn*, to which he refers in *Heir* 1.1, appears to be lost (as Colson and Whitaker note in Loeb ad loc. in *Migr. Abr.* he always uses *dōrea*; in the treatise on 'rewards and punishments' he uses *athlon*).

[14] For the meaning of the word, cf., e.g., Plato, *Men.* 82b.

Paul quotes in 4.18: *houtōs estai to sperma sou*, 'so shall your descendants be'; in other words, 'that is what your "seed" will be like'. This promise of an enormous, uncountable family is the promise which Abraham believes; and this in turn is the belief, the faith, of which the text says that 'he reckoned it to him as righteousness', *elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn*.

The theme of *klēronomia* is repeated yet again (though many translations fail to bring it out), this time in relation not to the enormous family but to the promised land: 'I am YHWH,[15] who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to inherit' (*klēronomēsai*). This precipitates Abraham's question for an assurance that he will indeed possess the land (*hoti klēronomēsō autēn*), to which the divine response is to *make a covenant*, with Abraham cutting animals in two and the fiery symbol of the divine presence passing between the pieces. The meaning of this covenant, giving assurance to Abraham that the [**212**] promises will hold good, has to do with the means by which his *sperma* will indeed inherit (*klēronomēsei*) the promise: they will themselves be slaves (*doulōsousin*) in a foreign land for four hundred years,[16] but God will judge those who enslave them and will bring them out with great possessions. This, it seems, is the means by which Abraham's *sperma* is to gain the promised *klēronomia*.[17] The point is repeated one more time in Genesis 15.18: God made a covenant with Abraham, *dietheto kyrios tō Abram diathēkēn*, saying, 'to your descendants', *tō spermati sou*, 'I give this land'.[18] Insofar as we can gauge the ways in which Genesis 15 was being read by other Jews in the second-Temple period, it looks as though this is the emphasis that they would have brought out: that the Abraham narrative as a whole, and Genesis 15 within it, forms the launching-point for a long narrative about the patriarch's family and their promised land, which the later writers are expounding in order to emphasize the fulfilment of that in their own day.[19]

Paul appears not only familiar with all this but actually to be presupposing it, in both Romans 4 and Galatians 3.[20] He is tracking, and engaging with, exactly this sequence of thought about the *sperma* and the *klēronomia*. But at this point he appears to make a jump. True, Genesis 12.3 had indicated that through Abraham God would bless all nations. But, despite the insistence of Genesis 15.4 (echoed in Hebrews 11.12) that Abraham's true heir would be his own physical offspring, Paul in Romans 4.18 quotes 'so shall your seed be' as a reference to Abraham being 'the father *of many nations*'. It is as though he advances the change of name, from Abram to Abraham, from Genesis 17 to Genesis 15. This, I think, is what lies behind what Paul says in Romans

[15] The LXX has *theos*.

[16] So Gen. 15.13; cf. Ex. 12.49f. (430 years); Ac. 7.6 (400 years). See Daube 1956, 439f.

[17] Gen. 15.13f.

[18] So NRSV etc. (cf. MT *nathati*); but LXX is *dōsō*, 'I will give'.

[19] See my discussion of the varied Jewish retellings of the Israel-story in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2 (see below n. 55). On this point, see, e.g., CD 3.2f. (cf. 3.12f., 19f.); *Jub*. 19.8f; 23.9f.; not least 1 Macc. 2.52 (on which see below); Sir. 44.19f. Gathercole's use of these passages (Gathercole 2002, 235f.) ignores their main emphasis which is on Abraham's seed and inheritance, not on the mechanics of his 'justification' in the abstract.

[20] One would never know from some exegetes that Paul was here dealing with Genesis at all: cf., e.g., Westerholm 2004, 280–4.

4.13, that the promise to Abraham and his seed was that they should 'inherit the world', *to klēronomon auton einai kosmou*. This apparent widening of the promise of the *land* to a promise about the *whole world* is made elsewhere in second-Temple Judaism.[21] It is true, as well, that Genesis 15 [**213**] ends up with the covenant promise of the geographical land (15.18–21, demarcated both geographically and ethnically), and that in Romans 8 Paul uses language relating to the ancient 'promised land' to refer now to the entire cosmos. But I think at the moment, here in chapter 4, this reference to the worldwide inheritance seems to be not so much about *geography* but about *descendants*: about the uncountable family whom Paul is taking to be, not simply a very large family of Abraham's own physical descendants, but a 'family' composed of many nations, indeed of the whole world.

Romans 4 as a whole comes back again and again to this same point. In 4.11–12 Paul speaks of Abraham as the father of uncircumcised as well as circumcised. In 4.16–17 he speaks of the promise being valid for 'the entire seed', *panti tō spermati*, 'not only the [seed] "out of the law" ', *ek tou nomou*, but 'the [seed] that is out of the faith of Abraham' (*tō ek pisteos Abraam*), because he is 'father of us all', quoting Genesis 17.5.[22]

How, then, is Paul putting together, in Romans 4 in particular, the specific point about the promise referring to many nations (including, therefore, many who are not Abraham's physical descendants) with the equally specific point, to which he returns emphatically at the end of the chapter, that Abraham's faith had to do with believing that God would give to him and Sarah, despite their advanced age, an actual physical son of their own? It looks as though Paul is holding the two in a closely linked parallel. In 4.18 it is clear that he refers the promise of Genesis 15.5 ('so shall your seed be', looking up at the uncountable stars) to the *many* nations that God would give him, but in 4.19–21 he clearly describes Abraham's faith, in believing precisely this promise, in terms of the specific son to be born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, and says that this was the faith because of which 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness'. This leads him to the chapter's triumphant conclusion, that this same faith in the God who raises the dead is the faith of the Christian (4.24–25; compare 10.9–10).

This in turn sends us back to the verse which introduces the final section of the chapter. In 4.17 Paul describes Abraham's God in two ways, corresponding exactly to this parallel: Abraham believed in the God who

[21] Cf. esp. Sir. 44.19–21, citing Gen. 12.2; 15.5; 17.10f.; 22.1, 16–18: Abraham is the father of a multitude of nations; God makes the covenant with him, promising that the nations would be blessed through him, that his *sperma* would be like the dust of the earth or the stars in the sky, and, not least, that they would have a *klēronomia* 'from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth' (44.21, echoing the Davidic promise of Pss. 72.8; 89.25; cp. Ex. 23.31; 1 Kgs. 4.21, 24; Ps. 80.11; Zech. 9.10). Cp. too *Jub*. 19.21; 32.18f.; Philo, *Mos*. 1.155; *1 En*. 5.7b; *4 Ez*. 6.55–59. I do not see this extension in *Jub*. 14—15, 29—30, or in Ps. 37 [LXX 36].9, 11 etc. as suggested by Stowers 1994, 360 n. 49. Further discussion in, e.g., Byrne 1996, 157. On the theme of Abraham's larger inheritance, and the difference between Paul's vision of this and that of Sirach or *Jubilees*, see my 'New Exodus, New Inheritance', and *Romans*, 495f.

[22] Most translations treat the two phrases *tō ek tou nomou* and *tō ek pisteōs Abraam* as plural: '*those* of the law' and '*those* of Abraham's faith'. Granted the importance of the singularity of the seed in Gal. 3 it may be better to keep it singular here too.

(a) raises the dead and
(b) calls the non-existent things into existence.

[**214**] I suggest that Paul, in reading Genesis 15, sees these two reflected in Abraham's request and God's promise. Abraham asked God about an actual physical offspring; this is answered by God 'raising the dead', giving life to his and Sarah's 'dead' bodies by giving them a son of their own. God promised, in addition, something far more abundant than Abraham's specific request: a family consisting of many nations, like the stars of heaven. This has to do with God 'calling non-existent things into existence', giving Abraham 'offspring' from many nations.

This double statement then corresponds closely, of course, to the repeated double statement about Jewish and gentile members in Abraham's faith-family, as in 4.11–12. There the order is reversed, because of the flow of thought of the chapter at that point. Abraham is described as

(a) the father of uncircumcised believers (the 'many nations') and
(b) the father of circumcised people (the 'raised-from-the-dead' ones) provided they follow Abraham's faith.

The same happens, with the original order again, in the decisive 4.16, where the promise is validated for 'all the seed', not only

(a) 'those out of the law' (the circumcised ones, now 'raised from the dead') but also
(b) all who share Abraham's faith (with the emphasis on the 'all', i.e. including the 'many nations').

This leads straight into the double statement of Abraham believing in God as *both* the giver of life in place of death *and* the one who creates out of nothing.

It seems clear from all this that Paul understands the crucial promise of Genesis 15.5, and hence the nature of Abraham's faith in Genesis 15.6, in terms of the promise of the 'seed', starting with Isaac but broadening out to include that much larger family.

Paul has, as so often, compressed many complex ideas here into a tight space. But it seems clear that in Romans 4 at least he is reading the promise of Genesis 15.5 as a promise about a *family*, a 'seed', consisting of 'heirs', 'inheritors', starting with Abraham's own son Isaac but then going well beyond the boundaries of his subsequent physical family into the 'many nations' of 4.17 (quoting Genesis 17.5).[23] This was, of course, according to both Genesis and Paul, [**215**] the promise which Abraham believed, with a 'faith' that was then 'reckoned as righteousness'.[24]

[23] So Byrne 1996, 143.

[24] This way of reading the chapter relativizes and in a measure outflanks the various proposals about Paul's following of a rabbinic pattern of atomized prooftexting, or indeed the suggestion that, by providing an authoritative *exemplum* such as Abraham, he is conforming to the rules of Greco-Roman rhetoric (see Jewett 2007, 306). These may be there as echoes, but the main theme is the exposition of Gen. 15.

My proposal, then, is that when Paul spoke of Abraham's *misthos* in Romans 4.4, he intended to refer to this promise and to this worldwide family, starting with the life-out-of-death Isaac and moving on to the creation-out-of-nothing 'many nations'.[25] The verse is then much more than 'an example taken from everyday life' or a 'universally valid rule'.[26] So far from the reference to a *misthos* introducing a general point, only loosely related to the Abraham story, the link between that word and Genesis 15.1 indicates (as does the sequel in the rest of the chapter) that Paul is still talking about the patriarch himself. The promise about the worldwide family (Abraham's 'reward' in Genesis) is after all the subject of much of the rest of the chapter. It is also, arguably, the subject of the key passage which leads in to chapter 4, namely 3.27–31. A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law (3.28), because otherwise – that is the significance of the little word *ē* at the start of 3.29 – God would be the God of the Jews only, whereas in fact he is God of Gentiles as well, *since God is one*. Paul here invokes the Shema itself against any suggestion that his own Jewish people might be the sole people of God. No, he says: God will justify the circumcision *ek pisteos* and the uncircumcision *dia tes pisteōs*.[27] And this, so far from nullifying Torah, makes Torah more firmly grounded (3.31). It is exactly this point, rather than a generalized or abstract scheme of salvation, which Paul is then anchoring in the story of Abraham, part of the foundational narrative of the five-book Torah itself.

The underlying thrust of this proposal will, I hope, be clear. It strikes exactly against a position which has become one of the last strongholds of the 'old perspective' on Paul.

There is already a tradition among the opponents of the so-called New Perspective on Paul in which Romans 4.4–8 becomes the key evidence that Paul, despite the arguments of Sanders, Dunn, myself and others, was after all mainly if not exclusively concerned with the contrast between (a) the human performance of good works as the means of justification and (b) the simple trust in **[216]** God's grace.[28] I and others have argued in the past that, on the contrary, the metaphor of 'working for a reward', and the idea of earning wages, is here simply a secondary metaphor which Paul never employs in similar contexts elsewhere, and which cannot be allowed to become a sort of Old Perspective tail wagging the otherwise large and furry New Perspective dog.[29] But once we make the connection of *misthos* in verse 4

[25] Watson 2007, 262 suggests that the 'reward' is 'righteousness', but this is hardly convincing. He also suggests that in this early stage of the chapter Paul has no thought of connecting Abraham's faith to God's promise, which again, though common enough in scholarship, seems to me demonstrably wrong.

[26] Byrne 1996, 145; Kuss 1963, I, 182 ('eine allgemein geltende Regel').

[27] This may indicate a difference of the *mode of entry* into the people even while emphasizing the *identity of status* of Jew and gentile (on the basis of *pistis*) once that entry has taken place: see *Romans*, ad loc.

[28] Gathercole 2002, 244–8. Cranford 1995, 80 critiques this position, but his own alternative (that the point is not 'faith versus works' but 'reckoning according to obligation versus reckoning according to favour') remains in the realm of ahistorical abstraction (as he himself admits at 83, where he says that the 'increasing specificity of [Paul's] point' is 'somewhat obscured in the metaphors and citations of 4.4–8'); this is easily corrected by understanding Paul's use of *misthos* as a reference to Gen. 15.1.

[29] See *Romans*, ad loc. Schreiner 1998, 220 says that this is an attempt 'to evade the text'; my present argument provides the refutation for this charge.

with the same word in Genesis 15.1,[30] and once we follow through the implications of Paul's virtually certain reference to *misthos*, not as a 'reward' for 'obedience to Torah' or some equivalent thereof, but as the 'reward' which consists of a family (and indeed a land) promised by God to Abraham, not only does the entire passage make much more sense, as I shall shortly show, but this last refuge of the 'Old Perspective' is dismantled, leaving the occupants nowhere to hide. Yes, Paul does then develop a very brief book-keeping metaphor in verse 4. But the reason for the metaphor itself ('working' for a 'reward' which one is then 'owed') emerges not from an underlying implicit second-Temple Jewish soteriology of 'doing good works' to earn God's favour, an idea for which there is scant evidence, but from Genesis 15 itself, which is innocent of all such notions, and which speaks instead, as Paul does, of *covenant* and *family*. Verse 4 embroiders this with a particular colour, but this embroidery carries no weight in the passage as a whole.

The same is true for the language of 'works' in 4.2 and 4.6. These belong closely, of course, with the discussion of 'works of the law' in 3.20, 27–28. Those verses are themselves the subject of current controversy, and one cannot therefore appeal to 4.2, 6 as though they constituted an unambiguous reference to 'works' in the older reformational sense. In fact, the often ignored opening word of 3.29 – the *ē* which means 'or' – indicates clearly enough, as we just noted, that Paul is here talking about *the 'works of the law' which would separate Jew from gentile*.[31] Though we cannot pursue this further at the moment, this is perhaps the point to emphasize that this reference to the [**217**] abolition of barriers that would exclude gentiles from the one people of God does not reduce Paul's soteriology to sociology, as some have absurdly suggested.[32] As I have stressed elsewhere, it is a mainstream Jewish understanding of God's purpose in choosing Abraham that he was to be the one through whom the problem of human sin and its effects would be dealt with. The question of 'who are the children of Abraham?' is thus precisely the question of 'who are the people whose sins have been/are being/will be dealt with?', and, more widely, 'how is the creator God going to deal with the problem of sin in humankind as a whole?' The presence of the dealing-with-sin theme – for instance, in the discussion of David and the quotation from Psalm 32 in verses 6–8 – cannot be adduced as though it proved that Paul was 'really' or 'only' speaking of salvation from sin, and not primarily mounting an argument about the worldwide meaning of the covenant made in Genesis 15.

[30] The only commentator I have found who draws a link with Gen. 15.1 is Barrett 1971, 88; but he makes nothing of it, implying simply that the word was in Paul's mind because it was in that text. Cranford 1995, 80 picks this up but does nothing with it, though it would have made his own argument much stronger. See too Seifrid 2007, 623, who rightly sees the link with Gen. 15.1 and notes that this points forward to the promise of the 'seed', but does not see how this works in terms of 4.1–6 itself, or the effect that this might have on an entire reading of the chapter and indeed of Romans in general.

[31] See *Romans*, ad loc.

[32] See Westerholm 2004, frequently; Westerholm does, however, eventually acknowledge not only the compatibility in Paul of arguments about the Jew–gentile unity of the church and arguments about salvation from sin, but (441) the fact that Paul's doctrine of justification was formulated in the context of the first dispute rather than the second.

The Justification of the Ungodly

How, then, should we read 'the justification of the ungodly' in Romans 4.5? It has long been customary to understand the passage something like this:

(a) Abraham is at the moment a pagan, from a polytheistic background, feeling his way towards monotheism;
(b) Abraham is in any case uncircumcised; he is still in that sense 'ungodly';
(c) Abraham is in any case a sinner like the rest of us, and like David whom Paul will shortly be quoting;
(d) Abraham, in short, needs to be 'justified';
(e) Abraham believes that God will justify the ungodly, i.e. will justify him, Abraham, in this present condition;[33]
(f) This is what Abraham believes, and this is why God does in fact justify him;
(g) Abraham thus serves as a 'biblical example' or 'scriptural proof' of 'justification by faith'.[34]

One might summarize this viewpoint by saying that Abraham is justified by faith because he believes in justification by faith (as opposed to the justification of the godly).

[**218**] I suggest, instead, that we should read the passage like this:

(a) God makes a promise to Abraham that his 'reward' will be a colossal, worldwide family, like the stars of heaven in number and occupying not just 'the land' but 'the world';
(b) In order to believe this promise, Abraham must believe that somehow God will bring into this family people from all sorts of ethnic and moral backgrounds, i.e. the 'ungodly';
(c) Abraham thus 'believes in "the one who justifies the ungodly" ', i.e. the God who has made this promise to him about his 'ungodly' descendants, not in the sense that he has believed in his own justification;
(d) Abraham is therefore himself 'justified by faith', not in that he was previously 'ungodly' (still less that he continued to be 'ungodly' after being justified, as some have suggested), but that God has reckoned him 'righteous' – with a meaning yet to be determined;[35]

[33] See, e.g., Dunn 1988a, 205.

[34] This outline, familiar in many treatments, is perhaps best exemplified in Käsemann, e.g. Käsemann 1971, 85; 1980, 110–12.

[35] It is interesting that *asebēs* is sometimes coupled with *hamartōlos* (e.g. 1 Tim. 1.9; 1 Pet. 4.18; Jude 15, and the parallel of Rom. 5.6 with 5.8), with the latter being almost a technical term for gentiles (Gal. 2.15) – though of course, as in the 'we' of Rom. 5.6–11, Paul's whole point from Rom. 3.9–20 is that Jews have joined gentiles in the dock (cp. 1 Macc. 6.21; 7.5; 9.73, where 'some of *tōn asebōn* from Israel' refers back to those Jews who have aligned themselves with the pagans [cf. 1.11]). The references in, e.g., 2 Pet. 2.5f.; Jude 4 indicate well enough that *asebeia* would be seen by Jews, as well as early Christians, as a basically pagan category; this corresponds to, e.g., Gen. 18.23, 25 where Abraham's distinction of the *dikaios* and the *asebēs* corresponds to Lot on the one hand and the inhabitants of Sodom on the other. It is no objection to this to point out that *ton asebē* in Rom. 4.5 is singular, 'the ungodly one'; as BDAG 141 points out, citing the parallel 1 Pet. 4.18, this is an example of the 'collective singular', as indeed in Gen. 18.

(e) Abraham is 'justified by faith', not because he has believed in an abstract system of justification or soteriology, but because he has believed in the God who has made promises about his enormous multi-ethnic family.
(f) The chapter is thus explaining that what God has done in the events concerning Jesus (3.21–26) is the fulfilment of the covenant promises made to Abraham in the beginning;
(g) Romans 4 thus explains the way in which the *dikaiosynē theou*, the covenant faithfulness of God, is revealed in the gospel (3.21, cf. 1.15–17).

What, then, does 'justification' itself consist of? There is no sign here, I suggest, of the elaborate mediaeval apparatus concerning *iustitia* or of the radical adjustment of that apparatus that was achieved by the sixteenth-century reformers. That is not what Romans 4 is about. Rather:

1. Genesis 15, the chapter with which Paul is here working, is the chapter in which God makes the covenant with Abraham, promising him both a huge [**219**] family and a particular geographical homeland – and promising him that, in order to get the former into the latter (the family into the land), there will be a long period of slavery followed by a dramatic rescue: in other words, the Exodus.[36]

2. I suggest that one should read (and that one should understand Paul as reading) Genesis 15.7–21 as *epexegetic* of 15.6. In other words, one should not understand the extended promise of the land and how it will be attained, focused on the covenant-making ceremony with the divided animals and the fiery apparition that goes between them, as something *other than* what is said in 15.6, that Abraham believed God and 'he reckoned it to him as righteousness'. Genesis 15, in other words, is not saying two different things, (a) 'God reckoned it to Abraham as righteousness' and (b) 'God made a covenant with Abraham in which he promised him a family and a land, to be attained through the Exodus'. Genesis 15.6 is sandwiched between the two halves of the chapter: 15.1–5 is all about God's promise to Abraham concerning his family and his inheritance, and 15.7–20 is all about the making of the covenant which consists of the divine promise about land, family and inheritance. When, in the middle of all this, we read in verse 6 that Abraham believed a promise, *about those very things*, and that God 'reckoned it to him as righteousness', the context alone strongly suggests that 'reckoned it to him as righteousness' means, more or less, 'God reckoned this in terms of covenant membership', 'God made a covenant with him on this basis'. Abraham's faith in God, and in God's promise, was the sign and badge of the covenant which God then proceeded to make, the covenant which guaranteed precisely that promise. Nothing in the text of Genesis suggests that 'he reckoned it to him as righteousness' means anything other than this.

3. In case this seems too big a stretch from normal readings of the verse, consider a further point which comes into focus at Romans 4.11. Describing Abraham's circumcision, Paul writes that he received circumcision as 'a sign and seal' (*sēmeion, sphragida*) of the 'righteousness of faith which [he had]

[36] Gen. 15.13–16.

in uncircumcision', *tēs dikaiosynēs tēs pisteōs tēs en tē akrobustia*. But in the passage Paul is referring to (Genesis 17.10–11), God declares that circumcision will function as a sign *of the covenant*: *kai estai en sēmeio diathēkēs ana mesou emou kai hymōn* (17.11). Thus where Genesis has 'sign of the covenant', *sēmeion diathēkēs*, Paul has 'sign of *dikaiosynē*', *sēmeion dikaiosynēs*, the *dikaiosynē* which is now characterized, and recognized, by *pistis*. One might bring this out by rendering *dikaiosynē* here as 'covenant membership', or even 'the status of covenant membership'. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant membership Abraham already had on the basis of believing God's promise about his family. Paul seems to have made this equation, and so should we.

[**220**] One possible objection to this move would be to say that Paul has deliberately *avoided* the use of 'covenant', and has substituted something quite different, namely 'righteousness', in its place. The best and clearest answer to this objection comes in the one and only parallel in the Hebrew Bible to the key phrase in Genesis 15, to which I now turn. It both answers the present point and makes a further strong case of its own.

4. The only parallel in Israel's scriptures to the phrase *elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn* is found in Psalm 106 [LXX 105].30–31. Here the psalmist celebrates the action of Phinehas who, in Numbers 25, intervenes as the plague is destroying the Israelites who have worshipped the Baal of Peor. Phinehas was one of the great biblical examples of 'zeal', and he and his story would have been well known to the young, self-confessedly zealous, Saul of Tarsus.[37] The psalmist, commenting on Phinehas's action, declares

> And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness from generation to generation.
> *kai elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn eis genean kai genean heōs tou aiōnos.*[38]

The psalmist had provided a brief and dense summary of what Phinehas had actually done. In Numbers, Phinehas took a spear and, in obedience to Moses, killed an Israelite and a Midianite woman with a single thrust. In the Psalm, he 'stood up and intervened'. In exactly the same way, the psalmist has provided a brief and dense summary of the divine blessing which came upon Phinehas as a result.

In Numbers, this blessing is very specific:

> YHWH spoke to Moses, saying: 'Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among them on my behalf (*en tō zēlōsai mou ton zēlon en eutois*) that in my jealousy (*en tō zēlō mou*) I did not consume the Israelites. Therefore say, 'I hereby grant him my covenant of peace (*diathēkēn eirēnēs*). It shall be for him and for his descendants after him (*kai tō spermati autou*) a covenant of perpetual priesthood, because he was zealous for his God (*anth' hōn ezēlōsen tō theō autou*), and made atonement for the Israelites.'[39]

[37] See Gal. 1.13f., on which see, e.g., Hengel 1989, 180; on Phinehas as the archetypal model of 'zeal', 156–77; see my 'Paul, Arabia and Elijah (Galatians 1.17)' [reprinted as chapter 10 of the present volume]; and *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2.

[38] The MT has *vatē'ḥāsheb lō litsdāqāh*, 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness', corresponding to Gen. 15.6 *vayaḥthebehā lō tsdāqāh*, 'and he reckoned righteousness to him'; the LXX of the two passages is identical.

[39] Num. 25.10–13; LXX lacks 'my' with 'covenant'.

So too in Sirach, drawing back like the psalm from an explicit description of what Phinehas actually did but keeping the Pentateuchal reference to the covenant:

[221]

> Phinehas son of Eleazar ranks third in glory for being zealous in the fear of the Lord, and standing firm, when the people turned away, in the noble courage of his soul; and he made atonement for Israel. Therefore a covenant of friendship (*diathēkē eirēnēs*) was established with him, that he should be leader of the sanctuary and of his people, that he and his descendants should have the dignity of the priesthood for ever. Just as a covenant was established with David . . .[40]

How might one provide a brief and dense summary of God's gift of 'my covenant of peace', 'a covenant of perpetual priesthood' and 'a covenant of friendship'?[41] The psalmist seems to think that one can perform this task by writing 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness'. The psalmist has no reason to eliminate a reference to 'covenant' by substituting something quite different. 'Reckoned as righteousness' must therefore be understood as being broadly synonymous with 'established a covenant'.

The phrase cannot, in any case, be a reference to Phinehas's own personal 'justification' in some detached sense.[42] The 'reckoning' continues to all his succeeding generations, all his *sperma*. In the context both of Numbers and of the psalm, the point is clear: Phinehas's descendants are priests for ever. The phrase 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness' thus means, fairly straightforwardly, 'God made a covenant with him and with his family'.

Phinehas is linked with Abraham, interestingly, in the classic exhortation to 'zeal' issued by Mattathias of Modein. He himself had imitated Phinehas's example by killing a Jew offering pagan sacrifice, killing the presiding official at the same time and tearing down the altar. 'Thus', says the writer, 'he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu.'[43] This leads to the formation of the anti-Syrian revolutionary movement. When Mattathias is about to die, he summarizes his position, and exhorts his sons, by telling them the story of Israel, highlighting the parts considered particularly relevant.[44] This is what it will mean, he explains, to 'show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors'.[45] The story then starts with Abraham and continues, through Joseph, to Phinehas:

> Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the **[222]** covenant of everlasting priesthood (*en tō zēlōsai zēlon elaben diathēkēn hierōsynēs aiōnias*).[46]

[40] Sir. 45.23–25.

[41] On 'covenant of peace', cf. too Isa. 54.10; Ezek. 34.25; 37.26 – all, of course, in strongly eschatological contexts of covenant renewal and restoration after exile.

[42] Cf., e.g., Schreiner 2010, 192. 'Phinehas was counted righteous because he was righteous.'

[43] 1 Macc. 2.25f.

[44] See again the discussion of retellings of the Jewish story in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2 (see below n. 55).

[45] 1 Macc. 2.50: *zēlōsate tō nomō kai dote tas phychas hymōn hyper diathēkēs paterōn hēmōn.*

[46] 1 Macc. 2.52–54.

One cannot, of course, argue directly from the parallel between these three sentences to an exact identification of 'it was reckoned to him as righteousness', spoken concerning Abraham, and 'received the covenant of priesthood', spoken of Phinehas. For a start, Joseph's 'becoming lord of Egypt', the parallel in his case, is a different sort of thing entirely. But the correspondence is striking all the same, granted the way Psalm 106 uses the phrase 'reckoned as righteousness' to summarize what elsewhere is described as the establishing of a covenant.

As we just saw, a very similar point is made about Phinehas, in a very different list of heroes, in Sirach 45. The writer places the 'covenant of peace' established with Phinehas chronologically between the covenant made with Abraham and the covenant established with David, distinguishing the Davidic from the Aaronic covenant through Phinehas by commenting that the inheritance (*klēronomia*) of the Davidic covenant passes from the king to his son but that the *klēronomia* of Aaron passes to his descendants (*kai tō spermati autou*).[47]

Four conclusions follow from this parallel with Phinehas. (1) There is good reason to suppose that the phrase *kai elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn* was taken to mean 'and on this basis God established a covenant with him'. *Dikaiosynē* then means, more or less, 'the status of covenant membership'. (2) There is every reason to suppose that Saul of Tarsus was extremely familiar with the tradition of 'zeal' exemplified in 1 Maccabees 2; that he would have thought of Phinehas (and Elijah) as among his predecessors in this tradition; and that he would have known and cherished texts which pointed to this tradition of 'showing zeal for the law' (including quite possibly a reference to Abraham) as the appropriate way of supporting 'the covenant of the ancestors'. Romans 4 provides strong evidence that, when Paul rethought his beliefs in the light of the revelation of the risen Jesus on the Damascus Road, he retained the covenantal theology and the idea of God 'reckoning it as righteousness', but filled it with fresh content culled from the story of Abraham itself. (3) When Paul speaks of God making promises to Abraham *kai tō spermati autou* he is echoing, in an almost formulaic way, what was said about not only Abraham but also others with whom covenants were made. (4) It is therefore highly likely that when Paul quotes Genesis 15.6 ('he reckoned it to him as righteousness') he intends it to mean what it meant in its original context, that is, that 'on this basis, God established his covenant with Abraham, reckoning Abraham as his covenant partner', so that the promises of a **[223]** worldwide family and 'inheritance' would be valid *kai tō spermati autou*, 'to his seed, also'.

From these conclusions there follows another, perhaps the most important. Paul the apostle had decisively rejected the model of 'zeal' he had formerly embraced, namely, that of the violence exemplified in Phinehas, Elijah and Mattathias. But he had not rejected its basis, namely God's promise to Abraham and its further extension through David. He had, instead, radically reinterpreted it in the light of Jesus the Messiah and his death and resurrection.

[47] Sir. 45.25; as we saw above, Sirach extends the Abrahamic covenant to the inheritance of the whole world (44.19–21).

Now, instead of the 'ungodly' and all their ways being rejected, so that 'zeal' consisted in defending Israel against them, the Abrahamic promises were to be seen as the basis for their transformative inclusion within the covenant. This, Paul affirms, is what God had promised to Abraham as his 'reward': the 'many nations' that would be his extended *sperma*, and the whole *kosmos* that would now be the extended 'promised land'. That is what Abraham had believed, and that was the basis of the covenant that was then established.

This, then (to confirm what was said above), is what Paul means by the phrase 'the one who justifies the ungodly' in verse 5. Romans 4 as a whole is about the bringing of Gentiles into the one family, a theme repeated again and again from different angles. 'Justification' would seem, then, to be Paul's way of denoting either the *bringing into the family* of those outside or the *recognition or demarcation* of newcomers as being within that family. Either way, it has to do with covenant membership. The point is very close to the argument of Galatians, particularly 2.15–21 and 3.6–29. Indeed, when Paul speaks in Galatians 2.15 of 'Gentile sinners', *ex enthnōn hamartōloi*, it appears that *hamartōloi* there has a very similar meaning to *asebēs* in Romans 4.5.[48]

Romans 4 demands to be read, then, in terms of the fulfilment of the covenant of Genesis 15. This concerns Abraham's enormous promised world-wide family, that is, his extended *sperma*, and their extended *klēronomia*, 'inheritance', which is the whole world. The 'reward' spoken of in 4.4 refers to the 'reward' in Genesis 15.1, which is precisely this huge family, the whole *sperma*. The 'justifying of the ungodly', spoken of in v. 5 as the characteristic action of the God in whom Abraham believed, is not a reference to Abraham's own justification from within a supposed 'ungodly' state, but refers rather to 'the inclusion within the *sperma*' (in other words, the 'justification') of non-Jews. Since that was the main subject of 3.27–31, we should not be surprised.

In and through it all, Paul is referring to Abraham, not because some hypothetical opponents had raised, or might be going to raise, questions about the patriarch. He is doing so because the point he is making throughout Romans 1–4, and particularly now in 3.21—4.25, is that the God of Israel has been faithful to the covenant promises he made to Abraham, and that this covenant fidelity, fully unveiled in [**224**] the faithful death and resurrection of the Messiah, is the basis of the covenant status and membership (*dikaiosynē*) of all who believe the gospel, Gentile and Jew without distinction. Genesis 15 does not supply Paul with a detached 'proof from scripture'. He is strongly affirming, even while he is radically reinterpreting, the ancient Jewish tradition in which he already stood, of envisaging the story of God's people as going back to, and being characterized by, the origin of the covenant in God's promises to Abraham.

This makes excellent sense of another key paragraph in Romans 4, namely verses 9–12. Many exegetes have treated this in terms of 'circumcision' being a 'human work' by which one might seek to gain God's favour, but for Paul the question at stake is about the welcome now offered to Gentiles within Abraham's extended family. The question of 4.9, whether the blessing is

[48] See above, n. 36.

restricted to the circumcised or extended to the uncircumcised also, is in effect a repetition of the question with which the chapter opens (see below). Paul's initial answer, in verse 10, is to point out that Genesis 15, already quoted, comes chronologically before Genesis 17, the giving of circumcision, so that 'it was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness' before he was circumcised. Circumcision cannot therefore be a condition of this 'reckoning'. As we saw a moment ago, Paul explains that Abraham received circumcision as a sign or seal of the covenant that had already been made, of the 'covenant membership' (*dikaiosynē*) he already possessed on the basis of Genesis 15.

This, he now points out, has a double implication. Two conclusions are set in parallel, one about uncircumcised believers and the other about circumcised believers. The first one, relating to Gentile believers, itself divides into two: both parts are introduced by *eis to*, but without any *kai* to link the two clauses. This indicates, I suggest, that the second *eis to* clause is not an addition to the first, a separate topic as it were, but is rather an explanation of the first:

He received circumcision as a sign and seal of the *dikaiosynē tēs pisteōs* which was 'in uncircumcision':

(a) eis to einai auton patera pantōn tōn pisteuontōn en tē akrobustia
(so that he might be the father of all who believe in uncircumcision)
(b) eis to logisthēnai kai autois tēn dikaiosynēn
(so that they too might have righteousness reckoned to them)

This parallelism suggests that 'having righteousness reckoned to them' is another way of saying the same thing as 'that Abraham might be the father of all who believe in uncircumcision'. As with Phinehas's having 'righteousness reckoned to him', this is about the establishment of a covenant with the person concerned and with his *sperma* after him. This provides further support for the larger argument I have been making, that the theme of the chapter is the fatherhood of Abraham over an extended family, and that this is denoted, not merely supplemented, by **[225]** the language about the 'reckoning of righteousness', which always had to do with the covenant which God was making with the patriarch.

Paul's second conclusion follows, now concerning the circumcision (4.12): Abraham is the father of the circumcised as well – provided that they do not rely on their circumcision by itself, but follow the steps of the faith-in-uncircumcision of 'our father Abraham'. Abraham and his fatherhood remain the subject. Having argued that Abraham's family is thrown open to the 'ungodly', Paul now indicates an important restriction: imitating Abraham's faith is the necessary badge of membership. This reflects what Paul says elsewhere in Romans and Galatians.[49]

Reading the body of Romans 4 in this way offers us a fresh point of view on several other issues in the chapter, and in Romans 3—4 as a whole. But before we come to those I want to turn aside to the parallel material in Galatians 3 where, within a significantly different argument, Paul nevertheless offers substantially the same perspective on Abraham.

[49] Cf. Rom. 2.25–29; 9.6–13; 10.1–13; 11.23; Gal. 3.7–9; 4.21–31.

[beginning of previously unpublished section]

Abraham in Galatians 3

The basic difference between Romans and Galatians can be summed up in terms of word-statistics which, though potentially risky as a guide, are here quite indicative. Galatians has no occurrences of the *sōzein* root, only three of *hamartia* and one of *hamartōlos*. By contrast, in Romans, which is roughly three times as long as Galatians, *sōzein* is found eight times and *sōtēria* five; *hamartanō* occurs seven times, *hamartēma* once, and *hamartia* itself no fewer than forty-eight times. In the same way Romans has many occurrences of *zōē*, Galatians hardly any; Romans has several mentions of *thanatos*, but Galatians none. It does not take a statistical genius to suggest that Romans seems to be 'about' salvation from sin and death in a way that Galatians simply is not.[50] However, in Romans *nomos* is found seventy-four times against thirty-two in Galatians, which granted the proportional length is broadly comparable. So too *pisteuō* occurs twenty-one times in Romans as against only four in Galatians, but the corresponding noun *pistis* occurs forty times in Romans as against twenty-two in Galatians, giving Galatians the higher score proportionately. The two letters are clearly covering very similar ground from some points of view even if not from others. More significantly, perhaps, *theos* is found 155 times in Romans as against only thirty-one in Galatians, a much higher proportion for Romans; while *Christos* is found only sixty-eight times in Romans as against forty in the much shorter Galatians. Straws in the wind, perhaps, but maybe indicative of something. Romans seems to be about God, and about salvation from sin, in a way that may not be true, or not so true, of Galatians, while Galatians for some reason has a much higher concentration on *Christos*.

The polemical situation of Galatians makes this easily comprehensible. Romans announces its theme as God: God's righteousness, God's wrath, God's judgment, God's forbearance, God's truth, God's covenant, God's life-giving power, and not least God's love.[51] These hardly feature in Galatians. Galatians, however, comes straight to the point: the Galatians are turning to 'another gospel', which is leading them to submit to the 'agitators' who want them to be circumcised. The result is that, like Cephas in Antioch, the 'agitators' are working on the assumption that for full membership, and full table-fellowship, in the people of God (which means, of course, of Israel's God) one must be circumcised. Without that, gentile believers in Messiah Jesus and Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus must eat at separate tables. That was

[50] This, to my mind, means that the essay of Wischmeyer 2010 moves in the wrong direction throughout (apart from being unhelpfully dependent on the flawed analysis of Betz 1979). Cf., e.g., 135, 160, where the theme of the text is said to be, 'Wie bzw. wodurch sind die Galater in den Zustand des Heils oder Lebens gekommen?' This is not, of course, to deny that Paul *presupposes* the death of Jesus as the means of rescuing people from their sins, as in Gal. 1.4 etc.; as I said, salvation from sin and membership in the single family of God are inextricably linked for Paul in a way that modern Western thought has done its best to uncouple.

[51] Rom. 1.16–18; 3.1–9, 21–26; 4.17; 5.8; 8.31–39; 9.6—10.4; cf. 15.5f., 9–13.

the problem in Antioch to which Galatians 2.15–21 provides Paul's rhetorically forceful response.[52]

This is where Abraham comes in. Paul could, of course, have responded to the 'agitators' by denying that belonging to the family of Abraham had any relevance at all. The present so-called 'apocalyptic' reading of Galatians, made popular by the thorough commentaries of Martyn and de Boer, argue a line which logically would take Paul to that point.[53] If that were so, the only reason for Paul to introduce Abraham into his argument would be if the 'agitators' had made such a strong case concerning the patriarch that Paul felt he had to answer it. But if that had been so – if, for instance, they had been stressing Genesis 17 and its command to circumcise – then Paul could have answered as he does in Romans 4.9–12. Abraham was 'reckoned righteous' when uncircumcised; why then could they not be as well? I think Paul is doing something quite different in Galatians 3. He is offering a *retelling of the Israel-story*, in line with a good many such retellings from both the Bible and second-Temple Jewish literature (and for that matter early Christian writings, too).[54] In this retelling he (a) strongly affirms the Abraham-story and its full covenantal meaning and (b) places the Mosaic law *within* the continuing Abraham-story and demonstrates that it always had – in the purposes of Abraham's God! – an essentially *temporary* role, an essentially *negative* role, a necessarily *divisive* role, and a role *which has now ceased to function because of the arrival of the Messiah*. The Torah was not an evil force, fighting against the purposes of God, still less was its gift through the angels (3.19) a sign that it came from a dark or dangerous source. But, god-given though it was, it was always intended to be temporary (3.23–25); its purpose within the strange plan of God was always negative (3.22a); it necessarily kept Jew and gentile apart, thus making it impossible for the 'single seed' to be formed (3.19–20); and the agitators, by insisting on its continuing validity now that the Messiah had come, are taking the Galatians back to the 'present evil age' from which the death of Jesus has rescued them (1.4).[55]

[52] For the 'messiahship' of Jesus in general, and in Galatians in particular, see 'Messiahship in Galatians?' [reprinted as chapter 31 of the present volume].

[53] Martyn 1997a; de Boer 2011.

[54] For a full treatment of these retellings and their varied shape and relevance see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2. I have in mind, for instance, biblical retellings, such as those in Deuteronomy, both the 'wandering Aramean' speech and the great prophetic covenant narrative in chs. 27—30; the historical Psalms, esp. 105 and 106, and the Davidic Psalms (2, 72, 89) which indicate the transfer of the Abrahamic promises to the royal house; the prophetic narratives which look back to Abraham from the time of exile and on to redemption; the narrative prayers of Ezra 9, Neh. 9, and Dan. 9, linking with Dan. 2 and 7 (we know from Josephus that these were being read in the first century in terms of a world ruler who would arise from Judaea; and indeed Josephus himself is a prime example of both large- and small-scale retellings of Israel's story). In the second-Temple period, see the list of heroes in Ben-Sirach; the story of revolutionary zeal in 1 Macc. 2; the 'animal apocalypse' in *1 Enoch*; the historical visions of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*; some of the Qumran documents, e.g. CD; *Jubilees*, Pseudo-Philo and many others. The mention of Abraham's obeying Torah before it had been given (*m. Kid.* 4.14) stands out both by its non-historical order and its merely exemplary, non-narratival, function. It is ironic that it is this latter way of reading Abraham that has become the model for so much Protestant exegesis of Rom. 4. A recent collection of essays on retellings of the Jewish story is in Calduch-Benages and Liesen 2006.

[55] It is all too easy to slide from recognizing all the above into the idea that the law is a bad thing to be 'trashed': so, e.g., de Boer 2011, 268.

About these things, as the letter to the Hebrews says wearily, we cannot now speak in detail – except to say one thing. Discussion has continued over the question of whether Galatians exhibits something that could be called 'anti-Judaism'.[56] But the point of an *eschatological* reading of the text is precisely that Paul is *not* saying there was 'something wrong' with something called 'Judaism'. Paul is affirming God's original plan, including the strange, dark paths by which it has been worked out and the sudden, world-changing revelation of the gospel which has brought it to its appointed goal, 'when the time had fully come' (4.4). Paul, *like a great many other second-Temple Jews*, believed in the arrival of God's eschatological moment as the coming great turn-around, the time when everything would be different. Some second-Temple Jews associated that coming moment with a Messiah. Paul believed that it had arrived with the Messiah's death and resurrection. This is precisely and strictly a *Jewish* perception of the world. The real anti-Judaism would be for Paul to declare that God had now done something which made not only Moses but also Abraham an irrelevant distraction.

And that he never does. My basic case, over against Martyn and others, is that they have (a) rightly seen that Paul is sharply critical of any attempt to impose the Jewish Torah on gentile converts, but have (b) wrongly deduced from this that Paul must also be opposed to the idea of a continuing narrative, stretching back to Abraham, within which he and his converts would find themselves now at the leading edge. Indeed, it sometimes appears that Martyn, in line with his mentor Käsemann, was determined to see all things Jewish, including the idea of that single great narrative going back to Abraham, as the classic case of *homo religiosus*; and that this was the special target of Paul's polemic.[57] If that were so, there would indeed be no positive place for Abraham in the actual argument of Galatians.

But in fact Paul does offer a positive place for the patriarch, as we can see already from the end of chapter 3: if you are Christ's, *you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise*. There is nothing concessive about this, no sense of 'if you really *must* think in terms of joining Abraham's family, well, you actually have that membership already by being in Christ, but in fact you shouldn't be worrying about such things'. As in 4.21–31 and its sequel in 5.1–12, Paul is clear not only that the Galatian Christians are already full members of Abraham's family but that any who now want to force them to be circumcised, or any who give in to that pressure, will be cutting themselves off both from the Messiah himself and from Abraham. Being in Abraham's family, in other words, *matters*; and, with that, it matters that one learns what it means to be at the leading edge of the single great narrative that, despite

[56] E.g. Bachmann 2008 (1999). Contributions from widely differing angles include, e.g., Nanos 2002.

[57] See, as is well known, Käsemann 1969b, ch. 3 (the debate with Stendahl) and ch. 4 (on the faith of Abraham). Käsemann's very understandable concerns are indicated in, e.g., his warning against 'an immanent evolutionary process whose meaning can be grasped on earth, or which we can control and calculate' (63) and against 'a historical development stamped by ecclesiastical tradition', where 'Christ himself becomes the cypher for a movement which he started'. Just because we must avoid the oncoming traffic of an evolutionary naturalism, however, it is unwise to drive into the ditch of a soteriology which, even if it tries to claim the title 'apocalyptic', has been radically dehistoricized and deJudaized.

the massive and world-shaking convulsion that has taken place through the Messiah's death and resurrection, is still continuing. This idea of a single great narrative still continuing is, of course, felt to be problematic by some readers of my own work, since they have wrongly heard in my phrase 'the climax of the covenant' the unwelcome sound of an immanent development, a smooth upward path from early beginnings to ultimate fulfilment; the sort of thing Käsemann was rightly worried about. (Some have associated such an idea with Cullmann, though Cullmann himself was at pains to deny this implication.) This pulls the discussion back into the familiar either/or associated with Karl Barth (with his autobiography, not merely with his theology!): *either* the steady development of a bourgeois, liberal religion, *or* the radical inbreaking of the fresh word of God, which as in the Johannine prologue is 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. For this (so it is thought) there can be no 'back story'. All such 'back stories' are so much 'religion', so much 'human preparation for grace', to be swept away in the glorious apocalypse of the gospel.[58]

This is not the time or place to enter into the full debate that these ideas require. They have to do, in any case, with twentieth-century formulations, not (I believe) with anything germane to Paul.[59] What we must do here is to look again at Galatians 3 and notice how the exegesis of the passage actually works. I want to propose, as I did with Romans 4, that Paul is engaging throughout with the whole of Genesis 15.

I refer to the summary of that chapter which I offered above. Genesis 15 is all about God making the covenant with Abraham, with the main themes of that covenant being the promised inheritance (*klēronomia*) and the promised seed (*sperma*) who will inherit that promise. It is beyond all question that *sperma* and *klēronomia* are major themes in Galatians 3, highlighted in verses 16–20 and then, decisively, in the QED of 3.29. When, as part of Paul's argument, he refers in verse 15 to the *diathēkē* which God made with Abraham, which cannot be set aside by something which has come 430 years later (another reference to Genesis 15, though the difference between 430 here and 400 in Genesis is curious), I submit that we have no good reason to doubt that the *diathēkē* of which he speaks is the covenant of Genesis 15. True, *diathēkē* obviously carries the metaphorical meaning of 'will'; but it is a desperate expedient, granted the omnipresence of Genesis 15 in the chapter and the chronological marker, again echoing Genesis 15, between this *diathēkē* and the Torah (3.17), to suggest that the primary or even the only meaning is an illustration about the way a human 'will' functions. It is far and away more likely (as with 'reward' and 'earning' in Romans 4!) that the idea of the 'covenant' has suggested to Paul this momentary metaphorical development. It is the covenant that states what Paul wants to retrieve, that through Abraham

[58] Of course, the Johannine gospel regularly refers to its own 'back story' in which Abraham, and even Moses, are given positive roles to play; but that is beyond our purpose here.

[59] There is no space here to justify this sweeping assertion, but I am convinced that to read Paul in the light of his own world is far more helpful than to read him (say) in the light of debates between Bultmann and Käsemann.

God is going to bless all the nations.[60] That, after all, is the promise which has been reaffirmed in Galatians 3.14: now, because of the death of the Messiah, the Abrahamic promise can flow through to the world after all.[61]

We should then interpret Galatians 3.15–22 in parallel to 3.6–14: God makes promises to Abraham, the law gets in the way, but God's initial purpose will be realized. And the point is that the terms of the covenant do not specify a plurality of families, but a single family, *hos estin Christos* (3.16).

It is of course that final phrase, used by generations of scholars as a parade example of Paul's apparently strange ways of reading scripture, which has caused all the difficulty both in relation to verse 16 and in relation to Paul's entire sequence of thought.[62] Paul's point throughout is that the divine promise to Abraham envisaged a single family, not a plurality of families. Exegetes have been thrown off course by the phrase *hos estin Christos*, assuming that Paul is here using sleight of hand to make *sperma* refer to an individual when he obviously knows (as in 3.29) that the word is collective. The proper course is to start at the other end: to see that *Christos*, too, is here collective, not merely 'individual'.[63] The law was added for a period of time, to fulfil a particular and necessary function in the divine purposes, but eventually 'the seed', *the single family purposed by the one God*, would arrive.[64] Anything, meanwhile, that might create a plurality of families, as the Jewish law obviously did in Antioch and is now threatening to do in Galatia, must (if made absolute and permanent) be opposed to the promises God made to Abraham. Thus, in 3.19–20, there is no need to plunge into the bottomless pit of speculations about wicked angels giving the law, on the one hand, and about various possible mediators, on the other.[65] The law was given (by angels) through the hand of a mediator, Moses. He, however, is not the mediator of

[60] So rightly, e.g., de Boer 2011, 218f. (against, e.g., Betz 1979, 154–6, who offers a long discussion of *diathēkē* here without even hinting that Paul might be thinking of the covenant with Abraham). Our distinction between 'will' and 'covenant' is a modern one which would not loom so large for Paul; in some legal language to this day the phrase 'last will and testament' is still used, and 'testament' is of course a synonym for 'covenant'. Cf. too Heb. 9.15–22, where the 'covenant' is obviously the main theme and the idea of a 'will' is introduced as a subordinate metaphor (9.16). Martyn 1997a, 338 states that Paul uses *diathēkē* in this passage 'to refer to nothing other than a person's last will', since he supposes (despite Paul's making of Gen. 15 thematic throughout the chapter) that in the Galatians situation 'covenant' would be taken to refer to the Sinai covenant (341, 343).

[61] On 3.10–14 see *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 7.

[62] Dunn 1993a, 183f. is typical of many: the argument is 'artificial' and 'thoroughly rabbinical'. Betz 1979, 157 says that Paul is 'paying no attention to the content of the promises', the kind of charge that tends to rebound onto the head of the accuser.

[63] Against almost all exegetes: e.g. Tobin 1995, 440f. Das 2001, 73 n. 9, declares that this reading is forced, and that we should not bring in ideas from other texts, even those later in the same chapter, to explain the verse (cited with approval by Schreiner 2010, 230). Schreiner himself answers this point when he says, repeatedly, that to understand one part of Gal. 3 we must understand the whole (210, 233; at 259 he rightly says that the question of who are Abraham's true offspring has been the main point of the chapter). In any case, the idea of incorporative Messiahship is not introduced here for the first time; cp. Gal. 2.15–21, though this raises other complications beyond what we can discuss here.

[64] The notion of the singularity, the unity, of the people of God is itself a major theme of the chapter, as indicated in the decisive 3.28. It is noticeable that Schreiner 2010 manages to avoid this point whenever it comes up (e.g. 243, 253, 258f.).

[65] Esler 1998, 198–200 rightly rules out the idea that the angelic gift was a bad thing, but remains with speculative theories about mediators. Martyn 1997a, 364–70 exemplifies what seems to me exactly the wrong approach, leading – as he himself admits – to something close to Marcionism.

the single family, the single *sperma* which God promised to Abraham. He cannot be. Torah, left to itself, will produce a plurality of 'families', as they found at Antioch and are finding in Galatia. But 'God is one', and therefore, as in Romans 3.29–30, God desires and will produce a single family for Abraham composed of both Jews and gentiles, with the only badge of membership being *pistis*. God, in other words, will deal with the blockage between the Abrahamic promises and their fulfilment. The result is that now, as in 3.22, the promise is given *to believers* on the basis of the *pistis Iēsou Christou*.[66]

In and through all this, Paul's retelling of the Abraham story in Galatians 3 is resoundingly positive.

(a) 3.6: Abraham believed God; very well (3.7), those of faith are Abraham's children. (This, obviously, makes a 'circle' with 3.29.)
(b) 3.8: scripture promised that God would bless all nations in Abraham; very well (3.9), those of faith (we are left to understand that this includes people of every nation) are blessed with faithful Abraham.
(c) The complex argument of 3.10–14 intrudes on this happy scene, as Torah does in the narrative as a whole.[67] But the conclusion, in verse 14, makes it clear: Paul is affirming the Abrahamic promises, and explaining that they continue, and are being fulfilled, in the creation of a multi-ethnic family characterized by *pistis*.
(d) This continues with the promises and the *klēronomia* in 3.16–22, as we have just seen, and again the point is unfailingly positive. Paul is affirming the entire Abrahamic package as he sees it.
(e) The final dense paragraph (3.23–29) might look as though it had left Abraham behind, but when it gets to the end we discover what has been true all along: if you belong to the Messiah, you are Abraham's *sperma* (the single 'seed', not a plurality of families divided by the regulations of Torah), and, in accordance with the promise, you are *klēronomoi*. QED.

It is hard to see, actually, how Paul could have made his affirmation of Abraham and the covenant of Genesis 15 any more positive.

Have we therefore created, after all, a smooth evolutionary or immanent *Heilsgeschichte*, moving steadily from glory to glory, with no need for a radical break, an 'apocalypse', no need for God to say 'No' to something – perhaps, to everything! – before he can then say 'Yes'? By no means. And here is a key point: *hardly any of the ancient Jewish stories I referred to earlier told the narrative of Abraham and his family in that way, either*. The two obvious exceptions might be Psalm 105 and the list of heroes in Ben-Sirach.[68] Apart from them, almost all the retellings of Israel's story, starting with Deuteronomy and working

[66] Full details on all this in *Climax of the Covenant*, ch. 8. This renders straightforwardly obsolete the long tradition of discussion represented by, e.g., Dunn 1993a, 191–3.

[67] Cf. Rom. 5.20: *nomos de pareisēlthen hina pleonasē to paraptōma*.

[68] One might also cite Wis. 10—12 as an apparent exception. However, the 'hero' of the story there is 'Wisdom' herself, and though the key human players – Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and so on – appear in a good light, the passage emphasizes the constant rebellion of Israel as a whole (e.g. 11.15) and the necessity of God's chastising of them (12.21f.).

through Psalm 106, Daniel 9 and all the way to *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, are just as much a *Verdammungsgeschichte* as a *Heilsgeschichte*, often indeed ending in what seems to be a blind alley, much like Psalm 89: we trusted these promises, but now it's all gone horribly wrong! Among the early Christian retellings of the same story, always of course now leading the eye up to Jesus as Messiah, the speech of Stephen in Acts is likewise definitely a *Verdammungsgeschichte*, contrasting with the happier tale of Paul's speech in Acts 13 (though there the darker side comes in the challenge to the local synagogue community, for whom this way of telling the story is deeply unwelcome).[69] Even the list of heroes in Hebrews 11 and 12, which in some ways reminds us of Ben-Sirach, is a list of people who were out of sorts with their world, whose witness was by wandering and suffering rather than taking a smooth path to fulfilment.

Paul, I suggest, presupposes a retelling of the Jewish story which is – however paradoxical this sounds! – directly in line with the dark and twisted Jewish narrative, in which the story was anything but a smooth progression but rather lurched from disaster to disaster until the final rescue. For Paul, even more paradoxically, the Torah itself has become the greatest problem to be overcome. Its 'curse' has got in the way of the 'blessing' (3.10–12).[70] The late-arrived Torah has appeared to thwart the promise of the single *sperma* (3.17–22). The *paidagōgos* kept us under lock and key (3.23–24; compare 4.1–3). Paul's radical innovation has been to recognize the god-given Torah itself as the intended and necessary means of this dark side of the story. The divinely appointed negative role of Torah has become the Pauline equivalent of the 'dark waters' of *2 Baruch*, the extended exile of Daniel 9, and indeed, more explicitly, the covenantal curse of Deuteronomy. And, exactly as in those many biblical and Jewish retellings of the story, Paul's point is that the God of Abraham will accomplish, and for Paul has now accomplished, the dramatic new 'apocalyptic' rescue-operation that was needed. That, for Paul, is the achievement of the *Christos*, the Messiah.

There is one other puzzle which faces us when we suggest that in Galatians 3 Paul has offered a thoroughly positive view of Abraham and of the covenant God made with him. Genesis 15 is not only about the *sperma* and the covenant; it is about the *klēronomia*, the inheritance – which means the land, the land between the Red Sea and the Euphrates, inhabited in Abraham's day by the Kenites, the Kenizzites and the rest.[71] This alerts us to one of the biggest shifts in perspective anywhere in the New Testament, though not as frequently remarked on as the other ones (circumcision, sabbath, food laws): what has happened to the promises regarding the land?[72]

Much Christian tradition has, of course, cheerfully spiritualized these promises.[73] The 'land' is relocated in 'heaven', to which one gains access by

[69] Ac. 13.16–41, with the warning note at v. 41 and the subsequent controversy at vv. 44–52.

[70] This can scarcely count as a demonstration that Torah was evil, or not given by God, or shown up as false, since the 'blessing' which then results is also that promised in Torah; and in any case Paul assigns a positive motive even to the 'negative' side of Torah's work in 3.22 (cf. also Rom. 7.7–25, on which see *Romans*, ad loc.).

[71] Gen. 15.18–21.

[72] See W. D. Davies 1974.

[73] As even W. D. Davies does (1974, 161–220); cf. Brueggemann 1977, 177–83.

death itself, seen as a new Exodus leading across the River Jordan to the heavenly 'promised land'. An 'inaugurated' version of this declares that for Paul the Spirit has taken the place of the land.[74] But this tradition, though venerable, is unknown to the early Christians.

If one were to resist such a move, it could I suppose be suggested that when Paul speaks so emphatically about the *klēronomia* now being given to all those who are *en Christō* (the complete *sperma tou Abraam*, those who by the spirit are now themselves 'sons of God' [3.29; 4.7]), he might actually mean that all such people, gentiles as well as Jews, were now to inherit the ancient promised land in the Middle East, so that the incoming gentiles would be like the returning lost tribes.[75] But though later on Paul does speak of bringing the offerings of the gentiles to Jerusalem as a kind of prophetic sign, this is hardly the *klēronomia* he was talking about in Galatians 3 and 4. He does not envisage even a symbolic pilgrimage of gentiles to Zion.[76] Nor is there any sense in which that financial contribution is taken as a sign of implicit ownership or inheritance of the land.

The clue, rather, is found once more in the development of Galatians 3 and 4 in Romans 4 and 8, which we noted briefly above. There it is clear: the whole world is now God's holy land, and it was that whole *kosmos* that was promised to Abraham in the first place, as other Jewish writers before Paul had suggested more than once.[77] But the theme of a worldwide *klēronomia* is not simply a hypothetical extension of the Abrahamic promise. It is the specific further promise, a Davidic development of Abraham if you like, that we find in Psalm 2, one of the most obvious and central messianic passages in Israel's scriptures. 'Ask of me', says God to the king whom he has just addressed as 'my son', and 'I will give you the nations as your inheritance', *dōsō soi ethnē tēn klēronomian sou*.[78] This is what Paul is invoking in Romans 8.17–25, in an enlarged version of the argument of Galatians 4.1–7. The larger 'inheritance' is precisely the *messianic* inheritance. Psalm 2 is the lever which opens up the localized Abrahamic promise so that it now contains the whole world. In other words, in relation to Galatians 3 and 4, the Abrahamic promise, that in him God would bless all the nations (3.8), is fulfilled at last in the *Christos*, the incorporative single *sperma*, because here *Christos* really does mean Messiah, the son of God (4.4, picking up Psalm 2.7), the one for whom, in the subsequent promise, the Abrahamic *klēronomia* was widened to include the whole world.

This consideration of the move from land to world leads us back at last to Romans 4, where we have some important unfinished business. There are two exegetical spin-offs from our earlier discussion which we must briefly consider, and then two major problems which we must address.

[74] De Boer 2011, 224.

[75] For an exploration of similar themes, in Paul's use of 'returning exile' passages to refer to gentiles, see Starling 2011.

[76] Might this, though, have been in the minds of some of his accusers in Ac. 21.28f.?

[77] Rom. 4.13; see above.

[78] Ps. 2.8; cp., e.g., Pss. 105.44; 111.6; could these perhaps be a kind of transition, seeing the original promised land as 'the inheritance of the nations'? The Abrahamic promise of a land from 'the sea' to 'the river' is picked up in the messianic promises of, e.g., Ps. 72.8 (which also goes on to speak of a worldwide rule); 89.25.

[end of previously unpublished section]

Romans 4.1: The Question which Structures the Chapter

First, the question which structures the chapter and the answer which it evokes. It has long been recognized that Romans 4.1 is a puzzle, mainly because of the verb *heurēkenai*, 'to have found'. Commentators and translators have struggled to make sense of this with the normal punctuation of the verse, as apparently did early copyists, some of whom missed out *heurēkenai* altogether, making 'Abraham' somewhat awkwardly the object of *eroumen*, brought out in English by 'what then are we to say about Abraham'.[79] Reckoning this as a smoothing out of an obvious difficulty and hence almost certainly secondary, the verse as normally understood has to mean something like NRSV's 'What then are we to say *was gained by* Abraham?' However, *found* and *gained* are not quite the same thing, and the difficulty of giving *heurēkenai* anything like its proper (and regularly Pauline) sense ought to push us to look for alternative answers.[80]

This puzzle, I suggest, is exactly cognate with the puzzle of verses 16 and 17. Many translators, all the way back to the King James Version, have experimented with brackets around part or all of 16b and 17.[81] All these suggestions cause as **[226]** many problems as they appear to solve, because the quote about Abraham being the father of many nations comes up again in the next verse, so the first time it occurs can hardly be an aside, as that bracketing suggests. But, much more important, we have seen good reason to regard the idea of Abraham as 'the father of us all' as the very heart of the chapter, and of Paul's exposition of Genesis 15. It is not peripheral to the whole line of thought, as the introduction of a parenthesis would suggest, but is absolutely central.[82] The promise Abraham believed was the promise about God giving him this worldwide family, about (in other words) him becoming the father of many nations. This cannot be shoved aside into a bracket without doing violence to the whole.

To recognize that this theme of Abraham's universal fatherhood is the theme of the whole chapter enables us to embrace a quite different reading of verse

[79] E.g. RSV; NRSV mg.; NEB; REB. This omission was endorsed by, e.g., Lightfoot and Sanday and Headlam; I am grateful to Peter Rodgers for comments on this, though I disagree with him in supposing that they were correct. See discussion in Metzger 1971, 450; Moo 1996, 257f.; Jewett 2007, 304.

[80] For the Pauline sense of 'find' as in 'find to be the case', cf., e.g., Rom. 7.21 with *Romans*, ad loc. A regular alternative has been the suggestion that 'what did Abraham find' might imply that Abraham 'found grace': so, e.g., Dunn 1988a, 198; Byrne 1996, 145. Moo 1996, 259 considers the latter but prefers the former.

[81] KJV/RV/NJB put brackets round 17a ('As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations'), followed by RV and NJB. RSV has dashes, creating a parenthesis, around the whole key segment from the middle of 16 to the middle of 17: 'That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants – not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations" – in the presence of the God in whom he believed . . .' NRSV has compromised between these, opening a bracket at 'for he is the father of us all' and closing it where RSV has the second dash. Among commentators Cranfield 1975a, 243 regards 17a as parenthetical. See further Hays 2005, 76f.

[82] Witherington 2004, 127 says that vv. 16–18 are grammatically difficult though Paul's gist is reasonably clear, but it does not seem to me that he has actually grasped the gist in question.

1. Richard Hays argued for the basic point nearly thirty years ago, and I have since then modified his proposal, with (I am glad to say) Hays's approval.[83]

Hays's proposal began with an observation so obvious that one might wonder why nobody had said it in the recent past. Normally when Paul says 'What then shall we say?', *ti oun eroumen*, there is an implicit question mark (there are, of course, no punctuation marks in the early MSS), followed by a proposal of something that one might go on to say at this point but which Paul will in fact deny. Examples abound, not least in Romans 6.1: 'What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?'; 7.7: 'What then shall we say? That the law is sin?'[84] If we read Romans 4.1 in this way, it opens the possibility of reading *heurēkenai* with the subject not as 'Abraham' but as 'we' or 'us', implied from the first person plural of *eroumen* and of the possessive *hēmōn* four words later. Hays therefore translated, 'What then shall we say? Have we Jews considered Abraham to be our forefather only according to the flesh?' expecting the answer 'no'; and he read the chapter accordingly. Paul, from this angle, is wanting to [**227**] stress that 'we Jews' have all along regarded Abraham as much more than simply 'our fleshly forefather'.[85]

But this, as Hays himself has now admitted, is far less likely, both as a translation of the verse and as an introduction to what the chapter actually says, than the alternative which I proposed in my commentary and now have in my translation: 'What shall we say, then? Have we found Abraham to be our ancestor in a human, fleshly sense?'[86] Or, in the recent Common English Bible, for which Hays provided the first draft of Romans: 'So what are we going to say? Are we going to find that Abraham is our ancestor on the basis of genealogy?' We might also compare the Italian translation *La Bibbia*, which, rendered into English, has 'What then shall we say? That we have found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?'[87]

This proposal brings Romans 4.1 closely into line with the overall question which Paul is addressing in Galatians. If someone comes to put their faith in Jesus the Messiah, ought they to regard Abraham as their father in the normal, fleshly sense, meaning that if the person concerned was a (male) Gentile they ought at once to get circumcised, to become a full proselyte and so to become a member of the family *kata sarka*?[88] This question

[83] The original article: Hays 1985, now repr. as Hays 2005, 61–84; acceptance of my modification: 73 n. 38.

[84] Cf. too 3.5: 'What shall we say? Is God unjust?' and 3.9: 'What then? Are we at an advantage?' Full list and discussion: Hays 2005, 64–6.

[85] Stowers 1994, 234, 242 suggested a modification: 'What then will we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather by his own human efforts [that is, according to the flesh]?' Stowers was still operating with a reformational view of 'works' etc., which is I think outflanked by the fresh reading I am offering. Wilckens 1978, 261 sees the possibility of repunctuation, but assumes that this would mean that Paul would be speaking of Abraham 'finding' his own justification, which he naturally regards as peculiar.

[86] *Romans*, 489f.; *The New Testament for Everyone* (= *The Kingdom New Testament* [USA]), ad loc.

[87] *La Bibbia: edizione paoline*, 1987, as cited in Bryan 2000, 119.

[88] Gathercole 2002, 234 suggests that I arrive at all this through an overharmonization with Galatians, which is absurd; my argument is based solely on the coherence of Rom. 4. The fact that Galatians corresponds to Romans in all sorts of particulars is well known; that it does so in yet another way ought not to be seen as a weakness in a theory.

can equally be put the other way round: can Gentiles be considered to be members of Abraham's family when he is obviously not their physical forefather?[89]

Most commentators have either ignored this proposal or simply pushed it aside.[90] But the reasons they give for rejecting it show, time and again, that they **[228]** have not in fact understood the way in which the proposal belonged closely with a fresh and highly plausible reading of the whole chapter.[91]

There are, for instance, the objections concerning grammar and wording.[92] Can the question that results (*heurēkenai Abraam ton propatora hēmon kata sarka*) really stand without expressing a subject (*hēmas*, presumably) for the infinitive?[93] I see no problem here: we already have 'we' understood from the opening *ti oun eroumen*, and understood again through the *hēmon* in the clause itself. For Paul to repeat *hēmas*, though pedantically correct, would seem otiose, and quite unlike his regular style, not least in the quick-fire argument of the central chapters of Romans. We may compare 4.16 (*dia touto ek pisteōs, hina kata charin, eis to einai bebaian tēn epangelian panti tō spermati*): no subject, no verb, but the sense is clear. Or, indeed, 5.12–21, where Paul almost rivals Aristotle in a kind of telegraphic style. Another problem has been raised in connection with the definite article before *propatora*: if this noun is the predicate ('have we found Abraham *to be our forefather*') it should not (so it is claimed) have the article.[94] Zahn already responded to this by pointing out that the assertion would not be that Abraham might be 'a' forefather, but that he was *the* forefather. This is not to be swept aside, since it corresponds exactly with the category outlined in Blass–Debrunner: despite the general rule that predicate nouns are anarthrous, 'the article is inserted if the predicate noun is presented as something well known or as that which alone merits the designation (the only thing to be considered)'.[95] This is what we find here, especially I think in the light of the following *hēmon*. It is possible, in any case, that there may be here, as often in Paul, an ellipsis: 'Have we found Abraham, our forefather, [to be our

[89] Cranford 1995, 75 n. 17 tries to play off these two ways of posing the question, favouring the latter; but it seems to me that he has misread my statement of the former ('Romans and the Theology of Paul' [reprinted as chapter 7 of the present volume]).

[90] Exceptions include Stowers 1994, 242f.; Neubrand 1997, 184; Grieb 2002, 46f.; Keck 2005, 120. None of these follows this through in the way that I am doing, or discusses the residual problems with Hays's original view to which my modification provides a solution. Stowers rejects Hays's interpretation in terms of Abraham's family (on the familiar, but now unwarranted, grounds that this theme is only introduced in v. 9), and makes 4.1 instead the voice of a Jewish interlocutor whose agenda is the attempt to reform gentiles by teaching them 'good works'. Among Hays's predecessors we note Zahn 1910, 215; and (for the punctuation, though not the interpretation) e.g. Luz 1968, 174, and John Wesley (Hays 2005, 65f.).

[91] E.g. Gathercole 2002, 234f. Jewett's response to Hays (Jewett 2007, 307f.) points out the very weaknesses in Hays's view which my modification has removed.

[92] See, e.g., Witherington 2004, 119f. n. 12.

[93] So Schreiner 1998, 213, following Dunn 1988a, 199; Tobin 1995, 443 n. 14.

[94] Engberg-Pedersen 2000, 363f. n. 3.

[95] BDF para. 273. Engberg-Pedersen challenges this not on grammatical grounds but in terms of the sense: 'How', he writes, 'could Christ-believers have "found" Abraham to *be* their *one and only* forefather according to the flesh?' Quite easily, is the answer: that was what the 'agitators' in Galatia were urging the converts to do.

forefather] according to the flesh?' Avoiding the repetition of 'forefather' would be natural, and would then leave the article unchallenged.[96]

[**229**] Other relevant objections have been raised in relation to *kata sarka* if the question were to be read the way Hays has suggested. Watson, for instance, has drawn attention to the fact that the phrase does not occur again in the chapter, and Davies follows Käsemann in claiming that the phrase, used in the way Hays requires, would need to carry a negative connotation which it has not had so far in Romans.[97] Wider reflection suggests answers to both points: in both Romans and Galatians Paul regularly links 'flesh' with 'works' and indeed with 'circumcision'.[98] The category of a family *kata sarka* is precisely what Paul is discussing and setting aside in 4.13–17, though there he refers to them as *hoi ek nomou*. Davies and Käsemann are wrong to suggest that *sarx* here would need to carry a negative connotation; Paul is not saying there was anything bad or wrong with Abraham's 'fleshly' identity and family, just that the promise which God made, and which Abraham believed, was always about a larger unit.

A further objection has been raised: if Paul were following his normal pattern of beginning with *ti oun eroumen* followed by a possible inference that might be drawn, but which he is going to reject, we might have expected him to follow up with *mē genoito*.[99] But this is unnecessary. Not only does Paul not always make that move in the other similar instances; in 3.9, for instance, he rejects the implication with *ou pantōs*. But in this case things are slightly more complicated. He does indeed reject the implication at the end of verse 2: *all' ou pros theon*, 'not in God's presence', looking forward to 'in the presence of the God in whom he believed' in verse 17. But before offering that functional equivalent of *mē genoito* he first thinks it important to explain the force of the question he has raised. If it were to be the case that by finding oneself justified through the death of the Messiah, and brought thereby into the single family in whom the principle of the Shema is upheld, so that Torah itself is not abolished but established and God's covenant faithfulness itself at last unveiled – if, in other words, we note the positive things that are said about the Jewish tradition, and not merely the negative ones, in 3.21–31 – then does this mean that we have in fact discovered Abraham to be 'our forefather' in the sense of the one through whom a people of God *kata sarka* has been established, which would then entail Gentile believers needing to be circumcised and to keep the whole Mosaic law?

[**230**] That, I suggest, is how the question of verse 1 is to be understood, and verse 2 then amplifies it as follows. Paul has already, in 2.17–24, made it clear that the 'boast' of Israel – his own 'boast' from his former life as a zealous Pharisee – is ruled out. That boast, however, was not a matter of mere moral

[96] Cp. Gal. 3.20, where *ho de mesitēs henos ouk estin* can be read as 'the mediator, however, is not mediator of "the one"', avoiding repetition of *mesitēs* which is already in any case repeated from v. 19. See *Climax of the Covenant*, 169.

[97] Watson 2007, 261 n. 8; G. N. Davies 1990, 148.

[98] E.g. Rom. 2.25–29; Gal. 4.21–31. This is what enables Stowers 1994, 234, 242 to read *kata sarka* as a straightforward synonym for *ex ergōn*; though I disagree with Stowers's interpretation I agree that there is a fluidity of thought between these various concepts, which then means that *kata sarka* in 4.1 does indeed relate to *ex ergōn* in 4.2 and the discussion of circumcision in 4.9–12.

[99] So Schreiner 1998, 213, following G. N. Davies 1990, 148.

superiority ('people like me are exempt from the charges you bring against the pagans'), but a matter of *Israel's vocation*, the divine call of Israel to be 'a light to the nations': 'a guide to the blind, a light to people in darkness, a teacher of the foolish, an instructor for children'.[100] The boast in question was that (a) we are ethnically Jews, (b) we possess Torah, (c) the one true God is our God, so that (d) we can fulfil Israel's ancient vocation to be the people through whom God will solve the problem of the world. This, not merely moral superiority, is the 'boast' which Paul is answering in 2.21–24, summing up the problem in 3.2–3, where Israel has been 'entrusted' (*episteuthēsan*) with God's oracles for the nations but has been faithless to that trust. The 'boast' which Abraham might have had, but does not have, here in 4.2 is the possibility that he might have become the father of the world-rescuing covenant family on the basis of something that was true in and of himself, a status *ex ergōn* which would then lead to a family that was purely *kata sarka*. That was, of course, precisely how Abraham was seen in much if not all second-Temple literature (not as a proto-Pelagian self-help moralist earning his own salvation, but as the one who kept Torah and so was able to be the forefather of Israel).[101] That is the point which Paul is ruling out, and he will not do it simply by sweeping it aside with a *mē genoito*. It is more serious than that. It has to do with the place of God himself in the picture: *all' ou pros theon*. Just as the 'righteousness of God' is the real theme of the whole section, as, in a measure, of the whole epistle, so here the question of God, God's grace and God's life-giving power are all at stake. That is why, when Paul has dealt with the earlier arguments, he comes back to his real point in verses 16 and 17: it must be *ek pisteōs*, so that it can be *kata charin*, because it all happens 'in the presence of the God in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist'.

Paul, then, answers 'no' to the question of 4.1. He does this, in fact, throughout the chapter, *whose climax is precisely verses 16 and 17*, the part frequently bracketed out or at least downplayed.[102] But – in answer to another common objection to Hays's proposal – it is the *whole* chapter that has this theme, not **[231]** merely the section beginning with verse 9 or verse 13.[103] That is the point of my earlier argument about *misthos* in verse 4, and of the argument to which we will shortly turn about the psalm quotation in verses 7–8. In short, if the opening question is not properly understood, the whole chapter

[100] 2.19f. On this theme, see 'Hidden Clue' [reprinted as chapter 30 of the present volume].

[101] Cf. e.g. B. W. Longenecker 1991, 211f.; Dunn 1993a, 160f. By the time of the Rabbis Abraham has become mainly an example: e.g. *m. Ab.* 5.2, 3.

[102] Schreiner 1998, 231–5, actually marks a paragraph break between vv. 16 and 17 (as does Wilckens 1978, 272), though admitting that this is problematic and that in v. 16 Paul does speak of 'the inclusion of all peoples into the promise of Abraham' (231) which he sees as 'the other emphasis of this text' (other, that is, than the normal reformational reading).

[103] E.g. Esler 2003, 395 n. 80; ironically considering his sociological focus, he declares that if Hays were correct 'we would then have Paul asking a question not taken up in Romans 4'. Schreiner 1998, 213 likewise objects that 4.1–8 'do not concern the nature of Abraham's paternity', exploiting Hays's suggestion that vv. 2–8 were preliminary to the main discussion, which I have now suggested is unnecessary. Dunn 1988a, 199 objects that Hays's reading would 'weaken the more immediate link' with vv. 2–8, whereas in fact it strengthens it. As Cranford points out (Cranford 1995, 75 n. 19), Hays's thesis would improve Dunn's own overall reading of the chapter.

is thrown out of balance; and that is what has happened in most readings. In verses 16 and 17 Paul declares that 'It is of faith, *hina kata charin*, so that [it might be] according to grace'. So what, here, is deemed to be 'according to grace'? It is not, here, 'justification', let alone 'salvation', but *Abraham's fatherhood of the worldwide family*. The *kata charin* of verse 16 answers to the *kata sarka* of verse 1. 'We have', in other words, 'found Abraham to be our father *according to grace*, not "according to the flesh", so that the promise might be valid for the whole seed, *panti to spermati*, for all those who share Abraham's faith.' This brings us, triumphantly, to the climax of the chapter, the complete answer to the question of the first verse: 'And this Abraham is the father *of us all*, in accordance with the scriptural promise that "I have made you a father of many nations".' Abraham is not merely, in other words, the father of Jews, of the circumcised, of a *kata sarka* family, into which Gentile converts would then have to come as circumcised proselytes, but of the whole, larger gathering which God had promised. This is what the chapter is all about. Verses 1, 16 and 17, read in this way, encapsulate and frame the theme perfectly. Commentators have either rejected or ignored this proposal because, in my view, they have continued to suppose that Romans 4 was really a 'scriptural proof' of 'justification by faith' seen in the normal reformational sense. As so often, close attention to particular texts has taken second place to overarching schemes. There is nothing wrong with overarching schemes; indeed, they are vital. But they must justify themselves by showing that they make more sense of every line, every word that Paul actually wrote.

When, therefore, we read verses 1 and 16–17 of Romans 4 in the light of my proposal about *misthos* and the justification of the ungodly Gentiles in verses 4 and 5, these key verses gain clarity and force both in themselves and as the main frame for the argument of the chapter. What then about the obvious challenges that might be put at this point? Are there not other elements in the passage that might be taken as evidence for a more traditional view?

[232] Works, Boasting and Forgiveness: Signs of an Older Perspective?

The most obvious objection that might be brought against my whole argument is the presence, in this same introductory paragraph of Romans 4, of the theme of 'works' in verses 2–6, and of the forgiveness of sins in the quotation from Psalm 32 [LXX 31] in verses 7 and 8.

First, 'works'. I hold to a version of the view made popular by James Dunn: that the 'works' which Paul says do not justify are the 'works' which, through their obedience to the distinctive marks of Israel's Torah, mark out the Jews from their pagan neighbours. The long post-reformation tradition of seeing the 'works' in question as good moral works performed in the hope of justifying oneself by good behaviour simply does not fit the texts. In particular, it does not fit Romans 3.28 and 29, where, as I said before, the *ē* at the start of 3.29 reminds us that when Paul says *chōris ergōn nomou* at the end of verse 28 he is thereby ruling out the 'works' which mark out the Jewish people from the pagans.

The argument for this position is long, and would involve a consideration not only of Galatians 2—4 but also texts such as 4QMMT, the only certain place in second-Temple Jewish literature where 'works of the law' is a key theme.[104] There, as I have argued at length elsewhere,[105] the 'works' are specific points of Temple liturgy which demarcate one type of Jew from another, producing a form of inaugurated eschatology in which the person concerned may tell, in the present, that they are among the people whom God will vindicate in the future. This provides a fascinating parallel, in shape though not of course in content, with Paul's own inaugurated eschatological framework for justification. The main difference of content is that the 'works' in MMT are those which differentiate one Jew from another, being post-biblical legal developments, whereas the 'works' in Paul are the biblical laws which differentiate Jew from Gentile. But the shape is the same: these 'works' will mark out those who perform them as the advance guard of God's eschatologically vindicated people. That is 'justification by works'. The 'boasting' which Paul then excludes in Romans 3.27 is the boast, not of the successful self-help moralist, but of the Jew whose marks of identity are a permanent barrier, keeping out Gentiles. We may of course compare 2.17–29.[106]

How, then, does this work out in Romans 4? Verse 1 asks, as we have suggested, whether the inclusion of Gentiles in the family, and the affirmation of the law at the end of chapter 3, leaves us in a position where all Christians now have to regard Abraham as their forefather according to the flesh. As in Galatians, 'flesh' and **[233]** 'works' go very closely together, not least (we may suppose) because two of the key works are circumcision and the food laws. Thus, in Romans 4.2, Paul points out that Abraham would have a reason to 'boast' if he was 'justified *ex ergōn*'. In the light of 3.27–31, with 2.17–29 behind it, this cannot mean that if Abraham had been a successful self-help moralist he would have a ground to boast, but that Abraham would have a ground for boasting if he and his family were marked out according to the 'works' which, as laid down in Torah, would keep them separate from the rest of the world and enable them to be, after all, 'a light to the nations'. Paul answers this point with a brief negation: *all' ou pros theon*. Once again we refer back to 2.17–29, where God's comment on the Jewish 'boasting' is that it is empty, and worse than empty.[107] In the present passage, of course, Paul answers with Genesis 15.6, invoking not only the idea of believing and being justified but, as I have suggested, the entire context of the Genesis chapter, not least the promise of the *misthos* in the first verse.

[104] Though cf. the possible reading in 4Q174 1.7, on which see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2.

[105] See my '4QMMT and Paul' [reprinted as chapter 21 of the present volume].

[106] See 'Hidden Clue', where I argue for a further point: that in 2.17–24 the 'boast' is not primarily that the Jew keeps the law and so is exempt from the judgment of the wicked, but that the Jew, by possession of the law, is the divinely appointed *solution to* the problem of sin in the world.

[107] I have argued elsewhere ('Hidden Clue') that Rom. 2.17–24 is not about the Jews' boast of moral superiority per se, but about the boast that this assumed superiority means that Israel, as per the Isaianic vocation, is the solution to the human problem described in 1.18—2.16. This comes to a head in 3.2: they were *entrusted* (*episteuthēsan*) with God's oracles, in other words, given a message for the world; but they were 'unfaithful' to that commission (*ēpistēsan*). That is the second-order problem to which 3.21—4.25 provides the solution.

It is that promise to which Paul then returns in verses 4 and 5. Here I suggest that the word *misthos* itself has indeed triggered in Paul's mind the metaphor of someone doing a job in order to earn a 'reward' as of right. Paul has picked up *misthos* from Genesis, which is firmly in the front of his mind, and allows an illustration to develop sideways out of it, which by coincidence happens to overlap with one way of expounding an 'old perspective' view of justification. But such an interpretation can safely be set aside in favour of Paul's Genesis-based 'covenantal' reading. This, as we shall see, includes within it the notion of 'forgiveness', because *the covenant was always there in the first place to deal with the sin of Adam*. I have argued at length elsewhere, in fact, that the whole point of Abraham and his family in Jewish thought, going all the way back to the redaction of Genesis and all the way forwards to the post-Pauline Rabbinic commentaries on the book, is that Abraham and his family are God's chosen means of dealing with the problem entailed by Adam's sin and its consequences.[108] Thus if God is going to include 'ungodly' within Abraham's family, this does not mean that God is [**234**] condoning sin or ungodliness,[109] but rather that God's inclusion of them will contain within itself that dealing with their sinful state which is necessary if the inclusion is to be rescuing and restorative, which was the whole point in the first place. That, indeed, is how the larger section of 3.21—4.25 works: God unveils his 'righteousness' in the gospel of Jesus, in that the death of Jesus provides the way for people to be forgiven *in order that God could thereby give to Abraham the worldwide family, including the 'ungodly', that he has always promised*. Let me stress again: this is not at all to say that salvation from sin was unimportant to Paul. He presupposes it throughout. But the present argument, which refers back to God's act of salvation in the death of Jesus, does so in order to make a different point, which is that *through* this saving death God has unveiled, 'revealed-as-in-an-apocalypse', his own covenant faithfulness as the active attribute of his character. The metaphor of 'working for reward', then, does not here need to go far into the finer abstract points of 'earning' as against 'receiving something as a gift'. Those questions were indeed of interest to some Jews, and indeed Romans, in the period (and far more Europeans in the late Middle Ages), but they were certainly not Paul's primary concern, here or elsewhere.[110]

Paul is here, in fact, making a double contrast: first, between 'the one who works' and 'the one who believes', and second, between *kata charin* and *kata opheilēma*. The latter contrast – grace and debt – looks ahead once more to verse 16, where the emphatic *hina kata charin* has nothing to do with the absence of self-help moral effort and everything to do with the promise being

[108] See above all *Climax of the Covenant*, 21–6; *New Testament and the People of God*, 259–68. The point is foundational for most Jewish thinking ancient and modern: as one Rabbi put it, God planned to make Adam first knowing that if he went wrong he (God) could then send Abraham to sort everything out (*Gen. Rab*. 14.6). Paul shares this perspective, and simply has a different view of how Abraham has in fact achieved this.

[109] Cp. Rom. 6.1; Gal. 2.17.

[110] Cf. e.g. Seneca, *De Ben.*, and cf. Barclay and Gathercole 2008, not least Barclay's introductory essay (1–8).

valid 'for all the seed', for Gentiles as well as Jews.[111] We are right, then, to read these two verses not as the usual post-reformation (and post-romantic and post-existentialist!) contrast of human effort and divine grace, but as the contrast of (a) a human family *kata sarka*, marked out by the 'works' which give them their distinctive ethnic identity, with (b) the worldwide family promised by God as Abraham's 'reward', the family created by God's gracious act in 'justifying the ungodly'.

It is because Abraham believes in this God, 'the God who justifies the ungodly', that (according to Paul) he himself is 'justified', declared to be God's covenant partner. As has often been pointed out, this definition of 'the God in whom Abraham believed' (4.5) then looks forward to the further two definitions, (a) the God who raises the dead and calls the non-existent things into existence (verse 17, summing up once more the point about God's making Abraham the father [**235**] of many nations), and (b) the God who, more specifically, raised Jesus from the dead (verses 24–25).[112]

It is that latter passage which then offers the way back to verses 6–8, which are otherwise surprising, granted the direction of my argument so far, in their sudden introduction of the notion of forgiveness, of God not reckoning sin. I stress once more that this entire theme of 'Abraham's worldwide family' cannot be played off against the more familiar themes of 'sin and forgiveness'. Nothing that I have said means that (as some have suggested) I have allowed ecclesiology (the single worldwide family) to elbow soteriology (how people are rescued from sin and its consequences) out of the picture. Anything but. Once we have Abraham's family sorted out – but only once we have done that – we are able to address head on the question of how the underlying purpose of there being an Abrahamic family in the first place can now be fulfilled.

Without this perspective, it might be strange, even in reformational terms, to see Paul's sudden switch from Abraham and the covenant to David and forgiveness of sins.[113] Paul has not mentioned sins, or forgiveness, elsewhere in this passage, and will not do so again until the formula in 4.25, where 'Jesus our lord' was 'put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification'. The obvious verbal link between Abraham and David is made by the idea of 'reckoning': the quote from the psalm speaks of God 'not reckoning sin', but Paul turns this round, speaking of the man to whom God 'reckons righteousness'. This is made easier, perhaps, by the use of 'the righteous' at the end of the psalm (32.11). For the psalm, those whose sins are forgiven are 'the righteous' who are then to rejoice in YHWH.

[111] Cp. 9.11f.; 11.6. Space precludes what might otherwise be an interesting discussion of these.

[112] I find it strange that Cranford 1995, 87f. can deny that Abraham's faith is intended to be an example of Christian faith. I have argued that Abraham in ch. 4 is far more than an example, but the link of 4.17 and 4.23–25 seems to me to indicate that he is not less. Nor do I think that Paul's main thrust is to hold up Abraham as a scriptural precedent for the idea of someone whose faithfulness brought blessing to many (against Hays 2005, 84).

[113] This is the passage described by Gathercole as the 'smoking gun' of the Old Perspective, the sign that Paul was after all talking in reformational terms about sinners being justified apart from moral good works (Gathercole 2002, 250).

But why, if I am right in my analysis of the chapter as a whole, does Paul want even to mention the forgiveness of sins? The answer lies in his strenuous emphasis on the inclusion of Gentiles. Obviously, the psalm might be taken to refer to Jews.[114] But Paul, I think, makes it point to God's determination to 'justify the ungodly', to bring pagans into his family. The psalm goes on to speak of the psalmist's own experience of confession and forgiveness, but the opening two verses, cited here, appear to generalize from that into a much broader statement, as verse 6 also indicates ('therefore let all who are faithful offer this prayer to you'). Paul seems to be picking up this much more general point, so that his 'David' here is not, any more than Abraham, spoken of as himself a sinner (though no doubt Paul could have said that [**236**] too), but rather invoked as one who gives testimony to the blessing of forgiveness on anyone who has no 'works', no outward sign of belonging to God's people.[115] In fact, as Paul says in verses 9–12, 'this blessing' – the blessing that David has pronounced – is intended not primarily for the circumcision but for the uncircumcision.[116] They have lived in a world where, by Jewish estimates, everything they are and do is by definition sinful.[117] And Paul, stressing that God's 'reward' to Abraham is the worldwide family for which the justification of the ungodly will be required, calls on David to emphasize too that God, after all, is the sin-forgiving God, and therefore the God who includes Gentile sinners in his family.[118]

When we check out Paul's other references to David in Romans – which are normally screened out because they do not fit the standard profile of Paul's theology – the result is striking. In 1.3–5, Jesus is the son of David, the risen son of God, through whom the Gentiles are summoned to faithful obedience. In 15.12, as the climax of the theological exposition of the whole letter, the 'root of Jesse' rises from the dead 'to rule the nations; and in him the nations shall hope'. The vision of Psalm 2 (so important for Paul as for all early Christians) and Psalm 72 is fulfilled, not by David smashing the pagans to pieces like a potter's vessel (as in the *Psalms of Solomon*), but by him announcing God's blessing, in line with the Abrahamic covenant, on the ungodly whose sins are forgiven as they are welcomed into the family. As Paul says in 15.8–9, the Messiah became a servant to the circumcised because of God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. That covenantal and eschatological scheme, rather than an atomized system of individual sin and salvation, is the point of the whole letter.

[114] So Tobin 1995, 445.

[115] Contra, e.g., Gathercole 2002, 247.

[116] So, rightly, Hays 2005, 75. Of course, this does not mean that Paul imagines Jews do not need justifying, and indeed forgiving, as well; that is made crystal clear elsewhere in the chapter (4.12, 16) as well as e.g. 3.19f. We must, though, allow Paul to make his own specific points rather than immediately generalizing them into statements of what we had assumed the chapter 'must' be 'about'.

[117] Cp. *ex ethnōn hamartōloi* in Gal. 2.15.

[118] The Psalm is careful, of course, to indicate that forgiveness is conditional on the confession of sin; Paul will deal with the potential misunderstanding here in Rom. 6. This again clarifies, and advances beyond, Cranford 1995, 82f., though he correctly points out that Dunn 1988a, 206 has failed to see Paul's emphasis, which is not on going beyond the covenant but precisely fulfilling what the covenant always envisaged.

[beginning of previously unpublished section]

Abraham Elsewhere

The decision to focus attention on the exegesis of Romans 4 and Galatians 3 has left me no space to attend to the other obvious passages, which are here just mentioned for the sake of completeness. Since I regularly warn students against imagining that Romans 9—11 is simply an appendix to the letter this is the more to be regretted.

Romans 9—11 is in fact, as more and more are now recognizing, the place where all the lines of thought in the letter converge, and if we have rightly understood Romans 4 we should not be surprised that Paul begins his substantive argument in chapter 9 by coming back to Abraham. The question he faces is that of God's faithfulness to his promises. As in Genesis, this always means the promises to Abraham (and Isaac and Jacob), promises which were fulfilled in various ways – the finding of a wife for Isaac so that the *sperma* could continue, the bringing of Jacob back to the land after his own 'exile' and then the much greater 'exodus' under Moses.[119] The main point I would make about Romans 9—11 is that 9.6—10.21 is a classic, second-Temple style narrative of Israel: from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, on to Moses and Pharaoh and the exodus; on to the prophets and the exile, with Israel narrowed down to a remnant, here designated *sperma* (9.29), and to the anguish which corresponds to that of Daniel 9 or *4 Ezra*; and then to Deuteronomy 30, that famous and much-cited prophecy of the final 'restoration after exile', when hearts would be transformed and Israel would serve God properly at last. The difference is, of course, that for Paul it is *Christos* who is the *telos nomou* (10.4). The great Pentateuchal story, read (as Josephus indicates) not only as history but also as prophecy, has come full circle – though this leaves Paul, as it left Moses, with the puzzle of Deuteronomy 32, of non-Jews attaining a status which would make God's own ancient people 'jealous'.[120] It is this that Paul will use in Romans 11 as the lever to make his fresh argument about God's eventual purposes, and it is noticeable that when he does so the patriarchs are once again at the foundation of it.[121]

Even in Romans 11, despite regular assertions to the contrary, Paul is clear that, as in 4.9–12, those of Abraham's own physical *tekna* who will eventually be counted as part of the *sperma* (see 9.8) are those who 'do not remain in unbelief' (11.23). There is still a division in the family – but it is not a division in the *Christos* family, which must be united, but within the family *kata sarka*. Paul does not resolve this problem with the easy universalism so widely affirmed today. His refusal to do so points us to Galatians 4.21–31.

[119] On the first of these, it is striking that Abraham's servant in Gen. 24, conscious of God's promise to Abraham's *sperma*, invokes God's mercy (*eleos*), his covenant faithfulness (*dikaiosynē*) and his truth (*alētheia*) 24.12, 14, 27. These are the divine qualities that are under discussion in Rom. 9, as they were in 3.1–9.

[120] On Josephus, seeing Dt. 32 as prophecy; cf. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, ch. 2.

[121] 11.28; and perhaps also as 'first-fruits' and 'root' in 11.16, though this is of course contested.

Here, as is well known, Paul exploits the possibilities of the dark chapter Genesis 21 to characterize the believing community as the Isaac-children and the unbelieving Jews – and perhaps also the agitators – as Ishmael-children. This is where, with due caution against over-eager mirror-reading, we may indeed detect echoes of what the agitators might have been saying.[122] It seems to me quite possible that they had been arguing that uncircumcised gentiles were in the position of Ishmael, and were to be cast out, as Paul says they were wanting to do (4.17). But even this is not certain. Ishmael, after all, had been circumcised, and that before Isaac was even born. In any case, even if Paul was pushed into this particular argument, which I do not regard as certain, it is clear that for him being part of the genuine 'seed', of the true 'Abraham-family', is what matters. At no point does he say that Abraham and everything to do with him are simply part of that older religion which the new apocalypse has swept away. The 'freedom' which is given in the Messiah is the freedom which corresponds to that given in the Exodus (4.1–7); and the Exodus itself, as we saw, was the divine act in fulfilment precisely of the covenanted promise of Genesis 15.13–14.

There remains only the smallest of patriarchal references, but in some ways it is just as powerful as the longer expositions. As Paul draws the threads of his massive letter into a final appeal for united life and worship across the spectrum of the little house-churches in Rome, he urges them to welcome one another as they themselves have been welcomed by the Messiah. 'Let me tell you why', he writes:

> The Messiah became a servant of the circumcised people in order to demonstrate the truthfulness of God – that is, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, and to bring the nations to praise God for his mercy.[123]

The echoes of Romans 3.1–9 and 9.6—10.13 are right there, all in the service of the united praise of the Jew-plus-gentile family. The patriarchal promises have been basic to Paul's argument about the covenant faithfulness of God, and they remain so right to the end; and those promises always envisaged the worldwide family.[124] There is, of course, a fascinating historical reminiscence at this point: one might almost suggest that Paul was aware of the deliberate ethnic restriction of Matthew 10.5–6, which then, in line with Matthew 28.19, is widened to include all the nations once the Messiah's saving work has been accomplished. And we note once again the presence of a *narrative*: the retelling of Israel's story now in terms of (a) patriarchs, (b) a servant-Messiah, (c) God's truthfulness displayed and (d) the ingathering of nations. Paul, like all second-Temple Jews known to us, had this kind of story in his bloodstream. His conviction that Israel's God had burst upon the world afresh in Jesus and his death and resurrection led him not to abandon that narrative but to see it shockingly but gloriously

[122] See, e.g., Barrett 1982, ch. 9 (orig. in Friedrich, Pöhlmann and Stuhlmacher 1976).

[123] Rom. 15.8–9.

[124] In other words, I take the two clauses 'to confirm the promises to the patriarchs' and 'to bring the nations to praise God for his mercy' not simply as parallel but as consequential, with the ingathering of the nations being precisely central to the patriarchal promises. For a different view, cf. Wagner 1997. See my *Romans*, 747.

fulfilled. Paul remained loyal to the patriarch because he was convinced that, in Jesus the Messiah, God had done, in a great apocalyptic reversal and unveiling, exactly what he had said he would do so many years before.

[end of previously unpublished section]

Conclusion

We return one last time to Romans 4, the sheet anchor of my argument. Romans 4 is, in the last analysis, about God and God's unveiling of his worldwide saving purposes. Paul fully affirms the standard Jewish belief that when God wants to [**237**] save the world and humankind from the plight of Genesis 3—11, he calls Abraham and makes promises to him, promises which are then kept, ultimately, in the Messiah. Jesus is hardly mentioned throughout the opening section of Romans, but the last two verses of chapter 4 show that he has been under the argument all along, and he will now emerge in the letter's next section as the framework and energizing force for the exposition of what it means to be the renewed people of God. But the point Paul is making in these concluding verses of Romans 4 is tightly integrated with the entire argument of 3.21—4.25 as a whole. The death and resurrection of Jesus is seen by Paul as the means by which God deals with, and so can forgive, the trespasses which would have kept both Jew and Gentile out of the category of 'righteous'. Believing in the God who raised Jesus from the dead is seen by Paul as the crucial mark of the church (compare, of course, 10.1–13), the full expression of the faith which Abraham had when he believed in the God who raises the dead and creates out of nothing (4.17–22), which was itself the larger belief enclosing and including the specific belief in 'the God who justifies the ungodly' (4.5). People still try to make out that the 'New Perspective' on Paul is a matter of sociology rather than soteriology, of the removal of minor inconveniences for Gentile converts rather than God's victory over sin and death through Jesus the Messiah. There may be some who have taken it that way, though neither Ed Sanders himself nor Jimmy Dunn has been guilty of any such reductionism. Romans 4 shows how the whole picture hangs together.

It is nearly forty years since the late Bishop Stephen Neill remarked to me that the most important tool for understanding the New Testament is the concordance to the Septuagint. I paid attention, but not enough attention, at the time. The little word *misthos* in Romans 4.4, once we recognize it as an allusion to Genesis 15.1, enables us to clarify the entire argument of the chapter and, in so doing, to firm up a holistic and deeply Jewish reading of Romans in general and chapter 4 in particular, and also of Galatians in general and chapter 3 in particular. Paul has not introduced Abraham as an 'example' or 'scriptural proof' of a 'doctrine',[125] not even as 'a decisive test case'.[126] He

[125] Käsemann 1980, 105.
[126] Dunn 1988a, 199.

is not quoting scripture merely to create a rhetorically powerful impression of his great learning; he has the whole context of Genesis 15 in mind, and his discussions of Abraham only make sense when we have it in mind as well.[127] Paul's actual use of Genesis dovetails perfectly with his theological perspective. Abraham, throughout Romans 4, is the one with whom God made a covenant to rescue the whole world from the Adamic plight of sin and death, a promise now at last fulfilled in the Messiah. This contributes to the larger argument of the letter, which is a vindication of the covenant faithfulness of God, as seen in the powerfully saving gospel of Jesus the Messiah, and a plea, on that basis, for a radical ecclesial unity which will sustain the missionary theology Paul expounds and, as he explains in chapter 15, is still intent on implementing. Abraham, throughout Galatians 3, is the one with whom God made a covenant promise to create a single 'seed' from all the nations. This promise, too, is now at last fulfilled *en Christō*. This contributes to the larger argument of that letter, which is an urgent plea to avoid being dragged back into 'the present evil age' by imagining that the Messiah's death has left the Jew–gentile boundary intact. Romans offers a theology ('God's righteousness'), revealed in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus, which issues in an ecclesiology; Galatians argues for an ecclesiology in order to hold the 'truth' of the high ground [**238**] we might characterize in terms of 'apocalyptic' and/or 'eschatology'.[128] The soteriology of Romans and the ecclesiology of Galatians, and behind them both the vision of God's faithfulness and truth, hinges for Paul on his belief that in the crucified and risen Messiah God had done what he told Abraham he would do. Abraham is therefore the father of all believers, not 'according to the flesh' but according to grace. The ungodly have been justified. That, according to Paul, is the patriarch's reward.

[127] Thus supporting, e.g., Hays 1989 against Stanley; see 'Israel's Scriptures in Paul's Narrative Theology' [reprinted as chapter 32 of the present volume].

[128] It is thus oversimplifying to suggest (Cranford 1995, 75 n. 18) that Rom. 4 and Gal. 3 'use the figure of Abraham to prove the same point', though of course the two are closely interwoven and complementary.

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