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JUSTIFICATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE WAKE OF
THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

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JUSTIFICATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE WAKE OF
THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

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To Sarah,
for her unending patience and love.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
BDAG	Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd edition.
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the NT</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.), <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ETL	Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Louw & Nida	Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i>
NA ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27 th edition
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentaries
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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PREFACE

The present work could not have been finished were it not for the support of many people. My interest in doctoral studies began during my M.Div. at Covenant Theological Seminary. There I was especially privileged to sit under the teaching of David Chapman, Jay Sklar, and Jack Collins. During this time I also became fascinated with the issue of Paul and the law, and I soon discovered the work of Tom Schreiner, which sparked my interest in doing doctoral work with him at Southern Seminary. I owe an enduring debt of gratitude to Dr. Schreiner for his work on the subject, as well as his supervision and care throughout the dissertation writing.

Thanks also to the other gifted New Testament professors at Southern Seminary, who model what true godly scholarship can look like, as well as to many fellow students who helped me think through these issues. I have especially appreciated the work and teaching of Mark Seifrid, which has helped me refine my own thinking in many significant ways. I am grateful to Rob Plummer and Jonathan Pennington for acting as mentors to me, as well as to Michael Bird, for agreeing to be my external reader. Thanks also to the library staff at Southern, especially Christi Osterday and Ben Gantt, who were always more than accommodating.

I would also like to thank my parents, George and Brenda Hassler, for their enduring support, financial and otherwise, as well as my grandparents, Morris and Norma Davis. The encouragement of my wife's parents, Don and Curly Mason, has also been

invaluable to me. The same is true of the rest of my family, my church community group, and a handful of other lifelong friends.

Our three beautiful children, Jakob, August, and Emma Jane, have been a constant reminder of what truly matters in life, which can sometimes be forgotten when one is buried in books from dusk till dawn. Finally, I am incredibly grateful to my wife, Sarah. If I have learned anything throughout this process, it is that I do not deserve the wife that I have. There is no chance this would have ever been written without her.

Writing a dissertation is a difficult undertaking, as one seeks to contribute a valid idea while at the same time attempting to prove oneself as a competent scholar. It requires both confidence and humility, a rare combination indeed. If I have succeeded at all in this, my hope and prayer is that it serves to illuminate even more the grace of the One who died to give it. I can testify that I have had to receive it afresh daily, even hourly, as I have worked to finish this dissertation. May the fruit of that labor in some small way contribute to a deeper grasp of the boundless grace, mercy, and love of Jesus for those of us who do not deserve it. This is our only hope.

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December 2011

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Those familiar with Pauline studies are aware that since the rise of the New Perspective on Paul, and with roots earlier, a significant shift has occurred toward viewing Paul's doctrine of justification by faith in more corporate terms.¹ The shift owes a good deal of its existence to Krister Stendahl,² and it has since influenced as well as

¹Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1, observes that in "New Testament studies over the past twenty-five years there has been an increasing emphasis on the understanding of the documents against a background of people groups," with the result that "more and more emphasis has been given to the relevance of the texts to questions of collective identity and social cohesion, and less and less importance attached to how the texts might address issues more to do with the individual, the salvation of the individual and individual behaviour." Burnett's study, while different in method and focus from the present work, shares a similar concern to retain the individual element within Pauline soteriology, even while granting more corporate and covenantal elements. See also the balanced approach in Ben C. Dunson, "The Individual and Community in Twentieth- and Twenty-first-Century Pauline Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Research* 9 (2010): 63-97, who also provides a helpful overview of the history of interpretation on the subject of individual and corporate elements in Pauline soteriology.

Some surveys of the New Perspective include Michael Bird, "The New Perspective on Paul: A Bibliographical Essay" (*The Paul Page*) [on-line]; accessed 20 July 2011; available from <http://www.thepaulpage.com/Bibliography.html>; Internet; Donald B. Garlington, "The New Perspective on Paul: An Appraisal Two Decades Later," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (2005): 17-38; James A. Meek, "The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction for the Uninitiated," *Concordia Journal* 27 (2001): 208-33; Jay E. Smith, "The New Perspective on Paul: A Select and Annotated Bibliography," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (2005): 91-111; Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul: A Review and Response* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004); Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 3-248.

²Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215, later reprinted in idem, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78-96. The following statement of Lloyd Ratzlaff, "Salvation: Individualistic or Communal?" *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 4 (1976): 109, is representative: "Krister Stendahl (1963) has shown that Paul's view of the Law was not formed, like Luther's, as a result of personal anguish over guilt; rather it was the result of his struggling to identify the place of the Gentiles in the messianic community." See also Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 6, "The work of many scholars, beginning with the pioneering essay by Krister Stendahl on Paul and the West's introspective conscience, suggests the need for a persistent questioning of the traditional readings of Paul's letters on a much more elemental level."

been strengthened by the work of E. P. Sanders and the New Perspective on Paul. While the traditional interpretation stemming from the Reformation has highlighted the sinful individual before God in need of grace and forgiveness, the New Perspective has tended to focus more on the inclusion of Gentiles into God's covenant with Israel. From this have come readings of Paul that have differed greatly from those of earlier generations, generating a number of new conclusions regarding Paul's view of justification. While the new focus has been rightly appreciated for highlighting often-overlooked elements of Paul, it also has been the source of new ambiguity regarding Paul's view of justification.

Thesis

In light of this ambiguity, there is room for further work to be done on how Pauline justification incorporates the individual and, secondly, how the individual relates to the corporate people of God. The thesis of the present work is that there remains considerable textual evidence that is difficult for the corporate approach and demonstrates the central nature within Pauline justification of the individual before God apart from works and in need of grace. While the New Perspective, along with its forerunners and successors,³ has consistently downplayed—however rightly at times—the place of the individual in justification in favor of a more corporate approach to Pauline soteriology, these texts testify to a strong individual, anthropological element in justification, an element that is often underemphasized outside of more Reformed scholarship.⁴ Thus, the concept of the individual's lack of worthiness before God and

³Many scholars now deliberately deem themselves beyond the New Perspective, and, indeed, in many ways Pauline scholarship has moved into a post-New Perspective era. However, it is a rare Pauline scholar who is untouched by critical assumptions that have their root in the work of E. P. Sanders and his predecessors, as well as the subsequent New Perspective on Paul. The present work is more interested in such assumptions and their implications with regard to the specific issue of justification than with taking aim at the New Perspective in general.

⁴Cf. Michael Bird, "The Riddle of Righteousness," in *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Eugene, OR:

need for grace stems from Paul himself and not merely from reading Paul through a “Reformational” lens.⁵ While corporate elements are present and essential to Pauline soteriology, these elements do not define Pauline justification.

History of Research

The Reformational View

Before looking at the corporate trajectory in modern scholarship, it will be beneficial to briefly delineate what exactly is intended with the idea of the “Reformational” view of justification, which has been questioned over the last century and serves as the starting point for all discussion. One of the more helpful outlines of this view is provided by Stephen Westerholm in his monograph, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics*. Westerholm offers a portrait of the “Lutheran” Paul that was inherited from the Reformation,⁶ setting forth seven theses that

Wipf & Stock, 2007), 19: “I think those who want to reduce ‘righteousness’ to covenantal and sociological categories have done a great disservice to Paul.”

⁵Therefore, certain ideas have been overstated in light of the evidence, such as that Paul was not much interested in “inner tensions of individual souls and consciences” (Krister Stendahl “Paul among Jews and Gentiles,” in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 40; see also Markus Barth, “Jews and Gentiles: The Social Character of Justification in Paul,” *JES* 5 [1968]: 241-67), or that he did not treat “justification as the believer’s personal experience of forgiveness and deliverance from a subjective sense of guilt” (Richard B. Hays, “Justification,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 1132).

⁶Westerholm is careful to designate the word “Lutheran” with quotation marks so the reader understands that the term does not refer only to the views of Martin Luther himself—as influenced by him as they were—nor any Lutheran church, but to the view outlined here that emerged from the many streams of the Reformation, influenced as it was by earlier church fathers such as Augustine (see Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 1-6, for more on Augustine’s influence). However, since the word is prone to misunderstanding, I use the term “Reformational” so as not to imply that this view is limited only to Lutheranism or to Martin Luther himself (see Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 14, for another approach to the nomenclature issue). This is an important and sometimes neglected distinction. One example is N. T. Wright, “New Perspectives on Paul,” in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006), 263, who states that had Reformed, rather than Lutheran, theology won the day, the New Perspective might have been unnecessary. Westerholm’s work shows that there is a common thread between these traditions, and it is this thread and not one specific tradition that is weakened by the New Perspective. The Lutheran stream is, to be sure, more zealous in its distinction between Law and

articulate this understanding. There are four that are directly relevant to the present study:⁷

Thesis 1: Human nature, created good, has been so corrupted by sin that human beings are incapable of God-pleasing action. They are rightly subject to God's condemnation.

Thesis 2: Human beings must be justified by divine grace, responded to in faith, and *not* by any works of their own.

Thesis 3: Justification by grace through faith leaves human beings with nothing of which they may boast in God's presence. The (false) notion that human beings *can* contribute to their justification opens the door to a presumption that ill suits creatures in the presence of their Creator.

Thesis 5: The Mosaic law was given, in part, to awaken in human beings an awareness of their need of divine grace. Believers are delivered from its condemnation and need not observe its ceremonial prescriptions. The gift of God's Spirit enables them (in some measure) to fulfill its moral demands.

This understanding provides the foundation from which newer views of justification take their point of departure, and with which one may compare and contrast such views.

William Wrede provides a starting point.

Early Movement Toward a Corporate View of Justification

William Wrede. Wrede's influential *Paul*, first published as *Paulus* in 1904, departs from the Reformational understanding in several ways.⁸ First, Wrede sees

Gospel, but the connection between the Reformed and Lutheran traditions remains. It is the veneration of this common thread, which is assumed to be from Paul himself, rather than that of Luther or Lutheranism, per se, that often elicits the vociferous reaction to the New Perspective on Paul from some of the proponents of the traditional view.

⁷Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 88-95. The remaining theses, four, six, and seven, are, respectively: believers must still do good works; the nature of the reality of remaining sin is a legitimate issue in need of discussion; the irresistible nature of grace is also a legitimate issue in need of discussion.

⁸The following history of research is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight key figures who have been integral to the move toward a more corporate understanding of justification, as well

redemption, not justification, as the center of Paul's thought. This is contrasted with "modern belief," which transfers "the scene of salvation to man himself, or his consciousness," thereby elevating "peace of heart, a pure conscience, a confident assurance of grace, a consciousness of forgiveness."⁹ According to Wrede, Paul does not see salvation pertaining to such "subjective states of consciousness"—it is an *objective* change of humanity.¹⁰ Paul is not "thinking of the individual at all, or of the psychological processes of the individual, but always of the race, of humanity as a whole."¹¹ Hence, for Wrede, redeemed corporate humanity is the central focus.¹²

Naturally, these views have ramifications for Wrede's understanding of justification. Because he diminishes the place of the individual, he sees the doctrine of justification as a minor point in Pauline theology.¹³ He notably dubbed it Paul's "polemical doctrine": a doctrine that is "only made intelligible by the struggle of his life,

as those who have responded to this move. For example, while William Wrede is the first scholar listed, the shift toward a corporate view of justification could be argued to have even earlier roots. For example, Mark Seifrid, "In What Sense is 'Justification' a Declaration?" *Churchman* 114 (2000): 123, states that the "recasting of justification in corporate terms" goes back "at the very least to Albrecht Ritschl," in whose thought justification was simply "the vehicle by which the community of the reconciled is formed." Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 40-44, traces opposition to the Reformational reading to F. C. Baur (John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, ed. John Riches [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988], 4, also notes Baur's influence).

⁹William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1908; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 111-12.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 114.

¹²Not surprisingly, then, Wrede preferred to understand Paul in salvation-historical rather than anthropological terms, calling Paul's mode of thinking "purely historical." He writes, "Paul has always before his eyes great periods of human development, and thinks in terms of the temporal distinctions, past, present, and to come. . . . [Paul's] very piety receives its character from the salvation history; the history of salvation is the content of his faith" (*ibid.*, 115). In this way, Wrede anticipates later scholars such as N. T. Wright and others.

¹³"The Reformation has accustomed us to look upon this as the central point of Pauline doctrine; but it is not so. In fact the whole Pauline religion can be expounded without a word being said about this doctrine, unless it be in the part devoted to the Law" (*ibid.*, 123).

his controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity, and is only intended for this.”¹⁴ Justification was essentially a “weapon” with which Paul ensured that the Gentile mission was “free from the burden of Jewish national custom” and that the “superiority of the Christian faith in redemption over Judaism” was maintained.¹⁵ To be sure, he grants to Luther that justification is “of grace,”¹⁶ but, beyond this, Luther is wrong in asserting that the individual man overcomes “tormenting uncertainty” about his salvation by recognizing that “it depends absolutely on grace.”¹⁷ At bottom, “justification is nothing else than Christ’s historic act of redemption, namely his death.”¹⁸

Albert Schweitzer. Like Wrede, Albert Schweitzer objected to Reformational readings of Paul. Schweitzer, commonly known for understanding Paul largely in terms of “mysticism,”¹⁹ argued that what these older readings looked for in Paul were “proof-texts for Lutheran or Reformed theology; and that was what they found.”²⁰ Schweitzer was critical of reading Paul under dogmatic *loci* in general, preferring to trace the development of the “essence of Paulinism” from “one fundamental conception,” which

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 127.

¹⁶Ibid., 131.

¹⁷Ibid., 132.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹“The fundamental thought of Pauline mysticism runs thus: I am in Christ; in Him I know myself as a being who is raised above this sensuous, sinful, and transient world and already belongs to the transcendent; in Him I am assured of resurrection; in Him I am a Child of God.” This is the “prime enigma of the Pauline teaching: once grasped it gives the clue to the whole” (Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul*, trans. William Montgomery [London: A. & C., 1931; reprint, Boston: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998], 3).

²⁰Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. William Montgomery (London: A & C Black, 1912; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 2. Likewise, “Reformation exegesis reads its own ideas into Paul, in order to receive them back again clothed with Apostolic authority” (ibid.).

for him was eschatological mysticism.

What is important for the present study is how Schweitzer's conception of Pauline theology moved justification by faith out of the center of Paul's thinking and more to the fringes. In his view, scholars have simply assumed the doctrine's critical nature because it stands so much in the foreground of Romans and Galatians. But righteousness by faith is only one part of a bigger picture, a "fragment from the more comprehensive mystical redemption-doctrine."²¹ Schweitzer's classic statement here is that justification is a "subsidiary crater" that "has formed within the rim of the main crater—the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ."²² Furthermore, the concept of justification by faith, or the "intellectual appropriation of what Christ is for us," is inferior to the more difficult "quasi-physical" doctrine of eschatological redemption, for which Schweitzer argues. The latter is a "collective, cosmically-conditioned event," while the former, in contrast, is "individualistic and uncosmic."²³ Thus, for Schweitzer, justification by faith, while not indispensable, has been afforded much more attention than warranted. His view has been an important component in the shift toward a more corporate understanding of the doctrine.

Ernst Käsemann. Ernst Käsemann is somewhat unique with regard to the present issue, arguing against Rudolf Bultmann specifically that the "righteousness of God," rather than merely being a gift, is a salvation-creating power. It is "God's sovereignty over the world revealing itself eschatologically in Jesus," where the "world's salvation lies in its being recaptured for the sovereignty of God."²⁴ Käsemann was

²¹Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 220.

²²Ibid., 225.

²³Ibid., 219.

²⁴Ernst Käsemann, "'The Righteousness of God' in Paul," in *New Testament Questions of*

anxious to move past what he saw as the arid individualism of Bultmann, contending that the “righteousness of God” does not “refer primarily to the individual and is not to be understood exclusively in the context of the doctrine of man.”²⁵ Rather, it was an apocalyptic term wherein God reclaims his rightful sovereignty over the world.²⁶

On the other hand, Käsemann also argued against the salvation-historical approach of Krister Stendahl.²⁷ While Stendahl was right to protest against the “individualist curtailment of the Christian message,”²⁸ neither must salvation history be allowed to supersede justification: “[Salvation history] is its sphere. But justification remains the centre, the beginning and the end of salvation history.”²⁹ Therefore, while in one sense Käsemann moved the discussion in a more corporate direction, it was not entirely for the same reasons as the other scholars mentioned here.

Krister Stendahl. Krister Stendahl, perhaps more than anyone else with the possible exception of N. T. Wright, epitomizes the shift toward corporate justification. In

Today, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 180, 182 (first delivered in 1961 as a lecture entitled “Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus,” then published in *ZTK* 58 [1961]: 367-78, and widely considered one of the most important works in the “righteousness of God” discussion). For more on Käsemann and the “righteousness of God,” see Karl Paul Donfried, “Justification and Last Judgment in Paul,” *Int* 30 (1976): 140-42; Richard Hays, “Psalm 143 and the Logic of Romans 3,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 107-15; Sam K. Williams, “‘The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 241-45.

²⁵Käsemann, “Righteousness of God,” 180. Bultmann responded in his article, “ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 12-16. For a good recent treatment of the Bultmann-Käsemann debate, see Dunson, “Individual and Community,” 64-68.

²⁶Bultmann (along with others) takes issue with Käsemann on this point, arguing that, rather than an apocalyptic term borrowed from Judaism, the phrase was “eine Neuschöpfung des Paulus” (Bultmann, “ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ,” 16).

²⁷Käsemann saw himself as standing “between two fronts” by “refusing either to subordinate the apostle’s doctrine of justification to a pattern of salvation or to allow it to turn into a mere vehicle for the self-understanding of the believer” (Ernst Käsemann, “Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. Margaret Kohl [London: SCM, 1971], 76 n. 27).

²⁸*Ibid.*, 74.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 76.

his influential article, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” Stendahl argues that Paul did not arrive at conclusions about the law because of his individual conscience, but because of the place of Gentiles in the church.³⁰ It was not until Augustine that the “Pauline thought about the Law and Justification was applied in a consistent and grand style to a more general and timeless human problem.”³¹ Unfortunately, where Paul is concerned with Gentile mission, “his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man’s salvation out of a common human predicament.”³² Thus, the West has projected its own conscience onto the biblical writers, creating problems that “never entered their consciousness.”³³

Furthermore, Stendahl argues that while Paul did emphasize justification and righteousness, he did not emphasize *forgiveness*. Yet, contemporary Western Christianity does precisely the opposite. For us, “it all amounts to forgiveness,” and we quickly turn to anthropology because we are “more interested in ourselves than in God or in the fate of his creation.”³⁴ But, according to Stendahl, Paul was not firstly concerned with anthropology but *ecclesiology*. The doctrine of justification originates in Paul’s mind not from contemplating an innate need in man, but rather the Gentile mission. It was

³⁰See n. 2 above. Stephen Westerholm, “Justification by Faith Is the Answer: What Is the Question?” *CTQ* 70 (2006): 197, writes, “No article published in the twentieth century on a New Testament topic garnered more attention, provoked more debate, or exercised greater influence than Krister Stendahl’s ‘The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West.’”

³¹Stendahl, “Apostle Paul,” 85.

³²*Ibid.*, 86.

³³*Ibid.*, 95. Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul*, trans. Lilian Soiron (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 375 n. 1, made this same observation even before Stendahl, writing that if one correctly understands Paul’s call to ministry, one finds that “the Christian idea made an inrush upon his conscience through Christ’s appearance, which was destined not to resolve a crisis of the soul, but to call him to great mission, the greatest that a soul such as his could dream of. Introspection was not much practiced in this era.”

³⁴Stendahl, “Paul among Jews and Gentiles,” 24. He criticizes Bultmann for taking for granted that anthropology is the “the center of gravity” from which “all interpretation springs” (*ibid.*, 25).

“triggered by the issues of divisions and identities in a pluralistic and torn world, not primarily by the inner tensions of individual souls and consciences.”³⁵ This thought would be influential for E. P. Sanders, whose work would of course lead to a complete change in the landscape of Pauline scholarship.

The Tipping Point: E. P. Sanders

The publication of E. P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* is widely considered the watershed moment that led to the formation of the New Perspective on Paul, creating a paradigm shift in Pauline studies.³⁶ Sanders certainly had predecessors, but it was he who began the Copernican revolution in the field.³⁷ It is here that Sanders

³⁵Ibid., 40. Two other scholars argued similarly a few years later. First, Markus Barth, “Jews and Gentiles: The Social Character of Justification in Paul,” *JES* 5 (1968): 241, argued that the traditional understanding of salvation through grace “left little room for interest in the role of fellow-men in salvation.” Moreover, danger of “crass individualism and egotism is apparent in this type of interpretation,” because everyone is interested largely in their own justification before God. Yet, Paul held that “justification of our fellow-men is closely related to the individual’s justification by grace, because justification occurs only in a human community of those who are also justified by God” (ibid.). Therefore, faith in Christ is weighed not by “the struggle and the victory in which I am engaged in order to find my own salvation,” but in the “thankfulness and obligation for the justice, freedom and peace which God has secured for my fellow-man” (ibid., 267). Second, Nils Alstrup Dahl, “The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications,” in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 111, while retaining an individual element in the doctrine of justification, followed Stendahl in many ways, arguing that while justification “really is the merciful acquittal of sinful men,” there is nothing to indicate that “interior feelings of sin and guilt afflicted the Galatians and the Romans to whom Paul wrote.” Justification “does not simply involve the individual and his salvation,” and while it is not *primarily* social, its framework is “social and historical rather than psychological and individualistic” (ibid., 110).

³⁶E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). James Dunn writes, “If Stendahl cracked the mould of 20th century reconstructions of Paul’s theological context, by showing how much it had been determined by Luther’s quest for a gracious God, Sanders has broken it altogether by showing how different these reconstructions are from what we know of first-century Judaism from other sources” (James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 103 [originally published in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983): 95-122; subsequent page number references will be to the more recent publication]). Campbell, *The Deliverance of God*, 2, writes that Sanders’ work created a “seismic shift in Pauline scholarship.” For more on the shift, see also Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 3-27.

³⁷Some important predecessors to Sanders include C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul: Two Essays* (London: Max Goeschen, 1914); George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *HTR* 14

first put forth his notion of “covenantal nomism,” which would be a major shaping influence on all later Pauline studies.³⁸ But while considered monumental in its illumination of Paul’s Jewish context, for many Sanders’ work was less helpful in illuminating Paul himself.³⁹ This left the door open for others to refine and build upon his work, leading to the multifaceted New Perspective on Paul.

Nevertheless, Sanders himself has contributed to the present issue in a number of ways. First, following Schweitzer, Sanders argues that “righteousness by faith alone” is not the center of Paul’s thought. As long as one does consider it the center, one misses “the significance of the realism with which Paul thought of incorporation in the body of

(1921): 197-254; idem, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-30); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980 [1948]); H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); Samuel Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul: A Study in History*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979 [1958]); idem, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13; idem, *The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). See also Preston M. Sprinkle, “The Old Perspective on the New Perspective: A Review of Some ‘Pre-Sanders’ Thinkers,” *Themelios* 30 (2005): 21-31, for a survey of some of the more important scholars who paved the way for Sanders’ paradigm shift.

³⁸Covenantal nomism is the idea, by now common knowledge, that first-century Judaism was not legalistic, that Jews were saved by grace-centered election in the covenant, and that keeping the law—far from an attempt at meriting righteousness—was merely the means to *keep* the Jewish people within the bounds of this gracious covenant. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 49, writes, “Any proposed reconstruction of Paul’s convictional world needs to be one that could be plausibly inhabited by a covenantal nomist who had come to believe that God had raised Jesus from death.”

³⁹For example, G. B. Caird, review of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, by E. P. Sanders, *JTS* 29 (1978): 542, writes, “The chief disappointment of this fascinating book is that the expectations raised by the first part are not fulfilled by the second,” while N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 189, states that the book is “in some ways curiously unsystematic and incomplete” and that one of the “ironies in Sanders’ position is that he has never really carried through his reform into a thorough rethinking of Paul’s own thought” (19). See also Morna D. Hooker, “Paul and ‘Covenantal Nomism,’” in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982): 47-56; Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” 103, who finds the “most surprising feature of Sanders’ writing” to be that he “failed to take the opportunity his own mouldbreaking work offered,” remarking that Sanders’ “presentation of Paul is only a little better than the one rejected.” To be fair, Sanders did put forth a more detailed view of Paul in his work, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) (cf. also his brief *Paul* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991]), though many still found it unsatisfactory.

Christ, and consequently the heart of his theology.”⁴⁰ Instead of “righteousness by faith,” two other convictions govern Paul’s theology: (1) the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord, and (2) his calling as apostle to the Gentiles. “It is on the basis of these two *convictions* that we can explain Paul’s *theology*.”⁴¹

This second conviction is especially relevant for Paul’s view of justification. Sanders writes that it is “the Gentile question and the exclusivism of Paul’s soteriology which dethrone the law” and not “a view predetermined by his background.”⁴² Thus, the polemic in Galatians has virtually nothing to do with “whether or not humans, abstractly conceived, can by good deeds earn enough merit to be declared righteous at the judgment; it is the condition on which Gentiles enter the people of God.”⁴³ Hence, Paul’s argument is not for faith and against works per se, but rather against “requiring the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses in order to be true ‘sons of Abraham.’”⁴⁴ The question is one of who may enter the people of God.

To be sure, Sanders is not as explicit or developed in his diminishing of the role of the individual in justification as others, but his understanding of Paul’s relation to Judaism would lay the groundwork for other scholars who would pick up his themes and broaden them. Especially important for the present purpose is his denial of any legalism or works-righteousness in first-century Judaism and his argument that Paul’s preaching of justification by faith did not stem from an internal need for salvation but from his mission to the Gentiles.

⁴⁰Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 434.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 442 (his emphasis).

⁴²*Ibid.*, 497.

⁴³Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 18.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 19.

Post-Sanders: Balancing the Individual and Corporate

James Dunn. James Dunn's major contribution to the history of the New Perspective on Paul is the way he tailored Sanders' paradigm-shift to make it more palatable to a broader swath of Pauline scholarship.⁴⁵ In doing so, he buttressed some of the weak areas in Sanders' approach to Paul and gave the blossoming New Perspective on Paul not only its moniker but also the coherence it needed to take deeper root within scholarship.

At times Dunn appears close to the "old perspective" on justification. For example, recently he has affirmed as a "central point of Christian faith that God's acceptance of any and every person is by his grace alone and through faith alone,"⁴⁶ taking it as a "fundamental fact that no person can stand before God except by God's forgiving, justifying grace."⁴⁷ While dissatisfied with older approaches to Paul, he does not seem comfortable with completely casting out the traditional view of justification.

⁴⁵It should be noted that in many ways all the interpreters listed in the present history of research are attempting to balance the individual and the corporate. However, it is often the case that some lean more heavily in one direction than the other. The two listed here, James Dunn and Michael Bird, seem not to cast their lot too heavily in either direction, wanting instead to equally affirm central elements of the New Perspective while also maintaining anthropological elements within justification, albeit differently. Examples of a few others that could be included here include Garlington, "The New Perspective"; idem, *The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*; Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990); Colin Kruse, *Paul, the Law and Justification* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1996).

⁴⁶James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither?" in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 23.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 96. He goes on, "Justification by faith alone needs to be reasserted as strongly as ever it was by Paul or by Augustine or by Luther. To acknowledge dependence wholly on God the Creator and Redeemer, to glorify and worship him alone, to trust in him and give him thanks is the proper and only proper response of the creature before the Creator." Cf. also James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 379, "Human dependence on divine grace had to be unqualified or else it was not Abraham's faith . . . God would not justify, could not sustain in relationship with him, those who did not rely wholly on him. Justification was by faith, by faith alone." He even goes so far as to state that it is the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* ("doctrine by which the church stands or falls") and registers astonishment at the "charge that 'the new perspective on Paul' constitutes an attack on and denial of that Lutheran fundamental" (Dunn, "Whence," 23). To be sure, Dunn would firmly argue that there is more to the "full scope" of justification and that it is not merely about individuals as such. Nevertheless, it is striking how "Lutheran" he sounds at times.

However, in spite of this, his work has been instrumental in opening new doors toward embracing an approach to Paul that emphasizes social aspects of justification, often at the expense of the individual.

The starting point is Dunn's important article, "The New Perspective on Paul," where he argues that the "works of the law" with which Paul took issue were not to be understood "as works which *earn* God's favour, as merit-amassing observances" but rather *boundary markers* that are "simply what membership of the covenant people involves, what mark out the Jews as God's people," which largely included circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath.⁴⁸ Justification, then, becomes less about how a sinful person is declared righteous before God apart from works and more about "acceptance into a relationship with God characterized by the grace of Israel's covenant."⁴⁹ Paul was not opposing some form of Jewish legalism, but rather Jewish *restrictiveness*—that is, "the tendency in Judaism to restrict the covenant grace of God, covenant righteousness to Israel" through these boundary markers.⁵⁰

Therefore, the Reformational view, while not entirely jettisoned by Dunn, is clearly not the whole picture. It needs to be complemented "with a firm reassertion of the corporate and social implications of the full doctrine—in terms both of what it says about nationalist and racialist presumption, and of what it says about civic and political

⁴⁸Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," 111. Dunn has clarified his position since his original article, stating that "'works of the law' are not to be understood as restricted to circumcision, food laws and Sabbath issues," but rather "characterize the whole mindset of 'covenantal nomism,'" so that there is not a "special restricted sense, but a general sense given particular point by certain crucial issues and disputes" (idem, "Yet Once More – 'The Works of the Law,'" in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 214). In the end, however, the point is the same. For Dunn the works to which Paul refers represent works done in order to maintain covenantal boundaries, while the traditional view sees a more anthropological element in the works performed—i.e., they do or do not determine how one ultimately finds favor before God.

⁴⁹Dunn, *Theology*, 388.

⁵⁰James D. G. Dunn, "Paul and Justification by Faith," in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 372.

responsibility for the disadvantaged in a society which cherishes its biblical heritage.”⁵¹ It is this shift from understanding Paul’s polemic as being aimed not at general good works done in self-righteousness, but specific covenantal works done for self-identification that has given a boost to Sanders’ thesis and continued the trajectory away from the Reformational view of the individual in justification.

Michael Bird. Michael Bird has written recently on the subject, having as one of his objectives the balancing of the traditional understanding of justification with that of the New Perspective. After noting the divided nature of the discussion over “whether being ‘righteous’ signifies a legal status before God or represents a legitimisation of covenant membership,” he argues that “both elements are necessary for a comprehensive understanding of Paul.”⁵² While New Perspective scholars try to “squeeze all ‘righteousness’ language under the umbrella of ‘covenant,’” Reformed interpreters tend to “divorce Paul’s talk of righteousness from the social context of Jew-gentile relationships in the Pauline churches.”⁵³ Bird walks the line between the two, arguing that for Paul “justification creates a new people, with a new status, in a new covenant, as a foretaste of the new age.”⁵⁴

⁵¹James D. G. Dunn, “The Justice of God,” in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 211.

⁵²Michael F. Bird, “Justification as Forensic Declaration and Covenant Membership: A *Via Media* Between Reformed and Revisionist Readings of Paul,” *TynBul* 57 (2006): 109. A revision of this article appears as “Justification as Forensic Declaration and Covenant Membership,” in *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 113-54. From this point on, the designation “Via Media” will refer to the original article, while “Justification” will refer to the revised version.

⁵³Bird, “Via Media,” 109.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* He writes, “My concern here is to show that the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church is intimately related to ‘righteousness’, but I wish to affirm this on two conditions: (1) That one does not thereby reduce justification to ecclesiology, covenant, membership, or identity legitimation; and (2) that one keeps the vertical, forensic, and soteriological aspects of righteousness/justification foremost and primary” (Bird, “Justification,” 152 n. 130).

While he argues that the verb *δικαιόω* is “strictly forensic,”⁵⁵ for Bird justification is more than a forensic verdict. There is a covenantal dimension to justification. In this way, the unity of Jews and Gentiles is not merely “*illustrative* of the effects of justification,” as some would argue, but *constitutive* in that it “creates a new people.”⁵⁶ Thus, Bird attempts to wed critical elements of both the Reformational and New Perspective views.

Post-Sanders: Justification in Corporate Terms

Since the emergence of the New Perspective, a good deal of Pauline scholarship falls into this category. Several more could be added.⁵⁷ Two of the most prominent and influential, however, have been Richard Hays and N. T. Wright.

Richard Hays. Hays understands the focus of justification mainly to be the covenant community of the people of God. His view rests heavily on his understanding of Paul’s use of the phrase “the righteousness of God.” Hays writes, “Once it is recognized that ‘the righteousness of God’ in Romans is deliberately explicated in terms of this OT covenant conceptuality, it becomes apparent that the term refers neither to an abstract ideal of divine distributive justice nor to a legal status or moral character imputed or conveyed by God to human beings. It refers rather to God’s own unshakable faithfulness.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, the “righteousness” of believers who receive God’s grace

⁵⁵Bird, “Riddle of Righteousness,” 17.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁷One example would be Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 122, who equates being “reckoned righteous” by faith with being “members of Abraham’s family.”

⁵⁸“Justification,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1131.

“should be interpreted primarily in terms of the covenant relationship to God and membership within the covenant community.”⁵⁹

This understanding of “righteousness,” then, provides the foundation for Hays’s understanding of justification. If the righteousness of God and the believer centers mainly on God’s covenant faithfulness and the inclusion of people into the covenant community, then the traditional emphasis upon the sinful individual’s need for forgiveness and righteousness before a holy God more or less falls by the wayside.⁶⁰ This emphasis is not necessarily unimportant to Hays, but it is not the main thrust of Paul’s letters. The idea of God “claiming and vindicating a covenant community” is central, thus precluding the “individualistic error of treating justification as the believer’s personal experience of forgiveness and deliverance from a subjective sense of guilt.”⁶¹

N. T. Wright. Similar is the thinking of N. T. Wright. Wright is one of the strongest proponents of the more corporate approach to justification, exercising great influence while also receiving a great amount of criticism. Perhaps the clearest statement of Wright on justification is the following: “It is not ‘how you become a Christian’, so much as ‘how you can tell who is a member of the covenant family’.”⁶² Here Sanders’

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰“The fundamental problem with which Paul is wrestling in Romans is *not* how a person may find acceptance with God; the problem is to work out an understanding of the relationship in Christ between Jews and Gentiles” (Richard Hays, “‘Have We Found Abraham to be Our Forefather According to the Flesh?’ A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1,” *NovT* 27 [1985]: 83-84). Likewise, the “driving question in Romans is not ‘How can I find a gracious God?’ but ‘How can we trust in this allegedly gracious God if he abandons his promises to Israel?’” (idem, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989], 53).

⁶¹Hays, “Justification,” 1132 (Hays here cites Stendahl—a highly influential interpreter for him—who “has stressed the absence of these categories in Paul” [see also Hays, “Psalm 143,” 112, including n. 22]). In *ibid.*, 115, he argues that Paul’s allusion to Ps 143 in Rom 3:20 demonstrates that Paul does not have in view “the subjective quest for salvation” so much as, “as in Rom 3:5, the issue of God’s integrity, God’s justice which persistently overcomes human unfaithfulness.” See chap. 3 below for more on Ps 143 and Rom 3:20.

⁶²Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 122. See also idem, “Justification,” in *New Dictionary*

covenantal nomism plays a central role, though Wright has gone a separate route in understanding Paul. Convinced that Sanders was correct about the “Lutheran” interpreters of Paul who “smuggle Pelagius into Galatia,” Wright contends that justification is “not about how someone might establish a relationship with God.”⁶³ Rather, it is a matter of “how you tell who belongs to that community”—it is about “God’s eschatological definition, both future and present, of who was, in fact, a member of his people.”⁶⁴

Therefore, picking up the salvation-historical emphasis of his predecessors—as opposed to the anthropological emphasis of the Reformational interpretation—Wright asserts that justification is “not so much about salvation as about the church.”⁶⁵ It is “the original *ecumenical* doctrine,” because 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.”⁶⁶ To be sure, it is not that Wright wishes to extinguish all

of Theology, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: 1988), 359-61; idem, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), which presents his view in summary fashion.

⁶³Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119. “The point is that the word ‘justification’ does not itself *denote* the process whereby, or the event in which, a person is brought by grace from unbelief, idolatry and sin into faith, true worship and renewal of life. . . . In other words, those who hear the gospel and respond to it in faith are *then* declared by God to be his people . . . They are given the status *dikaios*, ‘righteous’, ‘within the covenant’” (idem, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 121-22).

⁶⁴Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119.

⁶⁵Ibid. This is a point upon which Wright receives a good deal of criticism. E.g., Richard Gaffin, “Review Essay: Paul the Theologian,” *WTJ* 62 (2000): 127, writes, “At issue here are not the ecclesiological implications, undeniable and crucially important, of Paul’s teaching on justification Where Wright’s overall construction is problematic, however, is in making these implications the heart or main point of Paul’s doctrine, denying or at least diminishing, at the same time, its soteriological significance.”

⁶⁶N. T. Wright, “New Perspectives on Paul,” in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006), 261.

discussion regarding personal salvation. Paul may or may not agree with Augustine or Luther on how one comes to know God in Christ personally. But, “he does not use the language of ‘justification’ to denote this event or process.”⁶⁷ For Wright, the idea of individual salvation has received too much attention throughout the history of the church, causing many interpreters to miss Paul’s central point.

Post-Sanders: Beyond the New Perspective

Several scholars do not fit neatly into the preceding categories. These have largely been dissatisfied not only with the traditional approach to Paul but also with the solutions offered by the New Perspective. In many ways, they have sought to move beyond the New Perspective to formulate new ways to understand Paul.⁶⁸ As perspectives both old and new on Paul have in some ways reached a stalemate, and as the traditional approach continues to be rejected, new and unique approaches to Paul are increasing in number and gaining more of a hearing. It will be apparent soon enough that the present dissertation continues to work within the old/new perspective framework of the argument, and much of the attention will be directed there (see “Method” below). Nevertheless, a brief word should be said concerning these newer approaches to Paul.

This category is comprised of three examples, and it should be noted that these differ from each other as much as they share similar tendencies. However, the purpose in creating the category is largely to note a common thread that underlies some of their thinking. This thread is the notion that the traditional understanding of justification is based on a modern, Western understanding of Paul that reaches back as far as Augustine. Modern interpreters, whether of old or new perspective sympathies, come to Paul with

⁶⁷Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119 (his emphasis).

⁶⁸E.g., Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 1040 n. 1, writes, “At bottom, the new perspective combines perceptions and strategies that ought to be distinguished. We need to move well beyond its categories and debates – and the following discussion tries to do so.”

preconceived assumptions that need complete reworking. Instead of continuing to work within this longstanding framework to challenge the traditional approach to Paul and justification, these readings attempt to shift the entire discussion toward new paradigms. For them, the New Perspective has been insufficient for rooting out the problems inherent in the traditional approach. They highlight where scholars such as Sanders and Dunn—their important contributions notwithstanding—have foundered in this regard.

In reality, these scholars are difficult to categorize, as each brings a distinct, learned, and complex angle to the issue. Therefore, it will be impossible to do justice to everything they say, a good deal of which is worth further reflection. However, what is important for our present purposes is that, while these interpreters are self-consciously attempting to move past the New Perspective, they continue to share some key assumptions and tendencies, especially with regard to first-century Judaism and the role of the individual in Paul's doctrine of justification. In other words, while critiquing scholars like Sanders and seeking to move beyond them, they continue to be dependent upon and share assumptions with them. Below are three that are significant and make the point well.⁶⁹

Francis Watson. The first of these is Francis Watson, whose revised doctoral thesis *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* was published nine years after Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.⁷⁰ Thus, Watson's work appeared as

⁶⁹Others that could be included in this category are those who have emphasized Paul's Jewishness in a manner that goes beyond that of most New Perspective interpreters (e.g., questioning the traditional categories of "Jew" and "Christian" for understanding Pauline thought). Some examples would include Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Pamela Eisenbaum, "Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism," *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (2005): 224-38; idem, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

⁷⁰Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). In many respects Watson also fits in the "balancing"

the New Perspective was rising but had not fully crested. Noting the general dissatisfaction with the Reformational view of Paul and following scholars such as Stendahl, Davies, Sanders, and Räisänen, Watson argued that there is a prominent social reality that informs Paul's polemic against the law. This social reality is the "creation of Gentile Christian communities in sharp distinction from the Jewish community."⁷¹ Thus, Paul's "theological reflection legitimates the separation of church from synagogue."⁷² While Watson does not enter the justification debate as deeply as others, it is clear that for him a more sociological approach to Paul's gospel is more in line with the evidence.

At the same time, in the revised and expanded edition of his original work, Watson takes a view of the "Lutheran" reading of Paul that is somewhat less harsh than that of other New Perspective proponents.⁷³ For example, he argues that there is more emphasis on divine agency in Paul than in Judaism and that the "Lutheran" emphasis on divine grace is "not wholly in error."⁷⁴ Yet, he is also insistent that the answer to the question of what Paul was arguing against "has nothing to do with 'the upright and religious person,' or 'legalism,' or 'good works as the condition for participation in salvation.'"⁷⁵ Instead, "it represents continued participation in the religious community it

category above. However, he is included here because of his deliberate attempt to move past "old/new perspective" categories rather than find a bridge between the two (hence the subtitle *Beyond the New Perspective* in the revised edition of his *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*).

⁷¹Ibid., 19.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³From this point on, Watson's original work will be designated *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, while his revised edition will be designated *Beyond the New Perspective*.

⁷⁴Watson, *Beyond the New Perspective*, 346.

⁷⁵Ibid., 134-35. Also see Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 6-8, where, while critical of elements of Sanders' approach, he approves of the way Sanders "successfully marginalizes the previously dominant metaphor of 'earning' or 'meriting' salvation" (8).

was trying to reform and in the traditions and praxis of that community.”⁷⁶ Thus, while slightly more sympathetic to the traditional approach, Watson is clearly dissatisfied with its central tenets and favors a more sociological explanation of Paul’s gospel.

What is important to note is that while his trajectory is not fully in line with that of the New Perspective, Watson is still clearly interested in the social elements of Paul’s gospel, and this is due in large part to assumptions shared with Stendahl, Sanders, and others about both Judaism and the anthropological element in justification as a largely “Lutheran” and modern concept.

Stanley Stowers. Stowers states his thesis at the outset of *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles*: “Romans has come to be read in ways that differ fundamentally from ways that readers in Paul’s own time could have read it.”⁷⁷ Especially in the West, the book has been used to describe “systems of sin and salvation,” despite the fact that this is not how Paul’s original audience would have read the letter. Stowers seeks to discover how this audience would have read it by examining “rhetorical conventions, generic conceptions, and cultural codes” of Paul’s readers.⁷⁸ Stowers’ reading leads him to the conclusion that Romans is trying “to clarify for gentile followers of Christ their relation to the law, Jews, and Judaism and the current place of both Jews and gentiles in God’s plan through Jesus Christ.”⁷⁹ These Gentiles have a “great concern for moral self-mastery and acceptance by the one God,” believing that such things may be attained through the Jewish law.⁸⁰ Against this, Paul develops a rhetorical strategy to

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 1.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., 36.

⁸⁰Ibid.

persuade them that such things are only found in God's work through Jesus Christ.

Like Watson, Stowers stands outside the New Perspective but is still influenced by and sympathetic towards the stream of thought of Stendahl that the West has read the concept of the individual in need of grace into Paul's letters more than allowing such ideas to be determined by the text. "The work of many scholars, beginning with the pioneering essay by Krister Stendahl on Paul and the West's introspective conscience, suggests the need for a persistent questioning of the traditional readings of Paul's letters on a much more elemental level."⁸¹ Further, such an idea finds its ultimate validation in Sanders' efforts to show that traditional Christian thought had caricatured first-century Judaism for its own purposes and that Paul was not responding to legalism.⁸² Thus, it suffices to note that even while Stowers embarks on a new approach to Paul, he shares key assumptions and burdens with the New Perspective.

Douglas Campbell. Campbell's recent work on justification is massive in size and aim, which is, in essence, to dismantle what he has labeled "Justification Theory."⁸³ Justification Theory, fundamentally, is simply the traditional approach to justification, though some may object that Campbell's description is at times too facile, veering into the straw man category. Nevertheless, Campbell's intention is to take aim at the traditional approach and its "powerful commitments to individualism, to rationalism, and to consent, these being organized in turn by an overarching contractual structure [of

⁸¹Ibid., 6.

⁸²E.g., Stowers writes, "The more we have learned about Judaism as it actually existed rather than the [legalistic] Judaism of Christian imagination, the more impossible it has become to give a historical account of the traditional Paul" (ibid., 327).

⁸³Campbell, *Deliverance of God*. Cf. also idem, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy*, JSNTSup 274 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005); idem, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26*, JSNTSup 65 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

salvation].”⁸⁴ However, the New Perspective finds its roots in this approach, insofar as it is a reaction against it, and thus does not move fully beyond it. Hence, finding Justification Theory untenable and at the same time implicating it as a major component in global ills caused by Western civilization,⁸⁵ Campbell attempts to move beyond all this, taking elements from both perspectives old and new and forging a new approach to Paul that is free from Justification Theory entirely.⁸⁶

Much of his case rests upon a rereading of Romans that understands Romans 1:18-3:20 as a “tightly focused, contingent discussion, and not a sweeping, prospective, systematic discussion at all,” that is, a “reduction to absurdity of the alternative gospel of the Teacher,” who serves as a rhetorical interlocutor throughout Romans 1-4, which Campbell calls the “citadel” of Justification Theory.⁸⁷ At this point what is important is to note assumptions of Campbell that stem from New Perspective concerns. Despite his attempt to offer something new, a significant part of his burden is clearly connected to an assumption that Sanders was in essence correct in key ways about Judaism and older approaches to Paul, resulting in the need of a serious overhaul of traditional notions.⁸⁸

⁸⁴Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 7 (see 28-29 for a summary of Justification Theory).

⁸⁵E.g., see Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 284-309 (chap. 13, “Dangers – The Modern European Pedigree”), and especially the section, “Justification and Liberal Political Individualism.” Earlier he writes, “When all is said and done, we may find that if our reading of Paul’s forensic texts can be freed from essentially European individualist, rationalist, and conditional presuppositions, they may yet speak in a more radical and liberating way to the conundrums of our own time: to *free* our reading (to a degree) *from* our modern culture is also to allow the apostle to *address* our culture more effectively” (ibid., 8; his emphasis).

⁸⁶Campbell emphasizes salvation as God’s loving deliverance of humanity rather than justification by faith alone of the sinner apart from works (e.g., see *Deliverance of God*, 62-73). While I am in full agreement that salvation involves God’s loving deliverance of humanity, the question is whether this is necessarily at odds with some key traditional categories for understanding the Pauline doctrine of justification.

⁸⁷Ibid., 528.

⁸⁸On Sanders being “correct,” the intended sense is that NT scholars were wrong in assuming Paul was responding to any kind of Jewish legalism, not that Campbell completely agrees with Sanders, because he clearly does not.

The difference is that Campbell, instead of providing an overhaul, would rather abolish the approach entirely and start over. In essence, Campbell follows Sanders' work to its logical, far-reaching conclusion, which is essentially an eradication-by-rereading of the passages that seem to contrast the individual's faith with works and would thus support a more traditional approach to justification.

As to the question of individual and corporate elements within justification, Campbell stands outside the categories a bit. In one sense, he attempts to balance individual and corporate concerns. He writes that “redeemed humanity *is neither individualist nor corporate*”—people are “not defined fundamentally by way of reference to themselves.”⁸⁹ Yet, “a degree of individuation is not erased,” either.⁹⁰ Campbell ultimately prefers the word “relational,” where saved people live in a new reality that is “communal and interpersonal.”⁹¹ At the same time, it is evident throughout his work that Campbell is dissatisfied with the individualism of the traditional approach. When he speaks of the individual it is not in the same sense as will be argued for here, where justification involves in large part the individual before God with faith apart from works. Thus, such concerns are often de-emphasized in his reading of Paul in favor of corporate concerns. Again, though, what is key is that Campbell's thesis, while endeavoring to move beyond the reformulations of the New Perspective, is still dependent upon certain assumptions coming from Sanders and his predecessors about the nature of first-century Judaism and the nature of Paul's argument in response to this Judaism. These are assumptions that, while not the only driving force behind the rejection of the traditional approach to justification, have played a significant role.

⁸⁹Ibid., 68 (his emphasis).

⁹⁰Ibid., 69.

⁹¹Ibid.

Post-Sanders: Justification in Individual Terms

Despite the general move toward a more corporate understanding of justification, there are several who still believe that the older perspective, though not perfect, was largely correct. While not denying that the New Perspective has made important contributions to Pauline scholarship, these scholars remain unconvinced that the Reformation was wrong in its emphasis upon the individual, anthropological element in justification.⁹² The following are representative examples.⁹³

Simon Gathercole. Simon Gathercole has argued in several places against New Perspective conceptions of Paul.⁹⁴ In his book, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*, Gathercole examines significant texts

⁹²E.g., Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 251, writes, "The New Perspective is helpful in that it corrects some of the lack of historical particularism of traditional approaches, but it is wrong to downgrade anthropological concerns when for Paul the Torah brings them to the fore."

⁹³Many others could be included here. Some examples include G. K. Beale, "Review Essay: The Overstated 'New' Perspective?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19 (2009): 85-94; A. Andrew Das, "Beyond Covenantal Nomism: Paul, Judaism, and Perfect Obedience," *Concordia Journal* 27 (2001): 234-52; idem, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001); Gaffin, "Paul the Theologian"; Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); I. Howard Marshall, "Salvation, Grace and Works in the Later Writings in the Pauline Corpus" *NTS* 42 (1996): 339-58; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); idem, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *WTJ* 45 (1983): 73-100; John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002); idem, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); Moisés Silva, "The Law and Christianity: Dunn's New Synthesis," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 339-53; idem, *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); idem, *Philippians*, 2nd ed. BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Brian Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006); Waters, *Justification and the New Perspective*.

⁹⁴Besides his monograph, *Where Is Boasting* (see n. 92 above), see also Simon J. Gathercole, "The Doctrine of Justification in Paul and Beyond: Some Proposals," in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006), 219-41; idem, "Early Judaism and Covenantal Nomism: A Review Article," *Evangelical Quarterly* 76 (2004): 153-62; idem, "Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21-4:25," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:147-84.

within Jewish literature that raise questions about the sufficiency of Sanders' category "covenantal nomism." He argues that too little attention has been paid to Jewish "boasting" as found in the primary sources and that the "lack of emphasis [in Pauline scholarship] on Jewish confidence on the basis of obedience is unjustified."⁹⁵

Furthermore, he argues that the antithesis set up by those such as Dunn, Hays, and Wright between Torah "as a means to righteousness" and Torah "marking out the righteous" is false. This neglects the fact that "effort is involved in obedience, effort that is impossible 'in the flesh,'" and sidesteps the important anthropological dimension in Paul's doctrine of justification.⁹⁶ For Gathercole, then, Paul's view of justification is not "integrally related to the inclusion of the gentiles in the people of God but is part of who Paul believes God to be in relation to humanity in general and the believer in particular."⁹⁷

Thomas Schreiner. Despite Sanders' influential claim that first-century Judaism was not legalistic, Thomas Schreiner has continued to insist that legalism played at least some role in Paul's Jewish context, thereby contributing to his doctrine of justification. When Paul says Israel pursued the law "as from works" in Romans 9:32, he means that Israel attempted to establish her own personal righteousness by trying to keep the law—a "delusive enterprise," since no one obeys perfectly.⁹⁸ Further, righteousness is often forensic in Paul, "denoting God's gift to his people," and forms an "indispensable bond" with forgiveness of sin.⁹⁹ Schreiner's view is essentially Reformational—forensic

⁹⁵Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 197.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 249.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 251.

⁹⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, "Israel's Failure to Attain Righteousness in Romans 9:30-10:3," *TrinJ* 12 (1991): 220. For more on the place of Jewish legalism in Paul's doctrine of justification, see *idem*, "'Works of Law' in Paul," *NovT* 33 (1991): 217-44.

⁹⁹Schreiner, "Israel's Failure," 204.

righteousness is an “alien righteousness, given to sinners by God” that is “not merited by works” and is “the basis and ground of any transformation that occurs in our lives.”¹⁰⁰

This informs how Schreiner understands the New Perspective emphasis on Jewish nationalism and covenantal inclusion as the root of Paul’s doctrine of justification. Taking issue here, he states that “Jewish nationalism and exclusivism cannot be neatly separated from Jewish obedience to the law”¹⁰¹ and that while “God’s righteousness expresses his faithfulness to his covenant,” this does not mean that “God’s righteousness is his faithfulness to the covenant.”¹⁰² In these ways, Schreiner’s work operates against the more corporate view of justification.

Stephen Westerholm. After outlining the traditional “Lutheran” view of justification at the beginning of his *Perspectives Old and New on Paul* (mentioned above), Stephen Westerholm goes on to expound and defend this view in the rest of his monograph. To be sure, he concedes that New Perspective scholarship has rightly shown that it was in the context of the dispute over Gentiles, and not in “a debate whether one is saved by human effort or divine grace, that Paul formulated the doctrine of justification.”¹⁰³ Nevertheless, this was “in effect Paul’s ‘gospel’ all along: a gospel of salvation for sinners facing God’s wrath, but graciously offered through Jesus Christ to all who believed in him.”¹⁰⁴ Westerholm then attempts to demonstrate this through a survey of the relevant Pauline literature, including that outside Romans and Galatians,

¹⁰⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 208.

¹⁰¹Schreiner, “Works of Law,” 236.

¹⁰²Schreiner, *Paul*, 199 (his emphasis).

¹⁰³Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 441.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 442.

arguing that even when justification by faith is not explicitly mentioned, it is still assumed as a critical foundation for Paul's theology.¹⁰⁵

Consequently, for Westerholm, the works that were excluded for righteousness were not simply Jewish boundary markers. They also “included the righteous works on the basis of which people were (ordinarily) thought to be righteous.”¹⁰⁶ The law was not able to deal adequately with human sin,¹⁰⁷ and, therefore, the fundamental problem Paul had with first-century Judaism was not ethnocentrism but sin: “The message of ‘justification by faith’ pertains in the first place not to how Gentiles may be included in the Jewish covenant but to how sinners—Jews and Gentiles alike—who are threatened by God's wrath may enjoy God's approval.”¹⁰⁸

Mark Seifrid. Mark Seifrid has been a vocal opponent of the New Perspective and N. T. Wright in particular on several points.¹⁰⁹ According to Seifrid, Paul was “a fallen human being under the power of sin and death” and neither his “good standing as a member of the nation of Israel, nor his energetic pursuit of the law” could change this fact.¹¹⁰ It follows, then, that circumcision was a “mark of faith and piety, not mere

¹⁰⁵E.g., he writes, “No study that took Ephesians and the Pastorals into account could conclude . . . that the Pelagian crisis or sixteenth-century controversies are the source of the ‘misreading’ of Paul that sees him excluding human works from salvation rather than particular works from the terms for Gentile admission to the people of God” (ibid., 406) (see also idem, “Justification by Faith,” 197-217). For more on this point see chap. 5 below.

¹⁰⁶Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 442.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Stephen Westerholm, “The Righteousness of the Law and the Righteousness of Faith in Romans,” *Int* 58 (2004): 264.

¹⁰⁹E.g., see Mark A. Seifrid, “The ‘New Perspective on Paul’ and Its Problems,” *Themelios* 25 (2000): 4-18; idem, “The Narrative of Scripture and Justification by Faith: A Fresh Response to N. T. Wright,” *CTQ* 72 (2008): 19-44.

¹¹⁰Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 9 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000), 33.

national identity.”¹¹¹ Therefore, justification necessarily possesses a strong individual element. Paul seeks to “individuate,” or “set the individual before the presence of God as a sinner . . . and as one who is justified and forgiven in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:26).”¹¹²

Moreover, the idea that in Paul God’s righteousness is strictly his covenant faithfulness is misguided. According to biblical usage, “righteousness-language does not derive from the context of ‘covenant’, but that of creation.”¹¹³ It “has to do with creational thought, not merely God’s covenant with Israel.”¹¹⁴ God’s acts of justification do not merely provide “salvation” for Israel, or anyone else for that matter, but instead “constitute the establishment of justice in the world which Yahweh made and governs.”¹¹⁵ Therefore, Seifrid rejects the idea that the inclusion of the Gentiles provides the major impetus behind Paul’s doctrine of justification. Instead, the reason the Gentile mission is so critical in Paul’s teaching on justification is because it points to the deeper, more fundamental idea of the forgiven sinner—it was “a *visible and bodily* expression of the justification of the ungodly.”¹¹⁶

The present work. The present work in many ways will be sympathetic to the traditional approach to justification—represented largely by those in the “Justification in Individual Terms” category above—but also mindful of its shortcomings. It will

¹¹¹Mark A. Seifrid, “Blind Alleys in the Controversy Over the Paul of History,” *TynBul* 45 (1994): 79.

¹¹²Seifrid, “Narrative of Scripture,” 43.

¹¹³Mark A. Seifrid, “In What Sense is ‘Justification’ a Declaration?” *Churchman* 114 (2000): 125.

¹¹⁴Mark A. Seifrid, “Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1:440.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1:441.

¹¹⁶Seifrid, “Narrative of Scripture,” 44 (his emphasis).

especially agree with the notion that in justification Paul greatly emphasizes the individual's lack of worthiness and need of grace, forgiveness, and righteousness before God. The intent is to show that this approach to Paul, while admittedly amenable to a modern, Western mindset, as the common charge has been, nevertheless has considerable roots in the Pauline texts themselves, especially when some key assumptions that are normally discarded are allowed. At the same time, the intention is not to argue strictly *against* the more corporate view in favor of a strictly individual approach. It is, rather, to re-emphasize the place of the individual in justification based on textual considerations, while not neglecting important corporate elements highlighted by the New Perspective.

Method

The study of broader topics in Paul such as justification by faith must carefully labor to blend exegesis with continual examination and reformulation of larger assumptions brought to the text, informed as these things are by one's own thought and the scholarly community.¹¹⁷ The present dissertation will follow this method, being largely exegetical in nature and making use of the best available exegetical resources, while at the same time keeping in view and making adjustments to larger assumptions.

While sympathetic to the Reformed view of justification, the intent of the work is also to demonstrate an awareness of the shortcomings of the traditional view and validity of some of the critique it has received throughout the last century. The dissertation will likely not abandon all pre-formed judgments—a virtually impossible task regardless of the scholarly camp in which one finds oneself.¹¹⁸ Therefore, un-argued

¹¹⁷In other words, there will be no text that “seals the deal” when it comes to the thesis put forth above, especially in light of deep presuppositions held by New Perspective scholars and others on this issue. The argument can only be established by building a case based on several passages, in addition to challenging specific hermeneutical assumptions.

¹¹⁸Thus, while statements such as that of Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 24, “I propose that Romans not be read with certain a priori assumptions that control readings,” can be useful, once these

assumptions will no doubt emerge at times (one example will be the relevance of the broader NT canon for the present discussion, especially texts outside the traditional battleground texts found in Romans and Galatians).

The argument throughout is largely tied to the old/new perspective framework of the discussion, and while I find more avant-garde approaches insightful and illuminating, the traditional categories and understandings still possess a good deal of value. Before moving too far beyond the New Perspective, some key assumptions deserve reconsideration. Hence, some of the concerns of the newer approaches to Paul may not be addressed in full. This is not because I have not considered such issues, but because at times the presuppositions are too divergent to be able to deal satisfactorily with every relevant point within the space limitations. Therefore, those who share certain assumptions will benefit in some ways more than others, though this admission comes without the concession that there will be nothing here to offer the wider scholarly discussion on the issue.

The chapters of the work will proceed as follows. Chapter 2 will introduce an argument regarding Jewish legalism that will inform the rest of the work. The chapter will question the conventional wisdom since Sanders that Jewish legalism is a dead end for understanding Paul's doctrine of justification. There is credible evidence to presuppose that some level of legalism or "works-righteousness" could have been present in certain elements of first-century Judaism, and specifically in the thinking and behavior of Paul's opponents, as well as those they were influencing. In many key justification texts, then, Paul is in fact responding to a form of legalism, though not mere legalism, nor mere ethnocentrism, nor even a general nomism, but legalism expressed through ethnocentrism.

assumptions are discarded, others inevitably enter in with regard to how one defines and understands everything from text to canon to history to theology to epistemology.

One important qualification, however, is that the chapter will not offer a comprehensive description of first-century Judaism on the whole. It is my opinion that some of the problems with studies of Paul, Judaism, and the law, have been created by attempting to make everything fit into one monolithic category to which Paul responds, however one understands that category.¹¹⁹ As will be explained more in chapter 2 and in the exegetical discussions that follow, the legalism for which I argue did not *define* the Jewish religion nor all first-century Jews, though it does describe Paul's former approach as a Jew, as well as those who were the targets of his polemic. For the sake of simplicity this will often be referred to as "ethnocentric legalism."

With this interpretive framework in mind, chapters 3 and 4 will examine three critical justification texts that highlight the individual nature of justification and present challenges for the corporate approach. It will be argued that Jewish restrictiveness alone does not do full justice to these passages.

Chapter 5 will examine some key texts outside the traditional justification battlegrounds of Galatians and Romans 1-4, including some passages where Pauline authorship is disputed, where further support can be found for the individual approach to justification. Chapter 6 will demonstrate how the findings of the previous chapters correspond to Paul's view of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God. In this chapter two important "corporate" passages will be examined, and some of the valid

¹¹⁹As Bird, "Justification," 115, suggests, "What Paul found wrong with Judaism may not be the same as what he found wrong with the views of his Jewish Christian competitors." Cf. also the statement of Pamela Eisenbaum, "Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism," *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (2005): 236, that "what is not helpful, however, is the quest for the *essence* of Judaism. Whether this essence is negative as in the traditional model (legalism), or whether it is positive as in the New Perspective (covenantal nomism), Judaism still ends up looking like a form of Christianity without Christ." Her article highlights well the difficulties that attend any definition of "Christianity" and "Judaism," especially within the first-century context of Paul. At the same time, the complete elimination of essentialism seems ultimately impossible in Pauline studies. While it is true that some essentialism stems from the incorrect assumptions of interpreters, some significant elements stem from Paul himself (e.g., what would be a "non-essentialist" explanation of Paul's declaration in 1 Cor 16:22: "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed"?). Whether it sits well with postmodern sentiments or not, Paul draws very clear boundaries at times, and any explanation of his thought must account for this.

concerns of the New Perspective will be addressed within the context of the main argument of the dissertation. Chapter 7 will provide a summary and conclusion of these lines of research.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH LEGALISM

“A major problem for anyone who says that Paul resisted legalism is that it seems to contradict the work of Sanders and other scholars who claim that Palestinian Judaism was not legalistic but a religion of grace.”¹ Thomas Schreiner aptly summarizes the burden of the present chapter. The problem he highlights is one that must be addressed satisfactorily in order for the thesis of the present work to stand. In Pauline scholarship, the words “legalism,” “nomism,” and “ethnocentrism,” among others, are used to make sense of the state of affairs to which Paul is responding in his doctrine of justification. Such categories have at times been helpful, while other times they have clouded the issue. Frequently scholars discuss the issue of justification without fully appreciating how critical such categories and their inherent assumptions about first-century Judaism are to the entire justification discussion. The fact is, however, that it is difficult to overestimate how significant one’s understanding on this point is for the Pauline doctrine of justification. The New Perspective on Paul, along with most of the scholarship that has followed it, rests almost entirely on the assumption that the Reformational understanding of justification was simply wrong in its assessment of first-century Judaism as legalistic.² This is the major burden of E. P. Sanders’ monumental

¹Thomas R. Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 241.

²“To be sure, if Sanders succeeds, then [the traditional view of justification] is in serious difficulties; if all Jews were covenantal nomists as he describes them, then Judaism cannot function as the negative vestibule to Christianity’s alternative system of salvation through faith alone” (Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 121).

Paul and Palestinian Judaism, and it has continued as an assumed premise in virtually all of Pauline scholarship.³ It is arguably *the* reason that, in the last several decades, scholars have turned away from the Reformational understanding of justification to look elsewhere for the meaning of Pauline statements on justification.⁴

Prior to this, as has been frequently noted, a legalistic Judaism was often set up as the dark backdrop against which Christianity could shine more brightly. For example, Sanders states, “The supposed legalistic Judaism of scholars from Weber to Thyen (and doubtless later) serves a very obvious function. It acts as the foil against which superior forms of religion are described.”⁵ In other words, the traditional view has taken a religion where man’s acceptance with God *is* based on works and set it over against one where man is freely accepted by God through grace.⁶

³See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). While Sanders was the one who finally commended such an approach to broader scholarship, he was not without important predecessors (see n. 37 in chap. 1). For example, see the almost prophetic description of George Foot Moore’s work in the early twentieth-century by Samuel Sandmel, *The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 66: “If I were asked to comment on the chief difference between the attitude toward Judaism in the Christian scholarship prior to Moore’s time and that after it, I would say that, prior to Moore’s time, there was almost no effort to be fair to Judaism, and since Moore’s time, there has been a considerable effort, and considerable attainment, especially in America and Britain. There is still a great distance to go, but I have every confidence, possibly naïvely so, that that ability of scholarship to correct itself will some day bring about the assertion of detachment and objectivity even in this field.”

⁴To be sure, it is not the only reason, as a general dissatisfaction with justification by faith as the central theme of Paul began well before Sanders. However, Sanders provided overwhelming evidence for this dissatisfaction from both Jewish and Pauline sources so that it became firmly lodged within scholarship.

⁵Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 57. Of course, depending upon one’s vantage point, the issue can be seen to have roots much earlier than this. For example, Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 13, writes that even by Augustine “the church had developed a theologically motivated stereotype of Judaism” where “Jews were legalists who rejected human mercy and God’s grace.”

⁶As an example of this, see Rudolf Bultmann’s sections on “Jewish Legalism” and “The Proclamation of Jesus,” in *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), 59-79: “Thus repentance itself became a good work which secured merit and grace in the sight of God. In the end the whole range of man’s relation with God came to be thought of in terms of merit, including faith itself” (71), whereas in the proclamation of Jesus, man “must approach God like a child, content to receive a gift, and innocent of any appeal to privilege or merit (Mark 10.15)” (ibid.,

Sanders argued that this was simply wrong and that the traditional view had not listened carefully to the evidence of Judaism itself. Instead, it consisted of a “retrojection of the Protestant-Catholic debate into ancient history, with Judaism taking the role of Catholicism and Christianity the role of Lutheranism.”⁷ For Sanders, such an understanding did not cohere with the evidence and so was rejected. James Dunn, then, arguing that Sanders’ assessment of Judaism had finally provided scholars the ability “to see Paul properly within his own context,”⁸ introduced the idea that Paul was not arguing against a general conception of “good works” after all. Instead, his polemic was aimed at more specific, covenantal works, such as circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. Such works are better understood as “badges” that are “simply what membership of the covenant people involves, what mark out the Jews as God’s people.”⁹ Similarly, N. T. Wright, also building his work on justification on the foundation Sanders laid, contended that Paul was not arguing against “straightforward self-help moralism or against the more subtle snare of ‘legalism’, as some have suggested,”¹⁰ but rather against works of the law as “things which divide Jews from Gentiles.”¹¹ In such a context the New Perspective on Paul was born.¹² Hence, the desire to move away from any conception of Paul’s

73) (however, also see the caution of Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* [London: T. & T. Clark, 2004], 7 n. 12: “This is Bultmann at his worst. Bultmann at his best is another matter”).

⁷Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 57.

⁸James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 103 (originally published in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester* 65 [1983]: 95-122; subsequent page number references will be to the more recent publication).

⁹Dunn, “New Perspective,” 111.

¹⁰N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 121-22.

¹¹N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 117.

¹²Other scholars could, of course, be added, but Sanders, Dunn, and Wright are the ones generally considered the pillars of the New Perspective on Paul.

opponents as legalistic is a central, if not *the* central, motivation of the New Perspective on Paul.

The purpose of the present chapter, however, is to challenge this assumption, at least in part. It is my contention that Paul *is* responding to a form of legalism within a strand of Judaism in his milieu, though with three additional remarks. First, this legalism is not descriptive of all of first-century Judaism and certainly does not mean that past caricatures and distortions of the religion were, after all, correct. Hopefully the reader will see that the argument here is for something very different. Second, to be sure, the term “legalism” is one that is prone to ambiguity, misinterpretation, and subjectivity. It must be both defined and used carefully. Third, the subject matter in this chapter could easily be extended into a full-length work. The topic of “soteriology” in first-century Judaism is a highly complex one, and it is not my intention to delve at great length into the primary Jewish sources, nor to offer any kind of final word on the subject on the whole.¹³ Rather, the point is to suggest the presence of a “legalistic” approach to the law that is plausible based on factors within Paul’s context that will be mentioned below.

Such an approach, admittedly, runs the risk of naiveté. New Testament scholars do well to heed the caution of C. G. Montefiore: “Rabbinic Judaism seems to be the one department of learning about which many great scholars have been willing to make assertions without being able to read the original authorities, or to test the references and statements of the writers whom they quote.”¹⁴ Certainly students of Paul have limitations in this field. However, with caution it is possible to avoid making the

¹³For a good recent treatment of the subject, see Michael F. Bird, “Salvation in Paul’s Judaism” (unpublished paper for the interdisciplinary seminar on Paul and Judaism hosted by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, September 2009) [on-line]; accessed 20 July 2011; available from <http://theo.kuleuven.be/cms2/uploads/Bird%20-%20Salvation%20in%20Paul%27s%20Judaism.pdf>; Internet.

¹⁴C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul: Two Essays* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1915), 7.

kind of unfounded assertions that Montefiore has in mind. Moreover, it is virtually impossible to avoid this subject and still hope to say something meaningful about justification. The legalism issue lies at the core of all “perspectives” on Paul, whether acknowledged or not. What exactly Paul is responding *to* in his attack on works of the law will largely determine what Paul is arguing *for* with regard to justification by faith.

Therefore, with these caveats in mind, I will argue that enough scholarship has been done in recent years at least to raise the possibility that the case against Jewish legalism has been exaggerated to some degree.¹⁵ If this is so, part of the foundation of the New Perspective, and especially its more corporate view of justification, would become less firm. By extension, if this is the case, the interpreter would be permitted to rethink some long-held assumptions, allowing for readings of Paul that would normally be rejected based on what is now considered conventional wisdom. If a form of legalism was present in first-century Judaism, then it may be that Paul actually is addressing some of the issues that arise from the more individual understanding of justification.

To be sure, such a line of argument would not negate important contributions made by the New Perspective to our understanding of Paul. These should in no way be disregarded. However, it may provide evidence that would slow down the pendulum that has tended to swing away from the more individual approach in recent years, opening the subject up for reconsideration. Therefore, the intention of the chapter is to show that a plausible case for legalism can be made and then, in the following chapters, to demonstrate how such an assumption helps explain several key Pauline texts that relate to justification, at the same time making a more strictly corporate approach more difficult. Thus, the present argument will require a measure of patience, as it will receive more

¹⁵More will be said on this below but as one example for now one may note the observation of Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 294, that “Paul is an extremely important witness to the presence of the element of works-righteousness within the overall covenantal nomism of first-century Judaism.”

support in subsequent chapters, where exegesis will demonstrate its plausibility.

Legalism Defined

Before moving further, however, “legalism”—an elusive term, to be sure—needs to be defined. One hesitates to use it at all because of the way it is prone to abuse and misconstrual, and no doubt many would prefer to avoid it altogether. However, while sympathetic to such concerns, it is my view that the term hits on something very specific that other terms do not, and, hence, it still has value so long as it is used carefully. Recently, Kent Yinger has examined the subject, noting that “little careful work has been done on defining this term in biblical and theological studies, the arenas of its greatest use.”¹⁶ He goes on to argue that for the sake of precision the term “should be reserved for soteriological legalism,” where “salvation is obtained by human obedience.”¹⁷ This is opposed to other related ideas, such as “ritualism” or “casuistry.”¹⁸ Yinger’s clarifications are useful, and the usage intended here follows his “soteriological legalism,” though with some nuancing. Note also that this differs from a softer kind of “nomism,” which can be defined simply as a lifestyle “compatible with Jewish traditions.”¹⁹ This idea, in my view, does not say enough about the underlying intention of the obedience performed.²⁰ Thus,

¹⁶Kent Yinger, “Defining Legalism,” *AUSS* 46 (2008): 91-92. Cf. also Bernard S. Jackson, “Legalism,” *JJS* 30 (1979): 1-22.

¹⁷Yinger, “Defining Legalism,” 108.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 101-08.

¹⁹Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 86. Cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Probleme paulinischer Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, n.d.), 67, who understands “works of the law” as the “service of the law” or “nomistic service” (“Dienst des Gesetzes”); so also J. B. Tyson, “‘Works of Law’ in Galatians,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 425 (who follows Lohmeyer), “It is a system of service to God’s revealed will; it is life under law.”

²⁰Heikki Räisänen, “Legalism and Salvation by the Law: Paul’s Portrayal of the Jewish Religion as a Historical and Theological Problem,” in *Die Paulinische Literatur und Theologie*, ed. Sigfred Pedersen (Århus: Forlaget Aros, 1980), 63-64, posited a distinction between “hard” and “soft” legalism, with the former denoting “petty formalism on the one hand, and smugness and self-righteousness on the other” and the latter denoting a “system of salvation [that] consists of precepts” but is “free of any boasting

expanding Yinger's definition some, legalism may be defined in the following way: *the explicit or implicit attempt to gain salvation or favor from God based on one's obedience either to the Mosaic law or other general precepts as though the obedience in itself has ultimately prompted God's favor rather than the grace and mercy of God.*²¹

Additionally, two qualifying points must be made related to the word "implicit" in the above definition. The first is that it is entirely possible that one could participate in this kind of action without realizing one is doing it. Schreiner observes that to "describe something as legalistic is a matter of perspective,"²² and it is logical to remain open to the possibility that there may be a very real difference between Paul's view of his opponents' behavior and attitude and their own view of their approach to the

or a self-righteous attitude." While Räisänen's distinction is insightful, his explanation does not do full justice to the complexity of the issue. Whether one boasts or is smug or not, if one's ultimate hope for justification rests in obedience, this is soteriological legalism and is opposed to the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. At the same time, if the "soft" legalist did not place ultimate hope in a set of precepts but simply obeyed them because they were prescribed by God (as Räisänen seems to be read by Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC, vol. 30 [Nashville: B&H, 1994], 194), then Paul's difficulty was not with the "soft" legalist at all—this may be more properly defined as a form of "nomism." Thus, restated, Paul's polemic is not against law-keeping generically, nor any obedience to God for that matter, but law-keeping as a means to justification.

²¹This definition is not intended to deny that God expects obedience from those who follow him. However, such obedience must be undergirded and empowered by the recognition that the basis for and ongoing maintenance of relationship with God is always grace through faith. Obedience flows out of this grace-based relationship, never vice-versa.

On salvation by law, Acts 15:1 is worth considering, where some Jews want Gentiles to receive circumcision in order to be "saved" (σώζω). Of course, the word "salvation" is also an elusive term. As Leon Morris, "Salvation," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald H. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 858, writes, "For Paul 'salvation' refers to what Christ has done in his great saving act for sinners; all the Pauline passages bear on this act in some way." More broadly, Philip S. Alexander, "Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 1:261, defines the word as "the supreme good (the *summum bonum*) to which humanity, individually or collectively, can attain, the state of blessedness in which the trials and tribulations of this life are transcended and the highest perfection realized." For Paul, no doubt, the *summum bonum* that Alexander describes was found in Christ and all that he provides to the fallen human being. However, such a *summum bonum* was longed for in the OT and first-century Judaism as well. The disagreement is over where such a supreme good was to be found.

²²Schreiner, "Works of Law," 241.

law.²³ For example, it is often noted that Paul considered himself “blameless” before his Damascus road experience, suffering no distress of conscience, with Philippians 3:6 cited as evidence.²⁴ However, Mark Seifrid notes that to interpret Paul this way “represents the same sort of psychologizing involved in the older image of Paul’s anguished conscience, only in the reverse direction.”²⁵ Thus, one may read the evidence in different ways depending upon one’s perspective, and prior assumptions will often determine this.²⁶

Another example is 1 Timothy 1:13, where, whether written by Paul or a later follower, Paul is labeled a “blasphemer” (βλάσφημον) prior to his conversion. Certainly Saul the Pharisee did not in any way view his life as “blasphemous” prior to his conversion, no doubt quite the opposite. Yet, his view changes after his conversion. Hence, Paul’s “blamelessness” and presumed strength of conscience prior to his conversion are a matter of perspective and do not necessarily preclude the possibility of legalism. The same would be true of other Jews living at the time of Paul.

²³Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 180, argues along similar lines when he writes that “Paul’s texts often require us to distinguish between how adherents of more traditional forms of Jewish covenantalism understood their practice on the one hand, and how Paul understood it in the light of what God has done in Christ on the other. The latter often includes features quite at home with traditional ‘legalistic’ interpretations.” So also Heikki Räisänen, “Legalism and Salvation,” 80, who notes that Paul “understood the logic of his opponents’ position in a different way than they themselves did.”

²⁴The classic work is that of Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215, especially 200-01 (later reprinted in Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 78-96). Also important is W. G. Kümmel’s study of Romans 7, *Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1929).

²⁵Mark Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 9 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000), 27. Similarly, Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 151, writes, “Paul’s statement is in fact quite irrelevant to the question regarding his conscience. The apostle is countering the Judaizers’ claims by showing his *credentials*; all of the items listed are accessible, objectively verifiable claims.” Cf. Maurice Goguel, “KATA ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗΝ ΤΗΝ ΕΝ ΝΟΜΩΙ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΑΜΕΜΙΤΤΟΣ (Phil., 3, 6): Remarques sur un Aspect de la Conversion de Paul,” *JBL* 53 (1934): 258-59. See also the criticism of Stendahl on this verse in John M. Espy, “Paul’s ‘Robust Conscience’ Re-examined,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 163-66.

²⁶This text will be considered in more detail in chap. 5.

Second, I am arguing for the possibility of a specific manifestation of legalism within first-century Judaism, not a comprehensive definition of the religion.

Soteriological legalism is a broad concept that undoubtedly could manifest itself in multiple ways, not being bound to any one particular expression.²⁷ New Perspective authors often point out that Paul was not Luther, that he does not “smuggle Pelagius into Galatia as the arch-opponent,”²⁸ and that Judaism was not a religion where one added up good deeds in hope that they outweighed the bad in the final judgment.²⁹ While these are important reminders, they do not necessarily preclude the possibility of soteriological legalism within the hearts of some first-century Jews—legalism present within first-century Judaism does not have to mirror that of Luther’s opponents for it to exist.

As mentioned at the end of chapter 1, the argument here is for the presence of an ethnocentric legalism, which is specifically Jewish in nature and tied to the works associated with the Mosaic covenant as commonly understood within Paul’s first-century context.³⁰ Thus, the New Perspective rightly highlights the evident ethnocentrism present in justification texts, as well as the fact that many of the works in question were more outward, boundary-marking works that connected Jews to the covenant of Israel, previously established through the grace and mercy of God.³¹ However, such an

²⁷So also Moisés Silva, “The Place of Historical Reconstruction in New Testament Criticism,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, 1st Baker ed. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 119.

²⁸Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 121.

²⁹A view that E. P. Sanders vigorously refuted (see Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 33-59). Sanders attributes the beginnings of such a conception to Ferdinand Weber (*Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften*, ed. Franz Delitsch and Georg Schnedermann [Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1897]).

³⁰One could also label this “legalistic ethnocentrism.” Either way, the point is that ethnocentrism and legalism are not necessarily incompatible nor even completely separate notions.

³¹See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 383-90, on how “Torah, not least the purity codes, was regarded as the distinctive badge of the nation of Israel” (385).

admission does not rule out a deeper legalism.

To state it differently, first consider the statement of John Barclay that the problem in Galatians “is not legalism (in the sense of earning merit before God) but cultural imperialism – regarding Jewish identity and Jewish customs as the essential tokens of membership in the people of God.”³² The fact is that the distance between these two concepts is not very far. If certain Jewish people trusted primarily in ethnic works that excluded Gentiles to connect them to the people of God, while having at best an ambiguous understanding about how the mercy of God undergirded such works, then arguably this ethnocentrism was part and parcel of a soteriological legalism. In other words, when one’s hope transfers from the impartial grace of God to any kind of human performance, one tends to guard this performance fiercely, because one’s very life depends upon it.³³ Thus, the natural outworking of a legalism that was attached to Jewish works was prejudice against those who did not do the works that made one a Jew.³⁴

It should also be noted that the deliberate use of the term “legalism” is different from the idea of “nomism,” which would be a more general keeping of Jewish customs.³⁵ For example, Michael Bird argues that the categories of “legalism” or

³²John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul’s Ethics in Galatians*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 239-40. Later he writes, “Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith has to do with his rejection of Israel’s cultural pride, not any presumption that she can amass credit by good works” (251). Again, however, these two concepts are bound together—they are not separate issues. The pride of some in Israel was based on works that connected them to the covenant, which was still legalistic.

³³Of course, there were no doubt many Jews who trusted fully in the grace of God but were so accustomed to expressing this trust through specific Jewish customs that it was difficult to believe that God would not require such actions of Gentiles. One may surmise that this was the case with some of the Jewish believers at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) or with Peter’s lapse in Antioch (Gal 2:11–14). The difference in such attitudes from those that ultimately were legalistic would be a willingness to listen and be corrected (cf. Acts 11:15–18, where Peter convinces circumcised believers of God’s working among uncircumcised Gentiles).

³⁴As John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 156, points out, “Ethnocentrism and self-righteousness are morally inseparable.”

³⁵See p. 40 above.

“nationalism” may be too simplistic and the “reality may lay somewhere in-between,” preferring the category “ethnocentric nomism.”³⁶ He writes, “It may be that Paul is not confronting ‘legalism’ or ‘covenantal nomism’ but an *ethnocentric nomism* This differs from legalism in that the works performed are part of a covenantal framework that contains grace and defines the identity of God’s people.”³⁷ Though Bird possesses a nuance that is to be appreciated, the problem is that a recognition of grace in the covenant does not necessarily preclude a subtle or even unknowing reliance on obedience to garner favor with God. My concern is that the term “nomism” is too broad and may soften and obscure what Paul is attacking. To be sure, nomism was present, but the term does not say enough about *how* such obedience was being offered. If nomism is defined generally as keeping Jewish customs, this could certainly be done in such a way that was not legalistic, thereby making nomism merely a genuine faith-filled response to God. While this undoubtedly characterized the approach of some within Judaism, this does not seem to be where Paul aims his argument for faith over against works. It is directed at a nomism that implied that the works *in themselves* elicited the favor of God, which is better described as legalism. This is very different from a nomism that was a genuine, faith-oriented obedience.³⁸

Thus, for the sake of clarity the present work will continue to speak in terms of “legalism,” with the above explanations and caveats in mind. The term still possesses

³⁶Michael Bird, “Justification as Forensic Declaration and Covenant Membership,” in *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 115.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 117.

³⁸Bird, “Justification,” 116, writes that Paul attacks the idea that “Gentiles must do the deeds which separate Jews from Gentiles in order to attain the blessings of Abraham”; such an idea has a “quasi-meritorious character” but is “also bound up with Jewish exclusivism.” On this point I would fully agree but go on to say that something that is “quasi-meritorious” implies a justification by works and could still be labeled “legalism.”

value, in my view. It is not ruled out simply by saying that first-century Judaism was not sixteenth-century Roman Catholicism.³⁹ There are more factors and complexities involved.

Legalism and First-Century Judaism

Returning to the Sanders revolution, however, the question remains whether the assumption is justifiable that Sanders was successful in abolishing legalism as a way to explain any aspect of first-century Judaism. Here there are a few observations to make.

Grace in the Law?

To begin, it is not entirely without good reason that Sanders' work "has been generally perceived as ruling out accusations that Second Temple Judaism was characterized by a boastful, self-righteous 'hard' legalism."⁴⁰ Sanders quite effectively demonstrated that Judaism had been unfairly caricatured by New Testament scholars, which is a point that "old perspective" scholars should continue to remember.⁴¹ Too often, the Mosaic covenant has served simply as a foil over against which the grace of God shines forth in the Christian gospel. Admittedly, such a conception is reductionistic and oversimplifies a complicated issue.

Indeed, relevant OT and Jewish texts testify that the law was a gift to a chosen

³⁹E.g., N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 479: "Contemporary studies of first-century Judaism indicate that Paul's contemporaries did not think like Pelagius or Erasmus; they were not bent on earning their justification, or their salvation, from scratch by performing the 'works of the law.'"

⁴⁰Yinger, "Defining Legalism," 102. On "hard" legalism, see n. 20 above. Bird, "Justification," 114, writes, "Whatever one might think of Sanders' description of Palestinian Judaism's pattern of religion as 'covenantal nomism', he has forced us all to take a good long look at Judaism rather than settle for skewed caricatures of it."

⁴¹E.g., Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 239, writes that "the way Paul argues about the law with Jews and those under their influence shows that he did not regard all Jews as legalists or Judaism generally as a legalistic religion."

people who had experienced God's mercy, to be obeyed in faith and trust,⁴² with provision for forgiveness of sin provided through the sacrificial system and, ultimately, through the mercy of God.⁴³ As Thielman writes, "Obedience in the Old Testament, then, is hemmed about with expressions of God's grace."⁴⁴ Thus, Paul argues not that Jews should abandon a notion of works-righteousness inherent in the Jewish Scriptures

⁴²On the critical place of faith and trust in God in the OT, see Num 14:11 as an example: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not *believe* in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"; also Zeph 3:2: "Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city . . . she does not *trust* in the Lord; she does not draw near to her God" (my emphasis). Also see Num 20:12; Deut 9:23; Ps 78:22, 32; Jer 39:18.

⁴³On forgiveness in the law, George Howard rightly states that to "keep the law then was, among other things, to find cultic forgiveness for breaking the law" (*Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., SNTSMS 35 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 53; so also Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 140). However, Thomas R. Schreiner, "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-Examination of Galatians 3:10," *JETS* 27 (1984): 158-59, argues that Howard's view, while correct in part, ultimately falls short with regard to Paul's situation because it fails to recognize the *newness* in Paul's thought. In other words, "There is no indication that Paul believed any longer that the offering of a sacrifice in the temple would suffice" (158). Paul's thinking is new "precisely because he argued that perfect obedience to the law *was* necessary for one to obtain justification," which of course was impossible, "and thus Paul argued that faith in Christ's death on the cross was the only way to experience justification (cf. Rom 3:9-26)" (159, my emphasis).

While largely in agreement with Schreiner here, one should note further that Paul's thought was not *completely* new. Schreiner himself observes elsewhere that such perfection is implied in the very need for sacrifice in the OT itself (see Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Commands of God," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 86-87). If God did not require perfection, no atonement would have ever been necessary. Further, at some level even the OT sacrifices were not sufficient to atone fully for all sin (see, e.g., Ps 51:16; Isa 1:11; Amos 5:22). Though God certainly accepted sacrifice, many passages highlight the fact that what was more fundamental than such external action was contrition, trust, and love toward God that stemmed from a circumcised heart (see Deut 30:6). Such a strict demand as that of Deut 10:16, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn," could only be fulfilled through the mercy of God—mercy that, presumably, could only be given on the basis of a more perfect sacrifice.

Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible: Unfolding God's Plan for Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 375-78, introduces a distinction that is useful. He distinguishes between "first-level" and "second-level" forgiveness, arguing that while sacrifice provided a kind of outward cleansing for the nation of Israel, forgiveness that was lasting and gave full assurance of conscience before God could only be found on the basis of God's *hesed* (cf. Ps 51:16-18). While this distinction should probably not be pressed to its limits, it is nevertheless helpful. While animal sacrifice provided a measure of forgiveness, it also highlighted the need for the full assurance that only God's continual *hesed* could bring. No doubt Paul would argue that the basis for any *hesed* of God toward imperfect OT believers like David was always Christ's once-for-all sacrifice operating retroactively (cf. Rom 3:25-26).

⁴⁴Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 240. So also A. Andrew Das, "Paul and Works of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4-5 as a 'New Perspective' Case Study," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 798, "Critics of the new perspective have often overemphasized the demand for strict obedience to the Law at the expense of God's gracious activity."

themselves, but, rather, that they should see in their own Scriptures that the “standard Jewish position” is that works of the law do not justify and have never justified (Gal 2:15-16).⁴⁵ It should not surprise those of us committed to *sola scriptura* that grace and mercy for sinners was available before Paul. Paul’s repeated appeals to the OT, upon which he establishes his entire doctrine of justification by faith (e.g., Gal 3:6; Rom 4:3), is fundamental evidence for this.

While the limits of the present work preclude a more thorough exploration of Paul’s theology of law, suffice it to say with regard to the above point that a primary assumption throughout will be that when Paul contrasts the law with the gospel, he has in mind more the commanding function of the law—which produced death in those bereft of the accompanying circumcision of heart (cf. Rom 7:11)—and not every single aspect of the Mosaic covenant. Douglas Moo is insightful here, arguing that if “*nomos* in the relevant texts is understood to refer to the commanding aspect of the Mosaic economy, or the Mosaic economy conceived of as consisting most basically in commandments, Paul can be absolved from the charge of finding in the OT only an *Unheilsgeschichte*.”⁴⁶ Further, he maintains, “the denial that justification can come through the law (e.g., Gal 3:11) is not a denial that those ‘under the law’ could be justified,” though it “*does* constitute a denial that man could ever be justified *by means of* the law (see Gal 2:21; 3:21).”⁴⁷

To be sure, in some places Paul does elevate “law” to a salvation-historical era or theological category that is set over against one of grace and faith that has come in Christ (e.g., Gal 3:19-29; Rom 5:20-21). Even in these instances, however, Paul appears

⁴⁵Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 239. This point will be explored more fully in chap. 3.

⁴⁶Douglas J. Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” *WTJ* (1983): 88.

⁴⁷*Ibid.* (his emphasis).

to be working with a conception of the law as a set of commands that could not produce life, with the more “gracious” elements of the Mosaic era such as trust and forgiveness left out of focus.⁴⁸ This explains how biblical authors can laud faithful Israelites who rendered obedience that was imperfect at best (e.g., Heb 11; Jas 2:21-25). Such an approach also answers the objection to the traditional view that there is “no cogent way for the people of God within the Old Testament, accompanied by those Scriptures, to proceed intelligibly to the new Christian dispensation.”⁴⁹ The reality is that there is a continuity between Old and New Testament, despite significant discontinuity in the plan of God.⁵⁰

Legalism in the Law

Yet, to concede that Paul believed that grace for sinners was available before Christ does not mean there was no presence of legalism or works-righteousness among the Jewish people. It also does not mean that there was no insufficiency with the Mosaic covenant for Paul. It simply means that human beings who kept the law imperfectly could be shown God’s favor and mercy.

Notice, though, that such an idea necessarily implies an expectation of perfection inherent in the law itself. While in one sense “the law does not demand perfect obedience, since sacrifices are provided for atonement under the Sinai covenant,” in another sense “the very need for atonement confirms . . . that perfect obedience is

⁴⁸In my view, Paul sees these elements as connected to the new covenant in Christ and present in a proleptic sense in the OT more than he does as inherent to that era, at least in a theological sense. Thus, he would not separate mercy found before Christ from Christ himself. At the same time, this is not a denial that a salvation-historical shift occurred with the coming of Christ—laws such as circumcision, sacrifice, and Sabbath were no longer binding in the way they were before the coming of Christ.

⁴⁹Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 124.

⁵⁰Of course, the subject of Paul’s view of the law is complex and has been tread upon extensively, especially in the last few decades. Many of the views stated here touch upon much larger issues that cannot be addressed fully at this time.

required, since apart from sacrificial atonement such infractions remain unforgiven.”⁵¹ Sanders and the New Perspective sometimes miss this point. If perfection were not the goal, atonement would not be necessary. Yet, the ideas of atonement and forgiveness pervade the Jewish religion. As A. Andrew Das writes, “The Jews’ sins always had to be reconciled with God’s will through a process of atonement and repentance, with perfection of conduct as the ideal.”⁵² Thus, imperfect obedience was not the *ultimate* standard of the Mosaic covenant. The ultimate standard was perfection, which could only be attained one way, mercy. The idea was that such mercy worked itself out in (imperfect) obedience to the law, but the root of such obedience was always mercy, mediated through sacrifice, and received by faith.

Certainly this was the case with the great figures in Jewish history such as Moses and David, but it also unquestionably applied to countless other unknown, faithful Jews. At the same time, it is clearly recorded that many failed to attain such an understanding of God and live before him accordingly.⁵³ Throughout the OT, one finds this manifested repeatedly in outright rebellion against God, but it could also manifest itself more subtly through a legalistic obedience that assumed it could attain perfection on its own while lacking the necessary mercy, faith, and inward circumcision of the heart (e.g., Isa 29:13).

To restate, then, the fact that God was gracious to many in Israel’s history does not mean that a form of works-righteousness or soteriological legalism was completely absent in Judaism. Indeed, since Sanders’ work emerged, several studies have sought to

⁵¹Schreiner, “The Commands of God,” 86-87.

⁵²Das, “Works of Obedience,” 802. He states further, “The practical result of less-than-perfect individuals enjoying by God’s grace and mercy a place in the world to come does not mitigate the demand that the Law be obeyed in entirety without sin” (ibid., 803).

⁵³Such a state of affairs for many of the people of Israel is anticipated in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves (e.g., see Deut 31:24-29; 32:5, 28-33).

reevaluate the evidence, oftentimes questioning the far-reaching implications associated with his arguments.⁵⁴ One significant example has been the two-volume set, *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*. Two contributions are worth noting here. In the first volume, Philip S. Alexander, writing with regard to the Tannaitic literature, argues that, indeed, the gracious election of Israel is a significant concept. But he notes that such a concept also stands in “dialectical tension” with one of works-righteousness. “Tannaitic Judaism can be seen as fundamentally a religion of works-righteousness, and it is none the worse for that.”⁵⁵ Alexander’s work is largely descriptive, presenting a sympathetic and honest view of Rabbinic Judaism, but it still poses challenges to Sanders. At the very least it demonstrates that when discussing the Tannaitic literature one should be cautious with the concept of grace, as the “superiority of grace over law is not self-evident and should not simply be assumed.”⁵⁶

In the same volume, D. A. Carson offers a critique with regard to the broad nature of “covenantal nomism,” observing that “Sanders’s formula is rather difficult to falsify, precisely because it is so plastic that it hides more than it reveals.”⁵⁷ Further,

⁵⁴The assessment of Jacob Neusner, “Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,” in *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic Reply to Professor E. P. Sanders*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, no. 84 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 246, that the book is “so profoundly flawed as to be hopeless and . . . useless in accomplishing its stated goals of systemic description and comparison” goes too far, in my view. At the same time, there is truth in his claim that “Sanders pays too much attention to the anti-Judaism of New Testament scholars” (ibid., 245). This unconcealed burden of Sanders tends to color his work.

⁵⁵Alexander, “Torah and Salvation,” 300.

⁵⁶Ibid. See also Das, “Works of Obedience,” 801-03, who criticizes Sanders’ approach for an “overemphasis on the gracious ‘framework’ at the expense of the strict demand for obedience”; Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, WUNT 2/241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 201, who writes that while “early Judaism was not a religion of legalistic works-righteousness whereby man attempts to earn favour before God through his own autonomous deeds . . . in many Jewish writings God’s saving grace is a response to prior human action.”

⁵⁷D. A. Carson, “Summaries and Conclusions,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 1:544.

Carson suggests that “covenantal nomism has become a rubric so embracing that it includes within its capacious soul huge tracts of works-righteousness or merit theology.”⁵⁸ While Carson’s conclusions have been criticized by some,⁵⁹ one point remains: to use “covenantal nomism” as a category to describe first-century Judaism does not necessarily rule out the presence of legalism within some elements of the religion.

Other scholars make similar points. Simon Gathercole has questioned key New Perspective assumptions through an examination of the concept of Jewish boasting. After a survey of obedience in early Judaism, Gathercole argues that the lack of emphasis in Pauline scholarship “on Jewish confidence on the basis of obedience is unjustified.”⁶⁰ Jacob Neusner argues that, while Sanders succeeds in writing an apologetic work against “a considerable social problem of our age,” anti-Judaism, he fails to accurately describe the Jewish religion as a system over against Pauline theology, and “systems which have not been accurately described cannot be compared.”⁶¹ On the task of describing Judaism, Douglas Campbell writes that “Judaism is best viewed as a coalition of different Judaisms” and that “there were many Judaisms in existence at the time of Paul.”⁶²

⁵⁸Ibid., 1:545

⁵⁹E.g., see James D. G. Dunn, review of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, *Trinity Journal* 25 (2004): 113; John M. G. Barclay, review of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (2005): 92.

⁶⁰Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 197.

⁶¹Neusner, “Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,” 246.

⁶²Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 117. Other studies that demonstrate the varied nature of second-temple Judaism include Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Friedrich Avemarie, “Erwählung und Vergeltung: Zur optionalen Struktur rabbinischer Soteriologie,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 108-26 (who argues that both ideas of election and human working are present in rabbinic “soteriology”); idem, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur*, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 55 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of Election: Paul’s Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel*,

Finally, Michael Bird suggests that “‘variegated nomism’ is a better description of second-temple Judaism since it permits a far greater diversity of beliefs concerning the role of the law, covenant, grace and eschatology than ‘covenantal nomism’ does.”⁶³

To be sure, these are merely snippet views of studies that speak to the much larger issue of the nature of second-temple Judaism. However, what these studies provide is cause for proceeding judiciously when making use of Sanders’ findings. They demonstrate that the issue is complex and that it is doubtful that any one label can adequately describe first-century Judaism on the whole.⁶⁴ The common thread of these various critiques of Sanders is that his category of “covenantal nomism,” while helpful in moving us toward a better understanding of first-century Judaism, is insufficient for categorizing every element within the religion.⁶⁵ As Francis Watson writes, it “leaves open the question as to how precisely covenant and law observance are related” and while Sanders “favours one type of answer to that question, this may not be the only possibility.”⁶⁶ If this is true, then it seems that it is entirely possible that one of the

WUNT II/202 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Francis Watson, “Not the New Perspective” (unpublished paper presented at the British New Testament Conference, Manchester, September, 2001) [on-line]; accessed 20 July 2011; available from <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/divinity/staff/watsonart.shtml>; Internet.

⁶³Bird, “Justification,” 114. So also Klyne Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace – to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 77: “While one can readily agree with Sanders that Judaism has been much maligned inaccurately, his analysis does not do justice to the diversity of themes or the abuse of these themes in various parts of Judaism.”

⁶⁴Cf. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 17-18, “It is unfortunate that, in reaction against modern Lutheran readings of Paul, it is now widely assumed that all strands of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity held broadly the same view of the relationship between ‘divine grace’ and ‘human response.’”

⁶⁵As Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 120, writes, “In sum, the picture of late Second Temple Judaism emerging from these studies is a nuanced one. It is above all diverse, and this diversity can be accurately mapped only in terms of various interrelated principles, axes, and continua.”

⁶⁶Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 8. See also idem, *Beyond the New Perspective*, xii, where he writes, “I also believe that the insistence that ‘Judaism is a religion of grace’ has had its day, and that the

elements Sanders has overlooked or underestimated is, in fact, a form of works-righteousness that existed among some Jews during Paul's time of writing.

Possible Objections

At this point, two possible objections should be addressed. The first is one that surfaces in the recent work of Douglas Campbell. Campbell, while clearly indebted to Sanders, nevertheless concedes that Sanders' argument is not flawless and that there is a "basic naivety" in "attempting to reduce late Second Temple Judaism's complex and subtle variations to a uniform description."⁶⁷ Yet, for Campbell such an admission does not prove that the traditional approach to justification, what he calls "Justification theory," is correct.⁶⁸ Justification theory can only be correct if law-observance and legalism are connected fully to "negative emotional accompaniments" and encompass *all* of Judaism. Campbell writes that this is simply not the case and that Judaism was too varied to be set up as a monolithic category over against which one can set "Justification theory."⁶⁹ Thus, the traditional approach will work only through a "rehabilitation of an *extreme* form of legalism," which is simply not present in the extant Jewish sources.⁷⁰

In some ways Campbell is correct. For "Justification theory" to work as he has described it one would need to find a completely perfectionistic, legalistic Judaism in the

extraordinary creativity and diversity of Second Temple Judaism should not be reduced to a singular soteriological scheme."

⁶⁷Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 119.

⁶⁸See chap. 1 on Campbell's approach. For Campbell's summary of "Justification theory" in propositional form, see *Deliverance of God*, 28-29. Some of the "key metaphors" in "Justification theory" include: a conception of "humanity as individual, rationalistic and self-interested" and "God as an authority figure of strict justice," humanity's "self-perceived ethical incapacity," a "compensatory mechanism of satisfaction, namely, Christ's atonement," and a "stipulated criterion of salvation's appropriation, namely, faith" (*ibid.*, 34-35).

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 121. He argues that "rabbinic law observance is not necessarily best comprehended within a soteriological or an individually self-interested framework" (118).

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 121 (my emphasis).

source material. Thus, the only way to rehabilitate such an approach to justification is to rehabilitate a view of Judaism that has been shown essentially to be a figment of the scholar's imagination.⁷¹ If Campbell's premise about "Justification theory" is correct, his point is devastatingly accurate.

However, the problem is that Campbell's description of the traditional view of justification and its view of first-century Judaism is too one-dimensional. Much of the work in his book rests on viewing "Justification theory" as a consistent, monolithic entity developed in response to the consistent, monolithic entity of a supposed legalistic first-century Judaism. However, while such an understanding may be applicable to some scholarship—especially pre-Sanders—it does not do full justice to the whole of the traditional approach to justification.⁷² For example, while Paul can argue against works of the law for justification in some places, he also clearly values the law and his Jewish heritage in other places, and many in the traditional camp readily acknowledge such a tension. Campbell's description of the traditional approach in terms of his "Justification theory" does not allow for such variation.⁷³ Similar to Sanders' covenantal nomism, Campbell's "Justification theory" seems to be an attempt to create a category that cannot hold everything it is designed to hold. The result is the unfair conclusion that every element of the traditional view must be abandoned in light of his arguments about first-

⁷¹He writes, "In sum, it seems doubtful that a harsh perfectionism of the sort prescribed by Justification can be found in the Jewish sources at all" (ibid., 114). In order to function, "[Justification] needs a characterization of Judaism in terms of legalistic perfection that thereby marries theory with an intensely negative – and hence propulsive – psychology. And – not surprisingly – this is just what neither Sanders nor his critics (generally!) find in the sources" (ibid.).

⁷²As Douglas J. Moo, "Review Article of *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* by Douglas A. Campbell," *JETS* 53 (2010): 145, has noted recently, "Campbell's 'Justification Theory' is a bit of a pastiche, drawn from exegetes, theologians, and Christian ministries and confessions over many centuries. The result is that he includes in 'Justification Theory' some elements that most supporters of a traditional reading of Pauline justification, would label as optional at best."

⁷³E.g., Moo questions the validity of Campbell's assumption that the traditional view of justification always entails a "preparatory phase in which sinful humans recognize their failure to follow God's law and make an 'empirical' decision to accept in faith the offer of salvation in Christ" (ibid.).

century Judaism.

Rather than a monolithic categorization of Judaism, what is being argued for here is ethnocentric legalism as descriptive of some within Judaism, not the whole of the religion. It is, however, what has sparked Paul's need to contrast faith with works of the law for justification. At some level, then, Paul *is* responding to a kind of "extreme" or "hard" legalism, the kind that Campbell believes cannot be rehabilitated for Judaism on the whole. While he is right that it cannot be rehabilitated for all of Judaism, it could be rehabilitated in the sense that the actions of those to whom Paul is responding imply a "hard" legalistic soteriology, even if grace is acknowledged in theory.

A second objection would be that the term "legalism" is unnecessary, as what appears legalistic could be explained differently, thus softening some of the harshness of Paul's apparent polemic against Judaism. Such approaches have the advantage of making elements of the traditional approach to justification more palatable in a post-Sanders milieu, addressing important work that has been done in recent decades while not entirely rejecting the traditional view. This desire for balance is certainly to be appreciated, but this approach still inevitably runs into problems.

One significant example is Bruce Longenecker. Longenecker provides a careful and nuanced portrait of Paul within first-century Judaism, one that avoids extremes and demonstrates a genuine concern for the textual evidence.⁷⁴ However, with regard to Jewish legalism, his portrait is not fully sufficient, in my view. Longenecker writes that while there are "passages where Paul does seem to suggest that nomistic observance can be a form of legalism," the target of Paul's polemic is nevertheless "the

⁷⁴See, e.g., Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*; idem, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11*, JSNTSup 57 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); idem, "Sharing in Their Spiritual Blessings? The Stories of Israel in Galatians and Romans," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

attempt to define the covenant according to ethnic or national lines.”⁷⁵ For Longenecker, “a charge of legalism should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that legalism is what Paul is attacking,” because the only reason Judaism is now seen as legalism is that “God’s covenant grace is defined in exclusive reference to Christ.”⁷⁶ In other words, whatever Paul is attacking could not be attacked before Christ came and so is different from what is usually construed as legalism. It is problematic on this side of Christ only, arising not from any kind of anthropological plight but from Paul’s “own transformed view” and functioning “as a strategy for discrediting an attitude of ethnic privilege.”⁷⁷ In this way Longenecker walks a fine line and is able to account both for Sanders’ work as well as passages that appear to show legalism.

However, while Longenecker’s nuance is admirable, the problem is that Paul does not seem to limit the issue to the post-advent period. He repeatedly appeals to the OT to substantiate his argument to Jews, as though his point is not completely new and should in some measure be understood from their own Scriptures. This implies that whatever he is attacking is not only the result of new revelation but is also organically connected to the Jewish situation before the coming for Christ.

There are two further comments to make on this last point. First, to be sure, it is true that Paul came to his view of the law after he came to faith in Christ. However,

⁷⁵Bruce W. Longenecker, “Contours of Covenant Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul,” in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 140; also idem, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 270.

⁷⁶Longenecker, “Contours of Covenant Theology,” 141. Elsewhere he writes that “at the forefront of Paul’s gospel is reliance on God’s gracious invasion and invading grace Accordingly, against this all-encompassing backdrop of the invasion of God, human activity [including the law] comes to nought, even if it is well-meaning and is carried out on the basis that God is in fact gracious” (Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham’s God*, 181). Thus, it is only because of the invasion of God’s grace that Paul began to view previously benign nomistic observance as legalistic. On this point, Longenecker appears close to Sanders’ classic view that “this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity” (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552)—the argument runs from solution to plight, not vice-versa.

⁷⁷Longenecker, “Contours of Covenant Theology,” 141.

this point does not necessarily negate legalism, here one must recall the point made above about legalism being a matter of one's vantage point. That Paul did not consider his former life legalistic while living it does not mean that it was not, in fact, legalistic. Second, there is a fundamental unbelief inherent in legalism as defined above. Biblical faith requires a turning away from oneself to receive something from God, while legalism does the opposite. It relies on its own resources, such as correct doctrine, acts of piety, or ethnic markers, instead of the mercy of God. Thus, it is likely that Paul understood the unbelief that manifested itself in the rejection of Christ as the ultimate form of fulfillment of the unbelief that was inherent in the legalism that was present before Christ's coming as well. For Paul, while the nature and object of this faith were not fully revealed before Christ, there has never been any other faith, nor any other means of justification before God.⁷⁸

Thus, the question for a view such as that of Longenecker would be, why could Paul not have been attacking both ethnocentrism *and* legalism, or, better, ethnocentric legalism? If it looks so much like legalism, why dismiss the possibility that legalism actually existed in first-century Judaism? To my mind, there are only two possible

⁷⁸Of course, there is discontinuity in Paul's theology of law as well. In some places the apostle presents a wider panoramic of God's ultimate design, where the law has a temporary and specific role, such as its purpose in "increasing the trespass" (ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα) of mankind before the appearance of Christ (Rom 5:20; also Gal 3:19). As Seifrid, *Christ, our Righteousness*, 98, points out, "the law of Moses has a limited role," presenting "the demands of God upon humanity under its fallen condition," and "having been given to Israel for the world (Rom. 3:19-20)."

One also thinks of more apocalyptic-oriented approaches to Paul's theology, where the law is part of the old age that has been defeated and is passing away in Christ (e.g., as in the work of J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], esp. 235-54; J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Galatians," *NTS* 31 [1985]: 410-24; idem, *Galatians*, AB, vol. 33A [New York: Doubleday, 1997]; idem, "The Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians," *Int* 54 [2000]: 246-66, both of whom were influenced by Ernst Käsemann [see, e.g., "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 108-37]). My intention is not to neglect this element of Pauline thought, which, though it cannot be done fully here, must be reconciled at some level with the continuity that is present in Paul's view of the law (as Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 242, states, "Continuity and discontinuity, then, are a hallmark of Paul's view of the law"). Nevertheless, the present argument is that when Paul has in mind the *manner* in which human beings are justified before God—when he contrasts faith with works of the law—he has in mind a fundamental continuity in God's dealings with man, which is the phenomenon of faith.

reasons. The first would be the underlying assumption that Sanders has shown that Paul *could not* be attacking legalism, which is a questionable assumption based on subsequent work done on the subject, mentioned above. The second would be a concern to avoid anti-Judaism, which, to be sure, is understandable. Still, presuppositions about what constitutes anti-Judaism will vary on this issue, and these should not be allowed to cloud the reality of Paul's context. Moreover, admitting that first-century Judaism contained *some* legalism does not mean that Paul was making this charge against all of Judaism. Moreover, Judaism is by no means uniquely worthy of the charge, as Christianity has certainly possessed its own share of legalism as well.

To be sure, the kind of balanced approach to the issue that Longenecker takes is a good way forward, genuinely attempting to take seriously what Sanders has demonstrated while still taking seriously texts that appear to indicate a measure of works-righteousness.⁷⁹ However, at times too much is granted to the New Perspective position on this issue, and interpretation of key justification texts becomes more forced, opening scholars up to inconsistency and further problems. As the following chapters seek to demonstrate, if the legalism issue is not given its due, many passages become more difficult to explain.⁸⁰ Paul's contrast of faith with works for justification is best explained

⁷⁹Along similar lines, Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 86, argues that first-century Jewish Christians were not "legalistic," that is, "attempting to gain favor with God by means of Torah observance," but "nomistic," that is, "expressing their Christian convictions in their lifestyle in ways compatible with Jewish traditions." But when "such a nomistic stance was foisted on Gentile Christians—whether consciously as in the Judaizers' activities or inadvertently by Peter's withdrawal from table fellowship—relations between the Mosaic law and the message of the gospel became antithetical, with legalism the result." Longenecker is certainly insightful here, but it seems logical that if it was legalism *after* being foisted on Gentiles, then it was legalism *before* as well. For Paul, imposing it on Gentiles was merely an outward indicator that these particular Jews were ultimately trusting in the wrong object—circumcision—rather than God's mercy, either before or after Christ.

⁸⁰For example, Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 332, who clearly favors the traditional approach, at times seems hesitant on the subject, preferring Räisänen's "soft" legalism to describe Paul's opponents (see n. 20 above) instead of a hypocritical, "merit mongering" legalism. Concerning Rom 1:18-3:20 he writes that "one searches the argument in vain for the notion that Jewish obedience to the law's statutes is marked by a 'legalistic spirit'" (320). While derogatory descriptions such as "merit mongering" should certainly be

when the reader understands Paul to be responding to *actual* legalism—a legalism that was present before and after Christ.⁸¹

Thus, to summarize, I am indeed arguing for a kind of “hard” legalism, one that was implied by certain actions, though grace was acknowledged in theory, and with two further qualifications. First, such an understanding does not describe every individual Jew nor every aspect of the Jewish religion, certainly not how the Mosaic law had to be understood or was understood by every Israelite. It seems entirely possible that Paul’s justification polemics could be directed toward one element of first-century Judaism but not all, with other aspects of his thought on the law stemming from elsewhere, all under the umbrella of a cohesive theology of law. Second, and this point is one of the most critical, Paul is responding to something that is nowhere fully described in the relevant primary sources, because those who practiced it would almost always be unaware of it themselves.

Thus, while Campbell writes that “the particular definition of Judaism prescribed by Justification theory is simply not found in the extant Jewish sources,” this, to my mind, does not close the case.⁸² As already mentioned, Campbell has in mind a completely perfectionistic and legalistic Judaism, which is not what is being posited here. Moreover, it is extremely unlikely that anyone would ever choose to describe themselves as legalistic in the manner described above. Legalism, in many ways, is in the eye of the

discarded, one wonders about a text like Rom 4:4. Is not the idea of someone “working” and earning a “wage” as opposed to receiving a “gift” the very definition of a “legalistic spirit”? And, if so, why would Paul resort to this line of argument if some Jews were not approaching their relationship to God in such a manner (see chap. 4 below for more on this text)? The hesitancy here, understandable as it is, may be obscuring the textual evidence in some measure.

⁸¹Part of the reason legalism had to be present before Christ is because, according to Paul, *faith* as a means to justification was present before Christ. No doubt he would understand this faith as a kind of proleptic faith *in Christ*, but justification by faith is nevertheless understood as existing before the historical advent of the Messiah. Thus, his argument, while implemented in a specific cultural context, still possesses a measure of timelessness.

⁸²Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 113.

beholder. Thus, if one does not see such an approach to the law spelled out in the primary sources, it does not necessarily mean it did not exist. The better question is, *do the sources affirm such a state of affairs as a possibility, and does such a possibility make sense of critical justification texts in Paul?* The former has already been established in studies critiquing covenantal nomism, and the latter is what the rest of the dissertation seeks to demonstrate.

Further Evidence

To this point in the chapter, the aim has been to highlight the shortcomings of the Sanders paradigm-shift and suggest that the possibility of Jewish legalism still exists. This section will offer a few other observations as evidence that Paul could be responding to a form of legalism. None of these are the final word on the subject but are supplemental to the argument made thus far.

First, apart from all discussion of first-century Judaism, it could be argued that it is a temptation in virtually any religious system, not least the Christian faith, for an individual or group to begin subtly believing that their actions somehow put the god of that religion in their debt at some level, even if one eschews such an approach in theory.⁸³ The extremes of the Roman Catholic Church to which Luther was responding in his era serve as the classic example. But even today in the United States anything from refraining from alcohol consumption to choice of Bible translation can become a mark of piety that more or less decides if one is truly a believer. Every church wrestles with such tendencies at some level.

⁸³Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 115, writes that the “history of the Christian church amply demonstrates that a theology of grace does not preclude legalism in practice” and (referencing Robert H. Stein) “if Judaism were not legalistic at all, it would be the only religion in history that escaped the human propensity for works-righteousness.” See also Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 247.

Second, the writings of the OT prophets testify to the presence of a kind of formalistic religion that relied on external actions for favor from God instead of genuine trust leading to heart-oriented obedience. Isaiah 29:13 is characteristic: “And the Lord said . . . ‘this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men’” (ESV). This text, not insignificantly, is also picked up by Jesus in the Gospels and applied to some in his own day (Matt 15:7-8; Mark 7:6-8). In Amos 5:21-24, God registers his hatred for the outward observances of his people, because they perform them while ignoring the true intent of the law, which was justice and righteousness (also cf. Isa 1:11-17; 58:2-7; Zech 7:5-6). While the language of “legalism” is foreign to texts such as these, the reality described is closely related. When people assume their outward actions are sufficient to continue in the favor of God, at the same time neglecting matters of the heart that stem from faith and love, then essentially they have engaged in a functional soteriological legalism.

Third, following the exile the law is elevated even higher in the already Torah-centric Jewish religion and culture. Everett Ferguson states, “The Jews understood the national tragedy of 586 B.C. as due to the failure to keep the law of Moses. Following the exile the study of the law became a duty of supreme importance (cf. 2 Baruch 85:3) and brought the class of professional scribes (*soferim*; cf. Ezra 7:6) to prominence as the interpreters of the law.”⁸⁴ Further, R. H. Gundry has argued that if one weighs the emphases of the Pauline and Palestinian Jewish literature, in the latter one finds an increased focus on the law and are left with the impression of Palestinian Judaism as

⁸⁴Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 539. Silva, “Historical Reconstruction,” 118, writes, “That the Jews were preoccupied with legal issues goes without saying: the massive amount of material brought together in the Talmud consists primarily of attempts to interpret, apply, and expand those of the Old Testament laws intended to regulate the life of God’s people” (Silva is not arguing that this is necessarily negative). See also Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 60-64

centered more on law-keeping than on grace, whereas the opposite is true in Pauline theology.⁸⁵ He is worth quoting at length:

Weighing the materials of Palestinian Judaism shows a preponderance of emphasis on obedience to the law as the way of staying in. The covenant, based on God's elective grace, may be presupposed; but it has no prominence (as Sanders admits). Rather, the law is searched, pulled, stretched, and applied. The rabbis start building a fence around it in order that people may not even come close to breaking it. A body of interpretative or applicatory traditions start piling up, also a body of oral legal traditions (written down finally in the Mishnah) which parallel the written law of the OT. These traditions draw the criticism in the NT outside of Pauline literature that they smother the original intent of the law (see Mark 7,6-13; par. Matt 15,3-9 for the classic passage). Whether it was Jesus or the early church that was originally responsible for the criticism and whether or not the criticism was just, the very raising of the issue establishes a Palestinian Jewish preoccupation with the law and with its careful observance and indicates a basic disagreement between Palestinian Judaism and Christianity at this point.⁸⁶

Of course, elevation and preoccupation with the law do not necessarily imply a negative kind of legalism. However, if such an observation is coupled with the common human inclination toward pride evidenced throughout Scripture, it is not particularly surprising that some Jews might have had the tendency to elevate a formalistic obedience to the law to the highest form of religious expression wherein it becomes the reason in itself for receiving favor from God, to the neglect of his grace and mercy.

Fourth, as the Gundry quote above mentions, the Gospels provide their own measure of evidence for a kind of legalistic attitude and behavior toward the law. This is especially the case, of course, with the portrait of the Pharisees in the NT.⁸⁷ All four

⁸⁵R. H. Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Bib* 66 (1985): 6.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷For a carefully nuanced and insightful approach to first-century Pharisaism, see Silva, "Historical Reconstruction," 112-21. Cf. also Watson, *Beyond the New Perspective*, 22, who connects the "fierce loyalty to ancestral traditions that led Paul to persecute the church" to Pharisaism—the "Pauline separation from 'Judaism' is separation from Pharisaism, understood as representing a 'national orthodoxy'" (24). The question, to my mind, is not whether being a Pharisee necessarily entailed legalism (surely it did not), but whether the nature of the Pharisaical Judaism in which Paul participated lent itself to legalism, and this was influential for Paul (this seems probable).

Gospels illustrate this to one degree or another. To be sure, because of the history of the discussion in NT studies it is necessary to be cautious here—discretion must be used to avoid statements that caricature the Pharisees and set them up as the foil for Christianity.⁸⁸ Still, the evidence in the Gospels is worth considerable attention.⁸⁹

Arguably the clearest example is in the Gospel of Luke in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector (18:9-14). The parable specifically states at the outset that Jesus told it “to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt” (πρός τινας τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι καὶ ἐξουθενοῦντας τοὺς λοιποὺς). Luke then, through the words of Jesus, depicts the Pharisee standing proudly, recounting several things that highlight the fact that he was “righteous”—implying little need for grace—while the tax-collector is shown in a strikingly opposite manner, not able to lift his head, simply crying out to God for mercy. Further, while Luke’s use of the verb δικαιῶ may not mirror Paul’s exactly, 18:14 still provides a telling choice of words: κατέβη οὗτος δεδικαιωμένος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ παρ’ ἐκεῖνον, “this one [the tax-collector] went down to his house justified, rather than the other.” Hence, one of the men was shown to “trust in his own righteousness,” while the other trusted in God’s mercy for his righteousness. In some measure, then, the Pharisee

⁸⁸As James D. G. Dunn, “Pharisees, Sinners, and Jesus,” in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 61, notes, the “horror of the Holocaust forced a much wider circle of Christians to re-examine the nature and roots of anti-Semitism” to see if it was endemic to the Christian Scriptures themselves, and so it was inevitable that the Pharisees, as the “most immediate predecessors of rabbinic Judaism, which became Judaism’s enduring form (and so the object of anti-Semitism through the centuries) . . . would have to come under particularly close scrutiny.”

⁸⁹Despite the fact that it is sometimes considered inauthentic. E.g., E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 276, suggests that “somebody accused the Pharisees of hypocrisy and legalism, but it was not, I think, Jesus,” while Ulrich Luz, “Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of Matthew as a Historical and Theological Problem: An Outline,” in *Studies in Matthew*, trans. Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 256, writes, “The Matthean judgments on scribes and Pharisees in ch. 23 bear little or no relation to reality . . . They are prejudices against Jews, and as such they have an important function for the identity of the community.” However, the problem with Luz’s assumption—besides the fact that it is difficult to prove with textual evidence—is that, while this is indeed some of the most extreme language regarding the Pharisees, it is not completely at odds with evidence in the other Gospels (see Dunn, “Pharisees, Sinners, and Jesus,” 61-86).

functionally engages in soteriological legalism, trusting in his own supposed obedience rather than the mercy of God.

Another example outside the Gospels, but still Luke’s account, is Acts 15:1-5, where certain Jews—most likely the believing Pharisees mentioned in 15:5 (τινες τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων)—insist that Gentiles receive circumcision in order to be “saved” (see 15:1: “if you are not circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” [ἐὰν μὴ περιτμηθῆτε τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως, οὐ δύνασθε σωθῆναι]). Whatever one makes of the historicity of Luke’s account, the fact that it exists at all provides some measure of evidence for the awareness of soteriological legalism in the first century. These particular Jews, who seem to be Pharisees, place an enormous amount of soteriological import upon circumcision. As Michael Bird writes, “In Luke’s telling (assuming Luke’s accurate depiction of the proceedings), Paul’s opponents were not merely insisting on the nationalization of Gentiles into Israel as a prerequisite for fellowship in the church, but were strenuously insisting that their very salvation rested on obeying the law.”⁹⁰

While the significance of such texts would require fuller studies, and, again, one must avoid stereotypical statements about Pharisees and Judaism, such evidence is nonetheless significant and should not be disregarded.⁹¹ Westerholm observes,

The criticisms directed in the Gospels against the Pharisees go beyond their failure to respond to the message of the kingdom. Pharisaic claims of meticulous observance are depicted as leading both to pride (Mt 23:5-7; Lk 11:43; cf. *Ant.* 17.2.4 §41) and to contempt for the less observant—an unwarranted contempt, since

⁹⁰Bird, “Justification,” 114. One could make the argument that “salvation” simply meant inclusion in the Jewish covenant, therefore the issue was actually ethnocentrism. However, the fact that they make “salvation” contingent upon circumcision betrays a faulty understanding of how God “saves” and has always “saved,” which has always been apart from circumcision in an ultimate sense (Rom 4:10).

⁹¹As John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, WBC, vol. 35B (Dallas: Word, 1993), 878, points out regarding the story of the Pharisee and tax collector, “it is important that we not read this as a story about every Pharisee and every tax collector; it is a story about a Pharisee who acts so, and about a tax collector who acts so.”

the latter in turn are portrayed as more sensitive to their failings, more open to Jesus' proclamation of God's sovereignty and love (Lk 7:37-50; 15:1-32; 18:9-14; 19:1-10).⁹²

Thus, there appear to be clear examples in the Gospels that correlate, at least to some degree, to the kind of legalism that has been understood traditionally to be the counterpoint to the Pauline doctrine of justification. These examples by no means close the case, but, on the other hand, to ignore them is to ignore important evidence.

All this, then, raises the question: is there any reason not to consider that such factors played a role in Paul's situation? Is it not possible to read the textual evidence regarding justification in such a way that Paul is responding to an over-emphasis upon external obedience that downplays the true means of receiving God's favor, which is mercy? Could it be that there was some substance to the traditional view that Paul was battling legalism, while still conceding that such an idea was easily abused? In this case, *abusus non tollit usum* would be applicable: the misuse of the legalism idea does not necessarily imply that it is entirely without validity. Hence, it seems at the very least *possible* that Paul was responding to legalism in some sense. My argument is that an alternative framework be considered that allows for this.⁹³

Qualification

Before stating a few implications of the above argument for the rest of the present study, a brief qualification is necessary. While it is likely that legalism played a strong role in the formation of Paul's doctrine of justification, legalism does not explain the *whole* of Paul's issue with the law. Some scholars have tended toward such a view. For example, Daniel Fuller has argued that the phrase "'works of the law' does not

⁹²Stephen Westerholm, "Pharisees," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 613.

⁹³For another detailed treatment of whether Paul was opposing legalism, see Schreiner, *Law and Its Fulfillment*, 93-121.

represent what the law itself commands, but rather the Jewish misinterpretation of the law,” by which he means legalism.⁹⁴ Fuller is eager to protect the necessity of faith in the OT and the gracious element of the Mosaic covenant. Such an approach is not totally unrelated to that of the New Perspective, which at times is simply trying to give the OT and other Jewish literature a fair hearing. Insofar as this is the intended goal, one should not be too hasty to discard such concerns. However, several studies have shown that “legalism” alone does not do full justice either to the phrase “works of the law” or to Paul’s general polemic against the law.⁹⁵ Thus, the idea of “works of the law” appears to be more neutral in itself, even if humans could pursue them legalistically.

What I am suggesting is that Paul had a multifaceted view of the law informed by Scripture, his conversion, his mission to the Gentiles, and his view of salvation history, and that different texts reflect different elements of his thought. In specific texts where he speaks of the *mechanism* by which one is justified before God (faith vs. works of the law), the problem at the fore for him is not as much salvation history or other issues as it is the anthropological issue of how one is counted righteous before God. To be sure, these issues were surely not neatly partitioned from each other in Paul’s mind, but it certainly seems to be the case that different parts of his writing reflect different elements of his theology of law. It is not the case that every time Paul discusses the law he has in mind ethnocentric legalism, but that in texts where faith is contrasted with law as the means of justification it is within a context where ethnocentric legalism has sparked his polemic.

⁹⁴Daniel P. Fuller, “Paul and the Works of the Law,” *WTJ* 38 (1975): 32. Here Fuller is following the work of Ragnar Bring (e.g., *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Eric Wahlstrom [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961]) and also relies on C. E. B. Cranfield (see C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” *SJT* 17 [1964]: 43-68). Cf. also Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 1982); idem, *Unity of the Bible*.

⁹⁵E.g., Moo, “Law,” 85-88; Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 319-21; Schreiner, “Works of Law,” 235.

Conclusion and Implications

In sum, this chapter has argued that if one defines legalism according to the definition above, including the qualifications made, then it is quite possible that such a state of affairs existed within Judaism at Paul's time of writing.⁹⁶ In Paul's context this legalism was subtle and implicit, not overt as in pre-Sanders caricatures of Judaism. It was more functional, implied in large part by the forcing of circumcision upon Gentiles, rather than theoretical in nature. The work of Sanders and those who have followed him does not rule out such a possibility. Their work often does, however, highlight the ethnocentric character of the legalism present. Thus, Paul was responding to a specific form of legalism that was tightly wrapped up with assumptions about what it meant to be a Jew—hence, ethnocentric legalism.

If the case sketched above is possible from the evidence mentioned, then the more individual understanding of justification is not as open to the charge of short-sightedness as is often the case in more recent discussion. This is not to say that all Reformational readings of Paul are without problems. It is only to say that scholars may not need to jettison the general anthropological thrust in justification that the Reformational view stresses, as has tended to be the case with the New Perspective and the scholarship in its wake.

The issue of Jewish legalism is critical because it lays the foundation for the New Perspective on Paul, as well as other revisionist understandings of justification. Cracks in this foundation would not negate every important contribution made by more recent scholarship, which has clearly put its finger on important problems with the traditional understanding. There can be no return to unfair and demeaning caricatures of

⁹⁶Legalism was defined above as “the explicit or implicit attempt to gain salvation or favor from God based on one's obedience either to the Mosaic law or other general precepts as though the obedience in itself has ultimately prompted God's favor rather than the grace and mercy of God.”

Judaism, nor to an overly abstract doctrine of justification that forces Paul into preconceived systematic theology categories. Scholars also cannot ignore the fact that Paul's polemic has an anti-exclusivism shape to it. Thus, this work is not at all attempting to dismantle the New Perspective. Enough of this kind of work has already been done, with results that have not always been helpful in moving the discussion forward.

However, the fact is that cracks in the New Perspective foundation would indeed change some of the focus and direction of the debate. It would open up new lines of discussion and hopefully new ways forward toward a common goal of better understanding the text.

Therefore, the following chapters will apply a framework that does not exclude legalism as a source for Paul's polemic, while still taking into consideration the insights on first-century Judaism that the New Perspective has highlighted. Such an approach will need to be nuanced in a way different from pre-New Perspective approaches to Paul, but, in my view, it is ultimately the best route forward. What will be demonstrated is that several critical justification or justification-related texts are made clearer if such a framework is allowed for, more so than with a more strictly corporate approach to justification. However, the intent is also to show how such an approach is able to account for corporate elements in Paul as well. The next chapter will consider two allusions to Psalm 143:2 in Romans and Galatians.

CHAPTER 3

PSALM 143:2 IN GALATIANS 2 AND ROMANS 3

The previous chapter argued for the opportunity to test a framework that allowed for the presence of Jewish legalism when reading key Pauline justification texts. The rest of the dissertation will be exegetical in nature, demonstrating how, when the framework from chapter 2 is allowed for, key textual evidence in Paul highlights the individual nature of justification. This evidence also creates certain difficulties for a more strictly corporate approach to justification that views Jewish exclusivism as the sole problem to which Paul is responding. Thus, the intention of this chapter and the next is to single out three different texts that are problematic for a more strictly corporate understanding of justification. While space precludes an examination of every relevant text, these have been selected because they make the point most saliently.

What is important in each is how Paul's use of two psalm texts provides a ground for his argument for justification by faith. This occurs at critical junctures in both Galatians and Romans and serves as foundational evidence for him, providing valuable insight into his thought. The present chapter will begin by examining Paul's use of an allusion to Psalm 143:2 in two places in his discussion of justification by faith: Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20. Both uses of this allusion are found in highly significant locations within Paul's argument in these letters.

Galatians 2:16 and Psalm 143:2

Galatians 2:16 will provide a starting point, largely because Galatians is dated earlier than Romans, and many of Paul's arguments in Galatians appear to be seed-forms of his more expanded treatment in Romans. It is virtually certain that Paul at least alludes

to Psalm 143:2 in Galatians 2:16. While the exact nature of the allusion is debated, it remains overwhelmingly likely that this is an allusion to Psalm 143:2.¹

My contention is that this allusion, both here and in Romans 3:20, is ideally suited to Paul's argument if a Jewish ethnocentric legalism is what has sparked his polemic. In Psalm 143:2, the psalmist proclaims that no one living is "justified" before God, the implication being that, because of inherent unworthiness, no one can withstand the judgment of God. Human beings are by nature sinful and only God is able to intervene to provide any hope for receiving his favor. Paul, while adapting the text, nevertheless alludes to it according to its original intent, one that is highly anthropological in nature and more difficult to account for with a strictly covenantal or corporate approach to justification.

Context

Galatians 2:16 falls within the larger pericope of Galatians 2:15-21, a foundational passage within the letter. Hans Dieter Betz, well-known for his structural analysis of Galatians in terms of Greco-Roman rhetoric, labeled Galatians 2:15-21 the *propositio* of the letter.² The *propositio* is a statement of "the points of agreement and

¹Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, HTKNT 9 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 174, argues that it is not a proper citation, but when the textual evidence is examined (see p. 85 below for the alignment of Ps 142:2 LXX, Gal 2:16, and Rom 3:20), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the psalm was foundational for Paul and, though he does not cite it explicitly, he intends a clear connection that would be understandable to at least some in his audience (see James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 115-16).

²Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), especially 14-25. While Betz stretches his theory to its limits, many have still found great benefit from it. See, e.g., Moisés Silva, "Betz and Bruce on Galatians," *WTJ* 44 (1983): 377-78; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), cix-cxiv, 80-81; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1993; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 20; Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians*, in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 230. For more on rhetoric in Galatians, including some critique of Betz, see Robert G. Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 106 (1987): 277-87; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 25-36, who does not fully agree with Betz but still sees 2:15-21 as the *propositio*.

disagreement and the central issues to be proved” and is inserted between the *narratio*, the statement of facts relating to the issue at hand, and *probatio*, the development of the central arguments.³ This general idea fits the letter of Galatians well, but even if Betz’s total approach is not adopted, his point is accurate that this particular passage is foundational to the rest of the book.⁴ It is *the* “propositional statement of Galatians that then is unpacked in the arguments that follow.”⁵ Additionally, within this pericope Paul’s allusion to Psalm 143:2 in verse 16 forms an especially indispensable foundation to his argument for justification by faith in Galatians and also, as will be seen later, his argument in Romans.

Up to this point in the letter, after a greeting (1:1-5) and statement of the problem at hand (1:6-10), Paul launches into a defense of his gospel and apostleship, arguing that these were given to him by God and not man (1:11-2:10). He also recounts Peter’s failure at Antioch with regard to the gospel (2:11-14). Then, in 2:15 Paul’s focus shifts. It is debated whether Paul is still reporting his speech at Antioch after 2:14.⁶ Since the details of the discussion are not directly relevant, it is sufficient to note that in all likelihood Paul still reports his interchange with Peter, though in verses 2:15-21 the reporting is primarily for the benefit of the Galatians.⁷ Here he switches from narrative to

³Longenecker, *Galatians*, cx.

⁴As Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul’s Use and Interpretation of a Justification Tradition in Galatians 2.15-21,” *JSNT* 28 (2005): 189 n. 1, writes, “One does not have to agree with Betz’s specific rhetorical analysis to recognize the importance of the passage within the structure and argumentation of the letter.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 151, calls it “perhaps the most significant text in Galatians, in which Paul summarizes his gospel.”

⁵Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83. He goes on, “While often largely ignored in the exposition of Galatians, this passage in reality is not only the hinge between what has gone before and what follows but actually the central affirmation of the letter.” So also Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 98; Hays, *Galatians*, 230; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 98.

⁶See Betz, *Galatians*, 113-14; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 80-81; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 150.

⁷“From a literary point of view, this unit is a continuation of Paul’s speech to Peter, but it is

a concise statement of “the central issues to be proved,” which will be discussed throughout the rest of the letter. Of critical importance are verses 15-16.

Galatians 2:15-16

Structure. Verses 15-16 are best understood together as, in Ronald Fung’s description, a “single, overloaded sentence.”⁸ While many translations provide a copulative verb in verse 15, breaking up the sentence, it is better to see the verse providing the entire subject of the sentence that extends to the end of verse 16.⁹ The phrase ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοὶ reads literally, “we by-nature-

apparent that the speech now has a broader audience in view than Peter and those with him at Antioch” (Matera, *Galatians*, 97). So also De Boer, “Justification Tradition,” 192; Albrecht Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, THKNT 9, rev. Joachim Rohde (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 87; Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC, vol. 30 (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 187; Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 117; Hays, *Galatians*, 236; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 80; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 171; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 150. J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, (London: Macmillan, 1865), 113-14, appears to agree, stating, “Text and comment are so blended together that they cannot be separated without violence.”

⁸Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 112. See also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*. NIGTC (Exeter, UK: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 137; William O. Walker, Jr., “Does the ‘We’ in Gal 2.15–17 Include Paul’s Opponents?” *NTS* 49 (2003): 562-63; De Boer, “Justification Tradition,” 192-93, whose approach to the structure of vv. 15-16 is identical to my own.

⁹On the former view, see, e.g., NRSV and ESV (“We ourselves are Jews by birth”); NAS (“We are Jews by nature”); Schreiner, *Galatians*, 154. This view receives more support if the δέ in v. 16 is original: “We are by nature Jews . . . but we know” (see De Boer, “Justification Tradition,” 192 n. 13). The external evidence is divided, as the word is present in significant manuscripts \aleph and B, but absent in P⁴⁶, the earliest manuscript evidence, as well as others such as A, Ψ , and \mathfrak{M} , hence its placement within brackets in NA²⁷. While its authenticity is certainly possible, my own view is that it is not, and that there is more fluidity between the verses, thus the participle instead of the indicative verb (see Dunn, *Galatians*, 131 n. 2, who points out the use of οἶδαμεν Rom 8:28; also idem, “New Perspective,” 106 n. 25; cf. Hays, *Galatians*, 237). Further, the later insertion of δέ seems more likely than its omission, as it could have been added upon the assumption that the “whole of verse 16 stood in contrast to verse 15” (Dunn, *Galatians*, 131 n. 2). Additionally, understanding all of v. 15 as the subject appears smoother grammatically, requiring less additions in English (e.g., the copulative verb in v. 15 and a word such as “so” or “therefore” before the main verbal clause v. 16, which begins with καὶ ἡμεῖς) (see Hays *Galatians*, 237). If it is original, it is likely connective rather than adversative (see Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83). A final possibility worth noting is to understand v. 15 as a relative clause: “We who are Jews” (ibid., 81; Betz, *Galatians*, 113). In the end, all these options are grammatical possibilities, and interpretation will probably influence a final decision to some extent, though none of them have to produce considerably different interpretations.

Jews-and-not-sinners-from-the-Gentiles,” and serves as the subject of the main verb (ἐπιστεύσαμεν), as well as the participial phrase (εἰδότες . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and subordinate purpose clause (ἵνα . . . ἔργων νόμου).

Next, the phrase at the beginning of verse 16, εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ”¹⁰ could be an attributive participial phrase that further describes the subject, ἡμεῖς Ἰουδαῖοι (as in AV, RSV), but more than likely it is functioning adverbially, in which case it is almost certainly causal, providing the ground for the belief in Christ (ἐπιστεύσαμεν) of Jewish believers: “because we know that a man is not justified by works of the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ.”¹¹

The main verb of the sentence, then, is not found until halfway through verse 16 in the phrase, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, “even we have believed in Christ Jesus” (with καὶ ἡμεῖς recalling the subject phrase in v. 15). The verb is modified further by a purpose clause, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, “in order that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not works of the law,” and a causal clause, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ, “for by works of the law no flesh will be justified.” Having examined the structure, the rest of the section will break down the component parts of the verses, finally arriving at the significance of the psalm allusion.

Verse 15. Verse 15 is the subject phrase already mentioned, ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί. The word φύσις is used often by Paul, referring to a

¹⁰All significant translation decisions will be explained below.

¹¹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83, opts for an “adverbial participle of attendant circumstance (‘circumstantial participle’),” which seems somewhat generic. Describing it as causal provides more specificity and seems to some extent to fit Paul’s thought process better.

“condition or circumstance as determined by birth.”¹² The use of Ἰουδαῖοι is closely connected to its use in verses 13-14 and no doubt is used by Paul to show a level of solidarity between himself and Peter, and likely also the other Jewish believers at Antioch.¹³ As William Walker notes, the position of the phrase ἡμεῖς φύσει indicates that the words are “singled out for special emphasis.”¹⁴ The fact that Paul and Peter are Jewish believers is important to Paul’s argument: Peter knows better than his actions testify, not only as a Christian but as a *Jewish* Christian.¹⁵ In fact, in many ways it is their shared Jewish identity that elicits his statement in verse 16, as the allusion to shared Scripture in verse 16d demonstrates (more on this below).¹⁶

Thus, Paul begins by affirming that, indeed, he, Peter, and the others are Jews and not “sinners from the Gentiles” (ἕξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί), with the phrase “sinners” possibly being a colloquialism used by law-abiding Jews.¹⁷ Given Paul’s mission to the

¹²BDAG, s.v. “φύσις” 1. In Paul, see Rom 1:26; 2:14, 27; 11:21, 24; 1 Cor 11:14; Gal 4:8; Eph 2:3 (outside of Paul, only Jas 3:7; 2 Pet 1:4).

¹³J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB, vol. 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 246, argues that this is an example of a “rhetorical convention, the *captatio benevolentiae*, in which the speaker captures his audience by means of a friendly reference to something he shares with them.”

¹⁴Walker, “Does the ‘We,’” 562-63. Walker argues that the “we” (ἡμεῖς) in vv. 15-17 includes Paul and Cephas, but not Paul’s opponents. This is partly but not wholly the case, as will be explained below.

¹⁵The use of the word “Christian” carries with it certain connotations and is considered anachronistic by some (e.g., see Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 21 n.1). However, its usage throughout the present work denotes a Jew who believed Christ to be the Messiah and lived accordingly. The term “Jewish believer” is used with the same intention (not to imply that Jews who did not follow Christ had no belief in God).

¹⁶As Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 239, writes, “‘Jews by nature’ understand . . . that no one can be justified by ‘works of the law.’”

¹⁷Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83. See also Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 115; Bruce, *Galatians*, 137; Betz, *Galatians*, 115; Bruce W. Longenecker, “Contours of Covenant Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul,” in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 139, who comments that Paul uses the term in a “tongue-in-cheek” manner. Certainly the idea seems to be present that those outside of Judaism were in

Gentiles, however, he no doubt employs the phrase with a measure of irony.¹⁸ It is likely that Paul had come to understand the typical Jewish use of the term with regard to Gentiles to be deficient in many respects. That is, its use as an epithet for Gentiles obscured the reality that all human beings, whether Jew or Gentile, were sinners apart from the grace found in Christ.

Verse 16abc. Therefore, Paul appeals to his identity as a Jew—albeit one who had come to faith in Christ—to provide the entire foundation for what he says in verse 16.¹⁹ Further, this appears to provide the entire foundation for his whole critique against what Peter, those troubling the Galatians, and the Galatians themselves were doing with the “works of the law.” This is a significant point. As new and radical as Paul’s doctrine of justification may have been, there is nevertheless a foundational component of the doctrine that Paul considered to be profoundly Jewish, in the sense that it was present in and supported by the OT, as well as agreed upon by Jewish Christians.

At the same time, scholars are divided on the precise nature of Paul’s appeal to common knowledge in verse 16, as well as with whom exactly Paul shares this knowledge. On one side of the issue, Martinus de Boer has argued that in Galatians 2:16a Paul is not only appealing to common knowledge but actually citing Jewish Christian

many ways non-holy (Martyn, *Galatians*, 248; cf. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ἀμαρτωλός, ἀναμάρτητος,” in *TDNT*, 1:324-27).

¹⁸Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 115.

¹⁹A full treatment on the subject of how exactly Paul defined notions such as “Jew” and “Israel” after the coming of the Messiah and the rejection thereof would be complex and beyond the limits of the dissertation. However, for our purposes it may be noted that while it is important to note that Paul is speaking to Jewish *believers* and not Jews in general, it seems clear that Paul held faith in Christ to be organically connected to faith in God before Christ. The object of the faith of the ancient saints was as much Christ as that of post-advent saints. Thus, for Paul, “true” Jews would naturally place their faith in the Messiah, as Paul considered him the culmination of all of God’s promises to Israel. Those who did not, then, ceased in many ways to be part of the true people of God, remaining Jews in an ethnic sense only.

tradition.²⁰ He argues that while Paul takes ἐὰν μὴ adversatively, contrasting works of the law with the “faith of Christ,” in doing so he is reinterpreting a tradition that took it as exceptive, so that the two were compatible.²¹ De Boer’s work follows James Dunn, who first questioned the traditional understanding of ἐὰν μὴ in his seminal article, “The New Perspective on Paul,” by arguing that the phrase is exceptive rather than adversative. Dunn argued that Paul states a common Jewish Christian assumption that covenantal nomism and faith in Christ were complementary, but then goes on to reject it, pushing “what began as a qualification on covenantal nomism into an outright antithesis.”²²

In response to these ideas, it should be noted that while Paul does seem to be appealing to a shared point of knowledge, it is difficult to demonstrate that he is quoting actual tradition. No markers in the text itself demonstrate this, and thus it is largely left to the mind of the interpreter to discern such a tradition and determine how it then further influences interpretation. Moreover, the argument of both De Boer and Dunn that Paul is reinterpreting ἐὰν μὴ seems easily prone to misinterpretation and confusion for the audience, and thus remains a doubtful interpretation²³

On the other side the discussion, Ian Scott argues that there “is no indication that the Apostle intended the verse to express convictions he held in common with his Galatian audience and their new teachers.”²⁴ He points to 2:21, noting that it is a “back-

²⁰De Boer, “Justification Tradition,” 189-216.

²¹Ibid., 195-96.

²²Dunn, “New Perspective,” 113.

²³See further on this point Martyn, *Galatians*, 264 n. 158.

²⁴Ian W. Scott, “Common Ground? The Role of Galatians 2.16 in Paul’s Argument,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 433. While Scott’s argument has weight, one shortcoming is that it overlooks Paul’s appeal to the Galatians’ former experience (e.g., 3:1-5). He appeals to what they *should* know but what their actions, and those of their teachers, now denies. This explains the difference between 2:16 and 2:21 that Scott highlights. In the former, Paul has his agreement with Peter and like-minded Jewish Christians in mind, but in 2:21 he has shifted to an argument against what Peter’s hypocritical actions, along with those of Paul’s opponents and their followers in Galatia, implied.

handed restatement of Paul's point in 2.16, and here Paul does *not* assume his audience's agreement."²⁵ Similarly, Walker argues that the "we" of 2:15-17, while referring to "Paul and Cephas, with possibly a secondary reference to Barnabas and 'the other Jews' in the Galatian churches," does not include Paul's adversaries and, thus, one cannot assume an agreement between them and Paul.²⁶ Hence, caution must be used in speaking of agreement between Paul and his opponents.²⁷

It would appear, then, that both poles of the present discussion have merit, demonstrating the complex nature of the issue. My suggestion, however, is that if Paul's polemical context is one of ethnocentric legalism, then he would be addressing an idea that was both common ground *and* controversial, depending upon the addressee, and even the addressee's particular disposition at the moment of address. The example of Peter is illustrative on this point. While Peter agreed with Paul on justification in theory, his actions in Antioch seem to have denied this reality. Thus, he is an ambiguous character, since he acts in accordance with what he does not truly believe (see Gal 2:13: *ὑπόκρισις* "pretense, hypocrisy"). This makes it possible for Paul to appeal to common knowledge while still offering rebuke. Paul's Galatian opponents, on the other hand, did not experience a temporary lapse like Peter, but were overtly preaching a "different gospel" (Gal 1:6). The momentary hypocrisy seen in Peter was more than momentary for them, instead characterizing their whole approach.

Scott, therefore, is likely right on this point. Paul is more at odds with his opponents than the rest, directing his polemic more forcefully in their direction, all the

²⁵Ibid., 426.

²⁶Walker, "Does the 'We,'" 565.

²⁷So also R. Barry Matlock, "The Rhetoric of *πίστις* in Paul: Galatians 2.16, 3.22, Romans 3.22, and Philippians 3.9," *JSNT* 30 (2007): 199 n. 26, who notes that while the more recent tendency to see Paul appealing to common knowledge is "an improvement on the older tendency to pit Paul simplistically against his tradition, this suggestion of a ready-to-hand agreement jars with the polemical setting."

while attempting to win over the Galatians. At the same time, whether Paul's opponents explicitly agreed with him or not, Paul's argument is that Jewish Christians *should* already understand his point in some measure based on the truth of the Gospel, which is grounded in the OT itself, hence the allusion to Psalm 143:2 as support. Therefore Paul reminds them of this through an appeal to common ground, while simultaneously attacking their wrong notions.

However one wades through the intricacies of the issue, for now it is enough to note that Paul seems to appeal to a premise that in his mind was, or should have been, agreed upon by Jewish Christians and not completely foreign to Jews in general, as it is supported by the OT.²⁸ This is evidenced not only by Paul's appeal to Peter as one Ἰουδαῖος to another, but, as will be seen shortly, by his grounding of the doctrine of justification with a psalm allusion (as well as appeals to other OT Scripture elsewhere).²⁹

Thus, it is unlikely that Paul is setting this sentence in contrast to verse 15: "We are Jews . . . *but* we know" (though possible grammatically).³⁰ Rather, he is stating a fact that should be known by Jews who have put their faith in Jesus as Messiah, with the ὅτι essentially signaling that "what follows could even be set in quotes as something widely affirmed."³¹ What is it, then, that they "know"? What is the shared understanding

²⁸A. Andrew Das, "Another Look at ἐάν μὴ in Galatians 2:16," *JBL* 119 (2000): 537, maintains, "Verse 16's affirmation must be satisfactory to all the adherents of Jewish Christianity represented in Galatians, regardless of their differences." One could nuance this further by saying it must be satisfactory to what they affirmed in theory, whether their actions cohered with the affirmation or not.

²⁹To be sure, there is newness in Paul's teaching and a discontinuity with the "former age." But his doctrine of justification is more an unveiling of something that had always been present than a creation "ex nihilo."

³⁰See n. 9 above. Additionally, as Dunn, *Galatians*, 133, observes, adding a qualifying conjunction here—"though we are Jews by nature"—lessens the impact of this appeal to unity (e.g., as in Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 167: "Wir, *obwohl* von Natur aus Juden" [my emphasis]).

³¹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83. Das, "Another Look," 537, argues that the participle of "knowing" indicates that "what Paul is about to say is an undisputed shared affirmation in early Jewish Christianity."

among Jewish Christians to which Paul appeals? The answer to this question is the first clause of a long, four-clause sentence.

Following the participle *εἰδότες* and *ὅτι* is the clause *οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. As mentioned above, the participle is likely adverbial, providing the ground for the verb “we have believed” to come in a moment. In other words, “*because we know . . . we have believed.*” What it is that they “know,” then, is expressed by Paul in a highly compact and pregnant phrase, replete with highly debated concepts and readings.

While each of these issues deserves a full treatment in its own right, space limitations will preclude this, as their complexity is great and the relevant secondary literature voluminous. Since it is Paul’s allusion to the psalm at the end of the verse that is of central interest, this should not create a problem. Moreover, the broader issue the present work is addressing is in many ways preliminary to the other subjects. While the controversies will certainly not be settled here, the current subject matter in many ways must be addressed before engaging in the other discussions, as it works in large part on a more presuppositional level with regard to these issues. Therefore, a comprehensive treatment is not necessary at this point. Nevertheless, I will briefly state my own positions on the issues before moving forward with the rest of the text. While these will not be defended at length, it is important to state them since they will permeate the rest of the work. Generally speaking, the present work will favor the traditional understandings of all four issues.

First, with regard to the verb “justify” (*δικαιῶ*) and “righteousness” language in general in Paul, much recent discussion has been prompted by the idea that Paul was not combating Jewish legalism or arguing for an anthropological faith/works dichotomy. This has compelled scholars to view the language more in covenantal terms. Since the anthropological approach to justification will be emphasized throughout the present dissertation, it will be apparent that I also hold to more traditional notions of

righteousness and justification. Thus, “justify” and often “righteousness” are best understood forensically, though I recognize the contribution of approaches that offer critique of an overly static view of the “righteousness of God” that can neglect the element of dynamic activity involved in the phrase.³² On these issues in general, the views put forth here will follow closely those of scholars such as Douglas Moo and Thomas Schreiner.³³

Second, works of the law are best understood in general terms as works done in accordance with the Mosaic law.³⁴ However, context and motivation for these works are also critical in Paul’s discussion. Dunn, in my view, was right to highlight the boundary-marking nature of the works in Paul’s context, as these appear to be the main points of contention in the relevant texts. However, the problem with the works in question was not related to ethnocentrism alone.³⁵ I will diverge from Dunn and others at this point. Works of the law discussions may have been provoked by works such as circumcision and food laws, but for him the issue was intimately connected to deeper, anthropological issues as well.

Third, on the issue of the “faith of Christ,” the objective reading is to be preferred. This view has in its favor that Paul clearly speaks of individuals believing in Christ (e.g., even in the present text of Gal 2:16 where one finds “faith of Christ” he

³²Douglas Moo’s definition balances these ideas well: “the act by which God brings people into a right relationship with himself” (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 74).

³³See, e.g., Moo, *Romans, 70-75* (commentary on the “righteousness of God”), 79-90 (excursus on “righteousness” language in Paul); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 189-217; idem, *Galatians*, 155-57.

³⁴Similar to Douglas J. Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” *WTJ* 45 (1983): 96, who argues for “commendable actions, performed in obedience to the law.”

³⁵Michael Bachmann, “J. D. G. Dunn und die Neue Paulusperspektive,” *TZ* 63 (2007): 43, believes they are better understood as “Halakhot” than “guten Werken.” Indeed, “works of the law” on some level should be distinguished from genuine good works that proceed from faith, but defining them as “Halakhot” seems too restrictive.

speaks of believing “in Christ” [ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν]), while there are no clear examples of him speaking of Jesus as “faithful” or “believing.”³⁶ To be sure, the phrase ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ employs a curious use of the preposition and genitive (to my mind, this is one of the strongest arguments against the objective reading). However, D. A. Campbell makes a strong case for connecting this usage to Habakkuk 2:4, in which case many of the grammatical arguments become superfluous in some ways.³⁷ The discussion would then move to Paul’s view of Habakkuk 2:4, whether Paul views it as Messianic or whether the faith in view is that of an individual. That Paul was using the text with a Messianic interpretation is not at all certain, and this would be imperative for the subjective reading. However, if Paul is citing Habakkuk 2:4 with the connection being the faith of an individual, then his usage is much more explainable.³⁸

Fourth, Paul’s use of ἐὰν μὴ has already been addressed to some extent above in the discussion concerning whether or not verse 16a was a shared idea between Paul and other Jews. On this point, viewing the phrase as exceptive as Dunn first argued is untenable because of Paul’s strict contrast of works of the law and faith. It seems unlikely that he would expect the reader to understand such a subtle move from a supposed Jewish

³⁶Cf. Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 161, who argues that the subjective reading “faces the insuperable linguistic objection that Paul never speaks unambiguously of Jesus as faithful (e.g., *Iēsous pistos estin*) or believing (*episteusen Iēsous*), while he certainly speaks of individuals as believing in Christ.”

³⁷D. A. Campbell, “The Meaning of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and ΝΟΜΟΣ in Paul: A Linguistic and Structural Perspective,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 91-103. He also writes, “In sum, it would seem that the two phrases ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ τῆς πίστεως function paradigmatically for Paul; that is, they are stylistic variations of the same basic idea, allowing Paul to repeat his point without undue tedium. This is not to say that the variation cannot be motivated, but in terms of their primary meaning they seem to be saying essentially the same thing when they occur” (96).

³⁸As already noted, elsewhere Paul clearly refers to the faith of the believer. Further, even Richard Hays, a strong proponent of the subjective reading, concedes that Hab 2:4 can be read in a non-Messianic sense, citing 1QpHab 8:1-3, where the faith (or faithfulness) of the individual is directed toward the “Teacher of Righteousness” with relation to Hab 2:4—Hays even grants that this is probably the original meaning in Habbakuk (Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed., The Biblical Resource Series [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 134, along with n. 58).

Christian view in verse 16a where covenantal nomism and faith in Christ were compatible to a view later in the same verse that opposes the two.³⁹ Further, Dunn's view is based on the idea that covenantal nomism is the central target of Paul's attack, a notion with which I disagree.

Of note in this discussion is a more recent article by Debbie Hunn, who shows that the partial exceptive and adversative use of *ἐὰν μὴ* existed at the time of Paul's writing, arguing that Paul uses it adversatively.⁴⁰ Thus, Dunn's view does not necessarily make better linguistic sense, and it seems to make less interpretative sense as well. Both the partial exceptive and adversative uses are able to explain Paul's intention well, though I am slightly more inclined to follow Hunn and the adversative view.⁴¹

Next in verse 16 is the main verbal clause of verses 15-16, *καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν*. As mentioned previously, the words *καὶ ἡμεῖς* refer back to the *ἡμεῖς* of verse 15.⁴² Paul seems to be saying that "even we who are Jews by birth" find justification "as truly as 'sinners of the Gentiles' do."⁴³ The aorist verb *ἐπιστεύσαμεν*

³⁹On this point, see the critique of Dunn by Heikki Räisänen, "Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism," in *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays*, trans. David E. Orton, JSNTSup 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 120-21. Räisänen argues that Paul's thought in Gal 2:16, rather than switching positions mid-verse, is smooth: "There is no formal indication of a contrast between the beginning and the end. In fact, a hidden contrast would spoil the thought: 'knowing what is necessary we did something else!'"

⁴⁰Debbie Hunn, "Εὰν μὴ in Galatians 2:16: A Look at Greek Literature," *NovT* 49 (2007): 281-90. In Gal 2:16, the partial exceptive view means taking *ἐὰν μὴ* as exceptive only to the principal clause, "a man is not justified," and not the entire clause, "a man is not justified by works of the law." Thus: "a man is not justified (by works of the law) except through the faith of Christ." So Burton, *Galatians*, 121; Fung, *Galatians*, 115; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83-84, who prefer the translation "but only." William O. Walker, Jr., "Translation and Interpretation of *ἐὰν μὴ* in Galatians 2:16," *JBL* 116 (1997): 515-20, also takes it as a partial exceptive but leaves the translation "except."

⁴¹For another good treatment with preference for the adversative view, see Schreiner, *Galatians*, 162-63.

⁴²See De Boer, "Justification Tradition," 193. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 88, writes, "The explicative use of *καὶ* ('even') makes the pronoun *ἡμεῖς* ('we') emphatic and serves to recall the beginning of the sentence in v 15, 'we who are Jews by birth.'"

⁴³Bruce, *Galatians*, 139.

appears to be used constatively, with the action viewed in a summary fashion.⁴⁴ The verb is then modified by a ἵνα -clause: ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. The clause provides the purpose for *why* Paul and other Jews have believed in Jesus, namely, in order to be justified. While Paul’s repetition of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου at the end of the clause seems redundant, it provides a natural transition to the final clause of the verse, which is another ὅτι-clause: ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.⁴⁵

Verse 16d and Psalm 143:2. The final clause is the central focus of the present argument. As already mentioned, the clause is a phrase taken from Psalm 143:2 (142:2 LXX). Since the allusion comes at a critical juncture both here and Romans 3:20, it is likely that Paul saw it as a foundational proof-text of sorts for his argument for justification.⁴⁶ It is especially noteworthy that it comes at the beginning of his discussion of works of the law versus faith in both epistles. Betz calls it the “theological presupposition” that undergirds Paul’s rejection of works of the law for justification.⁴⁷ However, while the allusion is frequently noted in commentaries, its relevance for the

⁴⁴BDF §332; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 557.

⁴⁵Bruce, *Galatians*, 140. For a helpful treatment of how the redundancy in the verse contributes to Paul’s rhetorical strategy, see Matlock, “Rhetoric of πίστις,” 193-99, who argues for the objective reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ and for seeing the argumentative movement of the verse as one where “the Jewish Christian experience of the gospel is placed within a common human narrative” (199).

⁴⁶Bruce, *Galatians*, 140, writes, “It may be inferred that for him at least this paraphrase of Ps. 143 (LXX 142):2 had become a habitual proof-text for the doctrine of justification by faith apart from works of law” (the term “proof-text” is used without the negative connotations of a kind of de-contextualized, cut-and-paste proofing of what one already believes on other grounds. The idea here is that Paul found in the psalm evidence for a truth he believed to be fundamental to faith in God). Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 88, also notes that the use of the allusion in both Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20 “shows that the passage is of constitutive importance for the apostle.” Cf. also Florian Wilk, “Gottesgerechtigkeit – Gesetzeswerke – eigene Gerechtigkeit: Überlegungen zur geschichtlichen Verwurzelung und theologischen Bedeutung paulinischer Rechtfertigungsaussagen im Anschluss an die ‘New Perspective,’” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 135 (2010): 273.

⁴⁷Betz, *Galatians*, 118.

justification discussion is, in my view, more significant than is often observed.⁴⁸

The allusion, which is another *ὅτι*-clause, rounds off Galatians 2:16: *ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ*, “for by works of the law no flesh will be justified.” As already mentioned, the wording comes from Psalm 143:2 (142:2 LXX), where the psalmist asks the Lord not to enter into judgment with him, *ὅτι οὐ δικαιωθήσεται ἐνώπιόν σου πᾶς ζῶν* (MT: *יְהוָה לֹא יִצְדַּק בְּכָל־חַיִּים*), “for every living thing will not be justified before you.”⁴⁹ For comparison purposes, Figure 1 provides an alignment of Psalm 142:2 (LXX), Galatians 2:16, and Romans 3:20.

Psalm 142:2	οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶς ζῶν ἐνώπιόν σου ⁵⁰
Galatians 2:16	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ
Romans 3:20	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ

Figure 1. Alignment of Psalm 142:2 (LXX), Galatians 2:16, and Romans 3:20

First, it should be noted how the use of *ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ* in Romans 3:20 ties Paul’s language even more closely to that of the psalm, leaving little doubt that this is at least an allusion.⁵¹ Next, Paul has clearly adapted the phrase for his own use. He adds the

⁴⁸Some do, of course, recognize its significance. E.g., Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 101–150*, HTKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2008), 773, in commenting on Ps 143, provide a survey of several NT studies that examine the significance of Paul’s allusions to the psalm.

⁴⁹I consider the psalm Davidic, but even if this is not granted Paul no doubt did the same. Nevertheless, since Paul does not cite David explicitly as he does in Rom 4:6, the author will be referred to simply as the “psalmist.”

⁵⁰The phrase *πᾶς ζῶν* is aligned here with *πᾶσα σὰρξ* for comparison only. In the actual text it follows *ἐνώπιόν σου*.

⁵¹Cf. similar wording in 1 Cor 1:29: *ὅπως μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ*, “that no flesh may boast before God.” Also, Martyn, *Galatians*, 253, observes, “Although Paul gives no formal signal that he is quoting scripture, he knows he is doing that, and he can probably assume that the Teachers are also aware of it.” For a more detailed discussion of whether this is an allusion or quotation, as well as possible reasons for Paul’s alterations, see Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress,

distinctive ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and substitutes πᾶσα σὰρξ, “all flesh,” for πᾶς ζῶν, “every living thing.”⁵² The phrase πᾶσα σὰρξ likely interprets πᾶς ζῶν, emphasizing “the collective vulnerability and weakness of human beings.”⁵³ The word σὰρξ, referring to “one who is or becomes a physical being,” also has connections to Paul’s use of ἄνθρωπος earlier in the verse.⁵⁴ It is not that “flesh” is evil in itself, but in its fallen state it is “subject to the debilitating forces of desire, decay, and death.”⁵⁵ Thus, it is the “human being” (ἄνθρωπος) who is “flesh” (σὰρξ) who performs the works of the law—works of the law are a flesh-centered attempt at justification.⁵⁶ Despite such adjustments of the text, there is no indication that Paul “substantially [alters] the meaning of the original psalm verse,” as Matera argues.⁵⁷ On the contrary, Paul is appealing to the same idea

2007), 255-56. See also Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, 174; Moisés Silva, “Galatians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007), 790. Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*, 10th ed., *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 58, also provides a brief explanatory list of Paul’s alterations.

⁵²As Käsemann, *Romans*, 88, writes with regard to the same allusion in Rom 3:20, “The decisive words ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are interpolated into the quotation from Ps 142:2 by way of interpretation.”

⁵³De Boer, “Justification Tradition,” 207. The same substitution is found in *I Enoch* 81:5 (see Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 6 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996], 121). In the LXX, the phrase πᾶσα σὰρξ often refers to “all mankind” (e.g., Ps 64:3; Jer 12:12; Eze 21:10; Joel 3:1), with a similar use in the NT (cf. Matt 24:22; Mark 13:20; Rom 3:20; 1Cor 1:29; Luke 3:6; John 17:2; Acts 2:17; 1 Pet 1:24). The specific phrase, “οὐ (or μή) + verb + πᾶσα σὰρξ,” carries the sense of “no person [+verb],” e.g., “no one is justified” (see BDAG, s.v. “σὰρξ” 3.a; also cf. Matt 24:22; Mark 13:20; Rom 3:20; 1Cor 1:29).

⁵⁴BDAG, s.v. “σὰρξ” 3.a. The word is used often in Galatians (1:16; 2:16, 20; 3:3; 4:13, 14, 23, 29; 5:13, 16, 17, 19, 24; 6:8, 12, 13).

⁵⁵George, *Galatians*, 190. For Paul, the word often connotes the weakness of humanity in distinction from God, though it possesses a spectrum of meaning that is essentially neutral on one end and highly negative on the other (as in the “works of the flesh” in Gal 5:19). On this point, see James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus—Flesh and Spirit: An Exposition of Romans 1.3–4,” *JTS* 24 (1973): 43–51; also Douglas Moo, *Romans 1–8*, *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 39–40. Jewett, *Romans*, 266, connects Paul’s use of “flesh” with the “Judaizer’s claim that circumcised *flesh* was acceptable as righteous to God.”

⁵⁶Betz, *Galatians*, 118.

⁵⁷Matera, *Galatians*, 94.

found in the psalm but contextualizing it into his present situation.⁵⁸

Psalm 143:1-2 is essentially a plea of the psalmist for help from God. He asks God to hear him not based on his own worthiness, but on God's faithfulness, pleading, "Do not enter into judgment with your servant [μη εισέλθῃς εἰς κρίσιν μετὰ τοῦ δούλου σου], for no one living will be justified before you." While not all scholars will agree, on the surface such an idea appears to cohere with the traditional notion that justification primarily refers to the individual in need of grace and forgiveness due to lack of worthiness before God.⁵⁹ In other words, the point of the psalm and Paul's citation of the psalm, at least at first glance, seem to be that humanity in its state of sin and weakness has nothing to commend it before God.

The verb, *δικαιωθήσεται*, used in the future, likely indicates that eschatological judgment by God is in view.⁶⁰ Paul applies the psalm to his situation by connecting

⁵⁸So also Oepke, *Galater*, 91; Schlier, *Galater*, 58; Käsemann, *Romans*, 88, who argues that Paul interprets the psalm for his specific purpose. Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, NovTSup 61 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 65, writes that the psalmist "states confidently that God, because of righteousness (vv. 2 and 11) and mercy (v. 12), will do (future) what the psalmist asks," and Paul, "in Gal. 2:16-21, likewise says that since no one is righteous before God, the only hope for anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, is trust (πίστις) in God's deliverance." De Boer, "Justification Tradition," 207, observes that Paul does not quote here, but simply uses the words of the psalm as a declaration. This fact only demonstrates how embedded the idea in the psalm had become in Paul's view of justification.

⁵⁹See Raymond F. Surburg, "Justification as a Doctrine of the Old Testament: A Comparative Study in Confessional and Biblical Theology," *CTQ* 46 (1982): 144, who argues that the psalm shows that "it is impossible for any man to have confidence in his standing before God on the ground of his own deeds." Also Moo, "Law," 97.

⁶⁰Betz, *Galatians*, 119. The use of the future could be gnomic as well (as Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB, vol. 33 [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 337, holds with regard to the similar use in Rom 3:20). However, it should be noted that throughout Paul, the past, present, and future aspects of justification are held together in tension (see Alister E. McGrath, "Justification," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993], 518; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 155). As Moisés Silva, *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 174, writes, "Paul is stressing the significance of faith for his own personal—yes, present—justification," but "this truth is set within the context of cosmic, eschatological realities. In other words, the 'subjective' experience of justification is not divorced from the 'objective' judgment at the end of the age."

humankind's fallen state with the works of the law, which he viewed as a fleshly and ultimately futile means of righteousness. As Paul identifies with fellow Jews, he alludes to a psalm in order to demonstrate that even their own Scriptures point to the futility of justification based on human effort. Herman Ridderbos is correct when he writes, "Hence, the negative phase of the 'not through works, but through faith alone' was nothing new, since it already lay contained in the genuine sense of guilt of the Old Testament saints."⁶¹ Those who somehow connected their justification to observance of the law failed to understand their desperate need of mercy.

While it is difficult to say with certainty what this *ὅτι*-clause is modifying, it is likely parallel to the preceding *ἵνα*-clause, further modifying the verb *ἐπιστεύσαμεν*. Thus, "we have believed *because* no flesh will be justified by works of the law." Therefore, the psalm allusion provides the ground for belief in Christ. The significance of this should not be neglected. At this point, the commencement of Paul's argument—the *propositio* of the letter, as it were—Paul grounds his argument for faith over against works of the law in a psalm where the psalmist pleads before God to have mercy on him due to his lack of worthiness. In other words, the language is individualized and anthropological.⁶² Before saying more, however, the use of the psalm in Romans 3:20 should be examined.

Romans 3:20 and Psalm 143:2

Though the context is different, Paul makes use of Psalm 143:2 in Romans 3:20 in a manner similar to that of Galatians 2:16, using it to ground his argument for

⁶¹Herman Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 100.

⁶²Contra Jens-Christian Maschmeier, *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus: Eine Kritik alter und neuer Paulusperspektiven*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament 189 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 157-201, who understands Gal 2:15-21 in a salvation-historical sense; also Chad Harrington, "Justification by the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ," *The Asbury Journal* 65, no. 2 (2010): 19, who argues that the passage is concerned with ecclesiology rather than an "individualistic soteriology."

justification by faith. Again, this section will hold to the premise that what has largely sparked Paul's response is a Jewish ethnocentric legalism, against which he is setting forth a timeless understanding of justification that possesses a strong individual, anthropological element. While justification by faith applies to more than Jewish legalism, what provokes Paul's polemical wielding of the doctrine is that some Jews were compelling Gentiles to be circumcised, an action that for him implied they were placing too much soteriological weight upon works of the law. Whether they recognized it or not, for Paul their actions implied that they were presuming upon such works to provide their standing before God in a way that contradicted the notion of undeserved grace.

Context

While an overly detailed examination of Romans 1:1-3:19 is beyond the scope of this work, a few brief comments need to be made to contextualize Paul's argument and highlight some points that will affect the examination of 3:19-20 below. In Romans 1 Paul begins by announcing that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe, the Jew first and the Gentile. Already one of the burdens of the New Perspective is present, the way Paul's mission to the Gentiles forms his thought. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for the Jews *and* the Gentiles. Moving to the next verse, Paul explains what it is that comprises this gospel, that is, what is "in it" (*ἐν αὐτῷ*). What is revealed in the gospel, then, is the righteousness of God (*δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*). However one interprets this phrase, there is no doubt that it is connected to faith; it is *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*. After this, Paul immediately cites the critical Habakkuk passage, which, in my view, undergirds his theology and provides a shorthand way of speaking of justification by faith.

After this initial announcement, Paul moves to a discourse on how the wrath of God falls upon all humanity, before shifting in 2:1 to demonstrate how no one escapes this, not even the one who believes he is able to judge another. This is because everyone who judges another practices the same things as the one they judge. At this point in

Paul's discussion of the wrath of God on the sin of humanity he has not specifically introduced the Jew/Gentile dynamic, but it cannot be far from his mind as he later charges Jews with doing this very thing (in 2:17-24).⁶³ Nevertheless, here he addresses the general *ἄνθρωπος*, without yet positing a distinction between Jew and Gentile, though the implication is clearly for Jews, as is shown in 2:9.

By this time, Paul demonstrates how judgment, like salvation (1:16), will be for Jew and Gentile alike. Then, with the Jew of 2:17-24 in mind, he demonstrates that a Gentile who “does good” will be blessed by God, even though he is not a Jew, for God shows no partiality (2:11).⁶⁴ After demonstrating his point about the Gentile who “does the things of the law” (2:14), he turns to the Jew who possesses and prides himself in the law but does not keep it. All of these passages are fiercely debated but, for our purposes, of central importance is that the one he is addressing is the Jew who prides himself in the law but is not really a Jew inwardly, whose heart has not been circumcised (2:25-29). This would seem to be exactly the kind of Jewish person who would attempt to be justified by works of the law—and in this case also one who engaged in ethnocentric legalism—and whose actions denied that salvation is ultimately based on the mercy of God given through faith. This person would miss that faith in Christ was what was necessary to obtain a righteousness before God that would bring justification.⁶⁵ As Paul

⁶³I recognize that the traditional view holds that Paul addresses Jews beginning in 2:1, but while Jews certainly are not far from Paul's mind here, in my view he is not yet addressing them directly. This is mainly because of the *ἄνθρωπος* language he uses until 2:9, where he mentions Jews/Gentiles particularly. Thus, it seems he has the general population of humanity in view until 2:9 (which of course includes both Jews and Gentiles), when he mentions Jews specifically.

⁶⁴The theme of impartiality is important, as Jouette Bassler, “Divine Impartiality in Paul's Letter to the Romans,” *NovT* 26 (1984): 43-58, has emphasized (see also idem, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom*, SBLDS 59 [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982]). However, it does not exhaust all that Paul is saying in these chapters.

⁶⁵See Richard W. Thompson, “Paul's Double Critique of Jewish Boasting: A Study of Rom 3,27 in Its Context,” *Bib* 67 (1986): 524-25, on the connection of 2:17-24 to 3:19-20.

makes his case against this element within Judaism, however, he is simultaneously arguing for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God. Those who understood that one has nothing to commend oneself before God must understand that it is not unlike God to welcome Gentile sinners.

In 3:1, then, Paul anticipates and briefly addresses the question, “If being a Jew is only internal and Gentiles will be considered ‘Jews’ if they obey God, then what advantage does being an ethnic Jew have?” These verses are notoriously difficult, but the overall point Paul is making is not. Jews do, indeed, have an advantage, but this does not mean they are able to presume upon this advantage. Paul then goes *back* to the idea of Jews being at no advantage with regard to the judgment of God. Using his catena of condemning OT texts, he shows specifically how the law itself condemns Jews, while still having ramifications for Gentiles (i.e., *πᾶς ὁ κόσμος*—see 3:19).

Romans 3:19-20

The next text is of central importance. Romans 3:19-20 closes all of 1:18-3:20 and forms a critical bridge from Paul’s discussion of the wrath of God and how both Gentiles *and* Jews are guilty before God to how righteousness is revealed in Christ (3:21-22). A brief summary of Paul’s argument in these verses is provided below before moving into the exegetical details.

Thus far Paul has argued that the wrath of God is revealed against all men, and that all men will one day face judgment according to their works. Those who obey God are saved and those who do not are not saved, no matter if one is a Jew who has the law or a Gentile who does not. This is to say nothing of how such obedience comes about, only to underscore the fact of judgment and that all are held accountable equally.

Paul aims such an argument primarily at Jews who assume their possession of and presumed obedience to the law provides a measure of protection. For Paul this was tantamount to a belief that justification was by works. To understand the intricacies of

Paul's argument it is imperative to understand that presuming upon the law reveals that at some level these Jews believe their obedience provides them favor before God. They wrongly believe that by obeying certain regulations, often those that had become markers of Jewish identity that provided separation from the Gentiles, they are protected and receive favor from God. In reality this is an implicit, ethnocentrically-oriented legalism, and hence justification by works.

Therefore, following his catena of passages that demonstrate that all men are "under sin" (3:9), Paul argues that the law, instead of being an instrument for presumption, actually demolishes any reason for presumption, holding every human being accountable. It testifies that all disobey and dishonor God (3:19).⁶⁶ Psalm 143:2, again, provides Paul with a very fitting text to undergird his point that all need the grace of God, not Gentiles alone (3:20). Works of the law that are presumed upon to maintain external covenant status and meet a standard of piety provide neither justification nor protection.

Verse 19. Moving now into the details, Paul begins verse 19 in a similar fashion to the way he began Galatians 2:16, with a shared point of knowledge. Dunn comments,

Paul uses the same appeal to common knowledge in Gal 2:16, one of the points at which the arguments of Galatians and Romans come very close. The exposition of Romans to this point (especially from 2:1) can be regarded as Paul's attempt to defend and make clear his understanding of the crucial principle (Gal 2:16) on which his earlier rebuke of Peter turned.⁶⁷

⁶⁶To be sure, the law itself provided for transgression, but this is not Paul's concern at this point. At present he is concerned with the commanding function of the law (see chap. 2, p. 48, above; Moo, "Law," 88). He is pinning his opponents, who pride themselves in possession of and obedience to the law while neglecting the foundational place of grace, to their own logic. When the law is approached without a proper understanding of sin and the need for mercy, it only serves to condemn.

⁶⁷James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A [Dallas: Word, 1988], 151. So also Byrne, *Romans*, 117: "The combined evidence of Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20 shows beyond doubt that Ps 143:2,

To be sure, that Paul is appealing to Jewish believers specifically is not as explicit as what was observed in Galatians 2:15-16. However, both Paul's appeal to the OT in 3:10-18 and the way he addresses those "in the law" (τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ) in 3:19 are virtually decisive for Paul having Jews primarily in mind, though the implications of his assertion are not *only* for Jews, as will be seen.⁶⁸

The verse begins with the phrase οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι, "now we know that." The use of οἶδαμεν with ὅτι is common in Paul (see 2:2; 7:14; 8:22, 28; 1 Cor 8:1, 4; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 Tim 1:8) and introduces a premise upon which Paul assumes he and his readers generally agree to be true.⁶⁹ Although in Galatians 2:16 the construction was εἰδότες ὅτι, the idea is the same. In this case, the common knowledge to which Paul appeals is that ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ, "whatever the law says, it speaks to those in the law."⁷⁰ The first use of νόμος in this phrase is probably best understood as broader than the Mosaic law, since the preceding catena of verses comes from the Psalms and Isaiah, not the Pentateuch.⁷¹ The second use, "those in the law" (τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ), may have the same

'embroidered' in this way, played a key role in Paul's explanation and defense of what it meant for Jews such as himself and Peter (Cephas) to come to faith in Jesus as the Christ."

⁶⁸So also James D. G. Dunn, "Yet Once More – 'The Works of the Law,'" in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 218: "The whole point of the second stage of the indictment [from Rom 1:18 onward] is to ensure that Jews recognize themselves to be included within the universal indictment And that is what is summed up here."

⁶⁹See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:143; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 168; Moo, *Romans*, 204; Byrne, *Romans*, 120; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 80.

⁷⁰The difference between λέγω and λαλέω is not highly significant, but it may be that the former simply describes the content of what the OT "says," while the latter refers more specifically to the act of "speaking" to specific people (see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:196; F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880], 1:239-40; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902], 80).

⁷¹So also Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (Pustet: Regensburg, 1963), 1:108; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1991), 66; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2nd ed., EKKNT 6 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987), 1:173; Cranfield, *Romans*; 1:195; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:105.

meaning or the more specific idea of “Mosaic law.”⁷² Probably the latter is in mind and Paul simply means “Jews.”⁷³ Such an idea flows naturally from the condemning evidence from the OT that Paul has just outlined. In other words, it is common knowledge that whatever the law says, it says it to Jews, with the “law” in this case being the condemnation from the OT that Paul has presently recounted. Hence, Jews are *not* better off, as their own Scriptures testify.⁷⁴

Interestingly, however, this does not only apply to Jews. Between the clause that begins, “whatever the law says,” and the following clause is an implied question: *why* does the law speak to those under the law?⁷⁵ The answer follows in the form of a *ἵνα*-clause that modifies the previous verb λαλεῖ: ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῆ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ, “in order that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may be held accountable to God.” The words στόμα φραγῆ refer to someone being unable

This use of νόμος is not uncommon in Jewish usage (see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 152). Contra E. H. Gifford, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (London: John Murray, 1886; reprint, Minneapolis: James Family, 1977), 87.

⁷²The article τοῖς substantizes the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, hence, “those in the law” (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 236). As Dunn points out, the distinction in prepositions should be observed (*Romans 1-8*, 152). The phrase is closer to that of 2:12 (ἐν νόμῳ) than that of 6:14-15 (ὑπὸ νόμον) (Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:195).

⁷³So Moo, *Romans*, 205; Schreiner, *Romans*, 168. Murray, *Romans*, 1:106, argues that the phrase refers to Jews and Gentiles both, due to the way the latter half of the verse describes the accountability of the whole world to God. Herbert Bowsher, “To Whom Does the Law Speak? Romans 3:19 and the Works of the Law Debate,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 295-303, and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 124, also see the referent as both Jews and Gentiles. However, while Murray’s observation about 3:19b is accurate, it should not intrude on the interpretation of 3:19a, which has as its target Jewish pride in the law (Schreiner, *Romans*, 168, also notes that the parallel phrase ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ in 2:12 clearly refers to Jews in distinction from Gentiles).

⁷⁴“Jews, who might think that they are exempt from Paul’s indictment, actually fall under it as well, because what the law says is applied especially to them. Paul insists that the Jew is mistaken if he thinks that, in trusting in the law, he is exempt from the wrath of God” (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 336).

⁷⁵The ἵνα indicates the purpose for which the law speaks to the Jews (so Wilckens, *Römer*, 1:173; Käsemann, *Romans*, 87; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:196; Jewett, *Romans*, 264; Godet, *Romans*, 240; Schreiner, *Romans*, 168; Moo, *Romans*, 205). It is possible that it indicates result (so Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, HTKNT 6 [Freiburg: Herder, 1977], 99), though the interpretive difference would not be great.

to speak (cf. Job 5:16; Ps 63:11; 107:42; Heb 11:33; 1 Macc 9:55), and ὑπόδικος, found only here in the NT and followed by τῷ θεῷ, conveys the sense of “accountable to God.”⁷⁶ Thus, as C. E. B. Cranfield notes, the verse evokes “the picture of the defendant in court, who, given the opportunity to speak in his own defence, is speechless because of the weight of the evidence which has been brought against him.”⁷⁷ Therefore, in some way, through its word to Jews and the condemnation therein, the law stops the mouths of all humanity, holding all accountable to God.

There are two ideas to note in this verse. First, Paul’s words appear to be directed toward the Jew who was relying in some way on the law for justification. This Jew is the one with whom Paul shares the common knowledge that the law speaks to those under the law, and to whom Paul declares that the law reveals their condemnation.⁷⁸ Yet, second, the implication goes beyond this, which is that this guilt and accountability hold true for humanity in general, apart from any ethnic distinction, as is shown in the phrases πᾶν σῶμα and πᾶς ὁ κόσμος. In other words, “Paul pens his *universal* indictment with a view to denying *Jewish* claims to a special defense at the final judgment.”⁷⁹

Further, the Jews in Paul’s thought appear to be a kind of representative subset of humankind in general. In other words, “If Jews, God’s chosen people, cannot be excluded from the scope of sin’s tyranny, then it surely follows that Gentiles, who have no claim on God’s favor, are also guilty.”⁸⁰ Thus, while Paul is at pains throughout these

⁷⁶See BDAG, s.v. “ὑπόδικος.” Barrett, *Romans*, 66, translates it “brought to trial.”

⁷⁷Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:196-97 (cf. Käsemann, *Romans*, 88: “under accusation with no possibility of defense”). See also Jewett, *Romans*, 265.

⁷⁸Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, 1:173.

⁷⁹Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 152.

⁸⁰Moo, *Romans*, 206. So also Anthony J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul’s Letter*, SNTSMS 81 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72 n. 113. Something similar could be said of “works of the law,” which, as Moo goes on to note,

chapters to undercut a form of Jewish pride, this does not *limit* the justification discussion to only Jewish ethnocentric legalism. Rather, Paul holds a fundamentally anthropological view of justification that applies to any attempt at garnering favor from God based on anything other than mercy. This, I would argue, is an *assumption* of Paul's that, following his conversion, he understood to be present from the beginning of God's dealings with fallen humanity.⁸¹ It was testified to in Scripture and now fully revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus, thus becoming a foundational element of Paul's preaching. In other words, in this instance in Romans Paul is aiming a timeless, anthropological view of justification, which is not bound by any particular culture and is present in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves, at an ethnocentric legalism that was specific to Jewish culture at Paul's time of writing.

Verse 20 and Psalm 143:2. This idea bears out even further in verse 20, where Paul makes use of the same allusion to Psalm 143:2 (142:2 LXX) that he used in Galatians 2:16. The verse begins with the conjunction *διότι*, which is usually understood to be causal or confirmative. While either is possible, in this verse Paul appears to be confirming with a scriptural allusion what he has just stated in verse 19.⁸² The only difference from the use of the allusion in Galatians 2:16 is the addition of *ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ*,

are "simply what we might call 'good works' defined in Jewish terms," so that "the principle enumerated here has universal application; nothing a person does, whatever the object of obedience or the motivation of that obedience, can bring him or her into favor with God" (Moo, *Romans*, 209).

⁸¹Moo, *Romans*, 90, writes, "Justification by faith is the anthropological reflex of Paul's basic conviction that what God has done in Christ for sinful human beings is entirely a matter of grace (see especially 3:24; 4:1-8, 16). If, then justification by faith is not the center of Romans or of Paul's thought in the logical sense, in another sense it expresses a central, driving force in Paul's thought . . . In this respect, the Reformers were not far wrong in giving to justification by faith the attention they did." For an argument that justification should still be seen as the center of Paul's proclamation, see Eduard Lohse, "Christus, des Gesetzes Ende? Die Theologie des Apostels Paulus in kritischer Perspektive," *ZNW* 99 (2008): 18-32.

⁸²So Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:197; Moo, *Romans*, 206. Contra Schreiner, *Romans*, 169; Jewett, *Romans*, 265; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 80; Gifford, *Romans*, 88. The difference in meaning, however, is not great. For more on the conjunction, see BDF §456 (1).

which ties the phrase even more closely to the LXX text of Psalm 142:2 and leaves little doubt that Paul has this particular psalm in mind when he makes these statements (see Figure 1 above to observe again the similarities and differences in the respective structures).⁸³ As in Galatians 2:16 the “decisive words ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are interpolated into the quotation from Ps 142:2 by way of interpretation.”⁸⁴ Brendan Byrne states it well: “What the psalmist meant to be a confession of general human unrighteousness in God’s sight, Paul, without losing the universal perspective, transforms into a scriptural exclusion of righteousness through the law, repeating precisely the same ploy with Ps 143:2 made in Gal 2:16.”⁸⁵ Hence, Paul again appeals to the underlying principle of the psalm within the current context he was facing.

The final phrase, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας, appears to explain the allusion further.⁸⁶ If the Psalm 143:2 allusion for Paul proves what the law cannot do—provide justification—this phrase shows what the law does do: brings knowledge of sin.⁸⁷ Likely Paul has in mind what he argued in 3:9-18, where the law provides evidence of the sinfulness of humanity.⁸⁸ But he is setting this reality specifically against a Jewish assumption that the law in some way justifies. As Dunn writes, “Paul’s point is that the law was *not* intended to provoke a sense of distinctiveness and security” (and, I would

⁸³Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 153, comments that the fact that the text is not introduced with γέγραπται, “it is written,” likely “indicates Paul’s awareness that he was quoting the text in a tendentious (but he would say, legitimate) form.” See also Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:197.

⁸⁴Käsemann, *Romans*, 88.

⁸⁵Byrne, *Romans*, 117.

⁸⁶As Cranfield states, it is “added in support (γὰρ) of what has just been said” (*Romans*, 1:198-99).

⁸⁷Moo, *Romans*, 210.

⁸⁸Paul has not yet developed the idea of the law provoking sin as in Rom 7 and has more of a general idea in view here (see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 155).

add, piety), “but to make those to whom it was addressed conscious of the fact that even as members of the people of God their continuing need of grace was no different from that of the gentile sinner.”⁸⁹

What is important for present purposes in these verses is the way Paul alludes to Psalm 143:2, as in Galatians 2:16, at a critical juncture in his argument. In Galatians it was at the very beginning of the central argument of the letter. Here in Romans it is found at an equally decisive point. Paul is about to make the well-known shift in 3:21 from demonstrating how the law testifies to sin to how righteousness is found apart from the condemnation that the law inevitably brings. Thus, the allusion and the idea that it represents are foundational to Paul’s doctrine of justification.

Essentially, though Paul’s arguments in Galatians and Romans are not exactly the same, the same idea is present in the allusion to Psalm 143:2⁹⁰—human beings in their utterly helpless state have nothing to offer God on their own and are entirely dependent upon his mercy.⁹¹ To be sure, as in Galatians and also in Romans thus far, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles provides Paul’s context. This should not be neglected. However, what is important for now is that the verse points to something more fundamental within human beings than ethnic distinctions. The law condemns all people, leaving every mouth shut and incapable of defense, including the mouths of Jews who are τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, “those in the law.”

Therefore, seeking refuge in the law through one’s presumed obedience

⁸⁹Dunn, *Romans*, 156; so also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 339: “If the law declares all people sinners and makes them conscious of their condition, then a fortiori the Jew to whom the law is addressed is just as much an object of God’s wrath as the pagan whose moral perversion and degradation reveal his condition.”

⁹⁰See Wilckens, *Römer*, 1:174–75. Contra Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul’s Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 122, who sees more of a distinction in the uses.

⁹¹Kuss, *Römerbrief*, 1:109: “Der Psalm ist das Klagelied eines Einzelnen, der sich in der Verfolgung seiner Sündhaftigkeit und der Sündhaftigkeit aller Menschen bewusst wird.”

without a proper understanding of how faith justifies creates two problems. First, it wrongly separates Jews from Gentiles (ethnocentrism), which has its root in the second, more fundamental problem: it obscures the fundamental necessity of *grace*. This is, in essence, legalism, and it is the reason Paul employs Psalm 143:2 at this point. The psalm perfectly demonstrates that God's dealings with humanity are always fundamentally first about *receiving* from God. All obedience must continually flow from this recognition or a form of works-righteousness, which lent itself easily to ethnocentrism, necessarily ensues.

Before leaving this text, two further subjects should be mentioned. First, Richard Hays's view of Paul's use of Psalm 143:2. Second, the manner in which the context of Psalm 143:2 informs the discussion.

Richard Hays and Psalm 143

Richard Hays offers a different interpretation than the one above. Hays examines the use of the psalm in its setting in Romans 3:20, though his work has implications for its use in Galatians as well.⁹² He argues that, indeed, the psalm shows that hope is not found in human "works," which for Hays are related mainly to "ethnic status."⁹³ But when one looks at the wider context of Psalm 143 where God's "righteousness" refers to his faithfulness, one sees that Paul is not concerned with "the subjective quest for salvation" after all, but rather "God's integrity" or "God's justice."⁹⁴

⁹²See Richard B. Hays, "Psalm 143 and the Logic of Romans 3," *JBL* 99 (1980): 107-15, which was reprinted in Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) (page number references will be to the original article). He makes a similar argument in Hays, *Galatians*, 240-41.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 241.

⁹⁴Hays, "Psalm 143," 114-15. N. T. Wright follows Hays in this line of thought (see N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter's Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 459). Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 337, discusses how "Paul echoes the psalmist's confession of his unrighteous

For Hays, this is ultimately why Paul alludes to the psalm in both instances. It is about the righteousness of God, understood as God's faithfulness, which, as Hays argues elsewhere, is also connected to the righteousness of the believer, "interpreted primarily in terms of the covenant relationship to God and membership within the covenant community."⁹⁵ Thus, in Hays's view Paul's use of Psalm 143, in contrast to the present argument, actually undergirds the more corporate approach to justification.

There are a few comments to be made by way of response. First, to be sure, Hays is correct that Psalm 143 has God's faithfulness as a central theme. The first verse has the psalmist asking God to hear him ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σου ("in your righteousness"). However, the question is whether God's faithfulness to the psalmist is Paul's primary reason for making use of it. Likely what attracted Paul to the psalm in the first place is the use of the verb δικαίω, which connects well to his present argument. But the psalmist uses δικαίω specifically with reference to the fundamental unworthiness of humanity to withstand the judgment of God. This is the logical starting point of discussion, and one should explore it fully before moving too quickly to the assumption that Paul is appealing to God's faithfulness through "righteousness" language. Of course the implication is that only *God's* faithfulness and righteousness can provide any measure of hope. But it is questionable whether this is where Paul's primary focus lies.

It should be remembered that Hays works strictly with a "non-legalism framework" that most scholars have accepted since the emergence of the New Perspective on Paul. Therefore, his article seeks to establish a more covenantal interpretation of a passage that appears to cohere with the traditional approach to

status before God" where "the psalmist admits his sinfulness and God's transcendent righteousness," but Fitzmyer then goes on to note Hays's approach approvingly.

⁹⁵Richard B. Hays, "Justification," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1131.

justification. Yet, the argument thus far has been that such a framework should not be presupposed necessarily. If one has not dismissed beforehand the notion of Jewish legalism, the fact that Paul alludes to a text about the unworthiness of the human being before God actually provides support for the idea that he is responding to a form of legalism. In this case, Psalm 143:2 undergirds Paul's anthropological view of justification where the individual has nothing to commend him before God, with the intervention God's mercy being his only hope.

While, to be fair, Hays agrees with the idea that the text is in part about "the unconditional inadequacy of human beings to stand before God," he nevertheless does not examine the idea any further than this.⁹⁶ But if one asks *why* Paul has an allusion regarding man's inadequacy here and in Romans 3:20—two critical places in his justification argument—it is only logical to go further and answer that some Jews likely thought they were adequate to stand before God based on something other than God's mercy. At this point, it becomes difficult to avoid the conclusion that some form of legalism is at work.

In response to this, Hays and other New Perspective scholars would no doubt argue that the adequacy assumed before God was "Jewishness" and not a "treasury of merits" or something similar. But, as noted earlier, this kind of ethnocentrism can be understood as fundamentally related to a deeper legalism. That which provides the necessary "Jewishness," which in turn provides the necessary adequacy before God, is an outward demarcation by *works* that are *performed*. While this is not an overly explicit, merit-craving legalism, it is still a functional, ethnocentrically-oriented legalism.

In sum, then, if one follows Hays and shifts the focus away from the concept of human inadequacy and move it primarily to the faithfulness of God, the argument can be

⁹⁶Hays, "Psalm 143," 115.

made to fit the more corporate approach to justification. However, if the case for Jewish legalism is reopened in the manner argued thus far, it makes a good deal of sense to see Paul alluding to a psalm about the individual's lack of worthiness before God in order to target those who assumed they possessed some level of worthiness before God through works, even if these works were "boundary markers" such as circumcision and food laws. Of course, such an argument will not be fully persuasive if one is insistent that legalism *cannot* be the reason for Paul's response. In any case, what remains is a choice between what makes better sense of the evidence, a framework that allows for such an assumption or one that does not.

The Context of Psalm 143:2

Along these lines, the context of Psalm 143:2 itself presents certain problems for the non-legalism approach to interpretation. It is difficult to explain why Paul would appeal to such a passage if his main concern was solely with how certain works provided an ethnic status that set Jews above Gentiles, with no real concern for the status of the human being as a sinner before God. Within the psalm's original context, there appears to be no reason to limit the discussion to ethnic, boundary-marking works—no doubt the psalmist faithfully kept such works and assumed that, at least externally, he was a covenant member in good standing.⁹⁷ In the psalm, then, it is more likely that moral failure is the focus, rather than more outward works that marked out Jews from Gentiles.⁹⁸ If so, it is logical to assume that Paul is referring to something similar. Indeed,

⁹⁷Such a point can be made even more compellingly from Romans 4:6-8, where Paul explicitly cites David (see chap. 4 below). See Schreiner, *Romans*, 219; Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 246-47.

⁹⁸As Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC, vol. 21 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 284, writes regarding this verse in the psalm, "The relativity of all human morality over against divine absolutes means that he can make no demands upon God." So also Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, AB, vol. 17A (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 323: "The psalmist pleads not to be put on trial and sentenced according to his deserts, since no man can be found just before God." Silva, "Galatians," 791, rightly observes how

while Paul often had the external mark of circumcision as his primary target, it was the way that circumcision was presumed upon as a mark of piety before God that created problems. In this way, Paul's polemic connects to the psalm, which declares that humans are without any form of piety apart from the mercy of God.

Another way this could be stated is that if, as the New Perspective argues, Paul was fundamentally concerned with prejudice against Gentiles alone, then an appeal to Psalm 143:2 may actually work against his argument. This is because one of the key tenets in the corporate approach to justification is that Jews within the covenant had no tormented conscience, and it was only in light of Christ that the need for a savior came to light. Yet, Psalm 143:2 presents someone whose conscience does not appear "robust," but who fully recognizes his own moral failure. It is difficult to understand why Paul would appeal to this psalm at this moment unless he sees a principle regarding lack of worthiness before God at work in the psalm that holds true for his own doctrine of justification.

There seem to be only two ways that such a point can be circumvented. The first is to argue that the psalmist indeed *was* referring to covenant-oriented works and not something beyond this. As already mentioned, this seems doubtful. The psalm, in part due to its use of $\pi\alpha\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma \zeta\tilde{\omega}\nu$, "every living thing," seems clearly in line with the Jewish idea of the universal sinfulness of mankind.⁹⁹ Such an idea was bound to include all kinds of moral failure and not simply the more ceremonial aspects of the law that could mark out ethnicity.

The second way would be that Paul is using the psalm in a manner different

Paul's allusion "casts considerable doubt on the attempt to restrict 'works of the law' to ceremonial practices," because it is highly unlikely that this is what the psalmist is referring to in context.

⁹⁹E.g., Job 9:2; Ps 14:1-3; 130:3; *1 Enoch* 81:5. Allen, *Psalms*, 281, calls it a "confession of general sinfulness," which "implies that the covenant relationship can be sustained only on the basis of continual divine forgiveness."

from its original context. That is, Paul has taken a text referring to an individual before God in need of mercy, reworked it somewhat, and applied it mainly to boundary-marking works in order to attack the nationalistic hubris of Jews, but without attacking any kind of soteriological legalism. For this to be sustained, one would need to make the argument that Paul would alter the psalm in such a way, in which case he would not only be modifying the words, but also the psalmist's main intention. To be sure, such an argument is not outside the realm of possibility, since Paul uses Scripture somewhat fluidly at times. However, that he would modify it so significantly is debatable, and, even if he was capable of doing this in theory, the question remains whether this is in fact what he is doing. If the argument that legalism could have been present in first-century Judaism is plausible, then Paul is appealing to a very fitting text as it stands, one that demonstrates that no human being is justified before God based on inherent worthiness, which some in Paul's context assumed was provided by works of the law.

This eases the tension mentioned above that rises inevitably upon the corporate view. That is, despite the fact that the psalmist was in one sense within the bounds of the covenant, he knew that this *ultimately* did not justify him before God. Inherent in the covenant is the assumption that the individual must place final hope in God alone and not on any human action. Ultimately, God owes humanity nothing, and this theme is present throughout Scripture and Jewish literature. The psalmist knew that any action he performed for the sake of God, including those that externally demarcated him as a faithful Israelite, were worthless apart from God's mercy.¹⁰⁰ Paul latches on to this notion

¹⁰⁰On the subject of pessimistic anthropology, Timo Laato *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach*, trans. T. McElwain, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 115 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), contrasts Pauline and Jewish thought, arguing that Jewish anthropology was more optimistic than Paul's. While in agreement with Laato, it should be noted that pessimistic anthropology was not entirely new to Paul, as the OT provides at least some evidence for it, though perhaps not as explicitly as Paul. Thus, it may be that Paul is more in line with OT anthropology than some elements of early Judaism.

to show certain Jews who presumed upon their works—especially the identity-markers—that such works did not in fact justify them before God.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has contended that Paul, while adapting Psalm 143:2 for his own context, still appeals to the same principle at work in the psalm: despite outward compliance with the Mosaic law, all humans are in need of the mercy of God due to lack of worthiness before him.¹⁰¹ In other words, works of the law “have *always* been an improper way to seek God's righteousness” and faith has always been the route to God—Paul is reminding certain Jews of this whose actions imply otherwise.¹⁰² Thus, the language Paul uses here is more anthropological than is often recognized, and it is the very language that undergirds his doctrine of justification.

To be sure, the New Perspective rightly emphasizes Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Paul is not composing a theological treatise in a vacuum—his mission was inextricably bound to his view of justification. Justification by law necessarily excludes Gentiles, which is a grave misunderstanding of God's purposes in the Messiah. Thus, both soteriology *and* ecclesiology are tightly interwoven throughout Paul's argument.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹N. T. Wright appears to sense the tension of Paul's appeal to Ps 143:2 when he admits that works of the law “will never justify, because what the law does is to reveal sin. Nobody can keep it perfectly” (N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009], 118). But admitting that such a premise factored into Paul's argument seems to go against the important New Perspective contention that there is no assumption in Paul's theology that the law was *meant* to be kept perfectly in any sense. E.g., elsewhere Wright writes, “No Jew who failed to keep Torah, and knew that he or she was failing to keep Torah, needed to languish for long . . . Remedies were close at hand, prescribed by God's grace within the Torah itself” (N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 145). For his position to be tenable, it would seem that this statement must somehow be more satisfactorily reconciled with the previous one.

¹⁰²Moo, “Law,” 97. My intent here is not to deny the theological distinction between “Law” and “Gospel,” so prominent in, e.g., Lutheran thought. To my mind this is a separate discussion and largely depends on how one defines these terms.

¹⁰³This point is stated well by Michael Bird, “Justification as Forensic Status and Covenant Membership,” in *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 113–54.

However, this does not mean that the Gentile mission is the more fundamental issue at hand. Paul's zeal in setting faith against works stems from what this *particular* form of ethnocentrism implied: a culpable, fatal misunderstanding of how God works with human beings that gives ground for boasting in one's own works before God.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Dunn wrongly separates these two elements, arguing that Paul "has the devout Jew in view, but not as the type of the universal *homo religiosus*" whose piety "somehow puts God in his debt" (*Romans* 1-8, 154). Ethnocentrism and forced circumcision *testify* to an assumption that piety at some level *does* make God a debtor, though this approach does not describe every Jew, only those with whom Paul was contending.

CHAPTER 4

ROMANS 4 AND PSALM 32:1-2

This chapter will examine Romans 4:1-8, a critical text for the justification discussion. It will proceed by way of an exegetical reading of Romans 4:1-5 followed by exegesis of 4:6-8, where a key point will be made regarding Paul's quotation of Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:6-8 that is in many ways parallel to the one made in the previous chapter regarding his Psalm 143:2 allusion. Paul's quotation of David presents certain problems for the corporate approach to justification. Essentially, the general argument will be the same as that of chapter 3: when Jewish legalism is not ruled out, the text provides evidence for the individual element within justification and supplies a better reading of the text than one that diminishes this element.

Context: Romans 3:21-31

Before moving into Romans 4, however, a brief word is necessary regarding Romans 3:21-31. While full exegesis is not necessary at this point, the verses are obviously critical to the letter of Romans and to any discussion of justification. They also provide the immediately preceding context of the text of interest and should be able to be explained in light of the present argument. Thus, more will be said about them in chapter 5, especially 3:27-30. The reason for reserving further examination until that point is that the passage demonstrates precisely how Paul's doctrine of justification keeps the individual before God in a foundational place while still addressing the issue of incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God. Hence, a more detailed discussion will fit better in the last chapter, which will integrate work on the individual in justification with corporate elements present in Pauline soteriology.

However, for now, suffice it to say that if the arguments made in chapters 2 and 3 have merit, Romans 3:21-31 fit naturally into the flow of Romans. New Perspective interpretations miss some key ideas here, in my view. These interpretations argue that clear social elements are evident that point to the larger story of Israel, which traditional approaches are prone to neglecting, severely hamstringing their understanding of Paul's doctrine of justification. To be sure, this frustration is warranted to some degree, as Paul is clearly interested in the place of Gentiles in the people of God (e.g., 3:29-30; 4:9-25). At the same time, while Paul's immediate context remains the relationship between Jew and Gentile, and this burden intersperses his argument throughout, this does not mean that it comprises the full extent of the argument he is making. As stated before, the Gentile problem signaled a more foundational soteriological problem, and Paul addresses both, sometimes apparently inseparably, but this does not mean there is no distinction or "pecking order." One must maintain the respective place of each issue in order to grasp fully Paul's view of justification.

With that said, this chapter will work with the following understanding of the central argument in these verses. Paul has presently demonstrated in 3:9-20 that Jews have no advantage over Gentiles before God simply because they possess the law. In fact, the law provides ground for their condemnation as well as that of the whole world, which renders any attempt at justification based on obedience to the law futile. He then moves to his central point: apart from this law and the condemnation it brings, God has provided Jews and Gentiles alike a righteousness in Jesus Christ (3:21-26). Since God justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith, there is no ground for boasting in the fact that one is a Jew with respect to justification before God (3:27-31). This leaves out many details, some of which will be examined later, but for now it is enough to point out these general points.

Introductory Note on Romans 4:1-8

If it is understood that the two themes of soteriology and ecclesiology are

woven throughout Romans 3:21-31, then Paul's transition into Romans 4 can be seen to flow organically from his argument up to this point. This argument involves an individual, anthropological view of justification promulgated in a context where Gentiles are not considered saved until they are circumcised, implying that both salvation and membership within God's people are based on certain Jewish works. If Paul is opposing an ethnocentric *works-righteousness*, his shift to Abraham, David, and a discussion about justification apart from works is natural (Rom 4:1-8). Furthermore, if Paul is opposing *ethnocentric* works-righteousness, and as one looks further ahead (Rom 4:9-25), it is also natural for his focus to shift from a more technical discussion of the inner workings of justification in 4:1-8 to the broader concept of who is part of Abraham's family.

This latter point is rightly underlined by New Perspective scholars, who point out that Romans 4:1-8 is not merely an illustration of an abstract doctrine of justification by faith.¹ Paul's mission to the Gentiles within God's larger story of Israel and the church is not set aside in these verses. Those who favor a more traditional view do not necessarily deny this point. For example, Thomas Schreiner observes, "Abraham's righteousness by faith and not by works is forged together with the theme that Abraham is the father of believers throughout the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles"—one "must not wrench apart the two themes Paul joins together here."² At the same time, acknowledging such a reality does not necessarily mean it should provide the exegetical key for Romans 4:1-8. In my view, these verses remain difficult for the New Perspective and are still best interpreted when one understands that the individual element in justification is fundamental in Paul's mind and argumentation. That is, it is the driving

¹N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 216. He also writes, "The flow of thought from Romans 4:9 onward indicates that the question toward which Paul is working in the opening verses is . . . who are the family of Abraham?" (ibid., 217).

²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 210.

force that propels him as he sees a prejudice against Gentiles as an indicator of a deep-rooted soteriological problem, not only an ecclesiological problem.

Paul's use of Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:6-8 seems especially problematic for a strictly corporate approach to justification for many of the same reasons as his appeal to Psalm 143:2, discussed in chapter 3 above. However, his appeal to Abraham is instructive as well, and a reading should be provided of Romans 4:1-5 before moving into 4:6-8. Therefore, the section below will examine Paul's appeal to Abraham first, then the following one will consider his quotation of David in Psalm 32:1-2.

Reading of Romans 4:1-5

If Abraham, the great forefather of Israel, is somehow able to testify that justification is by faith and not through works of the law, then Paul will have made a strong point of support for his present argument, especially among Jews.³ Abraham was held as the supreme model of faithfulness in Jewish interpretation.⁴ As Cranfield observes, "If anyone has a right to glory, Abraham must have—according to Jewish assumptions. So, if it can be shown that according to Scripture Abraham himself has no

³Because my intention is to offer a reading, rather than a comprehensive treatment of these verses, not every element of the scholarly discussion of Abraham in Romans 4 will be addressed in full. One significant example is the debate regarding salvation history between Ulrich Wilckens and Günther Klein on this passage (see further, e.g., Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 257 n. 8; Maria Neubrand, *Abraham – Vater von Juden und Nichtjuden: Eine exegetische Studie zu Röm 4*, Forschung zur Bibel 85 [Würzburg: Echter, 1997], 32-37; Benjamin Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4: Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6*, WUNT 2/224 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 222-25).

⁴E.g., see *Jubilees* 23:10; 1 Macc 2:52; Sir 44:20. See also Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 309; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word, 1988), 200; Gerhard H. Visscher, *Romans 4 and the New Perspective on Paul: Faith Embraces the Promise*, Studies in Biblical Literature 122 (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 150-57; Moo, *Romans*, 256. Paul would surely not disagree that Abraham was a great example of faithfulness, but the question at this point in Romans is from where does the favor Abraham received from God ultimately originate. For Paul the answer is God's unmerited grace. God blessed Abraham for his obedience, but this is not the same as saying that Abraham's obedience ultimately put God in his debt. Paul is sparring with those whose actions on some level implied that it did.

right to glory, it will have been proved that no one has such a right—that glorying has in fact been excluded.”⁵

However, Abraham serves Paul as more than an illustration. It is clear from the rest of Romans 4 and elsewhere that Paul understands Abraham as the representative of the people of God who are justified by faith. He is the great promise-bearer and father of all who believe, Jews and Gentiles alike.⁶ This point, of course, has been highlighted by New Perspective scholars, and in this passage Abraham’s role as the covenant member par excellence is referenced often.⁷ However, while this observation has been an important corrective to an over-individualizing of justification, and while the move to emphasize it in recent discussions of justification is worth full consideration, the inclusion into the family of Abraham does not, in my view, provide the key for interpreting Romans on the whole, nor Romans 4:1-8 and the doctrine of justification more specifically.⁸ While it is *a* theme in Romans in general, and certainly later in

⁵C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:224.

⁶“Both Paul’s insistence that justification is by faith alone and his concern for the full inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God make it necessary for him to integrate Abraham theologically into his scheme” (Moo, *Romans*, 257). See also Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 142.

⁷E.g., see Michael Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4: The Father of All Who Believe,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 76. For more on the Jewish view of Abraham, see Ulrich Luz, *Das Geschichtsverständnis des Paulus*, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 49 (München: Kaiser, 1968), 178-79; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 260-61; idem, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 220-69; Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, ‘Works of the Law’ at Qumran and in Paul, *New Testament Monographs* 13 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 99-128.

⁸For example, Akio Ito, “NOMOS [ΤΩΝ] ἘΠΙΤΩΝ and NOMOS ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ: The Pauline Rhetoric and Theology of NOMOS,” *NovT* 45 (2003): 253, writes that while a simple contrast between faith and works is one way of understanding Paul’s appeal to Abraham, “it does not exhaust the argument of Romans 4,” arguing that one must pay attention to the “covenantal overtones” throughout Rom 4. While his point true enough, it is also important that one not allow a reading of Rom 4:9-25 dictate one’s reading of Paul’s argument in Rom 4:1-8 if his point is not exactly the same as that of 4:9-25. Along similar lines, when Llyod Gaston, “Abraham and the Righteousness of God,” in *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 61, writes, “Abraham is understood in Romans 4 not primarily as the *type* of the later believers but as the *father* of later believers, Jews and Gentiles,” he makes a false

Romans 4, Paul's understanding of justification touches on something more fundamentally anthropological, something that lies at the very heart of what it means to be human, which Romans 4:1-8 shows.

To be sure, there have been well-crafted explanations offered on these verses, a few of which will be examined below, that deny the traditional notions of faith and works and interpret the verses in a way that is more palatable to New Perspective assumptions. However, in the end, how one interprets these verses will largely depend upon prior assumptions brought to the text. If legalism within Judaism is denied, and traditional understandings of justification eschewed, there is no necessary reason to interpret the verses along the lines of Paul contrasting human effort with grace. This has been the case with those who explain the text differently.

The success of these efforts may be judged with relevance to the textual arguments put forth, but, in the end, if one believes at the outset that justification has little to do with believing versus working, then there will always be other possible interpretations of the relevant texts. However, when ethnocentrism is understood as connected to a deeper legalism, then the need to find alternative explanations is not as pressing. In this case, some important elements of the traditional interpretation remain relevant, as will be demonstrated below.

Verse 1

Paul's argument in Romans 4 does not continue directly from 3:31, where he assures his audience that faith does not "nullify" the law, since he does not pick up the theme of faith establishing the law until later in Romans.⁹ Rather, Paul elaborates upon a

dichotomy, wrongly separating two ideas that are interwoven throughout Rom 4. One aspect is emphasized in Rom 4:1-8 and another in 4:9-25.

⁹So also Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis*, 173; Schreiner, *Romans*, 209, who argues that the presence of *οὖν*, rather than *γάρ*, indicates this. The *οὖν* in this case marks continuation of the line of

central theme of 3:27-31, especially that of 3:27-28, which is that boasting is excluded because justification comes by faith, not works of the law (for more on 3:27-30, see chap. 6 below).¹⁰ One must be careful at this point, because it becomes tempting to highlight specific themes while neglecting others, or to read all of 3:27-4:25 through one particular lens. Gerhard Visscher rightly states that such approaches to the text are “not wrong in what they affirm; the problem is that there are many aspects of 3:27-31 which continue into 4:1-25 and it is difficult is [sic] to do justice to all of them and see how they are interwoven into the fabric of this text.”¹¹ Thus, caution is necessary. However, it is possible to discern carefully the themes present and suggest connections between them.

In this vein, the theme that seems to connect all of Romans 3:27-4:25 is that justification is by faith apart from works (3:27-28; 4:1-8), which necessarily involves the inclusion of Gentiles (3:29-30; 4:9-25). Moo notes that between 3:27-31 and 4:1-25 “the similarity in general theme and development is striking” and that it is best to view 3:27-31 “as the initial statement of the theme, with chap. 4 as its elucidation and elaboration.”¹² While Abraham is clearly the focus of Romans 4, setting the chapter apart

thought of 3:27-28 (on this use of the particle, see BDAG, s.v. “οὐν” 2). Contra C. Thomas Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law*, SBLDS 55 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 75-76 (and throughout); Kari Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God’s Plan: Paul’s Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 85 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 140-41.

¹⁰So also Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 198; E. H. Gifford, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (London: John Murray, 1886; reprint, Minneapolis: James Family, 1977), 99; F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), 1:282-83; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:224. The connection between 4:1 and the central theme of 3:27-31 is also emphasized by those who favor a more corporate approach to justification. Upon this interpretation, however, the connection is not about the priority of grace over against works for justification, but about how God is the God of Gentiles as well as Jews, with the fatherhood of Abraham demonstrating this idea further throughout Rom 4. I maintain that both of these themes are present in 3:27-30 (see chap. 6 below), and both are present in Rom 4. The central question is which theme best explains 4:1-8.

¹¹Visscher, *Romans 4*, 124.

¹²Moo, *Romans*, 244-45 (see there for a more detailed look at the overlap in the texts). For example, he notes the repetition of such words as *καύχησις* /-μα, *ἔργα* /-ζομαι, *νόμος*, *δικαιώω* /-σύνη, *λογίζομαι*, and *πίστις* /-ευω. See also Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith*, 311; Halvor Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul’s Understanding of God in Romans*, NovTSup 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 228.

from the argument at the end of Romans 3, the central themes of 3:27-31 continue into Romans 4. “The specific question in verse 1, then, is whether the case of Abraham validates the contention in 3:27-28 that righteousness is by faith rather than works.”¹³

The actual question Paul asks is, *Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα*, “What then shall we say Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found?” The syntax of the verse is somewhat irregular, which has created both text-critical and interpretive problems.¹⁴ One solution suggested has been to see the phrasing originating in the expression *εὐρίσκειν χάριν* (or *ἔλεος*) from the LXX (e.g., Gen 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; 30:27; in the NT see Luke 1:30; Acts 7:46; Heb 4:16).¹⁵ However, Richard Hays has questioned this notion, along with the traditional understanding of the verse that has Paul asking what Abraham discovered with regard to justification, whether it is based on faith or works.¹⁶ Hays begins by noting the prevalence of the question *τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν* in Romans, which is often followed by a false inference.¹⁷ Based on this, he

¹³Schreiner, *Romans*, 213.

¹⁴There are two significant text-critical issues. First, some witnesses have *πατέρα* for *προπάτορα*, undoubtedly because the latter is uncommon (found only here in the NT), while *πατήρ* is used often of Abraham (e.g., Luke 16:24; John 8:56; Acts 7:2; Rom 4:12, 16; Jas 2:21). Second, the position of *εὐρηκέναι* varies and is even omitted in a few witnesses, including B (Codex Vaticanus) and followed by RSV (“What then shall we say about Abraham?”). In the Majority text it follows *ἡμῶν*, which was likely to smooth out the difficult syntax (see Schreiner, *Romans*, 221). While a complete omission would create the shorter reading, Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002), 450, suggests that it is unlikely *εὐρηκέναι* would have been added if it were not original, and, further, the similarity of the beginnings of *εὐρηκέναι* and *ἐροῦμεν* could explain the omission of the former (so also Rhyne, *Faith Establishes*, 156-57). Thus, the reading above, following NA²⁷, is the best option. See also Moo, *Romans*, 257 n. 9, for a thorough treatment of the issue.

¹⁵Otto Michel, *Paulus und Seine Bibel* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1929), 83; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:227; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 198.

¹⁶Richard B. Hays, “Have We Found Abraham to be Our Forefather According to the Flesh? A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 76-98.

¹⁷For more on the inferential question in Romans, see Michael W. Palmer, “τί οὖν; The Inferential Question in Paul’s Letter to the Romans with a Proposed Reading of Romans 4.1,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNTSup 113 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 200-18, who is sympathetic to Hays’s approach to Rom 4:1.

suggests punctuating Romans 4:1 as follows: *Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα*; In this case, Abraham is not the subject of the infinitive but the object, while the subject is intrinsic to the verb *ἐροῦμεν*, “we found,” providing the following rendering: “What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham (to be) our forefather according to the flesh?”¹⁸ Thus, the question is not about how Abraham was justified, but whether or not he is the father of both Jews and Gentiles by faith, thus connecting it to the more corporate idea of who makes up the people of God.

While Hays’s approach has gained adherents, it has also had its critics.¹⁹ There are two initial problems often mentioned: (1) there is no stated subject for the infinitive, and (2) Paul would likely have followed the question with *μὴ γένοιτο* as elsewhere.²⁰ Further, Hays bases part of his argument on the fact that Paul would not use *κατὰ σάρκα* to describe Abraham,²¹ yet Paul uses this exact phrase to describe Jesus twice in the letter with reference to his descent as an Israelite (Rom 1:3; 9:5) and once to describe Paul’s “kinsmen” of Israel (Rom 9:3). These uses are not necessarily negative but simply seem to indicate physical descent, the same idea Paul would then be indicating with reference to Abraham in 4:1.²² In this case, Paul is referring to Abraham in his role as the natural

¹⁸Hays, “Have We Found,” 81. Hays follows Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1910), 215.

¹⁹Hays is followed by, e.g., Neubrand, *Abraham*, 182-84; Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 74-75; N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 489. For a thorough treatment of the issue, see Visscher, *Romans 4*, 135-43; Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith*, 321-27.

²⁰See, e.g., Thomas H. Tobin, “What Shall We Say that Abraham Found? The Controversy behind Romans 4,” *HTR* 88 (1995): 443 n. 14; Glenn N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study of Romans 1-4*, JSNTSup 39 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 148 n. 2; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 106; Jewett, *Romans*, 307; Schreiner, *Romans*, 213.

²¹Hays, “Have We Found,” 77-78.

²²See Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul’s Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 147 n. 56; Davies, *Faith and Obedience*, 148 n. 2; Visscher, *Romans 4*, 142. This solution seems more natural than that of Jewett, *Romans*, 308, who sees *κατὰ σάρκα* as adverbial and

father of the Jewish people without the negative implications associated with the phrase elsewhere (e.g., Rom 8:4-5, 12-13).²³ Finally, Moo has noted that Paul can use *εὐρίσκω* with a similar sense of “find to be the case” later in Romans (see 7:10, 21), while James Dunn suggests the possible influence of the idea of Abraham being “found faithful” (see Sir 44:20; 1 Macc 2:52).²⁴

Thus, while Hay’s rendering is a possibility, there is no more textual warrant for it than the traditional reading. In the end, the wording of Romans 4:1 remains awkward upon any interpretation. To be sure, Hays writes, “If we suppose that Romans is a treatise on the problem of how a person may ‘find’ justification, it is possible to make some sense out of the sentence, but the construction in Rom 4:1 remains, at best, a very odd way for Paul to express himself.”²⁵ But the same could also be said if one supposes Romans is a treatise on how Gentiles are included in the family of Abraham. So one is left with the question of assumptions. Behind the textual argument is a concern to view the evidence in light of an understanding of Paul that specifically avoids the traditional understanding of justification. This is not necessarily wrong, and has proven useful at times. However, it is not necessarily right, either.

attaches it to the verb “find,” so that “the question turns on whether Abraham had circumcised his flesh before or after being declared righteous.”

²³Palmer, “The Inferential Question,” 208, objects to the traditional reading on the basis of its assumption “that the addressees (though not necessarily the readers) are all Jewish.” However, this is not necessarily entirely true. Many scholars believe the letter to be aimed at Gentiles generally but not without a Jewish element present in its address. This was bound to create some ambiguity of expression at times. If Paul is addressing a Jewish ethnocentric legalism, then at times his argument will be directed more clearly to the Jewish element present. But this does not mean it is without relevance to Gentile addressees and readers. A similar ambiguity was seen above in Gal 2:15-21, where Paul, still recounting his rebuke of Peter (“We Jews”), switches his focus so that his argument is given mainly for the sake of his Galatian addressees.

²⁴Moo, *Romans*, 259 n. 13; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 199. Dunn’s suggestion is even more plausible in light of the connection in 1 Macc 2:52 between Abraham being “found faithful” (*εὐρέθη πιστός*) and the phrase from Gen 15:6, “and it was reckoned to him for righteousness” (*καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην*), which Paul is about to cite.

²⁵Hays, “Have We Found,” 78.

Two additional considerations should be noted. First, a simple disposal of the traditional understanding and rereading of the text is not sufficient, in my view. Paul is addressing a multifaceted issue, and the traditional view was correct in highlighting one of the facets. Visscher points to this in his critique of Hays, noting that the question Paul asks upon Hays's reading "is not the question that Paul answers in the verses that immediately follow 4:1."²⁶ Visscher asks further,

Can it really be said that the answer given in verse 2 has to do with the question whether Abraham is a fleshly or spiritual father? While that subject arises later (vs 11-12), it is not the only concern of chapter 4, and it is certainly not the immediate concern of 4:2-10. Paul will answer that question before the chapter is concluded, but it appears odd to ask this question and then immediately give an answer which does not correspond to the question posed.²⁷

Thus, one needs to allow for the possibility that there is something right with the traditional view that is in need of adjustment, rather than complete rejection. Second, and more specific to the present argument, if Jewish ethnocentrism was connected to a deeper legalism, then it seems perfectly logical that Paul is asking what Abraham's experience was with regard to faith and works. To be sure, verses such as 3:29-30 and 4:9-25 point to the issue of inclusion into Abraham's family. However, this idea does not necessarily provide the exegetical key to 4:1-8. Dunn, who is far from the traditional view, writes that while Hays's translation "strengthens the link to vv 11ff. (Abraham's fatherhood), it weakens the more immediate link."²⁸ Therefore, the traditional rendering, though not completely free of problems, nevertheless remains the best option with its assumption that Paul is asking what Abraham's experience was with regard to justification.

²⁶Visscher, *Romans 4*, 139.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 199. Hays, "Have We Found," 93, states that vv. 2-8 are a "preliminary step towards the major thesis of the chapter," but, as Schreiner, *Romans*, 213 n. 2, responds, this is "scarcely satisfactory," stating further, correctly, that a "compelling rationale needs to be given for why these verses immediately succeed verse 1."

Verse 2

In 4:2 he continues, εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα· ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν, “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has a boast, but not before God.” The γὰρ grounds the validity of the question in 4:1. In other words, Paul asks, “What was Abraham’s experience? The reason I ask is that [i.e., γάρ] if *he* was justified by works, he has a reason to boast [and, by extension, so would we, as we follow his example].”²⁹ The idea of boasting (καύχημα) is most directly connected to the same idea from 3:27 (καύχησις), where Paul argues that it is “shut out” (ἐξεκλείσθη) because faith is the operative principle with God, which by nature gives up boasting in itself and trusts in someone else.³⁰ The idea is the same here.

The entire verse is a “first class” condition (i.e., εἰ plus indicative verb in the protasis and verb of any mood in the apodosis), which assumes a truth for the sake of argument.³¹ Jan Lambrecht notes, however, that based on Paul’s logic one would expect the apodosis not to be a “realis” or “condition of fact,” ἔχει καύχημα, “he *has* a reason to boast,” but an “irrealis,” with a construction such as εἶχεν ἂν καύχημα, “he *would have* a reason to boast.”³² Thus, this instance is a “mixed construction,” where the “protasis stands in the irrealis whereas the apodosis is in the ‘realis.’”³³

The conditional statement is followed by a final phrase, ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν,

²⁹See Godet, *Romans*, 1: 284-85; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:227.

³⁰For more on Rom 3:27-30, see chap. 6 below. On boasting specifically see n. 11 of chap. 6. The difference between the word καύχημα here and καύχησις in 3:27 may be that the former denotes the ground for boasting while the latter denotes boasting itself. For more on this word group, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:164-65. Note also that the verbal form is employed in 2:17, 23.

³¹See BDF §371 (1); Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 690-94.

³²Jan Lambrecht, “Why Is Boasting Excluded? A Note on Rom 3,27 and 4,2,” *ETL* 61 (1985): 366.

³³*Ibid.*, 367.

which has elicited discussion.³⁴ Some believe that Paul is saying that if Abraham were justified by works he would have a boast before other people but not God.³⁵ While this is possible, that Paul would entertain that Abraham was justified by works even if only before other human beings seems improbable based on his present argument.³⁶ Further, Paul's interest here is boasting with regard to justification before God, not people.

Glenn Davies prefers an argument, originating with Chrysostom, that has Paul saying that Abraham would have grounds for “glorying” if he were justified by works, but not glorying *πρὸς θεόν*, which means “to recognize the beneficence of God and his gift of salvation.”³⁷ Davies suggests this allows for the positive use of “glorying” in God found in both Paul and Jewish literature, as well as a more natural use of *πρὸς*, which he argues should not be equated with the Hebrew *לפני*—as is often the case in the commentaries—a phrase better rendered with *ἐνώπιον* (cf. Rom 3:20).³⁸ However, while Paul can certainly discuss boasting in a positive sense, this is not always the case (e.g., 1 Cor 1:29; 3:21; Gal 6:13; cf. Eph 2:9), and it does not seem to be the case in this instance. The immediate context has to do with the ground of justification, not a general obedience to God that Paul would commend. Further, while the use of *πρὸς θεόν* may not strictly mean “before,” it may certainly carry the sense of “with reference to,” which is not

³⁴For a thorough treatment of the issue, see Davies, *Faith and Obedience*, 148-54 (though his conclusion differs from my own).

³⁵So Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2nd ed., EKKNT 6 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987), 1:261; Günter Klein, “Sündenverständnis und theologia crucis bei Paulus,” in *Theologia Crucis – Signum Crucis: Festschrift für Erich Dinkler zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Carl Andresen and Günter Klein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 276; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 100; Godet, *Romans*, 1:286. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 373, seems to accept this idea but goes on to say Paul is only speaking theoretically.

³⁶So also Moo, *Romans*, 260-61; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:228; Byrne, *Romans*, 149; Schreiner, *Romans*, 214.

³⁷Davies, *Faith and Obedience*, 150.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 151-54.

necessarily a significantly different idea (cf. to similar notion and wording in 2 Cor 3:4).³⁹ Thus, it seems best to see Paul setting up a hypothetical situation that he then rules out completely. The phrase ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν is Paul's conclusion, though part of his logic is left out.⁴⁰ This rejection is then explained further in the next verse.

In this verse it is also important to recognize the natural transition Paul makes from “works of the law” to “works” in general. This is a revealing shift. The law had not been given in the time of Abraham, therefore Paul does not use the phrase ἔργα νόμου, but simply ἔργα. This seems to highlight that, at least at this point in the argument, Paul's fundamental concern is with the “working” element within the false idea that works of the law provided justification.

On the other hand, Dunn has argued that Paul is, in fact, referring to ἔργα νόμου. He bases this on the view of Abraham in Judaism as the great covenant-keeper, a point noted often regarding Abraham. For example, J. A. Ziesler writes, “Generally, Abraham's faith is understood as being righteousness, i.e. it is faithfulness, especially in keeping the whole Torah before it was given.”⁴¹ Thus, Dunn argues, it is not “good works” that are in view but “faithful obedience to what God requires” by way of keeping the covenant.⁴² In other words, what Paul is discounting is justification based upon

³⁹See BDAG, s.v. “πρὸς” 3.e.

⁴⁰See Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric*, 146 n. 55, who calls it a “suppressed enthymeme.”

⁴¹J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 182. See also Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11*, JSNTSup 57 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 211-12; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 372.

⁴²Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 200. So also Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 77; Kuula, *The Law*, 149-52. Longenecker, *Eschatology*, 213, holds a similar view, arguing further that even if legalism is being attacked, it “may well have aided Paul's larger attempt to discredit Jewish particularism” (see also idem, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1998], 140-41). While Longenecker's acknowledgement of the legalistic element here is to be appreciated, as mentioned in chap. 2, he attempts to make it fit a presuppositional framework regarding first-century Judaism inherited from Sanders that needs more nuancing.

covenant membership, not general works, and thus is still combating Jewish exclusivism.

However, two responses to this line of thought may be offered. First, simply, it seems to strain the text. Paul does not mention the law anywhere in these verses, but repeatedly stresses “works” (ἔργα) and “working” (ἐργάζομαι), even in his mention of David beginning in 4:6 (χωρὶς ἔργων) where he could have used ἔργα νόμου legitimately, since boundary-marking works existed in David’s time (cf. Romans 3:20).⁴³

Second, Dunn’s view assumes that Paul is not taking aim at legalism, but rather a genuine (though ethnocentric) obedience to God. However, if the problem that provides the backdrop to Paul’s polemic was more than ethnocentrism alone, if it was an ethnocentric legalism, then Paul is taking aim at a legalistic element in the law-keeping of his opponents, so that their presumed obedience is described as “working.” While the idea is more specifically connected to ethnocentrism elsewhere, in these particular verses Paul directs sharp focus toward the “working” element to make his point. This does not mean that a deep wedge needs to be driven between the idea of “works” here and “works of the law” elsewhere (e.g., note Paul’s use of the preposition ἐκ plus genitive ἔργων with both phrases). Only that since there are multiple elements to Paul’s polemic, one should be open to seeing him focusing in on a particular one in certain instances. This is what he is doing here, though elsewhere he can highlight the ethnocentric element involved.

Further, the argument to this point has been that while Paul is aiming his doctrine of justification by faith in large part at an ethnocentric legalism in these passages, the doctrine is not limited by this context. Paul’s doctrine of justification is one that applies to all humanity, regardless of race, and one that has always existed, though not revealed in all its fullness before Christ. This is why not only here but elsewhere the idea is used more broadly, and why the principle of receiving, over against “working,”

⁴³See further Visscher, *Romans 4*, 143-50.

remains fundamental to the whole discussion.⁴⁴ This is an important point and should not be too quickly discounted by modern interpreters of Paul. There is a thread of grace versus works that runs throughout the NT, and, while this does not validate every element of the older perspective on justification, it must still be accounted for.

Verse 3

Moving into 4:3, the conjunction γάρ connects the verse to the phrase ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν from 4:2, providing its scriptural ground.⁴⁵ Additionally, Paul essentially provides the answer to his question from 4:1, as the citation of Genesis 15:6 demonstrates what it was that Abraham, indeed, “found.” Thus: ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.”⁴⁶ Paul undoubtedly gravitated to the verse because of its connection of “believe” (LXX: πιστεύω, MT: יָאֵן) and “righteousness.” Taking the text at face value, Paul argues that Abraham, in his experience, found that righteousness was reckoned to him according to faith, with the implication being that it was not according to works. The current aim of the chapter precludes a detailed discussion of Paul’s use of Genesis 15:6 and related issues such as imputation of righteousness. However, my own view is that Paul is not stating that faith itself is equivalent to righteousness, but that the act of believing was the means by which God reckoned something to Abraham that he did not inherently possess.⁴⁷ This coheres with other uses in the OT, where something is

⁴⁴See chap. 5 for other texts that testify to this principle.

⁴⁵Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:228; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 201; Moo, *Romans*, 261.

⁴⁶The only difference from the text of the LXX is the use of δὲ instead of καί at the beginning of the verse, as well as the switch in spelling from “Abram” to “Abraham.” On the passive use of λογίζομαι with εἰς, see BDF §145 (2).

⁴⁷Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 206-07, notes the relevance of Rom 4:6 for Paul’s interpretation of Gen 15:6: “That Paul puts δικαιοσύνην as the direct object (in place of εἰς δικαιοσύνην in Gen 15:6) confirms that

“reckoned” to someone that is foreign to them by nature (e.g., Gen 31:15; Num 18:27, 30; Lev 7:18).⁴⁸

In comment on this verse it is often noted that Genesis 15:6 was interpreted in Jewish literature in such a way as to highlight Abraham’s faithful obedience, which raises the question of why Paul apparently reads the text differently from the received interpretation.⁴⁹ The traditional view on justification often takes this to mean that Paul is separating himself from Jewish interpretation, which was focused on obedience, to demonstrate that the text is actually about justification by faith.⁵⁰ The New Perspective line of thinking is that Paul would not have taken issue with the focus on “faithfulness” in the text, but is rather arguing against Abraham’s works insofar as they could be appealed to as a means of exclusivism.

By way of response, it is true enough that the Hebrew word for “faith” in Genesis (אֱמוּנָה) does not carry exactly the same sense as the Greek word Paul employs in Romans 4:3 (πίστεύω). This may in fact indicate that Paul is deliberately using the text in a different way for polemical purposes.⁵¹ This does not necessarily imply, however, that

he does not think of God accepting faith merely as the substitute for righteousness, but that righteousness is actually accorded.”

⁴⁸See O. Palmer Robertson, “Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text,” *WTJ* 42 (1980): 265-66. Robertson notes that Lev 7:18 is especially relevant, where if “a particular sacrifice is not eaten by the third day, its value shall be lost, and it shall not be ‘reckoned’ to the benefit of the sinner.” See also Visscher, *Romans 4*, 172-73; Moo, *Romans*, 261-62; Schreiner, *Romans*, 215. H. W. Heidland, “λογίζομαι, λογισμός,” in *TDNT*, 4:290-92, distinguishes between the idea of reckoning *κατὰ χάριν* and *κατὰ ὀφείλημα*, arguing that the former is the Hebrew sense, which is played off against the latter Greek sense. However, this seems unlikely.

⁴⁹E.g., see de Roo, *Works of the Law*, 101-02.

⁵⁰Gaston, “Abraham,” 46, observes, “That Paul is thereby deliberately and provocatively contradicting the theology of the synagogue is said by almost all commentators.” See also Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict*, 109: “Paul therefore had to give Gen 15:6 a new interpretation which supported his own argument.”

⁵¹E.g., Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 200: “Paul here attacks head-on the normal or at least widely accepted way of thinking about Abraham among his fellow Jews.” However, I am not convinced with

the original sense and subsequent Jewish interpretation were fully at odds with Paul's reading. The Genesis text and subsequent interpretation are not working with the same categories as Paul and are not concerned with precisely the same issues (a similar point is often raised in the debate over Paul and James in the NT).⁵² Paul is concerned with the question of how one ultimately receives justification and is not making a comprehensive statement about human obedience. If, as I suggest, Paul is combating some within Judaism who wrongly believed their Jewish identity—which provided ethnic and moral superiority—was the grounds for their justification, then Paul appeals to the idea of faith over against works to demonstrate that no one has anything to offer God on their own. However, this does not mean that this idea exhausts all that Paul believed about faith and obedience. Paul certainly saw an enduring quality to faith (e.g., Rom 4:19-22) and does not separate it from obedience. But when it comes to the nature of justification before God—how an individual who has “fallen short of the glory of God” *ultimately* finds favor with God—Paul does not allow for any human works.

Such a notion is not irreconcilable with the idea within the context of Genesis. It is a different emphasis, to be sure, but this does not mean there are two completely

Darrell J. Doughty, “The Priority of ΧΑΡΙΣ: An Investigation of the Theological Language of Paul,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 166, that *every* Jewish interpretation “conceived the faith of Abraham as an accomplishment” where “Abraham himself would have been regarded (to use Paul’s language) as a ‘man who works’, who received justification ‘according to debt’ on the basis of his work.” It is better to say that Paul attacks an approach to Abraham and the law that *implied* such an understanding of Abraham, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, and, further, that this is not necessarily the *definitive* Jewish interpretation of Abraham, certainly not the one promulgated in the OT itself.

⁵²Dunn states that Paul “had come to a clearer perception of what the mainstream of God’s covenant purpose was, and with that clearer perception had come the realization that the usual interpretation of Abraham and of Gen 15:6 in particular was a misinterpretation” (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 228). Whether the Jewish view was a “misinterpretation” depends upon the underlying motivation for viewing Abraham in this fashion. Simply to admire him as a faithful follower of Yahweh is one thing. But to separate his faithfulness, even if only implicitly, from a recognition that everything Abraham had and performed ultimately came from God, i.e., from mercy and grace, was to imply that Abraham was justified by works. The typical Jewish interpretation does not necessitate the latter implication, but those at whom Paul takes aim at this point were following this line of thinking, at least from Paul’s perspective.

separate dynamics at work.⁵³ Further, one must remain open to the possibility that Paul is pointing to something that, while not as explicitly elucidated in the OT, is present nonetheless. This speaks to the much larger issue of how to understand the OT in light of the NT and vice-versa—a complex issue in its own right to be sure. However, a wise approach to account for Paul’s line of thought seems to be to allow for an organic link to the OT while still permitting Paul to speak something new. This would explain his use of Genesis 15:6 (as well as other texts, such as Ps 143:2). His doctrine of justification is present in the OT itself, but there is a certain fullness to and manifestation of the doctrine that has come with the death and resurrection of Christ.⁵⁴ Thus, Paul’s interpretation is a legitimate one, and also one that he believes provides strong evidence for his case. The rest of Romans 4 expounds the themes of this citation.

Verses 4-5

Paul moves on in 4:4 to draw out the implications of the text for his present argument with more clarity and force. He begins, τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθὸς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα, “Now to the one who works, the reward is not reckoned according to grace but according to debt.”⁵⁵ The participle ἐργαζομένῳ recalls the phrase

⁵³Cf. Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*, Biblical Interpretation Series 57 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 152, who highlights the individual nature of faith present in the Hebrew tradition.

⁵⁴Rightly, Klyne Snodgrass, “Spheres of Influence: A Possible Solution to the Problem of Paul and the Law,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 97, criticizes Heikki Räisänen and E. P. Sanders for not allowing that Paul viewed faith as a possibility from the very beginning, which “seems to be precisely Paul’s point in Romans 4.” Snodgrass continues, “How can Abraham be viewed as a special case when the example of David is used as well (Rom. 4.6-8) and when Abraham is viewed as the father of faith for both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 4.12)? Others may question the legitimacy of his belief, but Paul saw himself as in line with Abraham and in line with a proper understanding of Judaism.”

⁵⁵The word μισθός may recall Gen 15:1 and Abraham’s “very great reward,” which is rendered μισθός in LXX (C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., BNTC [London: A & C Black, 1991], 83; Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 80), but Paul’s clear intention is the idea of a worker receiving his wages. On μισθός as worker’s wage, see BDAG, s.v. “μισθός” 1; Wilhelm Pesch, “μισθός,” *EDNT*, 2:432; Jewett, *Romans*, 312-13. In the NT see Matt 20:8; Luke 10:7; 1 Tim 5:18; Jas 5:4.

ἐξ ἔργων from 4:2. If Abraham were justified “from works” (4:2), then he would be “the one who works” in 4:4, who has his reward reckoned to him not on the principle of grace but as a matter of debt.

But, of course, this is not Abraham, as 4:5 shows. Paul spells out the opposite situation of “the one who works” (4:4) with “the one who does not work”: τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ, πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιῶντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ, λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, “but to the one who does not work but believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.” Thus, here one finds what has traditionally been understood as a fundamental distinction between working and believing. The one who works receives his reward as a debt, but the one who believes the God who justifies the “ungodly” who has no claim on him due to inherent unworthiness, *this* is the one in whose case faith is counted as righteousness.⁵⁶

Dunn, however, has argued that the wording here is “used simply as part of the analogy drawn from the world of contract and employment” and does not mean Paul is “castigating contemporary Judaism for a theology of (self-achieved) merit and reward.”⁵⁷ Hence, it cannot serve as support for the traditional notion of justification that views Judaism this way. However, Dunn appears to be right in what he affirms but not what he denies (as is often the case, in my view). While the verse does employ an employment metaphor, one must still, as Schreiner points out, “probe why an explanation [in these terms] is necessary,” with the implication being that likely “Paul underscores this point

⁵⁶The idea of Abraham being “ungodly” is discussed much in the literature, with a full treatment beyond the purview of this chapter. However, on this, the conclusion of Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith*, 345, is right that while nowhere “does Scripture call Abraham (anything like) ‘ungodly,’ yet it is impossible *not* to deduce from the apostle’s line of thought that he *de facto* does so” (also cf. Josh 24:2). Contra Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 101, who argue that it is “not meant as a description of Abraham.” Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict*, 110, argues that the statement that God justifies the ungodly is Paul’s “most polemical and provocative argument in his controversy with Jews.” This may have been the case to some, but Paul seems to argue that the idea should not be completely foreign.

⁵⁷Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 204.

because people are liable to think that their status with God has a commercial basis.”⁵⁸ Even if this is not how Paul’s opponents understood their actions, and even if the works in question were more related to covenantal obligations than general works, the underlying issue remains the same. Paul did not view their law-keeping as a simple, grace-inspired response to God—he viewed it as something presumed upon as a means of justification. The works associated with the Mosaic covenant were never intended to be a means of justification and to pursue them with such an intent was to miss the grace of God. This is the reason Paul explicitly spells out the way grace takes precedence in being justified and receiving righteousness.

In addition to his emphasis upon “reckoning” and “righteousness,” Paul is insistent that these concepts exist *apart from works*. That Abraham was not justified by works is already implied in 4:2 (ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη), which is soon followed by the idea of “the one who works” (τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ) in 4:4, demonstrating immediately that Paul is interested in “working” and the “worker” metaphor. The idea is picked up in verse 6, as will be seen below, with the phrase “apart from works” (χωρὶς ἔργων).⁵⁹ Thus, by reading the passage through a lens that has Paul excluding only nationalism and not legalism, Dunn downplays the “working” idea that is critical for Paul’s argument.

Michael Cranford follows Dunn’s interpretation in many ways. He argues that the contrast in verses 4-5 does not have to be understood to be between faith and human effort. In his view, this is an unfounded assumption of the traditional view, writing, “The key issue is not faith versus works, but reckoning according to obligation versus

⁵⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 220. On the commercial use of λογίζομαι, see Hans-Werner Bartsch, “λογίζομαι,” *EDNT*, 2:354-55.

⁵⁹Kuula, *The Law*, 151, argues that the phrase is a “shorthand reference to χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου in 3:28,” which may be true enough. The question is why does Paul shorten the reference to “works.” If there is reason to believe that Paul may have taken issue with a legalistic element within Judaism, then the fact that he can shorten the reference appears to indicate that his issue is with the “working” element in the “works of the law.”

reckoning according to favour.”⁶⁰ Further, he supports this idea with the fact that Paul never balances the works analogy in verses 4-5. In verse 4 Paul begins one way but ends another. Verse 5 does not finish the way expected upon the traditional view: “but to the one who does not work and yet receives a payment his reward is according to grace and not because of his own effort.”⁶¹ Cranford argues that the traditional interpretation reads too much into the verse and that the workman metaphor “only becomes evidence for the Lutheran position when the faith/works antithesis is already presupposed.”⁶²

Cranford’s work essentially takes that of Dunn’s on these verses and expands it. To be fair, the article is admirable for its serious attempt at interpreting verses that appear quite difficult for the New Perspective position. Still, Cranford’s reading of the text ultimately fails to convince. First, one of the underlying motivations of Cranford’s work seems to be to exonerate Paul from preaching against obedience. For example, he writes, “That Abraham believed God is clear, but that this belief was somehow antithetical to obedience would have been unintelligible to the Jewish reader.”⁶³

⁶⁰Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 80.

⁶¹Ibid., 81. Cranford references Herbert M. Gale, *The Use of Analogy in the Letters of Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 174, who writes, “At least under normal circumstances the picture of a workman and his pay is not usually associated with the picture of one who receives a payment *without* working.” Gale’s point is that Paul’s metaphor—and, as Gale goes on to say, Paul’s use of Gen 15:6—only makes sense in light of certain traditional presuppositions. This is true enough as long as it is recognized that the idea is applicable to both old and new approaches to the text.

⁶²Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 81.

⁶³Ibid., 80. Similarly, Doughty, “Priority of XAPIΣ,” 165, writes, “It is important to recognize, however, that for the pious Jew this argument would hardly have been convincing, or even understandable.” So also George Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., SNTSMS 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 56. Howard’s argument that Paul would not connect grace and faith because it would confuse his contemporaries’ conception of faith is unconvincing. It seems unwise to posit with such certainty what Paul’s Jewish contemporaries could or could not comprehend. Would a first-century Jew or Jewish Christian really have no conception of the difference between believing and acting upon that belief? That there is an intricate connection between faith and obedience is certainly true, but that they would be so identical that there would be no ability to separate them seems questionable. Moreover, this says nothing of the fact that grace and faith are connected explicitly by Paul in Rom 4:16 and Rom 5:2 (while the presence of the phrase “by faith” [τῆ]

However, in these verses Paul is not separating faith from a general notion of obedience but faith from obedience performed for the sake of justification.

This is an important distinction, and though it may have been unintelligible to some Jewish readers, the point is that ultimately it should not have been. This is Paul's intention in citing or alluding to OT texts when discussing justification (Gen 15:6; Ps 32:1-2; 143:2). Though the doctrine was in some measure concealed and not fully explicated in the OT Scriptures, for Paul it was nevertheless present. Therefore, it should not be unexpected that God would justify sinful human beings apart from their works (though this is not to say that for Paul justifying faith was not intricately related to obedience, only that it was possible to separate them to make a theological point).

Second, against Cranford, the contrast between faith and works seems more than clear in this passage even apart from traditional assumptions. To understand the concept of “working” as an “accidental aspect of the analogy” in verses 4-5 and thus not “the basis for Paul’s inclusion of the metaphor” is to overlook the clear evidence of the text itself.⁶⁴ As mentioned above, Paul writes that Abraham was not justified “by works” (ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη) but instead “believed God” (ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ), as is the case with anyone “who does not work,” but “believes” (τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ, πιστεύοντι). The substantive participial form of ἐργαζομαι is the first word, conceptually, in both verses 4-5 and forms the basis of the entire contrast. Later, in verse 6, Paul again highlights that the reckoning of righteousness happens “apart from works” (χωρὶς ἔργων).⁶⁵ In light of this repetition, the burden of proof seems to lie with those who hold

πίστει] in Rom 5:2 is uncertain textually, even if it is not original a copyist early in the text's history connected the ideas and believed others would be able to as well) (also cf. Eph 2:8).

⁶⁴Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 80.

⁶⁵See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 375: “Even though there is no mention of *erga* in the psalm to be quoted, Paul boldly adds this phrase. These important words are put in the emphatic final position in the introductory sentence, immediately preceding the words of the psalm itself.”

that “working” is not at the very least highly significant to Paul’s argument.

The strongest point in Cranford’s argument is his charge that the traditional view reads its own assumptions into the text. Certainly the traditional view has been prone to unwarranted assumptions at times. Still, the fact remains that this must be shown on grounds other than the present text. No doubt Cranford assumes this has already been accomplished by E. P. Sanders and the New Perspective. However, if the argument of chapter 2 has merit, this assumption is at least questionable. Moreover, if the traditional view reads a faith/works distinction because it is presupposed, a similar charge may be leveled at Cranford’s own reading: the text only becomes evidence for the New Perspective position when the faith/works antithesis is rejected from the beginning because of assumptions about Jewish legalism. But if Jewish legalism is a possibility, then there is no reason to reject out of hand a faith/works distinction in these verses.

Finally, regarding Paul’s incomplete analogy in verse 5. That Paul does not finish the idea in the way one expects does not necessarily mean that this interpretive possibility evaporates. He does not need to finish it in the way Cranford mentions because, for Paul, the fact that God “justifies the ungodly” (v. 5), allowing their faith to become the means to righteousness, is equivalent to the missing conclusion of the analogy that “those who do not work receive grace.” In Paul’s mind, the ideas are the same. There is no need to finish the metaphor in the way we believe he should logically spell it out if it is understood that this is what he means.⁶⁶ Thus, while Cranford takes the text seriously and makes a good attempt at providing an interpretation that coheres with New Perspective assumptions, the interpretation suffers from the need to downplay certain textual elements to fit preconceived ideas about what the text must *not* say: that within justification there is a fundamental element that sets faith against works.

⁶⁶So also A. Andrew Das, “Paul and Works of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4-5 as a ‘New Perspective’ Case Study,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 805-06; Kuula, *The Law*, 155.

To sum up the reading of 4:1-5, then, Paul has provided the answer to his question of 4:1. What did Abraham find in this matter? He found that he was counted as righteous because he believed God and, by implication from 4:4, this came to him as a gift of grace, not as a debt that God owed him. Contrary to more recent thought, it is best to continue to see these verses spelling out in a very straightforward manner the most fundamental of principles at work in Paul's view of justification by faith: those who believe their righteousness before God is ultimately based on their own doing, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, miss that grace is the operative principle in justification and in every relational interaction of humanity with God in light of the reality of sin. Of course, if one holds that Paul was not combating legalism on any level, then one must make sense of the text in other ways. However, it has already been argued that this need not be the case and, thus, these verses fit naturally with the present argument.

Romans 4:6-8: David and Psalm 32:1-2

While it was necessary to provide a reading of Romans 4:1-5, it is 4:6-8 that are the most problematic for the corporate view of justification. Here Paul shifts from the great forefather of the faith to the greatest king in Israel.⁶⁷ Both of these examples, while not without relevance to all believers, seem to be aimed to a significant degree at Jewish thinking. If Paul is able to make a solid argument with two of the greatest figures in the history of Israel, then he will have provided strong evidence for his view of justification, which was intricately tied to his preaching of a circumcision-free gospel to the Gentiles.⁶⁸

⁶⁷On Davidic authorship, see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 205; Schreiner, *Romans*, 219, who observes, "Whatever critical scholars make of Ps. 32, Paul would have understood David to be speaking of his own life in this psalm." So also R. H. Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Bib* 66 (1985): 15. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 314, notes that "it was not uncommon in rabbinic theology to support a Torah-verse with a quote from the prophets or Ketubim."

⁶⁸Anthony J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter*, SNTSMS 81 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 108, ties Paul's use of

In these verses, it is frequently noted that Paul is likely employing a Jewish exegetical technique (*gēzērāh šāwāh*) by confirming his argument in 4:3-5 with another Scripture that shares a common term.⁶⁹ In this case the scriptural confirmation comes from Psalm 32:1-2 (31:1-2 LXX), which Paul makes use of due to the word *λογίσηται*, “reckon,” and its connection to the argument he is making.⁷⁰ While this may be the case, it is also important to note that Paul again highlights the negation of “works” (*χωρὶς ἔργων*) in this new line of argument. The appeal to David’s words is not only a technique based on the use of the shared term *λογίζομαι*. It is also connected to Paul’s burden to demonstrate that justification before God happens apart from works. Hence, the argument “has an inward and substantial validity, for God’s reckoning righteousness to a man *χωρὶς ἔργων* is, in fact, equivalent to His forgiving of sins.”⁷¹ Thus, Paul writes, *καθάπερ καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει τὸν μακαρισμὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ᾧ ὁ θεὸς λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων*, “just as also David speaks of the blessing of the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works.”⁷² Two phrases in this verse indicate that what Paul is saying here is parallel to what he has recently said about Abraham, which was that Abraham demonstrates that faith is “reckoned as righteousness” apart from works (4:3) and that if one *were* to work, the reward would be given as a debt (*ὀφείλημα*), not according to grace

“great names” to apologetic traditions that “commonly introduce these and other biblical names to testify to various causes” (see also idem, “Romans 4 as Apologetic Theology,” *HTR* 81 [1988]: 258-61).

⁶⁹Joachim Jeremias, “Die Gedankenführung in Röm 4: Zum paulinischen Glaubenverständnis,” in *Foi et Salut selon S. Paul: Épître aux Romains 1,16*, *Analecta Biblica* 42 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 53-54; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:233; Barrett, *Romans*, 84-85; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 376; Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith*, 314, 350; Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict*, 111 n. 14.

⁷⁰Dunn, *Romans*, 229; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:232-33; Barrett, *Romans*, 85; Jeremias, “Gedankenführung in Röm 4,” 54; Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict*, 111.

⁷¹Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:233.

⁷²The word *λέγει* is best rendered “speak of” or “pronounce” (see Jewett, *Romans*, 315; Godet, *Romans*, 1:290: “he utters”).

(*χάριν*) (4:4). The first is *καθάπερ καὶ*, “just as also,” which sets up a comparison with David.⁷³ The second is the critical phrase *χωρὶς ἔργων*, “apart from works.” The fact that Paul speaks of “righteousness” apart from works connects it directly to the “one” of verse 5 who “does not work but believes” and has faith reckoned as righteousness. There is no question that the contrast in these verses is between “believing,” on the one hand, and some kind of “working” on the other. This point cannot be sidestepped. While one may debate what Paul means exactly by the use of the ideas of “believing” and “working,” the fact that he is starkly contrasting these two ideas is without question, and, further, such a distinction is fundamental to his teaching on justification.

Thus, Paul uses David’s words to undergird the argument he has made about Abraham. He goes on in verses 7-8 to cite Psalm 32:1-2 (31:1-2 LXX), where David speaks of the blessing of the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works (*ὁ θεὸς λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων*).⁷⁴ This man has his “lawless deeds” (*ἀνομίαι*) forgiven and his “sins” (*ἁμαρτίαι*) covered (v. 7). His sin (*ἁμαρτίαν*) the Lord does not take into account (*οὐ μὴ λογίσηται κύριος*) (v. 8). In these verses it becomes clear that while justification involves, on the one hand, a “reckoning” of righteousness, it also involves, on the other hand, a “non-reckoning” of sin (*οὐ μὴ λογίσηται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν*).⁷⁵ The prominence of forgiveness should be noted as well, especially in light of the contention of Krister Stendahl that Paul’s emphasis upon forgiveness was minimal.⁷⁶

⁷³Some textual witnesses (D, F, G) have *καθὼς*, but the evidence is weak, and the copyist likely replaced the less common *καθάπερ* with a more common word.

⁷⁴The text in 4:7-8 is identical to the LXX of Ps 31:1-2a.

⁷⁵The presence of *ϕ* in \aleph^2 , A, C, D², F, Ψ , 33, 1881, and \aleph is undoubtedly due to the smoother syntax it provided.

⁷⁶On this passage Stendahl writes that “poor Paul could not avoid using the verbal form, ‘were forgiven,’ because he had to quote Psalm 32:1 in which it occurs” (Krister Stendahl, “Paul among Jews and Gentiles,” in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 23). This is an incredibly weak argument; Paul was under no obligation to quote this psalm (noted also by Simon J.

Further, as Schreiner notes, this “sin” that is not reckoned must be connected to the “works” mentioned in verse 6, apart from which the “blessed” person is justified.⁷⁷ The only “works” the “blessed” man has in this instance are “lawless deeds” (*ἀνομίαι*) and acts of sin (*ἁμαρτίαι*), not anything that could be considered in line with the will of God. Thus, this person is justified “apart from” (*χωρὶς*) these. Furthermore, in the original context, the “sin” David speaks of appears to be moral failure and not connected to the more boundary-marking works of the covenant.⁷⁸ While this notion will depend upon one’s definition of the “covenant” and being “in” or “out” of it, nevertheless, within the psalm text David appears to be speaking of a general concept of human sin. That is, as Peter Craigie writes, “the psalmist views humans as sinning beings, whose possibility of happiness lies in the removal and forgiveness of that sin.”⁷⁹

This idea coheres well with the traditional interpretation. However, those who take a corporate approach to justification have understood Paul’s use of David differently. Some simply believe the verses are negligible with regard to the justification discussion, but this skirts the evidence to some degree.⁸⁰ Others have offered more

Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 247 n. 92).

⁷⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 219.

⁷⁸This point has been noted by several scholars, including Schreiner, *Romans*, 219; Byrne, *Romans*, 149-50; Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 246-47; idem, “Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21-4:25,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:158-59; Visscher, *Romans 4*, 184; Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith*, 393. Cf. also Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 308-09.

⁷⁹Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 2nd ed., WBC, vol. 19, supplement by Marvin E. Tate (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 266.

⁸⁰E.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 62 n. 125; Howard, *Crisis in Galatia*, 56, who argues that, because the words “works” and “faith” do not appear in the David quotation, “neither of these words figures in his proof.” But it is baffling that Howard is able to write this after Paul has used the phrase *χωρὶς ἔργων*, “apart from works,” in 4:6 to describe this

detailed explanations of how the verses fit into their framework. For example, Dunn sees the word *ἀνομία* in verse 7 as “indicating actions which characterized those outside the covenant,” so that David “can thus be said to envisage a forgiveness which goes beyond the bounds of the covenant, and which therefore is not dependent on the works of the covenant law.”⁸¹ Cranford argues similarly that “Paul is not concerned with faith apart from works but rather forgiveness apart from membership in ethnic Israel.”⁸² Don Garlington, in a review of Visscher’s book, also appeals to the idea that these verses have Gentiles in mind. This is because the sins David refers to “rendered him as one outside the covenant,” reducing him “to the level of the pagan world” so that he became “as one uncircumcised.”⁸³ Further, “Such an understanding makes perfect sense of Paul’s argument, because Gentiles may be assured that they are acceptable to God in a sense qualitatively similar to David, who, at the time of his sin, was no better *covenantally speaking* than they.”⁸⁴

very quotation. Howard’s argument also fails to give any weight to the use of *καθάπερ* as a means to connect this proof with the previous one, where both faith and works are explicitly mentioned.

⁸¹Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 206. Dunn’s view is partly supported by the idea, also noted by Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 62 n. 125, that David is not cited as another example, but “merely as author” (see also Gifford, *Romans*, 101). While this observation is true enough, that Paul would separate David’s words from his personal experience seems unlikely, especially with regard to a psalm that recounts individual sin so poignantly.

⁸²Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4,” 83. He goes on: “That this is precisely Paul’s point is confirmed by v. 9, where he asks, ‘Is this blessing then upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say, “Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness?”’ The increasing specificity of his point, somewhat obscured in the metaphors and citations of 4.4-8, is made clear in v. 9.” However, Cranford’s argument fails to take into consideration that Paul’s argument shifts in v. 9, signaled by the presence of *οὖν*. Thus, here Paul does indeed begin a discussion of who can claim Abraham as father. But it does not necessarily follow that this was Paul’s point in 4:1-8. If legalism and ethnocentrism are both part of the problem, then this shift occurs naturally. In this case, the “metaphors and citations of 4.4-8” are no longer obscured, as Cranford admits they are upon his own view.

⁸³Don Garlington, review of Gerhard H. Visscher, *Romans 4 and the New Perspective on Paul: Faith Embraces the Promise*, *Review of Biblical Literature* (November 2009), 9 [on-line], accessed 22 July 2011; available at http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7088_7701.pdf; Internet.

⁸⁴*Ibid.* (his emphasis).

There are two responses to be made. First, the idea of Dunn and Cranford that Paul is appealing to David who “envisions” Gentile justification simply seems implausible. To be sure, such an argument is conceivable if Jewish legalism is denied as a possible backdrop, but to my mind it feels like a reach. The psalm itself is, of course, not referring to a future justification of the Gentiles, but rather has David recounting a personal experience of forgiveness for sin. The “blessing” he describes comes from not being judged according to his actions as he deserves. Should one not allow this idea to have its place in Paul’s thought before moving to an interpretation that has him modifying the original psalm so that it refers to inclusion of the Gentiles? If one allows that Paul could be responding to a form of legalism, then he would be pointing out to those already within the covenant, who were presuming upon their works, that justification has never been based on works, a line of thought that implies the need for sin-free perfection. It has always been based on grace, which David’s words highlight. Paul picks up the idea that the blessing David speaks of happens “apart from works” and is not fundamentally contingent on his failure or success.

This interpretation should not be construed as denying the place of genuine obedience in the life of David or any other believer. It simply states that ultimate justification before God is according to grace. Paul is not arguing something completely new, but something that has always been present, albeit easily obscured. Again, however, this view is maintained only if one allows for the presence of legalism. If Paul is *only* responding to exclusivism, then there is of course need for other explanations such as those of Dunn and Cranford, but, as the present work has maintained, such an assumption is not incontrovertible.

Second, to Garlington’s idea that Paul is viewing David as a Gentile here, the obvious must be stated: David was still an Israelite. According to the notion of covenantal nomism, it is only outright rejection of the covenant that puts one outside of the covenant, not moral failure, no matter how great. Sanders writes that the maintaining

of one's place in the covenant occurs not only through obedience, but also through "atonement and God's mercy."⁸⁵ Thus, David has not, in fact, been rendered "one outside the covenant," as Garlington suggests. David's sin may have been great, but he repented and was still an Israelite, still within the bounds of the covenant. If this is the case, then, the question naturally arises as to why Paul makes use of David at this point.

This is the same question asked in chapter 3 with regard to Psalm 143:2. Upon a New Perspective view, why would Paul bring David into his argument at this point? David was circumcised and maintained his place in the covenant through law-keeping and repentance. Thus, if Paul was mainly concerned with the social separation created by the law, how is David one of the quintessential figures to whom appeal should be made? One would think Paul would be concerned with the way David's circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and food observances kept Gentiles out of the family of God and thus avoid his example altogether. Yet, Paul appeals to his testimony here at a key point in his discussion of justification by faith.⁸⁶

In light of this, it stands to reason that Paul is appealing to David not only to demonstrate how Gentiles are justified but also to remind fellow Jews of how they themselves are justified, and have always been justified, by faith.⁸⁷ Paul first demonstrates this through the experience of Abraham, then through the words of David, which reflected David's own experience of forgiveness. To suggest that no Jew would need reminded of this is not convincing. This ignores the tendency of human pride to

⁸⁵E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 422.

⁸⁶N. T. Wright never seems to address this point adequately (e.g., in Wright, *Romans*, 492-93, or elsewhere; even in Wright, *Justification*, 220, where he touches on it, he does not seem to see the problem David raises).

⁸⁷So also Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric*, 147: "Since David is the speaker of the psalm, what is said in the psalm must refer to Jews; that is, the forgiveness of sins to which the psalm refers and that takes place apart from works of the law must already be part of Jewish experience."

presume upon its own gifts, abilities, and actions before God—human sin easily clouds the reality of divine grace. It also ignores the evidence mentioned in chapter 2 that points to the significant possibility of the presence of a legalistic mentality in some strands of Judaism, to which Paul is responding.

To be sure, however, as with Paul's allusion to Psalm 143:2, it is possible that the apostle is making a different argument than the psalms in question, only using their words to make his case and not the actual experience of the psalmists. In the end, this possibility must be left up to the interpreter. In my view, though, it is unsatisfactory. There is no pressing reason to understand Paul to be using the words in Psalm 32:1-2, or Psalm 143:2, differently than they were used in the original psalms—he is appealing to a shared principle and applying it to his current situation. Only if legalism is fully denied as a target of his polemic must one argue differently, in which case Paul would be interpreting David's words along the lines of something it does not appear he actually said. Again, the interpreter is left with a decision to make.

As it stands, however, while Abraham is more easily incorporated into the New Perspective argument since he is the prime example of someone justified apart from boundary-markers (as they did not yet exist), this is not so easily accomplished with David. The corporate approach to justification must provide a satisfactory explanation for the fact that Paul buttresses his argument about Abraham with one from David. As in the allusion to Psalm 143:2, the “works” in question appear to be moral failures. Thus, it must be explained how this citation advances Paul's argument if he is only concerned with ethnocentrism, and it must be explained in a way that fits the flow of the argument better than attempts that have already been made. The simplest and most logical solution is that Paul is indeed responding to a form of legalism.

This is not to say, as N. T. Wright has recently reminded us, that Romans 4:1-8

is any kind of “smoking gun” that fatally hamstring the New Perspective. Certainly the issue is more complex than simply citing a few passages as trump cards.⁸⁸ Indeed, the passage does not demonstrate that the older perspective was completely right and the New Perspective is completely wrong. Still, it remains that this passage, along with the Psalm 143:2 allusions, are at best challenging to fit into the more corporate understanding of justification, and especially so since they are not merely peripheral evidence. They provide scriptural foundation to Paul’s argument. Furthermore, these passages do fit well into a framework that allows for a measure of legalism within first-century Judaism and, consequently, a stronger individual element in Paul’s doctrine of justification. That is, they fit well if one understands Paul’s problem with works in general and works of the law specifically not to be *first* about the relationship between Jew and Gentile—its significance notwithstanding—but about how the individual is counted righteous before God apart from works and in spite of sin.

Conclusion

Chapters 3 and 4 have sought to examine some key exegetical evidence in light of the assumption that Jewish legalism may have played more of a role in Paul’s polemic than has been assumed since the publication of Sanders’ work on the subject. If one entertains this assumption with regard to these three texts, the individual element in justification can be shown to be more intrinsic to Paul’s argument than has been understood since the New Perspective gained the ascendancy in Pauline scholarship. These texts are more difficult to explain with a non-legalism framework that understands justification in more strictly corporate terms.

The next chapter will examine more texts that highlight this distinction

⁸⁸Wright, *Justification*, 220, who is referring to a statement from Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 250.

between faith and works that was essential to the individual, anthropological thrust that was fundamental to Paul's doctrine of justification. These texts may be viewed as corroborating evidence for the view espoused in chapters 3 and 4. While the texts are not unexplainable upon a more corporate view, it will be argued that they flow more naturally from a view that allows for a stronger individual element in justification than Pauline scholarship has grown accustomed to accepting.

CHAPTER 5
JUSTIFICATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL
ELSEWHERE IN PAUL

While the case for the individual approach to justification in post-New Perspective Pauline scholarship may be made most strongly from the texts examined in chapters 3 and 4, it should be able to provide plausible readings of other key texts as well. These texts provide supporting evidence. Since space is limited, the chapter will not include every text that would be relevant, but a handful have been selected that best support the overall argument. Two of these come from epistles whose Pauline authorship is not disputed: Romans 9:30-32 and Philippians 3:9. The other three come from places where Pauline authorship has been questioned historically. After a brief word regarding the value of these epistles for the argument at hand, the chapter will focus on Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9, and Titus 3:5, before drawing some conclusions.

Not by Faith but as by Works: Romans 9:30-32

The first text will be Romans 9:30-32. While the pericope actually extends to 9:33, Paul's point in 9:30-32 will suffice for our purposes.¹ The key phrase to examine is *οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἔργων* in 9:32. The central question is what exactly it is that Israel was doing with the law to which Paul objected, so that he labeled their efforts "as from works" and not "from faith." This section continues to test the premise that Paul has an ethnocentric legalism as a target when discussing the means of justification. That is,

¹Romans 9:33 is a conflation of Isa 28:16 and 8:14 and serves to explain Paul's statement in 9:32b that Israel "stumbled over the stone of stumbling"—Christ. See also n. 31 below.

Paul's argument is shaped with an eye toward those who had an excessive preoccupation with compliance with the law—especially those elements that were more external and marked one out as a Jew—so that it became a form of legalism. Thus, to state up front, in this text Israel, as represented by those who reject Christ and continue seeking the law for justification, has missed what the law pointed to all along: faith, now revealed to be in Christ.² They are wrongly following the notion, even if only implicitly or unknowingly (cf. 10:2), that righteousness comes through one's efforts and not grace alone. Such an approach has caused them to miss the true means to righteousness, faith in Christ.

Context

As Romans scholarship generally recognizes, in chapters 9-11 Paul's focus changes, and he begins to articulate how Israel can seem to have failed to miss the gospel but still be part of God's ultimate plan. Despite the change of focus, the chapters are nevertheless critical to Paul's overall argument. As Moo states, "Paul's presentation and defense of 'his' gospel to the Roman Christians occurs against the backdrop of controversy over the relationship between Judaism and the church."³ Paul wrestles with how Israel fits into God's plan in light of Jesus Christ and the gospel, and how God's word and actions toward Israel have not failed as the gospel moves to the Gentiles. Thus, what Paul touched on briefly in 3:1-8 is taken up again and expanded upon.⁴

In Romans 9:1-5 Paul mentions his anguish over Israel's rejection of Christ,

²It is important to note that "Israel" here does not mean "every single Jewish person." As Glenn N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study of Romans 1-4*, JSNTSup 39 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 180, writes, "The preceding context indicates that not all Israel failed, but only those who did not pattern their lives after the example of Abraham (9.8f; 4.12), and this, Paul argues, is ultimately dependent upon God's electing purposes and his mercy." Paul here thinks of Israel as represented by those who have rejected Christ and seek justification by the law.

³Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 548.

⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 469.

also delineating the advantages that Israel has enjoyed. Then in 9:6-29 he explains how the fact that Israel has failed does not mean that God has failed—God has always been sovereign in election and salvation and this continues even now as Israel currently seems to be outside of God’s purposes. Then, in 9:30 Paul’s language, reflective of his argument earlier in the letter, becomes centered upon righteousness, faith, and the law. “After a silence lasting almost unbroken from the beginning of chap. 5, the talk of faith and of ‘the righteousness of faith’ reemerges with all the force which marked the critical expositions of 3:21-4:25.”⁵ Furthermore, Paul moves from a more salvation-historical-oriented discussion of Israel to the *mechanism* by which Israel has failed to attain what the Gentiles have.⁶ This is where the primary interest of the present study lies.

Verse 30

The verse begins, Τι οὖν ἐροῦμεν, “What then shall we say?” This question is common in Romans (3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14) and is used rhetorically to introduce the next stage of his argument.⁷ Though it is often answered with another question (e.g., 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14), this is not likely the case here due to the length of what would be the

⁵James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC, vol. 38B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 591-92. See also Jan Lambrecht, “The Caesura Between Romans 9.30-3 and 10.1-4,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 142, who writes that “the vocabulary and motifs from chapters 3-4 suddenly appear again.”

⁶So also Jean-Noël Aletti, “L’argumentation paulinienne en Rm 9,” *Bib* 68 (1987): 42; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 178: “[Paul] has considered the rejection of Israel from the point of view of the Divine justice and power, he is now to approach it from the side of human responsibility.”

⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 535; Moo, *Romans*, 621. It also serves as a device to draw an inference from the previous argument (see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979], 2:506; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 278; E. H. Gifford, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* [London: John Murray, 1886; reprint, Minneapolis: James Family, 1977], 177). It is not a hypothetical objection, contra Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, MeyerK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 249, who understands it as the question of a Jewish adversary.

answer in 9:30b-31 as well as the presence of the new question διὰ τί in 9:32.⁸

The answer to Paul's rhetorical question is ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην, "that Gentiles who were not pursuing righteousness obtained righteousness," introduced by a recitative ὅτι that indicates what it is exactly "we shall say."⁹ The pair διώκω/καταλαμβάνω is also used in Philippians 3:12-14, and the words are found together often in the OT and Jewish literature to indicate pursuit and overtaking (e.g., Gen 31:23; Exod 15:9; Deut 19:6; 2 Kgs 25:5; Sir 11:10; 27:8), sometimes with καταδιώκω instead of διώκω (e.g., Deut 28:45; Josh 2:5; 1 Macc 12:30).¹⁰ The present-tense participle διώκοντα is attributive, simply stating what is true of Gentiles. It is not that Gentiles did not pursue moral righteousness, but righteousness in the sense of right relationship with God.¹¹ The whole phrase is followed by δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως,

⁸So Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 580; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 278-79; Schreiner, *Romans*, 535. Contra Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 577.

⁹Both Ϝ⁴⁶ and G add τὴν before δικαιοσύνην—likely a "stylistic improvement" (Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 606). Additionally, it is frequently noted that the lack of article before ἔθνη indicates that Paul is referring to *some* Gentiles rather than *all*, as a class. See Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, HTKNT 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 306; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1991), 179; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:506; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 580; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 279; Schreiner, *Romans*, 536 n. 6. Contra Moo, *Romans*, 621 n. 21, who does believe Gentiles are viewed as a class, arguing that the lack of article "conveys a qualitative nuance," with the emphasis being on identity rather than number, over against that of Israel in v. 31. In either sense, Paul is clearly setting the response of a large number of Gentiles over against "Israel" as a whole, though he certainly understood that this did not mean every single Gentile and Jew.

¹⁰See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 580; Moo, *Romans*, 621. Some see it as a race metaphor, including Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 279; Schreiner, *Romans*, 536; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 277; Robert Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 In Pauline Perspective*, JSNTSup 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 101-05; Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, WUNT 2/241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 177; Steven Richard Bechtler, "Christ, the Τελός of the Law: The Goal of Romans 10:4," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 292; Paul W. Meyer, "Romans 10:4 and the End of the Law," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H. Silberman*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and Samuel Sandmel (New York: Ktav, 1980), 62. Contra Moo, *Romans*, 621, who thinks the usage is too broad for this. In the end, as Dunn states, whatever the imagery, "it easily transferred to pursuing a goal like justice/righteousness" (Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 580).

¹¹"The text, however, does not speak of moral power or of righteousness as a virtue but as a gift of salvation" (Käsemann, *Romans*, 277). So also John E. Toews, "The Law in Paul's Letter to the

“even righteousness that is from faith,” which describes further the “righteousness” Paul has in mind. The δέ is not adversative but is an “explanatory modification” of δικαιοσύνη (cf. 3:22).¹² Thus, the Gentiles have attained a right relationship with God that they were not seeking, as Israel was. It has revealed itself to them by means of faith (ἐκ πίστεως).

Verse 31

Verse 31 begins with the phrase, Ἰσραὴλ δὲ, with the δέ acting adversatively, “but Israel,” in direct contrast to what Paul has said about the Gentiles in verse 30: Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν, “but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness did not arrive at the law.”¹³ Paul describes Israel’s failure—in direct contrast to the Gentiles’ success in the previous verse—with the same idea of pursuit or possibly race, this time with the verbs διώκων and φθάνω.¹⁴ The participle διώκων, as with διώκοντα in verse 30, is likely an attributive participle describing Israel.¹⁵

The parallelism with the previous verse would lead us to expect δικαιοσύνην (in the accusative case as object of διώκων) as the goal of Israel’s pursuit, but instead one finds the phrase νόμον δικαιοσύνης, “law of righteousness.”¹⁶ The precise meaning of the

Romans: A Study of Rom. 9.30-10.13” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1977), 127; F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881], 2:181; Barrett, *Romans*, 179-80; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:506-07; Moo, *Romans*, 621; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 580.

¹²Gifford, *Romans*, 177. So also Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 279.

¹³Some textual witnesses (NA²⁷ lists Ⲛ², F, Ψ, 1881, ℣, lat, sy) add δικαιοσύνης to the second occurrence of νόμον (hence “law of righteousness” in AV), but the external evidence is weaker, and it appears to be an attempt to bring the phrase into line with the first and so is not likely original.

¹⁴On race imagery, see C. Thomas Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law*, SBLDS 55 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 100; Toews, “Law,” 128-29; Schreiner, *Romans*, 536.

¹⁵As Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 581, notes, it is not causal; it may be concessive, however (Schreiner, *Romans*, 537, following Bechtler, “Christ,” 292.).

¹⁶See Thomas R. Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure to Attain Righteousness in Romans 9:30-10:3,” *TrinJ* 12 (1991): 212; Bechtler, “Christ,” 292; Moo, *Romans*, 622. Indeed, some have taken it as hypallage: “righteousness of law” (e.g., RSV; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the*

phrase is debated.¹⁷ However, as Thomas Schreiner suggests, since Paul is concise and “the context does not provide any clear evidence to show why one interpretation should be preferred over another,” it seems wisest to find the solution in the meaning that adds the least to the text and also takes “righteousness” in parallel with its use in 9:30, where the Gentiles discover a right relationship with God.¹⁸ Thus, “law” likely refers to the Mosaic law and the genitive “righteousness” is objective: “a law for [i.e., in order to attain] righteousness,” meaning they pursued a right relationship with God by means of the law.¹⁹ It is this law at which Israel failed to arrive (*οὐκ ἔφθασεν*).²⁰ As already stated, *φθάνω* is another verb of attainment upon pursuit, in keeping with the idea of verse 30.²¹

Because Paul is terse when he says that Israel “did not arrive at the law” (*εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν*), how one interprets him will in part depend upon prior assumptions.

Romans, ed. and trans. John Owen, Calvin’s Commentaries, vol. 19 [reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 378; for more on this option, see François Refoulé, “Note sur Romains IX, 30-33,” *Revue Biblique* 92 [1985]: 164). In a similar vein, John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 2:43, has argued for “law” as “principle.” While these suggestions may support Paul’s point, grammatically they are unconvincing. As N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 648 n. 346, points out, Paul “was perfectly capable of writing *διώκων τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ*.”

¹⁷For good summaries of the options, see Refoulé, “Romains IX, 30-33,” 164-65; Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 212; C. Thomas Rhyne, “*Nomos Dikaïosynēs* and the Meaning of Romans 10:4,” *CBQ* 47 (1985): 488; idem, *Faith Establishes*, 99; Badenas, *Christ the End*, 103; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 578; Moo, *Romans*, 622-24.

¹⁸Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 212-13.

¹⁹So also Bechtler, “Christ,” 293: “a law that was to *lead to*, or *result in* righteousness” (his emphasis); Lambrecht, “Caesura,” 145; John Paul Heil, “Christ, the Termination of the Law (Romans 9:30-10:8),” *CBQ* 63 (2001): 487 n. 8; Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 212-13; Moo, *Romans*, 625.

²⁰While Paul states that Israel failed to arrive at the “law,” the idea of “righteousness” is inseparable from “law” in this instance. As Bechtler, “Christ,” 294, writes, “Because Israel has not attained *the goal* of the Torah, namely, righteousness, neither has it in fact attained the Torah itself, the law that leads to righteousness.” So also W. S. Campbell, “Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4,” in *Studia Biblica, 1978, III: Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, JSNTSup 3 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 76. Contra Toews, “Law,” 133, who makes much of the distinction.

²¹See Gottfried Fitzer, “*φθάνω*,” *TDNT*, 9:90; BDAG, s.v. “*φθάνω*.” Cf. its use in Phil 3:16. The translation “did not succeed in reaching that law” of ESV is better than “did not succeed in fulfilling that law” of RSV.

Based on those already argued for, my view is that Paul means that Israel failed to arrive at the law, as a means to righteousness, because when the law is pursued by works it becomes impossible to accomplish due to the reality of human sin and inability to obey God apart from grace.²² However one understands this, though, what is clear is that Paul has described a state of affairs: Gentiles, who were going their own way, essentially stumbled upon righteousness, while Israel, who was actively pursuing the perceived way to righteousness by means of the law, did not come to this point.²³ Paul then asks a logical follow-up question: Why?

Verse 32

Verse 32 begins with the question διὰ τί, “why?” Paul’s answer is elliptical and succinct: ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ ἔργων, literally, “because not from faith but as from works.”²⁴ Rightly, many commentators note that the verb διώκω is implied, so that

²²Similarly, Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul*, NovTSup 62 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 137-38; Heil, “Christ,” 487. The question is often raised as to the exact nature of the problem with Israel’s pursuit, whether the goal, the manner of pursuing, or the failure to keep the law (see Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 215-20, for a good treatment and list of scholarly opinion). E.g., Klyne Snodgrass, “Spheres of Influence: A Possible Solution to the Problem of Paul and the Law,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 103, writes, “Israel’s goal was not wrong, but the path she chose to get there—works—was” (so also Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 307; see n. 33 below). Martin, *Christ and the Law*, 137, argues that the problem is lack of obedience, while Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 177 n. 46, states that the “pursuit of Israel is not a neutral endeavor. This passage must be read from a *post Christum* standpoint. Paul is not commending ancient Jewish pursuit of the law, but rather is describing those who pursue righteousness in the law *in spite of* the true righteousness of God in Christ (10:3-4).” As mentioned above one’s view will depend on one’s vantage point. It was not wrong to obey the law, but it was wrong to obey the law as a means to ultimate justification and declaration of righteousness before God. When one pursues the law in this manner, both the goal and means are wrong, and the whole pursuit necessarily ends in failure because pursuing the law by works implies that perfection is the only way to accomplish the goal, which is impossible due to inherent human sinfulness.

²³“The curious fact is that the group that was *not* pursuing attained, while the group that was pursuing did not” (Bechtler, “Christ,” 292). See also Rhyne, “*Nomos Dikaiosynēs*,” 487-88; Toews, “Law,” 129.

²⁴The Textus Receptus was influenced by several textual witnesses that added νόμου (see AV: “but as it were by works of the law”), but this was undoubtedly an attempt to bring the text into line with Paul’s arguments elsewhere (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10) (see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002], 462-63). So also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 579; Schreiner, *Romans*, 548, who notes the omission is a more difficult reading and also “exegetically significant, for it indicates that the emphasis here is on ‘works’ instead of the ‘law.’”

Paul is saying Israel did not *pursue* the law by faith.²⁵ What is most critical at this point, however, is what Paul means with the word ὡς before ἐξ ἔργων. As is often noted, one of the uses of ὡς is to describe a subjective attitude that governs an action.²⁶ This appears to be the usage in Romans 9:32. In this case, Paul is saying that Israel pursued the law for the sake of righteousness *as though* such an endeavor could be accomplished through works.²⁷ Hence, as Ernst Käsemann notes, the presence of ὡς is “striking” and indicates a “deceptive delusion” on the part of Israel for Paul.²⁸

The presence of the word is significant and should be considered carefully. For example, E. P. Sanders has interpreted the passage through a strictly christocentric, salvation-historical lens, arguing that “Israel’s failure is not that they do not obey the law in the correct way, but that they do not have faith in Christ” and that the text has “little to do with Israel’s manner of observing the law.”²⁹ However, Paul’s ὡς seems to indicate that the reality is not so simple, especially when read in light of the argument of the

²⁵Barrett, *Romans*, 180 (“understanding νόμον ἐδίωκεν with οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως”; also see idem, “Romans 9.30–10.21: Fall and Responsibility of Israel,” in *Essays on Paul* [London: SPCK, 1982], 141); Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 280; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:509; Schreiner, *Romans*, 538; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 582; Wright, *Romans*, 649. Contra Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKKNT 6 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1980), 2:212, who argues that φθάνω is implied.

²⁶See BDAG, s.v. “ὡς” 3.c (“marker introducing the perspective from which a pers., thing, or activity is viewed . . . [in Rom 9:32] w. focus on what is objectively false or erroneous”); BDF §425 (3); Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 280 (who cite 2 Cor 2:17; 11:17; Phlm 14); Barrett, “Fall and Responsibility,” 153 n. 8; Bechtler, “Christ,” 294.

²⁷T. David Gordon, “Why Israel Did Not Obtain Torah-Righteousness: A Translation Note on Rom 9:32,” *WTJ* 54 (1992): 163-66, makes an argument that the referent of the phrase οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως, “not from faith,” is not Israel’s pursuit of the law but rather the law itself, comparing the wording here with that of Gal 3:12. While the argument is interesting, it does not sufficiently explain Paul’s use of ὡς.

²⁸Käsemann, *Romans*, 278. So also Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:510.

²⁹E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 37, 42. So also Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983; reprint, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 174, who argues that Israel’s righteousness is “identical with their *rejection of Christ*”—they “just do not understand . . . that a new age has begun.” Contra Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 583, who argues that such an approach “ignores the negative force of the antithesis by focusing exclusively on the οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως”; also R. H. Gundry, “Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Bib* 66 (1985): 16-17.

present work. Though clearly Paul faults unbelieving Israelites for their rejection of Christ, he faults their *manner* of pursuing the law for righteousness as well. James Dunn parts ways with Sanders on this point, stating that “the negative note against ‘works’ is clearly struck and is clearly intended to evoke the indictment of Israel summed up in 3:20.”³⁰ While the rejection of Christ is obviously the problem, Paul’s polemic does not end there. In these Israelites, the rejection is itself indicative of an approach to the law that was misguided and not in line with their own Scripture, which called for faith and pointed to Christ.

Implications

Romans 9:30-32, then, raises the question of how exactly Paul faults Israel in their pursuit of the law. In light of the contention that Paul has an ethnocentric legalism as a central target, a few observations can be made.

First, a general, honest pursuit of obedience to the commands of God is not what Paul is addressing. Nor is he necessarily addressing the desire to live according to Jewish customs based on the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant. There were of course many Jews who cared about the law but who also believed in Jesus, not the least of whom was Paul himself. It is the *context of and underlying motivation* for obedience that is a critical factor for Paul. Otherwise he would not be able to prescribe obedience in some places and denigrate works in others (cf. 1 Cor 7:19). As was mentioned in the last chapter, Paul is not taking issue with a general pursuit of obedience to God’s commands, but with the pursuit as a means to justification. This is an important distinction.

Second, clearly Israel’s failure is integrally tied to the rejection of Christ, as

³⁰Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 583. Unfortunately, in my view, Dunn does not go far enough. Elsewhere he writes that Israel “had treated the law and the righteousness it requires at too superficial and too nationalistic a level, as requirements which could be fulfilled at the level of the flesh and which are applicable only to the Jewish people (2:28-29)” (ibid., 593). As argued earlier, it is not only the nationalism that creates the problem for Paul, but how the nationalism is a symptom of a deeper legalism.

9:32b-33 demonstrates, a text that cannot be considered now other than to say that it undergirds the current point.³¹ As C. Thomas Rhyne points out, Israel's failure "to attain to the 'law of righteousness' because they insisted on works rather than faith is epitomized in their rejection of Christ."³² There is clearly a salvation-historical element involved. For Paul, the coming of Christ necessarily meant a new moment in salvation history that would change forever the relationship of God's people to the Mosaic law. Paul's polemic is indeed directed toward those who have rejected what he understood as the new and unexpected work God had done, including his commitment to the nations (even while still holding a commitment to ethnic Israel, as Romans 9-11 on the whole shows).

Third, and most critical for the present argument, the salvation-historical explanation does not fully account for Paul's polemic. Paul is addressing the *manner* in which the law is being pursued, not merely the *fact* that the law is pursued. The presence of ὡς indicates and supports this.³³ The rejection of Christ by the Jews whom Paul is

³¹Some hold that the "stone" in these verses refers to the law and not to Christ (e.g., Barrett, "Fall," 144; Toews, "Law," 146; Meyer, "End of the Law," 64; Davies, *Faith and Obedience*, 182-83, who leaves open the possibility), but this seems doubtful. For a defense of the traditional view that it refers to Christ, see R. Barry Matlock, "The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul: Galatians 2.16, 3.22, Romans 3.22, and Philippians 3.9," *JSNT* 30 (2007): 186 n. 16; Badenas, *Christ the End*, 106; Martin, *Christ and the Law*, 135 n. 35; Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 177 n. 47; Schreiner, "Israel's Failure," 214.

³²Rhyne, "Nomos Dikaiosynēs," 490.

³³Barrett, "Fall and Responsibility," 141, writes that Israel "had misunderstood their own law, thinking that it was to be obeyed on the principle of works, whereas it demanded obedience rendered in, consisting of faith." This idea is true enough as long as one understands Paul to be viewing "Israel" through the representative example of those who sought justification in the law. Further, it should be clarified that Paul's point in this instance does not seem to be to affirm "that the Mosaic law was a law of faith" (as Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible: Unfolding God's Plan for Humanity* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 466, argues; similar cases are made by Toews, "Law," 144-45; Rhyne, *Faith Establishes*, 100-01; Robert Jewett, "The Law and the Coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in Romans," *Int* 39 [1985]: 353-54). Certainly Paul believed this on one level, insofar as the law was to be obeyed in faith and highlighted the need for faith, while pointing to the ultimate object of faith, the Messiah. But at this point in his argument he is contrasting two ways of righteousness (the contrast of which is borne out even further in Rom 10:5-13), and one must be cautious in blurring the distinction too much (see Martin, *Christ and the Law*, 136-37). Hence, the converse to the point being made above is that while the text is anthropological in nature, it is also salvation-historical. The issue includes, but is more than, a mere misunderstanding of the law that if

addressing was a symptom of the fact that they were pursuing the law in a manner that was not grace-oriented, but works-oriented.³⁴

Even apart from defining “works,” whether general precepts or boundary-marking ordinances, it is clear that the text points to a distinction in receiving righteousness based on “faith” or “works,” however one regards the latter.³⁵ The text indicates that the issue with the law went beyond the fact that it was “not Christ.” On this point, New Perspective scholars such as James Dunn and N. T. Wright appear to agree, but it is the definition of “works” that creates division. There is no need to repeat the discussion of previous chapters on this point. It is only necessary to note again that even while Paul argues for inclusion of Gentiles he is arguing for grace apart from human striving. Thus, while Wright sees “works” as those which “marked out the Jews from their pagan neighbors” and Dunn as covenant obligations performed in a way that treated “the law and the righteousness it requires at too superficial and too nationalistic a level,”³⁶ this is not fully sufficient.³⁷ The nationalism that was present was a symptom of

corrected would have fixed the problem. Thus, Rhyne, “*Nomos Dikaiosynēs*,” 491, probably goes too far in saying that “faith in Christ permits one to attain to this ‘law of righteousness’” and “would have allowed the Jews to reach successfully the goal they were pursuing.” Again, on one level this is true, but it does not seem to be the precise point Paul is making here, which is to demonstrate the stark contrast between faith and works, with the latter intricately connected to the “law of righteousness.”

³⁴As Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 167, states, they had “lost the point of the law, which was to engender trust in the God who had chosen them,” and this “had as its inevitable outcome the result that when Christ came as the one who personified the call contained in the law to trust in God, the chosen people rejected him.”

³⁵Campbell, “End of the Law,” 74, simply assumes the passage demonstrates the contrast “between faith and works.” Similarly, Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 182, who believes Paul was responding to an “ethnocentric covenantalism,” nevertheless recognizes here the “fundamental opposition” between “divine grace” and “human works” (also citing Rom 4:4-5; 9:11-12; 11:5-6).

³⁶Wright, *Romans*, 649; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 593.

³⁷Bechtler, “Christ,” 305 n. 63, argues similarly that while Paul contrasts doing and believing, this occurs “in contexts where the inclusion of Gentiles” is the issue, with the real contrast being “between the way of doing what only Israel can do and the way open to all nations, that is, faith in what God has done in Christ.” This is right in what it affirms, but wrong to deny that such exclusivism was related to a

a deeper legalism, which was one manifestation of a more general human inclination: the tendency to reject grace and pursue God on one's own terms. Hence, Paul's fluid movement between "works of the law" and more simple "works."

In other words, on some level it is irrelevant to pinpoint the exact form of the works in the phrase "as from works" (ὡς ἐξ ἔργων). Certainly included was circumcision and other works that marked one as an Israelite, but the underlying principle is deeper. Paul's emphasis is on works *as works*, done for justification purposes, not merely as *Jewish* works, done for identity purposes. Thus, it is the same issue as in Romans 4:1-8, where Paul uses "works" instead of "works of the law."³⁸ This rhetorical shift on his part reveals the anthropological nature of the issue, with works of the law being a subset of any work performed for justification purposes that stands in opposition to grace. The fact that boundary-marking works like circumcision dominate Paul's discussion in these passages demonstrates how such works led to exclusion of Gentiles, but this is not the fundamental issue in his doctrine of justification. Rather, it is the attempt to receive favor from God based on works instead of grace. Thus, this passage is important because it continues to demonstrate the dichotomy between faith and works in Paul's thinking.

Righteousness from God: Philippians 3:9

The next text to examine is Philippians 3:9, a subject of debate since the emergence of the New Perspective. Essentially, my contention is that if understood along the lines of the present argument, it provides more evidence in support of the individual

deeper legalism. See Lambrecht's critique of Bechtler, who rightly notes that Israel's culpability, at least here, appears unrelated to exclusion of the Gentiles (Lambrecht, "Caesura," 146). Contra Llyod Gaston, "Israel's Misstep in the Eyes of Paul," in *Paul and the Torah* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987], 142, who argues Israel did not obtain "the goal of the Torah," which "is the inclusion of the Gentiles" (also idem, "For All the Believers: The Inclusion of the Gentiles as the Ultimate Goal of Torah in Romans," in *Paul and the Torah* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987], 128).

³⁸Contra Davies, *Faith and Obedience*, 180 n. 2 (also 123-24), who states that this is the "first time in Romans" that "ἐξ ἔργων conveys a pejorative meaning."

approach to justification. Significant is the way in which Paul equates his former law-keeping with “flesh” (3:4), rather than “the righteousness from God upon the basis of faith” (3:9). The question is why Paul sets these in opposition to one another. As will be shown, the issue is related to that of Romans 9:30-32 above, whether Paul has in mind merely a salvation-historical shift or something more fundamental to the manner in which humanity relates to God. If Paul believes that his former manner of life was essentially acceptable until Christ was revealed to him, then a salvation-historical solution is enough. But if he understood his former law-keeping as a means of finding favor with God—if it was legalism—then the idea of grace versus works as a means to salvation reemerges, and some of the traditional notions regarding justification would still be applicable.

Context

In Philippians 3:2, Paul instructs the Philippians with three parallel commands: “look out for the dogs, look out for the workers of evil, look out for the mutilation” (Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν).³⁹ He then

³⁹There is much scholarly discussion of the integrity of Philippians and the place of Phil 3 within the letter that is worthy of attention but for present purposes does not merit a full-length consideration. For comprehensive treatment with extensive citation of the relevant literature, see David E. Garland, “The Composition and Unity of Philippians,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 141-73. For other helpful overviews, see Robert Jewett, “The Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians,” *NovT* 12 (1970): 40-53; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1991), 10-18. Sufficient to note is that the unity of the letter has been debated within scholarship, especially in the mid-nineteenth century. Some who question its unity include: Walter Schmithals, “Die Irrlehrer des Philipperbriefes,” *ZTK* 54 (1957): 297-41 (also printed in idem, *Paul and the Gnostics*, tr. John E. Steely [Nashville: Abingdon, 1972], 65-122); B. D. Rahtjen, “The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians,” *NTS* 6 (1960): 167-73; Helmut Koester, “The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians III),” *NTS* 8 (1961-62): 317-32; F. W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 2nd ed., BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1969), 1-5, 100-02. However, more recent thought has questioned the rejection of unity. E.g., see Garland, “Composition and Unity,” 141-73; Jewett, “Epistolary Thanksgiving,” 40-53; William J. Dalton, “The Integrity of Philippians,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 97-102; Duane F. Watson, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and its Implications for the Unity Question,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 57-88; David A. deSilva, “No Confidence in the Flesh: The Meaning and Function of Philippians 3:2-21,” *TrinJ* 15 (1994): 27-54. There are good arguments on both sides of the issue, which seem to depend upon the interpreter’s vantage point. As Garland, “Composition and Unity,” 143, writes, “None of the arguments against the integrity of the letter, however, is considered insurmountable by advocates of its unity; the counter arguments are just as plausible, if sometimes just as conjectural. The result is a stalemate

goes on to explain that it is he and the Philippians who are the true “circumcision” (ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή), who worship in the Spirit and boast in Christ (οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), and who do not “put confidence in the flesh” (οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες). While the exact identity of Paul’s opponents has intrigued scholars, Paul’s reference to circumcision and law-observance indicate that, at least at this point in the letter, there are strong connections to the false teaching he dealt with in Galatians and Romans.⁴⁰

In verse 4, then, Paul states that if anyone has reason to put confidence in the

in the argumentation.” The assumption of the present work follows that of recent arguments for unity, though it should be noted that virtually no one questions whether Phil 3 is Pauline.

⁴⁰The precise identity of Paul’s opponents has been a matter of considerable debate within Philippians scholarship (for a good overview of the issue, see Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 7-10; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 26-35). The question is often considered along with other passages that describe Paul’s opponents (usually Phil 1:15-18, 27-28; 3:2, 18-19). Since the descriptions vary from text to text, many speculate that there was more than one group of opponents (for example, deSilva, “No Confidence,” 29, notes that some see “as many as five different groups”). Schmithals, “Die Irrlehrer,” 297-41, believed they were Gnostic libertines, while Koester, “Pauline Fragment,” 317-32, sees “Early Christian Gnosticism” of Jewish background at work. A. F. J. Klijn, “Paul’s Opponents in Philippians iii,” *NovT* 7 (1965): 278-84, argues that Paul’s opponents are Jews who preached a “better way to perfection” than Paul, and Carl R. Holladay, “Paul’s Opponents in Philippians 3,” *ResQ* 12 (1969): 77-90, sees Paul responding to a kind of Jewish Gnosticism. Finally, Robert Jewett, “Conflicting Movements in the Early Church as Reflected in Philippians,” *NovT* 12 (1970): 387, believes Paul struggles with “libertinist heretics from within” and “Judaizers from the outside.” Others do not think there were concrete opponents present (e.g., Fee, *Philippians*, 7-10; deSilva, “No Confidence,” 29-31; Morna D. Hooker, “Philippians: Phantom Opponents and the Real Source of Conflict,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni, *NovTSup* 103 [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 378; Andries H. Snyman, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians 3:1-11,” *Neotestamentica* 40 [2006]: 264, who is uncertain of their actual presence). Since the current focus is only on Philippians 3:9, it is enough to note that most see this particular passage as referring to Jewish Christian agitators, i.e., Judaizers, who, similar to opponents in Galatians and Romans, were compelling Gentiles to keep elements of the Mosaic law. Whether Paul is responding to concrete opponents that were present in Philippi or to a general false teaching that made inroads into the church is still a matter of debate. For our purposes, however, the judgment of Snyman, “Rhetorical Analysis,” 264, seems wise: “Whether they were present or not, the majority of scholars agree that they were Judaizers, whose false teachings on circumcision and Torah observance posed serious threats to the Philippian community. The seriousness of their false teachings and Paul’s frustration with these people explain the strong language at the beginning of chapter 3.” Of course, this still leaves the question of whether the issue of circumcision was more sociological or soteriological. For example, Mikael Tellbe, “The Sociological Factors behind Philippians 3.1-11 and the Conflict at Philippi,” *JSNT* 55 (1994): 97-121, believes Paul’s opponents to be Judaizers, but, similar to James Dunn and others, highlights sociological reasons for pressing and accepting circumcision. By this point, however, it should be apparent that this dissertation sees both soteriological and sociological concerns while still holding that the issue was more soteriological than is often acknowledged in more recent scholarly opinion.

flesh, it would be him. In fact, he has *more* reason than those who are troubling the Philippians (Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον). He then goes on to demonstrate this point in verses 5-6 through a listing of his merits as a Jew.

After building his case for why he has more reason than anyone to put confidence in the flesh, he tears down his mountain of accomplishments with the phrase, “I count all these things loss through Christ” (ταῦτα ἡγημαὶ διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν). Thus, his argument so far is that those who are troubling the Philippians are not true believers—they are workers of evil who boast in the flesh and not in Christ. Further, if anyone is tempted to promote themselves based on their distinctives as Jews, Paul’s record outshines theirs by far.⁴¹ Yet this record is not what gives him reason for confidence among them—it is only Christ and his grace. Paul amplifies his argument in verse 8 by saying that not only “these things” listed in verses 5-6 does he count as loss, but he considers “all things” (πάντα) to be loss, or dung (σκύβαλα), in light of the knowledge of Christ. Moreover, this was so that he might “gain Christ” (ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω) and “be found in him” (καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ). This last phrase opens verse 9.

Verse 9

The purpose clause with subjunctive verb at the end of verse 8, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “in order that I might gain Christ,” gives the reason why Paul has “lost all things” (τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην). This clause continues into verse 9 with another subjunctive verbal phrase: καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, “and be found in him.” Many commentators note that the καὶ creates a hendiadys, “where the second member spells out in greater detail what is meant by the first.”⁴² That is, the reason Paul has lost all things was that he might “gain

⁴¹As John B. Polhill, “Twin Obstacles in the Christian Path Philippians 3,” *RevExp* 77 (1980): 362, writes, “If anyone can boast of his Jewish pedigree, it is Paul.”

⁴²Fee, *Philippians*, 320 n. 28. Similarly, Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 159, thinks the second phrase is probably expegetic, with “being found in

Christ,” or, in other words, “be found in him.” Likely Paul has in mind both present and future realities here.⁴³ With the double phrase ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ (“in order that I might gain Christ and be found him”) in addition to τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν (“that I might know him”) in verse 10, Paul employs three parallel phrases to describe why he now counts “all things” as “loss.”⁴⁴

Next in verse 9, then, is a negative participial phrase, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου, “not having my own righteousness from the law,” which modifies the closest verb to it, εὑρεθῶ.⁴⁵ With Peter O’Brien, the participle is probably modal, demonstrating the means by which Paul is found in Christ.⁴⁶ Thus, whatever is made of

him” explaining what it means to “gain Christ.” So also O’Brien, *Philippians*, 392; G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2009), 237; John Reumann, *Philippians*, AB, vol. 33B (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 492; Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1967), 118.

⁴³As Fee, *Philippians*, 320, notes, the time frame of Paul’s “gaining” and “being found” in Christ is related to his “‘already but not yet’ eschatological perspective (cf. vv. 10-11 that follow), which determines his existence in Christ and serves as the basic framework for all of this theological thinking.” So also Hansen, *Philippians*, 237; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 392; Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1997), 208; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, rev. and exp. Ralph P. Martin, WBC, vol. 43 (rev. ed.) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 193; contra Beare, *Philippians*, 116, who thinks it refers to the present life only.

⁴⁴O’Brien, *Philippians*, 393; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 193.

⁴⁵The phrase may be the first part of a chiasm that extends to the end of the verse, as Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philippenerbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), 250-51, 310, has suggested: (A) μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν, (B) δικαιοσύνην, (C) τὴν ἐκ νόμου, (D) ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, (C’) τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ, (B’) δικαιοσύνην, (A’) ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει. So also Snyman, “Rhetorical Analysis,” 272-73; deSilva, “No Confidence,” 42; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 394; Silva, *Philippians*, 160. However, some have rejected this. For example, Fee, *Philippians*, 321 n. 34, sates that “it obviously is not” a chiasm, arguing that the “rhetoric in this case lies in the repetition.” R. Barry Matlock, “The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul: Galatians 2.16, 3.22, Romans 3.22, and Philippians 3.9,” *JSNT* 30 (2007): 177-84, makes a plausible case for seeing the rhetorical structure as “based upon antithesis, parallelism, and repetition,” rather than strictly chiasm. For more on structural possibilities, see also Reumann, *Philippians*, 498.

⁴⁶O’Brien, *Philippians*, 393; so also deSilva, “No Confidence,” 42; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 209 (the idea of “means” is better than “manner” with regard to the “modal” participle in this instance; on the difference between the two, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 627 n. 37). This is opposed to a more causal idea. Hansen, *Philippians*, 238 n. 114, however, notes that in either case “it provides an explanation of the basis of being in Christ.”

the terms here, it is certain that for Paul “being found” in Christ necessarily involves “not having” one’s own righteousness that is from the law.

The word ἀλλά, then, indicates that Paul is about to state what “being found” in Christ does involve, namely, a righteousness that is “through faith in Christ” (τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ).⁴⁷ The article τὴν is used for the second time, pointing back to δικαιοσύνην, and, thus, the word is implied here. Then, closing out the verse, Paul uses both article and word in the final phrase, clarifying further this righteousness: τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, “the righteousness from God on the basis of faith.”

Three points can be made from this verse that are virtually incontestable. First, being “found in Christ” necessarily involves “having righteousness.” Second, this righteousness is not “my own,” which for Paul is the same as saying that is not “from the law.”⁴⁸ Third, in direct contrast to a righteousness from the law that would be Paul’s own is a *true* righteousness, which is “from God” and “through faith in [of] Christ.” Beyond this, two debated areas surface frequently when probing the details of what Paul precisely intends in this verse: salvation history and imputation.

Salvation History

The salvation history issue in Philippians 3:9 comes very close to that of Romans 9:30-32. Is Paul simply contrasting two eras of salvation history, or why it is better for him to be a Christian than a Jew in a general sense, or is the issue more

⁴⁷The “faith of Christ” issue emerges in this text, eliciting much comment from scholars. To preserve space, however, the discussion will be bypassed and the reader is referred to comments in chap. 3, beginning on p. 81.

⁴⁸“It is very important to note the explicit opposition between the righteousness that comes from God (*ek theou*) and that which comes from the law (*ek nomou*). Clearly, Paul conceives of the two as mutually exclusive” (Silva, *Philippians*, 160; cf. also Joachim Gnilka, *Der Philipperbrief*, HTKNT 10/3 [Freiburg: Herder, 1976], 194). On the way Paul’s rhetoric highlights this contrast between two kinds of righteousness, see Snyman, “Rhetorical Analysis,” 259-83 (esp. 273-74). deSilva, “No Confidence,” 43, also notes the closeness of this idea to that of Rom 10:3, where Israel seeks “their own” (τὴν ἰδίαν) righteousness.

complex than this? If so, how? My answer, in line with the argument made thus far, is that Paul's previous hope was more connected to his former distinctives as a Jewish leader than the mercy of God, and this is what he contrasts with what he has gained in Christ. In his conversion, Paul came to understand his accomplishments as a Pharisaic Jew as worthless apart from faith in Christ. While in themselves the distinctives were neutral and some even commendable, especially those commanded in the OT, for Paul they were not undergirded by a true faith (cf. Rom 9:32; also Heb 4:2), which was eventually evidenced in his rejection of Christ.⁴⁹

Of course, no one denies that Paul is listing his accomplishments as a Pharisaic Jew and setting them in opposition to faith in Christ. The debate surrounds what his intention in doing so was exactly. As with Romans 9:30-32, Sanders has been the champion of the view that Paul's argument comes only from his altered *Heilsgeschichte* and not any kind of anthropological or "attitudinal" issue: "His criticism of his own former life is not that he was guilty of the attitudinal sin of self-righteousness, but that he put confidence in something other than faith in Jesus Christ."⁵⁰ N. T. Wright, whose argument is not identical to Sanders, nevertheless eschews the idea of Paul taking issue

⁴⁹Heikki Räisänen, "Paul's Conversion and His View of the Law," *NTS* 33 (1987): 408-09, argues that the "picture conveyed is that of a pious man obediently fulfilling the duties prescribed by God in his law" and that it is only Paul's persecution of the church that is presented negatively (see also Stanley K. Stowers, "ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ and ΔΙΑ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ in Romans 3:30," *JBL* 108 [1989]: 671, who writes, "Paul proudly asserts that there was nothing wrong with his Jewish past"). But this seems too simplistic. If Paul's supposed faithfulness to God led him to persecute those whom he now considers God's true people, is he really intending to paint the other distinctives in such a neutral or even positive light? This seems debatable. As Polhill, "Twin Obstacles," 363, writes, in Paul's zeal for what he believed to be righteousness, "he had been the chief persecutor of God's people and perverter of the divine purposes." Hence, while some of the actions were neutral in themselves as commands of God, the question of motivation is critical.

⁵⁰Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 44. See also Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 79-81; Räisänen, "Paul's Conversion," 408-10. For a brief summary of New Perspective thought on this passage, see Alan J. Thompson, "Blameless Before God? Philippians 3:6 in Context," *Themelios* 28, no. 1 (2002): 5-12.

with an attitude: “What Greek word or phrase, I wonder, would that very modern expression render? How would Paul have put such a point, had he wanted to?”⁵¹ Hence, Wright, similar to Stendahl, believes we read the modern conscience into the passage.

However, one should not too quickly dismiss the possibility that Paul is concerned with an attitude of the heart. While the expression may be modern, the reality it points to is not. One thinks of Paul taking issue with “those who boast in appearance and not in heart” (2 Cor 5:12: *τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ μὴ ἐν καρδίᾳ*) or who want to “make a good showing in the flesh” (Gal 6:12: *εὐπροσωπήσαι ἐν σαρκί*) in order to avoid persecution (cf. also Isa 29:13; Matt 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-7). Perhaps different terminology is necessary, but, nevertheless, the idea behind the wording was certainly available to Paul and seems to be present elsewhere in his writings. Paul’s concern for the attitude of the heart is actually quite significant with regard to his view of his opponents and his own former life.

Further, it should be pointed out that the idea that Paul has in mind only *Heilsgeschichte* is not something that can be shown directly from the text. Sanders is providing a reading of the text based on the assumption that Paul was not interested in combating self-righteousness, since Judaism was not a legalistic religion. This assumption permeates all New Perspective readings of this text. But if this assumption is not taken as a given, then it changes how the passage is read as well. In this case, the passage *can* be understood to refute a measure of self-righteousness, while at the same time not denying salvation-historical realities.⁵²

While chapter 2 has already addressed this issue, it should nevertheless be

⁵¹ N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 143.

⁵² So, rightly, O’Brien, *Philippians*, 395: “ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην was nothing other than self-righteousness, and Paul, writing now as a Christian, gladly jettisons it in favour of a different kind of righteousness.”

remembered that the ultimate burden behind the New Perspective view of Judaism is that, as Stendahl wrote, “for the Jew the Law did not require a static or pedantic perfectionism but supposed a covenant relationship in which there was room for forgiveness and repentance and where God applied the Measure of Grace.”⁵³ These scholars see no call for perfect obedience in the law, therefore the argument of the traditional view that Paul formerly believed in such a concept only to fail as a Pharisaic Jew so that he was driven to find grace in Christ is misguided. But, as previously mentioned, while it is true at one level that the law did not require perfection for one to be considered a faithful Israelite, this does not mean that a subtle legalism could not still exist that implied that one’s standing before God *was* based on one’s works rather than grace. Of course, that some or even many Jews could participate in a form of ethnocentric legalism does not mean that this defines the revealed OT religion or the religious stance of every first-century Jew. But if the idea is granted that such legalism was possible and could be a large part of the lens through which Paul was viewing Israel in his negative statements on the law, then the traditional notions of faith, grace, and works can be reconsidered, including in Philippians 3.

Thus, like Romans 9:30-32, salvation history is clearly important for Paul, but it does not explain everything. As R. H. Gundry writes, “Salvation-history does not account for all that Paul says, much less for the passion with which he says it; we are dealing with an autobiographical as well as a dispensational shift.”⁵⁴ Moisés Silva also states it well:

It is unfortunate that Sanders conceives of the two frameworks—*Heilsgeschichte* on the one hand and the significance of grace on the other—as either/or propositions. Paul is not concerned about purely chronological differences but about the

⁵³Stendahl, “Apostle Paul,” 80-81.

⁵⁴Gundry, “Grace,” 13; also O’Brien, *Philippians*, 396 (who quotes Gundry on this point).

difference in *character* between the two ages: the age of the flesh (= self-confidence and sin) and the age of the Spirit (= promise and salvation).⁵⁵

Paul's former rejection of Christ, then, along with that of those who followed a similar pattern, was problematic not only because it missed the new work the God of Israel was doing, but also because the underlying reason for missing it was an unwillingness to relinquish that which his Jewish works provided him—pride and presumed favor with God—which Paul later equates with enslavement to the old order of flesh, law, and death.

The rejection of Christ by many Israelites was for Paul the ultimate evidence and indicator of a heart that was part of the “age of the flesh,” living in dependence upon its “own righteousness” (ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην), and not fully resting in the grace of God. In his life and context this took the form of a reliance upon Jewish works (e.g., those listed in vv. 5-6) in a way that was never intended. Thus, in his conversion and calling Paul simultaneously realized that Christ was the Messiah of Israel *and* that he was a sinner in desperate need of grace.⁵⁶ A dispensational shift and a need for grace were simultaneously revealed to Paul.

Imputation

The second issue that often arises with respect to Philippians 3:9 is that of imputation. The subject is of course complex and has been fiercely debated in recent years.⁵⁷ It would require its own full treatment in order to say anything of real import.

⁵⁵Silva, *Philippians*, 160-61 n. 10.

⁵⁶This means further that Paul's conversion was more than simply a call to mission to the Gentiles. As Jacques Dupont, “The Conversion of Paul, and its Influence on his Understanding of Salvation by Faith,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 180, rightly points out, in Phil 3, in contrast with the letter to the Galatians, “Paul does not view the Damascus event in relation to his apostolic mission” but as a “discovery of that which contains the pith of Christianity and is therefore true for every Christian.”

⁵⁷See, e.g., John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), whose work is a response to Robert Gundry (see Piper, *Counted Righteous*, 44 n. 5); Don B. Garlington, “Imputation or Union with Christ? A Response to John Piper,” *Reformation & Revival* 12, no. 4 (2003): 45-113; Robert H. Gundry, “The Nonimputation of

Nevertheless, it seems unwise to move on without making a few brief comments with regard to the way the New Perspective has influenced the issue of imputation with respect to this verse and how the argument of the present work relates to it. These are by no means solutions to the issue, but merely suggestions for further thinking.

The particular view of N. T. Wright will provide an entry point. Wright strongly emphasizes the language in Philippians 3:9a of being “found in him,” that is, in the Messiah, downplaying the idea of imputation in favor of “incorporation” into Christ and his people. “Paul has discovered in the Messiah the true-Israel identity to which his life under Torah had pointed but which it could not deliver, and he therefore warns the Philippians against being drawn in that false direction.”⁵⁸ He argues that 3:9 is not referring to Christ’s own righteousness imputed to the believer, but to a “righteous status from God” that one receives when incorporated into “the-Messiah-and-his-people.”⁵⁹ The view of Wright and others who reject imputation are by no means identical. However, they nevertheless seem to stem from a shared dissatisfaction with an understanding of the Mosaic law as a kind of a meritorious job description that required perfect fulfillment by Christ, which is then transferred to the believer in a strict, bookkeeping, transactional fashion.⁶⁰ Due to the work of Sanders and others who have highlighted the covenantal

Christ’s Righteousness,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2004); D. A. Carson, “The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields,” in *Justification: What’s At Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2004); Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 9 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000), especially 171-86; Brian Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006); Michael F. Bird, “Incorporated Righteousness,” in *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 60-87.

⁵⁸Wright, *Justification*, 142.

⁵⁹Ibid., 150-51.

⁶⁰For a carefully nuanced statement on this issue, see Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood*, 226-28.

nature of the Jewish view of the law, the argument is that such an overly transactional view of law-keeping is insufficient and therefore unable to support a Pauline doctrine of imputation. While not the only objection to imputation, it is a foundational one for those who have questioned the doctrine in recent years, and it is also one closely related to the line of argument of the present work.⁶¹

While this issue has been addressed in chapter 2, it deserves repeating that there is validity to the above concern, and it should not be passed over too quickly. Certainly in one sense God did not demand perfect obedience for those living before Christ in order to receive his favor. The pattern of the OT involves a requirement of loyalty and trust, from which obedience naturally follows, with provision for sin given by God. At the same time, however, there is another sense where the law does require perfection, or else sacrifice and atonement would not be necessary. This is the case even if it is assumed that perfection could never come from a post-Adam human being. Thus, essentially, two ways are left for gaining this necessary perfection: God-given mercy, or human-driven works that in reality are a delusion and ultimately fail. Thus, while perfection from the human being was not the revealed intention of the law in the OT and not how every Jew pursued the law, this was indeed how the law was pursued by some, including Paul before his conversion. An ethnocentrically-oriented legalism, whether one realizes it or not, *does* imply that perfectly obeying a set of standards provides one with salvation. This is not to say that Paul understood this before Christ, but it becomes his view of his former life on this side of his conversion, where he sees reality more clearly.

Further, far from only a Jewish problem, Paul saw Jewish legalism as only one manifestation of the larger human attempt to strive for salvation and righteousness apart from God's true intentions (cf. Gal 4:8-10, written to Gentiles), to somehow attain these

⁶¹See Vickers, *Jesus' Blood*, 216-32, for a list of objections to the doctrine.

things apart from the only way humans are able: grace. If this is the case, then the idea of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner still has value. Fallen humanity needs a righteousness that comes from outside of itself, and thus so do first-century Jews. Thus, while the purpose of Philippians 3 is not to teach imputation, the traditional view of the “righteousness from God” (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην) in Philippians 3 may have more to speak for it than more recent interpretations have argued.

To be sure, an overly strict, transactional view of imputation does not appear to be reflected in the biblical evidence. As several recent interpreters have argued, in order to be more textually faithful, the language of imputation needs to be brought more into line with the idea of union with or incorporation into Christ.⁶² But this does not necessarily negate the idea that the righteousness given to the believer is in fact Christ’s very righteousness. Wright’s idea of a covenantal righteous status, the connection of which to God and Christ is somewhat unclear, does not seem to cohere fully with the Pauline evidence either, especially when viewed in light of the present argument. Wright’s view stems from a covenantal-nomistic understanding of Judaism that does not allow for the possibility of Paul responding to works-righteousness in virtually any sense. In line with this, Wright has developed an alternative understanding of receiving righteousness. But if these assumptions about Judaism are altered, then the idea of imputation, with some nuancing, is not entirely foreign to Paul. In this case, in Philippians 3:9 it is God’s very righteousness being given to Paul, separate from the righteousness he was striving for in typical human fashion apart from God.

⁶²E.g., Bird, “Incorporated Righteousness,” 85, writes that, “Given the supremely christocentric ingredient in Paul’s formulation of justification it is far more appropriate to speak of *incorporated righteousness* for the righteousness that clothes believers” (he goes on to cite Piper [ibid., 85 n. 123], who writes, “The implication seems to be that our union with Christ is what connects us with divine righteousness” [John Piper, *Counted Righteous*, 84-85]). So also Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood*, 237: “It is difficult to overemphasize that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness takes place in union with Christ”; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 174-75; Carson, “Vindication,” 77.

One final qualification on the present verse. The extreme language of Paul in these verses need not imply that all his former credentials were repugnant in themselves (especially in v. 5). There is legitimate reason for being thankful that one was born into the people of Israel, and even being a Pharisee. While Heikki Räisänen marvels that Paul calls “the covenantal privileges given by God ‘rubbish,’” one must understand that Paul sees them as “rubbish” in a specific sense.⁶³ He is responding to those who boast in such credentials. Paul turns their argument on its head and states that such credentials are nothing compared to what is gained in Christ. Furthermore, Paul is not simply saying that Christ is superior to Moses (though true). It was his former manner of receiving and living out such credentials, which involved self-righteousness rather than grace-centered obedience, that caused these actions to truly achieve their status as “rubbish.” Such self-righteousness did not describe the experience of all Jews, but it did for Paul, and no doubt he saw it as descriptive of his opponents as well. Thus, Paul uses strong language to make his point more forcefully over against his opponents and for the sake of the Philippians.

It need not be assumed, then, that “being a Jew” was necessarily opposed to faith for Paul—motives are critical. Certainly living as a Jew before Christ was acceptable and necessary, and after Christ, too, as long as one defines carefully what “being a Jew” means.⁶⁴ In Paul’s case, before his conversion, being a Jew was opposed to

⁶³Räisänen, “Paul’s Conversion,” 410. Räisänen cites Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 78, who notes that these cannot all be subsumed under the heading “achievement”; some are privileges (so also Dupont, “Conversion of Paul,” 179; for more on the distinction, see Thompson, “Blameless Before God,” 7-9). The difference between “achievement” and “privilege” is worth noting but not ultimately helpful, in my view. The reality is that any of the things listed could be grounds for pride and legalism, though they do not have to be (except persecution). Contrary to Watson, Paul does not seem to be renouncing “his whole covenant-status as a Jew” (*Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, 78; this would conflict with Rom 11:1-2, for example). He is renouncing the things listed in a very specific sense: inasmuch as they were a legalistic means of attaining righteousness *for him* (or, by extension, anyone else who pursued them in similar manner).

⁶⁴In other words, if it means rejecting Christ or forcing Gentile circumcision, then Paul would oppose it. But if it merely meant continuing in Jewish customs, my view is that this is not necessarily opposed to Paul’s gospel (cf. Paul’s apparent concern for Jewish customs in Acts 18:18; 20:16; 21:26). Of course, the issue is complex and requires more attention than is possible within current space limits.

faith, but this was because of the orientation of the heart underneath the external credentials, not necessarily because of the credentials themselves. However, for Paul, once Christ is rejected for the law, the true orientation of the heart is revealed, along with the object of one's ultimate hope, grace or works.

To sum up on Philippians 3:9, if one begins from the point of view that Paul could have been referring to an anthropological as well as salvation-historical issue, that a Jewish ethnocentric legalism was present in his context, of which he himself was a former participant, then the notion of grace for the sinner can be reconsidered. In this case, the righteousness Paul is referring to is indeed Christ's righteousness, "from God," and given to the sinner in union with Christ. For Paul this happened in direct contrast to his own efforts as a Jew that led him to self-righteousness, and which point to the common human tendency toward similar works-oriented endeavors.

The Contribution of the Disputed Epistles

The last three passages to examine, Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9, and Titus 3:5, traditionally held by the church to be Pauline, have had their authorship disputed by critical scholarship. While the issues that have been raised should not be neglected, they do not necessarily affect the use of the texts in the present chapter. My own view is that the case against Pauline authorship is not fatal, but, at the very least, these texts testify to how some of the earliest Christians understood Paul's thought. As Wright comments concerning Ephesians, "Even if this text is secondary, it was written by someone who knew Paul's mind very well and stood close to him in many important respects."⁶⁵ A similar statement could be made with regard to the Pastoral Epistles as well.⁶⁶ Thus, with

⁶⁵Wright, *Justification*, 168.

⁶⁶For example, Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, tr. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972], 148, write that the idea of righteousness by works in 2 Tim 1:9 and Titus 3:5

these caveats in mind, the discussion below will refer to the author as “Paul.”

Treatment of these texts will be brief, as their contribution to the present argument is relatively simple: they all explicitly deny “works” (ἔργα) any role in the salvation of God, which is described in terms of “faith,” “grace,” and/or “mercy.” One additional contribution they make is that none of them mention the law or use the typical justification language found in Romans and Galatians (except one use of δικαιοῶ in Titus 3:7). This is significant because the passages seem to demonstrate the presence of a foundational dichotomy between grace and works as instruments of salvation in places where the law is not under direct consideration, while still describing fundamental Pauline thinking.⁶⁷ Thus, if that which has been argued elsewhere about justification is true, then it is natural to see this distinction between working and believing/receiving in places such as these—indeed, in a way that is foundational to Paul’s understanding of what salvation through Jesus Christ means.

Not by Works so that No One May Boast: Ephesians 2:8-9

Of interest first is Ephesians 2:8-9, a text that highlights well the notion of

has been “taken over from Paul”; Karoline Läger, *Die Christologie der Pastoralbriefe*, Hamburger Theologische Studien 12 (Münster: Lit, 1996), 69, makes a similar observation; William Barclay, “Paul’s Certainties: Our Security in God—2 Timothy i. 12,” *ExpTim* 69 (1958): 324, writes that the Pastorals have “the mind of Paul”; R. Alistair Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” *JSNT* 54 (1994): 73 n. 1, assumes “that the author was not Paul himself, but that PE were put together by members of his immediate circle not long after his death”; Abraham J. Malherbe, “‘Christ Jesus Came into the World to Save Sinners’: Soteriology in the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt, NovTSup 121 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 353, writes, “The author is enough of a Paulinist to deny that human merit is a condition of salvation [citing Titus 3:5; 2 Tim 1:9].” In many ways, then, the texts provide evidence for Pauline thought even if inauthentic. However, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, xlvi-cxxix, on the validity of reconsidering Pauline authorship.

⁶⁷I. Howard Marshall, “Salvation, Grace and Works in the Later Writings in the Pauline Corpus,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 339-58, considers these three texts as well and makes the same point, quite convincingly. So also Moisés Silva, “Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:245.

salvation by grace as opposed to works. The preceding verses (2:1-7) provide a long account of God’s salvific work for those “who were dead in trespasses and sins” (ὁμᾶς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν) (2:1; also cf. 2:5). These formerly walked according to the “course of this world” and its present ruler (2:2), living in the “lusts of the flesh” and being by nature “children of wrath” (2:3). But God, “being rich in mercy,” loved them nevertheless, making them alive with Christ, in order that (ἵνα) “in the coming ages” he might show his grace and kindness to them in Christ Jesus (2:4-7).⁶⁸ Of note is the abrupt entry in verse 5 of the phrase χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι, “by grace you are saved.” At this point Paul “breaks into the sentence with a direct second-person address to his readers that both summarizes what he is trying to say and anticipates the theme of his next paragraph.”⁶⁹ This next paragraph will be the focus of the rest of the present discussion.

Verse 8

As Timothy Gombis notes, verses 8-10 introduce a “polemical edge” to Paul’s argument.⁷⁰ In verses 8-9, specifically, “the author contends that the initiative for God’s gracious and powerful rescue resides in God alone, ruling out any thought of this move of God originating elsewhere.”⁷¹ What is important is that the text demonstrates the mechanism *by which* one is saved: Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως, “for by

⁶⁸Nils Alstrup Dahl, “Gentiles, Christians, and Israelites in the Epistle to the Ephesians,” *HTR* 79 (1986): 32, notes that the negative picture of the Gentiles “provides a foil for the demonstration of the rich grace and the immense power of God, who in Christ has granted salvation to the condemnable Gentiles (2:1-10, 11-22).”

⁶⁹Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 134. See also Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 174.

⁷⁰Timothy G. Gombis, “Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 411. Gombis’s exegesis is insightful, but he stretches the divine warfare imagery to its limits, in my view.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

grace you have been saved through faith.”⁷² The periphrastic participial phrase ἔστε σεσωσμένοι with dative χάριτί parallels that of verse 5, with the only difference being the addition of the dative article, the conjunction γάρ, and the prepositional phrase, διὰ πίστεως, which further modifies χάριτί.⁷³ The article added before χάριτί points back to the mention of “grace” in both 2:5 and 2:7.⁷⁴ As Tet-Lim Yee notes, “What was then thrown in as a kind of ‘undercurrent’ . . . to God who ‘made alive’ the dead (v. 5a) now emerges as the main theme in vv. 8-10.”⁷⁵ The conjunction γάρ connects the verse to the previous, providing the ground for Paul’s emphasis in verse 7 on the “surpassing riches of his grace” (τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ).⁷⁶ The phrase τῇ χάριτί, then, as a dative of instrumentality, demonstrates by what means one is “saved”—salvation is “by means of grace.”

The salvation to which Paul refers has as its most immediate referent the deliverance he has just recounted in verses 1-7. The term σώζω, as Frank Thielman notes, “often refers to rescue from destruction (1 Cor. 1:18; 3:15; 2 Cor. 2:15; Rom. 9:27; Mark

⁷²Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 111, puts it well: “The repetition of the great truth with which he had already interrupted the flow of thought in v 5b serves as a lead into a statement about the nature of salvation in terms of relationship between grace and works.”

⁷³As Franz Mussner, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 10 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn; Würzburg: Echter, 1982), 66, writes, the word “grace” in v. 7 prompts Paul “im V. 8 nochmals hervorzuheben, was er schon in der Parenthese am Ende des V. 5 betont hat: dass unsere Rettung rein gnadenhaft erfolgt.”

⁷⁴Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 225; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 289 n. 63; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 340; T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1916), 51; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 142; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 111; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 174.

⁷⁵Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, SNTSMS 130 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 64. Andrew T. Lincoln, “Ephesians 2:8-10: A Summary of Paul’s Gospel?” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 619, also notes that “vv. 8-10 cannot be interpreted without reference to v. 5b and its context in the middle section.”

⁷⁶Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 111; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 174; Abbott, *Ephesians*, 51. Gombis, “Divine Warfare,” 411 n. 19, argues that both uses of γάρ in 2:8 and 2:10 “substantiate the claim made in v. 7.”

8:35; BDAG 982-83) and is therefore a particularly apt word to use for God’s merciful, gracious, and loving deliverance of believers from the desperate situation Paul has described in 2:1-3.”⁷⁷ Additionally, this salvation is διὰ πίστεως, “through faith”—while grace is the means of receiving salvation, faith is the mechanism for receiving grace. Thus: “If God’s grace is the ground of salvation, then faith is the means by which it is appropriated.”⁷⁸

Moving forward in the verse, this means salvation is not “from yourselves” (καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν), but is the gift of God (θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον).⁷⁹ While the referent of the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο has been understood by some as πίστις in the previous clause, it is best to see it as “referring to the preceding clause as a whole, and thus to the whole process of salvation it describes.”⁸⁰ Hence the opposite of true salvation of God by his grace and received through faith as a “gift” (τὸ δῶρον) is something from oneself.⁸¹ How, then, would one try to save oneself?

⁷⁷Thielman, *Ephesians*, 135. Also cf. Rom 5:9-10; 10:13; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Thess 2:10.

⁷⁸O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 174; also Thielman, *Ephesians*, 143. On the correlation between “salvation” in this verse and “justification” in the other Pauline letters, see Lincoln, “Summary of Paul’s Gospel,” 620. On faith as the means of connection to Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, see Thomas G. Allen, “Exaltation and Solidarity with Christ: Ephesians 1:20 and 2:6,” *JSNT* 28 (1986): 106-07.

⁷⁹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 112, notes that placement of θεοῦ first in the word order adds emphasis to its contrast with ὑμῶν.

⁸⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 112. So also Jean-Noël Aletti, *Saint Paul Épître aux Éphésiens*, Études Bibliques 42 (Paris: Gabalda, 2001), 130; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, trans. Helen Heron (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 98; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 343. Robert H. Countess, “Thank God for the Genitive,” *JETS* 12 (1969): 120, believes it refers to “faith.” However, the fact that τοῦτο is neuter makes it unlikely that the word is referring specifically either to “grace” or “faith,” which are both feminine. As stated above, more probable is that Paul has the entire idea of salvation in mind (and, as Thielman, *Ephesians*, 143 n. 2, suggests, possibly the neuter σῶτηριον, a word Paul uses elsewhere in the epistle in 6:17). For more on the issue, see also John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (London: Richard Griffin, 1854), 141-42.

⁸¹The term δῶρον is used only here in Paul. More frequent is δωρεά (Rom 3:24 [used adverbially]; 5:15, 17; 2 Cor 9:15; Eph 3:7; 4:7).

Verse 9

The answer to this question is the parallel phrase in the following verse: οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, “not from works.” The phrase οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων in identical wording explains the phrase οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν from verse 8 that was preceded by the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο that pointed back to God’s saving action toward transgressors based entirely upon grace. Therefore, directly opposed to the concept of the interconnected ideas of salvation, grace, faith, and gift, is that of ἔργων, “works.” Though the language is different from Paul’s discussions of justification and the law elsewhere, the underlying ideas are closely related.⁸² Andrew Lincoln notes how the same concept in Paul’s justification passages is taken up here and broadened for a largely Gentile audience so that it applies to the general human condition—the “term ‘works’ now stands for human effort in general.”⁸³ Paul goes further and states that the purpose (ἵνα) for salvation not being from works is so that “no one may boast” (ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσθῃται). The concept of “boasting” connects to Pauline thought elsewhere (e.g., Rom 3:27; 4:2; 1 Cor 4:7; Gal 6:13-14; Phil 3:3) and, as in those places, demonstrates the natural result of a dependence upon human effort as opposed to divine grace—human pride.

How does this passage, then, relate to the present argument? In simplest terms, the passage demonstrates that there is an underlying, elemental theme in Paul’s understanding of salvation that involves a fundamental dichotomy between human works and the grace of God. As O’Brien notes, works “now stand for human effort in general,”

⁸²Contra Ulrich Luz, “Rechtfertigung bei den Paulusschülern,” in *Rechtfertigung*, ed. Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, and Peter Stuhlmacher (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 369-75, who believes the idea of “salvation” has supplanted the Pauline doctrine of justification.

⁸³Lincoln, “Summary of Paul’s Gospel,” 623. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 144 (who does take the passage as Pauline), argues similarly that while “the Paul of the undisputed letters uses the language of ‘works’ and the language of ‘boasting’ together only when engaging Judaism polemically . . . it is not hard to imagine Paul expressing himself this way in a new setting.”

and this corresponds with a text such as Romans 9:11-12, where works are “*defined* as ‘doing anything good or evil’” and likewise “are ruled out as a way of obtaining salvation.”⁸⁴ Though the polemical context of faith versus Jewish works of the law is not present in Ephesians,⁸⁵ the concept that undergirds it remains intact.⁸⁶

Hence, the following question from Lincoln, worth quoting in full, needs consideration:

Could it be that Eph 2:8-10, in taking up works and boasting as major Pauline themes and interpreting them in terms of human performance, has not totally distorted Paul's perspective but serves as a reminder of the centrality and significance of Paul's criticism of works of the law and the boasting they involve in such passages as Rom 3:27, 28; 4:1-5; 9:30-10:13; Gal 3:10-14; Phil 3:3-9?⁸⁷

This question should be answered affirmatively. The distinctly Jewish issues of works of the law and ethnocentric legalism with justification by faith as the solution is one part of a larger conception for Paul: “Underneath [the Jewish perspective of Paul’s polemic] is a much wider issue of the relation of humanity to God, of which the judaizing problem is only one aspect.”⁸⁸ Ephesians 2:8-9, then, raises the strong possibility that recent

⁸⁴O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 177. See also Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 344-45; Abbott, *Ephesians*, 52.

⁸⁵Dahl, “Epistle to the Ephesians,” 37, comments that “it is remarkable that Ephesians contains no expression of anti-Jewish sentiments.”

⁸⁶Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 215, is in one sense right to note the lack of “polemic against meritorious works” in Ephesians 2:8-9. Yet, to say that the controversy of Gal 2 is now “unnecessary” is not fully accurate, either (see *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 68-69). Indeed, the polemical context of Romans and Galatians is missing, but this only demonstrates that the faith/works distinction was an underlying and foundational assumption of Paul, one that was ignited in the earlier Jewish controversy. It is not that the lack of polemic indicates the distinction between faith and working has largely disappeared from view, but that it has receded to the background where it is not the central issue to be proven, but the fundamental assumption that continues to inform all thinking.

⁸⁷Lincoln, “Summary of Paul’s Gospel,” 629.

⁸⁸Best, *Ephesians*, 228 (see also idem, “Dead in Trespasses and Sins,” *JSNT* 13 [1981]: 13-15, on the general use of “trespasses and sins” in 2:1 with reference to all humans, whether Jew or Gentile). As G. B. Caird, *Paul’s Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, New Clarendon Bible (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 53, states, the text highlights the fact that the human being apart from God “is the plaything of forces too strong for him to master,” for man “is truly himself, truly human, only when he lives by grace.”

interpretations of Paul have moved too far away from a fundamental Pauline notion by viewing the faith/works dichotomy as primarily an ecclesiological issue and not viewing it as foundational to both his doctrine of justification and that of salvation in general.

Before leaving the text, however, it is also noteworthy that Paul goes on in the next verses to discuss the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ and salvation to *all*, a point that aligns with New Perspective concerns. This is a critical element to Paul's theology and one that will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. However, before moving too quickly to this one must allow the full implications of the present verses to have their place. Whatever else Paul says, here one sees, *as fundamental to salvation in Jesus Christ*, a stark opposition of salvation/grace/faith to "works."⁸⁹ This complements well what has been argued up to this point concerning Paul's doctrine of justification.

Not According to Our Works: 2 Timothy 1:9

In addition to the above Ephesians text, two brief but very telling statements are buried in the Pastoral Epistles. The first is found in 2 Timothy 1:9 and is similar to Ephesians 2:8-9. In 1:8 Paul exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of Christ but to join Paul in suffering according to the power of God (μη οὖν ἐπαισχυνθῆς τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μηδὲ ἐμὲ τὸν δέσμιον αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' ἂν συγκακοπάθησον τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ κατὰ δύναμιν θεοῦ).⁹⁰ This leads Paul into a brief doxology in verses 9-10. "As

⁸⁹While verse 10 will not be examined in detail, it makes a corollary point. Though focused on believers' good works, it still demonstrates that it is *God's* work: αὐτοῦ . . . πρῶτον ("his workmanship"); κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ("created in Christ Jesus"); προητοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς ("God prepared beforehand"). As Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 29, writes, "After such a strong statement of human inability to help oneself, it is remarkable to come to verse 10, which praises the place of 'good works.' But these are not the 'works' of verse 9; rather, they are the necessary consequence and outcome of the readers' new life in Christ."

⁹⁰Some debate whether Timothy was actually struggling with timidity. For example, on 2 Tim 1:6 Alyce M. McKenzie, "2 Timothy 1:3-7," *Int* 60 (2006): 319, writes, "It stands to reason that the author would not feel a need to exhort Timothy to rekindle his faith if his flame was not faltering." But others argue that this is not the case, such as Christopher R. Hutson, "Was Timothy Timid? On the Rhetoric of

is often the case with Paul, the mention of the gospel and of God triggers a statement of praise and thanksgiving or a kind of doxology (cf. 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15f.; Rom. 11:33-36).⁹¹ Some commentators, noting the rhythmic structure of the verses, have understood it as a piece of liturgy or hymn.⁹² While possible, this conclusion is difficult to prove with certainty, especially since the language and content fit that of general Pauline usage.⁹³

The genitive θεοῦ of verse 8 is modified further in verse 9 with the attributive participial phrase τοῦ σώσαντος ἡμᾶς καὶ καλέσαντος κλήσει ἁγία, “who saved us and called us with a holy calling.” Both σώσαντος and καλέσαντος are aorist active participles governed by the article τοῦ and used to describe God in his actions toward believers.⁹⁴

Fearlessness (1 Corinthians 16:10-11) and Cowardice (2 Timothy 1:7),” *BR* 42 (1997): 59, who calls the idea of a timid Timothy a “projection not warranted by the text.”

⁹¹George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 1992), 373. Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, JSNTSup 280 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 151, calls the verses a “distinctly doctrinal statement.”

⁹²E.g., Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 597, write that the verses “have traits that seem to lead back to a liturgical source that is being recalled and alluded to if not actually cited.” So also Julette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 131; Gottfried Holtz, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, THKNT 13 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 1965), 230-32; A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1982), 122; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 99; NA²⁷ indents the verses as though in quotation.

⁹³Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 153, writes that “while vv. 9-10 do have their own unique status, they function as a part of the preceding argument being connected grammatically, logically, stylistically, and in participant structure.” So also Läger, *Christologie*, 67, who argues that the verses act more as “eine Digression des Verfassers, nicht aber wie das Zitat einer Vorlage”; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 475; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 377. I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 700, mentions the possibility of a hymn but goes on to say that “the language is that of the author; it is not introduced with any formula, and the content is appropriate to the context”; similarly Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1990), 146. Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 466, allows for the possibility, while Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB, vol. 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 347, urges caution with regard to inferences about the “traditional” nature of these verses.

⁹⁴Using the aorist tense-form, Paul views “saving” and “calling” in summary fashion, with past tense implied. Cf. Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 467; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 704.

The concepts of “saving” and “calling” are common in Paul.⁹⁵ The use of the dative case in *κλήσει ἁγία* is debated, with the options being a dative of means/instrument, “by means of a holy calling,” or interest, “to a holy calling [i.e., way of life].”⁹⁶ The context seems to tilt the evidence toward a dative of means—the means by which God did the calling.⁹⁷

The next phrase is the most significant, as Paul clarifies God’s manner of accomplishing this salvation and calling: *οὐ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἰδίαν πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριν*, “not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace.”⁹⁸ The preposition *κατὰ* means “on the basis of” and with the negative particle *οὐ* denies “our works” as the basis of the previously mentioned saving and calling of God.⁹⁹ Likely the word *ἰδίαν*, “his own,” is meant to govern both *πρόθεσιν* and *χάριν*, which are connected by *καὶ*.¹⁰⁰ Paul contrasts starkly the total idea of “God’s own purpose and

⁹⁵For Paul’s use of *σώζω* and *καλέω* here, see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 373-74; Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 467-68; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 481-82; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 704.

⁹⁶For the latter, see Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 586; NIV (“to a holy life”). Both ideas are found with *κλήσις* in Paul (e.g., see 1 Cor 7:20; Eph 4:1). Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 374, believes it serves in a “double capacity” to incorporate both ideas; so also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 482. ESV renders the phrase “to a holy calling” but includes the word “with” in a footnote. On the difficulty of the decision here, see C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 4th ed., Études bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1969), 2:714.

⁹⁷See BDAG, s.v. “κλήσις” (“In our lit. almost exclusively of divine initiative . . . of the divine call, of the invitation to enter the kgd. of God.”); Jost Eckert, “καλέω,” *EDNT*, 2:243; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 705. Paul’s emphasis in this instance seems to be more on God’s work than the way of life of the believer, though the two, of course, are inseparable: “It is most likely that the author is thinking of a call from a holy God which should lead to a holy way of life (Tit 2.12, 14), but this purpose would naturally arise out of a calling by a holy God” (ibid.; so also George M. Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of Salvation Language in the Pastoral Epistles*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs [Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2006], 118).

⁹⁸Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 598, believe *πρόθεσιν* and *χάριν* form a hendiadys, in which case the rendering would be “gracious purpose,” but there is no reason to merge the two ideas (rightly Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 469; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 705).

⁹⁹See BDAG, s.v. “κατά” B.5a.δ (in this use “in accordance with and because of are merged”). Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 374, notes that the “introduction of a positive statement by *ἀλλά* after a negative statement continues a pattern seen also in vv. 7 and 8.”

¹⁰⁰So Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 374. Contra Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 483, who argues that *ἰδίαν* probably only modifies *πρόθεσιν* “since it contrasts with *τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν*, ‘our works,’ and *τὴν δοθεῖσαν*,

grace” with τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν, “our works”—works are set against God’s purpose and grace.¹⁰¹ The attributive participial phrase τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων, “which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal,” closes the verse.¹⁰² The aorist passive participle τὴν δοθεῖσαν probably refers more strictly to χάριν than both χάριν and πρόθεσιν, as the idea of grace as gift is common in Paul (e.g., Rom 12:3, 6; 1 Cor 3:10; 2 Cor 8:1; Gal 2:9).¹⁰³ The notion of receiving grace before time began (πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων) is paradoxical, as I. Howard Marshall notes, but Paul appears to refer to the pre-existence of Christ and God’s eternal purposes through him.¹⁰⁴

The content of this verse is brief, but, again, the notion of God acting apart from any human “works” is highlighted. Ray Van Neste suggests that 1:9-10 provides the ground for Paul’s exhortation to Timothy in 1:8: “The admonition gives way to basis and it is entirely logical to present a creedal sort of statement in order to give a theological basis for an exhortation.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Mounce writes that if “salvation is based on works, then it can never be guaranteed (Rom 4:13-16) and it cannot serve as an

‘which was given,’ modifies only χάριν, ‘grace.’” While this is certainly possible, it seems to split up the text unnecessarily.

¹⁰¹Norbert Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 4th ed., RNT 7 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969), 230, notes the similarity on this point to the Ephesians passage examined above: “Diese Akzentsetzung auf die Gnade (statt der Werke) ist genuin paulinisch und erinnert dem Wortlaut nach an Eph 2,8f.”

¹⁰²On Christ in the Pastorals, see I. Howard Marshall, “The Christology of Acts and the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce, and David E. Orton, Biblical Interpretation Series 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 167-82.

¹⁰³See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 706; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 483; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 375; 119; Wieland, *Significance of Salvation*, 119. Contra Johnson, *Letters to Timothy*, 348; Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 599. See also the similar wording in 1 Cor 1:4, which J. A. Allan, “The ‘In Christ’ Formula in the Pastoral Epistles,” *NTS* 10 (1963-64): 120, notes presents “the closest parallel in the use of the [‘in Christ’] formula between the Pastorals and Paul.” As Marshall, “Christology,” 173, states, Christ is “the means through which the grace of God is potentially [*sic*] given.”

¹⁰⁴Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 706-07. See also Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 230; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 483; Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 2:715.

¹⁰⁵Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 152 n. 31.

encouragement to Timothy.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, any kind of working for God over against simply accepting the gift of God is fundamental to Paul’s message. In light of what has been argued thus far, this means there is a general human tendency because of sin to ignore or reject God’s gift of mercy in favor of a pride-motivated attempt at self-salvation. Thus, the Jewish legalism in which Paul participated was one manifestation of a general human problem. This is why the subject of grace versus works factors into passages outside of the more polemical justification passages, such as the present text, which uses the language of “salvation,” rather than “justification.”

As in Ephesians 2, however, ecclesiological concerns are not unrelated, as Paul continues in the next verses by highlighting how God’s purpose and grace have “now appeared” in the coming of Christ (1:10) and how he has been appointed a “preacher and apostle and teacher” for the gospel (1:11). Paul was not only saved by grace but was called to preach this salvation to the Gentiles. Thus, corporate elements of the gospel are present along with more soteriological and individual elements, and this should not be neglected. However, the point being made presently is that the soteriological and individual element is still prominent, not secondary, in Paul’s thinking and involves the idea of grace alone set over against human works. This points to the fact that salvation for Paul was indeed related in some fundamental way to receiving grace from God instead of working for God.

Not Because of Works Done in Righteousness: Titus 3:5

The final text to examine in the present chapter is Titus 3:5. Like 2 Timothy 1:9, the evidence is brief but significant.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the fact that it is so brief demonstrates

¹⁰⁶Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 482-83.

¹⁰⁷For a comparison highlighting similarities between Titus 3:3-7 and 2 Tim 1:9, as well as Titus 2:11-15, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 436-37.

that such a notion was virtually presupposed in Paul's teaching. There is no lengthy defense, only a brief statement spoken by Paul as an assumed given.

Beginning in Titus 3 Paul instructs Timothy on how those under his care should act toward others: submissive to rulers and gentle and peaceable toward everyone (3:1-2). He then offers as a reason for this the fact that they too were once like outsiders, being foolish, enslaved to passions, and hateful (3:3).¹⁰⁸ Then in 3:4 Paul shifts to how God's kindness intervened on their behalf: ὅτε δὲ ἡ χρηστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐπεφάνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ, "but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared."¹⁰⁹ This subordinate temporal clause modifies the main verbal phrase of the next verse, ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς, "he saved us." Verse 4 also begins a πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, "faithful saying" (see 3:8), of which there are five in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11).¹¹⁰ Many understand 3:4-7 to be comprised of traditional material, though there is debate on exactly where the traditional material begins and ends and what it means for interpretation.¹¹¹ Similar to what was found in 2 Timothy 1:8-10, the theological

¹⁰⁸The presence of γάρ indicates this (Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 335).

¹⁰⁹Alan Smithson, "Grace and the Character of God," *ExpTim* 115 (2003): 75, emphasizes the synonymous nature of the "kindness and generosity" of God here in 3:4 and his "grace" (χάρις) mentioned in 2:11. Stephen Charles Mott, "Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7," *NovT* 20 (1978): 22-48, highlights connections between Titus 2:10-14, 3:3-7, and Philonic thought in their respective descriptions of "ethical deliverance" by God.

¹¹⁰Virtually all scholars hold that verse 8 refers to the preceding rather than succeeding verses (see George W. Knight, III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles*, [Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1968], 81; Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 261), making it one of two "faithful sayings" that do so, along with 1 Tim 4:9. Further, most demarcate the saying as 3:4-7, though not all (e.g., Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 147, include 3:3 in the saying). For more on the saying, see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 347-50. On the sayings in general in the Pastoral Epistles, see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 99; idem, *Faithful Sayings*; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 48-49.

¹¹¹For various scholarly opinion on how the text should be divided, see Knight, *Faithful Sayings*, 81-86; Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 246-47, 260-61. See also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 440-41, who covers the overall issue well, preferring to see the text as a creed rather than hymn. Lincoln, "Summary of Paul's Gospel," 619, notes parallels between Titus 3:3-7 and Eph 2:8-10, suggesting a possible common tradition (on this connection see also Luz, "Rechtfertigung," 370). Whatever conclusion one reaches, it is evident that Paul has intentionally shaped the text. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 307,

statement of verses 3-7 appears to provide the ground for verses 1-2.¹¹²

For the present argument, however, what is important is what is said in verse 5 and how it relates to Pauline thought, especially the clause preceding the word ἔσωσεν. Before this verb is a long phrase of qualification: οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων τῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἃ ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος, “not by works that we had done in righteousness but according to his mercy.”¹¹³ The phrase is set before the main verb “in order to introduce as emphatically as possible the works/mercy contrast.”¹¹⁴ The construction ἐξ ἔργων appeared in Ephesians 2:9, and it is used elsewhere frequently by Paul, either with the genitive modifier νόμου (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10) or without (Rom 4:2; 9:12, 32; 11:6). In this instance, as in the Ephesians and 2 Timothy texts above, the more general idea of “works” is present, providing more evidence of a fundamental distinction between grace/mercy/faith and works in Pauline soteriology, of which his more polemical distinction between faith and “works of the law” was only a part.¹¹⁵ The works are further described as those “that are in righteousness” (ἐργων τῶν ἐν

writes, “It is clear that material from traditional schemata is being used, but we may ask whether the writer has so adapted it to his own purposes here that the task of identifying a traditional basis will be fruitless.” See also Läger, *Christologie*, 101-02; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 347-50.

¹¹²Lorenz Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, HTKNT 11/2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 3:166; Bassler, *1 Timothy*, 206; Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 2:649; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 446; Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 260.

¹¹³Some textual witnesses have the relative pronoun ὧν instead of ἃ (C², D², Ψ, 1881, ℳ), which would be an example of the pronoun being attracted to the case of its antecedent (in this case ἐργων).

¹¹⁴Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 313. Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 2:652, notes the emphatic position of αὐτοῦ set in contrast to the word ἡμεῖς, which “suggèrent l’autonomie de cette initiative gratuite.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 447, calls the phrase (with main verb included) the “heart of the creedal statement” of vv. 5-7. Contra Oberlinner, *Pastoralbriefe*, 3:170, who thinks it is “eine Explikation von V 4,” which seems doubtful.

¹¹⁵So J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I & II, Titus*, HNTC (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1960), 251; Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 12 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 219; Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 779; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 315, who argues that there is a “widening out of Pauline thinking in the direction of opposing moral effort generally as a means of salvation,” but also that “this emphasis is already present in Paul” (citing Rom 9:11 and Eph 2:9 as examples).

δικαιοσύνη), with the preposition ἐν likely indicating sphere, “assigning a quality or character to the action carried out.”¹¹⁶ It is probably best not to read too much into Paul’s use of δικαιοσύνη in this instance, as he appears to mean simply actions done in conformity with the requirements of God (whether legitimate or perceived).¹¹⁷ The prepositional phrase ἐξ ἔργων is contrasted through the conjunction ἀλλὰ with another prepositional phrase, κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος. While the word “mercy” is used as opposed to “grace” (though see v. 7), Paul often uses the word in a similar manner: “of God showing favour to people who do not deserve it” (see Rom 9:23; 11:31; 15:9 Eph 2:4).¹¹⁸

The verse continues, explaining that God’s salvation was διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου, “through the washing and renewal of the Holy Spirit,” a phrase that merits study in itself but is not the primary focal point here. As with the previous two texts, the point of interest is the fundamental distinction between working and grace at the core of salvation (σώζω in all three texts).¹¹⁹ Though “works” are contrasted with “mercy” and not “grace” specifically in Titus 3:5, the ideas are closely related for Paul, evidenced further in the appearance of χάρις and δικαιοῦ in 3:7, where Paul explains that the Holy Spirit, who provided regeneration and renewal (3:5), was poured out on them through Jesus Christ (3:6) in order that they might

¹¹⁶Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 779 n. 39; so also Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 314 n. 44. The syntax is slightly complicated here, but the article τῶν acts as a relative pronoun indicating that ἐν δικαιοσύνη further describes the “works” in question (cf. 2 Tim 3:16, which is a similar construction). The translation of Oberlinner, *Pastoralbriefe*, 3:171, demonstrates this: “nicht aus Werken, nämlich solchen in Gerechtigkeit, die wir getan haben.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 448, renders the phrase simply, “works of righteousness.”

¹¹⁷Cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 314; Knight, *Faithful Sayings*, 93.

¹¹⁸Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 314, who goes on to state that in “the present context it is equivalent to χάρις elsewhere.”

¹¹⁹As Christine Zimmermann, “Wiederentstehung und Erneuerung (Tit 3:5): Zu einem erhaltenswerten Aspekt der Soteriologie des Titusbriefts,” *NovT* 51 (2009): 276, writes, “Die Rettung ist unabhängig von menschlichen Werken und verdankt sich der Güte, Menschenliebe und dem Erbarmen Gottes (V 4-5).”

“become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (3:7b), “having been justified by his grace” (δικαιωθέντες τῆ ἐκείνου χάριτι) (3:7a).¹²⁰ Thus, the text provides a third example outside the undisputed letters of God’s salvation described in a manner that makes clear that the saving is “not by works” (οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων) that are “done” (ἐποιήσαμεν).¹²¹ These works are connected specifically to “righteousness” and contrasted starkly with “mercy,” which is also connected to “being justified” by God’s “grace.” As Jouette Bassler observes, “The author assumes (again in good Pauline fashion) that good works result from, and do not precede or evoke, God’s grace.”¹²²

This aligns well with the overall argument of the dissertation and keeps with the notion that at the heart of Paul’s doctrine of justification is righteousness as a gift that provides right standing with God, set over against human working. The fact that specifically Jewish works are not mentioned demonstrates that Paul’s arguments elsewhere, often directed at a Jewish ethnocentric legalism, are not limited to one particular cultural milieu, but stem from a larger anthropological argument about the general human tendency to relate to God according to works as opposed to grace and mercy. Marshall states it well: “If works are explicitly put in antithesis to faith in the *Hauptbriefe*, the later epistles emphasise the more fundamental implicit opposition between grace and works which is the ultimate basis of the antithesis between faith and works.”¹²³ Hence, the text provides more evidence that the idea of the individual’s need of grace and mercy as opposed to working for God’s favor is inherent in Paul’s teaching.

¹²⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 448, notes that the “contrasting use of the cognates δικαιοσύνη, ‘righteousness’ (v 5), and δικαιωθέντες, ‘justified’ (v 7), makes a powerful play on words.”

¹²¹“The essential point is that access to the benefits of God’s saving is an unmerited gift explicable only in terms of God’s mercy” (Wieland, *Significance of Salvation*, 224).

¹²²Bassler, *1 Timothy*, 208.

¹²³Marshall, “Salvation,” 358.

Conclusion

The burden of the present chapter has been to highlight and offer a reading of several texts that testify to the presence of an emphasis upon grace, mercy, and faith set over against works in Paul. Such an emphasis is expected in light of a framework that understands legalism to provide a backdrop to Paul's thought. However, "legalism" must not be understood too simplistically. The Jewish legalism in which Paul formerly participated and with which he then contended is only one manifestation of the larger tendency of human pride to strive for life apart from God, life which only comes through grace, received by faith. Passages such as these caution against allowing the more corporate approach to justification, with its emphasis upon the important ecclesiological element in Paul's thought and context, to *over-correct* by downplaying God's grace to the individual, which is a foundational element in Pauline thought.

CHAPTER 6

JUSTIFICATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN RELATION TO THE CORPORATE PEOPLE OF GOD

The central argument to this point has been that, contrary to the trajectory on justification since the emergence of the New Perspective, there is a highly individual, anthropological element present in Paul's view of justification. This argument rests on the assumption that legalism existed in, though did not fully define, first-century Judaism, an assumption which was argued as valid even in light of the work of E. P. Sanders and others on Judaism. Once the presence of legalism is granted, three key justification texts in Romans and Galatians become clearer, while at the same time becoming more difficult for a more strictly corporate approach to justification. Further, several other texts elsewhere in Paul have provided supplemental evidence.

However, even if one concedes the present argument, many other passages are left in need of explanation. Admittedly, my intention has not been to construct a full Pauline theology of law but to hone in and make a careful and specific argument through a handful of texts, with the hope being to slow down the increasing tendency to downplay the individual approach to justification in recent years. Thus, questions will likely be raised for which space does not allow a full answer. Still, it seems imprudent to leave the subject without examining a couple of passages that have been used to support the corporate view. It will be helpful to see how the argument put forth thus far relates to some texts that explicitly discuss the corporate people of God.

The intention of this dissertation has never been to refute or neglect valid observations of the New Perspective along these lines, only to highlight some problematic areas. Therefore, the present chapter seeks to demonstrate how a more

individual approach to justification integrates with some of the corporate elements found in Paul, specifically in two texts that align well with corporate concerns, Romans 3:27-30 and Ephesians 2:11-22.

Romans 3:27-30

Romans 3:27-30, and especially verses 29-30, present certain problems for the traditional understanding of justification.¹ George Howard flatly asserts that the traditional view of justification cannot explain the passage: “These verses all allude to the inclusion of the Gentiles; the modern understanding of justification by faith does not.”² Additionally, N. T. Wright claims that if faith is not understood along the more New Perspective lines of badge of the covenant member, then the verses are difficult to follow: “That those who insist on other meanings are not following [Paul’s] train of thought is demonstrated by the trouble they have with it.”³ To be sure, Paul’s argument in these verses is difficult to account for without allowing Jewish exclusivism into the discussion. However, the argument below will be that the idea of an ethnocentric legalism within Judaism continues to be able to explain such texts, keeping both the individual and corporate elements in justification in proper perspective.

Context

The present examination of Romans 3:27-30 will not be able to include a

¹A. Andrew Das, “Paul and Works of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4-5 as a ‘New Perspective’ Case Study,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 804, calls it “a centerpiece for the new perspective reading of Paul and the Law.” Cf. Anthony J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul’s Letter*, SNTSMS 81 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 74, who notes the tendency of the history of interpretation to focus on justification by faith to the neglect of the “significance of Paul’s affirmation of monotheism at the end of Romans 3.”

²George Howard, “Romans 3:21-31 and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” *HTR* 63 (1970): 232.

³N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 482.

detailed look at the preceding verses (3:21-26), which are unquestionably significant to Pauline theology, containing innumerable exegetical and theological issues.⁴ Nevertheless, the verses prior (3:19-20) and those following (3:27-30) are more important for the argument at hand and are of primary interest at this point. Below only a few observations will be made as they relate to the subsequent verses and the larger argument.

After stating in 3:20 that “no flesh will be justified” before God by works of the law, Paul moves on in 3:21 to declare that now the righteousness of God has been made known (πεφανερωται), a righteousness that, though not received through the law (χωρις νόμου), is nevertheless witnessed to by the law and prophets (μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν). Verse 22 further clarifies this righteousness as “through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας).

The last phrase of verse 22 is especially important for our purposes as it points forward to what Paul will say in verses 27-30. Taking his cue from the word πάντας just mentioned, he states, οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή, “for there is no distinction.” The righteousness of which he speaks is for *all* who believe—there is no distinction between human beings insofar as they all are in need. Hence, the unification of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, through a mutual need for righteousness, is never far from Paul’s mind.

The emphasis upon “all” continues in verse 23, where Paul states, πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, “for all have sinned and lack the glory of God.” In the previous verse, the γάρ explained how the righteousness of God came to “all [πάντας] who believe,” namely, because “there is no distinction.” The γάρ in verse 23, then, explains that there is “no distinction” because “all [πάντες] have sinned.” Thus, it

⁴As a starting point the reader is referred to Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 218-43; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 178-99; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word, 1988), 161-83.

may be noted that corporate elements are present even before 3:27-30, and, at the same time, these elements are related to a shared participation in sin and need for righteousness and reconciliation to God. Individual sin unites humanity in its need for righteousness.

Verses 24 demonstrates the nature of justification as a gift, freely given (δικαιοούμενοι δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι), pointing forward to 3:27-30, which rules out boasting—boasting is excluded when something is received as a gift. Verses 25-26 have generated much discussion, but the central idea, following Schreiner, is how God can “mercifully save people without compromising his justice.”⁵

Verses 27

Thus, after Paul’s summary explanation in verses 21-26 of the manifestation of the righteousness of God in Christ that brought justification for all, he continues in dialogue style with “the objective of puncturing Jewish presumption.”⁶ He asks the question, Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις, “Where, then, is boasting?” The question is connected to the previous section (vv. 21-26) through the word οὖν.⁷ Some have understood Paul to be resuming an argument about boasting that began in 2:17 (also 2:23), where the related verb καυχάομαι is used.⁸ No doubt there are connections to the boasting mentioned

⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 198.

⁶Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 184. Paul’s exchange here is often described as dialogical or diatribal. See Stanley Kent Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, SBLDS 57 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981), 155-74; Nils Alstrup Dahl, “The One God of Jews and Gentiles,” in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 188; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 294; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 102; Moo, *Romans*, 246.

⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 200. F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), 1:275, connects the οὖν to 3:23-26 while C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:218, believes the question stems either from 3:21-26 or the whole of 1:18-3:26.

⁸E.g., Richard W. Thompson, “Paul’s Double Critique of Jewish Boasting: A Study of Rom 3,27 in Its Context,” *Bib* 67 (1986): 521; Halvor Moxnes, “Honour and Righteousness in Romans,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 71; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 362; Brendan

earlier, as well as to the whole argument from 1:18 forward, but it is also true that Paul’s focus has shifted throughout the course of the first three chapters, and the immediate argument has its most direct connection to what has most recently preceded.⁹

Specifically, Paul is drawing an inference from the twin ideas of justification for “all” with “no distinction” (v. 22) and as a gift of God’s grace (v. 24: δωρεάν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι).¹⁰ The word for “boasting” is καύχησις, which Paul uses frequently (Rom 15:17; 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 1:12; 7:4, 14; 8:24; 11:10, 17; 1 Thess 2:19), along with καύχημα (Rom 4:2; 1 Cor 5:6; 9:15, 16; 2 Cor 1:14; 5:12; 9:3; Gal 6:4; Phil 1:26; 2:16).¹¹ Paul’s answer to this initial question is ἐξεκλείσθη, “it is excluded.”¹²

Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 136; Jewett, *Romans*, 295; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 185; Wright, *Romans*, 480.

⁹E. H. Gifford, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (London: John Murray, 1886; reprint, Minneapolis: James Family, 1977), 94, states it well that Paul is “looking back on his whole previous argument from i. 18, and more especially on the representation in iii. 21-26, of ‘the righteousness of God by faith.’” It should also be noted that Rom 3:27-30 points forward as well, highlighting the themes of Rom 4. So also Dahl, “One God,” 178; Joshua W. Jipp, “Rereading the Story of Abraham, Isaac, and ‘Us’ in Romans 4,” *JSNT* 32 (2009): 217-42; Moo, *Romans*, 243-45, who notes that Paul’s emphasis in both texts is on the preeminence of grace in salvation, ensuring “that Gentiles have equal access with Jews to the one God.”

¹⁰Contra Käsemann, *Romans*, 102, who does not think 3:27-31 draws an inference. Based on the presence of the inferential particle οὖν, Thompson, “Paul’s Double Critique,” 521, rightly asks, “But isn’t this precisely what it does do?”

¹¹Moo, *Romans*, 246 n. 8, notes that while the formation of the words would cause the reader to expect the former to “connote the act of boasting”—as is the case here in Rom 3:27 (also see Käsemann, *Romans*, 102; Godet, *Romans*, 1:275)—and the latter “the cause of boasting,” this is not always the case in Paul. See also Rudolf Bultmann, “καυχᾶμαι, καύχημα, καύχησις,” *TDNT*, 3:648 n. 35. For a more general treatment of the theme of boasting in Paul, see C. K. Barrett, “Boasting (καυχᾶσθαι, κτλ.) in the Pauline Epistles,” in *L’Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style et conception du ministère*, ed. A. Vanhoye, BETL 73 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 363-68.

¹²The verb ἐκκλείω means “to make no room for, exclude, shut out” (BDAG, s.v. “ἐκκλείω”; also Louw & Nida, §13.143) (found elsewhere in the NT only in Gal 4:17). Jewett, *Romans*, 296, notes that it “can mean literally to have the ‘door shut in one’s face’”; cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 362: “locked out.” The verb is an aorist passive with the implied subject being God or possibly “divine intention” (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 185; so also Akio Ito, “NOMOS [ΤΩΝ] ἘΠΤΩΝ and NOMOS ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ: The Pauline Rhetoric and Theology of NOMOS,” *NovT* 45 [2003]: 247; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 2nd ed., EKKNT 6 [Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987], 244; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:219; Schreiner, *Romans*, 200).

The reason for Paul’s exclusion of boasting is debated. While the traditional view largely understood boasting in this case to be related to self-righteousness, with the rise of the New Perspective the tendency has been to see it as referring to Jewish exclusivism.¹³ For example, Richard W. Thompson writes, “[Boasting] refers to the Jews’ confidence in a privileged status with God based on their possession of the law.”¹⁴ However, as the present argument has maintained, this is likely a false dichotomy. These two issues are interwoven in Paul’s mind and throughout the relevant texts. Exclusivism is present, indeed, but the exclusivism is rooted in a subtle form of self-righteousness that comes from performing Jewish works.¹⁵

Paul goes on with two questions and answers in his dialogical style: *διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως*, “Through what kind of law? Of works? Not at all, but through a law of faith.” The use of *νόμος* in this instance is somewhat unique and much-discussed in the literature. The question is whether it should be taken literally (“Mosaic law”) or non-literally (“principle,” “norm”) in either or both occurrences, though largely with relevance to the latter, “law of faith,” since even the non-literal view of “law of works” cannot avoid some connection to the Mosaic law, if

¹³For example, on the former, see Käsemann, *Romans*, 102, who writes that the “law in fact throws a person back upon himself and therefore into the existing world of anxiety about oneself, self-confidence, and unceasing self-assurance” but faith “puts an end to boasting”; Bultmann, “*καυχάομαι*,” 3:648-49: “For Paul *καυχᾶσθαι* discloses the basic attitude of the Jew to be one of self-confidence which seeks glory before God and which relies upon itself” (see also idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951], 1:242). On the latter, see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 185, who argues that “Paul attacks the self-confidence of the Jew as Jew, the boasting in God as Israel’s God, the pride in the law as indicating God’s commitment to his people and as marking them off from the other nations.” So also Moxnes, “Honour and Righteousness,” 71.

¹⁴Thompson, “Paul’s Double Critique,” 522. Thompson appears correct that there is a double critique of both failure to keep the law (while presuming to do so) and overconfidence in privileged covenant status, but I disagree with Thompson’s notion that Paul excludes boasting only on the basis of a “new revelation” of faith.

¹⁵While Jan Lambrecht, “Why is Boasting Excluded? A Note on Rom 3,27 and 4,2,” *ETL* 61 (1985): 368, believes that boasting is excluded only through a new “dispensation in which faith is the central principle,” the exclusion of boasting should not be limited to the post-Christ era.

only indirectly.¹⁶ While the non-literal view of the “law of faith” has been the traditional consensus, in the mid-twentieth century this began to change within German scholarship, where some scholars took the phrase as a reference to the Mosaic law.¹⁷ An early proponent was Gerhard Friedrich, who argues, “Das Gesetz des Glaubens Röm. 3, 27f. ist das Gesetz, das die Glaubensgerechtigkeit bezeugt Röm. 3, 21.”¹⁸ While interpreters differ on the precise meaning, the central idea is that boasting is excluded when the Mosaic law is pursued by faith, not works. Klyne Snodgrass summarizes: “Boasting has been excluded when the law is placed in its proper sphere: faith.”¹⁹ Similarly, C. E. B. Cranfield argues that boasting is excluded “by God’s law, not misunderstood as a law which directs men to seek justification as a reward for their works, but properly understood as summoning men to faith.”²⁰

Others, however, including the present work, continue to believe Paul is using

¹⁶See Heikki Räisänen, “The ‘Law’ of Faith and the Spirit,” in *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays*, trans. David E. Orton, JSNTSup 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 50 n. 2.

¹⁷For a helpful history of interpretation of the phrase see, Räisänen, “‘Law’ of Faith,” 48-54.

¹⁸Gerhard Friedrich, “Das Gesetz des Glaubens Röm. 3,27,” *TZ* 10 (1954): 415. Others who hold that νόμου πίστewς refers in some way to the Mosaic law or Torah include: Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiry into the Relation of Law, Wisdom, and Ethics*, WUNT 2/16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 285-88; Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul*, NovTSup 62 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 27; C. Thomas Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law*, SBLDS 55 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 70; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11*, JSNTSup 57 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 209; Klyne Snodgrass, “Spheres of Influence: A Possible Solution to the Problem of Paul and the Law,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 101; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1991), 79; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 186; Wright, *Romans*, 480.

¹⁹Snodgrass, “Spheres of Influence,” 101.

²⁰Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:220. Ito, “NOMOS,” 256, argues that the “law of works” refers to “the part of the Torah which reveals the Jewish failure to live up to the standard demanded of them in the Torah” while the “law of faith” refers to the “part of the Torah that presents Abraham’s faith.” Wright, *Romans*, 480, understands “Torah of works” as “that which defines Israel over against the nations, witnessed by the performance of the works that Torah prescribes” and “Torah of faith” as the “indication of where the true, renewed people of God are to be found.”

the word metaphorically, along the lines of “rule,” “norm,” or “principle.”²¹ While Paul no doubt believed the Mosaic law should be pursued in faith, in this argument his clear intention is to contrast justification by faith with that by works of the law (v. 28). Hence, it seems unlikely that he refers to a faith-oriented view of the law at this point, as this could confuse the argument he is trying to make.²² Räisänen states it well: “In other contexts Paul of course does speak of the Torah much more positively. This happens quite suddenly already in 3.31. But the position taken in 3.27 is not such a positive one.”²³ Thus, the metaphorical understanding fits the argument well and appears to cohere with other uses in Romans (cf. Rom 7:21, 23-25; 8:2). However, since the Mosaic law was no doubt close to Paul’s mind when νόμος was employed, it is possible that he engages in a kind of word-play.²⁴

Also of note in verse 27 is that Paul does not use “works of the law” as he did in 3:19, but simply τῶν ἔργων, “of works.” To be sure, the law is still in view, as the next

²¹E.g., Thompson, “Paul’s Double Critique,” 520 n. 1; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 363; Byrne, *Romans*, 138-39; Moo, *Romans*, 249-50; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 95. Schreiner, in *Romans*, 202, leans toward a literal understanding but more recently has changed to the non-literal view (see idem, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions Series [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010], 22). Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 251 n. 64, understands the “law of works” as the Torah, but the “law of faith” as referring to v. 28, while Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 183, sees the latter as the “new covenant in Christ’s blood.”

²²So also Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (Pustet: Regensburg, 1963), 1:176. For detailed argumentation against the literal view, see Räisänen, “Law of Faith.” Moo, *Romans*, 248 n. 16, notes that an appeal to the qualitative nature of ποῖος, “what kind of?”—possibly indicating two qualities of the same law, that of works or faith—is not decisive. The word is often used in the NT without qualitative meaning, as simply “what?” (BDAG, s.v. “ποῖος,” lists both as possibilities). Even if the qualitative element remains, however, it does not necessarily end the discussion. If νόμος means “principle,” the question “what kind of?” could still be used rhetorically to refer to two different principles and does not necessarily imply two qualities of the same principle.

²³Räisänen, “Law of Faith,” 63.

²⁴So also Moo, *Romans*, 249-50; Käsemann, *Romans*, 102-03. For a thorough defense of this view, see Heikki Räisänen, “Paul’s Word-Play on νόμος: A Linguistic Study,” in *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays*, trans. David E. Orton, JSNTSup 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 69-94.

verse demonstrates, so that Jan Lambrecht is not unjustified in arguing that “works are no doubt works of law . . . i.e. the observance of the Torah.”²⁵ However, the manner in which Paul at times omits νόμου when discussing works likely also indicates that the underlying principle of Paul’s contrast between law and faith for justification is “working” (a point made earlier in chap. 4 with regard to Romans 4:1-8 and “works” in the case of Abraham and the psalm of David,²⁶ as well as chap. 5).

This is especially probable if one allows for the possibility that Paul is responding to a form of legalism. In this case, then, the idea of “working for God” is the fundamental soteriological problem Paul is addressing, even though its outward form in Paul’s polemical context was the Mosaic law, thus connecting the issue closely with Jewish exclusivism and ecclesiology. Hence, the fact that Paul at times speaks only of “works” is indicative of the underlying issue, in which case the traditional distinction between believing and working in Paul should not be discarded.²⁷

Verse 28

Verse 28, through the conjunction γάρ, provides the ground for the fact that boasting is excluded διὰ νόμου πίστεως, “through the law of faith.”²⁸ It is because “we

²⁵Lambrecht, “Boasting,” 368.

²⁶On this point Lambrecht appears to agree, stating that in Rom 4:1-5 “the horizon is broader, regarding both works and boasting” (ibid., 369).

²⁷Contra N. T. Wright, “The Messiah and the People of God” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1980), 97, quoted in Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 186, who writes that “Paul’s critique of ‘works’ . . . functions within his critique of ‘national righteousness.’” My point is the opposite: his critique of national righteousness functions within his critique of works.

²⁸So also Richard W. Thompson, “The Inclusion of the Gentiles in Rom 3,27-30,” *Bib 69* (1988): 543-44. Some manuscripts, including B, C, D², 33, and ℳ, have οὖν instead of γάρ, which makes v. 28 an inference drawn from v. 27 rather than its ground (thus AV: “Therefore we conclude”). The evidence is slightly inferior to that supporting γάρ: ⚭, A, D*, F, G, Ψ, 81, 630, 1506, 1739, 1881, among others, including versional evidence (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002], 450). Its inclusion may have been due to the presence of οὖν in 3:27, 31 (Schreiner, *Romans*, 208), a tendency to understand λογίζομεθα as a conclusion (Dunn,

reckon a man justified by faith apart from works of the law” (λογιζόμεθα γὰρ δικαιοῦσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου).²⁹ The use of the first-person plural λογιζόμεθα could be a stylistic decision that refers only to Paul—an “author’s plural.”³⁰ However, it may be that, as with the use of οἶδα in Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20 (see chapter 3 of the present work), Paul appeals to the common knowledge of all believers, especially Jewish believers in the present context.³¹ The meaning of λογίζομαι in this instance indicates a conviction held, hence “we hold” (RSV, ESV) or “we maintain” (NAS, NIV).³² The statement comes very close to Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20, examined above.³³

As already mentioned, Howard asserts that these verses are problematic for a traditional view of justification that holds that Paul’s polemic was against a more general notion of works. He writes, “It is for this reason that verse 28 so often does not appear to relate to verse 27 before it or verses 29 and 30 after it. These verses all allude to the inclusion of the Gentiles; the modern understanding of justification by faith does not.”³⁴

Romans 1-8, 184; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 450), or possibly a combination of the two. Moreover, Paul’s argument seems to favor v. 28 as the foundational ground of v. 27 in light of its similar wording to that of Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20, which are also foundational statements of Paul’s view of justification.

²⁹Martin Luther famously added the word “alone” to his translation of Romans (see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 360).

³⁰Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:220, who does not opt for this view. So Schreiner, *Romans*, 203, who believes it is an “apostolic plural referring only to Paul.”

³¹So Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 187, who states that this is “the same appeal as the εἰδότες of Gal 2:16.” Also see Byrne, *Romans*, 139: “The more prolix parallel in Gal 2:16 suggests that Paul is here formulating (in a kind of footnote) what he believes to be a standard expression of the Jewish-Christian experience of conversion.” Similarly, Thompson, “Inclusion of the Gentiles,” 544; Jewett, *Romans*, 298; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:220; Moo, *Romans*, 250; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 1988), 187.

³²See BDAG, s.v. “λογίζομαι” 3; also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 363; Käsemann, *Romans*, 103 (“pass judgment in dispute”); Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:220.

³³For more on the similarities, see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 187.

³⁴Howard, “Romans 3:21-31,” 232.

But while Howard's point is well-taken with regard to verses 29-30, upon which comment will be made below, verse 28 flows quite naturally upon the more traditional understanding that boasting is excluded because the principle of faith is the operative mechanism for justification and not that of works, as verse 27 states. Boasting is excluded by the principle of faith (v. 27), because a person "is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (v. 28). Paul is clearly taking aim at exclusivism, but he is not taking aim *merely* at exclusivism.

Richard Thompson also argues for seeing inclusion of the Gentiles as the sole focus of the passage, stating that the use of *γάρ* as a ground and *λογιζόμεθα* as an indication of shared understanding indicates that "justification by faith is not the *conclusion* to which Paul wishes to lead his readers at this moment; rather it is now the *premise* on which he bases his conclusion that boasting is excluded."³⁵ Along similar lines, though stated more broadly, Richard Hays writes that "Paul treats the doctrine of justification by faith as an agreed-upon premise *from* which he can construct his position about the relation between Jews and Gentiles and the role of the Law in the life of the Christian community."³⁶ That such an idea for Paul is an assumed premise used to combat Jewish exclusivism is a correct observation, in my view. This explains Paul's similar language in Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20, both based on a psalm that would have been known to Jews.

However, it does not necessarily follow from this that Paul is combating *only* exclusivism in this passage and elsewhere. He is also combating self-righteousness by way of reminder of a principle that should have already been understood from Scripture.

³⁵Thompson, "Inclusion of the Gentiles," 544.

³⁶Richard B. Hays, "Have We Found Abraham to be Our Forefather According to the Flesh? A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1," *NovT* 27 (1985): 85 n. 31.

In other words, that Paul appeals to a common understanding does not mean that the Jews he is addressing were living in accordance with what they said they believed. In this case, their ethnocentrism served to reveal that they were in fact relying on works for salvation, even though their shared confession was better than this. Paul's argument to the Galatians in Galatians 3:1-4 seems to imply this very mentality of knowing something by way of memory and confession but not living accordingly. If this is at all the same of the Jews to whom Paul is speaking in Romans 3:28, then he is likely simultaneously arguing against ethnocentrism *and* self-righteousness.

Verse 29

Moving into verse 29, Paul expounds on his statement in verse 28, writing, ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν, "Or [is he] the God of the Jews only? Is he not [the God] of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also."³⁷ The question is a response to the idea in the previous verse that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.³⁸ It implies that if God is the God of the Gentiles, the previous statement in verse 28 is validated.³⁹ Thus, yes, God is the God of Gentiles, too: hence an individual is justified by faith, not works of the law.⁴⁰ The reason Paul appeals to this argument needs further

³⁷The Greek is highly abbreviated and thus the addition in brackets in the translation above (on this, see also Jan Lambrecht, "Paul's Logic in Romans 3:29-30," *JBL* 119 [2000]: 526). Also note that the use of οὐχὶ implies an affirmative answer (BDF §427 [2]).

³⁸So Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:221. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 188, posits that Paul's "rapid-fire style suggests a line of argument finely tuned as a result of many exposures in debate."

³⁹Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:221, states it conversely: "The question ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; indicates what would necessarily follow, if what is stated in v. 28 were not true. If that were not true, then God would not be the God of all men in the sense that He desires and seeks the salvation of all with equal seriousness." See also Godet, *Romans*, 1:277-78; Moo, *Romans*, 251; Jewett, *Romans*, 299; Byrne, *Romans*, 139.

⁴⁰Dahl, "One God," 189, highlights the fact that Jews would agree with the idea that God was God of the Gentiles, though see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 188, on the tension that nevertheless existed in Jewish literature between particularism and universalism (of course, such a tension exists in the OT as well, with the reality of God's sovereignty over the nations and his promise to bless them through Abraham coexisting

explanation, but suffice it to say at this point that, as recent interpreters have pointed out, Paul’s argumentation demonstrates that works of the law do indeed separate Jews from Gentiles, and this is part of the issue.⁴¹ Before saying more, however, Paul’s thought continues into verse 30.

Verse 30

Verse 30 picks up from the end of verse 29 (“Yes [he is the God] of Gentiles also”) with the phrase εἴπερ εἶς ὁ θεός, “if indeed God is one.” The word εἴπερ, “if indeed,” is probably used to provide the ground for how God is God “of Gentiles also”: namely, because “he is one.”⁴² Some believe it is better to see this as a kind of condition because εἴπερ is weaker as a grounding conjunction than the variant ἐπείπερ, which is found in some textual witnesses.⁴³ For example, Robert Jewett argues that it is best to see the end of verse 29 as the apodosis and verse 30a as the protasis.⁴⁴ There is likely something to this, but it should also be noted that the use of εἴπερ as opposed to εἰ

with his special covenant relationship with Israel). Dahl says it well when he states that “justification by faith, without any distinction between Jew and Greek, is in full harmony with the universal monotheism which the Jew also professes, but the radical consequence of which he fails to draw” (Dahl, “One God,” 190).

⁴¹Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 193, is correct on this point that “‘works of the law’ signify that attitude which affirms that in effect God is only God of the Jews.” Cf. also Schreiner, *Romans*, 206: “Those who see a polemic against Jewish exclusivism are correct that such a theme is present in these verses.”

⁴²Morris, *Romans*, 188, writes that it gives “logical ground” for God being God to Gentiles.

⁴³NA²⁷ lists Ⲙ², D*, F, G, (K), Ψ, 33, 1881, 20, Ir^{lat}, and Eus. Stowers, *Diatribes*, 165-66, understands καὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν in v. 29 as the statement of an interlocutor and v. 30 as Paul’s response, which Stowers renders, “If he really is [God of the Gentiles, then] he is the one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 720-21, also takes it as a condition but makes a division between the last two phrases of v. 30: “If God is one, or unified – the God, that is, who will deliver the circumcised ‘through fidelity’ – then it follows in a certain sense that he will also deliver the uncircumcised ‘through that fidelity.’” It seems like a strain, however, to make (δικαιώσει) ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως the apodosis when it appears so clearly in parallel with περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως as the second object of δικαιώσει.

⁴⁴Jewett, *Romans*, 299-300.

strengthens the condition so that the rendering is “if indeed,” which is not far from “seeing that” or “since” and could carry grounding connotations.⁴⁵ Thus, the causal idea is not entirely unwarranted, with the ground being that “God is one,” a commonly accepted Jewish idea based on the Shema (Deut 6:4), which most interpreters recognize as the basis of Paul’s appeal here.⁴⁶ This also has the advantage of explaining the variant readings, which evidently understood a causal element to be present.⁴⁷

Hence, the appeal to the oneness of God demonstrates that salvation history is indeed part of Paul’s argument—Jewish exclusivity implicitly denied God’s universal sovereignty of all humankind. As Dunn writes, “Here in effect Paul does go behind Israel’s salvation-history claim to have been specially chosen by God. God’s Lordship as Creator is even more fundamental, and belongs to salvation history no less than his election of Israel.”⁴⁸ Similarly, Charles Giblin argues that the “law of faith” of verse 27 “is invoked not only to exclude man’s boasting, but at the same time to show that the ultimate issue at stake is God’s oneness over all, shown in a justice that transcends divisive differences.”⁴⁹

After providing this ground, Paul further describes $\delta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ with a relative clause: $\delta\varsigma\ \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \pi\epsilon\rho\iota\tau\omicron\mu\eta\gamma\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\kappa\rho\omicron\beta\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\ \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma$, “who will justify the

⁴⁵Cf. BDF §454 (2).

⁴⁶E.g., Charles H. Giblin, “Three Monotheistic Texts in Paul,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 544; Käsemann, *Romans*, 104; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:222; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 365; Wright, *Romans*, 482; Jewett, *Romans*, 300 (who rightly criticizes Stowers’ rendering [see n. 43 above] for missing the fact that v. 30 has the “force of a theological premise that supports the claim that God belongs to the Gentiles in v. 29”). Contra Guerra, *Apologetic Tradition*, 76, who believes it stems from Hellenistic Jewish apologetic theology.

⁴⁷Several commentators note that the variant reflects a stylistic decision (e.g., Jewett, *Romans*, 294; Schreiner, *Romans*, 208; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:222 n. 2).

⁴⁸Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 189.

⁴⁹Giblin, “Three Monotheistic Texts,” 544.

circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith.”⁵⁰ The use of the future *δικαιώσει* is either logical (gnomic) or it refers to final judgment.⁵¹ Both are possible, and while the former is slightly more favorable since Paul seems to be making a gnomic statement describing God, the meaning is unaffected since justification is both present and future—“the future declaration seals the present reality.”⁵² Interestingly, Paul uses the abstract nouns *περιτομὴν* (“circumcision”) and *ἀκροβυστίαν* (“uncircumcision”) to “denote the communities of the circumcised and uncircumcised respectively.”⁵³

Some have suggested that the switch in prepositions from *ἐκ πίστεως* to *διὰ τῆς πίστεως* is significant. While the idea extends back as far as Origen, more recently Stanley Stowers has argued that Paul uses *ἐκ* when referencing Jews and *διὰ* when referencing Gentiles.⁵⁴ However, such a distinction seems unlikely in the context, where Paul is highlighting the same means of justification for both groups.⁵⁵ Furthermore, part of the presuppositional framework of Stowers is that “there is no text where Paul could unambiguously be said to indicate that Israel needs or has received the same kind of

⁵⁰Moo, *Romans*, 252 n. 34, notes that the article in the second phrase is anaphoric, referring to the anarthrous *πίστεως* in the first phrase. So also NIV: “that same faith”; Lambrecht, “Paul’s Logic,” 526; Howard, “Romans 3:21-31,” 233; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 96.

⁵¹For the former, see Kuss, *Römerbrief*, 1:178; Käsemann, *Romans*, 104; Moo, *Romans*, 252; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:222; Giblin, “Three Monotheistic Texts,” 545. For the latter, see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 189; Schreiner, *Romans*, 206. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 365, favors taking it as gnomic but does not completely rule out understanding it eschatologically, while Lambrecht, “Paul’s Logic,” 526, does precisely the opposite.

⁵²Schreiner, *Romans*, 206.

⁵³Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:222. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 206; Byrne, *Romans*, 140.

⁵⁴Stanley K. Stowers, “ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ and ΔΙΑ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ in Romans 3:30,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 665-74. On the varying opinions on the prepositional alteration, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:222; Moo, *Romans*, 252 n. 35.

⁵⁵Byrne, *Romans*, 140, followed by Schreiner, *Romans*, 206. For a thorough critique of Stowers’ argument, see Douglas A. Campbell, “The Meaning of ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ and ΝΟΜΟΣ in Paul: A Linguistic and Structural Perspective,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 93 n. 9.

atonement through Christ as the Gentile nations.”⁵⁶ Such an assumption misses two elements in the passage: (1) Paul understands justification to be more fundamental than any cultural distinctions, even those of the nation of Israel, demonstrating that all humanity stands before God in need of atonement, an idea that he understood from the Hebrew Scriptures themselves (e.g., Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; Rom 4:6-8), though it was not fully manifested until the coming of Christ, (2) Paul is addressing those in Israel who were involved in a form of legalism that implicitly denied point #1. Thus, Paul does not envision differing ideas of atonement for the two groups, which would be evidenced by the different prepositions. Rather, the alteration between the two is likely stylistic,⁵⁷ though, as argued previously with regard to ἐκ πιστεώς (see chap. 3, p. 81), my inclination is that Paul is using wording from Habakkuk 2:4. In this case it may be that διὰ, meaning “through” or “by means of,” indirectly serves to explain the use of ἐκ.

Thus, to restate, Paul uses the fact that God is one to ground the principle of justification by faith apart from works of the law.⁵⁸ Moo sums up the burden of verse 27-28 well:

In the OT, while the law was not the means of salvation, it did function to ‘mark out’ the people of God; and in Judaism, it became an impenetrable barrier. But for Paul monotheism, as he has come to see it in Christ, means that there can be no such barrier; all must have equal access to God, and this can be guaranteed only if faith,

⁵⁶Stowers, “ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ,” 670.

⁵⁷So most commentators, including Käsemann, *Romans*, 104; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:222; Barrett, *Romans*, 80. Lambrecht, “Paul’s Logic,” 526, is somewhat noncommittal but notes that most see it as stylistic. Wright, *Romans*, 483, however, allows for a distinction in meaning.

⁵⁸Thompson, “Inclusion of the Gentiles,” 546, argues that the relative pronoun is merely descriptive and God’s oneness does not ground justification by faith—the phrase should be understood thus: “the God who justifies on the basis of faith is one (and because he is one, he is God of the Gentiles).” Thompson wants to see justification by faith as a new revelation, and grounding it in the Jewish doctrine of the oneness of God does not allow for this. Again, however, justification by faith is not completely new. That was part of the problem and explains the legitimacy of Paul’s appeals to the OT to support justification by faith.

not works in obedience to the Jewish law, is made the 'entrance requirement.'⁵⁹ This idea is significant and demonstrates that ecclesiology is indeed tightly bound with soteriology for Paul.

Implications

In the preceding context (Rom 3:21-26) of our current text, Paul explained how God justifies sinners in Jesus Christ apart from the law through faith. The verses demonstrated that justification is both a gift of grace and a gift for *all*, with “no distinction.” The themes of soteriology and ecclesiology were already evident. However, it is in 3:27-30 that these themes emerge even more as an interwoven unity.

Paul's statements upon justification being a gift necessarily mean that there is no room for boasting, as 3:27-28 demonstrates. Faith receives grace completely as a gift, which leaves no room for pride. Boasting is explicitly connected here with “works” and “works of the law.” The present contention has been that Paul is still attacking legalism and self-righteousness, but as one moves into 3:29, the specific form of the legalism that was most present to Paul becomes clearer. It is a legalism that in Paul's context manifested itself in a Jewish separation from Gentiles. To see how the ideas of legalism and ethnocentrism are bound together is to understand, as previously argued, that the Jewish ethnocentrism that was happening *was* a form of legalism. Paul was attacking a reliance upon Jewish works for salvation, even if grace was acknowledged in theory. This reliance necessarily led to an exclusion of Gentiles and a forcing of circumcision upon them in order to receive salvation in Jesus Christ.

This line of thinking explains Paul's ability to move seamlessly from discussing grace and faith versus works to a discussion of the oneness of God. If Paul

⁵⁹Moo, *Romans*, 252. See also Erich Grässer, “‘Ein einziger ist Gott’ (Röm 3,30),” in *Der Alte Bund im Neuen: Exegetische Studien zur Israelfrage im Neuen Testament*, WUNT 35 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 256-57.

were simply addressing Jews as moral legalists with no regard to how their works separated them from Gentiles—as the “universal *homo religiosus*”⁶⁰—then the discussion here and elsewhere of the relation of the Gentiles to the people of God would be superfluous. But, as the New Perspective has rightly pointed out, there is more context to Paul’s argument than this. Within it there is a distinct exhortation to Jews to understand that Gentiles can be saved apart from Jewish works. At the same time, the issue runs deeper, as these Jewish works still afforded a sense of self-righteousness to many, including Paul before his conversion. Thus, the situation could be described as a surface issue influenced by a more deep-seated issue. The surface issue was exclusion of the Gentiles and rejection of the new moment in salvation history. However, the issue underneath from which the surface issue sprang was undue reliance upon works. Both issues are at work and tightly interconnected in Paul’s argument.

Ephesians 2:14-18

The next passage to examine is Ephesians 2:14-18, as it sits within the broader context of Ephesians 2:11-22, which, as much as any other text, underscores the burden of the more corporate approach to justification.⁶¹ As will be shown below, the text demonstrates that a significant function of the law as an instrument of the present age and its ruler (see Eph 2:2) was to separate humankind, specifically the Jews, who held the “covenants of promise,” from the rest of the world. This was not, of course, the revealed intent of the law in the OT, where its original function is said to be that of showing forth God’s wisdom to the nations (Deut 4:6) and making Israel a kingdom of priests in the midst of the world. However, the presence of sin did allow for this, making human

⁶⁰See Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 154.

⁶¹For example, N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 168, writes that while Eph 2:1-10 represents the “old perspective,” Eph 2:11-22 is “the new perspective: Jews and Gentiles coming together in Christ.”

separation the reality. Thus, the law became not only a means of justification before God, but also a dividing wall of hostility. The text shows that these two ideas are interrelated.

Commentators often divide Ephesians 2:11-22 into verses 11-13, 14-18, and 19-22.⁶² While all of Ephesians 2:11-22 is instructive, for our immediate purposes verses 14-16 are most relevant, which will be examined in detail, with brief comment on 17-18.

Preceding Context (Verses 11-13)

In Ephesians 2:11-13, Paul urges Gentiles to “remember” (μνημονεύετε) that formerly they were alienated from God’s covenant with and actions toward Israel. They are called the “uncircumcision” (ἀκροβυστία) by those called the “circumcision” (ὕπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς), which is “made in the flesh by hands” (ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου). Already one should note the emphasis on circumcision—a physical indicator of one’s Jewishness that necessarily excluded Gentiles—indicating the prominence of the ethnic dimension of the present argument. As Frank Thielman observes, “The note of ethnic tension Paul sounds here prepared for the divine solution to this tension in the next section (vv. 14-15).”⁶³ Moving into verse 12, Paul reminds readers that Gentiles were “strangers to the covenants of promise” (ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), “not having hope and without God in the world” (ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) (3:12).⁶⁴

⁶²E.g., Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 151-86; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 1999); 185-221; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 351; Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 32-39.

⁶³Thielman, *Ephesians*, 151. He writes that the word ἀκροβυστία, “uncircumcision,” literally means “foreskin” (cf. Gen 17:11 LXX: καὶ περιτμηθήσεσθε τὴν σάρκα τῆς ἀκροβυστίας ὑμῶν, “and be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin”) and observes further that the “term λεγόμενοι (*legomenoi*, called) hints that ἀκροβυστία was used derisively and emphasizes the tension that existed between Jews and Gentiles over precisely this physical distinction between them” (ibid., 153; see also 159-60 for more on circumcision as a Jewish distinctive).

⁶⁴Paul actually lists five disadvantages: “without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

But now (νυνὶ δὲ) they have been “brought near by the blood of Christ” (ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ) (3:13).⁶⁵

Verses 14-18

In verses 14-18, for a number of reasons, including the shift in focus to Christ, the presence of several *hapax legomena*, and difficult syntax, various explanations have been given for the literary structure.⁶⁶ Heinrich Schlier understood the verses as a Christian reinterpretation of a Gnostic redeemer myth, where the redeemer destroys the barrier between God and the redeemed.⁶⁷ While the idea of the incorporation of Gnostic elements has been criticized,⁶⁸ many still see traditional or hymnic elements in the passage, though with variation in the details.⁶⁹ Other explanations are offered, however.

⁶⁵See Thielman, *Ephesians*, 158, on the distinctiveness of the phrase νυνὶ δὲ in Paul.

⁶⁶For good treatments of the relevant issues that include histories of the discussion, see Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, SNTSMS 130 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127-36; Michael S. Moore, “Ephesians 2:14-16: A History of Recent Interpretation,” *EvQ* 54 (1982): 163-68; Peter Stuhlmacher, “‘He is Our Peace’ (Eph. 2:14). On the Exegesis and Significance of Ephesians 2:14-18,” in *Reconciliation, Law, & Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 182-200; Best, *Ephesians*, 247-50; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 363-66.

⁶⁷Heinrich Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, BHT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1930), 18-26. For more on Schlier’s influence, see Derwood Smith, “The Two Made One: Some Observations on Eph. 2:14-18,” *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (1973): 34-35; Jack T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background*, SNTSMS 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 88-92; Moore, “Ephesians 2:14-16,” 163-68.

⁶⁸See Smith, “The Two Made One,” 34, 47 n. 3.

⁶⁹Gottfried Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965), 24-31, was an early proponent of the notion that the verses originate in a hymn. Others who hold that there are either traditional or hymnic elements present include Joachim Gnllka, “Christus, unser Friede – ein Friedens-Erlöserlied in Eph 2, 14-17: Erwägungen zu einer neutestamentlichen Friedenstheologie,” in *Die Zeit Jesu*, ed. Günther Bornkamm and Karl Rahner (Freiburg: Herder, 1970), 190-207; idem, *Der Epheserbrief*, HTKNT 10/2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), 147-52; Ernst Käsemann, “Ephesians and Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 288; Jack T. Sanders, “Hymnic Elements in Ephesians 1-3,” *ZNW* 56 (1965): 216-18; Calvin J. Roetzel, “Jewish Christian – Gentile Christian Relations: A Discussion of Ephesians 2:15a,” *ZNW* 74 (1983): 81-89; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 127-31; Smith, “The Two Made One,” 34. For more examples, see Best, *Ephesians*, 247 n. 26; idem, *Essays on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 63 n. 30; Smith, “The Two Made One,” 47 n. 4.

For example, Peter Stuhlmacher has argued that verses 13-18 are “a christological exegesis of Isa. 9:5-6; 52:7; and 57:19,”⁷⁰ while Tet-Lim Yee believes that verses 14-18 are interwoven with verses 11-13, reflecting “the author’s conscious compositional effort to eulogise Christ by accentuating his reconciliatory work and magnanimity.”⁷¹ Thus, no consensus exists as to the origin and use of the material found in these verses.

In the end, however, while the textual composition of Ephesians 2:14-18 is intriguing, if not for the history of interpretation alone, it is not of great import if the verses were adapted from traditional material or not.⁷² The present study is interested in what the author was trying to convey through either original or traditional material insofar as this material testifies to either Pauline thought or an early interpretation of Pauline thought. In either case the text provides valuable insight into Pauline soteriology and ecclesiology (see chap. 5 on the contribution of the disputed epistles).

Most critical are verses 14-16, which possess a myriad of exegetical and interpretive issues. While these verses will be examined in more detail than the others, for the sake of space the examination will not exhaust every exegetical detail in the passage. In some places the reader will be referred elsewhere for more detailed discussion.⁷³

Verses 14-15a. Verse 14 begins a new sentence, *αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν*, “for he himself is our peace,” meaning that Christ, specifically through his blood

⁷⁰Stuhlmacher, “He is Our Peace,” 187. So also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, trans. Helen Heron (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 112.

⁷¹Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, SNTSMS 130 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136.

⁷²The author (Paul, in my view) clearly has his own purpose either way, and, while the syntax is difficult, this is not uncommon in Ephesians. Further, as Thielman, *Ephesians*, 162-63, observes, Ephesians 2:14-18 functions similarly to other Pauline excurses.

⁷³Some particularly thorough and insightful treatments include Best, *Ephesians*, 247-66; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 363-84; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 122-34, 139-46; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 161-73; Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 126-180.

shed on the cross (cf. ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 2:13 and ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ in 2:14), has brought peace between Jews and Gentiles.⁷⁴ As Peter O’Brien observes, “These opening words stand like a title to the whole passage and introduce the vital theme of ‘peace’ (vv. 14-18).”⁷⁵ With the emphatic pronoun αὐτός (“he himself”) placed at the head of the sentence, the focus turns clearly to Christ and remains there through verse 18.⁷⁶ The γάρ connects the verse to verse 13—Christ’s peacemaking through the cross provides the ground for Gentiles to be brought near. The word, αὐτός, “he himself,” is the subject of the three following participles: ὁ ποιήσας (2:14), λύσας (2:14), and καταργήσας (2:15), each describing further how Christ has made peace. While the first two are attributive participles describing Christ and connected by καί, the third modifies λύσας, describing precisely how Christ “destroyed the dividing wall.”⁷⁷ Thus, Christ is the one who “made both one” (ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἓν), who “destroyed the dividing wall of the fence—the hostility—in his flesh” (τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ), by “setting aside the law of commandments in ordinances” (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας).⁷⁸ This translation is preliminary, as several

⁷⁴In these verses Paul shifts from second-person to first-person-plural style, which differentiates the verses from both vv. 11-13 and 19-22 (see Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998], 247; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 191; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 161).

⁷⁵O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 193. See also Stanley E. Porter, “Peace, Reconciliation,” in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald H. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 698; Best, *Ephesians*, 250.

⁷⁶See Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 141 n. 54; BDF §475 (1); Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 140, who comments that the pronoun “is to be seen as a reference to Christ and introduces a train of thought in which Christ is the central actor.”

⁷⁷So also Jean-Noël Aletti, *Saint Paul Épître aux Éphésiens*, Études Bibliques 42 (Paris: Gabalda, 2001), 148; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 374-75; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 168. The participle καταργήσας is likely adverbial denoting means (see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 628-30). Cf. Best, *Ephesians*, 252-57.

⁷⁸Aletti, *Éphésiens*, 151, argues that “law-enmity” is an inverse metonymy of “Christ-peace” (“La loi mosaïque est donc identifiée à la haine, selon une métonymie inverse de la première, celle du Christ-paix”).

grammatical and interpretive issues surround verses 14-15a.

First, with *ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν* it is noted that the use of the neuter adjective (*τὰ ἀμφοτέρα*) and number (*ἐν*) is peculiar in light of the previous use of the masculine in verses 11-13. While some take this as evidence of pre-existing tradition,⁷⁹ other plausible explanations have been put forth, such as that Paul, anticipating the neuter noun *τὸ μεσότοιχον* (“dividing wall”), has spatial imagery in mind, causing him to think in terms of “region” (the neuter *χωρίον*) and so gravitate to the use of the neuter despite the fact that he is referring to groups of people.⁸⁰ Whatever one makes of the use of the neuter, the referent in the Ephesians text is clearly Jews and Gentiles as groups.

Second, there is the question of the referent of the phrase *τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ*. While *μεσότοιχον* means “dividing wall” or “barrier,” the modifying genitive *τοῦ φραγμοῦ* typically means “fence,” indicating a notion of enclosure.⁸¹ The genitive appears to be appositive or exegetical, explaining further the noun *μεσότοιχον*.⁸² The phrase has been variously understood in its interpretive history. Three ideas seem to dominate, though others are possible.⁸³ First, along the lines of the Gnostic redeemer

⁷⁹E.g., Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 140, understands it as a “remnant of the traditional material which originally referred to heaven and earth”; so also Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: Ein Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1957), 124.

⁸⁰Best, *Ephesians*, 252; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 164. Others note that the neuter can be used for groups of people (e.g., Stuhlmacher, “He is Our Peace,” 185; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 194; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 368; see BDF §138 [1]), though this does not explain Paul’s change from masculine to neuter. At the same time, the pre-existing tradition theory does not explain why Paul did not simply alter the traditional material to match his own in vv. 11-13.

⁸¹On the former, see BDAG, s.v. “*μεσότοιχον*.” On the latter, see BDAG, s.v. “*φραγμός*,” which lists both “a structure for enclosing an area” and “a wall that separates,” the latter being a figurative extension of the former (citing only Eph 2:14); Louw & Nida, §7.59 (“a structure for enclosing an open area”). It seems probable that the idea of enclosure is still present in its use here.

⁸²So BDF §167; Schlier, *Epheser*, 124; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 113.

⁸³For example, some view it simply as a metaphor for social separation (e.g., Best, *Ephesians*, 256-57; John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* [London: Richard Griffin, 1854], 161). Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Chicago: Judson, 1959), 43, lists the possibilities then states that a decision probably “must not be made”

myth mentioned above, Schlier thought it referred to the wall dividing heaven and earth.⁸⁴ As with Schlier's general theory, though, this has been questioned.⁸⁵ However, the idea of a cosmic wall often still persists with those who view the material as originally a hymn.⁸⁶ Second, an early and popular opinion is that it refers to the wall that Josephus mentions in the Jerusalem temple separating the Gentile area from that for Jews only.⁸⁷ However, it is questionable whether the Gentile audience to which Ephesians is addressed would have understood such a reference—many believe this to be improbable.⁸⁸ Last, some view it as a reference to the Mosaic law.⁸⁹ My general thought is that this is the most plausible view, with some qualification. Since the very next verse refers to the law, it seems that the author likely has it as the immediate referent in verse 14.⁹⁰ With *μεσότοιχον* indicating a wall that divides and *φραγμός* indicating a kind of enclosure, probably the best way to understand the phrase is that Paul is referring to the

as this would limit the implications: "Political and cosmic, moral and righteous, intellectual and psychological, physical and metaphysical distinctions and divisions must also be thought of when Eph. 2:14 is read." Such a notion may be a legitimate application of the text, but it reads too much into Paul's intention in context.

⁸⁴Schlier, *Christus*, 18-26. So also Karl Martin Fischer, *Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes*, FRLANT 111 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 133.

⁸⁵See Best, *Ephesians*, 255, for a critique of Schlier's approach.

⁸⁶E.g., Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141.

⁸⁷See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 15.417. For more on this option, see Eadie, *Ephesians*, 160-61, who traces it back at least to Anselm but does not hold to it himself; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 369 (with nn. 3 and 4), who lists the evidence but ultimately rejects it; Bruce, *Ephesians*, 297-98, who leaves open the possibility.

⁸⁸See, e.g., Aletti, *Éphésiens*, 149 n. 121; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 195. Contra Louw & Nida, §7.62, who see it as referring to the partition in the temple.

⁸⁹E.g., Nils Alstrup Dahl, "Gentiles, Christians, and Israelites in the Epistle to the Ephesians," *HTR* 79 (1986): 36; Stuhlmacher, "He is Our Peace," 189; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 113.

⁹⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141. Hence the suggestion of Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*, AB, vol. 34 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 286, seems wise: "An interpretation based on the context of Eph 2:14 still offers the safest means for finding out the author's intention."

law, with special emphasis on the way it became an instrument of enclosure for Jews leading to separation from Gentiles.⁹¹ Thus, Paul is declaring that Christ has broken down the law's function as a wall that fenced in the Jews and separated them from the Gentiles.

Third, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the next two phrases, τὴν ἔχθραν and ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ fit syntactically within the structure of the verses. The issue is whether τὴν ἔχθραν, “the enmity,” is the object of λύσας or καταργήσας, as well as if ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, “in his flesh,” modifies λύσας or καταργήσας. All positions are somewhat awkward grammatically. In the first, with regard to τὴν ἔχθραν, the participle is sandwiched by its objects, τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ and τὴν ἔχθραν, both in apposition to each other. In the second, τὴν ἔχθραν is in apposition to τὸν νόμον, but the phrase ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ awkwardly intervenes. The placement of ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ is difficult as well. It could modify either λύσας or καταργήσας, leaving a number of interpretive options.⁹² A decision is not easily made, but my view is that both are connected to λύσας, with τὴν ἔχθραν in apposition to the “dividing wall” and thus another object of the participle and ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ as a prepositional phrase of the participle. This would leave the following rendering: “He destroyed the dividing wall of the fence—the

⁹¹See Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 151; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 167 (“The Jewish law was both a ‘partition’ that separated Jews from Gentiles and a ‘fence’ that enclosed the Jewish people, keeping them safe from Gentile influences”).

⁹²There seem to be four plausible options: (1) Both could be connected to λύσας, “broken down”: “[Christ] has broken down the dividing wall—the enmity—in his flesh,” with “the law of commandments” as the only object of καταργήσας (my own position; so also ESV; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 168, who notes further some commentators who favored this construction whose native language was ancient Greek); (2) Both could be connected to καταργήσας, “abolished, set aside”: “[Christ] abolished in his flesh the enmity,” with “the law of commandments” in apposition to “enmity” (so NAS; AV; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 123-24); (3) The word “enmity” could be connected to λύσας while “in his flesh” is connected to καταργήσας: “[Christ] has broken down the dividing wall—the hostility—by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments” (so RSV; NIV; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 373; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 114); (4) There is a final option that avoids a decision between the two participles and understands “in his flesh” as parenthetically connected to all three participles in verses 14-15: “In his flesh he has made both groups one and has broken down the dividing wall—the hostility, abolishing the law of commandments” (so NRSV; Best, *Ephesians*, 258). For a thorough treatment of the possibilities with responses to each, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 371-74; Best, *Ephesians*, 257-59.

enmity—in his flesh.”

Harold Hoehner argues that this view “particularizes the meaning too much,” since Christ’s flesh has to do with the “general hostility of human beings toward God,” not “the hostility between Jews and Gentiles,” arguing instead for seeing “in his flesh” connected with the setting aside of the law.⁹³ However, it may be unwarranted to create too much of a division between the “enmity” between Jews and Gentiles and that between humanity and God. This is especially so in light of verse 16, where Jews and Gentiles are members of “one body” that Christ reconciles to God through the cross, “killing the enmity in it” (ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ, with ἐν αὐτῷ likely referring to τοῦ σταυροῦ of the previous phrase).⁹⁴ This verse will be discussed more below, but for now it is worth noting that Paul seems to be working with a conception of “enmity” (τὴν ἔχθραν in both instances) that is between both God and humanity, as well as between humanity itself (Jews and Gentiles). While not identical, they are not unrelated.

Thus, the similar wording may be instructive. In verse 14 Christ “destroys the enmity in his flesh” while in verse 16 he “kills the enmity in [the cross].” The idea of “destroying the enmity in his flesh” and “killing the enmity in it” can be understood as parallel, which would indicate that this is the intended sense of the difficult syntax of verse 14. In other words, the similar wording in verse 16 where the prepositional phrase stays with τὴν ἔχθραν seems to favor a reading of ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ with τὴν ἔχθραν in this instance as well. Thus, it is the enmity that is “destroyed” in his flesh, by means of the “setting aside of the law of commandments in ordinances” (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας), which had caused division.

This leads to the fourth issue to determine in the verses. In this case, there are

⁹³Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 372-73.

⁹⁴Thielman, *Ephesians*, 168, notes the connection to v. 16 as well.

no syntactical problems but rather an interpretive issue of what Paul means by describing the law as “of commandments in ordinances” (τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν), which was “set aside” (καταργήσας). The verb καταργέω can take the meaning “set aside,” “bring to an end,” or “make completely inoperative,” “put out of use,” “nullify.”⁹⁵ It is possible that a combination of “set aside” and “make inoperative” are present here. The rendering “abolish” in many English versions is probably too strong, or at least not nuanced enough.⁹⁶ T. K. Abbott writes that “it does not properly mean to destroy but ‘to make of none effect,’ ‘to deprive of power,’” and that while “used of things coming to an end,” it is a “coming to an end by being superseded.”⁹⁷ Hence, while Christ “destroyed” the dividing wall of the enmity that the law became, he did not “destroy” the law of commandments, but rather “set them aside” or “rendered them inoperative” as the governing authority for the people of God (more below).

The addition of the phrase τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν to the word νόμος is unique, but its redundant nature is typical of Ephesians.⁹⁸ The phrase ἐν δόγμασιν has the sense of “consisting in ordinances” and appears to highlight the commanding nature of the law.⁹⁹ O’Brien writes, “The genitive ‘of the commandments’ indicates the content of

⁹⁵See BDAG, s.v. “καταργέω”; Gerhard Delling, “καταργέω,” *TDNT*, 1:453.

⁹⁶E.g., cf. Paul’s appeal to the “first commandment” in 6:2, demonstrating a complex view of the law in Ephesians.

⁹⁷T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1916), 62.

⁹⁸Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 142; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 169. Martin Kitchen, “The Status of Law in the Letter to the Ephesians,” in *Law and Religion: Essays on the Place of the Law in Israel and Early Christianity*, ed. Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: James Clark & Co: 1988), 146, calls Ephesians “notoriously pleonastic.”

⁹⁹See BDAG, s.v. “δόγμα” 1.a. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 39, states that the addition of ἐν δόγμασιν emphasizes the law “in terms of its requirements.” The phrase is missing in P⁴⁶, which has led Roetzl, “Jewish Christian,” 86, to suggest that it was a “later, artificial creation,” inserted to lessen the harshness against the law so as to cohere with “positive statements made about the law and the commandments in other letters ascribed to

the law, while the phrase ‘in ordinances, decrees’ suggests the essential form in which the commands are given.”¹⁰⁰ Paul seems to be viewing the law as a whole, but with a particular emphasis upon the law as a set of commands (cf. the only other use of *δῶγμα* in Paul in Col 2:14, where it is connected with a *χειρόγραφον*, “record of debt”). Andrew Lincoln is probably right that the wording “conveys a sense of the oppressiveness of all the law’s commandments.”¹⁰¹

Some have been uncomfortable with such strong language about the law and have sought to lessen the severity by arguing that Christ did away with only certain aspects of the law. For example, John Calvin argued that it was only the ceremonial law that ended.¹⁰² Schlier contended for a legalistic misuse of the law,¹⁰³ and Neil McEleney argues similarly that the text refers to “the precepts of the Law as interpreted by the strict school.”¹⁰⁴ Markus Barth contends that “Christ has abrogated the divisive function of the law—and therefore not God’s holy law itself,”¹⁰⁵ and not far from Barth is Yee, who believes an ethnocentric misuse of the law is in view.¹⁰⁶

Paul.” However, notwithstanding the weak textual evidence, Paul at times speaks very negatively of the law, even using the same word, *καταργέω*, with reference to the Mosaic covenant in 2 Cor 3:11, 13-14. See the critique of Roetzel by Kitchen, “The Status of Law,” 145-47.

¹⁰⁰O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 197.

¹⁰¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 142.

¹⁰²John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle, Calvin’s Commentaries, vol. 21 (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 238. So also Eadie, *Ephesians*, 163. Eberhard Faust, *Pax Christi et Pax Caesaris: Religionsgeschichtliche, traditions-geschichtliche und sozialgeschichtliche Studien zum Epheserbrief*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 24 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 138-50, sees the ritual law as abrogated so that it no longer divides Jew from Gentile.

¹⁰³Schlier, *Epheser*, 126: “Ist dieses kasuistisch-legalistische Gesetz vernichtet.”

¹⁰⁴Neil J. McEleney, “Conversion, Circumcision and the Law,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 340.

¹⁰⁵Barth, *Ephesians*, 291.

¹⁰⁶Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 154-61.

Separating certain elements from the law in Paul is always a precarious task, though the impetus to do so is understandable. There is a tension present here that is related to the broader issue of the law in Paul. That is, Paul's view of the law was multifaceted, and it is difficult at times to determine to which facet Paul refers. The central tension, of course, is that the law was both revealed by God and good and holy (Rom 7:12) but was also used by human sin for other purposes, which God also sovereignly intended (Rom 5:20; Rom 7:13; Gal 3:21-22). So while in Romans 3:31 Paul states that we do not "nullify" (καταργοῦμεν) the law, here in Ephesians 2:15 Christ has, in fact, "nullified" (καταργήσας) the law. Context of argument is, as always, critical. In Romans 3:27-30 Paul is arguing that faith provides justification, not works of the law, and thus he is careful to say that this does not imply an abandonment of the will of God embodied in the law. The context is different in Ephesians 2:15, where the law is viewed with respect to its role in dividing Jews from Gentiles, thereby also withholding salvation from the Gentiles. In this instance, the Mosaic covenant as an instrument of governance of the people of God has been "nullified" and "set aside," thus ending the hostility caused by the law.¹⁰⁷ This is a different point than Paul is making in Romans 3:31.

Thus, that Paul has the whole law as a covenant with Israel in view is likely, though it is also viewed through a specific lens, one where it was used by human sin to separate Jews from Gentiles. Insofar as the law was revealed by God, separated Israel for the good purpose of putting God's wisdom on display to the world, and insofar as obedience to it was borne from a true faith according to these purposes, the law was good. But insofar as it was acted upon by human sin, it bore different fruit, such as outright rebellion in addition to more subtle disobedience, such as ethnocentrism and

¹⁰⁷So also Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 367, who states that the Mosaic law "has been 'rendered powerless,' that is, ceases to stand as an immediate authority for God's people." So also O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 199, who cites Moo on this point.

legalism. God's act in Christ ended the law as a covenant that governed God's people and replaced it with a new covenant. Thus, it ended the separation between Jews and Gentiles.

Thorny exegetical and interpretative details notwithstanding, whatever one makes of the specific issues present, the point of the passage is clear enough. In Christ the function of the law as a means of division between Jew and Gentile came to an end.

Verses 15b-16. Verses 15b-16 are comprised of a long subjunctive purpose clause that is itself comprised of two verbs: *κτίση*, "he might create," and *ἀποκαταλλάξῃ*, "he might reconcile."¹⁰⁸ The whole clause modifies either the participle *καταργήσας* from verse 15a or, more likely in my view, all of verses 14-15a, since, as Ernest Best notes, "the same concepts, peace, enmity, two, one, making (creating), he (in his flesh, in himself), run through both sets of clauses; vv. 15b, 16 give them a new context."¹⁰⁹ Thus, it gives two purposes for Christ's setting aside of the law, thereby destroying the enmity.

The first is verse 15b: *ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην*, "in order that he might make the two in himself one new man, making peace."¹¹⁰ Paul now switches from the neuter (v. 14: *τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν*) to the masculine (v. 15: *τοὺς δύο . . . εἰς ἓνα*; v. 16: *τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους*). Best argues that the switch indicates that individual people are now in view, as opposed to groups of people.¹¹¹ However, this seems unlikely. The switch to the masculine is better explained by the shift in focus from

¹⁰⁸Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 161, understands the parallel purpose clauses as a form of *parallelismus membrorum*, noting that similar constructions are found frequently in Paul (see *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 161 n. 132 for a list of examples).

¹⁰⁹Best, *Ephesians*, 261. For the former view, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 378; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 170.

¹¹⁰Literally, "In order that the two he might create in him into one new man."

¹¹¹Best, *Ephesians*, 261-63. He is followed by John A. Allan, "The 'In Christ' Formula in Ephesians," *NTS* 5 (1958-59): 60-61.

spatial imagery (the areas separated by the “dividing wall”) to that of the “one new man” (which is naturally masculine). Paul has used the verb κτίζω to describe believers being created anew in Christ for good works in 2:10, and he will use it in 4:24 to describe them as “being created in righteousness” (κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνη). Here, however, he uses it to describe their creation as a new humanity in Christ.¹¹² The idea has strong connections to Paul’s “Adamic Christology, with its associated ideas of Christ as inclusive representative of the new order and of believers being incorporated into him.”¹¹³ The participle ποιῶν is adverbial and indicates result, “with the result of making peace (between Jews and Gentiles).”¹¹⁴

The second purpose comes in verse 16: καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἐχθρὰν ἐν αὐτῷ, “and [that he might] reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, thereby killing the hostility in it.” In this clause a vertical dimension is added to the discussion. It is not only that Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to one another; they are reconciled *to God* in one body.¹¹⁵ The verb ἀποκαταλλάσσω only occurs elsewhere in the NT in Colossians 1:20, 22, and is never found prior to Paul.¹¹⁶ The word σῶμα is used throughout Ephesians to refer to the

¹¹²O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 200; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 143. With respect to κτίζω, Thielman, *Ephesians*, 170 n. 26, notes that everywhere else in the NT the verb refers to “God’s creative activity in Gen. 1-2” (Matt 19:4; Mark 13:19; Rom 1:25; 1 Cor 11:9; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; 3:10; 1 Tim 4:3; Rev 4:11; 10:6), so it is likely that Ephesians 2:10, 15, and 4:24, “recall God’s original creation of human beings.”

¹¹³Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 143. Cf., e.g., 1 Cor 15:22; Gal 3:27, 28; Col 3:10, 11.

¹¹⁴Thielman, *Ephesians*, 171, calls it a “textbook example of an adverbial participle of result.” So also Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 639; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 380.

¹¹⁵Rightly, Derwood Smith, “The Two Made One: Some Observations on Eph. 2:14-18,” *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (1973): 35 (“Thus we are concerned with the overcoming of the division between Jews and Gentiles on the one hand and on the other hand the split between mankind and God”).

¹¹⁶Friedrich Büchsel, “ἀποκαταλλάσσω,” *TDNT*, 1:258, who suggests Paul may have coined the term. The addition of the prepositional prefix to καταλλάσσω possibly indicates intensification (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 382; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 171).

church as Christ's body (1:23; 4:4, 12, 16 [twice]; 5:23, 30), which is no doubt the usage in this instance as well.¹¹⁷ Thus, the two groups, Jews and Gentiles, created anew into one new man, which is one body—the church—are reconciled to God (τῷ θεῷ) *through*, or *by means of*, the cross (διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ).

This second purpose clause, then, like the first, is followed by an adverbial participle, ἀποκτείνας—this time one of means or instrument, “by means of killing the enmity with it.” Paul again uses the term τὴν ἐχθραν, “the hostility,” but because the idea has shifted now to reconciliation “to God,” the hostility refers to that between God and humanity.¹¹⁸ However, as mentioned above, the two ideas are not unrelated and likely a connection between them is intended here—enmity within humanity is a natural outworking of enmity between God and humanity. The final prepositional phrase, ἐν αὐτῷ, provides the location of the killing of the enmity. The phrase, in the masculine, could be referring to Christ himself or to the cross.¹¹⁹ In the end, both convey the same idea, but since τοῦ σταυροῦ is close, it is the most likely referent.

Therefore, the central idea in verses 14-16 is that Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled to each other as they have been reconciled to God through the cross. This new creation in Christ transcends cultural distinctions, without necessarily abrogating them.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷So also Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 117. This is opposed to the idea that it refers to Christ's body on the cross, as some earlier commentators assumed (see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 382 n. 5). Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 144, notes that the “qualifying adjective ‘one’ makes clear that he has the Church in mind.” Eadie, *Ephesians*, 168, argues that αὐτοῦ (“his body”) would be used if referring to Christ on the cross, but even in this case it would not be decisive, as Paul uses this very phrase in 1:23 (τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ) to refer to Christ's body as the church.

¹¹⁸So O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 205; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 172; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 383. Contra Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 146; Best *Ephesians*, 266.

¹¹⁹For the former, see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 146; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 117. For the latter, see Joachim Gnllka, “Christus, unser Friede,” 205; idem, *Epheserbrief*, 144; Best, *Ephesians*, 266; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 384. Barth, *Ephesians*, 297, argues that they “cannot be considered mutually exclusive alternatives” and combines them.

¹²⁰Cf. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 202-04; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 144.

Thus, it is not that ethnic Israel continues exactly as before, only with Gentiles incorporated into it, nor is it that Jews must abandon all Jewish customs and live completely like Gentiles, but that now in Christ there is an identity that is more fundamental than that defined by the Mosaic law or by any other cultural identity. While the new identity is organically connected to God's actions toward and purposes for Israel, it is nevertheless defined anew (born again, perhaps), uniting all those who are in Christ into one people, the new humanity.

Verses 17-18. The remaining verses of the chapter will not be examined in detail, but a brief comment should be made. Verses 17-18 are connected to the previous three verses through the continuing theme of “peace” (εἰρήνη). Verse 17 continues this theme with an allusion to Isaiah 52:7 and 57:19, and verse 18 is then connected grammatically to verse 17 through the conjunction ὅτι.

Thus, in verse 17 Paul “now summarizes the dual theme of peace between Jews and Gentiles and peace between humanity and God with a skillfully crafted allusion to Isa. 52:7a and 57:19.”¹²¹ Christ “preached peace” to those far and near, and the ground of this preaching (ὅτι) is then given in verse 18, which is the access to the father in the one Spirit (ἔρχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα) that came through Christ (δι’ αὐτοῦ). Hence, the double themes of peace with God and peace among Jews and Gentiles is again highlighted and connects it back to verse 16.¹²²

Succeeding Context (Verses 19-22)

Verse 19 begins a new thought with the phrase Ἄρα οὖν (RSV: “So then”; NIV: “Consequently”). Though comment on verses 19-22 is unnecessary for our purposes, it is

¹²¹Thielman, *Ephesians*, 173.

¹²²So O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 208: “This statement is parallel with v. 16, where Paul had emphasized that through the cross Christ has reconciled both of them in one body to God.”

sufficient to note that the theme of Gentile inclusion continues, as Paul calls them fellow-citizens (*συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων*) and members of the household of God (*οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ*).

Implications

There are two points to highlight in Ephesians 2:14-18 with respect to the overall argument being made. First, the “old perspective” on Paul must account for how the law for Paul was not only a symbol of human striving for God but also a symbol of separation of Israel from the nations, to whom Israel was to mediate God’s presence. The law was not only a barrier between God and humanity but also a barrier between Jews and Gentiles, a barrier within humanity itself. God’s work in the cross had as a central purpose the uniting of all humankind in the one man Jesus Christ.

Second, however, while it is clear from this text that a central purpose of the cross was to destroy this barrier, this does not mean that such an intent *defines* salvation or justification by faith.¹²³ Passages such as this one are best explained if justification is fundamentally about human beings being counted righteous and brought into right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Such an idea is present even in this “corporate” passage in Ephesians. Christ’s work does not simply unite Jews and Gentiles, or any other cultural group within humanity. It first brings salvation to the “one new man,” which is the new humanity comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, justification provides the means of reconciliation of *all* of redeemed humanity *to God*. Salvation must first be seen to be about reconciliation to God and second about reconciliation among human beings.

To state differently, justification may be viewed as God’s instrument to reconcile the “one new man”—the new humanity—to himself, and that this takes place

¹²³Of course, the terms “salvation” and “justification” are not identical. However, it is no doubt clear by this point that the present work sees justification as the fundamental ground for salvation and so the ideas are very closely related.

without regard to ethnic distinction makes reconciliation among human beings possible. The reconciliation of human to human, as important as it is, does not define what justification by grace through faith in Christ apart from works is *in itself*. Though Protestantism may be guilty of highlighting the latter idea while neglecting the former, it is not incorrect or un-Pauline in its emphasis upon justification as the sinful human being counted righteous before God by grace alone apart from works.

Though the specific language of “works of the law” and “justification” are not present in Ephesians, the more general ideas of “works” and “salvation” (see chap. 5 on Eph 2:8-9) merely broaden out what Paul has said elsewhere in Romans and Galatians. The Jewish ethnocentric legalism present in those letters is not the only form of sin that the cross killed, but for Paul it was a representative example of humanity’s bent toward pride and boasting and denial of grace, the only hope in light of the reality of sin.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how the present argument accounts for two passages that highlight the corporate element in Paul’s soteriology. The above texts demonstrate quite clearly the interweaving of soteriology and ecclesiology for Paul. Indeed, they point to the high priority placed upon the unification of Jews and Gentiles in God’s salvific work through Jesus’ death on the cross. This reality can tend to be obscured or at least devalued by a more traditional understanding of justification, especially before the emergence of the New Perspective. The charge against the traditional view of *over*-individualizing justification by faith and salvation is not without warrant.

At the same time, neither this fact nor the evidence in the above texts appear to negate the fundamental burden of the more individual approach to justification. Instead, the evidence serves to demonstrate its full-orbed nature. While justification and salvation necessarily include the individual as the fundamental material upon which God works,

the concepts move beyond the individual in Paul. Salvation for Paul was not *merely* about the individual, but was part of a much larger scheme where God reconciles all humankind to himself, uniting them all in Christ as “one new man.” Thus, the individual’s justification is a representative example of the justification of the new humanity in Christ.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In 1977 E. P. Sanders significantly changed the way scholars would think about Paul and his doctrine of justification by faith. This paradigm shift has provided a wealth of new avenues for thinking about Paul and his view of the law, many of them profitable. It has also paved the way for a new understanding of justification that no longer has the individual and the need for grace in a central location. The present dissertation has sought to address this issue.

By now the New Perspective is no longer new and Pauline scholarship lives in its wake, attempting to move forward in a post-New Perspective milieu, with many shifting to new patterns of thought about Paul. However, the burden of the present work has been to argue for a stepping back, if only briefly, to reconsider some assumptions that persist in all areas of the discussion, especially assumptions influenced by the trajectory inherited from Sanders and precursors such as Krister Stendahl that Paul was not primarily interested in the individual's forgiveness of sins and receiving of grace apart from works. No matter the present consensus, this trajectory is faulty to some degree. It does not cohere with all the evidence and is in need of reassessment. While corporate elements in Pauline soteriology are clearly present, they have come to overshadow and skew the evidence for Paul's concern with the individual in justification. The intention of the present work has been to demonstrate this in detail as well as to challenge it.

Summary

Chapter 1 stated the thesis of the work and provided a history of research that highlighted the move from the more individual understanding of justification connected

to the Reformation to the corporate view that began to emerge early in the twentieth-century, finding its permanent place within Pauline scholarship through the work of the New Perspective on Paul. Before challenging elements of the corporate approach by way of exegesis, it was necessary in chapter 2 to argue that the case against Jewish legalism that is usually assumed to be closed should be reconsidered.

Sanders showed with compelling force that legalism did not define first-century Judaism and that Pauline scholarship needed to account for this. However, Sanders did not show that legalism was *completely* absent within parts of the Jewish religious context in which Paul wrote. It was argued that at the very least the evidence allows for the possibility of its presence, even if not decisively proving it, especially a legalism that was connected to a Jewish ethnocentrism.

Once this case was made, a few significant texts were examined that create certain problems for newer approaches to justification. Chapters 3 and 4 provided exegesis of three texts where Paul either cites or alludes to a psalm (Ps 143:2 in Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20; Ps 32:1-2 in Rom 4:6-8) in such a way that provides evidence for a timeless, anthropological element in justification that existed before and after Christ's manifestation, though not fully revealed until the death and resurrection of Jesus. These texts are often explained differently upon newer approaches, but when the possibility that Paul is responding to an ethnocentric legalism is allowed for, important elements of the traditional interpretation remain valid while still accounting for Paul's ecclesiological concerns. At the same time, more strictly corporate interpretations are more difficult.

Chapter 5 provided additional confirming evidence that was found elsewhere in Paul, including some of the disputed letters. These, too, demonstrate that Paul, in his conception of justification and salvation, was working with a fundamental dichotomy between grace, received through faith, and works. Then, in chapter 6, two passages were examined that are generally considered to cohere more with New Perspective concerns, presenting certain challenges to the traditional view of justification. It was shown that,

indeed, these texts do point to significant ecclesiological concerns in Paul's view of justification and salvation more broadly. Traditional interpretations must not neglect or ignore such evidence. At the same time, this fact does not negate the justification of the individual, based on grace through faith apart from works, that was emphasized in previous chapters of the dissertation.

Implications

The line of argument of the present work is important for two reasons. First, as stated above, the New Perspective is no longer new, and within Pauline scholarship at this time one often feels more its effects than one sees much interaction with its key assumptions. We now live and think in the world created by the New Perspective more than we question its key tenets, and Pauline scholarship continues to try to make sense of Paul in this world. However, my concern is that, because of this reality, questionable assumptions are being conceded even within more conservative scholarship, and this will continue to be the case for future work. While Sanders has been critiqued for elements of his covenantal nomism and especially his understanding of Paul, the assumption persists that he was completely on target in dismantling any form of Jewish legalism. However, the simple fact is that if Paul is not responding on some level to what has traditionally been labeled legalism, his purpose in spelling out so clearly in several significant places the inability of human works to provide justification and salvation makes minimal sense at best.

As was shown in the previous chapters, New Perspective and other explanations for these texts certainly have been offered, but often these appear to be attempts to make difficult passages fit a scheme that cannot hold them, rather than a genuine incorporation of textual evidence that leads wherever it may. In the end, if all the textual evidence is considered together, the most cohesive way of understanding it is to concede that Paul saw a foundational element in justification that has the human being

relenting from working in order to receive the gift of God. Many newer approaches to Paul have moved too far away from this conception, thus rendering attempts at explaining these texts unsatisfactory.

To be sure, the Protestant and especially Reformed view of Paul tends to view *all* of Paul through this lens. Another lasting contribution of Sanders and the New Perspective has been to highlight this, which forces all parties involved back to the text to continue working, a phenomenon for which one can be grateful. There is much more to be mined in Paul than the distinction between grace and works in justification, and while many in Protestant and Reformed circles find new approaches to Paul disconcerting (rightly at times), these approaches often provide valuable correctives to a tendency of overemphasis and shortsightedness.

Nevertheless, the sometimes overly vocal defense of the individual approach to justification has not been completely unwarranted. There are genuine textual problems with the newer approaches. These have had the advantage of exploiting questionable assumptions of the traditional view, but have then turned around and built new systems on their own questionable assumptions. The intent of the present work has been to point out at least some of these and suggest that new ways forward be more attuned to this. One may continue to debate the problems of the older approach, but one goes too far if the fundamental anthropological nature of Paul's distinction between faith and works is ignored. It is not all there is to say about salvation in the NT, nor even justification in Paul. But even though there is more to say, there is not less to say, and this must be neither forgotten nor neglected.

Before concluding, some of the limits of the present study and possible lines of future work in this area should be highlighted. Because of the nature of the work and its specific argument, it was necessary to look at some key texts in the Pauline literature. However, other texts could have been examined as evidence, and many others remain in need of explanation upon the suggestions made in this dissertation. For example, Romans

9:11-12 and 11:6 are two other places where grace and works are clearly contrasted. Paul's contrast of the righteousness of the law with the righteousness of faith in both Galatians 3:10-12 and Romans 10:1-13 deserves treatment. Finally, a broader reading of Romans and Galatians, along with a more expansive treatment of a Pauline theology of law would also buttress the central points made here.

Additionally, one of the central difficulties in discerning Paul's view of the law is the nature of his view of obedience to God in general. If salvation is by grace alone, how does a human being obey God in such a way that it is not "from works"? One senses that a significant portion of the dissatisfaction with the traditional approach to Paul comes from a burden to demonstrate that Paul was indeed concerned with changed lives, not merely mental assent to a set of doctrines. I agree with this burden, and the intention has never been to deny the necessity of obedience. Obedience is the natural outworking of the kind of faith of which Paul speaks. And while it is a complicated state of affairs well beyond the scope of this work, it is one deserving of continued thought and work.

For now suffice it to say that justification by faith is organically connected to a changed humanity. It is not a legal fiction. However, justification by faith is not *defined* by a changed humanity. Justification is an act of God that *by definition* excludes all human participation. It is a declaration that happens in a realm that is beyond human time and action. Thus, when its mechanism is discussed by Paul, human working is always denied a role. At the same time, this says nothing of the justified individual's obedience in real human time and history. It is a different but not disconnected subject—the tension exists and deserves continual exploration. Thus, yes, indeed, Paul cared greatly about obedience. But this fact does not impinge upon the doctrine of God's free gift of justification to the individual.

Paul was a man who believed he had experienced the grace and kindness of God. This formed the core of his gospel. Whatever else may be said of him, this is not an issue that is debated. From this fact springs all of his teaching and mission. Like Paul,

other individuals must receive the grace of God, too, otherwise there is no way for a corporate people to receive the grace of God. As appropriate (and, if one is honest, fashionable) as it may be to lament the individualism of Western culture and the destruction of which it is capable, one must not lose sight of the fact that Paul preached his grand narrative of the salvation of God for Israel and the world to *individuals* so that he might “save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Individuals receive grace. Individuals believe and act upon that belief. Without doubt these individuals are called to something beyond themselves, and this must inform their reality. But it begins with the fallen individual receiving a gift in justification that can never be earned or deserved. Recently it has been written that, while the neglect of the individual in justification in recent work is a mild problem, “at least Wright and others have endeavored to redress the balance in favor of an appreciation of justification in its salvation-historical dimensions.”¹ This is a fair statement. However, by now the redress is well under way. What is needed is to chart an even more balanced course for the future.

¹Don Garlington, “‘Even We Have Believed’: Galatians 2:15-16 Revisited,” *Criswell Theological Review* 7, no. 1 (2009): 28.

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ABSTRACT

JUSTIFICATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE WAKE OF THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

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This dissertation contends that in spite of the increasing trajectory toward a more corporate, covenantal understanding of justification within Pauline scholarship since the emergence of the New Perspective on Paul, there still remains significant evidence that justification, at its core, is concerned with the individual before God in need of grace, who is counted righteous apart from any human works. Chapter 1 provides a history of research that traces this corporate trajectory within modern scholarship, as well as noting some of the responses to it.

Chapter 2 examines the case for the presence of Jewish legalism at Paul's time of writing, to which he responds with his doctrine of justification by faith. Though E. P. Sanders successfully showed that legalism did not *define* second-temple Judaism, his work does not rule out the possibility of legalism within elements of the religion during the lifetime of Paul. This legalism would be more subtle than in pre-Sanders caricatures of Judaism, and is intricately tied to ethnocentrism, since the works in question were often those such as circumcision, which separated Jews from Gentiles—hence, ethnocentric legalism.

Chapters 3 and 4 apply a framework that does not rule out legalism to three key justification texts (Gal 2:16; Rom 3:20; Rom 4:1-8). In these passages, Paul alludes to or cites a psalm text, each of which highlights an underlying anthropological approach

to justification that denies the place of works, which was also timeless, though now fully revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Chapter 5 examines evidence in other places in Paul, including some of the disputed letters, that undergirds the idea that fundamental to justification and Pauline soteriology in general is a distinction between grace (through faith) and works.

Chapter 6 seeks to align the present argument with more corporate concerns in Pauline soteriology through exegesis of two passages that are often considered to be linchpin texts for the New Perspective (Rom 3:27-30; Eph 2:14-18).

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the argument, as well as implications of the present study, with further reflection on what it means for future work on the subject.

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