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Paul, Christ and Time: An Investigation of Apocalyptic and Salvation-Historical Themes in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles

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Abstract

This thesis examines the subjects of history and time in the undisputed Pauline epistles, with reference to ongoing debates between apocalyptic readings of Paul, which emphasise the radical invasiveness of the Christ event, and salvation-historical readings, which emphasise continuity between the Christ event and Israel's history. Current disagreements between prominent Pauline scholars such as J.L. Martyn and N.T. Wright can be traced back to similar debates in twentieth century New Testament scholarship, and the work of Rudolf Bultmann, Oscar Cullmann, and Ernst Käsemann, in particular.

One broad area of agreement between apocalyptic and salvation-historical readings of Paul is the way in which they consider history in terms of chronologically-successive periods of time, and understand the significance of the Christ event in terms of its fixed place in this scheme. This thesis examines four key Pauline texts: 1 Corinthians 10, 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 3-4, and Romans 9-11, arguing that neither apocalyptic or salvation-historical understandings can fully account for significant features of these texts. Instead, I argue that the work of Walter Benjamin and Karl Barth offers useful ways of thinking about history and time, allowing for a more cohesive reading of these texts. In particular, Barth's claim that the Christ event is in history but not of history provides a way of considering the Christ event as both a concrete, historical occurrence, part of Israel's history, and an event which is not dependent upon or limited to that history.

Paul, Christ and Time:

An Investigation of Apocalyptic and Salvation-Historical Themes in the Undisputed

Pauline Epistles

By Anton Rose

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Contents

Abbreviations

All abbreviations of ancient literature and academic journals follow the forms indicated in the *SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006).

Statement of Copyright

Part One

Chapter 1
History and Time in Paul's World

The Messiah is the fulfillment of the long purposes of Israel's God...In the Messiah are fulfilled the creator's paradoxical purposes for Israel and hence for the world. He is the climax of the covenant.[1]

The singularity of the Seed spells the end of *Heilsgeschichte* as a view that encompasses a linear history of the people of God prior to Christ. For Christ was born not into the context of "Israel's history", but rather "under the dominance of the Law" … into a context marked by a sort of covenantal docetism and by universal enslavement.[2]

One of the perennial issues in the study of the Pauline texts is the relationship between Paul and Judaism.[3] This is most often approached as a theological issue, or a socio-religious one. Does Paul's gospel offer a modification of Jewish theology, adding to and reinterpreting it? Does Paul present something entirely new, a break away from his Jewish past, offering the gospel of Jesus Christ as a stark alternative to Judaism?

The question of Paul and Judaism is also, however, a historical –or historiographical – one. Second temple Judaism did not merely consist of a set of rules and rituals. The Jews of Paul's time held beliefs about what God had done in history, and what he would continue to do in the future. Jewish identity did not reside purely in observance of the law, but in

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[1] N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (London: New York: T&T Clark, 1991), 241.

[2] J. Louis Martyn, 'Events in Galatia: Modified Covenantal Nomism versus God's Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel: A Response to J.D.G. Dunn and B.R. Gaventa' in Jouette M. Bassler ed., *Pauline Theology Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 160-79, at 174.

[3] There is a monumental amount of literature on this topic. Much of the debate in the last few decades has surrounded the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul', the foundational texts of which include Krister Stendahl's essay 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West' in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-97, and E.P. Sanders *Paul, The Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, Press, 1983). Stendahl and Sanders, among others, argue that interpretations of Paul going back to the Reformation have erred by misunderstanding first century Judaism, producing a false dichotomy where Judaism is seen as a religion of works, whereas Pauline Christianity is a religion of faith and grace.

remembrance of the past. In Paul's defence of his Jewish credentials in Philippians 3 he refers not only to his zeal for the law, but also to his lineage, his history. This suggests another dimension to the question of Paul and Judaism. Put simply, how does Paul map the Christ-event onto the rest of history and time? Does he see the Christ-event as the climactic chapter of Israel's history, or is the Christ-event the beginning of a new history, or story, only loosely related to previous events? If the Christ-event is related to other historical events, is this relationship a positive or a negative one? What overview of history – if any at all – is either presupposed or implied by the Pauline texts?

Before canvassing the scholarly debates regarding history and time in Paul, however, it is worth considering some more basic questions about how history and time were understood in the ancient world, and how this might affect our reading of Paul. Time, after all, is one of the most fundamental features of human existence. It constantly shapes the way in which we experience the world around us, and its inexorable march determines the way in which we live our lives. Nonetheless, it is remarkably difficult to analyze. St Augustine famously reflected on this problem:

> For what is time? Who can easily and briefly explain it? Who can even comprehend it in thought or put the answer into words? Yet is it not true that in conversation we refer to nothing more familiarly or knowingly than time? And surely we understand it when we speak of it; we understand it also when we hear another speak of it. What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know. (*Confessions*, 11, XIV, 17)

Questions of history are inextricably connected to our concept of time. History describes events not just in terms of their content, but also in terms of their temporal features, locating events in past, present and future, or before and after. Time is such a fundamental feature of human existence that one might think it transcends cultural and historical location. Hence, when reading an ancient writer like Paul, it is easy to assume that he thought about time in roughly the same way we do. Such assumptions, however, are worth questioning.

1. Types of Time

i. Time and Process

In *Time and Process in Ancient Judaism*, Sacha Stern aims to draw out and consider the implications of a phenomenon found across a broad range of ancient Jewish texts regarding their concept of time, or rather, their lack of it.[4] Stern's thesis is bold, but quite simple. He argues that 'the concept of time as an entity itself was unknown in ancient Jewish culture, and that reality was conceived only in terms of processes.'[5] According to Stern, time and process are fundamentally different in kind: 'time is abstract, process is concrete; time is one, process is many; time is reified, process is real.'[6] Reading ancient texts while assuming a modern understanding of time can damage our reading of those texts, because the ways in which ancient people thought about time were significantly different:

> The dimension of time which we usually take for granted in our modern world-view is not a tangible and concrete reality; it is not perceptible to the senses…All we experience around us are concrete objects, engaged in certain relations which we call 'events'; events, in turn, are structured around sequences which we call 'processes'. Time is only an *abstract* measurement of processes…The modern concept of time as a general category, and autonomous flow, an empty extension, or a structure and dimension of the universe, is only a generalization and synthesis of all the discrete time-measurements that can be made of the individual processes which we experience.[7]

Stern's argument consists of two major steps. First, he argues for the initial plausibility of his thesis. Second, he surveys a wide range of ancient Jewish texts to show that no abstract concept of time is present. Stern sets out to show that his conclusion is at least plausible by rejecting the notion that a reified, abstract concept of time is universal to humanity. He does so by referring to anthropological studies of cultures where no such concept seems to be displayed. In particular, Stern refers to E.E. Evans-Pritchard's study of the Nuer, a pastoral, tribal ethnic group from South Sudan and Western Ethiopia.[8] In a fascinating passage from his study of the Nuer, Evans-Pritchard recounts:

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[4] Sacha Stern, *Time and Process in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Littman, 2007).
[5] Stern, *Time and Process,* 3.
[6] Stern, *Time and Process*, 3.
[7] Stern, *Time and Process*, 18.
[8] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940). See also Stern, *Time and Process*, 12-16.

...the Nuer have no expression equivalent to 'time' in our language, and they cannot, therefore, as we can, speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth. I do not think that they ever experience the same feeling of fighting against time or of having to coordinate activities with an abstract passage of time, because their points of reference are mainly the activities themselves ...Events follow a logical order, but they are not controlled by an abstract system, there being no autonomous points of reference to which activities have to conform with precision.[9]

For the Nuer, and other similar pre-modern cultures, time is not perceived as 'an entity that flows on its own independently from the rest of reality.'[10] Events and processes are not mapped onto abstract timelines; they just happen, according to natural and social processes. This is also apparent in their concept of history, or rather their lack of it:

'It will have been noted that the Nuer time dimension is narrow. Valid history ends a century ago, and tradition, generously measured, takes us back only ten to twelve generations in a lineage structure, and if we are right in supposing that lineage structure never grows, it follows that the distance between the beginning of the world and the present day remains unalterable. Time is thus not a continuum, but is a constant structural relationship between two points, the first and last persons in a line of agnatic descent. How shallow is Nuer time may be judged from the fact that the tree under which mankind came into being was still standing in Wester Nuerland a few years ago.[11]

Both in their understanding of history, and in their lifestyle, the Nuer give no indication of having the same kind of concept of time as found in modern cultures; or rather, they show no concept of time whatsoever. It is at least plausible, then, that the same could be said for ancient Jewish culture. With this in mind, Stern is able to conclude that 'There is no inherent reason why the concept of time should be assumed universal…Process without time is a plausible and entirely rational world view.'[12]

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[9] Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer,* 103.
[10] Stern, *Time and Process,* 16.
[11] Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer,* 108.
[12] Stern, *Time and Process,* 23.

Stern proceeds by constructing a sustained argument from silence, based on a survey of a wide range of ancient Jewish texts including Rabbinic writings, the Hebrew Bible, and other texts such as those found at Qumran. For example, Stern suggests that in the Rabbinic writings one finds the idea of doing things at the proper time, such as reciting the Shema, but there is no rabbinic ethic of punctuality, or of saving or wasting time. Whenever there is an appropriate or fitting time do something, this time is both broad and unspecific, and is linked to concrete processes rather than being attached to an abstract timescale.[13] Likewise, while Calendars are important to various Jewish groups, they are organized according to processes.[14] Stern offers Ps. 90:4, Ecc. 3:1-8, and Job 9:25-26 as examples of scriptural texts which lend themselves well to speculation about time; the lack of such speculation, he suggests, is telling.[15]

Stern's argument is well constructed, covering a wide range of evidence, but it has a number of problems. First, there is the question of how persuasive it can be to argue from silence. Stern is correct to say that arguments from silence are not necessarily invalid, but it is essential to consider the context in which they are used. With regards to ancient texts, genre and purpose are extremely significant because they determine what we might reasonably expect to find in any particular text. Stern supports his argument from silence by stating that 'it rests on a methodological conviction, which I think many historians would share with me: that one cannot impose a modern idea or concept on any ancient culture without positive evidence to substantiate it.'[16] When the very question at hand is whether or not reified, abstract time is a 'modern idea or concept' or one shared with ancient cultures, this justification holds little force; Stern simply begs the question.

Second, Stern's distinction between 'Semitic' and 'indo-European' culture is far too simplistic,[17] and this problem is compounded by the way in which he treats Judaism as a monolithic entity. This is historically inaccurate and unpersuasive, and Stern once again begs the question by setting the limits of this monolith in a way which prejudices his conclusion. This is most apparent in his treatment of Philo and Josephus, two authors who straddle the blurry divide between Greek and Jewish cultures. Philo is a clear example of a Jewish author

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[13] Stern, *Time and Process,* 83.
[14] Stern, *Time and Process,* 64-66.
[15] Stern, *Time and Process,* 45.
[16] Stern, *Time and Process*, 5.
[17] Nicholas R.M. De Lange, 'Review of Sacha Stern, *Time and Process in Ancient* Judaism,' in *JTS* 56.2 (2005), 628-633, at 631, criticises it as 'dated and unhelpful.'

who writes about time in what Stern deems to be a non-Jewish way.[18] Philo considers time in the context of creation, arguing that 'beginning' in Genesis 1:1 should not be taken 'in a chronological sense, for time there was not before there was a world.'[19] To use Stern's terminology, time is considered by Philo here as an abstract, reified concept. Stern notes that Philo and Josephus both demonstrate 'The Greek concept of time,' but he explains that this is due to Greek influence.[20] By dismissing Philo and Josephus in this way, Stern blatantly engages in circular reasoning.

Third, several of the examples given by Stern could just as easily weaken his case as support it. A clear example of this is the story of R. Eleazer, who was reported to have never wished anyone who sneezed good health, because this would have deflected him away from the study of Torah. Stern suggests that this is an example where there is only the idea that activities must be prioritized, rather than that time is something which can be wasted. It seems, however, that while there is no explicit mention of wasting time in this story, it does imply a sense of the finitude of time, and in a context where the period of time under consideration would be an abstract division, not dictated by any concrete process.[21] As De Lange argues in his review of Stern, we are left with a number of cases which are not conclusive; unfortunately for Stern, 'weightier burden of proof is needed to prove a negative.'[22]

As far as Paul is concerned, he would presumably fall into the category of un-Jewish Jews, occupied by Philo and Josephus. Certainly, his warning to the Corinthians that 'the appointed time is short' (1 Cor. 7:29) suggests an understanding of time as finite, with no reference to concrete processes. Stern is correct to argue that in ancient cultures, time was linked more to concrete processes, but this feature of ancient cultures is more a function of science and technology, rather than an indication of a fundamentally different concept of time.

ii. Past, Present, and Future Orientation

In a provocative article on the topic of the New Testament's concept of time, Bruce Malina argues that the New Testament has been consistently misread by interpreters who

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[18] See S. Lauer, 'Philo's Concept of Time' *Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1958), 39-46.
[19] *De opificio mundi* 26.
[20] Stern, *Time and Process,* 100.
[21] Other questionable examples include his interpretations of passages in the *Seder Olam* and the *Avot*. See Stern, *Time and Process*, 73, 85.
[22] De Lange, 'Review of *Time and Process*,' 630.

erroneously assume that the ancient, pre-industrial cultures in which the authors of the New Testament lived shared the same understanding of time as modern, post-industrial cultures. In fact, he argues, their perception of time was different to ours in several respects, and so an essential task for the New Testament interpreter is to understand and describe these differences: 'it is the first-century Meditteranean appreciation of time that the NT interpreter must appropriate if only to be fair to the authors and their communities.'[23]

One of the differences Malina proposes is similar to Stern's thesis. Malina, however, goes into much less depth than Stern, and is open to similar criticisms.[24] A more interesting aspect of Malina's arguments is his discussion of present, past, and future orientation. By this, he means whether a culture predominantly considers the past, the present, or the future to be most significant when thinking about values and goals, and when it comes to diagnosing and solving problems. A future-oriented culture places value on future goals, and acts in the present to shape the future and make these goals attainable. Malina gives modern American culture as an example of this.[25] In much of the Western world, it is common to plan for things far into the future. Children are encouraged to work hard at school so they can gain good qualifications, which will allow them to enter a profession, and have a comfortable lifestyle many years in the future. Adults are encouraged to put significant amounts of the money they earn into pensions, which only bear fruit decades later. Governments put in place long-term plans, and businesses spend huge sums of money on research to anticipate what the future may bring.

In contrast, a culture with a past-orientation decides what to do in the present primarily by considering what has gone before, placing significant value on tradition, and cultural continuity. An example of this would be a culture that practices ancestor worship, where it is more important to act in a way which honours and remembers previous generations, than it is to shape the world for future generations. A culture with a present-orientation focuses on the day-to-day, with little regard for the distant future. Malina argues that while future orientation dominates in the Western, developed world, it is actually relatively rare among humans as a whole.[26] He argues that future orientation requires specific

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[23] Bruce J. Malina, 'Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989), 1-31, at 2.

[24] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 19-23.

[25] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 5.

[26] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 5. Malina relies primarily on Florence Rockwood Kluckholn and Fred L. Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations* (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1961). It is worth noting that these orientations are not mutually exclusive. A present-orientated culture is primarily focussed on the present, but not exclusively so.

cultural elements. First, 'people must share the strong belief in the conditional probability that if some act is performed in the present there is a great probability of realization of a goal state in the future.' Second, 'people must have a strong commitment to value goals whose attainment can only occur in the future.'[27] Crucially, for these elements to be credible, there is a necessary condition: the basic survival needs of the present must be met. If one is constantly struggling day to day for survival, planning for the future is simply not feasible.

For Malina, the present orientation of ancient Meditteraneans, along with the absence of an abstract concept of time, produces a social system based only on 'what concretely is.'[28] One of the major implications of this is that the New Testament authors themselves were present-oriented, and this raises the possibility of serious misreading of the New Testament texts by interpreters who approach them with a future-orientation. As Malina argues, 'in the New Testament period there was no tension between the "now" and the "not yet." When those writings were written and collected, there was only emphasis on a rather broad "now."'[29] He goes on to suggest that this means that eschatology, apocalyptic, and the delay of the parousia have to be rethought, because they have been coloured by 'anachronistic and ethnocentric overlay.'[30] Malina gives a number of examples of specific texts where such anachronistic misreadings have occurred, including Mark 13:30; Matt. 16:28; 24:34; Luke 9:27; 21:32. On his analysis, all of these verses are concerned with the present, and have been misread by interpreters who incorrectly assume that they are concerned with the future.

The points raised by Malina regarding the difference between present-orientation and future-orientation are well worth making, and he is surely correct to warn of the possibility of misreading ancient texts by interpreting them through modern cultural eyes. There are, however, significant problems with the conclusions that he draws from his analysis. Malina's broad definition of the present is quite unpersuasive. He expands the present to incorporate the near-past and the near-future, linked together by concrete processes: 'what a person *was* aware of in the past relative to what one *is* aware of at present as well as what *one is on the point of being* aware of due to the past and present all form a single meaningful now, the actual present. The antecedent and the forthcoming blend in with the ongoing.'[31] There is an element of circularity in this statement. Malina defines the present in a way which can account for a larger body of evidence, but in doing so he weakens the force of his argument.

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[27] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 7.
[28] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 10.
[29] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 29.
[30] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 29.
[31] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 13.

Malina confuses matters further when he introduces the concept of 'imaginary time.' This is the time that 'falls outside the horizon of the experience world,' i.e. that which goes beyond the elongated present.[32] Only God knows what falls in imaginary time, because it extends beyond the broad, concrete present. Hence, texts like Mk. 13:32 and Acts 1:7, which warn against looking forwards into this imaginary time. This makes it difficult, however, to see how Malina can reach the conclusion that there is no tension between the now and the not yet. An example of this is Romans 9-11. One of the many points that Paul makes in this passage is that the people of Israel have not yet arrived at their final destination. In the present, the majority of Israel have rejected the Messiah. In the future, however, things will be different. Paul concludes this lengthy passage by revealing a 'mystery': all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26).[33] Paul reveals something that will happen in 'imaginary time.' In fact, it is the distinction between the concrete present and the imaginary time of the future which creates the tension between the now and not yet that Malina rejects. The distinction that Malina introduces between present-orientation and future-orientation should prompt some caution when reading the New Testament, but the conclusions drawn from the distinction go far beyond the available evidence.

iii. Cyclical or Linear Time

Another distinction that often crops up in discussions of ancient concepts of time, and in particular the differences between Hebrew and Greek concepts of time, is the distinction between cyclical and linear time.[34] Cyclical time, or circular time, refers to the idea that time repeats itself in cycles. This can refer to the entirety of time itself. In linear time, there is no such repetition. Time has a clear beginning and a clear end. When used as a means of distinguishing between Greek and Jewish culture, however, the cyclical/linear distinction is unhelpful, for the simple reason that the two are not mutually exclusive. This means that to categorize the Greek concept of time as cyclical and the Hebrew concept of time as linear is far too simplistic, particularly as this gives the unwarranted impression that the two are very different.

For example, writing about the concept of time in Chronicles, Ehud Ben Zvi raises the question of whether for the Chronicler, the arrow of time 'might be curved, of whether it must be fully mono-directional or may end up being a combination of mono-directional and

[32] Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 14.
[33] For a detailed discussion of this text, see chapter 8.
[34] For example, see Malina, 'Christ and Time,' 16.

circular.'[35] Circular time involves both social and astronomical aspects, with a focus on days, weeks, months, years, festivals, and events that are repeated regularly, determined by both the movement of heavenly bodies, and religious institutions. Chronicles is also interested in linear time, of plotting events accurately in relation to each other, in an attempt to discern historical cause and effect at both the human and divine level. This is not history as we know it, but there is still a concern for chronology.[36] Events are dated relatively, with reference to other events, rather than on an 'objective' time-scale, but they still hold important temporal attributes of before and after. There is a cyclical aspect built into this chronology, which is itself rooted in theological convictions about humans and God. Humans are sinful, and so they repeatedly rebel; God is faithful, and so he repeatedly restores.[37]

Cyclical and linear concepts of history also co-exist in Greek thought. In an essay on ancient historiography, Arnaldo Momogiliano surveys a number of Greek authors, including Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius, arguing that there is a distinction between Greek philosophy and history on the subject of time. Whereas Greek philosophers often thought of time as cyclical, Greek historians tended not to.[38] These examples should warn against making broad claims about "the Greek concept of time" or "the Hebrew concept of time."[39] Cultures such as these are multifaceted, and what is true for one group or individual within a culture is not necessarily true for the culture as a whole.[40]

In his study of time in history, Dennis Feeney reaches a further conclusion. Not only can different people within the same culture hold different understandings of time, but also

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[35] Ehud Ben Zvi, 'About Time: Observations About the Construction of Time in the Book of Chronicles' *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 22.1 (2000), 17-31, at 31.

[36] James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 27, argues against the suggestion that the Hebrew bible is not particularly concerned with chronology: 'The Old Testament contains a complete and carefully worked-out chronological system, by which a large number of the important events (and a good many details of less apparent significance) can be dated in relation to one another, and in particular dated from the absolute datum point of the creation of the world.'

[37] Ben Zvi, 'About Time,' 31.

[38] Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Time in Ancient Historiography' *History and Theory* 6 (1966), 1-23, at 13.

[39] Momigliano, 'Time in Ancient Historiography', 18-20, does suggest four ways in which the approach of Hebrew historians differs from that of their Greek counterparts: 1. Biblical history is continuous from creation to 400 BC; 2. There is a less stringent eligibility criterion, e.g. they see no need to explain how we know the content of the conversations between Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3; 3. Remembrance is a religious duty; 4. Hebrew historians were not prophets, but they did subordinate themselves to prophets.

[40] If the distinction between cyclical and linear time is unhelpful, a more useful distinction might be between teleological and ateleological time. In teleological time, history is going somewhere, rather than repeating endlessly. History is moving towards a goal, or a final time when it will come to an end. A teleological understanding of history is suggested by Paul when he argues that the eschaton is approaching.

individual people can themselves 'inhabit different frames of time, often simultaneously - cyclical, recurrent, linear, social, historical.'[41] Feeney uses the example of a merchant, 'who occupies his own mercantile time horizon while still intermittently engaging with the Church's time horizons.' Such a person's understanding of time is complex and malleable, because they are 'engaged throughout in a dialectic between two different temporal calculi, of profit versus salvation, of time to be used as a commodity versus eternal time as the goal of his earthly existence.'[42] This should alert us to the possibility that someone like Paul – who engages with a wide range of different people and groups, who writes for a variety of purposes, and who performs a number of different roles in varied circumstances – might also think about time in complex, malleable ways. Any attempt to establish a rigid temporal or historical framework for Paul, and to then read the Pauline texts in terms of this framework, risks obfuscating their complexities and flexibility.

iv. Experienced Time

As well as considering how people think about time, it is also important to recognize that time is *experienced*. In a wide-ranging study, Hugh Rayment-Pickard considers a number of different ways in which humans experience and interpret time:[43]

When we are trying to understand time from the human point of view, we are generally trying to place the dots into some kind of pattern or sequence. We join them with story-lines that show how the dots relate to one another. Are all the dots on an ascending line heading in some direction? Are they all piling up in a purposeful way? Or are the dots a random splatter, like Rorschach ink blots, scattered here and there without pattern or reason? Or is each dot meaningful in its own right, like the circles on a Damien Hirst spot painting: free-standing epiphanies that have their own inherent value? Or perhaps the dots are just an ellipsis in time - dot-dot-dot - a line of events marking time before some future revelation? And how do the events of history, or the

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[41]D.C. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007), 3.

[42] Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 4.

[43] The two are intimately linked. How one thinks about and analyses time directly influences how one experiences it, and vice versa.

events that make up our lives, relate to the 'Big Dot', the event that Christians call the end-time or eschaton?[44]

Rayment-Pickard outlines four 'types' of time, all different ways or modes of existing in, experiencing, or interpreting time: Catastrophic time, Apocalyptic Time, Kairic Time, and Prophetic Time. These categories provide a useful heuristic tool for looking at the different approaches to time that we find in the New Testament, and in the Pauline corpus specifically. Each of these categories can be applied on a micro scale, in terms of how the passage of time is experienced on a day-to-day level, or on the macro scale of describing patterns, lines, and shapes, or the lack of them, across the broad swathes of history.

The first type of time is C-type, or catastrophic time. This is where time is running out, but is only heading in a destructive direction. There is no final destination or end of time which gives time its meaning. Time is ultimately pointless; meaning and redemption are absent.[45] A person living in C-type time lives in despair, with no real hope for the future, and no reason to believe that their actions in the present have any meaning. Rayment-Pickard uses the example of the Greek God Chronos. It was prophesied that one of his children would depose him, and so in a bid to prevent the inevitable, he attempted to eat each of his children. Zeus, however, survived, and later killed his father. Like Chronos, a person living in catastrophic time experiences the passage of time bringing them closer to the end, with no hope of salvation.

C-type time is significant theologically because it is the antithesis of religious thinking. Where religion affirms that salvation is possible, and that in the future things will be better, Catastrophic Time offers no such hope. That said, there are in fact examples of Catastrophic time in the Bible. Ecclesiastes despairs that 'all is vanity and a chasing after the wind,' with no salvation in sight, because 'What is crooked cannot be made straight' (Ecc. 1:14-15). Paul offers a similar catastrophic vision of humanity when describing the human situation in the opening chapters of Romans. All are in sin (3:10), and all are without excuse (1:20). To compound matters further, God has responded to humanity's rejection of his ways by giving them over to their sinful desires (1:24, 26). The fall begins a C-type time, because each generation is born into sin, and is unable to do anything to redeem itself. Redemption narratives define themselves against C-type time.

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[44] Hugh Rayment-Pickard, *The Myths of Time: From St Augustine to American Beauty* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2004), 10.

[45] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 42.

In contrast to directionless and despairing C-type time is A-type, or Apocalyptic time. 'Apocalyptic time is pregnant time, time orientated towards a disclosure to come.'[46] This approach to time is characterized by watching, hoping, and waiting. To live in Apocalyptic time can mean waiting for a particular event that is hoped for or expected, or it can be characterised by a more general attitude towards the future: 'Instead of *planning* the future, we *remain open* to it.'[47] In some ways, Apocalyptic time captures the eschatological tension between the now and the not yet, as the church eagerly awaits what is yet to come.

There are examples of Apocalyptic time in Paul's letters. In Romans 8, for example Paul describes a creation that 'waits with eager longing for the revelation of the children of God' (8:19). Another notable example of A-type thinking in Paul is found in 1 Thessalonians. Here, Paul writes to a church suffering under the burden of persecution, and clearly struggling. His advice to them is 'to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs...so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one' (4:11-12). In what follows, Paul encourages the Thessalonians by offering them a glorious vision of Christ's return, and of the awaiting church going out to meet him (4:13-17). The caveat is that the exact timing of this is unknown; all they can do is wait and hope (5:1-11). This is not the triumphant church, striding forwards to carry out God's mission on earth; this is 'the apocalyptic church, huddled in waiting for the End Time.'[48]

In contrast to A-type time's hopeful and patient expectation for the future, K-type, or Kairic time is focused more on the present. Kairic time 'refers to any view of history as a series of moments *each* potentially complete in itself.'[49]

> There are weak and strong versions of kairic theology. In the weak version...the *kairos* of the incarnation is a middle point in the time-line of redemption...This *kairos* does not challenge the linear aspect of redemptive time, but gives it shape and structure. By contrast, the strong version of kairic theology sees the incarnation as a fundamental disturbance in the linear model of redemption. The *kairos* of the incarnation brings the *telos* of history into the middle of time. Thereafter every moment becomes a kairic opportunity for communion. The strong *kairos* sees redemption not as a line, but as a dispersal pattern of moments through time, a

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[46] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 65. The meaning of 'apocalyptic' is a significant and contested issue, which I will examine in chapter 3. Here, I use it in the way Rayment-Pickard does.

[47] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time*, 71.

[48] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time*, 110.

[49] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 87.

constellation of openings and epiphanies in the dreary and often tragic chronicle of linear history. The *eschaton* becomes an ever-present possibility, rather than a future hope.[50]

The idea that 'The eschaton becomes an ever-present possibility, rather than a future hope' carries a tone strongly reminiscent of Bultmann's reading of Paul.[51] When the gospel is announced, the Christ-event is made present in a real sense. Eschatological hope is realized in the present, through the challenge of the gospel and the decision of faith. The cross is not just a historical event, but is the event which permeates history, creating new potential in each present moment.

The final type of time is P-type, Prophetic time. Here, time is moving forwards purposively, with a clear destination in mind. The true meaning of the present is found not in the present itself, but in the way in which each moment works towards the final goal. In contrast with apocalyptic time, which is characterized by hopeful, expectant waiting for revelation, prophetic time is characterized by action, working through time towards an objective. 'The unfolding of prophetic time feels purposeful, directed, and rational.'[52] In Romans 9-11, Paul outlines a clear sequence, extending into the future, describing how the work of God is being and will be carried out. By doing so, he outlines the place that his own Gentile mission has in God's overall salvific scheme. It is God who acts, but God acts *through* his church, and through apostles like Paul in particular. The church is purposeful and missional, working to carry out God's plans for history.

Applying his scheme to a Christian context, Rayment-Pickard suggests that when the church operates in apocalyptic time, this can lead to an insular, inactive attitude, where the task of the church is simply to survive until the end comes.[53] This contrasts with prophetic time, where the church works alongside God towards a future, expected goal. Rayment-Pickard suggests Ephesians as an example of this kind of ecclesiology. Referring to Eph. 1:10 specifically, he writes: 'This is not the apocalyptic church, huddled in waiting for the End Time. This is the prophetic church mobilized for creative participation in God's plan for the future.'[54] Rayment-Pickard's typology offers a fairly broad framework, and he considers a wide range of texts. His typology is not intended to apply to Paul specifically, and his

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[50] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 91.
[51] See chapter 2.
[52] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 110.
[53] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 84.
[54] Rayment-Pickard, *Myths of Time,* 113.

understanding of apocalyptic does not correspond with the usage of the term in Pauline studies. Rayment-Pickard's study is still useful, however, in the way that it alerts us to the possibility that we might find different ways of understanding time within the Pauline texts. The 'types' of time are not mutually exclusive, but can overlap and coexist.

2. Paul, History and Time

i. Implications for the Study of Paul

The questions raised by Stern and Malina are well worth asking, and it is always important to be aware of the danger of applying modern, anachronistic ways of thinking to ancient texts. That said, neither Stern nor Malina argue persuasively that we should expect Paul's general approach to the topics of history and time to be fundamentally different to a modern way of thinking. Their arguments warrant a response, but are ultimately unconvincing.

More positively, the work of Momigliano and Feeney alerts us to the possibility that Paul's approach to history and time may be complex and multi-faceted. Paul may think about time in different ways, and situate his own life in relation to other historical events in different ways, depending on the situation. According to Rayment-Pickard's typology, we can see evidence of different types of time within the Pauline texts. This does not necessarily mean that Paul was inconsistent or confused. Instead, this observation serves as a warning that to attempt to force the Pauline texts into a rigid or overly simplistic historical or temporal scheme might be to do injustice to them, masking their complexity. This is worth bearing in mind as we start the first part of this study.

Another conclusion that emerges from this discussion is that how one thinks about time depends largely on how one answers two important questions. First, where is the course of time leading to? Is there an ultimate destination in sight, or is there only oblivion? Or, does time lead not to an ultimate goal, but through countless individual moments of potential fulfilment? Second, how is time being directed? Who is in control? Is history a chaotic realm, guided by random chance? Is it under the sway of powerful malevolent forces, or is it meticulously guided by the divine hand? The question of history's teleology determines how one experiences and understands each present moment, whether these moments should be seen as steps on the road to a future goal, or whether each moment has inherent value, apart from all other times.

ii. The Structure of the Thesis

In the remaining chapters of part 1, I will examine the different ways in which questions of history and time have been approached in Pauline scholarship. In chapter 2, my focus will be on twentieth century debates involving influential New Testament scholars including Oscar Cullmann, Rudolf Bultmann, and Ernst Käsemann. Cullmann's salvation-historical reading of Paul, which sees the Christ-event as the decisive midpoint of time, is incompatible with the approach of Bultmann, who abandons the idea of a grand historical narrative, focussing instead on the eschatological present, the individual's existential response to the gospel. Käsemann stands between Cullmann and Bultmann. His 'apocalyptic' reading of Paul shares Bultmann's existential focus, but he also recognises the presence of corporate and cosmic categories, and refuses to remove salvation history from Pauline theology.

In chapter 3, I will show how these debates have continued into the twenty-first century, in discussions of apocalyptic and narrative. Here, I will focus on the work of N.T. Wright and J.L. Martyn, who offer significantly different accounts of history and time in the Pauline texts. Wright seeks to understand Paul's theology in terms of his storied world-view. For him, Paul understands the Christ-event in terms of a great narrative of catastrophe and redemption, as Christ fulfils the creator's rescue plan begun in Abraham. Martyn, in contrast, sees the Christ-event as an incongruous, unprecedented divine invasion of the cosmos, which both reveals and combats humanity's monolithic state of slavery.

In chapter 4 I will introduce two additional voices to the discussion: Karl Barth and Walter Benjamin. Barth and Benjamin provide different, valuable ways of thinking about history and time. Barth's consideration of how history and eternity collide in the Christ-event, and Benjamin's examination of the interaction between history and the messianic, both offer models for thinking about the way in which the Christ-event interacts with the rest of history.

In part 2, I will turn to the Pauline texts themselves, with particular attention given to 1 Corinthians 10, 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 3-4, and Romans 9-11. This is not an exhaustive list of texts within the Pauline corpus where questions of history and time are significant. Each of these texts, however, has important implications for these topics.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul engages with a scriptural narrative and directly compares an episode from Israel's history to the present situation of the Corinthian church. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul uses the story of Moses' descent from Sinai to compare the old and new covenants, and the two distinct ages to which they belong. In Galatians 3-4, Paul draws a connection between the time of Abraham and the present time, and considers the place and

purpose of the law in the broader scheme of God's interactions with human history. In Romans 9-11, Paul considers a huge span of time, looking into both the past and the future to explain the roles of both Israel and the church in the divine plan.

Finally, in part three, I will bring the insights gained from the examination of these texts together, re-examining the debates of part 1. I will present my conclusions, arguing that Paul's approach to history is complex and multi-faceted, but always centred around the Christ-event, which is in history but is not itself of history.

Chapter 2
Salvation History and Existentialism

It would be difficult to read Paul's letters and come to the conclusion that he has no interest whatsoever in history. On numerous occasions, Paul refers to the past, to stories of Abraham (Gal. 4; Rom. 5), Moses (2 Cor. 3), and Israel (1 Cor. 10; Rom. 9-11). He also considers the future, looking forward to the return of Christ (1 Thess. 4). He preaches Christ crucified, a historical event (1 Cor. 1), and he considers his present life and work in relation to other historical events (Romans 11). This much is relatively clear. What is less clear, however, is how these different aspects of his thought hang together. This problem can be posed in terms of two interrelated questions. First, what role does history play in Paul's theology as a whole? There are a number of ways in which one might answer this question. One might, for example, read Paul and come to the conclusion that history provides the framework for his theology. The Pauline gospel consists of a great story, spanning history from creation to the Christ-event, and onwards towards the eschaton. As another possibility, one might regard this kind of historical framework as a remnant of Paul's Jewish background, which obscures the true essence of his thought, the individual's encounter with Christ. Second, given that history seems to play at least some role in Paul's theology, what shape or structure does it have? Again, this question could be answered in a number of different ways. Does Paul, for example, see an ascending line, beginning with creation and leading through to the eschaton? Does he see a number of separate points orbiting the Christ-event at the centre? Does the Christ-event mark the end of history, or its mid-point, or neither of these options?

In this chapter I will be considering these questions by focussing on three influential figures in twentieth-century New Testament studies: Oscar Cullmann, Rudolf Bultmann, and Ernst Käsemann.[55] These three theologians offer radically different readings of the New Testament, including Paul, and their disagreements provide a useful backdrop for considering some significant issues regarding the interpretation of Paul. In chapter 3, I will show how these same issues remain significant for contemporary interpreters.

For Cullmann, *Heilsgeschichte* lies at the heart of New Testament theology, most notably in Paul. In Cullmann's reading of Paul, the Christ-event is the midpoint of history,

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[55]These three have been chosen because of their influence, because they represent significantly different positions, and because they directly engage with one another. This makes it possible to see the key points at which their interpretations diverge.

and Paul's own self-understanding consists of an attempt to recognise his own place in the great redemptive narrative, spanning the whole of history. Bultmann, however, offers a stark alternative to Cullmann. For him, the salvation-historical elements of Paul's thought are mythological remnants of his Jewish past, lacking in existential significance. To get to the heart of Pauline theology, one must strip away these elements, or at least translate them into a form that is intelligible to modern humans.

For a number of reasons, Käsemann is deeply suspicious of salvation-historical readings of Paul, but he is unwilling to dismiss them entirely. He disagrees with Cullmann, arguing that Paul's apocalyptic gospel does not fit easily within a linear Heilsgeschichte, but he also argues against the individualistic focus of Bultmann's approach, arguing for the significance of corporate and cosmic categories in Paul. The influence of Käsemann's 'apocalyptic' reading of Paul can still be seen today. Before examining these scholars in detail, however, it is important to consider the historical and theological context in which they wrote.

1. The Problem of History and Theology

i. The Legacy of Lessing's Ditch

In 1777, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, inspired by the radical historical criticism of Reimarus, published an essay titled 'On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power,' including a now famous claim which would go on to shape much subsequent debate regarding the relationship between history and faith: 'If no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by means of historical truths. That is: *accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.*'[56] Lessing's point is simple and profound. The central claims of Christian faith, such as the divinity of Christ, or the reality of the resurrection, are claims which cannot be supported by historical research.[57] This is partly because of issues with the historical sources, and partly due to the enormity and

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[56] Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 'On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power' in *Lessing's Theological Writings* ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956) 51-56, at 52.

[57] For the background to Lessing's argument, see Henry Chadwick, 'The Old Orthodoxy and the Fragments of Reimarus' in *Lessing's Theological Writings* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956), 9-29. Chadwick argues that Lessing was influenced by Reimarus' unpublished essay titled 'Impossibility of a Revelation which All Men Can Believe on Rational Grounds,' which argued against the possibility of a universal divine revelation, due to the weaknesses of man, and the threat to the natural order.

significance of such claims. These theological claims, if true, demand a fundamental change in a person which cannot be justified only on the basis of the strength of the historical evidence. This is what Lessing referred to as the 'ugly, broad ditch' that he could not get across.[58] Lessing's critique calls into question any historical basis for the truth of Christianity.

Once it began to be accepted that the New Testament was open to historical criticism, it was only to be expected that attempts would be made to reach beyond the gospels and to construct a life of the 'real,' or 'historical' Jesus. Albert Schweitzer's famous 1906 study *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is a history of some of the first attempts at doing so.[59] Schweitzer offers a powerful critique of these attempts, stating that 'The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the kingdom of God, who founded the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration, never existed. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in historical garb.'[60] Despite the severity of this criticism, Schweitzer does not draw the conclusion which one might expect, that faith in Christ has no basis. Instead, he suggests that faith exists as something apart from history, and that 'Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from him and flows through our time also. This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery.'[61] Historical research into Jesus is possible, but it cannot confirm religious claims about Christ.

This line of thinking is taken up and expanded upon by Martin Kähler.[62] Kähler goes further than simply arguing that any attempts to uncover the 'real' Jesus are futile; he goes on to argue that research into the historical Jesus can be counter-productive; if historical criticism is required to know Jesus, then the kerygma is taken out of the pulpit and placed in the hands of historians.[63] The nature of faith requires that it stands or falls prior to historical research. Kähler writes: 'The figure of Jesus has in every age exerted too powerful and too direct an influence on all sorts of people and still makes too strong a claim on everyone to allow a person to suppose that a decisive stand with respect to Jesus is not implicit in a

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[58] Lessing, 'On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power', 55.
[59] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* ed. John Bowdern trans. W. Montgomery, J.R. Coates, Susan Cupitt, John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2000).
[60] Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 478.
[61] Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 479.
[62] Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* trans. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).
[63] Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus,* 102.

negative attitude to the claim made by the apostolic "recollection" of him…'[64] Historical research is not where the validity of Christianity is to be found, because belief in Jesus is not a rational decision reached after a person has calmly considered all the available evidence. It is an act of faith.

These developments raise some important questions regarding the relationship between history and theology. In what sense, if any, are the gospels historical? What is the relationship between the Jesus of the Christian faith and Jesus of Nazareth? How is the life of the individual believer connected to events in past history? They also raise questions about how we should go about reading the New Testament. Paul, for example, refers to historical people and events, and uses them to inform his theology. These include some historical events which are theoretically verifiable using historical methods, but also events that are outside of history's grasp. We might be able to use archaeology to find evidence of Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt, but we cannot use historical methods to determine whether or not God engraved a divine law on stone tablets. We can learn about the cultural and historical circumstances of first century Palestine, and debate the plausibility of different aspects of the gospels, but we cannot know whether Jesus was raised from the dead, and carried up into the heavens.

ii. Salvation History

One response to the problem of history and theology is to strip the gospel message of historical detail, separating it from a broader historical narrative. As we will see, this is the course taken by existentialist approaches to the New Testament, with Bultmann at the forefront of this movement. An alternative approach is to place the Christ-event into the context of an overarching historical narrative, situating it in relation to previous historical events such as those that make up Israel's history, and in relation to subsequent historical events including the development of the church. In this way, the gospel found in the New Testament does not simply consist of an offer of salvation, or a new way of living, or a hope for a future. Instead, to proclaim the gospel means to proclaim the activity of God throughout history, with the Christ-event as the central point. This kind of scheme is often referred to as a salvation history, a *Heilsgeschichte*.

In a fascinating study of the history of salvation-historical readings of the New Testament, including Paul, Robert Yarbrough traces their development throughout the

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[64] Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus,* 92.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[65] Yarbrough's work is primarily concerned with scholars who consider the broader themes of New Testament theology as a whole, rather than Paul specifically. This is because the division of theology into increasingly fragmented categories – Pauline studies, Johannine studies, etc. – is a relatively recent phenomenon. Hence, it is worth bearing in mind that many early salvation-historical approaches, including the ones examined in this chapter, had the whole of the New Testament in view. This is in contrast to the focus of the present study, which is on Paul specifically. Nonetheless, the critical questions raised by scholars like Bultmann and Cullmann have held considerable influence over the whole field of New Testament studies, including Pauline studies, and they still hold relevance today.

Yarbrough argues that New Testament theology in the past two hundred years has been divided between two contrasting streams.[66] One the one hand is the dominant modernist critical approach, led by Baur, Wrede and Bultmann. These scholars approach the New Testament texts with a modern, rationalistic, post-enlightenment world view, which shapes and limits their interpretation of these texts. On the other hand, there is the salvation-historical approach, or rather, salvation-historical approaches,[67] which attempt to read the New Testament texts on their own terms. The former approach attempts to look beyond the texts to find the subjective human experience or awareness which they testify to; the latter approach seeks to examine the historical claims found in those texts, without dismissing them as the products of a pre-modern worldview which cannot now be accepted.[68]

According to Yarbrough, it was J.C.K Hofmann who coined the term *Heilsgeschichte*,[69] a term which captures the positive relation between salvation and the

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[65] Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiden: Deo, 2004). Yarbrough begins with Baur and Hofmannn, then Wrede and Schlatter, before examining the 'Religion versus Theology' debate of the inter-war period, and the Biblical Theology movement of the 1950s. Afterwards he examines Culmann's reclamation of *Heilsgeschichte*, and Bultmann's response.

[66] Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy?*, 2-4.

[67] As Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy?*, 5, argues, the salvation-historical perspective is 'multiform, not monolithic.'

[68] Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy?*, 37, sees these differences exemplified in the contrasting approaches of Baur and Hofmannn: 'For Baur New Testament theology reflects a variegated, internally contradictory immanent intellectual process, by whereby a simple pure religion was creatively (dialectically) transformed into the basis for a baroque dogmatic superstructure. New Testament theology is in that sense a history of "a search for actuality." Hofmannn reverses the process. "Actuality" stands at the historical starting point, not the end. It is this actuality—its effects, its gradual apprehension, its being experienced, appropriated, and proclaimed in the early church— upon which Hofmannn places emphasis.'

[69] Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy?*, 5.

world's historical processes. In other words, in salvation-historical readings the Christian gospel, as found in the New Testament, does not merely make claims about human subjective experience; it also makes objective claims about historical events, and attributes universal significance to these events. Salvation history is simply the 'affected-by-the-transcendent historical process in its entirety to which the Bible points.'[70] The most famous advocate of a salvation-historical reading of the New Testament, including Paul, is Oscar Cullmann.

2. Oscar Cullmann's *Heilsgeschichte*

i.Cullmann's Approach to History

Cullmann's first major work on the subject is *Christ and Time.*[71] In the introduction, he states that 'the object of the present work is to determine what is central to the Christian proclamation.'[72] For Cullmann, the answer is *Heilsgeschichte*. In contrast to the Greek cyclical conception of time, Cullmann argues that in the New Testament, time is thought of as linear.[73] There are two features which mark out the Christian conception of time. First, that salvation is bound to a continuous time process embracing past, present and future. Second, that all points on the line are related to the one historical fact at the mid-point, i.e. the Christ-event.[74]

Throughout the book, it is clear that Cullmann sees himself as providing an alternative to Bultmann's existential reading of primitive Christianity.[75] Cullmann affirms that the Christ-event is the definitive divine act, and that it occurs within history, although this does not mean that it is historically verifiable. While the Christ-event is the definitive divine act, however, it is not historically isolated. It is one point on a line of divinely-orchestrated events which make up a biblical salvation history. The gospel proclaimed in the New Testament cannot be reduced to the Christ-event itself, as an isolated occurrence. Instead, the gospel only really makes sense when the Christ-event is situated in a broader span of salvation history. Cullmann finds evidence for this way of looking at history in the use of καιρός and

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[70] Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy?*, 56.

[71] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press, 1951).

[72] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 11.

[73] As in chapter 1, it might be more helpful to say that the New Testament conception of time is *teleological*, leading towards a final goal, although this too is open to question.

[74] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 33.

[75] See for example, Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 28: 'The present volume simply seeks to show on the basis of the Primitive Christian sources that this history is not, to use a word of Rudolf Bultmann, a "myth" of which the New Testament revelation can be unclothed.'

αἰών in the New Testament. For Cullmann, καιρός refers to a definite point in time with a fixed content, while αἰών designates a duration or extent of time.[76] This lexical argument was one of the chief sources of criticism of Cullmann.[77]

In his second major work, *The Christology of the New Testament*, Cullmann again argues for a salvation-historical reading of the New Testament, concluding that 'all Christology is *Heilsgeschichte*, and all *Heilsgeschichte* is Christology.'[78] Cullmann surveys the titles used for Jesus in the New Testament, grouping them temporally, in terms of whether they refer to the earthly life of Jesus, the present work of the risen Lord, or the future work of the returning Lord. He argues that New Testament Christology arises from considering the historical work of Christ. Christology is not primarily concerned with abstract speculation about Christ's nature, and it does not come about simply by imposing external myths onto the person of Christ.[79] When Christians began to speculate about Christ's nature and person, and to consider him divine, this speculation arose out of the conviction that Christ was at work at different points in history, as the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, as well as the risen Lord. In other words, Christology developed from a salvation-historical perspective.[80]

Salvation in History builds on Cullmann's previous work, but compared to *Christ and Time* there is less focus on describing the primitive Christian understanding of time, and more focus on considering the theological implications.[81] Cullmann no longer relies on the lexical arguments that were criticised by those who read the earlier work.[82] He devotes a section of *Salvation in History* to Paul, remarking that while he would have previously regarded the question of whether Paul thought along salvation-historical lines as 'superfluous,' present discussions suggest that a case needs to be made.[83] He concedes to Bultmann that the 'now of

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[76] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 39.

[77] James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, 105, groups Cullmann with a number of scholars who mistakenly 'assume that the layout of the lexical stock of language forms a pattern symmorphous with the patterns or structure of thought supposedly common among the speakers of the language concerned...They assume as a consequence that the variations between languages in respect of this layout correspond to differences in the thought or mental pattern typical of the peoples or groups using these languages.' See also pp.47-48 on Cullmann specifically.

[78] Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of The New Testament* trans. Shirley C. Guthrie, Charles A.M. Hall (London: SCM Press, 1959), 326.

[79] Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, 317.

[80] Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, 321.

[81] Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* trans. Sidney G. Gowers (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1967).

[82] Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy*, 233-247, argues with some justification that most of the major criticisms of Cullmann focus on his earlier work, but that the more sophisticated theology found in *Salvation in History* avoids many of the issues found in *Christ and Time*.

[83] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 248.

the decision' is important for Paul, as seen in texts such as 2 Cor. 6:2, but argues that this 'now' is subordinated to salvation history.[84] This salvation-historical perspective 'permeates all the apostle's thinking and acting.'[85]

Cullmann finds evidence of a salvation-historical perspective in a number of Pauline texts. Gal. 3:6-4:7 is given as an example of such a perspective, in the way that Paul connects Abraham with the Christ-event. Abraham does not just prove a timeless principle; he is a point in the Christ-line of salvation history: 'Abraham is more than an "example from Scripture" [*Beispiel aus der Schrift*], more than just any example of an Old Testament witness who believed. Rather, his story is recalled as an event historically understood [*geschichtlich verstandenes Ereignis*], the starting point for a *development* [*Entwicklung*] leading to the baptism of those believing in Christ.'[86] This is a significant point. For Cullmann, the connection between the historical stories of Abraham and Christ does not consist in their shared pattern, or themes, or that they show similar things about God and humanity, but in the fact that they are two parts of the same larger story. Similar points are made with regard to Romans 4, and the Adam-Christ connection in Romans 5.

For Cullmann, it is significant that Paul not only understands the Christ-event in relation to a broader salvation-historical framework, but that he also understands his own life in salvation-historical terms. Cullmann reads Romans 9-11 in this way.[87] Paul's role as apostle to the Gentiles is placed within the context of a wide-reaching divine plan. Christ's self-revelation to Paul gave him a new purpose within this plan. Hence, although the time is short (1 Cor. 7:29), the time in between the resurrection and the parousia is not just a stop-gap. It is a divinely ordained period which makes up one part of the great *Heilsgeschichte*, an indispensable part of God's saving plan, which spans history in its entirety, and is still ongoing.[88]

ii. The Role of Heilsgeschichte in Pauline Theology

We began this chapter with two questions. First, what role did salvation history play in early Christian theology, including Paul? Second, what shape did this salvation history take? For Cullmann, then, the answer to the first question is that salvation history was at the

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[84] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 248, 245.
[85] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 252. On the role of Abraham in Galatians, see chapter 7.
[86] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 129; *Heil als Geschichte*, 111.
[87] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 250-251.
[88] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 252.

very heart of early Christian theology.[89] This history cannot be dismissed as 'myth', and the New Testament cannot be 'unclothed' of it without doing irreparable damage to its message. Indeed, Cullmann goes as far as saying that one who rejects 'the historical proof' of the centrality of redemptive history, and who 'is determined to go on to take his chosen attitude to it,' should be aware that he 'thereby makes his own personal decision for or against the Christian message itself.'[90] As for Paul, Cullmann argues that the salvation-historical aspects of his theology cannot simply be dismissed as a remnant of his Jewish background. The kernel of Paul's theology is not to be found by stripping away mythological material, including the idea of salvation history. Paul understands the Christ-event as the definitive act of God *in history*, and this event is to be understood by placing it in the broader framework of the divine plan across history. Furthermore, all Christian self-understanding is defined by its relationship to this historical scheme.

Regarding the shape of this scheme, Christian salvation history takes the same linear form as its Jewish counterpart. In the past, present and future, there are 'special divine *kairoi*,' and by joining these together, the redemptive line emerges.[91] However, while the Christian view shares the same basic shape as the Jewish view - a line of divine acts beginning with creation and ultimately leading towards the eschaton - there is one major difference: 'The chronologically new thing which Christ brought for the faith of Primitive Christianity consists in the fact that *for the believing Christian the mid-point, since Easter, no longer lies in the future*.'[92] This means that while 'what the Jews expected of the future is still expected of the future,' this future event 'is no longer the centre of the redemptive history.'[93]

Cullmann uses the analogy of a decisive battle that takes place before the end of a war. This battle determines the eventual outcome of the war, but does not bring it to an immediate end.[94] It is this which creates the already/not yet tension which is characteristic of New Testament eschatology. The 'shifting of the centre of time' is 'the radically new thing' in early Christian theology.[95] This is a particularly important feature of Cullmann's approach, because we will see it again in chapter 3, in more contemporary readings of Paul. For

[89] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 29.
[90] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 29. By 'historical proof' Cullmann does not mean that the events which make up *Heilsgeschichte* can be historically proven, but that the centrality of *Heilsgeschichte* in the proclamation of the early church is a historical fact.
[91] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 43.
[92] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 81.
[93] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 84.
[94] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 84.
[95] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 86. See also *Salvation in History*, 99.

Cullmann, Paul pulls the different points of salvation history together more closely, such that the climactic moment of salvation history is no longer in the future; it has already occurred in Christ. But the basic shape of Jewish salvation history remains the same, and it provides the structure for Paul's own thought. The Christ-event modifies this structure, without fundamentally changing it. Cullmann sees Paul adjusting the Jewish *Heilsgeschichte* by bringing future hope into the present, without rejecting the idea that the arrival of the messiah is the next stage in the great story of history, going back to creation.

In his later work, Cullmann adds two significant caveats to this basic outline. First, while he maintains that salvation history is linear, he stresses that this is an irregular line, rather than a straight one.[96] Salvation history is not a steady ascent, but includes peaks and troughs. The divine sequence of events is referred to as salvation history 'for want of a better expression.'[97] Because this sequence is constantly coloured by human sin, the redemptive history can also be seen as a 'history of disaster', an '*Unheilsgeschichte.*'[98] This, too, is a significant point. As we will see, one of the main criticisms of salvation-historical readings of Paul – both in Cullmann's time, and in the present day – is that they arguably imply a sense of development, such that the Christ-event is the natural culmination of Israel's history. Cullmann, however, maintains that the Christ-event should be understood as part of a broader *Heilsgeschichte*, while rejecting the idea of natural progression or causation within this history, at least on the human level. The different events that make up salvation history are linked because they are parts of God's plan through history, not because they relate to each other in terms of historical cause and effect.

This leads to the second caveat, which is the claim that while salvation history runs within secular, world history, events can only be identified as belonging to the salvific line through revelation. Hence salvation history is a 'history' which is by definition beyond the reach of historical enquiry, even if some of the individual events which make up that history are open to such enquiry.[99] This is another point for which Cullmann was criticised. If salvation history is beyond the scope of historical enquiry, how can it still be called history? Chief among his critics was Bultmann.

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[96] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 15.
[97] This is an indication that Cullmann recognised the negative connotations of the term.
[98] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 21; *Heil als Geschichte*, 3.
[99] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 77.

3. Bultmann's Existentialist Interpretation

i. Bultmann's Program of Demythologization

History plays a peculiar role in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. On the one hand, questions regarding history permeate his writing, to the extent that Heinrich Ott can with some justification describe history as '*the* one great theme' of his thought.[100] On the other hand, Bultmann repeatedly displays a deep scepticism towards history, and particularly towards its interaction with theology. Matters are made more complicated given the great complexity, and the occasional lack of clarity, found in Bultmann's writing on the subject. In order to fully understand Bultmann's approach to salvation history, it is important to understand his wider theological outlook. Bultmann is most famous for his desire to 'demythologize' the New Testament, a method of interpretation which he describes in a controversial essay.[101] While this essay was published midway through Bultmann's career, it represents a natural development from, and a more systematic clarification of his previous work. Here, Bultmann argues that to ask a modern person to accept the mythological world-view of the New Testament would be 'both pointless and impossible.'[102] It cannot be accepted because it clashes with the scientific world-view, and because it can no longer be maintained given that the parousia has failed to occur.[103] Demythologization helps to get at the real meaning which lies behind the mythical language; myth should be interpreted 'in anthropological terms - or, better, in existentialist terms.'[104]

In addition to his strategy of demythologization, Bultmann can be situated in a long tradition of scepticism regarding the interaction between history and theology, his attitude being a legacy of the work of Lessing, Schweitzer, and Kähler, among others. This is apparent in Bultmann's scepticism regarding the search for the historical Jesus. Bultmann has no problem with historical enquiry in the context of Christian history *per se*. This pursuit can be interesting and rewarding, and can even add concrete details to the picture of Jesus; what it cannot do is aid or provoke the singular decision of faith, which is the heart of Christianity.

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[100] Heinrich Ott, 'Rudolf Bultmann's Philosophy of History' in *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* ed. Charles W. Kegley (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 51-64, at 51. Ott's essay is a response to Bultmann's 1957 Gifford Lectures on History and Eschatology.

[101] Rudolf Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologising the New Testament Proclamation' in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

[102] Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology,' 3.

[103] Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology,' 5.

[104] Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology,' 9.

Bultmann is sceptical about the efficacy of historical theology, because he doubts whether historical theology can ever do what it sets out to do. As Bultmann puts it, 'That God has acted in Jesus Christ, is, however, not a fact of past history open to historical verification. That Jesus Christ is the Logos of God can never be proved by the objective investigation of the historian.'[105] For Bultmann, the decision of faith is made when a person is confronted by the kerygma of Christ, which becomes an eschatological encounter, not when they consider the historical evidence for the Christian claims about Christ. This is significant for the question of salvation history, because for Bultmann any salvation-historical interpretation inevitably clogs up the kerygma with unverifiable and irrelevant historical claims. What is important is the existentialist implications of the faith encounter.[106]

One important feature of Bultmann's discussion of issues relating to history is the distinction between *historisch* and *geschichtlich*, a distinction which Bultmann takes from Kähler. The difference between these two terms is difficult to translate precisely into English, but a common approach is to translate the former as 'historical' and the latter as 'historic'. A 'historical' (*historisch)* event or person is the object of historical enquiry, an object which is 'uncovered' by the tools and methods of the historian, with no extra-historical additions. For example, the 'historical Jesus' is the figure who is uncovered when the gospels and other relevant sources are examined critically by the historian. In contrast, a 'historic' (*geschichtlich*) person or event is one which has meaning or significance beyond its time. *Historie* is the account of what has happened. *Geschichte* is concerned with what this means.[107] As Bultmann makes clear, the meaning of history lies in its existential significance: '*the meaning in history lies always in the present*, and when the present is conceived as the eschatological present by Christian faith the meaning in history is realized.'[108]

In fact, for Bultmann there are really at least three distinct 'Jesuses' to consider:[109] the 'real' Jesus, now inaccessible, the Jesus we find recorded in the gospels, and the Jesus of faith, the risen lord at the centre of Christian faith. To these might be added a fourth, the

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[105] Rudolf Bultmann, 'Bultmann Replies to His Critics' in *Kerygma and Myth (Volumes I&II)* ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch trans. Reginald H.Fuller (London: SPCK, 1972), 191-211, at 207

[106] Bultmann's existentialism was particularly influenced by Heidegger. On this connection see David Fergusson, *Bultmann* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 63-5; 91-4; John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (London: SCM Press, 1955).

[107] See Fergusson, *Bultmann*, 57.

[108] Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology: The Gifford Lectures 1955* (Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 155.

[109] Gareth Jones, *Bultmann: Towards a Critical Theology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 34.

Jesus of historical criticism, after traces of the third Jesus have been removed from the second. Bultmann is primarily concerned with the Jesus of faith, who becomes present to an individual through the kerygma. In fact, some of his statements suggest a surprising disregard for the real Jesus, or the Jesus found in the gospels.[110] Nonetheless, while the kerygmatic Christ does tend to overshadow the earthly Christ, they still remain inextricably linked in Bultmann's thought. The locus of this connection is the cross.

Despite Bultmann's general rejection of historical theology, he does reserve a unique role for one particular historical event: the cross of Christ. For Bultmann, while the primary locus of salvation is in the present, in the individual's existential encounter with God, and the decision of faith, this encounter remains inextricably linked to the cross of Christ. It is here, on the cross, where God's judgment of the world can be found, and it is the proclamation of the crucicentric gospel which brings about the existential decision of faith. The cross of Christ is 'the embodiment of the hidden and revealed wisdom of God',[111] and when the kerygma of Christ is preached, the cross becomes a 'personal encounter' and 'ever-present reality'.[112] The individual is faced with the same question which faced Paul, whether or not they are 'willing to see in a historical fact like the person and destiny of Jesus the breaking in of the time of salvation.'[113] Preaching brings about an existential encounter in the present, but this remains tied to the eschatological act of God on the cross.

This raises two related questions. First, is it possible for Bultmann to speak of Christ crucified as the eschatological judgment of God without recourse to mythological language, language which Bultmann's interpretation of the kerygma cannot allow for? Bultmann's refusal to use 'objectifying' language would seem to preclude the possibility of a particular historical event being identified as a divine action.[114] Most of the ways in which the

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[110] See Jones, *Bultmann*, 38-39.

[111] Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith: The Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 33.

[112] Rudolf Bultmann, 'Reply to Theses of J. Schniewind' in Hans-Werner Bartsch ed., trans. Reginald H. Fuller, *Kerygma and Myth (Volume II)*, 102-123, at 111.

[113] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 115.

[114] Heinrich Ott, 'Objectification and Existentialism' in Hans-Werner Bartsch ed., trans. Reginald H. Fuller, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate – Volumes I and II* (London: SPCK, 1972), 306-335, at 315, argues that Bultmann seeks to banish the subject/object distinction from theology. By this he means that revelation is not understood as something "out there", waiting to be discovered. Historical events have no objective value as revelation or redemption until they are encountered subjectively: 'Where Bultmann speaks of the kerygma he is always speaking of the redemptive act of God which has occurred and continues to occur *pro me*. But the important thing is always the *pro me*. That is what Bultmann focuses his attention on, to the exclusion of everything else. Of course, the redemptive act is prior *datum*, it is *extra nos*. But it becomes relevant and "historical" only in the moment when it occurs *pro me*.'

significance of the cross is expounded rely on mythological language – that Jesus was God incarnate, and was raised up to glory, or that Jesus' death served as a ransom payment – language that Bultmann would deem unsuitable for a modern world-view.

If this can be answered, the second question arises: why is *this* particular event, the cross of Christ, identified as the eschatological event, rather than any other?[115] What is it about this particular historical event which allows it to be identified as God's eschatological act? In an article on Bultmann's concept of myth, Cullmann criticizes him on this point, arguing that if 'Faith is not the conviction that the event of Golgotha has effectively placed us in a new situation, but that it invites us to reconsider our existence,' the consequence is that 'even the single historical event that Bultmann allows to remain as an element of salvation is, in reality, stripped of its character as a unique event.'[116] The ultimate result of Bultmann's approach is that he strips the New Testament 'of the central events which form the substance itself of the Christian faith.'[117]

Bultmann's response to the first of these questions is not entirely convincing. In reply to a similar criticism by Edwin Good,[118] Bultmann states the following:

> I should like to reply that talk which concerns the activity of God is analogical. It seeks to express that the being confronted by God has its origin in God alone and that man in his relations with God is only the passive, the receiving one. The case is similar in speaking of the concept of the transcendence of God…If I may put it sharply, God is beyond the world which I myself am in. I can also say that God's otherworldliness means that he in relation to my world is nothingness, just as to those without faith he must appear as nothing…But also he encounters me in that which shakes me to the depths, that is, which brings me to naught and precisely thereby frees me from myself and thus from the world. My understanding of myth will not prohibit me from speaking of God in images, for instance in songs which praise God, thank

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[115] This question is raised by Friedrich K. Schumann, 'Can the Event of Jesus Christ be Demythologised?' in Hans-Werner Bartsch ed., Reginald H. Fuller trans., *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate – Volumes I and II* (London: SPCK, 1972), 175-190, at 180.

[116] Oscar Cullmann, 'Rudolf Bultmann's Concept of Myth and the New Testament,' *Concordia Theological Monthly* 27.1 (1956), 13-24, at 19.

[117] Cullmann, 'Rudolf Bultmann's Concept of Myth,' 23.

[118] Edwin M. Good, 'The Meaning of Demythologisation' in Charles W. Kegley ed., *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 21-40, at 35. See also Karl Barth, 'Bultmann – An Attempt to Understand Him' in Hans-Werner Bartsch ed., Reginald H. Fuller trans., *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate – Volumes 1&2*', 83-132, at 110.

him, or ask of him. In a word, the existential meaning of symbolic language must be grasped.[119]

Essentially, Bultmann argues that there is nothing wrong with speaking of God, as long as it is kept in mind that words about God are symbolic, analogical expressions of the existential encounter with God. The implication of this claim is that the project of demythologization is merely a form of translation, swapping outdated symbols for new ones. It seems, however, that Bultmann's demythologization runs deeper than this. Mythological language is not simply rejected by Bultmann because it is no longer used, but because it reflects deeper thought structures, including a world-view which must now be rejected. Demythologization is not mere translation, or a modern updating of the kerygma, but is existential interpretation. Bultmann takes myth to be an out-dated means of expressing existential ideas.

For Bultmann's project to be complete, he must either reject the possibility of any meaningful talk of God, or find a way of talking about God in a way which is compatible with the modern scientific world-view. If the way of doing this is to describe the human encounter with God in subjective, existential terms, then the problem of relating this to an objective, historical event remains. To his credit, Bultmann does show a keen awareness of this lingering problem. He goes on to state that 'Faith stresses the paradoxical identity of an historical event and the eschatological event. If the historical Jesus were eliminated, then the paradox would be destroyed and the kerygmatic Christ would be reduced to a mythological figure.'[120] Aware of the dangers faced by severing the link between the existential, eschatological present and the historical past, but having disarmed himself of the tools needed to maintain that link, Bultmann falls back onto paradox.

Bultmann argues that the cross of Christ can be identified as the historic event of divine judgment because of the existentially transformative power of the kerygma. In Christian theology generally, the claims of the gospel, and its authenticity, are founded on the one from whom the gospel originates. The power of the kerygma comes from not just what it says, but *who* it testifies to; Christology is foundational because it is the Christ, the son of God, the Logos, who is at the centre of the gospel. As Karl Barth puts it in his criticism of Bultmann, 'the New Testament describes the cross of Christ as an event with an inherent

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[119] Bultmann, 'Reply' in Charles W. Kegley ed., *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 257-288, at 259.
[120] Bultmann, 'Reply,' 260.

significance of its own', rather than an event which acquires significance 'by being taken up in the kerygma.'[121] Bultmann seems to suggest that this relationship actually runs in the opposite direction – Christ crucified is the definitive act of God because it is in the preaching of the Christocentric kerygma that one is confronted by an existential decision. In other words, the gospel is known as revelation because of its existential efficacy, not because of its apparent origin, which loses its veridical value when mythological terms such as 'son of God' can no longer be used.

ii. Bultmann's Critique of Cullmann

Even if Bultmann's overall project has problems, he still offers a stark alternative to Cullmann's reading of Paul, stripping away the mythological, salvation-historical baggage to reveal the existential challenge of the cross. These differences appear most clearly in an essay Bultmann wrote in response to *Christ and Time*. Bultmann criticizes Cullmann on several points.[122] First, he disputes Cullmann's use of the term 'history', stating 'I cannot see that for him "history" in the phrase "history of salvation" has any different meaning from what it has in "history of the world".'[123] Bultmann's point is that Cullmann's use of the term 'history' is imprecise and misleading. Put simply, the scheme of salvation-history sought by Cullmann within the biblical witness is not a 'history' which could be labelled as such outside of theological enquiry. Such a scheme necessarily involves the identification of divine intervention in time, a 'historical' feature unable to be verified through the means of historical criticism.

This aspect of Bultmann's criticism has some merit, and in *Salvation in History*, Cullmann responds to Bultmann's criticism by conceding that the use of the term is not entirely appropriate, recognising that faith puts an emphasis on certain events that history cannot justify.[124] Nonetheless, he maintains that salvation history and history are at least analogous.[125] This analogy consists of three central points. First, salvation history is concerned with a connected series of events, 'even if the principle of the connection is not arrived at historically.' Second, within the divine plan a place is left for historical contingency, for human resistance and sin. *Heilsgeschichte* also includes a history of disaster,

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[121] Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann - An Attempt to Understand Him,' 98.
[122] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith,* 226-240.
[123] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 231.
[124] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 23.
[125] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 78.

an *Unheilsgeschichte*. Third, the essential individual events which make up salvation history are themselves historical events, in the sense that they really occurred.

Quite apart from issues of terminology, Bultmann also outlines some deeper issues with Cullmann's approach. One such issue is related to Bultmann's use of *Sachkritik.* By this is meant a method of interpretation which focuses on the central subject-matter of the text, which may become obscured by the details. For Bultmann, the essential message of the New Testament is found in the preaching of Christ crucified, and the existential, transformative encounter with God. Bultmann accuses Cullmann of distorting the central message of the New Testament by making salvation-history the dominant motif, stating that Cullmann 'turns the theology of the New Testament into a Christian philosophy of history.'[126] By imposing a salvation-historical scheme upon the New Testament, Cullmann is deemed to have elevated certain aspects to a more prominent level than is merited, and thereby to have taken emphasis away from the real centre of the New Testament witness. By doing so, this witness is distorted. According to Bultmann, this distortion runs in two directions, first by failing to account for large portions of the New Testament where a salvation-historical outlook is absent or insignificant, such as the Johannine texts,[127] and second by failing to take into account the significance of the delay of the parousia. Bultmann argues that while Cullmann identifies the Christ-event as the mid-point of history, this is a position which can be maintained only after the parousia has failed to materialize. For primitive Christianity, the Christ-event is the end of history. The central eschatological message of the New Testament is existential rather than salvation-historical.

It is with regard to eschatology where we can see the most prominent dividing line between Cullmann and Bultmann. Bultmann's final and most significant charge against Cullmann is that he fails to grasp the problem of 'the temporality of eschatological existence.'[128] Whereas for Cullmann, the eschatological age can be plotted on a historical line which begins with Christ and continues through the present, to be fulfilled in the future, for Bultmann eschatology occurs in the present, in the existential encounter between the individual and God. In the case of this particular criticism, Thielicke is correct when he states that the 'elimination of salvation history' is the 'logical consequence' of Bultmann's

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[126] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 233.
[127] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 235.
[128] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 239.

demythologization.[129]Any attempt to identify the course of divine action in history will inevitably stray into what Bultmann would identify as mythological thinking. Cullmann's scheme collapses if the parousia is dismissed, but for Bultmann, hope in the parousia, at least in the literal, cosmic way in which the New Testament describes it, can no longer be maintained if the New Testament is demythologized. For Bultmann, to speak of salvation history is necessarily mythological, and so it must be rejected in favour of the kind of existentialist eschatology which Bultmann finds in Paul and John.[130] Cullmann, however, sees this as a distortion of what eschatology really means, and he criticizes Bultmann directly:

> The words 'eschatology' and 'eschatological' relate to the end time [*die Endzeit*], not the time of decision [*die Entscheidungszeit*]. Certainly, the end time is a time of decision, but every time of decision is not an end time; therefore, we shall use the expression 'eschatology' and 'eschatological' in their etymological sense of 'end time'. That, of course, does not mean that in the New Testament they are not related to the present...However, the concept of the 'end time' is not to be understood in an existential way, but in the temporal sense of 'final time' [*letzte Zeit*]. That means that it remains closely bound up with the concept of salvation history. To speak of 'final time' only has meaning when it stands in connection with a preceding time [*einer vorhergehenden Zeit*].[131]

In Paul's antinomies between law and faith, spirit and flesh, freedom and slavery, and in his focus on an inaugurated eschatology, where justification is already made possible in the present, Bultmann sees an eschatological scheme focused on the present transformation of the individual, from one mode of being to another, brought about by the message of the gospel and the decision of faith which follows. While it is undoubtedly true that much of what Paul

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[129] Helmut Thielicke, 'The Restatement of New Testament Theology' in Hans-Werner Bartsch ed., Reginald H. Fuller trans., *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate – Volumes 1&2* (London: SPCK, 1972), 138-174, at 141.

[130] It is important to note that Bultmann's essay is a response to Cullmann's *Christ and Time*. In his later work, Cullmann's more nuanced position allows him to avoid some of the force of Bultmann's criticisms. In addition, Cullmann argues that Bultmann's problems with his approach stem from an attempt to make the New Testament palatable to modern man. Cullmann portrays his own approach as simply trying to outline the theology of primitive Christianity, regardless of how unpalatable it may be: '[Salvation-historical events] may be unacceptable to the modern mind, but this does not mean that they were not constitutive and essential to that of the Christians of the first century.' Cullmann, 'Bultmann's Concept of Myth,' 23.

[131] Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 79; *Heil als Geschichte*, 61.

writes fits well with Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of eschatology, his presentation of Paul is ultimately skewed. Paul's eschatology is individualized and realized in the present, but not, as Bultmann would have it, exclusively so. In addition to this realized, individualized eschatology, there are additional aspects to Paul's eschatology which lend less support to Bultmann. Bultmann is forced to dismiss these as the remnants of Jewish apocalyptic thought.[132]

For example, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul writes of a future time when the dead will be raised, death will be destroyed, and rulers and powers will be put under Christ's feet. In Romans 8 Paul describes the 'whole creation' eagerly awaiting future revelation, and for incomparable glory which is yet to be revealed. Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians is to look forward to the time when Christ will return to meet his church. Indeed, Paul makes it explicit that the validity of the present life of faith rests on the truth of this future hope: 'If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied' (1 Cor. 15:19). Bultmann identifies this cosmic language as mythological, which means it must be interpreted existentially. But is it really possible to offer an existential interpretation of passages such as these without distorting their meaning?

An existential interpretation, as Bultmann understands it, is necessarily concerned with humankind. Regarding Paul, Bultmann states that 'Every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa.'[133] Theology is anthropology. Surely, however, the point of cosmic language is to express the conviction that God's action reaches beyond the interior life of individual humans. It aims to show that eschatology is *not* simply anthropology. Bultmann is then left with the choice of either interpreting sections of the Pauline corpus (not to mention the rest of the New Testament) in a way which seems to distort them, or discarding significant portions. One might question whether it is possible to slice apart the Pauline texts while still remaining faithful to them in any meaningful way.

Bultmann's reply to this charge would be to state that it is based on a misunderstanding of demythologization, a process which seeks not to reject mythological material but to interpret and translate it into terms acceptable for modern people. Again, though, this works on the assumption that mythological material in the New Testament is essentially existential in its orientation; a way for first-century writers to express ideas regarding human existence. Indeed, as Bultmann puts it: 'The real point of myth is not to give an objective world picture; what is expressed in it, rather, is how we human beings

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[132] Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, 2.
[133] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 190.

understand ourselves in our world. Thus, myth does not want to be interpreted in cosmological terms but in anthropological terms - or, better, in existentialist terms.'[134] While there is no doubt that mythological language is used in the New Testament to express existential ideas, it is scarcely credible to suggest that this is all that such language does. It also serves what Good describes as a 'functionally scientific'[135] purpose, to describe the world as it really is (or at least as it is really thought to be), apart from humanity. By interpreting mythological language in a purely existential manner, Bultmann unduly narrows down the wider significance of this language.

Nonetheless, while there are certain points at which Bultmann leaves himself open to criticism, for the most part his theological scheme is still impressively constructed. His methodology and presuppositions are clearly stated, and for the most part followed through consistently. Because of this, it is difficult to criticize individual aspects of Bultmann's theological outlook without calling his entire project into question. For example, his rejection of salvation history, and his interpretation of eschatology, both stem from his conviction that the apocalyptic eschatology of primitive Christianity is no longer tenable, a conviction which is open to debate. Similarly, Bultmann's desire to demythologize the New Testament and to interpret it existentially is a consequence of his claim that the mythological world-view of the New Testament cannot be accepted by modern people. Of course, this means that for one who believes that a mythological world-view can be synthesized with a scientific one, or at least held in acceptable tension, Bultmann's interpretative project becomes at best unnecessary, and at worst a damaging distortion of the theology of the New Testament.

4. Ernst Käsemann's War on Two Fronts

Ernst Käsemann is perhaps best remembered for his contributions to research into the historical background of the New Testament. In particular, he played a pivotal role in the second 'quest' for the historical Jesus.[136] Käsemann was also interested in wider historical themes, and a significant proportion of his work focused on Paul. Like Bultmann, under whom he studied at Marburg, Käsemann wrestled with the question of how history should relate to theology; indeed, the influence of Bultmann in Käsemann's work is unmistakable,

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[134] Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, 9.
[135] Good, 'The Meaning of Demythologisation,' 27.
[136] See Ernst Käsemann , *New Testament Questions of Today* trans. W.J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 23-65.

and the two men share a great deal of common ground, including their focus on existential interpretation, their willingness to demythologize the New Testament, and their belief that the New Testament is understood primarily as proclamation and encounter with the kerygma, rather than as a historical document. Nonetheless, there are areas where Käsemann finds himself in significant disagreement with his mentor, and he is certainly not timid when it comes to criticizing Bultmann. Käsemann does not reject Bultmann's reading of the New Testament outright, but he does seek to temper it, placing existentialist questions within a broader, cosmic and corporate outlook.

i. Broadening Bultmann's Existentialism

Käsemann agrees with Bultmann's claim that Paul's theology is distinctively orientated towards the individual,[137] but he argues that Bultmann takes this observation too far, and pushes Paul into a radical individualism. Instead, while individuals are significant for Paul, they cannot be properly considered apart from their wider context. The drawback of existentialist interpretation is that 'although it enables one to see the historicity of man, it does not give an adequate view of world historicity.'[138] Instead, Käsemann emphasizes the 'apocalyptic' aspect of Paul's thought, which he understands as including corporate and cosmic categories: 'The world is not neutral ground; it is a battlefield and everyone is a combatant. Anthropology must then *eo ipso* be cosmology just as certainly as, conversely, the cosmos is primarily viewed by Paul under an anthropological aspect...But neither the exegetical nor the theological findings allow what the apostle calls the universe to be reduced to the world of men alone.'[139] For Bultmann, theology and anthropology stand in a dialectical relationship, but for Käsemann, Christology stands above this dialectic as the primary and dominant category in Paul's theology: 'If the dialectic of 'and vice versa' is seriously meant, neither theology nor anthropology can 'properly' be conceded priority. Yet it might be possible to develop the two in light of Pauline Christology.'[140]

The upshot of this is that the question of humanity's place in history becomes more significant. Whereas Bultmann confines Paul's apocalyptic antinomies primarily to the sphere of the individual, Käsemann takes a step back and recognises a wider, cosmic horizon

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[137] Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1971), 4.
[138] Ernst Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom: A Polemical Survey of the New Testament* trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), 132.
[139] Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom*, 23.
[140] Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom*, 12.

in Paul's thought. The question of humanity's place in the created order as a whole becomes prominent: to respond to the kerygma in faith is not just to open oneself to a new self-understanding, but to choose to place oneself under the lordship of Christ, as opposed to other lords. David Way argues persuasively that this idea of the lordship of Christ plays a crucial role in Käsemann's theology. Where Bultmann has a theology-anthropology dialectic, Käsemann places Christology above both of these categories, broadening each of them.[141] Indeed, Käsemann goes as far as claiming that 'the central theme of the New Testament is the worldwide lordship of the crucified.'[142]

By emphasising the category of apocalyptic, Käsemann affirms that Paul's concerns go beyond the inner life of individuals. Each person's individual circumstances become more important, and these are understood in terms of the wider theme of God's ongoing actions, which are displayed in world history, and not simply in individual encounters with the gospel.[143] Hence, 'Man cannot be defined from within his own limits, but he is eschatologically defined in the light of the name of Christ.'[144] Crucially, for Käsemann, Paul's concern for the world beyond the inner life of individuals must be maintained even after the texts have been demythologised. Whereas Bultmann interprets Paul's talk of demons, powers, and personified sin as ways of expressing existential ideas about humanity, Käsemann is keen to interpret them as referring to a broader, supra-human horizon, where 'law, sin, and death represent the lordship of calamity over the world, thus the possession of the individual person, as well as the entire cosmos.'[145]

Käsemann's move away from Bultmann's anthropology is indicative of a more general difference between the two men. Put simply, Käsemann is significantly less radical than Bultmann in his critical reading of the bible. Bultmann's *Sachkritik* leads him to dispense with sections and themes in scripture which do not sit easily with a post-mythological world-view, or which do not lend themselves to existential interpretation. For Käsemann, this is a step too far; a failure to account for the whole of scripture, at least in

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[141] David Way, The *Lordship of Christ: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Paul's Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 138.

[142] Ernst Käsemann, *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene: Unpublished Lectures and Sermons* ed. Rudolf Landau, Wolfgang Kraus, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Grand Rapids: Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), xiv.

[143] As Ben Dunson, *Self and Other: Individual and Community in Pauline Theology* (Durham University Doctoral Thesis, 2011), 56, puts it, for Käsemann 'the individual is indispensible in Paul, but primarily because the universal compass of the Pauline mission demands a concrete individual response. Individuals are important, but only insofar as they contribute to the establishment of the universal lordship of Christ.'

[144] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 34.

[145] Käsemann, *On Being a Disciple*, 188.

some way, is a sign of deficiency in a theological system. As he states in an implicit criticism of Bultmann: 'Where existence and situation determine, and must determine, every theological statement, perspectives based on salvation history are bound to be passionately rejected. Yet this is to do violence to the texts.'[146] In this respect, then, Käsemann's approach is arguably more balanced than that of Bultmann, and we see the effect of this in his consideration of historical themes. While recognizing the challenges posed by the idea of salvation history, Käsemann remains hesitant to do away with the concept altogether. Bultmann is content to pay little attention to passages such as Romans 9-11, where a salvation-historical scheme seems to be present, but Käsemann is keen to tackle these passages head on, and so the question of how salvation history relates to the rest of Paul's theology is raised.

ii. Käsemann's Cautious Acceptance of Salvation History

Käsemann displays a definite readiness to consider the usefulness of the concept of salvation history, but this readiness is mixed with a great deal of caution. There are several reasons for his caution, some relating to Käsemann's own *Sitz im Leben*. Having lived through the rise of National Socialism, Käsemann is understandably suspicious of the idea of progress in history: 'On the way to a theology of proclamation we rediscovered that Reformation doctrine of justification...This discovery immunized us deeply against a conception of salvation history which broke in on us in secularized and political form with the Third Reich and its ideology...Our experience has made a theology of history suspect for us from the very outset.'[147] Any theology which recognises development through the course of history must account for the actual events of world history; in addition, such a theology opens itself up to misuse.

It is also significant that Käsemann seems to place justification and salvation history in opposition here. This demonstrates the main theological reason for Käsemann's caution towards salvation history: it threatens to take the focus of the gospel away from the doctrine of justification. The danger, as far as Käsemann is concerned, is that a focus on salvation history, considering the wider span of God's interactions in history, may take the emphasis away from the centrality and priority of the divine offer of justification, addressed to individuals. Salvation is not concerned with historical movements and patterns, but with the

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[146] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 65.
[147] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 64.

recognition of human sin, and the need for grace. Salvation-historical approaches which primarily think of the gospel as a historical movement, may distort this emphasis.

Käsemann's Lutheran background means that this is a possibility to be well guarded against, and this defensive attitude is most apparent in his debate with Krister Stendahl. In his hugely influential essay 'Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,' Stendahl argues that traditional Protestant readings of Paul, going back to Luther, have featured a problematic misunderstanding and overemphasis on Paul's doctrine of justification. This is for two reasons. First, Paul's polemic against Judaism, or rather against Judaizers, is traditionally interpreted based on a misconception of Judaism. This reading characterizes first-century Judaism as legalistic and centred on works-righteousness; in actual fact, Stendahl argues, '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.'[148] Second, the Pauline texts concerning justification (Galatians and Romans in particular) are read as answers to the wrong questions. Paul's argument does not stem from introspective questions, asking 'How am I to find a gracious God?'[149] His concern is much more specific: 'how am I to defend the rights of the Gentiles to participate in God's promises?'[150] Under Stendahl's reading, the doctrine of justification is not polemical but apologetic, explaining Paul's understanding of a new phase salvation history in which his mission to the Gentiles plays a central role.

Käsemann's essay 'Justification and Salvation History,' which is primarily a response to Stendahl, is fascinating but problematic, as he fails to come to terms fully with Stendahl's argument. Käsemann recognizes that Paul's justification language is directed against Judaism, but he argues that his criticism of Judaism is not to be confined to a particular historical situation: 'Our task is to ask: what does the Jewish nomism against which Paul fought really represent? And our answer must be: it represents the community of 'good' people which turns God's promises into their own privileges and God's commandments into the instruments of self-sanctification.'[151]

Käsemann's commitment to the doctrine of justification as *the* Pauline doctrine makes him extremely wary of any attempt to relegate it to the periphery. Unlike Stendahl, he refuses 'to subordinate the apostle's doctrine of justification to a pattern of salvation

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[148] Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 80-81.
[149] Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 131.
[150] Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 131.
[151] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 72.

history.'[152] As Stendahl points out in his response to Käsemann, however, this criticism betrays a failure on Käsemann's part to fully grasp the significance of Stendahl's initial critique: 'he seems to beg the question by taking the term justification by faith in the traditional Protestant sense, and doing this in a debate where that traditional interpretation of Paul is the precise question at issue.'[153] Stendhal's question is not what role 'the doctrine of justification' plays in Paul's thought; it is whether this doctrine is present at all when Paul writes of justification. For Käsemann, the doctrine of justification is the heart of the gospel, the theme which best describes the way in which God interacts not only with individual humans, but with the whole of the created order, for all times. For Stendahl, Paul's use of justification is an apologetic strategy, brought out by Paul when the place of Gentiles in the people of God is called into question. It is tied to a particular place and time, and to a question which is no longer directly relevant today. The traditional Protestant extrapolation of this specific situation into more general statements is exegetically unwarranted.

Despite this, Käsemann's position can still be maintained even given the strength of Stendahl's criticism. Stendahl is surely correct when he argues that the Protestant *doctrine* of justification by faith, in all its fullness, cannot be found in specific passages where Pauline speaks of justification by faith. Käsemann misunderstands Stendahl by failing to grasp this central point of Stendahl's criticism. Nonetheless, Stendahl too is incorrect if he means to suggest that this demolishes the foundations of Käsemann's primary doctrine. For Käsemann, the doctrine of justification is displayed in passages such as Galatians 3 and Romans 4, where the question of Jews and Gentiles is raised. Crucially, however, this is not the only place where justification is present; justification stands for the entirety of the Christian message. To proclaim the gospel is to proclaim justification, because the justification of the ungodly is the unifying theme which ties the New Testament proclamation together: 'Salvation, always, is simply God himself in his presence for us. To be justified means that the creator remains faithful to the creature…This means that in justification it is simply the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus which is at stake.'[154] God is primarily revealed in Christ, or more specifically in the cross, and so God is known primarily as the one who justifies the ungodly. Indeed, God's very being 'is the justification of the ungodly and hence the raising of the dead and creation out of nothing. For he acts under the token of the crucified Christ.'[155]

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[152] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 76.
[153] Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 131.
[154] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 74-75.
[155] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 75.

For Käsemann, justification by faith is the overriding theme of the Pauline corpus; the specific language used to describe it is not particularly important. Stendahl is correct to state that when Paul speaks of justification by faith, it is primarily so with regard to the specific issue of whether and how Gentiles can enter into the people of God; Käsemann can simply argue, however, that the Pauline answer to this specific issue is indicative of and guided by the central Pauline claim: that in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has graciously deemed it possible for the unrighteous to stand before God in faith. It is in salvation history that this is demonstrated. God makes himself known as the justifier of the ungodly, and the result of this is that 'salvation history is not the consummation of, let alone the substitution for, justification, but its historical depth [*geschichtliche Tiefe*], i.e., one of its aspects.'[156] Salvation history is never denied by Käsemann, but it is always subordinated to justification.[157]

Käsemann argues further that salvation history is properly understood when it is intimately connected with eschatology:

The Pauline proclamation of the reality of salvation history is deeply paradoxical. This paradox is retained when, in Rom. 4.12ff.; 9.6ff., the apostle discusses the problem of the continuity [*Kontinuität*] of salvation history as exemplified by Abraham. Paul really does talk about continuity [*Kontinuität*] in time and space and does not yet understand the sonship of Abraham in the metaphorical sense which was adopted later. Apparently he finds it important to preserve the fulfilment of the promise to Israel in its character as historical [*geschichtliche*] power as well. Thus in Paul the historical and eschatological dimensions do not yawn apart in the sense that they are essentially and *ab initio* different. The eschatological breaks in upon earth in a very real sense taking root not only in the sacraments, the church and the Christian life, but even in history…The eschatological is neither suprahistory [*Übergeschichte*] nor the inner aspect of historicity[*Innenaspekt einer Geschichtlichkeit*]; it is power which changes the old world into a new one and which becomes incarnate in the earthly sphere…salvation history has a spatial and temporal dimension, frontiers

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[156] Kasemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 75-6; *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 134.
[157] On this point, see Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 257.

dividing off the cosmic spheres of power and a cohesion which leads from creation to Christ and the parousia by way of the choosing of Israel and the promise.[158]

Here, Käsemann's approach begins to share some resemblance with Cullmann's. While salvation history does not dominate Pauline theology, it is an aspect which cannot be ignored. The important thing is to give it its proper role within Paul's theology, without under or overemphasizing it:

> 'I apparently stand between two fronts in refusing either to subordinate the apostle's doctrine of justification to a pattern of salvation history or to allow it to turn into a mere vehicle for the self-understanding of the believer. I would recognize both as necessary. What I would dispute are the respective emphases which are associated with these aspects.'[159]

This is not mere fence-sitting, however. Käsemann is driven by a desire to do justice to the whole of scripture, and this requires a war on two fronts. On the one hand, the approach of Cullmann, which places salvation history at the heart of New Testament theology, overestimates its significance and obscures the real centre of the New Testament, which is justification. The approach of Bultmann, on the other hand, recognizes the heart of the gospel but threatens to rip it from its proper framework and context. An example of this is Bultmann's inability and unwillingness to find a place for Israel and the Old Testament in his theological scheme. This is a failure which Käsemann has no desire to emulate, and an Old Testament figure who particularly grasps his attention is Abraham.

iii. Abraham and Heilsgeschichte

Under threat from Judaizing opponents in Galatia, one of Paul's polemical tactics is to appeal to the story of Abraham. This manoeuvre provides Paul with some useful ammunition: Abraham himself was righteoused by God through faith, before and apart from works of the law (Gal. 3:6-7; 4:18), just like the Galatians were. However, Paul then goes on to state that

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[158] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 68; *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 121-2 .

[159] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 76; *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 135: '*Die Debatte beweist umgekehrt, dass ich offensichtlich zwischen zwei Fronten stehe, wenn ich die Rechtfertigungslehre des Apostels weder einem heilsgeschichtlichen Leitbild unterordnen noch zum blossen Vehikel für das Selbstverstandnis der Glaubenden machen lassen will. Beides wird als notwendig anerkannt. Bestritten werden aber die damit jeweils verknüpften Akzentsetzungen.*'

faith came only with Christ (Gal. 3:23-4). This raises some fascinating questions. What relation, if any, does Abraham's faith have with the Christ-event? If Abraham could be righteoused through faith before Christ, then why was the Christ-event needed?[160]

Käsemann recognizes the seriousness of these problems: 'The choice of the patriarch as example and prototype would be absurd if we were meant to confine the possibility of experiencing the divine righteousness to the period *post Christum crucifixum*. Moreover, the appeal to the Old Testament so characteristic of Paul would then lose all positive theological significance, so that, following Marcion's footsteps, we should also have to draw the necessary conclusions as regards the canon.'[161] For Käsemann, some kind of salvation-historical perspective is required in order to preserve any real faith in scripture as revelation of God. A total fixation on the cross, and its connection with present encounter, as one finds in Bultmann, can do great damage. Not only is the Old Testament lost, but so is the New, including Paul, who fundamentally assumes a real connection with the Old.

Käsemann's answer is to appeal to the concept of salvation history, albeit with significant qualifications: 'It is completely true that here not only is a particular understanding of salvation history being expounded - another one is simultaneously being destroyed…What Paul is *not* doing is guarding a perceptible and in the earthly sense unbroken continuity [*eine wahrnehmbare und irdisch ungebrochene Kontinuität*] between Abraham and Christ, which could fit into the theological formula of promise and fulfilment.'[162] The 'continuity' of salvation history is actually to be found in the radical discontinuity of earthly life, which is interrupted and confronted by the divine action. It is 'not marked by a visible earthly continuity but by interruptions and paradoxes; again and again its path leads over the grave out of which it brings the dead to life.'[163]

For Käsemann, Paul is able to state that Abraham was made righteous by faith, and also that righteousness through faith is offered in Christ, because of the conviction that it is the God of Abraham who is revealed most emphatically in Christ. God is primarily known to us as the one who justifies the ungodly, and so justification is 'the central theme of salvation history in general.'[164] Throughout history, God remains the same God. The question of the distinctiveness of the Christ-event remains, however. Is the Christ-event a truly new

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[160] Similar questions are raised by Paul's use of Abraham in Romans 4.
[161] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 86.
[162] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 87; *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 153-4.
[163] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 88.
[164] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 95.

revelation, or actually just a dramatic, emphatic example of the divine action which is already present in history prior to the Christ-event?

Käsemann does not answer this question directly, but he does suggest that Abraham's action only truly makes sense through the eyes of faith *after* the eschatological event, i.e. the cross and resurrection of Christ. Abraham reached out based on faith in God's promise, but 'Anyone who reads the scriptures in the light of the eschatological event understands that in doing so he was reaching out towards the reality of Christ, which was still hidden from him.'[165] This suggestion raises some fascinating possibilities; unfortunately, Käsemann does not develop this claim in any depth. He is keen to reject any suggestion that Abraham is some kind of proto-Christian, without being aware of it. This would be to strip him of his historicity.[166] But what does this mean for the status of the Christ-event itself? Bultmann writes of the cross becoming present to us through the preaching of the kerygma. Does Paul envision the cross as becoming present to Abraham in some sense, prior to its actual irruption into history? And what are the implications of this for Christology?

It is unfortunate that Käsemann did not push these possibilities further. Nonetheless, his affirmation of a particular kind of salvation history, where historical continuity is to be found 'vertically,' in the character and action of God, is an important move, allowing him to avoid the potentially dangerous implications of traditional salvation-historical schemes, while avoiding excessive individualism and maintaining a historical and cosmic breadth of vision. Käsemann achieves this by ensuring that salvation history is always subordinated to justification by faith. It would be possible, however, to extend Käsemann's thesis, by saying that salvation history *is* justification. Salvation history is a series of punctiliar events connected by their shared origin, the God who justifies the ungodly, and who brings life to the dead, a God revealed most emphatically in the death and resurrection of Christ.

iv. Käsemann's Mediating Position

On the question of the relationship between the Christ-event, and the other biblically recorded events which might make up a *Heilsgeschichte*, Cullmann and Bultmann stand at opposite ends of a spectrum. For Cullmann, the Christ-event is the decisive divine act in an ongoing redemptive history. The earliest Christians, including Paul, recognised the central significance of the Christ-event, and understood their place in the divine drama in terms of a salvation-historical scheme. For Bultmann, however, to attempt to explain the Christ-event

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[165] Kaseman, *Perspectives on Paul*, 95.
[166] Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, 87.

today by mapping it onto an overarching divine plan throughout history is to fail to grasp the true significance of the cross of Christ, which announces the end of history, and poses an existential challenge to any who would listen.

As for Paul, the crucial question is this: in explaining the present significance of the Christ-event by referring at times to other parts of biblical history, such as the justification of Abraham (Gal. 3-4), or the story of Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10), does Paul act based on circumstance, using the mythological figures and language available to him at the time, under pressure from external forces such as his opponents, or does he write in such a way because the structure that underpins his theology, guiding his understanding of the Christ-event, is based on a particular form of salvation history? If the former answer is correct, as it is for Bultmann, then we can only truly understand Paul if we strip his theology of its mythological baggage, and uncover the kernel beneath. If the latter answer is correct, as Cullmann argues, then our approach to Paul must be very different.

Käsemann presents us with something of a mediating position. He recognises the validity of Bultmann's insistence on reading Paul in terms of the *Sache* of his theology, with a focus on its existential meaning, but he cannot see a way of reading Paul faithfully without taking seriously the salvation-historical aspects of his theology. For Käsemann, then, Paul offers an apocalyptic gospel with a salvation-historical perspective. Whether these two things can truly go together is, however, open to debate. In the following chapter, we will see that this particular debate is still ongoing, as the questions raised by Cullmann, Bultmann and Käsemann continue to divide Paul's interpreters.

Chapter 3
Apocalyptic and Narrative

Käsemann's 'rediscovery' of apocalyptic served as a response to Bultmann's theological programme on two fronts. First, it broadened the horizons of Bultmann's existentialism, putting the individual into a broader, corporate and cosmic context. Second, it offered an alternative to Bultmann's history of religions analysis of Paul; Jewish apocalyptic replaced Gnosticism as a background for Paul's theology. In recent decades, Bultmann's influence on Pauline studies has waned. Käsemann's influence, however, can still be felt, particularly in the proliferation of so-called 'apocalyptic' interpretations of Paul.

In this chapter, I will show how the questions and debates of the previous chapter have developed in more recent Pauline scholarship. First, I will trace the development of Käsemann's apocalyptic reading, focussing on J. Christian Beker and J.L. Martyn. Following this, I will examine the legacy of Cullmann's salvation-historical reading of Paul, focussing on the narrative approaches of Richard Hays and N.T. Wright. Both Martyn and Wright are and have been significant voices in contemporary discourse concerning Paul, but their approaches differ in significant ways. For Martyn, Paul's theology centres on God's movement into the cosmos in Christ. This unprecedented, invasive, punctiliar act liberates humanity from oppressive evil forces. For Wright, in contrast, the Christ-event is the decisive chapter in the great story of God's interactions with the world, going all the way back to creation. The Christ-event is the fitting climax to the story of Israel.

1. The Apocalyptic Paul

i. The problem of apocalyptic

'Apocalyptic' is a notoriously slippery term, 'the most misused word in the scholar's vocabulary.'[167] It has become increasingly common to find Paul described as an apocalyptic thinker, but the term is often used uncritically. Even within Pauline studies specifically, the term has been used in such a variety of ways that its usefulness can legitimately be called into question. Attempts to define apocalyptic with regard to the study of Paul have met with mixed success. Does apocalyptic refer to a genre of texts, meaning that Paul either writes apocalypses, or writes letters that bear comparison with apocalyptic texts? Or does the term

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[167] Leander E. Keck, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Jewish Theology' *Interpretation* 38.3 (1984), 229-241, at 230.

instead denote a reading of Paul that contrasts with alternative approaches, such as existentialist, or salvation-historical approaches? If so, how does this relate to the genre of apocalyptic, if at all?

Martinus de Boer, one of the more prominent apocalyptic Pauline scholars, argues that two distinctive 'tracks' can be found in Jewish apocalyptic texts.[168] The first is 'cosmological apocalyptic eschatology.' This track places humanity in the midst of a cosmic battle between good and evil. Humanity finds itself in a world where fallen angels and evil powers are at work. The problems of the world must be overcome by divine intervention to defeat these evil powers, and to free humanity. The second track is 'forensic apocalyptic eschatology.' This track emphasises human free will and responsibility. Evil is the result of human sin, and could be overcome if humanity would follow God's righteous law. De Boer finds track one in its 'pure' form in *1 Enoch* 1-36, and suggests that it is consistent with Käsemann's understanding of apocalyptic. The purest examples of track 2 are found in the apocalypses of *2 Baruch*. This kind of apocalyptic, which focuses on human decision, is consistent with Bultmann.[169]

De Boer uses this model as a basis for understanding the conflict in Galatians. He agrees with those who describe Paul's theology in Galatians as apocalyptic, but suggests that Paul's opponents were also advocating an apocalyptic theology. The difference between them was that they were on different tracks. Paul's apocalyptic in Galatians is cosmic, track 1, whereas his opponents' apocalyptic was forensic, track 2.[170] This analysis situates the Galatians conflict within a Jewish theological context, but the helpfulness of de Boer's distinction is questionable. As de Boer admits, there is significant overlap between the two

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[168] Martinus C. de Boer, 'Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology' in Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards eds., *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1989), 169-190. See also his commentary on Galatians, Martinus C. De Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louiseville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 171-90.

[169] While Käsemann's apocalyptic emphasis is a response to Bultmann, Bultmann has recently been reclaimed as an apocalyptic theologian, albeit in a different way. See David W. Congdon, 'Eschatologizing Apocalyptic: An Assessment of the Present Conversation on Pauline Apocalyptic' in Joshua B. Davis, Douglas Harink eds., *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2012), 118-36, at 124-127, cf. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 460-61, who argues that apocalyptic readings of Paul have their own narrative, which corresponds closely to the existentialist narrative at the heart of Bultmann's theology. In contrast, however, De Boer, 'Paul's Mythologizing Program in Romans 5-8' in Beverly Roberts Gaventa ed., *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5-8* (Baylor University Press, 2013), 1-20, argues that Bultmann's demythologization amounts to a deapocalypticisation of Paul, by emphasising present eschatology and human decision.

[170] De Boer, 'Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic', 184.

tracks; most Jewish apocalyptic texts cannot be neatly allocated to one track or the other. The same tension exists within the Pauline corpus, and not just between different letters. De Boer himself points out that Romans 1:1-5:11 fits track 2, while 6:1-8:38 fits track 1.[171] If Paul can switch so easily between the two tracks, can the conflict in Galatians really be explained as a battle between the two forms of apocalyptic?[172] In delineating the two tracks, has de Boer forced an unhelpful distinction onto the Jewish apocalyptic texts?[173]

In an essay on the problem of the word 'apocalyptic', Richard Sturm notes that work on apocalyptic tends to be quite confused.[174] He makes a distinction between three different types of apocalyptic: 1. Apocalypse as a literary genre; 2. Apocalyptic eschatology; 3. Apocalypticism as a religious movement. These types are related, but distinct. Sturm warns against defining apocalyptic narrowly as a literary genre, because this could mean that Paul and Jesus, who did not write apocalypses as such, could not be described as apocalyptic thinkers. Instead, Sturm suggests that 'apocalyptic' can be used to refer to a theological approach, marked by common concepts such as belief in two aeons, the embattled sovereignty of God over time and the cosmos, and the revelation of an imminent eschaton. As Sturm concedes, however, it is difficult to decide precisely 'whether any single concept or cluster of ideas is central or 'essential' to apocalyptic', meaning that 'it remains uncertain

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[171] De Boer, 'Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic', 182.

[172] The apparent differences between the earlier chapters of Romans and the middle chapters are at the heart of Douglas Campbell's huge apocalyptic reading of Paul in *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2009) cf. Campbell, 'An Apocalyptic Rereading of "Justification" in Paul: Or, an Overview of The Argument of Douglas Campbell's *The Deliverance of God*' in the *Expository Times* 2012, 123.8 (2012), 382-393. Campbell's argument is highly detailed and complex, but essentially he argues that in the early chapters of Romans, Paul uses 'speech in character' to describe and critique 'Justification Theory', a contractual soteriology which bears some resemblance to De Boer's track 2. In Romans 6, Paul begins to outline his true apocalyptic theology, which is incompatible with the kind of justification theory that he has previously described. Campbell suggests that Paul has been consistently misread by interpreters who take the early chapters of Romans as central to his theology. The size and scope of Campbell's work prohibits a full engagement here, suffice to say that I do not find Campbell's central thesis to be convincing. For a useful engagement with Campbell, and a response, see: R. Barry Matlock, 'Zeal for Paul but Not According to Knowledge: Douglas Campbell's War on 'Justification Theory' *JSNT* 34 (2011), 115-149; Grant Macaskill, 'Review Article: *The Deliverance of God*' *JSNT* 34 (2011), 150-161; Campbell, 'An Attempt to be Understood: A Response to the Concerns of Matlock and Macaskill with *The Deliverance of God*' in *JSNT* 34 (2011), 168-208.

[173] N.T. Wright, 'Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship,' *The Expository Times* 123.8 (2012), 367-381, at 373, is critical of De Boer's analysis of Jewish apocalyptic, and of J.L. Martyn's reliance on this analysis.

[174] Richard E. Sturm, 'Defining the Word 'Apocalyptic': A Problem in Biblical Criticism' in Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards eds., *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1989), 17-48. See also Vincent P. Branick, 'Apocalyptic Paul?' in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47.4 (1985), 664-675; Keck, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Theology'

how one can most adequately approach the problem of defining 'apocalyptic'.'[175] Sturm succeeds in identifying some of the problems with 'apocalyptic', but does not offer any significant solutions.

In a survey of apocalyptic readings of Paul, Matlock is highly critical of the way in which the term has been employed in the field, concluding that the term should be abandoned.[176] Matlock's critique is wide-ranging, and aimed at a number of apocalyptic interpreters including de Boer and Sturm, but there are three primary components of his argument. First, Matlock points out the lack of clarity in the relationship between the apocalypses, referring to Jewish texts which tend to be placed in the apocalyptic genre, and to apocalyptic as an abstract theological approach. As Matlock argues, the abstraction apocalyptic 'must, if terminology is to signify anything other than confusion, be made on the basis of the apocalypses.' This means that apocalyptic 'will be in some sense what the apocalypses are about', and so to describe Paul as apocalyptic would mean to say that there is a connection between Paul and the apocalypses, such that they are 'about' the same thing.[177] This connection, however, is often made tenuously, or not at all, leading to confusion. And, ultimately, 'If our terminology suggests a relationship to the apocalypses which either is not intended or cannot be maintained, the terminology, rather than clarity or historical integrity, should be sacrificed.'[178]

Second, this confusing state of affairs is made worse by the fact that describing apocalyptic as a genre is problematic. Even before we begin to draw links between Paul and apocalyptic literature, we are faced with the problem of deciding what this body of literature includes, and what makes an apocalyptic text apocalyptic.[179] As Matlock argues, by pointing out diversity within apocalyptic, de Boer 'gives us more reason to distrust the notion.'[180]

Third, interpreters of Paul tend to presuppose that there is such a thing as apocalyptic. Matlock uses the example of Martyn's critique of Beker's apocalyptic reading of Paul.[181] Where Martyn disagrees with Beker, this disagreement is framed as a correction of the perception of apocalyptic, 'as if this matter of 'apocalyptic' is something we are stuck with, and whatever we want to do with Paul, we had better work it so that we can call it

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[175] Sturm, 'Defining Apocalyptic,' 37.
[176] Barry R. Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996).
[177] Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 261.
[178] Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 261.
[179] Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 271.
[180] Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 315.
[181] See below.

'apocalyptic'.'[182] Matlock is similarly critical of Sturm's 'determination to speak undeterred' about Paul's apocalyptic, despite the numerous problems with the term that Sturm himself identifies.[183]

Matlock's criticisms are forceful, and his frustration is understandable. Indeed, his proposal that 'apocalyptic' should be abandoned as a way of describing Paul's theology has some merit. The problem with this proposal is that the term has already become deeply ingrained in the field of Pauline studies, such that 'apocalyptic' can be used to refer to a distinct school of interpretation.[184] Rather than attempting to offer a new terminology to replace 'apocalyptic', the next part of this chapter will look closely at some of the Pauline scholars who are widely recognised as part of the apocalyptic school, with a view to outlining how the term will be used throughout the rest of this thesis.

ii. J. Christian Beker's Apocalyptic Paul

One influential example of an apocalyptic reading of Paul is J. Christian Beker's *Paul the Apostle*.[185] Beker's ambitious and wide-ranging study aims to uncover the 'coherent centre' of Paul's thought, which is identified as a 'symbolic structure' consisting of 'a Christian apocalyptic structure of thought' derived from Paul's Jewish background, but reoriented around the Christ-event.[186] Beker sees a clear line leading from Jewish apocalyptic to Pauline apocalyptic. He considers several different accounts of Jewish apocalyptic, and reduces them to three basic ideas: historical dualism, universal cosmic expectation, and the imminent end of the world. Paul, as a Pharisee, 'was no doubt an apocalypticist,' and while this apocalyptic outlook is altered by his conversion, his subsequent theology remains rooted in his former life.[187]

Like Käsemann, Beker offers his reading of Paul as an alternative to Bultmann, who he sees as robbing Paul's apocalyptic of its meaning by making it more palatable for the modern reader.[188] For Beker, Paul's understanding of resurrection cannot be limited to existentialism or anthropology; it is a 'historical-ontological category', with 'ontological-

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[182] Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 310.
[183] Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 313.
[184] For example, David A. Shaw, 'Apocalyptic and Covenant: Perspectives on Paul or Antinomies at War?' *JSNT* 36 (2013), 155-171.
[185] J. Christian Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (London: T&T Clark Ltd., 1980).
[186] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 16.
[187] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 145.
[188] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 141.

cosmological' meaning, such that it is distorted when limited to 'the realm of human decision and possibility.'[189] Beker is also critical of Cullmann, whom he accuses of neutralising or at least minimising futurist, cosmic eschatology, such that the future, apocalyptic triumph of God 'is absorbed into the Christocentric triumph of God.'[190]

Significantly, however, Beker sees no obvious disjunction between apocalyptic and salvation-historical themes in Paul. While he identifies dualism as one of the central characteristics of Jewish apocalyptic, he warns that for Paul, this dualism is tempered by the salvation-historical understanding of Israel's place in God's saving plan across history.[191] The Christ-event remains an invasive act of God, which drastically changes the course of history, but Paul 'emphasises the discontinuous character of the Christ-event in conjunction with God's continuous salvation-historical plan.'[192] For Beker, the apocalyptic nature of the Christ-event is compatible with a salvation-historical scheme that sees God working throughout history and in the history of Israel in particular. Paul himself was aware of a certain tension here, but for him it provoked only wonder at the mystery of God's ways (as in Romans 11).

Beker, then, offers an apocalyptic reading of Paul consistent with Käsemann's approach. He fleshes out the proposal that Paul's theology is rooted in Jewish apocalyptic, without making any major departures from Käsemann's position. Like Käsemann, Beker sees apocalyptic as compatible with salvation history. As we have seen, Käsemann displays an understandable hesitancy when it comes to salvation history, but recognises that it cannot be removed from Paul's theology without distorting it. Beker maintains this, and considers in more depth how the apocalyptic and the salvation historical strands of Paul's theology tie together. Where Beker's apocalyptic scheme is most different from the kind of salvation history proposed by Cullmann is in its future-orientation. Where Cullmann sees two stages of history, with the Christ-event as the centre point and dividing line, Beker consistently stresses the significance of Paul's future expectation.

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[189] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 153-4.

[190] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 356. How fair a criticism this is of Cullmann is debatable. Beker, 177, uses a military analogy where the Christ-event is like D-Day, compared with the apocalyptic VE-Day of the future, meaning that the Christ-event is crucial but provisional. Cullmann, however, uses a similar analogy himself, and makes a very similar point, that the Christ-event marks the point at which God has intervened and 'won' the battle of history, but that this victory is yet to be fully manifested. See Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 84.

[191] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 181.

[192] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 244.

iii. J.L. Martyn's Apocalyptic Paul

If there is an obvious line of influence from Käsemann to Beker, similar lines can be drawn from both Käsemann and Beker through to J.L. Martyn. There are few contemporary Pauline scholars who can claim to have shaped the landscape of Pauline studies as significantly as Martyn, whose apocalyptic reading of Paul demands a serious response. Martyn's debt to Käsemann is obvious, and is acknowledged by Martyn himself,[193] but Martyn's significance lies in the way in which his apocalyptic reading of Paul has pushed beyond both Käsemann and Beker.

The point of departure can be seen in Martyn's review of Beker's *Paul the Apostle*.[194] Martyn has an enthusiastic response to Beker's work, and notes their shared indebtedness to Käsemann.[195] He argues, however, that while Beker finds in Paul a marriage between apocalyptic, as the core of his thought, and salvation history, as the structure, this marriage is Beker's own construction, rather than Paul's. The key text here is Galatians. For Beker, in Galatians Paul is forced to repress apocalyptic. Martyn's response to this claim is revealing:

> One is driven to ask whether it is not Paul's voice in Galatians that is being suppressed, perhaps because that letter is felt to be offensive on two counts: it contains very few references to God's future triumph, that is to what Beker views as the core of the coherent apocalyptic core, and it can be read as a conscious avoidance of the continuum of salvation history.[196]

For Martyn, Galatians is *the* definitive expression of Paul's apocalyptic, and it is the epistle which dominates his work on Paul. Whereas both Käsemann and Beker maintain a role for salvation history alongside Paul's apocalyptic focus, Martyn moves beyond them by separating the two: Paul's apocalyptic is directly opposed to *Heilsgeschichte*.

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[193] For a personal account of their relationship, see J. Louis Martyn, 'A Personal Word About Ernst Käsemann' in Joshua B. Davis, Douglas Harink eds., *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2012), xiii-xxv. Martyn's commentary on Galatians is also dedicated to Käsemann.

[194] J. Louis Martyn, 'Review of J. Christian Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought*' *Word and World* 2.2 (1982), 194-198.

[195] Martyn, 'Review of J. Christian Beker,' 196.

[196] Martyn, 'Review of J. Christian Beker,' 196.

For the most part, Martyn uses 'apocalyptic' as a theological term, rather than a literary one.[197] For Martyn, the question at the heart of apocalyptic is 'What time is it?', and Galatians answers this question.[198] Paul anticipates a future completion of a cosmic war which has already been won by Christ, who has invaded the cosmos, defeated the ruling powers, and ushered in the new aeon, the eschatological new creation. As Sturm points out, prior to Martyn Galatians tended not to be thought of as apocalyptic due to the lack of references to the imminent eschaton; Martyn corrects this tendency by emphasizing the other apocalyptic aspects of the letter.[199] For him, the gospel that Paul preaches declares 'God's movement into the cosmos.'[200] This idea is absolutely central to Martyn's approach. Christ enters into the world from outside of it, and in his death and resurrection he confronts, challenges, and transforms the world, ushering in a new age of new creation. 'The gospel is about the divine invasion of the cosmos (theology), not about human movement into blessedness (religion).'[201]

The majority of Martyn's work on Paul has focused on Galatians, including an impressive and significant commentary, and numerous essays.[202] His reading of Galatians is distinctive, and a useful way of drawing out its distinctive aspects is to examine Martyn's debate with James Dunn[203] on Galatians.[204] Dunn describes Galatians as 'Paul's first

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[197] He does, however, make the point that Paul is fond of using the verb ἀποκαλύπτω. In Galatians, a significant part of Paul's apologetic strategy is to emphasise that his gospel has been revealed, or 'apocalypsed' from above, rather than coming from men. Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, 312, is unimpressed by Martyn's use of this lexical evidence: 'As though dissatisfied with the degree of tenuousness already achieved in talk of 'apocalyptic', Martyn manages to add his own idiosyncratic touch in apparently wishing to pour all of what we mean by apocalyptic' into the occurrence in Paul of ἀποκάλυψις (and ἀποκαλύπτω), which, we might otherwise have thought is a simple enough term, like our own 'revelation'.'

[198] J.L. Martyn, *Galatians* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 104.

[199] Sturm, 'Defining Apocalyptic,' 39.

[200] Martyn, 'Events in Galatia: Modified Covenantal Nomism versus God's Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel: A Response to J.D.G. Dunn and B.R. Gaventa' in Jouette M. Bassler ed., *Pauline Theology Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 160-79, at 168.

[201] Martyn, *Galatians*, 349.

[202] For a collection of Martyn's Pauline essays, sees J.L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

[203] Dunn, James D. G., 'The Theology of Galatians: The Issue of Covenantal Nomism' in Jouette M. Bassler ed., *Pauline Theology Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 125-46.

[204] Beverly Roberts Gaventa also contributed to this debate. Her approach to Galatians is much closer to Martyn's than to Dunn's. Gaventa studied under Martyn, and is another representative of the apocalyptic school of Pauline interpretation. See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, ''The Singularity of the Gospel' in Jouette M. Bassler ed., *Pauline Theology Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 147-159.

sustained attempt to deal with the issue of covenantal nomism'[205] and he identifies three main strands to Paul's argument. First, that the expression of life within the covenant should be consistent with its beginning, i.e. with the promise made to Abraham prior to the law. Second, that God's promise always had Gentiles in view from the beginning, again going back to the promise made to Abraham that 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' (Gen 12:3). Third, that the law is given a distorted role when understood in a way which conflicts with the pre-law promise. The practical implication of this is that to insist on circumcision and other 'works of the law'[206] for Gentiles is 'to assume that God's purpose means the triumph of Israel as a nation state,'[207] which incorrectly narrows God's wider intentions in the promise to Abraham. Essentially, then, Dunn views the debate in Galatians as between different versions of covenantal nomism; the basic framework of the discussion is agreed on by both parties.

Martyn's response to Dunn is indicative of his general approach to Galatians. According to Martyn, the theological differences between Paul and the Teachers[208] are far more radical than Dunn's interpretation allows for: 'The Teachers' fundamental issue is covenantal nomism, if you like; Paul's is evangelical, cosmic, history-creating Christology.'[209] Martyn finds evidence for this in the way that Paul speaks about the law in Galatians, in contrast to being in Christ. Being under the law is like being a slave, whereas being in Christ means sonship and freedom from slavery (Gal 4:1-7).[210] Paul even goes so far as to state that agreeing with the Teachers would be to submit once more to a yoke of slavery, without the benefits of Christ (Gal. 5:1-2). For Martyn, however, the problem faced by the Galatians (and the rest of humanity) goes beyond the issue of the law alone:

> It is scarcely his intention to equate enslavement with the view of covenantal nomism in which the Gentile is excluded as Gentile (Dunn). On the contrary, for Paul enslavement is the monolithic state of affairs in which the elements of the cosmos

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[205] Dunn, 'Theology of Galatians,' 125. 'Covenantal nomism' refers to an understanding of the law whereby keeping the law is an act in response to God's prior, gracious act of creating the covenant.

[206] Taken by Dunn to refer quite specifically to badges or marks of the covenant.

[207] Dunn, 'Theology of Galatians,' 135.

[208] Martyn's term for Paul's opponents in Galatia.

[209] Martyn, 'Events in Galatia,' 165.

[210] For more on Martyn's reading of Galatians, see chapter 7 below.

hold in bondage *all human beings* and in which the Law functions as one of these universally enslaving elements.[211]

Here we see Martyn's apocalyptic scheme coming to the fore. The issue faced by the Galatians is indicative of a universal, cosmic situation, where 'the present evil age' (Galatians 1:4) is under the lordship of enslaving powers. Paul's proclamation to the Galatians is that God has sent his Son invasively into this world. The new creation ushered in by Christ does not just stand in contrast with the former age, but in radical discontinuity. For Martyn, Christ's invasion of the cosmos necessarily implies warfare; the fundamental powers and structures of the world stand opposed to Christ. Christ is not sent to reset the course of a ship that has lost its way, but to rescue the drowning crew of a ship wrecked in a hostile storm.

In some respects, Galatians 4:4 neatly encapsulates Martyn's interpretation of Paul's gospel as it is presented in Galatians.[212] Christ appears at 'the fullness of time', an apocalyptic indication of the turn of the ages. He does not take his followers out of the old age, and nor does he bring the ways of the old age to a neat, tidy end; the fallen world is invaded, warfare is declared, and victory is won. In addition, Christ does not arise out of the old age; he is in no way a natural culmination of what has gone before, or the result of worldly processes. God *sends* his Son *into* the world. This apocalypse is not simply an unveiling of a previously unseen aspect of the world,[213] but an invasion of it. For Martyn, when Paul states that Christ was born under the law, he means that 'Christ was born not into the context of "Israel's history", but rather "under the dominance of the Law".'[214]

The figure of Abraham and his covenant with God is at the heart of this argument. In his proposed scenario for the situation in Galatia, Martyn suggests that a key component of the Teachers' teaching is the claim that in order to become true sons of Abraham, thereby inheriting the blessings promised to him, it is necessary to perform works of the law, including circumcision. Paul advances a number of ripostes to this argument, first drawing on the Galatians' spiritual experiences (3:2) and then appealing to some key proof texts (3:6, 7, 10-13). He then proceeds to employ a legal metaphor to emphasize the significance of the chronological priority of the promise over the law (3:15-18). The promise was made based on

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[211] Martyn, 'Events in Galatia,' 169-70.

[212] See chapter 7 for a closer reading of this text, and a more detailed critique of Martyn's reading of it.

[213] The Christ-event does, however, have epistemological implications. Christ does not just bring a new message or revelation, but a whole new 'way of knowing', marked by the turn of the ages. See the essay 'Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages' in Martyn, *Theological Issues*, 89-110.

[214] Martyn, *Galatians*, 174.

faith, completely apart from the law, and before it was even given. Logically, then, the inheritance of the promise cannot depend on the law, as this would require God to alter the original terms of the covenant with Abraham. This naturally raises the question of the purpose of the law, a question which Paul attempts to answer in the following section (3:19-4:7). Martyn rejects any positive role for the law, even going as far as to question its divine origin. The time of the law is not a period of preparation. It is a barren stretch of time:

> The covenantal promise is precisely *not said* to have commenced a history that subsequently served as the context into which Christ was born. That covenantal promise did not at all found its own epoch. Indeed, because of the docetic state of the covenantal promise prior to Christ's advent, there is no indication in this passage that before that point there was something that could be identified as the history of a corporate people of God created by the power of that promise. The resultant picture presents, therefore, neither a modified form of covenantal nomism nor an edition of *Heilsgeschichte* properly equipped with the pre-Christ linearity necessary to a meaningful use of that term. In Galatians, Abraham is distinctly a punctiliar figure rather than a linear one. The recipient of God's promise, he is not at all the beginning of a line that can be traced through something called history, for he does not have "seeds", but rather a "singular seed." Thus neither history nor story is a word well linked with Paul's portrait of Abraham in Galatians.[215]

The picture Martyn draws is of two distinct, punctiliar, salvific events (the promise to Abraham and the Christ-event), separated by a chaotic chasm across time, where the salvific promise remains dormant until the fullness of time. Israel's history is not characterized as a time of faithful waiting, but of enslavement. Hence, by accepting the claims of the Teachers, the Galatians are turning back on the new creation and returning to slavery. The Christ-event is not the latest chapter in Israel's story, but the apocalyptic invasion of the cosmos by God, who has acted decisively to wrestle humanity free from the powers of evil.

iv. Defining Apocalyptic

Martyn's apocalyptic reading of Paul has exerted a significant influence on Pauline scholarship, such that it is possible to speak of an apocalyptic school of Pauline

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[215] Martyn, 'Events in Galatia,' 173.

interpretation.[216] Within this grouping, there is room for diversity and disagreement, and Martyn's followers have critiqued and moved beyond his apocalyptic approach in various ways.[217]Nonetheless, there are certain features and emphases that characterize these apocalyptic approaches to Paul. Finally, then, we come to a definition of sorts. Apocalyptic readings of Paul share the following features:[218]

1. The gospel is an invasion. The gospel does not present individuals with a way of obtaining salvation; in the Christ-event God invades the cosmos, defeating the forces of evil and setting people free from bondage.

2. Rejection or at least subordination of salvation history. The Christ-event is radically new, and while it may bear some relation to past history it does not depend on this history, and is not part of a linear process running through time.

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[216] Fleming Rutledge has proposed an 'Apocalyptic Family Tree' of several generations, tracing the theological lineage of Käsemann, Barth, Martyn, de Boer, and Gaventa, among others. This family tree has been amended by David Congdon, who suggests that there are really two apocalyptic families, distinguished in the following way: 'For the first family of apocalyptic, the new age is one that is directly visible or apprehensible according to the categories and faculties of the old age; the new age sequentially follows the old and is competitive with it. For the second family of apocalyptic, the new age is only indirectly or paradoxically visible, and thus cannot be grasped according to the categories and faculties of the old age; the new age paradoxically coincides with the old age and is noncompetitively present within it.' Family A includes Käsemann and Beker, while family B includes Barth, Bultmann, and Martyn. Congdon's distinction is interesting, and helps to show the variety within apocalyptic approaches. His groupings are, however, questionable. For example, while there are points of contact between Bultmann and Martyn, such as their rejection of salvation history, Bultmann's demythologization does not sit easily with Martyn's emphasis on real, cosmic powers. For Rutledge's family tree, see http://ruminations.generousorthodoxy.org/2009/10/modest-proposal-apocalyptic-theology.htm - accessed 1/12/2014 For Congdon's adaptation, see http://fireandrose.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/two-apocalyptic-families-modest-proposal.html - accessed 1/12/2014 cf. Congdon, 'Eschatologizing Apocalyptic,' 131-33.

[217] For example, Susan Eastman, 'Apocalypse and Incarnation: The Participatory Logic of Paul's Gospel' in Joshua B. Davis, Douglas Harink eds., *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2012), 165-82, at 171, suggests that apocalyptic interpretations of Paul should move on from 'invasion' language to 'incarnation' language: 'The problem is that this imagery does not go quite far enough in depicting the depth of Christ's identification with Adam's race as his *modus operandi*. Christ's death with and for us is an "inside job," which frees us in an utterly counterintuitive way.'

[218] Of course, this is not to say that all of these features are exclusive to apocalyptic interpretations.

3. Anthropological pessimism. All of humanity is in need of salvation, and all are under the dominion of sin. This includes Israel. Sin and death are thought of as active powers, which hold humanity in bondage.[219]

These points are all interrelated. The invasion of the world in Christ is required because of the terrible situation that humanity, and the whole of the cosmos are in. It is not sufficient for the gospel to simply offer new conditions for entering into the community of God's people, because humanity in its entirety, including God's people, is in bondage. The state of the world thus demands a solution that is totally 'other', from outside. This means that Christ cannot be seen to arise *from* history, but must enter *into* it. History is the record of humanity's enslavement. It is also significant that as well as providing the solution to humanity's situation, the Christ-event also has a revelatory function, exposing the depths of their plight. The gospel undermines any human claims to superiority; Christ's gift is for all, because all are people are under the power of sin.

There is much to be said for such apocalyptic readings of Paul. Certainly, I find myself in far greater agreement with Martyn's approach to Galatians than Dunn's. By emphasizing the cosmic scale of Paul's theological vision, and by highlighting the motif of new creation, contrasted with the old, evil age and its enslaving powers, Martyn successfully identifies a radical edge to Paul's gospel which is obscured by the kind of interpretation that Dunn proposes. Christ is not a prophet sent to redefine the conditions through which Gentiles can enter into the covenant, thus opening a new chapter in salvation history; he is sent to wage war against evil powers, to set captives free, and to usher in the new, eschatological age.

There are, however, some problems with this way of reading Paul, including exegetical,[220] methodological,[221] and theological ones. The most significant of these relate to

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[219] For an example of this, see Beverley Roberts Gaventa, 'The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Towards A Widescreen Edition' *Interpretation* 58 (2004), 229-240. Gaventa stresses the need to move from individualistic readings of salvation to corporate, cosmic ones. Her focus is on Romans, but she suggests 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11; Gal. 1:4, and 1 Cor. 15 as other Pauline texts where this perspective is in evidence.

[220] See Part 2 below for a more detailed examination of some key texts, including engagement with Martyn's reading of Galatians 3-4, in chapter 7.

[221] The vast majority of Martyn's Pauline work focuses on Galatians. In some ways this is a strength of his approach, allowing for a detailed and insightful examination of a text that has previously been regarded as unapocalyptic. One does wonder, however, how Martyn's interpretation of Galatians should be incorporated with the rest of the Pauline corpus. In particular, it is unfortunate that Martyn has not written at any real length on Romans. There Paul considers Abraham and the law in ways which do not obviously fit with Martyn's reading of Galatians. Where Martyn does briefly

point three. Whereas Käsemann and Beker see salvation-history as providing a framework for Paul's apocalyptic theology, this link is severed by Martyn.[222] For Martyn, Paul's argument in Galatians does not provide a reinterpretation of salvation history, but a direct rejection of it.[223] The time before Christ is an evil age. In the Christ-event, God wins a decisive victory against the evil powers that held sway in that age, ushering in the new one. That there is no salvific line prior to the Christ-event is required by this sharp distinction between the two ages.

In Galatians, the figure who disrupts this picture somewhat is Abraham, who is justified by faith despite living in the time before Christ, and who is the recipient of the promises that are fulfilled in Christ. He is thus a figure who fits naturally into a salvation-historical scheme. Martyn avoids this conclusion in two ways. First, he suggests that Paul refers to Abraham only reluctantly. He is forced to do so in response to his opponents, who present themselves as sons of Abraham. Second, Martyn argues that while Abraham and Christ are linked by the promise, it does not follow that Abraham represents the starting point of a linear process, running through history from Abraham to Christ. Instead, the promise remains in a docetic state, until Christ irrupts into history.[224]

Abraham, however, is not the only figure who disrupts the two-ages scheme that forms the backdrop of Martyn's apocalyptic vision. If the time between Abraham and Christ is a salvation-historical chasm, where the promise remains in a docetic state, what are we to make of Israel, who were baptized, who ate spiritual food, and who drank from the rock, which was Christ (1 Cor. 10)? What of Moses, whose face was transformed into the image of glory, just as those who are in Christ are transformed (2 Cor. 3)? And what are we to make of Paul's apparent interest in the course of history in Romans 9-11?[225] Apart from these specific historical people and events, how does an apocalyptic scheme account for Paul's ongoing

consider the differences between Galatians and Romans, he recognizes the possibility that Paul changed his mind, while emphasizing the different situations that Paul was writing to in each letter. See Martyn, *Theological Issues*, 174-5.

[222] In contrast to Bultmann, who has been 'rediscovered' as an apocalyptic thinker, Käsemann's apocalyptic credentials have been called into question, due to his reluctant acceptance of salvation history. See Shaw, 'Apocalyptic and Covenant,' 155-6.

[223] In addition to this rejection of salvation history, Joshua B. Davis, 'The Challenge of Apocalyptic to Modern Theology' in Joshua B. Davis, Douglas Harink eds., *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2012), 1-48, suggests three more points at which Martyn moves away from Käsemann's apocalyptic: 1. Rectification instead of justification, emphasising divine agency and the gospel bringing an objective change in the world; 2. A subjective genitive reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ; 3. A focus on Gal. 3:28 as the essence of Paul's apocalyptic theology.

[224] Martyn, 'Events in Galatia,' 171-73.

[225] For a closer examination of these texts, see part 2.

interest in and use of the Hebrew Scriptures, if they are products of the evil age which serve only to hold people in bondage until they are released by Christ?

The irony here is that in employing 'apocalyptic', a purportedly Jewish theological category, Martyn struggles to account for the ways in which Paul draws connections between the Christ event and Jewish history.[226] If salvation-historical readings like Cullmann's err by offering too simplistic a view of history, where linear continuity fails to account for the radical newness of the Christ-event, apocalyptic readings like Martyn's err by going too far in the other direction, emphasizing the otherness of the Christ-event to the extent that its relationship with other historical people and events is obscured. Paul does not present an overview of history where the promise to Abraham is like the first in a line of dominoes, colliding with each other in a process which culminates in the Christ-event. But Paul's understanding of history does remain fundamentally Jewish. The God of Christ is also the God of Abraham, Moses, and Israel.

2. Narrative Readings of Paul

i. Finding Paul's Story

One way of thinking about the relationship between the Christ-event and Israel's history is to identify a meta-narrative, or a great story which provides the framework for Paul's theology. The Christ-event remains the definitive divine act, but it finds a place in the wider story of God's dealings with his creation. *Heilsgeschichte* has fallen out of fashion in Pauline studies, but recent years have seen an increased level of interest in narrative readings of Paul. If apocalyptic readings carry the legacy of Käsemann and Bultmann, to varying degrees, narrative readings carry the legacy of Cullmann.

Paul wrote letters, but these letters are influenced by stories in a number of ways. He informs his arguments by referring to stories about Adam, Abraham, and the people of Israel, and he supports his position as an apostle with reference to his own personal story.[227] At the heart of the gospel he proclaims is the story of Jesus, the crucified messiah. Paul, though, was not primarily a story teller. In contrast to the gospels, where the story of Jesus is told in narrative form, with a clear beginning, middle and end, Paul wrote occasional letters to

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[226] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 460.
[227] See John M.G. Barclay, 'Paul's Story: Theology as Testimony' in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 133-156.

Christian communities, addressing specific theological and ecclesiological issues in an epistolary format.

That Paul did not write stories as such does not, however, preclude the possibility that Paul's theology is in some sense narrative.[228] Over the past few decades, narrative has emerged as a significant analytical category, across a number of disciplines, including theology.[229] Increasingly, it has been argued that people understand themselves and the world around them not in terms of theoretical systems, or sets of principles, but in terms of stories. This leads to the tantalising possibility that if we can properly understand the great story within which Paul situates his own life and work, we will have found a framework for understanding how the various aspects of his theology fit together.

One of the difficulties in assessing narrative approaches is that various different approaches fall under this label. In some cases, texts are read as explicit narratives, and are interpreted on this basis. Great care is taken to consider where individual parts of a text fit into the narrative as a whole, and how this modifies their meaning. In other cases, non-narrative texts are read against the backdrop of implicit narratives. Attempts are made to reconstruct the stories that lie behind the text that we have. It is this latter sense that is to be considered here, with reference to the Pauline texts. A number of questions or clusters of questions arise from this approach. First, where is/are the story, or stories, to be found in the Pauline texts? Are they behind the text, in the text, in front of the text, or a mixture of the above? How do we go about identifying or uncovering these stories? Second, which story or stories does Paul use, both explicitly and implicitly? What guides his selection of these stories, and what are their limits? Third, and following on from the previous questions, what is the relationship between the different stories that Paul uses? Does Paul have in mind a grand narrative, running from creation and fall, through Abraham and the history of Israel, all the way up to Christ and beyond, or do the various stories Paul uses have a more fragmentary relationship, being disconnected from each other, but sharing a theme or pattern? Or are there other ways of describing this relationship? In order to draw out the significance of these

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[228] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 353, states that Paul was a man of proposition, argument, and dialogue, rather than being storyteller. Responding to Beker, Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 463, suggests that Beker's point misses the mark; the question is not whether Paul tells explicit stories, but whether his worldview has a narrative shape.

[229] Perhaps the most influential of these works in Biblical studies is Hans Frei's *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

questions, I will begin by sketching out the approaches of two influential voices in the narrative study of Paul, Richard B. Hays and N.T Wright.[230]

ii. Richard Hays and the Pauline Narrative Substructure

Probably the most famous example of applying a narrative approach to Paul is Richard Hays' *The Faith of Jesus Christ*.[231] Hays begins his study by considering a number of different attempts that have been made to provide a fundamental framework or starting point for Paul's theology. These are divided into three different groups: doctrinal centre, religious experience, and existential categories. For a number of reasons, Hays argues, these approaches have failed, most often because they tend to emphasise certain aspects of Paul's theology at the expense of others.[232] Hays suggests a different approach, that of narrative. For Hays, the gospel that Paul preaches does not primarily consist of a theological system, but of a story.[233] The immediate problem with this approach is the lack of explicit narrative within the Pauline corpus. We do not have a "gospel according to Paul" comparable to the canonical gospels, but instead a collection of occasional letters.[234] Hays recognises this, of course, and introduces a distinction between story and narrative. "Narrative," as a noun, 'is used only to refer to explicitly articulated narrations ("performances") such as the Gospel of Luke or the

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[230] These two scholars have been chosen primarily for their respective influences on the discussion of narrative within Pauline studies, as well as their influence in the area more generally. Their approaches are similar, but with different emphases. There are several other notable examples of narrative approaches to Paul including: Ben Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Lousiville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Robin Scroggs, 'Salvation History: The Theological Structure of Paul's Thought (1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Galatians)' in Jouette M. Bassler ed., *Pauline Theology Volume 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 247-65. Witherington's extensive work is particularly notable as an attempt to narrate the entirety of the Pauline grand narrative. Disappointingly, however, it lacks a clear methodology, or any substantial discussion of narrative theory, or a consideration of the issues that arise from narrative approaches to Paul.

[231] Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11 Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

[232] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 3-5.

[233] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 6.

[234] Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 2, argues that the lack of narrative in the Pauline texts has tended to be overplayed as a result of a focus on Paul's doctrine. He identifies Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Cor. 11:30-12:30; Gal. 1:11-2:21; Rom. 1:18-32; 9-11, as examples of explicit narrative.

Philippians hymn.' In contrast, "story" refers to 'the ordered series of events which forms the basis for possible narrations.'[235]

This leads to a discussion of the relationship between discourse and story. Hays outlines two forms of this relationship. In the first, a story belongs to the superstructure of a discourse. This would describe cases where a story is provided to emphasise the point being made in a discourse. For example, the traditional story of "the boy who cried wolf" can be used to discourage false warnings. This story belongs to the superstructure of the discourse because it could easily be removed from the discourse, or replaced with a different story to make the same point. In the second form of the story/discourse relationship, the story is part of the substructure of the discourse. In these cases, the story 'may find only allusive, fragmentary expression within the discourse,' but 'the discourse would be unintelligible without the story, because the discourse exists and has meaning only as an unfolding of the meaning of the story.'[236]

The particular text chosen by Hays as a test case for a narrative approach is Galatians 3:1-4:11. Part of this analysis is a comparison between Gal 4.3-6 and 3:13-14. Hays uses the 'actantial model' of narrative proposed by A.J. Greimas. According to Greimas, stories consist of a series of sequences. Within each sequence, different figures within the narrative each play one of a group of roles, including sender, subject, object, receiver, opponent, and helper, whose mutual interactions unfold in particular ways.[237] These relationships are illustrated as follows:

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Sender        --->   Object  --->   Receiver


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Helper        --->   Subject  <---   Opponent
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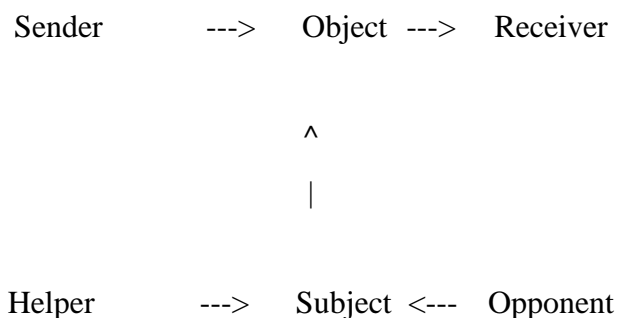
The significance of this analysis with regards to Hays' exegesis is to show that Gal. 3:13-14 and 4:3-6 are both based on the same basic gospel story. In both cases, the subject is Christ, the opponent is the law, the helper is faith, the sender is God, the object is freedom,

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[235] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 1.
[236] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 22.
[237] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 91.

adoption and receipt of the Spirit, and the receivers are Jews and Gentiles. This allows Hays to counter the suggestion that there are differing soteriologies in these two passages. While they may use slightly differing terms, they are both underpinned by a participationist soteriology with a narrative logic: 'Paul understands salvation as sharing in the destiny of a representative figure whose story is the enactment of God's salvific purpose.'[238] This exegesis serves two main purposes for Hays. First, it provides a methodological basis for analysing narrative features within a text, and demonstrates that this approach can be successfully applied to Paul. Second, it provides the basis for Hays' subsequent argument in favour of the subjective genitive reading of πίστις Χριστοû, because the story of Jesus found in these passages focuses on Christ as the faithful subject in the story, rather than on the individual and their own response of faith.

Hays' exegesis of these two passages has much to be commended, and this narrative approach has added much to the πίστις Χριστοû debate. There are, however, some problems with his approach, which fall into two main categories. First, there are issues that arise out of his largely uncritical acceptance of Greimas' scheme. An example of this is the way in which Hays selects elements from Paul's gospel story and fits them into Greimas' actantial model. The relationships between the different characters in Paul's story are actually more complex than the actantial model allows for. Hays identifies God as the sender, but he could just as plausibly be identified as the helper, and, perhaps more controversially, as the subject. God is also the giver of the law,[239] which Hays identifies as the opponent, and could additionally be seen as the receiver, having won adopted children through Christ. James Dunn's concern that the text may become distorted when forced into a preconceived theoretical mould is well founded.[240] Having said that, to nit-pick here may be to miss the point of Hays' analysis, which primarily aims to demonstrate that there is a narrative substructure behind these texts.[241]

The second problem with Hays' analysis concerns the content or the extent of the narrative substructure. Hays is able to show that sections of Galatians exhibit a narrative character, containing the basic features that we would expect to find in a story. In Galatians,

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[238] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 184.

[239] Although this is open to question in the case of Galatians. See chapter 7 below.

[240] James D.G. Dunn, 'The Narrative Approach to Paul: Whose Story?' in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 217-30, at 221.

[241] In the introduction to the second edition of *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, XVII, Hays distances himself somewhat from Greimas, suggesting that he uses this way of analysing narrative as a thought experiment, but that his reading of the text does not rely on it.

Paul narrates the gospel of Jesus' salvific faithfulness. This, however, is not the only story that Paul tells, or rather, this is not the full extent of the story that Paul tells in Galatians. A large part of Paul's strategy is to show how the story of Christ's faithfulness fits in with the wider story or stories, of Abraham, of the law, and of Paul himself. Hays argues that an audience such as the Galatians, who already knew the story of Christ, would be able to recognise the underlying story that Paul refers to in Gal. 3:13-14 and 4:3-6, and fill in the gaps, adding the details that are left unsaid.[242]

This means there is a larger, fuller story which Paul intends to allude to when he offers these short summaries. It seems fair to assume that when Paul was in Galatia, he preached at length and gave a fuller account of the story of Christ, which would then have provided the basis for the Galatians' understanding of the letter. Unfortunately, we are not in the same position as the Galatians, and all we have to go on is the text itself, with reference to the other Pauline texts.[243] We do not have the story as it was originally narrated to the Galatians, assuming that it was at all.[244] This raises some difficult methodological questions. If we are to interpret Paul's words with reference to the larger story that he has in mind, then we can only fully understand Paul if we know what that story contains. How, though, are we to go about uncovering the content of this story, given that it is not directly narrated in its entirety in the Pauline texts? What is included in this story, and what are its limits?[245] Much of Hays' subsequent work has addressed these questions, analysing the ways in which Paul echoes and alludes to the Hebrew Scriptures and the stories told therein, but while this has been largely fruitful, these problems still remain.[246]

iii. N.T. Wright and Paul's Great Story

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[242] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 111.

[243] Unfortunately, this often produces more uncertainty than clarity. For example, there are significant differences in the way that the gospel story is told in Romans.

[244] There is actually a further problem here. Not only do we not have Paul's own version of the story as narrated to the Galatians, we *do* have the story as it has been narrated throughout centuries of Christian tradition, raising the possibility that we may all too easily read this story into the Pauline texts, unwittingly swapping exegesis for eisegesis.

[245] As Graham Stanton, 'I Think, When I Read That Sweet Story of Old', in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 125-132, at 128, points out, different letters include different aspects of the story of Jesus. For example, Jesus' return plays an important role in 1 Thessalonians, but is absent from Galatians.

[246] See in particular *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005).

Wright's is influenced by Hays, but there are significant differences between their approaches, and their conclusions. Hays focuses more on specific Pauline passages, and their particular narrative substructures, while Wright is more interested in the wider picture, or the broad narrative framework that provides the structure for Paul's theology. To put it another way, Hays is concerned with narrative on a micro level, while Wright operates more on a macro level, attempting to tie together Paul's various narrative threads, with the aim of weaving a Pauline grand narrative.

Wright's approach stems partly from his critical realist epistemology.[247] For Wright, this 'acknowledges the essentially 'storied' nature of human knowing, thinking, and living, with the larger model of worldviews and their component parts.'[248] This means that people do not perceive and understand the world around them in terms of a list of beliefs or principles, but in terms of a worldview, and worldviews are essentially stories. I understand my place in the world by considering the story that I am a part of, and in playing my part. As for Paul, Wright argues that his theology is rooted in the great narrative found in Jewish tradition:

> First-century Jews, like all other peoples, perceived the world, and events within the world, within a grid of interpretation and expectation. Their particular grid consisted at its heart of their belief that the world was made by a good, wise, and omnipotent god, who had chosen Israel as his special people; they believed that their national history, their communal and traditional story, supplied them with lenses through which they could perceive events in the world, through which they could make some sense of them and order their lives accordingly.[249]

First-century Judaism, however, was not a monolithic entity. Instead, it was made up of numerous different streams and groups, distinguishable by both their theology and their geographical location. Wright acknowledges this, but suggests that while different groups had their own 'twists' in the story, the core remained consistent.[250] For the Qumran community, for example, the twist was that they, not the Jews left in Jerusalem, were the vessel through which God would achieve his goals in history. For Paul, the twist was that the long-awaited

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[247] See N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), especially chapters 2 and 3.
[248] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 45.
[249] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 41.
[250] In a Q&A session at the Department of Theology and Religion in Durham, February 2014, Wright described this consistent core in terms of a 'family resemblance', shared by Paul.

messiah had already arrived, and had been nailed to a cross. Whereas one of the standard Jewish ways of addressing the problems of the world was to speak in terms of two epochs, the present age and the age to come, Paul claimed that the new age had already been inaugurated.[251]

In this way Wright presents Paul's theology as deeply embedded in Jewish tradition, while also maintaining its radical distinctiveness; the Pauline 'twist' is quite unlike any other take on the great story of Israel. To illustrate the way in which Paul reinterprets Israel's story, Wright uses the analogy of a play consisting of five acts: Creation - Fall - Israel - Jesus - Church. The first three acts are consistent with the basic Jewish story, 'the narrative many second-Temple Jews carried in their heads and their praying hearts,'[252] which goes something like this: The one God, Yahweh, created the world and its people, but those people turned away from him. In spite of their sin, Yahweh made covenants with Noah, Abraham, and finally with his chosen people, Israel, and gave them the law, promising that a day would come when he would set the world right. For Wright, this can be summed up as 'covenantal monotheism', and it forms the backdrop for Paul's theology. Act four, Jesus, came as a surprise to everyone, even faithful Jews, but it nonetheless remained consistent with the first three acts. Act five, which for Paul is still ongoing, must also retain some form of continuity with what has gone before; it is up to the church to improvise a fitting continuation of the great story.

This has a significant impact on the way in which we read Paul. First, the narrative has a controlling effect on his theology; it must "fit" with the wider story. For example, it might be argued that a Marcionite position, where the Old Testament and its God are dismissed in favour of Christ, destroys the unity of the story, providing a conclusion which does not fit with what has gone before. For Wright, a reading of Paul which rejects continuity with Israel's story becomes non-narratival, and therefore non-Jewish.[253] The difficulty here is that there are no clear rules for deciding what constitutes a "fitting" continuation of the story.[254] Indeed, it could easily be argued that Paul's radical claim that the Messiah was

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[251] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 477.

[252] N.T. Wright, 'Israel's Scriptures in Paul's Narrative Theology', *Theology* 115. 5 (2012), 323-329, at 323.

[253] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 460.

[254] Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 195, does offer a definition of narrative logic and what it means to have a fitting continuation to a story, but it is a definition which by its very nature will always be imprecise: 'In short, the coherence of events in a narrative is characterized by *fitness* rather than logical necessity. In this respect, narrative logic differs from a propositional logic, in which consequences follow necessarily from premises. If we ask why the events of a particular story are

crucified on a cross does not constitute a fitting continuation of Israel's story, based on their messianic hopes. Paul even recognises this himself, calling Christ's crucifixion a 'stumbling block' for Jews (1 Cor. 1:23), and going to great exegetical length to answer the question of whether the crucifixion meant that the messiah was cursed (Gal. 3:10-14). Another way to put the problem is this: if Paul's 'twist' to the great Jewish story is so radical and incongruous as to propose a crucified messiah, who failed to change the political status quo, but who created a Gentile church free from the law, in what meaningful way can there be continuity between his gospel and the Jewish story, if there even was one?[255] For Paul, is the story of Christ the next chapter in the story of Israel, or a new story altogether? Wright prefers the former option; apocalyptic readings of Paul favour the latter.[256]

Second, reading Paul against the backdrop of the Jewish story means to recognise that when he uses scripture he is not referring to isolated, detached texts, but to sections of what make up a grander story. As Wright argues, 'His explicit quotations, and implicit allusions, are not freestanding. They are the tips of a much larger iceberg, the massive but often submerged scriptural narrative which Paul believed came to the surface dramatically with Jesus.'[257] One example he gives is of Romans 4, which features a quotation from Genesis 15 (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:6). Wright argues that Romans 4 has the whole of Genesis 15 in mind, not just the quotation. Paul's entire argument has in mind the story of Abraham's faith in response to God. Paul is not simply mining scripture for useful proof texts, but evoking the wider themes and plots of the scriptural story. Abraham is not merely an example of faith; he is the start of the covenant story which finds its fulfilment in Christ.[258] Unfortunately, we find a similar problem here as we found with Hays: how do we determine the extent of that which Paul intends to allude to? We are faced with an awkward interpretive circularity. In order to understand Paul's allusions and quotations, we must have a good idea of the story he is referring to, but in order to understand how Paul tells and interprets this story, we must be able to understand his allusions and quotations. Wright's appeal to a basic Jewish story that Paul adapts is an attempt to break into this circle, but is questionable given the problems already discussed.

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ordered as they are and not in some other way, the answer can only be "because that is the way it happened" or "because that is how the story is told." No explanation on grounds of strict logical necessity is possible.'

[255] See Dunn, 'Narrative Approach,' 223.

[256] As Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 460-61, argues, apocalyptic readings of Paul still provide their own narrative, but one which is not deemed to be a continuation of Israel's story.

[257] Wright, 'Israel's Scriptures,' 325.

[258] Wright, 'Israel's Scriptures,' 326.

3. What Does Paul's Story Look Like?

i. Issues with the Reconstruction of a Pauline Great Story

Both Hays and Wright argue quite persuasively that light can be shed on the Pauline texts when they are analysed in terms of the explicit and implicit stories that Paul tells. As we have seen, however, their approaches are not without their flaws, some more significant than others. There are three problems in particular that are of interest here. First, there is the problem of identifying the story within the text. This is partly a question of location. Is the story *within* the text, as an integral and reasonably clear component of the text? Or is it *behind* the text, informing the text and providing its framework and boundaries? Or is it *in front of* the text, pieced together by the reader?[259] I suspect that Wright would answer "all three", while emphasising the second option.[260] Where there is story *within* the text, such as the Christological poetic narrative of Phil. 2:5-11 or the autobiographical narrative of Gal. 1:13-2:14, the matter of identifying the story is relatively straightforward; it can be read off the page. However, in these cases when there is clearly narrative in the Pauline texts, this narrative is never self-contained and complete. At no point does Paul narrate his great story from beginning to end. All we have are fragments. This means that even stories *within* the text are closely related to stories *behind* the text. Wright argues, with some justification, that the simple fact that Paul is not a storyteller, in the sense of someone who narrates whole stories, does not mean that his theology is not shaped by story.[261] That Paul does not tell his great story in its entirety does not necessarily mean that no such story lies behind his thought; stories do not always lie on the surface of the text. The question remains, however, of how we should go about uncovering and reconstructing the Pauline story, supposing that there is one.

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[259] For this distinction see Dunn, 'Narrative Approach to Paul,' 219.

[260] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 463, approves of Petersen's distinction between the poetic sequence, 'the order in which the material appears in the text itself', and the referential sequence, 'the order in which, if we try to reconstruct the world which the text both presupposes and addresses, this same material and more besides, will appear.' To these he adds a third layer, the worldview narrative.

[261] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 463. Wright goes on to suggest that critics of his narrative approach are influenced by preconceived ideas about Paul's theology: 'What is going on, clearly enough, in the objection to discovering a story in Paul's text is a matter not simply of textual analysis, but of a theological a priori. Paul must not be allowed, it seems (in some quarters), to have a gospel which is actually narratable in the form of a fully-fledged story...lest he cease believing in sovereign divine action, in a God who bursts in from outside, vertically from above, in a new event, a fresh revelation ('apocalypse').'

One way of filling the gaps in Paul's stories, in order to produce a complete, consistent Pauline narrative, is to refer to Jewish scripture and traditions. This is the approach taken by Wright. We assume that Paul is familiar with the Jewish story, and take this as the basis for the great story that he has in mind, with his distinctive Christological twist. As has already been noted, however, this is far less simple than we might hope, both because the concept of a great story that first century Jews would have basically agreed on is highly questionable, and because of the extent to which Paul subverts this story.

Even if there were such a story, and we could confidently say what was in it, we would still be left searching for a firm foundation for Paul's great story. Paul's theology is drenched in the Hebrew Scriptures, but this does not mean that he incorporates them into his theology uncritically. To use the apocalyptic language of Martyn, the Christ-event does not just serve as an extra chapter bolted on to the story so far, but an invasive act which radically alters Paul's perception of Israel's past. Paul's story may well share common features with the traditional Jewish story, features such as characters - Adam, Abraham, Moses - and events - the promise to Abraham, the giving of the law - but these stories may still be radically different, despite their surface similarities, because they differ in terms of how these features are connected and interpreted. Shared elements do not necessarily imply a shared story, because the theologically significant thing is how these elements are brought together.

To use an example from the world of cinema, in Christopher Nolan's 2000 film *Memento*, we follow the protagonist, Leonard Shelby, as he struggles to piece together the true circumstances behind his wife's violent murder, all while struggling to deal with anterograde amnesia, a condition which means that he cannot store recent memories. Shelby meets various other characters, and tries to work out their individual roles in what happened. In the final act of the film, we discover that Leonard's wife actually died in other, tragic circumstances, as the result of an insulin overdose that was partly caused by Shelby's own condition. Unable to cope with the guilt and grief, Shelby made sure that he would never be able to remember the truth, and left clues to allow himself to construct a falsified version of events. This is more than a mere plot twist, shedding new light on previous events. Instead, it shows the audience that what they have witnessed is actually a different story altogether. What was ostensibly a story about a man searching for truth becomes a story about a man going to great lengths to hide from the truth. This involves the same characters, the same setting, and many of the same events, but it is a different story. In the same way, it is possible that the Pauline great story - if there is one - contains many of the same elements as the traditional Jewish story, but still remains radically different, to the extent that it is a mistake

to think of the Christ-event as a new chapter of a pre-existing story; instead, the Christ-event means that the story must be fundamentally rewritten.

The second major problem with articulating a Pauline grand narrative is Paul's selection of stories. If it is basically correct to assert that there is a great story that lies behind Paul's thought, within the group of stories that Paul tells one might fairly assume that some individual stories form the essential core of the great story, while others are less important. If one is going to argue that this great story forms the substructure of Paul's thought, such that his discourse is unintelligible without it, it is important to be as precise as possible in describing the substance of this story. For a narrative scheme to offer significant interpretive insights into Paul's letters, it is not sufficient just to demonstrate that Paul's thought has a narrative structure. This insight has explanatory value only if we can identify the content of this narrative. In other words, it is not enough to say that Paul is telling a story (or alluding to a story). What is the extent of this story? What are its limits? Is there an essential "core" to the story - that Jesus was sent from God, and that he was crucified and rose again, for example - meaning that other narrative details are useful embellishments, but not essential?

Hays, with some justification, argues that Bultmann's approach to Paul could be described as 'denarrativisation' rather than 'demythologisation', because Bultmann seeks to strip away all the 'mythological' details of Paul's gospel story until he is left with a single statement, detached from a larger narrative: Jesus Christ is crucified.[262] Alternatively, one could argue that Bultmann simply reduces Paul's gospel story to its most basic core, the story of the crucified Christ.[263] Clearly, for Hays, this does violence to Paul's gospel story, and leads to a misreading of his theology. What is required, then, is to flesh out more fully what should be included in the basic gospel story, which would then form the backdrop for his theological discourse. How, though, are we to make these editorial decisions? Is Paul's gospel unintelligible without mention of Israel? Does it fall apart when it does not include Abraham, or Adam, or creation? What of the earthly life of Jesus, which is conspicuous by its absence in the epistles, barring some small details?

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[262] Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 48-50. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 457, makes a similar point, suggesting that Bultmann erred both by incorrectly assuming what can and cannot be believed in the modern world, and by 'screening out one of the fundamental strands of meaning in a worldview.'

[263] As Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 458, suggests, Bultmann offered his own story, with three stages: man before faith, the event of grace, and the new born Christian. Wright's point is that all worldviews have a narrative substructure, even if it is not immediately obvious. This is correct as far as it goes, but there is a significant difference between Bultmann's implicit existential narrative, with its focus on the individual, and the kind of grand, world-story that Wright is interested in.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, there remains the question of how the different stories that Paul uses are supposed to fit together, and what this means for his theology as a whole. This question tends to be answered in either one of two ways. On the one hand, there are those who emphasise the continuity between Paul's different stories, which are linked together into one grand narrative. On the other hand, there are those who view these individual stories as related in a non-linear way. Matlock uses the contrasting metaphors of an arrow and a web, asking 'is scripture for Paul more like a line pointing forward (the arrow), or a set of concentric circles drawing one inward (the web)?'[264] Matlock suggests that narrative approaches to Paul tend to assume the former, and have a tendency 'to think in terms of a single, Grand story instead of many stories, joining and separating, having the unity of an anthology, not that of a singular entity.'[265]

In contrast, Morna Hooker argues that Paul's stories relate to each other as chapters in a book, rather than short stories in a collection, arguing that the individual stories 'make sense in Paul's thought only in relation each other.'[266] It is worth pushing this metaphor further. There is a difference between a collection of short stories written by different authors that have been selected by an editor, and a collection of short stories that have all been written by the same author, and brought together as one collection, carefully selected and ordered by that same author. Of course, in the case of the Hebrew Scriptures, God is simultaneously co-author, editor, and main character in the various stories that make up the anthology!

ii. Models for Paul's Story or Stories

The various stories contained within scripture may not comfortably fit the mould of a grand narrative with clear, linear continuity, and chapters that follow on neatly from one another, but they may be connected in a way which goes beyond the fact that they carry the same themes, follow the same pattern, or have the same divine author. When Paul asserts that the promise came before the law (Gal. 3:17), he is stating the obvious, but he also touches on something of significance that goes beyond the immediate problem of the law and the promise, highlighting that there is an inextricable temporal relationship between these events,

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[264] Matlock, 'Arrow and the Web,' 53.
[265] Matlock, 'Arrow and the Web,' 53.
[266] Morna D. Hooker, ''Heirs of Abraham': The Gentiles' Role in Israel's Story: A Response to Bruce W. Longenecker' in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 85-96, at 87.

a relationship which affects their meaning.[267] If the various stories that Paul alludes to had occurred in a different order, then they could each be given a different meaning, based on an interpretation of this order. Hence it will not do to think of these various stories, whether the giving of the law, the promise to Abraham, or Adam's sin, merely as dislocated occurrences. They may be separated across time, without a clear historical line between them, but their significance is bound up in this specific temporal ordering. What is needed, then, is a model of history, or of the story of the gospel, which can account for the centrality of the Christ-event, the invasiveness of divine action in history, and also the temporal ordering of salvific events.[268] We can illustrate this through some simple diagrams:

A

B

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[267] As D.A. Carson, 'Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New', in D.A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, Mark A. Seifrid eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism Volume II: The Paradoxes of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 393-436, at 411, puts it: 'At the risk of deploying anachronistic categories, instead of allowing the law-covenant to gain a controlling force in a massive systematic theology, he reads the texts in a biblical-theological or salvation-historical sequence. Suddenly the law-covenant is no longer the high point, the culmination and control of all that is meant by true religion.'

[268] By this I simply mean the various historical occurrences which Paul believes to have been brought about by God as part of his plan for the world.
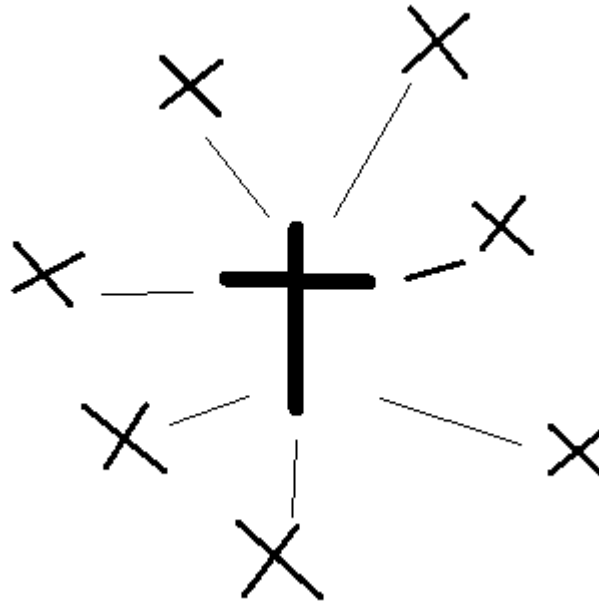
Diagram A represents a grand narrative, or a linear *Heilsgeschichte*. Salvific events are connected through history, producing a meta-narrative with the Christ-event as its central point. The line here would not necessarily be on a consistent curve, as a linear salvation history can include peaks and troughs, but overall there is an upwards trajectory, as God's purposes in history are gradually fulfilled through his people, despite setbacks resulting from human sin.[269] The most significant problem with this picture is that it undermines the incongruous character of the Christ-event.[270] It may well be the dividing point of history, but it appears as just another event in the course of salvation-history. For Paul, however, it is not just a salvific event; it is *the* salvific event. It is for this reason that Paul preaches Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:22; 2:2). The Christ-event is not just a new chapter added on to the great story of Israel, but is a radical alteration of the story, turning the audience's perception of what has gone before upside down.

Wright, to his credit, is clearly aware of the perceived tension between affirming the continuity of salvation history on the one hand, and the apocalyptic, incongruous character of the Christ-event on the other. His response to this problem is to suggest that these are really

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[269] If the x axis represents time, then the y axis would represent something like humanity's relationship with God.

[270] As Barclay, 'Paul's Story,' 135, argues, the kind of 'redrawn' *Heilsgeschichte* that Wright proposes may 'threaten the centrality of Christology and the critical message of the cross.'

just two sides of the same coin, and that the problem arises out of a misunderstanding of Jewish apocalyptic. Jewish apocalyptic, like Daniel, 'characteristically speaks of the unveiling or revelation of mysteries, hidden secrets known in heaven but not before known on earth. Among the mysteries which apocalyptic characteristically reveals, through whichever device, is *the plan of God*.'[271] This means that for Wright, then, Paul's appeal to mystery shows that apocalyptic and salvation history (or covenantal monotheism, to use Wright's preferred terminology) are intertwined. The divine plan in history has always been characterized by hiddenness and surprise.[272] When these hidden things are revealed, however, they are shown to be consistent with what has gone before:

> The Pauline answer to the question, 'So what is the creator's promise, and what is the intended rescue operation?' is not 'Jesus Christ' as a bolt from the blue, with merely a few prototypes, hints and vague promises to point ahead of him. It is, rather Jesus Christ…as the fulfilment of the creator's rescue plan. And the creator's rescue plan was to call Abraham and his family.[273]

This argument is useful so far as it goes, but it does not fully solve the problem, which is whether or not it is possible to incorporate the radical centrality of the Christ-event into a grand story spanning history, a story which finds considerable continuity with Jewish belief and expectation. Wright's fusion of apocalyptic and salvation-history sees the Christ-event as the next step in a previously established story, rather than seeing the Christ-event as the source of a new, re-written story or set of stories.

Diagram B represents a contrasting way of viewing Paul's use of story. At the heart of this cluster of stories is the gospel story of the crucified and risen messiah. All the other stories that Paul tells, whether they concern creation, Israel, or Paul himself, are meaningful *only* insofar as they relate to the Christ-event. The Christ-event is the lens through which other stories are understood, because the significance of these stories is found in the way in which they bear the shape of, and point towards, the Christ-event.[274] There is no historical or

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[271] N.T. Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005), 52.

[272] See also N.T. Wright, 'Gospel and Theology in Galatians' in L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson eds., *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard Longenecker* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 222-239, at 237-8.

[273] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 494.

[274] For Barclay, 'Paul's Story', 154-5, Paul 'tells very particular grace-shaped stories.' These are linked by 'their homology, their common 'syntax' or pattern, their cruciform or grace-moulded shape.'

temporal line between these stories because the Christ-event stands over and above history itself. While this avoids the problems with the first approach, new problems arise. This approach fails to articulate the significance of the ordering of these events. Paul's argument in Galatians 3 relies on the ordering of the promise, the law, and the messiah, and the idea that there is divine intention behind this. Likewise, in Romans 9-11 Paul explains Israel's rejection of Christ as a necessary precursor to the Gentile mission.

C
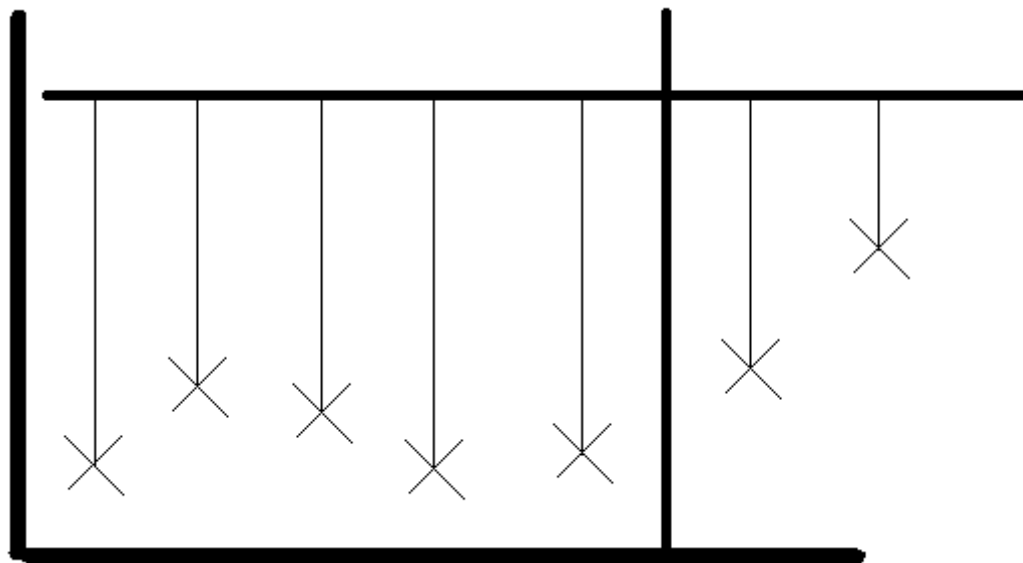
Diagram C is a fairly crude attempt at graphically representing an alternative way of thinking about how Paul's various stories fit together. Salvific events relate to each other in two ways: first, through their respective temporal locations and second, through their shared origins. Adam comes before Abraham, and Abraham comes before Moses. Note, however, that they do not follow on from each other naturally, as if one causes the other. They are causally related only insofar as they share the same cause, or causer. Each of these individual stories is an example of God invading history, and the story of Christ stands out among these other stories as the definitive manifestation of God's grace. Here, the Christ-event (represented by the cross running vertically and horizontally) is an event within historical, chronological time, but also holds up the other stories, which remain relevant only insofar as they relate to God's action in Christ. The new age is not simply tacked onto the end of history; it runs parallel with human history, breaking through in the stories of Abraham, Moses, Israel, and most emphatically with the Christ-event itself.

Francis Watson argues against narrative readings of Paul such as those of Hays and Wright on the basis that the gospel is a 'vertical' occurrence, rather than a 'horizontal' one. By this he means that the Pauline gospel 'announces a definitive, unsurpassable divine incursion into the world' which redefines not only the end but the beginning of the world.[275] Watson goes on to argue that 'The death of Jesus is not an event within a temporal flow; it is an absolute and unsurpassable event that determines who Jesus is, who God is, and indeed who we are.'[276] Like Martyn, Watson is surely correct to emphasise this 'vertical' aspect of Paul's theology, but again, as with Martyn, one wonders whether there needs to be such a sharp dichotomy between the vertical and the horizontal. Indeed, one might argue that one of the most startling, revolutionary aspects of Paul's theology is the claim that in the Christ-event God's son *does* enter into history, his life and death becoming events 'within a temporal flow', even if they are not causally determined by this flow. The crucifixion is a present reality, but it also a specific event which happened at a particular time, in a particular place, as Jewish flesh was nailed to a piece of wood.

In his reading of Galatians 4:4, Martyn rightly emphasises the direction of Christ's movement, into history, at the apocalyptic fullness of time. But it is also significant that in this apocalyptic invasion Paul enters into a particular history, born of a woman, born under the law. As David Horrell argues, while the revelation of Christ is for Paul an interruption, which does not arise out of history, but invades and challenges it, Paul still chooses to explain the significance of this revelation with reference to Israel's history, and scripture remains central to his theologising.[277] A simple, linear story as shown in diagram A may well be rife with problems, but it can be unfairly used as a straw man by those who reject any kind of *Heilsgeschichte* or metanarrative in Paul's theology.[278] As Horrell puts it, 'Paul does not have to think of this story as a simple 'line,' nor as one that reflects a process of 'gradual

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[275] Francis Watson, 'Is There a Story in These Texts?' in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 231-40, at 232.

[276] Watson, 'Is there a Story?', 234.

[277] David G. Horrell, 'Paul's Narratives or Narrative Substructure?: The Significance of 'Paul's Story" in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 157-171, at 160.

[278] As Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, argues, while talk of God's saving activity through history might be taken 'to denote some king of 'immanent' process', a 'salvation' that merely emerges from the ongoing evolutionary development of natural forces,' this is not the only way of thinking about it. Even Käsemann, who strenuously objected to the presence of such a process within the Pauline texts, still recognised the significant role of salvation history in Paul's thought.

maturation'...This story is not simply linear or steadily progressive: it is punctuated by key moments of which the coming of Christ is *the* definitive, climactic moment.'[279]

iii. Conclusions to Chapter 3

Clearly, a few simple diagrams cannot resolve the tension between *Heilsgeschichte* and apocalyptic in Paul. While Wright is correct to argue that these two approaches to Paul are often played off against each other unnecessarily, there still remains a genuine problem. Paul tells various different stories, which relate to each other in a complex way. At the centre of this bundle of stories is the story of the crucified messiah. To string these stories together like pearls on a thread risks failing to appreciate how the story of Christ redefines all other stories, and stretches out across time; but to read Paul's other stories only as satellites orbiting the story of Christ obscures Paul's clear belief that the God of Jesus is the God of Adam, Abraham and Moses, who acts purposively throughout history, both before and after the Christ-event, which is itself the culmination of an unpredictable divine plan.

The problem with the move away from salvation history, and from the kind of apocalyptic found in Käsemann and Beker, is that Martyn and other apocalyptic interpreters of Paul struggle to deal with the way in which Paul uses the Old Testament, and the way he thinks about figures like Abraham and Moses. This problem arises from an overly simplistic understanding of history and time, brought about by the emphasis on the apocalyptic aspects of Paul's thought, and the polemic against salvation history. For Martyn, the present evil age, prior to the apocalypse of Christ, is a time of total enslavement. There is no salvific line leading up to the Christ-event, because all of humanity, including Israel, is enslaved to evil powers, including the law.

In part two, I will argue on the basis of four key texts that this apocalyptic view of history fails to account fully for the complex ways in which Paul maps the Christ-event onto the rest of history. Nonetheless, I do not think that apocalyptic readings of Paul must be abandoned. In their focus on the priority and incongruity of divine action, and in their characterisation of the gospel as an invasive power that liberates humanity and engages the forces of evil in cosmic warfare, they capture something at the heart of Paul's theology. What is needed, then, is a way of maintaining these aspects of apocalyptic readings of Paul, while also accounting for the way in which Paul deals with people and events in history prior to the Christ-event. In other words, we need a way of describing the Christ-event as both an

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[279] Horrell, 'Paul's Narratives,' 163.

incongruous, invasive act, and also as the climax of God's dealings with Israel, all the while avoiding the problems with Wright's narrative interpretation. In view of this, the following chapter will introduce two new voices to the debate: Walter Benjamin and Karl Barth. Despite their differences, Benjamin and Barth both think critically about history and time, and offer useful ways of thinking about how Paul might map the Christ-event onto the rest of history.

Chapter 4

Messianic Time: Karl Barth and Walter Benjamin

In chapter three, we saw that apocalyptic and narrative approaches to Paul have significant problems. Both of these approaches share two important features. First, they think of history in terms of successive periods of time, in a chronological sequence. For apocalyptic approaches such as Martyn's, there is division between the old age and the new age, albeit with some overlap. In narrative approaches such as Wright's, successive ages, or chapters, or acts, make up the great narrative which spans history. Second, they view the Christ-event as a concrete historical occurrence, which occurs at a specific point in time, and which marks the dividing point between two successive ages. In this chapter, my intention is to introduce two new voices to the debate. Karl Barth and Walter Benjamin write from very different perspectives, but both are interested in considering the nature of messianic interaction with history. Barth's theology of the Christ-event, and Benjamin's messianic philosophy of history, offer some useful ways of thinking about Paul's theology of history and time.

1. Barth, History, and Time

One of the difficulties in assessing Barth's theology of history is that, as with other key aspects of his theology, it underwent development over the course of his career.[280] This theological development can be seen both between different editions of the *Römerbrief*, Barth's ground-breaking commentary on Romans, and also between the *Römerbrief* and Barth's magnum opus, the *Church Dogmatics* (CD). Here, I will be approaching Barth with two particular questions in mind. First, in what sense, if at all, is the Christ-event a historical occurrence? Second, in what way does the Christ-event relate to the rest of history? I will argue that Barth's answers to these questions, and his understanding of how God's eternal time interacts with human, historical time in the Christ-event, provides a useful set of concepts for helping us to move beyond some of the apparent tensions between the apocalyptic and salvation-historical themes in Paul.

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[280] For two important contributions to this debate see Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* tr. E.T. Oakes (San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 1992); Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realist Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). Von Balthasar's influential study of Barth posits two significant shifts in his theology, first from liberalism to dialectical theology around 1918, second from dialectic to analogy in 1927. McCormack critiques Von Balthasar's account, suggesting a new paradigm with five distinct phases in Barth's theology after the break with liberalism in 1915.

i. Theology and History in the Römerbrief

The *Römerbrief* was first published in 1919, with a significantly updated second edition in 1922,[281] and it had a powerful impact on its release, provoking strong responses, both positive and negative. One of the central themes of the book is the otherness of God. In the introduction to the second edition, Barth states that if he had a system, it was 'limited to what Kierkegaard called "the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity" - "God is in heaven and thou art on earth"' and that 'the relation between such a God and such a man, and the relation between such a man and such a God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy.'[282] Barth repeatedly stresses the otherness of God, and hence the otherness of divine action and revelation, by which he primarily means the resurrection. This is made clear in another programmatic statement in the introduction to Barth's commentary:

> The gospel is not a religious message to inform mankind of their divinity or to tell them how they may become divine. The Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men. Salvation comes to them from Him, because they are, as men, incapable of knowing Him, and because they have no right to claim anything from him. The gospel is not one thing in the midst of other things, to be directly apprehended and comprehended. The gospel is the Word of the Primal Origin of all things, the Word which, since it is ever new, must ever be received with renewed fear and trembling. The Gospel is therefore not an event, nor an experience, nor an emotion - however delicate! Rather, it is the clear and objective perception of what eye hath not seen nor ear heard.[283]

Because of this, there is a profound mystery at the heart of Christian theology. The God who is utterly distinct from humanity is brought close and made known to them through revelation. The unknowable God is made knowable. Knowledge of God is not something that

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[281] Further editions were published in subsequent years, with less significant changes. All English quotations here are from the 6th and final edition, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: University Press, 1968). German quotations are taken from the 1922 edition of *Der Römerbrief,* from the Digital Karl Barth Library, http://solomon.dkbl.alexanderstreet.com/, accessed 11/12/2014.

[282] Barth, *Romans*, 10.

[283] Barth, *Romans*, 28. Here we see a good example of Barth's understanding of revelation, one of the key themes in his theology. It is the gospel which takes epistemological priority over all else.

can be discovered or worked out by humans. It is not out in the world, waiting to be found.[284] Knowledge of God can only occur through God's own gracious self-revelation. Barth contrasts two worlds: the eternal world of the divine, and the temporal world of human history. In Jesus, 'two worlds meet and go apart, two planes intersect, the one known and the other unknown…The name Jesus defines an historical occurrence and marks the point where the unknown world cuts the known world.'[285] This affirmation, that God's revelation in Jesus takes the form of an historical occurrence is not, however, without qualification. For Barth, there is an important sense in which it will not do to describe the Christ-event as historical, and so while he does not deny its historicity, particularly when talking about the resurrection, there is a noticeable uneasiness in these affirmations. For example, Barth states that 'In the Resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but it touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it. And, precisely because it does not touch it, it touches it as a frontier - as the new world.'[286] The resurrection both touches and does not touch the world of flesh, the world of history. What appears on the face of it to be a contradiction, however, is typical of Barth's dialectical approach to God's revelation in history. He goes on in the same vein:

> The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as there it 'came to pass', was discovered, and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not 'the coming to pass', or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the resurrection is not an event of history at all.[287]

Again, we find the same kind of dialectical language. The resurrection is in history, but not of history.[288] This is a significant distinction, and so it is important to be as clear as

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[284] Barth famously rejected natural theology, and was heavily critical of Emil Brunner for this reason.

[285] Barth, *Romans*, 29.

[286] Barth, *Romans*, 30.

[287] Barth, *Romans*, 30, cf. *Römerbrief* , 6, '*So ist die Auferstehung das Ereignis vor den Toren Jerusalems im Jahre 30, sofern sie dort "eintrat", entdeckt und erkannt wurde. Und sie ist es auch wieder gar nicht, sofern ihre Notwendigkeit, Erscheinung und Offenbarung nicht durch jenes Eintreten, Entdecken und Erkennen bedingt, sodern selbst ihr Bedingendes ist.*'

[288] The language of 'in history but not of history' is widely used in scholarly work on Barth's concept of history, generally with reference to this passage, but not uncontroversially so. As Kuo-An Wu, *On the Concept of History in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh University Doctoral Thesis,

possible about what this means. The resurrection is an event *in* history, in the sense that it really happened, at a particular time and place. But there are two ways in which the resurrection is nonetheless not *of* history. First, the resurrection is an event which, by its very nature, falls outside of the realm of historical enquiry. Because it is the point at which the unknown world touches the known world, it is an event which history cannot properly account for: 'Insofar as our world is touched in Jesus by the other world, it ceases to be capable of direct observation as history, time, or thing.'[289] History accounts for cause and effect within itself, but the Christ-event enters into history from outside, or as Barth famously puts it, 'vertically, from above' (*Senkrecht von Oben*).[290] For Barth this means that within history, 'Jesus as the Christ can be understood only as Problem or Myth.'[291] He can only properly be understood as the revelation of God through faith, which stands outside of history's grasp. The resurrection is a historical event, but history cannot identify it as such; only faith can. Like Bultmann, Barth makes a distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*. *Historie* is something that can be proved by the methods of historical study. *Geschichte* is something that really took place, but which may be beyond the reach of historical study. All *Historie* is *Geschichte*, but not all *Geschichte* is history. For Barth, the resurrection is *Geschichte* but not *Historie*. The resurrection is the point at which the *Unhistorisch* becomes *Historisch*.[292]

Second, there is a danger that by thinking of the resurrection as a historical event, we rob it of its essential nature as an act of revelation which enters into the world vertically,

2011), 67-8 argues, this language is the result of a 'rather free style of 'explanatory' rendering' in Hoskyns' English translation. In the original German, there are no phrases which correspond directly to 'in history' or 'of history.' Wu is correct to point out the differences between the original and the translation, but there is little warrant for his claim that this translation contributes to the 'strong impression that Barth denies the historicity of the resurrection' in the 1922 edition of the Römerbrief - a charge against which Wu correctly, and successfully, defends Barth. Hoskyns' translation is quite liberal, but he does capture the dialectical aspects of Barth's argument in this passage, what Wu refers to as the 'dual nature concerning the relation of resurrection to history.' As Barth himself states in the preface to the English addition (p.1): '[Hoskyns] has combined fidelity to the text with a considerable freedom of presentation; and that is, surely, the mark of a good translator.' Hence, while the phrase 'in history but not of history' was not written by Barth himself, it remains authentically Barthian, and I will continue to use it as such. See also F.W. Camfield, *Revelation and the Holy Spirit: An Essay in Barthian Theology* (London: Elliott Stock, 1933), 32; Trevor A. Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Essays Toward a Reading of his Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 26; McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realist Dialectical Theology*, 144, 233.
[289] Barth, *Romans*, 29.
[290] Barth, *Romans*, 30; *Römerbrief*, 6.
[291] Barth, *Romans*, 30.
[292] Barth, *Romans*, 222; *Römerbrief*, 204.

tying it instead to horizontal, historical processes. In this way, the resurrection loses its radical otherness; alternatively, we might say that it ceases to be truly apocalyptic:[293]

> If we thrust the Resurrection into history, if we set the pre-supposition which is in Jesus within the sequence of events, if we weave the paradox of faith into human spiritual experience, we introduce, as it were, a spectre which devours every living thing…Resurrection ceases to be resurrection, if it be some abnormal event side by side with other events.[294]

Because the Christ-event is a divine act, it requires no historical antecedents. In Christ, God irrupts into history, vertically, at a particular point of historical time. Because of this direction, the Christ-event is 'without before or after.'[295] Again, revelation is *in* history but not *of* history. The claim that God acts in history puts revelation beyond the scope of historical inquiry. Explanations of historical occurrences based on divine action 'simply do not fit within the causal nexus or canons of explanation assumed by most historians.'[296]

This dialectical approach to the historicity of the Christ-event has significant implications for our second question, that of the relationship between the Christ-event and the rest of history. Barth offers a largely negative interpretation of human history. History, for Barth, in its direction and its details, is a record of humanity's unrighteousness, and proof of their desperate need for the gospel. This is most apparent in Barth's comments on Romans 3:9-10. Barth states that 'The word 'humanity' means unredeemed men and women; the word 'history' implies limitation and corruption; the pronoun 'I' spells judgment.'[297] The gospel denounces any human claim to righteousness, and 'the whole of human history pronounces this indictment against itself.'[298] Indeed, Barth goes as far as to say that original sin 'is the doctrine which, in the last resort, underlies the whole teaching of history.'[299]

Here Barth's overview of history shares similarities with Martyn's apocalyptic vision. The Christ-event irrupts into the present evil age. Within the darkness of history, however,

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[293] This idea is clearly present in Martyn's reading of Paul. As we saw in chapter 3, Martyn repeatedly stresses that the Christ-event should not be understood as part of a linear sequence.

[294] Barth, *Romans*, 115.

[295] McCormack, *Dialectical Theology*, 145.

[296] Richard E Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 66.

[297] Barth, *Romans*, 85.

[298] Barth, *Romans*, 85.

[299] Barth, *Romans*, 86.

Barth identifies a 'crimson thread' running 'consistently and markedly throughout history.'[300] This thread, revealed most emphatically in the Christ-event, is the true meaning of history, and is what links distinct figures such as Abraham and Christ. Christ is not, however, just one figure hanging on this thread; instead, Christ himself *is* the thread, and the 'LOGOS of all history.'[301] Here Barth draws an ingenious connection between the significance of salvific events like the covenant with Abraham, or the Christ-event, and their non-historical character. Barth describes the Christ-event as both historical (*historisch*) and non-historical (*unhistorisch*).[302] It is only the non-historical that can reach through time and have significance for us today, because the discourse of faith is concerned with the non-historical, the invisible, and the incomprehensible. In other words, Barth presents a kind of *Heilsgeschichte* which is necessarily non-historical. There is a thread running through history, linking Abraham and Christ, but it is the thread of promise and fulfilment, of truths which fall outside of history's scope. When the story of Abraham is looked at with the eyes of faith, rather than with the eyes of history, 'the present becomes aware of the unity of meaning that is in all history,'[303] a unity found in Christ. In this way Barth is able to present the Christ-event as truly 'other', truly apocalyptic, while maintaining a form of continuity that runs through history.

ii. Theology and History in the Church Dogmatics

One of the criticisms levelled at the *Römerbrief* is that it presents what can be interpreted as a docetic Christology.[304] Barth's Christology in the *Römerbrief* is intimately connected with his understanding of the relationship between revelation and history. Hence, when he makes ambivalent statements regarding the interaction between revelation and history in the Christ-event, he leaves himself open to the criticism that he does not take the humanity, or the worldliness of Christ seriously enough. Barth recognized this problem himself, and sought to rectify it in the *Church Dogmatics*:

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[300] Barth, *Romans*, 117.
[301] Barth, *Romans*, 142.
[302] Barth, *Romans*, 195; *Römerbrief*, 175. Following Wu, my preference is to translate *unhistorisch* as non-historical, rather than unhistorical, in an attempt to avoid the implication that *unhistorisch* denotes something that did not really happen. By non-historical I mean something that really happened, but which is beyond the reach of historical study.
[303] Barth, *Romans*, 145.
[304] Richard H. Roberts, *A Theology On Its Way? Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 39; McCormack, *Dialectical Theology*, 233.

I should like at this stage to utter an express warning against certain passages and contexts in my commentary on Romans, where play was made and even work occasionally done with the idea of a revelation permanently transcending time, merely bounding time and determining it from without. Then, in the face of the prevailing historicism and psychologism which had ceased to be aware at all of any revelation other than an inner mundane one within common time, the book had a definite, antiseptic task and significance. Readers of it today will not fail to appreciate that in it Jn. 1 does not have justice done to it.[305]

By this he refers to the prologue to John's gospel, and in particular to the claim that 'the word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). It is interesting that Barth himself makes reference to the 'task' of the *Römerbrief*. It is in many ways a polemical work, in contrast with the *Church Dogmatics,* which is more mature, and far more thorough. Barth also makes reference to his description of the divine world touching the world at a tangent, now stating clearly that revelation 'does not remain transcendent over time, it does not merely meet it at a point, but it enters time' (*Sie bleibt der Zeit nicht transzendent, sie tangiert sie nicht bloss, sondern sie geht in die Zeit*).[306] Barth finds the theological apparatus for this development in Chalcedonian Christology.[307] Barth emphasizes both the deity and the humanity of Christ, such that Christ is the figure in whom time and eternity come together. The Christ-event is in history but not of history because Christ himself is fully human, and therefore concretely historical, but also fully divine, beyond history's grasp.

In a fascinating passage, Barth considers 'the modern problem of "revelation and history",' defined as 'the question of whether and how far man's time may be regarded at any definite point as the time of God's revelation.'[308] This problem arises when texts such as those found in the New Testament, which claim to attest to revelation from God, and to divine action within history, are put under the scrutiny of historical criticism. For Barth, however,

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[305] Karl Barth*, Church Dogmatics*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936- 1969), I/2 S14, 50. Henceforth referred to as CD. German quotations are taken from *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (KD), from the Digital Karl Barth Library http://solomon.dkbl.alexanderstreet.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi-bin/asp/philo/dkbl/volumes_toc.pl?&kirch=ON, accessed 11/12/2014.

[306] CD I/2 S14, 50; KD 1/2, 55.

[307] Hart, 'Revelation' in John Webster ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 37-56, at 51; George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 136.

[308] Barth, CD 1/2 S14, 56.

this question 'rests upon a portentous failure to appreciate the nature of revelation,'[309] and he highlights three main errors that surround this issue. First, Barth argues that it is a mistake to approach the question of revelation and history by beginning with the general phenomenon of time, or history. Second, he argues that historical events can only be found as revelation when they are sought as such. In other words, it makes no sense to ask whether Jesus Christ is God's revelation without having a prior commitment to the possibility of finding revelation, and a desire to do so. Third, if the Christ-event really is revelation, then it necessarily falls outside of the scope of historical enquiry: 'There has been a failure to see that if revelation is revelation, we cannot speak of it as though it can be discovered, dug up, worked out as the deeper ground and context of human history.'[310] While the Bible is a historical document, which contains information about history, its usefulness for theology consists in it being a record of revelation, which historical enquiry does not have the tools to deal with adequately.

These are all epistemological claims, and an area where Barth's theology is closer to Martyn's than to Wright's. For Wright, the story of Israel provides the context for interpreting the Christ-event, and to some extent limits or controls that interpretation, but for both Martyn and Barth it is the Christ-event which provides the means of interpreting the rest of history. This is not necessarily an either/or choice. Wright also argues that the Christ allows and requires a reinterpretation of Israel's history. But while all agree that this relationship is a reciprocal one, running in both directions, for both Martyn and Barth there is a much stronger emphasis on the epistemological role of the Christ-event. In other words, Martyn and Barth differ from Wright in offering a more thoroughly Christological epistemology.

Based on Barth's critique, a project like the quest for the historical Jesus has limited use, because it has no way of telling us whether or not Jesus is the eternal logos made flesh. Again, however, it is important to stress that while Barth continues to argue that revelation can never be 'historical' in the sense of being open to historical enquiry, this does not equate to a denial of revelation's historicity altogether. Here Barth criticizes Bultmann's approach to history. Barth agrees with Bultmann that the resurrection is not a historical fact, in the sense of being open to the verification of modern historical scholarship, but he rejects the conclusion that Bultmann draws from this 'when he insists that for this reason the facts reported could not have occurred.'[311]

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[309] Barth, CD 1/2 S14, 56.
[310] Barth, CD 1/2 S14, 58.
[311] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 446.

Bultmann's sceptical approach to the historicity of the New Testament accounts, and his desire to strip them of their mythological features, leads him to conclusions which Barth finds unacceptable. At the other end of the scale from Bultmann's approach to revelation and history stands Cullmann. Cullmann avoids some of what Barth deems to be errors in Bultmann's approach, but Barth is also critical of his account of history. For Barth, the problem with Cullmann's approach is that it fails to account properly for the significance of the resurrection. Barth sees evidence of this in Cullmann's *Christ and Time*, where the resurrection enters the picture towards the end of the book, 'without any real significance for the author's reconstruction of the New Testament conception of time and history.'[312] Barth suggests that this is symptomatic of a methodological flaw in Cullmann's approach. Cullmann errs when he supposes 'that the New Testament authors started with a particular conception of time as an ascending line with a series of aeons, and then inserted into this geometrical figure the event of the Christ as the centre of this line.'[313] This is an important criticism, and it helps to highlight a significant aspect of Barth's theological approach.[314] Again, it is the Christ-event which takes epistemological priority. If in Christ the totally other God has taken on human flesh, this must be the event which defines the rest of history. If Jesus Christ is raised, it will not do to merely consider how this might fit in with the rest of history. Instead, one must ask how the rest of history fits around this truth. For Barth, the historical period that covers the life of Jesus is not just a particularly remarkable period among others. It is the time when the impossible becomes possible, and the eternal God becomes temporal. Because of this, it redefines all other times. As in the *Römerbrief*, however, while Barth is keen to stress that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are divine revelation which take concrete, historical form, he is equally keen to stress that God's revelation is not limited to this form:

> The recollection found in the New Testament cannot be mere recollection, a mere backward look at a once for all happening. If it is, it will inevitably be, like all other recollection, merely recollection of a past event. But the Easter story, though it is a happening that once became an event in datable time, does not merely belong to the past...The New Testament is really the witness to recollection of revelation. But because it is the witness to recollection of *revelation*, the recollection attested by it is

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[312] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 443.
[313] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 443.
[314] I have already noted the similarities between Cullmann and Wright. This criticism from Barth is directed at Cullmann, but it could just as easily be directed at Wright, who takes the great story of Israel, made up of a series of chapters, and inserts the Christ-event into this great story.

thereby extended. Recollection of eternal time, which is what recollection of the risen One is, is necessarily recollection of a time which overarches our time, and which therefore cannot be confined to the datable time with which it is in the first instance related.[315]

iii. Eternity and Christ

Barth's doctrine of time and eternity as it is developed in the *Church Dogmatics* is crucial to his understanding of the relationship between God and history. The sections of the *Church Dogmatics* dealing with the subject are, however, deeply complex, and are an example of where the language available to Barth struggles to express clearly the ideas he apparently intends to convey.[316] Barth rejects the idea of eternity being merely quantitatively different from normal time. Instead, God's eternity is qualitatively different from creaturely time. The problem with thinking of eternity as extended, limitless time is that it fails to grasp the difference between the divine and the creaturely time. As Barth puts it, 'to identify eternity with time without beginning and end would be to attribute to it an idealised form of creaturely existence.'[317] It would be equally wrong, however, to think of eternity as timelessness. God is not constrained by creaturely temporality, but nor is he outside of time altogether, utterly divorced from temporality.[318] What, then, does it mean for Barth to say that God is eternal?

> Eternity is not timelessness. It is beginning, middle and end in fullness, for it is all three simultaneously. It is always the first and second as it is also the third. Thus God is His own dimension. And this dimension underlies, conditions and includes that of His creature, so that that of His creature is always His own, and where His creature is, He is also. But His dimension has no fixed span, no margins, no measure but Himself.[319]

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[315] Barth, CD 1/2 S14, 116.

[316] George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford: University Press, 1991), 58, describes it as 'one of the most vexing matters in Barth's theology.'

[317] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 558.

[318] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 558.

[319] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 558.

God's eternity does not mean that he is divorced from temporality, but that he is 'supremely temporal', with 'authentic temporality.'[320] Indeed, God himself is the origin of all time (*der Ursprung aller Zeit*). One aspect of this authentic temporality is simultaneity. Hence Barth makes the apparently paradoxical claim that God's eternal, authentic temporality is where 'yesterday, today, and tomorrow, are not successive, but simultaneous.'[321] Within this simultaneity, however, stands the earthly life of Christ, who lives within human, creaturely, temporality. Hence, in Jesus Christ Barth sees the coming together of time and eternity. Several commentators have pointed out the Trinitarian shape of Barth's doctrine of time and eternity.[322] As Chalamet argues, in God's eternity, past, present and future are simultaneous but still distinct, existing in a kind of perichoresis. In this way, Jesus Christ is both temporal and eternal, living at a particular time, but spanning the whole of time. This is possible because 'each of his temporal forms contained the other two, dynamically, by way of anticipation or recapitulation.'[323] The Christ-event is thus both a temporal and an eternal act.

In an essay on Barth's doctrine of time, Hunsinger draws out three crucial points from Barth's discussion of eternity.[324] First, eternity is, in some sense, timeless. This is true insofar as Barth argues that God's temporality is distinct from ours, although Barth is keen to stress that God is not timeless in the normal sense of the word. Second, eternity is a mode of time that is God's own. Third, the eternal temporality of God is the condition for the possibility of time's redemption. This third point is of particular significance, because it provides the theological basis for Barth's understanding of revelation, and of the incarnation in particular. If God's eternity means that he stands utterly apart from creaturely time, then it is difficult to see how God could really enter into human temporality in the person of Jesus. By defining God's eternity in a way which incorporates temporality, albeit in a way that is quite different from human temporality, Barth is able to say that in the incarnation, and in the earthly life of Jesus, God really has time for us. This claim forms the foundation of Barth's understanding of the incarnation. Without it, Barth suggests, God remains aloof. A timeless God cannot be an incarnational God. This understanding of eternity means that God 'has a basis in himself for a

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[320] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 437; cf. KD III/2 S47, 525: '*Auch der ewige Gott lebt nicht zeitlos, sondern hochst zeitlich, sofern eben seine Ewigkeit die eigentliche Zeitlichkeit und so der Ursprung aller Zeit ist.*'

[321] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 437.

[322] Christophe Chalamet, 'No Timelessness in God. On Differing Interpretations of Karl Barth's Theology of Eternity, Time and Election' *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 4 (2010), 21-37; Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 188.

[323] Chalamet, 'No Timelessness,' 126.

[324] Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 189.

positive relation to creaturely time, a basis on which he can and does freely enter into time and take time for us.'[325]

God enters into time concretely in the Christ-event, being present in human flesh. Barth is keen to stress, however, that this does not mean that God remains separated from time outside of the thirty or so years of Christ's human life. God 'does not hover motionless above the flux of human history', but he accompanies each individual through the procession of time.[326] This is made possible because there is a correspondence between our time and God's time. Our time is willed and created by God as a dimension which corresponds to his.[327]

Barth's doctrine of eternity, in conjunction with his Christology, allows him to solve the problem of how the radically other God can genuinely enter into time. This doctrine is not, however, without problems. First, there is the question of whether the simultaneity of past, present, and future in God's time effectively nullifies human temporality. If past, present, and future are cotemporaneous for God, is human temporality just an illusion, meaning that human time is not truly open? Bent Flemming Nielsen argues that this line of criticism of Barth is unwarranted, because 'the mere fact that something assumes a *chronological form in one context* does not preclude its figuring in the context of divine reality as *contemporaneously and simultaneously present* in all its constituent parts.'[328] This means that the two are held together in dialectical tension.

This response, however, leads us to another possible criticism of Barth, concerning the paradoxical and dialectical language that he employs. Put simply, Barth's claims regarding time and eternity at times stretch the limits of language, to the extent that it is questionable whether they have any real meaning.[329] What does it really mean, for example, to say that past, present and future are distinct but simultaneous? Just as Barth's doctrine of Time shares a Trinitarian pattern, it also shares a sense of mystery and paradox with the doctrine of the Trinity. In comparing Barth's doctrines of eternity and the Trinity, Hunsinger emphasizes this sense of mystery, arguing that the presence of divine and human predicates, of eternity and temporality, in a single subject, Jesus Christ, is 'as Barth understands it, the

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[325] Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 201. See also Chalamet, 'No Timelessness,' 26.

[326] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 523.

[327] Barth, CD III/2 S47, 537.

[328] Bent Fleming Nielsen, 'Karl Barth - a Brief Introduction: Time and Eternity' http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Barth%20A%20Brief%20Introduction%20Time%20and%20Eternity.pdf – site accessed 11/12/2014, 8.

[329] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 14, warns that Barth 'departs from commonsensical conceptions of "time" and "eternity".'

supreme mystery of the Christian faith. Its terms can be described, but its occurrence defies, inevitably, explanation by means of some larger conceptual pattern or scheme.'[330] For Barth, then, there comes a point in theology at which explanation must come to an end.

In proclaiming the mystery of Jesus Christ as the person in whom eternity and time come together, Barth presents a radically Christocentric theology of history. Christ, as the one in whom time is truly fulfilled, is the meaning of history, and in his eternity he transcends human temporality. Barth's emphasis on the verticality of divine action means that in an important sense his theology is thoroughly apocalyptic.[331] The meaning of history is actually found in the non-historical, when the divine irrupts into the human sphere and stands in judgment over history. Barth's emphasis on the vertical invasion of historical time means that he is opposed to the linear *Heilsgeschichte* found in Cullmann. But he still maintains that there is a Christological crimson thread which runs through history, as hidden history. This hidden history is un-history, insofar as it does not rely on the same causal nexus as the rest of history. Because of Christ's eternity, his presence in history is not limited to his earthly life; any moment of time, past, present, or future, is open to the possibility of revelation.[332]

2. Walter Benjamin's Apocalyptic Redemption of History

This idea of the openness of history leads us neatly on to Walter Benjamin. Recent years have seen an increased level of interest in philosophical engagements with Paul, either with or by continental philosophers including Alain Badiou[333] and Giorgio Agamben,[334] among others.[335] Walter Benjamin is one such thinker who has received less attention from

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[330] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 237.

[331] See Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 64-78, for a reading of Barth along these lines. Barth's theology has had a significant influence on apocalyptic interpreters of Paul, including Käsemann and Martyn.

[332] As McCormack, *Dialectical Theology*, 48, puts it: 'The 'turn of aeons' is not something which had to await the appearance in history of the man Jesus of Nazareth in the years AD 1-30; it was something which was realized from the beginning of time, wherever the power which raised Jesus from the dead was active in creating faith. The prototypical example in the Old Testament of a person who already lived on the basis of the new reconciled life created by God in Christ was Abraham.'

[333] Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (California: Stanford University Press, 2003). For a useful engagement with Badiou, see John M.G. Barclay, 'Paul and the Philosophers: Alain Badiou and the Event' in *New Blackfriars* 91 (2010), 171-184.

[334] Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[335] For three collections of essays on Paul and contemporary philosophy, see John D. Caputo; Linda Martin eds., *St Paul Among the Philosophers* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009); Douglas A. Harink ed., *Paul, Philosophy and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with*

Pauline scholars than he perhaps deserves.[336] Benjamin's impressive and influential body of work covers a wide range of subjects, from literary criticism to political theory, and from aesthetics to the philosophy of history. While he is interested in theological ideas, and incorporates them into his work on other areas, Benjamin is not a theologian as such. Nonetheless, there are some interesting parallels between Benjamin and Paul, and his philosophy of history has an apocalyptic character.[337] Here my focus will be on two of Benjamin's shorter texts, the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (also known as *On the Concept of History*)[338] and the *Theologico-Political Fragment*.[339] Rather than providing a comprehensive analysis of these fascinating texts, my intention is to focus on specific points at which there are thematic parallels between Benjamin and Paul. These include Benjamin's critique of the idea of historical progress, his emphasis on remembrance and reinterpretation of the past, and his examination of the messianic potential within history.

i. Reading Walter Benjamin

The *Theses* were written by Benjamin shortly before his tragic death in 1940,[340] and are undoubtedly influenced by the dramatic international events unfolding at the time. Benjamin had witnessed the rise of the fascist right in Europe, unrestrained by the left, and by the time the *Theses* were written, Benjamin's hopes for the future of Europe had been shaken by the Germano-Soviet pact, the outbreak of the war, and the occupation of Europe. The future looked bleak, and there is a distinct sense of pessimism in the *Theses*. This collection of short reflections on history was not intended for publication; instead, it was sent to various

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Agamben, Badiou, Žižek and Others (Oregon: Cascade, 2010); John Milbank; Slavoj Žižek; Creston Davis eds., *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010).

[336] One example is Grant Poettcker, 'The Messiah's Quiet Approach: Walter Benjamin's Messianic Politics' in Douglas Harink ed., *Paul, Philosophy and the Theopolitical Vision,* 90-118.

[337] David Congdon lists both Barth and Benjamin, alongside Bultmann and Bonhoeffer, as the 'grandfathers' in the 'B' side of his apocalyptic family tree. J.L. Martyn is part of the next generation, while Badiou and Agamben are listed as 'estranged cousins.' See http://fireandrose.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/two-apocalyptic-families-modest-proposal.html, accessed 11/12/2014.

[338] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* ed., Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 245-255; Alexander Honold ed., *Walter Benjamin Erzählen: Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und zur literarischen Prosa* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007), 129-40.

[339] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York; London; HBJ, 1978), 312-313.

[340] Benjamin fled from Paris the day before the German army arrived. He escaped to Spain, and the border with Portugal, with the intention of gaining passage across the Atlantic. On the day of his departure, the border was closed. Tragically, Benjamin chose to take his own life rather than fall into the hands of the Nazis. The border reopened the next day, allowing other members of Benjamin's party to flee to safety.

of Benjamin's close friends. The *Theses* are a rich and complex work, underpinned by two main questions. First, what is the appropriate way of interpreting history? Second, how might redemption emerge in history?

The history behind the *Fragment* is less clear, largely due to a disagreement between two of Benjamin's close friends. Theodor Adorno reports that Benjamin read the *Fragment* to him and his wife in their last meeting before Benjamin's death, claiming it to be his latest work, and so he dates it to the final portion of Benjamin's life. In contrast, Gershon Scholem claims to have seen the *Fragment* many years before, and he dates it to 1920-21, much earlier in Benjamin's career, suggesting that Benjamin's claim to Adorno was in jest.[341] The dating of the *Fragment* is significant for two reasons. First, because the earlier date places it before Benjamin's Marxist period; second, because the relationship between the *Fragment* and the *Theses* partly depends on their chronological proximity. Unfortunately, there is simply no way of knowing the truth.

While undoubtedly fascinating, Benjamin's work can be difficult to read, and the *Theses* and the *Fragment* are no exception.[342] There are several reasons for this, one of the most prominent being the way in which Benjamin employs theological language. Neither of these texts can be classed as theology as such, but in both Benjamin speaks of messianic redemption. One of the key issues for interpreting both the *Theses* and the *Fragment*, then, is how Benjamin's theological language should be understood. In his commentary on the *Theses*, Michael Löwy outlines three different schools or interpretative strategies that have emerged.[343] First, the materialist school, represented by Bertolt Brecht, where Benjamin's theological language is mere metaphor. Benjamin is a historical materialist, using theological language as a way of expressing his own analysis of history and the present political situation. Second, the theological school, represented by Gershom Scholem, where it is Benjamin's Marxist language which is mere terminology. Benjamin is first and foremost interested in rearticulating Jewish messianism for the present.Third, the school of contradiction, represented by Jürgen Habermas, where Benjamin is deemed to have attempted

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[341] Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gerhard Scholem* (Columbia: University Press, 2005), 23.

[342] For an excellent commentary on the *Theses*, see Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On The Concept of History'* trans. Chris Turner (London: New York: Verso, 2005).

[343] Löwy, *Fire Alarm,* 20. On the *Fragment*, see Eric Jacobson, 'Understanding Walter Benjamin's *Theological-Political Fragment*' in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 8.3 (2001), 205-247; Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, 'Walter Benjamin's *Theological-Political Fragment* as a Response to Ernst Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia*' trans. Jonathan Luftig in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 47.1 (2002), 3-19.

an unsuccessful reconciliation between theology and Marxism. It is perhaps part of the intrigue of Benjamin's work that all three schools have some validity.

It is certainly tempting to follow the materialist school and to explain Benjamin's language as mere metaphor; to do so makes him a far less awkward figure to deal with. In this way, Benjamin's work on the messianic can be taken away from theology and utilized more simply in the political present. However, this approach does not do justice to the complexity of Benjamin's work. Indeed, as Jacob Taubes points out in characteristically forthright fashion, Benjamin does not only speak of the messianic as an abstract concept: 'All right, first of all, one thing is clear: There is a Messiah. No shmontses like "the messianic", "the political", no neutralization, but the Messiah. We have to be clear about this. Not that we are dealing here with the Christian Messiah, but it does say: the Messiah.'[344]On the other hand, Benjamin does not sit comfortably in the category of theologian. He does not engage directly with other theologians, and nor does he interact directly with any of the numerous biblical or post-biblical religious texts which we might expect him to. Benjamin himself describes his use of theology in the following way: 'My thinking relates to theology like blotting paper to ink. It is totally soaked in it. But if the blotter had its way, none of the writing would remain.'

The blotting-paper image suggests a sense of reluctant necessity, where the presence of theology, in some form at least, is unavoidable. This image fits well with the first, and perhaps the most famous of the *Theses*. Benjamin takes an image from Edgar Allan Poe, of a chess-playing automaton which is actually controlled by a dwarf hidden inside the machine. In Benjamin's version, the automaton is historical materialism, and the hidden dwarf is theology. By employing theology, historical materialism can 'win' the game of history (which involves both winning the battle over interpretation, as well as winning control of the course of history). Theology is powerful, but remains in the background. Hence, while theology clearly influences Benjamin's work, he does not propose theological solutions in the sense of positing divine intervention in history; the 'messianic' becomes a broader category for describing a mode of understanding and intervening in history, in a way which is somewhat analogous to the arrival of the Messiah, which may or may not occur.

Giorgio Agamben, whose own work has been greatly influenced by Benjamin, argues that Benjamin's *Theses* are directly influenced by Paul. This proposal centres around Thesis

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[344] Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* trans. Dana Hollander (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 70. In the *Fragment*, Benjamin states that 'only the Messiah himself consummates all history.'

II, where Benjamin states that each generation is imbued with a weak messianic power. Interestingly, the word 'weak' is emphasized by the use of spacing: '*Dann ist uns wie jedem Geschlecht, das vor uns war, eine s c h w a c h e messianisch Kraft mitgegeben.*'[345] Agamben, with reference to Benjamin's aim to develop an art of citation without citation marks, suggests that this unusual spacing should alert us to the possibility that here Benjamin is indicating a citation of another work, and the text suggested by Agamben is 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Agamben further supports this suggestion by pointing out that the Lutheran translation of this verse, which is the translation most probably used by Benjamin, also contains the word *Kraft*, another word found in the highlighted sentence in Thesis II.[346] In the wake of this 'discovery', Agamben finds other cases of apparent citation, including the end of Thesis XVIII, 'Now-time…comprises the entire history of mankind in a tremendous abbreviation' as a reiteration of Ephesians 1:10.[347]

While there are certainly linguistic parallels here, there are some significant differences between Benjamin's texts and the Pauline texts apparently being cited. For example, Benjamin's argument in Thesis II is that there is messianic potential in every generation, which tends to be unfulfilled. Paul's point in 2 Corinthians 12 is that in *this* generation Messianic power is being exerted despite of Paul's own weakness; it is Paul who is weak; the power of the Messiah is boundless. This makes it difficult to see what kind of purpose Benjamin may have had in mind with such a citation, particularly given its obscurity. Agamben's theory is intriguing, and is certainly plausible. It is, however, far from being proven. Even if Benjamin was not directly influenced by Paul, he is certainly influenced by Jewish thought, and Jewish messianism in particular. Therefore, even if Benjamin did not have the Pauline texts specifically in mind when writing the *Theses*, we should still expect there to be interesting parallels with Paul, who remains one of the most influential Jewish messianic thinkers in history.

ii. History as Catastrophe

If there is one theme which stands out as a dominant feature of Benjamin's philosophy of history, it is his sustained polemic against the idea of historical progress. Benjamin stands firmly opposed to any understanding of history which recognizes linear

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[345] Benjamin, *Erzählen,* 130. In this version the emphasis is given by italics, but spacing was used in the original.
[346] Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 138-40.
[347] Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 143.

progression over the course of time, with historical processes driving world events inexorably towards a brighter future. In theological terms, Benjamin's critique of history is anti-*Heilsgeschichte*. This can be seen most clearly in Thesis IX, where Benjamin employs the powerful image of the 'angel of history':

> A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events [*eine Kette von Begebenheiten*], he sees one single catastrophe [*eine einzige Katastrophe*] which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught up in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress [*Fortschritt*].[348]

This image is a reflection on history, and Jewish experience of persecution over thousands of years. As Löwy suggests, it also takes on a prophetic quality when viewed in the light of subsequent historical events: in Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Chernobyl and 9/11, the pile of wreckage has continued to grow, all made possible by *Fortschritt,* progress.[349] For Benjamin, a philosophy of historical progress must be rejected for a number of reasons. First, historicism too easily forgets and dismisses the victims of history. As Kahtib explains, historicism creates a false image of history, which 'always takes the victor's perspective in which all past events form a coherent and therefore ideological narrative.'[350] Thus, there is an ongoing struggle for history in two respects, both to control the course of history in the present, and to control the way in which history is reported.[351]

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[348] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 249; *Erzählen*, 133.

[349] Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 62.

[350] Sami Kahtib, 'Walter Benjamin, Karl Marx, and the Spectre of the Messianic: Is There a Materialist Politics of Remembrance?' http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/conti/2010/10/mesa-17/khatib_mesa_17.pdf, accessed 11/12/2014

[351] As Deuber-Mankowsky, 'Walter Benjamin's Theological-Political Fragment,'15, puts it, 'What the teleological contemplation of history lacks is what Benjamin's philosophy of history compels us to remember: the past. More precisely, it insists on taking account of that which in the past unequivocally points to temporality, which is to say transitoriness. What has been can serve the

This theme is apparent in Thesis VII, where Benjamin describes the transmission of 'cultural treasures' by the 'victorious' figures of history, treasures which 'owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great geniuses who created them, but also the anonymous toil of others who lived in the same time period.'[352] It is these victors and geniuses who are remembered, while the defeated and unexceptional are forgotten. Because of this, it is the task of the historical materialist to 'brush history against the grain,'[353] both to remember those who are forgotten, and to prevent history continuing to run this course.

Second, historicism leads to fatalism and apathy. If the course of history is moving inexorably forward, driven by the necessary laws and the 'science' of history, this inevitable historical progression holds sway over individuals and their actions. In thesis VIII, Benjamin relates this apathy to the concrete historical example of his own time, arguing that 'One reason Fascism has a chance is that, in the name of progress, its opponents treat it as a historical norm.'[354] In historicism, fascism can be seen as an unfortunate but necessary step on the road to historical progress. On the contrary, however, 'the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule.'[355] For Benjamin, it is this realization which allows us to avoid historical apathy and take hold of the potential held in the present.

This idea is central to Thesis B, where Benjamin contrasts two approaches to history. On the one hand, there are the soothsayers who 'queried time and learned what it had in store.' On the other are the Jews, who were 'prohibited in enquiring into the future: the Torah and the prayers instructed them in remembrance.' The future 'holds sway' over the former, whereas for the latter, 'every second was the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter' (*Denn in ihr war jede Sekunde die kleine Pforte, durch die der Messias treten konnte*).[356] If history is directed by laws, then the future is already decided, limiting the significance of choice and action in the present. If it is open, then each moment is full of potential, and each decision is significant.

Third, in a related point, historicism relies on a particular understanding of time. Benjamin argues that historicism, and the belief in historical progress, rely on a conception of time as empty and homogenous. In thesis XIII, Benjamin states that 'The concept of

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teleological philosophy of history as a legitimisation only of what is, what ought to be, or what will come.'

[352] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 248.
[353] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 249.
[354] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 249.
[355] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 248.
[356] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255; *Erzählen*, 140. These are the final words of the *Theses.*

mankind's historical progress cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time (*eine homogene und leere Zeit*).'[357] In thesis XIV, Benjamin's alternative is to suggest that 'History is the subject of a construction whose site is not empty, homogenous time, but time filled by now-time (*Jetztzeit*).'[358] This means that each moment is unique, and thereby a new opportunity.

For Benjamin, history is an ongoing catastrophe, littered with tragedy. However, in Thesis A he describes a better approach to history, where the historian 'establishes a conception of the present as now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time (*Splitter der messianischen*).'[359] If history is a pervading darkness, then these 'splinters' are flashes of light, which briefly interrupt the gloom and offer new possibilities. Löwy describes them in the following way: 'The 'splinters of messianic time' are moments of revolt, the brief instants that save a past moment, while effecting a fleeting interruption of historical continuity, a break in the heart of the present. As fragmentary, partial redemptions, they prefigure and herald the possibility of universal salvation.'[360] Like Barth, then, Benjamin sees history predominantly as catastrophe, while also seeing signs of something better within the wreckage.

iii. History Remade

One of the distinctive features of Benjamin's philosophy of history is the way in which his hope is directed not simply to the future, but also to the past. Like the angel of history, who eagerly desires to 'awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed', Benjamin is convinced that the task of any generation is not simply to shape the future, but to redeem the past. Each generation is confronted with a battle over history, which involves taking control of both the course of history, and also the reporting of history, reconstructing an account of history from the perspective of the fallen and the oppressed. The revolutionary past and the revolutionary present are mutually influential; just as the present generation can seize hold of the past to illuminate their own situation, and inspire action to change it, the past itself has the potential to be redeemed through the actions of those in the present. In Thesis II, Benjamin writes: 'The past carries a secret index by which it is referred to redemption…there is a secret agreement between past generations and the present ones.

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[357] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 252; *Erzählen*, 136.
[358] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 253; *Erzählen*, 137.
[359] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255; *Erzählen*, 139.
[360] Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 101.

Then our coming was expected on earth. Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim.'[361] Each generation is imbued with messianic potential, but while in each generation there is a possibility of redemption, history is saturated not with redemption and fulfilment, but with failure and misery.

For Benjamin, this places a burden on each future generation, to provide not only their own redemption, but also the redemption of the past, a redemption which involves both remembrance and fulfilment. Significantly, however, remembrance is not simply an end in itself: remembrance of the past offers some form of redemption by not allowing the defeated and oppressed to slide off the pages of history, but it also leads to concrete action in the present. For Benjamin, remembrance provides an explosive tool for understanding and shaping the present. The example he gives in thesis XIV is of the relationship between the French Revolution and ancient Rome: 'to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history.'[362] This idea of a meeting between past and present is a central component of his philosophy of history. History is not simply an objective record of events which have happened: 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger…Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins.' (Thesis VI)[363] The past can only be redeemed through remembrance, and through finding success where those of former times found none, but this redemption requires a meeting of the past and the present.

Benjamin uses the image of a rosary to explain his way of understanding history. Historicism, Benjamin suggests, 'contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical.'[364] Recognition of this, Benjamin argues, allows a historian to stop seeing history simply as a record of a sequence of events, like the beads of a rosary. By freeing historical events from a simple, chronological sequence, each moment of time can be viewed in its uniqueness, and in its fullness. The historian who does so, fighting against the dogma of historicism, 'grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one.

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[361] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 246.
[362] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 253.
[363] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 247.
[364] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255.

Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with splinters of Messianic time.'[365] This alternative approach to history is similar to Barth's discussion of non-historical figures like Abraham. If Abraham is viewed in the historicist mode which Benjamin objects to, he becomes a historical stepping stone, a link in a chain, and is lost in the past. But both Barth and Benjamin see that when figures like Abraham are viewed in their own uniqueness, unconstrained by the laws of history, they are able to transcend their historical bounds.

iv. The Messiah Interrupts

Contrary to those who recognize progression in the course of history, Benjamin sees only wreckage piled upon wreckage. In order to bring about redemption - for the past, the present, and the unrealized future - it is not enough to simply wait for history to run its course. What is needed is the opposite: history must be interrupted by a messianic occurrence. In the *Fragment*, Benjamin states that 'Only the messiah himself consummates all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, creates its relation to the messianic.' He then uses the image of two arrows, pointing in opposing directions. One arrow represents the profane, and the other the messianic. Messianic occurrence does not occur out of the natural course of history, but interrupts and stands opposed to it.

Deuber-Mankowsky suggests that this part of the *Fragment* is typical of Jewish messianism, emphasizing the otherness of messianic occurrence: 'Redemption comes, if it comes, from the outside.' She also goes on to argue that 'Benjamin distinguishes the realm of God and worldly history so thoroughly that he excludes anything that would directly anticipate redemption.'[366] In one sense, this is correct. If history is seen as the angel of history sees it, then it consists of an ever-increasing catastrophe. The course of history is not a constant line moving upwards to a point marked "redemption". In another sense, however, Benjamin's entire project is concerned with those messianic interruptions of history which both create and anticipate redemption. Benjamin distinguishes between the 'messianic' and 'The Messiah'. It is the Messiah who consummates history, who 'breaks off history', but this future messianic event is not Benjamin's primary concern. Benjamin is concerned with the present, and the possibility of seizing hold of the splinters of messianic time which each moment potentially contains. Rather than waiting for the Messiah to arrive and bring the

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[365] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255.
[366] Deuber-Mankowsky, 'Walter Benjamin's *Theological-Political Fragment'*, 14.

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catastrophe of history to an end, Benjamin recognizes a need to interrupt history by injecting it with the messianic.

3. Reading Paul with Barth and Benjamin

i. Catastrophe and Redemption

For Paul, a diagnosis of history results in a perspective comparable to the angel of history. Writing to the Galatians, he speaks of the 'present evil age' from which they have been rescued (1:4). Their former condition, still shared by the vast majority of the world who are not in Christ, is described in terms of slavery (4:8). We find similar ideas in Romans 1, where Paul offers a devastating critique of humanity's situation. Because they have rejected him, God has given humanity over to all kinds of unnatural and sinful desires and activities; as a result they now stand under judgment. We might expect that in Israel, God's chosen people, Paul would find a hope for human history. Instead, Paul claims that Israel, too, have failed. The law, given by God, has failed to create a righteous or holy people through whom history might be shaped. In fact, the law has actually imprisoned those to whom it was given (Gal. 3:23). Despite their zeal, Israel have stumbled (Rom. 9: 32-33).

While his diagnosis of the present situation may be grim, he nonetheless maintains faith in a God who has repeatedly acted in history, and continues to do so. The history of humanity detailed in the Old Testament is in many respects a history of catastrophe piling upon catastrophe: Adam's disobedience brings death (Romans 5); the law brings death because of Israel's sin at the foot of Sinai (2 Cor. 3); Israel tests God despite multiple blessings, and is punished (1: Cor. 10). In Paul's own time, Israel is under the occupation of a pagan Empire.

This history is, however, shot through with fragments of messianic time: Abraham is made righteous and blessed with a son (Gal. 4); Israel are released from slavery in Egypt and sustained in the desert (1 Cor. 10); Moses is given a glorious law, and he is able to enter God's presence unveiled (2 Cor. 3). For Paul, these events are not only hints of what may be to come, but point to something that has happened: the Christ-event.

For Paul, in contrast to Benjamin, there is no question of waiting and wondering if the Messiah will ever appear. The 'fullness of time' has arrived (Gal 4:4), and God has sent his son into the world to bring about redemption. Paul's messianism shares with Benjamin's an interruptive quality. However, unlike Benjamin's messiah, who arrives and brings history to its close, Paul's messiah irrupts into history, shakes it up, and then leaves, with the promise to

Anton Rose   Paul, Christ and Time

come again. Whereas Benjamin's messianism provokes a sense of urgency because each and every moment has a messianic potential, albeit a weak potential, Paul's urgency stems fromthe conviction that the time is short (1 Cor. 7:29).

Like Benjamin, Paul does not believe that the arrival of the messiah is the culmination of historical processes. To be clear, this does not mean that the messiah's arrival bears no relation whatsoever with what has gone before. Even Benjamin, who strenuously criticises the concept of historical progress, does not deny any link between messianic occurrence and prior events; indeed, the contrary is true. In the *Theses*, it is the meeting of past and present which can ignite messianic action. Likewise, for Paul the Christ-event is at least to some extent the culmination and fulfilment of God's prior actions in history. Nonetheless, the arrival of the messiah is only inevitable in the sense that God's promises are true. God's promises are quite separate from the laws and processes of history.

Neither Paul nor Benjamin is content with waiting for the messianic to occur. But while both take a sense of urgency from their understanding of the messianic, the Pauline urgency is of a different character to the Benjaminian urgency. For Benjamin, one cannot simply sit and wait for the messiah to arrive. The messianic potential must be seized by each generation. A model of history which recognizes a continual progression towards a messianic future robs the present of its own significance, and blots out the past. Nonetheless, Benjamin's own model of history, of an ongoing catastrophe shot through with splinters of the messianic, is imbued with a strong sense of melancholia. While his *Theses* are directed towards revolutionary action in the present, Benjamin held little hope for his own generation. In the French translation of the *Theses*, he added a pessimistic line to the end of thesis XII. Discussing the failures of social democracy, Benjamin comments: 'Our generation has learnt this to its cost, since the only image it is going to leave behind is that of a defeated generation. This will be its legacy to those who come after.'[367] For Paul, in contrast, the messiah has already come, and will soon come again to bring history to its close. The intensity of his evangelistic fervour stems from the belief that the time remaining is short, but it is underpinned by hope imbued with faith: the messiah has come, and will soon come again.

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[367] Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 84.

ii. Conclusion to Chapter 4

Both Benjamin and Barth consider how messianic or divine action interacts with history. Both reject any notion of redemption arising out of history, as a result of historical processes. When the messiah appears, he invades and interrupts history. In this way, both Benjamin and Barth share some of the main concerns of apocalyptic readings of Paul. Where they differ from these readings is in their consideration of how the past, present, and future are connected. Benjamin rejects a linear understanding of history, and he argues in favour of the historian who refuses to see historical events as beads on a rosary.[368] Likewise, Barth rejects linear *Heilsgeschichte*, but finds a Christological crimson thread through history, and finds history's unity in the person of Christ, who is fully divine, and eternal, but also fully human, and temporal. Barth is critical of Cullmann's salvation-historical scheme, where history is made up of successive ages, or epochs, and where the Christ-event is the dividing line between the old age and the new age, viewed as chronologically successive periods. This criticism could also be levelled at Wright, whose picture of a play with five acts, with the Christ-event as the dividing point between two acts, shares noticeable similarities with Cullmann's *Heilsgeschichte*. Perhaps less obviously, however, Barth's critique is also applicable to contemporary apocalyptic readings of Paul. For Martyn, the Christ-event marks the turning of the ages, where God in Christ invades the present evil age, inaugurating the new creation.

The shared feature of the approaches of both Martyn and Wright is that they assume a chronological scheme of successive epochs, where the new age is a new period of history, following on from a previous one. For Wright, this means that the Christ-event must be seen as the culmination of Israel's history, and understood in this context. For Martyn, this means that the time before Christ must be seen as a salvation-historical chasm. Barth avoids this problem by characterizing the new age not simply as the next stage in human history, but as the meeting of God's eternal time with human, historical time. In this way, Barth is able to view the Christ-event as a concrete, historical event, and as a radically other invasion of time, and also as bearing a relationship with past historical events, such as the story of Abraham. Barth finds the theological roots of this understanding of history and time in Christology. Just

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[368] Interestingly, Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1473-83, attempts to wrestle Benjamin away from those whom he designates as the 'so-called apocalypticists', arguing that Benjamin's apocalypticism is in line with ancient Jewish apocalyptic, which Paul takes up and moves beyond. But the kind of grand narrative proposed by Wright is just the kind of construct which Benjamin rejects, preferring instead to recognize the potential for messianic occurrence within a fragmentary history. Benjamin is perhaps not the ally Wright thinks he is.

as Christ is both human and divine, the Christ-event has a dialectical relationship with history, being in history but not of history.

Despite Martyn's staunch rejection of a linear *Heilsgeschichte*, his understanding of scriptural events still rests on a chronological scheme of before and after, arranged around the Christ-event. Barth's dialectical approach to the relationship of the Christ-event and history allows him to affirm the interpretive significance of these chronological, before and after relationships - because the Christ-event is *in* history, occurring at a particular time and place - without his understanding of history and time becoming beholden to these relationships. Because the Christ-event is not *of* history, it evades the shackles of any chronological scheme.

Perhaps, then, Paul approaches history like Benjamin's messianic historian. While chronological relations between historical events retain some interpretive value, his interpretation of these events, and the way in which they relate to each other, are not limited by linear chronology. For Paul, the events of salvation history are not strung together like beads on a rosary, because God's interaction with the world does not arise from or depend on history. In the light of the Christ-event, he is able to look at Israel's history anew, to see new constellations taking shape between the Christ-event and the lives of people like Abraham and Moses. A Barthian understanding of Christology and time provides the theological apparatus for establishing these relationships.

It does not necessarily follow, however, that Barth's understanding of history and time allows us to solve the apparent tension in the Pauline texts between continuity and discontinuity, or between salvation history, narrative, and apocalyptic. At no point do we find Paul attempting to tie these themes together systematically, or to think on the same kind of theological level that we find in Barth. In part two, then, our task is to consider whether the way in which Paul thinks about history and time hints at the kind of ideas that Barth systematizes, and whether Barth's version of apocalyptic can help to ease some of the tensions apparent in Paul, providing us with a useful alternative to, or critique of, the approaches of both Wright and Martyn. My approach will be to examine each key text in its own context, to draw out the implications of each text for Paul's understanding of history and time, and then to consider briefly how a Barthian approach might aid our reading of these texts. In part three, having examined each of my key Pauline texts, I will be better placed to draw more general conclusions, and to consider the usefulness of Barth in presenting a coherent account of Paul's theology of history and time.

Part Two

Chapter 5
1 Corinthians 10:1-13

In part one, I argued that both apocalyptic and salvation-historical readings of Paul assume chronological schemes of successive epochs – even if the number of and relations between these epochs are thought of differently – and that these schemes shape and limit these readings. In both readings, Israel belongs to a former age, a time before Christ, and their theological role is determined by this historical placement.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul exhorts the Corinthians by referring to the story of Israel's wanderings in the desert, and by relating this story to the present situation. Given an apocalyptic scheme where all humanity, including Israel, is held in slavery in the evil age prior to Christ, we might expect Paul to emphasize the differences between the two historical situations, taking place as they do in radically different times, one prior to and one following Christ's apocalyptic invasion of the cosmos. Alternatively, given a salvation-historical scheme where the Christ-event is the climax of Israel's history in which God was working purposively in preparation for the revelation of Christ, we might expect Paul to read this story as a foreshadowing of, and preparation for what was to come. As we shall see, Paul does not quite meet either of these expectations. What Paul does instead, however, has significant implications for his understanding of history and of the place of the Christ-event in that history.

1 – Paul, Scripture, and History

i. Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures

Questions relating to Paul's understanding of history are inevitably linked to his use and understanding of the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures are, after all, historical records, offering a narrative of sorts beginning with the creation of the world, and detailing God's interaction with his chosen people. They are also more than mere history, being shaped by the conviction that God acts purposively across history, intervening in human affairs. For anyone whose thought is shaped by it, scripture provides a framework for understanding history. Indeed, a quick glance at Paul's letters indicates that scripture plays an important role in his theology, and in the way he argues. Given that Paul was a zealous Jew, trained as a

Pharisee, this should not come as a surprise.[369] The interpretation of scripture is central to several of Paul's most significant arguments, with scriptural quotations inserted at strategic points. Even when scripture is not explicitly referred to through quotation, Paul's writing remains deeply imbued with scriptural tones; it is natural for Paul to form and express his opinions in language that is grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures. As Richard Hays puts it:

> The vocabulary and cadences of Scripture - particularly of the LXX - are imprinted deeply on Paul's mind, and the great stories of Israel continue to serve for him as a fund of symbols and metaphors that condition his perception of the world, of God's promised deliverance of his people and of his own identity and calling. His faith, in short is one whose articulation is inevitably intertextual in character.[370]

Nonetheless, while it is relatively uncontroversial to claim that Paul's relationship with scripture shapes his epistles, what is less clear are the precise terms of this relationship. Is Paul's faith one that is rooted in scripture, which provides the ideas, symbols and parameters with which to understand the Christ-event and the experience of the church, or is Paul's faith primarily anchored in his experience, meaning that scripture must be reinterpreted in a way that makes it compatible with this experience?[371] Does Paul base many of his arguments on scripture because it remains his conviction that scripture retains a crucial role in the present, and for the new people of God, or is he forced to engage pragmatically with scripture to counteract the arguments of his opponents?

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 is a text which relies heavily on scripture, as Paul exhorts the Corinthians by using examples from Israel's history. By studying this argument, it becomes apparent that while Paul uses scripture for rhetorical purposes,[372] he does not simply mine it

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[369] Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1-3, places Paul alongside other Jewish readers who 'participate in an ongoing conversation about how to read the Torah and the prophets.' For Watson, Paul's theological positions are not derived independently from his experience of Christ, and then applied to scripture; rather, his 'so-called "view of the law" is nothing other than his reading of a text; his "theology of justification" is in reality a scriptural hermeneutic.' The same might be said for his understanding of history.

[370] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 16.

[371] This recalls the epistemological questions raised in chapter 4. Does Paul's knowledge of God begin with the Christ-event and work backwards through scripture, or begin with scripture as the basis of understanding the Christ-event?

[372] Margaret Mitchell, *Paul, The Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16, describes the Corinthian letters as 'a correspondence course in *practical, indeed tactical, hermeneutics*.'

for useful proof-texts to support his argument, and then employ them cynically to win an argument in his favour.[373] The way in which he uses scripture in this text relies on deeply held theological convictions, relating to God's consistency and faithfulness, and to Paul's own understanding of history, in particular the significance of the time in which he and the Corinthians lived.

Rather than providing an exhaustive commentary on this passage, the approach taken in this chapter will be to give an outline of Paul's argument, and then to focus on a selection of phrases and themes which have particular significance for understanding Paul's view of history. As is typical with Paul, 1 Cor. 10:1-13 raises as many questions as it answers, and so this chapter will conclude by highlighting some of these questions, and considering how they might relate to other significant Pauline texts.

ii. The Structure and Origin of 1 Cor. 10:1-13

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Paul engages with the Old Testament in an innovative way, deploying his own interpretation of the wilderness narratives as important evidence to support his exhortations. This section is one piece of a larger argument spanning chapters 8-10, primarily concerning the question of food offered to idols.[374] There are several interesting features of this section of the argument, but the rhetorical structure is quite simple. The section opens with an introductory formula, 'I do not want you to be unaware,' (10:1) variations of which Paul uses on a number of occasions to indicate that he is about to deliver a significant message.[375] In verses 1-4, Paul describes the Israelites' experience in the desert using sacramental language that draws comparison with the Corinthians' experience, detailing the ways in which they were blessed by God. Despite their privileges, they disobeyed God and incurred his displeasure. In verse 6, Paul makes his point clear, stressing that the things he is describing occurred for the benefit of those, like the Corinthians, who are living at the ends of the ages. For the Corinthians, falling under God's judgment remains a real possibility, despite the blessed and privileged position that they find themselves in. The Israelites shared similar blessings and privileges, but this did not prevent them from falling under judgment. The Israelites put Christ to the test and suffered the consequences; the same

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[373] Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 3, argues that 'Paul cites individual texts not in an *ad hoc* manner but on the basis of a radical construal of the narrative shape of the Pentateuch as a whole.'

[374] On the structure and coherence of Paul's argument, see J. Delobel, 'Coherence and Relevance of 1 Cor. 8-10' in R. Bieringer ed. *The Corinthian Correspondence*, (Leuven: University Press, 1996), 177-190.

[375] See also Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Thess. 4:13.

might happen to the Corinthians (10:9-10). To ignore such a warning would be foolish, and would be to reject the warnings given by God in scripture (10:11). The section is completed with the reassurance that God will not test the Corinthians beyond what they can bear (10:13).

Paul's argument is built on a historical analogy, as he compares the Israelites' experience with the Corinthians'. He does so in two ways. The first is implicit, in his description of Israel's wilderness wanderings. Some of the details are lifted straight from the scriptural narrative with no new interpretation, such as Israel passing through the sea; others are reinterpreted by Paul in distinctive ways. He claims that they were 'baptized into Moses' (10:2), and that they ate 'spiritual food' (10:3), and drank 'spiritual drink' (10:4), allusions to the sacramental bread and wine subsequently referred to in chapters 10 and 11. Perhaps the most startling claim is that the rock which they drank from 'was Christ' (10:4) The background to this claim will be considered in more depth below, but it is worth noting here that invoking the name of Christ at this point helps to cement the analogy between the Israelites and the Corinthians. Paul makes the comparison explicit by declaring that 'these things happened as examples for us.'[376]

While the argument as a whole is rooted in scripture, there is only one quotation, from Ex. 32:6 (v.7). Paul does, however, have a wider range of scriptural texts in mind. Meeks identifies Num. 14:20-35 as the basic text,[377] while Collier suggests that Numbers 11 is of particular importance, with the quotation from Exodus 32 serving 'midrashically as Numbers 11 writ small' through the linguistic connection between the two texts.[378] Paul's reference to the twenty-three thousand who died (10:8) seems to be a reference to Num. 25:9, although there the number is twenty-four thousand. Paul may simply have misremembered the number, or there could be a conflation with Num. 26:62.[379] The quotation Paul chooses, which states that Israel ate and then 'rose up to play' (Ex. 32:6), does not immediately appear to be an obvious choice. However, the verb παίζειν, particularly when read alongside Gen. 21:9, is to

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[376] See below for discussion of the meaning of τύποι, translated here as 'examples'.

[377] Wayne A. Meeks, '"And Rose Up To Play": Midrash and Paraenesis in 1 Corinthians 10:1-22', *JSNT* 16 (1982), 64-78, at 69.

[378] Gary D. Collier, "That We Might Not Crave Evil': The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians 10:1-13' in *JSNT* 17.55 (1995), 55-75, at 72.

[379] See William Baird, '1 Corinthians' in *Interpretation* 44.3 (1990), 286-29. B.J. Koet, 'The Old Testament Background to 1 Cor 10, 7-8' in R. Bieringer ed., *The Corinthian Correspondence* (Leuven: University Press, 1996), 607-615, argues that Paul intentionally alludes to both Ex. 32:38 and Num. 25:9.

be taken as a reference to Israel's subsequent sin, and idolatry in particular.[380] This provides Paul with a useful connection between eating and idolatry, which suits the present context.

Several commentators have raised the possibility that 1 Cor. 10:1-13 could have its origins in a pre-Pauline tradition, either Jewish or Christian, which Paul adapts and inserts into his argument to strengthen his case against the eating of idol food. Meeks points out the similarities between this pericope and texts such as Ps. 106 and Neh. 9:9-37, where a similar structure is used for confession, and Hos. 13.4-8 and Amos 2:9-16; 3:2, where it is used for admonition. Like 1 Cor. 10:1-13, these texts detail Israel's time in the wilderness, emphasising the blessings that they received, and then go on to describe how some of the Israelites fell into sin, and idolatry in particular. Meeks suggests that 1 Cor. 10:1-13 does not fit entirely smoothly into Paul's wider argument, and that this can be explained by positing that Paul incorporates a previously composed literary unit. One feature of this pericope which supports its independent literary history is its symmetrical structure, with a fivefold repetition of 'all' who were blessed followed by a fivefold repetition of 'some' who sinned.[381] Meeks also suggests that verses 6 and 11 form an *inclusio*.[382]

Likewise, Collier suggests that 10:1-13 can easily stand on its own as 'a focussed statement against falling prey to the temptation of selfish craving, with a concluding exhortation centred in the faithfulness of God', which naturally raises the possibility that the pericope may have originally been an independent text, or part of a different larger text.[383] This is definitely plausible, although if 1 Cor. 10:1-13 is taken from a pre-Christian text, then Paul has certainly made some significant alterations to it, most notably the Christological references and the use of Christian sacramental language and imagery. It is also possible, of course, that Paul could be using a pre-existing Christian tradition, but no such traditions are available to us, and even if Paul does borrow heavily from a pre-existing text, he has still selected these elements himself, and altered them to fit his argument.

Setting aside the question of the literary history of this text, another important question remains. Why does Paul choose to persuade the Corinthians using *this* particular argument, and *this* particular scriptural tradition? In Galatians 4, for example, Paul engages in lengthy scriptural debate over the significance of Abraham. In that case, however, it seems

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[380] Meeks, 'And Rose Up To Play,' 69. Both the *Genesis Rabbah* 53:11and the *Palestinian Targum* on Gen 21:9 suggest that Ishmael's sin was idolatry.
[381] This symmetry is not perfect, however. While there are fives uses of πάντες, there are only four uses of τινες, with Meeks suggesting κἀκεῖνοι as the fifth example of 'some.' See Meeks, 'And Rose Up To Play,' 75, footnote 4.
[382] Meeks, 'And Rose Up To Play,' 65.
[383] Collier, 'That We Might Not Crave Evil,' 72.

likely that he is prompted to do so by his opponents' use of scriptural arguments, using the story of Abraham in their attempts to persuade the Galatians to accept circumcision. The situation was different in Corinth. Paul was writing to a predominantly Gentile congregation, where Judaizing was not an issue. That he freely chooses to employ an argument based on scripture - including some extra-biblical tradition on the side[384] - indicates that the Corinthians had been educated to some extent in the scriptures, presumably by Paul himself, and that they recognised it as an authoritative source.[385] It is also indicative of Paul's wider attitude towards the role and significance of scripture, an attitude perhaps best encapsulated by Paul's reference to the Israelites as 'our fathers' (10:1). This could be explained away as a remnant of the tradition Paul is employing, but it seems implausible that Paul would include such a theologically loaded claim if he did not agree with it.[386] By writing to a Gentile congregation and casually stating that they are the descendants of the Israelites, Paul indicates that he sees real continuity between the people of Israel and the church of Jesus Christ. This provides theological justification and motivation for trying to persuade the church with arguments based on Israel's scriptures, because it means they are the Corinthians' scriptures too.

2. Typology, Allegory, and Pauline Hermeneutics

i. Identifying Paul's Hermeneutical Techniques

The hermeneutical strategy used by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:1-13 has been given a number of different labels. Collins describes 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 as a 'sustained midrashic exposition,' which bears similarity to rabbinic *haggadah* and *halakha*,[387] and states that the

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[384] See the discussion below on the tradition of the moving well.

[385] Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing With Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 90, suggests that while a good knowledge of scripture would be required to understand all of Paul's different references, a 'minimal knowledge' would still be sufficient to understand the argument, as long as the audience respected his sources, i.e. scripture.

[386] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 449, points out that in the Mishnaic tradition, converts are instructed to pray, "Our God and the God of *their* fathers" (*m. Bik.* 1:4).

[387] Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999), 364. Christian Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 39 also likens Paul's approach to scripture here with haggadah and midrash. However, *Hays, Echoes of Scripture*, 13-14, warns against the pitfalls of labelling arguments as midrashic: 'The difficulty...lies in its simultaneous imprecision and authoritative mysteriousness: the label *midrash* tends to bring the interpretative process to a halt...when in fact we should keep pressing for clarity.'

identification of the rock as Christ is allegorical.[388] Dunn suggests that Paul uses 'a sort of allegory', but notes that 10:4 may indicate a historical rather than typological equation.[389] Thiselton thinks it is a mistake to describe Paul's argument as an allegory, instead suggesting that Paul uses typology, which he distinguishes from allegory as being based on events rather than ideas.[390] Witherington suggests that Paul's technique is best described as typology or analogy, and likens it to the classical rhetorical technique of *paradeigma* (paradigm), a term reported by Quintilian and described as the use of a historical parallel.[391] For Hays, Paul 'traces a bold metaphorical correspondence' between the past and the present.[392] It is noticeable that while some commentators use the language of typology and allegory interchangeably, others seek to distinguish between them as separate techniques. Given this, it is worth examining what differences, if any, there are between these approaches.[393]

Both typology and allegory seek to go beyond the literal, historical, or plain meaning of a text. Gerald Bray defines allegory as 'primarily a method of reading a text by assuming that its literal sense conceals a hidden meaning, to be deciphered by using a particular hermeneutical key.'[394] Philo is perhaps the best known practitioner of allegorical interpretation. One example of this kind of interpretation is his commentary on Gen. 2:10-14.[395] For Philo, the river flowing out from Eden represents goodness, which flows from the wisdom of God. When the one river from Eden becomes four rivers, this represents different aspects of goodness which come from God. Pishon is prudence, Gihon is courage, Tigris is temperance, and Euphrates is justice. Philo is not concerned with any geographical claims that Genesis may be making, but instead looks for a higher meaning in the text.

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[388] Collins, *1 Corinthians*, 365.

[389] James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of the Apostle Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 279-80. Dunn bases this claim on the fact that Paul says the rock *was* Christ, rather than the rock *is* Christ.

[390] Anthony C. Thiselton, *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 150.

[391] Ben Witherington III, Conflict *and Community: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmaans Publishing Company, 1995), 217, citing Quintilian's *Inst. Or.* 5.11.1, 6.

[392] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 160.

[393] It is important to note that the typology-allegory antithesis is a construct. It may be a useful way of talking about the differences between texts, but the way in which we distinguish between the two terms will not necessarily correspond to a particular author's use of the terms.

[394] Gerald Bray, 'Allegory' in K. Vanhoozer ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 34-36 at 34. One might argue, however, that this is too broad a definition, with allegory becoming a catch-all label for any non-literal interpretation.

[395] *Legum Allegoriae 1*, 65-72.

In his excellent study of ancient uses of allegory, David Dawson distinguishes between two forms of allegory, compositional allegory and interpretive allegory.[396] In the former, a text is composed by an author with the intention of carrying an allegorical meaning. A good example of this would be Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where various figures in the narrative are clearly intended to convey meanings beyond the literal interpretation of the story. In the latter, an interpreter reads a text written by someone else. This is the form of allegory most prominent in the New Testament and early Christianity, particularly as it is the Old Testament which most allegorical interpretation is focused on. Dawson defines allegory very broadly as meaning 'to say something other than what one seems to say,'[397] but makes his definition more precise by comparing allegory to other types of non-literal interpretation. He suggests that the defining characteristic of allegory is that it involves narrative; it is this which distinguishes it from metaphor, etymology, and personification.[398] Again, this narrative element can be either compositional or interpretive. Dawson uses the example of an analogy between chess and warfare. To state that "war is a game of chess" is to employ metaphor; however, if one were to write a story about a chess match between the Russian and American chess champions, and to intend to make a point about the cold war, then this extended, narrativized metaphor would be an allegory.[399]

ii. Typological Approaches

What, then, is typology, and how does it differ from allegory, if at all? Witherington offers a useful explanation of the theological basis for typology: 'The idea behind typology is that since God's character never changes, God acts in similar ways in different ages of history, and, perhaps more importantly, provides persons and events that foreshadow other later persons and events in salvation history.'[400] Typology assumes that scripture comes from God, that it is trustworthy, that God is consistent, and that he has a plan for history.[401] As a

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[396] David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 4.

[397] Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 3.

[398] Dawson, *Allegorical Readers,* 6-7.

[399] Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 6.

[400] Witherington, *Conflict and Community,* 217. See also James A. Sanders, 'Paul and Theological History,' in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 52-57, at 54; Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 730.

[401] Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 15, describes typology as a form of allegory which is guided by certain rules and theological impulses, such as the desire to defend the historicity of scriptural texts, or the belief that there is intertestamental continuity.

hermeneutical method, typology works by identifying features of a text and connecting them with people and events not present in the text itself.

In his influential study of biblical typology, Goppelt distinguishes typology from allegory in two main ways. The first is in the attitude of the interpreter to the historicity of the text at a literal level. Goppelt suggests that in allegorical interpretation, the aim is to interpret the 'higher' meaning of the text with little regard for the literal or historical meaning of the text. In contrast, for typological interpretation the historicity of the types is important.[402] Historical people, things, and events prophetically prefigure future occurrences, but they remain historical people, things and events in their own right. Philo, for example, is occasionally dismissive of the literal or historical sense of a text when it involves unacceptable details, such as the crude anthropomorphic descriptions of God in Genesis, or the apparently immoral behaviour of important figures.[403] In most cases, however, Philo is more than happy to consider the literal sense of the text; he simply finds his own allegorical reading to be more interesting and valuable. The significant point is that an allegorical reading does not depend on historicity.

Goppelt's second distinction highlights another important difference between allegory and typology, based on the 'direction' of the interpretation. Allegory involves interpretation in a 'vertical-spatial' direction, whereas typology works in a horizontal-temporal direction. Typology therefore involves a certain view of history, where divinely ordained types point towards their consummation or completion (in antitypes) in the future. In allegory, the historicity of events or people is not necessarily dismissed, but nor is it of great importance for the allegory. In typology, historicity is required because typology draws a connection between two or more distinct people, events or narratives, separated temporally. We might say, then, that typology is a specific branch of allegory, where the allegorical figures are rooted in history and applied to a specific temporal framework.[404] Of course, due to the overlap between the two concepts, and the numerous different texts which can be and are labelled as either typology or allegory, there can be no absolute rules for distinguishing the two, although the distinctions above do offer a useful guide. The typology-allegory antithesis is a construct, and so while the distinctions outlined above will be used here, it is important to

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[402] Leonard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 52

[403] See Adam Kamesar, 'Biblical Interpretation in Philo' in Adam Kamesar ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 65-91.

[404] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 150, offers an alternative description of this difference: *'typology*...draws parallels between *events*, while allegory (in general) rests on parallels between *ideas*.'

remember this does not necessarily correspond to other authors' use of the terms including Paul's.[405]

As an example of the difference – as well as the similarity – between allegory and typology, one can easily imagine both allegorical and typological interpretations of the story of Hagar and Sarah. Philo provides just such an allegory in *De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*, a study concerning the attainment of wisdom. Hagar represents those subjects which must be studied on the way to attaining wisdom and virtue. This attainment is symbolised by the birth of Isaac, after which the preliminary studies will be thrown out, referring to Hagar and Ishmael being cast out. Philo ends his investigation by reminding his readers not to dwell too long on a literal interpretation of the Sarah and Hagar story. After all, 'the question here is not about women but about minds' (*Cong.* 180). This is a fairly straightforward example of allegory. Philo takes various elements from the narrative and gives them new meanings. The events of the narrative are then reinterpreted based on these meanings. What results is a dehistoricised, timeless lesson about studying and developing towards wisdom and virtue.

In Galatians 4:21-5:1, Paul presents his own interpretation of the story of Hagar and Sarah from Genesis 16, 21. Paul himself states that these things are allegorical (4:24). Elements of the story are chosen and made to correspond to elements from outside of the text itself: Hagar is Mount Sinai, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem (4:25); Sarah is the Jerusalem above (4:26). In fact, based on the distinction made above, we would perhaps most accurately describe Paul's interpretation here as typology.[406] Paul does not take Sarah and Hagar or Isaac and Ishmael as representative of general types or groups of people, but as pointing to specific groups at a specific time. There are two levels to this typology. On the first level, Sarah and Hagar refer to 'two covenants' (v24). Hagar is a type of Mount Sinai, the Mosaic covenant (as Paul understands it); Sarah of the prior covenant with Abraham. This supports Paul's previous arguments for the superiority of the earlier covenant in chapter 3. In the second layer of the typology, Sarah and Hagar point forward to the present day, prefiguring the situation that Paul and the Galatians find themselves in. This is shown in verse 25, where Paul states that 'Hagar...corresponds to the present Jerusalem' and also in verse 29, where Paul states that the story of Isaac and Ishmael is being re-enacted in the present. If the first of these two layers were present by itself, Paul's interpretation could be

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[405] See the discussion of Gal 4:21-5:1 below.
[406] For Goppelt, *Typos*, 140, 'The interpretation is not allegorical, in the proper sense of the word; rather, it is typological throughout.' See also Bray, 'Allegory', 34.

seen to be a conventional allegory, where Hagar and Sarah are figural representations of two different ways of living, or of the two covenants. It is the second layer, where Paul draws an analogy between Isaac and Ishmael's situation and that of the present day, which establishes Paul's use of the Genesis tradition as typological, as the scriptural story is seen to prefigure the events of Paul's time. That Paul labels as allegory what we might prefer to think of as typology suggests that we should be careful not to read external definitions of hermeneutical techniques back into Paul. What is important is the way in which particular arguments and techniques are formed and used in any given text, and not how they are labelled.

iii. τύπος and Typology

The question remains, then, of what kind of hermeneutical strategy or technique Paul employs in 1 Cor. 10:1-13. The following discussion will suggest that Paul's use of scripture in these verses is broadly typological, but that there are some significant differences between the typology used here and other examples of early Christian typology – in both Paul and other authors – differences which have some interesting implications for Paul's understanding of history.[407] That Paul uses typology in these verses is often taken as a given, due to his use of the word τύπος. After describing the Israelites' experiences, Paul declares that 'these things happened as τύποι for us.' That this should be taken as a cue that Paul intends to build a typology is, however, open to question, because while τύπος can be translated as 'type', it is equally plausible to translate it as 'example.'[408] Hays argues that 'type' is the most accurate translation, given that Paul uses the same word to refer to Adam in relation to Christ in Rom. 5:14.[409] In this case, to translate the word as 'example' distorts the intended meaning of the phrase. However, the same argument can be used to support a translation of 'example', given that we find the same word again in Phil. 3:17, where 'example' clearly seems to be the

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[407] As Hays, *Echoes*, 101, perceptively argues, labelling a hermeneutical approach as an example of typology can be useful, but it is not the end of investigation: 'To classify a rhetorical figure such as 1 Cor. 10:1-13 as typology does not fully define the relation between the metaphorically related elements; we have to ask what Paul is doing with the typology in each individual case.'

[408] Adolf Schlatter, *Die Korintherbriefe* (Stuttgart, Calwer Verlag, 1974), 121, translates τύποι as *Regel*, rules, which has a stronger force than 'examples'. Friedrich Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther* (Göttingen: Zürich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 125, translates τύποι as *Vor-Bilder*, examples, and goes on to use the language of *'warnende Beispiele'*, warning examples.

[409] Hays, *Echoes*, 95. He goes on to argue that 'The admonitory function of the passage depends on the imaginative device of reading Israel's story not just as an instructive example but as a prefiguration of the Christian church with its sacraments.'

intended meaning.[410] It could certainly be argued that the context of the verse also supports this translation, as Paul presents Israel as an example for the Corinthians of what might happen to them despite their privileged position.

Ultimately, both translations of τύπος point in the direction of Paul seeing a significant connection between Israel's past and the Corinthians' present, and the logic of Paul's argument in 10:1-6 implies what we might describe as a typological relationship, particularly given his effort to stress the parallels between the two situations. The meaning of Paul's argument remains, however, whether or not he intends to make use of a pre-established technique we would label as 'typology', and whether or not τύποι is translated as 'types' or 'examples.' Having said that, the typology presented here is distinctive in two ways. First, the typological relationship is incomplete. The point of Paul's argument is to warn the Corinthians; while the fate of the Israelites in the past is sealed, the fate of the Corinthians is yet to be decided. Second, Paul implies a significant of the level of continuity, or similarity, between the two situations.

iv. 1 Corinthians 10 and New Testament Typology

These two features become apparent when we compare 1 Cor. 10:1-13 with other examples of early Christian typology. For example, in Hebrews the old covenant and the old ways of worship are contrasted with the new. The physical sanctuary is described as 'a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one' (8:5), and while it is ordained by God, it is imperfect. However, the author of Hebrews asserts that Christ has come through a 'greater and perfect tabernacle' (9:11), and is therefore able to complete, through the new covenant, what was formerly incomplete. Rather than offering the blood of goats, he offered his own blood (9:13-14). Whereas the sanctuary built by human hands was 'a mere copy of the true one' (9:24), Christ entered into the heavenly sanctuary itself. In this way, Hebrews presents a thoroughly typological understanding of the old covenant and its relation to the new. The law and its practices are an imperfect, temporary image, prefiguring what has now come, with a perfect and eternal replacement. This is supported by quotations from Jeremiah 31, concerning God's promise of a new covenant. In Hebrews, the theological significance of this typology is to show that the old covenant has been superseded: 'In speaking of "a new covenant," he has

[410] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 463, argues that the phrase 'so we might not be' confirms that Paul does not have in mind types, but examples for guidance. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 197, suggests that in verse 6 Paul use τύπος not with the technical, hermeneutical sense of the term, but with its 'moral sense' (*moralische Sinn*).

made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear'
(8:13).

      Hebrews is not alone in using typology in this way, although its use of typology is
unusually explicit.[411] John's gospel contains numerous allusions to the Old Testament,
intended to explain Jesus' significance typologically. An example of this is John 19:14, where
John remarks that Jesus' trial and death occurred on the day when the paschal lamb was being
prepared. This recalls 1:29, where John the Baptist declares Jesus to be the lamb of God who
takes away the sin of the world. Jesus, as the willing sacrificial lamb, is the perfected antitype
of the Passover lamb, whose death is efficacious not just for Israel, but for the world. The
typology present in texts like Hebrews and John aims to demonstrate the superiority of the
antitype over the type. In both texts, features of Israel's history prefigure features relating to
Christ, or the church, but the comparison is done in a way which aims to make it clear that
the former are inferior representations, which have now been superseded or perfected.[412]

      In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul's approach to Israel's history is in some respects the opposite
of that found in Hebrews and John. First, his typology is intentionally left incomplete.[413]
Paul's intention is to persuade the Corinthians not to behave in the same way as Israel, and so
to avoid sharing their fail. That the Corinthians could fail remains a serious possibility.
Second, while Paul draws a comparison between Israel's history and the church's present, he
does not do so with the same intention of showing the superiority of the latter, and
denigrating the former. To do so would be counterproductive. Instead, Paul seeks to show
that the Corinthians' situation is *not* superior to the Israelites'. A typological interpretation
along the lines of that found in Hebrews or John could undermine his argument, because if
the blessings experienced by the Corinthians are vastly superior to those experienced by the
Israelites, the historical correspondence outlined by Paul would not function as an effective
warning. In that case, the Corinthians would not be inviting the same judgment that befell the
Israelites, because their situation is more privileged. Paul's desire to show the correspondence

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[411] For a useful study of the development of Christian typological interpretation after Paul, see
Steven DiMattei, 'Biblical Narratives' in Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley eds., *As It is
Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 59-93.
Judith L. Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Chrsitian Commentators* (Grand Rapids,
Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 158-60, argues that both Origen and
Augustine used Paul's typological exegesis as a model for how to interpret the Old Testament.

[412] We do also find an example of this kind of typology in the Pauline epistles. In Rom 5:12-
21, Paul draws a typological connection between Adam and Christ, with Christ reversing the effects
of Adam's fall.

[413] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 217, makes this point in comparison with the
Christ/Melchizedek typology in Hebrews 7.

between the Israelites' situation and that of the Corinthians is demonstrated most clearly in the Christological claim of 10:4.

One possible key to understanding Paul's hermeneutical method is his use of the term πνευματικός.[414] Paul uses it to describe the food, the drink, and the rock in the desert. It is possible that Paul's intention here is to indicate that these things should be taken non-literally, as part of an allegorical connection between the past and the present, but this is almost certainly not the case.[415] Paul's argument relies on the blessings being real, historical occurrences.[416] Neither should Paul's use of πνευματικός be taken to mean that the food, drink, and the rock were non-physical.[417] It seems far more plausible that Paul intends to highlight the source of the Israelites' blessings, and thereby to emphasize the similarities between the Israelites' situation and the Corinthians'.[418] God's provision for Israel was supernatural, and their sustenance came directly from heaven (Ex. 16:4, 15).[419] Describing this food as 'spiritual' bears similarities to Wis. 16:20, which refers to manna as 'food of angels.'[420] In this way, Paul compares Israel to the Corinthians. They too have received spiritual blessings in the sacraments of both baptism and the Eucharist, which most directly corresponds to Israel's spiritual food and drink, and also in the spiritual gifts that have been bestowed upon them, and which Paul goes on to discuss later in the letter.

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[414] This is, of course, something of a loaded term in 1 Corinthians, featuring prominently in earlier chapters. See John M. G. Barclay, 'πνευματικός in the Social Dialect of Pauline Christianity' in Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, Stephen C. Barton eds., *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D.G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 157-167; Richard A. Horsley, 'Pneumatikos vs Psychichos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status Among the Corinthians' in *Harvard Theological Review* 69.3 (1976), 269-288; Birger A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism* (Missoula, Montana: Scholar's Press, 1973)

[415] C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971), 222.

[416] The adverbial form is used in Rev. 11:8 to mean 'allegorically', but the context there is quite different. See Witherington, *Corinthians*, 220-221.

[417] The food and drink had symbolic significance, but it also provided the Israelites with physical nutrition and sustenance. F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1968) argues that Paul's use of spiritual language indicates that he is speaking figuratively. To see Paul's language as merely figurative, however, obscures the full implications of his argument.

[418] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 449.

[419] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 455.

[420] Goppelt, *Typos,*145.

3. Christ and Israel in the Desert

i. Christ and the Rock

Perhaps the single most fascinating element of 1 Cor. 10:1-13 is the somewhat startling claim in verse 4 that the rock that followed Israel, and from which they drank, 'was Christ' (ἦν ὁ Χριστός). This verse is particularly puzzling given that Paul seems to refer to an extra-biblical tradition, and that he does so in a way that indicates that this tradition was well known, requiring no special introduction. Paul refers to 'the spiritual rock that followed them,' but at no point in the biblical narrative is there any reference to a moving rock that followed the Israelites. It seems almost certain that Paul is leaning here on an interpretive tradition which is attested to in a number of extra-biblical sources. For example, in the *Book of Biblical Antiquities*, Pseudo-Philo describes God's provision for the Israelites, including 'a well of water to follow them' (10:7). This water 'followed them for forty years' (11:15). The *Tosephta Sukka* 3.11 describes a rock 'the size of a large round vessel', 'rising with them up onto the mountains and going down with them into the valleys.'[421] This tradition probably arose as a solution to a problem or gap within the biblical tradition. While the desert narratives detail the regular provision of food, there is no corresponding detail regarding drinking water, which raises a very simple question: from where did the Israelites gather their drinking water while they wandered through the desert? Given that the narrative includes a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire which travel through the desert with the Israelites, and given that there is more than one reference to the rock, in different locations (Num. 20:11; 21:16; Ex. 17:1-7), check these it does not require a huge leap to arrive at the idea of a moveable rock or well.[422]

What we find, then, in 1 Cor. 10:4, is Paul utilizing an extra-biblical tradition to supplement his own discussion of biblical texts. It is possible that the idea of a moving rock is Paul's own innovation, but as Enns correctly argues, the presence of a similar idea in Pseudo-Philo suggests that the tradition was roughly contemporaneous with Paul, and the brevity of Paul's comment suggests that he is referring to a well-known tradition which requires no further explanation.[423] The real Pauline innovation is found in his reinterpretation of the

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[421] For a discussion of the tradition, see E. Earle Ellis, 'A Note on First Corinthians 10:4' *JBL* 76.1 (1957), 53-56.

[422] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 456.

[423] Peter E. Enns, 'The "Moveable Well" in 1 Cor 10:4: An Extrabiblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text' in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6 (1996), 23-28, at 27.

tradition, as he identifies the rock as Christ.[424] Here there is an interesting comparison to be made with Philo. In the *Legum Allegoriae II.86*, Philo identifies the rock with wisdom: 'for the abrupt rock is the wisdom of God, which being both sublime and the first of things he quarried out of his own powers.' Several commentators, recognizing the parallels between Philo's interpretation and Paul's, have used 1 Cor. 10:4 as evidence for a 'wisdom Christology' in the Pauline texts.[425] However, it must be noted that while there are some parallels between Philo's and Paul's interpretation of this episode, there are also significant differences. Paul's intention is to use the desert narrative to inform his admonition of the Corinthians, by drawing parallels between two historical situations. Philo's intentions are different, using the rock as part of a more generally-applicable allegory. He too intends to instruct, but not with the same kind of specific, historical focus.

Paul's claim that the rock was Christ can and has been interpreted in different ways, and interpreters have identified various exegetical and interpretive techniques in Paul's argument. As argued above, Paul's interpretive strategy in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 is not an example of a conventional allegory. In addition, while the passage as a whole has a broadly typological basis, it is a form of typology quite different to that found in Hebrews and John, or even in Galatians 4. This is particularly apparent in 1 Cor. 10:4. In Galatians 4, where Paul identifies the various parts of his typology, he uses the present tense to do so: τὸ δὲ ῞Αγὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν (Hagar is Mount Sinai). In this way, the phrase is oriented towards the present, with the emphasis on the new meaning given by Paul. In contrast, Paul uses the imperfect tense in 1 Corinthians 10:4: ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός (the rock was Christ). In this phrase, the emphasis is on the past. The phrase has the character of a historical claim, adding detail to the story, rather than an allegorical identification.[426] If Paul intended to construct the type of typology (or allegory) found in Galatians 4, we could reasonably expect him to use the present tense. [427] This would be more natural, and it would correspond with Galatians 4, where the use of 'allegory' is made explicit. Paul's claim in 10:4 is typological insofar as by

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[424] The *Targum Onkelos* Ex. 17:5-7 may indicate a messianic interpretation of the rock. See Larry Kreitzer, '1 Corinthians 10:4 and Philo's Flinty Rock', *Communio Viatorum* 35 (1993), 109-126, at 113.

[425] See Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 223; E. Earle Ellis, 'Χριστός in 1 Corinthians 10:4, 9,' in Martinus C. De Boer ed., *From Jesus to John: Essays on New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge,* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 168-73, at 169. For an argument against Pauline use of a wisdom Christology, see Gordon . Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 96.

[426] Collins, *Corinthians*, 365, claims that the rock is 'allegorically identified as the Christ', but this does not fit with Paul's language.

[427] See Dunn, *Theology*, 279. Dunn describes Paul's method as 'a sort of allegory', but recognises that his statement bears the characteristics of a historical claim.

inserting Christ into his narrative, he strengthens the parallels between Israel's experience in the desert and the Corinthians' present experience, but the presence of this parallel in itself does not answer the question of what precisely Paul means when he claims that the rock was Christ. In other words, the question of the historical character of Paul's claim remains, regardless of whether or not it forms part of a wider typology. Indeed, given that typology is concerned with recognising correspondence between temporally separate historical occurrences, the presence of some kind of typology in 10:1-13 should lead us to the conclusion that Paul does intend to make a historical claim in verse 4. Without it, the typological connection is weakened, and verse 4 adds little to the rhetorical force of Paul's argument.

If we are correct to conclude that Paul intends to make some kind of historical claim about the rock in the desert, rather than a merely symbolic or allegorical one, there are still questions remaining about the precise implications of this claim. What could it mean to state that the rock was Christ? Hays warns of the dangers of over-interpretation: 'Paul's metaphors should not be pressed. He does not mean, at the level of literal statement, that Moses passed out baptismal certificates or that theologians should debate whether Christ was igneous, metamorphic, or sedimentary.'[428] What, however, is the nature of the comment, if it does not mean to say that Christ literally became a rock? Again, the rhetorical force of Paul's claim rests on Christ being "really" present in the desert. If not, the Corinthians could claim that their situation is different to the Israelites' in a significant way, because they, unlike the Israelites have Christ. To read 10:4 simply as Paul's way of indicating that Christ is the embodiment of God's blessings now in the same way that the rock embodied God's blessings in the past dilutes Paul's intentions, and weakens his rhetoric. For example, Baird argues: 'Paul is saying that just as Christ is the embodiment of God's redemptive action for believers now, so the rock represented the source of life for Israel in the exodus. Ultimately it is God who redeems...'[429] The problem with this is that Paul's statement is specifically *Christological*, rather than *theological*.

In recognition of this, several commentators identify 10:4 as a piece of evidence supporting the claim that Paul believed in a pre-existent Christ. This is a tantalizing proposition. If Paul reinterprets scriptural narratives not merely by bringing to the texts his understanding of the significance of the Christ-event, but actually by re-reading them as narratives about Christ, this would have hugely significant implications for Paul's theology of

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[428] Hays, *Echoes,* 280.
[429] Baird, '1 Corinthians', 287.

history. Along these lines, Conzelmann argues that the pre-existence of Christ is presupposed here by Paul.[430] If this is the case in 1 Corinthians 10, we could plausibly read other similar texts in the same way.[431]

We should, of course, be careful not to force later theological concepts like preexistence upon the Pauline texts. Nonetheless, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this text has some significant Christological implications, at least pointing in the direction of preexistence.[432] Hays is correct to object that Paul's language should not be pushed too far, as though Christ was physically identical with the rock, but even if it is true that Paul's claim should not be taken at the most basic level, it is also true that there must be something of substance in Paul's claim, beyond mere symbolism. Hays describes 10:4 as 'a parenthetical remark' and an 'imaginative leap' on Paul's part.[433] This does not mean, however that Paul's statement should be taken as insubstantial or impulsive. Indeed, Hays himself suggests that the latter part of chapter 10 has Deuteronomy 32 in mind, a passage notable for its repeated descriptions of God as a rock.[434]

If this is the case, then 10:4 hints at two substantial and significant claims. First, that Christ himself was present in a real sense in Israel's past history, as a source of their blessings; second, that in fulfilling this role, there is some kind of correspondence between Christ and God. What, however, does this 'real sense' entail? Both Oropeza[435] and Thiselton[436] speak in terms of Christ being 'ontologically' present in the wilderness, although the word's precise meaning in this context is unclear. It is entirely possible, of course, that Paul himself did not have a particularly thorough conceptual scheme of how precisely Christ was present with Israel.[437] Clearly, Paul did not have a full-blown, systematic doctrine of

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[430] Hans Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 196, states that 10:4 '*lässt die systematische Voraussetzung dieser Exegese erkennen: den Gedanken der Präexistenz Christi.*' See also Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 124, who contrasts Paul's approach with Philo's. He argues that Philo sees the rock as an allegory of wisdom, whereas Paul's claim in 10:4 refers to the preexistent Christ.

[431] This brings to mind Barth's 'crimson thread' with Christ's presence underpinning the hidden unity in history.

[432] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 218.

[433] Hays, *Echoes*, 94.

[434] Hays, *Echoes*, 94.

[435] B.J. Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 132.

[436] Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 730.

[437] Matthew Thiessen, ''The Rock Was Christ': The Fluidity of Christ's Body in 1 Corinthians 10:4' *JSNT* 36 (2013), 103-126, argues that Paul's language should be seen in the light of the Song of Moses in Deut. 32:1-43, and Psalms 78 and 95, where rock language is used in the context of Israel's wilderness traditions, where God is a rock. This means that Paul makes a 'startlingly high Christological claim.' Thiessen goes on to develop this line of thought by with

Christ's pre-existence, or what would later become known as Trinitarian theology, but verses like 1 Cor. 10:4 do indicate that the seeds of these later developments are present in Paul's thought. What seems clear is that for Paul, while Christ was fully revealed in history in the Christ-event, this was not Christ's first involvement in history.

Overall, there seem to be five possible ways of reading the Christological claim of 10:4:

1. Paul means to say that Christ was physically present, in the form of a rock. Clearly, this can be dismissed.

2. Paul's claim is an allegorical marker, comparable with Galatians 4:25. As argued above, this is unlikely.

3. Paul's claim is an ad hoc, imaginative proposal, with little thought behind it. There may be an element of truth in this, but the similarity between 10:4 and 10:9 (see below) suggests that this is not simply an impulsive claim with little substance. Paul must surely have been aware of how 10:4 could be interpreted, and so it would be extremely careless for him to use this kind of language without really meaning it.

4. Paul means to indicate that the pre-existent, pre-incarnate Christ was present with Israel. Paul's Christology might not be consciously developed in these terms, but verses like 10:4 and 10:9 do point in this direction. We might speculate about the nature of this presence, but it is unclear what kind of answer we would be looking for.

5. Paul's use of 'Christ' is effectively a cipher for a certain way in which God interacts with the world. When Paul says that Christ was the rock, he means to say that God's interactions with Israel, and the blessings given to them, fitted the same pattern of divine action seen in the Christ-event. This raises some interesting possibilities regarding Paul's

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reference to Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Sommer argues that ancient Israelites held to a conception of divine fluidity where God could be present in different material forms. Hence, Thiessen argues, 'Paul is not allegorically, metaphorically, or typologically identifying the rock with Christ. Rather, he is making the claim that the *pneumatic* rock was Christ; that is to say, Christ was pneumatically present in the *physical* rock at the time Israel wandered in the wilderness.' Here, *pneuma* is not a spiritual, non-material entity, but a 'subtle, sublime form of matter.'

understanding of the Christ-event in relation to the rest of history. This approach is less applicable to 10:9, however, where it is the person of Christ being put to the test.

ii. Putting Christ to the Test

There is some debate over the original form of 10:9, due to differences between manuscripts. A minority of manuscripts read 'Lord' instead of 'Christ', which removes the significant Christological implications of the verse, but the latter reading is to be preferred.[438] The support for κύριος is mainly Egyptian, with some attestation in Syriac, Armenian and Ethiopic, whereas the support for Χριστός is more widespread, both numerically and geographically. This reading also goes back further in the manuscript tradition. Χριστός is the reading favoured by Marcion, which prompted Epiphanius to argue that κύριος was the original reading, with the move to Χριστός being theologically motivated, the proposal being that Marcion found κύριος to be an unwelcome reference to the demiurge. It is equally plausible that a change from Χριστός to κύριος could have been theologically motivated by those engaged in the Christological disputes of the third century. While the presence of Χριστός in 10:9 might be deemed suspicious if it were an isolated case, its proximity to the undisputed presence of Χριστός just a few verses earlier in 10:4, along with the manuscript evidence, should assuage any such suspicion.[439]

If 10:4 was a unique example of Paul apparently inserting Christ into an Old Testament story, freely and imaginatively reworking the scriptural narrative to suit his rhetorical purposes, we could fairly be suspicious of reading too much into it. But in 10:9, as part of the same argument, Paul makes another very similar claim, warning the Corinthians that they 'must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.'[440] Again, Christ is inserted into the biblical narrative; the Israelites are described as not just testing not just God, but Christ himself. Where Paul could simply urge the

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[438] Χριστός: Papyrus[46] D F G K L Ψ 630. 1241. 1505. 1739. 1881. latt sy co; Ir[lat] Or[1739mg] κύριος: ℵ B C P 33. 104. 326. 365. 1175. 2464 sy[hmg]. There is also minor attestation for θεός: A 81.

[439] For an extensive survey of evidence on this question see Carroll D. Osburn, 'The Text of 1 Corinthians 10:9' in Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee eds. '*New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 201-12. See also Oropeza, *Paul and Apostacy*, 154-6; Fee, *Corinthians,* 457. Both Osburn and Oropeza agree that both the internal and external evidence point strongly in the direction of Χριστός being the original reading. Fee regards it as 'almost certain.'

[440] The Numbers narrative which forms the basis for Paul's exposition does not mention Israel putting God to the test, but the idea is found in Ps. 78:18. There may also be a deliberate echo of the LXX Deut. 6:16. See Fee, *Christology*, 97.

Corinthians not to put God to the test, like the Israelites did, he chooses to add Christ into the equation.[441]

In some ways this is an even more surprising claim than 10:4. In 10:9, unlike 10:4, omitting Christ's name would not necessarily weaken Paul's exhortation.[442] Paul chooses to mention him anyway. Hays suggests that the formula 'as some of them did' is repeated by Paul, even though the Israelites 'were not, strictly speaking, putting Christ to the test,' so that he can maintain 'rhetorical parallelism.'[443] This parallelism could, however, be maintained without mentioning Christ at all. Paul could simply have written, 'do not put God to the test, as some of them did.' Failing to invoke Christ's name here would not damage Paul's point in the same way that it would do in verse 4. That Paul chooses to introduce Christ at this point strongly suggests that he believed that Christ really was there in the wilderness – even if the precise terms of this presence are unclear – and that by testing God, the Israelites were also testing Christ. Echoing Conzelmann, Fee writes: 'It is the presuppositional nature of the assertion that is so striking, since Christ's pre-existence is what makes such an argument possible at all.'[444] In the cases of both 10:4 and 10:9, Paul's statements only make sense if Christ was there with Israel in a real, historical sense. The proximity and similarity of the two verses strengthens this interpretation.[445]

Even if Paul does borrow heavily from another source when constructing verses 1-13, these two claims appear to be distinctively Pauline. Indeed, this interpretation is further supported when these two verses are compared to another similar case within 1 Corinthians. In 1 Cor. 8:6, Paul famously reformulates the *Shema* to incorporate Christ, declaring that 'there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.' The implication here is that Christ has a role in creation, and this interpretation is strengthened by a comparison with Colossians 1, where similar language is used to develop a much more full-blown account of Christ's role in creation. Even if Colossians is post-Pauline, it is not difficult to see a trajectory from 1 Cor. 8 to Col. 1.[446]

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[441] Baird, '1 Corinthians', 289: 'To test Christ is to test the redemptive activity of God - then and now.' Or, to put it the other way round: to test God is to test the redemptive activity of Christ - then and now.

[442] As Ellis, 'Χριστός', 169, points out, Paul could easily have warned the Corinthians not to test Christ, as Israel tested Yahweh. Instead, he chooses not to mention God in this verse. The result is that Paul 'places Christ both at the exodus and in the (present) eschatological reality in Corinth.'

[443] Hays, *Corinthians*, 165.

[444] Fee, *Pauline Christology,* 98.

[445] Garland, *1 Corinthians,* 463.

[446] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1974), 150, suggests that there are several other similar examples, although they are quite tenuous.

In several places, then, Paul's statements make most sense as expressions of the belief that Christ was present in history prior to the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. In these examples Paul may well be influenced by wisdom traditions, particularly in the cases of 8:8 and 10:4 - although wisdom influence on 10:9 is less obvious - but it remains significant that Paul is able to make statements applicable to wisdom but to apply them specifically to Christ. Paul's hermeneutical strategy in these verses indicates a strongly-held conviction that the revelation that has been given to him has enabled him to freely and imaginatively reinterpret the Old Testament, retelling the stories of Israel with Christ as a central character. This suggests a Christocentric way of thinking about the relationship between Israel's history and the history of the church, after the Christ-event, without necessarily construing this relationship in linear terms.

4. History Re-Written in Christ

i. Reading the Past at the Ends of the Ages

That Paul feels able to reinterpret the scriptures as having particular significance for the church in the present day can be explained at least partly with reference to his understanding of time. Paul envisions the *ekklesia* of Christ as living in a unique eschatological time, a period of history in between the Christ-event and the eagerly awaited *parousia.* In 1 Cor. 10:11, Paul explains his application of the lessons learned from Israel's past by declaring that these things happened for those 'on whom the ends of the ages have come' (εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκε). This fascinating phrase appears to be loaded with theological substance, but it has proved difficult to come to a consensus on how best to translate it. This is partly due to the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of τέλος,[447] and also due to the slightly unusual use of the plurals τέλη and αἰώνων. The use of the plural could simply be a case of Hebrew idiom, where the singular would be used in English, which would give a reading of 'the end of the age', instead of 'the ends of the ages.'[448] Alternatively, the

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For example, he suggests that Rom 11:34-35 may contain the idea of Christ being God's counsellor and mediator. Other such examples include 2 Cor. 3; Rom. 9:15; 10; 11:4. His suggestion that 'If we once realise that, in any passage where Paul thinks of the Father as acting in Israel's history, he is actually thinking of God-in-Christ as the agent, we shall not be surprised to find the 'real presence' of the pre-existent Christ anywhere in Paul's exegesis of Scripture' does, however, beg the question somewhat.

[447] We find similar difficulties in Rom. 10:4, where the meaning of τέλος holds enormous significance for Paul's understanding of the law.

[448] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 465.

plural might refer to 'a kind of frontier point where the old dispensation meets the new.'[449] Here, the back end of one age meets the front end of another, with the church living at the time of the intersection. These translations both take τέλος to mean 'end', but it is also plausible that Paul has in mind fulfilment or completion. In this case, the plural could mean that all previous ages have come to their completion in the Christ-event.[450] Both meanings of τέλος would provide Paul with the justification for his new perspective on scripture. If the church is living at the time when a new eschatological age is being ushered in, this situation would provide a unique vantage point from which to look back across history. If the current age is complete, then it can be reviewed in its entirety. Likewise, if the present time is where the previous age finds its fulfilment, then it follows quite naturally that wherever God can be seen to have acted in history, these actions were leading forwards in some way to this point.[451]

Overall, Paul's statement in verse 11 gives a picture of the present which incorporates both the sense of the time of the church being where the previous ages have come to be fulfilled, and also where the old ages have come to an end. These two senses are not mutually exclusive; rather, they support each other. Paul seems to have in mind a similar idea as in Galatians 4:4, where Christ comes at 'the fullness of time',[452] and he may also be influenced by the Jewish idea of the 'end of days'.[453] His perspective is thoroughly eschatological, and his claim that the scriptures were written 'for us' bears comparison with 2 Cor. 3:12-18, where Paul claims that the people of Israel have a veil in front of them when they read the law, which is removed when they turn to the Lord.[454]

In each case, scripture is only properly understood by a certain group, the 'us' group of the church, those who are in Christ. But this proper interpretation of scripture is also linked to a particular time, the time after Christ when scripture finds its fulfilment not just in the

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[449] Garland, *1 Corinthians,* 465; Hays, *Corinthians*, 162.

[450] Leon Morris *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 141; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 223.

[451] As a quite different way of understanding Paul's meaning, M.M. Bogle, 'Ta telē tōn aiōnōn 1 Corinthians 10:11: A Suggestion,' *The Expository Times* 67.8 (1956), 245-247, at 247, suggests that τέλὸς here might carry the same meaning as in Plato's *Republic*, where it refers to mystical rites. Paul may have been thinking sacramentally, rather than eschatologically, giving a translation of 'To whom the eternal mysteries have come down,' or 'who are the heirs of the mysteries of the ages.' A sacramental meaning would, however, seem to work against the overall thrust of Paul's argument, particularly in verses 1-4, which seeks to downplay the superiority of the Christian sacraments over the blessings given to the Israelites.

[452] For more on this phrase, see chapter 7.

[453] Dan. 12:13; 4Q174 1:2, 15, 19; 1QSa 1:1; Test. Mos. 12:4. See Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy*, 169.

[454] See chapter 6.

Christ-event itself, but also in the subsequent life of the church.[455] Of course, Paul would also maintain that these things also happened as examples for Israel, as well as for the church. There is no suggestion that the scriptures were written exclusively for the church in the future. Nonetheless, by qualifying his claim in verse 11 by referring to the particular time that the church exists in, Paul affirms that the church lives in a unique time, and has a unique place in God's dealings with history. Previous generations of Israel could certainly learn from the stories of their ancestors, but these stories were also pointing forwards in time to the end of the age, and to those who are in Christ.[456] It is only now, in the time following the Christ-event, that this mystery has been revealed.

ii. Christ's Mysterious Historical Presence

        Anthony Hanson, commenting on passages including 1 Corinthians 10, offers some provocative comments on Paul's scheme of history, and particularly the place of Christ in this scheme. Responding to C.K. Barrett's suggestion that for Paul, Christ is a 'divine intruder', whose involvement in the world, while being previously foreshadowed to some extent, begins at 'the fullness of time' (referring to Galatians 4),[457] Hanson argues that 'when we note how often Paul finds Christ speaking in the Scripture, when we conclude (as we must) that on certain historic occasions in Israel's past Paul believed the Son to have been present, we must confess that to merely trace a predictable pattern in Scriptures is not enough. The Son was there, could have been apprehended, and was believed in by some.'[458] What precisely Hanson means by saying that Christ 'could have been apprehended' is unclear, and his claims, while bearing some validity, are a leap beyond Paul's own words. Nonetheless, Hanson does raise some important questions. If Christ was indeed present in some form in Israel's history prior to 'the fullness of time', was he made known at all, and if so, to whom and in what way? If

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[455] Hays, *Echoes*, 86, suggests that Paul's use of the Old Testament is primarily ecclesiocentric rather than Christocentric: 'What Paul finds in Scripture, above all else, is a pre-figuration of the *church* as the people of God…In short, Paul operates with an *ecclesiocentric* hermeneutic.' In his later work, however, Hays does identify more examples of a Pauline Christological hermeneutic, such as Romans 15:3, which he reads as 'Christological ventriloquism' comparable to John 2:17 and Hebrews 2:10-12. See the essay on Christology in Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 101-118.

[456] See also Rom. 4:22-25; 15:1-5.

[457] C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 82. Barrett's approach bears comparison with Martyn's apocalyptic reading of Paul: 'Jesus is one who comes as an alien from another world. No one can constrain his coming – climb into heaven and bring him down. At the appointed moment God sends his Son; in him he manifests his righteousness apart from the law, that is, without direct reference to or dependence on the previous religious structure of Israel.'

[458] Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology,* 150.

Christ was really present in Israel's history, and was the source of their blessings in the desert, how do these past events relate to the Christ-event itself? What is it about the Christ-event which makes it so significant for Paul, if it is not Christ's first involvement in history? In relation to this, what, if anything, distinguishes the experience and/or status of those after the Christ-event from those beforehand? After all, Paul is at pains in 1 Corinthians 10 to emphasize the similarity of the historical situations of the Israelites and the Corinthians. Both groups received spiritual blessings, and both groups received them from Christ. Were the Israelites 'in Christ', perhaps without knowing it?

Hanson raises the possibility that Christ could have been and was apprehended in history prior to the Christ-event. While Paul does not answer this question directly, he does give attention to a similar problem. Paul maintains that scripture points towards Christ, and to the end of the age. While he is less keen on providing Christological proof-texts than some other early Christian writers,[459] Paul does say that scripture was written for the benefit of the church, those 'on whom the ends of the ages have come,' (1 Cor 10:11), and that the gospel was 'promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures' (Rom. 1:2). The problem with these claims is that even faithful, educated Jews such as Paul did not anticipate a messiah like Jesus Christ. That this is true was demonstrated quite clearly in his rejection by the Jewish majority, and the subsequent persecution of the church by zealous Jews, including Paul himself. If the scriptures clearly point towards Christ, why did those familiar with the scriptures reject him when he appeared? Likewise, if Christ was present with Israel in the desert, why was his presence not recognized?

Paul's main strategy against these kinds of questions is to appeal to mystery, divine secrecy, and revelation. His concluding doxology at the end of Romans refers to a 'mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles' (16:25-6). Likewise, in 1 Corinthians Paul describes the gospel message which he preaches as 'God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory' (2:7). Paul explores this idea in more depth in 2 Corinthians 3, where he argues that Israel have failed to understand scripture properly, i.e. Christologically, because they have been under a veil which is removed for those who are in Christ.[460] From this collection of texts a general picture begins to emerge of a divine plan intentionally hidden and only now revealed. Paul constructs an account of history where Christ is present, but where this presence is only made known after the Christ-event itself.

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[459] Hays, *Echoes*, 86.
[460] See chapter 6.

This is one key point where Israel's situation differs from that of the church, including the Corinthians. Whereas both groups share blessings that come from Christ, it is only the church to whom Christ has been made known. Does the significance of the Christ-event therefore rest primarily - or even solely - on its role as an act of revelation? After all, one of Paul's main points in 1 Corinthians 10 seems to be that Israel were equally as blessed as the church are now. An interesting comparison can be made here with Paul's discussion of Abraham. In Romans, Paul can say both that we are now justified by faith through the blood of Christ (5:1, 9, 18), and also that Abraham was justified by faith, apart from works, and hundreds of years before the Christ-event. Does this mean that Abraham was justified in an inferior way which typologically prefigures the justification of those in Christ? Or does the Christ-event work retroactively throughout history? Or was Christ present in history, performing the work which was later to be made public in his life and death? That Paul can so easily describe events in scriptural history in terms usually reserved for the church indicates some fluidity in his understanding of God's interaction with history.

iii. Conclusions to Chapter 5

From the preceding study, a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, while Paul's interpretation of scripture in 1 Corinthians 10 can be described as typological, it differs from other early Christian typology in some significant ways. Paul compares the distinct historical situations of the Israelites and the Corinthians not polemically, in order to denigrate the former and show the superiority of the latter, but as a way of showing something quite different. Paul's rhetoric relies on convincing the Corinthians that their own situation is not more privileged than Israel's was, in order to show that they face real danger, and that their decisions carry consequences. Paul's typology is intentionally left incomplete; the Corinthian church can stay faithful to God and avoid making the same mistakes that the Israelites made, and in such a way become the antitype to Israel's type, or they can ignore Paul's warning and face God's judgment.[461]

Second, Paul's interpretation of scripture in 1 Corinthians 10 has epistemological implications. Rather than simply interpreting the church's experience in terms drawn from the scriptural record of Israel's history, he reinterprets Israel's experience in sacramental terms drawn from the life of the church. This is a circular relationship, because the Christ-event informs Paul's reading of scripture, and scripture informs Paul's understanding of the Christ-

[461] As Baird, '1 Corinthians,' 288, puts it, 'Paul does not depict types to be fulfilled but moral lessons to be learned from the negative examples.'

event. But the initial epistemological or hermeneutical logic runs from the Christ-event backwards through time, and not the other way round. Only once the story of Israel is redefined in terms relating to the Christ-event and the life of the church can Paul use that story as the basis for his exhortations. His claim that episodes in Israel's history occurred as examples for the church contains an implicit, significant caveat: they can only be identified as such when read through the lens of the Christ-event. As Watson puts it:

> This version of the hermeneutical circle has its own teleology…the relationship between Christ and scripture is not a symmetrical one, as though "Christ" and "scripture" were two independent objects that could mutually shed light on one another. Paul reads the scripture in the light of Christ only *in order* to read Christ in the light of scripture; scriptural interpretation *per se* is of no interest to him.[462]

The way that Paul reads scripture and history in 1 Corinthians 10 poses a challenge to the narrative approaches like Wright's, where the Christ-event is a new chapter added onto a pre-formed story of Israel. Paul does tie the stories of Israel and the Corinthians together to some extent, but only after re-writing the scriptural narrative in terms that are derived from the Christ-event itself.

Third, in 1 Corinthians 10 Paul identifies significant continuity between Israel and the church. That Paul, addressing a predominantly gentile church, can refer to the Israelites as 'our ancestors,' indicates continuity between Israel and the church that does not sit easily with apocalyptic readings. For Paul, it seems, the church does not represent an entirely new people of God formed in the wake of the Christ-event, superseding the former people of God, but instead represents a genuine continuation of Israel's history. Quite what this means for the majority of Israel who are not also in the church is one of the thorny issues which forms the basis for Romans 9-11.[463] It is also significant that while texts such as Galatians 4 may indicate that for Paul the Abrahamic covenant and promise stands over the Mosaic covenant, 1 Corinthians 10 indicates that the time in between Abraham and Christ remains significant. That said, the question of whether or not this means that Paul envisages a linear salvific progression from Abraham, through Israel, and to Christ, remains open. Paul sees connections between the story of Israel as written in scripture and reinterpreted after the

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[462] Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 298.
[463] See chapter 8.

Christ-event, and the ongoing story of the Corinthians and the wider church. But, crucially, the relationship is one of resemblance and shared features, rather than causality.

That Paul can describe such close resemblance, however, even going as far as inserting Christ into the scriptural narrative, poses a challenge for apocalyptic schemes which emphasize the sharp contrast between the old and the new, with the Christ-event as the dividing line. If the Christ-event is the unprecedented moment where Christ enters into history and liberates humanity from a monolithic state of enslavement to evil forces, why does Paul claim that Christ was present in the desert, and why does he re-read Israel's experience in sacramental terms taken from the post-Christ-event experience of the church?

Fourth, Paul attributes to Christ the central role in holding together the continuity between Israel and the church. By inserting Christ into the account of Israel's wandering into the desert, both as the source of their blessings, and as the one whom they put to the test, Paul hints at an understanding of history which is thoroughly Christological. It is not just that the Old Testament is understood to be pointing towards Christ, prophetically foreshadowing the Christ-event, or that Israel's history provides the historical context for or sets the scene for the Christ-event. Rather, these texts suggest that Christ's own interaction with human history extends beyond his birth, life, death and resurrection. To use Barth's language, here we see Paul identifying the 'crimson thread' that runs through history, a *Christological* crimson thread. 1 Corinthians 10 indicates that the Old Testament narratives are not just a set of stories that help us to understand the subsequent story of Christ, but are integral parts of that very same story. This reading is possible if the Christ-event itself is seen as being in history but not of history, and thereby not limited to the thirty or so years of Christ's earthly life. The history of the world, and of God's interaction with the world in particular, is the history of Christ.

Chapter 6
2 Corinthians 3

In the previous chapter, we saw Paul using a scriptural narrative as a way of warning believers in the present. Paul's version of this narrative was, however, rewritten in Christological and ecclesiological terms. The typological connection drawn between the Israelites and the Corinthians was used to show the similarities between the two communities, rather than to denigrate the time before Christ. Paul even went as far as to insert Christ himself into the scriptural narrative, and to reinterpret the Israelites' blessings in sacramental terms.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul again uses a rewritten or reinterpreted scriptural narrative to support his argument. This time, however, his aim is quite different. Instead of using scripture to warn the Corinthians, here he uses it to defend his own ministry, by reinterpreting the scriptural narrative of Moses' descent from Sinai. Whereas in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul's argument relies on emphasising the similarities between Israel and the church, in 2 Corinthians 3 his argument relies more on emphasising the differences, centred around the distinction between the old and new covenants.

In part 1, I argued that the various debates regarding Paul's understanding of history and time arise at least partly from the presence of real tensions in the Pauline texts, between continuity and discontinuity. Apocalyptic readings emphasise discontinuity, where the Christ-event is an invasive, punctiliar occurrence, whereas salvation-historical readings emphasise continuity, seeking to place the Christ-event in the context of Israel's history. 2 Corinthians 3 is a particularly significant text for this subject, because here we see evidence of this tension within the space of a few verses. On the one hand, Paul argues for a sharp distinction between the two covenants, and between Israel and the church; on the other hand, he reinterprets Moses' individual experience, comparing it directly with the experience of believers in the present.

1. Reading 2 Corinthians 3

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Paul's use of scriptural narrative in 2 Corinthians 3, and to draw out the implications of this for Paul's understanding of history and time. Unfortunately, this is not a straightforward process. 2 Corinthians 3 is a particularly

challenging text, presenting interpreters with a number of complex, interrelated questions.[464]
It forms one part of Paul's wider argument in defence of his own ministry, which covers a
large portion of 2 Corinthians, taking the shape here of an extended comparison between his
ministry and Moses' ministry. The logic of Paul's argument is difficult to follow at times, and
this problem is only compounded by numerous cases where there is significant debate over
how to translate particular words or phrases. A central feature of Paul's argument is his use of
the Old Testament, including direct interaction with Exodus 34: 29-35, which tells the story
of Moses' descent from Sinai with a glowing face, as well as more subtle allusions to
prophetic texts such as Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31. Unfortunately, understanding Paul's use
of these texts is doubly difficult; first, because the source material itself is far from
straightforward; second, because of the liberal way in which Paul edits and reinterprets this
source material. Given these difficulties, it will be necessary to deal with some of the tricky
exegetical details before considering some of the wider theological implications of the text.
Our interest here is to consider what kind of salvation-history, if any at all, is implicit in this
passage. In addition, what is the nature of the comparisons between Moses and Paul, and
between the Israelites of Moses' day and the Jews and Christians of Paul's day?

i. Paul's Defence of his Ministry

First, however, it is important to consider the place of 2 Corinthians 3 in the letter as a
whole. Paul's main aim in 2 Corinthians is to defend his ministry against criticisms. 2
Corinthians 3 forms one part of this wider argument, and so it must be read in that context.
Given that much of this chapter is taken up by a defence of Paul's ministry against his critics,
it is important to consider who these critics were, and what basis they had for criticising Paul.

Space does not permit a detailed examination of these questions, but in my reading of
2 Corinthians 3, I find myself in agreement with the conclusions reached by Jerry L. Sumney
in his excellent study of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians.[465] Sumney argues that the

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[464] Scott Hafemann, who has written at length on 2 Corinthians 3, describes it as 'one of the
most difficult passages to understand within the Pauline corpus.' See *Paul, Moses, and the History of
Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Peabody,
Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996), 1. As Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 123, humorously puts
it, 'It is hard to escape the impression that, to this day, when 2 Corinthians 3 is read a veil lies over our
minds.'

[465] Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians*
(Sheffield: Academic Press, 1990). As indicated in the title, much of Sumney's work is focused on
assessing the methodological basis for 'mirror-reading' Paul's opponents. His conclusions regarding
the identity of Paul's opponents in chapter 1-9 are primarily based on the 'explicit statements' found in
2:17; 3:1a; 5:12, supported by other allusions.

predominant issue in 2 Corinthians 'is that of the proper criteria for evaluating minister and ministries.'[466] Paul differs from his opponents on the question of 'the proper manifestation of divine power in apostles' lives.'[467] Their differing outlooks take concrete form in disputes over payment, evidence of status, and appropriate demeanour. This means that Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians are quite different from the Judaizing opponents in Galatians. Here, the focus is more on Paul himself, rather than the theological content of his gospel – although the two are necessarily linked to some extent.

Paul begins 2 Corinthians 3 by directly comparing himself with his opponents. Whereas they prove their credentials with written letters of recommendation, Paul needs no such written letters. Paul does not reject letters of recommendation *per se*, but questions whether he, Paul, requires one.[468] The Corinthians themselves are Paul's letter of recommendation. There is some debate over whether this 'letter' is written on Paul's heart, or on the Corinthians' hearts (3:2),[469] but Paul's meaning is fairly straightforward either way: Because of their relationship with Paul, the Corinthian church are a public, living validation of his ministry. They are a letter of Christ, prepared by Paul,[470] and written by the Spirit.[471] It is noticeable that in verse 3 Paul very quickly moves from talking about physical letters written with ink, to letters carved on tablets of stone. Given that Paul's opponents did not literally carry around tablets of stone, this metaphorical leap is Paul's own invention, but it

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[466] Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 146.

[467] Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 147.

[468] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 260

[469] The first person plural possessive pronoun ἡμῶν is better attested (Papyrus[46] A B C D G K P Ψ 614 17r9 *Byz Lect* it vg syr[p, h] cop[sa, bo] goth arm) than the second person ὑμῶν (א 33 88 436 1881 eth[ro]). Despite the greater support for the former, however, the latter fits the context better; Paul is vindicated by the Corinthians themselves, whose hearts have been changed by the Spirit. For arguments in favour of ἡμῶν, see Rudold Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 74; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the* Corinthians, 259; Thomas Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (Zurich: Patmos-Verlag, 2010), 188. For ὑμῶν, see C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A&C Black, 1973), 107; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 127; Victor Paul Furnish, *II* Corinthians (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1984), 181; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 32; Thomas E. Provence, 'Who is Sufficient for These Things? An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 2:15-3:18', 54-81; Robert B. Sloan, '2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 and "New Covenant Hermeneutics" - A Response to Richard Hays,' *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995), 129-154, at 139.

[470] In several places in this passage, Paul refers to himself in the first person plural, e.g. with ἡμῶν in verse 3. This may indicate that Paul has in mind not just himself, but the apostolic company as a whole. See Sloan, 'New Covenant Hermeneutics,' 135-40.

[471] By introducing the Spirit into the debate, Paul echoes his argument in Gal. 3:1-5, where the presence of the Spirit in the Galatian community serves as evidence in favour of Paul's ministry.

allows him to move on to a discussion of the contrast between the old and new covenants, setting up the second reference to stone in verse 7.[472]

After highlighting the superiority of his 'letter' to those of his opponents, a superiority which demonstrates the competency of his ministry, Paul considers the nature of this competency, which comes from God, rather than from Paul himself (3:5). This recalls the pattern of verse 3, where Paul prepares the letter, but the letter belongs to Christ and is written with the Spirit. Immediately, Paul turns to the question of the nature of the covenant of which he is a minister, leading into a comparison of the two covenants that was hinted at in verse 3. Paul's comparison of the two covenants initially appears to be quite arbitrary. What do the covenants have to do with Paul's ministerial credentials? The progress of Paul's argument seems less arbitrary, however, when one recognises how Paul repeatedly alludes to prophetic material, and to two texts in particular:[473]

> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

> A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Several key terms in the beginning of chapter 3 can be found in these two texts, including 'new covenant' (3:6 cf. Jer. 38:31-34),[474] 'hearts of flesh' (3:3 cf. Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), and 'written on your hearts' (3:2 cf. Jer. 31:33). Jeremiah 31 also mentions God's

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[472] Morna D. Hooker, 'Beyond the Things that are Written? St Paul's Use of Scripture' in *New Testament Studies* vol. 27.3 1991, 295-309, at 296, sees this as one of a number of places within 2 Cor. 3 where Paul's argument becomes muddled.

[473] Exod. 31:18 and Ezek. 11:19 may also be in Paul's mind here. See Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 265.

[474] καινὴ διαθήκη also appears in Paul's discussion of the Lord's table in 1 Cor. 11:25, where it appears that that he uses a pre-existing tradition. See Margaret Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 235.

spirit, which, as we will see, plays an extremely important role in Paul's argument. Given all of this rich imagery found in the prophets, it is not difficult to see how Paul might have made these connections when thinking about written letters of approval, in contrast with the living 'letter' of the Corinthians. In addition, it is possible that Moses was used by Paul's critics as an example of someone who had a more glorious ministry.[475] If this were the case, it would be entirely unsurprising for Paul to answer his critics by engaging in a discussion of Moses' ministry in comparison with his own.

After directly comparing his ministry with that of his opponents in 3:1-4, then, Paul changes tack and compares the new covenant, of which he is a minister, to the old covenant, of which Moses was the chief minister. He does so by positing a series of antitheses between the two:

Tablets of stone	Tablets of human hearts
Letter	Spirit
Kills	Gives life
Temporary	Permanent
Condemnation	Justification

These antitheses all lead to the conclusion that Paul's ministry of the new covenant is one of greater glory. Significantly, though, at no point does Paul make any attempt to downplay the glory of Moses' ministry of the old covenant, although he does say that this glory has now faded, or been abolished (3:7).[476] In fact, Paul goes out of his way to

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[475] John Koenig, 'The Knowing of Glory and Its Consequences (2 Corinthians 3-5)' in Robert T Fortna, Beverly R. Gaventa eds., *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 158-169, at 159-60, identifies three reasons that suggest this may be the case. First, Paul's focus on the old covenant as a mediator of glory is not found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus. Second, Moses and the law are not serious issues for the Corinthians in prior extant correspondence, but are suddenly introduced here. Third, Paul's opponents are denounced immediately prior to and following Paul's 'midrash' on Exodus 34. Against the idea that Paul responds to a specific argument of his opponents using Moses, Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 228, suggests that 'It would be simpler to suppose that it is Paul himself who has combined the thought of the metaphorical letter of introduction, which Christ as its author, with that of the Decalogue, written 'by the finger of God', and has used it as a subordinate motif to underline the superiority of the new order.' In a similar way, N.T. Wright, 'Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18' in L.D Hurst, N.T. Wright eds., *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 139-50, at 141, argues that while it is possible that Paul's opponents used Moses, this is not necessary in order to explain Paul's argument, given that covenant is an important theme throughout the passage.

[476] See the discussion of καταργέω below.

emphasise the glory of Moses' ministry, introducing the idea of Moses' glorious shining face (3:7), and repeatedly describing the old covenant as glorious, despite its shortcomings (3:7, 9, 10, 11). Paul's argument in support of his own ministry is based on a relative comparison with Moses'. If Paul's ministry is more glorious than Moses' ministry, then the more glorious Moses' ministry was, the more glorious Paul's ministry must be. This argument follows a simple logical pattern, deriving a conclusion from two premises:

> P1: Moses' ministry was one of glory
>
> P2: Paul's ministry is greater than Moses' ministry, as shown in the antitheses.
>
> Therefore C: Paul's ministry is one of greater glory.

That Paul chose to use this particular kind of argument[477] suggests that his opponents, or at least the Corinthians to whom he writes, could have been expected to accept his premises. In response to those who call the glory of his ministry into question, Paul points to the permanent, life-giving, heart-engraving power of the Spirit. The antitheses posited between the two covenantal ministries, and the logical conclusions drawn from these, lead Paul into a direct comparison with Moses, beginning in verse 12.

ii. Rereading Exodus 34

The main text that Paul engages with in 2 Corinthians 3 is Exodus 34:29-34, which tells the story of Moses' descent from Sinai with the tablets of the covenant.[478] This comes after the golden calf incident in chapter 32, which means that these tablets are the second ones given by God, after the first were broken. The text tells us that as Moses came down from the mountain his face was shining, because he had been talking with God. Two features of the Exodus narrative are particularly noticeable when read alongside Paul's version.

First, in Exodus 34, Moses is initially unaware that his face his shining. After coming down from the mountain, Aaron and the Israelites are afraid to approach, but Moses calls

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[477] This type of argument, following an "if X...how much more Y" pattern is comparable to the rabbinic *Qal-Wahomer*, the light and the heavy, also known as *a minore ad maius*, from the lesser to the greater. Other examples of Pauline usage include Rom. 5:8, 10, 15, 17; 11:12, 24. See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 204; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 279; Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 239.

[478] Jane Heath, 'Moses' End and the Succession: Deuteronomy 31 and 2 Corinthians 3' *NTS* 60 (2014), 37-60, argues persuasively that while Paul's engagement here is primarily with Exodus, his reading of this text is also influenced by Deut. 29-32. Paul draws on the closure motifs there, as Moses' ministry comes to an end, suggesting that Jesus is the true successor to Moses.

them near to him, and gives them the commandments that he had received on the mountain. Only then, in verse 33, does Moses put on the veil. We are then told that whenever Moses went before the Lord, he took off the veil, only putting it back on afterwards. It is implied, however, that whenever Moses went in to speak with the Lord, he would afterwards leave the tent, tell the Israelites what he had been commanded, and only then put the veil on again. These details are not included in Paul's account of the story in 2 Corinthians 3.

Second, Exodus 34 does not include any explicit claims that the glory of Moses face faded, or was in the process of being annulled. καταργέω does not occur in the LXX here, and there is no equivalent in the Hebrew. This is a detail that is introduced by Paul.[479] The closest that we come to an explicit explanation of the veil in Exodus 34 is in verse 30, which states that the Israelites were afraid when they saw Moses' face. That said, while the Exodus narrative does not explicitly state that Moses' glory faded beneath the veil, it does leave room open for such an interpretation. As Watson argues, the scriptural narrative does not satisfactorily explain why Moses veiled his face, and nor does it state what happened to Moses' face when it was veiled. There is therefore an ambiguity present within the story, and Paul's reading is an attempt to provide a solution to a problem which the text itself poses.[480]

Whereas the line of argument in 3:1-11 is relatively easy to follow, 3:12-18 poses some much more difficult exegetical questions. Why does Paul think that Moses veiled his face, and to what extent does his interpretation depart from Exodus 34? What is the meaning and significance of καταργέω, which occurs four times in chapter 3? What does τέλος mean in verse 13? How does Israel's hardening relate to Moses' veiling? Why does Paul switch from talking about the Israelites of Moses' day to Jews of his own day? Who precisely turns to the Lord, and what does this actually mean? Who is the Lord in verse 17, and what does it mean to say that he is the Spirit? What is the meaning and significance of the mirror in verse 18? These questions are complex, but are important for gaining an understanding of Paul's argument as a whole, and therefore for examining the wider implications of the text.

Paul begins in verse 12 by drawing an explicit distinction between himself and Moses. Unlike Moses, Paul argues, the hope that he has because of the new covenant allows him to

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[479] See Linda L. Belleville, 'Tradition or Creation? Paul's Use of the Exodus 34 Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.7-18', Craig A. Evans, James A. Sanders eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1993), 165-86.

[480] Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 292-295. Stephen K. Davis, *The Antithesis of the Ages: Paul's Reconfiguration of Torah* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2002), 201, makes a similar argument: 'Although his reading runs counter to what is expected, and his counter-reading is attributable to his 'messianic' lenses, Paul is only extending the clues he finds in the text of Exodus concerning the nature of the Sinai revelation.'

act with πολλῇ παρρησία. Crucially, then, it is παρρησία, boldness, which Paul identifies as a key difference between himself and Moses.[481] Verse 13 serves to support this distinction. Paul has great boldness, *unlike* Moses, who veiled his face. This means that we should approach verses 13-14 already with a good idea of what Paul wants to say. His description of Moses must support the claim that Moses did not have the same kind of boldness that Paul has. What is the evidence that Paul gives to show that Moses lacked boldness in his ministry? That Moses put a veil over his face.[482] Unfortunately, this simple answer belies the complexity surrounding the tricky issue of Moses' veiling, which itself is bound up with questions of how best to understand some key terms in Paul's description, including καταργέω and τέλος.

Several translations use the language of 'fading' in verse 13. For example, the RSV states that Moses veiled his face 'so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendour.' The idea here is that after meeting with God, Moses' face was glorified, but that this glory began to fade away after Moses left God's presence. Alternatively, καταργέω could mean to abolish or to do away with.[483] The NRSV, for example, translates verse 13 as 'not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside.' Translating καταργέω along these lines is the preferred option for the majority of commentators,[484] and there are two main reasons for this.

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[481]According to Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 206, παρρησία 'was first used in the political sphere to designate a person's right to speak openly and publicly, then also in the private sphere with respect to the relationship between friends.' Murphy O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 36, argues that in Philo (e.g. *Probus*, 150-152; *De Specialibus Legibus* I, 321), παρρησία 'has a special importance as the essential property of noble souls fortified by virtue. As the fruit of wisdom it implies friendship with God.'

[482] The reason for the connection between boldness and the veil is not immediately obvious. W.C. Van Unnik, '"With Unveiled Face", an Exegesis of 2 Corinthians iii 12-18' , *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963), 139-50, suggests that the connection may be found in the fact that in Aramaic, to uncover the face implies confidence and freedom. Hence what Moses did was 'in the symbolic language of Paul's time first a sign of shame and bondage.' How much this influenced Paul is difficult to say, however, especially given that there is no such explanation in the Exodus text itself.

[483] Either way, this is a Pauline addition. Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 116, argues that Paul does not introduce καταργέω because of a detail within the story, but 'because of his conviction that the law has been done away with, in retrospect.' In contrast, Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 243, suggests that the idea that the glory on Moses' face was impermanent may be implied in the Exodus text, as Moses must keep returning to the Lord to renew the glory.

[484] See William R. Baker, 'Did the Glory of Moses' Face Fade? A Re-examination of καταργέω in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18' *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10.1 (2000), 1-15, at 2; Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 116; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 203; Duane A. Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts: The Translation and Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3' *JETS* 53.4 (2010), 729-72, at 741; Randal C. Gleason, 'Paul's Covenantal Contrasts in 2 Corinthians 3:1-11' *Biblotheca Sacra* 154 (1997), 61-79, at 78; Hafemann 'Paul's Use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians,' *Interpretation* (1998), 246-257, at 256; Hays, *Echoes*, 134; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 68; H.C.G. Moule, *The Second Epistle to the*

First, Paul's usage of the term elsewhere supports this translation. καταργέω appears four times in 2 Corinthians 3, in different forms: καταργουμένην (3:7), καταργουμένον (3:11), καταργουμένου (3:13), καταργεῖται (3:14). In each case, there is little support for a 'fading' translation. The occurrence in 3:11 is particularly instructive here, because there τὸ καταργουμένον is directly contrasted with τὸ μένον; the contrast is between that which has been set aside and that which remains, or between the temporary and the permanent. Apart from the four occurrences of καταργέω in 2 Corinthians 3, there are numerous other examples within the Pauline corpus, both in the disputed and undisputed letters; in none of these cases does the word mean 'to fade.'[485]

Second, other ancient texts use καταργέω in a legal sense, meaning render inoperative, annul, or make powerless.[486] This is particularly significant given that Paul is discussing the law and the covenant. Third, if Paul had wished to say that Moses' glory was fading, he might have been expected instead to use μαραίνω.[487]

There is also debate over the meaning of τέλος in verse 13, with commentators split into two main camps. First, there are those who interpret τέλος in terms of cessation.[488] This would mean that Moses veiled his face to hide the fact that the law was to be done away with. This can be linked to either way of translating καταργέω . Second, it is possible to translate τέλος in teleological terms, as referring to the goal or the final purpose of Moses' glory, and implicitly the covenant itself.[489] For example, William Baker argues that that τέλος refers to Moses' face as being 'representative of the kind of intimate, complete, personal relationship that all believers have in Jesus Christ.'[490] As in Romans 10:4, there is not necessarily an either/or choice to be made between these two options.[491] The teleological meaning of the

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Corinthians (London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1976), 23; Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 243; Wright, 'Reflected Glory', 161. For a defence of 'fading', see Belleville, 'Tradition or Creation?', 16; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 285.

[485]Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:14; 2 Thess. 2:8; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rom. 3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:6; 1 Cor. 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8, 10, 11; 15:24, 26. Baker, 'Did the Glory of Moses' Face Fade?', 4-5, argues that present in each of these cases 'is a reality or a situation that, apart from the interference or introduction of a new reality or situation, would persist in its effects. However, something else comes into the picture that in some fashion blocks out, buffers, or overwhelms the former force or reality.'

[486] See Hays, *Echoes*, 134; Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts', 740-745. Garrett surveys examples including Euripides, *Phoenissae* 751-753, and Athanaeus Mechanicus, *On Machines* 4.6.

[487] Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts', 745.

[488] See Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 90.

[489] See Hays, *Echoes*, 143; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 68; Provence, 'Who Is Sufficient?' 76; Sloan, 'New Covenant Hermeneutics,' 146; Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 193.

[490] Baker, 'Did the Glory Fade?', 15.

[491] Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts,' 753-4, offers a third option for reading εἰς τέλος. He suggests that the phrase is idiomatic Greek, meaning to do something steadfastly or completely, and he gives examples from the LXX (Gen. 46:4; Josh 3:16; 8:24; Ps. 9:19), the New Testament (Matt. 10:22;

law can be intimately linked with its cessation, just as Christ could fulfil the purpose of the law by bringing it to an end.[492] There is, however, an important factor to consider when assessing the relative merits of different interpretations of both τέλος and καταργέω. In 3:13, Paul is concerned with sight. Moses veiled his face to prevent Israel from seeing something. How exactly would Israel have been able to see the end of the law in Moses' face? This point is perhaps the strongest argument in favour of understanding καταργέω in terms of fading. Fading glory is visual, something that Israel would have been able to see. While Paul's other uses of καταργέω do not imply fading, they do not have the same visual context, and so the comparison is not decisive.

iii. The Purpose of the Veil

Having considered the meaning of the two key terms in 3:13, we are now in a better position to answer our initial question: According to Paul, why did Moses veil his face? There are four main possibilities here:

1. Moses put on the veil to protect Israel, either because they were afraid to look at Moses' face, or because the glory of Moses' face was linked to God's holy presence, which could prove fatal for sinful Israel. Hafemann argues that Paul reads Exodus 34 in its wider context, where it follows on from Israel's sin at the foot of Sinai, the destruction of the initial tablets of stone, and God's desire to bring judgment on stiff-necked Israel. Just as Moses intercedes for Israel and persuades God to be merciful, he uses the veil to protect them from God's presence.[493] However, while Israel are saved from God's ultimate judgment, the veil also acts as a form of judgment in itself, separating Israel from God's glory.[494] There are two significant problems with this. First, in Exodus 34 Israel are repeatedly exposed to the glory of Moses' face, without suffering from it.[495] Second, the glory of Moses' face is a result of

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24:13; Mk. 13:13), and classical literature (Euripides *Iphigenia in Aulis* 161). This reading changes the meaning of the verse quite significantly, implying that Moses' intention was not to prevent Israel from discovering something in particular by looking at his face, but to prevent Israel from becoming transfixed on his face, gazing upon it right up to its final annulment. This is an interesting suggestion, but it is difficult to see how it would fit Paul's argument here.

[492] Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts,' 754.

[493] Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 310-313.

[494] Hafemann, 'Paul's use of the Old Testament,' 247, argues that the veil is simultaneously a display of God's judgment and his mercy. Mercy, because his glory is still present among Israel; judgment, because it must be veiled.

[495] As Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 292, points out, the veil arrives in the story when it is too late to be useful, and the way Moses uses the veil is the reverse of what one might

God's mercy, having relented from destroying Israel, and chosen instead to give Israel another set of tablets. Hafemann's interpretation has the considerable merit of attempting to place Exodus 34 in its wider context, but it is ultimately unpersuasive.

2. Moses put on the veil to hide from Israel the true goal of the covenant, which would otherwise have been revealed. There are two main issues with this view. First, in the Exodus narrative, Israel *do* see Moses' shining face, and apparently do so on multiple occasions. This detail makes this interpretation awkward, unless either Paul dismisses this aspect of Exodus 34, or we suppose that if the Israelites had been able to stare at Moses for long enough, they would have understood the goal of the old covenant. This leads to the second main issue with this interpretation. What exactly would Israel have been able to see that would have allowed them to perceive the true goal of the covenant? Hanson suggests that Moses' face was transformed into the image of Christ,[496] but this goes beyond what Paul actually says; we could surely expect Paul to make this explicit if it were really what he meant. Even if Moses' face were transformed into the image of Christ, how would Israel possibly have been able to recognise that face, and draw the appropriate conclusions?

3. Moses put on the veil to prevent Israel from continually staring at Moses' face. As Harris puts it, 'the purpose of Moses' veil was to prevent preoccupation with outward δόξα (cf. 5:14) and to point to the temporary character of the whole Mosaic system of covenant and law.'[497] In other words, Moses veiled his face in an attempt to prevent Israel from fixating on what was a transitory glory.[498] Presumably, then, Moses' intimate relationship with God involved him knowing the true intent of the covenant, and its temporary status. The main problem with this interpretation is that Moses could have produced the same effect by keeping his face unveiled. Israel would then have seen the glory fading; there would be no glory to continually stare at.

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expect. 'It is only when Moses is *not* fulfilling his role of mediator of God's commandments that he is veiled.'

[496] Anthony T. Hanson, 'The Midrash in 2 Corinthians 3: A Reconsideration,' *JSNT* 9 (1990), 2-28, at 16.

[497] Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 300. See also Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts,' 754; Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 120. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 68, suggests that Israel's fault was that 'they persisted in looking at a face that symbolised a "ministration" that was on the way out.' Moses was aware of this, and his intention was to prevent it from continuing.

[498] Davis, *Antithesis of the Ages*, 203, argues that the veil presents Israel from gazing at the glory until the onset of the eschaton.

4. Moses put on the veil to hide from Israel the fact that the glory was fading, or coming to an end. In this case, it is possible that Moses was motivated either by a desire to prevent Israel from being discouraged or disappointed,[499] or to protect his own reputation against those who would doubt his importance if they knew that the glory of his face faded.[500] For example, Kooten argues that the veil was used 'not against fear of Moses' glory, but against the painful awareness that Moses' glory was only transitory.'[501]

Of the four options listed above, the last is to be preferred. Moses veiled his face to hide from Israel the fact that the glory of the old covenant was transitory, and always intended to be set aside. This is in contrast with the permanent glory of the new covenant (3:11). The major problem with this reading is that it involves Moses in a significant deception of Israel. That the veil is set aside in Christ may suggest that the deception brought about by the veil was part of God's plan in giving the covenant, a plan only to be revealed in Christ,[502] although it is not entirely clear whether Paul sees Moses' decision to veil himself as divinely ordained or not.

Ultimately, however, Paul is less interested in the precise details of what motivated Moses to put on the veil, and more interested in what Moses' actions say about the two covenants, and the two ministries. Moses veiled his face to hide the transitory, fading glory of his ministry. Paul, in contrast, acts with boldness, because he is the minister of a permanent, more glorious ministry. Moses' actions guarded Israel from the true nature of the old covenant, and even in Paul's day, a veil lies over their minds (3:15). Those in the present who do not recognise that the old covenant has been annulled in Christ are like the Israelites. Both groups share the same hardness. Where Paul's comparison becomes slightly forced is in the way he moves from a literal veil over Moses' face to a metaphorical veil over the face of present-day Jews. In verse 15, 'Moses' is still present in the form of the written law, and a veil

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[499] Martin, *2 Corinthians,* 68, 73; Kooten, 'Why Did Paul...', 161; Martin H. Scharlemann, 'Of Surpassing Splendour: An Exegetical Study of 2 Corinthians 3:4-18' *Concordia Journal* 4.3 (1978), 108-117, at 113.

[500] Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 119; Belleville, 'Tradition or Creation?', 185.

[501] Kooten, 'Why Did Paul...', 161, argues further: 'The fact that the first time Moses only covered himself after he had ceased talking to the Israelites suggests-in Paul's view-that they must have seen the glory on Moses' face gradually fading away.' The problem with this is that if Israel saw Moses' glory fading, what purpose would the veil serve? Moses' deception would be clear for all to see.

[502] The idea that the ministry of the old covenant involved keeping Israel in the dark – literally and figuratively – may tie in with Paul's understanding of the role of the law as a pedagogue. See chapter 7 below. It also fits with Paul's use of mystery language in Romans 9-11, when looking at God's plans across history. On this, see chapter 8.

still separates him from Israel; the difference now is that the veil is no longer a literal veil over the face of Moses, but a metaphorical veil, over the minds of Israel. The solution to the problem of the metaphorical veil, which is linked to Israel's persisting hardness, is offered in verse 16.

iv. The Present Situation

Most commentators interpret verse 16 as making a universal claim, along the lines of 'when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.' Paul uses Exodus 34:34a and adapts it:

Exod. 34:34a (LXX)	2 Cor. 3:16
ἡνίκα δ᾿ ἂν	ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν
εἰσεπορεύτο	ἐπιστρέψῃ
Μωϋσῆς	
ἔναντι κυρίου	πρὸς κύριον
λαλεῖν αὐτῷ	
περιῃρεῖτο	περιαιρεῖται
τὸ κάλυμμα	τὸ κάλυμμα
ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι	

In contrast to the more common reading, however, Robert Sloan argues that 3:16 has been consistently misread as expressing a general claim about all believers.[503] Instead, he argues, the subject of ἐπιστρέψῃ is Moses specifically. According to Sloan, verse 16 resumes Paul's narrative about Moses that is interrupted in verse 14 by a digression, as Paul inserts a parenthetical claim about the present day, and the similarities between the present situation and the Exodus narrative that is being presented. This reading plays an important role in Sloan's overall argument, which seeks to make a distinction between the apostolic party and believers as a whole. Against the more common way of reading these verses, Sloan argues that Paul does not intend to make general claims about Christian experience. This leads into verse 18, where 'we all' refers not to believers in general, but to the apostolic company specifically. Sloan is certainly correct to emphasise that the focus of 2 Corinthians 3 is on Paul's apostolic company; after all, Paul's discussion of Moses in this chapter is brought about

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[503] Sloan, 'New Covenant Hermeneutics,' 140-144.

by the need to defend his ministry against his critics. It does not follow, however, that this apologetic intention precludes Paul from making claims about believers as a whole. On the contrary, the main point of comparison between Moses' and Paul's ministries in verse 12-18 is not the ministers themselves but the effect that their respective ministries have on those who are being ministered to.

To return to verse 16, if Paul had simply intended to return to his narrative, and refer only to Moses himself, why would he alter the text of the LXX so significantly, and in a way which seems to point towards a more universal application of the text?[504] As Hays argues, there are two specific details that Paul changes which point towards the clause being intended to be read 'as a statement of a general possibility rather than as a narration of past action.'[505] First, Paul removes the verb εἰσέρχομαι and replaces it with ἐπιστρέφω, a verb used in 1 Thess. 1:9 for conversion, or turning to the Lord. Second, the verb is changed from the imperfect indicative to the aorist subjunctive, indicating a general possibility rather than a specific past occurrence. In addition to these points, Paul omits Moses' name, a curious move if his intention is to end a digression and return to a narrative about Moses.[506]

This means that the switch in focus from the past to the present that begins in verse 14 is not a digression, but is instead the next step in Paul's argument. While verses 14-15 focus on non-believers in the present, verse 16 contrasts them with believers. By adapting a description of Moses and using it to describe Christian experience more generally, Paul indicates that Moses' experience was indicative of what would later become more widely experienced through Christ and the Spirit. By equating the Lord with the Spirit in verse 17, Paul returns to one of the key differences between the two covenants, as in verse 8. The hardness and veiling that are characteristic of the old covenant are removed by the Spirit.[507]

3:17, however, provides us with another controversy, the heart of which is the proper referent of κύριος.[508] Against the suggestion that κύριος refers to Christ specifically, rather than God, Dunn argues that because 3:16 is based on Exodus 34:34, albeit with some

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[504] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 70.

[505] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 147.

[506] Kooten, 'Why Did Paul...' 162.

[507] Mohan Uddin, 'Paul, the Devil and 'Unbelief' in Israel (With Particular Reference to 2 Corinthians 3-4 and Romans 9-11)' *Tyndale Bulletin* 50.2 (1999), 265-280, suggests that the idea of unbelievers being blinded or hardened is a common trope in Jewish sectarian texts, such as 4Q390, and *Ascension of Isaiah* 2:1-4. For Uddin, Paul's arguments only make sense against the backdrop of Jewish apocalyptic.

[508] Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 310, suggests four points of broad consensus here: First, 17a must be interpreted in the light of v16; second, word order and the use of κύριος in v16 suggest that κύριος is the subject in v17; third, there is no need to resort to positing textual emendation in reading this verse; fourth, 17-18b should not be dismissed as a Gnostic gloss.

significant editing added by Paul, κύριος must retain the original referent, Yahweh. Given that the text in Exodus clearly refers to Yahweh, and given that Paul cites this text, it follows that Paul uses κύριος in verse 16 to refer to Yahweh. Verse 17, then, is an added layer of detail, explaining how this relates to the present; κύριος has the same referent in each verse.[509] Just as Moses took off his veil when he went before the Lord, now the veil is removed when one turns to the Spirit. This argument is supported by Paul's usage of κύριος in similar contexts elsewhere. In other places where Paul cites or alludes to the Old Testament, κύριος retains its reference to God (e.g. Rom. 4:8; 9.28, 29; 10:16; 11:3, 34; 15:11; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2:16; 3:20; 10:26; 14:21 2 Cor. 6:17-18; 8:21; 10:17). This means that 3:17 is essentially a hermeneutical comment, further explaining the parallels between Moses' situation and the present situation.[510]

Dunn's argument certainly has some force, but by removing Christ from the equation in 3:16-17, he fails to pay sufficient notice to the persistent role that Christ plays in this part of Paul's argument. In 3:3, it is Christ who writes on hearts by the Spirit of God; Christ, the Spirit, and God are all involved in a process which is intimately tied to turning to the Lord and being unveiled as in 3:16-17. In a similar way, in 3:14 it is in Christ that the veil is abolished, while in 3:18, directly following the verse in question, the glory of the κύριος, seen by those who are unveiled, is the glory of Christ (cf. 4:4). Certainly, Paul has God in mind in verses 16-17, but given the role of Christ in the process that he is describing, it is highly questionable whether Paul's use of κύριος in verses 16-17 refers *only* to God, and not at all to Christ.

In verse 18, Paul explains what it means for believers to be free and unveiled. First, they are able to see the glory of the Lord κατοπτριζόμενοι; second, they are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. It is useful to compare Paul's language here with that found in 1 Corinthians 13. There, Paul states that in the present we see δὶ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, in contrast with the future, when we will see face to face (13:2). Paul intends to emphasise the imperfection of present experiences in order to deflate the Corinthians' emphasis on spiritual gifts. In contrast, the rhetoric of 2 Corinthians 3 runs in the opposite direction: Paul intends to demonstrate the superiority of his ministry, based on the benefits

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[509] James D.G. Dunn, '2 Corinthians III.17 - "The Lord is the Spirit",' *JTS*, 21.2 (1970), 309-20, at 310.

[510] It is possible, but unlikely, that 3:17 involves interpolation. See David Greenwood, 'The Lord is the Spirit: Some Considerations of 2 Cor. 3:17' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34.4 (1972), 467-472, at 470-71.

that it provides in the present.[511] After arguing that the Spirit unveils believers, thereby removing a barrier between them and God's glory, it would be strange for Paul to then introduce a new barrier into the discussion. Why, then, does Paul introduce the idea of a mirror? The answer to this question is to be found in the second half of verse 18, where Paul states that believers, with their faces unveiled, are being transformed into the image of glory. If we take Paul to mean that these unveiled faces are the mirrors that reflect the Lord's glory, then the verse as a whole makes much more sense, and fits in neatly with what precedes it.[512] Those who now have unveiled faces are like Moses, whose face was transformed so that it displayed, or reflected, God's glory.[513] Paul's use of the middle voice here implies that this is a dynamic process. As Garrett puts it, this is 'a true middle, with the subject participating in the process and results of the action. In short, the active voice would simply mean that we bounce God's glory back at him, as a mirror does, with no real change in the mirror itself. The middle implies both that we reflect and that we become what we reflect.'[514] This returns us to Paul's initial claim in verses 12-13, that Paul's ministry is distinct from Moses' in its boldness. Unlike Moses, whose face shone with God's glory, but who hid behind a veil, isolating himself from Israel, Paul proclaims his ministry boldly with an unveiled face, and the new covenant that he proclaims changes those who accept it, transforming them too into mirrors that reflect the Lord's glory.[515]

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[511] Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts', 764.

[512] Garrett, 'Veiled hearts', 764.

[513] Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 285, suggests that Paul employs typology in 3:18, with Moses as a type of the Christian convert.

[514] Garrett, 'Veiled Hearts,' 765.

[515] In a study of Paul's use of the mirror in 3:18, David M. Litwa, 'Transformation Through a Mirror: Moses in 2 Cor. 3.18' *JSNT* 34.3 (2013), 186-297, argues that Paul has a pre-existing tradition about Moses in mind. He notes that the odd juxtaposition of beholding God in a mirror and transformation has led commentators to seek parallels in a number of different genres, including Greek magic, catoptromantic ritual, Dionysian mystery, Wisdom traditions, Jewish hydromancy, vision mysticism, and Greco-Roman mythology. According to Litwa, these approaches all fail to take notice of the central importance of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3. While Moses is not explicitly mentioned in verse 18, his role in Paul's argument means that we should not be surprised to find allusions to him here. Exodus 34 is clearly the scriptural text that forms the foundation of Paul's reflections in 2 Corinthians 3, but Numbers 12 may be a crucial text for understanding 3:18 in particular. Here, God declares that in contrast with prophets, who see God in visions and dreams, Moses sees God clearly, face to face, and he beholds the form of the Lord.

2. History and Time in 2 Corinthians 3

i. Tracing Paul's Argument

Now that the most significant exegetical issues concerning 2 Corinthians 3 have been considered, we can trace the course of Paul's argument through the chapter. There are three main stages to Paul's defence of his ministry here. First, in 3:1-6, Paul directly addresses the claims of those who support themselves with literal letters of recommendation. Paul has no need of such letters, because the Corinthians are a living letter, who implicitly validate Paul's ministry. Paul is confident because the worth of his ministry does not rest on his own competency, but on the competency of the God who sent him, allied with the life-giving Spirit that has written on the Corinthians' hearts. Verse 6 leads into the second part of Paul's argument by reintroducing the distinction between two different ministries, initially hinted at in verse 4. In 3:7-11, Paul details the ways in which his ministry of the new covenant differs from Moses' ministry of the old covenant. Whereas Moses' ministry was a temporary one, written with letters on tablets of stone, and leading to death, Paul's ministry is a permanent one, written on human hearts with the Spirit, and leading to life. Moses' ministry came with dazzling glory; given that Paul's ministry is superior, it must be even more glorious.[516] In 3:12-18, having established the superiority of his ministry, Paul goes on to show what this means in practice. Paul, in contrast to Moses, is able to act with great boldness, and whereas those who Moses ministered to were separated from God's glory by a veil, those who Paul ministers to are unveiled, and are transformed.

ii. Two Covenants, Two Ages

One of the aspects of Paul's theology that vexes readers most consistently is his attitude towards the law. This ties in closely with the topics of history and time, as a significant element of the continuity/discontinuity tension, because the place of the law in the life of the church is an indicator of the state of the historical and theological relationship between the church and Israel. Should believers follow the law, carrying Israel's legacy?

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[516] As Hooker, 'Beyond the Things That are Written?', 298, fairly points out, Paul's opponents might easily have responded at this point: 'the reason why you, Paul, do not wear a veil is quite simply that you do not have any glory to conceal!' If the glory of Moses' ministry made his face shine so that Israel were afraid, surely Paul's more glorious ministry should mean that his face is even brighter? Paul does not answer this objection directly, but in 4:6-7 he suggests why those under the new covenant do not visibly display glory.

Should they reject the law as a remnant of a former age, severing a potential link with Israel? Does the church carry on Israel's story, or create a new one?

In some places within the Pauline corpus, we find remarkably positive claims regarding the law. The law is holy (Rom 7:12) and the Spirit enables believers to fulfil the law (Rom 8:4). On other occasions, however, Paul's claims regarding the law are shocking in their negativity. Paul regards his righteousness based on the law as rubbish (Phil. 3:8), and likens being under the law to being in slavery (Gal. 4:21-31). How should readers of Paul's letters deal with the apparent tensions between these statements? One option is to suppose that there is development within the Pauline corpus, with Paul adapting his views over time. Another option is to attempt to identify certain of Paul's statements as representing the 'real' Paul, and explain others as polemical, emotionally-charged exaggerations. Alternatively, we could abandon the quest for synthesis, and accept that Paul's theology of the law is ultimately incoherent.

2 Corinthians 3 is an important passage for addressing these questions, because here we see the two sides of Paul's attitude towards the law functioning side by side, in his comparison between the old and new covenants. On several occasions, Paul emphasises that the law, and Moses' ministry of that law, was glorious (3:7, 9, 10, 11). Set alongside these claims of glory, however, are several far more pejorative descriptions. The old covenant 'kills' (3:6), is a 'ministry of death' (3:7), and is a 'ministry of condemnation (3:9). Given that these apparently contradictory claims are set side-by-side, it will not do to dismiss either the positive or negative claims as mere polemic; nor would it make any sense to suggest that Paul develops his view of the law within the space of a handful of verses. It would also be highly unsatisfactory to suggest that Paul's argument is simply incoherent, although this possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Assuming for the moment that Paul is not simply incoherent, how might we understand the dynamic tensions regarding the law within 2 Corinthians 3? Fortunately, there are several important clues within these verses that indicate how Paul holds these claims together. First, as mentioned previously, it is significant that much of what Paul says about the law, and the ministry that went with it, is based on a relative comparison. Paul is keen to stress that the old covenant had much glory; it lacks glory in comparison with the new covenant. The comparative aspect of Paul's argument only goes so far in addressing the issue at hand, however. In verse 6, for example, Paul does not say that the letter gives life, but that the Spirit gives more life. Instead, with much greater impact, he states that the letter kills,

while the Spirit gives life. Here, the two covenants are not at different places on a sliding scale; they are utterly opposed.

The second feature of chapter 3 that is particularly worth noting here is the role of the Spirit. The Spirit features at numerous points in the chapter, clearly indicating that it has a central significance for Paul's argument (3:3, 6, 8, 17). Paul never quite makes the point explicitly, but bubbling under the surface of the text is the implication that the Spirit's role as an empowering figure is one of the fundamental features of the new covenant, marking it as radically different from the old. It is the Spirit which brings life (3:6), grants freedom (3:17), and transforms believers (3:18). In contrast with Israel, whose minds were hardened, and with Jews who have a veil over their minds, believers are unveiled before the glory of God. We find a similar, and perhaps more clearly expressed claim in Romans 8:2-4: 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do...so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.' It is not difficult to see a similar kind of logic underlying 2 Corinthians 3. The law was given by God in glory, but it was met by sinful, hardened Israel. Because of Israel's sin, the glorious law leads only to death and condemnation. In contrast, the new covenant includes the empowering Spirit, which means that it leads to life and freedom.

This interpretation is supported by Paul's allusions to Ezekiel and Jeremiah. In Ezekiel 36, for example, God laments the fact that Israel have profaned his holy name among the nations (v. 22). His response is to restore Israel, and to set things right by placing a new heart within them, and giving them a new spirit (36:26). By placing his spirit within them, God will be able to ensure that Israel follow his statutes and observe his ordinances (36:27). In the new covenant of Jeremiah 31, God's law will be placed within his people, written on their hearts, and all of Israel will know him (31:31-33). For Paul, this time has come, and the words of the prophets are being fulfilled in those who follow Christ. His claims regarding the law cannot be read as if the law is being looked at in isolation. What concerns Paul is the interaction between the law and God's people. The combination of two factors - Israel's sin and hard-heartedness, and the absence of an empowering force within the old covenant - means that the law fails to bring about obedience. To some extent, then, Paul's 'problem' with the old covenant in 2 Corinthians 3 is not what it does, but what it does not do. The new covenant, empowered by the Spirit, does not have this problem.

The third and perhaps most significant feature of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 3 regarding the question of the law is the presence of temporal themes. The various things that

Paul says about the old and new covenants are not detached, timeless claims; Paul is consistently aware of the dynamic of past, present and future within his argument, and two features of his argument clearly indicate that the law was meant only for a specific, limited time.

First, as previously mentioned, we find allusions to prophetic texts that explicitly point forwards to a time of change, when God will introduce a new covenant, with a different form and character. Bultmann argues that Paul's reinterpretation of scripture and his particular construct of salvation history are foreign to the Old Testament.[517] Certainly, Paul's reading of Exodus 34 goes beyond the original text, but in his repeated allusion to prophetic material, Paul aims to show that his claims are in line with the expectations set out within scripture itself. He reinterprets scripture, but he does not abandon it.

Second, Paul's statements involving a comparison between the old and new covenants include an important temporal aspect, showing how the former status of the law is different to the present status of the law. A key component of these comparisons is Paul's repeated use of καταργέω, used primarily to show that the law was an impermanent feature of the past, in contrast with the new covenant of the Spirit, which is a permanent feature of the present and future. The clearest example of this is verse 11, where Paul contrasts that which is permanent with that which was temporary. Given that Paul maintains that both ministries were ordained by God, we are left with an implicit scheme of the divine plan across history, including distinct phases.

Indeed, several commentators note the presence of an implicit salvation-historical scheme in 2 Corinthians 3. Murphy-O'Connor suggests that for Paul, the role that Moses played 'in the history of salvation has now been superseded.'[518] Moses' ministry failed insofar as Israel 'gave a permanent value to something that was essentially provisional and temporary, and this continues in the synagogue to the present day.'[519] Commenting on the presence of salvation-historical ideas within 2 Corinthians 3, Stockhausen remarks that 'however unfashionable, this classic theological idea is inescapable.'[520]In a number of detailed works on 2 Corinthians 3, Scott Hafemann repeatedly emphasises the role that salvation-history plays in Paul's thought. For Hafemann, 2 Corinthians 3 'is a thesis-like summary of

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[517] Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an der Korinther*, 91.

[518] Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 36.

[519] Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 37.

[520] Carol K. Stockhausen, '2 Corinthians 3 and the Principles of Pauline Exegesis' in Craig A. Evans, James A. Saunders eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 143-164, at 164. Stockhausen suggests that salvation-historical ideas are present in Paul's discussion of both Moses and Abraham.

Paul's understanding of the history of redemption from Adam and the Fall in the Garden, to Sinai, to the "covenant-heartedness under the old covenant, to the inauguration of the new covenant by Christ as the "second Adam," who is the very image of the glory of God, to the transformation of the Corinthians into that same image, and beyond.' This history 'is the "plot" or framework of Paul's thinking.'[521] Hafemann overstates his argument somewhat, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that salvation history plays a fundamental role in Paul's interpretation of the Exodus tradition, in the sense that he re-reads it by placing it in the context of a wider historical framework, now revealed in the Christ-event.

One potentially troubling aspect of this salvation-historical scheme is the questions that it raises about God's character and intentions. Given that God is capable of sending his Spirit and offering a covenant which leads to life, why did he choose to give a covenant that would lead to death and condemnation? If the divine plan was always to provide a new covenant, as indicated in the prophetic material that Paul cites, what purpose did the first covenant serve? These are questions that Paul addresses more thoroughly in Romans 9-11, but in both texts there is a certain ambiguity surrounding the role of hardening in relation to the divine plan. Not every single Israelite was hardened, however, and not every single Israelite was separated from God's glory by a veil.

iii. Moses, a Man out of Time

Within the Exodus 34 narrative, Moses holds a unique position, as the one who goes before the Lord unveiled. This means that in 2 Cor. 3:14-18, when Paul draws a direct comparison between the time of Exodus 34, and the present situation, Moses plays a unique role. First, in verse 15, 'Moses' refers not to the man, but to the Pentateuch, read in the present by Jews, who read it with a veil over their minds. Second, in verse 16, Moses' unique experience of going before the Lord is adapted to apply to all who are in Christ. Moses' historically specific action becomes the universal, historically-detached possibility of turning to the Lord. Whereas in Exodus 34, Moses is the one person among the whole of Israel who can turn to the Lord unveiled, in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul claims this as a possibility for all believers. In this way, Paul constructs what might best be described as a typology.

Despite the lack of τύπος language, 3:14-18 actually presents a more traditional typology than that found in 1 Corinthians 10. In Paul's rendition of the Exodus 34 narrative, we find two distinct groups, whose interactions with God's glory are in stark contrast. Among

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[521] Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 440.

the entirety of Israel, Moses alone is able to go before God unveiled; the rest of the Israelites are hard-hearted. In the present day, the same separation exists, except that the first group, previously represented only by Moses, now includes all believers, who are free and unveiled. In this way Paul presents Moses as pointing forwards typologically to those who are in Christ. This is particularly apparent in 3:16, where Moses' action of going before the Lord is rewritten to incorporate all those who turn to the Lord. It is interesting to note that in the initial stages of Paul's exposition of Exodus 34, Moses is primarily used in comparison with Paul himself, or with the apostolic party. Throughout 3:1-14, Paul intends to show that his ministry is like Moses' ministry, but superior to it. By verse 15, however, Moses' significance becomes more universal, as a type of all believers. This is not to say, however, that Paul's use of Moses is inconsistent. The fact that Moses, as an isolated individual, is a type of all those who follow Christ, is itself evidence for Paul's claims to superiority. Moses could not share his privileged position with the rest of Israel, because the covenant that formed the basis of his ministry was temporary, and devoid of the necessary power, i.e., the Spirit, to solve the problem of Israel's hardness. Paul, in contrast, is a minister of a permanent, Spirit-infused, life-giving ministry, which brings all believers into contact with God's glory.

Note, however, that the deficiencies in Moses' ministry of the old covenant relate to its effect on those to whom Moses ministered. Moses himself does not seem to suffer from the same hardness, or from the absence of the Spirit. Unlike the rest of Israel, Moses himself is able to go before God unveiled, and in doing so he is outwardly transformed; his face displays glory in a similar way to how believers themselves are transformed (3:18). To restate: one of the problems that Paul identifies with the old covenant in 2 Corinthians 3 is that it lacks the Spirit, which brings life and freedom to those under the new covenant. The absence of the Spirit is manifested in the heard-heartedness of Israel, and the fact that Moses must hide his face from them. The important point here is that these are not problems that seem to affect Moses himself, who takes his veil off when he goes before the Lord. In other words, while Moses' ministry is clearly presented as being inferior to Paul's, in terms of its wider effect on other people, Moses himself appears to transcend the limits of the old covenant, experiencing the benefits that accrue to those who are in Christ under the new covenant. In 3:18, Paul describes two things that happen to those who are in Christ. First, they are unveiled, meaning that they can clearly see the glory of God; second, they are transformed into the image of that glory. Both of these things apply to Moses, who goes before God unveiled, and whose face is transformed with dazzling glory.

iv. Conclusions to Chapter 6

This reading of 2 Corinthians 3 has problematic implications for both apocalyptic and salvation-historical readings of Paul. In several respects, 2 Corinthians 3 does actually support the kind of historical scheme proposed by apocalyptic readings. The antitheses between the old and new covenants support the sharp distinction between the old age and the new, with the Christ-event as the dividing line. In addition, Paul suggests no positive role for the law in bringing about or preparing for the Christ-event. Nor are there any hints of a linear salvation history. The old covenant was intimately linked with death, and those who read the law were and still are veiled. This veil is only removed in Christ, and this is only possible now that a new situation has been brought about by the Christ-event. The temporary, fading glory of then old covenant has been replaced by the permanent glory of the new.

Moses, however, is presented as a temporal anomaly. In the darkness of the period of the old covenant, surrounded by stiff-necked Israel, Moses' shining face appears as a dazzling incongruity. The problem is not just that Moses does not share the experience of the rest of Israel, but that Paul reinterprets Moses' experience in explicitly Christological or ecclesiological terms. Like Israel in 1 Corinthians 10, who receive the same blessings as believers – baptism, the Eucharist, Christ's presence and blessing – Moses' experience is described in terms that portray him as a proto-Christian of sorts. If the Christ-event is a punctiliar event with no precedent, how is it that Israel in the desert, and Moses at Sinai, experience blessings which believers, post-Christ, derive from the Christ-event itself? Again the crucial point is not just that Israel and Moses receive blessings, but that these blessings are directly comparable with the blessings received by believers who have faith in Christ, and who live in the age following Christ

2 Corinthians 3, then, is evidence of significant complexity within Paul's understanding of history and time. On the one hand, he affirms a historical scheme consisting of at least two chronologically successive historical periods, ages, or epochs. The covenant given to Israel at Sinai was a temporary one, meant to last for a limited period of time. It was followed by a new covenant, inaugurated by Christ and ministered by Paul. In this sense, 2 Corinthians 3 offers quite a different view of history to that found in 1 Corinthians 10. There Israel's situation is described in terms that almost dissolve the temporal distance between them and the Corinthians. Both groups share the same sacramental blessings, and are blessed by the presence of Christ within their communities. In 2 Corinthians 3, in contrast, there is a clear distinction between the two covenants, the communities they fostered, and the ages in which they were effective. Moses, however, does not fit neatly into this scheme, and Paul's

presentation of him in 2 Corinthians 3 is comparable to his presentation of Israel in 1 Corinthians 10. Temporal categories are significant in 2 Corinthians 3, but they do not limit Paul's reading of scripture in the way suggested by the pre-Christ-event/post-Christ-event dichotomy of apocalyptic readings. This kind of complexity is more easily accounted for by Barth's approach to history and time. For Barth, the Christ-event is in some sense a unique occurrence, located in a specific historical period. To that extent, it is genuinely new, and can be seen to mark the dividing point between two epochs. But in another sense it is not truly new at all, because it is where an eternal reality meets the limits of human history.

The inclusion of a temporal, salvation-historical dynamic within 2 Corinthians 3 creates interesting parallels with some other significant Pauline texts, including Galatians 3-4. There Paul offers a radical interpretation of the meaning and intention of the law. There are numerous parallels between the two passages. In both, Paul denies that the law can lead to life, and in both Paul emphasises the role of the Spirit in marking a clear departure from the time of the law. Like 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 3-4 includes a significant temporal dynamic. Paul's argument relies on a chronological sequence of time, and the order of events within it, from Abraham, to Moses, to Christ. Paul's claims regarding the law are qualified with temporal markers. The law was added *until* the offspring would come (3:19). Before faith came we were imprisoned, *until* faith would be revealed (3:23), but *now* that faith *has come*, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian (3:25). It is when *the fullness of time had come*, that God sent his son (4:4). In Galatians 3-4, then, we find a similar kind of temporal dynamic as found in 2 Corinthians 3. In both, the claim that the law was only given as a temporary measure plays a crucial role in the logic of Paul's argument. It is to Galatians that we now turn.

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Chapter 7

Galatians 3-4

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For a number of reasons, Galatians 3-4 is a highly significant text for understanding Paul's theology of history and time. First, unlike 1 Corinthians 10 and 2 Corinthians 3, which each focus primarily on one specific episode from Israel's history, and relate it to the present situation, in Galatians 3-4 Paul considers a broader swathe of history, and engages with his opponents on the question of the proper way of interpreting it. Paul looks back at the promise to Abraham, and to the giving of the law, considering how these events relate to each other, and to the Christ-event. Second, Paul engages with key topics like the place of the law in God's plan for history, considering its origin, its purpose, and its role in the present. Third, Galatians 3-4 is a significant text for the narrative and apocalyptic approaches examined in part 1, including those of Wright and Martyn. Here we see how their contrasting approaches inform, and are informed by, their readings of a specific text. As we will see, however, the ways in which Wright and Martyn read this particular text are indicative of some of the wider problems with their approaches.

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1. The Context and Purpose of Galatians

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i. Setting the Scene

Galatians stands out among Paul's letters as the most heated and polemical. Paul dictates with an urgent, and at times exasperated tone, tackling his opponents directly, and his arguments are intended to bring about a specific result in the Galatian community. As with the Corinthian correspondence, then, any interpretation of Galatians must deal to some extent with the question of historical context. Who were Paul's opponents, and what kind of gospel were they preaching to the Galatians? Much could be said about the process of mirror-reading, and the various debates surrounding particular details of the Galatians situation. In this chapter, I will largely be following the conclusions reached by John Barclay in his study of mirror-reading in Galatians.[522] This means that the following points will be assumed:

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[522] John Barclay, 'Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case' *JSNT* 31 (1987), 73-93. Barclay considers the various methodological issues that arise when one attempts to mirror-read a polemical letter like Galatians, listing problems with the letter itself, potential pitfalls such as undue selectivity and over-interpretation, and criteria that might be used to effectively mirror-read, including type of utterance, tone, frequency, clarity, unfamiliarity, consistency, and historical

Paul's opponents were Christians, and probably Jewish Christians specifically, who wanted the Galatians to be circumcised and to observe at least some of the rest of the law, including its calendrical requirements. They brought into question the adequacy of Paul's gospel, and his personal credentials, and by the time of Paul's letters, they had had some significant success in Galatia. They convinced at least some of the Galatians by appealing to scriptural arguments, including the Abraham narratives.[523]

ii. The Theology of Paul and His Opponents

The point that both Paul and his opponents agree on is that through Christ, the promises made to Abraham have been fulfilled. Gentiles are able to become heirs of the Abrahamic blessings, and full members of God's people. The point at which they disagree, on the surface at least, is what Gentile Christians should do as part of this membership. Conclusions may be drawn from Galatians about how Jews are to behave once they are in Christ, but the focus in Galatians is on Gentiles specifically. Whereas Paul's opponents argue, with some justification, that Gentiles must follow the law, including the requirement of circumcision, Paul emphatically rejects these claims. Gentiles are to live by faith, instead of the law, and the only "badge" of membership that they require is faith in Christ. But Paul goes further than simply stating that following the law is not a *requirement*. Paul could feasibly have argued for a slightly modified version of his opponents' arguments along the following lines: Gentiles become full heirs of the Abrahamic promise through faith in Christ. Following the law is not a necessary part of this, but given that the law came from God, there is nothing wrong *per se* with Gentiles choosing to follow the law, as long as they remember that their status derives from Christ, and that their following of the law is not an obligation.[524]

Instead, however, Paul's argument is far more radical and polemical. He states that his opponents are perverting the gospel of Christ (1:7), arguing that following the law is like returning to a state of slavery (3:9; 5:1), and that if the Galatians allow themselves to be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to them (5:2). Throughout Galatians, faith and law

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plausibility. For a useful collection of essays on the subject of the Galatian situation, see part 3 of Mark D. Nanos ed., *The Galatians Debate* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2002), 321-434.

[523] These are the conclusions regarded by Barclay as either certain, virtually certain, or highly probable, and are accepted as such by the majority of commentators.

[524] As Gaventa,'The Singularity of the Gospel,' 151, points out, one might respond to Paul by asking 'why not follow the law? Even if Gentiles aren't obliged to follow it why *must not* they do so?' For Gaventa, Paul's answer is that 'There can be no compromising of the gospel's singular and exclusive location in Jesus Christ alone.'

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are played off against each other.[525] A person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (2:15), the Spirit came to the Galatians through faith rather than works of the law (3:5); Abraham was blessed because of his faith, whereas those who rely on the law are under a curse (3:6-14); we were under law until the arrival of faith (3:24-25). The message to the Galatians is clear: You can live by faith *or* by law, but not by both.

iii. Paul's Counter-Argument

In Galatians 3, Paul launches a three-pronged assault on the implicit claims of his opponents. First, he appeals to the Galatians' experiences, asking rhetorically whether they received the Spirit as a result of their faith, or as a result of their works of the law (3:1-5). Paul's question urges the Galatians to remember their own history. Not for the last time in Galatians, the temporal ordering of events becomes significant for their meaning. First, the Galatians believed the gospel they heard, received the Spirit, and saw God working miracles among them. Only afterwards did some of them begin to follow the law. The point is clear: if receipt of the Spirit came through faith, before works of the law, what is there to be gained from doing such works? This argument has the further benefit of reminding the Galatians of their relationship with Paul. It was through Paul's preaching that they had faith, and received the Spirit; their current spiritual blessings have come from the gospel that Paul preached, not from the gospel preached by his opponents.

This leads to Paul's second argument, where he appeals to the scriptural story of Abraham (3:6-9). Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6, which allows him to use Abraham as a scriptural example of being justified by faith, apart from works. Paul then makes a connection between the promise made to Abraham, this time quoting Genesis 22:18, suggesting that the present situation, where Gentiles are being blessed, is the fulfilment of this promise. In this way Abraham is used to prove a principle, that righteousness comes through faith, as well as to forge a historical connection.

After establishing that righteousness and blessings come through faith, Paul turns to the effects of the law. Paul takes Deuteronomy 27:26, which pronounces a curse on those who fail to uphold them, and argues that this places all people under the law, even, or perhaps especially, those who attempt to do the law. This claim is then connected with Deuteronomy

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[525] Graham Stanton, 'The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ - Galatians 3.1-6.2' in James D.G. Dunn ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 99-116, at 101, suggests that it is important to think of Galatians as an oral performance to be heard, rather than a text to be read and studied. When read out loud, the theme that stands out clearly, through repetition of words and phrases, is that νόμος and πίστις are opposed to each other.

21:23, which pronounces a curse on those who are hung from a tree. A text that could easily have been used against the claims of those who preach a crucified messiah is turned on its head; for Paul, it is by becoming a curse that Christ was able to redeem those who were also under a curse. The precise logic of Paul's argument here is difficult to follow, however.[526] One possibility is that there is an assumed or implied premise which Paul does not make explicit, such as "no one upholds the law perfectly." This would echo Paul's use of Ecc. 7:20 in Romans 3:10, but sits uneasily with Paul's claim to being 'blameless before the law' in Phil. 3:6. In addition, the idea that perfect obedience is required would be unusual, given that the law includes specific measures for dealing with sin.[527]

iv. The Curse of Exile

Another quite different reading of Paul's argument sees the curse as referring not to cursed individuals, but to the corporate curse of exile.[528] This kind of reading seeks to place Paul's argument here in the context of a broader Jewish narrative. James M. Scott argues that the connection made by Paul between Deut. 27:26 and 29:19 indicates that he read Deut. 27-32 as a unit. These chapters 'repeatedly emphasise that the sin of the nation would cause the 'curses' of the law - ultimately exile - to fall upon the people, but that, if they repented, God would eventually restore them to covenant relationship and to the land.'[529] Scott cites a number of Jewish texts that indicate a sense of prolonged exile,[530] arguing that this was a widespread idea in second-temple Judaism. Paul's understanding of the law and the curse falls within the traditional sin-exile-restoration pattern 'which is so familiar in Old Testament/Jewish tradition.'[531] According to Scott, Paul's argument in Gal. 3:10-14 is often

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[526] For a survey of the main lines of interpretation, See James M. Scott, ''For as Many as are of Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10)' in Craig A. Evans, James A. Sanders eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 187-221, at 188-193. These include: 1. The law is impossible to fulfil; 2. Paul spins an ad hoc reversal of his opponents' arguments; 3. Paul implies that those who do the law have the wrong motivations; 4. Paul uses Deut. 27 simply because of the link there between law and curse; 5. The 'works of the law' here refer only to badges of covenant membership, rather than the law as a whole; 6. The law itself is a curse, regardless of how it is responded to; 7. Gal. 3:10 is essentially a threat, warning against the negative potentiality of the law. See also Moisés Silva, 'Abraham, Faith and Works: Paul's Use of Scripture in Galatians 3:6-14' *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001), 256-67.

[527] Daniel Boyarin, 'Was Paul an "Anti-Semite"? A Reading of Galatians 3-4' *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 47 (1993), 47-80, at 48, argues that the idea of perfect obedience is unprecedented in Jewish literature before Paul.

[528] Scott, 'For As Many As Are of Works of the Law,' 194.

[529] Scott, 'For As Many As Are of Works of the Law,' 196.

[530] The most important of these is Daniel 9, which may have influenced 2 Macc. 7; 1 Enoch 85-90; T. Lev. 14-18. Similar exilic themes are found in Bar. 1:15-3:8; Prayer of Azariah; Sir. 36:1-17

[531] Scott, 'For As Many As Are of Works of the Law,' 196.

misunderstood when it is assumed that Paul is talking about individuals before God. Instead, Paul's focus is on corporate sin, and the corporate curse that follows.

N.T. Wright interprets Gal. 3:10-15 along similar lines. Wright argues that Paul has Deut. 27-30 as a whole in mind, rather than just the two parts that he quotes. Paul's argument

> …is not an isolated explanation of the cross, or a proof text for justification by faith, or anything so atomistic. It is the sharp expression of a theme which occupies Paul throughout the chapter: the fact that in the cross of Jesus, the Messiah, the curse of exile itself reached its height, and was dealt with once and for all, so that the blessing of covenant renewal might flow out on the other side, as God always intended.[532]

For Wright, Paul's argument does not make a general claim about the impossibility of upholding the law; instead he reflects on what has actually happened. Wright suggests that Paul's logic follows the following structure: [533]

> a. All who embrace Torah are thereby embracing Israel's national way of life.
> b. Israel as a nation has suffered, historically, the curse which the Torah held out for her if she did not keep it
> c. Therefore all who embrace Torah are now under this curse.

By becoming a curse, Christ takes the curse of exile upon himself, bringing the exile to an end, and ushering in the age where the promises to Abraham are fulfilled. This reading of Gal. 3:10-14, which takes the curse to refer to the curse of exile, is an appealing one, particularly given that it takes what can appear to be arbitrary proof-texting on Paul's part and places his argument into a wider theological context. There are, however, some substantial problems with Scott's and Wright's interpretations.

First, it is difficult to ascertain just how influential and widespread the idea of an ongoing exile was within second-temple Judaism. While there are certainly some examples of this theme, it is not ubiquitous, and it cannot be assumed that Paul believed Israel to be in an ongoing exile, either before or after his turn to Christ. Where the theme of ongoing exile is present to some extent, it is not always understood in the same way. As Mark Seifrid puts it:

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[532] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 141.
[533] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 147.

The early Jewish tradition of an extended period of exile for Israel is more complicated than recent advocates of this perspective often have taken into account. Dissatisfaction with the condition of Jerusalem and the Temple is not precisely the same as the theme of a continuing exile. And to view the exile as in some sense continuing is not the same as regarding 'all' of Israel as being in exile or estranged from God. Variations in the use of the exile image suggest that it served as a rather fluid *topos* rather than as a settled and unchanging interpretation of Israel's experience.[534]

This does not mean that Paul cannot have thought of Israel as being in a state of ongoing exile, but it does mean that we have to be extremely careful about reading these ideas into Paul. This brings us to the second problem with Scott's and Wright's approach. If Paul's argument is based so heavily on the idea of an ongoing exile, would we not expect there to be more obvious clues within the text? Even if we were to accept that the idea of an ongoing exile was prominent within second-temple Judaism, it remains the case that in Galatians Paul has a Gentile audience in mind. Paul could not simply assume that they would be familiar with the idea of ongoing exile; indeed, Paul's argument seeks to establish the idea of a curse coming from the law, rather than assuming one. If a particular understanding of exile underlies Paul's argument here, why would he not make it more explicit when addressing a Gentile audience?

Third, it is important to recognise that Paul's argument in 3:10-14 is not solely based on Deuteronomy. Paul also quotes from Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5, quotations which form important steps in his argument. What justification is there for claiming, as Wright and Scott do, that the wider context of Deuteronomy 27-32 determines Paul's argument, while paying much less attention to the wider contexts of Habakkuk and Leviticus? Likewise, how do we go about determining which parts of Deuteronomy Paul has in mind, if only specific texts are referred to? We came across this issue in general terms in chapter 3; here, it appears in the context of a specific text.

These problems indicate one of the dangers of Wright's narrative approach, that it can lead to reading ideas into the text. Does Wright identify exilic themes in Galatians because

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[534] Mark A. Seifrid, 'Blind Alleys in the Controversy Over the Paul of History' *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994), 73-96, at 87. Siefrid goes on to argue (p.91) that Wright's reading of Galatians 3 is at odds with Romans 9-11. There, the advent of the messiah does not bring Israel's exile to an end, but begins it anew; Israel's ongoing exile is the means by which blessings come to the Gentiles.

the evidence points in that direction, or does he find them there because he expects to? If we approach Pauline texts with the presupposition that they will fit into a particular narrative framework, even while reinterpreting that narrative, it becomes difficult to recognise at what points these narrative aspects are being read out of the text, and at what points they are being read into the text. Wright leaves himself open to accusations of eisegesis here, as a direct result of his narrative approach.[535] Ultimately, while the "ongoing exile" reading of Gal. 3:10-14 is plausible, it is unpersuasive. The idea of an ongoing exile would have some interesting implications for Paul's understanding of salvation history, but there is not enough substance within Gal. 3:10-14 to support it.

A more simple way of reading this part of the text is offered by Boyarin, who identifies Paul's exegesis here as a form of Midrash. Deut. 27:26 reads 'Cursed is everyone who does not uphold everything that is written in the book of the Law, by doing it.' Boyarin notes that the final part of the verse, 'by doing it', is semantically superfluous. 'Paul, then, following a very standard midrashic move rereads the verse (or indeed rewrites it syntactically), so that all of its elements will add to the meaning.'[536] This alternative reading of the verse could be written as 'Everyone, who [precisely] by doing it does not uphold all that is written in the book of the Law, is under a curse.' In this way, Paul makes a distinction between doing and fulfilling the law. Those who are under the law fail to fulfil it, placing themselves under a curse. Ultimately, the important point for Paul is that scripture itself shows that those under the law are under a curse.

2. The Origin and Purpose of the Law

i. Why Was the Law Given?

In the third part of his argument for faith instead of the law, after arguing from experience and scripture, Paul appeals to a legal analogy, based on the precedence of the promise over the law (3:15-18). Abraham's inheritance was guaranteed by the covenant with God, which was ratified 430 years before the law. The gap between the law and covenant means that the inheritance is disassociated from the law, resting only on the promise. Whatever the law does, it cannot annul the covenant that was previously ratified between Abraham and God. The effect of these three arguments is to reinforce the rhetorical

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[535] For a detailed argument in favour of the "ongoing exile" reading of Paul, see Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 139-163.

[536] Boyarin, 'Was Paul an "Anti-Semite"?,' 50.

opposition between faith and works of the law. Up to verse 18, then, Paul gives no positive role to the law whatsoever. The blessings promised to Abraham, and the Gentiles' receipt of these blessings, are founded entirely on promise and faith, apparently with no room for the law.

This leads to an obvious question: Why then the law? (3:19).[537] That Paul sees the need to address this question directly here is an implicit concession that his opponents' argument is not without foundation.[538] Unfortunately, while Paul does address this question directly, his answer is far from straightforward. Indeed, the following verses contain some of the most obscure, and also the most highly contested claims in the entire Pauline corpus. How one understands Paul's response to the question he raises in 3:19 goes a long way towards determining how one thinks of Paul's understanding of salvation-history. For some, Paul depicts the law as an evil, enslaving power, given by demonic angels, which holds all people in slavery until they are rescued by Christ. For others, Paul depicts the law as an essentially benevolent guardian, keeping God's people safe during their infancy, until Christ's arrival to bring them into maturity.

One feature of Paul's answer in 3:19 that stands out immediately is the temporal limitation that Paul places on the law. The law was 'added', and only 'until' the coming of the seed. In contrast with traditions depicting the law as eternal, Paul places it within finite temporal boundaries, and does so when writing about the law's purpose. This is of great significance, and contradicts several other second-temple Jewish texts, which see the law as eternal. For example, *Wis. Sol.* 18:4 describes the law as 'the imperishable light', and 1 Enoch 99:2 warns against those who transgress 'the eternal law.'[539] It is likely that Paul's opponents also held similar beliefs; for Paul, however, this is an error. If his gospel appears to some as being in opposition to the God-given law, this is because they incorrectly assume that the law was meant to last forever. Paul's emphatic rejection of this assumption indicates an underlying difference between himself and his opponents.

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[537] An alternative reading is 'what then the law?', but the more commonly translated 'why then the law?' makes more sense in this context. See Daniel B. Wallace, 'Galatians 3:19-20: A *Crux Interpretum* For Paul's View of the Law' *WTJ* 52 (1990), 225-45, at 232; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: New York: T&T Clark International, 1998), 253.

[538] After all, a straightforward reading of the Abraham narratives does not leave as much room between the promise and circumcision as Paul perceives there to be. Abraham is not commanded to circumcise in order to receive the promised blessings, but the requirement of circumcision follows shortly afterwards.

[539] Other examples include Jub. 1:27; 3:31; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.277, Philo *Vit. Mos.* 2:14. See Richard Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990), 139; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 254.

If the law was a temporary measure, however, the original question still remains. Why then the law? What was it *for*? Paul's frustratingly ambiguous answer is that it was τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν. The key word here is χάριν, which can be understood in a few different ways, although it is also significant that Paul refers to transgressions rather than sins. In Romans, Paul makes a distinction between sin and transgression. Knowledge of sin comes through the law (Rom. 3:20), and without a law there is no transgression (4:15), which is a violation of law.[540] No such distinction is made in Galatians, but it does seem likely that Paul has a similar idea in mind here. Various interpretations of Paul's answer to the question of the law in 3:19 are possible, therefore.

First, Paul could be trying to say that the law was added as a temporary way of dealing with sin, until the time of Christ.[541] This could involve the law as a moral guide, to show people the proper way to live, or it could refer to the parts of the law which include measures for dealing with sin. Paul may have had the sacrificial system in mind here.[542]

Second, Paul may be arguing that the law was added to identify sin as transgression, to 'bring to light sin as transgression of the defined will of God.'[543] This could have both positive and negative implications. Positive, by demonstrating the need for a saviour, thereby preparing the way for the gospel; negative, by adding the dimension of conscious transgression, and imprisoning all under sin.[544]

Third, Paul could mean that the law was added to provoke and increase transgressions, taking χάριν causally. The law then would not just have the effect of making it clear how sinful humanity is, but would also have the further effect of making the situation worse. The strongest argument in favour of this position is the comparison with Romans,

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[540] That Paul can speak about Adam's transgression in Rom. 5:14 suggests that he does not necessarily mean that the Mosaic law specifically is required for transgressions. Adam still violated a law in the sense that he disobeyed a direct command from God. See Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 254.

[541] Dunn, 'The Theology of Galatians,' 136.

[542] James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 89.

[543] Linda L. Belleville, '"Under Law": Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4:11' *JSNT* 26 (1986), 53-78, at 55.

[544] As in Walter G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 130. Sigurd Grindheim, 'Not Salvation History, but Salvation Territory: The Main Subject Matter of Galatians' *New Testament Studies* 59 (2013), 91-108, at 103, suggests that the identification of sin as transgression would lead to an increase in transgression, supporting the idea that the law was given to provoke transgressions. This does not necessarily follow, however. Indeed, it could be argued that by identifying sins as transgressions, the law could be expected to reduce sin, supporting option 1 above.

where the result of the law is an increase in trespasses, with sin seizing an opportunity in the commandments (5:20; 7:8). There are a couple of problems with this interpretation, however.

First, in Romans a dynamic exists between sin, the law, and humanity, which is not present in Galatians. In Romans, Paul talks about sin as an active power, which takes advantage of the law. This allows Paul to say that the law provokes sin, while maintaining that the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good (7:12). Hence, there is a difference between describing the *result* of the law, which is an increase in transgressions, and the *purpose* of the law. This leads us to a second problem. In Gal. 3:19, Paul is directly addressing the question of the law's purpose. If χάριν is taken causally, then Paul must be making the quite astonishing claim that the law was given with the intention that sin would increase, in the form of transgressions. For Paul to make such an argument would surely be extremely unlikely, even given the fact that Romans contains comparable ideas.[545] As Dunn puts it, 'an interim measure which went on provoking transgressions for more than a millennium, without providing remedy for all that time, would imply a remarkably heartless picture of the God who so failed to provide.'[546]

ii. Who Gave the Law? God, Angels, and Mediation

This objection only has any force, however, if it is assumed that it was *God* who added the law in order to provoke sin. Hans Hübner, for example, prefers a reading of 'to provoke sin' in 3:19, but argues that 3:19-20 includes the idea that the law was given by demonic angels, rather than God. 3.19 does not implicate God, because Paul does not deem him to be involved in the addition of the law.[547] Martyn also interprets these verses along these lines, reading Romans 5:13 into Paul's use of παραβάσεων in Gal. 3:19, and concluding that 'Paul surely thinks of the law as antedating these transgressions and, indeed, very probably as producing them.'[548] Like Hübner, he links this function with the claim that the law was added by angels, rather than by God.[549] Clearly, evil angels giving a law intended to

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[545] Boyarin, 'Was Paul an Anti-Semite,' 50-56, argues that it is *a priori* implausible for Paul to have believed that the law was intended to increase sin. Instead, he suggests that 'The simplest explanation of the verse is that the Law was given as a temporary and secondary measure, because of the existence of sin in the present age, in order to restrain people from transgressing until the coming of Jesus who is the seed.'

[546] James D.G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (London: A & C Black, 1993), 190.

[547] Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* trans. James C.G. Greig (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 26-27.

[548] J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (New York; London: Doubleday, 1997), 354.

[549] Martyn, *Galatians*, 357.

increase sin would be less shocking than God doing so; the flipside of this, of course, is that the claim that the law came from evil angels is itself quite shocking. Altogether, this means that the initial part of Paul's answer in 3:19 needs to be interpreted in context, along with the rest of 3:19-20.

As it happens, the other components of 3:19-20 are also highly controversial. First, there is significant disagreement over the phrase διαταγεὶς δὶ ἀγγέλων. The idea that angels were present at Sinai, and involved in some capacity in the giving of the law is not a Pauline innovation. It is present in Deut. 33:2 and repeated in a number of other early Jewish texts, including some from the New Testament.[550] The key question here, then, is what Paul intends to convey by alluding to these angelic traditions.[551] In other examples where angels are mentioned in relation to Sinai, this is done to emphasize the glory and holiness of the law given there by God. Paul, however, seems to use the tradition in a different way. Second, we come to 3:20, one of the most obscure verses in the New Testament. The basic idea behind Paul's argument here seems to be the contrast between the oneness of God, and the plurality of parties involved in mediation. Beyond that, though, the precise logic of the verse is difficult to follow. Numerous interpretations have been offered over the years, some more plausible than others. There are three main possibilities here.[552]

1. The presence of angels and a mediator means that the law was distanced from God, if not entirely detached from him.[553] Paul possibly had in mind the covenant with Abraham, which is implicitly compared with the Sinai covenant. Whereas the covenant with Abraham was made directly between Abraham and God, the Sinai covenant between God and Israel was made indirectly, through angels, and by a mediator, probably referring to Moses. The point Paul is making, then, is that the circumstances in which the law was given to Israel are evidence of its inferiority.[554] This would add force to the comparison between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants in 3:15-18. There are two problems with this interpretation. First, there

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[550] These include Jub. 1,29, Philo Som. 1.141-3 Josephus Ant. 15.136. Acts 7.38, Heb. 2.2.

[551] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 140 suggests the quite plausible thesis that Paul's opponents used the tradition of angels being present at the giving of the law as evidence in favour of their arguments; Paul's reply then involves an *ad hominem* reversal of these claims. This could explain the obscurity of Paul's argument.

[552] See Longenecker, *Galatians*, 141-2 for various different interpretive options.

[553] Stanton, 'The Law of Moses', 113; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 259.

[554] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 142: 'So just as ἑνὸς οὐκ in the first part of the verse drew attention to the law's indirect and contractual nature, here εἰς ἐστιν ("is one") draws attention to the fact that God's true redemptive activity is always direct and unilateral in nature. To desire the former, therefore, is to desire the inferior, whereas God wants to deal with his people directly.'

is no mention of or direct comparison with the Abrahamic covenant here. At most, such a comparison is implied by the context. Second, it is not entirely clear on this reading what the connection is between verse 20 and the preceding verse. It is possible that this is simply an ad hoc reversal of the claims of Paul's opponents, who may have used angelic Sinai traditions to emphasise the glory of the Mosaic covenant. Alternatively, the reference to angels and the mediator may simply be to add to the main thrust of 3:19, which is that the law was a temporary measure with a specific purpose for a limited time.

2. Another interesting proposal is that Paul's reference to a mediator, in contrast with God's oneness, is a criticism of the law for being exclusive to Israel. Wright suggests that in light of 3:15-18, and in particular 3:19, which refers to the seed, the natural way of reading ἑνὸς 'is as a reference to the one family, the single 'seed' promised to Abraham and now fulfilled in Christ.' Because Moses was a mediator of revelation to Israel only, he cannot be the mediator 'through whom the promised 'one seed' is brought into existence.' Hence, 'Paul is saying that Moses, to whom the Galatians are being tempted to look for membership in the true people of God, is not the one through whom that single family is brought about.'[555] This is certainly an intriguing suggestion, but Wright overplays the connection between plurality and oneness found in 3:15-18, and that found in 3:20. In the former passage, the distinction is between Christ, as a singular seed, and Israel, as plural seeds. The promised offspring of Abraham is Christ himself, not those who follow the law. In 3:20, Paul's argument is based on the claim that *God* is one; it is essentially a theological argument, rather than a Christological one. Wright's interpretation of 3:20 is certainly plausible, but as with his interpretation of 3:10-14, if this were the connection that Paul intended to make, we might expect him to do so more clearly.[556]

3. The presence of a mediator implies a plurality of parties. Given that God is one, he cannot have been involved at Sinai. Hence, the presence of a mediator means that the law was given to Israel by many angels, rather than the one God. Martyn considers two ways of

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[555] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 169. Wright's interpretation is supported by Boyarin, 'Was Paul an Anti-Semite', 57.

[556] Dunn, 'The Theology of Galatians,' 136, offers another version of this interpretation, connecting 3:20 with the presence of angels in 3:19:'The point Paul is probably making is that to treat the law in such an exclusive, restrictive way is equivalent to treating the law as though it was given through Israel's guardian angels, or, indeed, as though the law itself was Israel's guardian angel...To thus regard the law as a national identity marker, as a boundary dividing Jew from Gentile, is in effect to deny the oneness of God.'

dealing with 3:20: Paul means to say either that Moses did not speak to the one God, but to many angels, or that God played an indirect role in the giving of the law, 'somewhere in the distant background.'[557] In support of the 'shocking first reading,' Martyn offers a number of arguments. First, he suggests that 3:22 and 3:24 both indicate that God has worked his purposes through Christ despite the law, rather than because of it. Second, the implication of 3:21 is that the law could not stand *effectively* against the power of God's promise. Third, he argues that Paul does not consider the law to be a monolith. God is the author of the Law's promissory, Abrahamic voice, while not being the author of the law's cursing, Sinaiatic voice. Fourth, Martyn argues that Paul consistently attaches the word 'covenant' with the Abrahamic promise, dissociating it from the Sinaitic law. In addition, he draws a connection between 3:20 and Paul's warning in 1:8 regarding an alternative gospel preached by angels.[558]

As with Wright's reading, however, we might expect Paul to make this point clearer. It is one thing to suggest that the Sinaitic covenant is inferior to the Abrahamic covenant; it is quite another to suggest that the law was given by evil angels. If this is the correct reading of Galatians 3:19-20, it has huge implications for Paul's view of the law, and his understanding of salvation history. The history of Israel under the law could not be seen as a time of preparation for the messiah, but instead as a period of enslavement to demonic forces, where the covenant that was thought to regulate Israel's relationship with God was actually given to provoke sin. This would surely be one of the main points of Paul's argument, rather than a relatively minor detail. [559]

How should we proceed, then, given the complexity and obscurity of these two verses? While it is here that Paul directly addresses the question of the law, this small section of Paul's argument does not operate in isolation. Rather than initially using 3:19-20 to interpret what follows, an alternative approach is to look for clues in the following verses that

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[557] Martyn, *Galatians*, 366.

[558] Martyn, *Galatians*, 357.

[559] Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 130-133, sees Gal. 3:19-20 as an example of Paul's muddled thinking over the law. For Räisänen, the implication of verse 20 is that God was not involved in the giving of the law. A mediator was required because each party had multiple members (angels and Israelites). However, the temporal limit on the law indicated in verse 19 suggests that the law was part of God's plan. Further, Räisänen suggests, the fact that Paul saw the need to explain the purpose of the law at all suggests that it was not given by demonic angels. The thesis that Paul's theology of the law is inconsistent across the Pauline corpus as a whole is certainly worthy of consideration. It does seem unlikely, however, that Paul would flatly contradict himself within the space of two verses.

might help us to understand Paul's claims in 3:19-20. This should enable us to produce a more cohesive reading of Paul's argument as a whole.

iii. The Meaning of παιδαγωγός

One of the key terms in 3:21-4:20 is παιδαγωγός. Paul, describing the period 'before faith came' states that we were imprisoned and guarded under the law (3:23). Therefore, the law was a pedagogue.[560] The pedagogue was required so that justification might come through faith; now that faith has come, we are no longer under a pedagogue (3:24). Two important points emerge from these verses. First, Paul reiterates his temporal reinterpretation of the law's purpose. The law was given as a παιδαγωγός for a specific time; once that time had passed, the law was no longer needed. Second, the purpose of the law as παιδαγωγός is linked to the possibility of being justified by faith. This echoes the previous verses, where Paul emphatically denies that the law is opposed to the promises of God. Unlike the promise, the law cannot bring life, and cannot bring justification. Because all are imprisoned under sin, and because the law cannot bring life, the promise can only be received through faith in Jesus Christ (3:21-22).

What then does Paul have in mind when he used the word παιδαγωγός?[561] The only other Pauline usage is found in 1 Cor. 4:15: 'For though you might have ten thousand παιδαγωγοὺς in Christ, you do not have many fathers.' Here, the παιδαγωγός is deemed to be a positive influence, but inferior to a father. Longenecker examines a range of Jewish texts, which depict Moses, Aaron, Miriam, David, and Jeremiah as Israel's pedagogues, but concludes that 'there is no passage in the extant Jewish literature where the Mosaic law itself is spoken of as a pedagogue.'[562] Given that the word implies a temporary role, this is unsurprising. The closest parallels to this idea are found in 4 Macc. 1:17; 5:34.[563]

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[560] While παιδαγωγός can be translated as 'pedagogue', it does not necessarily carry all of the connotations of the word in English. Alternative translations include guardian, leader, or guide. Meissen, *Galater*, 161, suggests 'Erzieher,' an educator or teacher for small children.

[561] There have been a significant number of studies addressing this question specifically, including: T.D. Gordon, 'A Note on Paidagogos in Galatians 3.24-25' *New Testament Studies* 35.1 (1989), 150-154; Anthony T. Hanson, 'The Origin of Paul's Use of *Paidagogos* for the Law' *JSNT* 34 (1998), 71-76; Richard Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7' *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 25.1 (1982), 53-61; David J. Lull, '"The Law Was Our Pedagogue": A Study in Galatians 3:19-25' *JBL* 105 (1986), 481-98; Norman H. Young, '*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor' *Novum Testamentum* 39.2 (1987), 150-176.

[562] Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law', 55.

[563] Hanson, 'The Origin of Paul's Use of *Paidagogos*', 75, proposes that Paul's use of the term in Galatians 3 is influenced by Numbers 11:11-12. The conclusion drawn is that Paul 'hopes to emphasise the temporary, restrictive, and now obsolete function of the law' (p.75).

In classical literature, the term possesses 'an ancient and rich background.'[564] Pedagogues were widely used by both Greeks and Romans. The earliest evidence for their use comes from Herodotus, but it is likely that their use went back to the archaic period.[565] It is also likely that they were used by wealthy Jews, as Josephus' son had one (*Vita* 76). Pedagogues had several roles, all relating to the upbringing of minors. First, they were to protect their charge from any dangers that might befall them while under their care. Second, they were to discipline their charge, as a way of controlling and shaping their behaviour. Third, they were to be moral guides, teaching their charge how to behave as a morally responsible adult. The rule of a pedagogue tended to be strict, but this was seen as necessary for the development of children into adulthood. This created a situation where a free child, an heir of a wealthy master, would be under the control of a slave. As Lull puts it, 'children were considered no different from slaves, not only socially, but also anthropologically, to the extent that they were characterised by unbridled passions. Pedagogues were to be exchanged for reason as the divine guide of lives when one passed from immaturity to maturity.'[566] This is significant for Paul's use of παιδαγωγός, particularly given his additional use of slavery language. In Galatians 4:1-2, Paul describes a situation just like the one that Lull describes.

Pedagogues were usually slaves, but their role required a level of confidence and respect from their masters, given that they were to be entrusted with their master's heir. Indeed, several texts have remarkably positive things to say about pedagogues, and 'from the classical tragedies to Hellenistic romances one finds a frequent, warm, and deserved expression of affection towards former pedagogues.'[567]Young gives examples from Euripides' *Electra*, where a pedagogue is addressed as a member of the family circle, after saving the baby Orestes from death, and *The Phoenissae*, where Antigone meets her old pedagogue, and addresses him with great respect, while Philo describes the harsh rule of a pedagogue with great affection.[568]

Pedagogues did receive some criticism, however. Often, pedagogues were chosen from among the older and less able slaves in a household. Younger, more able slaves were reserved for the more physically demanding tasks. This practice was criticised by moralists who argued that the role of the pedagogue was so important that it should be given to the

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[564] Young, '*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor'.
[565] Young, '*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor', 151.
[566] Lull, 'The Law Was our Pedagogue', 494. A clear example of this is found in Plato, *Leg*. 7808E, where Plato states that children are treated as freeborn insofar as they are sent to teachers, but are treated as slaves when they are disciplined by pedagogues.
[567] Young, '*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor', 165.
[568] Young, '*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor', 165.

most able slaves.[569] Pedagogues were also on occasion the objects of mockery, being caricatured by ancient playwrights. Because they were often chosen from among the older slaves, they had a reputation for being sour and grumpy. As Longenecker argues, however, 'The depiction of the ancient pedagogue as a grim and ugly character is indeed a caricature' and is not a serious representation of their role and standing in society.[570]

What does this evidence mean for Paul's use of pedagogue in Galatians? Two features of the classical usage of the word clearly correspond with Paul's usage. First, the role of a pedagogue was temporary. When a child reached maturity, they would be released from the jurisdiction of their pedagogue, and assume their role as an adult. That the role of the law as a pedagogue was only intended to be temporary is emphasised repeatedly by Paul (3:24-25; 4:2-4). Second, a pedagogue had the job of guarding and restraining their charge. This corresponds to Gal. 3:23, where Paul says that we were kept confined under the law until the revelation of faith. Taken together, the law as pedagogue is depicted as keeping God's people confined for a particular period of time.

There are two minor points where Paul's depiction of the pedagogue is different from the picture gained from other ancient texts. First, one of the roles that pedagogues had was to teach their charge, or at least help to facilitate their learning, ensuring that they were ready to assume their responsibilities once they reached the age of maturity. The law taught Israel in the sense that it highlighted sin, but not in the sense that it aided Israel's development. There is little indication in Galatians that the law was intended to prepare God's people for Christ's arrival; Christ did not arrive when Israel had become ready to receive him, but at the time chosen by the father (4:2, 4). This leads to the second unusual feature of Paul's use of the pedagogue image. Generally, the temporal limitations on the pedagogues' role were dictated by law and custom. In Galatians 4:2, Paul says that this time is dictated by the father, an idea unprecedented in ancient sources.[571]

The key question, however, is whether Paul sees the law, in its function as παιδαγωγός, as a benevolent force, created by God, or as a negative, malevolent force, enslaving God's people. The evidence considered above suggests that the first option is much more likely. While pedagogues were occasionally mocked, and while the institution of the pedagogue did come in for some criticism, the overwhelming impression is that pedagogues

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[569] Young, '*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor', 152.
[570] Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the law'', 55.
[571] James C. Walter, 'Paul, Adoption, and Inheritance' in J. Paul Sampley ed., *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003), 42-76.

were seen as an important, benevolent feature of a child's upbringing. The rule of a pedagogue was not always pleasurable for a child, involving as it did discipline and restrictions, but this was always done for the child's benefit, as they awaited the time when they would leave their pedagogue behind, becoming full heirs. Once a pedagogue's charge reached maturity, their term under a pedagogue came to an end. To say that the παιδαγωγός was a benevolent force does not, however, mean that it played a positive role in bringing about the Christ-event, contributing to a salfivic line. Instead, it means that the time of the law, under the restrictions of the pedagogue, was an intentional part of God's plans across history. Oepke argues that where Paul's use of the pedagogue image differs from ancient use is that there is no sense of the law as παιδαγωγός bringing about maturity, or directly leading to Christ, unlike the ancient παιδαγωγός who helps his charge to mature. He still maintains, however, that Paul has in mind successive phases of *Heilsgeschichte*, each willed by God.[572]

That other ancient texts indicate a positive role for pedagogues does not make it certain, of course, that Paul uses the term in a positive sense. It is possible that he could have chosen to use an idea that was familiar with his Galatian audience, but to adapt it to fit a negative portrayal of the law. Given the external evidence, however, the burden of proof lies on those who take παιδαγωγός in Galatians as implying a malevolent role for the law. Two points in particular count against the more negative readings of παιδαγωγός.

First, a connection tends to be made between the pedagogue and slavery. This is quite understandable; slavery has extremely negative connotations, and Paul repeatedly uses slavery language in his argument about the law (4:1, 3, 7, 8, 9). It is important to notice, however, that Paul himself relativises this language, and does so when he introduces it at the start of chapter 4. In 4:1, Paul says that heirs, when minors, are no different from slaves. At the same time, however, they are still lords, due to their status as heirs. There is quite a difference between saying on the one hand that someone actually is a slave, and on the other, that someone is heir and lord of all, while being no different from a slave for a time. Paul's slavery language in Galatians 4 is still forceful, but it must be understood in the context of this added detail. In the present, their situation is comparable to that of a slave. For slaves, however, their present situation is likely to be their permanent lot. For a child under a pedagogue, these slave-like restrictions are only temporary, and this means that while comparisons with slaves are warranted, their situation is fundamentally different to that of a

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[572] Albrecht Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, (Berlin: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt, 1984), 122-3.

slave. Paul looks at the broader scope of history, and reads Israel's time under the law in hindsight, in the context of the new age.

Second, the time during which the heir is no better than a slave is set by the father (4:2). When Paul explains this analogy in 4:3-4, beginning with 'so also we', the time set by the father corresponds with the fullness of time, when God sent his son. Again, the apparently harsh language of slavery is modified. The slave-like status of the heir is determined by the father, or God, who chooses this status as a temporary measure.[573] Slave-status may not causally contribute to the eventual receipt of the inheritance, but nor is it opposed to the inheritance (just as in 3:21-22). The father, who guarantees the inheritance, and defines the status of the heir, also appoints the guardians and trustees who have authority over the heir.[574]

iv. The power of the στοιχεῖα

Paul's lengthy answer to the question of 'why the law?' focuses primarily on those who were under the law prior to Christ. The Galatians, though, were not under the law previously, or at least not in the sense of actively following the law.[575] In 4:8-11, Paul clarifies the significance of what he has been saying for his Gentile audience. In their former life, prior to knowing God through Christ, the Galatians were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods (4:8). To choose to be under the law would be to turn back again to weak and beggarly στοιχεῖα (4:9). That the Galatians are observing special days suggests that they have already returned to this life of slavery (4:10).

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[573] For a quite different reading of Gal. 4:1-2, see James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 122-145. Scott argues that Paul alludes here to Israel's period of slavery in Egypt, and their eventual exodus. Israel, despite being in exile and living as slaves, remained heirs of the Abrahamic promises. For a detailed critique of Scott's exegesis, see John. K Goodrich, 'Guardians, not Taskmasters: The Cultural Resonances of a Pauline Metaphor in Galatians 4:1-2' *JSNT* 32.3, (2010), 251-84. Goodrich criticises Scott on a number of points, but outlines three main flaws in his interpretation. First, the text in question contains a distinct lack of explicit terminological overlap with Old Testament and other Jewish accounts of the Exodus. Second, an awkward use of verb tenses is required in order for the analogy to be understood as referring to a specific, completed historical event. Third, Scott's reading produces an unfortunate irony, where the Exodus becomes an initiation into a new kind of slavery, under the law.

[574] Like παιδαγωγός, ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος are well attested in classical texts. Given the parallels between 4:1-2 and 3:23-25, it is likely that Paul sees these terms as synonymous with the παιδαγωγός, or at least as carrying out a very similar role.

[575] Throughout Galatians 3:21-4:5, there is some ambiguity regarding whether Paul is describing Jewish existence specifically, or the human condition more generally. The contrast between 'we' and 'you' in 4:5-8 may indicate the former, but Paul's claim in 3:22 that the scripture has imprisoned 'all things' under sin suggests that he has humanity in general in mind.

στοιχεῖον can be used in a number of different ways.[576] In Galatians, the term could be taken to refer to spiritual beings, and possibly to the angels mentioned in 3:19, but it is more likely that it means either the elements of the universe, or rudimentary principles. While it is plausible that Paul could think of Gentiles as being enslaved to demonic spiritual powers, it is significant that Paul uses the same terminology to describe the state of both Jews and Gentiles. Both groups are enslaved to στοιχεῖα (4:3, 9).

As Belleville argues, there are several examples of στοιχεῖον being used to refer to basic principles,[577] in contrast with a distinct lack of external evidence for στοιχεῖον being used to refer to evil spiritual entities.[578] This translation also ties in nicely with Paul's use of the pedagogue metaphor. Regardless of the precise meaning of στοιχεῖον, however, the rhetorical force of Paul's use of the word in 4:3 and 4:9 is clear: the point being is made is that both pagan idolatry and Jewish law-observance are rudimentary ways of living for those of spiritual immaturity.[579] Now that Christ has come, and both Jews and Gentiles are able to receive the blessings promised to Abraham, becoming mature sons of God, the way of living that befits this mature status is the life led by the Spirit.[580] To return to things like circumcision and calendrical observance is misplaced obedience, a regression to an immature way of living, like a master of a household who turns his back on his inheritance and returns to a childish lifestyle. The law is to be rejected not because it was given by evil angels, but

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[576] Delling, *'Stoicheo-Stoicheion'*, *TDNT* 7, 666-687, lists six applications of the word: 1. Degrees on a sundial; 2. Basic elements including earth, fire, water and air; 4. Fundamental principles or rudimentary teachings of subjects; 5. Stars and other heavenly bodies; 6. Stellar spirits, gods, demons, and angels.

[577] See Belleville, 'Under Law', 60. While there are no other uses of στοιχεῖον in the undisputed Pauline corpus, the word does appear in Colossians 2:8-23, where it is usually translated as 'elemental spirits' or 'the rudiments of the world.'

[578] Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 284-5 considers four possible meanings of στοιχεῖον: 1. The basic elements of the universe; 2. Fundamental or elementary principles; 3. Heavenly bodies; 4. Elementary spirits (i.e. angels, demons). Of these, Witherington argues that options 3 and 4 'have no contemporary precedent', and so the burden of proof lies on those who wish to choose them. Option 2 is preferable because 'The context here requires that we come up with a meaning that has something to do with the status or condition of a minor as opposed to a mature adult, and the larger context suggests that it has something to do with submitting to or being under some kind of teaching or rules.'

[579] Belleville, 'Under Law', 69, makes this point well: 'Not that the law and the 'rudimentary principles' are one and the same. Nor is the Law one of these principles. Paul does not state this. What he does state is that being "under law" and being 'under the rudimentary principles of the world' are similar experiences with similar results. What the law and the elementary principles of the world have in common is that they regulate and legislate in accordance with rules and standards that are suitable only for a period of spiritual minority.'

[580] Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, 71-72, suggests that the proximity of the childhood metaphor in 3:23-4:7 means that στοιχεῖα could be translated as 'childish superstitions. Paul's point is that such things are not befitting of people who have attained – or been blessed with – spiritual maturity.'

because God gave it for a time that has now passed. To follow the law now is to show a lack of either understanding of or trust in what God has now done in Christ, at the fullness of time (4:4).

The precise implications of τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου are unclear. De Boer suggests two ways of reading the phrase.[581] The first possibility is that it is closely connected to the analogy of the heir and the will, effectively corresponding to the date set by the father in 4:2.[582] The second possibility is that Paul here compares the passage of time to a container that runs full. De Boer is wary of this reading, because it may erroneously imply that God's decision to send Christ was dependent on something in history, but he suggests that it does not necessarily imply this. It seems most likely that the phrase is to be read as part of the preceding legal analogy. In 4:2, it is the father who chooses the time, and so the fullness of time most likely refers to this time chosen by the father, with 'fullness' connoting the completion of the previous time.[583] A new age is begun, bringing the previous age of the law to an end.[584] Now, the son leaves his slave-like position, assuming his true role as heir.

Previously we noted that Marytn's interpretation of 3:19—that the law was given by evil angels, rather than God—was possible, but unlikely given Paul's statements about the law elsewhere. Given the subsequent sections of Galatians, Martyn's reading is even more difficult to justify. Gal. 3:23-4:7 does not suggest a positive salvation-historical role for the law in the sense of helping to bring about the Christ-event, but our reading of these verses does show that the law, and the period of time during which it served its purpose, were ordained by God for a particular time, as part of his overarching plan for history.[585] Martyn's radical reading of 3:19 is unwarranted, but it does fit neatly with his overall apocalyptic scheme. If the Christ-event is an unprecedented, incongruous act, an act of warfare as God invades a cosmos which is under the sway of evil powers, it makes sense to think of the law as one of these powers, contributing to the monolithic enslavement of humanity. It seems likely, then, that Martyn's apocalyptic scheme, with it sharp distinction between two ages,

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[581] De Boer, *Galatians*, 261-2.

[582] See also Jurgen Becker, ‚Die Brief an die Galater', in Jurgen Becker, Hans Conzelmann, Gerhard Friedrich, *Der Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 1-85, at 48.

[583] Becker, 'Die Brief an die Galater', 46, even translates τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου as 'das Ende der Zeit.'

[584] Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, 132.

[585] While the law did not help bring about the Christ-event, in the sense of satisfying its necessary conditions, it can still be argued that the law prepared the way for Christ by identifying and condemning sin, and showing the need for Christ. See Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 132-134.

pushes him towards a reading of 3:19, and of the role of the law, which is exegetically unwarranted.

3. Abraham

i. Abraham in Jewish literature

Abraham, and the scriptural narratives concerning him, play a central role in Paul's argument in Galatians. To some extent, Galatians can be seen as a battle over Abraham and his legacy: who are the true children of Abraham? For Paul's opponents, the true children of Abraham are those who, having believed in Christ, follow the law given by Abraham's God, including the requirement of circumcision. For Paul, Abraham's true children are those who, like Abraham, live by faith. Given his role in the Genesis narratives, it is unsurprising that Abraham appears as an important figure in Jewish literature. Nancy Calvert-Koyzsis, who has written at length about the place of Abraham in early Judaism,[586] argues that between 200 BCE and 200 CE, Jewish authors presented Abraham in two main ways.[587]

First, Abraham is the first true monotheist, turning away from idols to believe in the one God. In Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, for example, Abraham is invited to join in with building the tower of Babel. Instead of adding his strength to this idolatrous endeavour, however, Abraham refuses, putting his life at risk to remain faithful to the one true God.

Second, Abraham is obedient to the law, even before it is given to Moses. This idea is present in Genesis 26:5, and is developed in later texts. In Philo's *De Abrahamo*, for example, the Torah is presented as the revelation of the natural law, a law which Abraham was obedient to.[588] It is understandable, then, that Paul's opponents viewed Abraham in the way that they did. Abraham represented not just belief in the one true God, but absolute faith. This faith was demonstrated by obedience to God's law. That the faith of Abraham's descendents should be marked by the same obedience is a reasonable conclusion.

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[586] Nancy L. Calvert, 'Abraham and Idolatry: Paul's Comparison of Obedience to the Law with Idolatry in Galatians 4:1-10' in Craig A. Evans, James A. Sanders eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 222-237; Nancy Calvert-Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham Traditions for Early Judaism and Christianity* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004). Calvert-Koyzis surveys a number of Jewish texts and authors including Jubilees, Philo, Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, and the Apocalypse of Abraham.

[587] Calvert-Koyzis, 'Abraham and Idolatry', 225-6.

[588] For a comparison between Philo and Paul's use of Abraham, see Orrey McFarland, 'Whose Abraham, Which Promise? Genesis 15.6 in Philo's *De Virtutibus* and Romans 4' *JSNT* 35.2 (2012), 107-129. McFarland argues that for Philo, God rewarded Abraham for his faith, which was the culmination of his progression in attaining virtue. For Paul, in contrast, God's gifts to Abraham were purely gracious, with no regard for Abraham's worth.

ii. Abraham in Galatians

Paul's interpretation of the Abrahamic narratives is, of course, very different. Abraham is used in Galatians in four main ways. First, he is an example of the principle that one is justified not by works of the law, but by faith. For Paul, Abraham embodies this principle, and shows it to be true. In Gal. 3:6-9, Paul ties together Abraham's faith and his subsequent justification, or his being reckoned as righteous, citing Genesis 15:6, and the promise to Abraham that all the Gentiles would be blessed in him, citing Genesis 12:3. When Paul goes on to quote from Habakkuk 2:4 in Gal. 3:11, he has already set Abraham up as an example of this principle. Absent from Paul's discussion of Abraham and his legacy is any mention of his circumcision, or the kind of law-obedience found in other Jewish texts. Abraham is reckoned as righteous because of faith, not because of his works.

Second, Paul emphasises that the promise was made to Abraham and to his seed, interpreting Genesis 17:8 Christologically, in order to show that the promise does not depend on the law. Martyn sees in this argument a strong rejection of salvation history. He suggests that Gal 3.16 can be divided into three parts:[589]

(a) now the covenantal promises were spoken to Abraham "and to his seed."

(b) The text does not say, "and to the seeds," as though it were speaking about many people, but rather, speaking about one, it reads, "and to your seed,"

(c) and that seed is Christ

Paul could have, Martyn suggests, left out (b). That he includes it 'shows that he is concerned specifically to deny the Teachers' covenantal nomism, their redemptive-historical interpretation of the "seed of Abraham," their notion of Gentile transference into the already-existent, covenantal people of God.'[590] Paul affirms the singularity of the seed as a way of breaking up any suggestion of a salvific line beginning with Abraham, running through Israel to Christ, and now incorporating the Gentiles, and so 'Paul's interpretation of the seed to whom God made the covenantal promise is as polemically *punctiliar* as it is *singular*.'[591] The

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[589] Martyn, *Galatians*, 346.
[590] Martyn, *Galatians*, 346.
[591] Martyn, *Galatians*, 348 De Boer, *Galatians*, 223, reaches a similar conclusion: 'Paul's Christological interpretation enables him to exclude the interpretation of Gen 17:8 probably being advocated by the new preachers in Galatia ... the promise of 17:8 refers not to the law-observant

time of the law, then, played no positive role in the fulfilment of the promise, which is entirely divorced from the law.

Wright's reading of 3:16 bears some similarities with Martyn's, but unsurprisingly he draws different conclusions. Like Martyn, he sees Paul undercutting the arguments of his opponents by showing that the promise to Abraham always had Christ in view. But where Martyn sees Paul worried by the prospect of Gentiles being enslaved to the law, Wright sees Paul worried by the prospect of multiple groupings and divisions within the body of Christ. Part of the difficulty with this verse is that σπέρμα can refer to a singular person, but it can also have a collective meaning. While noting that Paul identifies Christ as the singular σπέρμα, Wright takes this as referring to 'family.' Hence the seed 'refers to the one family, contrasted with the plurality of families that would result if Torah were to be regarded the way Paul's opponents regard it.'[592] Paul's opponents err by seeing the law as a restriction of the Abrahamic promises to one race, σπέρμα taken in the sense of physical offspring. Paul's response is to show that the promise to Abraham 'always envisaged a single family, not a plurality of families; therefore the Torah, which creates a plurality by dividing Gentile from Jews, stands in the way of the fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham.'[593]

Where both Wright and Martyn agree is that in his interpretation of Genesis 17:8, Paul rules out any suggestion that the recipients of the promises to Abraham are his physical descendants, or those who now follow the law. Where they mainly differ is in how they draw out the implications of this argument. For Martyn, this is a clear sign that Paul rejects any notion of salvation history: 'In Gal 3:167 he denies the Teachers' linear, redemptive-historical picture of a covenantal people, affirming instead the punctiliar portrait of the covenantal person, Christ.'[594] As we have seen, however, that the law does not bear a linear relationship with the Christ-event in the causal sense does not mean that it has no role to play as part of God's overarching plan for history. Wright, for example, sees Paul not rejecting the law's role outright, but redefining it. The law is to be understood 'not as a restriction of the Abrahamic promises to one race – that is the mistake Paul's opponents are making – but as a temporary measure introduced for certain specific purposes which, in the long run, would not prevent but would rather facilitate the creation of the single family.'[595] Wright thus affirms

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church, but to Christ himself. Between the promise and Christ, therefore, there were no offspring to Abraham, no heirs of the promise that God made to Abraham.'

[592] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 164.
[593] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 168.
[594] Martyn, *Galatians*, 348.
[595] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 167.

the salvation-historical role of the law, but in a much weaker sense than in the kind of salvation history that Martyn so emphatically rejects.

The third main way Paul uses Abraham in Galatians is to emphasise the temporal priority of the Abrahamic covenant over the Sinaitic covenant. Abraham does not just embody a timeless principle about God's relationship with humanity. His story is also history, occurring at a specific time and place, which is dated in relation to the law (Gal. 3:17). This temporal ordering is absolutely central to Paul's use of Abraham. This is clear in the legal analogy that Paul creates in 3:5-18. Here Paul's argument is underpinned by a temporal logic; Paul relativises the significance of the law by placing it in a specific chronological relationship with the Abrahamic covenant. The covenant with Abraham was made first, and the law came afterwards. It is this temporal ordering which determines the relationship between the two. The Abrahamic covenant and the Sinaitic covenant may not be related causally on the level of human history, but their chronology is not incidental to their mutual significance.

Fourth, the story of Abraham's physical offspring is used typologically to explain the present situation, and to warn the Galatians (4:21-31). Paul himself refers to this as an allegory, but it better fits the definition of typology set out in chapter 5 above. It is typological because Paul identifies correspondences between two distinct historical situations, and uses the former to support his reading of the latter. Paul does not read the story of Sarah and Hagar as a timeless illustration of two different types of people, but as a narrative which points forwards to the present situation. What happened then is also happening now (4:29), but it is crucial that the Galatians resist those who would draw them back into a situation of slavery. In his typological reading of the story of Sarah and Hagar, Paul uses the same language as in his discussion of the law in 2 Corinthians 3. Again there are two covenants, and again there is a sharp contrast between the two. Martyn argues that the two covenants here refer not to Judaism and Christianity, but to the two competing Gentile missions, one law-observant and one not law-observant.[596] It is correct that Paul has his opponents in view here, with reference to the specific Galatians situation; he is not engaging in a general critique of Judaism.[597] But in warning the Galatians that to follow the law means transferring from one type of slavery to another, it remains implicit that all who follow the

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[596] Martyn, *Theological Issues,* 191-208.
[597] See Michael Bachmann, *Anti-Judaism in Galatians? Exegetical Studies on a Polemical Letter and Paul's Theology* trans. Robert L. Brawley (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 85-100.

law apart from Christ, either Jew or Gentile, are in slavery.[598] They are not the true heirs of Abraham. Paul's reading of this story is in some ways counterintuitive,[599] but the meaning for the Galatians is reasonably clear. The story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, shows that the Galatians' newfound freedom is rooted in their faith, apart from the law.

Overall, then, Paul's use of Abraham in Galatians is imbued with a sense of time and history. The Abrahamic narratives are not simply mined for proof-texts, and Paul does not see Abraham as an essentially ahistorical figure who is useful in the way that his own story is an example of a particular way of God dealing with humanity. In Galatians, the Abrahamic covenant, the Sinaitic covenant, and the Christ-event are mapped onto a chronological framework; without this framework, Paul's interpretation of these events loses some of its force. This is not to say however, that in Galatians Paul presents a simple, linear *Heilsgeschichte*. There is no steady ascent here, from Abraham, through Israel, to Christ. Indeed, the way in which Paul describes the relationship between Abraham and the Christ-event reveals some interesting anomalies. Throughout Galatians, Paul contrasts two different modes of relationship between God and humanity. The first is based on faith and the Spirit; the second is based on law and flesh. The relationship between the two does not consist simply in the former being superior to the latter; there is also an important temporal aspect to take into consideration. The life of law and flesh was for former times, before the arrival of Christ onto the scene. Before faith came (πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν), the law played its role as a pedagogue, until the revelation of faith (3:23). Now that faith has come, there is no need for the disciplinarian, because faith has taken its place (3:25). This juncture in time is marked by the Christ-event (3:24; 4:4).

Of course, by faith Paul does not simply mean belief in God; 'faith' refers to the new way of living and relating to God, and the change in status enacted in people because of the Christ-event. Israel did not have this kind of faith, and they lived under the law. Abraham, however, does not fit neatly into this scheme, and his story shows that this new way of faith is not entirely new. Throughout Galatians, Paul's retelling of Abraham's story is devoid of any reference to law. For Paul, Abraham's relationship with God was defined by his faith; it is this faith that meant that he was reckoned as righteous. In 2 Corinthians 3, Moses appears as

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[598] For a critique of Martyn's reading see Brendan Byrne, 'Jerusalems Above and Below: A Critique of J.L. Martyn's Interpretation of the Hagar-Sarah Allegory in Gal 4.21-5.1' *NTS* 60 (2014), 215-231.

[599] See John M.G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1988), 91-93. Barclay is probably correct to suggest that Paul's engagement with the story of Sarah and Hagar results from his opponents' engagement with the same story.

an incongruous figure. Unlike the rest of Israel, who are separated from God's glory, Moses goes before God unveiled, and reflects God's glory, in just the same way as those who are in Christ do. Abraham is a similarly incongruous figure. As a righteous man of faith, Abraham does not just point forward typologically to the coming of faith, but actually lives by it. In the time before Christ, before faith came, Abraham was made righteous by faith.

iii. Abraham in Romans 4

Space here does not permit anything approaching a comprehensive comparison of Paul's use of Abraham in Galatians 3-4 and Romans 4. Certainly, there are both contrasts and similarities between these two texts.[600] There are features of Romans 4, however, which have interesting implications for Paul's understanding of time. First, as in Galatians, Paul uses chronology as part of his argument. In Galatians, Paul emphasises the temporal distance between the promise and the law. In Romans, he emphasises the chronological priority of Abraham being made righteous over his circumcision (4:9-10). Because Abraham's circumcision came afterwards, it cannot be the source of his righteousness.

Second, the way in which Paul tells the story of Abraham in Romans 4 incorporates language which Paul takes from the Christ-event, such that the temporal distance between Abraham and Christ arguably begins to dissolve. Wesley Hill makes this point in comparing Paul's telling of the story with the original story in Genesis.[601] In Genesis 17, Abraham and Sarah are both of advanced age. When God promises to Abraham that he will be the father of

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[600] For comparisons between the two, see Günter H. Juncker, '"Children of Promise": Spiritual Paternity and Patriarch Typology in Galatians and Romans' *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17.1 (2007), 131-160; Gordon D. Fee, 'Who are Abraham's True Children? The role of Abraham in Pauline Argumentation' in Steven A. Hunt ed., *Perspectives on our Father Abraham: Essays in Honor of Marvin R. Wilson* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 126-137; Roy A. Harrisville, *The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of St. Paul* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992); Thomas H. Tobin, 'What Shall We Say that Abraham Found? The Controversy Behind Romans 4' *Harvard Theological Review* 88.4 (1995), 437-452; Bruce Longenecker, 'Sharing in Their Spiritual Blessings? The Stories of Israel in Galatians and Romans' in Bruce Longenecker ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 58-84; Hooker, 'Heirs of Abraham'. For a recent discussion on Abraham in Romans 4, see N.T. Wright, 'Paul and the Patriarch: The Role of Abraham in Romans 4' *JSNT* 35 (2013), 207-41 cf. Jan Lambrecht, 'Romans 4: A Critique of N.T. Wright' *JSNT* 36 (2013), 189-194. Wright here strongly rejects the idea that Paul 'envisages a smooth, continuous salvation-history in a crescendo all the way from Abraham to Jesus' (208), but he does place Paul's reading of the Abraham narrative in Romans in the context of a larger story, where Abraham 'is the one with whom God made a covenant to rescue the whole world from the Adamic plight of sin and death, a promise now at last fulfilled in the Messiah' (237).

[601] Wesley Allen Hill, *Paul and the Triune Identity: Rereading Paul's God-, Christ-, and Spirit-Language in Conversation with Trinitarian Theologies of Persons and Relations* (Durham University Doctoral Thesis, 2012) http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3921 - accessed 23/12/2014, 62-71.

many nations, he falls on his face and laughs, asking whether a child could be born to a man of one hundred years and a woman of ninety years (17:15-17). Abraham and Sarah's advanced age emphasises the miraculous nature of the promise.

In Paul's rereading of the story, however, he goes one step further. For Paul, Isaac does not come from a situation of old age, but of death. In Genesis, Abraham and Sarah are merely old, but in Romans, Abraham remains faithful even when he considers his own body, which was 'already dead' (ἤδη νενεκρωμένον), and the deadness (τὴν νέκρωσιν) of Sarah's womb (4:19). These references to death are Paul's own additions to the story. As Hill argues, 'The Genesis story emphasises the advanced age of Abraham and Sarah ... but it does not describe this as a condition of death out of which Isaac will be born, as though by resurrection. That metaphor is one Paul brings *to* the text of Genesis, which raises the question of where it comes from and why Paul has decided to employ it here.'[602] The answer to this question is hinted at a few verses earlier, where Paul refers to God as the one who gives life to the dead, and who calls into existence things that do not exist (4:17). But it is the conclusion to the section in 4:23-25 'which emerges as determinative for the shape of the argument's *development*.'[603] There, it is Jesus who is the one raised from the dead.[604]

Paul's rereading of the Abraham narrative, then, goes beyond simply using him as an example for an abstract soteriological or theological principle. He is more than a mere example of justification by faith. By reinterpreting the birth of Isaac in terms drawn from the Christ-event – resurrection and new life from a condition of death – Paul recognises continuity in history. This continuity does not imply linear causation, but Paul sees the same God, working in the same ways, in both the Christ-event and the story of Abraham. It is Paul's understanding of the Christ-event which allows him to reread Abraham's story.

This new understanding is implied in 4:23, where Paul states that the words spoken to Abraham were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.[605] For the addressees of Paul's letter, however, it is not faith generally which is of value, but more specifically faith in him who raised Jesus from the dead (4:24). How, then, does the faith of believers correlate with

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[602] Hill, *Paul and the Triune Identity,* 64.

[603] Hill, *Paul and the Triune Identity*, 64.

[604] Hill, *Paul and the Triune Identity*, 62, sets up his argument against Hays, *Echoes of Scripture,* 57, who states that Paul 'has developed this reading of the story directly through exegesis of Scripture, without any appeal to the language of Christian confession. This reading intends to be and is Jewish theological interpretation of the significance of Abraham.' For Hill, in contrast, Romans 4 represents a Christological rereading of the Abraham story.

[605] This echoes 1 Corinthians 10:11, where the things that happened to Israel occurred for the sake of believers in the present. In both cases, Paul takes a narrative from the Hebrew Scriptures and rereads it in the light of the Christ-event.

Abraham's faith? If righteousness depends on faith in Christ's death and resurrection, how can it be the compared with the faith of Abraham, who lived in the time before Christ? This is similar to the problem of Galatians 3, where Abraham lives by faith in the time before faith.

It seems scarcely credible that Paul means to say that Abraham himself had faith in Christ. But Paul does reread Abraham's story in terms based on the Christ-event, suggesting some level of continuity in divine action across history. It may be significant that in 4:24, while the faith that Paul describes relates to the Christ-event specifically, it is not actually faith *in Christ* that Paul refers to specifically, but faith *in God*, the one who raised Jesus our lord from the dead (τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν). Hence, while Abraham did not know about the Christ-event, living many years before it, he still had faith in the God who would go on to raise Christ from the dead. Paul, living after this event, recognises it as a fundamental part of God's revealed character. God *is* he who brings life to the dead (4:17), evidenced in both the Christ-event itself (4:24), and in the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, a story which is now reread in the light of the Christ-event (4:19).

In 4:25, Paul goes on to further explain the grounding of the righteousness that is reckoned according to faith: Christ was handed over to death for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification. This is not quite a formal, systematic soteriology, but these details do suggest two distinct components to the righteousness of believers: first, God's action in Christ; second, believers' faith in this God. Only the latter component is present in the Abraham story, however, which takes place before the Christ-event. Does this mean that the Christ-event works backwards through time, so that Abraham is made righteous because of Christ's death and resurrection, even before it happened?[606] Paul does not offer a clear answer to this question, but his re-readings of the Abraham narrative in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 both suggest a fluidity in his understanding of time, correlating with his reading of scriptural narratives in 1 Corinthians 10 and 2 Corinthians 3.

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[606] Wayne H. Johnson, 'The Paradigm of Abraham in Galatians 3:6-9' *TrinJ* 8 (1987), 179-99, at 196, argues that Paul here identifies the Christ-event as the solution to the problem of how God could declare sinners to be righteous. Abraham is the 'prime example' of this, but now the grounds for this decision 'have been fully revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.'

4. Abraham, the Law, and Salvation History

i. Time or Territory?

As we have seen, at several points in his argument in Galatians 3-4, Paul utilises temporal distinctions. Paul argues that the arrival of faith means the end of the time of the law; Gentiles share in the new age, where the promises to Abraham are being fulfilled, having found their promised recipient in Christ. For Martyn, the crucial issue of Galatians can thus be summed up in one question: 'what time is it?'[607] The issue that divides Paul and his opponents is whether Gentiles must follow the law, but the reason that they come to different conclusions on this issue is that they have different beliefs about time. Not all commentators agree on this point however. Sigurd Grindheim argues that the main subject matter of Galatians is 'salvation territory' rather than salvation history, and the question at the heart of the letter is not 'what time is it?', but rather 'what has Jesus done for you and what is your relationship to him?'[608] While acknowledging that there are temporal themes in Galatians, Grindheim suggests that these are often overstated. Several 'temporal' markers, he suggests, can instead be read spatially. For instance, Paul's introductory statement in 1:4 tends to be read as 'the present evil age', or 'the evil age that is now', but can equally be read as 'the evil world that is here.'

In addition to these more ambiguous phrases, Grindheim argues that there are a number of clear examples of spatial language. The Galatians are moved into a different place (1:6); Paul is set apart (1:15), believers are in Christ (2:4, 17; 3:13, 26, 28), Paul used to be in Judaism (1:13, 14), the conflict between Paul and his opponents is depicted as a territorial war (2:4, 5; 4:17, 30; 5:12), and the Galatians are at risk of moving away from Christ (4:9; 5:4).[609] Hence, Paul's purpose 'is not to provide an overview of salvation history; it is to explain the nature of the Galatians' transition from slavery to freedom.'[610]

Grindheim is certainly correct to recognise spatial categories in Galatians. It seems unnecessary, however, to play temporal and spatial categories off against each other. It is true that Paul's focus is on the Galatians' particular situation; his letter to them is not an abstract theological treatise. But if the point at which Paul and his opponents clash is ecclesiological, or ethical – how should Gentiles behave now that they are in Christ, particularly in relation to

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[607] Martyn, *Galatians*, 104.
[608] Grindheim, 'Not Salvation History', 108.
[609] Grindheim, 'Not Salvation History', 95-6.
[610] Grindheim, 'Not Salvation History', 97.

the law? – Paul finds the root of this disagreement in a theological difference that is intrinsically bound to the question of time. The arguments of Paul's opponents have a certain logic to them. After all, surely God's people should obey God's law? For Paul, though, this logic belongs to a different time, before God sent his son to redefine the terms of his relationship with humanity.

ii. Conclusion to Chapter 7

Of the three texts considered in detail so far, Galatians 3-4 potentially offers the broadest view of salvation history. 1 Corinthians 10 and 2 Corinthians 3 are primarily concerned with particular episodes in Israel's history, and their significance for the present. In Galatians 3-4, Paul considers a much wider span of time, taking in the story of Abraham, the period of the law, and the Christ-event, as well as the present situation. How do these various events or periods fit together in Paul's thought? Central to this question is Paul's understanding of the law, which plays a crucial role in his argument in Galatians. Unfortunately, while Paul's lengthy answer to the question of 'why the law?' is full of interesting ideas, it is primarily defensive, as he seeks to counter any suggestion that his gospel goes against God's law. According to Paul, his opponents have failed to understand that the law was given for a period of time, which has now come to pass. But this simply leads to further questions. What was the purpose of this period of time, and how did it contribute or lead to what happened in Christ? Why give the law at all, instead of waiting until the fullness of time to send Christ? Why not send Christ in the first place, skipping the time of the law? Unfortunately, these deeper questions are not considered. In Galatians, Paul sees an urgent need to downplay the role of Israel and the law in God's plans. The Christ-event has created a new situation, not dependent on the law. In this sense, the Christ-event is apocalyptic. Martyn is surely correct to emphasise the revelatory aspect of the Christ event, allowing believers to look back and better understand history. However, contra Martyn, Paul resists going down the route of denying that the law was ever given by God, and that it was ever part of God's plan for history. The law *was* given by God, but for a time that has now passed. Here, again, Barth's approach is useful. In Galatians Paul emphasises the calamitous nature of history, but also recognises that the Christ event is part of the crimson thread running through history, the plan God has weaved *despite* that history, in fact.

There are several features of Galatians that hint at some kind of salvation-historical scheme. First, it is significant that Paul does not go down the route of denying the law's divine origin. His downscaling of the law's role is radical, but it remains within the context of

divine action in history, in the sense that it was ordained by God, given for a specific time. Second, there is a direct link between the story of Abraham and the story of Christ. This is partly a case of promise and fulfilment, but the connection goes beyond that. God's declaration of Abraham's righteousness, based purely on faith, creates a relationship between God and humanity bearing a particular pattern, a pattern that is repeated in the community created in the wake of the Christ-event. Third, Paul places the Christ-event within the context of the law. In the fullness of time, God sent his Son, born under the law (4:4). These details certainly do not amount to a full-blown scheme of *Heilsgeschichte*, and they certainly do not imply any sense of progress through history, on the human level.[611] They do, however, suggest that Paul's attitude towards salvation-history is more complex than the rhetorical requirements of Galatians can allow for. In another context, such as Romans 9-11, the situation may be different.

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[611] As Barclay, *Obeying the Truth,* 96-105, argues, Paul's argument in Galatians is characterised by both continuity and discontinuity. He refers to successive epochs of time, and to promise and fulfilment, but he also talks about 'the present evil age', and characterises salvation in Christ as rescue from the slavery of powers including the law. Paul's apocalyptic motifs sit side by side with a salvation-historical outlook. If we emphasise one of these aspects of his theology at the expense of the other, 'we interpret him too one-sidedly and relax the tension which these two factors create.'

Chapter 8
Romans 9-11

Romans 9-11 is an emotionally charged, theologically complex text. To attempt to do justice to it in its entirety here would be futile. Instead, this chapter will focus on specific passages within the text, approaching them with our particular topic in mind, considering how Paul sees God working in history in the past, why Israel's present situation is as it is, and how the divine plan will proceed in the future. In these chapters Paul does present a salvation history of sorts, but in his presentation the emphasis is on the incongruity of divine activity in history, which is divorced from the realm of human cause and effect, resting entirely on God's sovereignty, and his repeated decision of grace.

Romans 9-11 contains numerous individual points of debate, but commentators also disagree on some of the more general questions about these chapters.[612] Is Romans 9-11 the theological centre of the letter, or is it a digression following on from the climax of Paul's argument in chapter 8?[613] Does Paul present a carefully constructed argument in response to the question of Israel, or do we see Paul arguing dynamically, offering an ad hoc response to a question that follows naturally on from the previous chapter?[614] Of all the undisputed

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[612] For a useuful survey of the trends in recent interpretation of Romans 9-11, see Mark Reasoner, 'Romans 9-11 Moves from Margin to Center, from Rejection to Salvation: Four Grids for Recent English-Language Exegesis' in Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner eds., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 239-49. Reasoner plots interpreters against four 'grids': connection, diagnosis, argument, and mystery, and notes general interpretive shifts over time.

[613] Recent studies have tended to see Romans 9-11 as integral to the letter as a whole, and as the climax of Paul's theological argument that spans chapters 1-11. See for example J. Christian Beker, 'Romans 9-11 in the Context of the Early Church,' in Daniel L. Migliore ed., *The Church and Israel: The Frederick Neumann Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990), 40-55, at 44; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 29-30; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 469; Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company), 244; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 234. Several commentators point to the introduction, or *propositio* in 1:16-17, which introduces the theme of Jews and Gentiles, a theme which dominates chapter 9-11.

[614] The emotional tone of the introduction to Romans 9, along with the complex, and arguably convoluted course of Paul's argument, has led commentators to speculate about how the chapters were composed. While some commentators deem chapters 9-11 to be a carefully constructed apology, others characterise them as an ad hoc argument, culminating in a surprise conclusion which may even involve sudden divine revelation. If the doxological climax to chapter 11, including the revelation that all Israel will be saved, was anticipated by Paul at the beginning of chapter 9, then his apparent anguish could seem disingenuous. This, of course, assumes that the Israel who will be saved in chapter 11 is the same Israel who Paul's anguish in chapter 9 is directed towards. It could also be that Paul's anguish is a rhetorical device which emphasises the current dire situation of Israel, with the effect that the climax of chapter 11 becomes more emphatic in contrast. For a useful survey of

Pauline letters, Romans has the least obvious purpose.[615] There are a number of different reasons why Paul might have decided to write the letter to the Romans, including but not limited to: Paul's intention to use Rome as a base for a missionary journey to Spain;[616] an attempt to ease tensions between the Jewish and Gentile parties within the Roman church;[617] Paul's concern to bring the Roman church within the divine two-step pattern;[618] that Paul really writes for the church in Jerusalem, in an attempt to defend his understanding of the gospel;[619] that Paul seeks to establish an 'apostolic' foundation in Rome.[620] It is likely that Paul had several interrelated reasons for writing Romans.[621] There is a danger of misinterpreting the letter by choosing one of these possibilities and allowing it to shape our reading of the text exclusively. In Romans 9-11, however, it seems clear that one of Paul's

contrasting ways of reading Romans 9-11, see Heikki Räisänen, 'Paul, God and Israel: Romans 9-11 in Recent Research' in Jacob Neusner, Peder Borgen, Ernst S. Frerichs and Richard Horsley eds., *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 178-206.

[615] There is a large amount of literature that directly addresses this issue. In addition to commentaries, see W.S. Campbell, 'The Romans Debate' *JSNT* 10 (1981), 19-28; Jeffrey A. Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans: Toward a New Understanding' *Novum Testamentum XXXII* 4 (1990), 317-339; Andrew A. Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Karl P. Donfried ed., *The Romans Debate – Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991); Walter B. Russell, 'An Alternative Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1988), 174-184.

[616] Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 80-90. Jewett identifies four factors that point to the Spanish mission being the main motivation behind the letter: 1. The peculiar rhetoric of the letter; 2. The form of greetings at the end and their likely inclusion in the original form of the letter; 3. The cultural situation in Spain; 4. The role of Phoebe as the patron of the Spanish mission and the presenter of the letter to the congregation.

[617] It is possible that these tensions arose because of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 49 CE, and their subsequent return after Nero's accession in 54 CE. It is plausible that these circumstances could have created a situation where a Gentile-dominated church in Rome became the recipient of a number of new Jewish members. See Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision,' 322; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 260-264; Schreiner, *Romans*, 21; Witherington, *Romans*, 17

[618] Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Romans 9-11* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 244. The 'divine two-step pattern' refers to the idea that the gospel was for the Jews first, and the Gentiles second.

[619] Jacob Jervell, 'The Letter to Jerusalem' in Karl P. Donfried ed., *The Romans Debate – Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), 53-64

[620] Günter Klein, 'Paul's Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans' in Karl P. Donfried ed., *The Romans Debate – Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), 29-43.

[621] Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision,' 31, suggests that 'Paul's letter should be seen as an attempt to gather up the circumstances in Rome as well as in Paul's own life and ministry into a single version.' Likewise, Schreiner, *Romans*, 23, argues that Paul wrote for several different reasons, but that each of these reasons is prompted by a wider concern: 'the furthering of the gospel and a united church, for the glory of God.' On the other hand, Jewett *Romans*, 80, warns against overly complex explanations of the purpose of Romans, which make the letter difficult to understand.

key concerns is Jewish-Gentile relations, both within and outside of the church. Paul seeks to correct any misunderstandings by tackling the difficult question of Israel.

1. The Plight of Israel

i. Have God's Promises Failed?

Paul begins Romans 9 by lamenting the present fate of his own people, the Israelites. To begin with, he does not explicitly state what the cause of his anguish is, but it becomes clear over the course of the chapter. Gentiles have become recipients of blessings, but the majority of Paul's Jewish brethren have not. This is troubling for Paul because as a Jew, he has concern for his fellow Jews (9:3). But this situation also has potentially troubling theological implications.[622] The Jews are those to whom blessings have been promised. Given the present situation, has God failed to keep his promises? This situation is worrying for Jews, but it is also worrying for Gentiles. As Beker asks, 'if God's promises to Israel have become null and void, how are Gentiles to trust the confirmation of these promises to them in Christ?'[623] This is a theological problem, but it has a salvation-historical aspect: if in the past, God elected Israel, and promised her certain blessings for the future, why now, in the present are Gentiles enjoying these blessings, while the vast majority of Jews are not? The promises made to Israel, recorded in scripture, suggest certain things about the future. But the present situation does not fit these expectations. Does this mean that God is untrustworthy? Is he unrighteous? These questions are salvation-historical ones, because they are played out in the historical sphere. The present situation, at least on the surface, suggests a discontinuity in history, rather than the continuity implied by the pattern of promise and fulfilment. Paul's task, then, is to show that when one looks across the breadth of God's activity in history, one sees evidence of a God who behaves with righteousness and consistency, even when this consistency is not immediately apparent on the human level.

Paul's answer to the theological problem posed by the present situation is made up of several parts. First, he makes a distinction between children of the flesh and children of the promise (9:6-8). There is a true Israel within Israel, and true children of Abraham among Abraham's physical descendants. The point here is that God's promises only apply to this

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[622] On the relationship between Paul's personal and theological anguish, see Otfried Hofius, '"All Israel Will Be Saved": Divine Salvation and Israel's Deliverance in Romans 9-11' in Daniel L. Migliore ed., *The Church and Israel: The Frederick Neumann Symposium on the Theological Intepretation of Scripture* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990), 19-39, at 27-28.

[623] Beker, 'Romans 9-11 in the Context of the Early Church,' 45.

group; whether or not God has been faithful depends on whether or not he has been faithful to this group specifically. But behind the question of who are the members of the true Israel, or the true descendants of Abraham, lies a more general claim regarding the way in which God interacts with individual humans, and with the course of human history. In the case of Jacob and Esau (9:13-16), who were 'loved' and 'hated' by God respectively, Paul definitively rejects any suggestion that God's attitude or actions towards them was based on anything they had done.[624] Paul quotes from Ex. 33:19, concluding that 'it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy' (9:16)

ii. The Scandalous Basis of the Divine Decision

Comparing Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 with *The Wisdom of Solomon*, John Barclay argues that 'It is hard to avoid the impression that Paul is out to scandalise his readers.'[625] *Wisdom* stresses the goodness, love, and mercy of God. God's goodness guarantees a fair, just, and well-ordered universe. In such a universe, people will tend to get what they deserve. The righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked will be punished. The reverse of this is also true: receipt of blessings is an indication of righteousness, while receipt of curses is an indication of unrighteousness. In *Wisdom*, Jacob is presented as a 'righteous man', who is recognised as such by Wisdom, and blessed as a result. This provides an implicit rationale for God's preference for Jacob. God acts fairly, giving people what they deserve, based on their actions. This shows the righteousness of God, but it also establishes an orderly, fair universe, of moral cause and effect.[626]

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[624] Moo, *Romans*, 587, suggests that 'love' and 'hate' here refer to actions that God carries out, rather than emotions that he feels.

[625] John M.G. Barclay, 'Unnerving Grace: Approaching Romans 9-11 from the Wisdom of Solomon' in Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner eds., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, 91-109, at 107. For a more comprehensive comparison of *Wisdom* and Romans, see Jonathan Andrew Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013).

[626] Elizabeth E. Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9-11* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989), outlines four points at which wisdom traditions differ from apocalyptic (although there is some overlap): 1. For the sage, the meaning of life is imminent and accessible in the present. For the seer, meaning is located in the future; 2. The wisdom writer finds meaning in the proper conduct of life. The apocalyptic writer finds meaning in divine activity; 3. Wisdom is available for all who seek it. Revelations are granted only to specific persons; 4. The wisdom writer experiences confidence in the order, balance, and harmony of creation. For the seer, life makes sense only with regard to the eschatological future. Based on this typology, Paul's approach in Romans 9-11 is firmly apocalyptic.

Paul, in contrast, offers one single, simple rational: the sovereign choice of God.[627] As Barclay argues, Paul has already set a precedent for this kind of characterisation of God's actions.[628] In explaining the effects of the Christ-event, Paul argues that the ungodly are justified (4:4-6), and that we were reconciled 'while we were enemies' (5:6-10). Hence, it seems likely that Paul's understanding of figures such as Jacob and Esau is itself conditioned by his understanding of the Christ-event. In Christ, God has acted decisively to call the unrighteous, the ungodly, and those who are his enemies. The blessings that come from the Christ-event are not distributed based on merit, or worth. The logic of the Christ-event is not worthiness, or just deserts. It is grace. God's blessings in Christ are given freely according to God's inscrutable grace, and Paul sees the same pattern of divine activity at work with figures like Jacob, and with Israel, who receive God's mercy (9:15). The reverse is also true, as Esau and Pharaoh attest (9:17-18).

In the previous chapter on Galatians 3-4, we saw that for Paul, the Christ-event was not contingent on Israel's history. Israel did not prepare the way for Christ. Instead, the Christ-event is an incongruous act of grace, which depends on God's sovereignty alone. In Romans 9, then, we see that this mode of divine activity is consistent across history. God's calling of individuals and communities is based on God's own decision, and not on the kind of ethical rationale that *Wisdom* supplies. God's election of Israel was not a single event which began a linear, causal chain, spanning history and leading towards the Christ-event. Instead, Israel's ongoing election is determined by grace, from generation to generation: 'the only Israel that exists is the one God brought into being through promise and call.'[629] This, of course, leads us to the situation of Paul's own generation, where it seems that God has abandoned the majority of Israel, passing on their blessings to the Gentiles.

Towards the end of chapter 9, Paul considers the nature of Israel's plight in more detail. Paul explains the present situation in terms of the contrasting fortunes of Gentiles and Jews. Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have found it through faith; Israel, who sought after the righteousness of the law, did not achieve righteousness (9:30-31). Why is this

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[627] Linebaugh, *God, Grace and Righteousness,* 175 expresses this well: 'The contrast is stark: *Wisdom's* rereading of Israel's scripture is a rewriting of Israel's history that uncovers and underlines the rationale for divine action by naming the fit between God's acts and human subjects; Paul's retelling of foundational moments in Israel's history excludes a series of possible explanations for the duality of divine decision (e.g. birth, status, morality, success) and celebrates the utter and autonomous singularity of God's initiative.'

[628] Barclay, 'Unnerving Grace,' 109.

[629] Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 'On the Calling-Into-Being of Israel: Romans 9:6-29' in Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner eds., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 255-269, at 260.

the case? Because Jews have strived for righteousness on the basis of works, rather than faith. To clarify what he means by this, Paul says that they have stumbled over a stumbling stone, quoting from Isaiah 28:16.[630] A prophecy that God's people will stumble over a stone put in place by God raises the same kind of questions regarding sovereignty and responsibility that Paul discusses in chapter 9, but the pressing question here is what, or who Paul identifies as the stone, and the context strongly implies that the stone is Christ.[631] Paul goes on to describe Israel's fault in terms of having unenlightened zeal (10:2), and of being ignorant (10:3), failing to recognise and submit to God's righteousness. Israel's zeal, which is directed towards the law, is ignorant and misplaced because 'Christ is the end of the law' (10:4).

iii. Christ, the τέλος of the law

Of course, the precise meaning of 10:4 is a cause for some debate.[632] As in 2 Cor. 3:13, this debate is primarily focussed on the meaning of τέλος. In Romans 10:4, there are three basic options:[633]

1. Temporal. τέλος means cessation, or termination, as Christ abolishes the law in some sense.[634]

2. Teleological. τέλος means goal, or aim, and faith in Christ is that which the law was intended to lead towards.[635]

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[630] There are also other early Christian texts that make a similar connection, including 1 Pet 2:6-8; Barn 6:2-4; Mk 12:10-11; Matt 21:42; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11.

[631] It is possible that the stone refers to the gospel, rather than Christ himself, but as Jewett, *Romans*, 611, puts it, 'either way, the offense is Christological.'

[632] There are numerous detailed studies of this issue, including: Robert Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4 in Pauline Perspective* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); Steven Richard Bechtler, 'Christ the Τέλος of the Law: The Goal of Romans 10:4' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56.2 (1994), 288-308; John Paul Heil, 'Christ, the Termination of the Law (Romans 9:30-10:8)' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63.3 (2001), 484-498; George E. Howard, 'Christ the End of the law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4ff.' *JBL* 88.3 (1969), 331-337; Ira Jolivet, 'Christ the Τέλος in Romans 10:4 as Both Fulfilment and Termination of the Law' *Restoration Quarterly* 51.1 (2009),13-30; Wilhelm C. Linss, 'Exegesis of Telos in Romans 10:4' *Biblical Research* 33 (1988), 5-12.

[633] Lin, 'Exegesis of Telos,' 7, suggests 'fulfilment,' 'goal,' and 'termination' as different options. Most commentators group the first two together.

[634] See James D.G. Dunn, *Romans* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1998), 597; Schreiner, *Romans*, 545; Kari Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan – Volume 1: Paul's Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans* (Helsinki: The Finnish Exegetical Society, 2003), 316. According to Kuula, 'Paul must have meant that a salvation-historical shift had taken place. Before Christ, the law and the covenant were in force, but after Christ the salvific presence of God was only available by participation in Christ. So Christ was the end of the law in a temporal sense. At the time of the Christ-event, the era of the law and the covenant as a sphere of salvation had ended.'

3. A mixture of the above.[636]

The first option is preferred by a majority of contemporary scholars,[637] and it certainly fits neatly with our reading of Galatians 3-4. There, Paul characterises Israel's time under the law as a time of infancy and immaturity, until the fullness of time, when Abraham's children could become full heirs, living by the Spirit rather than according to the law. Here, then, as in Galatians 3-4, the Christ-event marks the dividing line between two epochs of salvation history. Christ brings the time of the law to an end. There are good reasons, however, to think that τέλος also has teleological connotations here. As Badenas argues, the use of τέλος in Biblical and cognate literature strongly supports this teleological reading.[638] In addition, the way Paul talks about the law in Romans 8 indicates that Christ does not simply terminate the law. There, Paul argues that the law was weakened by sinful flesh (8:3). The advent of the Spirit does not simply do away with the law, however. Instead, Paul states that those who walk in the Spirit, rather than the flesh, fulfil the righteous requirements of the law (τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου). In one sense, then, Christ brings the law to an end. The Spirit replaces the law as the operative force in the lives of God's people.[639] In another sense, however, Christ is the goal, or climax of the law, because the Christ-event allows for the creation of a people who, through faith and by the Spirit, fulfil the law's righteous requirements.[640]

This has interesting implications for the question of salvation history, suggesting both continuity and discontinuity between the time before Christ, and the time after Christ. On the one hand, there is continuity between these two epochs, because the law retains a role in both.

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[635] For example, Jewett, *Romans*, 601, describes 9:30-10:4 by stating that 'The entire argument deals with Israel's present failure to recognise Christ as the goal of the law.'

[636] Jolivet, 'Christ the τέλος,' 30, suggests that Paul's use of τέλος is 'intentionally ambiguous and simultaneously conveys the dual meanings that Christ is both the goal/fulfillment of the written Torah and its termination.' Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 327, suggests that the law comes to an end by being fulfilled in Christ. After the Christ-event, a new *Weltzeit* is begun.

[637] Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law*, 7-34, traces trends in the interpretation of Rom. 10:4, showing that the teleological reading used to be more common, but that more modern scholarship has tended to prefer the temporal reading.

[638] Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law*, 38-79. Badenas covers a wide range of relevant texts in the linguistic part of his study. Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 618.

[639] Heil, 'Christ, the Termination of the Law,' 487, suggests that Christ is the end of the law in the sense of ending the law as the way to righteousness. But Paul's argument throughout Romans is that righteousness has never been based on the law. It has only ever come through faith.

[640] Bechtler, 'Christ the τέλος of the law,' 300, argues that the teleological and temporal meanings of τέλος cannot both be in view. In light of verses such as Romans 3:21 31; 8:4; 12:10, he argues, Paul cannot have meant that Christ is the termination of the law. It is perfectly possible, however, that Paul could think that the law no longer applies, without completely dismissing it. 8:4 in particular indicates a fascinating nuance in the way in which the law operates in the time of the Spirit.

Paul tends to contrast living by the Spirit with living by the law (e.g. Gal. 5:16-26), but here he states that a Spirit-led life will actually fulfil the law. There is also discontinuity, however, because the new situation shows the futility of the old one. Those who now fulfil the righteous requirement of the law do so purely because of the Spirit. This suggests that Israel's history was not leading anywhere. It was not progressing or developing to a point where the law could be fulfilled. This was only made possible by the apocalyptic interruption of the Christ-event, and the giving of the Spirit.

Israel's current plight, then, is a result of their response to Christ. While a minority, including Paul, have recognised Jesus as the messiah, the majority have not. Paul, as one who previously persecuted the church, knows this all too well. These verses are not a general, timeless criticism of Israel's religious activity. They are specific to the present situation that Paul addresses. It is important to recognise that when Paul says in 9:31 that Israel strove for righteousness based on the law, this claim parallels verse 30, where Paul states that Gentiles have attained righteousness. Paul may quite plausibly look back across the breadth of Israel's history and see a repeated pattern of misunderstanding and misplaced zeal, but in these verses he has a much more limited span of time in mind, when Gentiles have received righteousness.[641] This means that Israel's 'fault', the fault which explains the present situation, is related directly to the Christ-event.[642] Israel's failure is paralleled by Gentile success. In other words, Israel's fault is that they have failed to submit to God's righteousness as displayed in the Christ-event.[643]

Paul's statement in 10:4 suggests, however, that the situation is more complex than Israel simply failing to recognise Christ as the messiah. Again, this recalls Paul's argument in Galatians 3-4, where Paul refuses to allow for the option of faith in Christ in addition to obedience to the law. And, as in Galatians, there is a crucial temporal aspect to Paul's argument. Israel's fault is not simply that they have failed to submit to Christ, but that in doing so they have failed to recognise that something drastic has happened in salvation history, bringing the old age of the law to an end, and ushering in a new age of 'righteousness

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[641] While Paul is focussed here on the present, this does not mean he does not see connections between the present and the past. Watson, *The Hermeneutics of Faith*, 435-7, argues persuasively that in Rom. 10:6-10, Paul rewrites Deut. 30:11-14 so that faith in Christ is substituted for doing the commandments. Likewise, in Rom. 11:8, Paul draws on both Is. 29:10 and Deut. 29:3, to show that 'the Israel of his own day is in exactly the same situation as the Israel addressed by Moses in the land of Moab.'

[642] As Cranfield, *Romans*, 517 argues, Paul's use of the aorist indicative suggests that Paul had in mind a specific historical event, i.e. the rejection of the Messiah.

[643] Cf. Terrence L. Donaldson, 'Jewish Christianity, Israel's Stumbling, and the *Sonderweg* Reading of Paul' *JSNT* 29.27 (2006), 27-54, at 30.

for everyone who believes' (10:4). Paul's diagnosis of the present situation, a situation which causes great anguish, has a salvation-historical character.[644] It is salvation-historical because it is tied to a particular scheme of history. Paul believes that the Christ-event has brought the old age, the time of the law, to an end. Christ is the end of the law. Now a new age, the age of faith and the Spirit, has begun. The majority of Israel, who have not submitted to Christ, have not yet recognised the turn of the ages.

iv. Israel's Role in the Divine Plan

If in chapter 9 God's actions and choices may appear to be arbitrary, calling some while rejecting others, in chapter 11 Paul argues that Israel's present situation has a clear purpose. He does this by outlining what Cullman calls an *Unheilsgeschichte*,[645] where God's ultimate plan for history is brought about through and despite catastrophe, caused by human sin. In Galatians, Paul refers to the promise to Abraham that the nations would be blessed through him. In Romans 11, Paul argues that blessings have come to the Gentiles through Israel. Surprisingly, though, it is through Israel's fall and rejection, rather than through her success, that the Gentiles have been blessed.

One can easily imagine a narrative centred on Israel's role as the vessel of God's revelation, where Israel, as a nation chosen by God and made holy by him might be - to use the language of Isaiah 49 - a light to the nations, bringing the Gentiles closer to God. An alternative narrative might focus on Israel as the vessel of God's judgment, purifying the nations by bringing them to their knees, and embodying the power and glory of God. The narrative that Paul depicts in Romans 11 is radically different to these. It is Israel's transgression (11:12) which means riches for the world, and it is their rejection which is the reconciliation of the world (11:15)

Israel's stumbling, then, has been brought about by God as a means of bringing blessings to the Gentiles. As Israel has fallen, the Gentiles have been raised up. This could have been the end of Israel's story. Indeed, Paul carefully lays the groundwork for just such a possibility: the elect remnant of Israel joining with the Gentiles as God's new people, leaving

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[644] For Moo, *Romans*, 642, Paul shows in this verse that Israel's situation results from her failure to recognise the gospel and Jesus as the culmination of salvation history: 'Paul is thinking in this verse in his usual category of salvation history. He is picturing the Mosaic law as the centre of an epoch in God's dealings with human beings that has now come to an end.'

[645] Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 21. See chapter 2 above.

the rest of Israel to perish.[646] Paul maintains that this outcome would not make God

unrighteous, and would not mean that God had rejected his people (11:1). God's honour

would remain intact. But this is not the conclusion to Israel's story that Paul expects. Instead,

Paul believes that at some point in the future, 'all Israel will be saved' (11:26).[647]

2. The Salvation of Israel

i. πας Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται

This is one of the most controversial claims in the entire Pauline corpus. Numerous

questions arise from these deceptively simple words, regarding the timing of this salvation,

and the mechanism by which it will be achieved,[648] but the most significant question is who

precisely Paul refers to as 'all Israel.' There are two main ways of answering this question.

Either Paul is redefining Israel to cover the elect remnant of ethnic Israel, i.e. Jewish

Christians, along with Gentiles who are in Christ, or he has in mind ethnic Israel as a whole,

including both the faithful remnant, and the unfaithful majority who have stumbled over the

stumbling stone.

The most significant proponent of the first option is N.T. Wright. Wright argues that

if 11:26 is read as referring to ethnic or fleshly Israel as a whole, this effectively undercuts

'more or less all he has been saying up to this point.'[649] Instead, he suggests, it makes more

sense to read 'all Israel' in the same way as 'the Israel of God' in Gal. 6:16, as referring to

'the full company of God's believing people, Abraham's complete family, Jews and Gentiles

alike.'[650] Several features of Romans 9-11 lead Wright towards this conclusion. First, Wright

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[646] Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 264, sees this as an intentional move, as a way of
'trapping' his Gentile audience into a prideful position, before turning the tables on them.

[647] Mary Ann Getty, 'Paul and the Salvation of Israel: A Perspective on Romans 9-11'
Catholic Biblical Quarterly 50 (1998), 456-469, at 458, describes 11:24-32 as a summary of chapters
9-11, with 25-26a as the 'thesis statement.'

[648] Paul could have a mass conversion in view, inspired by jealousy, or he could envision an
eschatological miracle. It is also possible that Paul did not know how it would happen. As Dunn,
Romans, 692, suggests: 'His contribution to the early Christian eschatological thought at this point is
simply in the revelation given to him that Israel's salvation is to be the climax of salvation history, not
a precise schedule or agenda of coming events.' See also Alan. F. Segal, 'Paul's Experience and
Romans 9-11' in Daniel L. Migliore ed., *The Church and Israel: The Frederick Neumann Symposium
on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990), 56-70.

[649] N. T. Wright, 'Romans 9-11 and the "New Perspective"' in Florian Wilk and J. Ross
Wagner eds., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*
(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 37-54, at 51.

[650] Wright, 'Romans 9-11 and the "New Perspective",' 51. Wright's reading of this phrase,
however, is open to question. Susan Eastman, 'Israel and Divine Mercy in Galatians and Romans' in
Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner eds., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the*

argues that Romans 1-8 argues consistently that believers are the true inheritors of the Abrahamic promises. For Paul to suddenly change his mind at the end of Romans 11 would seem very strange.[651] Second, Wright argues that Paul's grief in 9:1-5 is real. If Paul expected all ethnic Israel to be saved, why would he feel such grief?[652] Third, when Paul does talk about ethnic Israel retaking their place as part of God's people, such as in the olive tree analogy (11:16-24), this re-grafting is on the basis of faith. Paul maintains that such re-grafting is possible, but this depends on a response of faith, not on a last-minute restoration irrespective of faith.[653] Wright ties these arguments together by concluding that in Romans 9-11 Paul uses the word 'Israel' in a 'paradoxical' and 'polemical' way, sometimes referring to fleshly Israel, and sometimes referring to believing Jews and Gentiles.[654] In 11:26, Paul's use of 'Israel' is a polemical redefinition.[655]

Wright's interpretation highlights some of the complexities of Paul's argument in Romans 9-11, and is an attempt to tie Paul's various statements together into a coherent, consistent argument.[656] Wright is not, however, entirely successful. His first argument has some merit, but as we have seen, one of the key claims that Paul makes, particularly in Romans 9, is that God's sovereignty overrides any human activity. It is true that throughout Romans, Paul stresses the importance of responding to God with faith, but by tying God's blessings exclusively to a faith-response, there is a danger of making faith into the kind of work that Paul so emphatically rejects. Faith is the appropriate response to God's grace, but it cannot determine the scope or the effectiveness of that grace, at least not in advance. If God were to save all of fleshly Israel at some point in the future, this would represent a generous outpouring of grace, and would prompt the kind of doxology that we find at the end of chapter 11.

Interpretation of Romans 9-11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 147-170, at 149-152, argues that 'the Israel of God' refers to ethnic Israel, with Paul praying that they would receive mercy.

[651] Wright, 'Romans 9-11 and the "New Perspective",' 50.

[652] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 237.

[653] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 248.

[654] Wright, 'Romans 9-11 and the "New Perspective",' 50-51.

[655] Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan*, 304-307, reads 11:26 in a similar way, and argues that this is evidence that Paul has failed in his attempt to show that God's word has not failed. The promises to ethnic Israel have been transferred to those who believe in Christ, leaving the majority of ethnic Israel without the blessings promised to them.

[656] In *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 499-503, Wright describes 9:6-10:21 as 'a classic restatement of the story of Abraham's family', and sees in these chapters 'the strong and central affirmation that there is indeed a *single divine plan* to which God has been faithful'(499), although this plan is revealed to be 'hugely paradoxical' (450). See also the detailed examination of these chapters pp. 1156-1258, where Wright expands upon his reading of these chapters as found in his earlier works.

Wright's second argument, based on Paul's apparent grief, must also be taken seriously. There are two immediate responses to it, however. First, as mentioned previously, it could be argued that Romans 9-11 is an ad hoc argument which Paul develops as he dictates. It is therefore possible that at the beginning of chapter 9, Paul did not anticipate the conclusion of chapter 11. Paul's movement from grief to praise would then represent a genuine personal development as he either follows his argument through, or receives some kind of revelation as he dictates.[657] A more simple response is that in 9:1-5 Paul is considering the present, whereas in chapter 11 he looks forwards into the future. It would be neither inconsistent nor insincere for Paul to have grief for his Jewish brethren because in the present they stand outside of God's blessings, while believing that in the future, they will be brought back into the fold.

Wright is correct to argue that in the olive tree analogy, any re-grafting depends on faith. God will graft Israel back in 'if they do not persist in unbelief' (11:23). This does not necessarily lead to Wright's conclusion, however. If, as some commentators argue, Paul has an eschatological event in mind in 11:26, it could be argued that this claim is separate to the olive tree analogy, which is more concerned with the present situation. Jews who turn away from unbelief in the present will become recipients of the Abrahamic promises in the present, irrespective of what might happen in the future. Alternatively, one can argue that if 11:26 refers to an eschatological event, it does not follow that this event would show no regard for faith. It could be that in the future, God will reveal himself in such a way that Israel's hardness will be revealed and Israel as a whole will turn away from unbelief. Ultimately, Wright's argument rests on the idea that a future restoration of all ethnic Israel would be inconsistent with Paul's theological approach. This is not the case.[658] Paul's consistent emphasis throughout Romans 9-11 is on the sovereignty of God, and the independence of the divine decision.

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[657] Bent Noack, 'Current and Backwater in the Epistle to the Romans' *Studia Theologica* 19 (1965), 155-166, at 61, argues that if Paul knew the conclusion of chapter 11 to begin with, then 9-11 is 'a sham fight, not a struggle for the solution of a real problem. But the opposite is true. The solution is granted Paul during his wrestling with the problem, the mystery is revealed to him at the very moment of his dictating the second part of chapter XI.' Klaus Haacker, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79, makes a similar argument, taking 10:1 as an indication that the mystery was revealed to Paul as an answer to his prayers. Neither Noack or Haacker are entirely convincing, however.

[658] Schreiner, *Romans*, 622, argues that the perceived disparity between chs. 9 and 11 is more apparent than real: 'God has designed salvation history in such a way that the extension of his saving grace surprises those who are its recipients. Gentiles were elected to salvation when the Jews were expecting to be the special objects of his favor and the Jews will be grafted in again at a time in which Gentiles will be tempted to believe that they are superior to ethnic Israel.'

Further, Wright's approach to 11:26 obscures the rhetorical force of '*all* Israel,' which is based on the distinction between two groups within Israel, a distinction which Paul makes throughout Romans 9-11.[659] This distinction is made explicit in Romans 11, where Paul argues that he personally is part of a remnant, chosen by grace, a faithful minority within ethnic Israel.[660] The existence of this remnant is consistent with Israel's past, such as in the time of Elijah (11:2-5).[661] In 11:7, Paul distinguishes between the 'elect,' who obtained what they were seeking, and 'the rest' who were hardened. In verse 11, 'they' refers to this hardened majority, and here Paul anticipates the conclusion in verse 26.[662] The stumbling of the hardened majority has brought salvation to the Gentiles, but Paul's response to the question of whether this stumbling will lead to a fall – in other words, whether or not their present situation is permanent - is an emphatic μὴ γένοιτο. Paul then introduces the possibility of their 'full inclusion,' which will lead to immense riches (11:12). 11:26, then, should not come as a complete surprise which goes against Paul's previous arguments. Israel's stumble is explained in terms of the divine plan, and it is clearly understood as a temporary measure, and a means of bringing blessings to the Gentiles, and then subsequently to Israel too.[663] Paul interprets Israel's history, and their present situation in particular, so

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[659] Additionally, as Schreiner, *Romans*, 617, points out, in readings such as Wright's, Paul's revelation of the mystery becomes a huge anticlimax. That Gentiles and Jews who believe in Christ will be saved is a logical conclusion that can be drawn from Paul's argument throughout Romans. It is not a mysterious revelation.

[660] Heikki Räisänen, 'Faith, Works, and Election in Romans 9: A Response to Stephen Westerholm' in James D.G. Dunn ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 239-49, at 245, argues that Paul's remnant theology differs from Old Testament remnant theology in one important way. In the Old Testament, the remnant are those shown to be faithful, whereas for Paul, the remnant are those who have been chosen, or predestined. For Paul, however, the two things are closely related, meaning that Räisänen's distinction is not entirely helpful.

[661] Craig A. Evans, 'Paul and the Prophets: Prophetic Criticism in the Epistle to the Romans (With Special Reference to Romans 9-11)' in Sven K. Soderlund and N.T. Wright eds., *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honour of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 115-28, suggests that Paul's use of 1 Kings and Isaiah in Romans 9-11 places him in the tradition of prophetic criticism, which undergirds his approach to Israel's current plight.

[662] In a fascinating study, Torsten Uhlig, 'Too Hard to Understand? The Motif of Hardening in Isaiah' in David G. Firth and H.G.M. Williamson eds., *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches* (Nottingham: Apollos: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 62-83, examines the hardening motif in Isaiah. There, Israel's hardening is overcome by the servant (Isa. 43:10; 50:4-5, 10); 51:7), and by Israel listening to his voice. This ushers in the messianic reign, which will be one of knowledge (Isa. 11:2, 9; 32:3-4). This may offer some background for Paul's use of the motif in Romans 9-11.

[663] James D.G. Dunn, 'Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology? Reflections on Romans 9:4 and 11:27' in Sheila McGinn ed., *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert Jewett* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, U.K.: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 287-307, argues that Paul's use of covenant language in the scriptural citation in 11:25-27, indicates an attempt to affirm that God's original covenant, or covenants, with Israel

that, contrary to expectations, it is Israel's failure, rather than their success, which leads to the Gentiles being blessed. But the story does not stop there. Israel's failure is a temporary measure, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. In 11:25-26, a hardening has come upon part of Israel (ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ), but in the future all Israel (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ) will be saved (11:26).[664]

ii. The Pattern of Divine Action in History

Wright presents a version of salvation history where the new Israel, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, effectively supersedes the old, fleshly Israel.[665] The story of God's people continues through this group, membership of which has been redefined by the Christ-event. As I have argued, however, Paul maintains throughout Romans 9-11 that receipt of God's blessings has always been based on grace, which God gives freely, determined by his own sovereign decision. This means that salvation history is never bound to a particular linear pattern, never bound to historical rules, or the chains of cause and effect. An eschatological event where all Israel is saved cannot be regarded as especially incongruous with the rest of salvation history, because salvation history is always marked by incongruity, as the verticality of divine activity interrupts and reshapes the horizontal plane of human history.[666]

In this regard it can again be illuminating to read Romans 9-11 alongside Galatians 3-4. As in Galatians, Paul rejects any suggestion that Israel's history led towards the Christ-event, at least not on the horizontal, human level of historical causation. Israel's history was not the necessary condition for the Christ-event, and the events which make up salvation-

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remains valid. Paul radically redefines the way in which the covenant would be fulfilled, but this is always 'an in-house contribution to Israel's understanding of itself as God's people.'

[664] Even if this 'all' includes ethnic Israel, it does not necessarily include every single Israelite. Stephen Westerholm, 'Paul and the Law in Romans 9-11' in James D.G. Dunn ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 221, points out the example of *M. Sanhedrin* 10, which declares that 'All Israel have a share in the world to come,' and then lists a number of Israelites not included in this.

[665] As Christopher Zoccali, ''And So All Israel Will be Saved': Competing Interpretations of Romans 11:26 in Pauline Scholarship' JSNT 30.3 (2008), 289-318, at 295, argues, this would be 'inconsistent with Paul's rhetorical purpose in this section of the letter, namely, to undercut a 'Gentile supersessionism' taking hold in the church at Rome.'

[666] J. W. Aageson, 'Typology, Correspondence, and the Application of Scripture in Romans 9-11,' *JSNT* 31 (1987), 51-72, suggests that 'correspondence' is the most appropriate term for how Paul relates different scriptural event in Romans 9-11. The different stories he refers to correspond to each other in terms of a shared pattern. For example, in Rom. 9:6-13 Paul infers from scripture two principles. First, that the children of God are those of the promise; second, that God's plan of election works because of the call of God, not works. The different stories he refers to share the imprint of these principles.

history are connected only because each one is brought about by the divine decision. Where Romans 9-11 differs from Galatians is the way in which Paul widens his perspective.

In Galatians, Israel's story effectively becomes subsumed under the new story of God's people, brought about by the Christ-event. Jew and Gentile are no longer seen as useful categories in Paul's discourse (3:28), because within the body of Christ there is no room for ethnic distinction, and circumcision no longer has any value (5:6). Paul is concerned with Jewish Christians, and with Gentile Christians, and he is concerned with the present situation. The question of non-Christian Jews is simply not present in his discussion. In Romans, this question comes to the fore, and the categories of Jew and Gentile become useful once more. Paul broadens his perspective further by looking into the future, and the salvation-historical interplay between Jew and Gentile, culminating in the glorious future where all Israel will be saved.

iii. Conclusion to Chapter 8

In Romans 9-11, Paul is confronted by the problem of Israel. Throughout the preceding chapters, Paul has consistently argued that God is righteous, and that his righteousness has been displayed in the Christ-event.[667] The Christ-event has, however, brought about a new and somewhat troubling situation. Gentiles are now sharing in the blessings promised to Abraham's children, while the majority of Jews, Paul's own brethren, are not sharing in these blessings. It could be argued, then, that in the present situation God has failed to deliver on his promises. God's righteousness is in question.

Paul's response to this situation has a thoroughly salvation-historical character, relying on a scheme of two epochs, or ages, the times before and after Christ. His critique of Israel is not timeless or abstract. Instead, he explains the present plight of Israel in salvation-historical terms, arguing that the majority of Israel has failed to see that in Christ a new, messianic age has begun, bringing the old age of the law to an end. He looks to the past, to figures such as Jacob and Esau, to show that God's actions in history have always been determined by God alone, and that Israel's special role has always been based on God's free decision of grace, unconstrained by the processes of human history. He looks to the future, arguing that the present situation, where Gentiles seem to have taken over the position previously held by Israel, is but one stage in a mysterious divine plan, which will culminate in Israel's final restoration.

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[667] Grieb, *The Story of Romans*, characterises the whole text as a defence of God's righteousness.

In Romans 9-11, then, Paul both affirms and critiques the idea of salvation history. In his explanation of the divine plan, and in his consideration of past episodes in Israel's history, Paul echoes Galatians 3-4 by refusing to recognise any form of progress within this unpredictable history. There is no sense in which Israel's history prepares the way for the Christ-event, in the sense of providing its necessary conditions; in fact, it is through Israel's failure that salvation comes to the Gentiles, not through Israel's success. When Paul looks across the wide span of history, he does not see a neat ascending line, beginning with Abraham and climaxing with the Christ-event. He does, however, see a salvation history of sorts. God acts across the breadth of history, from generation to generation, and from the new perspective brought about by the Christ event, Paul can see God's hand at work in the *unhistorisch*, repeatedly interrupting and reshaping history for his purposes. Here Paul shows that his gospel is not concerned simply with ethical instructions, or individual calling. The Christ-event interrupts and challenges individual human existence, but it also interrupts and challenges human history as a whole. Paul sees a righteous God who acts decisively, if at times mysteriously, working through the failures of his people to bring about a final conclusion, the wisdom and mercy of which can only provoke awe and worship (11:33-36).[668]

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[668] Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions*, 173, suggests that 11:28-32 provides the 'logical' conclusion to Paul's argument, while 33-36 offers the 'liturgical' counterpart. This hymn combines with the introductory oath of 9:1-5, creating an *inclusio* for chapters 9-11.

Part Three

Chapter 9
Summary and Conclusions

1. Summary

This thesis has sought to examine the ways in which Paul, in his extant letters, thinks about history and time. More specifically, it has attempted to answer the following question: for Paul, how does the Christ-event fit with the rest of history, and with Israel's history in particular? This question has been framed by a long-standing, ongoing debate. On the one hand, there are those who emphasise continuity in Paul's understanding of history. Paul presents, at least implicitly, a *Heilsgeschichte*, or great story, where the Christ-event is the culmination of Israel's history, the climactic chapter in the story of God's dealings with the world. On the other hand, there are those who emphasise discontinuity. The Christ-event is a punctiliar, invasive divine act; rather than being the culmination of history, it invades history and interrupts it.

I have tried to show that both of these approaches have considerable merit, as well as significant problems; to identify Paul's understanding of history and time as *either* apocalyptic *or* salvation-historical means running the risk of obfuscating significant aspects of Paul's thought. Paul's theology of history maintains a tension between continuity and discontinuity; he sees the Christ-event as the culmination of Israel's history, *and* as a radical, surprising interruption of that history.

Faced with such a tension, we might follow a number of different approaches. First, we could see this tension as evidence of the inconsistency and incoherence of Paul's thought and explain it as a result of Paul writing occasional texts in different contexts, over a number of years. Second, we could emphasise one aspect of Paul's thought, one side of this tension, at the expense of the other.[669] Third, we might attempt to articulate a theological framework which allows this tension to stand in a fruitful way.

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[669] For example, one might argue that Paul is *really* an apocalyptic thinker. Where the Pauline texts seem to indicate a salvation-historical outlook, one must either reinterpret them apocalyptically, or explain them as a rhetorical move intended to appease his audience, or dismiss them as a remnant of his Jewish past, and therefore not a true representation of his thought.

My suggestion is that the third of these approaches is the most helpful. There is, of course, nothing particularly novel about this approach. Several of the scholars featured in this thesis have argued, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, that the apocalyptic aspects of Paul's thought go hand in hand with the salvation-historical aspects. My intention here has been to provide a more considered conceptual and theological basis for holding these aspects together. I cannot claim to have "solved" this issue, but it is hoped that this thesis will at least point to some ideas which might contribute to the debate.

In chapter 1, I began by considering some preliminary issues relating to time and history in the ancient world, and considered how these might affect our reading of Paul. Based on the work of Momigliano, Feeney, and Rayment-Pickard, I argued that when we read the Pauline texts, we should be open to the possibility of finding a complex, multi-faceted understanding of history and time, as Paul thinks about and experiences time differently in different contexts.

In chapter 2, I examined and compared the work of three influential twentieth century New Testament scholars, beginning with Oscar Cullmann. Cullmann's salvation-historical reading of the New Testament, including Paul, sees early Christian theology as shaped around a historical framework. God's interaction with the world is consistent across history, and the Christ-event marks the mid-point of time. In stark contrast to Cullmann, Rudolf Bultmann's existentialist reading of Paul is dismissive of the salvation-historical approach, for both methodological and theological reasons. For Bultmann, the salvation-historical aspects of Paul's letters are remnants of his Jewish background. The Pauline gospel does not offer a philosophy of history, but an existential challenge. Ernst Käsemann offers a mediating position. He is sympathetic to Bultmann's existentialist reading of Paul, but argues that he goes too far. He is deeply sceptical of the idea of *Heilsgeschichte*, for theological and socio-political reasons, but recognises that Paul does maintain an interest in understanding the Christ-event in the wider context of God's actions across history.

In chapter 3, I showed how the questions raised by Cullmann, Bultmann, and Käsemann, have re-emerged in more contemporary Pauline scholarship, in debates concerning apocalyptic and narrative approaches. First, I traced the history of apocalyptic interpretation from Käsemann, through Beker, and up to Martyn, arguing that the more contemporary apocalyptic readings of Paul have moved beyond Käsemann and Beker by severing the link between apocalyptic and salvation history. I suggested that Martyn's reading of Paul captures the radical edge of his gospel, but struggles to account for the ways in which Paul maintains an interest in Israel's history, and in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Second, I considered some of the critical issues surrounding narrative approaches to Paul, focussing on the work of Hays and Wright. Wright's identification of a grand narrative, which provides the structure for Paul's theology, shares several features with Cullmann's *Heilsgeschichte*. It also shares similar strengths and weaknesses. Wright's attempt to reconstruct a grand Pauline narrative helps to affirm Paul's Jewishness, and to provide a level of consistency to his understanding of history, but it suffers from some significant methodological problems. Wright fails to reconstruct the Pauline story convincingly, and he underestimates the extent to which the Christ-event radically reconfigures Paul's understanding of Israel's story.

In chapter 4, I introduced two new voices to the debate: Walter Benjamin and Karl Barth. Benjamin's work is not theological in the sense that Paul's is, but his philosophy of history does examine some of the central issues that arose in chapters 2 and 3. In his critique of historicism, and in his consideration of the way in which messianic events occur in and interact with history, Benjamin provides some useful images for thinking about the way in which Paul understands the Christ-event's interaction with history. Barth's work on history and time is more explicitly theological. His work on the connection between God's eternity and human historical time, and his description of the Christ-event as in but not of history, provides a possible way of bringing together the apocalyptic and salvation-historical aspects of Paul's theology.

In chapter 5, I examined my first key text, 1 Corinthians 10:1-14. In these verses, Paul warns the Corinthians about their conduct by comparing their situation to that of the Israelites in the desert. Three significant points were drawn from this text: first, Paul reinterprets Israel's experiences through the lens of Christian experience, such that the blessings given to Israel are directly comparable with those given to the Corinthians; second, Paul indicates significant continuity between Israel and the church, including the Corinthians, such that he can refer to the Israelites as 'our ancestors'; third, Paul cements the connection between Israel and the Corinthian church by twice claiming that Christ was present in the desert, many years prior to the Christ-event itself.

In chapter 6, I moved on to 2 Corinthians 3, and Paul's account of Moses' descent from Sinai. In this text, Paul again compares the Corinthians' present situation with that of Israel. The difference here is that Paul's focus is on Moses in particular. Moses, who comes face to face with God's glory, is transformed, and he reflects that glory as a result. This is like believers, who reflect the glorious image of the lord. As in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul finds significance for the present in a story from Israel's past, as well as reinterpreting that story

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through the lens of the present. Paul sees two distinct epochs, with two distinct covenants. But even in the old age, under the ministry of death, Moses experiences the transformation which is to be commonplace in the renewed, Spirit-led people of God.

In chapter 7, I examined Galatians 3-4. This is a crucial text for understanding Paul's theology of history because Paul considers the relationship between the law, the promise to Abraham, and the Christ-event, and because it is a key text for apocalyptic interpretations. Paul rejects any suggestion that Israel's history, and the period of the law, provided the necessary conditions for the Christ-event; he does, however, maintain that the law was given by God. Significantly, Paul argues that the respective significance of the law and the promise are tied to their chronological ordering, in the fact that the law came after the promise. Galatians 3-4 is also significant for the way in which Paul reads the story of Abraham. Paul is able to say both that the time before Christ was a time of enslavement, before faith, and also that within this evil age, Abraham was justified by faith. This is similar to Romans 4, where the story of Abraham and Sarah is described in terms which Paul takes from his understanding of the Christ-event, as enacted by the God who brings life to the dead. Like Moses, Abraham is a salvation-historical anachronism, if a sharp apocalyptic distinction between two ages is maintained.

In chapter 8, I completed my survey of key texts by examining Romans 9-11. In these chapters Paul engages directly with the question of Israel, and how Israel's past, present, and future fit in with God's actions in Christ. At no point in his epistles does Paul fully narrate a great story, from start to finish, but Romans 9-11 is perhaps the closest he comes to doing so, particularly given the wider context of Romans 1-11 as a whole. Paul surveys a range of historical people and events, assesses the present situation, and explains what will happen in the future. In doing so, he identifies a particular type of continuity in history. There is continuity in the sense that God acts according to his righteousness and faithfulness, and that his historical interventions are part of a wider plan. But this does not mean that Paul identifies a linear salvation history where one thing leads to another, finally culminating in the Christ-event. God's activity is unconditional, and Paul's emphasis is always on the freedom, sovereignty, and priority of the divine decision in each generation, interrupting and reshaping the human, historical sphere.

2. Conclusions

i. Paul and Scripture

The subjects of history and time are particularly important for the study of Paul because of his relationship both with Judaism as a religion and historical tradition, and with the Hebrew Scriptures. While Paul's understanding of and belief in the Christ-event leads him to radically re-examine the Hebrew Scriptures, and to reinterpret them in ways which move well beyond his pre-Christ theology, he never abandons Scripture altogether, or dismisses the significance of the history they attest to. The tension inherent in his reading of Scripture both creates and is created by the tension in his understanding of history and time, which includes both continuity and discontinuity. In chapter 5, I wrote about Paul's hermeneutical circle, concerning the relationship between the Christ-event and the Hebrew Scriptures. This can be represented as follows:
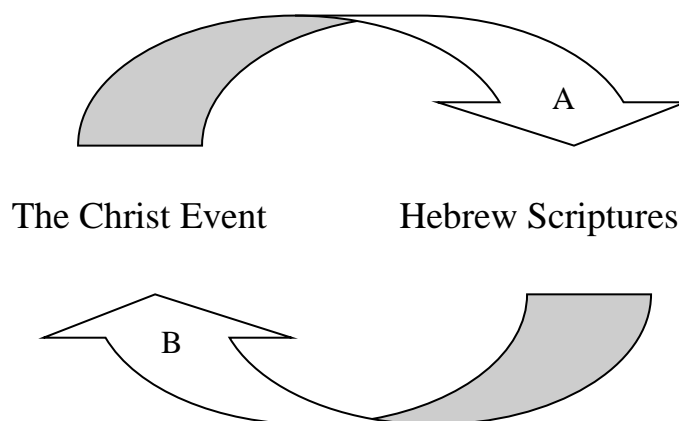
The relationship here is circular, because while Paul's reading of Scripture is shaped by his understanding of the Christ-event, his understanding of the Christ-event is shaped by his reading of Scripture. In each of the texts examined in this thesis, we saw Paul using Scripture to shape and inform his arguments, as part of his attempts to articulate the significance of the Christ-event for the lives of early believers. We also saw him reinterpreting and reshaping Scripture, finding new connections and meanings. These two processes contribute to each other. An overemphasis on one side of this hermeneutical circle – or here, on one interpretive arrow – can lead to erroneous readings of Paul.

Both Wright and Martyn recognise this circularity, but one of the key differences between their approaches is how they weight it. For Wright, more weight is given to arrow B. The revelation of the Christ-event plays a role in reshaping Paul's understanding of Scripture, and of the story of Israel told within, but the primary ways in which he conceives of the

significance of the Christ-event show that he sees it as the culmination of a story whose basic outline he already knew. This means that Christ is the Jewish messiah, sent to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, and to fulfil Israel's role in the redemption of creation. For Martyn, in contrast, the Christ-event is an act of revelation, of apocalypse, which takes epistemological and hermeneutical priority over the Hebrew Scriptures. He emphasises arrow A, and argues that through the Christ-event, Paul is able to see that Israel's story is to be completely rewritten. The time between Abraham and Christ is not the history of God's people, following God's holy law. It is a tragic tale of a people enslaved.

There is, unfortunately, no simple way of breaking into this circle, and no way of correctly assessing how the different sides of the circle should be emphasised. In the texts examined in this study, Paul engages with scripture in a number of different and often surprising ways. He consistently looks to Scripture to build and support his theological arguments, but he never imports Scripture into his arguments uncritically. It is always reconsidered in the light of the Christ-event, which itself is understood in the light of Scripture. The complexity and variation found in Paul's use of Scripture should warn us against approaching the Pauline texts with any rigid scheme in mind, and should encourage us to evaluate whether our readings of Paul unduly emphasise one side of the hermeneutical circle at the expense of the other.

ii. History and Time in Paul

It is common to speak of Paul's partially-realised eschatology, the famous 'now-but-not-yet' tension. Such language usually implies a historical scheme where two ages overlap. This can be illustrated by the diagrams below:

A
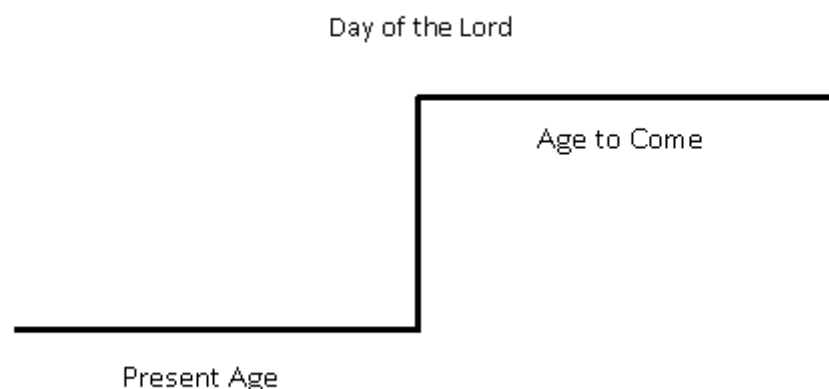
B
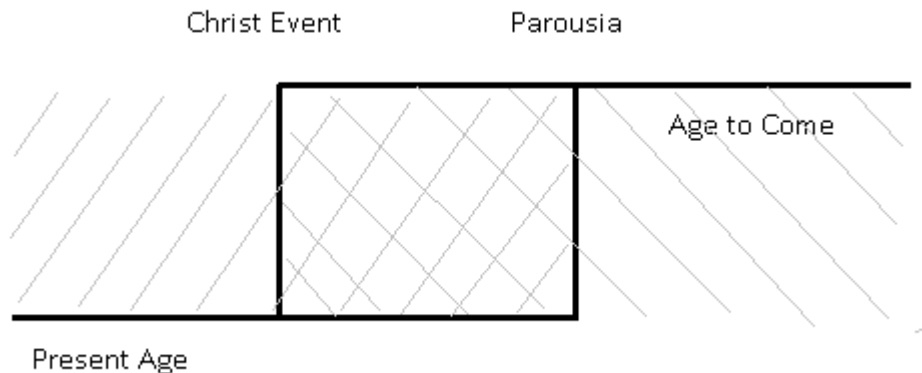
In diagram A, the age to come follows on chronologically from the present age. The two ages are not cotemporaneous; they are connected, but also separated, by an eschatological event, such as the day of the Lord. Diagram B represents a common way of thinking about Pauline eschatology, outlining one of the main ways in which his understanding of history is deemed to depart from Jewish eschatology. The new age is partially inaugurated in the Christ-event, but not fully. In the future, Christ will return, completing the work he started, and fully establishing his kingdom. The time in between is the time where the old age and the age to come overlap. Features of the age to come, such as the presence of the Spirit, and the spiritual gifts given to believers, are manifested in the present age. But these are only first fruits, hints of what is to come.

This paradigm is representative of apocalyptic readings of Paul, where the old age, or rather the present evil age, is invaded and fundamentally changed by Christ, who enters into conflict with the dominant forces of evil, and brings about a new creation. As I have argued, however, in texts such as 1 Corinthians 10, 2 Corinthians 3, and Galatians 3-4, Paul's descriptions of Israel, Moses, and Abraham, do not fit well with this scheme. In diagram A, there are two distinct, but chronologically successive ages. In diagram B, the overlap of the two ages effectively creates a third. These three ages are also chronologically successive: the old age, the present, partially realised age of the overlap, and the age to come, following Christ's return.

Israel, Moses and Abraham are located temporally within the old age, but in many ways they fit more neatly in the present, partially-realised age, because they bear the marks

that Paul associates with believers in the present age. This poses a problem for apocalyptic schemes which stress a sharp distinction between the evil age and the age inaugurated by Christ. How is Paul able to say that Abraham - who lived in the age before Christ, and therefore before faith (Gal. 3:23-24) - was justified by faith? How can he describe Moses as reflecting the glory of God, in the same way that believers now reflect the image of Christ? If the time of the law was a salvation-historical chasm, why does Paul describe Israel's spiritual blessings in ways directly comparable with the blessings given to those who are in Christ, even going as far as claiming that Christ was present in the desert with Israel?

These problems arise at least partially because the new age is thought of in primarily chronological terms. The new age is a new period of time, which begins at the Christ-event, overlaps the present age, and will continue into the future when the present age comes to an end at Christ's return. This is the case in apocalyptic schemes like Martyn's, where Christ invades the evil age to bring about the new one. But it is also the case in narrative schemes such as Wright's, where the Christ-event is the dividing line between two successive acts in the ongoing divine and human drama of history.

Alternatively, we might think of the new age in different terms. The new age is not simply a period of time tacked onto the end of history, but a reality that exists at all times, irrupting into history wherever God acts. When Paul speaks of the new creation, he speaks of it in this way, not as a future event or epoch which will begin when the old creation passes away, but as a powerful reality which God brings about within the present age: εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις (2 Cor. 5:17). When Paul thinks of the story of Moses' radiant face, he sees new creation at work, even among Israel's failure. When he speaks of God justifying Abraham and bringing life to the death of Sarah's womb, he sees an act of resurrection, a manifestation of the same power which raised Christ from the dead. When he reconsiders Israel's time in the desert, he sees Christ's presence, blessing his people. When he looks across history in Romans 9-11, he sees God choosing and recreating his people in each generation. In the light of the Christ-event, Paul sees that the whole of history is the time of the overlap. Here, a Barthian understanding of eternity and time may be illuminating. For Barth, God's eternity is distinguished from human, historical time qualitatively, rather than quantitatively. Wherever and whenever God is at work, the new age touches the old.

One significant objection must be considered at this point. If the Christ-event is in history but not of history, and if Paul sees God - perhaps even in Christ, as in 1 Cor. 10 - at work in history prior to the earthly life of Christ, does this mean that the Christ-event loses its uniqueness as the defining moment of history? If righteousness was possible before Christ, as

in the case of Abraham, why was the Christ-event needed? Is it reduced to being just another example of divine intervention?

To some extent, this objection assumes the kind of linear understanding of time being questioned. If in the Christ-event God's eternal time invades human temporal time, then it is possible that this particular event grounds all other salvific events; that, for example, Abraham's righteousness was made possible by the Christ-event, even though it entered into history many hundreds of years later.

Paul also suggests a number of ways in which the Christ-event remains the unique, definitive, salvific event. First, there is a crucial epistemological aspect, helpfully highlighted by apocalyptic readings. The Christ-event is revelatory, allowing mysteries to be known, and history to be reinterpreted. Second is the scope, or scale, of the Christ-event. Moses and Abraham are relatively isolated historical cases from within the history of Israel, itself a minority group within humanity. Paul sees the Christ-event as opening up new possibilities for all people. Third, the Christ-event remains special because of Christ himself. Christ is unique, the most important figure in the history of the world, and the one with the name above every other name.[670]

A further objection might be made at this point. Does the language of history and time, of human temporality and God's eternity, go too far beyond the Pauline texts? Is this a case of taking later theological speculation, and applying it to ancient texts without warrant? This is certainly something to be careful of. I would not want to suggest, for example, that a fully-formed Barthian doctrine of time and eternity can be derived from the Pauline texts, just as long as we look hard enough. But there are hints of such a perspective, and it does seem be the case that in wrestling with the meaning of the Christ-event, Paul began to see it as an event which broke out of the confines of its own historical location.[671]

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[670] Space does not permit a proper engagement with current debates regarding Pauline Christology. I do think, however, that the view of history and time proposed in this thesis supports arguments in favour of a rapidly-emerging high Christology within the early church, including Paul. See among others, Fee, *Pauline Christology*; Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003); Andrew Chester, 'High Christology – Whence, When and Why?' *Early Christianity* 2 (2011), 22-50.

[671] We already begin to see more considered speculation along these lines in the deutero-Pauline literature. The startling Christological claims of Colossians 1:15-20 fit well the kind of perspective I am advocating, and, even if these verses were not written by Paul himself, they remain within the trajectory indicated by the undisputed letters. There are notable similarities, for example, between Col. 1:15-20 and 1 Cor. 8:6. For the writer of Colossians, the Christ-event remains a genuine historical event, but Christ himself is the creative grounding of all things. The story of the world, the story of history, is the story of Christ. The past, present and future come together in Christ.

This kind of perspective helps to shed light on the four texts examined in this thesis. If the Christ event is in but not of history, then it is not confined to one specific historical time. In 1 Corinthians 10, we can read Paul's claims regarding Christ's presence in the desert not as ad hoc argumentation, or imaginative leaps, but as substantial claims reflecting Paul's belief that the Christ-event permeates history. Through the lens of the Christ event, Paul can look back on Israel's history and find continuity not only in terms of promise and fulfilment, but in the presence of Christ himself.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul engages with history in complex ways. His interest in chronological sequence and historical epochs, bound to the old and new covenants, fits well with both apocalyptic and salvation historical approaches, even if they characterise the relationship between these epochs differently. But both of these approaches struggle to account for Paul's depiction of Moses, and his direct comparison with those who are in Christ. If the Christ event is in history but not of history, however, we can account for both aspects of Paul's reading of this text.

In Galatians 3-4 we find similar features again. Paul does not present a linear *Heilsgeschichte*, where the time of the law leads through to the Christ-event, but he does see interpretive value in the chronological ordering of events and epochs. The promise precedes the law, which in turn precedes the new age of faith. Abraham, however, is made righteous by faith – like those in Christ – but in the time before the Christ-event. In Romans 4 we find a similar phenomenon, but in terms more clearly drawn from the Christ-event. This is not quite like 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul directly places Christ into a pre-Christ-event narrative, but it again indicates a complexity in his understanding of how the Christ-event relates to history. Its chronological place in history is significant for its meaning, but its meaning is not limited by this placing. It is in history, but not of history.

In Romans 9-11, Paul examines a broader swathe of history. We do not, however, find either a linear *Heilsgeschichte*, or a simple division between before and after the apocalyptic invasion of the Christ event. Instead, Paul identifies repeated patterns of divine engagement with history, working in surprising and incongruous ways which reflect God's action in the Christ-event itself.

In our reading of these texts, we need not entirely abandon the kind of historical, chronological framework underpinning apocalyptic and salvation-historical approaches. Relationships of before and after remain central to Paul's understanding of history. However, we also see Paul approaching a range of historical episodes in a manner comparable to

Benjamin's ideal historian, who recognises relationships and points of comparison which cannot be accounted for based on simple chronology.

In chapter 3, I showed how contemporary apocalyptic readings of Paul, following Martyn's lead, have severed the connection between apocalyptic and salvation history, a connection maintained by earlier apocalyptic interpreters including Käsemann and Beker. This has been to their detriment. Apocalyptic readings of Paul must find ways of emphasising the radical invasiveness of the Christ-event, while also recognising Paul's consistent desire to interpret the Christ-event in the context of Israel's history (and vice versa). The perspectives offered by Barth and Benjamin, where the connections between historical events are not limited to their temporal proximity or chronological ordering, offer a way of doing so.

Because God's action in the Christ-event is unconditional, it is freed from the shackles of historical cause and effect, but also from a simple, linear understanding of time. It is in history but not of history. The irony here is that while apocalyptic readings of Paul have struggled to explain the way in which the Christ-event relates to the rest of history, it is precisely an apocalyptic understanding of the Christ-event which provides the theoretical apparatus with which to do so. Because God's action in Christ is unconditional, entering history from outside, it is in an important sense non-historical. Because it is non-historical, it is free, unrestricted by human temporality: the past, the present, and the future, are all engulfed by the triumph of God in Christ.

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