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Apostate Turned Prophet

Paul's Prophetic Self-Understanding and Prophetic Hermeneutic with Special Reference to Galatians 3:10-12

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This article argues that Paul's prophetic self-understanding is a fruitful starting point for understanding the elements of continuity and discontinuity between his Pharisaic past and the theology found in his letters. It is argued that Paul understood the majority of his fellow Jews, including himself as Pharisee, as apostates from the God of Israel. Paul's Damascus experience represents his coming to God. This perspective helps explain the problem passage in Gal 3:10-12. Paul reads Deut 27:26 and Lev 18:5 in light of the prophetic tradition, where these passages were seen as the warrant for God's judgment on Israel because of her apostasy.

The apostle Paul appears to be sharply critical of at least some of his fellow Jews, occasionally referring to them by the use of invectives such as 'dogs' and 'mutilation' (Phil 3.2). At the same time, he remains strongly committed to his Jewish heritage, appeals matter-of-factly to the Jewish Scriptures, preaches a gospel that is for Jews first (Rom 1.16), and insists that he himself is an Israelite (Rom 11.1).

Faced with this diverse evidence, scholars have reached opposite conclusions regarding Paul's assessment of his own past. Heikki Räisänen believes that Paul has rejected outright the

biblical covenant,[1] and Kari Kuula explains Paul's transformation as a conversion to a different religion.[2] On the other hand, James Dunn insists that Paul's Christian beliefs did not represent a departure from his former religion, merely a new form of it.[3]

I will suggest that there is an explanation that accounts equally well for both of these aspects of Paul's writings. After his Damascus experience, Paul understood himself to have been called to join the ranks of the Hebrew prophets. He finds that their verdict on Israel as an apostate nation can be applied to his contemporaries, his own Pharisaic past included. The salvation that the prophets proclaimed is only to be found in Jesus Christ.

In the following, I will briefly look at two passages where this evaluation of Israel comes to expression, namely 1 Thess 2.14-16 and Rom 9-10. Three other passages, Phil 3.2-11, 2 Cor 4.6, and Gal 1.15-17, indicate that Paul sees himself as someone who has been transformed by God from an apostate into God's servant. In Gal 1.15, Paul's new status is also described as modeled after the pattern of the prophets. Finally, I will show how this reconstruction of Paul's self-understanding can inform our reading of one of the problem passages in Paul's letters, namely Gal 3.10-12.

1 Thessalonians 2.14-16

Paul's most biting critique of his fellow people comes to expression in 1 Thess 2.14-16:

'For you, brothers and sisters, have become imitators of the churches of God that are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for you have also suffered the same things from your own fellow citizens, just as they suffered from the Jews who also killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted

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1. 'Paul's Conversion and the Development of His View of the Law', *NTS* 33 (1987) 404–19, esp. 410.

2. *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan I: Paul's Polemical Treatment of the Law in Galatians* (Publications of The Finnish Exegetical Society 72; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) 200.

3. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 716–7.

us and do not please God and oppose all human beings, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thereby they always fill up the measure of their sins. God's wrath has overtaken them until the end.'

These three verses have often been considered a post-Pauline interpolation, however.[4] The reasons are stylistic, theological, and historical. I cannot discuss these questions at length here, but because they relate to Paul's understanding of Israel's history, I will address some of the historical and theological issues.[5]

The historical problem concerns the categorical statement that God's wrath has come over Israel εἰς τέλος (v. 16). The interpretation of the aorist ἔφθασεν as a prophetic aorist has generally been abandoned, and scholars agree that this verse must refer to some form of divine judgment that

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4. K. Eckart, 'Der zweite echte Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Thessalonicher', *ZTK* 56 (1961) 294–315; B. A. Pearson, 'I Thessalonians 2.13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation', *HTR* 64 (1971) 79–94; D. Schmidt, '1 Thess. 2:13–16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation', *JBL* 102 (1983) 269–79; E. J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (SP 11; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995) 123–7; W. O. Walker, Jr., *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters* (JSNTSup 213; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 210–20.

5. For more comprehensive arguments for the authenticity of these verses, see G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 202–7; T. Holtz, *Der Erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (EKK 13; 2d ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990) 27, 110–2; C. J. Schlueter, *Filling up the Measure: Polemical Hyperbole in 1 Thessalonians 2.14–16* (JSNTSup 98; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 116–23; J. Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul: An Analysis of 1 Thessalonians, Philippians and Galatians* (ConBNT 28; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1997) 42–6; T. D. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours* (JSNTSup 183; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 24–45.

has already befallen Israel.[6] This statement is difficult to account for, unless, of course, it is a post CE 70 interpolation. Those who defend the authenticity of the verse often object that there are several disasters in the 40's that Paul could be referring to, such as the death of King Agrippa in CE 44, Theudas' revolt in CE 44-46, the famine of Judea in 46-47, the riot in Jerusalem during the Passover in CE 49 with the consequent massacre of twenty to thirty thousand Jews (Jos. *Ant*. XX.112; *J.W*. II.227), and the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in CE 49.[7] But it remains problematic to invest any of these events with such a profound theological interpretation, when there is no direct evidence that the apostle Paul understood any of these disasters in such a way. The identification of these events with the divine wrath of 1 Thess 2.16 can therefore never be more than an assumption.

It should be noted that Paul does not condemn the Jews indiscriminately. As Frank D. Gilliard has shown, the comma included in most versions between v. 14 and v. 15 is misleading. The participial phrase τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν in v. 15 serves to restrict the group of Jews that are in view. Paul says that the churches in Judea suffered from 'those Jews who killed the Lord Jesus'.[8] In essence, his statement is therefore not different from what he says in

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6. K. P. Donfried, "Paul and Judaism: 1 Thess. 2.13–16 as a Test Case," *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2002) 195–208, esp. 206–7; Holtz, *Erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, 108.

7. R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 37–8; C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 30; Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica*, 36; M. N. Bockmuehl, "1 Thessalonians 2:14–16 and the Church in Jerusalem," *TynBul* (2001) 1–31, esp. 25–9.

8. F. D. Gilliard, "The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma Between 1 Thessalonians 2.14 and 15," *NTS* 35 (1989) 481–502.

Romans 9-11. In both passages, the condemnation or salvation of the Jews is conditioned upon their receiving or rejecting Jesus.[9]

Paul's harsh verdict must be understood in light of intra-Jewish discussions of why God's judgment has befallen Israel. Paul's language betrays several affinities with the language of apocalyptic literature, such as the theme of the end and the concept of filling up the measure of sins, which corresponds to the apocalyptic idea of a predetermined course of history (*1 En.* 81.2; *Jub*. 32.21).[10]

The apocalyptic view of Israel's history is strikingly similar to that of 1 Thess 2.14-16. Israel's exile and subsequent misery are interpreted to be caused by their own sins (Tob 13.5, 9; *1 En*. 89.54; *Jub.* 23.22; *Ps. Sol*. 17.5; *2 Bar*. 13.9; 77.3-4; *Sib. Or*. 3.721-723), sometimes described as apostasy (*1 En*. 93.9) and outright rejection of the Lord (Bar 3.12; 4.2-9, 13; CD-A 1.3, 13-21) and his law (*Jub.* 23.16, 19; *T.Mos.* 3.12-13; *T. Jud.* 18.3; *4 Ezra* 14.30-31),[11] evidenced by their disobeying(*4 Ezra* 2.1; 7.130; *T. Levi* 16.2; *T. Jud.* 18.5; *T.Dan* 2.3) and ultimately slaying the prophets (*1 En*. 89.51; *Jub*. 1.12; *4 Ezra* 1.32).[12] The apocalyptic perspective adds, however, the conviction that God will intervene to bring the final judgment on the sinners of Israel (*1 En.* 90.24-27; 91.11-12; *Ps. Sol.* 17.23, 25; *4 Ezra* 9.9-12; *2 Bar.* 41.3-42.2),

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9. Similarly, Holtz, *Erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, 109–10.

10. The presence of apocalyptic language in 1 Thessalonians has long been noted. See Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica*, 191–206.

11. Frank Thielman observes: 'Thus Jewish scripture during Paul's day, especially in the Greek form in which Paul knew it, viewed the history of God's people largely as a history of failure to do God's will. Often this failure was expressed in terms of Israel's continual violation of God's law or covenant' (*From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* [NovTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1989] 36).

12. See O. H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick des Propheten* (WMANT 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).

and establish a purged people for himself (Tob 14.7; Wis 3.6; *1 En*. 90.28-36; *Ps. Sol*. 17.26-27, 30; 18.7-9; *4 Ezra* 7.27; *2 Bar*. 13.10). This will take place or is already about to take place at a time that represents the climax towards which all of history has been moving, a time often characterized by afflictions (*Jub*. 23.25; *Sib. Or*. 3.635-651; *T.Mos*. 9.1-7; *2 Bar*. 48.31). Sometimes this purging takes place through the establishment of an elect remnant (*1 En*. 93.10; CD-A 1.4-8) and sometimes the agent of the restoration is the Messiah (*1 En*. 90.37; *2 Bar*. 70.9; 72.2; *Ps. Sol.* 17.21-43; *Sib. Or.* 3.652; *4 Ezra* 7.28).[13]

Paul shares the apocalyptic expectation that the coming of the Messiah ushers in the judgment of God. His categorical statement that 'God's wrath has overtaken them' expresses the belief that God's purging judgment of Israel has begun. The verb φθάνομαι may be used proleptically (cf. 1 Thess 4.15; Phil 3.16; Matt 12.28; Luke 11.20), indicating the onset of a divine judgment that will be fully manifested in the future.[14] As is the case with so many of Paul's convictions, his understanding of God's judgment was reshaped by his theology of the cross. God's judgment did not come in the way Paul the Pharisee expected, but was executed through the cross of Christ. It remains Paul's conviction, however, that the act of the Messiah was the instrument of God's judgment. In 1 Cor 1.18-31, Paul explains the paradoxical nature of God's judgment. By choosing to reveal himself in the cross of Christ, God has pronounced his verdict on the wisdom and strength of this world (v. 25). He has shamed the wise and the strong (v. 27); he has destroyed those who are something, by electing those who are nothing (v. 28).[15]

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13. The Apocalypse of Weeks does not refer to the Messiah specifically, although the messianic time clearly follows the purging judgment (*1 En.* 91.13-17).

14. Similarly, E. Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1972) 119–20; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 117; A. J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 177.

15. See further S. Grindheim, "Wisdom for the Perfect: Paul's Challenge to the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 2:6–16)," *JBL* 121 (2002) 691–711.

I maintain, therefore, that 1 Thess 2.14-16 is understandable as a characteristically Pauline contribution to the intra-Jewish discussion regarding the sins of Israel. Paul's verdict is not fundamentally different from the views found in apocalyptic literature. He understands the history of Israel to be a history of apostasy. Since the time of the prophets, they have rejected the messengers of God and ultimately rebelled against God himself.

The majority of Israel is therefore subject to God's judgment. In this conviction, Paul does not differ markedly from the view of the more sectarian literature from the Second Temple period. In *1 Enoch*, the apostates of Israel are condemned and the hope of salvation is reserved for the righteous remnant, which constitutes the elect (5.4-7; 93.9-10).[16] The *Psalms of Solomon* also seems to assume God's rejection of Israel at large (2.7-8; 9.1; 17.5),[17] and the expressed hope is that God will judge the people of Israel so that a purged God's people may emerge (4.6-8, 23; 12.4; 15.6-9; 17.23). Only the righteous can count on the promises of God, and the term 'Israel' is frequently reserved for this group, to the exclusion of the rest of ethnic Israel (5.18; 8.34; 10.6; 11.1; 12.6; 14.5).[18] In *4 Ezra* the limited number of the saved is a central thought (7.47, 60), and

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16. While he finds the same pattern of religion in *1 Enoch* as he finds in the Rabbis, E. P. Sanders observes that the group of the elect seems to be more narrow in *1 Enoch*, limited to the group with which the authors identify, a group that understands itself to constitute the only true Israelites (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977] 361–2). Cf. also R. Bauckham, 'Apocalypses', *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (2 vols.; WUNT II/140; ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifrid; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 1.135–88, esp. 143, 145.

17. Mikael Winninge observes that it is characteristic of the theology of the *Psalms of Solomon* that the apostates of Israel are considered to be worse than the Gentiles (*Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul's Letters* [ConBNT 26; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995] 194).

18. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 399, 404; J. Schüpphaus, *Die Psalmen Salomos:*

they are understood as the remnant as opposed to the many that will be judged (6.25; 7.28; 9.7-8, 13, 21-22; 12.34; 13.24, 26, 48-49; cf. *2 Bar*. 29.4; 40.2).[19] In the literature from Qumran, references to the disobedience of Israel at large and God's rejection of them are commonplace (1QS 1.23-26; 1QH[a] 7.20-23; 12.6-20; CD-A 1.11-2.1; 3.10-14; 5.20-21).[20]

Ein Zeugnis Jerusalemer Theologie und Frömmigkeit in der Mitte des vorchristlichen Jahrhunderts (ALGHJ 7; Leiden: Brill, 1977) 89; M. A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (NovTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1992) 128–9; Winninge, *Sinners and the Righteous*, 61, 108; J. Schröter, "Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit: Das Gottesbild der Psalmen Salomos in seinem Verhältnis zu Qumran und Paulus," *NTS* 44 (1998) 557–77, esp. 567–8.

19. Cf. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 418.

20. The literature from Qumran still refers to ethnic Israel as 'Israel', and the concept of the 'true Israel' is not fully developed in the community. The conviction reflected in this writings, however, is that ethnic Israel is no longer the covenant people of God. For a discussion, see Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 245; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 87–9; G. Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (AGJU 35; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 192–218; P. R. Davies, 'The Judaism(s) of the Damascus Document', *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 4 - 8 February, 1998* (STDJ 34; ed. J. M. Baumgarten, E. G. Chazon and A. Pinnick; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 27–43, esp. 31; M. Bockmuehl, '1QS and Salvation at Qumran', *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (2 vols.; WUNT II/140; ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifrid; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 1.381–414, esp. 389–93; S. Grindheim, *The Crux of Election: Paul's Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel* (WUNT II/202; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 67–9.

Romans 9-10

Although he expresses very different emotions about it, Paul's assessment of the people of Israel in Romans 9-10 corresponds to his views in 1 Thess 2.14-16. In Rom 9.2-3, Paul has a great sorrow and an unceasing anguish on behalf of his people (v. 2) and he wishes that he himself was cut off from Christ for their sake (v. 3).[21] His prayer for them is that they be saved (10.1). The clear implication and the only satisfactory explanation for his anguish is that he does not consider his people to be saved at the present time.[22] He acknowledges their zeal for God but their zeal is not based on knowledge (10.2). Paul explains this state of affairs by drawing an antithesis between a righteousness that is their own and a righteousness that is God's (10.3). This antithesis parallels the antithesis between the righteousness that is of the law and the righteousness that is from faith (9.30-31). By pursuing the former, the Israelites have been barred from the latter (10.3).

Philippians 3.2-11

Almost all commentators observe that Paul's description of Israel's plight in Rom 10.2-4 is based on his own personal experience, as a comparison with Phil 3.2-11 shows.[23] Paul's self-

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21. As most commentators recognize, ἀδελφός is here not used in the qualified sense of brothers and sisters in the Lord, but for fellow members of the Jewish people (O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* [KEK; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966] 294; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* [trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 258; J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* [AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993] 544; J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* [WBC 38B; Dallas: Word, 1988] 525; R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007] 561).

22. U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (2 vols.; EKK 6/2; 2d ed.; Zurich: Benziger, 1987) 2.186.

23. M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul épitre aux Romains* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1916) 252; Michel, *Römer*, 325; Wilckens, Römer, 2.220; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 582; D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 632; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 587; P.

description in Phil 3.2-11 mirrors his description of Israel in Rom 9.31-10.4. Just as Israel, so had Paul also been zealous; he had excelled in zeal (3.6a). His zeal was accompanied by an impeccable righteousness in the law (3.6b), described as his own. In Philippians 3 Paul also draws an antithesis between this righteousness and the righteousness that is from God and based on faith (3.9).

The rhetorical function of Paul's autobiography in Philippians 3 is to provide a personal example of the conduct that is worthy of the gospel (1.27), which is modeled perfectly by Christ (2.5-11).[24] Having introduced the antithesis between the evil workers and those who worship in God's Spirit in vv. 2-3, Paul's personal story serves as an example of someone who has moved

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Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer* (NTD 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 140; B. Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997) 314; T. R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 542–3; N. T. Wright, 'The Letter to the Romans', *The New Interpreter's Bible* (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002) 10.653; E. Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 290; Jewett, *Romans*, 616. Cf. also E. Käsemann, 'Paulus und Israel', *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (2 vols.; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) 2.194–7, esp. 195; S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (WUNT II/4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981) 3–4. Zeba Crook dismisses the significance of this passage for our understanding of Paul's conversion, but he does not provide an argument (*Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* [BZNW 130; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004] 151, n. 1).

24. Cf. D. F. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *NovT* 30 (1988) 57–88, esp. 72–4; P. S. Minear, "Singing and Suffering in Philippi," *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (eds. R. T. Fortna and B. R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990) 202–19, esp. 205–6; D. A. Black, "The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Textlinguistics," *NovT* 37 (1995) 16–49, esp. 41; M. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1998) 195.

from the group of evil workers to the group of true worshipers. The group of evil workers is characterized by their confidence in the flesh (v. 3), which formerly had been the object of Paul's own confidence (v. 4). He had considered his religious status and accomplishments as a Jew to be a gain (v. 7). Now, however, he had rejected these advantages as grounds for confidence before God, boasting in Christ Jesus instead (v. 3). Both the comparison with Romans 10 and the flow of the argument in Philippians 3 show that Paul aligns his former self with those who are condemned by God.[25] The group with which Paul formerly identified is now maligned with the three-fold invective 'dogs', 'evil workers', and 'mutilation' (v. 2), the latter of these being a play on words with circumcision. Paul conveys that those who insist on physical circumcision have missed its real value and become as those cursed by God instead, as eunuchs were unacceptable to God according to Deut 23.1.

Remorse?

As Krister Stendahl has correctly emphasized, Phil 3.2-11 gives no indication that Paul was plagued by a tortured conscience before his Damascus road experience. His transformation is not described as the desperately sought relief from his fanatic attempts at maintaining a religious standard that was too difficult for him. From Paul's testimony in Phil 3.2-11, it appears that he had been far from depressed, but rather quite satisfied and downright proud of his religious status and achievements.

Other scholars have gone even further than Stendahl, however, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa asserts that even the Jesus-believing Paul, when looking back, does not show any sign of remorse because of his past.[26] But it is important to distinguish between Paul's evaluation of his

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25. Markus Bockmuehl observes that the self-righteousness Paul ascribes to the opposition (v. 9) was once Paul's own attitude (v. 6). He also notes that this self-righteousness is not accepted by God (*Philippians*, 209).

26. *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Overtures to biblical theology 20; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 28. Stendahl himself concedes that the apostle Paul,

life when he was still a Pharisee, and the perspective he gained after his conversion on his former life as a Pharisee.[27] While there is no available evidence that Paul the Pharisee suffered from self-condemnation, he did condemn his own past after he had come to faith in Christ. In light of his new value system, Paul's own value judgment on his past is so damning that his feelings may be adequately described as remorse, even though Paul uses different terminology. In Phil 3.2-11 it is not enough for Paul to say that in Christ he has found something better; he makes clear that what he previously valued, he now considers loss. For emotional effect, he adds that he now thinks of his former values as dung (σκύβαλα).

When Paul refers to any specific misdeeds in his past, he most frequently mentions his persecution of the church (Phil 3.6; 1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13). The mention of this element of his past appears to serve different rhetorical purposes in the various contexts. In Phil 3.2-11, Paul's point is to say: look how much I have abandoned because of Christ. Implicitly he is exalting Christ, because no sacrifice can possibly compare to the gain of knowing him. Although Paul is not

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when looking back at his former life, expressed regrets that he had persecuted the church. Stendahl's point was that Paul showed no signs of remorse before his call as an apostle (*Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976] 13). Peter O'Brien, on the other hand, emphasizes that Paul understood his Damascus road experience as the event of his personal salvation ('Was Paul Converted?' *Justification and Variegated Nomism* [2 vols.; WUNT II/181; ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifrid; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004] 2.361–91, esp. 365–6).

27. Paula Fredriksen has argued that Paul's reports in his letters must be read as stylized accounts, where the convert tells his story in light of the understanding he has gained later ("Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *JTS* 37 [1986] 3–34). Alan Segal also takes this approach (*Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990]).

explicitly expressing any regrets, he is performing the ultimate devaluation of his previous religious status and accomplishments.

When Paul recalls his acts of persecution in 1 Cor 15.9, however, his rhetorical purposes are different and his language comes closer to expressions of remorse. His focus is now on the contrast between his lack of qualifications and the magnitude of God's grace. God's grace is so amazing that it embraced even him, the least of the apostles. To prove his point, Paul cites the pinnacle of his sins, his persecution of the church of God. It is as if he is saying: look how bad I was, and yet, God's grace transformed me.[28] Similarly, in Gal 1.13, Paul emphasizes the awesome power of God, which turned him into an apostle. To drive home the point that his apostleship could not possibly be the work of human beings, he pulls out the trump card of his personal testimony: he had persecuted the church of God. Could he be any further away from becoming an apostle? When in fact he did become one, it was because of the sovereign intervention of God.

Paul's choice of terminology in 1 Cor 15.9 and Gal 1.13 may be seen as a reflection of his feelings of remorse. In both of these instances, the object of Paul's persecution is identified as 'the church of God'. Of the 43 occurrences of the term ἐκκλησία in the undisputed Pauline letters, the qualifier θεοῦ is only included in 8 of them.[29] Its inclusion both in 1 Cor 15.9 and Gal 1.13 may be of some significance. Paul heightens the emotional effect of recalling his former sins. Not only did he persecute the church, he persecuted the church of God. Through his choice of words, Paul does the opposite of glossing over his past sins; he rather stresses the gravity of them. The contrast between his hostile actions towards God and God's mercy towards him is underscored. True, Paul never explicitly mentions that he has any regrets. To do so would merely be another demonstration of excessive zeal, this time for stating the obvious.

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28. The only reference to Paul's persecution of the church in the disputed Paulines, 1 Tim 1.13, serves the same rhetorical function.

29. In the canonical Pauline letters, the term ἐκκλησία occurs 61 times, with θεοῦ 11 times.

2 Corinthians 4.6

An absolute contrast between before and now also characterizes Paul's reference to his conversion in 2 Cor 4.6, where he says that God who let light shine in darkness also 'shone in our hearts'. Most scholars find in this light-out-of-darkness experience a reference to Paul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus road.[30] Victor Furnish has objected, however, that the verse makes more sense as a description of the illumination (φωτισμός) Paul provides for others. He compares it with the account in Acts 9 and observes the light there is a physical light with blinding effects, whereas 'light' in 2 Cor 4.6 is used metaphorically, referring to spiritual illumination. Moreover, Paul elsewhere refers to his Damascus experience as a revelation (Gal 1.15-16; 1 Cor 15.8), not an enlightenment.[31] But Furnish's objections are not compelling. We should not expect uniformity in

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30. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975) 106; Kim, *The Origin*, 5; C. Dietzfelbinger, *Die Berufung des Paulus als Ursprung seiner Theologie* (WMANT 58; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985) 49–51; R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco: Word, 1986) 80; G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (trans. J. P. Galvin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 123; A. F. Segal, 'Conversion and Universalism: Opposites That Attract', *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (JSNTSup 86; ed. B. H. McLean; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 162–89, esp. 165; M. E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994) 1.316–7; M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) 42; F. J. Matera, *II Corinthians* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) 103–4; M. J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 336–7. Beverly Roberts Gaventa is also open to this interpretation (Gaventa, *From darkness*, 2).

31. V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; New York: Doubleday, 1984) 250–1.

the ways Paul and Luke describe this event. They have different purposes for their accounts. Luke focuses on external manifestation in order to show the legitimacy of the Christian movement (Luke 1.4), whereas Paul downplays his visions (2 Cor 12.1-10), so that he can direct the Corinthians' faith towards the invisible (4.18; 5.7). It is also doubtful whether Paul would have made a very clear distinction between illumination and revelation (cf. Eph 1.17-18; 1QH^a 12.6, 23). Moreover, the parallel between 4.4 and 4.6 requires the interpretation that illumination in 4.6 refers to Paul himself being illuminated and not to Paul illuminating others. Verse 4 explains how the unbelievers are prevented from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Verse 6 describes the positive parallel, applied to Paul, which must be the ability to see the glory of Christ, not to be commissioned to the Gentiles.[32] Paul's use of creation language from Gen 1.3 also makes more sense if the reference is to the absolute change in Paul's life, from darkness to light. Darkness and light terminology is the language of conversion (Acts 26.18; Rom 2.19; 1 Thess 5.4-5; Eph 5.8; 1 Pet 2.9; *T. Gad* 5.7; *Jos. Asen.* 8.10).[33] There is therefore no compelling reason to exclude a reference to Paul's conversion in 2 Cor 4.6, even though the description is not intended to single himself out (as is the case in Gal 1.15-16), but rather to provide an example of the conversion he has described generically in 3.16.[34]

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32. K. O. Sandnes, *Paul - One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding* (WUNT II/43; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) 137–8. Similarly, Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* 1.338.

33. Cf. H. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924) 139; Sandnes, *Paul*, 137, n. 28.

34. Cf. Sandnes, *Paul*, 144. George W. MacRae observes that Paul 'seems to have wished to generalise to the level of the Christian experience of conversion' (G. W. MacRae, "Anti-Dualist Polemic in 2 Cor 4:6?" *Studia Evanglica 4/1: The New Testament Scriptures* [TU 102; ed. F. L. Cross; 1968] 420–31, esp. 423 quoted from Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 251).

The reference to glory in 4.6 connects Paul's autobiographical remark to the discussion of the relative glory of the old and the new covenants in 3.6-18. He there comments on the inability of the children of Israel to appropriate rightly their own Scriptures. The hardening of Israel was a stock theme in early Christian teaching, finding its scriptural warrant primarily in Isa 6.9-10 (cf. Mark 4.12 par.; John 12.40).[35] In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul traces Israel's hardening back to the time of the wilderness generation, adding that the same spiritual dullness remains to the present day, described by the metaphor of the veil lying over their hearts (vv. 14-15). In 3.16 Paul gives a modified quotation of Exod 34.34, which refers to Moses' turning to the Lord so that he could see God's glory. But in Paul's rendering, the quotation is applied to any Israelite who turns to the Lord. The quotation thus becomes a generic statement about conversion.[36] Lack of such a conversion prevents the Israelites from understanding the old covenant rightly (v. 13), and it prevents them from seeing the glory of the new covenant. The Christians, however, see the glory of the Lord, and they are transformed to glory themselves (v. 18).

When Paul in 4.6 describes himself as the one who has undergone an absolute transformation from light to darkness, so that he has been given the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, he stands out as an example of a Jew who has had the veil removed from his mind (3.15-16) and been transformed into the image of the glory of the Lord (3.18). Again we see that Paul includes himself in his verdict on the Jewish people as hardened and

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35. Cf. S. J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996) 366–7; J. R. Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul 'in Concert' in the Letter to the Romans* (NovTSup 101; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 244–51.

36. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 211; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 70; Harris, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 308. Thrall takes the subject of ἐπιστρέψῃ to be Moses, understood as a type of the Christian convert (*Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1.271). Similarly, Hafemann, *Paul*, 388–9.

lacking a right relationship with God. Paul has experienced a conversion, however, the kind of conversion all the children of Israel need.

Paul's description of his conversion may be compared to the radical sectarians in Israel. The author of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* also praises God for the revelation he has been given. He describes the revelation as 'Like perfect dawn you have revealed yourself to me with per[fect] light' (1QH^a 12.6). Similar terminology occurs in 12.23 where the hymnist confesses to God that 'you... reveal yourself in me with your strength as perfect light'. This revelation has obviously put the author of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* at odds with his fellow Jews, whom he refers to as God's people (1QH^a 12.6, 11). In his opinion, they are fools, as is evidenced by the fact that they have rejected him and God's exaltation of him (1QH^a 12.8). The explanation is that they search God with a double heart (1QH^a 12.14). In reality they are idolaters (1QH^a 12.15); they have not chosen the path of the Lord (1QH^a 12.17).[37]

Galatians 1.15-16

The revelation that changed Paul's life is also described in Gal 1.15-16. It is widely accepted that this description of his call draws on the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. When Paul refers to 'God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace', he is alluding both to Jeremiah's call narrative (1.5) and to the call of the Servant in Isaiah 49.1.[38] Karl

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37. Although there are similarities in the self-understanding of Paul and the author of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* vis-à-vis Israel, the theological rationale for their assessments differ greatly. According to the *Thanksgiving Hymns*, the problem with Israel is that they have changed the law, and the underlying premise is that salvation is only available through the sectarian interpretation of the requirements of the law. For Paul, salvation is only accessible without the law (Rom 3.21).

38. F. Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT 9; Freiburg: Herder, 1974) 81–2; H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 70; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 92; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990) 30; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the*

Olav Sandnes has argued convincingly that Paul is here not only demonstrating his acquaintance with biblical language but actually offering us a glimpse of his self-understanding.[39]

At this juncture, a disclaimer is necessary. To place Paul in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets does not exhaustively explain his self-understanding. Paul never explicitly calls himself a prophet, and his preferred self-designation is 'apostle'. In other words, the conviction that God has done something fundamentally new in Christ also determines how Paul understands himself. Newness does not appear in a vacuum, however. The prophetic elements of Paul's self-descriptions show that he understood his apostolate in many ways to be modeled after the Hebrew prophets.

As James Dunn has emphasized, Paul understands his prophetic call as a call to go to the Gentiles. The explicit purpose of the prophet-like call in Gal 1.15-16 is that Paul proclaim the good news among the nations.[40] This observation serves as another reminder that Paul's prophetic self-

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Galatians (BNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993) 63; J. L. Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 156–7. Cf. also H. Windisch, *Paulus und Christus: Ein biblisch-religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 24; Leipzig: Hindrichs, 1934) 137; J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959) 24–6; Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews*, 8; J. M. Scott, "Paul's Use of Deuteronomic Tradition," *JBL* 112 (1993) 645–65, esp. 661, n. 72; R. E. Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2* (WUNT II/102; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 111–5.

39. As corroborating evidence, Sandnes demonstrates how prophetic motifs surface in different types of Pauline texts, such as the greeting in Rom 1.1-5, apologetic passages such as 2 Cor 2.16; 3.5-6, in argumentative texts such as 1 Cor 9.15-18; Rom 10.4-18, as well as in a thesis statement such as 1 Cor 2.6-16 (*Paul*, 77–184).

40. James D. G. Dunn insists that the ἵνα in Gal 1.16 be given its full weight ("'A Light to the Gentiles': The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul," *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987] 251–66, esp. 251). John G. Gager goes further and maintains that the mission to

understanding is fundamentally shaped by his encounter with Jesus Christ and its implication for the inclusion of the Gentiles.

Even as Paul sees himself as an apostle to the Gentiles, however, he understands his ministry to be a ministry to Israel. His mission to the Gentiles may even be described as a mission whose ultimate purpose is the salvation of Israel.[41] Rom 11.13-14 informs us that 'as far as [he] is the apostle to the Gentiles, [he] glorifies his ministry, if somehow [he] may provoke some of [his] own people and save some of them'. (Cf. also Rom 11.25-26, 31; 1 Cor 9.19-23.)[42]

My point here is not to deny that Paul's prophetic ministry must be understood vis-a-vis the nations, but to underscore that his prophetic self-understanding also informs his attitude towards his own people.[43] The ultimate test of my contention will lie in its usefulness in explaining Paul's theology and exegesis.

Prophetic Theology

If the Pauline self-understanding that I have just outlined briefly is basically valid, some light may be shed on the exegesis of Paul's letters. In recent years, several studies have drawn upon

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the Gentiles was what Paul's conversion was all about (*Reinventing Paul* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000] 27, 44–5).

41. Similarly, P. Lapide and P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul Rabbi and Apostle* (trans. L. W. Denef; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984) 25; W. S. Campbell, "Israel," *DPL*, 441–6, esp. 445.

42. In 1 Thess 2.15-16, Paul maintains that the Jews are hindering their own salvation by hindering Paul from preaching to the Gentiles. The implication is that Paul's preaching to the Gentiles will have the salvation of Israel as a result (Scott, "Deuteronomic," 656).

43. Craig Evans arrives at a similar conclusion: 'It is important to note too that Paul did not regard himself as an apostate from Judaism (Rom 11:1: I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin), but rather as an apostle (and prophet) to an apostate Israel, even as Elijah the prophet had been sent to an apostate Israel' ("Prophet, Paul As," *DPL*, 762–5, esp. 764).

the prophetic tradition for illuminating aspects of Paul's theology. Frank Thielman has demonstrated that Paul's understanding of the human plight is firmly rooted in the tradition of Israel's prophets.[44] Elsewhere, I have argued that Paul's critique of the Jewish confidence in the election of Israel can be fruitfully compared to the prophetic critique of Israel, especially that of Jeremiah.[45] Specifically, with respect to Paul's exegetical method, Craig Evans has shown that Paul's use of Israel's Scriptures in Romans is based on a prophetic hermeneutic. Just as the prophets tended to take the symbols of Israel's security and use them against the people, so does Paul use Israel's Scriptures and apply them against the people of Israel and in favor of the inclusion of the Gentiles.[46] In the following, I will focus on one of the problem passages in Paul's epistles, namely Gal 3.10-12. I suggest that some of the difficulties in this passage can be solved when Paul is read in light of his prophetic self-understanding.

Galatians 3.10-12

Gal 3.10-12 is a notorious crux in Pauline exegesis. The quotations from Scripture do not appear to be proving Paul's point. While Paul's argument is directed against those who keep the law, his quotation from Deut 27.26 curses those who break it. What is more, far from condemning law observers, the quotation from Lev 18.5 promises life to law keepers. The traditional explanation, that Paul assumes that no one actually obeys the law, as it has to be obeyed perfectly,[47] has been seriously challenged at least since Heinrich Schlier.[48] The problem is that the

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44. Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*.

45. Grindheim, *Crux*.

46. C. A. Evans, "Paul and the Prophets: Prophetic Criticism in the Epistle to the Romans (with Special Reference to Romans 9–11)," *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (eds. S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 115–28.

47. So E. d. W. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920) 164; H. Lietzmann, *An die Galater* (HNT 10; 4th ed.;

requirement for perfect law observance is not in evidence, neither in Paul nor in contemporary Jewish sources. On the contrary, Phil 3.6 indicates that Paul thought law obedience not only to be achievable, but that he himself had achieved it.

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971) 19; Bruce, *Galatians*, 159; H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983) 94–5; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought: A Contribution to the Development of Pauline Theology* (Studies of the New Testament and its world; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984) 19; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 118; T. R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 44–8; L. Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law* (WUNT 124; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 92; A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001) 163–7. Christopher Stanley holds a modified version of this view. Instead of finding an implicit verdict to the effect that those of works of the law are under a curse because they do not keep the law, he finds an implicit threat: those of works of the law are threatened with a curse if they do not obey every single commandment ('"Under a Curse": A Fresh Reading of Galatians 3.10–14', *NTS* 36 [1990] 481–511, esp. 500). Similarly, Norman Young suggests an unexpressed condition (*'if* those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου do not do all the requirements of the law') instead of an unexpressed causal premise (*'because* no one can keep the law perfectly') ("Who's Cursed–and Why? [Galatians 3:10–14]," *JBL* 117 [1998] 79–92, esp. 86). According to Alan Segal, Paul has Pharisaic fulfillment in view. While such law observance may have been achieved by Paul himself, it would have been practically impossible for Paul's Gentile audience in Galatia (*Paul the Convert*, 120). Similarly, D. F. Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians: A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter* (WUNT II/190; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 119.

48. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (KEK 9; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971) 133.

E. P. Sanders maintains that exegesis of the quoted passages does not help us understand Paul's argument.[49] Instead, he insists, the quotations are selected because they combine the terms Paul wants to associate, not because they actually say what Paul's argument requires. The way to understand Gal 3.10-12, therefore, is to focus exclusively on what Paul takes his quotations to mean, and to ignore the meaning of the actual texts that are being quoted.[50] J. Louis Martyn also observes that Paul uses Deut 27.26 to prove the exact opposite of what the verse says. He therefore suggests the Paul's argument is not driven by his understanding of this passage of Scripture, but that the use of this quotation is dictated by the opponents, whose theology Paul contradicts. Paul anticipates the Scripture passages that his opponents will use and deflects their impact by providing his own exegesis of them.[51]

I suggest that Paul's quotations are not as arbitrary as they may seem. The key to their interpretation is to understand that Paul reads them through his prophetic trajectory. In the prophetic tradition, these passages of Scripture had already been made a part of the arsenal directed against apostate Israel.

The curses in Deuteronomy 27 are used and quoted in the book of Jeremiah. Specifically,

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49. Alan Segal thinks that Paul's argument cannot be understood on the basis of his exegesis of Scripture, but on the basis of his experience of conversion (*Paul the Convert*, 118, 122). Christopher Stanley maintains that the verses Paul quotes from Scripture might equally well have been used to prove the opposite of Paul's position. The quotations can be effective only because the audience already shares Paul's basic convictions regarding justification by faith ("'Under a Curse'," 504–5).

50. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (London: SCM, 1983) 21–3. Similarly, C. B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 114.

51. Martyn, *Galatians*, 311–2.

Jer 11.3 alludes to Deut 27.10, 26.[52] In the form in which Paul would have known the book, chapter 11 presents a lament for the sins of Israel. They are called to listen and obey the covenant that God made with them when he led them out of Egypt.[53] The sad reality is, however, that the people are not listening and obeying. The curse from Deut 27.26 is therefore invoked. The covenant people have disobeyed the covenant, and the covenant therefore pronounces a curse on the people. This state of affairs is traced back all the way to the times of the defection of the Northern tribes (v. 10).[54]

Jeremiah is not implying that it was impossible to keep the covenant in the first place. His focus is on the fundamental covenantal disloyalty of which Israel is guilty. Rather than being

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52. Scholars debate whether Jeremiah made use of deuteronomistic tradition or whether Jer 11.1-13 is the work of a deuteronomistic redactor. For deuteronomistic redaction, see W. Rudolph, *Jeremia* (Handbuch zum Alten Testament 12.3; 3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968) 77; W. Thiel, *Die Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973) 144; J. Kiss, *Die Klage Gottes und des Propheten: Ihre Rolle in der Komposition und Redaktion von Jer 11–12, 14–15 und 18* (WMANT 99; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener-Verlag, 2003) 5. For authenticity, see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (2 vols.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 1.349–51; J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999) 615.

53. Verse 4 shows that the covenant in question is the Sinaitic covenant, not the Josianic covenant (which was a renewal of the Sinai covenant). So Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 78; Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 1.352; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 621; H. Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah in Prophetic Tradition: An Examination of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (Contributions to Biblical exegesis and theology 26; Louvain: Peeters, 2000) 190. Contra Thiel, *Deuteronomistische Redaktion*, 144.

54. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 624.

committed to the Lord, they followed their stubborn heart (v. 8), conspired (v. 9), and served strange gods (v. 10).

Jeremiah's application of the deuteronomic curses connects with a major motif in the original list of curses in Deuteronomy 27 as well. This list brings together a seemingly random list of offenses. The first and the last of these sins are explicitly described as taking place 'in secret', and the others are of such a nature that they might easily escape the public eye.[55] In other words, the question of the curses transcends the sphere of the community and becomes a matter between God and the individual offender.[56] In Jeremiah 11, the focus is upon sins against God. The people are condemned for blatant sins of disloyalty to the Lord. Both Deuteronomy 27 and Jeremiah 11 are directed against sins that can be seen as a manifestation of a heart that is not right with God. By Jeremiah's verdict, the people are apostates and the corresponding curse befalls them. Although Jeremiah also quotes the promises to those who obey (vv. 4-5), the rhetorical function of these

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55. G. v. Rad, *Deuteronomy* (OTL; London: SCM, 1966) 168; M. Noth, "'For All Who Rely on Works of the Law Are Under Curse'," *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1966) 118–31, esp. 118; P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 331; J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (The JPS Torah commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996) 256.

56. Appealing to the wider context of Deuteronomy 27-32, N. T. Wright and James Scott argue that Paul's quoted curse is provoked by the corporate sin of apostasy committed by the covenant people (N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992] 146; J. M. Scott, "'For as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are Under a Curse' [Galatians 3.10]," *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* [JSNTSup 83; eds. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993] 187–221, esp. 195–7). This reading ignores the more specific, individual focus of Deut 27.14-26, as well as Paul's repeated use of language that refers to individuals (ὅσοι in v. 10; πᾶς in v. 10; οὐδεις in v. 11; ὁ δίκαιος in v. 11; ὁ ποιήσας in v. 12). Cf. also Stanley, "'Under a Curse'," 484.

promises is merely to serve as a foil for the curse.[57] The theoretical possibility of the blessings emphasizes Israel's plight: they have lost out on the blessing and suffer the curse.

Lev 18.5 is also an important verse in the prophetic tradition. The prophet Ezekiel quotes this verse in his disputation speech in chapter 20.[58] In this chapter, Ezekiel offers a prophetic reinterpretation of the history of Israel. By emphasizing Israel's sins at every stage of their history, Ezekiel rewrites their story as the story of their apostasy.[59] It had already started in Egypt, when they were unwilling to throw away their idols (v. 8). The wilderness generation was no better, rebelling, as they despised the Lord's ordinances, and desecrated his sabbaths (v. 13). Likewise, the second wilderness generation emulated their parents' sins (v. 21). Ezekiel's generation has followed in their ancestors' footsteps. They have committed idolatry (vv. 27-31), and sacrificed their children to idols (v. 31). As a result, God will judge this people (v. 35).

In the midst of this biting critique of his people, Ezekiel repeatedly quotes the promise in Lev 18.5. The rhetorical function of the quotation is to describe the gravity of Israel's sins. God's laws are good laws; they result in life for those who keep them. But Israel did not listen, broke God's good laws, and gave their loyalty to other gods. Once again, the impossibility of fulfilling

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57. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 1.352. The debate between Martin Noth ("'For All Who Rely on Works of the Law Are Under Curse'", 126) and Heikki Räisänen (*Paul and the Law*, 124–7) regarding whether the promise in Deuteronomy is merely a theoretical or an actual possibility is not relevant for our understanding of Paul, if he reads Deuteronomy through the filter of Jeremiah. With Jeremiah, the curse is established as the only actual possibility.

58. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Hermeneia; trans. R. E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 1.410; L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word, 1990) 10; D. L. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 632. For the use of Lev 18.5 in Ezekiel 18 and 33 in addition to ch. 20, see P. Sprinkle, "Law and Life: Leviticus 18.5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel," *JSOT* 31 (2007) 275–93.

59. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 1.405; Block, *Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 614.

the law is not in view. Nor is it Ezekiel's point that Israel has stumbled in some of the details of the law. Rather, their sin is apostasy, fundamental violation of the covenant, as it has been throughout their history.[60]

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel had already used Deut 27.26 and Lev 18.5 as a warrant for judgment, and when Paul uses these same Scripture verses he stands in the same tradition. Just as Jeremiah applies the curse to the people of the covenant, so does Paul direct his critique to those 'from works of the law'. In other words, he addresses those who want to belong to the Sinai covenant.[61] The 'Sinai covenant people' are under a curse, he proclaims, and the warrant is found in Deut 27.26: 'cursed is everyone who does not abide in all things that are written in the book of the law so that they do them'.[62] As Paul has learned from Jeremiah, this curse may be applied broadly to the covenant people. The explanation, if supplied from Jeremiah, is that the covenant people have committed the sin of fundamental disloyalty to the Lord. It is therefore irrelevant to discuss whether perfect law obedience was required or considered possible. The curse falls upon the apostate, a description that is made to apply to those who want to belong to the Sinai covenant. Paul's unexpressed premise is therefore a radical view of the ungodliness of professed worshipers of Israel's God, a view he seems to have in common with the Hebrew prophets.

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60. Similarly, Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 287.

61. If Paul stands on the shoulders of Jeremiah in his critique of 'works of the law', it is difficult to limit his critique to Jewish identity markers (pace Dunn, *Galatians*, 172). The sins of Jeremiah's generation were not that they were obsessed with preserving their Jewish distinctives. This interpretation of 'works of the law' is only possible if the expression refers to a tendency that originated in the Maccabean era (Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 352).

62. As in Jeremiah, the curse is already a given. It is therefore insufficient to find only the potential of a curse in Paul's words. Pace Stanley, "'Under a Curse'," 500. Correctly, Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 147–8.

This prophetic critique of Israel also seems to have influenced several of the various groups within Second Temple Judaism. In some of this literature, Lev 18.5 is also occasionally used as a warrant for the judgment that befalls the people. The clearest example is *4 Ezra* 7.20-25, where the people's violation of the principle of Lev 18.5 explains why they had to perish. It is also possible that Lev 18.5 was used in the context of discipline in 4Q504 6. The text is corrupt, but line 15 refers to the Lord's disciplining Israel, and line 17 quotes Lev 18.5.[63]

The more common use of Lev 18.5, however, is to show that obedience to the Torah gives life (*Ps. Sol*. 14.2; CD-A 3.15-16; Philo, *Congr*. 86-88).[64] (Perhaps Bar 4.1 and *Let. Aris.* 127 should also be mentioned, but it is uncertain whether these texts have Lev 18.5 directly in view.)

In the *Psalms of Solomon*, which may have originated within the same circles as the Pharisaic party,[65] these two uses of Lev 18.5 come together. A clear allusion to Lev 18.5 occurs in *Ps. Sol.* 14.1-2: 'The Lord is faithful to those who love him in truth, to those who endure his discipline, to those who walk in the righteousness of his decrees, in the law, which he commanded us for our life.' *Ps. Sol.* 14 is a commentary on the biblical Psalm 1.[66] The righteous are compared

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63. Cf. J. R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 247.

64. For a discussion of whether this life is understood as life in the resurrection or within the covenant, see S. J. Gathercole, "Torah, Life and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament," *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. C. A. Evans; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004) 126–45.

65. The question of the provenance of the *Psalms of Solomon* is highly debated. For an overview, see J. L. Trafton, "The *Psalms of Solomon* in Recent Research," *JSP* 12 (1994) 3–19, esp. 7–8; K. Atkinson, "Towards a Redating of the Psalms of Solomon: Implications for Understanding the Sitz im Leben of an Unknown Jewish Sect," *JSP* 17 (1998) 95–112, esp. 96–7.

66. H. E. Ryle and M. R. James, *ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΟΛΟΜΩΝΤΟΣ: Psalms of the Pharisees, Commonly Called the Psalms of Solomon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891) 111;

to the trees of life, who will be rooted forever (vv. 3-4). They are contrasted with the sinners (v. 6), who love the companionship of sin (v. 6b) and whose inheritance is destruction (v. 9). The purpose of the psalm is to hold up the promise of a reward for the righteous (v. 10), and the allusion to Lev 18.5 functions as a warrant. Those who obey the law will be rewarded because the law was given for the very purpose that its obedience would result in life. It is reasonable to understand this 'life' as a reference to life that extends beyond death, as the psalmist assures the righteous that they will live and be rooted forever (vv. 3-4) and not be plucked up all the days of heaven (v. 4b).[67]

Like Psalm 1, *Ps. Sol.* 14 uses the picture of the righteous as the foil for the description of their negative counterpart, the sinners. They will be deprived of the reward of life and will instead suffer destruction. In the argument of *Ps. Sol.* 14 as a whole, Lev 18.5 therefore serves a double function: a positive function for the righteous, and a negative function for the sinners. Since the reward of the law is life, the sinners, who do not obey it, will not obtain life. The major sin of which the sinners are guilty, is that they have not remembered God (v. 7).[68]

Paul's interpretation of Lev 18.5 is similar to that of the *Psalms of Solomon*, but he is more radical in his application. Whereas the *Psalms of Solomon* seems to exclude the majority of the people of Israel from the reward promised and therefore sees Lev 18.5 as a warrant for their judgment instead, Paul subsumes the whole people under this judgment. For him, the double function of Lev 18.5 is reduced to one. He is thus closer to Jeremiah's application of the verse than he is to the *Psalms of Solomon*.

If Paul's implicit indictment of the sins of the covenant people is dependent on Jeremiah, it implies that Paul finds the same fundamental error with them as did Jeremiah: lack of trust in the

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K. Atkinson, *An Intertextual Study of the Psalms of Solomon* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 49; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2001) 275.

67. Cf. Ryle and James, *ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΟΛΟΜΩΝΤΟΣ*, 113; Atkinson, *Psalms of Solomon*, 287; Gathercole, "Leviticus 18:5," 132–3.

68. Atkinson, *Psalms of Solomon*, 284.

Lord and lack of loyalty to him. After the coming of Christ the sin of disloyalty manifested itself as failure to believe in Jesus. At the time of Jeremiah, this sin manifested itself as misplaced trust in secular alliances rather than in the Lord. This sin is therefore not quite adequately described as failure to know what time it is, i.e., failure to recognize that the new, eschatological age has been inaugurated in Christ.[69]

When Paul's quotation is read in the exegetical tradition of Jeremiah, the logical connection seems to be: 1. The Sinai covenant pronounces a curse on those who are fundamentally disloyal to the Lord. 2. Those who want to be under the Sinai covenant are fundamentally disloyal to the Lord. 3. The Sinai covenant pronounces a curse on those who want to be under it.

Having introduced the concept of faith righteousness by appealing to the prophet Habakkuk, Paul then turns to Lev 18.5. Viewed through the lens of Ezekiel, Paul's quotation has associations, not of life, but of forfeited life and, consequently, death. With the perspective gained from Ezekiel, Lev 18.5 serves as a reminder that Israel was unable to attain this life because they did not show the necessary obedience. Paul's logic in Gal 3.11-12 can now be appreciated: 1. God promises righteousness by faith. 2. In the law, righteousness is promised by doing, to which, as we know from Ezekiel, the covenant people do not attain. 3. Righteousness is not by the law.

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69. Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 573. Don Garlington also finds that Paul's use of Deut 27.26 implies that he charges his opponents with the sin of apostasy, not simply that they fail in fulfilling all the details of the Mosaic law. Garlington defines this apostasy as clinging to the wrong era of salvation history (the Mosaic law) and corresponding failure to accept Jesus as the means God has provided for salvation. The problem with Garlington's interpretation is that it does not explain how Israel's behavior constituted apostasy before the coming of Christ, although he maintains that the consequences of their apostasy were seen in the events of Israel's history from 587 BCE onwards ("Role Reversal and Paul's Use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10–13," *JSNT* 65 [1997] 85–121, esp. 107–10).

Conclusion

A consistent pattern now emerges: Paul joins the prophetic lament against the covenant people. They have fundamentally violated the covenant and become apostates. Righteousness can therefore not be achieved through the law. The loyalty to God that is necessary for life and justification is now demonstrated by believing in Jesus Christ. By coming to faith in Christ, Paul himself had realized that his former zeal constituted apostasy. But now that he is in Christ, he has joined the ranks of the prophets, renews their exposure of fundamental apostasy, and calls for repentance and loyalty to the Lord, which now means to put one's faith in Jesus.