

SCOTT J. HAFEMANN

# Paul: Servant of the New Covenant

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Scott J. Hafemann

Paul:  
Servant of the New Covenant

Pauline Polarities in Eschatological Perspective

Mohr Siebeck

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To Gin M. Hafemann,  
who prays and studies



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## Preface

### A Paradigm for Reading Paul

But how Jewish was Paul, really? ... so one might say that he tackles Jewish problems in a Jewish way.

Jörg Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity"<sup>1</sup>

My 1995 study of the relationship between the "old" and "new covenant" as set forth in 2 Cor 3:4–18 led to several surprising conclusions concerning the eschatological and history-of-salvation nature of Paul's theology.<sup>2</sup> Informed by a contextual interpretation of the veil of Moses in Exod 34:29–35, Paul argued that Moses's "ministry of death" and "condemnation" was not the result of some qualitative or quantitative inadequacy in the Torah itself. The problem that plagued Moses's ministry was not his message, but the people to whom he ministered. Although the law came in a revelation of God's glory, Israel's "stiff neck," manifest in her sin with the golden calf, rendered her unable to encounter the life-transforming presence of God without being destroyed (cf. Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9 with Exod 34:30, Deut 29:2–4, and 2 Cor 3:7, 13). Moreover, in accord with the witness of the law and the prophets, Israel's hard-hearted condition, apart from a remnant of believers, persisted throughout Israel's history under the "old covenant" and into Paul's own day (cf. 2 Cor 3:14–15 with Rom 11:7–10). For in a mystery of God's providence, Israel's "minds were hardened" at Sinai, a reality further instantiated by her having been given the law *without the Spirit* so that, without the divine power to obey, "the *γράμμα* kills" (2 Cor 3:6, 14; cf. 1 Cor 10:1–14, with its reference to Israel's idolatry with the golden calf in 1 Cor 10:7–8). The problem throughout Israel's history, therefore, was not the

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<sup>1</sup> Jörg Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, eds. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog, AGJU 71 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007), 289, 310. Frey lays out a compelling case for the fact that "Paul never abandoned 'Judaism' in order to join 'Christianity'" (p. 291, pointing, p. 291 n. 32, to the fact that "the first time *Ἰουδαϊσμός* is used in contrast with *Χριστιανισμός* is more than 50 years later, in Ignatius [*Magn.* 10:3 and *Philad.* 6:1]").

<sup>2</sup> See my *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3*, WUNT 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), especially pp. 429–459, where these conclusions are presented in detail and in dialogue with the OT, Second Temple Judaism, and the main lines of contemporary scholarship. These opening paragraphs are taken from these pages.

character of the covenant made with Israel, but the character of the Israel with whom the covenant was made.

In response, Paul's "ministry of the Spirit" and "righteousness," as a mediation of "the glory of God ... on the face of Christ" (cf. 2 Cor 3:18 with 4:4, 6), was bringing about the long-promised, Torah-fulfilling transformation of the eschatological people of God made possible by the new covenant provision of the forgiveness of her sins (Jer 31:31–34).<sup>3</sup> Unlike Israel, the people of the new covenant thus experience the law *with the Spirit*, which, as a result of the law being written on the heart, "makes alive" (cf. the reference to Jer 31:31–34 in 2 Cor 3:6 with the allusions to the new covenant promise of the Spirit from Ezek 36:26–27 in 2 Cor 3:3). Moreover, the link between the transformation pictured in 2 Cor 3:18 and the new life portrayed in 2 Cor 5:14–17, 21 demonstrates that Paul conceives of the new covenant to be of one piece with the inauguration of the new age of the new creation for those now "in Christ." For Paul, the "old" (with its covenant) has already passed away and the "new" (with its covenant) has arrived (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>4</sup> Through Paul's "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18–20) this "unveiled" encounter with the glory of the Lord is extending the "new creation" inaugurated by Christ throughout the world, in which God's new covenant will be kept by those whom God is saving from among Israel and the nations (cf. 2 Cor 2:14–17).

Paul's letter/Spirit contrast and his understanding of the distinct ministries defined by it thus explicate the consequences of not encountering and encountering the glory of God within a "salvation-history," sin-judgment-restoration framework. Paul's contrast between the old and new covenants is not a material, theological contrast between two distinct means of redemption. Rather, it is an eschatological, two-age contrast between the era of Israel, during which the nation, separated from the presence of God, consistently broke the covenant, and the era of the church, in which God's eschatological people made up of Jews and gentiles, transformed by the power of God's presence, now keep the covenant. So Paul had no "problem" with the Torah/old covenant/commands of God per se; nor did he import into the Scriptures foreign, Christian presuppositions in the service of his polemic on behalf of the gospel. The argument of 2 Cor 3 points in a different direction for understanding the polarities in Paul's thinking, namely, to eschatology and salvation history. To comprehend Paul, therefore, we must look to his self-understanding as an apostle of Christ called by God to be a "servant

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of my exegesis of Jer 31:31–34/38:31–34LXX, see Appendix Two below; for a summary of my exegesis of 2 Cor 3:4–18, see chapters two and three.

<sup>4</sup> See *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 434–436, for Paul's corresponding conviction that his ministry of the Spirit was the means by which God was reversing the effects both of Israel's "fall" with the golden calf and of mankind's "fall" into sin in Gen 3 (cf. Rom 1:18–23 with Rom 3:21–26; 5:12–19 and 2 Cor 4:6).

of the new covenant” that had been established by the Messiah and empowered by the Spirit (2 Cor 3:3–6).

In the years since I reached these conclusions I have been testing and working out their implications through a close reading of other key passages in which Paul’s new covenant perspectives inform the polarities that occupy the generative center of his thought.<sup>5</sup> Though written over a long stretch of time, the essays collected in this volume all consequently follow and find their coherence in the trajectory set forth in my 1995 work. The whole is nevertheless greater than the sum of its parts in that these essays represent an ongoing development of an eschatological paradigm for reading the Pauline *Hauptbriefe*.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, their approach is not thematic but discourse-focused, not comparative but local in its field of vision, and not deductive but inductive in its orientation. At the same time, the texts are read with an eye toward their larger theological (not primarily political or social), salvific (not primarily rhetorical or polemic), and conceptual (not primarily historical) significance.

These studies represent steps along a path toward mapping out the coherence of Paul’s thought. Working out a synthesized statement of Paul’s “new covenant theology” is the next step forward for which these studies are intended to have paved the way. Such a theology will center around the still relevant and related questions concerning Paul’s understanding of Jesus’s messianic identity as the Son of God and Lord of the Nations (salvation and life “in Christ”), his understanding of redemption, reconciliation, and purity-holiness as they encompass the establishment of the new covenant (Christ, the Passover lamb, 1 Cor 5:7; 11:23–26) and its maintenance (Christ, the “mercy seat” and intercessor at God’s right hand, Rom 3:25; 8:34), his view of the nature, content, and role of the Torah-halakha in the Church (the “law of Christ” and the “law of the Spirit of life,” Gal 6:2; Rom 8:2), and his confidence concerning the present and future justification of God’s people (the “death” and “life of Christ” and “the ἀρραβών of the Spirit of Sonship,” Rom 5:9–11; 8:14–17; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). The trajectory established in 2 Cor 3 and confirmed by the present studies indicates that the answers to these larger questions must take their bearings from Paul’s inaugurated eschatology,

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<sup>5</sup> In this regard there are three principle lacunae that still require more substantial study: 1 Cor 10:1–13, Rom 3:27–31, and Rom 10:5–13. Regarding the former, the starting point is Carla Swafford Works, *The Church in the Wilderness: Paul’s Use of Exodus Traditions in 1 Corinthians*, WUNT 2/379 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); for the latter, see Per Jarle Bekken, *The Word is Near You: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul’s Letter to the Romans in a Jewish Context*, BZNW 144 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> In what follows, the introduction and chapters six, seven, and ten, though developed for various venues in recent years, are published here for the first time. The arguments of the other chapters have been slightly updated and clarified (their original publication is cited at the beginning of each essay and all are used here with permission). The current volume complements my other collection of essays on these themes, which were intended for a broader audience and brought together at the kind initiative of Robin Parry at Cascade Books, *Paul’s Message and Ministry in Covenant Perspective: Selected Essays* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015).

anchored as it was in his hope in the future consummation of God's redemption of his people and the world (Rom 8:22–25; Phil 3:20–21). More specifically, the above questions are to be informed by Paul's Scripturally-based conviction that Jesus, as the Messiah, will be the salvific mediator of a final, universal judgment according to works that, within the context of the new covenant, will be normed by the criteria of the Torah (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 2:16; 14:10).<sup>7</sup>

The exegetical and theological discussion must continue in dialogue with the ongoing, specialized work represented in the bibliographical addendum below. In pursuing these questions, it will also be important to engage the recent, comprehensive treatments of Paul's theology; one thinks, for example, of the works of Baumert, Beale, Bird, Das, Dunn, Fredriksen, Gorman, Hahn, Holland, Pate, E. P. Sanders, Schnelle, Schreiner, Stuhlmacher, Thielman, Westerholm, Wilckens, Witherington, Wolters, and Wright. Moreover, of special interest is the growing emphasis on anchoring Paul's thought ever more firmly "within Judaism" than previously advocated, even by various proponents of the "new perspective(s) on Paul."<sup>8</sup> It is my hope that the following studies will make a modest contribution to this endeavor.

There is still much to be done. Inasmuch as these essays came into being over a considerable span of time, I am very much aware of the need to engage with the recent scholarship related to the studies presented here. By virtue of its nature and my own limitations, not being able to take into account the current work of my colleagues is the major weakness in the present work. Though I have clarified my own thinking throughout these essays and updated the older ones where possible, I look forward to retracing my steps once again in order to redirect my path as necessary. Nevertheless, I still affirm the proposals presented here, which stand or fall on their own merits. Yet, as with all our work, they remain provisional on the way to a better understanding of Paul, the biblical-theological genius and apostle of Christ to the nations.

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<sup>7</sup> The starting point for this discussion will be the comprehensive studies of Christian Stettler, *Das letzte Gericht: Studien zur Endgerichtserwartung von den Schriftpropheten bis Jesus*, WUNT 2/299 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) and *Das Endgericht bei Paulus: Framesemantische und exegetische Studien zur paulinischen Eschatologie und Soterologie*, WUNT 371 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). See too Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism and Judgment according to Deeds*, SNTSMS 105 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> See now the thesis-statement, state of the question, and some of the diverse examples of this partially new approach as set out in Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015). As Nanos describes this nascent and still developing movement, its assumption is "that the writing and community building of the apostle Paul took place *within* late Second Temple Judaism, *within* which he remained a representative after his change of conviction about Jesus being the Messiah (Christ)" (p. 9, emphasis his).

## A Bibliographical Addendum

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## Introduction

# Pauline Polarities in Eschatological Perspective

Thinking of the world as a collection of events, of processes, is the way that allows us to better grasp, comprehend and describe it. It is the only way that is compatible with relativity. The world is not a collection of things, it is a collection of events.

Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Paul, who elsewhere describes himself to the Corinthians as “a servant (διάκονος) of God” (2 Cor 6:4) and “a servant (διάκονος) of the Messiah” (2 Cor 11:23; cf. Phil 1:1), described himself in 2 Cor 3:6 as a “servant of the new covenant” (διάκονος καινῆς διαθήκης).<sup>2</sup> The persuasion driving this study is that this last appellation is as formative for understanding Paul’s ministry as his relationship to God and Christ is for understanding his apostolic calling.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, trans. by Erica Segre and Simon Carnell (New York: Allen Lane/Penguin Random House, 2018), 87. As Rovelli goes on to explain, “If we find a sufficient number of variables that remain synchronized enough in relation to each other, it is convenient to use them in order to speak of *when* ... The fundamental theory of the world must be constructed in this way; it does not need a time variable: it needs to tell us only how the things that we see in the world vary with respect to each other. That is to say, what the relations may be between these variables” (p. 103).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Paul as “a servant (διάκονος) of the gospel” (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23) and “a servant (διάκονος) of the church” (Col 1:24–25), likewise derivative from his apostolic calling. The plural forms of διάκονος in these texts are best construed as “apostolic plurals” referring to Paul in his office as an apostle. Διάκονος for Paul is not a technical designation for his apostolic ministry, but can be used more generally to describe others who serve someone or something in the status of a slave. The fact that it was used by the “false apostles” (2 Cor 11:13, 23) reflects its common and standardized use in the early church. For the other Pauline uses, see Rom 13:4 (the power of the rulers as a servant of God); Rom 15:8 (Christ as a servant of the circumcision); Rom 16:1 (Phoebe as a servant of the church at Cenchreae); 1 Cor 3:5 (Paul and Apollo as servants of the Lord); 2 Cor 11:15 (Paul’s opponents as servants of Satan); Gal 2:17 (Christ as a hypothetical servant of sin); Eph 6:21; Col 4:7 (Tychicus as a [fellow-]servant “in the Lord”); Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12 (the servants of/in the church); Col 1:7 (Epaphras as a servant of Christ); and 1 Tim 4:6 (Timothy as a servant of Christ Jesus). For the “new covenant” in the NT, see 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6 (and, by implication, 2 Cor 3:14; Gal 4:24); Luke 22:20; Heb 8:6–13 (quoting Jer 31:31–34); 9:15; 12:24 (here: διαθήκη νέα; and, by implication, Heb 7:22; 8:6; 10:16; 10:29; 13:20); Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24.

<sup>3</sup> For Paul’s use of the διακον-terminology to describe his apostolic ministry, see too 2 Cor 3:3, 8–9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3–4; 11:8; 1 Tim 1:12 and John N. Collins, *DIAKONIA: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. 195–215 on Paul. Collins concludes

this regard I have argued earlier that Paul's self-conception in 3:4–6 reflects his conviction that God had called him just as he had Moses and the prophets, but with a distinctively different ministry corresponding to the fulfillment of Jer 31:31–34, which had now been brought about by Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:25). As a “servant (δίακονος) of the new covenant,” Paul's “ministry (ἡ διακονία) of the Spirit” and “righteousness” (cf. 3:6 with 3:8, 9) is thus the eschatological counterpart to Moses's “ministry (ἡ διακονία) of death” and “condemnation” under the “old covenant” (ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη; cf. 3:6 with 3:7, 9, 14).<sup>4</sup> I have also argued that Paul's identity and ministry in 3:6–18 are the corollary to his self-understanding in 3:1–3. There Paul presents himself as the one who, in fulfillment of Ezek 36:26–27 (cf. Ezek 11:19–20), the other most prominent “new covenant” passage from the Scriptures, now mediates “the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets, but on tablets consisting of fleshly [i. e., receptive] hearts” (3:3). In so doing, Paul “serves” to bring into existence the eschatological people of God (cf. διακονέω in 3:3 with διάκονος/διακονία in 3:6–9; 4:1). The Corinthians as “the epistle of Paul” in 3:1 can therefore be equated with their identity as “the epistle of Christ” in 3:3.<sup>5</sup> This eschatological perspective on his ministry of the Spirit, which for Paul derives from the new covenant passages of Jer 31 and Ezek 36, provides the foundation for the following studies.<sup>6</sup>

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that Paul uses the terminology in regard to himself not to refer to general Christian service, but to the specific function of being a “spokesman” for the gospel and a “medium” of God's glory (cf. pp. 197–198, 203–205). This accords with its more general meaning in the NT as “messengers on assignment from God or Christ” (p. 195). For a survey of the use of διάκονος in the LXX, post-biblical Judaism, and Paul, see my *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3*, WUNT 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995; reprinted by Hendrickson, Paternoster, and Wipf and Stock publishers), 110–119. Against this biblical and Jewish background, “servant” (δίακονος) refers not primarily to one's identity, but to the servant's role as a representative agent or messenger and the corresponding activity of mediating on behalf of the one represented, with the connotation of the constraint and duty (but not lowliness) associated with being a slave.

<sup>4</sup> For this point and its implications for understanding the relationship between the ministries of Moses and Paul in relationship to Israel and the church, see the main lines of my *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*.

<sup>5</sup> For these points as the referent of the images employed in 2 Cor 2:14–3:3, see my *Suffering and the Spirit: An Exegetical Study of II Cor 2:14–3:3 within the Context of the Corinthian Correspondence*, WUNT 2/19 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), republished in a slightly abridged form as *Suffering and Ministry of the Spirit: Paul's Defense of His Ministry in II Corinthians 2:14–3:3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990; reprinted by Paternoster and Wipf and Stock publishers).

<sup>6</sup> See too now the work of Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians*, WUNT 2/282 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). In support of the eschatological perspective to be argued in this volume, Morales offers a detailed survey of the connection between the Spirit and restoration eschatology in the OT (esp. Isa 11:1–16; 48:17–19; 59:15–21; Ezek 11:14–21; 18:30–32; 36:26–27; 37:6LXX, 14; 39:29, seen to be a response to the curses of Deut 28, p. 40), in 2TJ (esp. Jub 1:1–26; Pss. Sol. 17:30–32; 1 Enoch 49:2–3; and 4Q504 frgs. 1–2, 2.13–14 [which draws on Jer 31:33 to overcome curses of Deut 28:27–28], 5.3–4, 6b–8, 9b–12a; 4Q521 frag. 2, 2.1–7, 11), and in Galatians (with its use of

## Eschatology

Following Paul's lead in 2 Cor 2:14–3:18, the studies collected in this volume are the result of my attempt over the past 30 years to develop a consistently eschatological, covenantal reading of Paul's theology. In them I argue that Paul's conviction that with the coming of the Messiah the new age of the new creation has dawned decisively informs his view of the old and new covenants, and hence his theology. Conversely, Paul's understanding of the nature of the covenant relationship between God and his people, both "old" and "new," and of the two ages within history to which they belong as constitutive realities, decisively informs his eschatology, and hence his theology.

This emphasis on Paul's two-age conception, of course, is not novel. It is widely acknowledged that Paul shared the common Jewish conception central to a biblically-based eschatology that history comprises two, sequential "ages" or "eras" separated by a divine act of cosmic redemption, which often became identified with the coming of the Messiah. It is also commonly recognized that Paul's view of history, in shocking contrast to the majority of his kinsmen, was decisively altered by his conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is in fact the crucified, risen, and ascended Messiah of Israel and Lord of the nations. As a result, the long-awaited "new age to come" of the "new creation," with its "new covenant," had already dawned in the midst of the "old, evil age," without bringing it to an end! In short, the eschatological hope of Israel had been inaugurated, but not-yet consummated. For Paul, the "kingdom of God" is here, but not-yet in its fullness (cf. Rom 14:17 and 1 Cor 4:20 with Gal 5:21 and 1 Cor 6:9–11). The "end of the

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Isaiah). In doing so Morales demonstrates that the outpouring of the Spirit as an eschatological sign comes to be viewed in some key texts from 2TJ and Paul as the solution to Israel's status under the curses of the law in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. For in these texts "... the reception of the Spirit signals the redemption of Israel from the curse and the empowerment of believers to order their lives rightly before God" (p. 5; cf. pp. 150–151). "So, when Paul describes the result of Christ's redemptive death as the reception of the Spirit and the blessing, he is thinking in the categories of restoration eschatology" (p. 166). But in contrast to my understanding of the role of the Spirit (the covenant provision) as empowering obedience to the commandments of the law (the covenant stipulations), thereby making it possible to inherit the eschatological promises of life (the covenant blessing), Morales concludes that, for Paul, and in contrast to the OT and 2TJ traditions he traces, the Spirit, in effect, actually replaces the law, since the law failed to bring life throughout Israel's history (see, e.g., his pp. 162–163, 166–168, 171–172). Morales admits, however, that "one question to which the present study has not found a satisfactory answer concerns the relationship between the outpouring of the Spirit and obeying the commandments of God ... This part of Jewish eschatological expectation seems not to have influenced Paul's ministry – on the contrary, Paul is adamant that his churches should not practice the 'works of the Law' ... Nevertheless, Paul's stance against his congregations doing the works of the Law remains a puzzle in need of a solution, especially since other aspects of his pneumatology depend on texts that combine the sending of the Spirit with obedience to the commandments" (p. 172). I am attempting to solve this puzzle in light of the fact that this "Jewish eschatological expectation" did in fact decisively influence Paul's ministry.

ages” has come upon believers (1 Cor 10:11; cf. Gal 1:4), but “the god of this age” is still malevolently and deceptively active in the lives of both believers and unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4; cf. 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; Eph 2:2). This means that those who now “belong to the Messiah” (for this designation, cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 15:23; Gal 3:29; 5:24; Rom 16:16) must reckon with what it means to live patiently and faithfully during this “over-lapping of the ages” (cf. Rom 12:2), during which time they are being “saved by hope” in the final redemption yet to come (Rom 8:23–25).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Paul himself, though called to be an apostle of the risen Christ, was also called to suffer like Christ on behalf of his churches (1 Cor 2:1–5; 4:8–13; 2 Cor 1:3–7; 2:14–17; 4:7–12; 12:7–10, etc.). In sum, Paul’s life and theology, like that of the church as a whole, encapsulate an “inaugurated eschatology” that longs for its consummation.

The studies that follow seek to show that the key to understanding the well-known polarities that characterize Paul’s thought is therefore to be found in Paul’s reckoning with this unexpected, eschatological reality. More specifically, I endeavor to demonstrate that Paul’s messianically-determined experience and convictions regarding the “overlapping of the ages” informed his interpretation of the history-of-salvation contrasts that were already becoming apparent in the early church between this age and the age to come, the old covenant and the new, the law and the gospel, Israel and the church, the church and the nations, and the flesh and the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> The comprehensive explanatory power of this paradigm

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<sup>7</sup> Here I am following the pervasively influential study of Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964/1975), with its now famous WWII analogy: although the eschatological “D-Day” has taken place, the final “V-Day” is still to come (see pp. 3, 10, 141–142, 145). Thus, Cullmann argues throughout his programmatic work, *Heil als Geschichte: Heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 147, that in considering the eschatological relationship between the present and future we must recognize “die heilsgeschichtliche Spannung zwischen ‘schon’ und ‘noch nicht’ als Schlüssel zum Verständnis der neutestamentlichen Heilsgeschichte” (emphasis removed). For as Cullmann rightly observes, “To anyone who does not take clear account of this tension, the entire New Testament is a book with seven seals, for this tension is the silent presupposition that lies behind all that it says” (*Christ and Time*, 145–146). In the English-speaking world this perspective was set forth in the same period of time in studies such as that of C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962), 105: “The basic terms in which Christian existence must be understood are eschatological. It rests upon Christ’s own resurrection and victory over the powers brought forward from the time of the End, and upon the verdict of acquittal brought forward from the last judgment. It is thus a unique eschatology, since it asserts that, notwithstanding appearances, the End has already come, and further that, notwithstanding this confident assertion, the End is not yet. Out of this formula ‘Already–Not yet,’ which is the fundamental pattern of the Christian life, we see evolving in Paul the more developed maxim of ‘As if not’ (ὡς μὴ),” pointing to Rom 6:11 and 1 Cor 7:29–31.

<sup>8</sup> Oscar Cullmann’s conclusion concerning Paul’s theology, *Heil als Geschichte*, 233, is trenchant here: “Die Spannung zwischen ‘schon’ und ‘noch nicht,’ die wir bei Jesus als das Hauptmerkmal dessen, was man seine ‘Eschatologie’ nennt, herausgestellt haben, steht nun auch bei Paulus im Vordergrund und bildet das wichtigste heilsgeschichtliche Bindeglied zwischen ihm

will be its validation. For any attempt to see Paul as an integrated thinker must establish a heuristic model that can elucidate and encompass the meaning and interrelated nature of the many polarities that come to the fore in Paul's delineation and defense of his apostolic message and ministry.<sup>9</sup>

The present studies also underscore the fact that scholarship has once again rightly prioritized eschatology in its study of Paul's epistles. As de Boer reminds us, we owe this refocusing to Käsemann's reintroduction of "apocalyptic" into the study of early Christianity in general and of Paul in particular as the needed corrective to the Bultmannian demythologizing of Paul's theology in terms of an individualistic, anthropologically-centered *Selbstbewußtsein*.<sup>10</sup> In de Boer's words, "Paul's cosmological language about Sin and Death as malevolent powers represents an attempt to account for anthropological realities and experiences. Behind human sinning and human dying, Paul discerns cosmological powers at work which he calls Sin and Death. He thus mythologizes with what Käsemann called 'anthropological relevance.'" <sup>11</sup> Moreover, although for Paul the historical realization of God's victory in the world is still penultimate, Paul nevertheless proclaimed that in Christ God had already liberated his people from their enslavement to these cosmic powers of Sin and Death.

There can be no doubt that Paul's eschatological "gospel" is "apocalyptic" in its character and consequence. Paul's introduction to his letter to the Romans, among many passages, makes this abundantly clear. The salvific realities inaugurated and sustained by the Messiah and the Spirit are clearly "apocalyptic" in their divine initiative in accordance with God's promises and in their nature as God's powerful acts of grace (Rom 1:1–7). They are also "apocalyptic" in their

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und Jesus. Die Theologie des Paulus wird von dieser Spannung, die sich keineswegs nur auf die Existenz des einzelnen, sondern auf die ganze zwischenzeitliche Heilsgeschichte bezieht, die Grund und Voraussetzung aller Existenz ist, beherrscht: seine Auffassung vom Heiligen Geist, von der Kirche, seine Sakramentenauffassung und seine Ethik."

<sup>9</sup> These polarities entail, among still others, the following Pauline contrasts: Law/Christ, Law/Grace, Law of Sin and Death/Law of Spirit and Life, Works/Faith, Sin/Grace, Adam/Christ; Old Man/New Man; Death/Life; Jew/Gentile, Weak/Strong, Suffering/Glory, Peter/Paul, ministry of condemnation/ministry of righteousness, and justification by faith/judgment by works. For a representative delineation of these eschatological contrasts in Paul's own language and their related anthropological manifestations, taking Romans, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians as examples, see Appendix One below.

<sup>10</sup> See Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul's Mythologizing Program in Romans 5–8," in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 3, 7. Thus, as de Boer points out, "With respect to Paul, then, Bultmann's demythologization of Paul came down to a deapocalypticized Paul, a Paul with no future eschatology and no cosmological powers" (p. 5). In contrast, Käsemann argued that the world is a "battlefield, and everyone is a combatant. Anthropology must then *eo ipso* be cosmology' ... since a human being's life is 'from the beginning a stake in the confrontation between God and the principalities and the world,' it 'can only be understood apocalyptically,'" leading to a "cosmological-apocalyptic reading of Paul" (pp. 5–6, quoting Käsemann).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.



era-changing, new creation power in the lives of God's people. The good news is that God has acted decisively through the Son to deliver his people from their enemies and to justify them before God's coming judgment in fulfillment of the eschatological promises mapped out in Isa 40:9–11, 52:7, and 61:1–2 (Rom 1:16). Finally, the salvific realities announced in Paul's gospel are equally "apocalyptic" in their consistently future focus. The establishment of the new covenant community is the "last" pre-consummation revelation of God's righteousness in the world (Rom 1:5–8). As such, the Messiah's salvific deliverance displays God's continuing trustworthiness to save those who trust in him, i.e., Paul's "apocalyptic" gospel is the "revelation of God's righteousness from faith to faith" (Rom 1:17).

Romans 1:1–17 thus demonstrate that the "apocalyptic" nature of Paul's inaugurated eschatology cannot be over-stated. To quote de Boer again,

Because "the righteousness of God" refers first and foremost to God's own saving action, effective in the lordship of the crucified Christ, the justifying action on behalf of the ungodly not only "declares righteous" (is not simply a forensic-eschatological pronouncement, as it is for Bultmann) but also actually "makes righteous." It does so by coming on the human scene to liberate human beings from cosmological forces and powers that have enslaved them.<sup>12</sup>

Read in this way, the "apocalyptic" deliverance of God's people is the context for understanding Paul's complementary, *not contradictory*, understanding of the redeeming significance of Christ's cross, resurrection, and ascension for the "forensic" justification of God's people. Such an integrated understanding of the "apocalyptic" and "forensic" aspects of Paul's theology, held together by Paul's OT-configured salvation-history framework, has been championed above all in recent scholarship by Peter Stuhlmacher, whose perceptions run throughout these studies. In his words,

Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ bezeichnet bei Paulus das Heil und Wohlordnung schaffende Wirken Gottes, und zwar so, daß mit ein und demselben Begriff Gottes eigene Wirksamkeit und das Resultat dieser Wirksamkeit benannt werden können ... Der berühmte Begriff Gottesgerechtigkeit läßt sich also bei Paulus weder rein theozentrisch noch rein soteriologisch fassen, sondern umfaßt beide Aspekte des schöpferischen Heilshandelns Gottes: Gott, der Schöpfer und Richter aller Kreatur, entreißt die an Christus Glaubenden durch den Sühnetod seines Sohnes der Herrschaft der Sünde und nimmt sie neu in seine Gemeinschaft auf.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Paul's Mythologizing Program," 6–7.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Bd. 1: Grundlegung: Von Jesus zu Paulus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 334, 336, original emphasis removed. In drawing this exegetical conclusion (cf. his survey of Paul's key texts on pp. 332–347), Stuhlmacher follows Käsemann's (and Schlatter's) reading of Rom 1:17, based on the OT and early Jewish "Apokalyptik," that the "righteousness of God" in Rom 1:17 is the "Inbegriff der 'sich eschatologisch in Christus offenbarenden Herrschaft Gottes ...'" (p. 334). For Stuhlmacher's survey of the OT and early Jewish tradition regarding the righteousness of God in the context of the eschatological end of the age, see pp. 325–331. It is not clear, however,

Nevertheless, I avoid using the term “apocalyptic” throughout these studies for two reasons. First, there is a widespread lack of clarity in current scholarship concerning the referent of the term itself.<sup>14</sup> The admixture of its uses to refer to a genre and its various characteristics, to a disputed body of literature in search of an agreed upon membership, to an “apocalyptic” (as an adjective) theology/eschatology and/or worldview that is only partially and selectively related to the genre’s defining markers, and/or to a mode of thinking about history that may or may not itself have historical representatives renders its use difficult at best without an extensive delineation of its various contexts.<sup>15</sup> My purpose here, however, is not to clarify this terminology. Second, in the contemporary debate over the nature of Paul’s theology, “apocalyptic” has also come to signify a particular “perspective” on Paul with a varying relationship to the above genre, literature, worldview and/or their defining categories. This “apocalyptic” reading of Paul is often characterized by a disavowal of the category of “covenant,” given the

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how this squares with his reading of the righteousness of God in Rom 1:17, 3:22, and 2 Cor 5:21 as a reference to “die von Gott gewirkte Gabe der (Glaubens-)Gerechtigkeit,” which is also Bultmann’s position (cf. p. 335). In my view of Rom 1:16–17, the gospel reveals the “righteousness of God” because it declares that God has fulfilled his promise to save his people by creating in them with his power the very righteousness required by his own judgment – i.e., God’s righteous character is made known in that God has remained faithful in his commitment to bring about the faithfulness of his people.

<sup>14</sup> See now the opening statement of Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, “Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction,” in their *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 3–4: “As Barry Matlock acknowledged (in fact, protested) some years ago, ‘‘Apocalyptic’’ interpretation of Paul is, if not a consensus, then certainly a commonplace.” Beyond this basic affirmation, however, there is little consensus regarding what the label ‘apocalyptic’ actually suggests about Paul’s theological perspective. Indeed, lying conspicuously behind the employment of common language are many different definitions, and even competing interpretations of Paul’s letters” (quoting Matlock from 1996 – nothing has changed in the last 22 years). The authors seek to clarify this confusion by categorizing various viewpoints into two broad approaches, “Eschatological Invasion” and “Unveiled Fulfillment,” in regard to three axes, spatial, temporal, and epistemological, though, adding to the confusion, even these are acknowledged to be overlapping concepts (cf. pp. 6–17).

<sup>15</sup> The scholarly use of the adjective, “apocalyptic,” is usually only selectively related to the contours of the literature belonging to this genre. For the defining statement of the issues involved in defining and analyzing “apocalyptic” literature and themes, for the 13 characteristics pertaining to the genre of the “Jewish apocalypse,” and for a listing of the 15 commonly recognized Jewish apocalypses, see still John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards a Morphology of a Genre” and “The Jewish Apocalypses,” both in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins, *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1–20 and 21–59. Collins details the two main views of apocalypticism: 1) the “historical” view that emphasizes a temporal eschatology, whether having to do with historical events, cosmic and/or political realities, or merely a personal eschatology (all with and without a heavenly journey involved); and 2) the “vertical” view that emphasizes the spatial symbolism of the heavenly world (pp. 21–23). He combines them both in his definition of an “apocalypse” as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world” (p. 22).

latter's implications of continuity and fulfillment within a history of redemption, no matter how theocentric, dramatic, or decisive the establishment of the "new covenant" of the new creation of the new age is conceived to be. Such readings privilege general theological concepts to the neglect of the historical orientation of much apocalyptic literature itself.<sup>16</sup> As a result, it also often leads to a radical, law/gospel dichotomy, interpreted materially as signifying two distinct modes of salvation. This is unfortunate inasmuch as the current "apocalyptic" readings of Paul consequently tend toward a present-focused spiritualization of Paul's theology that is cut off from the past and only tangentially related to the future. One of the implications of my studies is that we must avoid bringing such an a-historical, over-realized eschatology to our reading of Paul. Nor should we make the Torah itself the villain. Paul's eschatology, both inaugurated and consummated, is history-altering and transforming, but nevertheless historically located and covenantally defined.<sup>17</sup>

In making this case, I am therefore intentionally using "eschatology" without the adjectival modification "apocalyptic" in order to highlight the historically-oriented and future-focused nature of Paul's soteriology. Used in this absolute way, "eschatology" refers to the "end time" as the "last time" and/or to the "last

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<sup>16</sup> For a helpful discussion of the historical orientation of the genre of apocalyptic literature, pointing to historical summaries and the periodization of history as regular features of many apocalypses (cf. Dan 7–12; 1 En. 83–90; 91:12–17; 4 Ezra 3:1–27; 11–12; Syr. Bar. 35–40; 53–74; Apoc. Abr. 21–32; cf. Sib. Or. 3:97–161), see Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought*, SNTSMS 119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28–36. Indeed, even "the motif of new creation occurs almost exclusively in the eschatological material of the historical apocalypses" (p. 33 n. 33). For as Hubbard points out, the intent of the eschatological material in apocalypses is "to offer hope to the present generation through the promise of ultimate deliverance and vindication" (p. 35). Christopher Rowland's observations in this regard are thus worthy of quoting at length: "Thus apocalyptic, whose main concern was the revelation of the divine mysteries, could in no sense be complete without offering some kind of total view of history. An orientation towards the future alone would have given a theological picture which minimized divine control of history in the present. *The extent of apocalyptic's debt to the past is manifested in the way in which the divine activity through history is so consistently portrayed in the historical reviews contained in the apocalypses. To that extent the mantle of earlier historiography has fallen on the apocalypticists*" (quoted by Hubbard, pp. 28–29, emphasis mine).

<sup>17</sup> The current debate would do well therefore to take its bearings, positive and negative, from the analysis of the theme "apocalyptic" and the treatment of its major proponents by N. T. Wright, "Part II: Re-Enter Apocalyptic," in his *Paul and his Recent Interpreters* (London: SPCK, 2015), 135–218. Here I am agreeing with Wright's conclusion that "... Paul really was an 'apocalyptic' theologian, who believed that God had done a radical new thing, a fresh gift of grace, in the sending, and the dying and rising, of Jesus the Messiah, and that he had indeed thereby liberated Israel from its plight and the world from the powers of evil. But this, Paul argues again and again, was the original purpose of the divine covenant with Israel. This was where the strange, dark, non-immanent salvation history had been going all along" (p. 186). This definition, of course, uses "apocalyptic" to refer to the content, character, and consequence of God's actions in Christ, not to its literary or genre referents.

things” *in time and space* that God will do to usher in the “eschaton.”<sup>18</sup> The studies presented here take up fundamental aspects of Paul’s understanding of both the inaugurated and consummated expressions of this eschatological, salvific reality. Various other “last things,” such as the resurrection of the dead, the “intermediate state,” the character of the new heavens and earth in which faith, hope, and love continue to exist, and the question of universalism, though important themes, are specific facets of Paul’s eschatology and, as such, lie outside the parameters of this present study. My focus is on the implication of inaugurated eschatology for Paul’s understanding of the *present habitus* of the church in relationship to the *past history* of Israel, upon which it is based, and for his *future hope* for final redemption, toward which both the past and present are moving. Paul’s eschatologically determined history of redemption, while incorporating Israel’s past and the church’s present, thus also preserves eschatology’s focus on redemption’s future consummation. This threefold, temporal interrelationship corresponds to the threefold covenant structure of Paul’s thought as a whole (see below).

So “eschatology” remains lexically preferable as a description of the generating center of Paul’s theology because it can include the apocalyptic character and significance of Paul’s gospel within a historical nexus that entails a decisive break and its consequences between the two ages of the old and new covenants. For as I will argue, the polarities in Paul’s thinking, viewed *eschatologically*, presuppose a *continuity* in the *structure* of God’s *covenant* relationship with his people throughout salvation history while at the same time reflecting the *discontinuity* that exists between the *character* of his people within the two eras of this same history.<sup>19</sup> As Jackson puts it, quoting Stuhlmacher’s essential insight, “Paul’s soteriology has to do with a *history of election* which cannot be separated from a

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<sup>18</sup> Again following Cullmann, *Heil als Geschichte*, 60–61, who argues for the meaning of “eschatology,” likely based on the use of τὰ ἔσχατα in Sir 7:36, as the “end-time” (“Endzeit”) in the sense of the “last-time” (“letzte Zeit”). See Cullmann’s corresponding critique, pp. 60–61, of the a-temporal re-interpretation of “eschatology” to refer to one’s self-awareness of always standing in a position of existence-determining decision. In his words, “Die Worte ‘Eschatologie’ und ‘eschatologisch’ beziehen sich auf die *Endzeit*, nicht auf die *Entscheidungszeit*. Gewiß ist die *Endzeit* *Entscheidungszeit*, aber nicht jede *Entscheidungszeit* ist *Endzeit*. Wir werden daher die Ausdrücke ‘Eschatologie’ und ‘eschatologisch’ in ihrem etymologischen Sinn von ‘Endzeit’ verwenden” (p. 61, emphasis his). Cullmann then stresses that in view of the NT concept of inaugurated eschatology, it is typical that “die *Endzeit* [ist] *zugleich* *Zukunft* und *Gegenwart*” (p. 61, emphasis his).

<sup>19</sup> On the “apocalyptic” nature of the new covenant, see now Sarah Whittle, *Covenant Renewal and the Consecration of the Gentiles in Romans*, SNTSMS 161 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 92, commenting on Rom 12:2: Via the death and resurrection of Christ and the work of the Spirit, “a radical discontinuity in the human condition has come about for those in Christ, and this is inextricably linked with the status of the covenant relationship.” That Paul may be thinking of the same new covenant context in Rom 12:2 that is in view in 2 Cor 3:6–18 is made possible by the use of μεταμορφώω in both texts (cf. Rom 12:2 with 2 Cor 3:18); see my *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 218, and now Whittle, *Covenant Renewal*, 94–95. As

“‘cosmological-eschatological horizon.’”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Stuhlmacher’s interpretation of Paul in this regard is pivotal in that, as Käsemann’s student, he brought together the latter’s emphasis on Paul’s apocalyptic conceptuality with his own recognition of Paul’s biblically-derived salvation-history. And once an apocalyptic deliverance is integrated into the broad scope of Paul’s biblically-informed history of redemption, his inaugurated eschatology can be seen to be era-changing in character and covenantal in context and content.

Here too, in emphasizing a biblically-based “salvation history” or “history of redemption” approach to reading Paul, I am standing in the tradition that in modern scholarship received a programmatic statement by Oscar Cullmann.<sup>21</sup> Cullmann recognized already in 1967 that for many the concept of “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*) had taken on a certain offensive character since it brought with it an apologetic or positivistic “aftertaste” (*Beigeschmack*), especially since it had been associated with a Hegelian view of history. The concept was also suspect because it is not a biblical term and can hence be identified with alien characteristics of “history” (*Geschichte*) (pp. 56–57). Regarding the latter critique, Cullmann associates the concept with the use of *οἰκονομία* in Col 1:25 and Eph 1:10; 3:2, 9 (cf. too 1 Tim 1:4; Ignatius, Eph. 19:2; 20:1), which he relates to Paul’s references to

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she concludes, “Although Paul does not specify the goal of the transformation in Romans 12:2, there is every indication that 2 Corinthians 3:18 provides the answer” (pp. 100–101).

<sup>20</sup> T. Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept*, WUNT 2/272 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 133, emphasis mine. An important implication of Jackson’s study is the compatibility of apocalyptic and salvation historical perspectives in Paul’s theology (see pp. 182–183): Paul “sustained historical concerns even if he adopted apocalyptic categories of thought” (p. 183).

<sup>21</sup> See his *Heil als Geschichte*. The references in this paragraph are all to this work. For the history and analysis of the salvation-history school, usually overlooked in contemporary scholarship due to the hegemony of the Baur-Wrede-Bultmann tradition within academic scholarship, see Robert Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiden: Deo, 2004) and my review in *Trinity Journal* 29 (2008): 153–156. Yarbrough’s history focuses on the work, interrelationships, and trajectory of J. C. K. von Hofmann (1810–1877), A. Schlatter (1852–1938), M. Albrecht (1992–1956), L. Goppelt (1911–1973), and O. Cullmann (1902–1998). In the English-speaking world, see already the 1943 statement by Archibald M. Hunter, *The Unity of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1943), 9, 19, who observed that the concept that best describes “the manifold wisdom of God” displayed both in the gospel of the kingdom and in the church it creates (pointing to Eph 3:8–12) must be borrowed from the Germans, namely, “the *Heilsgeschichte*” that “treats of a Saviour, a Saved (and saving) People, and the means of Salvation .... For the ‘story’ is of the consummation of God’s saving purpose for his People (Ecclesiology) through the sending of his Messiah (Christology) and of the means of Salvation (Soteriology) ... all of these are so closely connected that one implies the other – and all lead to the one centre, the *Heilsgeschichte*.” For an insightful statement of a biblically-based salvation history organized around a CSER-structure (Creation/Covenant – Sin – Exile/Death – Restoration) and inaugurated eschatology, see Roy E. Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping unity in diversity*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press/Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 254–308. And for representative, extensive treatments of NT theology from the perspective of inaugurated eschatology, see Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) and G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

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