

THE PILLAR NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

General Editor

D. A. CARSON



*Paul's Letter to the*  
ROMANS

Colin G. Kruse

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*Dedicated to my beloved wife of fifty years,  
Rosemary,  
and to my esteemed colleagues in the three institutions  
in which I have had the privilege of teaching:  
Satya Wacana Christian University, Indonesia,  
Ridley Melbourne,  
and  
the Melbourne School of Theology*



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## *Editor's Preface*

Commentaries have specific aims, and this series is no exception. Designed for serious pastors and teachers of the Bible, the Pillar commentaries seek above all to make clear the text of Scripture as we have it. The scholars writing these volumes interact with the most important informed contemporary debate, but avoid getting mired in undue technical detail. Their ideal is a blend of rigorous exegesis and exposition, with an eye alert both to biblical theology and to the contemporary relevance of the Bible, without confusing the commentary and the sermon.

The rationale for this approach is that the vision of “objective scholarship” (a vain chimera) may actually be profane. God stands over against us; we do not stand in judgment of him. When God speaks to us through his Word, those who profess to know him must respond in an appropriate way, and that is certainly different from a stance in which the scholar projects an image of autonomous distance. Yet this is no surreptitious appeal for uncontrolled subjectivity. The writers of this series aim for an even-handed openness to the text that is the best kind of “objectivity” of all.

If the text is God’s Word, it is appropriate that we respond with reverence, a certain fear, a holy joy, a questing obedience. These values should be reflected in the way Christians write. With these values in place, the Pillar commentaries will be warmly welcomed not only by pastors, teachers, and students, but by general readers as well.

\* \* \*

Especially since Reformation times (though in fact even earlier), Paul’s letter to the Romans has played an extraordinary role in shaping the understanding and life of Christians. To mention only four passages: How we think about natural revelation is hugely indebted to Romans 1–2; Luther called Romans 3:21–26 the center of the entire Bible; Romans 11 wrestles with the relationship between Israel and the church; and Romans 8 has

been called the most important chapter in the Bible, unfolding the entire plan of salvation from justification to glorification, all grounded in the matchless love of God for his people. Moreover, in recent decades (to go back no further), Romans has called forth a disturbingly large array of interpretations. That means a good commentary must not only provide a reliable unpacking of the text, but it must also be a useful guide to the plethora of books and essays that swirl around this letter. Enter Colin Kruse. Readers of *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* will know him for the clarity and good sense in his commentary on John's letters in the PNTC series. Here his skills come to the fore again: clarity of thought and writing, independent judgment, deep reverence for what the text actually says, and uncommon wisdom in sorting through the vast secondary literature without getting bogged down. It is a pleasure to commend this commentary and include it in the series.

D. A. CARSON

## *Author's Preface*

To be invited to produce a commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans for inclusion in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series is a special privilege, and one for which I am grateful to both the editor of the series, Professor Don Carson, and the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. This commentary replaces an earlier volume written by Dr. Leon Morris, who was the principal of Ridley College when I joined the faculty there back in 1979. It is my hope that this book of mine will prove to be a worthy successor to his work.

This commentary is based upon the text of the New International Version (NIV 2011). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are from the NIV 2011. Quotations from the Apocrypha are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Included in the commentary are additional notes on matters of special interest or importance. If these were included in the actual commentary, readers might lose track of Paul's developing argument. Some may prefer, therefore, on a first reading of the commentary on a particular portion of text, to skip over the additional notes and come back to them later on.

The Letter to the Romans is arguably the apostle Paul's most important piece of writing. While it addresses issues of crucial importance for first-century believers, in particular those of the Christian congregations in Rome, in doing so it also addresses matters of great importance for believers of all times. Romans is essentially an exposition and defense of the gospel of God concerning his Son, Jesus Christ, a gospel in which the righteousness of God is revealed for the salvation of all who believe in his Son. This exposition and defense is carried out against the background of God's sovereign action as creator, judge, and redeemer of the world.

The Letter includes important statements about the person and work of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In addition, it addresses such major theological themes as the righteousness of God, the

atonement, justification, predestination, faith, hope, the role of the Mosaic law, and believers' freedom from it as a regulatory norm, the renewal of the creation, and the place of Israel in the purposes of God. It also deals with practical matters such as ministry in the Christian congregation, believers' relation to the state, and attitudes to be adopted by the 'weak' and the 'strong' in the Christian community, and it refers to Paul's many associates and ministerial colleagues, including many notable women.

Work on this commentary has occupied the greater part of my discretionary time over the last eight years. Much of that work has, by necessity, been of a solitary nature, but happily it was enhanced by three months spent in the scholarly Christian community at Tyndale House, Cambridge. I am very grateful for the interaction I enjoyed with members of the staff and other researchers working there at the time. I also appreciated very much the encouragement of my colleagues at the Melbourne School of Theology, and in particular of Dr. Greg Forbes and Dr. Ted Woods, fellow lecturers in the Biblical Studies Department. I also valued the advice of General Editor of the Pillar New Testament Commentary series, Professor Don Carson, during the period of my work on this project and his insightful comments on the completed manuscript. I am grateful to Milton Essenburg of William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company for his understanding and willingness to accommodate me when I had to ask for extensions to the date of submission of the manuscript, and for his subsequent editorial work on the manuscript.

COLIN G. KRUSE

## Abbreviations

<i>1, 2, 3 Enoch</i>	Ethiopic, Slavonic, Hebrew <i>Enoch</i>
<i>2, 3 Apoc. Bar.</i>	Syriac, Greek <i>Apocalypse of Baruch</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ACCSR	Gerald Bray, ed., <i>Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, VI: Romans</i>
<i>AnglTheolRev</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>Apoc. Mos.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Moses</i>
<i>AsiaJT</i>	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BAGD/BGD	W. Bauer, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	<i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>
B.G.U.	<i>Berliner Griechische Urkunden</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>Bib. Ant.</i>	Ps.-Philo, <i>Biblical Antiquities</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibToday</i>	<i>Bible Today</i>
<i>BibTrans</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>Bijdr</i>	<i>Bijdragen</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	<i>Beihefte zur ZNW</i>
<i>CalvTheolJourn</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>

ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica, New Testament
<i>CurrTheolMiss</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
Dead Sea Scrolls	
1QH	<i>Thanksgiving Hymns</i>
1QIs <sup>a</sup>	The complete Isaiah scroll
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
1QSa	<i>Rule of the Congregation</i> (Appendix a to 1QS)
1QSB	<i>Rule of the Blessings</i> (Appendix b to 1QS)
4Q161	<i>Commentary on Isaiah</i>
4Q246	<i>Apocryphon of Daniel</i> (known as the ‘Son of God fragment’)
4Q285	<i>Sefer-ha-Milhamah</i>
4QFlor	<i>Florilegium</i> (or <i>Eschatological Midrashim</i> )
1QpHab	<i>Peshar Habakkuk</i>
4QpIsa <sup>a</sup>	<i>Peshar Isaiah</i>
4QpGen <sup>a</sup>	<i>Peshar Genesis</i>
4QpPs	<i>Peshar Psalms</i>
4QTest	<i>Testimonia</i>
CD	<i>Damascus Document</i>
DNTB	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i>
DPL	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
Epictetus	
<i>Diatr.</i>	<i>Diatribai (Discourses)</i>
ERT	<i>Evangelical Review of Theology</i>
ET	English translation
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FilolNT</i>	<i>Filologia Neotestamentaria</i>
<i>FoiVie</i>	<i>Foi et Vie</i>
Greg	<i>Gregorianum</i>
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>HorBibTheol</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible</i>
IDB Sup	<i>Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
<i>Ign. Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Ephesians</i>
<i>Instit. Or.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institutio Oratoria</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Irenaeus	
<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>

JB	Jerusalem Bible
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
Josephus	
<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
<i>Wars</i>	<i>Jewish Wars</i>
JPT	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Judaica</i>	<i>Judaica: Beiträge zum Verständnis . . .</i>
KJV	King James Version
KJVS	King James Version with Strong's Numbers
LBS	Library of Biblical Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
lit.	literally
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LS	<i>Louvain Studies</i>
LSJ	Liddell–Scott–Jones, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
LTJ	<i>Lutheran Theological Journal</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MM	J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, <i>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament</i>
MT	Massoretic Text
NA <sup>27</sup>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 27th rev. ed.
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
<i>NotesTrans</i>	<i>Notes on Translation</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Odes Sol.</i>	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
OT	Old Testament
<i>Paed.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Paedagogus</i>
<i>P. Lond.</i>	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i>
Philo	
<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Cong.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>

<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De decalogo</i>
<i>Mig.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	<i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Praem.</i>	<i>De praemiis et poenis</i>
<i>Spec. Leg.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De virtutibus</i>
<i>Vit. Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Moses</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Politica</i>
<i>Ps.-Phoc.</i>	<i>Pseudo-Phocylides</i>
PSB	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</i>
PSB Sup	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin Supplement</i>
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
Rabbinic Literature	
<i>b. Sanh.</i>	Babylonian Talmud <i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>m. 'Abot</i>	Mishnah tractate <i>'Abot</i>
<i>m. Giṭṭin</i>	Mishnah tractate <i>Giṭṭin</i>
<i>m. Makk.</i>	Mishnah tractate <i>Makkoth</i>
<i>m. Sanh.</i>	Mishnah tractate <i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Exod. Rab.</i>	<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RelSRev</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTR	Reformed Theological Review
SB (or Str-B)	(H. Strack and) P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
Seneca	
<i>Clem.</i>	<i>De clementia</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales</i>
<i>Frag.</i>	<i>Fragmenta</i>
<i>Ira</i>	<i>De ira</i>
<i>Vit. beat.</i>	<i>De vita beata</i>
SH	Sanday and Headlam, <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i>
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
Sir	Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach)
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SR	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
Str-B (or SB)	(H. Strack and) P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>StudBib</i>	<i>Studia Biblica</i>
Tacitus	
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales</i>

<i>T. Benj.</i>	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
<i>T. Dan</i>	<i>Testament of Dan</i>
<i>T. Gad</i>	<i>Testament of Gad</i>
<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
<i>T. Naph.</i>	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
<i>TBei</i>	<i>Theologische Beiträge</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TEV</i>	<i>Today's English Version</i>
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae Graecae</i>
<i>TNTC</i>	<i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TTZ</i>	<i>Trierer theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VoxRef</i>	<i>Vox Reformata</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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# *Introduction*

## I. ROME AND ITS POPULATION

When Paul wrote Romans, the empire was under the rule of Nero Claudius Caesar, the fourth of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (Tiberius [14-37], Caligula [37-41], Claudius [41-54], and Nero [54-68]). Nero's early reign was regarded as the best period since the death of Octavian (Caesar Augustus). Nero had not yet become the murderous tyrant of his later years. As capital of the empire, Rome attracted peoples from all over the Mediterranean region. It is estimated that in the mid to late 50s Rome had a population of about 400,000 made up of 'slaves (30%) and freed men and women (30%), and freeborn (40%)'.<sup>1</sup> It is also estimated that about 10 percent of the population were Jews.

In A.D. 41 the emperor Claudius extended Jewish rights throughout the empire, but in the same year, according to Dio Cassius, he ordered the Jews, 'while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings' (*Hist. Rom.* 60.6.6). Several years later, according to Acts 18:2, Claudius ordered all the Jews to leave Rome, an order believed to have been issued in A.D. 49. The Roman historian Suetonius (b. ca. A.D. 70; d. ca. A.D. 130) says, 'since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome' (*De Vita Claudii* 25.4). This is believed to be a reference to the same event mentioned in Acts 18:2. Questions have been raised about how these accounts of the expulsion of Jews should be understood. In particular, it has been argued that Luke's account should be regarded as hyperbole because later in Acts, where Paul's meeting with Jews in Rome is described (Acts 28:16-24), there is no indication that they were aware of the expulsion, an event that must have been traumatic for the Jewish community at the time. There is no indication either of the ani-

1. Peter Lampe, 'The Roman Christians of Romans 16', in *The Romans Debate, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 230.

mosity between Jews and Christians that one would expect if the expulsion had been triggered by disputes about the Christ.<sup>2</sup> However, the edict of Claudius lapsed when he died in A.D. 54 and by A.D. 58, when Paul wrote Romans, many Jews, including Priscilla and Aquila, had returned to Rome. By the time Paul arrived there in ca. A.D. 60, some eleven years would have passed since the issuing of the edict of expulsion, and some six years since Jews had begun returning to Rome. Sufficient time had elapsed to explain why the event might not be at the forefront of the minds of the Jews with whom Paul met in Rome. In any case, whether every last Jew or only a majority of them had been expelled, there is no good reason to doubt the fundamental accuracy of the reports of Luke and Suetonius.

## II. CHRISTIANS IN ROME

The Christian community in Rome probably owed its foundation to the work of Christian travelers, immigrants, and merchants, some of whom may have been present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:10) and were therefore either Jews or proselytes. Accordingly, the earliest Christian community in Rome would have been Jewish in character. However, following the edict of Claudius promulgated in A.D. 49 when Jews were expelled from the capital, it would have been comprised mainly of Gentiles. When in A.D. 54 Claudius died and this edict lapsed, Jews began to trickle back into Rome, and Jewish believers again became part of the Christian community.

Nevertheless some have argued that the implied audience of Romans is entirely Gentile.<sup>3</sup> In 11:13 Paul does say: 'I am talking to you Gentiles', and it could be argued that when he says in 7:1: 'I am speaking to those who know the law', this does not necessarily refer to Jews. It could refer to Gentiles who have some background in the synagogue. However, it is significant that 50 percent of the names the apostle mentions in chapter 16 are Jewish, and it is highly unlikely that he would have written the letter without having them in mind as well (see 'Additional Note: The Twenty-Six Named Individuals in Romans 16:3-15', 574-75). We should think, then, of an audience comprised of a Gentile majority and a Jewish minority.

According to the Acts of the Apostles, there were Christian communities in Puteoli (situated about 180 km. southeast of Rome) as well as in Rome itself (Acts 28:13-15). Most Christians in Rome lived in the Transtiberium region (Trastevere) and along the Appian Way, the poorer

2. Johann D. Kim, *God, Israel, and the Gentiles: Rhetoric and Situation in Romans 9-11* (SBLDS 176; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 54-56.

3. Cf., e.g., Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 21-33; Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 75-84.

parts of Rome. A small number lived in the better parts, especially those who were slaves in well-to-do households. Those in the poorer parts lived in *insulae*, flimsy, overcrowded apartment blocks often of wooden construction and therefore terrible firetraps.<sup>4</sup> Most Christians were either freed-[wo]men or slaves. As many as 60 percent of them were of slave origin. In this respect the Roman Christian community differed from other Pauline congregations, for example, Corinth, which, according to Malherbe and Meeks, represented a fair cross section of their urban societies.<sup>5</sup> There are indications that some of Paul's audience at least had been exposed to persecution (12:14, 17-21).<sup>6</sup>

### III. PAUL'S SITUATION: A SCENARIO

Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road involved a conversion *to* Christ (not *from* Judaism) and a call to be an apostle to the Gentiles. As such, his life was marked by several interlocking motivations, the most fundamental of which was his aim to please God (2 Cor 5:9; 1 Thess 2:4).<sup>7</sup> Connected with this was his sense of obligation to preach the gospel (1:14; 1 Cor 9:16), free of charge (1 Cor 9:18; 2 Cor 11:7), in places where Christ had not been named (15:20; 2 Cor 10:16). He did all in his power to ensure that believers were strengthened and grew to maturity in their faith (Col 1:28) so that they would not fall prey to those who would turn them away from their pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor 11:2-3). He felt a deep sense of responsibility for Gentile believers especially, both those who were the fruit of his own apostolic ministry and those who were not (1:14-15; Gal 4:19).

His ambition to go on preaching where Christ was not already known was constrained by the needs of, and threats to, existing believing communities for which he was responsible. So, for instance, he wrote to the Corinthians: 'Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you' (2 Cor 10:15-16). When Paul wrote this, he was involved in a life-and-death struggle to ensure that the Corinthians' faith was not subverted by false apostles (2 Corinthians 11-13). It was only when this matter had been dealt with that he would feel free to

4. A. B. du Toit, "God's Beloved in Rome" (Rm 1:7). The Genesis and Socio-Economic Situation of the First-Generation Christian Community in Rome', *Neot* 32 (1998) 367-88, provides a detailed description of living conditions in the Transtiberium.

5. Cf. du Toit, "God's Beloved in Rome" (Rm 1:7)', 386-87.

6. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 25-39, provides an excellent account of 'Rome and the Roman Christians'.

7. Prior to his conversion Paul also sought to please God, but in a way that proved to be misguided.

pursue further his ambition to preach in 'regions beyond' where Christ had not been named.

This casts some light on the provenance of Romans. As apostle to the Gentiles, Paul felt under obligation to the believers in Rome (1:14-15). He had long wanted to fulfill this obligation (1:13-14), but his ministry, both evangelistic and pastoral, in the eastern Mediterranean meant that he had to defer doing so (15:20-24). But once he had completed that ministry, his mind turned first to the need to exercise a ministry among the Romans believers, and having done that, to pursue his ambition to preach in the western Mediterranean, in Spain. However, before he could do either of these things, he had another obligation to fulfill: he had to convey to Jerusalem the collection for the poor saints taken up among the Gentile churches of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia (15:25-28). As it turned out, events in Jerusalem meant further unwelcome delays in carrying out his plans, and his eventual arrival in Rome was as a prisoner, and that curtailed his freedom of movement.

#### IV. ROMANS: A SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT

In 1:1-7 Paul introduces himself to the Roman believers as an apostle set apart for the gospel of God, a gospel concerning God's Son, born as the seed of David and therefore the Jewish Messiah, and appointed Son of God with power and therefore Lord of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Of this gospel Paul has been appointed an apostle to the Gentiles, and the Roman believers, being predominantly Gentiles, are numbered among these and therefore are included among those for whom he is responsible.

1:8-17 the apostle seeks to establish good rapport with his audience by referring to their faith, which is being 'reported all over the world', and saying that they feature constantly in his prayers, not least his prayer that he might succeed at last in coming to visit them, something he has been hindered from doing until now. He says that he is eager to preach the gospel to them because he is under obligation to all people, including his audience in Rome. He insists that he is not ashamed of this gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for all who believe because in it the righteousness of God is revealed. This revelation of the righteousness of God in the gospel is in fact the major theme of the letter.

In 1:18-11:31 Paul expounds and defends the gospel, showing how the righteousness of God is revealed in it. This involves a number of steps. First, he explains that such a revelation of God's saving righteousness is needed because humanity otherwise stands exposed to the wrath of God because of its sin (1:18-32). Those who take the high moral ground because they know better, including Jewish people who have the law but do not keep it, have no immunity (2:1-29). The apostle's insistence that the Jews

are not immune does not constitute a denial of the advantages they have as God's people, in particular their possession of the law (3:1-8). However, these advantages do not mean that they are better off than the Gentiles, for even their law testifies to their sinfulness, and so, like the Gentiles, they stand accountable before God.

Paul takes the second step in his exposition and defense of the gospel in 3:21–5:21. Here he shows how God has set forth his own Son as the atoning sacrifice for sins so that people may be justified through the redemption he has provided in Christ, and by so doing he has shown that he is just when he justifies sinners who have faith in Jesus. Because both Jews and Gentiles are justified through faith without reference to the law, all grounds of illegitimate boasting on the part of Jewish people have been removed. The one God justifies the circumcised and the uncircumcised in the same way: through faith. At this point Paul introduces the case of Abraham to show that, contrary to some current Jewish belief, he was justified by faith without works and while uncircumcised. He emphasizes that what was written about Abraham was written not only for his sake but also for the sake of all those who believe, to whom God will likewise credit righteousness. There follows a brief pastoral application that spells out the blessings of justification (5:1-11), before Paul portrays the saving action of God in Christ and its blessed effect for all who believe by comparing and contrasting it with Adam's sinful act which had disastrous results for all humanity.

The third step in Paul's exposition in 6:1–8:39 involves showing that salvation by grace through faith does not promote moral anarchy, as some of his detractors had alleged. Rather, believers as those who have died to sin and now serve their new master, Christ, cannot continue in sin. It involves showing also that while believers need to be free from the law so as to bear fruit for God, this is not to say that there is anything wrong with the law. On the contrary, the law is good, but having been laid under tribute by sin, it has become part of the problem, not part of the solution. It also involves showing that those who are in Christ are empowered by the Spirit, enabling them to live in a way that the law promoted but was unable to effect because of human sin. Paul also shows that believers, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, experience suffering and frustration as they await their inheritance as children of God. The creation itself likewise endures frustration as it awaits liberation. Even in this time of waiting the Spirit helps believers in their weakness, and God himself works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Therefore, nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

In the fourth step of his exposition and defense of the gospel in 9:1–11:36 Paul deals with the pressing problem of Israel's rejection of the gospel. Can it be said that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel if the majority of the Jewish people, to whose ancestors God's promises were originally made, do not experience his promised blessings? Has the word

of God failed? In response Paul first stresses his own agony over the majority of his kinsfolk who, despite their many God-given privileges, still will not believe. He explains that God's promises have not failed, for God has always chosen some rather than others as he has the right as creator to do, and he has always maintained a remnant of believing Jews of which Paul himself is a part. Next he explains that it is not only God's choice that is operating, but that unbelieving Israelites also bear responsibility. They have refused to submit to God's righteousness, insisting upon their own way of establishing righteousness by the law. Finally, lest his Gentile audience become arrogant in their attitude towards unbelieving Jews, the apostle insists that God will remain faithful to his promises and show himself righteous by bringing 'all Israel' to salvation.

Following his exposition and defense of the gospel, Paul spells out for his audience in 12:1-15:13 certain important behavioral implications. There are implications for their life in the Christian community, in the wider world, and in particular in relationships between Jewish and Gentile believers within their community.

Paul concludes the body of his letter in 15:14-33 by explaining why he has written so boldly: as apostle to the Gentiles who in the 'priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel' presides over the self-offering of the Gentiles to God, he reminds them of certain things so that their offering may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. He then speaks of his desire to visit them and spend time with them on his way to Spain, after he has delivered the collection to the saints in Jerusalem. He expresses his hope that they will help facilitate his mission. He also solicits his audience's prayers for the trip to Jerusalem, so that he may be delivered from the machinations of unbelievers there and that the collection will be graciously received by the saints.

In the final chapter, 16:1-27, Paul commends Phoebe, who probably carried his letter to Rome, greets acquaintances who are now (back) in Rome, warns his audience about those who cause divisions, and finally conveys greetings to the Roman believers from those presently with him (in Corinth), before concluding with an ascription of praise and glory to God.

## V. THE PURPOSE OF ROMANS

The purpose for which Paul wrote Romans has been the subject of extensive debate. Part of the problem presented by the letter is that in 1:1-15 and 15:14-16:27 Paul implies that he was writing to prepare the way for his visit to Rome and a subsequent mission to Spain, while seeking prayer support for his impending visit to Jerusalem with the collection. However, such a purpose does not seem sufficient to explain the long theological and ethical

sections of the letter (1:16–11:36; 12:1–15:13). Any satisfying solution to the problem of purpose, therefore, must show how the theological and ethical sections of the letter relate to the purpose implied in Paul's statements at the beginning and end of the letter. Put another way, the argument running through 1:16–15:13 has to be understood first, and then related to the implied purpose found in 1:1–15 and 15:14–16:27. It is important to attempt first of all, then, a brief statement of the argument of 1:16–15:13.

Paul states his basic thesis in 1:16–17: 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last; just as it is written, "The one righteous will live by faith"'. Essentially, then, Paul's thesis is that the power of God is revealed through the gospel for all who have faith. In succeeding sections of the letter he argues the case for this thesis, defends it against possible objections, and spells out some of its ethical implications. He begins by arguing in 1:18–3:20 that God acts righteously in making no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in the matter of sin, and therefore none in the matter of judgment either. In 3:21–5:21 he goes on to argue that, just as God reveals his righteousness in making no distinctions in the matter of sin and judgment, so too he reveals his righteousness in making no distinctions in the matter of salvation either. Jews and Gentiles alike are to be justified by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and that apart from works of the law. Such a thesis was open to a number of objections. Paul responds to some of these objections as he goes along, but in chapters 6–8 he deals specifically and at length with objections concerning moral standards and the nature and role of the law. In chapters 9–11 he deals with objections concerning the place of Israel in the saving purposes of God, maintaining that God has been righteous in his dealings with Israel and will not fail to act in faithfulness to his covenant with her. Having argued the case for his thesis, and having dealt with some of the objections that could be raised against it, in 12:1–15:13 Paul proceeds to draw out the ethical implications of the gospel in respect to such matters as ministry in the church, submission to rulers, love of fellow believers, life in the light of an imminent end, and toleration of other believers.

If the brief description of the overall argument of Romans outlined above is accepted, it must then be asked what Paul's purpose was in arguing along those lines. We could answer, at one level, that his purpose was to explain and defend his gospel of justification by grace through faith for Jews and Gentiles without distinction. That is probably true. If so, we must then ask: Why did he feel he had to give this explanation and make this defense when writing Romans, and how is it all to be related to the implied purpose for writing found in the opening and closing sections of the letter? In other words, what was Paul's overall purpose in writing Romans? Numerous suggestions have been made in response to this question, though not all of them succeed in explaining the overall purpose. Broadly speak-

ing, these suggestions may be grouped into three main categories: those which explain it in terms of (a) a situation existing in the Roman congregations; (b) a stage in Paul's apostolic career; and (c) a combination of these.<sup>8</sup> A representative selection of the different suggestions is provided below.

(a) *A Situation Existing in the Roman Congregations.* Various identifications of this situation have been put forward. These include: (i) The Roman church lacked apostolic foundation, and Paul wrote Romans to provide the church with an apostolic presentation of the gospel, something he says he intended to do in person when he made his visit to Rome.<sup>9</sup> (ii) When the Christian Jews who had been expelled from Rome by Claudius were allowed to return, they found that the Christian house churches in Rome had developed a form of organization quite different from the synagogal form they had when they left. They also found themselves as a small Jewish Christian minority within a Gentile Christian majority. Paul wrote Romans to urge the Gentile Christian majority to live harmoniously with the Jewish Christian minority.<sup>10</sup> (iii) There was conflict in the Roman church between law-observant Christian Jews and law-free Gentile Christians. It was in response to this situation that Paul wrote Romans.<sup>11</sup> (iv) There was conflict between strong and weak *Gentile* believers over the matter of law observance. Paul dealt with this problem by applying the conclusions he had reached in his debate with the synagogue concerning what had become a central issue in the Christian church.<sup>12</sup> (v) Paul wrote Romans as an attempt to 'evangelize' by letter those whom he had so far been unable to 'evangelize' in person in order to elicit a proper response to the gospel on the part of his Roman readers (15:15-16).<sup>13</sup> (vi) The main function of Romans was to allow the Christians at Rome to hear the gospel from Paul so that they might be drawn into his apostolic orbit, and so that they too might become part of that offering of the Gentiles which, by Paul's priestly ministry of the gospel, would become acceptable to God.<sup>14</sup>

(b) *A Stage in Paul's Apostolic Career.* The following are some of the

8. Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), brings together many of the contributions to this debate.

9. Günter Klein, 'Paul's Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans', in *The Romans Debate, Revised*, 29-43.

10. Wolfgang Wiefel, 'The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity', in *The Romans Debate, Revised*, 85-101. Cf. also W. S. Campbell, 'Romans III as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter', *NovT* 23 (1981) 37-39, who also identifies anti-Judaism on the part of Gentile Christians as a cause of division in the Christian community in Rome.

11. A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 64-65.

12. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 1. Teilband (EKKNT 6/1; Zurich, Einsiedeln, Köln/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 39-42.

13. Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism* (JSNTSup 45; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 69-104.

14. L. Anne Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (JSNTSup 55; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 163-64.

suggestions relating the purpose of Romans to a stage in his apostolic career: (i) Paul wrote his letter to the Romans at the close of a period of bitter controversy over matters affecting the churches of Galatia, Corinth, and possibly Macedonia. It sums up the positions he reached as a result of engagement in these controversies, and it constitutes a 'manifesto' setting forth his deepest convictions on central issues; a manifesto that he sought to give the widest publicity.<sup>15</sup> (ii) Paul wrote Romans on the eve of his departure for Jerusalem with the collection. In the core of the letter (1:18–11:36) he sets out for his Roman readers the content of the 'collection speech' he intended to give in Jerusalem so as to elicit their support and intercession for him when he went to Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> (iii) Paul wrote Romans as an 'ambassadorial' letter to advocate a cooperative mission to evangelize Spain. He needed the assistance of the Roman Christians to provide contacts in Spain because of the lack of Jewish population there that could provide him with a base of operations. Also, Greek was not widely spoken, and Paul would need the help of those in Rome who could assist with translation. But he needed to ensure that those who assisted him would not discredit the mission by carrying with them a sub-Christian Roman system of honor that would be resisted by the barbarians of Spain and so his mission be jeopardized. The exposition of the gospel that shows that God honors sinners of all cultures impartially through Christ was thus intended to serve the cause of Paul's Spanish mission.<sup>17</sup> (iv) Paul addresses Gentile believers who still associated with the Jewish synagogues in Rome, stressing the importance of 'the obedience of faith'. It is incumbent upon Gentile Christians to obey the *halakhot* applicable to 'righteous Gentiles', and this means submitting to the synagogue authorities. His purpose for doing so was so that when he arrived in Rome and began by preaching the gospel to Jews, the behavior of Gentile Christians in the synagogue would not prove to be a stumbling block to them.<sup>18</sup>

(c) *A Combination of the Above*. It is not surprising that many scholars understand the purpose of Romans as a combination of matters related to situations in the Roman churches and Paul's apostolic career: (i) When Paul wrote Romans he had two concerns. The first was to prepare for his visit to Rome and subsequent Spanish mission, while seeking prayer support for his visit to Jerusalem. The second was to respond to certain prob-

15. T. W. Manson, 'St. Paul's Letter to the Romans — and Others', in *The Romans Debate, Revised*, 3-15. Gunther Bornkamm, 'The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament', in *The Romans Debate, Revised*, 16-28, takes up and extends Manson's approach by suggesting that in Romans we have a statement of Paul's 'realizations' about the gospel; realizations which he now wanted to defend in Jerusalem. Bornkamm believes that Romans is the last of the authentic letters of Paul, and as such it has become in fact the historical 'testament of Paul'.

16. Jacob Jervell, 'The Letter to Jerusalem', *The Romans Debate, Revised*, 53-64.

17. Robert Jewett, 'Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter', *Int* 36 (1982) 5-20; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 87-88.

18. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 289-334.

lems in the Roman church about which he had been acquainted.<sup>19</sup> (ii) 'The Jewish question' Paul had to deal with previously was emerging as a problem once more as he contemplated his impending visit to Jerusalem. It was also threatening disunity in the Roman Christian community. These things compelled Paul to write about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in Romans.<sup>20</sup> (iii) Among the Jews returning to Rome after their expulsion by Claudius were Jewish Christians who had heard about the conflicts in which Paul had been engaged in Galatia, Philippi, and Corinth. They opposed Paul and his gospel, and their criticisms are reflected in the rhetorical questions of 3:7; 4:1; 6:1, 15; 7:7, 12, 14. Paul wrote Romans to overcome these criticisms so as to prepare the way for his planned visit to Rome and so that he might secure the help of the church there for his Spanish mission.<sup>21</sup> (iv) A significant section of the Roman church was still clinging to the law as the means of obtaining justification at the coming judgment. Paul wrote urging them to let go of the law for the sake of unity, for the sake of his grand vision — one eschatological people made up of Jews and Gentiles (15:6) — and to bring the church within the scope of his own authority as apostle to the Gentiles.<sup>22</sup> (v) The Roman Christian community consisted of two main groups, Judean and Gentile Christ followers. Paul's aim in Romans was to bring about unity in the church by highlighting his readers' new identity as followers of Christ (without denying the importance of their ethnic identity). This he sought to do, not only for the sake of the Roman Christ-followers themselves, but also so that they would not 'get in the way' of his preparation for the missionary journey to Spain, and to secure their prayer support for his visit to Jerusalem with the collection.<sup>23</sup>

*A Working Hypothesis.* Early in Romans Paul indicates that members of his audience were included among those for whom he feels responsible (1:5-6), and that he wants to exercise a ministry among them, as he had done among other Gentiles (1:13-15). However, another obligation prevented him from doing so straightaway. He had to travel to Jerusalem with the collection for poor believers taken up among churches of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia. It would appear that, being obliged to delay his trip to Rome, Paul wrote a letter so as to exercise a ministry by letter as a forerunner to his ministry in person when he finally reached Rome. This is consis-

19. John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity, 1989), 15-16.

20. J. C. Beker, 'The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans', *HTR* 79 (1986) 12.

21. Peter Stuhlmacher, 'Der Abfassungszweck des Römerbriefes', *ZNW* 77 (1986) 186-91.

22. Brendan Byrne, "'Rather Boldly'" (Rom 15,15): Paul's Prophetic Bid to Win the Allegiance of the Christians in Rome', *Bib* 74 (1993) 85-86.

23. Philip E. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 359.

tent with the only *explicit* statement the apostle makes about his purpose for writing found in 15:15-16:

Yet I have written to you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might be an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

This confirms that Paul's *primary* purpose in writing Romans was to minister to the believers in Rome for whom he had an apostolic responsibility. He wanted to ensure that their understanding of the gospel was such that they would constitute an acceptable sacrifice to God, consecrated by the Holy Spirit. If this was Paul's primary purpose, we can understand why it was necessary for him to provide such a comprehensive statement and defense of his gospel, for as people are exposed to and embrace the truth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit works in their lives producing sanctification. Consistent with this primary purpose is the apostle's attempt to deal with divisions within the Roman Christian community (11:13-32; 14:1-15:13) and to answer the objections to his gospel (3:1, 9; 4:1; 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:6, 14, 30; 11:1, 11) that were being voiced in Rome (16:17-18), which, if left unanswered, would hinder his audience from fully embracing his gospel. If Paul's *primary* purpose is identified in this way, it does not rule out such *secondary* purposes as preparing the way for his visit to Rome and subsequent mission in Spain, and soliciting the Roman Christians' prayers for his impending 'collection visit' to Jerusalem (15:22-32).

## VI. RHETORICAL MATTERS

Paul's Letter to the Romans is not easily classified in terms of the contemporary literary conventions. The opening and closing sections of the letter resemble those of an occasional personal letter. The opening identifies the sender and recipients, includes a greeting, and is followed by a thanksgiving section. The closing section relates the apostle's present situation and future plans and includes a request for support, before concluding with greetings, a warning, and a doxology. However, the body of the letter is not at all like a personal letter. It constitutes an extended theological treatise, one that expounds and defends the gospel, and is followed by a long ethical section spelling out important practical implications of the gospel.

However, the letter *as a whole* cannot be categorized as a theological treatise or letter-essay because this does not properly account for the opening and closing sections, and also because letter-essays were generally sup-

plementary to other writings.<sup>24</sup> Nor can the letter as a whole be described as epideictic (i.e., reinforcing and celebrating commonly held values), even though there are certainly significant epideictic sections in the letter (5:1-2, 11, 21; 8:1-2, 10, 31-39; 11:33-36) because it contains significant deliberative (exhortatory) sections as well (6:11-13; 12:1-15:13). The suggestion that it should be read as an ambassadorial letter that seeks help for the Spanish mission does not adequately account for the extended theological section in the body of the letter, even though the view does find some support in the closing section of the letter. To regard the letter as essentially deliberative intended to persuade and dissuade and set in an epistolary framework does not do justice to the theological section. Romans, then, does not fit easily into any of the single categories suggested and is best read as a letter that utilizes various forms. It is certainly an occasional letter with clear traits of a personal letter, but it also incorporates an extended letter-essay (treatise). It does reinforce and celebrate commonly held values, and it does include significant exhortatory sections as well.

In Romans Paul employs a number of rhetorical devices. For example, in chapter 2 he uses diatribe (in which an author engages a hypothetical dialogue partner), in chapter 3 internal dialogue (whereby an author poses and responds to his/her own questions), and in chapter 7 speech-in-character (a device by which an author adopts a particular persona to articulate the experience of particular persons). He makes use of creedal statements, hymns and benedictions, Scripture quotations, syllogisms, and midrashic argument. He makes extensive use also of well-known stylistic features, including parallelism, anaphora (repetition of initial words or syllables), homoioteleuton (similar-sounding endings), and chiasm (repetition of words or ideas in reverse sequence).<sup>25</sup>

## VII. AUTHORSHIP, PLACE, AND DATE OF WRITING

The Pauline authorship of Romans has rarely been seriously questioned. The evidence indicates that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote the letter. Granted that chapter 16 is part of the original letter (see the discussion of 'The Integrity of Romans', 13-14 below), we have a reference to greetings sent by 'Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy' (16:23), to the believers in Rome. He is most likely to be identified with the Gaius who was one of those in Corinth whom Paul baptized (1 Cor 1:14). We also have a reference to greetings sent by 'Erastus, who is the city's director of public works' (16:23), to the Roman believers. There is a distinct

24. Cf. Brendan Byrne, S.J., *Romans* (Sacra Pagina 6; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 15.

25. Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 24-28, 30-31.

possibility that he is identified with the aedile of the inscription with the name Erastus that was discovered in 1929 east of the stage building of the theatre in Corinth (see a full discussion in the commentary on 16:23). Both of these references support the view that Romans was written while Paul was in Corinth. In 16:1 Paul commends 'our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae' that was one of Corinth's two seaports, and as she is commended at the beginning of the long list of people to whom Paul wants his greetings extended, this suggests that Phoebe was the courier who carried Paul's letter to Rome. This, too, suggests that the apostle was situated in (or around) Corinth when he wrote the letter. Finally, according to Acts 20:3 Paul spent three months in Greece towards the end of his third missionary journey prior to his departure for Jerusalem with the collection. In Greece he would have been most likely to stay in Corinth in fellowship with the church he had founded there.

In chapter 15 there are certain pointers that indicate the date Paul wrote his Romans: He had completed his mission in the eastern Mediterranean (15:23); the churches of Macedonia and Achaia had made their contributions to the collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem (15:26-27), which places the writing of Romans after that of 2 Corinthians 8-9; and Paul is about to embark on his trip to Jerusalem to convey the collection monies there (15:25). After that he hopes to visit Rome en route to Spain (15:28). While the date of writing can be confidently placed after the writing of 2 Corinthians 8-9 and just prior to Paul's departure for Jerusalem, there are differences of opinion concerning the allocation of an exact chronological date, generally put by scholars somewhere between A.D. 54 and 59.<sup>26</sup>

## VIII. THE INTEGRITY OF ROMANS

The question of the integrity of Romans relates primarily to chapter 16 and its place in the letter. While the majority texts include this chapter as an integral part of Romans, there are variations in the textual tradition that have caused questions to be raised. In particular there is evidence for the placement of the doxology (located traditionally at 16:25-27) in six different locations listed by Metzger as: (a) 1:11-16:23 + doxology; (b) 1:1-14:23 + doxology + 15:1-16:23 + doxology; (c) 1:1-14:23 + doxology + 15:1-16:24; (d) 1:1-16:24; (e) 1:1-15:23 + doxology + 16:1-23; (f) 1:1-14:23 + 16:24 + doxology.<sup>27</sup> Different positions adopted by various scholars regarding this matter have

26. For detailed discussions see, e.g., C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 12-16; Jewett, *Romans*, 18-21; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 85-88.

27. Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1994), 471.

been repeatedly summarized and do not need to be rehearsed again here.<sup>28</sup> The majority acknowledge the authenticity of 16:1-23. Lampe provides the following reasons why chapter 16 should be regarded as an original part of Romans: (i) Paul never ends his letters with the formulation 'the God of peace be with all of you' (15:33); rather, such a formula usually precedes requests to pass on greetings — like those in chapter 16. (ii) There is no evidence in the textual tradition that any manuscript of Romans concludes with chapter 15. Both chapters 15 and 16 are either included or omitted together. (iii) The unique features of chapter 16 with its many greetings coincides with the fact that chapters 1–15 reveal that Paul is writing to a church which he did not found and has never visited, yet from which he seeks support for his mission. (iv) Romans 15:19-29 indicates that chapters 1–15 were written from Greece at the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey. This coincides with the apostle's situation reflected in chapter 16: he wrote the letter from Greece, entrusted it to Phoebe of Cenchreae (one of Corinth's two seaports) for delivery; and among those who send greetings are Timothy, Sosipater, and Gaius, who are those one would expect to be with Paul at the end of his third missionary journey.<sup>29</sup> In the commentary that follows, chapter 16 is therefore treated as an integral part of Romans.

## IX. THE INFLUENCE OF 'THE NEW PERSPECTIVE'

'The new perspective' is a term coined by James Dunn to represent a new approach to the interpretation of Paul's letters and is used in the Manson Memorial Lecture he delivered at the University of Manchester in 1982.<sup>30</sup> This new approach was sparked off by the publication in 1977 of E. P. Sanders' book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,<sup>31</sup> a book that has proved to be a watershed in Pauline studies. Sanders' aim was to compare Palestinian Judaism and Pauline Christianity. The impact of his book and the ongoing debate to which it gave rise can be considered under the following headings.

### A. Judaism

Sanders' examination of Palestinian Judaism was based on his study of Jewish sources dating from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200. These included early rab-

28. See, e.g., the detailed discussions in Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 2-11; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 55-67; Jewett, *Romans*, 4-18.

29. Lampe, 'The Roman Christians', 217-21.

30. James D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', *BJRL* 65 (1983) 95-122, now conveniently included in the collection, *The New Perspective on Paul, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 99-120, to which subsequent references are made.

31. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

binic (Tannaitic) literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a selection of works from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. As a result of this study he concluded that Palestinian Judaism is best described as 'covenantal nomism'. What is meant by this term is best described in his own words:

The 'pattern' or 'structure' of covenantal nomism is this: (1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. The law implies both (3) God's promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God rewards obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement, and God's mercy belong to the group which will be saved. An important interpretation of the first and last points is that election and ultimately salvation are considered to be by God's mercy rather than human achievement.<sup>32</sup>

Sanders, while commended by many for the work he did on the Jewish sources and for correcting distorted views of first-century Judaism, has not been without his critics. His approach to the study of Judaism using the categories of 'getting in' and 'staying in' has been criticized as inappropriate because these categories emerged not from the Jewish documents themselves but were shaped by Pauline scholarship.<sup>33</sup> Jacob Neusner, a prolific Jewish author, is particularly critical of this aspect of Sanders' work. He says that 'in regard to Rabbinic Judaism, Sanders's book is so profoundly flawed as to be hopeless and, I regret to say it, useless in accomplishing its stated goals of systemic description and comparison'.<sup>34</sup> However, Neusner did commend Sanders for making an apologetic for rabbinic Judaism that combats the ignorance and malicious anti-Semitism of other accounts of it.

Westerholm argues that while it is misleading to characterize Judaism as a religion of 'works-salvation', nevertheless observance of the law may be regarded as Israel's path to life. He stresses that Paul not only implied that his opponents believed that the law serves a soteriological function, but that the apostle himself believed it was given for that purpose.<sup>35</sup> Schreiner, while endorsing Sanders' work insofar as it destroys the caricature of Judaism as a religion that has no theology of grace and is obsessed with earning merit, argues that it was legalistic because its soteriology was synergistic, that is, sal-

32. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422.

33. Cf., e.g., Jacob Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', *HR* 18 (1978) 177-91; Thomas F. Best, 'The Apostle Paul and E. P. Sanders: The Significance of Paul and Palestinian Judaism', *ResQ* 25 (1982) 65-74; Nils A. Dahl and Samuel Sandmel, 'Review of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* by E. P. Sanders', *RelSR* 4 (1978) 153-60; W. Horbury, 'Paul and Judaism', *ExpTim* 90 (1979) 116-18.

34. Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', 191.

35. Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 156.

vation was by God's grace *and* human works.<sup>36</sup> There was nothing wrong with legalism if the required works could be performed. The problem is that it rests upon the mistaken view that human beings are good and that their works can be sufficient.<sup>37</sup> Hagner says: 'In its best theology, Judaism is a religion of grace. Often, however, its gracious foundations are tacitly assumed and often the law takes a place of overwhelming priority. It is not surprising if a religion whose heart lies in praxis rather than theory (theology), a religion dominated by nomism, where the covenant is more presupposed than articulated, inadvertently produces followers who fall into a legalistic mode of existence. This may explain the "exception" of 4 Ezra (cf. 2 Baruch) with its clear legalism, which Sanders does not deny'.<sup>38</sup>

A comprehensive and critical response to Sanders' portrayal of first-century Judaism is the book edited by Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid, intended to provide 'a fresh evaluation of the literature of Second Temple Judaism' and to test the applicability of 'covenantal nomism' as an appropriate description of Jewish beliefs in that period.<sup>39</sup> Distinguished specialists examined different types of literature from the period (including Prayers and Psalms; the Pseudepigrapha; Jewish Apocalypses; Testaments; Wisdom literature; the writings of Josephus; Tannaitic literature; the Targums, the writings of Philo, and Qumran literature). Summarizing the results, Carson notes: (i) Parts of the literature examined did reflect 'covenantal nomism' so that it may be said that Sanders is not wrong everywhere, 'but he is wrong when he tries to establish his category is right everywhere'. (ii) Covenantal nomism is a reductionist category because 'all its inspiration is found in one kind of biblical ideas, while complementary biblical ideas are completely ignored'.<sup>40</sup> (iii) Covenantal nomism as a category proves to be not only reductionist but misleading because it 'cannot itself accomplish what Sanders wants it to accomplish, viz. serve as an explanatory bulwark against all suggestions that some of this literature embraces works-righteousness and merit theology precisely because covenantal nomism embraces the same phenomena. Sanders has to some extent constructed a "heads I win, tails you lose" argument: it is rhetorically effective, but not a fair reflection of the diverse literature'.<sup>41</sup> Carson concludes his summary: 'Examination of Sanders's covenantal nomism leads one to the conclusion that the New Testament documents, not least Paul, must not be

36. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 94.

37. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 98.

38. Donald Hagner, 'Paul and Judaism: Testing the New Perspective', in Peter Stuhlmacher, *A Challenge to the New Perspective: Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification — With an Essay by Donald A. Hagner* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 87-88.

39. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, Vol. I — *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

40. Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, I, 543.

41. Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, I, 545.

read *exclusively* against this background. It is too doctrinaire, too unsupported by the sources themselves, too reductionistic, too monopolistic'.<sup>42</sup>

## B. Pauline Religion

After his study of Palestinian Judaism Sanders turned his attention to a study of Paul's religion. To do this, he undertook an investigation of the seven letters of Paul whose authenticity is unquestioned (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). This investigation led him to conclude that Paul's religion is best understood as 'participationist eschatology'. Sanders says:

The heart of Paul's thought is not that one ratifies and agrees to a covenant offered by God, becoming a member of a group with a covenantal relation with God and remaining in it on the condition of proper behavior; but that one dies with Christ, obtaining new life and the initial transformation which leads to the resurrection and ultimate transformation, that one is a member of the body of Christ and one Spirit with him, and that one remains so unless one breaks the participatory union by forming another.<sup>43</sup>

What distinguishes Palestinian Judaism from Pauline Christianity is not to be found in the matter of grace and works but in Paul's understanding of righteousness. Once again we let Sanders speak for himself:

To be righteous in Jewish literature means to obey the Torah and to repent of transgression, but in Paul it means to be saved by Christ. Most succinctly, righteousness in Judaism is a term which implies the maintenance of status among the group of the elect; in Paul it is a transfer term. In Judaism, that is, commitment to the covenant puts one 'in', while obedience (righteousness) subsequently keeps one in. In Paul's usage, 'be made righteous' ('be justified') is a term indicating getting in, not staying in the body of the saved. Thus when Paul says one cannot be made righteous by works of law, he means that one cannot, by works of law, 'transfer to the body of the saved'. When Judaism said that one is righteous who obeys the law, the meaning is that one thereby stays in the covenant. The debate about righteousness by faith or by works of law thus turns out to result from the different usage of the 'righteous' word group.<sup>44</sup>

For Sanders, then, as far as Paul is concerned, what is wrong with Judaism is not its zeal for the law or that it promotes a quest for self-

42. Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, I, 548.

43. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 514.

44. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 544.

righteousness based on the works of the law, but rather that it is unenlightened. In Sanders' oft-quoted words: 'In short, *this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity*'.<sup>45</sup> The overall effect of Sanders' work has been to call into question both the way first-century Judaism has been depicted as a religion of works-righteousness and the way the letters of Paul have been interpreted. Those who embrace Sanders' conclusions tend to be critical of traditional Protestant exegesis heavily influenced by the Reformation emphasis upon the doctrine of justification by faith.

### C. The Works of the Law

In an essay that marked his first foray into the debate, Dunn acknowledges his indebtedness to Sanders for correcting a distorted image of first-century Judaism.<sup>46</sup> However, he says Sanders failed to take the opportunity his work provided to explore the extent to which Paul's theology could be explained in terms of Judaism's covenantal nomism.<sup>47</sup> Dunn argued that when Paul speaks of the 'works of the law', he has in mind circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath, the characteristic marks of faithful Jews that distinguished them from Gentiles. 'When Paul denied the possibility of "being justified by works of the law" it is precisely this basic Jewish self-understanding which he is attacking — the idea that God's acknowledgment of covenant status is bound up with, even dependent upon, observance of these particular regulations'.<sup>48</sup>

Dunn's initial description of Paul's understanding of the works of the law in terms of the Jewish identity markers, circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance, has been subject to criticism on two counts. First, this was not the way the works of the law were understood by Jewish people. For them the works of the law were not just circumcision, obeying food laws, and observing the Sabbath, but obedience to all that the law requires,<sup>49</sup> something they practiced simply because this was required under the terms of the Mosaic covenant.<sup>50</sup> Second, in Romans, when Paul concluded that no one will be justified by works of the law (3:20), this was because even the Jews who had the law failed to observe its requirements,

45. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552.

46. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', 99-120.

47. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', 103.

48. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', 111. A similar approach is adopted by Roman Heiligenthal, 'Soziologische Implikationen der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre im Galaterbrief am Beispiel der "Werke des Gesetzes": Beobachtungen zur Identitätsfindung einer frühchristlichen Gemeinde', *Kairois* 26 (1984) 38-53.

49. Cf. David Flusser, "'Durch das Gesetz dem Gesetz gestorben'" (Gal 2,19), *Judaica* 43 (1987) 34; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 177; Thomas Schreiner, "'Works of Law" in Paul', *NovT* 33 (1991) 232-44.

50. Cf. Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, 'Some Reflections on James Dunn's "The Incident at Antioch (Gal. 2.11-18)"', *JSNT* 18 (1983) 70.

and it was not their failure to practice circumcision, to obey food laws, or observe the Sabbath that he had in mind. The failure he highlighted was their failure in the moral area.

In later work Dunn acknowledges that he failed to explain that the “works of the law” do not mean *only* circumcision, food laws and Sabbath, but the requirements of the law in general.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, he continued to insist that the works of the law do refer *particularly* to ‘those requirements which bring to sharp focus the distinctiveness of Israel’s identity’.<sup>52</sup> He claims that recognition of the social function of the law goes a long way towards resolving the tensions and contradictions in Paul’s thought. In particular, he says, it resolves the problem of the tension between Paul’s negative and positive statements about the law. It is the social function of the law that Paul criticizes even while he affirms its positive role, one fulfilled in the love of one’s neighbor.<sup>53</sup> For further discussion, see ‘Additional Note: The Works of the Law’, 173-76.

#### D. Paul’s Critique of Judaism

Dunn says that Sanders’ work goes much further in making sense of Paul in his Jewish context than Sanders himself realized.<sup>54</sup> But while stressing that first-century Judaism was not legalistic and that Jewish people were not seeking to amass merit by works of righteousness, he failed to recognize the sociological significance of the works of the law, that is, he failed to recognize that for Jews the works of the law functioned as identity markers of the covenant people. Recognizing this, Dunn argues that Paul was critical of Judaism, not because it was legalistic but because of its exclusivism. Only those who submitted to circumcision and took upon themselves the yoke of the law could be included in the people of God.

It is true that Paul was critical of Judaism because of its exclusivism, its ethnocentrism. This is reflected in his argument in 2:1-29 and implied in 3:27-30. However, his major criticism was that, as he did prior to his conversion (Phil 3:2-9), some Jewish people were seeking to establish their own righteousness by works of the law rather than submitting to God’s righteousness (9:30–10:4).<sup>55</sup> To carry out the works of the law is in itself a good thing, but to do so believing it to be grounds for ultimate justification is mistaken, and sets aside the way to justification provided by God.

51. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 4.

52. James D. G. Dunn, ‘Works of the Law’ (Galatians 3.10-14), *The New Perspective on Paul, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 130.

53. Dunn, ‘Works of the Law’, 131.

54. Dunn, ‘The New Perspective on Paul’, 105.

55. Cf. Hagner, ‘Paul and Judaism’, 100.

## E. Justification

Those influenced by the new perspective emphasize that Paul's doctrine of justification is to be understood in the context of his mission to the Gentiles. It is those who believe in Jesus Christ, be they Jews or Gentile, whom God justifies. Those who believe in Christ may be said to have been justified (5:1). Justification, then, is not a term Paul uses to refer to the *means* by which people are 'saved' and so included in the people of God; rather, it is something that may be predicated of those who are *already* saved. They are saved by God's grace through what he has done in Christ so that their sins have been forgiven, and now they are numbered among God's people. On this basis, Wright argues: 'Justification . . . is not a matter of *how someone enters the community of the true people of God*, but of *how you tell who belongs to that community*, not least in the period of time before the eschatological event itself, when the matter will become public knowledge'.<sup>56</sup> If justification is related only to the question, 'Who are included among the people of God?' it becomes an ecclesiological, not a soteriological, term.

It is not surprising that this emphasis by some of those who embrace the new perspective has attracted criticism. O'Brien claims that this approach diminishes the human predicament — exposure to the wrath of God because of rebellion and sin. It also marginalizes what is prominent in Paul's teaching, that is, that justification brings present and future pardon and acquittal. He claims that justification is an essential element of the gospel.<sup>57</sup> Westerholm says that in the new perspective the charge of legalism leveled against Judaism has been substituted for the charge of ethnocentrism. He finds in Paul's writings evidence for both among some Jews, and insists that the primary reason Paul saw for their failure to achieve the righteousness they sought was reliance upon deeds of righteousness.<sup>58</sup> Hagner quotes J. Gresham Machen: 'Paul was not devoted to the doctrine of justification by faith because of the Gentile mission; he was devoted to the Gentile mission because of the doctrine of justification by faith'.<sup>59</sup> He argues that Dunn's emphasis upon national righteousness, rather than legalism, as the main thrust of Paul's criticism of Judaism 'pushes justification by faith very much to the periphery, making it pertinent only to the Gentiles. The problem is a bigger one than simply holding the two emphases in balance. Despite Dunn's claim, I do not see how his approach can do anything but take all vitality out of the doctrine'.<sup>60</sup>

56. Tom Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Oxford: Lion, 1997), 119.

57. Peter T. O'Brien, 'Was Paul a Covenantal Nomist?' in D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, Vol. II — *The Paradoxes of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 296.

58. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 444-45.

59. Hagner, 'Paul and Judaism', 90.

60. Hagner, 'Paul and Judaism', 104-5.

However, as the debate about the significance of the new perspective for an understanding of justification has proceeded, both Dunn and Wright have clarified their positions, seeking to show that they do not negate the insights of the Reformation. Dunn, while maintaining that Paul's doctrine of justification by faith was hammered out in the context of the Gentile mission, asserts that 'justification by faith alone needs to be reasserted as strongly as ever it was by Paul or by Augustine or by Luther — against all attempts to add anything extra'.<sup>61</sup> Both Dunn and Wright insist that their emphasis upon the ecclesiological nature of justification by faith should not be interpreted to mean that they minimize the importance of the individual's need for salvation. However, the emphasis upon the ecclesiological implications of justification, important as they may be to correct previous neglect, does seem to have resulted in moving the truth of justification as the acquittal of guilty sinners based upon the forgiveness of their sins from the centre to the periphery. At least this is the impression with which many of their readers have been left. In a recent publication Wright seeks to correct this impression. He affirms the insights of the Reformation, insisting that it is not his purpose to do away with them, but rather to locate them in the wider context of covenant theology.<sup>62</sup> He describes justification as 'the declaration (a) that someone is in the right (his or her sins having been forgiven through the death of Jesus) and (b) that this person is a member of the true covenant family'. However, while the justification of believers does lead on to their being incorporated into the people of God, that would appear to be a by-product of rather than intrinsic to justification itself.

## **F. Summing Up . . .**

(i) The literature of Second Temple Judaism reveals a Judaism that is more complex than what may be portrayed simply as covenantal nomism. In places it does reflect a Judaism that may be described as covenantal nomism, but in other places it reflects legalism. (ii) The early interpretation of the 'works of the law' as the sociological identity markers of circumcision, keeping food laws, and Sabbath observance has given way to the recognition that the 'works of the law' denote all that the law requires. (iii) While it is true that ethnocentrism and exclusivism were aspects of the Judaism that Paul criticized, he was equally if not more critical of the legalistic tendencies found among some of his fellow Jews. (iv) Paul's teaching on justification by faith was articulated in the context of his mission to the Gentiles as part of his defense of the incorporation of Gentile believers into

61. James D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither?', in *The New Perspective on Paul, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 96.

62. Tom Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 222.

the people of God without having to submit to circumcision or take upon themselves the yoke of the law. At its heart, however, this doctrine has to do with God's gracious acquittal of guilty sinners, both Jews and Gentiles. (v) Justification is God's declaration in favor of believers — he will accept no charges brought against them (8:33); a declaration effective for them in the present time (5:1, 9; 8:1) and to be confirmed on the last day. (vi) The doctrine of justification by faith is not itself the gospel message — the gospel is the good news of what God has done through his Son's atoning death and resurrection to deal with the effects of the fall upon individuals, society, and ultimately the cosmos.

## X. THEOLOGICAL THEMES

At various places in the commentary and in the additional notes I discuss important themes in Romans. What is offered below brings together material related to a number of the more pervasive themes with brief comments. This is not intended to be in any way a full discussion of these matters, but, hopefully, it will serve to alert readers to some important theological features of Romans.

### A. God the Father

Romans is a profoundly theological document in the sense that who God is, what he is like, and what he does constitute the main subject matter.<sup>63</sup> God is 'one' (3:30), 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (15:6), immortal (1:23), eternal (16:26), and 'the only wise God' (16:27). His wisdom and knowledge are unfathomable (11:33). He exercises the divine prerogatives of giving life (4:17) and executing judgment (2:16; 3:6, 19; 14:10-12). He has made known his eternal power and divine nature through what he has made (1:19-20).

The righteousness of God is a major theme. His decrees are righteous (1:32). He is righteous when he passes judgment upon sinners (2:2, 5), including Jewish sinners (3:4-5). His wrath is 'revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men' (1:18). He hands people over to the consequences of their sin (1:24, 26, 28). But while 'the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience' are intended to lead people to repentance (2:4), those who refuse to repent store up wrath for themselves on the day of God's wrath (2:5). He does not show favoritism, but rewards all people according to their works (2:6-11). The righteousness of God is especially re-

63. Cf. Jochen Flebbe, *Solus Deus: Untersuchungen zur Rede von Gott im Brief des Paulus und die Römer* (BZNW 158; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

vealed in the gospel, that is, his saving righteousness whereby he brings people into a right relationship with himself (1:17). This he reveals without reference to the Mosaic law and for the benefit of all who believe (3:21-22). There is no compromise of God's righteousness when he justifies sinners who believe, for by setting forth his Son as the atoning sacrifice for their sins he demonstrated his righteousness so that he can be both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (3:25-26).

The love of God is another important theme in Romans. God demonstrated his love for human beings in that while they were sinners Christ died for them (5:8). Into the hearts of those who believe God pours out his love by the Holy Spirit (5:5), and nothing whatever shall be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus (8:39). Believers are described as those who are loved by God (1:7), and even unbelieving Israelites, though they are enemies as far as the gospel is concerned, are, as far as election is concerned, loved by God on account of the patriarchs (11:28), for God's gifts and calling are irrevocable (11:29).

The sovereign will and purpose of God find repeated expression in Romans. Paul recognizes that his own movements are determined by the will of God (1:10; 15:32). God's will has been made known through the law given to Israel (2:18). Believers are transformed by the renewing of their minds so as to 'be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will' (12:2). Believers have been called according to God's purpose (8:28). God exercises his divine prerogative in showing mercy to whomever he will and hardening whomever he will (9:11-18). As a potter determines what he will do with the clay, so God determines those to whom he will show his wrath (those he has borne with great patience) and those to whom he will make known the riches of his glory (the objects of his mercy drawn from among both Jews and Gentiles) (9:19-24). Temporal authorities are established by God's decree (13:2) and function as his servants to punish wrongdoers and commend those who do right (13:3-6). Ultimately, God's sovereignty will be acknowledged by all when every knee will bow to him (14:11).

Not surprisingly in a letter that expounds and defends the gospel, the grace of God is a pervasive theme. Paul has his apostleship by the grace of God (1:5; 12:3; 15:15). Believers are justified by God's grace through faith (3:24; 5:2) as Abraham was (4:1-8, 23-25). God's grace and the gift of God that came through grace have far greater effects for good than the effects for evil that proceeded from Adam's trespass (5:15, 17), so it may be said that 'where sin increased, grace increased all the more' (5:20). Just as sin reigned in death, so God's grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ (5:21). Because believers live under God's grace, not the law, sin shall not be their master (6:14). There is still a remnant of believing Jews chosen by grace (11:5-6). By God's grace believers receive different gifts for ministry (12:16). It is no wonder, then, that in greetings to his audi-

ence at the opening and closing of Romans Paul invokes God's grace upon them (1:7; 16:20)

The theological focus of Romans is very evident in the fact that God is the primary agent of salvation. He made known the gospel of his saving righteousness through the law and the prophets (1:2; 3:21). Through the preaching of the gospel his power for salvation is made known and released for the benefit of all who believe (1:16-17). This saving righteousness comes from God and is effected through the redemption in Jesus Christ (3:24). God set him forward as a sacrifice of atonement in order to demonstrate his justice, having passed over sins committed beforehand, so he can be both just and the justifier of sinners who have faith in Jesus (3:25-26). God credited righteousness to Abraham as a gracious gift when he believed (4:2-5). David speaks of the blessing of those to whom God credits righteousness: He forgives their sins and never counts them against them (4:6-8). What God did for Abraham he does for all who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead (4:22-24). God delivered Christ over to death for our sins, and raised him to life for our justification (4:25). The death of Christ for sinners is the demonstration of God's love (5:8), and through it God has reconciled us to himself (5:10-11). God, faced with the powerlessness of the law to bring about the fulfillment of its own demands due to the weakness of human flesh, sent his Son to condemn sin in the flesh, so that the law's righteous requirement might be fulfilled in believers (8:3-4). God works in all things for the good of those who love him, those whom he called according to his purpose and whom he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son (8:28-29). He predestined them, called them, justified them, and glorified them. He is 'for us' so that no one can be against us. Having not spared his own Son, he will along with him give us all things. He will entertain no charges brought against us (8:30-33). God is able to restore those of unbelieving Israel if they do not persist in unbelief, and by so doing ensure that 'all Israel' will be saved (11:23-26). Ultimately, God will crush Satan under the feet of believers (16:20).

God is uniquely the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and he is uniquely his Son. Paul can speak of the people of Israel being adopted as God's sons (9:4), but more often he speaks of believers being adopted as God's sons and daughters. Being led by the Spirit, they show that they are his children (8:14). They have received the Spirit of adoption by whom they cry, 'Abba, Father' as the Spirit himself testifies with their spirits that they are God's children (8:15-16). Because believers are God's children, they are also God's heirs, joint heirs with Christ (8:17). Being God's children and having the 'firstfruits of the Spirit', believers eagerly await their adoption, the redemption of their bodies, the time when they enter into 'the glorious freedom of the children of God' (8:21-23). God has predestined them to be conformed to the likeness of his Son so that he becomes the firstborn (*prōtotokos*, the unique Son) among many brothers (and sisters) (8:29).

## B. Jesus Christ the Son of God

While Romans is profoundly theological in the sense that God is the main active agent, it is also deeply Christological in that what God does he does 'through Christ'. So, on the last day God will judge men's secrets *through* Jesus Christ (2:16); believers are justified by God *through* the redemption in Christ Jesus (3:24); they have peace with God *through* our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1); *through* him they have reconciliation with God (5:11); God's grace reigns through righteousness to bring eternal life to believers *through* Jesus Christ our Lord (5:21); and the gift of God to believers is eternal life *through* Christ Jesus our Lord (6:23).

As far as the person of Christ is concerned, his human ancestry is traced from the Jewish people (9:5). He became a servant of the Jews to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs (15:8). He is the messianic Son of David according to his human nature, and declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead (1:3-4). Being raised from the dead he became the Lord of both the dead and the living (14:9). While in Romans Christ is frequently referred to as the Son of God (1:3, 4, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32), he is never simply equated with God. Paul reserves the title *theos* for God, and generally uses the title *kyrios* ('Lord') for Jesus (notwithstanding 9:5 — see the commentary).

The work of Christ emphasized in Romans is what he achieved through his death in obedience to God. His death was the sacrifice of atonement whereby redemption was won for believers (3:24-25). When he died for sinners (5:6, 8; 14:15), he removed the basis upon which anyone could condemn those who believe in him (8:1, 34). Through his death on their behalf, believers have 'died' to sin (6:2-7; 8:2) and to the law (7:4), and in this freedom they are able to bear fruit for God (7:6). Christ brought to an end the period of the law's jurisdiction (10:4). By the Spirit he now lives in those who believe (8:9-11), and though they are many and have differing gifts, they form one body in him (12:4-5). Being now raised from the dead, Christ is at God's right hand, where he intercedes for believers (8:34). He continues his ministry through Paul to bring Gentiles to the obedience of faith by the power of signs and miracles and the power of the Spirit (15:18-19).

## C. The Holy Spirit

As noted above, Romans is both profoundly theological and deeply Christological, but it also has much to say about the Spirit, and in this way it reflects elements of the later doctrine of the Trinity. The Spirit is referred to as 'the Holy Spirit' five times (5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16), 'the Spirit of God' four times (8:9, 11 [2x], 14); 'the Spirit of Christ' once (8:9); 'the Spirit of holiness' once (1:4); 'the Spirit of adoption' once (8:15); and simply 'the Spirit' fifteen times (2:29; 7:6; 8:4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 16, 23, 26, 27 [2x]; 15:19, 30). The ti-

ties 'the Spirit of God' and 'the Spirit of Christ' indicate the intimate relationship between God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

The activity of the Holy Spirit occupies an important place in Romans. The first reference to this occurs in 1:4, where Paul says that Christ was appointed Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. The second reference relates to true circumcision of the heart effected by the Spirit (2:29). All other references to the Spirit's activity relate to his ministry in the lives of believers: By the Spirit God pours his love into their hearts (5:5); the Spirit of life sets believers free from the law of sin and death (8:2) so that the just requirement of the law may be fulfilled in them as they live according to the Spirit (8:4); the Spirit lives in believers and will give life to their mortal bodies (8:11); by the Spirit believers are enabled to put to death the misdeeds of the body (8:13). Believers are led by the Spirit (8:14); the Spirit testifies to their spirits that they are children of God (8:15-16); they enjoy the firstfruits of the Spirit (8:23); the Spirit helps them in their weakness, and when they do not know how to pray, he intercedes for them (8:26-27). The Spirit generates hope in believers (15:13) and sanctifies them so that they become an acceptable offering to God (15:16). Finally, Paul says that he carried out his mission in the eastern Mediterranean 'through the power of the Spirit' (15:19).

#### **D. The Righteousness of God**

In 1:16-17 Paul describes the gospel as the power of God for salvation for all who believe, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed. In the major theological section of the letter, 1:18-11:36, the apostle expounds and defends this gospel, showing how the righteousness of God is revealed in it. Five aspects of the righteousness of God are evident or implied: (i) his distributive justice whereby God recompenses all people in accordance with their works; (ii) his covenant faithfulness whereby God always remains true to his promises — his word does not fail; (iii) his saving action whereby God reveals his righteousness in acting for the salvation of his people; (iv) his gift of righteousness, that is, the status of being declared righteous by God; and (v) the righteousness of life he requires of believers and is the outworking of his saving righteousness and the gift of righteousness he bestows upon them. Of these five aspects, God's saving action in Christ enabling the justification of sinners receives the major emphasis (see 'Additional Note: "The Righteousness of God"', 79-81).

#### **E. The Atonement**

As might be expected, in a letter in which Paul expounds the gospel, the subject of the atonement is addressed in several places. The key text is 3:24-

26, in which Paul says that believers have been justified by God's grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement (*hilastērion*). There has been extended debate concerning the meaning of *hilastērion*, a word that may carry three different meanings: expiation, the mercy seat, and propitiation. Expiation denotes the removal of sin, the mercy seat is the place where the blood of the sacrifice was applied on the great annual Day of Atonement, and propitiation denotes the removal of wrath. It is true that on the basis of Christ's death God wipes away sins, and therefore the atonement involves expiation. It is possible that there is an allusion to the mercy seat in this text. It cannot be denied that Christ's death also functions as propitiation. In Romans the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness of humanity, and those who presume upon his grace while continuing in sin only store up wrath for themselves on the Day of Judgment. If people were to be reconciled to God, propitiation had to be effected through the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf. 5:9-10). This must never be understood, however, in the pagan sense of human beings trying to appease the wrath of deities, for according to the gospel it was God himself who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us, setting him forth as the atoning sacrifice for our sins (see 'Additional Note: *Hilastērion*', 188-91).

## F. Justification

Paul employed his doctrine of justification by grace through faith when he was defending the right of Gentiles to be included among God's people, but it was not simply 'a fighting doctrine' to counter the arguments of his opponents. He speaks of it in passages not concerned with the question of Gentile inclusion (cf. 8:29-30; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 3:9; Phil 3:9; Tit 3:7). At its heart justification has to do with God's gracious acquittal of guilty sinners, and it is in fact integral to the apostle's understanding of salvation.

Justification as understood by Paul is essentially forensic in character. It refers to God's decision as judge to justify sinners who believe in his Son, that is, to confer upon them the status of being righteous in his sight. To be able to do this without being unjust himself, God had to present Christ as a sacrifice of atonement to deal with the problem of their sins. Only then could he 'be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus' (3:26). Thus Paul says that Christ was put to death for our sins and raised for our justification (4:25), that justification comes through his blood (5:9), and that it was Christ's obedience (primarily his death) that effected justification for all who believe (5:16-19).

Justification, God's adjudication in favor of those who believe in his Son, becomes effective the moment a person puts their faith in Christ. It is a present status enjoyed by believers. So Paul can say, 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our

Lord Jesus Christ' (5:1). In 8:31-39 Paul celebrates the blessings of the justified: 'God is for us', and having given his Son for us, he will graciously give us all things with him; God will entertain no charges against us, for he himself has justified us; there is no condemnation because Christ has died for us and, having been raised to life, now intercedes for us; therefore, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our present justification will by God's grace be confirmed on the Last Day.

## **G. Faith**

As would be expected in a letter that expounds the gospel as 'the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes' (1:6), faith is a crucial theme. Paul describes himself as an apostle set apart for the gospel of God, charged with the task of calling people to the obedience of faith, that is, the obedience that consists in faith response to the gospel (1:1, 5). In this gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, probably meaning that God's saving righteousness elicits faith first among the Jews and then among the Gentiles (1:17). The saving righteousness of God that brings justification for all who believe is appropriated by faith (3:22). For God to remain just while justifying those who have faith, it was necessary for him to present his Son as a sacrifice of atonement (3:25-26). Both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith apart from observing the law (3:28-30). The fact that God justified Abraham, that is, credited righteousness to him, as a gift in recognition of his faith and not because of works that he performed, nor because he had then been circumcised, shows that on the human side all that is required is faith (4:1-22). The conclusion Paul draws from his discussion of Abraham is: "The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead' (4:23-24). In the process of his discussion of the significance of Abraham, Paul reveals his understanding of the nature of faith through which people are justified. Abraham 'did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised' (4:20-21). Faith is acceptance of the word of God and the belief that he is able to and will do what he has promised.

## **H. The Mosaic Law**

As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul had to defend the right of Gentiles to be included in the people of God without having to undergo circumcision or take upon themselves the yoke of the law. The gospel he proclaimed was a gospel in which the righteousness of God was revealed apart from the law

and was therefore applicable to Gentiles as well as Jews. This fact, however, constituted no devaluation of the law. The receiving of the law was one of Israel's great privileges (9:4), one that enabled them to 'approve of what is superior', to be 'a guide for the blind, a light for those in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children', because they 'have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth' (2:18-20). Their legitimate boast in having the law was only inappropriate when they failed to observe it.

Paul, however, saw another function of the law. He says that 'it was brought in so that the trespass might increase' (5:20). This statement has been variously interpreted (see the commentary on 5:20) but is best understood to mean that the law led to an increase in the number of trespasses in the sense that what were not known to be trespasses before the giving of the law were clearly recognized as such thereafter. This receives support from Paul's statement in 7:7: 'I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet"'. While Paul says that the law 'was brought in so that the trespass might increase', he also added, 'But where sin increased, grace increased all the more'.

While Paul recognized that receiving the law was one of the great privileges of Israel, he also recognized that the period of its role as a regulatory norm for the people of God came to an end with the death and resurrection of Christ. The clearest expression of this is found in 7:1-6, where, employing the image of a woman being freed from the law of marriage by the death of her husband, he says that as believers 'by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code' (7:6).

Believers, though released from the law as a regulatory norm, do not live sinful lives. In fact, paradoxically, it is precisely because they are no longer under the law, but under grace, that sin is not their master (6:14). In fact, the sort of life the law was unable to bring about in people is actually made possible for those who live according to the Spirit (8:3-4) and walk in the way of love (13:8-10). The law still has an educative role for believers (cf. 3:10-20; 4:1-25; 8:35-37; 9:6-17, 25-33; 10:5-13, 15-21; 11:2-4, 7-10, 25-27, 33-36; 14:10-12; 15:8-12). The Mosaic law is no longer their regulatory norm, but the OT still functions as Scripture for them. It testifies to the gospel (1:1-2; 3:21; 4:1-25; 16:25-26), and, interpreted paradigmatically in the light of Christ, it provides guidance for godly living (cf. 12:17-21; 13:8-10; 14:10-12; 15:2-4).

## I. Israel in the Purposes of God

Paul argues that Jews and Gentiles are alike in the matter of sin and judgment (1:18-3:20) and also in the matter of salvation (3:21-31). In 11:32 he declares: 'God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have

mercy on them all'. It might seem, then, that Paul negates any special place for Israel in the purposes of God, but this is not the case. He acknowledges that there are many advantages in being a Jew (3:1-2; 9:4-5), even while insisting that they are no better off in the matter of sin and judgment (3:9). He argues that since there is one God, he will justify both the circumcised (Jews) and the uncircumcised (Gentiles) by faith, and that this excludes all Jewish boasting on mere ethnic grounds (3:28-30).

While Israel can claim no immunity in the matter of judgment, and no special privileges in the matter of salvation, this does not mean that they have no special place in the purposes of God. In 9:4-5 the apostle says of the people of Israel: 'Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen'. Yet despite these privileges many of the people of Israel had rejected the gospel and failed to experience its blessings, and this raises the question whether God's word has failed. In response Paul provides two explanations for this state of affairs. First, in 9:1-29 he argues that 'not all who are descended from Israel are Israel' (9:6). God said to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion' (9:15), and so Paul insists, 'God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden' (9:18). Ultimately, therefore, the reason why some experience the blessings of the gospel while others do not is the effect of God's choice.

Second, in 9:30-10:21 Paul argues that the people of Israel themselves bear responsibility for their failure. They sought to establish their own righteousness and would not submit to God's righteousness (10:3). The problem was not that the gospel was remote from them; rather, it was near, and it was available to them as it was to everyone else, for as the Scripture says, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' (10:6-13). The problem was, as Isaiah said, that even though God held out his hands to Israel all day long, she remained 'a disobedient and obstinate people' (10:21).

However, this is not the end of the story, for even though Israel has rejected the gospel, God has not rejected his people. He has always maintained a remnant of faithful Israelites, as he did in the time of Elijah, and Paul himself is one of them (11:1-5). Paul notes that in the present time, when the majority of Israelites have stumbled, this has provided occasion for the gospel to be taken to the Gentiles, and many of them were responding positively. Israel's stumbling meant that salvation had come to the Gentiles. But Paul believes that there will yet be a turning on the part of Israel, and if their stumbling meant reconciliation for the world, their acceptance will mean life from the dead (11:11-15). Paul says to his audience: 'I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until

the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins" (11:25-27). What it means for 'all Israel' to be saved has been interpreted in different ways. The least problematic interpretation is that it refers to the salvation of the 'elect of Israel of all time' (see 'Additional Note: "All Israel Will Be Saved"', 448-51).

## J. The *Centrum Paulinum*

By the *centrum Paulinum* is meant the center, heart, or organizing principle of Paul's theology. Because of the occasional nature of Paul's letters, it is difficult to determine what this is.<sup>64</sup> Nearly all of Paul's letters address particular pastoral or theological problems, and what they contain is directed to those concerns. The nearest thing we have to an articulation of Paul's theology is his Letter to the Romans, though even this, it may be argued, has an occasional character. His letters, then, do not contain an articulation of what he believes to be the center, heart, or organizing principle of his theology. While the *centrum Paulinum* cannot be said to be an important theme in Romans, a discussion of the matter is included here because Romans, more than Paul's other letters, provides clues as to what it might be.

Many suggestions have been put forward regarding the *centrum Paulinum*, and a number of these are described briefly below. From Reformation times until relatively recently, Protestant interpretation of Paul was dominated by the belief that the central feature of Paul's theology is justification by faith. This view was questioned by Wrede and Deissmann, who regarded Paul's teaching on justification as a polemically conditioned and isolated phase of his thought — introduced in his conflict with Judaizers and neglected thereafter. Schweitzer, in similar fashion, said that justification by faith was just a 'subsidiary crater' within the main rim of Pauline theology. He argued that union with Christ was the central theme of Pauline thought, something he understood as a 'quasi-physical' union with Christ that occurred through baptism. Sanders argues that the main theme of Paul's theology was the saving action of God in Jesus Christ that makes it possible for people to participate in that action by their union with him.

Cullmann believed that the idea of a linear succession of saving acts of God (central to which was the Christ event) is the key to understanding Paul's thought. Stendahl, who regarded justification by faith simply as a fighting doctrine introduced by Paul in his conflict with the Judaizers, like

64. By way of comparison we may note that in the Synoptic Gospels the center, heart, and organizing principle of Jesus' theology appears to be the kingdom of God: (i) it constituted his primary message when preaching to the crowds; (ii) a great many of his parables related to the kingdom; (iii) the miracles he performed were largely signs of the kingdom; and (iv) the Sermon on the Mount may be described as ethics for the children of the kingdom.

Cullmann regarded salvation history as the underlying theme of Paul's theology. Käsemann acknowledged the importance of salvation history for Paul but insisted that justification is at the heart of the apostle's theology. He contends: 'Justification and salvation-history belong together, but everything depends on the right co-ordination. Just as the church must not take precedence over Christ, so salvation-history must not take precedence over justification. It is its sphere. But justification remains the centre, the beginning and the end of salvation-history. Otherwise the cross of Jesus would also inevitably lose its central position'.

Ridderbos argues that the unifying center of Paul's theology is the work of Christ as the center of redemptive history. Paul's theology is the exposition of the new redemptive facts of the Christ event, understood against the background of the great redemptive-historical framework of salvation history. Ladd cites Ridderbos with approval. His own contribution is to apply his understanding of eschatology to the question about the *centrum Paulinum*. He believes that the inbreaking of the new age in Christ is the central feature of Pauline theology, and it offers a solution to the tension between justification and mysticism (or the new life in Christ). Both justification and the gift of the Spirit belong to the new age, and have now become matters of present experience.

Fitzmyer argues that the key to Paul's theology should be formulated in terms of what the apostle stated over and over in various ways. He draws attention, for example, to 1 Corinthians 1:23-24: 'we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'. He says: 'This story of the cross thus puts Christ himself at the center of his soteriology (God's new mode of salvation) and all else in Paul's teaching has to be orientated to this christocentric soteriology'.

Martin holds that any model of the center of Pauline theology must: (i) respect the divine initiative in grace; (ii) speak to the cosmic and human predicament; (iii) preserve the centrality of the cross and the responsiveness of faith; (iv) lay a basis in the indicative for the imperative call to total commitment and decision, and (v), above all, take 'theo-logy' seriously as concerned with the story of God and the destiny of humankind. His own suggestion for the best 'omnibus' term to describe such a model in Pauline theology is reconciliation.

Beker argues that the triumph of God is the integrating theme of Paul's theology. He says that Paul is a theocentric theologian. While the Christ event is the turning point in time that announces the end time, all that Christ did and does is for the sake of the final triumph and glory of God. The triumph of God as the coherent center of Paul's theology, Beker says, is reflected in passages like 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 and Romans 8.

Dunn says that the 'fulcrum point' of Paul's theology is Christ. He is responsible for a realignment of Paul's heritage — God is now known

through Christ; the righteousness of God is now related to Christ; Israel is expanded to incorporate all who believe in Christ; Christ is the key to understanding Scriptures (the veil is lifted when a person turns to Christ); Christianity is Christ — he is the thread running throughout; Christ inaugurates a whole new world; faith is now faith in Christ; salvation involves growing in conformity to Christ; and the church is the body of Christ.

The various suggestions that have been made concerning what constitutes the *centrum Paulinum* (justification, union with Christ, salvation history, Christ as the center of redemptive history, eschatology, reconciliation, the triumph of God) are, every one of them, important Pauline themes. Which of them should be adopted as the *centrum Paulinum* will no doubt continue to be debated. In respect to what may be deduced from Romans itself concerning this matter, note should be taken of the overwhelmingly theocentric nature of the letter (described in the section on 'God the Father' above). The gospel Paul expounds is the gospel of God in which the righteousness of God, the grace of God, and the love of God are revealed. God's sovereign will is determinative in the matter of salvation as he exercises his divine prerogative to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy. God himself is the primary agent of salvation, and he effects it through the redemptive activity of his Son whom he put forward as the atoning sacrifice for sins. Accordingly, the focus of Paul's exposition of God's saving activity is upon the work of the Son. Perhaps it may be said, then, that, as far as Romans is concerned, the center, heart, and organizing principle of Pauline theology is the action of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ to deal with the effects of human sin, individually, communally, and cosmically. In brief, as far as Romans is concerned, the *centrum Paulinum* is the gospel of God comprehensively conceived.



# Commentary

## I. LETTER INTRODUCTION, 1:1-17

The introduction to Paul's Letter to the Romans consists of two parts. The first part is the traditional greeting from the author to the recipients. In the case of Romans it is substantially longer than the greetings in Paul's other letters. The second part is the traditional thanksgiving section in which the apostle informs his audience of his prayers for them and his longing to visit them, a visit he wants to make in order that he might have some ministry among them.

### A. Greetings, 1:1-7

*<sup>1</sup>Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — <sup>2</sup>the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup>regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup>and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup>Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. <sup>6</sup>And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>7</sup>To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:  
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The format of the opening greeting of a Greek letter (as evidenced by the many letters found among the papyri recovered in Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century) was normally quite brief: 'A to B, greeting'.<sup>1</sup>

1. Cf., e.g., *P. Lond.* 42, cited in C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London: SPCK, 1961), 27-28.

Appropriately, when writing for a largely Gentile audience, Paul adopts this Greek form for his greeting.<sup>2</sup> He employs the direct form of address (using the second person) in his greetings, which introduces a certain sense of intimacy. This is balanced, however, and especially so in Romans, by reference to his status ('a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle'), indicating that the letter is a more official and serious communication.

The greeting formulae in Paul's letters are generally enlarged and Christianized, as, for example, in 1 Thessalonians 1:1: 'Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you'. Sometimes the content of the greeting provides hints of what might be expected in the body of the letter. For example, in his greeting in 1 Corinthians 1:1-3 Paul emphasizes that he was 'called to be an apostle . . . by the will of God' and addresses his letter 'to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours'. By doing so he foreshadows the fact that he will be defending his apostleship, while reminding the Corinthian believers that they are called to be holy and that they are but a part of a wider Christian community and therefore need to follow the rules Paul lays down for all his churches (cf. 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-34).

The greeting in Romans is much fuller than either that in 1 Thessalonians or 1 Corinthians and is unique among the greetings in Paul's letters, in particular because of its length and theological density. The content of the greeting can be set out as follows:

*A. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,  
called to be an apostle  
and set apart for the gospel of God —  
the gospel he promised beforehand  
through his prophets  
in the Holy Scriptures  
regarding his Son,  
who was a descendant of David,  
as to his earthly life  
and who was appointed the Son of God in power  
through the Spirit of holiness  
by his resurrection from the dead:  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Through him we received grace and apostleship  
to call to the obedience that comes from faith  
all the Gentiles.  
for his name's sake,  
And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to  
Jesus Christ.*

2. Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 45-46.

B. *To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:*

C. *Grace and peace to you  
from God our Father  
and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

From this layout it can be seen that the greeting has the three basic elements of standard Greek epistolary greetings (A: 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ . . .'; B: 'to all in Rome who are loved by God . . .'; C: Greeting: 'grace and peace to you . . .'). The first element ('Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ . . .') is greatly expanded so that Paul can introduce himself as 'called to be an apostle' and 'set apart for the gospel of God'. This gospel God promised beforehand through his prophets and it concerns his Son. The Son is then described as a descendant of David (his human lineage) and the Son of God with power (by divine appointment). It is from the Son of God that Paul has received his call and the grace enabling him to be an apostle, in particular an apostle to the Gentiles. His Roman Gentile audience, he insists, are included among those for whom he has been appointed an apostle.

The second element of the greeting ('to all in Rome who are loved by God . . .') is brief and contains no expressions of endearment or honor often found in Greek letters (as, e.g., in Titus 1:4; Philem 1-2), nor any veiled rebuke (as in the case of 1 Cor 1:2). This can be accounted for by the fact that Paul is addressing many people whom he had not met before (cf. 1:8-13). The third element ('Grace and peace to you . . .') is quite brief, as is the case in most of Paul's letters (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Philem 3), but not all (cf. Gal 1:3-5).

The original audience of Paul's letter might have wondered why the opening greeting (prescript) was so extraordinarily long. Those who had some knowledge of epistolary conventions and rhetorical strategies would sense that Paul was going to great lengths to introduce himself so as to secure a good hearing for what he was to write in the rest of the letter.<sup>3</sup> From the contents of the prescript an astute audience would also detect hints about what Paul intended to convey to them in his letter, but they would have to listen carefully to what was being read to discover exactly what that was.<sup>4</sup>

**1:1** *Paul* was the apostle's Roman name. It was common for Jews in NT times to have a Gentile name alongside their Jewish name (in the apostle's case: Saul).<sup>5</sup> Using his Roman name probably helped to facilitate his

3. Cf. Byrne, *Romans*, 37-38.

4. Samuel Byrskog, 'Epistolography, Rhetoric and Letter Prescript: Romans 1.1-7 as a Test Case', *JSTOT* 65 (1997) 27-46, provides a helpful discussion of these matters.

5. Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 49-50, says: 'Since Paul was a Roman citizen, the matter is rather more complicated. It is very probable that he possessed the three names characteristic of a Roman citizen, a *praenomen* or personal name, a *nomen* or clan name, and a *cognomen* or family name. It is probable that one of the two names given in Acts 13.9 ['Saul, who was

travels around the empire.<sup>6</sup>

Unusually, Paul does not associate any of his colleagues with him in the authorship of this letter, even though Timothy was with him when he composed the final greetings (16:21). Dunn suggests 'that Paul wanted to present himself in his own person to these largely unknown congregations, as (the) apostle to the Gentiles (cf. 11:13), and with the subsequent exposition of the gospel understood very much as his. . . . It was on their reaction to this very personal statement that the success or failure of this letter would hang'.<sup>7</sup>

Paul further introduces himself to his audience as *a servant of Christ Jesus*,<sup>8</sup> literally 'a slave of Christ Jesus'. He introduces himself in this way in only one other letter (Phil 1:1),<sup>9</sup> but he does speak of himself as a slave of Christ in Galatians 1:10. Elsewhere he refers to believers as 'slaves of Christ' (1 Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6; Col 4:12). In the LXX the title 'a servant/slave of the Lord' is used of Joshua (Josh 24:30; Judg 2:8), Moses (2 Kgs 18:12), and Jonah (Jon 1:9), and the title 'child/slave of God' is used of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:26, LXX 3:93) and Moses (Dan 9:11). In referring to himself as a servant/slave of the Lord, Paul may have had in mind, in particular, the servant passage in Isaiah 49:1-7. In all these LXX references the expression appears to have honorific connotations: To be a servant/slave of the Lord is to have high status.<sup>10</sup> However, as Moo notes, 'the connotations of humility, devotion, and obedience are never absent from the OT phrase and are surely primary here [in 1:1] also'.<sup>11</sup>

For the first-century audience of Paul's letter the word 'slave' would have other connotations as well as connotations related to the institution of

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also called Paul'] was one of Paul's official *tria nomina*, and the other a *signum* or *super-nomen*, an unofficial, informal name, additional to the three official names, such as was common at this time in the east. "Saul" in a Latinized form could have been the apostle's *cognomen*, and "Paulus" his *signum*. But it is much more likely that it was the other way round, that "Paulus" was his *cognomen* and "Saul" in its Semitic form his *signum*. That in his work as a missionary among the Gentiles he should have preferred to use one of his Roman names is readily understandable'.

6. Cf. David J. MacLeod, 'Eternal Son, Davidic Son, Messianic Son: An Exposition of Romans 1:1-7', *BSac* 162 (2005) 77.

7. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 7.

8. Manuscript evidence at this point is fairly evenly balanced, some supporting [*doulos*] *Christou Iēsou* (followed by the NIV), others supporting [*doulos*] *Iēsou Christou* (followed by the NRSV). The former variant, followed by the NIV, treats 'Christ' as an official title ('Messiah'), whereas the latter, followed by the NRSV, treats 'Christ' as a proper name.

9. He does refer to himself as 'a slave of God' (*doulos theou*) in Tit 1:1.

10. Jewett, *Romans*, 100, draws attention to 'the local connotation of this expression [a slave of Christ Jesus], which makes perfect sense in a letter to Rome, where influential slaves in imperial service proudly bore the title "slave of Caesar". More than four thousand slaves and freedmen associated with Caesar's household, his personal staff, and the imperial bureaucracy have been identified through grave inscriptions with this kind of title'.

11. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 41.

slavery. For them, a slave was someone who belonged entirely to another and from whom absolute obedience could be expected. Paul would have been quite happy for his reference to himself as a slave of Christ Jesus to be understood in this way because he thought of himself, and in fact of all believers (1 Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6; Col 4:12), as slaves of Christ — people who belonged to Christ and owed him their full obedience (1 Cor 6:20).<sup>12</sup>

It is significant that here Paul refers to himself as a slave of ‘Christ Jesus’, not ‘Jesus Christ’. In the latter ‘Christ’ might be regarded as a proper name, but in the former it clearly functions as a description of Jesus’ status — he is the Messiah (*Christos* being the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word for Messiah).<sup>13</sup>

Paul describes himself further as one *called to be an apostle* (lit. ‘a called apostle’).<sup>14</sup> This is the normal way he introduces himself in his letters (cf. 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1). Paul’s calling as an apostle was according to the purpose of God (1 Cor 1:1) and involved being set apart for, or wholly dedicated to, the preaching of the gospel (1:1). The key text for understanding Paul’s calling is Galatians 1:15-16 (NRSV: ‘But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being’). This text reflects Paul’s conviction that he was chosen by God for the task before he was born; that his calling came to him by revelation at a time determined by God himself; that it rested entirely upon God’s grace, not upon anything deserving on Paul’s part; that it involved a direct revelation of Jesus Christ to him involving no human mediation; and that the scope of his ministry was to be primarily among Gentile peoples.<sup>15</sup> Two things were fundamental to Paul’s apostleship: he had seen the risen Lord (1 Cor 15:3-8), and he had been commissioned by him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (1:1-5; 15:15-16; Gal 1:1, 15). By introducing himself as an apostle to his Roman audience, most of whom did not know him, Paul pro-

12. Michael Joseph Brown, ‘Paul’s Use of *doulos Christou Iēsou* in Romans 1:1’, *JBL* 120 (2001) 724, 731-32, argues that Paul’s reference to himself as a ‘slave of Christ’ (*doulos Christou*) was appropriate when writing to the Roman church, for it included within its membership imperial slaves belonging to Caesar’s household (*familia Caesaris*). These people were socially mobile, sometimes rising to positions of power and authority, but were despised by the aristocrats. By describing himself as a *doulos Christou* Paul was presenting himself as one who likewise suffered contempt (in his case as an apostle to the Gentiles), and would hope thereby to secure a better hearing from those in the Roman church who were the objects of contempt. However, as Origen observed: ‘The reality of Paul’s freedom [is not] compromised by this in any way. As he himself says: *Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave of all*. . . . For he serves Christ not in the spirit of slavery but in the spirit of adoption, for Christ’s service is more noble than any freedom’ (‘Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans’ [ACCSR, 17]).

13. Cf. N. T. Wright, ‘The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections’, in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, X (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 415.

14. Cf. Harold J. Greenlee, ‘Some “Called” People’, *NotesTrans* 11 (1997) 49-51.

15. For a fuller discussion of Paul’s calling, see C. G. Kruse, ‘Call/Calling’, *DPL* 85.

vides them with a good reason to give their attention to the contents of his letter: he writes as one who has been called and commissioned by God. See 'Additional Note: Paul's Apostleship', 56-57.

Paul further describes himself as one *set apart for the gospel of God*. The word translated 'set apart' is often used to mean separating people from contact with others (as in Matt 25:32; Luke 6:22; 2 Cor 6:17; Gal 2:12), but here it means setting apart for a purpose (the proclamation of the gospel), something that was inherent in Paul's conversion/commissioning experience on the Damascus Road. Paul uses the same word in Galatians 1:15-16, where he says that he was 'set apart' from birth by God to preach Christ among the Gentiles. It is also used in Acts 13:2, where the Holy Spirit tells the prophets and teachers in Antioch to 'set apart' Paul and Barnabas for the work to which he has called them. Barrett comments: 'Paul had been a Pharisee (Phil. iii.5), supposing himself to be set apart from other men for the service of God; he now truly was what he had supposed himself to be — separated, not, however, by human exclusiveness but by God's grace and election'.<sup>16</sup>

As an apostle, Paul's primary function was to proclaim the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 1:17), one that he calls here 'the gospel of God', as he does frequently in his letters (Rom 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tim 1:11).<sup>17</sup> The essential background to the word 'gospel' is found in the LXX. Although the noun 'gospel' itself (*euangelion*) is found there only once (in 2 Sam 4:10, where it means the reward given for good news), the cognate verb (*euangelizō*) is found twenty-three times, and uniformly means to bring or proclaim good news. Particularly relevant are passages where it is used in relation to proclaiming news of God's salvation (e.g., Ps 96:2 [LXX 95:2]; Nah 1:15 [LXX 2:1]; Isa 40:9; 52:7; 61:1). *Euangelion* was also used in the emperor cult to refer to important announcements (e.g., the birth of an heir, or the emperor's accession). It may be, as some scholars have suggested, that Paul's description of the gospel as 'the gospel of God' distinguishes it implicitly from all other 'gospels', in particular those of Roman emperors.<sup>18</sup>

**1:2** Paul describes 'the gospel of God' as *the gospel he promised before-*

16. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1967), 17. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 9, however, believes that any such allusion would have been lost on the original audience.

17. Even more often Paul refers to his gospel as 'the gospel of Christ' (Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2). In 1:3-4 he will make clear that the content of the gospel concerns Christ (in this sense it may be called the 'gospel of Christ'), but it is essentially God's gospel. God the Father initiated the plan of salvation, which he accomplished through Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19).

18. Ben Witherington III, with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 31-32, notes: 'In the light of the use of this term of emperors at their births or when they accomplished something dramatic, it is also clear that Paul intends an implicit anti-imperial sort of rhetoric. The one who really offers salvation and true Good News for human beings is the God who has sent Jesus and raised him from the dead'. Cf. Wright, 'Romans', 415-16; Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 55.

hand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. In 16:26 he describes the gospel in similar terms as that 'made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God'.<sup>19</sup> In 3:21 he insists that the law and the prophets testify to the righteousness made known through the gospel. In these ways he deliberately links the gospel he proclaims with God's promises to Israel in the OT. Besides such explicit statements, Paul's frequent quotations from the OT in Romans reflect implicitly his conviction that the gospel was 'promised beforehand' (1:17; 4:3, 7, 8, 9, 16-17, 22; 9:25-26; 10:6-8, 11, 13; 11:26-27; 15:9-12), as do quotations in his other letters (1 Cor 2:9; 15:27, 54-55; 2 Cor 6:2, 16-18; Gal 3:6, 8, 11, 13, 16; 4:27-28; Eph 4:7-8). An examination of all these references indicates that the OT Scriptures in which Paul found the gospel foreshadowed are Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, and Habakkuk. For Paul, these books constitute (the law) and the prophets which proclaimed beforehand 'the gospel of God'.<sup>20</sup>

Paul frequently refers to the writings of the OT as 'the Scripture(s)' (4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Cor 15:3, 4; Gal 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 3:16), but only here as 'the Holy Scriptures'. This is, perhaps, to highlight their importance, and thereby the importance of the gospel promised beforehand in them, so that his audience will give their attention to what he is to write about it. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 Paul states explicitly that the core elements of the gospel are in accordance with the Scriptures: 'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures'.

The way Paul refers to the gospel here, as something proclaimed beforehand, suggests that he has in mind not simply a message of good news, but the events which constitute the basis of that good news, that is, what God achieved through Christ — the manifestation of the righteousness of God. Moo comments appropriately, therefore, when he says that the gospel 'becomes functionally equivalent to "Christ" or God's intervention in Christ'.<sup>21</sup>

**1:3-4** Here, citing, it seems, an early Christian creed, Paul describes the content of 'the gospel of God' mentioned in 1:2. Slightly rearranging the text, the content of the gospel may be set out as that:

19. Cf. Tit 1:2: 'the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time'.

20. Byrne, *Romans*, 43, says of the verb 'promised beforehand' (*proepēngēilato*) that, while it 'usually has the sense of "promise beforehand" (e.g., BAGD 705), the more basic sense of "announce beforehand" (cf. LSJ 1478) conveys more effectively Paul's sense of scripture as primarily addressed to the present (eschatological) age (cf. 15:4; 1 Cor 9:10). The prophets (writing) in the "holy scriptures" did not simply "promise" good news at a future date but actually made an anticipatory proclamation of the gospel, which is now being realized (cf. Gal 3:8) and "heard" when they are read'.

21. Moo, *Romans*, 43.

regarding his Son,  
 who was a descendant of David,  
 as to his earthly life  
 who was appointed the Son of God in power  
 through the Spirit of holiness  
 by his resurrection from the dead:  
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

Several arguments have been put forward to support the view that these verses contain material from an early creed. Some of these are more cogent than others, and some are based upon particular exegeses of these verses that are still subject to debate. However, their cumulative effect is impressive and supports the view that Paul is incorporating credal material in 1:3-4 (see 'Additional Note: Paul's Use of Credal Material in 1:3-4', 47-49).

Turning to the actual content of 1:3-4, we notice first and foremost that Paul points out that the gospel is 'regarding his Son' (cf. 1:9). Paul was very conscious that God's own Son was at the heart of the gospel message. Accordingly, he says elsewhere that God sent *his Son* to redeem those under the law (Gal 4:5); that he did not spare *his own Son*, but gave him up for us all (8:32); and that he reconciled humanity to himself through *his Son* (5:10; cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21). 'His Son' in this context denotes a unique relationship. It is true that in the OT various figures are spoken of as God's sons, for example, Israel's king (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7), Israel the nation (Exod 4:22-23; Jer 31:9), and angels (Gen 6:2; Job 1:6; 38:7; Dan 3:25), but here in 1:3-4 it becomes clear that 'his Son' means much more than these.

Paul employs two participial clauses to describe God's Son, the one describing what he is 'as to his earthly life' (lit. 'according to the flesh') and the other what he is 'through the Spirit of holiness' (lit. 'according to the Spirit of holiness'). Before we unpack these participial clauses, we should make a general comment on the distinction Paul makes about what God's Son is according to the flesh and according to the Spirit of holiness. Some have taken this to distinguish the human and divine natures of Christ, that is, his humanity and his deity, but this is unlikely. It probably refers to how Christ is to be understood in the period of his incarnation ('a descendant of David'), and how he is to be understood following his resurrection ('the Son of God in power').<sup>22</sup>

22. Cf. MacLeod, 'Eternal Son, Davidic Son, Messianic Son', 86. Byrne, *Romans*, 39, says: "The credal formula which Paul cites to indicate this envisages what might be called the "messianic career" of Jesus in two stages. 1. In terms of his human origins ("according to the flesh"), Jesus fulfils a key requirement for messianic "candidacy" in the understanding of early Christianity and some Jewish circles: birth from the royal house of David. 2. As raised from the dead and entered thereby into the new age marked by the Spirit ("according to the Spirit of holiness"). Cf. Witherington, *Romans*, 32: 'v. 3 does not focus on Jesus' human nature per se, but rather on his human lineage through David, and v. 4 is not about what Christ is according to his divine nature but rather about what happened to Jesus at the

In the first of the two participial clauses Paul calls God's Son the one 'who as to his earthly life [lit. 'according to the flesh']<sup>23</sup> was a descendant of David'. By describing him in this way Paul affirms his Jewish lineage, stretching back to King David. In the Gospel accounts Jesus' Davidic lineage is traced through Joseph (cf. Matt 1:16, 20; Luke 1:27; 2:4; 3:23), even though the Gospels affirm that Joseph was not his natural father (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:34). Cranfield suggests that 'the implication of the narratives is that Jesus' Davidic descent rests on Joseph's having accepted Him as his son and thereby legitimized Him'.<sup>24</sup>

There is only one other place in the Pauline corpus where Jesus is described as 'a descendant of David' (2 Tim. 2:8), though this is implied in 15:12 (where he is described as 'the Root of Jesse' — David's father). By referring to him as 'a descendant of David' Paul alludes to promises of a Davidic Messiah found in the OT, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Qumran writings (2 Sam 7:12-13; Pss 89:3-4, 20-29; 132:11-12; Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8; 6:12-13; the *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18; 4 Ezra 12:31-32; *T. Jud.* 24:1-6; 1QM 11:1-18; 4QFlor 1:10-14), and echoes early Christian belief that Jesus was the long-awaited Davidic Messiah (Matt 1:1, 17; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42; Mark 10:47-48; 11:10; 12:35-37; Luke 1:32, 69; 3:31; 18:38-39; 20:41-42, 44; John 7:42; Acts 13:34; 15:16; Rev 5:5; 22:16).<sup>25</sup>

In the second participial clause the apostle describes Jesus as the one 'who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord'. A number of matters in this statement call for special comment. First, the expression 'the Spirit of holiness' is found only here in the NT.<sup>26</sup> It can be interpreted in two

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resurrection, when God's Spirit raised him from the dead and designated or marked him out as Son of God in power'.

23. Paul uses the expression 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka*) in two ways in his letters: (a) negatively, meaning 'according to the sinful human nature' (8:4-5, 12-13; 2 Cor 1:17; 5:16; 10:2; 11:18); and (b) neutrally, meaning 'in relation to human nature' or 'according to (mere) human standards' (4:1; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 1:26; 10:18; 2 Cor 10:3; Gal 4:23, 29; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22). The use of *kata sarka* here in 1:3 is clearly of the second neutral type, indicating that, as far as his human nature was concerned, God's Son was of the lineage of King David.

24. Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 59.

25. Byrne, *Romans*, 44, comments: 'The complexity of Jewish messianic belief at the time of Jesus has been increasingly recognized. However, there were undoubtedly circles which interpreted the biblical oracles . . . as foretelling the rise of an anointed prince of David's line who would play a key role in bringing about the restoration of Israel's fortunes in both a political and religious sense. Qumran messianism certainly included expectation of such a Davidic prince, along with priestly and prophetic figures (1QS<sub>a</sub> 2:14; CD 7:18-20; 4QpGen<sup>a</sup> 5:1-4; 4QFlor 1:11-13; 4QpIsa<sup>a</sup> frags. 8-10, col. 3:10-18; 4QTest 9-13; cf. also Pss. Sol. 17:21-46; 18:5-9). It is not surprising, then, that descent from David should feature in an early Christian credal formula asserting the messianic status of Jesus (cf. esp. 2 Tim 2:8)'.

26. Byrne, *Romans*, 45, holds that *pneuma hagiōsynēs*, 'featuring the Semitic adjectival genitive, has a biblical anticipation in the Hebrew of Ps 51:11 (MT 51:13) and Isa 63:10-11 and parallels in Qumran literature (1QS 4:21; 8:16; 9:3; 1QH 7:6-7; 9:32). The Greek phrase

main ways: (a) as the 'Spirit of holiness'. Here Spirit has a capital 'S', indicating it is a reference to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. In this case what Jesus is in respect of his human nature, a descendant of David, is contrasted with what he is in respect of the Holy Spirit, declared to be the Son of God. This is supported by the fact that Paul frequently contrasts what is 'according to the flesh' with what is 'according to the Spirit', where 'Spirit' refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:4, 5, 6, 9, 13; Gal 3:3; 4:29; 5:16, 17; 6:8; Phil 3:3; 1 Tim 3:16), the third person of the Trinity. In this case 'the Spirit of holiness' may be either equivalent to 'the Holy Spirit', or mean Spirit of sanctification, the Spirit who sanctifies.<sup>27</sup>

(b) The NRSV construes it as 'the spirit of holiness'. Here 'spirit' is spelled with a lower-case 's', which would allow 'the spirit of holiness' to be interpreted as the human spirit of Jesus, which is holy.<sup>28</sup> Such an interpretation receives some support from the fact that Paul does in a few places use 'flesh' and 'spirit' to refer to the physical body and the spirit of human beings respectively (1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 7:1; Col 2:5). Militating against this interpretation is the fact that elsewhere in Paul's writings the word 'spirit', when linked with the expression 'according to' as it is here, always refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. 8:4, 5; Gal 4:29).

If we take 'the Spirit of holiness' as a reference to the Holy Spirit, there is a second matter that demands attention. The NIV translation describes Jesus Christ as the one 'appointed Son of God'; however, many other English translations have, 'declared to be the Son of God'. These translations lessen the possibility of Paul's statement being interpreted in an adoptionist manner.<sup>29</sup> However, this runs counter to the use of the same verb elsewhere in the NT, where it never means 'to declare', but rather 'to

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occurs in the *Testament of Levi*: ". . . and he (the eschatological Priest) will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life. The spirit of holiness shall be upon them. And Beliar shall be bound by him, and he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits" (18:11-12). This is a significant parallel to the Christological statement in Rom 1:4 because it links possession or imparting of the spirit with authority and power to overcome forces hostile to God (cf. 1 Cor 15:25-28). In Rom 1:4 the reference is almost certainly to the Spirit of God. The risen Lord's imparting of the Spirit (1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:18; cf. John 20:19-23) indicates his own messianic status and the dawn of the new age. "Before" the resurrection, Jesus' messianic qualifications could only be based upon his "fleshly" descent from David; postresurrection, they are palpable in the shape of the Spirit'.

27. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 15, comments: 'The term is clearly Semitic in character, modeled on the Hebraic form (not the LXX) of Ps 51:11 and Isa 63:10-11. . . . It would almost certainly be understood by Paul and the first Christians as denoting the Holy Spirit, the Spirit which is characterized by holiness, partaker of God's holiness'.

28. So, e.g., Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 236.

29. However, adoptionist interpretations are ruled out by the fact that the one who is appointed Son of God with power is already described as 'his Son'. Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT 6; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 38-39, who says: 'The placement of the words *tou huiou autou* ['of his Son'] before the two participles suggests that the one who became the seed of David and was appointed God's Son in power at the resurrection was already the Son before these'.

determine', 'to decree', or 'to appoint' (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb 4:7).<sup>30</sup> It is preferable then to stay with the translation 'appointed Son of God'.<sup>31</sup> In regard to the significance of this statement Moo's comment is apposite: 'In this passage, we must remember that the Son is the subject of the entire statement in vv. 3-4: It is the *Son* who is "appointed" Son. The tautologous nature of this statement reveals that being appointed Son has to do not with a change in essence — as if a person or human messiah becomes Son of God for the first time — but with a change in status or function'.<sup>32</sup>

The third matter to be explained is what the apostle means when describing Jesus Christ as 'appointed Son of God in power', implying that he is the one with power. Other translations render the text 'declared with power to be the Son of God', in which case 'with power' is linked with the participle 'declared/appointed', implying that the declaration that Jesus is the Son of God was made with power. Grammatically either translation is possible. However, Paul's statement in Philippians 2:6-11 that, following Jesus' willingness to humble himself even to death on a cross, God exalted him to the place of supreme authority, suggests that here in 1:4 it is better to think of Jesus being appointed to be the Son of God 'with power' rather than of being 'declared powerfully' to be the Son of God.<sup>33</sup> Wright com-

30. Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 61-62, observes: 'No clear example, either earlier than, or contemporary with, the NT, of its use in the sense "declare" or "show to be" has been adduced. This being so, it is probably right to conclude that the support for this interpretation afforded by various Greek Fathers is due to a doctrinal consideration rather than to their superior knowledge of Greek usage'.

31. But see Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 45, who says: 'K. L. Schmidt argues that there is no great urgency to decide between "declaration or decree" and "appointment and institution" because "a divine declaration is the same as a divine appointment: God's *verbum* is *efficax*. It would seem that *declared* is the better way to understand the expression, but that "appointed" is possible in a sense which safeguards the truth that Jesus was Son of God before as well as after the resurrection'. Chip Anderson, 'Romans 1:1-5 and the Occasion of the Letter: The Solution to the Two-Congregation Problem in Rome', *TrinJ* 14 n.s. (1993) 32, commenting on Paul's statement that Christ is 'appointed' Son of God, cites L. C. Allen, who argues: 'The *huiou theou* ("Son of God") in v. 4 is most likely derived from Ps 2:7, "You are my Son", the coronation "decree" of Yahweh. Thus Jesus was "decreed", in the plan and promises of God, to be his Son. This understanding of the declaration is confirmed by the fact that such terminology was already used in early Christian preaching concerning Jesus. In Acts 10:42 Peter declares that Jesus was *ho hōrismenos hypo tou theou* ("the one appointed by God") as Judge. And again, in Acts 17:31, Paul himself proclaims that God had fixed a day to judge the world *en andri hō hōrisen* ("through a man whom he appointed"; cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 11:29; 17:26). Thus it seems likely that the background to Paul's statement is found in the promise announced in 2 Sam 7:5-16, where God foretold a future Davidic king, and in Psalm 2, where God decrees that an anointed Davidic king shall be called his "Son"'.  
32. Moo, *Romans*, 48.

33. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 14, comments: "'In power" was presumably important to Paul. It indicated that Jesus' divine sonship (v 3) had been "upgraded" or "enhanced" by the resurrection, so that he shared more fully in the very power of God, not simply in status

bines both these alternatives when he says: 'Jesus was declared to be son of God "in power". This phrase seems to refer *both* to the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead (see 1 Cor 6:14; 15:24, 43; 2 Cor 13:4; Eph 1:19-20; Phil 2:10) *and* that thereby declared his identity as Messiah, and to the powerful nature of his sonship, through which he confronts all the powers of the world, up to and including death itself, with the news of a different and more effective type of power altogether' (*italics added*).<sup>34</sup>

Fourth, we need to ask in what sense it was 'by his resurrection from the dead' that Jesus Christ was appointed Son of God in power. This implies that Jesus, through the Spirit, was appointed to be the Son of God by means of his resurrection from the dead. This is possible (even though in Paul's writings the Holy Spirit is never the *agent* who raises Jesus from the dead) because in 8:11 Paul does speak of the Spirit as the *means* by which God raised Jesus from the dead. In this case we could interpret 1:4 to mean that through the Spirit, by the resurrection, God appointed Jesus to be the Son of God with power. The alternative translation is 'from the time of the resurrection'. In this case it is not 'by' the resurrection that Jesus is appointed to be the Son of God with power, but rather 'from the time of' the resurrection he has been appointed to be the Son of God with power. The difference between these two interpretations is in the end not great. If it was from the time of the resurrection that Jesus was appointed to be the Son of God in power, then it means that the resurrection was determinative for this appointment.<sup>35</sup>

Fifth, what is the significance here of the title 'Son of God'? This title is now known to have had messianic connotations in first-century Judaism. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 4QFlor 1:10-14 (dating from the first century B.C.), cites God's promise to David to establish the throne of his son (2 Samuel 7:12-13) and interprets it as a promise for the end time when the Branch of David will arise to save Israel.<sup>36</sup> At a minimum, therefore, being declared to be the Son of God means being declared to be the Messiah. This is remi-

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at God's right hand . . . but in "executive authority", able to act on and through people in the way Paul implies elsewhere (e.g., 8:10; 1 Cor 15:45; Gal 2:20; Col 2:6-7). Interestingly, both [Pseudo-]Constantius and Augustine relate 'in power' to Christ being born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary (ACCSR, 10).

34. Wright, 'Romans', 418-19.

35. Wright, 'Romans', 419, says: 'The resurrection told Paul not only who Jesus was (the Messiah), but also what time it was (the start of the "age to come")'.

36. The text of 4QFlorilegium may be found in G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1998), 493-96. Another fragment from Qumran, 4Q246, known as the 'Son of God fragment', refers to 'the son of God' and 'the son of the Most high', and speaks of an eternal kingdom, all of which is remarkably paralleled by what is found in Luke 1:32-35 ('he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High'; 'be called the Son of God'; 'he will reign . . . his kingdom will never end'). This has led C. A. Evans, 'Son of God Text (4Q246)', *DNTB* 1134-37, to recognize messianic overtones in this fragment, but debate continues over the intended identity of 'the son of God' in the fragment (cf. discussion in Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 576-77).

niscent of the early Christian preaching recorded in Acts 2:32-36 in which the resurrection was proclaimed as God's vindication of the crucified Jesus as the true Messiah (cf. Acts 2:36: 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah').

Finally, God's Son, the message about whom constitutes the gospel, is now explicitly identified as 'Jesus Christ our Lord'. Expressions like this which combine the name Jesus and/or Christ with 'Lord' (e.g., 'the Lord Jesus Christ', 'Jesus our Lord', 'our Lord Jesus Christ', 'Christ Jesus our Lord', 'the Lord Jesus', 'our Lord Christ', 'our Lord Jesus') are Paul's favorite designations for Jesus in Romans (cf. 1:4, 7; 4:24; 5:1, 11, 21; 6:23; 7:25; 8:39; 13:14; 14:14; 15:6, 30; 16:18, 20). By referring to the Lord as 'Jesus Christ' Paul is implying that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. By speaking of Jesus as *Lord*, Paul is not only acknowledging him as his master (cf. 1:1) but also underscoring his deity, for Paul unhesitatingly cites passages in the OT where the title 'Lord' refers to Yahweh and applies them to Jesus (10:13/Joel 2:32; 14:11/Isa 45:23).

The description of Jesus Christ our Lord (*kyrios*) as the one declared to be the Son of God with power, when heard by the believers in Rome, the imperial capital, would have very significant connotations. Caesar claimed to be the *kyrios* with political power, and those who acknowledged Jesus as *kyrios* were acknowledging a greater power. He was not only the Lord of individual believers, but also the one who would subdue all political as well as spiritual powers beneath his feet (cf. Phil 2:9-11: those 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth'), and indeed the one who would renew the whole created order (8:19-21).<sup>37</sup>

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#### ADDITIONAL NOTE:

#### PAUL'S USE OF CREDAL MATERIAL IN 1:3-4

The arguments in support of the view that Paul employs credal material in 1:3-4 have been listed conveniently by Poythress,<sup>38</sup> and can be described as follows: First, the parallelism of the two well-balanced participial phrases ('who . . . was a descendant of David' and 'who . . . was appointed the Son of God') is typical of credal formulae. Similar parallelism is found in two other places in the Pauline corpus:

He appeared in the flesh,  
 was vindicated by the Spirit,  
 was seen by angels,  
 was preached among the nations,

37. Cf. N. T. Wright, 'A Fresh Perspective on Paul?' *BJRL* 83 (2001) 35-36.

38. Vern S. Poythress, 'Is Romans 1<sup>3-4</sup> a Pauline Confession after All?' *ExpTim* 87 (1975-76) 180.