

REVIEW ESSAY

PAUL THE THEOLOGIAN

RICHARD B. GAFFIN, JR.

A combined review of these books¹ may seem ill-advised. Wright's much briefer effort is "an interim report" (apparently toward a large-scale work underway on Paul's theology, 7). Based on special lectures given at various locations in recent years, he writes in a more popular, less technical vein (there are few footnotes and, somewhat problematically for his readers, no indices); his aim is to orient a wider audience to the study of Paul today. Dunn's work, in contrast, is massive, by any standard—in its design, execution, and apparatus (replete with lengthy footnotes, voluminous bibliographies and multiple indexes). In his own view, it is "a full restatement of Paul's theology"; he sees it as the first such effort since Herman Ridderbos's *Paul* (the Dutch original) appeared in 1966, "a fresh attempt . . . made all the more necessary" by the epochal influence of E. P. Sanders and the attendant emergence of the so-called new perspective on Paul (5). Even with these (and other) differences between the two volumes, however, there is value in considering them together. Certain common viewpoints and emphases come to light that are worth highlighting and assessing. That sort of comparison follows a somewhat selective survey, with some interaction, of each book.

Wright begins with a chapter ("Puzzling Over Paul") profiling major trends in the scholarly study of Paul in this century. He confines his attention to the mainstream of the historical-critical tradition (though without identifying it as such); Schweitzer, Bultmann, Davies, Käsemann and Sanders serve as key witnesses. The yield of this exposé for the study of Paul today lies in four areas (20-23): history (Paul is "a very Jewish thinker," not "a thoroughgoing Hellenist"); theology ("an overarching Pauline theology" is a legitimate quest); exegesis (important but not as a substitute for or at the expense of "theological readings"); application ("how we use Paul today").

Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., is professor of biblical and systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary.

¹ N. T. Wright: *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1997. 192 pp. \$14.00, paper; James D. G. Dunn: *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cambridge: T. & T. Clark, 1998. xxxvi + 808 pp. \$45.00; £29.95.

Chapter Two (“Saul the Persecutor, Paul the Convert”) sets the direction, at least in large measure, for the rest of the book. Recognizing that Paul’s conversion is significant, Wright is nonetheless intent on maximizing continuity with his pre-Christian, specifically, in Wright’s view, his Shammaite Pharisaic past. This emphasis is deemed particularly necessary because of what he perceives to be persistent misunderstanding of Paul throughout church history, especially beginning with the Reformation. The book, it appears, is written primarily to correct this misunderstanding.

Saul and Paul share an agenda shaped by “three cardinal points”: monotheism, election and eschatology (31). The difference/discontinuity involved may be expressed globally by saying that Saul’s violent exclusivism—Israel in opposition to the Gentiles and less faithful Jews, became Paul’s nonviolent universalism—Israel together with the Gentiles (cf. 92-94). The balance of the book is largely taken up with fleshing out this change. Toward the close, he summarizes: “So far in this book I have attempted to set out a view of Paul, his work and his thought in terms of the way in which the Jewish agenda and theology of Saul of Tarsus was radically rethought, but not essentially abandoned, in the Christian agenda and theology of Paul the apostle” (135).

Several caveats to this overall construction are in order. 1) I am not as confident as Wright seems to be that Saul can be identified as a Shammaite Pharisee, that is, committed to a particular agenda of Torah-rigorism and violent, eschatologically oriented political activism, which then, though modified, became a decisive determinant for Paul’s theology. My own reading in this area is hardly extensive but I see little reason on this point (whether Paul was a Shammaite or Hillelite) for questioning the judgment of Sanders, for one: “I do not believe we have any information that would enable us to deal with such a question.”² Wright’s Paul, then, may well contain an element, potentially significant, of his own construction.

2) Wright’s assessment of the Reformation tradition’s understanding of Paul will come up again below. Here we may note that, particularly over against that tradition, he asserts that the pre-Christian Saul “was not interested in a timeless system of salvation, . . . in an abstract, timeless, ahistorical system of salvation” (32; cf. 118). That continues to be true as well for Paul (60), especially in his teaching on justification (118, 129, 131). I myself have used such language in the classroom over the years and occasionally in writing to signal the advance brought by Geerhardus Vos and Ridderbos, among others, in alerting us to the controlling salvation-historical context of all biblical revelation, and to remind that the truth of Christianity, especially of its message of salvation, is not in tension with history, nor somehow to be secured above or beyond history.

But speaking this way without adequate qualification, which Wright does not provide, is subject to misunderstanding because, well, abstract! To

² E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977), 138, n. 61.

charge globally, for instance, that classical Protestant theology is “ahistorical” in its formulations is unfair because overstated (Vos himself notes, for instance, that in its doctrine of the covenants on its historical side Reformed dogmatics is a precursor of what we now call biblical theology³). Again, to assert flatly that the Bible is not interested in “an abstract or timeless system” (e.g., 118) too easily leaves the impression, particularly within current theological discourse, that all truth, as historically qualified, is no more than relative and socially constructed, and so lacks enduring validity. This is not to suggest that Wright denies that Paul’s teaching has such validity, as chapter nine (“Paul’s Gospel Then and Now”) plainly shows (though not unproblematically, as we will note below). At any rate, however, we should not hesitate to say that, properly understood, Paul teaches “a system of salvation” and that it is “timeless,” that is, valid until Jesus returns.

3) In connection with distancing Saul from the notion of a “timeless,” “ahistorical” salvation, Wright maintains that Jews like him “were not even primarily interested in, as we say today, ‘going to heaven when they died.’” Rather, their dominating interest, “very different from the normal Western view of ‘heaven,’” was “to share in the life of the promised renewed Israel and renewed world” (32-33). Again, they “were not primarily interested in the state of their souls after death; . . .” To be sure, to this he immediately adds, “that was no doubt important, but no doubt God would have the matter in hand” (118). But, he never explains, here or elsewhere as far as I can see, *why* it was important or *how* God had matters in hand.

I defer passing judgment on this assessment of the (this-worldly, politically oriented) eschatological outlook of the Shammaite Saul. But what is troubling is that here Wright finds another point of continuity with Paul. Let me be clear about the problem. I am certainly not questioning either that for Paul (along with Jesus and the other NT writers) the believer’s ultimate hope is bodily resurrection, not a disembodied immortality of the soul, or that the context for this resurrection existence will be the present creation renewed and consummated as the new creation; Rom 8:18-25, for one, points to that. Wright’s stress on these matters is salutary. Also, there can be little question that evangelical Protestantism, past and present, has often been unduly speculative and romanticizing in picturing the heaven believers enter at death (although evangelicalism is hardly alone in this respect but has plenty of company in other Christian traditions). Further, I recognize that in the statements just cited, Wright does not, and perhaps is careful not to, set heaven and earth/this world in opposition, or polarize concern for the soul at death and hope for bodily resurrection at the end of history.

³ Ed. R. B. Gaffin, Jr., *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 232.

What remains disquieting, nonetheless, is that Wright's Paul seems downright *disinterested* in heaven; the place of heaven in his theology is at best unclear. A striking instance, as the book unfolds, is how Phil 3:20-21 is addressed (125). Wright aptly notes, in terms of verses 20b-21, the new allegiance of the church at Philippi, no longer to Caesar but to Christ as Lord, while they await his coming, as Savior, to transform their bodily existence. But surely strange in this regard is his total silence about verse 20a; there Paul's pointed juxtaposition to his readers' allegiance as privileged citizens of an imperial colony is that "our citizenship is in *heaven*."

Moreover, so far as I can discover, elsewhere there is no recognition of the vertical component in Paul's eschatological outlook on the believer's present existence, brought about by Christ's ascension, the vertical outlook reflected, for instance, in the "in the heavenlies" passages in Ephesians (1:3; 1:20; 2:6). Nor is any account taken of Paul's preference, strongly asserted ("better by far"), to depart the body in death to be with Christ (Phil 1:23), or of the similar sentiment, more generally expressed, in 2 Cor 5:6, 8. Being with Christ in heaven, apart from the body and earthly life, following death is not Paul's ultimate hope, but it is surely his penultimate hope; as such, it is no less vital a concern for the believer than resurrection and integral to Paul's eschatological vision. Any presentation of his theology, no matter how summary, ought to take note of this (redemptive-historically determined) earth/heaven, body/soul "dualism," or at least not take a direction, as it seems to me Wright does, that depreciates it.

Chapter Three ("Herald of the King") focuses on Paul's gospel and in many respects is the center of the book. Again, apparently, with his perceived misunderstanding by the Reformation tradition and modern evangelicalism primarily in view, Wright wants to make clear what Paul's gospel is not. "It is not, then, a system of how people get saved" (45). "My proposal has been that 'the gospel' is not, for Paul, a message about 'how one gets saved,' in an individual and ahistorical sense" (60). It is not "something that in older theology would be called an *ordo salutis*, an order of salvation" (40-41).

What, then, is the gospel? In a word, that Jesus is Lord, the announcement of Christ's universal lordship. This gospel proclamation, in summary, has four basic components (60): the death of Jesus, his resurrection, the crucified and risen Jesus as Israel's Messiah/king, Jesus as Lord of the entire world.

Wright's view of the death of Jesus and what it effects will concern us below. Here I note what strikes me as a certain vagueness in how this gospel proclamation "works," in how the declaration that Jesus is Lord becomes effective in hearers. Perhaps most forthcoming, toward the close of the chapter he writes: "Paul discovered, at the heart of his missionary practice, that when he announced the lordship of Jesus Christ, the sovereignty of King Jesus, the very announcement was the means by which the living God reached out with love and changed the hearts and lives of men and women,

forming them into a community of love across traditional barriers, liberating them from paganism which had held them captive, enabling them to become, for the first time, the truly human beings they were meant to be" (61). This is an admirable statement in many respects of the change effected by the power of the gospel. But it also begs certain issues. In particular, nothing is said here, or elsewhere in the chapter apparently, about faith and its connection to the gospel, more pointedly, about how faith relates to Jesus as *Savior*.

Earlier in the chapter, he writes: "We shall come to 'faith' in due course" (45). Apparently he has in mind primarily his subsequent discussion of justification (Chapter Seven). There he writes, "As I said earlier, Paul's conception of how people are drawn into salvation starts with preaching of the gospel, continues with the work of the Spirit in and through that preaching, and the effect of the Spirit's work on the hearts of the hearers, and concludes with the coming to birth of faith, and entry into the family through baptism" (125; cf. 116-17). Articulated here, his earlier stricture noted above notwithstanding, is something approximating an *ordo salutis*, in which faith has an apparently key role. Although it could be stated more clearly, we are probably to infer that faith is engendered by the Spirit; later on he says, "it is the God-given badge of membership, neither more nor less" (160). But how faith functions in relation to Christ, particularly for entry into membership in his body is not made clear. Specifically, lacking, or at least muted, is the fiducial aspect of saving faith ("... accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone . . .," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 14:2; e.g., Acts 16:31; Gal 2:20). Rather, the accent falls on faith, understood as (lived-out) confession of Jesus as Lord, as the badge of already being a member (132, 160), and on faith as "faithfulness" (e.g., 160).

A concern of Wright in this regard, surely commendable, is to head off a moralistic view of faith as a "work" (125, 132, 160, although his comment that the role of faith "has long been problematic within post-Reformation dogmatics," 125, is surely off the mark, at least for classical Reformed theology with its doctrine of regeneration). Nonetheless, the ambiguities already noted remain. Put in the terms of an ongoing debate within evangelicalism, Wright is emphatic that Jesus is Lord, but much less clear about how he is Savior. His presentation of Paul's gospel is at least open to being construed as follows: it's not that Jesus, because he's my Savior, is my Lord; rather, as he's my Lord, he's my Savior—in the sense that my salvation consists in my continuing allegiance to Jesus as Lord. The danger that this in its own way opens the door to moralism is hardly imaginary.

I take it that a large concern in this chapter (and elsewhere throughout the book) is to show that Paul's interest is in the history of salvation, not the order of salvation—to put it in terms of the distinction explicit and controlling, for instance, in Ridderbos's book on Paul (the adjectival pair, "heilshistorisch"—"heilsordelijk" in the Dutch original makes the distinction even more pointed). This distinction provides an important perspective, one that has surely proven fruitful in interpreting Paul (and other New

Testament writers). It also serves to correct an undeniable tendency within the Reformation tradition to be excessively preoccupied with questions of *ordo salutis* and so inadequately appreciate or miss entirely Paul's overarching redemptive-historical orientation.

Considerable confusion results, however, when redressing imbalance becomes an exercise in polarizing legitimate concerns, as happens in Wright (and at points, too, in Ridderbos). Issues in the application of salvation to the individual may not be Paul's primary concern, but they are a concern and a crucial one at that. Assuredly, the heart of Paul's gospel are the *magnalia Dei* of the once-for-all accomplishment of salvation (*historia salutis*), centered in Christ's death and resurrection; these are "of first importance" (1 Cor 15:3). But the ongoing application of salvation ("how one gets saved") is also integral to the gospel; it, too, is "good news" in the ears of sinners. The question of the Philippian jailer is, after all, a pointedly *ordo salutis* question, and Paul has a ready (gospel) answer (Acts 16:30-31, which, by the way, includes more than the declaration that Jesus is Lord; see v. 32).

Chapter Four ("Paul and Jesus") deals with how Saul's "creational monotheism" became Paul's "christological monotheism."⁴ Apart from questioning the stress here on continuity between Jewish and Christian monotheism, to be taken up more specifically below, all told this is a helpful and lucid demonstration of Paul's triune view of God. Chapter Five ("Good News for the Pagans"), then, describes how Paul engaged and confronted Gentile Hellenistic culture with this monotheistic gospel. Particularly helpful is Wright's pointing up how Paul unmasked various pagan idolatries as parodies of reality and challenged the dominant philosophical options of his day (Skeptic, Stoic, Epicurean, 85-92).

Chapter Six ("Good News for Israel") links closely with the following chapter ("Justification and the Church"). Since the doctrine of justification will occupy us below, some partial comments may suffice here. The former chapter centers around the much debated question of what Paul means by "the righteousness of God" in Rom 1:17 and related passages. Primarily over against the Reformation view of a status or forensic gift, Wright argues that, while "righteousness" is a law court term, the phrase in question is "God's righteousness," understood, in the light of OT usage, as a divine quality and activity. It refers to his "covenant faithfulness" (e.g., 99, 101) and is tantamount to his love (110-11). While a subjective genitive sense is probably correct, an objective or origin sense, favored by the Reformers, is also in view (as can be argued successfully, I believe, at least for Rom 1:17). Wright, however, dismisses that sense as "mak[ing] no sense at all" (99).

On 2 Cor 5:21, consciously distancing himself from its widespread understanding, especially since the Reformation and held in some form by many

⁴ These categories are employed by Wright elsewhere; see his *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 113-19, 135-36.

commentators, he adopts the rather idiosyncratic view, argued more extensively elsewhere,⁵ that here "the righteousness of God" does not have in view Christ and his work but is rather a description of Paul and the other apostles in their ministry of reconciliation as "*an incarnation of the covenant faithfulness of God . . . the living embodiment of the message they proclaim*" (104-5).⁶ The classic Protestant view that imputed righteousness is in view is dismissed as foreign to the immediate and wider context (a reading of Calvin [*Institutes*, 3:11:4, toward the end], for one, will show the contrary to be true).

Paul's teaching on justification, for Wright, turns on a categorical distinction. Once again countering the Reformation understanding of Paul, justification is not the gospel. It is not the content of the gospel, not even a component part, but rather, a consequence of the gospel. For Paul, in continuity with contemporary Judaism, "Justification . . . is not a matter of *how someone enters the community of the true people of God, but how you tell who belongs to that community*. . . . In Sander's terms, it was not so much about 'getting in,' or indeed about 'staying in,' as about 'how you could tell who was in.' In standard Christian theological language, it wasn't so much about soteriology as about ecclesiology; not so much about salvation as about the church" (119). "Let us be quite clear. 'The gospel' is the announcement of Jesus' lordship, which works with power to bring people into the family of Abraham, now redefined around Jesus Christ and characterized solely by faith in him. 'Justification' is the doctrine which insists that all those who have this faith belong as full members of this family, on this basis and no other" (133). "For Paul, 'the gospel' creates the church; 'justification' defines it" (151; cf. the rest of the paragraph).

At issue here are not the ecclesiological implications, undeniable and crucially important, of Paul's teaching on justification, in particular the ethnic, Jew-Gentile universalism of the church, which post-Sanders interpretation of Paul constantly highlights. Where Wright's overall construction is problematic, however, is in making these implications the heart or main point of Paul's doctrine, denying or at least diminishing, at the same time, its soteriological significance. That, coupled with a certain vagueness, already noted, about the gospel, leaves me uneasy about what Wright is really saying on these basics of Paul's soteriology.

That dis-ease is only compounded later when, in chapter Nine, devoted to some of the implications of Paul's gospel for the church today, emphasis is put on the doctrine of justification as "the great *ecumenical doctrine*" (158). We are told that one lesson today of Galatians 2, where Jewish and Gentile Christians learn that they may eat together, is that Roman Catholics and Protestants should have eucharistic fellowship. "Many Christians,

⁵ "On Becoming the Righteousness of God," in D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson, eds., *Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 2: 200-208.

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all italics in quotes are (as in this one) original.

both in the Reformation and counter-Reformation traditions, have done themselves a great disservice by treating the doctrine of 'justification' as central to their debates, and by supposing that it described the system by which people attained salvation. They have turned the doctrine into its opposite" (158-59).

These are strong words; blunt and unsparing, they invite a response, however brief here. For one thing, they involve an obvious category jump. The issue of ethnic division and attendant soteric privilege overcome by the gospel of grace is muddled with the issue of conflict, decidedly nonethnic, about the grace of the gospel. Further, these words, in their own way, are revealing. Now it appears that the Reformation is culpable not only for exaggerating the difference between Paul and the Judaism of his day but also for exaggerating the difference between itself and the Roman Catholic Christianity of its own day. Which may be taken to suggest, in backhanded fashion, that the Reformation after all may not have been that far off the mark in seeing a substantive link between late medieval Catholicism and first century Judaism.

In breaking off this survey here, I recognize that I have not dwelt on positive aspects as I might have; to mention just one more area, a number of important, well-put emphases in chapter Eight ("God's Renewed Humanity"). My approach, however, which I hope is essentially accurate in its criticisms, does answer to the overall conception of the book in the minds of both its author and some reviewers, as well as its reception by a number of readers I am aware of. For instance, a back cover blurb from *The London Times* asserts, "A strong counterattack that defends the orthodox view of Paul as the faithful interpreter of Christ." Presumably, that is written primarily with the final chapter ("Paul, Jesus and Christian Origins") in view, where A. N. Wilson's largely psychologizing treatment of Paul is adroitly debunked. But this chapter is really no more than an appendix (the book's subtitle, by the way, "Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?") aptly applies only to it). For the most part what precedes, as we have already noted, has in view a quite different front (which apparently involves a piece of Wright's own autobiography, 32); its overriding concern is to distance Paul from perceived Reformation and modern evangelical misunderstandings of him, especially, no less, on the gospel and justification. A similarly overall positive assessment is the review in *World* magazine (George Grant); the book "finds that only historic biblical orthodoxy has sufficiently answered the thorny questions of the apostle's contribution to the faith."⁷ And Wright himself believes his treatment of justification and the gospel to be conducive to "a thoroughly orthodox reading of Paul" (132).

One is at a loss to know just what defines orthodoxy in such assessments. But it is plainly not historic biblical orthodoxy, at least to the extent such

⁷ November 1, 1997, 24.

orthodoxy is faithfully reflected in central soteriological affirmations of the creeds and theology of the Reformation tradition. Not to point that out would be a disservice both to Wright and his readers.

The sheer size of Dunn's *Theology* allows for little more than a summary sort of survey here. Chapter One ("Prologue") is a fairly extensive discussion of what writing a theology of Paul ought to involve. Interacting with ongoing debates, particularly in this century, Dunn's "own preferred model," rather than mere description, "is that of dialogue" (23; cf. 12, and in chapter Nine, "Epilogue," 713ff.). Such dialogue involves "the tension of a theological hermeneutic as a tension between *critical disinterestedness* and *personal involvement* with the subject matter"; it "may have personal consequences, requiring some adaptation or shift, however small, in one's overall ideological standpoint and lifestyle" (8). The subject matter of concern is neither Paul's doctrine (the older Liberal *Lehrbegriff* or system approach), nor his religion (Wrede and others, in reaction to the Liberal view), nor his rhetoric (more recent literary-critical developments), but is in fact his theology, understood "in a more rounded way, as talk about God and all that is involved in and follows directly from such talk, including not least the interaction between belief and praxis" (9).

Dunn's approach is one of dialoguing with Paul's theologizing, as it may be put. The latter itself is seen as consisting largely of dialogues, explicit or often implicit, replete with allusions. Consequently, to dialogue with Paul is to enter into his own dialoguing of various sorts: among others, with his pre-Damascus Road past, with himself in the present, with his readers in their situations, with Jesus traditions. At the same time, Paul's, as any theologizing, involves "three phases or levels" (18): the "deepest" being "inherited convictions or traditional life patterns," "axioms and presuppositions, often hidden and undeclared"; secondly, "transformative moments," "window-opening experiences"; thirdly, "immediate issues and current reflections" (see the summary elaboration of the first two of these levels in the "Epilogue," 716ff., 722ff.). On the much mooted question of whether Paul's theology has a "center" or "core," Dunn is ambivalent. His reservation is that this imagery is "too fixed and inflexible" (20); at the same time, he appears willing to speak of Christ as the center, "but as a living centre of his theologizing, and not just a conceptual centre of a static system" (729-30).

Dunn takes the position, correct in my view, that the theology of Paul is more than the sum of the theologies of each of his letters. Admittedly, "these letters are the only firm evidence we have of Paul's theology" (14, in a footnote: material from Acts "can never be more than secondary and supportive"). The letters themselves, however, are such that they force us, by deduction, to take into account the fuller, overall theology that lies in back of them and, in turn, gives rise to each; the letters are like "the sections of an iceberg above the water" (15). At the same time, Dunn gives a certain priority to Romans, "the most sustained and reflective statement

of Paul's own theology by Paul himself." It functions as "a kind of template" ("prompter and plumb line") for the book as a whole (25-26).

Mention of Romans and the other letters of Paul prompts a question on which Dunn might have been somewhat more forthcoming. Footnote 39, page 13 can easily escape attention (I located it, on rereading, with the help of the excellent subject index). There he states his view, without reasons, that only eight of the NT letters attributed to Paul were written by him. Colossians was "probably written by Timothy before Paul's death" and Ephesians and the Pastorals are "definitely post-Pauline," though they "should not be wholly disregarded" in describing his theology; they are "what we might call an afterwave or tail of the comet or, better, the school or studio of Paul." Plainly, such a stance on sources (including pertinent material in Acts), however qualified, is bound to have consequences both narrowing and distorting and so bars the way toward discovering the true scope and contours of Paul's theology.

This prompts a further comment on my deepest reservation not only about these methodological reflections but the book as a whole. The problem is raised implicitly in the title itself, by the decision to include a reference to Paul as *apostle* ("Only one title would do," xvii), and in the opening sentence of the Prologue: "Paul was the first and greatest Christian theologian" (2). But what, for Dunn, makes Paul the "greatest" theologian? Mentioned first is the canonical status of his letters ("an official rule of faith and life," 3). Left unclear, however, are both Dunn's understanding of the historic church view of canonical authority as well as his own theological commitment. Accented, instead, is that Paul's authority as a theologian is not "merely formal." What has been much more consequential is "the impact of Paul's theology itself." But this material dominance, we are told, does not mean that, as "the first great apostle-theologian," he was "a *better* theologian than any of these [named theologians], or than others from East and West, past and present, who might be named" (4). Apparently, then, Paul's greatness as a theologian is contingent on his being the first; his theology "inevitably provides an indispensable foundation and serves as a still flowing fountainhead for the continuing stream of Christian theologizing."

This outlook receives some clarification later, within the chapter on the church, in a section devoted to "Paul's apostolic authority" (571-80). There it seems Paul's authority is not at all formal; certainly no connection is seen between apostolicity and canonicity. Rather, all church authority, including that of the apostle, is "charismatic in character" (cf. 735). As such, apostolic authority, among other things, was "wholly circumscribed" by the content of the gospel (573), exercised not over but within the congregation (574), and always circumstantially relative (see the summary statement, 580). Apparently then, Paul's apostolic commission did not invest him with authority that is categorically different or higher in principle than that of any pastor and teacher in the church (736).

Toward the close of the Prologue, Dunn observes: "Theology wrestles with the supreme questions of reality and human existence" (24). I cannot escape the impression that Dunn sees himself, in his own right, as engaged with these perennial questions, and, so involved, has found that "Paul's contribution to the ongoing dialogue on these question is unsurpassed." But that contribution, however highly lauded, is not absolutely binding. Operating with an unwarranted, and ultimately pernicious, disjunction between formal/canonical and material/content authority (it's not true because it's in the Bible; it's in the Bible because it's true), he does not recognize that Paul's (13!) letters (and pertinent materials in Acts) are a *Deus dicit* of ultimate and irrefragable authority. His controlling commitment to theology as dialogue precludes that.

Between Prologue and Epilogue, the book unfolds in seven major chapters (encompassing twenty-five major sections): "God and Humankind"; "Humankind under Indictment"; "The Gospel of Jesus Christ"; "The Beginning of Salvation"; "The Process of Salvation"; "The Church"; "How Should Believers Live?" These strike me as appropriate and useful basic divisions for presenting the theology of Paul as a whole. Also, the major sections in each chapter are, with a handful of exceptions, likewise aptly chosen; they leave very little uncovered. The section on baptism might have been better included in the chapter on the church (where the Lord's Supper is dealt with), rather than under "The Beginning of Salvation." More debatably, perhaps, the section on Israel, too, belongs with considering the church, rather than under "The Process of Salvation."

Most questionable, surely, is considering Christ's pre-existence as the next to last section within the chapter on the gospel, between sections on his resurrection and parousia; similarly, the subsection "Jesus as God?" (252-60) is included within the section on the resurrection. If there is truth to the adage that one's overall theological outlook stems from one's view of God, the root error of the book comes to light here. Dunn elaborates, perhaps somewhat more cautiously than previously, his emphasis, maintained over the years, especially since *Christology in the Making* (1981), on the distance between NT writers, including Paul, and the later christology of the church reflected in the ecumenical creeds. Paul, he holds, is marked by a certain reserve that holds back from affirming the full deity of Jesus. The earliest Christians' "veneration of Christ" was "something short of full-scale worship," "something short of the adoration reserved for God alone" (260). Paul's highest christological appellations (e.g., "Lord"), including preexistence statements, are functions of Christ's exaltation and fall short of ascribing full deity. To read Rom 9:5 "as a benediction to Christ as 'God' would imply that he had abandoned the reserve which is such a mark of his talk of the exalted Christ elsewhere" (256; Titus 2:13, regarded as post-Paul anyway, is side-stepped in a couple of footnotes, 257, 259). At any rate, "Paul's reserve was soon lost to sight" (260); what prompted such reserve "is subjected to the law of diminishing definition, as theologians attempt to

conceptualize the inconceivable and lose the wonder in endless refinement" (293). That this indictment hardly does justice to the Chalcedon formulation and its heirs I leave to the side here.

All told, nonetheless, this is a volume of remarkable depth and breadth. It reflects the author's seasoned and mostly settled views after over thirty years of preoccupation with Paul. The argumentation is invariably thoughtful, often provocative (though occasionally diffuse), and consistently engages the text; the command of secondary literature is magisterial. Careful reading will be well repaid at virtually every point. Within the historical-critical tradition, this is the best book on Paul's theology currently available, certainly in English. Though I cannot recommend it as a main textbook for the classroom, it should serve for some time to come as an important stimulus and guide for research and writing.

These two volumes have in common several noteworthy features.

1. The post-Sanders era, marked by renewed preoccupation with law in Paul, can leave the impression of narrowing attention to one (admittedly important) aspect or detail of his theology, after the eventual waning of much more global outlooks, especially, for example, that provided by Bultmann, mid-century, in the section on Paul in his *Theology of the New Testament*. Both these books, however, are evidence that this preoccupation has become a window for reconceiving and restating that theology as a whole. Both, whatever their dissimilarities, bring to light basic contours that this reconfiguration will likely display for some time.

2. As is well known, this "new perspective," while it in other respects encompasses a fairly broad spectrum of views, may be seen to be distinguished by two, mutually-related standpoints: on the one hand, a fundamental, far-reaching reassessment both of Second Temple Judaism and of Paul's own (both pre- and post-conversion) assessment of it, and of the Reformation tradition's assessment of Paul and Judaism, on the other. To put it bluntly, with this reassessment the soteriological (and anthropological/hamartological) distance between Paul and the Judaism of his day is substantially reduced, between Paul and the Reformation/historic Protestantism substantially widened (I leave to the side here the general tendency, as it seems to me, of the "new perspective" too readily to lump together the Reformation with modern Protestantism prior to Sanders as the target of its criticisms; such similarities as there may be between Luther and Bultmann, for instance, are upon more careful reflection little more than merely formal).

These issues are much discussed and cannot be taken up here in any depth. I limit myself to some brief comments that do little more than indicate viewpoints needing to be elaborated and argued more carefully.

a) A standard test-case for "new perspective" advocates has been the Reformation tradition's understanding of Paul. With few exceptions they disparage the tendency to see its conflict with Rome as a virtual rerun of Paul's opposition to Judaism, notably of his polemic in Galatians. I remain

unpersuaded, however, that this classical Protestant interpretation of Paul is fundamentally wrong. Granted, the first century Mediterranean world of Paul may not have been as "introspective" as the West since Augustine (Stendahl et al.); nor should we impose Luther's conversion experience and spiritual biography on Paul (e.g., in understanding the Damascus road event—Paul may not have passed through a crisis of conscience as Luther did, but neither should we exclude the possibility of that, at least in some respect; psychologizing Paul on this matter, on the basis of his letters and material in Acts, in any direction, seems an unwarranted and risky undertaking). But time, I believe, will make increasingly clear the essential continuity between the polemics of Paul and the Reformers.

The counterprotest, massively launched by Sanders himself, is that Second Temple Judaism, unlike late medieval Roman Catholicism, is a religion of grace, not merit. But that summary characterization begs a host of historical and theological issues. For one, Rome conceives of salvation, from beginning to end, as by grace. It understands its sacramental system as a whole, beginning with baptism, as mediating saving grace. Its eventual distinction between condign and congruent merit, for instance, reflects the effort to subordinate or contain the notion of merit within that of grace, to make merit attainable by grace. At the same time, ongoing study has made clear that a meritorious mindset, though perhaps not as uniform as past scholarship has maintained, is nonetheless not foreign to the Judaism of Paul's day (e.g., 4 Ezra; Josephus).

But what is crucial here, of course, is not the language of grace, nor one or other notion of divine gratuity. The Reformation, following Paul and the other biblical writers, came to recognize that saving grace is meaningful and has reality only as the revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ, and then only as that divine righteousness (as the fidelity of God to himself and his covenant promises, embodied in Christ) is reckoned, by faith alone that unites to Christ, as the believer's; what is true, inherently, of Christ, the head of the body, is true, by imputation, of his members. The Reformers, faithful to Paul, recognized that where righteousness is not so understood and experienced, any and all speaking about grace is ultimately pretense—pretense that masks the effort, however conceived, at securing myself before God and so is merit-oriented effort, whether or not it is recognized as such. In the end of the day, I take it, Rome and "the present Jerusalem" (Gal 4:25), despite all differences, are one in this regard.

b) One overall effect of the "new perspective" tendency to reduce or moderate the distance between Paul and the Judaism of his day is that it appears to assume a basic continuity between the OT and the various mainstreams within Judaism. For both Dunn and Wright the OT roots of Paul's theology and its roots in Second Temple Judaism seem to be more or less interchangeable or at least continuous. What one would think is an obvious distinction, at least from an evangelical perspective, is repeatedly

glossed over. There is little recognition or even appreciation that OT revelation and Jewish religion and theology are not the same thing and often in conflict, even in OT times and especially in Paul's day. Nor is there a due awareness of the canonical distinctiveness of the Jewish Scriptures in relation to subsequent sources; the piety expressed throughout the OT prophets and elsewhere in the Psalms, for instance, is normative in a way that the Qumran materials, say, are not, even when similar sentiments are expressed in the latter.

This is not to deny a factor of continuity, that there remained in Paul's day a faithful remnant (e.g., Rom 11:5; cf. Luke 2:25ff., 36-38), individuals found, no doubt, among the various mainstreams, even within the religious establishment (Luke 23:50-51; cf. John 3:1ff.; 7:50-51; 9:16; 19:39). But these, as the notion of the remnant suggests, were the exception. Wright tells us that Paul "did not (as it were) abandon Judaism for something else" (39) and relentlessly presses that point home throughout his book. But, while he certainly did not abandon the religion of the OT, just for the sake of fidelity to it and to the God of Abraham, he most certainly did abandon the dominant streams in the Judaism of his day, relentlessly opposed first by Jesus and then by himself, namely, that Judaism and Christianity are two different religions. Not to recognize that will inevitably distort the interpretation of Paul as well as Jewish-Christian dialogue today.

In fact, both our authors see their reduction of distance between Paul and Judaism as affording advantages and new opportunities for such dialogue. This is explicit in Dunn (e.g., 507-8, 531-32), more implicit but, I judge, pervasively present in Wright. In this regard, the difference in how each construes Paul's view of God will inevitably come into play. For Wright, Paul's trinitarian conception is found to be quite at home within first-century Jewish monotheism (63ff.), while, primarily in view of that same monotheism, Dunn argues for a less than fully trinitarian conception. It is not difficult to imagine that in current dialogue Dunn will receive the more sympathetic hearing.

c) As to the alleged distance between the Reformers and Paul, the flaw in the former is seen, in large part, in their preoccupation with Pelagianism; the inveterate tendency especially of the Reformation tradition has been to read this preoccupation into Paul, thereby attributing to him its own misunderstanding of Judaism as "proto-Pelagian," "a Pelagian religion of self-help moralism" (Wright). This charge is like a refrain in Wright (e.g., 19, 32, 35, 116, 120, 124, 129), implicitly present in Dunn, particularly in discussing Paul's teaching on the law and justification.

Apart from the reminder above that meritorious and therefore moralistic tendencies are by no means nonexistent in Second Temple Judaism, a further observation needs to be made here. When I ponder the conclusions our two authors themselves reach on Paul's understanding of sin, I cannot help but envision the tired but knowing smile of Charles Hodge, observing (as I've heard the saying attributed to him), as he surveys the ebb and flow of

church history, that it's not so much the ghost of Pelagius that he fears as the ghost of semi-Pelagius!

Both authors speak of sin as incurring guilt, but on what constitutes guilt Wright is at best unclear or silent, Dunn clearly deficient. Both fail to affirm that Paul teaches, principally in Rom 5:12ff., the imputation of Adam's first transgression, to affirm that guilt for that sin is a constitutive factor in original sin, the condition as sinner in which every human being is born. Dunn, in fact, rejects that Romans 5 teaches this: "Nevertheless, guilt only enters into the reckoning with the individual's own transgression" [a footnote quotes D. E. H. Whiteley with approval: "St. Paul does believe in Original Sin, but not in Original Guilt"]. Human beings are not held responsible for the state in which they are born. That is the starting point of their personal responsibility, a starting point for which they are not liable" (97).

The Pelagian/semi-Pelagian axiom that ability is the measure of accountability could hardly be expressed more clearly. Where, in this or similar fashion, personal responsibility is evacuated from the notion of original sin, then the undeniable "givenness" of sin as part of the human condition from birth, sin in its corporate, transsubjective, and transpersonal dimensions, will be seen, inevitably, as an alien, enslaving power and the accent will fall on sinners as helpless victims. Correlatively, accountability and guilt will be limited to personal, voluntary acts and so give rise to the temptation to find remedies that are essentially moralistic.

Wright might protest here that it is unfair to saddle his silence with Dunn's views. We should respect that. Still, we have to observe that, like Dunn, his preponderant emphasis, by far, is on sin as a power that overcomes and enslaves; in distinction, sin as guilt and its consequences are at best left ambiguous because largely ignored. There are also his statements on the death of Christ and what it effects and on imputation, to be considered below.

3. The status of religious language, particularly the role of metaphor in theological assertions, is a large and complicated issue. I touch on it here only to express some reservations about how both authors view the use of metaphorical language in Paul. Dunn addresses this matter repeatedly and in some detail. For instance, the introductory section to the long chapter, "The Beginning of Salvation" concludes with a subsection, "Metaphors of salvation" (328-33). Here, in a quick survey, a variety of metaphors taken by Paul from various areas of life are noted. Included among these is "salvation" itself, "which has become such an established technical term in theology that its force as a metaphor can be easily forgotten" (329). This survey gives rise to several overall reflections. First, "these metaphors bring out the *reality* of the experience of the new beginning" (331). Second, Paul uses "very different metaphors" because the reality expressed by them "defied a simple or uniform or unifacted description" (332). He goes on to caution against giving any one metaphor "some primary or normative status so that all others must be fitted into its mold"—something he sees as

happening in the "classic Protestant" doctrine of justification. Finally, and fundamentally, in view of the inadequacy of 'rational description,' metaphor is indispensable to express the reality of which Paul speaks.

At issue here is not the legitimate place of metaphor in theological discourse nor the necessarily analogical nature of all human speaking about God. Questionable, however, is Dunn's failure to specify any clear or stable nonmetaphorical referent for our language about God and his ways. Even the subsection heading itself, as just noted, contains, in his view, a metaphor; it reads, in effect, "Metaphors of the metaphor, 'salvation.'" Apparently, as we read on, the nonmetaphorical "reality" in view is "the new beginning" or "the crucial transition" (317), and its "experience," expressed by a wide variety of metaphors. But it is not clear why "new beginning" and, for that matter, even "God" are not likewise metaphors. The post-Kantian disjunction between religious and ordinary discursive language seems firmly in control here.

This brings into view another concern. According to Dunn's second principle, noted above, the great variety of metaphors employed by Paul entails that no one metaphor is deemed central or normative for the rest. The apparent corollary, however, is that, while the use of metaphor is indispensable (his third principle), no one metaphor is itself indispensable. Discussion in this chapter (on the beginning of salvation) bears this out. There are three (or four) major sections: justification by faith, participation in Christ, the gift of the Spirit (and baptism), the first of these being the longest in the entire book (56 pp.). At the beginning of the second that lengthy discussion is attributed to "[t]he dominance of the 'justification' metaphor in traditional analyses of Paul's soteriology" (hence the considerable space needed to challenge and correct that tradition). Further, we are told immediately that "for those less attracted by the judicial character attaching to it [justification], an alternative lay close to hand," namely "the imagery of participation in Christ," which "is in many ways the more natural extension of Paul's christology" (390). For Dunn, apparently, addressing the relationship between justification and union with Christ, for instance, is a nonissue; the two are alternative picturings of the same reality, the latter closer than the former to Paul's core concerns but each having its relative appeal, depending, at least in part, on one's personal predilection.

Subsequently, near the beginning of the third section, on the gift of the Spirit, he observes that this "imagery . . . is complementary—not anti-theoretical—to the imagery examined in the last two sections" (414). But how are they complementary? Not, as he suggests, with an appeal to Gal 3:14 in the case of justification and the gift of the Spirit, as alternative ways of thinking of the blessing of Abraham (cf. 360, n. 105: "described equivalently as"). In context, immediate and broader, Paul's point is surely that they are inseparable yet distinct, nonequivalent descriptions/benefits. Further, "The three images—restored status, participation in Christ, and divine enabling—together made for an integrated and mutually supportive

matrix which must have been pleasing for Paul, theologian, missionary, and pastor. For it ensured a combination of intellectual appeal, embracing experience, and motivated ethic, which evidently made the earliest Christian missionary outreach so attractive and compelling to a wide range of nationalities and social classes." Read in the light of Dunn's other statements, these sentences take back what, at a first glance and by themselves, they may appear to give. For Dunn, Paul's metaphors for "salvation" include something for everyone, but nothing mandatory; no one metaphor, justification or any other, is indispensable for everyone. On this Luther and Calvin seem considerably closer to Paul than Dunn.

Wright, unlike Dunn, does not address the issue of metaphor directly. But the notion occurs repeatedly and is particularly pivotal in his treatment of righteousness and justification, specifically through "the law-court metaphor" and related expressions (33, 97-99, 106-7, 110, 117, 129, 152). At issue here is not the presence of a metaphorical aspect or dimension in Paul's speaking about righteousness and justification but how Wright views this judicial language, conceived of as entirely metaphorical, in relation to other presumably nonmetaphorical language. The problem is most pointed on pages 110-11. There, in a concluding section, he observes that it is a mistake, as so often happens, to regard Romans "as an exposition of judicial, or law-court, theology" (presumably he has in mind those in the Reformation tradition who view the imputed righteousness of God in Christ as the or a central theme of the book). "The law court forms a vital metaphor at a key stage of the argument. But at the heart of Romans we find a theology of love." Then, in the next paragraph he adds that, unless we transcend "the notion of 'righteousness' as a law-court metaphor," as "so many . . . in the past" have failed to do (again, the Reformation tradition is apparently in view), the impression left is of "a legal transaction, a cold piece of business, almost a trick of thought performed by a God who is logical and correct but hardly one we would want to worship" (later in the same paragraph: ". . . a blind or arbitrary thing, a cold system which somehow God operates, or which operates God").

The emotively charged antipathy of these statements is palpable (I leave to the side how accurately they represent the Reformation view). In Wright's view, what gets us beyond the forensic metaphors and to what they point is, "of course," God's love. "God's justice is his love in action, . . ." "God's love is the driving force of his justice. . . ." Here, apparently, God's justice is a function of his love, a penultimate, always metaphorical expression of the nonmetaphorical reality of divine love. "The language of theology, properly understood, gives birth to the language of love." Wright does not seem to find a place in Paul for the equally ultimate reality of God's judicial wrath terminating on the finally unrepentant, as enunciated, for instance, in 2 Thess 1:8-9 (cf. 2:10, 12; Rom 2:8; 1 Thess 1:10). In this respect his position does not seem far from Dunn's.

4. These reservations about our authors' handling of metaphor in Paul are borne out and come to a particular focus in what they say about the death of Christ—obviously a central matter, on any reading of Paul. For Dunn, we may keep, for the most part, to his "Conclusions" (231-33) to the long section, "Christ crucified," in the chapter on the gospel. Anticipating the principles he subsequently enunciates about metaphor (328ff.), already noted above, his first conclusion begins, "Paul uses a rich and varied range of metaphors in his attempt to spell out the significance of Christ's death" (231). After listing those previously discussed in the section (among others, sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation, conquest of the powers), he stresses that the meaning of Christ's death "could be adequately expressed only in imagery and metaphor." Further, "As with all metaphors, the metaphor is not the thing itself but a means of expressing its meaning." Consequently, it would be "unwise" to treat metaphors as in any respect literal, "as though, for example, Christ's death were literally a sacrifice provided by God. . . ."

In a similar vein, the gist of his second conclusion is that "no one metaphor is adequate to unfold the full significance of Christ's death," with the further stricture that it is "unwise . . . to make one of these images normative and to fit the rest into it, even the predominant metaphor of sacrifice." According to the fourth conclusion, the variety of metaphors "corresponded" to the various experiences resulting from the impact of Paul's preaching of the cross (232). It would appear, then, that on this view the metaphors (e.g., sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation) are essentially functions or the reflex of experiences, rather than the reverse. The experiences, in turn, are engendered by a reality, metaphorically mediated but otherwise left unspecified.

How this sort of appraisal works out further for the idea of sacrifice is noteworthy. Earlier in the section, a discussion of Paul's theology of atoning sacrifice ends accenting the "inadequacy" of the word "substitution" to express what is "at the heart of the sacrificial metaphor." "But Paul's teaching is *not* that Christ dies 'in the place of' others so that they *escape* death (as the logic of 'substitution' implies)" (223). Rather, the point is that Christ and believers share in death ("Christ's sharing *their* death makes it possible for them to share *his* death"), so that "representation" and "participation," though still not adequate, are better than "substitution." Here considerations that for Paul are inseparable yet distinct, substitution and representative solidarity ("for us" and "with him"), are blurred, so that the former is effectively eliminated or neutralized and the latter does not receive its due.

The eighth conclusion notes that "sacrifice" cannot be easily dispensed with, since it is so central in Paul. Nevertheless, it is "a difficult metaphor for contemporary commentators" (233). Earlier this contemporary difficulty is spelled out as aversion to the idea of bloody sacrifice ("one of the most repellant features of Paul's [and early Christian] theology for modern

readers . . . generally abhorrent to post-Enlightenment culture, something to be consigned to a more primitive and cruder period of conceptualization of divine-human relationships," 212). Dunn strikes me as being of a divided mind here. On the one hand, he is unable for sound exegetical reasons to follow those who marginalize sacrificial imagery as secondary in Paul. Yet, he also seems to share something of the modern antipathy he notes; he is hesitant to accept the metaphor of sacrifice as it stands in Paul.

His solution, back to conclusion eight, is this: "As the debate about myth and demythologization has demonstrated, the outdated metaphor has to be remetaphored rather than simply discarded if the potency of its message for Paul and the first Christians is not to be lost" (233). But what this "remetaphored potency" entails is not really spelled out; we are left with some brief, allusive remarks about martyr theology and "evoking a spirit of self-sacrifice," and their potential for disclosing the seriousness of sin and the alienation experienced in today's world. Suffice it to say that when, as here, the aspect of imitation, while undeniably present and important, is made the functioning center of Paul's theology of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin, its actual center has been missed.

Wright states repeatedly that on the cross God "dealt with sin" (49, 106-7, 110, 126, *passim*). But in what did this divine dealing consist? His answer to that question is unclear, at least at a critical point. His most extensive comments come under "The crucified Jesus" (46-49). Not surprisingly, given his understanding of the gospel as the declaration of the lordship of Jesus, the accent falls on his cross as "the ultimate royal victory" (49), as his kingly triumph over sin as power ("the liberating victory of the one true God . . . , over all the enslaving powers that have usurped his authority," 47). In terms of classical views of the Atonement, the *Christus victor* theme would appear for Wright to be central for Paul. "For this reason I suggest that we give priority—a priority among equals, perhaps, but still a priority—to those Pauline expressions of the crucifixion of Jesus which describe it as the decisive victory over the 'principalities and powers.' Nothing in the many other expressions of the meaning of the cross is lost if we put this in the centre" (47).

The dethroning of the power of sin is unquestionably at the heart of Paul's theology of the cross. That theme certainly bears emphasizing, particularly in view of its relative eclipse, at least until recently, in systematic-theological treatments of the Atonement, though we can question whether it has the sort of priority in Paul Wright assigns it. He leaves unclear, however, what are the other "equals," as he puts it, in Paul's teaching on the crucifixion. Specifically, what about the cross as a sacrifice that propitiates the judicial wrath of God on sinners and removes their guilt? He does speak of Jesus' death as "the moment when God executed judicial sentence on sin itself," with an appeal to Rom 3:24-26 and 8:3 (48). But this, as far as I can discover, is not really explicated. It does not seem unfair to surmise, then—when we consider his understanding of the gospel and justification,

of sin, and his proposed exegesis of 2 Cor 5:21, all already noted—that he does not see a place in Paul for a vicarious, substitutionary atonement, for the notion of Christ's death as penal substitution. Akin to Dunn in this respect, Christ is our representative (93: "the representative Israelite"), but not, strictly speaking, our substitute, not the one who, in our stead and *coram Deo*, in his death bears and removes the guilt of our sin. What is missing in both Dunn and Wright is the recognition that for Paul what God effects in Christ's death has reference first of all not to the needs of sinners but to the demands of his own person, specifically his justice and holiness.⁸

5. Finally, on two matters integral to Reformed theology, both books are indicative of a consensus that appears to hold, with few exceptions, in the study of Paul today, especially within the historical-critical tradition. First, there is little sympathy for, in fact downright antipathy toward, any notion of imputation. We have already seen Wright's mind on this ("a cold piece of business," 110). "Imputation" is missing from Dunn's extensive subject index. He rejects, as we have seen, that Paul teaches the imputation of Adam's sin. Not surprisingly, then, his lengthy treatment of justification is silent about the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

Second, and surely not unrelated to the first, is the matter of double predestination. Referring to Rom 9:14-23, Dunn speaks of "a fascination, part attraction at its theological rigour, part repulsion at the portrayal of a God so seemingly arbitrary" (500), but warns against being "sidetracked into debates about predestination" (509) and rejects "that election in that passage [Rom 9:1-23, or elsewhere in Paul for that matter] concerns individuals and their eternal destiny" (n. 46). Though "a full-blown predestinarianism seems to be the unavoidable logic, and Paul presses a little way down that road: . . . to push further down that road is quickly to lose Paul and the thread of his argument" (512). That thread concerns election, understood exclusively as corporate, with a view to God's role for Israel among the nations. Negative statements encountered serve to highlight "the positive side of God's purpose"; together they form "God's eschatological chiaroscuro" (513). All told, "we may say that Paul's theology of predestination is itself caught within the eschatological tension—the brighter side of predestination as a function of the already, the dark side of predestination as a function of the not yet of God's *ultimate purpose of mercy*" (italics added).

Wright does not address the issue of predestination directly and no doubt it was not within his purview to do so. Where he does touch on election, it

⁸ Wright's treatment of the death of Jesus in his more recent writings, as least as far as I have found, does not provide a basis for modifying these criticisms; see particularly the chapter, "The Reasons for Jesus' Crucifixion," in his *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), esp. 602-4. Cf. the reflections of A. E. McGrath, "Reality, Symbol & History. Theological Reflections on N. T. Wright's Portrayal of Jesus," in C. C. Newman, ed., *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel. A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 159-79, on the Atonement esp., 168ff.

is viewed as corporate (Israel as a nation, e.g., 55). It does not seem impertinent, however, to observe that, given his orientation at a number of points, already noted, particularly that God's wrath and justice are penultimate (and no more than metaphorical) expressions of his love (see esp. 110-11), it is not clear that he would differ substantially with Dunn.

Both these books, whose authors have been extensively engaged for many years in deepened reflection on Paul's theology, have much to teach serious students of Paul. But those convinced by their own study that the Reformation tradition is preponderantly faithful to the apostle, particularly to his teaching on sin and salvation, will have to conclude that the interests of that tradition are not well served by either.



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