

Tit for Tat:
A rhetorical and apocalyptic analysis of Paul's intertextuality
in his Justification texts (with special reference to Romans 9:17–10:21)

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My paper title and subject refers to the intertextual dimension within a large project on Paul that I am just completing—*The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, forthcoming 2008) (hereafter *DOG*). When I came to collate the relevant material for SBL, however, it proved far too long, amounting to a book in its own right! So I have instead excerpted here a key section from chapter nineteen (§§ 5-8), and supported this with another chapter on the provenance of Romans (*DOG*, chapter thirteen, also available to the Seminar online). These excerpts necessarily refer beyond themselves at times to other discussions in the book, and I apologize for any inconvenience caused, but it seemed best to let these references stand to guide readers to the relevant sections of my forthcoming discussion should they wish to pursue matters further. All of our analyses tend of course to presuppose other discussions, and I will be happy to speak to any questions about these links during the seminar, should they prove important. In the mean time I ask that readers refrain from referencing or quoting the following material without my written permission; it is a preliminary presentation offered to the

Seminar. Some explanation of the overarching project within which these discussions operate might also be helpful.

I call my suggested rereading of Paul's Justification texts "rhetorical" and "apocalyptic." That is, I intend to offer in *DOG* a plausible alternative construal of Paul's well-known texts that discuss righteousness, justification, works, and faith—principally Romans 1–4, 10, Galatians 2:15–3:29[ish], and Philippians 3—by way of a more rhetorical analysis of their contingency, ultimately endorsing an apocalyptic interpretation of Paul's theological commitments within that contingency. I offer this rereading because I view their conventional construal, yielding a theory of salvation couched in terms of Justification and retributive justice, as destructive in multiple ways, whether exegetical, theological, ethical, or political. My rereading seeks to displace this construct by reading the relevant texts in rigorously historical critical terms as an engagement with the opposing gospel of a Jewish Christian missionary—the Teacher, in Martyn's well-known nomenclature. The Justification texts all, in my view, function as Galatians is generally conceded to function: as an engagement—sometimes rather fierce!—with an intruding mission that advocates circumcision and law-observance as integral to Christian salvation and praxis. Hence their basic mode is persuasive or rhetorical. This approach allows interpreters to analyze Romans, in particular, as a vigorous and highly particular engagement, across a whole range of issues, with another opposing position to which it bears little or no direct connection; the basic antithesis present in Romans, and especially in its Justification discussions, is therefore just that, an antithesis, in which one gospel—which is right—overrides and refutes another—which is wrong. (The conventional approach to these texts tends to read this antithesis *as* Paul's gospel—the

assumption that generates the prospective, foundationalist, and conditional soteriological construct that lies at the heart of so many of our difficulties as Pauline interpreters.) So the rhetorical and the apocalyptic aspects of my overarching project are closely related; it is the former account of the relevant texts' contingencies that ultimately allows a theological construal of Paul's position within the arguments of those texts in apocalyptic terms.

Intertextuality is of course integral to and inextricably involved with this broader project. These discussions by Paul are shot through with scriptural texts. Hence I have not really attempted to separate that dimension out in what follows. Careful, contingently sensitive exegesis, that is also (hopefully) theologically, ethically and politically self-aware, will involve an appropriate analysis of Paul's intertextuality in this relation. Clearly it is an essential part of my broader rereading to demonstrate how the well-known and important intertexts operative in Paul's Justification texts—Habakkuk 2:4, Genesis 15:6, and so on—function rhetorically, as merely antithetical, and, when on Paul's side of the debate, apocalyptically (which is to say principally unconditionally, christologically, and eschatologically). The following analysis of the relevant texts in Romans 9–10 is therefore a window into my analysis in these terms of the rest of the relevant texts and intertexts treated in the remainder of *DOG*. One of my main suggestions here is that we do not understand Paul's intertextuality in these texts accurately if it is artificially separated out from all these other interpretative considerations and considered in isolation; dangerous distortions become possible at such points. My main intertextual conclusions can be found in § 8.2. However, I have included §§ 6 and 7 here as well, because their exegetical discussions establish those later conclusions.

It ought to be appreciated, further, that quite a bit of analysis has taken place by the time Romans 9–10 is treated in *DOG*. In particular, some key moves have already been made in relation to the meaning of δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ in Paul—a question in my view closely bound up with intertextuality—and the frequent meaning of πίστις. In the case of the former, I argue for an intertextually mediated notion of divine deliverance resonating with ancient conceptions of kingship (hence the main title of the forthcoming book), an act evident especially in Jesus’s resurrection and heavenly enthronement as messiah and lord (cf. esp. *DOG*, ch. 17, an excerpt of which is available to the Seminar online). In the case of the latter, I argue for an intertextually mediated emphasis on Christ himself at numerous points—on his fidelity to the point of death, and God’s consequent act of resurrection (cf. esp. *DOG*, ch. 15; key excerpts of this argument are available to the Seminar online). For reasons of space I have not actually included those discussions in this paper, but reference them indirectly since they often seem to prove controversial (but I will certainly understand if this material is not processed!).

In the following excerpt then, in accordance with the provenance for Romans already established by *DOG*, chapter thirteen, I attempt to supply a responsible and plausible exegesis of Romans 9:27–10:21. And an interesting picture of Paul’s intertextuality emerges from this broader analysis—one in which Paul replies, “tit for tat,” to the Teacher’s gospel and quotation of scripture with countervailing and interlinked scriptures of his own. (He also cunningly subverts the Teacher’s texts at times.) The result is a sophisticated and brilliant set of refutations grounded on profound and consistent theological convictions. I

treat the text in more detail in two main sub-sections—Romans 9:27–10:5 and 10:6-21—although I will break down this second sub-section further in due course.

§ 5 Romans 9:27–10:5¹

This subsection in Romans and the next (Romans 10:6-21) are potentially “texts of terror” for my apocalyptic rereading, and on at least four counts.

First, Paul states explicitly in 9:31-32 that one factor preventing Israel from receiving the saving righteousness available in Christ is her pursuit of God in the light of the Torah and “by means of works [of law].” And this statement clearly creates the possibility that Israel’s *prior* pursuit of “works” impeded her receipt of Christ.² If this reading proves correct, then Paul will have imputed to the history of Israel just the system that Justification theorists expect to find there (and however unfairly in general descriptive terms). Hence, this text opens the door to an a priori, prospective construction of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in Paul, overthrowing at the same moment any retrospective construction of that relationship—the construction being pursued through this project in unconditional, apocalyptic, and hence retrospective terms. Romans 9:31-32 may, in short, be the rock upon which the apocalyptic construal stumbles and falls. But our potential problems in this text are not yet over.

¹ I will retain the original numbering of the subheadings to ease possible cross-references later on to *DOG*.

² Paul’s statements in Rom. 9:11 and 11:5-6 are indecisive because they are negations. (οὐκέτι should be read in 11:5-6 as a marker of inferential, not temporal, negation: cf. BDAG 736, meaning 2.) Elsewhere in Paul the phrase “works of law” occurs in the context of debates with other Jewish Christians, or in contexts that are arguably characterized as such: cf. Rom. 2:6-7, 15; 3:20, 27-28; 4:2-8; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10; cf. also Eph. 2:9-10. (The Romans texts address only “a Jew” or “Jews,” hence not necessarily Israel as a whole.)

Second, Paul states in 10:4 (in all probability) that “Christ is the τέλος of the law,” thereby perhaps reinforcing the earlier hint of prospectivism. Most previous debate of this famous claim has concentrated on whether τέλος means “end” or “goal.” However, I suggest that more important issues are at stake. Can this statement be construed, on *either* reading, retrospectively and hence apocalyptically?—because at first glance a reading in terms of end *or* goal seems to point ineluctably (again) toward a prospective process. Israel either fails to grasp that Christ has ended her relationship—at least in certain major respects—with the law (and so does not abandon it, moving on to faith), or, in a similar but not identical fashion, she fails to grasp that Christ has fulfilled the law for her (and so does not take hold of that fulfillment in faith).³ And in like manner, third, Paul seems to describe illegitimate Jewish activity in Romans 10:5 in terms of Leviticus 18:5—“the person who does these things will live by them,” thereby

³ Justification theorists tend to prefer the reading “end,” because Christ “fulfills” the negative, prior experience of law observance only indirectly, satisfying the wrath of God unleashed there against sin and functioning in an analogous, contractual fashion to save those who exercise the appropriate criterion for salvation, which is now the easier condition of faith. Advocates of more salvation-historical and/or “scriptural” readings of Paul find the sense “goal” more palatable; the Scriptures point to Christ, as any right-thinking exegete should realize. The meaning “goal,” however, if attested, can still assist the Justification advocate over against the apocalyptic rereader, because at least Paul still seems to be thinking prospectively, however opaquely. In either of these readings, the potentially harsh consequences for Israel of such “prospectivism” are apparent as well; in both cases Israel fails to grasp something obvious and can be accused of stupidity, resulting in a strong accountability if she continues to reject Christ (i.e., one appropriately met with punishment): cf. my *The Quest for Paul’s Gospel* (London: T & T Clark [Continuum], 2005), ch. 7, 132-45.

raising the possibility once more that a legalistic description of Judaism prior to Christ might be in view.

As if these three challenges were not serious enough, fourth, Romans 10:6-10 is widely cited as a quintessential statement of Paul's notion of saving "faith." Paul's discussion seems both straightforwardly anthropocentric and conditional: *if* a person believes in Christ, both resurrected and as Lord—information that lies near to hand, because of missionaries and preachers—*then* that person will be saved (vv. 6-10; cf. also vv. 14-17). And this applies to "everyone" who does so, generating the important, universal dimension in Christian salvation as Justification theory constructs it (vv. 11-13). The offer of faith is open to all. This argument seems to be unavoidably voluntarist, implying that faith is a choice or decision that can just be made (note especially the third-class conditional construction used in v. 9). So it seems that Romans 10 affirms strongly the principle of salvation that lies at the heart of Justification theory.

The apocalyptic rereading of Paul faces perhaps its most difficult challenges in this stretch of text.⁴ However, rereaders need not lack hope altogether. It is widely acknowledged that Paul's Greek here is abbreviated and difficult, so his statements may well turn out on closer investigation to be more susceptible to an apocalyptic reading than they first appear, especially given certain key interpretative possibilities that we are familiar with by now—a christological emphasis within Paul's πίστις language, which influences in turn a

⁴ It should be noted that this text's challenges are by no means limited to those made in relation to an apocalyptic reading. For example, all readings struggle to explain Paul's use of Deut. 30:12-14 in 10:6-8.

more christocentric and dynamic interpretation of δικαιοσύνη. These two critical semantic insights can then be linked profitably with Paul's subversion of the athletic imagery functioning in this passage (the ἀγών topos). And this all opens up the possibility of a more sustained apocalyptic understanding of Paul's argument as a whole. We will begin our more detailed analysis, however, by considering the text that actually frames Paul's entire argument, both here and beyond—namely, 9:27-29. Following that analysis, the difficult and contested argument in Romans 9:30–10:21 will be considered in two stages—in terms of 9:30–10:5, and then 10:6-21 (specific Justification terminology fading in fact from v. 17).

As has already been noted, Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22 and 1:9 in 9:27-29, after having cited Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 in 9:25-26. The Hosea quotations function as the capstone to his opening argument in vv. 6-24, justifying pagan inclusion within the saved—traditionally Jewish—people of God. The Isaianic quotations that follow these texts then speak of the complementary salvation-historical issue of Jewish recalcitrance and exclusion: “If the Lord of hosts had not left survivors to us, we would have fared like Sodom ... ” (etc.: 9:29a, NRSV). Paul signals this reorientation toward Israel explicitly as he frames his citations: Ἡσαίας δὲ κράζει ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.... He has not addressed this question directly since 9:1-5. So this citation formula and set of quotations seems to serve an important rhetorical function; it moves this issue back into argumentative centrality (cf. 1 Cor. 1:19). His engagement with the question of Jewish salvation in Romans 9–11 ought

therefore to be recognized as beginning in 9:27, after which point we will need clear signals to turn away from it (cf. 11:17; 12:1).⁵

But as we turn to consider 9:30 following, we encounter a notoriously dense thicket of exegetical problems. So interpretative progress will be rather slow and irregular for a while. We can generate a degree of insight concerning 9:30 itself by reintroducing some of the lexical decisions that were made in Romans 1–4. But after this we will have to abandon any sense of linear analysis momentarily in order to work our way through this text from its clearest claims onward.

5.1 Semantic considerations

(1) *Romans 9:30*—πίστις and δικαιοσύνη. Translated literally, Romans 9:30 states: “What then shall we say?! The pagans who do not pursue righteousness have grasped righteousness—a righteousness ‘through fidelity.’” Paul has made a final distinction here in some sense, and it is very important—the appositional statement δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως. I would suggest that by this stage in the letter the signifier πίστις (see 9:30, 32; 10:6, 8) would have been understood by the letter’s auditors with reference to Christ when it is present in the phrase ἐκ

⁵ This possibility passes largely unnoticed by the commentators, who generally assume that Paul’s scriptural citations in vv. 25-29 function in a single sub-section and also serve an essentially secondary, corroborative argumentative function: see, i.a., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 571-75.

πίστεως (or in parallel to this phrase in context; cf. 9:30, 32; 10:6). As we have already seen, lying behind this key qualifier is Paul’s messianic use of Habakkuk 2:4, a text Paul reads as “the righteous one through fidelity will live.” Ἐκ πίστεως, and πίστις in context, therefore denote allusively a key part of Jesus’ life, namely, Easter Friday, which was an event of faithfulness to the point of death, followed by resurrected life and heavenly enthronement on Easter Sunday, as the scriptural prophecy goes on to say. I hasten to add that the cognate verb πιστεύω (often present in the form of a participle) tends to refer to Christian actions, largely on analogy to Genesis 15:6 supported by Isaiah 28:16, so human trust in God is not excluded by this suggestion. (This last text is quoted twice by Paul in the broader argument here—see 9:33b and 10:11—and human trust is referred to again in 10:4, followed by 10:9, 10, 14, 16, and 17.) But the δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως, gifted here to the pagans despite their lack of pursuit of it, is operative through the Christ event. And this allows us to confirm our earlier suggestions for another critical term more precisely.

This “righteousness” actualized in Christ is for Paul clearly divine in origin; it is an act, in some sense, of God.⁶ And it is a singular act—the Christ event. It is, furthermore, obviously a saving act; Christ saves. Indeed, Paul prays in 10:1-3 for Israel’s salvation, and he states twice at the same time that she ought to recognize the δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ. (He also uses the phrases εἰς σωτηρίαν and εἰς δικαιοσύνην interchangeably in this chapter; cf. 10:1, 4, 10.) But “saving” in what sense? The Habakkuk quotation speaks of “life”—“the righteous one through fidelity *will live*” (ζήσεται)—and there is good reason to think that this

⁶ Cf. Rom. 3:5, 25 and 26; and hence also, almost certainly, 1:17, 3:21 and 22.

denotes eschatological life, the life of resurrection. In the first instance, this is the best way to read the Habakkuk citation (assuming a messianic reading), which suggests that Jesus was resurrected and glorified after his faithful death on the cross. But various hints from the context confirm these implications.⁷ So the δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως is a divine irruption of new life into a setting dominated by death (and this is very important, because it underlies all of Paul's theological reasoning in this subsection, as we will see shortly). Furthermore, it seems that divine being is inseparable from divine activity in all this. "Righteousness" cannot here be a static property or attribute of God, perhaps transferable to humanity in a quasi-substantial way; it is a divine action—an event. Ontology is therefore inseparable from ethics, and vice versa, and our translations have been right to try to reflect this. "Righteousness" is really "righteous activity" or, as here, a "righteous act" or "... event"⁸ (at which point some of Paul's odd grammatical shifts also become comprehensible; see more on this just below).⁹

⁷ First, the (repeated) quotation of Isa. 28:16/8:14: shame and glory are important themes in Romans rooted in the eschaton: see, i.a., Rom. 5:2-5; cf. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 4th edn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980 [1975]), 279; second, belief, trust, salvation, and resurrection are intimately connected in 10:9-13; and, third, the suggestions of various other parts of the letter, in particular, chapter 8, where life is clearly resurrected, eschatological life. "Life" is an important theme in Romans, as noted in a classic analysis by Robin Scroggs, "Paul as Rhetorician: Two Homilies in Romans 1-11," in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 271-98.

⁸ Note, in addition to Käsemann's classic reading, Keck's apposite remark: "God's righteousness is not simply an attribute ... but God's saving action in Christ" (*Romans* [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2005], 248); also *DOG*, chapter seventeen.

In short, we can confirm from 9:30 and its immediate setting that the δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως is an equivalent phrase to the δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ and is, furthermore (and consequently), a singular, saving, and resurrecting act by God, right in this context and so “righteous,” and effected through Christ. So we can translate this verse more explicitly as “the pagans, who are not pursuing righteousness, have [nevertheless] grasped righteousness—the righteous [saving] act of God, effected ‘through fidelity’ [in the sense of ‘through the faithful Christ’].”¹⁰ Paul states here, then, that the Christ event has saved the pagans even though they were not expecting it. And he has argued at length immediately before this claim, in 9:6-26, that the electing God is allowed to do precisely this.

With 9:31, however, our problems begin. A difficult, abbreviated section ensues, yet one fraught with momentous theological consequences. Verse 31 is parallel to v. 30 in some but not all (or even the expected) ways. In this verse it seems that Israel pursues a νόμος of righteousness—a strange phrase—in contrast to the pagans, who do not pursue righteousness at all. She is then characterized as not doing something; however, the verb in question, φθάνω, is both rare and ambiguous. It could mean here “preceded” (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15),

⁹ It is important to emphasize that the exact *content* of righteous acts is heavily context dependent. In *DOG*, chapter seventeen it was suggested that this content in Romans is influenced by the discourse of divine kingship.

¹⁰ Paul’s pun here is impossible to capture in translation. He slides from the “righteous activity” espoused by the Teacher to the “righteous act” of God, both of these practices being describable in Greek by δικαιοσύνη.

“arrived,” “overtaken” (cf. 1 Thess. 2:16), or merely “attained” (cf. Phil. 3:16),¹¹ and Paul himself uses it in at least three of these senses elsewhere. It is clearly not the same verb as καταλαμβάνω, and the usual prepositional phrase denoting an object, which could help us, is not supplied—unless it is εἰς νόμον, but this can be read in relation to διώκω as well (cf. Phil. 3:14). Finally, where we expect δικαιοσύνη—after οὐκ ἔφθασεν at the least—it is not supplied! To make matters worse, the verse that follows, 32a, is a difficult verbless clause, a mere juxtaposition of programmatic prepositional phrases—literally, “because not through fidelity but as through works” (ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ ἔργων). We *must* supply elided material in order to make sense of this statement—at least a verb or participle—but any such addition assumes that we know exactly what Paul is saying in v. 31, and we don’t.

At this point, then, the normal technique of exegesis seriatim simply seems to fail us; Paul does not provide sufficient information in his actual claims here or their immediately preceding statements to guide the modern reader through all these ambiguities.¹² So I suggest that we jump forward to a clearer set of statements and then try to develop a consistent interpretation of the passage as a whole from there. Fortunately, just such a lucid entry point seems to be provided by 10:1-3, which resumes the term that we have just been engaging—δικαιοσύνη.

¹¹ BDAG 1053.

¹² I am possibly exaggerating our difficulties here; some purchase on this text is perhaps possible. But no precise *temporal* decisions are possible, and this is the critical point at issue in our present discussion.

(2) *Romans 10:1-3—God’s righteous act in Christ and Israel’s twofold response.* In the first three verses of Romans 10 Paul seems for the moment to speak plainly. This is the second of three biographical intrusions that take place through chapters 9–11—one at the beginning of each chapter (cf. 9:1-3; 10:1; 11:1b). Paul says here in v. 1 that the desire of his heart and his prayer to God on behalf of Israel is for her salvation (so clearly she is not, in his view, currently saved¹³). In v. 2 he notes Israel’s zeal but immediately qualifies this as lacking in “recognition” or “acknowledgment” (ἐπίγνωσις; cf. 1:28; 3:20; Phil. 1:9; Phlm. 6). The motif of misguided ignorance is then emphasized in the participial construction that begins v. 3, and probably also in the main verb that concludes it: so “being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God ... they [i.e., Paul’s Jewish compatriots] have not submitted to¹⁴ God’s righteousness” (NRSV). Significantly, complementing this refusal to acknowledge the δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ is a “seeking to establish their own [righteousness]¹⁵...” (which could be interpreted

¹³ Hence, this speaks immediately against dual covenant construals of Paul: cf. John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), and Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). The difficulties of this overarching reconstruction will deepen as we consider Romans 10 in more detail.

¹⁴ A passive, usually translated here in precise terms with a middle sense. Moo suggests that Koiné not uncommonly confused these voices (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996], 633, n. 18).

¹⁵ The text-critical decision is not especially significant because if the word was not originally present, it had to be presupposed (i.e., it was elided); cf. Moo (*Romans*, 630, n. 2).

as an elaboration of Israel's zeal that was noted in v. 2). We learn four important things from these claims.

- (i) It seems difficult—if not impossible—to avoid an identification between the δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ that Paul speaks of twice here in v. 3 and the δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως that he has just spoken of in 9:30 (and implicitly in 9:31);¹⁶ both these expressions denote the Christ event. And with this realization, Paul's strange case shifts in 10:3 are revealed to be genitives of separation or origin—"the righteous saving act *from* God," that is, Christ.¹⁷

¹⁶ If they are not the same, then Paul would have changed subjects dramatically! The righteous act of God that the pagans received in 9:30 and that Israel did not attain to in 9:31, the act that leads to the reverse of eschatological shame (i.e., to glory) in 9:33b, would now *not* be the content of Paul's prayer for salvation in relation to Israel in 10:1 or the object of her ignorance in 10:2-3! In 10:4 the two notions are married explicitly, with the statement that Christ leads to δικαιοσύνη[ν] for everyone who trusts.

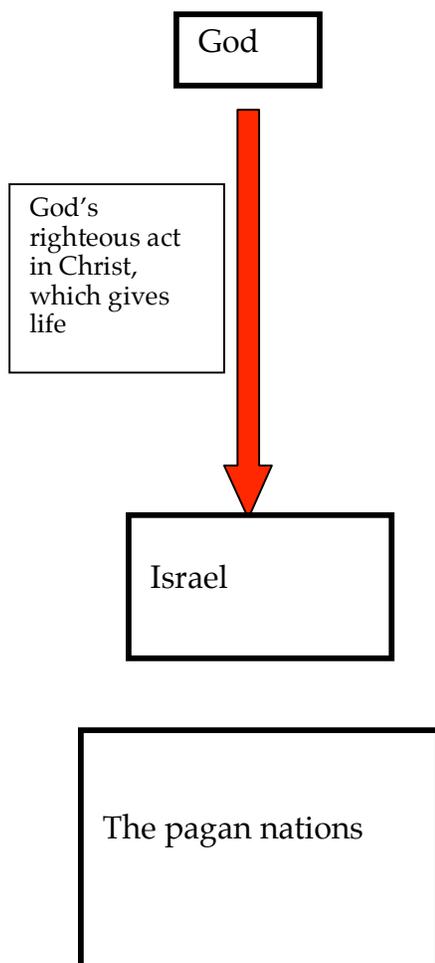
¹⁷ Note the differentiated cases in 10:3—τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην and τῆ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ. These are unique in Romans, and in Paul's entire corpus. There is little or no need for such differentiation if Paul wishes to speak simply of God's own righteous activity, as he has done before (cf. esp. Rom. 3:5). Explicit christological genitives in such terms are also apparent elsewhere in Paul, that is, with prepositions supplied: see 1 Cor. 1:30 and Phil. 3:9. I suspect that 2 Cor. 5:21 ought to be read in this sense as well.

- (ii) But it can be seen now that *two* types of “righteousness” are involved in Paul’s argument, and one is an aspect of Israel’s “misstep.”¹⁸ On the one hand is the righteous saving act of God in Christ. On the other hand, opposing it, is some establishment of their own righteousness that certain Jews now seek—a “righteous activity” that is neither from nor endorsed by God.
- (iii) This alternative, competing “righteous activity” is one aspect of a twofold misstep by Israel. Not only is she apparently involved in a righteous project that lacks divine authorization, but she is ignoring the Christ event, and this is Paul’s main emphasis. (Including two instances from 9:32 on, he alludes to this rejection of Christ five times; the false competing righteous activity is spoken of three times—thus far—although it will fade dramatically from view as Romans 10 unfolds; cf. later only 11:6.)
- (iv) If God has set forth a way to salvation in the Christ event—God’s way—then it follows fairly directly that this alternative Jewish activity is also a form of salvation—one elected by Israel herself. It might be more than this, but it is at least this. To have rejected God’s way to salvation implies that Israel has some alternative up her sleeve.

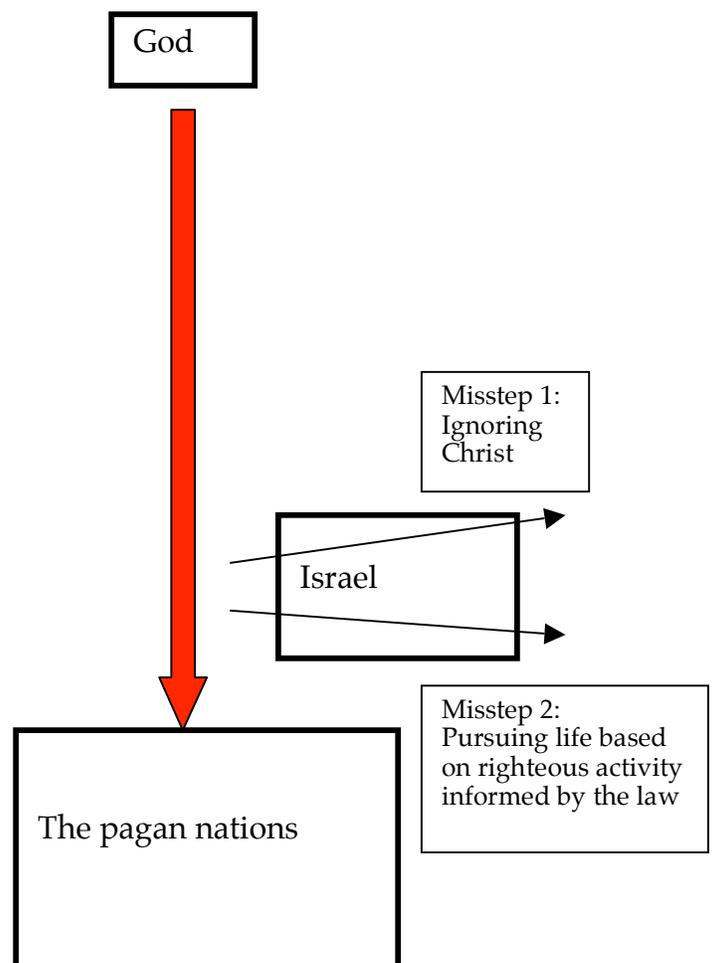
¹⁸ Gaston’s useful characterization, drawn from Rom. 11:11 (cf. *Paul and the Torah* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987], 116-50).

The argument in Romans 10:1-3

Stage 1:
God's righteous act in Christ



Stage 2:
Israel's twofold response



(3) *Romans 10:5—Israel’s righteous activity ἐκ νόμου.* This is an appropriate point at which to introduce 10:5 into our discussion—a quotation of Leviticus 18:5: “Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that ‘the person who does these things will live by them’” (Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς).¹⁹ The evidence is accumulating that this statement reprises the competing righteous activity of Israel; it encapsulates her alternative saving system. Not all the evidence for this assertion is yet apparent, but perhaps the decisive pieces are.

The case for this judgment begins by noting that Leviticus 18:5 must corroborate one of the two types of righteousness that we have just noted. Moreover, as the quotation explicitly attests, this righteousness concerns a way to life, here meaning a way to resurrection, the subject of all the other instances of δικαιοσύνη in the subsection. It is difficult to see how the phrase “the person who does these things ...” reprises anything significant that Paul has said previously about the righteous saving act of God in Christ. Paul has linked his description with the instrumental phrase from Habakkuk 2:4—“through fidelity.” This is the space where phraseology from Leviticus 18:5 would have to function, if it were to corroborate God’s δικαιοσύνη as well. And in fact Paul never speaks of Christ “doing” something—that is, using the verb ποιεῖν—in the manner that he

¹⁹ The checkered textual history of this verse suggests that it greatly puzzled the early church as well. However, the variant found in \mathfrak{p}^{46} , B, part of the Western tradition (the second corrector of Sinaiticus, D, and G), and the majority text fits my developing interpretation perfectly. (Moo gives a full discussion in *Romans*, 643, n. 2.)

repeatedly denotes Christ acting ἐκ πίστεως. However, the Levitical text works nicely as an account of the righteous activity that Israel seeks to establish in opposition to God's. Israel does indeed seem to be "doing" something here, and thereby seeking to live. And Paul even marks it explicitly as something effected ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου, or "through law."

In view of this, the ἔργων νόμου, or "works of law," Paul mentions in 9:32 are probably an echo of Leviticus 18:5 and so summarize one aspect of Israel's misstep. Ἔργων seems to be Paul's deliberate allusion to the participle ποιήσας in Leviticus 18:5. (He probably doesn't use the cognate substantive for ποιέω, ποίημα, because this was rare in Koiné.)²⁰ The basis for Paul's important phrase "works of law" finally seems clear! And underlying this echo is a broader intertextual situation that should now be made explicit.

Leviticus 18:5 resonates with Habakkuk 2:4. Paul does not cite Habakkuk 2:4 near Romans 10:5, but he echoes its key phrase three times in the immediate context and speaks repeatedly of its subject matter—the act of God in Christ that gifts life to the world (i.e., δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). He does juxtapose these texts explicitly in Galatians 3:11-12, where he has sculpted them into a parallel stylistic form (an arthrous substantive, an identical verb, and a key instrumental

²⁰ It occurs only twice in the New Testament, in Rom. 1:20 and Eph. 2:10. By way of contrast, ποιέω occurs 568x, and ἔργων 169x. These connections are articulated nicely by Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 92-96; and Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark [Continuum], 2004), 315-35.

prepositional phrase). And that juxtaposition is antithetical.²¹ Moreover, Paul negates a scriptural endorsement of “doing the law” in Galatians 3 not once but twice (and this total does not include his other negations of “works of law”).²²

These considerations point to an important exegetical judgment. The citation of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 is a programmatic summary of Israel’s own righteousness that she “seeks to establish” over against the righteous saving act by God in Christ. Leviticus 18:5 suggests that certain Jews seek life on the basis of their fulfillment of the Mosaic law, and this suggestion resonates both stylistically and theologically in counterpoint to Habakkuk 2:4. The righteous activity affirmed by the Leviticus text will ostensibly lead to resurrection, probably through a declaration by God on the day of judgment that such people are in fact righteous and so deserve eternal life. Hence, we can recognize immediately in this system—derived here largely independently—the conditional, essentially Arminian (if not Pelagian!) system of the Teacher (but applied here in some sense to Judaism).²³ Perfect fulfillment of the positive demands of the law is still apparently necessary if the stated axiom of Moses is to be fulfilled; however, this accords with what we discovered earlier as well.²⁴ But

²¹ See also Gal. 3:10, which includes the key phrase ποιῆσαι αὐτά.

²² So has Paul changed his mind when he writes Romans, and this despite his continued negation of the “catch phrase” drawn from this text?!

²³ Cf. also my final remarks on the church-historical pedigree of Justification theory in *DOG*, chapter eight; cf. also the analysis of “faith” in Justification theory in chapter two.

²⁴ See *DOG*, chapter fourteen; and see further in *DOG*, chapter twenty. Indeed, this is why Paul characterizes this opposing gospel in terms of perfectionism: see esp. Gal. 5:3; 6:13a; cf. also Jas. 2:10. However, probably only perfection in the “active” sense is meant by this—that is,

it is important to note that the full theological rationale underlying this polemical summary, along with its exact salvation-historical location, has yet to be determined in the present context. (The reading must also remain somewhat tentative until we have interpreted 10:4.) Nevertheless, with these realizations we are in a strong position to go back and resolve the ambiguities of 9:31-32a and then to grasp the full contingent force of 9:30-32a.

(4) *Romans 9:31-32a—Israel’s torah of righteous activity.* We have learned from the rest of the subsection that Israel’s twofold misstep is, on the one hand, to fail to acknowledge Christ and, on the other, to engage in a false appraisal and use of the law—a righteous activity ἐκ νόμου. Furthermore, as long as she persists in this activity, God’s righteous saving action in Christ is not experienced; these two righteous modes are incompatible. And these claims now result in a good reading of vv. 31-32 with a minimum of elided material.

We can first resolve the elided verb in v. 32a that drives the juxtaposition of Paul’s well-known prepositional phrases, [ὅτι] οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ ἔργων. It is now apparent that these are the two aspects of Israel’s misstep—ignorance of the faithful Christ and a preoccupation with the law. Hence, “pursuit” or “pursuing” seem the most likely ellipses.²⁵ This short set of

the positive doing of good deeds; cf. Rom. 2:6-10. Jesus still presumably provides atonement for transgressions; cf. Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:19; Gal. 1:4.

²⁵ As Cranfield urges (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Volume II: Commentary on Romans IX–XVI and Essays* [London: T & T Clark (Continuum), 1979 (2004)], 508-9), although probably in the form of the appropriate participle (a form that he dismisses without comment): ὅτι [διώκοντες] οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ ἔργων κ.τ.λ.

comments seems to function as a pivot in the broader discussion: ignoring the faithful Christ is picked up by the rest of this verse and the verse that follows (v. 33), while “works of law” seem to have been the concern of the preceding verse (v. 31).

Turning to v. 31, we can now recognize in its truncated statements the two types of righteous activity that were spoken of in 10:1-3 and 5, along with one aspect of Israel’s misstep (i.e., the false form of righteous activity). Israel has clearly not “attained” to the righteous saving act of God in Christ, the righteousness “through fidelity” that the pagans received in 9:30 and that she ignores through 10:3. The elided δικαιοσύνην can now be recognized at the end of v. 31.²⁶ And one aspect of her mistake, in terms of “works of law,” is now recognizable through v. 31 in terms of the alternative program of self-appointed righteous activity and salvation. In view of the scriptural text quoted in 10:5—Leviticus 18:5—this is accurately described as a torah, or teaching, concerning righteousness—a νόμος δικαιοσύνης—although a false teaching. (This then echoes perfectly with analogous torahs, or teachings, in 3:27, where a teaching concerning πίστις excluded a teaching concerning “works.”) Moreover, by “seeking to establish her own righteousness,” thus following a particular “teaching concerning righteousness,” Israel is clearly not focused on the Christ event but on her own ethical performance informed by torah. Any race that she

²⁶ And it is supported by the parallelism between vv. 30 and 31. Here Paul contrasts pagans not pursuing something but getting it—“righteousness”—and Israel pursuing something but not getting it—that is, most obviously, righteousness. If Paul shifts the goal of this pursuit, then the point of the contrast in activities is lost.

is running is in terms of the law, and so in effect she pursues the law, hence Paul's phrase εἰς νόμον. To insist on a torah of righteousness, a νόμος δικαιοσύνης, is also to run in some sense toward the law, and so εἰς νόμον.

³⁰Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν;

ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην

κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην, δικαιοσύνην δὲ ἐκ πίστεως

³¹Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον

οὐκ ἔφθασεν [δικαιοσύνην].

³²διὰ τί; ὅτι [διώκων] οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἔργων προσέκοψαν

κ.τ.λ..

This is the ideal point at which to reach out for Paul's contingent meaning in these verses. That is, much of what has been said up to this point is a clarification for modern interpreters of what would have been fairly obvious to Paul and his original auditors. Now, having grasped the semantic building blocks that Paul and his audience could assume, we can consider the argument itself that the apostle was constructing.

The voice of the Teacher seems to be recognizable once again in the complaints of 9:30-31, which also serve the purpose of foregrounding the two main issues under discussion.²⁷ As we have already seen, Paul has quoted a set of

²⁷ Pelagius was alert to these interpretative possibilities in relation to voice: "If this is spoken in the person of the apostle.... But if the whole of the above thought belongs to the objectors, the apostle here is replying and summarizing the issue by saying: 'What shall I say to

important scriptural texts in vv. 27-29 to round off his argument concerning pagan inclusion in salvation (9:6-26) and to inaugurate his engagement with the second and rather more difficult question of Jewish salvation (9:30–11:36). The quotations he uses are shockingly negative. Israel is as scattered as the sand, and that suddenly. Furthermore, but for the Lord’s preservation of a small remnant, she would be as Sodom and Gomorrah! So these scriptural texts serve to establish the absurd missionary dynamics that Paul is currently struggling with—pagan inclusion and Jewish exclusion. It seems most likely, then, that the voice that *queries* this set of dynamics in vv. 30-31 is that of the Teacher: “What then are we to say!? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it ...?! [B]ut Israel, who did strive for ... righteousness ... did *not* succeed?!” (NRSV, emphasis added). (Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην ... [31] Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν [δικαιοσύνην].) It is then *Paul* who qualifies the correct sense in which the pagans have received “righteousness” (a δικαιοσύνην [δὲ] ἐκ πίστεως, of course; this also explains its parenthetical character in syntactical terms). And he responds in v. 32 with a brief characterization of the two problems to which he attributes this anomalous

these objections...?” (noted in Gerald Bray, and Thomas C. Oden, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament VI: Romans* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998], 259). Some of his comments on preceding material in Romans also indicate that he is participating in much broader debate at this point: “Those who think that this is not Paul talking [in 9:26] but the Jews interpret it to mean....” (257; cf. also 258).

situation for Israel: διὰ τί; ὅτι [διώκων] οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ' [διώκων] ὡς ἐξ ἔργων προσέκοψαν κ.τ.λ. Thus, the full exchange in 9:30-32 (DC):

Teacher: What are we to say then? *Pagans* not pursuing righteous activity have received a righteous act [from God]?!

Paul: The righteous act [of God] “through faithfulness.”

Teacher: But *Israel*, pursuing a torah of righteous activity toward that Torah, have *not*?!

Paul: Why? Because they did not strive for it “through faithfulness” but “through works.” They have stumbled over the stumbling stone....

The following argument simply elaborates on these two basic claims.

But it seems that in the process Paul also subverts a standard Greco-Roman and derivatively Jewish topos known to modern readers as the ἀγών motif. Indeed, this is a vital insight, which will enable us ultimately to understand 10:4.²⁸

²⁸ This largely because of the standard study of the topos in Paul by V. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1967). More recently, see Nigel J. Spivey, *The Ancient Olympics* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

5.2 Paul's subversion of the ἀγών motif

The ἀγών topos involves the use of metaphors associated with Hellenistic athletics, although these overlap significantly with military imagery as well.²⁹ Common is the metaphor of a stringent race, as seen most famously in the New Testament perhaps in Hebrews 12:1-4. Paul uses such ἀγών imagery quite frequently, emphasizing one or another aspect of the broader discourse as his contingent concerns dictate.³⁰ Various clues in both Romans 9:30–10:5 and its broader setting suggest that athletic imagery is indeed in play in this text. But Paul is not endorsing the ἀγών in a straightforward fashion here as he does elsewhere, and as those commentators who note the motif's presence tend to assume;³¹ he is twisting the normally heroic discourse into a farce.

²⁹ It is clearly a "masculinist" discourse.

³⁰ Cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16; 1 Thess. 2:2; and Gal. 2:2b; 5:7 (and 1:14?); cf. also Col. 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:12; and 2 Tim. 4:7.

³¹ Fitzmyer represents well the view that relates this discourse primarily to Judaism (*Romans*, 567, 76-81) and Old Testament texts; cf. also Moo (*Romans*, 593); and Dunn (*Romans 9–16* [Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1988], esp. 580-81). But while some influence—especially at the stylistic level—may be granted, a strong Old Testament causality is unlikely. The texts that Fitzmyer and others cite cannot actually explain Paul's argument, and they do not encompass even half of Paul's athletic vocabulary, which includes here τρέχω, διώκω, καταλαμβάνω, φθάνω, τέλος, and an implicit prize—βραβεῖον (and the lexicon in the closely related Phil. 3:12-16 is still more extensive). Indeed, these observations reverse the causality suggested by Fitzmyer et al. The ubiquitous ancient imagery of pursuit, competition, and struggle that is deployed self-consciously by the ἀγών topos and used here in turn by Paul *also* informs numerous Old Testament texts. Some commentators at least acknowledge the presence of the athletic imagery

First, the evidence that the ἀγών is present: Paul speaks four times in 9:30-32 explicitly or implicitly of “pursuit” (διώκω), at the end of which a “grasping” and “attaining” (or not) take place—the terminology associated with winning and gaining a prize. This process is then interrupted by a stumble. So clearly a race of some sort is involved, although a somewhat unfortunate one. There are *eight* such references here (including the supplied ellipses). Prior to this pericope, moreover, as we noted earlier, Paul stated in 9:16—to the near universal bafflement of commentators—that God’s preference for Jacob over Esau did not depend on human willing or *running* (τρέχοντος). In 11:11 Paul resumes the metaphor, asking whether Israel has stumbled so seriously that she has fallen and suffered “defeat.”³² These references seem too frequent and sustained to be mere metaphorical flourishes on Paul’s part (and his comic manipulation of the topos will also later speak against this). But how exactly does Paul subvert the discourse? In the course of 9:30–10:5 he twists the topos in three essentially absurd directions.

(1) *Romans 9:30—those not competing have won the prize.* In 9:30 Paul states that the pagans are not running anywhere; they are not even in the ἀγών, striving for

(e.g., Käsemann, *Romans*; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*; Fitzmyer, *Romans*; and Moo, *Romans*). However, they generally do little with it argumentatively. Largely alone, Stowers grasps the subversive aspect to Paul’s use of the topos, although he interprets Paul’s argument rather differently from what is being suggested here (*Rereading Romans*, 303-6, 312-16). Keck also notes that it is an “anomaly” (*Romans*, 242).

³² Stowers again is alert to the cluster of athletic motifs here—πταίω, πίπτω, παράπτωμα, and ἥττημα (*RR*, 312-16).

“righteousness” and so for a prized crown on the future day of glorious reward. “Righteousness,” in the sense of God’s righteous action that saves them, drops into their lap, and they grasp it. So their race is over and the prize won before they have even begun to compete (cf. Matt. 20:1-16). It is as if the spoils have gone not to the athletes but to the spectators. This is the first move in the parody—those not competing have won the prize.

(2) *Romans 9:31-32a—Israel’s race is misguided.* Israel, however, is self-consciously competing in a religious race. In 9:31-32a Paul describes this as her pursuit of a teaching concerning righteous activity and so toward the law, and we have no reason to doubt the discipline and sincerity of this race (cf. the zeal of 10:2). But Israel has ignored the granting of the prize to those who are not competing—the pagan nations. Hence—in Paul’s second subversive move—she has overlooked the fact that the real race is over and she is now running onward in a race of her own making.

It is not difficult to find an explanation for Paul’s concern to undermine the motif in Romans so thoroughly, especially when he otherwise endorses it. The ἀγών motif would have lent itself readily to the teaching of his opponents, as much as it did to Paul’s own exhortations elsewhere. The righteous are engaged in a strenuous contest for perfection; they must train their bodies and minds by constant practice and effort, guided in particular *by the law and its teachers*. After long, disciplined application, struggle, and competition, they will eventually win the coveted prize made available on the day of judgment—the

victory wreath of salvation and divine approval!³³ It seems likely, then, that an ἄγών motif was a part of the Teacher's gospel;³⁴ hence, it is understandable that Paul would be subverting it here.³⁵

(3) *Romans 10:4—the Christ event as the τέλος, or finish line.* A particular construal of Paul's famous statement in Romans 10:4—τέλος [γὰρ] νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι³⁶—integrates nicely with this farcical Jewish ἄγών.³⁷ If τέλος is understood here to be the finish line in a race or contest—a

³³ Cf. perhaps most obviously 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 2:16; 3:12-14; 4:1.

³⁴ Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh & Nashville: T & T Clark & Abingdon, 1997), esp. 12-24; cf. also 25-45.

³⁵ And his subversions do not of course begin here. He undermined a probable agonistic slogan, "the Jew first, *then* the pagan," in Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10; and 3:9 (cf. *DOG*, chapter fourteen).

³⁶ It is suggested by some interpreters that the phrase εἰς δικαιοσύνην be read adnominally here in relation to the law and not "everyone who trusts." But this is unlikely. Result and purpose clauses using εἰς are a characteristic feature of Paul's argument in Romans. Paul's movement between the language of "righteousness" and "salvation" in Romans is also frequent. Hence, it seems most likely that this phrase merely reprises εἰς σωτηρίαν in 10:1 and anticipates the juxtaposition of the two phrases in v. 10. (Moo gives useful additional reasons for rejecting the adnominal alternative: *Romans*, 636-38.)

³⁷ As even Schreiner concedes (*Romans* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998]), athletic imagery pervades 9:30-33, and all the other key motifs from those verses are (as we have seen) still being discussed in 10:1-4—namely, Christ, false law observance, the righteous but misguided behavior of Israel, and the righteous act of God in Christ. Moreover, 10:5 continues the discussion of these motifs. This all suggests that the athletic imagery evident from 9:30 onward might certainly still be in play in 10:4.

meaning apparent in ancient literature³⁸—then we activate connotations of *both* “end” and “goal” (thereby perhaps moving beyond that debate), *yet do so in a way that is not theologically debilitating*.³⁹

Such a reading is certainly consistent with the comic manipulation of the ἀγών motif that we have just noted in 9:30-32a, where those not competing win and those competing seem to be doing so in a misguided race. But we appreciate now still more clearly that it is misdirected, because the real competition is already finished. If the Christ event is the “finish line” for the law, then the race is indeed over (cf. Phil. 3:2-16). Any subsequent racing on the part of Jews is

³⁸ General references can be found in Robert Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law. Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective* (JSNTSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); cf. also BDAG 998-99. In general cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 511F. This particular meaning is apparent in the references suggested by LSJ: cf. Bacchylides, *Scholia POxy*, 5.45 (and cf. “prize” in 10.6); Plato, *Republic*, 613c; Pindar, *Isthmian Ode*, 4 (3). 32 (50) (and cf. also “prize” in 1.27; *Pythian Ode*, 9.118; *Olympian Ode*, 10 [11].67; *Nemean Ode*, 7.57).

³⁹ That is, the long debate whether τέλος means “end” or “goal” is arguably a false storm center. Both attitudes to the law are well attested in Paul: he speaks clearly elsewhere of the law’s termination in some sense, as well as its fulfillment (see most obviously Rom. 3:21—which combines both notions—but also Rom. 1:2-4; 15:4; 2 Cor. 1:20; 4:13; etc.). And both meanings are not infrequently present in this signifier’s use; certainly both are present in its construal as “finish line.” To his credit—and largely alone among the commentators—Dunn argues for deemphasizing this question and endorsing a “both-and” reading (although in fact he emphasizes the notion of “end”): *Romans 9–16*, 589. However, neither alternative resolves the more important underlying question whether Paul is arguing retrospectively or prospectively at this point, since both “end” and “goal” are compatible with prospective characterizations of his gospel.

therefore misdirected if not ludicrous.⁴⁰ The advantage of this reading is that it can integrate the strong contextual signals that τέλος in 10:4 suggests some sort of goal⁴¹ with the equally strong signals that something is being terminated, or ended.⁴² But the mistake of Israel—from Paul’s point of view—is also interpreted in an a posteriori rather than an a priori fashion; Israel makes her mistake *after* the end of the race has arrived, not on the way *to* that goal. So she can be held responsible primarily for not responding appropriately to Christ, and for treating the law inappropriately from that point on, rather than for stupidly and/or unethically failing to understand her own law, Scriptures, and history⁴³ prior to

⁴⁰ And it is not difficult to find further support in this realization for my earlier suggestion that 9:6a be rendered in terms of “deviating” or “drifting off course.”

⁴¹ The strength of which is seen in Badenas’s study (*Christ*). He is well aware of the use of τέλος to denote a finish line in a race. Keck points to this specific connection as well (*Romans*, 249).

⁴² It should not be controversial to suggest that for Paul the arrival of Christ terminates the law in some sense: cf. Rom. 7:6; 8:2; Gal. 3:23-25; 4:4-5; 5:1-4; Phil. 3:7-11. It is important to grasp in addition that the use of the law prior to Christ does not necessarily correlate with its later use by particular Jews or Jewish Christians: cf. Phil. 3:3-6. The clearest law-related terminations in context are the abandonment of “works of law,” which are mentioned in 9:32, along with pursuit of God’s righteous action by way of a νόμος δικαιοσύνης εις νόμον (9:31). Israel is also described as “zealous” but “ignorant” in 10:2, and involved in 10:3 in some attempted establishment of her own righteous activity, which is wrong. Presumably, all these things should cease.

⁴³ There is also no need to assert a fixed, negative description of Judaism in the period prior to the coming of Christ, on which the gospel account will build—one of the enduring conundrums of Justification theory. Cf. *DOG*, chapters one, four and six; also *Quest*, 132-45.

Christ's arrival.⁴⁴ Consequently, this reading draws the theological sting from the motif—from an apocalyptic point of view—while respecting its semantic content.

But we have yet to consider 9:32b-33—the final piece in this pericope's intriguing puzzle. Paul's metaphorical enthusiasm, not to mention aggression, leads to a slight complication here.

(4) *Romans 9:32b-33—the Christ event as a stumbling stone.* In v. 33 Paul introduces a set of scriptural texts that intensifies his subversion of the ἀγών discourse—his third such move. The Christ event is, according to Isaiah 8:14 (and probably by way of a Hebrew stone/son wordplay⁴⁵) a stone laid in Zion, a stone that offends and trips, although the one who believes in it will not be ashamed (so the appended Isa. 28:16). Israel has not believed, so she stumbles, and this clearly undermines further any sense that Jews are involved successfully in a religious

⁴⁴ In other words, the metaphor of a “goal” is being subverted by Paul in 10:4, so that motif does not need to imply that Israel was involved prior to Christ in goal-oriented activity as well, a reading that potentially endorses a prospective theological program. Paul is not necessarily endorsing the discourse *and* subverting it at the same time.

⁴⁵ Cf. אֶבֶן and בֶּן; cf. also Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM, 1970), 50-53; also Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 202-4; and the nuanced account of J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 126-42; cf. also Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 10:210 (where he is evasive concerning the meaning of the stone spoken of in Dan. 2:34); and *Jewish War*, 5:272. The latter text recounts a fascinating practice that took place during the siege of Jerusalem, and has already been noted in part in *DOG*, chapter fifteen.

race. If they are, then they have fallen flat on their faces according to Paul's use of Isaiah.⁴⁶

The stumbling motif is a significant one for Paul, because he returns to it in 11:11 to ask if whether is irrecoverable, asserting there that it is not. However, this notion operates awkwardly in relation to the subversion that he has developed in 9:30-32a and 10:4. There the race is over before it starts; Israel races off into the distance on an absurd race of her own making. Here, however, she is racing along but trips and falls. Now technically, she can't do both these things at once—race off in a competition that is over *and* fall while competing.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ A minority has suggested identifications for the stone other than Christ (e.g., Meyer, Gaston, Davis, and Meeks, surveyed by Keck, *Romans*, 245). However, this seems unlikely in view of the act of belief in it, echoed by 10:4 and 10:9-13, which points both implicitly and explicitly to Christ (so correctly A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans. A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* [London & Louisville: Westminster-John Knox, 2002], 98). Indeed, in the insistence that Israel has stumbled over a stone consisting of her own misreading of the law, we encounter—probably unwittingly—the apogee of the anti-Jewish, prospective reading (which does not make the reading wrong, but it does encourage us to explore alternatives).

⁴⁷ The commentators generally overlook this distinction, but it is unavoidable in the text. The pagans, Paul states in 9:30, are *not* involved in a race at all, hence the irony of the receipt of a prize. This activity then contrasts with the racing Israelites who do not attain to that prize because of some form of misdirection in relation to the law; they are racing in the wrong direction, εἰς νόμον, after the finish line has already been passed by. So there is no actual race unfolding *between* pagan and Jew. Neither is this apparent in 11:11-12. When Paul does return to comparison between the two he uses the metaphor of a tree, not of a competition (see 11:17-24), the terms of the discussion being shifted overtly in 11:15-16. Consequently, 9:33 *must* add a further layer to a set of subversions rather than fill out a single, consistent analogy.

However, I am not sure that this matters very much. Paul is subverting a metaphorical discourse within a broader polemic on his part. It is not fatal, or perhaps even surprising, if he mixes his own metaphors in the process. The letter's auditors probably got the basic point. Any suggestion that the Christian life is a race run in accordance with the law is not an inspiring appeal so much as a ludicrous illustration. Such runners race off in the wrong direction, or they trip and fall. But it might be worth noting in addition that Paul's two comic subversions here also correspond reasonably well to the two aspects of Israel's misstep. Insofar as she pursues salvation through righteous activity oriented by the law—through "works"—she runs a race of her own making, ignoring the fact that the real race is actually over. Insofar as she rejects the Christ event as God's appointed route to salvation, she trips up and falls over something important that is lying at her very feet; she overlooks a vital point. So Paul's mixed metaphors are arguably caused in part by his desire to illustrate the two aspects of Israel's basic difficulty, and to do so while subverting an ἀγών discourse, with one eye at the same time on a useful prophetic text. (Small wonder that not everything correlates perfectly!) And with these interpretative judgments in place, we are now in a position to consider the important underlying implications.

5.3 Implications

It is clear that Romans 9:30–10:5 contains a juxtaposition of religious modes—*ἔργων νόμου* and *πίστις*—and this creates a critical set of interpretative options.

We could construe the antithesis in a prospective manner, as the majority of interpreters do; the concern of the Jews with their own righteousness *leads to* the rejection of the later righteous act by God in Christ.⁴⁸ A prospective construal would ultimately endorse Justification theory, or some similar reconstruction of Paul's thinking, both here and elsewhere. But this interpretative decision is, as far as I can tell, invariably assumed rather than established. Nothing decisive is ever cited from the text in its support. And indeed, as far as I can tell, *there is nothing in the text that stands against the opposite possibility*—that anthropocentric, Jewish righteousness is a post-Christian phenomenon. On this reading, the Jews' *ignoring* of the Christ event—the righteous act of salvation proceeding from God—results in the *subsequent* establishment of a false, alternative righteous activity, *and arguably even does so necessarily*. “Works of law,” then, do not precede faith, but follow it.

I want to consider this important question “semi-independently” at first, since this can provide stronger corroboration for the rereading that was developed earlier (semi-independent because a particular approach to Paul's use of $\pi\sigma\tau$ -terminology must still be imported from that earlier point, the immediate evidence here being insufficient to decide this question either way).

⁴⁸ Commentators are in broad agreement on this point. That the antithesis could be completely nonprospective does not seem to occur as a possibility. Some commentators do stretch to a “mixed” approach: cf. Stowers, *Rereading Romans*; and Keck, *Romans*, 242-48; Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 341. But I am not sure that this is ultimately helpful. If Paul is held to be reasoning theologically in opposed directions simultaneously—both prospectively and retrospectively in relation to “works of law”—then the consequences for our interpretation of his thinking are dire (so *Quest*, 33, 46-48).

And there are in fact two closely related but distinguishable questions to be addressed. What is the order of these two states, and what is Paul's theological rationale for so arranging them?—questions, we might say, of narrative and of explanation. The question of narrative should be addressed first, because if a retrospective plot-line can be established, so to speak, then the theological rationale follows from that automatically—i.e., an essentially retrospective, apocalyptic rationale that we are already quite familiar with. Conversely, a prospective plot-line opens up the possibility of less constructive, non-apocalyptic rationales.⁴⁹

What, then, is the narrative priority of these two basic states? Does Israel's establishment of her own righteous activity precede her repudiation of the faithful Christ in Paul's discussion, or does her repudiation of the faithful Christ result somehow in her establishment of her own righteous activity? Do "works of law" as a religious program (so to speak) go before or follow the Christ event, as Paul articulates these events here? Much rests on the answer that we give to this basic question. And the available evidence seems to indicate that "works of law" by Jews *follow* the Christ event for Paul, and do not precede it.

(1) Paul seems constantly to treat this antithesis as a perfect correlation and real alternative: it is *either* "works of law" or πίστις, as in 9:32a

⁴⁹ This approach will preserve the relative independence of our analysis of Romans 9:30–10:5. Once the order has been determined, we can infer Paul's rationale here with a reasonable degree of certainty. Without the judgment in terms of narrative priority that he did proceed in this manner, however, there seems to be no basis for proving or disproving that this was in fact his underlying theological program.

(and, in effect, 10:3). However, if “works” refers to a pre-Christian, preparatory state, there is not a perfect correlation. For all those practicing “works of law” who are not reached by preaching—and this group includes significant numbers of pagans, as well as Jews living before ca. 30 CE—there is *only* “works of law.” πίστις is not an option. But, as far as I can tell, Paul never explicitly suggests or affirms this scenario—a statement of the principle of “works of law alone.” Rather “works of law” versus πίστις always seems to be a live option; it is one or the other. If “works of law” follow the Christ event, then Paul’s antithesis stands, but not vice versa.

- (2) In close relation to this, it is not surprising to find that the immediately preceding context for Romans 9:30–10:5, namely, 9:6–26, which contains Paul’s most extensive treatment of the nature of pre-Christian Israel, never characterizes that situation in terms of “works of law”—far from it. Paul characterizes pre-Christian Israel, as we have seen, in terms of gifts, privileges, and election. (This corresponds with his analysis of pre-Christian Israel elsewhere as well, notably, in Galatians 3:15–25; cf. also Phil. 3:2–6.) Indeed, that the divine election of the patriarchs is based on works is *explicitly denied in 9:12!* (οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ...). This is not to deny that pre-Christian Israel possesses a certain freedom, not to mention a certain sinfulness, and is engaged to some degree in law-regulated activity. But Paul never articulates that situation in terms of “works of law”—as righteous legal

activity directed ultimately toward salvation in a contractual or conditional fashion (except arguably here, and hence this text's importance). "Works of law" arrive in 9:32, *just after Christ does*. (The divine call to the pagans in Christ is spoken of using prophetic intertexts from 9:24 onward.⁵⁰)

(3) The disobedience of Israel that Paul goes on to emphasize strongly in context, in Romans 10:6-21, is almost completely oriented by the rejection of Christ. Indeed, "works of law" now drop completely from view. (See only 11:6, which is another denial, and almost certainly inferential, not temporal.) But they should not if "works" characterize a preceding generic state, without the traversing of which recognition and acceptance of Christ are impossible. In that role they should continue to be an ongoing part of Israel's problem. That they are not suggests that they do not fulfill this preparatory role for Paul.

(4) Paul's account of why "works of law" are wrong in this passage is inadequate; it is too "flat." As we have already seen at some length, most accounts of "works" suggest that they are not wrong in and of themselves; technically, they should be salvific, but humans are too sinful to perform them. It is the realization of human sinfulness

⁵⁰ And perhaps corresponding to this puzzling absence, the pagans in 9:30 are said by Paul explicitly *not* to be pursuing "works of law" when they receive the δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως (although perhaps—the Teacher might reply—this is because they are not listening and have completely rejected this mode of salvation, or its equivalent—Rom. 1:18-32!).

through their repeated attempted performance and failure that prepares for the arrival of the gospel and the exercise of “faith”—a deeper, richer account of their theological function.⁵¹ But Paul never articulates this deeper internal psychological dynamic here. He simply denotes that any pursuit of salvation through “works of law” is misguided in and of itself as a practice, *irrespective of any theological lessons learned*.⁵² It is wrong *as a way to life*. And this again points to a responsive, rather than a preparatory function.

- (5) Paul’s subversion of the ἀγών motif in relation to Israel places the bulk of Israel’s activity after the arrival of Christ; this is what makes the subversion effective. She races off after the race is over. Paul thus characterizes “works” as a false preoccupation after Christ’s arrival.⁵³

Hence, I conclude that there is little or no evidence from the immediate context of Romans 9:30–10:5 to support the conventional, prospective arrangement of

⁵¹ A point made famous of course by Stendahl’s accusation of “introspection” (see *DOG*, chapter six); for a precise theological account see *DOG*, chapter one (in largely theoretical terms), but also in *DOG*, chapters eight and ten (i.e., in church historical and exegetical terms).

⁵² The absence of any description of the appropriate corresponding function for Christ—as an atoning sacrifice paying for those sins committed while pursuing works of law—is also embarrassing.

⁵³ This observation must be tempered, however, by the third move in the subversion—the stumble—which seems to occur part of the way through a race. In response, it can be suggested that the ludicrous ἀγών (as against the failed ἀγών) is more prominent in context, being negated three times. But this is not a decisive contention.

“works of law” and πίστις in this text, but quite a bit to be said in favor of the opposite view—that “works of law” follow Christ here.⁵⁴ And with this judgment, our second important question can be answered—namely, that a retrospective theological analysis of “works” and “faith” is probably also in play. This rationale will be detailed in due course—after a scrutiny of Paul’s argument in 10:6-21 (see esp. § 8.1)—so it can suffice to say at present that the first three challenges issued by Romans 9:30–10:5 to an apocalyptic rereading of Paul seem to have been defused—this text’s apparent generic endorsement of the law in terms of “works,” its characterization of Christ as some sort of τέλος in relation to the law, and its citation of Leviticus 18:5. All of these motifs can and arguably should be read within a retrospective, apocalyptic schema—conclusions apparent even on a semi-independent reading. And with these judgments we can turn to examine the fourth challenge in detail—the theme of “faith” that is so prominent in the rest of Romans 10 (specifically, vv. 6-17, although the relevant arguments extends through v. 21).

⁵⁴ The more historicized approach urged by Dunn and Wright—with “works of law” denoting selfish Jewish attitudes to the badges of the covenant such as circumcision, diet, and Sabbath observance—admittedly avoids some of these problems. However, other, even more serious problems arguably attend this explanation, as we have seen already in *DOG*, chapter twelve. Moreover, it is worth noting that nothing *in* Romans 9:30–10:5 or its context actually supports this suggested, sociological interpretation of the phrase! So, e.g., Dunn’s commentary simply introduces the notion repeatedly, without explicit justification (*Romans 9–16*, 576-77, 81-83, 86-88, 93, 95-96).

§ 6 Romans 10:6-21

Somewhat incredibly, we hear little of “works” in Romans 9–11 after 10:5—or before 9:31-32. (There is the briefest of repudiations in 11:6, corresponding to an equally brief dismissal in 9:12.) But there is an extensive discussion of “faith,” extending through both famously resonant and infamously obscure (or even unfair) claims by the apostle—the fourth interpretative challenge that the apocalyptic rereader faces in this text. Are we forced to endorse a more anthropocentric and conditional construal of the function of faith here, or is an alternative, christocentric reading sustainable—or even preferable?!

6.1 Romans 10:6-8

The subsection’s obscure statements seem to arrive first, in vv. 6-8:

⁶ἢ [δὲ] ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη οὕτως λέγει·
 μὴ εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου·
 τίς ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν;
 τοῦτ’ ἔστιν Χριστὸν καταγαγεῖν·
⁷ἢ· τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον;
 τοῦτ’ ἔστιν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν.
⁸ἀλλὰ τί λέγει;
 ἐγγύς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν
 ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου,
 τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ κηρύσσομεν.

A number of questions have puzzled interpreters at this point, in particular, the identity of the speaker in v. 6-8, whom Paul identifies only as ἡ [δὲ] ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη, and the rationale—if any—that underlies Paul’s astonishing reinterpretation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in a christocentric and rather “oral” fashion. Beyond these issues (and building on them), interpreters ask why Paul has actually done all this—that is, quoted Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in this slanted way at this point in his discussion. What is the rhetorical purpose of this somewhat outlandish maneuver? I will need to find plausible answers to these questions if I am to claim subsequently that my rhetorical and apocalyptic reading is sustainable through this material. However, some reasonable answers do arguably become apparent if we interpret this text in continuity with the rereading that has been developed up to this point in the letter. Three elements within that rereading are now especially helpful: (1) the reference of much of Paul’s πιστ- language, especially by way of the substantive πίστις and the phrase ἐκ πίστεως, to Christ; (2) the emerging connection between Christ and wisdom (cf. esp. 1:16 and 9:6-26); and (3) the invariable rhetorical backdrop to Paul’s assertions of the Teacher’s opposing gospel, which probably used this Deuteronomic text for its own, more conventionally Jewish purposes (i.e., to urge the observance of the law upon any prospective converts). When these three insights are integrated into the discussion, Paul’s difficult text comes into focus more clearly; it seems much more responsible, in both intertextual and rhetorical terms, than we might previously have been led to believe, from which point we can also build toward a plausible interpretation of the broader discussion.

(1) *The reference of Paul's πιστ- language to Christ.* Our first step toward greater clarity takes place as we attribute the two instances of πίστις used here by Paul to Christ himself. The first such attribution, in v. 6, merely follows the intertextual cue that has been so significant throughout the letter (i.e., ἐκ πίστεως) and has been used already in context in 9:30 and 32. These instances should be interpreted consistently. Moreover, the phrase ἡ [δὲ] ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη clearly resumes Paul's earlier, concentrated use of δικαιοσύνη in vv. 30, 31, and 10:3, with an almost identical phrase occurring in 9:30—δικαιοσύνη δὲ ἐκ πίστεως. We have good reason already for interpreting this material with respect to Christ. But this decision in relation to v. 6 is reinforced by the overt twofold reference of the Deuteronomic text to Christ himself in vv. 6b and 7; Paul states explicitly that *Christ* is the one who does not need to be sought either in heaven or in the abyss. These decisions have the further virtue of allowing the phrase τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως in v. 8 to be referred to Christ as well. And once this is done, a satisfying unity is imparted to the voice's recommendations, as against a somewhat puzzling divergence of reference. The word that is near to the mouth and heart of the listener is identical with Christ, who does not need to be brought nearer by retrieval from either heaven or the abyss. Paul speaks throughout this set of verses of Christ and Christ alone. This identification does not resolve all our interpretative difficulties, but at least we can now recognize that Paul is talking consistently in some sense about Christ in vv. 6-8. (And—to recall an earlier caveat—this is not to exclude the role of belief on the part of the recipient of Christ; that activity will become more prominent in Paul's argument momentarily.)

Most interpreters hold that the christological reinterpretations of the Deuteronomic text that are taking place through vv. 6-8 are clarifications by Paul, analogous to other *peshet* interpretations in his day.⁵⁵ It is reasonably obvious that the clauses τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χριστὸν καταγαγεῖν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν, and τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ κηρύσσομεν, are not being spoken by the "voice" of vv. 6 and 8. All three comments are introduced by the overt interpretative signal τοῦτ' ἔστιν, while the third must refer to Paul and his fellow missionaries (cf. esp. vv. 15-17), drawing him explicitly into these statements ("... the word concerning the faithful one that *we* proclaim"). So Paul is clarifying things here for his auditors. But it is not these clarifications that have occasioned discussion in the past, so much as their rationale (or apparent lack of one).

(2) *Paul's rationale—a Christianized wisdom discourse.* Running through the center of this argument is, of course, a Deuteronomic text that applies in its own context quite unequivocally to the law. Moreover, it was delivered (in canonical terms) by Moses from the east side of the Jordan to the assembled Israelites in an important reaffirmation of the earlier covenantal event of Horeb. So Paul's bald

⁵⁵ Cf. Christopher Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SntSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 336-41 (cf. also 415-513). Lim correctly notes that it is not *entirely* accurate to call Paul's technique here a *peshet*; cf. Timothy H. Lim, *Holy Scripture in the Qumran Commentaries and Pauline Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 124-39; Lim, "Midrash Peshet in the Pauline Letters," in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: JSOT, 1997), 280-92.

ascription of this text to Christ simply seems exegetically appalling—a groundless and even interpretatively violent reappropriation of one of Judaism’s most precious moments. However, this ascriptive violence is palliated—at least to some degree—by the observation of M. Jack Suggs and Elizabeth Johnson (i.a.) that Judaism had *itself* already reread this text with reference to wisdom, and this reorientation probably underlies its further reappropriation by Paul in Romans 10 in relation to Christ.⁵⁶ These scholars point to the rereading of this Deuteronomic tradition in Baruch 3:29-30: “Who has gone up into heaven, and taken her [i.e., wisdom], and brought her down from the clouds? Who has gone over the sea, and found her, and will buy her for pure gold?” (NRSV). It is clear that Christ is the wisdom of God for Paul;⁵⁷ hence, if Judaism was already reascribing the words of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 to wisdom, it hardly seems so offensive for the apostle to articulate that identification here further in terms of Christ. Moreover, that Paul is manipulating wisdom traditions in Romans, and in

⁵⁶ M. J. Suggs, “the Word Is near You’: Roman 10:6-10 within the Purpose of the Letter,” in *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. R. Farmer, et al. (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 289-312; R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 73-83; E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9-11* (SBLDS 109; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars, 1989); Edith M. Humphrey, “Why Bring the Word Down? The Rhetoric of Demonstration and Disclosure in Romans 9:30-10:21,” in *Romans and the People of God*, ed. Sven K. Soderlund, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 129-48; Wright, “The Letter to the Romans,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L. Keck (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2002), 658-66; Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 159-68.

⁵⁷ Cf. most obviously 1 Cor. 1:30. I would add, however, that the two notions are not coterminous for Paul; he identifies wisdom with the Spirit as well.

the context of Romans 10 in particular, is already apparent, reinforcing the likelihood of this identification still further.

A subtle allusion to wisdom has already been noted in 1:16 in close association with the terminology of δικαιοσύνη, along with the emergence of a wisdom thematology in Romans 9:6-25. However, resonances with wisdom are also detectable in Romans 10 in various ways. First, Paul has switched the term “sea” in the original Deuteronomy text (which also recurs in its rereading in Baruch) for the far less common “abyss” (ἄβυσσος), a term found principally in wisdom literature.⁵⁸ Second, Paul speaks in v. 12 of the Lord “enriching everyone who calls him” (πλουτῶν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους αὐτόν). This is most unusual terminology in this relation for Paul (if not in the rest of the New Testament),⁵⁹ but it resonates directly with the common trope in wisdom

⁵⁸ It occurs around 50x in the LXX (including four instances in the Odes in this total), principally in wisdom literature. It is very rare in the New Testament, occurring outside Revelation only here (Rom. 10:7) and in Luke 8:31 (when the legion occupying the demoniac begs not to be sent into the abyss). In Revelation the word is more common, occurring in 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

⁵⁹ There are only twelve occurrences in the New Testament, and three in Paul; cf. elsewhere only a literal use in 1 Cor. 4:8, and the most intriguing 2 Cor. 8:9, which may well also participate in a wisdom discourse, although this does not always seem to be noted. The commentators are preoccupied with refuting Dunn’s thesis that Christ is not pre-existent in Paul (James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [London: SCM, 1980]), the parallel with Phil. 2:5-11, and the possibility that genuine economic poverty is meant in some sense; cf. Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 32A (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 404-5, 417-18; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, Texas: Word, 1986), 262-64; Margaret E. Thrall, *A*

discourses that praises the value of wisdom as far in excess of gold and other treasure.⁶⁰ It may then be no coincidence that, third, Paul quotes a wisdom text at the conclusion of this particular argument in v. 18b—Psalm 19:4 (and cf. esp. 19:10!). Fourth, the repeated language of calling, words, and summons that sounds through Romans 9–11 seems to echo with those interwoven tropes in wisdom discourses. (See more on this material momentarily.) Fifth, and finally, this link will integrate perfectly with the probable reconstruction of the Teacher’s gospel at this point—a reconstruction that Paul is almost certainly trying to counter at this stage in his argument. (See more on this aspect of the discussion momentarily as well.) Hence, it seems fair to suggest that Paul is using a wisdom discourse in Romans 10 here in relation to the Deuteronomic text that he is manipulating christologically.

But this realization that a wisdom discourse is operative in Romans 9–11 may also allow us to resolve a further puzzle in this passage, namely, the identity of the speaker in vv. 6–8—ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως. It now seems likely that this voice is simply God’s as he speaks to his people about his special child, wisdom, who is now identified more specifically as Christ. Indeed, even more specifically, God seems to be *calling* his people to recognition of this vital fact, summoning them to acknowledge and receive Christ even as wisdom frequently calls to the wise and to Israel in her texts. This identification builds on the strangely active and “oral” activity of God in Romans 9–11. (And, again, it integrates exactly with

Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Volume II: Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII (London: T & T Clark International [Continuum], 2004 [2000]), 532–34).

⁶⁰ Cf. classically Prov. 2:1–4; 3:13–16; 8:18–19, 21 (here promising wealth as well as exceeding it).

Paul's probable argumentative strategy here, as we will see shortly.)

Significations of speech and speaking are heavily concentrated in Romans 9–11, and several strategically critical instances are linked directly to God himself.

The verb λέγω, admittedly common in the New Testament, is nevertheless densely deployed here, with no fewer than twenty-five instances. It complements the occurrence that is rather less usual in Paul of λόγος, which has three of its seven occurrences in Romans in chapter 9. More indicative than mere statistical instances, however, is the grammatical coordination of several of these instances with God. As we have already seen, “the word of God” is one of the driving forces in the account of Israel's ancestral history in Romans 9—see especially 9:6 and 9. But rarer words of speech are also clustered in this text.

Paul uses the alternative designation of “word,” ῥῆμα, much more infrequently than he does λόγος, and it tends to be prompted by its occurrence in scriptural intertexts. Of its six occurrences in his undisputed letters, four are in Romans 10 (cf. Rom. 10:8 [2x, the first instance—of course—Deut. 30:14], 17, 18 [Ps. 19:4]; 2 Cor. 12:4 [a pun]; 13:1 [a quotation of Deut. 10:15]; cf. Eph. 5:26; 6:17 [this last a reference to the Spirit]). καλέω, meanwhile, occurs eleven times in Romans, eight of those being in Romans 9–10 (and two in 8:30)! Even more significantly, God is the subject of *all* the “calls” in chapter 9 (cf. 9:7, 12, 24, 25, 26; he is also the subject of the calls in 4:17 and 8:30 [2x]).

When this repeated emphasis on speech, and in particular the speech of God in Romans 9–11, is combined with the repeated allusions to wisdom and its emphases on calling and summons, it seems likely that the voice speaking the Deuteronomic words in vv. 6–8 is the voice of God, discoursing about his child,

wisdom, who is now arriving in and as Christ. The righteous act of God through the faithful Christ entails that Christ has come down from heaven, and up from the abyss, and in that act God himself is speaking to his people. The two divine acts fuse. But if Paul's strange use of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 is now more comprehensible in broader interpretative terms—as part of a Christianized wisdom discourse—we have yet to find out why he is deploying this complex textual interplay at this point in Romans. However, an answer to *that* question now lies near to hand.

(3) *Paul's rhetorical purpose—Israel's accountability for her rejection of Christ.* I suggest that there are two rhetorical aspects to Paul's rescripting of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in accordance with divine wisdom in Romans 10—one negative and one positive (and, as we have seen, this double rhetorical function is characteristic of much of Paul's carefully crafted argument in Romans).

First, negatively, it seems highly likely that the Teacher was also using Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in his gospel presentation, so Paul's careful reorientation of this text in Romans 10 toward Christ counters and even subverts any such deployment by the Teacher. As he has done for so many of the Teacher's key terms and motifs, Paul attempts here to wrest material away from that competing system, although in this case an entire text! Several observations undergird this judgment.

Deuteronomy 30:12-14 is reasonably well attested in Jewish literature in Paul's day, and sometimes even in programmatic locations.⁶¹ Moreover, it is easy to understand why the Teacher would have used it. The link between the law and wisdom—well established in Judaism by now—opens up a host of powerful rhetorical opportunities. Acceptance of the law understood in this sense would involve access to a superior personal ethic, as wisdom indwells the soul of the righteous person; but it would also supply access to the secrets of just government and the cosmos and guarantee the tutelage and care of God's providence. The treasures of the universe are contained in it! At the same time, the countervailing theme of the inaccessibility of wisdom would have allowed the purveyors of wisdom mantic roles of considerable influence; they alone could provide access to this wisdom through their texts and teachings. The wisdom discourse can consequently underwrite rhetorics of status and power by their proclaimers.

That the Teacher endorsed this Jewish discourse is almost certain. In Romans 2:17-20 Paul reproduces the Teacher's privileges (in order to undermine them, of course), and their principal component is learning in the law. But Paul goes on to describe the law in relation to the Teacher as "the embodiment of knowledge and of truth" (...τὴν μὀρφωσιὴν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας...)—wisdom language! Moreover, the Teacher's deep involvement with the Wisdom of Solomon is well attested by now, suggesting his familiarity with this

⁶¹ In addition to Baruch 3:29-30, cf. esp. Philo, *The Posterity and Exile of Cain*, 84; *On the Change of Names*, 237; *On the Virtues*, 183; and *Every Good Man is Free*, 68. The relevance of 4 Ezra is noted just below.

discourse.⁶² So Paul almost certainly had good reason to reorient Deuteronomy 30:12-14 away from the law and from wisdom, and toward Christ. In so doing, he was attempting to defuse one of the Teacher's main scriptural texts, along with one of his key sets of claims. Perhaps a discussion of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 was meant to follow the initial establishment of the problem by the Teacher in terms analogous to Romans 1:18-32. In this relation, it is worth recalling that the immediate frame for this Old Testament text is "[c]hoose life that you might live" (Deut. 30:19); it is a *decision* text (and even seems to be attested as such by other roughly contemporaneous Jewish texts).⁶³ But now when the Teacher quoted Deuteronomy 30 and invoked his listeners to choose life that they might live, the Roman auditors, having heard Romans 10, would think immediately of God's wisdom incarnate in Christ—which was presumably a choice, and a life, that they already had made and grasped—and not of law, where the Teacher hoped to direct their enthusiasm.

Yet while this hypothesis for the negative aspect of Paul's rhetorical strategy seems basically plausible, it does not explain completely why Paul undertakes this delicate textual reorientation precisely here in his unfolding argument. In order to address this explanatory shortfall, we must turn to consider a possible positive aspect in Paul's argument.

⁶² See esp. Wis. 6:12-19; 7:1-8:21.

⁶³ Cf. esp. 4 *Ezra* 7:129; cf. also 8:56, noted by Richard Bauckham, "Apocalypses," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume I: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2001), 171. Bauckham detects the use of Deut. 30:19-20 in 4 *Ezra* 14:30 as well. Wright also notes a "proverbial" use in 4 *Ezra* 4:7-8 ("The Letter to the Romans," 661).

It is important to recall the broader issue that Paul is addressing in Romans 10—the failure of the majority of Israel to respond positively to Christ, a failure that seems in turn to discredit Paul’s “Jewish” gospel and his own Jewish loyalties (and especially if he views unbelieving Jews as condemned). In the light of this overarching agenda, Paul’s manipulation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 can arguably be seen to function within a particular rhetorical trajectory that is unfolding through Romans 9–11 in response to these challenges. Paul has initiated this line of argument already, in 9:33a, and he seems to continue it after 10:6-8 as well, especially in 10:14-17, so our full discussion of this dynamic should be postponed until those later verses have been addressed. However, we can certainly note enough information at this point to respond to our current dilemma.

In 9:33a Paul quoted Isaiah 8:14, which states that God has laid a “stone of stumbling and rock of offense in Zion.” Certainly, this text predicts trouble in relation to any Jewish response to the designated stone; it is prophetically foretold that this rock will trip and offend. However, it is important to appreciate that this text suggests as well that *God himself has placed this stone in Zion*. The all-important stone, trust in which will deliver from eschatological humiliation, has been set by God in Jerusalem. In other words, God seems to have stooped down and come near to his people, placing the key to their life and salvation in their very midst. And Paul’s reorientation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 corresponds exactly to this earlier sentiment. It suggests that God has spoken to his people directly, bringing Christ down (or up) to them, so that no travel either to heaven or into the abyss is necessary in order to find him. This wisdom is not inaccessible, then, but could not be more accessible (a striking reversal of certain

aspects of the wisdom discourse as well).⁶⁴ Indeed, God has placed the critical word(s) in their very mouths and hearts.

Paul has thus responded to the conundrum of Jewish rejection of Christ by suggesting quite simply that God has come all the way to Israel, presenting her with the easiest of responses, so that as she refuses, her accountability for that response is plain and unavoidable. She is, one might say, ἀναπολόγητος. God has done everything that he can to present her with this option; he has come near in Christ—as near as the mouth and the heart (and we will address the theological ground that underlies Paul’s rather shocking confidence in this regard shortly). So it seems to be a simple but effective rebuttal. Moreover, in this way he has also subverted one of the Teacher’s key decision texts, turning it against him. That text now functions in an apologetic account explaining the *unbelief* of Israel, not the belief of pagan converts!

In short, in response to the challenge that the majority of Israel has not responded to Christ, Paul seems to be replying in Romans 10:6-8 that Israel is nevertheless accountable for this turn away from God’s action in Christ, not God or anyone (or anything) else.⁶⁵ It is her fault. He has much more to say on this

⁶⁴ In this sense, moreover, Paul is being faithful to both the original Deuteronomic text and its later reinterpretation in terms of wisdom. Both those texts essentially predicate a certain approach to God—a stooping down to bring what is necessary for Israel near (in Deuteronomy, the law, and in Baruch, wisdom identified with the law).

⁶⁵ I hasten to add that this notion of “accountability” must be framed very carefully indeed. Paul hedges it with various qualifications (cf. esp. 11:32), and it should certainly *not* be located in any a priori, prospective schema, as in Justification theory. Paul places it, rather, in this qualified and a posteriori position. It is best, then, to speak of a “soft” rather than a “hard”

question; however, this is the relevant element here, because it explains what he is doing in Romans 10:6-8. And we can now see that this argumentative trajectory continues through the verses that follow (and that continue to concern us)—vv. 9-10, 11-13, and 14-21.

6.2 Romans 10:9-10

We come now to Paul's famous statements in vv. 9 and 10:

⁸...Ἐγγύς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν
 ἐν τῷ στόματί σου
 καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου
 τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ κηρύσσομεν
⁹ὅτι ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν
 καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ
 νεκρῶν
 σωθήσῃ [10]
 καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην
 στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν.

The first thing to note is the way that Paul has crafted this material as a further explication of the texts he has been citing since v. 6; these verses are actually all of a piece. So on one level, he extends the mouth-heart antithesis of

accountability in Paul. Moreover, it is vital to resist reading this situation in an essentially modern, "Kantian" way, in which "ought implies can." For Paul, this does not necessarily seem to have been the case. Israel ought to have responded to Christ, although he holds elsewhere that she could not respond to him.

Deuteronomy 30:14 with an artful chiasm (mouth's confession—heart's trust—heart's trust—mouth's confession). But the *content* of these two complementary activities also resumes, at least in its first chiastic wing, the signals of Deuteronomy 30:12-13, where another, complementary antithesis was deployed, although there in relation to Christ—heavenly life and death in the abyss. In v. 9 the mouth confesses Jesus' lordship, which the confessors have not had to ascend to heaven to ascertain, and the heart trusts in Christ's resurrection, which the trusters have not had to descend into the abyss to effect or ascertain. Hence, the entire discussion is integrated as an explication of Deuteronomy 30:12-14. But we must not lose Paul's principal rhetorical point in the details of his intertextual craft.

The overarching impression generated by this exquisitely constructed textual interplay is that the speaker of Deuteronomy 30:12-14—God—has done everything to bring Christ to the very threshold of his people's being—to their mouths and their hearts (and even "in" them, as the text suggests). Everything has been accomplished, except for the responses of confession and trust and call (and these will be glossed momentarily by Paul in terms of submission as well: see v. 16). God has come near to his people in Christ and asked only for them to confess the resurrection, heavenly enthronement, and lordship of his Christ—the very confession in fact that the Roman Christians have been affirming since vv. 2-4 of the letter. If these responses are present, then they are indeed saved. (Unfortunately, however, we know already that they are not.)

A number of details in this dramatic offer are worth noting before we consider the verses that follow.

- (1) These verses strongly confirm the saving and eschatological nuances that were previously detected in Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη (see *DOG*, chapter seventeen). Saving language functions interchangeably with δικαιο- language in these verses, and it completes a process focused on the resurrection and heavenly enthronement of Christ.

- (2) The progression in Paul's use of πιστ- language apparent earlier in the letter is evident here as well, although in a slightly more articulated fashion. Paul's rereading of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in Romans 10:6-10 begins by focusing on a narrative of Christ—his death, resurrection, and heavenly enthronement—which is recounted briefly in vv. 6-7 and 8b and then continues as Christians believe in and confess that narrative, as suggested by vv. 8a and 9-10. So God's saving act proceeds "through faith"—the faithful Christ—"to faith"—in the belief and confession of Christians.

- (3) The conditional structure of v. 9 should not be overinterpreted. Here Paul states that "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, [then] you will be saved" (NRSV). Strictly speaking, the conditional relationship expressed in this sentence relates the content of the protasis to the apodosis and nothing more; those who confess and believe in this fashion will be saved. We might say more baldly that if A is present, then so is B; A is the condition that, if present, results in the further

correlation of B. (Consider the statement, if someone is born in the United Kingdom, then he or she is a British citizen. It does not of course follow from this that he or she *chose* to be born in the UK.) So this sentence by Paul in v. 9 does not speak directly to the *causality* of A in conditional terms, as it is often assumed to—in this case, that the saving belief and confession of the Christian is itself a condition that can be undertaken voluntarily. This would be a false extension of the sentence’s grammatical conditionality. Paul’s surrounding argument—both locally and more broadly—will have to fill out his exact understanding of its agency. We learn primarily from this conditional claim that belief in and confession of Christ is correlated for Paul with salvation. If this is present in Israel, then she is saved (but in the main it is not). And it is perhaps worth pointing out that belief in and confession of her Lord is not meant to be something new for Israel, although the orientation of that confession and belief has been expanded—but these observations prompt us to consider the important material that follows.

6.3 Romans 10:11-13

In v. 11 Paul reprises one of his scriptural texts (from 9:33)—an unusual act for him—and modifies it. In 10:11 he suggests that *πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυθήσεται* (Isa. 28:16). As in 3:22-23, the use of *πᾶς* seems to stimulate here an immediate discussion of ethnicity and difference, although it culminates

in 10:13 in a citation of Joel 2:32 (3:5 LXX)— πᾶς [γὰρ] ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται. And this last citation suggests that the preceding elaboration is anything but coincidental.

Twice in the immediate context of Joel 2:32 the prophet has spoken of the removal of the people’s shame (2:26 and 27), and the occurrence in 2:27 seems especially important: καὶ ἐπιγνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι πλὴν ἐμοῦ, καὶ οὐ μὴ καταισχυθῶσιν οὐκέτι πᾶς ὁ λαός μου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. There are simply too many resonances between this text and Paul’s discussion in Romans 10:10-13 to ignore (i.e., as mere coincidence)—the presence of God, the *κύριος*, or *Lord*, with *all* his people, who will never again *be put to shame*. Indeed, it is almost certainly this association that legitimizes Paul’s modification of Isaiah 28:16 in v. 11 with the addition of πᾶς (at which point it can be asked whether the citation in v. 11 is better viewed as a conflation of Joel 2:32 and Isaiah 28:16 rather than merely a modification of the latter text). So Paul’s two textual citations here, and the intervening discussion, seem entirely deliberate.

Moreover, in the light of these two texts, drawn from explicitly Jewish contexts and set here in an overarching argument oriented toward Jews, it seems that the dismissal of any significant difference between Jew and Greek that takes place in v. 12 is oriented in this setting primarily toward Jews as well. The Jew who believes is also included in the salvation already extended toward believing pagans (cf. 9:25-30); believing pagans and Jews can *all* be saved by the same Lord. (And Paul’s emphasis at this point on “all”—a feature of the text drawn from Joel—anticipates his important concluding statement in 11:26 that “all Israel

will be saved"; this is, moreover, the text's emphasis in its original context.) So it can be seen that Paul's artful intertextual weaving in Romans 10 continues from vv. 6-10 through v. 13, coming to a climactic point in the affirmation of Jesus' lordship. Moreover, he has reversed the probable thrust of the Teacher's discourse at this point as well. Whereas the Teacher probably begins with Israel and then asks whether pagans can be included within that privileged constituency—answering that they can be only on the condition of full law observance, including circumcision—Paul here suggests that Israel can be included within the privileged constituency of the saved (as she certainly ought to be) provided that she evidences belief and confession in the resurrected Lord.

In an important study, Kavin Rowe has shown how the immediate setting of lordship in these verses ascribes deity to Christ rather directly (i.e., the term "lord" is functioning in its full Old Testament sense as a title for God), although without identifying him with divinity exclusively. In a sense, then, the Christian (re)definition of God peeps through the intertextually constituted tensions in this text.⁶⁶ I would only want to add that this is quite consistent with the broader apologetic that we have seen Paul developing through this chapter of Romans. His point is that *God has come to Israel in person*, so any rejection of this gracious drawing-near is the more incomprehensible. Paul's broader apologetic agenda in context leads to this particular theological emphasis. But this also explains why Christ is so overtly specified as the object of Christian belief at this point, which is an unusual emphasis for Paul (elsewhere cf. only Gal. 2:15-16; possibly Phil.

⁶⁶ Kavin Rowe, "Romans 10:13: What Is the Name of the Lord?," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 22 (2000): 135-73.

1:27-28; cf. Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 2:5). Ordinarily, he speaks of belief in the gospel or of trust in God “the Father.” However, here Christ has been “placed in Zion”; God has come right to his people, so there is even less excuse (if indeed any) for failing to believe in this event.⁶⁷ This is an unusual situation and consequent emphasis for Paul that are then hardly programmatic for the determination of the object of some of his other πιστ- statements. We might say that Christ functions explicitly as the object of saving belief for Paul where an apology vis-à-vis Jewish unbelief is also evident, and hence where Isaiah 28:16 is cited (perhaps supported by Joel 2:32, which emphasizes Christ’s lordship).

Numerous other powerful theological questions and answers are set in motion by this material; however, before considering those relevant to our current investigation in more detail, we should briefly note the consequent function of vv. 14-21.

6.4 Romans 10:14-21

Although the opening verses of this material are almost invariably read as an explication of Paul’s mission to the pagans (and I would not dispute this in broader terms, either in Paul’s life or in his theology), our developing rereading suggests that the climax deployed by vv. 14-15a may in fact continue to address

⁶⁷ This also reinforces the suggestion that 9:5 be read as a full-fledged reference to Christ as divine; again, although unusual, this is one of Paul’s key apologetic points in context. Romans 9:5, read in this fashion, correctly anticipates Paul’s later argument: God has come to Israel in Christ.

Jews as well, just as the preceding material in vv. 11-13 has. Indeed, a plausible reading of this entire section is possible in just these terms.

On the heels of Paul's claim of the ease of salvation for all Israelites merely in relation to the confession of Christ's lordship, it is easy to imagine an objection (and one still made not infrequently today). It amounts to the typical complaint concerning those who have *not* heard, although here it is made on behalf of Jews. Indeed, it is possible that the querulous interlocutor of 9:30-31 has returned once again, asking at this point how Paul's claims in vv. 9-13 can possibly be true without some sort of presentation to the Jews of all this critical information about Christ (at which point the resonance of this text with certain central concerns of Justification theory is apparent). It seems unfair to hold Jews accountable for rejecting Christ when they do not actually know the key pieces of information about him, and it is perhaps easiest to imagine that Diaspora Jews are especially in view at this point; Christ has, it seems, already come to Zion (cf. 9:33). So the Teacher duly challenges Paul with these counterquestions (the following being my translation throughout).

¹⁴But⁶⁸ how can they "call" [as you assert with Joel 2:32] on the one in whom they have not believed?

And how can they "believe" [as you assert with Isa. 28:16] in the one of whom they have not heard?

And how can they hear apart from preaching [of some sort]?

¹⁵And how can they preach unless they are sent [to preach]?! ..."

^{16a}"... but not everyone submitted to the good news ..."

⁶⁸ And this probably also suggests an adversative use of οὐν (BDAG 737, meaning 4).

^{18a}“... but I ask,⁶⁹ surely they did not hear ...”

^{19a}“... but I ask (again), surely Israel did not understand (or, more literally, “know”)?!”

Verse 14 can be seen to inaugurate a series of essentially hostile questions to Paul’s suggestion that Israel is accountable to God’s act through Christ in terms of some response of belief and submission—questions that continue in vv. 18 and 19a as well. The Teacher places the essentially practical objection here to Paul that Jews everywhere will need to be told about Christ if they are to believe in and call on him, as Paul suggests they ought to. But as is usually the case with the Teacher’s provocative intrusions—which are, after all, shaped by Paul—these ultimately serve only to strengthen the apostle’s position. And here he duly knocks back each challenge with a blunt citation of Scripture—an especially effective rejoinder in the present situation because these texts are addressed to Israel, and are well known to her. The result of this interchange is *a deepened sense of Israel’s accountability*, Paul’s main point in context. All her excuses prove groundless, and are even scripturally attested as such.

Thus, Paul replies in v. 15b to the Teacher’s complaint that the Jews must be told about Christ with the statement from Isaiah, “How beautiful are the feet of those proclaiming good news” (Isa. 52:7). This text implies the arrival in Israel of just the messengers that the Teacher asserts must be present for Paul’s claims to hold good. They have arrived and announced their message because the

⁶⁹ BDAG 589-90, meaning 2a, although 2d is also possible, namely, “assert,” or even 2e, “maintain.”

prophet speaks of the beauty of their feet. However, the Teacher retorts in v. 16a, “But not everyone submitted to the good news....”

Now this is not technically an objection to Paul’s basic challenge to Israel in Romans 10 in terms of unbelief, but it is an embarrassment. The majority of the Jews have not believed in this good news. However, even this embarrassment has been foretold in Scripture, lessening its scandalous nature: “Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed in the things heard from us?’” Moreover, Paul parlays this text into a further, probably parenthetical rejoinder to the previous challenge that the Jews need to hear something before they can trust and be saved. Isaiah’s text establishes the reality of this sequence as well; the prophet asks who has believed in things that *have been heard*. And hence Paul is able to state here: “So, then, belief is through that which is heard [which Isaiah spoke of]—and that which is heard through the word concerning Christ.”⁷⁰

However, the Teacher is not yet finished in terms of this line of argument. He complains next, “But I ask, surely they did not hear?” (The emphatic double negative in the Koiné used here expects a negative answer to this query—“no”; cf. ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ οὐκ ἤκουσαν.) But Paul contradicts this implication (again)—μενοῦνγε—and quotes a useful Scripture once more in v. 18b: “Their voice has

⁷⁰ This last quotation is therefore a resumption of the reinterpetative moves that we have already seen taking place in relation to Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in vv. 6-10; indeed, all of Paul’s quotations in this passage are christocentric and are probably justified by an underlying connection with divine wisdom, as Paul’s distinctive phrase here [διὰ] ῥήματος Χριστοῦ suggests. His use of ῥήμα here resumes the use of that word in Deut. 30:14, quoted in v. 8 and echoed in the following phrase, τὸ ῥήμα τῆς πίστεως, and it anticipates the same word in the quotation of Ps. 19:4 in 10:18.

gone out into all the land, and their words to the edges of the empire.” This is a quotation from Psalm 19:4, although it does not need to be recognized as such for Paul’s counterargument to work. In context, it seems likely to be predicting the work of missionaries like Paul who have been sent to the Jewish people scattered through the known world (cf. Gal. 2:7-9), although we have already noted that this is a wisdom text, thereby raising the possibility that this is again the voice of God. Whatever the identity of the tongues and voice, this text affirms that Israel everywhere in the world has heard.

After the counterassertion of v. 18b, the Teacher has one last protest to make in this vein: “But I ask [again], surely Israel did not understand [or, more literally, “know”]?!” However, Paul once more refuses to supply the expected negation, and he begins to round off this subordinate discussion concerning Jewish culpability with a set of important scriptural quotations.

He quotes first from Moses—specifically, Deuteronomy 32:21—in v. 19, and then twice from Isaiah—specifically, 65:1 and 2—in vv. 20 and 21. The Deuteronomic text begins an argumentative turn toward the next stage in his argument, articulated through most of Romans 11, where he finds various positive aspects within the basic tragedy of Israel’s failure to respond to Christ. Here in 10:19 he anticipates the suggestion elaborated later that pagan conversion will make the Jews jealous, goading them into a correct response. However, implicit in this “jealousy” is knowledge. (One must have knowledge of certain things even to become jealous.) The Isaianic texts in vv. 20-21 then speak more bluntly of where Paul’s argument has presently ended up.

Recapitulating the paradoxical salvation-historical scenario that was stated clearly in 9:30-31, and has been implicit all along, Paul states that the

pagans, who were not interested in God, have nevertheless somehow received him. “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me” (NRSV). But Israel has not only *not* received God in Christ; as Paul has shown in 10:1-18, she has *rejected* Christ. God has come near in Christ and his other appointed representatives, but Israel has pushed them away. So she has not acted in ignorance (as vv. 14-15a, 18a, and 19a suggest) but deliberately, and has in effect chosen to establish her own route to salvation and to life rather willfully (as vv. 3, 5, and 16a assert). So Paul can cite the apparent prophetic prediction of this in closing that “[a]ll day long I have held out my hands to a *disobedient* and *contrary* people” (NRSV). And this citation concludes his initial apologetic response to the charge from the Teacher that the majority of Israel has not believed, thereby discrediting his gospel. Paul has responded through much of Romans 10 that the fault for this salvation-historical absurdity is Israel’s, not God’s, and certain parts of Scripture can be read in support of this claim.

In view of all this, it is not surprising to find at the end of this discussion the further, refreshingly direct query of the Teacher, who seems by now to have grasped the import of the argument: “I ask then, has God not simply abandoned his people [as, in view of the foregoing, he has a right to]?!” But Paul himself, while holding Israel responsible for rejecting Christ, will not of course allow this to be the end of the matter. Just as God’s election triumphed over pagan ignorance in 9:6-26 and 30, so too it will triumph over Jewish disobedience—and in many subtle ways! Israel’s rejection of God in Christ is by no means the last word. But it is not necessary for the present investigation to probe these important suggestions by Paul in Romans 11 in more detail here. Justification

language and theory fade during the course of Romans 10, especially from v. 17, and it is necessary to ask in the present relation only whether we have succeeded in rereading this material both plausibly and apocalyptically. We should be able to answer this question shortly in a more definitive way, once some of the deeper theological implications of Romans 9:27–10:21 have been teased out a little further.

§ 7 A repunctuation of the NRSV⁷¹—Romans 9:27–10:21

PAUL: 9²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,

“Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea,
only a remnant of them will be saved;

²⁸for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively.”

²⁹And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left survivors to us,
we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomorrah.”

TEACHER: ³⁰“What are we to say then? Pagans not pursuing righteous activity have received a righteous act [from God]?! ”

PAUL: The righteous act [of God] “through faithfulness.”

TEACHER: ³¹But Israel, pursuing a torah of righteous activity toward that Torah, have not?!

PAUL: ³²Why? Because they did not strive for it “through faithfulness” but “through works.” They have stumbled over “the stumbling stone,” ³³as it is written,

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble,
a rock that will make them fall,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

10¹ Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be

⁷¹ With the appropriate modifications at certain points.

saved. ²I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ³For, being ignorant of the righteous act from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to the righteous act from God. ⁴For Christ is the finish line for the Torah, with the result of righteousness for everyone who believes.

⁵Moses writes concerning the righteous activity that is through the Torah, that

*“the person who does these things will live by them.”*⁷²

⁶But the righteous act that takes place “through faithfulness” says,

“Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”

(that is, to bring Christ down)⁷or

“Who will descend into the abyss?”

(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

⁸But what does it say?

“The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart”

(that is, the word of the faithful one that we proclaim);

⁹because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰For one believes with the heart and so is delivered, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

¹¹The scripture says,

⁷² Instances here and through v. 8 (italicized) of ancient parody, Paul quoting the Teacher’s own favored text and words, although after this quotation, in a radically different sense.

“All who believe in him will not be put to shame.”

¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and enriches all who call on him. ¹³For,

“All who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

TEACHER: ¹⁴But how can they “call” on one in whom they have not believed? And how can they “believe” in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear apart from preaching? ¹⁵And how can they preach unless they are sent?

PAUL: As it is written,

“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

TEACHER: ¹⁶But not everyone submitted to the good news.

PAUL: [And] for this reason, Isaiah says,

“Lord, who has believed our proclamation?”

¹⁷So then, belief comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

TEACHER: ¹⁸But I ask, surely they did not hear?

PAUL: Indeed they have; for

“Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the empire.”

TEACHER: ¹⁹But I ask, surely Israel did not understand?

PAUL: First Moses says,

“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”

²⁰Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

“I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

²¹But of Israel he says,

“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

TEACHER: ¹¹I ask, then, surely God has not abandoned his people?

PAUL: Of course not! I am an Israelite....

§ 8 The theological implications

We began this chapter, and § 5 in particular, by noting that Romans 9:27–10:21 contains four serious explicit challenges to my suggested rereading of Paul—two remarks concerning Israel and “works” (9:31–32; 10:5) that could be construed with reference to a pre-Christian activity, one remark implying that Christ was an “end” or a “goal” (10:4), but that on either reading could suggest some prospective process, and the long account of “faith” in Romans 10 that could be construed conditionally in relation to salvation (see esp. 10:9–10), again thereby unleashing a broader contractual and necessarily prospective structure within Paul’s thinking. So at four points Justification theory could potentially be activated, and this would then contradict the unconditional, apocalyptic, and retrospective process I derived from Romans 1–4 in part four, and would also unleash all the pernicious consequences generated by Justification theory that my apocalyptic rereading is designed to avoid. In every case, however, I have suggested that these statements and their localized contexts—if approached without prospective and conditional precommitments—can (and even should) be read retrospectively (see esp. §§ 5 and 6 above). And the prospective challenges present within these texts are therefore—at least arguably—repudiated.

However, we have yet to explore my exegetical suggestions’ implications in these texts at a deeper level. If they hold good, and Paul’s thinking turns out to be satisfyingly retrospective, then what are the implications for that thinking? Romans 9–10 does not merely parrot (or contradict), but *deepens* the account of Paul’s thought derived already from Romans 1–4 and 5–8 in several important ways. We gain further insight into the precise nature and dynamic of the

apostle's retrospective argumentation, explored here in § 8.1; we grasp more precisely the reasons for the profoundly intertextual nature of his discussion, as well as the closely-related reasons for the resonances between Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-26, and 9:30–10:17 (although I have suggested that the argument here spans 9:27–10:21), articulated here in § 8.2; and we learn more about his notion of Christian faith, analyzed here in § 8.3.

8.1 The retrospective ground of Paul's argument

The validity of Paul's contention from Romans 9:27 onward depends entirely on the validity of his claim that God *has* acted in Christ definitively to "deliver" both pagan and Jew. In the light of this claim, Paul holds all other salvific claims to be relativized, including any associated use of the law. Only given the overt truth of this prior claim—that God *has* brought salvation and life to Israel in Christ—are Paul's other negations remotely acceptable. But given this premise, they do make sense. Obviously, Paul is convinced of the claim's truth. So the crucial question is, what is the exact basis of Paul's confidence and its ensuing relativizations?

The repeated implication from Romans 9:30–10:21 is that Christ's eschatological life has provided the critical disclosure of God's salvation for Paul, together with the consequent dislocation of all alternative modes of salvation⁷³ Hence, it seems

⁷³ Christ's resurrection is spoken of twice overtly (10:7, 9b). His lordship, meaning his heavenly enthronement and glorification, is spoken of at least once but perhaps twice (10:9a, and perhaps 6). And it has already been noted that this terminology is set in overt parallels to Paul's uses of δικαιο- and σωτερ- language, drawing those signifiers too into an eschatological orbit of

that Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascension to lordship are the new, definitive revelation of salvation, of life, and of God's "deliverance."⁷⁴ Moreover, those who merely evidence trust in this set of events, and in the God who acts through them, seem to be guaranteed a future share in the events themselves.

The importance of Habakkuk 2:4 for Paul is apparent here. That citation speaks of Jesus' "life," that is, his resurrection and existence in glory: "the righteous one through fidelity will live." This is in pointed (implicit) contrast to Leviticus 18:5, cited in Romans 10:5, which speaks of life through law observance. (The contrast is explicit in Gal. 3:11-12.) "Life" in both these texts is almost certainly a reference to eschatological life.⁷⁵ If one "lives" in relation to Christ's resurrection, then self- or human-centered salvific activities are displaced and excluded.⁷⁶ It is *this* set of facts that automatically marginalizes all other possible routes to eschatological salvation, including any reliance on Moses, other than as a testimony to the Christ event.⁷⁷ To rely on any other

meaning. Finally, the repeated "shame" texts refer as well to the eschatological event of the final judgment (cf. Isa. 28:16 [2x], in 9:33 and 10:11; and Joel 2:32 in 10:13).

⁷⁴ Of course, this is hardly a new assertion for the argument of Romans; cf. Rom. 5:17-19, 21.

⁷⁵ As we have already seen, esp. in *DOG*, chapters fifteen through eighteen, and will further confirm in *DOG*, chapter twenty.

⁷⁶ This implication is perhaps clearest in Phil. 3:7-11, as we will see in *DOG*, chapter twenty-one.

⁷⁷ Cf. Rom. 1:2-4; 3:21; and perhaps also 16:26. (And it is not surprising to find that Paul, a former Pharisee, is deeply sensitive to such concerns; cf. Acts 23:6-7.)

activity, in Paul's view, is clearly *not* to live on the basis of the life available in relation to Jesus Christ himself,⁷⁸ who has been sent by God.

Hence, Paul's overall posture now seems clear—the basis of his conviction and his relativizations. On the ground of Christ's resurrection, who is assumed to be the definitive eschatological action for others by God, Paul reasons retrospectively and exclusively with regard to any other, Jewish type of activity (and he would doubtless extend this exclusion to any human activity that was competitive with the Christ event). Whatever that activity may be in precise terms—and precise terms no longer need to be given!⁷⁹—it is now redundant, and any reliance on it will lead inevitably to a missing of the actual route to salvation established by God. Moreover, if that route—God's definitive act in his Son—is repudiated, then for Paul, *by definition*, an alternative and essentially human route to resurrection has been adopted instead, any protestations notwithstanding. Consequently, Paul speaks in 10:3 of Israel “seeking to establish her own righteous activity.”

⁷⁸ Cf. Gal. 2:21; 3:21b.

⁷⁹ This is an important point, and especially if the argument in this text is to contribute to broader articulations of Paul's views of Judaism and of the law. If Paul's view is retrospective—“thinking backward”—then he need not have formulated detailed criticisms of Judaism in its own terms. Thus, E. P. Sanders's famous aphorism is basically correct (cf. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 434-35, 438-40, 442, 474-85; cf. also *DOG*, chapter twelve, § 2.2, for further references and a more detailed discussion). However, it can now also be phrased more precisely: What Paul found wrong with Judaism was not so much that it was not Christianity (or anything in its own terms *per se*) but that it was not based on the resurrected Christ. Furthermore, we could add that insofar as it was, then presumably it was not wrong.

We should note now that this repudiation can be effected by as little as *adding* something to the Christ event. So in fact two categories of unwise “doers” are discernible in Paul: Jews who repudiate Christ in the name of the law, and Jewish Christian Teachers who advocate law observance as mandatory for converts from paganism to Christianity, in addition to their loyalty to Christ. Paul regards both categories as equally misguided, and indeed *both make the same fundamental error*: they deny the complete saving efficacy of the righteous act of God in Christ, choosing to supplement this with certain instances of mandatory human activity. Moreover, in a sense, to follow the Teacher’s gospel is also to *exacerbate* the current difficulty of unbelieving Israel, rather than to resolve it—at least, this is the artful inference that lies submerged in Paul’s developing position—because it would encourage Jews to add mandatory, law-informed practices to the saving act of God in Christ (or at least affirm that posture). And so the Teacher’s calumnies have, once again, been turned back on his own head. Paul is not the one with an excruciating difficulty in relation to unbelieving Israel, so much as the Teacher, whose Arminian (if not Pelagian) gospel endorses their unbelief.

There are other categories of “doers,” however, that seem quite acceptable. Jewish law observance that does not impinge on the eschatological sufficiency of the Christ event seems unexceptionable—so 1 Corinthians 9:20 (although clearly, this is quite flexible). Indeed, one suspects that “messianic Jews” are not just acceptable but normative for Paul—so 1 Corinthians 7:17-24. Righteous activity informed by the law prior to Christ is unexceptionable as well,

although it now seems largely irrelevant—so Philippians 3:3-6.⁸⁰ But Paul's opposition to the unacceptable categories can hardly be understated.

He regards such programs as futile and misguided, but also ultimately as dangerous—in large measure, because they lack fundamental ethical efficacy. God's appointed route to eschatological life, the Christ event, addresses the enslavement of human nature by evil forces in the death of Christ and then offers a resurrection. However partial its present experience, Paul holds that death in Christ is the only effective basis for righteous activity by humans—whether Jews or Greeks—because only participation in Christ's execution terminates humanity's sinful condition and reconstitutes it in a more effective ethical state, ultimately to resurrect it—something Paul can describe as a “real” circumcision that has cut the sinful nature off from the human heart.⁸¹ Any reliance on human activity for eschatological vindication without the ethical surgery that God provides in Christ, however zealous its pursuit, will result only in humiliation. *And it ignores the gracious and effective system lying just to hand that God has actually provided!*⁸²

⁸⁰ However, note as well that this is automatically a redundant question in any discussion involving at least one Christian participant. (Law-observance is also *never* said explicitly by Paul to be saving; as we have just seen, his account of Israel in Rom. 9:6-23 is elective.)

⁸¹ A point already discussed in *DOG*, chapter fourteen in relation to Rom. 2:25-29; cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 44:9 (cf. also 36:25-27); cf. also Col. 2:11; and Philo, *The Special Laws* 1:1-11; *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3:46-52; *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, 2:2; and *On the Migration of Abraham*, 92.

⁸² I make this suggestion in part to point out that an apocalyptic system still contains a vigorous critique of “works.” Indeed, arguably its critique of any such system is more radical than the repudiation effected by Justification theory. In the latter, “works” remain valid in a

8.2 Paul's intertextuality

We are in a position now to answer our second important question in this relation—why the characteristic terminology of Romans 1:16-17 and 3:21-26 recurs so overtly and intensively in Romans 9:27–10:17—a question bound up with Paul's intertextuality in these passages.

It seems that when Paul wishes to engage directly some of the Teacher's central claims, asserting his own emphasis on Christ's centrality in response, he turns consistently to a cluster of important scriptural texts. The Teacher's claims about salvation through law observance are freighted and supported by certain key scriptural texts as well; hence, as Paul narrates the confrontation for his auditors, he is presenting them with a clash between two "torahs," and not merely one torah over against a more innovative and recent gospel (i.e., Paul's).

In Romans 1:16-17 and 3:21-26 Paul is signaling briefly the presuppositions in his gospel that contradict the Teacher's opening and fundamental claims about God and ground his own later counterarguments in chapters 5–8. Over against a God of retributive justice (who thereby effectively

certain sense, and necessary to the function of the entire system, although they should be left behind in its first, pre-Christian phase. A legitimate space within Paul's thought must therefore be maintained for them. The transition to Christianity must also be accomplished by some work—the work, of course, of faith. In an "apocalyptic" gospel, however, "works" are simply and completely wrong; unconditional grace implicitly judges all human-centered activity as superfluous, if not also as sinful. Yet this repudiation does not generate in turn a repudiation of ethics. Paul expects a rigorous ethical commitment from his communities.

marginalizes the disclosure and work of Christ), introduced—and criticized!—in 1:18–3:20, Paul wishes to signal the definitive disclosure and action of God *through Christ on behalf of* a very different, more inclusive constituency (thereby also revealing a fundamentally different God as well—a God of deliverance, not punishment). So, as we have seen, he deploys, against Leviticus 18:5 (etc.), a compilation of phrases and words drawn from Psalm 98:2, Habakkuk 2:4, Genesis 15:6, Isaiah 28:16, and Joel 2:32. Similarly, in Romans 9:27 Paul turns again to speak of the climactic moment within the history of Israel that is the Christ event—the arrival of the divine wisdom in the midst of her people. So once again he makes recourse to his key Scriptures and their terms, although supplementing those at this point with Isaiah 8:14 and Deuteronomy 30:12-14 (and introducing Joel 2:32 explicitly), supporting those with other useful texts as well (among which Isa. 52:7 is probably especially programmatic). In short, when Paul needs to speak of God acting definitively through Christ to save, in direct confrontation with the Teacher’s claims, he uses language infused with key scriptural texts in order to lend those claims legitimacy and authority. And those moments arrive in Romans in 1:16, 3:21, and 9:27. It seems, moreover, that we can now discern the origins of this ingenious intertextual interplay—and this will also further emphasize our earlier resolution of the third significant challenge in Romans 10 to our developing, retrospective rereading.

That challenge was found in 10:5, where Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5: “the person who does these things will live by them.” I have already suggested that this text is best read in context as a reference in some sense to law-observant behavior by Israel after the coming of Christ. So it seems unlikely that Paul is quoting this text as a programmatic characterization of historical Israel—just the

interpretation I am trying to avoid. But if this is not the quotation's function, what is it? At this point two further possibilities open up for us.

Has Paul drawn this text from Moses in order to describe the gospel of his opponent, in order ultimately to refute it? This option seems fraught with difficulties (although they are not as serious as the preceding option). To start, it would seem to be tendentious—ascribing a purely Mosaic text to the Teacher—and it is also prone to misunderstanding, that is, in just the terms that we previously noted, as a description of mosaic religion per se. Furthermore, the phrase does not ever seem to be explicitly qualified as such by Paul. It is also possibly unfair; the Teacher might reasonably reject Paul's tendentious description of his gospel in these terms. (Alternatively, he would be allowed a fortuitous comeback; Paul would have thereby conceded the *legitimacy* of the Teacher's account of Moses.)

But these problems are all avoided if the text's original citation and deployment are attributed to the Teacher himself. And on reflection it seems quite likely that Leviticus 18:5 (possibly supported by phraseology found in Ps. 62:12, Prov. 24:12, and Sir. 16:14, viz., "he will give to each according to his works") was a key text of the Teacher's. It speaks of "life," in the sense of eschatological life, through "doing," which translates directly into "works," persistent good works resulting in a righteous state and the verdict from God on the day of judgment of "righteous" and hence "saved" and "blessed" (at which point a little boasting might even be in order; this righteous behavior is of course made possible after circumcision of the sinful passions). Leviticus 18:5 is therefore an accurate summary of just the gospel that Paul attacks in Romans 1–4—the gospel of the Teacher, a gospel of "justification" (in the full ethical and

indicative sense of that word).⁸³ So it seems likely that the Teacher himself introduced the terminology of “works” and “doing” into the debate, rooting these—entirely characteristically—in key scriptural texts. And this realization allows us to avoid falling back into any prospective theological trap on Paul’s part. But this also, simultaneously, points to the linguistic origin of this entire cluster of key texts in Romans. *Paul has crafted his own countervailing set of texts specifically to refute, word by word, the key scriptural claims of the Teacher.* (Rather indicatively, the baldest disposition of these texts is then in Gal. 3:6-11, a passage that we will consider shortly in chapter twenty.)

The core of the textual engagement is the juxtaposition of Habakkuk 2:4 over against Leviticus 18:5. As Romans 2:6 also indicates, however, when an instrumental, substantive phrase is drawn from Leviticus 18:5, both Paul and the Teacher prefer the more idiomatic construction “works” (ἔργων) over “doings” (ποίημα or some such). Paul then negates these, affirming salvation or “life” ἐκ πίστεως instead—through Christ.

ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς [cf. Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12]
 [ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ] [cf. Rom. 2:6-10]
 ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται [cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11]

It is worth emphasizing, moreover, that the heart of Paul’s position is christological and retrospective. He knows that a person is not ultimately saved

⁸³ It also seems significant that similar if not identical “gospels” to this one can be detected in other parts of the NT, further corroborating its probable existence. The construct even seems multiply attested!; cf. Jas 1:22-25; 2:12, 14-26; Matt. 5:19-20.

through works because he knows that a person is ultimately saved by way of some connection to Christ, who has already been resurrected and hence saved. It is by being grafted into this life that others achieve life themselves—a grafting that God must of course effect. Moreover, that grafting has in Paul’s experience stretched out to include some who are non-law observant (i.e., pagans). And a set of texts is used to express these important facts as well—Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32. “Everybody” or “all” who reflect this engrafting by reflecting the character of Christ are guaranteed the same life and resurrection, so Paul freights this implication by building from πιστ- terms, using the contextual overlap in Joel to effect a further important set of qualifications in terms of universality—“all”—and confession of Christ’s lordship.

ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ καταστυγνῆσεται [cf. Rom. 10:11]

πᾶς [γὰρ] ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται [cf. Rom. 9:33; 10:13]

Furthermore, Paul is confident enough to suggest that this salvific dynamic is discernible in the Old Testament as well, and especially in the patriarchal narratives. In Romans he makes this argument most famously by leaning on the key πιστ- stem again and explicating Genesis 15:6. (The Teacher leans more on Genesis 17, but those texts do not need to be included here.)

Ἐπίστευσεν [δὲ] Ἀβραάμ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην [cf. Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6]

Paul is also concerned, however, to refute another set of key items in the Teacher's gospel with Scripture. The Teacher almost certainly emphasizes God's declaration of the law observant as "righteous" (and hence saved) on the day of judgment—a use of the verb δικαιοῶ. And so Paul attacks this claim with a text as well—Psalm 143:2. This text affirms Paul's conviction that no one will be declared righteous in this fashion, for numerous compelling reasons. He also attacks the Teacher's slogan at this point that "God declares righteous the righteous" with his own, rather shocking claim that "God declares righteous (in the sense of delivering) the *unrighteous*" (usually translated "ungodly").

ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτόν⁸⁴ [cf.

Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16]

[Θεὸς δικαιοῦν τὸν ἀσεβῆ, οὐ τὸν δίκαιον] [cf. Rom. 4:5; cf. 5:6]

But the Teacher almost certainly makes further use of righteousness language; he probably enjoins righteousness on his converts in the sense of persistent righteous activity informed by the Mosaic law. He also threatens his converts with dire consequences if this activity is not undertaken; such people will experience the wrath, not the blessing, of God. His righteous, retributive

⁸⁴ The allusion in Rom. 3:20 includes the phrase ἐνώπιον αὐτόν, which echoes ἐνώπιόν σου in the LXX (although in a different position); Gal. 2:16 omits this. The phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου has been added in both instances.

justice will condemn them to hell on the day of judgment, instead of blessing them. They will be shamed.

Paul's textual response is at its most artful at this point. He deploys a "swing" text—one that can refute two claims here within the Teacher's system simultaneously. Against *both* the righteous activity of the convert *and* the punitive wrath of God he speaks, rather, of God's right act of saving deliverance, echoing in particular Psalm 98:2 (but also drawing on broader notions of divine kingship)—a wordplay that is impossible to reproduce in translation. This text suggests in nuce that Paul does not depend on his *own* righteous activity but on *God's*. Moreover, the God that Paul knows in Christ is characterized fundamentally *by salvation*, not by wrath. So entirely different conceptions of God are at stake as well. The echo of Psalm 98:2 makes both these points whenever it is used.

[δικαιοσύνη μου...] [cf. Rom. 10:3; Phil. 3:6-8]

δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ ἀπεκάλυψεν... [cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:5; 3:21-22; 10:3; also perhaps Gal. 2:21; 3:21; 5:5]

[ὀργή Θεοῦ...] [cf. Rom. 1:18; 2:5-9]

And he attacks the suggestion as well that his law-free converts will be shamed on this future day of judgment (with a useful text that has already been deployed in support of another point).

[παῖς] ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ καταισχυθήσεται [cf. Rom. 9:33; 10:11]

It is worth stepping back for a moment to evaluate what Paul has achieved in and through this textual engagement.

First, we should note the techniques that he seems to have used. The main principle undergirding all of his textual deployments seems to be *gezerah shawah*, or “catchword linkage” (although it seems that a cognate will suffice to establish a connection). Only three of his quotations echo their original contexts, at least to the extent of some surrounding verses—Psalms 98:2 and 143:2, and Joel 2:32.⁸⁵ But at some point all the texts seem to say explicitly what Paul needs them to say argumentatively, in the form of either a clause or a complete sentence; they seem invariably to contradict something that the Teacher has been claiming directly (his claims often being couched in terms of Scripture as well). Hence, we do not need to detect the echoes to understand the rhetorical function of these quotations, although they help us understand those functions more precisely at times (including the theological positions that sometimes lie behind them). (So, e.g., the linkage between Isa. 28:16 and Joel 2:32 is difficult to detect without grasping the contextual echoes.)

Second, we can consider what Paul is doing here, at least to a degree. Opinions of his skill have of course varied enormously. Some charge him with gross exegetical distortions. Others detect underlying canonical frameworks of considerable sophistication (and so on). This question is not especially relevant to our developing argument; we are more interested in what Paul is actually doing

⁸⁵ This is admittedly a minimalist account of the echoes possibly present. However, I do not want to base any substantive conclusions here on disputed textual resonances, as far as that is possible. More may well be present, but they will not affect my main conclusions.

rather than its value or skill. However, it might be worth suggesting that judgments that Paul's quotations are somehow "inadequate" tend to presuppose anachronism. In terms of the contemporary rules of the exegetical game, Paul was perfectly entitled to quote small snippets of Scripture out of context (etc.), if he wanted to, and as he has done here. Certainly, his exegesis is not modern and historicizing, but why would it be? Similarly, it is difficult and probably also unnecessary to detect deep underlying hermeneutical configurations that drive these superficial quotations, much as tectonic plates drive superficial shifts in the earth and seabed. These texts function argumentatively very much as they appear. And it is seldom necessary to move beyond them to understand Paul's rhetorical points (although the presence of certain echoes looks both likely and helpful). And having said all this, there does seem to be something remarkably skillful in what Paul has done.

Paul has not chosen this scriptural ground; the Teacher has. And yet Paul seems to have constructed an entire network of mutually supporting texts, some of which even make multiple points, all connected with one another or with the Teacher's gospel by key words or stems, in order to undercut that opposing gospel at all its key points. Each of these texts must fulfill a double function; it must refute a component in the Teacher's system *and* integrate either with that system or with Paul's developing system through the possession of a shared cognate. (So Paul's set of texts is a bit like a complex crossword puzzle.) And Paul has constructed this system without modern aids and even a single Bible that he can flip through and consult (i.e., much of it is almost certainly dependent on his memorization of Scripture). In terms of his own scriptural game, then, this

seems to be a masterful performance. Clearly, he knows the Jewish Scriptures intimately.

It is also important to appreciate that this type of quotation by Paul is highly contingent; he argues in this way only when he is opposing the Teacher and his gospel. So it is an important false inference to extrapolate from this type of exegetical activity to Paul's "own" approach to Scripture. This is *not Paul's* use of Scripture, in the deepest sense of that phrase. It is often little more than a rhetorical tit-for-tat. We must seek Paul's own, perhaps constitutive use of the Jewish Scripture beyond this contingency, and elsewhere (where I would suggest that narrative trajectories are very important⁸⁶).

Finally, it needs to be emphasized that we should not press this material directly into theological service. As we have already seen (especially in chapter fifteen), this scriptural interplay both expresses and constrains Paul's communication. He seems frequently to restate—in slightly different, presumably clearer language—what he has said elsewhere by way of quotation. It is dangerous, then, simply to reconstruct Paul's contingency directly in terms of language drawn from his polemically deployed proof texts without additional controls on any such reconstructions. And this methodological caveat leads to our final programmatic comment concerning Romans 10 (which is probably the most important).

⁸⁶ Cf. *Quest*, 69-94.

8.3 *The nature of faith*

Romans 9:27–10:21 does not just pose problems for a thoroughgoing apocalyptic rereading of Paul's view of Judaism, with its references to "works," Christ as the τέλος of the law, and its quotation of Leviticus 18:5 (all of which could be interpreted in terms of a prospective analysis by Paul, with Judaism's inadequacies leading to and hence establishing salvation by faith). It speaks constantly of "faith" as well, and has consequently been read as one of the clearest statements in Paul of faith as *the* criterion for salvation. Paul's words in 10:8-10 seem to suggest this especially directly: "'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved" (NRSV). The realization that this material is oriented toward Israel (cf. § 6 above) does not alter this implication very significantly; if this—and this alone—is what Israel must do in order to be saved, then by implication that principle still applies to everyone (as Paul even seems to admit in passing, in v. 12). Should "faith" and "believing" in this text, then, be read in the way that Justification theory expects and so falsify my developing apocalyptic reconstrual of Paul? Does Paul commit himself clearly here to a condition for salvation, and to this one alone?

I freely admit that if this text is read in isolation from its setting, it can be construed in a way that integrates with Justification theory. However, I also

contend that if the expectations of Justification theory in relation to this text are resisted and if certain key insights from our developing rereading of the surrounding discussion are held in view, then it can be construed in an apocalyptic sense as well. Once again we face a conundrum like that noted in chapter eighteen concerning the interpretation of the believing Abraham and his analogical relation with later Christians. That analogy could legitimately be read in its immediate setting in either a “thin” or a “thick” sense. The “thin” reading supported Justification theory, while the “thick” reading was more christocentric and apocalyptic, and either reading seemed initially acceptable. But various considerations from the text’s broader setting suggested—rather strongly—that the “thick” reading was ultimately the correct one (or, at least, the better one). So the analogy ended up vindicating, not undermining, the broader apocalyptic reading of Paul. *And similar considerations apply, I suggest, to Paul’s discussion of “belief” in Romans 10.*

It is not that what Paul is saying here should be denied; he is saying that if Israel only confesses and believes in Christ, then she will be saved (and this applies to everyone else as well, as v. 12 states). However, the causality underlying this process is more complex and profound than first meets the eye, as a result of which such “belief” ends up functioning more as a *marker* of salvation than a solitary *condition*; it is a marker of participation in the faithful and resurrected Christ, which thereby *guarantees* for the believer a future participation in the resurrection that Christ has already achieved. It is this underlying reality, I suggest, that Israel has been called to in Romans 10 but has rejected (and, in a sense, her rejection is the more scandalous in view of this; that is, she has pushed away a confession already operating within her).

A thin reading views belief in Romans 10 as essentially propositional. Apostles, missionaries, or preachers present individuals with the essential facts about Christ—that he has been resurrected by God and is now “Lord”—and those individuals ought then to believe this information and to confess their belief. If they do so, then they are officially saved. Nothing more is mentioned, so nothing more, strictly speaking, needs to be done.⁸⁷ However, although this is a possible reading of Romans 10:8-10, as we have already seen in the much more extensive conventional construal of Romans 1–4, various difficulties emerging downstream suggest that this thin account of the text may not be the best one.

First, we should note that several of the textual difficulties observed in relation to the conventional construal of Romans 1–4 will recur if we follow this thin approach. The emphasis from Romans 9:30 onward on Christ’s fidelity now becomes otiose, and the emphasis on Christ’s resurrection arbitrary. These two features of Christ resonate against similar features in the lives of believers—they seem to have been selected for these reasons deliberately. However, there is no substantive reason for these similarities on the thin reading of the text. Nothing meaningful connects them. Strictly speaking, individuals do not even need to believe in Christ himself in order to be saved; God could have specified *any* item as the object of belief in order to grant salvation. And if he wanted to maintain some special reference to Christian realities and the church, there is no obvious need to single out Christ’s resurrection and lordship as the key items. Just how to negotiate the conundrums of belief voluntarism (or, alternatively, of elected

⁸⁷ See, e.g., Moo, *Romans*, 643-70; Schreiner, *Romans*, 550-76, esp. 550-51, 564; Watson’s remarks: *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles* (rev. and expanded edn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 243.

belief) is unspecified as well. So certain aspects of a thin reading of this text remain puzzling.

Second, many of the acute conceptual tensions noted in relation to Justification theory and the conventional construal of Romans 1–4 now surge back into prominence—tensions apparent as other claims in Romans are juxtaposed with the thin reading of these claims in Romans 10.

We are again puzzled by how an enslaved and depraved person, as evidenced especially by Romans 7, could exercise such belief; “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (8:7-8 NRSV). God seems once again to be unreasonable and unjust. There are, moreover, no good reasons for believing that Christ *is* both resurrected and Lord. How do individuals know this? (They cannot travel up to heaven to view the enthroned Christ, nor travel into the abyss of death to see if he is still there!) And if they do not verify these things, then how can they believe them? (While, if they do not believe them, how can they choose to do so?!)

Furthermore, the role of the Spirit is once again opaque. Previously it simply seemed unnecessary, but in the light of Paul’s intervening discussion, especially in Romans 8, a contradiction is now generated. Paul has now attributed a key role in salvation to the work of the Spirit, who pours out the love of God into the hearts of the delivered (5:5) and liberates the mind of flesh from Sin and Death (8:2). This contradiction is perhaps seen most acutely in the ethics and ecclesiology that is elaborated in more detail beginning in 12:1. There Paul clearly speaks of a transformed mind, and of a pneumatologically called and ordered community (vv. 2-8). Faith is even specifically mentioned in v. 3 as *a gift*

(φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρωνεῖν, ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως). That is, the Spirit's transformation of the person seems here to undergird the new ethic of the Christian, and a communal existence of power and intimacy. This is not the minimal action of faith and the consequent contractual association of believing individuals implicit within salvation through faith alone.

Added to these gathering problems (and the foregoing is a mere sample) is the material from elsewhere in Paul's extant writings that suggests confession is itself a pneumatologically inspired event. In relation to the Corinthians, Paul recounts at length how his preaching is mediated, authenticated, and understood by the work of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2): ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ Θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος... ὁ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα (2:10, 15). Hence, later on he argues with complete consistency that οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν, Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ (12:3). First Thessalonians seems to speak of this modality more compactly: εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ Θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ' ἡμῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς λόγον Θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν (2:13).

The proliferating tensions apparent here are eliminated, however, and a superior reading of Romans 10 realized, if the cues in these confessional texts are followed. Belief and confession in the risen Lord are effected for Paul by the work of God, by both the Spirit and the word. Messengers and their message consequently *mediate* this process, but they do not *cause* it or *exhaust* it. Moreover, Romans 10 itself seems to point gently toward this "thick" rather than "thin" reading.

We have already noted that Romans 10 subtly invokes a wisdom discourse, in so doing resuming some reasonably strong cues from Romans 9. It seems entirely likely, then, that “the word of God” is again active in Romans 10. Indeed, here God “the Father” speaks certain important words to Israel concerning his wisdom, now incarnate as Christ. Paul’s text then notes that missionaries like Paul bear “the word” to their constituencies, so that they might believe, confess, and be saved. But this “word” is also originally spoken by the divine voice, who uses words from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in vv. 6-10—“the word is near you....” Moreover, that word, spoken by the divine voice, and carried and proclaimed by missionaries, is *in the very mouths and hearts* of its recipients—a place where only the Spirit of God can go. Hence, it seems likely that the voice and words of Psalm 19:4, quoted in Romans 10:18, refer not just to missionaries by themselves but to a broader process in which missionaries participate but that rests fundamentally on the voice and words of God. After all, only God’s voice reaches out immediately and literally into every land and to the ends of the earth, as the original Psalm also suggests.

These cues are subtle, but they seem to confirm the thick reading that is almost forced upon us by the jarring theoretical contradictions that it immediately resolves. If Romans 10 speaks of a process of mediated belief, in which God, the divine word, and the Spirit are actively at work (not to mention various called emissaries), then it fits smoothly into Paul’s broader discourse in Romans and accords with many of his confessional texts that occur elsewhere as well.

Most importantly, this reading allows us to correlate meaningfully the fidelity and resurrection of Christ and those of the Christian. I suggest that these

symmetrical features in the text are not arbitrary or coincidental; they subtly convey the point that belief, confession, fidelity, and eventual resurrection in the Christian are undergirded by a theology of participation. Faith is not the mere fulfillment of a condition, to which God responds with a promised future resurrection—the connection between these two events being conditional and arbitrary (and their presence in Christ opaque). Faith in a Christian stems from participation in the faithful one and indicates that resurrection is therefore guaranteed; resurrection is simply the further part of the story of Christ that the Christian has yet to experience. But Christ has been resurrected and enthroned, so this hope is certain. Hence, faith is functioning in this reading as evidence that the Christian is in fact and indeed presently a part of this programmatic unfolding story. *It is a marker of divine involvement, not the fulfillment of a contractual condition.*⁸⁸ And, as such, it *must* be mediated by divine involvement, at which point all of Paul's claims elsewhere about the role of the Spirit become more comprehensible. (His repeated suggestion that God has come in person to Israel also becomes more comprehensible.) In short, only this participatory account of Paul's argument explains fully the symmetry between the faithful and resurrected Christ and the believing Christian who will hopefully be resurrected in the future. Yet once it is mobilized, it does so neatly and powerfully,

⁸⁸ Advocates of the new perspective—esp. Wright—emphasize this aspect of the text helpfully, although it must also sometimes be extricated from other considerations! Wright states accurately: “Genuine heart-level belief can only come about, Paul believed, through the action of the Spirit in the gospel. This faith is the sure sign that the gospel has done its work” (“The Letter to the Romans,” 664).

simultaneously eliminating all the contextual and theoretical tensions that the thin reading of this data in terms of Justification generates.

There seem to be few or no good reasons for opposing a “thick,” apocalyptic reading of Romans 10 emphasizing its christocentric account of faith, and many for endorsing it. It should not, however, merely be assimilated within our broader apocalyptic construal. Romans 10 adds its own subtle emphases to our overall construal of Paul’s argument and thinking. Four in particular are worth noting here briefly as the discussion of this subsection comes to a close.

- (1) This text affirms the role of human freedom within the broader process of salvation; to emphasize the priority of God’s call and election is clearly not, for Paul, to remove human freedom in any decisive sense. It seems important, then, to resist the customary application of an “either-or” choice upon Paul’s thinking at this point. Salvation is still “free,” but any further specification of that notion requires careful—and theological—elucidation.
- (2) Similarly, Romans 10 emphasizes that at the heart of the Christian response to God is belief and confession, because these are the appropriate responses to the Christ event. To be caught up in the new Christian reality is inevitably to be committed to certain key speech acts that attempt to describe that reality’s most basic features; Christians ought to believe in and speak of the coming to them of Christ. Theological articulation—not to mention reflection—therefore

lies at the very center of this new reality. (And that articulation is facilitated by the language of Scripture.)

(3) The exact nature of Israel's "unbelief" needs to be defined very carefully. It is not so much that Jews have received a certain piece of information and then decided "no" (another "thin" reading of the data). It is that they have repudiated the coming of God—the opportunity to participate in the very being of God, the life of God. This would be easy to accept on their part, because God has in effect come the whole way to them; God has come to his people again. And this is what has been repudiated (in part, in favor of some law-oriented life). Moreover, this belief in Christ's lordship is continuous in certain important respects with what they already do—namely, confess God as the Lord. Certainly, Paul is asking Jews to submit to a new clarification of that identity, but it is not a *new* identity! So in a sense, the majority of the Jewish people turn their backs at this point on the Shema. They are asked to continue to believe in the Lord but refuse to do so in the new, Christian definition of that Lord's identity (which is nevertheless—from the Christian point of view—the correct, and the original one).

(4) It is important to recall that the Roman Christian auditors would process this analysis of "belief" in terms of assurance, not appropriation. They do not need to undertake the appropriate acts of belief and confession in order to be saved; they enact them already (cf.

esp. 1:2-4; 6:17; 15:14-15). So Paul's account of saving belief in Romans 10 affirms them in their current saved location rather than presenting them with a condition that they need to fulfill in order to be saved. As *evidence* of salvation, not its appropriation, belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is therefore a *necessary* criterion, but not necessarily a *sufficient* criterion. So the way is cleared for Paul to make much more extensive ethical requests of his converts. (That is, we are no longer committed to the constricting *sola* that is often associated with *fides*.)