Conclusions

The advantages in using this structure and the suggested translations are two-fold. By isolating and emphasizing the positive message of vv. 20-23, the negative tone of the letter will be reduced and the positive directives will receive more attention, as seems to be the author's desire. Second, readers see the nature of the ungodly more clearly. In blocks 1 and 3, the ungodly follow negative examples, as if they did not remember those examples. In block 2, a positive example was not remembered. In blocks 4 and 5, the readers are reminded that such ungodly people were predicted long ago. Such are the chief advantages to restructuring the book.

ROGER L. OMANSON

KEY TERMS IN PAUL'S LETTERS THAT SHAPE THEOLOGY

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The traditional understanding of Paul's writings among Protestants since the Reformation is that Paul represents salvation by grace while Judaism represents salvation by works of the law. Romans and Galatians are traditionally read from this perspective, and Paul's letters are understood as teaching the timeless message that individual salvation comes from faith alone. In keeping with this understanding of Paul's theology, the Judaizer today is the person who tries to earn salvation by doing good deeds. A classic study of Romans from this perspective is Anders Nygren's 1949 *Commentary on Romans*.

Over the past twenty-five years or so, however, a new approach to Paul has been gaining acceptance. James Dunn, who credits E. P. Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Pa.: Fortress, 1977) with the beginning of the paradigm shift in Pauline studies, writes:

> Sanders' basic claim is not so much that Paul has been misunderstood as that the picture of Judaism drawn from Paul's writings is historically false, not simply inaccurate in part but fundamentally mistaken. What is usually taken to be the Jewish alternative to Paul's gospel would have been hardly recognized as an expression of Judaism by Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. Sanders notes that Jewish scholars and experts in early Judaism have for long enough been registering a protest at this point, contrasting rabbinic Judaism as they understand it with the parody of Judaism which Paul seems to have rejected.[1]

In his commentary on Romans, John Ziesler similarly credits Sanders as the key figure in this shift in understanding Paul's writings. Ziesler's words are worth reading in entirety:

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1 J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 65 (1983): 97. It must be noted that there are scholars who disagree considerably with Sanders' analysis of the rabbinic sources. See, for example, Jacob Neusner, "Mr. Sanders' Pharisees—and Mine: A Response to E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991): 73-95, and Martin Hengel and R. Deines, "E. P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism,' Jesus, and the Pharisees. Review article of *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*, and *Judaism: Practice and Belief* by E. P. Sanders," *Journal of Theological Studies* 46.1 (1995): 1-70.

> There is one particular respect in which this [Ziesler's] commentary differs from most of its predecessors. Until about 1977 it was usual to find commentaries saying that Paul, especially in Galatians and Romans, was opposing the view allegedly held by most of his Jewish contemporaries, that good deeds, and in particular good deeds done in obedience to the *Torah*, enabled one to acquire merit with God and so be acceptable to him. Paul, it was claimed, wrote to maintain that now, because of Jesus Christ, it must on the contrary be said that acceptance with God, and acquittal at the divine judgment, is entirely by grace on the divine side and by faith on the human side. In other words, Luther's problem was also Paul's problem, except that Luther's opponents were certain Roman Catholic theologians, and Paul's were Jewish ones. That granted, their targets were taken to be virtually the same.
>
> In 1977 E. P. Sanders in a massive study failed to find any such merit-dominated approach to God in Jewish sources of the relevant period. If he is right, then Romans must be construed differently. Even where its handling of some matters differs from that of Sanders, this commentary is heavily indebted to him.[1]

A few pages later Ziesler writes, "Therefore, those who read this commentary with experience of some earlier ones may perceive that it consistently tries to see the issues in corporate and social terms at least as much as in individual or strictly theological terms. For example, justification is taken to involve not only 'being put right with God' but equally 'entering the people of God.' "[2]

Nearly fifteen years before Sanders' publication, Krister Stendahl had pointed out in "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West"[3] that once the early church became a gentile church and Paul's argument was simply accepted as normative in the church, it was easy for interpreters to read Paul in light of *their* theological concerns. Stendahl argued that Augustine and later Martin Luther did just that—reading Paul in light of their own quests for relief from a troubled conscience. For Luther, it was natural to understand Catholicism as the equivalent of first-century Judaism, understood as holding to a system of merit and salvation by works. Stendahl wrote,

> The Reformers' interpretation of Paul rests on an analogism when Pauline statements about Faith and Works, Law and Gospel, Jews and Gentiles are read in the framework of late medieval piety. The Law, the Torah, with its specific requirements of circumcision and food restrictions becomes a general principle of "legalism" in religious matters. Where Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic

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1 John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM; Pa.: TPI, 1989), 1-2. See also J. Ziesler, "Some Recent Work on the Letter to the Romans," *Epworth Review* 12 (1985): 96-101.

2 Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 18. Along these same lines, F. Watson writes, "Paul's theological reflection is completely misunderstood if it is isolated from its historical context." *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Watson states on the first page of his monograph, "The Reformation tradition's approach to Paul is fundamentally wrong."

3 Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215. This article was later reprinted in his *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Pa.: Fortress Press, 1976). For a criticism of Stendahl's approach, see Ernst Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans," 60-78 in *Perspective on Paul* (Pa.: Fortress Press, 1971). And for Stendahl's reply, see *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 129-133.

community, his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a common human predicament.

According to Stendahl, Paul's arguments in Romans and Galatians regarding justification and the righteousness of God were worked out by the need to answer the question, "How can Gentiles become part of God's people?"

To quote again from Dunn, "If Stendahl cracked the mould of 20th century reconstructions of Paul's theological context, by showing how much it had been determined by Luther's quest for a gracious God, Sanders has broken it altogether by showing how different these reconstructions are from what we know of first-century Judaism from other sources."[1]

According to this new perspective, Galatians and Romans are not primarily about individual salvation. They are about how Gentiles (as a people) enter the people of God. Paul's concerns were with group and community problems, and when he wrote individualistic and introspective comments, they were usually "in the service of communal concerns, especially relations between Jewish Christians, other Jews, and Gentile Christians."[2] To quote Matera's commentary on Galatians, "While the traditional interpretation views Paul as combating a righteousness by works that seeks to assure one's own salvation, this [new] view of Galatians argues that *the legalism which Paul opposes is a cultural hegemony rather than a legalistic morality* [emphasis mine]."[3]

Stated in other words, Paul is not attacking the fundamentals of Israel's theology in Galatians and Romans. The message of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, was shaped by the Gentile mission! Romans is not a treatise on the doctrine of justification by faith. It is rather about God, that God is both impartial and faithful: impartial to all, including the Gentiles, and faithful to Israel.[4] This new understanding of Paul's writings and his situation means that certain key words and phrases in Paul's writings need to be looked at again in terms of how they are understood and translated.

Dikaiosynē theou (Righteousness of God)

The difficulties of interpreting and translating the phrase "righteousness of God" are well known.[5] For Rudolf Bultmann, who accepted the traditional Lutheran understanding, these words everywhere refer to the righteousness that comes *from* God *to* the believer, that is, it refers to the justification of the individual sinner, a gift of righteousness. For many Protestant scholars, justification by faith has been seen as the organizing center of Paul's theology. But Stendahl surely has it right in his brief commentary on Romans: the organizing center in Paul's theology is his

1 Dunn, "The New Perspective," 100. See also Mary Ann Getty, "Paul and the Salvation of Israel: A Perspective on Romans 9-11," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 456-469; Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1994), 14-47; and Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, ch. 1.

2 Daniel J. Harrington, *Paul on the Mystery of Israel* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 20.

3 Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 29-30.

4 See E. Elizabeth Johnson, "The Faithfulness and Impartiality of God," in *Pauline Theology. Volume III Romans* (ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 211-239.

5 See Manfred T. Brauch, "Perspectives on 'God's righteousness' in recent German discussion," 524-542 in Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; and Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," *JBL* 99 (1980): 241-290. For more recent surveys, see J. J. Scullion, "Righteousness (OT)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, 724-736; and John Reumann, "Righteousness (Early Judaism)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, 736-742, and "Righteousness (NT)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, 1992, 745-773.

apostolic perception of his mission to the Gentiles. And "consequently Romans is central to our understanding of Paul, not because of its doctrine of justification but because the doctrine of justification is here in its original and authentic setting: as an argument for the status of Paul's Gentile converts on the model of Abraham" [emphasis mine].[1]

The following NIV translation of Rom 3.21-22 is clearly based on the traditional interpretation: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference."

In his studies of Paul's letters, Käsemann, Bultmann's own student, challenged the traditional understanding of "the righteousness of God" by emphasizing the "righteousness of God" as "God's power."[2] But, in agreement with the traditional Protestant understanding of Paul's writings, Käsemann continued to see justification by faith as a polemical doctrine that Paul had developed in opposition to Jewish interpretation of the Law.

Stendahl, however, correctly understood Paul's emphasis on justification by faith to be apologetic as Paul defends the right of Gentile converts to be full members of the people of God. In Romans, Paul is arguing that God has not been inconsistent or unreliable (see Rom 3.1-8). After a thorough study of Rom 3.1-7, Sam K. Williams claims that Paul intends "the faithfulness of God," "the righteousness of God," and "the truthfulness of God" as virtual equivalents.[3] By justifying Gentiles on the basis of faith, God is only doing what he did with Abraham long before (Romans 4). In fact, Williams goes so far as to say that "a leading connotation of *dikaiosynē theou* in Romans is God's faithfulness in keeping his promise to Abraham."[4]

Leander Keck similarly argues that "the righteousness of God" refers to "the moral integrity of God," in the sense of the constancy, consistency, dependability, trustworthiness, and faithfulness of God in light of Jesus' cross and resurrection.[5] More recently Keck has written that both parts of Romans [1–8 and 9–11] "are held together by a theology of God's righteousness (integrity) faithfully asserting itself salvifically through earthly discontinuities."[6] Similarly, Brendan Byrne has recently claimed in his commentary on Romans that "the gospel 'reveals' the 'righteousness of God' in that it announces that God has acted faithfully, not only with respect to Israel, but, as Creator, with respect to the entire world. What is at stake is God's own righteousness ... "[7]

In a similar way, N. T. Wright more specifically interprets the phrase *dikaiosynē theou* as "the covenant faithfulness of the creator God."[8] Paul, then, is not talking about human righteousness which comes from God (as NIV translates

1 Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), *ix*.

2 Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Pa.: Fortress Press, 1969), 168-182.

3 Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," 268.

4 *Ibid.*, 265.

5 Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Pa.: Fortress Press, 1979), 118.

6 Keck, "What Makes Romans Tick?" in *Pauline Theology. Volume III Romans* (ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 26.

7 Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 53.

8 Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology. Volume III Romans* (ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 65. See also the same basic understanding by Richard B. Hayes, "Justification," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, 1131-1132.

Rom 3.21-22) but is rather talking about God's covenant faithfulness. Rom 3.21-22, according to this way of understanding, means that "the works of Torah, that is, those practices which mark Israel out from among the nations, cannot be the means of demarcating the true covenant people ... Instead the covenant faithfulness of the creator of the world is revealed *through the faithfulness of Jesus, the Messiah*, for the benefit of all, Jew and Gentile alike, who believe."[1] The point of these verses, then, is not human faith or faithfulness as the NIV translation cited above suggests, but rather that "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" (*pisteōs Iēsou Christou*) is the means through which the covenant faithfulness of God is enacted.

Rom 10.3 is another passage where "righteousness of God" is often wrongly understood as referring to human righteousness which comes from God. NRSV reads, "For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness." This verse is usually interpreted to mean that *individual* Jews were trying to establish their own righteousness before God by doing the works of the Law.[2] But Sanders and Getty are correct in noting that this verse must be read in its context, that is, the theme of the inclusion of the Gentiles, and not as an attack on Israel or Judaism. Getty writes that v. 3 refers "to the Jews' exclusive claim to that righteousness. In other words, Israel is not accused of a 'works righteousness,' but of an ignorance and blindness born of exclusivity. The Gentiles *did* obtain righteousness not because they sought it but because access to righteousness was given to them through faith. This is also the way Jews understood righteousness to be attained [italics mine]."[3] Ziesler, who shares this understanding, suggests that "their own righteousness" here means "something like 'their own version, not God's, of what constitutes life as his people.' "[4] And Wright explains Rom 10.3 this way: "Israel was 'ignorant of the righteousness of God'; that is, Israel did not understand or recognize what its god was doing within its history *in fulfillment of his covenant purposes*." "Seeking to establish their own" means that they refused to abandon their ethnic status of covenant membership.[5]

TEV rather consistently translates *dikaiosynē theou* as "God's way of putting people right with himself" or "how God puts people right with himself." This translation was a step in the right direction in that it moved away from understanding the genitive *theou* as a genitive of source, that is, "righteousness *from* God." Recent studies, however, make more sense of this expression and of Paul's writings as a whole when *dikaiosynē theou* is understood as referring to God's covenant faithfulness. And in those verses where Paul used "righteousness" of people (for example, Phil 3.9), it should not be interpreted in terms of "forensic" or "ethical" righteousness but rather primarily in terms of the covenant relationship to God and membership within the covenant community.[6]

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1 *Ibid.*, 37. On page 42, Wright calls these "works of Torah" "badges of Jewish ethnic covenant membership."

2 So, for example, C. K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul* (Pa.: Westminster Press, 1982), 146f.

3 Mary Ann Getty, "Paul and the Salvation of Israel: A Perspective on Romans 9–11," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 467.

4 Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 256.

5 Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," 56-57.

6 Hays, "Justification," 1131.

Erga nomou (Works of the law)

The traditional interpretation is that "works of the law" refers to the ethical requirements of the Law. Paul is understood as arguing against legalism, that is, he argues that one is justified by faith in Christ and not by doing good works. Protestant interpreters have often interpreted this expression in light of the Reformation debate between Protestants and Roman Catholics concerning ethical works and their meritorious value.[1] The following quotations from several modern commentaries on Galatians represent this traditional perspective:

> What is deprecated is the performing of them [works of the law] in a spirit of legalism, or with the idea that their performance will win acceptance before God.[2]
>
> Any approach to Christianity which rests upon rigid observance of external rules as a means of salvation is no better off than that which the Galatians were in danger of adopting ... If the path to righteousness consists of well-defined duties which can be verified, it is a simple matter for the individual to apply himself wholeheartedly to such a fixed procedure than if he has to exercise the discipline of a personal faith ... [3] and
>
> In Paul's vocabulary "works of the law" always denotes efforts to attain a stated goal by conformity to a legal pattern, and have a particular application to the Jewish doctrine of works (or merit).[4]
>
> These deeds [works of the law] done in fulfillment of the law's prescriptions are at the same time an expression of the Jews' self-consciousness as God's chosen people and (for them) the basis of a legal claim over against God ... The *implication* of Paul's statement, however, may well include the rejection of "any and all works as works-of-merit—that is, of 'legalism'—as of no avail in the matter of justification ... "[5]

An increasing number of contemporary interpreters, however, suggest that the expression "works of the law" refers primarily to circumcision, dietary laws, and observance of the Jewish feast days, which were seen as identity markers separating Jews from Gentiles. As noted above, Wright interprets this expression as "badges of Jewish ethnic covenant membership." Matera states, "Thus *ex ergōn nomou* is a technical phrase akin to a code word and has a precise meaning for Paul and the Galatians."[6] James Dunn's comments are worth quoting in full on this point:

> The issue expressed in "works of the law," in other words, was *not* whether membership of the people of God entailed various obligations (Paul had no doubt that it did), but whether it entailed an in effect sectarian interpretation of these obligations, whether it entailed obligations designed to exclude others, whether it entailed that Jew remain distinct from Gentile.[7]

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1 See especially the comments by Donald Guthrie, *Galatians* (Greenwood, S. C.: Attic Press, 1969), 41-42.
2 F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 137.
3 Guthrie, *Galatians*, 40-41.
4 *Ibid.*, 87.
5 Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 113-114.
6 Matera, *Galatians*, 93. See also 99.
7 Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1993), 137.

Elsewhere Dunn says that "we should define 'works of the law' as what the law required *of Israel as God's people*." He further states that "works of the law" is the Pauline term for "covenantal nomism." Dunn also equates "works of the law" with "Jewish covenantal lifestyle." The main point to be made is that the "works" to which Paul referred were not done in order to attain righteousness, but rather in order to maintain covenant righteousness, not least by separation from the Gentiles. This was wrong for Paul, not because they were seeking to receive merit from God for their legalism, but because they were resisting God's will in the gospel by continuing to insist on Israel's privilege and separation from other nations.[1]

In his recently published commentary on Galatians, J. Louis Martyn writes, "It ['works of the law'] is a locution that has led a great many interpreters to credit Paul with a theology of 'faith' versus 'works.' In fact, a rather different translation is called for, leading to a different picture of Paul's theology."[2] Martyn correctly shows that the expression "refers simply to observance of God's Law," and his own translation is "observance of the Law."

How one understands *erga nomou* will be decided also in part by how one understands *pistis Christou*. For Paul surely contrasts the two, whether explicitly or implicitly (Gal 2.16; Phil 3.9; Rom 3.21-22; Gal 2.20-21). Paul Achtemeier makes an important point regarding Rom 3.20-29. The apostle Paul asks in v. 29, "Or is God the God only of the Jews?" His answer is that God is also God of the Gentiles. The implication is then that law's works were available only to the Jews. Paul was, therefore, referring specifically to the commands of the Torah and not to human accomplishment generally. Achtemeier concludes that *erga nomou* refers far more to "Jewish religious heritage" than to "human religious accomplishment." A consequence of this conclusion is that one can no longer read Paul as if he is setting *pistis Christou* over against *erga nomou*, understood as "human accomplishment."[3]

Pistis Christou (Faith of/in Christ)

The literature on this expression in recent years is enormous and growing.[4] NRSV now recognizes "faith/faithfulness of Christ" (Christ as the subject who is faithful) as a possible alternate translation on the following passages: Rom 3.22, 26; Gal 2.16 (*bis*), 20; 3.22; Phil 3.9. As noted above, Wright understands *pistis*

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1 Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 354-379.

2 J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (N. Y.: Doubleday, 1997), 260. Martyn further states that this expression has nothing to do with "works" in contrast to "faith." Rather, "the expression simply summarizes the grand and complex activity of the Jew, who faithfully walks with God along the path God has opened up for him in the Law" (261). Richard N. Longenecker, however, argues for the traditional view, that "works of the law" is "a catch phrase to signal the whole legalistic complex of ideas having to do with winning God's favor by a merit-amassing observance of Torah (*Galatians* [Dallas: Word, 1990], 86).

3 Achtemeier, "Apropos the Faith Of/In Christ," in *Pauline Theology. Volume IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 87-88.

4 Persons interested in studying this issue in more detail will wish to look at the works listed by Martyn in his commentary on Galatians, page 270, fn. 171. In addition to the works mentioned there, see also Martyn's own discussion on pages 263-277. Also in support of the translation "faith of Christ" are the following articles: Achtemeier, "Apropos the Faith Of/In Christ"; Richard B. Hays, "PISTIS and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?" in *Pauline Theology. Volume IV: Looking Back, Pressing On*, 35-60; Morna D. Hooker, "PISTIS CHRISTOU," *NTS* 35 (1989): 321-342; and L. T. Johnson, "Romans 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 77-90. Hays, "PISTIS and Pauline Theology," has more than a page of bibliography of works since 1981 in favor of the subjective genitive (fn. 3) and in favor of the objective genitive (fn. 4), 36-37.

Christou as the faithfulness of Jesus. The limitations of space in this paper require that the recent history of research on this expression must simply be assumed.

It should be noted, however, that the interpretation and translation of *pistis Christou* is not unrelated to the translation of *dikaiosynē theou*, especially when *dikaiosynē theou* is understood as the manifestation of God's faithfulness to his covenant promise to Abraham.[1] Commenting on Rom 3.21-26 Hays correctly notes that as long as interpreters understood *dikaiosynē theou* as human righteousness imputed by God, then it was possible to understand *pistis Christou* as "faith in Christ" (Christ as the object of human faith). But once it is recognized that *dikaiosynē theou* means "God's covenant faithfulness," the objective genitive understanding of *pistis Christou* "becomes virtually unintelligible."[2]

In fact Howard concludes his *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article on "Faith of Christ" with the following statement:

> It is likely that the *pistis Christou* formula, especially when it occurs in Romans and Galatians, related primarily to the inclusion of the Gentiles. The faith of Christ is the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham that all the nations will be blessed in him. Christ kept faith (= faith of Christ) with the divine promise by opening the doors to the Gentile nations. For Paul, then, the doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine that by the faith of Christ God has united Israel and the nations in the present age in order to lead them to faith in God and to accomplish the salvation of mankind.[3]

Section headings

This new understanding also has implications for section heading titles used in translation. For example, Rom 3.10ff. have traditionally been read as an attempt to assert the total depravity of every particular human being. The New Living Translation calls this section "All People Are Sinners." Section headings in commentaries and translations often say something like "Universal Failure to Attain to Righteousness" (W. Sanday and A. C. Hedlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* 5th ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902) or "Everyone Is a Sinner" (God's Word [1995], vv. 1-20).

These verses are, however, Paul's way of asserting the commonality of Jew and Gentile.[4] Such an awareness of Paul's intention may result in better section headings. R. David Kaylor notes that

> interpreters usually give this section [Rom 1.18–3.20] a label such as "the universal need for the gospel," or "the sinfulness of all humanity." ... That interpretation correctly recognizes Paul's assertion of universal human sinfulness, but it misses the central point: Paul wishes to affirm that there is no

1 See Hays, "PISTIS and Pauline Theology," 37. L. T. Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (N. Y.: Crossroad, 1997), 59, states that the implication of the translation "through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe" is that Jesus' human faith is the means of the revelation of God's righteousness.

2 *Ibid.*, 46.

3 George Howard, "Faith of Christ," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, 760.

4 Writing on this section of Romans, Stendahl (*Final Account*, 19) notes that Paul "almost always repeats that phrase, 'both Jews and Gentiles,' or 'first the Jews, then the Gentiles.' This is to remind Lutherans what his argument is all about, rather than all those sermons about sin and guilt and forgiveness that Lutherans cherish."

real distinction between Gentile and Jew, a point to which he returns dramatically at 11:32 ... [1]

Kaylor focuses more helpfully on the historical context by calling section 1.18–3.20 "Gentile and Jew: Alike in Covenant Breaking." In the same vein, he calls vv. 3.21–4.25 "One New Covenant for Gentile and Jew." Notice that older commentaries such as that by F. F. Bruce call 1.18–3.20 "Sin and Retribution: the Universal Need Diagnosed" and vv. 3.21–5.21 "The Way of Righteousness: The Universal Need Met."[2] But contrast Bruce's headings with the heading that Byrne gives in his commentary for 1.18–4.25, "The Inclusion of the Gentiles on the Basis of Righteousness by Faith." Like Kaylor, Byrne reflects the new understanding of Paul and keeps the focus on the historical setting rather than too quickly forcing the reader to think of these verses as Paul's timeless message that individual salvation comes from faith alone.

Conclusion

The comments in the pages above show that recent studies have led to very different ways of reading Paul's letters from the traditional understandings. Of course the issues are complex, and there are many who continue to defend the traditional Reformation understanding of Paul.[3] Space has not allowed for exegetical study of the relevant passages, but readers are encouraged to consult the books and articles listed in the footnotes and in the list of additional reading at the end of this paper. Whether Stanley K. Stowers is correct in claiming that the shift in understanding *pistis* and *dikaiosynē tou theou* in Paul's letters has "decisively" taken place remains to be seen. But with good reason he writes that these two shifts mean a dramatic change in the way that we read not just individual passages such as Rom 3.21-26, but all of Romans, and the entire Pauline corpus.[4]

The next step that must be explored more fully is whether these shifts require a dramatic change in the way that we translate individual passages in Paul's letters, at least in functional equivalence translations. I have provided tentative translations of five passages in Romans, Galatians, and Philippians, which should be compared with traditional translations such as RSV and NIV. Granted that the following translations are periphrastic, but do they better express Paul's intended meaning by "unpacking" the sense, if the new perspective on Paul is accepted?

Romans 3.21-22

But now God's covenant faithfulness has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, God's covenant faithfulness manifested through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

Romans 10.3

For being ignorant of God's covenant faithfulness, and seeking to establish a status of righteousness, of covenant membership, which will be for Jews and

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1 Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 33-34.

2 Bruce, *Romans* (Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

3 See, for example, Frank Theilman, *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986); Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective; with an Essay by Donald A. Hagner* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

4 Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 194.

Jews only, Israel did not submit to God's covenant faithfulness[1] (*or*, For being ignorant of God's covenant faithfulness, they refused to abandon their ethnic status of covenant membership which would be for Jews and Jews only and did not submit to God's covenant faithfulness.)

Galatians 2.16

Yet we who know that a person is not justified by adhering to Jewish religious heritage but through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, even we have placed our trust in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by Christ's faithfulness, and not by adhering to Jewish religious heritage, because no one shall be justified in that way.

Galatians 3.22

But the Scripture consigned all things to sin that what was promised might be given through the faithfulness of Christ to those who believe.

Philippians 3.9

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on Jewish covenant membership, but that which is through the faithfulness of the Messiah, the righteousness from (*ek*) God that depends on faith.

Additional Reading

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1 This translation owes some of its phrasing to N.T. Wright, who also states, "The covenant always envisaged a worldwide family; Israel, clinging to her own special status as the covenant-bearer, has betrayed the purpose for which that covenant was made. It is as though the postman were to imagine that all the letters in his bag were intended for him" (*What Saint Paul Really Said* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 108).

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