

YON-GYONG KWON

Eschatology in Galatians

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Rethinking Paul's Response
to the Crisis in Galatia

Mohr Siebeck

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To my wife Inhwa
Sine qua non

Preface

The present study represents a slightly revised and updated version of my Ph. D. thesis submitted to King's College, University of London, in September 2000 and accepted in January 2001. The work consists mostly of exegesis of Galatians in the traditional sense of the word. There are some important methodological suggestions, but its focus throughout is to explicate the meaning of Paul's argument itself. Readers who look for a 'novel' approach or a 'groundbreaking' methodology will be disappointed; its contribution lies in challenging the traditional reading of the letter by looking at it from a different perspective.

Scholarly interest in Galatians does not show any sign of abating, and many interesting studies have appeared since the completion of my dissertation. On the whole, however, I have not come across many studies that either seriously challenge my thesis or are directly relevant to it. On those salient points proposed in this book, most studies still seem to follow the 'consensus' that I take issue with. For this reason, I do not feel it necessary to undertake a major revision of my original thesis; therefore, the extent of updating and revision is fairly limited.

I have incurred a huge debt of gratitude during the years of my research for this thesis. My first and special thanks go to Professor Graham Stanton, who supervised my work throughout, even after his move to Cambridge. I cannot thank him enough for his ready help, careful criticism, warm encouragement and particularly his patience with my raw materials, without which my research would have been much more torturous. I also thank him for encouraging me to seek publication of this work. I also offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Douglas Campbell, now at Duke University, who acted as another supervisor at the latter stage of my research, whose careful readings of my earlier drafts have greatly enhanced the quality of my work. I also thank Dr. Edward Adams who also read my draft and offered many helpful suggestions.

My doctoral research would not have been possible without the financial assistance of many institutions, to all of which I offer my sincere gratitude: the British Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for the granting of an ORS award for the years 1997-2000; the KCL Theological Trust for the 'small' grants; the DooRae research foundation for financial support. I

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I also send my thanks and affection to my parents and my mother-in-law for their unfailing love and support which has always been a precious part of my life.

A warm word of thanks is also due to my colleagues here at Westminster Graduate School of Theology in Seoul for their support and encouragement. I also thank Dr. Joseph S. Park and Mr. Sang Lee, both of whom read part of the material and offered me many helpful suggestions in stylistic matters.

I am grateful to Professor Dr. Jörg Frey for accepting this work into the WUNT series, as well as for his comments and suggestions. I also thank the staff at Mohr for their kind and swift help, in particular Mr. Matthias Spitzner.

Needless to say, my deepest gratitude goes to my wonderful wife, Inhwa Choi. Throughout our years together she has been a cheerful imitator of the self-sacrificing love of Christ, of which I am a most fortunate and most grateful beneficiary. It is she who made my research possible in the first place, and by dedicating this published version to her, I am thus merely repeating what I did with the original thesis version, namely, getting the work back to its rightful owner.

The biggest change since the completion of the thesis is, of course, the birth of my daughter, Sarah, who was conceived around the time I submitted my thesis. Her birth put an end to our ten years of anxious waiting, but I am sure she will protest that it was she who had had to wait all those years to allow daddy to complete his project. During the time of revision she would come and sit on my lap, duly promising that she would keep ‘quiet’, and I loved her breaking her promises as much as she did herself. Both my wife and I, together with our parents and friends, are grateful for no other reason than her just being here with us, knowing that that is the very dream our Father in heaven is still dreaming (Rom 8:29). So, as always, my final words remain: SOLI DEO GLORIA.

June 2004

Yon-Gyong Kwon

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Notes

The abbreviations used in this work follow the convention of *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *New Testament Studies*, and *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. In the notes, a short title and year are given; full titles are available in the bibliography at the end. Where the name of an author is given without a short title, the reference is to that author's commentary on Galatians. For commentaries on the other books of the Scripture both author and a short title are given. For an author who shares the same name with another, the initial of that person's first name is also given to avoid confusion.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Task

Paul's letter to the Galatians continues to attract lively scholarly interest.¹ This is hardly surprising since this relatively short letter contains much valuable information about Paul and the early church and presents many fascinating issues both for historians and for theologians. It is thus not surprising to see that this letter often provides a crucial test case for students of earliest Christianity. It is not an exaggeration to say that one cannot speak with any degree of confidence about Paul and early Christianity without first making one's mind up about Galatians.² So the stakes are high and discussion is intensive. This being so, it is also quite rare to find a happy consensus on most issues that concern the letter.

There is, however, one glaring exception: most scholars accept that there is 'a structure of realized eschatology' in Galatians.³ Here two claims are involved. First, Paul's logic is an 'eschatological' one; to understand Paul is to grasp this fundamentally eschatological way of thinking undergirding his argument in the letter.⁴ Secondly, it is a 'realized' eschatology. In Galatians it

¹ Recent major studies include Dunn, *Theology* (1993) and *Galatians* (1993); Hong, *Law* (1993); Hansen, *Galatians* (1994); Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996); Williams, *Galatians* (1997); Martyn, *Issues* (1997) and *Galatians* (1997); Witherington, *Grace* (1998, commentary); Esler, *Galatians* (1998); B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998); Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998); Choi, 'Spirit' (1998, Ph. D. thesis, Denver-Iliff); Nanos, *Irony* (2002). See also Nanos ed., *Debate* (2002).

² Good illustrations can be found in the theories of Beker, Martyn, Sanders and Dunn.

³ Beker, *Paul* (1980) 98–99. See e.g., Marshall, 'Eschatology' (1997) 49; R. Longenecker lxxxvii–lxxxviii; Barclay, *Truth* (1988) 100; Meeks, 'Apocalyptic' (1982) 695.

Unlike the more technical use of the term 'realized eschatology' in the work of C. H. Dodd, in the present study we use it loosely to denote *an emphasis on the realized aspect of salvation*. In contrast to this, we shall use the term 'future eschatology' to describe Paul's perspective in Galatians, in which he understands the meaning of the present (and the past) as it pertains to the future hope of final salvation.

⁴ One thinks of such influential studies as Schweitzer, *Mysticism* (1930); Vos, *Eschatology* (1930); Cullmann, *Time* (1950) and *Salvation* (1967); Schoeps, *Paul* (1961); Davies, *Rabbinic Judaism* (1948); Ridderbos, *Outline* (1975); Furnish, *Theology* (1968).

is this aspect of ‘already’ that carries the sharpest edge of his contextual polemic.⁵ To exaggerate a little, to understand Paul’s argument in Galatians is to grasp its realized eschatological structure.⁶

Is this consensus, which seems so obvious to most interpreters, well-founded? Or is it possible that it is merely the result of repeated assertion which nevertheless lacks hard evidence? Indeed, when scholars agree on a certain issue, they usually do so because the relevant data is so clear as not to allow any other interpretation. Unfortunately, however, this is not always the case. Not infrequently, scholarly consensus may involve more than disinterested exegesis, as the story of the emperor’s ‘new clothes’ reminds us. It is for this reason that once in a while we need to hear the cry of a boy who clearly *sees* the naked body of the king, but not the wonderful robe he is *supposed to see*. The present study is our attempt to express such a boyish surprise at the ‘transparent robe’ of ‘realized eschatology’ in Galatians, with the conviction that there is indeed good reason to question its reality.

1.2 Ways of Reading the Galatian Eschatology

Let us begin the discussion with a simple but crucial question: granted, for the time being, a realized eschatology in chapters 3 and 4 of the letter, what do we do with the strong future eschatology in chapters 5 and 6 where Paul issues solemn ethical instructions and warnings (5:5, 21b; 6:7–9)? If his emphasis is indeed on realized eschatology, why does he, as he rounds up his argument, confuse his readers by saying things which almost seem to bring his earlier words to naught? What then should we do with these troublesome chapters? Is there a satisfactory answer to this question—namely, an interpretation of Paul’s argument which shows a level of self-consistency as one might expect in such a highly polemical writing as Galatians?⁷

We begin our study with a brief overview of the scholarly treatment of the subject, with the goal of demonstrating that *Paul’s eschatology in Galatians has not yet been adequately accounted for*. Being a virtual consensus, eschatology has seldom been a major topic in scholarly discussion, which renders a systematic review of the subject difficult. We divide our survey into three major groups: 1) a fully realized eschatology; 2) the eschatological tension between ‘already and not yet’; 3) future eschatology. In addition to

⁵ Scholars disagree over the nature and extent of this ‘fulfillment’.

⁶ Even those who take Paul’s main concern to be the ‘ongoing’ aspect of Christian life think that the ‘already’ of the ‘getting in’ forms the essential ground for Paul’s thesis.

⁷ We do not, of course, mean the kind of rigid systematic consistency in which every single detail logically fits together. What we mean is a sharply focused *perspective* which shapes the contour of Paul’s argument as a whole. Cf. the helpful discussion in Silva, *Galatians* (2001) 143–150.

these, we shall also take a look at the view of Betz about future eschatological justification. This grouping is, of course, somewhat artificial, but our purpose is not so much to discuss who says what as to discern major ways of construing Paul's eschatology in Galatians. This will pave the way for the presentation of our own reading of the letter in the subsequent chapters. Since eschatology is intrinsically related to ethics, and in turn, to the larger issue of the structure of the letter, we will also be paying some attention to how successful each approach is in making a coherent case out of Paul's argument as a whole.

1.2.1 Fully Realized Eschatology: Traditional Approach

Many scholars discern what we may call a 'fully realized eschatology' in Galatians. Overall, the view is presented in unambiguous terms, which renders a long discussion unnecessary. What follows is thus a brief analysis of some major lines of approach within this position, with special reference to their implications for understanding the eschatological structure of the letter.

An obvious starting point is the 'traditional' reading of the letter in which Paul's doctrine of justification is understood as his attempt to thwart the 'legalistic' attitude of 'justification by works of the law'. Burton⁸ provides a good account of this view. For him, the letter concerns whether the Gentiles should receive circumcision or not in order to gain 'membership' in the covenant people and salvation (lvii). Paul rejects this legalistic view of his opponents by claiming that justification is only in Christ and by faith. Paul's main contention is, of course, that legalistic 'works of the law' can never be the proper ground for God's acceptance.

What concerns us here is Burton's claim that Paul's refutation of such 'legalism' carries a strong *a posteriori* polemic in it. In other words, Paul falsifies the legalistic notion of justification on the basis of the factual reality⁹ of justification by faith: the undeniable fact that Christ actually died (2:21), which marked the revelation of God's righteousness, requires that faith in the crucified Christ has to be the only way of justification and that the law-righteousness is a blind alley which flies in the face of what has actually happened (141).

Paul's scriptural argument is also read in the same light. What is crucial for Burton is, of course, the Galatians' actual experience of the Spirit by faith and without the law. Taking 'the promise of the Spirit' (3:14) as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise which dominates much of Paul's discussion in chapters 3 and 4, he suggests that Paul makes his claim of 'by faith' on the ground that the promised inheritance is already realized in the form of the

⁸ Burton, *Galatians* (1921).

⁹ This reality is interpreted either forensically or ethically. For the more recent 'apocalyptic' approach, see 1.2.3 below.

Spirit, namely, the Spirit that the Galatians received by faith. Paul renders pointless the demand of circumcision as the condition of becoming children of Abraham by pointing out the fact that the Galatians are already sons of Abraham by their faith in Christ. By stressing the 'realized' nature of Christian life, then, '[t]he appeal of the apostle is to retain the status they already possess' (225). Throughout, Paul's thought is 'concentrated on the way of acceptance with God in the *present* life', and naturally, 'eschatological references are few and indirect' (15, emphasis added).

This does not mean that the element of 'not yet' is completely denied.¹⁰ The trouble is, however, that, though acknowledged, it simply remains *inconsequential* for Paul's *main* argument. We are not told how it can be understood as part of Paul's response to the crisis without letting it hamper its otherwise neat realized eschatological framework.¹¹ Given this rather disruptive nature of future eschatological references, it is not surprising that some scholars, such as Eckstein,¹² come up with a much neater version of realized eschatology, denying *any* relevance of future eschatology for Paul's argument in the letter. For him, even the 'hope of righteousness' (5:5) does not refer to future justification but to the hope *present* justification bestows on those justified (247). He too acknowledges that believers' perseverance will prove 'meaningful in the end' and 'surely be rewarded'. As it becomes immediately clear from the way he puts the matter, however, the sharp teleological edge in Paul's words is carefully blunted so as not to disrupt the emphatically realized thrust (251). '[D]ie eschatologische Spannung', Eckstein unequivocally concludes, 'spielt in der konkreten galatischen Kontroverse keine Rolle' (118).

1.2.2 Fully Realized Eschatology: Sociological Readings

The traditional reading of the letter has presently been under heavy attack, especially since the publication in 1977 of E. P. Sanders's major book.¹³ Many scholars, with various degrees of modification, still continue to hold the traditional view of Judaism and Paul,¹⁴ but different ways of resolving the tension are vigorously sought, most noticeably in terms of sociology and

¹⁰ Burton acknowledges future justification and the necessity of proper obedience. Compare pp. 471 and 278, 311–312. Duncan's more Lutheran reading also allows the element of 'not yet'.

¹¹ Such silence is typical of many scholarly interpretations, e.g., Hendriksen; Guthrie; Bruce; Hübner, *Law* (1984); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998); Schreiner, *Law* (1993).

¹² Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996).

¹³ Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism* (1977); *Law* (1983). For some reviews, see Neusner, 'Comparing' (1978) 177–191; Best, 'E. P. Sanders' (1982) 65–74. One should not forget that Sanders joins an already growing momentum detected, e.g., in Stendahl, *Paul* (1976).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Hübner, *Law* (1984); Kim, *Origin* (1984); Westerholm, *Law* (1988); Thielman, *Plight* (1989); idem, *Law* (1994); Laato, *Law* (1995); Hagner, 'Jewish Matrix' (1993); Gundry, 'Grace' (1985); Stanton, 'Law' (1996).

eschatology. Without doubt, one of the mounting concerns since the work of Sanders has been how to relate Paul's criticisms of the law to the 'covenantal nomism' that Sanders so forcefully describes. What is relevant for us here is the fact that these newer trends do not seem to help us to appreciate the future eschatological thrust in Galatians. While the notion of 'legalism' is seriously questioned, its basic, realized eschatological framework goes almost unchallenged.

In recent years, the sociological dimension of Paul's argument attracts growing scholarly interest.¹⁵ Being sociological, attention is necessarily focused on the *present*, allowing little room for the future eschatological dimension of Paul's polemic to stand on its own. Watson¹⁶ provides a good example. Failing to find any 'theological' ground for Paul's rejection of the law (64), he takes it to be a sociological call for 'separation from the Jewish community'. 'Paul's use of an antithesis asserts the separation of church from synagogue, but does not explain theologically why such a separation is necessary' (69). For the Gentiles, justification by works of the law means 'entry into the Jewish people', which is wrong 'for that reason alone' (69).¹⁷ Paul's polemic in Galatians is manifestly a *sociological* one on which his theological conviction has no bearing at all. Naturally, Watson practically passes over the issues of eschatology and ethics, together with the role of the Spirit which forms the spine of Paul's argument (3:2–5; 4:21–31; 5:16–26; 6:7–9).

Barclay¹⁸ does view ethics as an integral part of Paul's polemic. With the convenient scheme of 'identity' and 'pattern of behavior', he competently demonstrates how Paul's theological argument 'points toward and requires the moral instruction at the end of the letter' (77–105, here 105) which, as the 'necessary consequence' of identity, describes 'how the members of God's people should live' (217). What is puzzling for us here is that, while ethics is well anticipated by Paul's discussion of identity, its futuristic framework is neither 'anticipated' nor 'necessitated' by it. This is inevitable, since Barclay takes Paul's theological argument to be about 'realized identity' and explain ethics in that particular light rather than the 'not yet' of future salvation.¹⁹

¹⁵ The prevalence of such motifs as 'identity', 'inclusion', 'unity', 'equality', 'openness', 'separation' and 'boundary' illustrates this trend.

¹⁶ Sanders, *Paul* (1986).

¹⁷ Italic is removed in the last quote. Here he cites the frequently cited words of Sanders in *Palestinian Judaism* (1977) 552: 'In short, this is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity'.

¹⁸ Barclay, *Truth* (1988). Unlike Watson, his *main* concern is theological. R. Longenecker's 'legalism and libertinism' resembles Barclay's scheme. See also Matera, 'Culmination' (1988) 85; Gaventa, 'Singularity' (1991) 149: 'a new identity in Christ' and 'new life in the Spirit'; Hong, *Law* (1993); Fee, *Presence* (1995) 367–471.

¹⁹ See pp. 90, 91–92, 95, 96–97. This is much more explicit in Esler. See below.

After all, he too agrees with Beker and Martyn that 'Galatians does not match the other apocalyptic Pauline letters' in its lack of 'the near-expectation of the end' (100). Ethics is well integrated into the scheme, but future eschatology still does not find any role to play, even in what is arguably one of the most successful attempts to interpret the letter as a unified argument.

Esler's reading of Galatians in terms of a social anthropological theory of identity²⁰ seems more successful in accounting for the role of ethics and eschatology, in that both elements are now taken up as 'aspects of a much larger reality called identity' (172, 217). Esler reminds us, quite legitimately, that 'a group's sense of their destiny, of where they are headed, can constitute an important part of their sense of who they are', since 'identity' has 'both a present and future dimension' (175, 233). From this he further claims that such an identity-generating function is the *main* purpose behind Paul's talk of future salvation (233).²¹ Here the domestication of *future* eschatology into the concept of *present* identity, already visible in Barclay, becomes quite explicit. However, one cannot help feeling that this is the answer Esler gets from the theory with which he began and not a conclusion gained from his actual reading of Paul's argument.²²

By saying this, we do not mean that these interpreters argue for a realized eschatology. They explicitly affirm the future eschatological dimension of Paul's theology, as well as the necessity of proper conduct for end-time salvation (6:7–8).²³ The point is, however, that as in Burton this recognition is *irrelevant* for their readings of Paul's polemic itself, which is the inevitable consequence of their sociological orientation. But the future eschatological thrust is clearly there in the letter (5:5, 21b; 6:7–9), and one cannot help wondering if too much is not left unexplained for their sociological readings to be convincing.

²⁰ Esler, *Galatians* (1998). See his own summary in 'Social Identity' (1998). See also 'Reading' (1996) 215–240 and 'Family Imagery' (1997) 121–149.

²¹ Meeks, 'Apocalyptic' (1982), speaking of the function of the motif, anticipates the full-blown study of Esler.

²² Through the methodological glasses of 'identity', Esler seems to see *everything* in Galatians in that particular light, thereby creating the impression that Galatians is about identity. What really happens, however, is that from the start Galatians is approached from the particular angle of 'identity'. Although we do not thereby deny the dimension of identity altogether, claiming that such an identity-forming function is the *main* purpose of Paul's theological argument is pushing this otherwise valuable insight a bit too far. For a telling criticism of Esler's work, see the review by Bonnington (1999), especially pp. 144–145.

²³ See, e.g., Watson, *Paul* (1986) 64–65; cf. pp. 119–121, 148, 159; Barclay, *Truth* (1988) 165, 227, 230: 'it was not just a matter of what God *had* done...but what he *continued to do* in and for the believer' (227, *italics* his). Here we observe a 'theological' turn in his language, which becomes strategic for an 'eschatological' or 'apocalyptic' reading of Paul. See the next section.

Sanders, very instructively, reveals the problem future eschatological motifs cause for these sociological readings.²⁴ Calling Paul's justification language a 'transfer terminology',²⁵ he claims that the issue in Galatians is not the condition the Gentiles must meet to be 'saved' or 'justified' at the Judgment but to enter the people of God,²⁶ namely, to become true 'sons of Abraham'. 'Justification', 'freedom from the law' and 'receiving the Spirit' all deal with this issue of 'getting in'.²⁷ Paul's case is clear: by believing in Christ, Gentile converts have already become proper members of God's people. This does not mean that Sanders denies future salvation in Paul.²⁸ It simply is not the issue in Galatians which is only about the *initial entry*.²⁹ Naturally, 'Galatians is remarkable for the relative absence of end-time language, but the ruling topic of chapter 3 is how to become a descendant of Abraham'.³⁰

Sanders *does* notice the motifs of future salvation (5:5), however. He explains that in the end initial entry matters, because it is the 'precondition of end-time salvation'. And behind this lies 'the unspoken assumption that the true descendants of Abraham will be saved'. Ultimately, then, Galatians is about 'how to enter the body of those who would be saved'.³¹ The strategic split between 'getting in' and 'staying in' has then proved rather artificial from the first,³² as well as his suggestion of 'entry' as the subject of the letter.

1.2.3 Fully Realized Eschatology: Eschatological Readings

Another important way of explaining Paul's polemic against the law is to seize upon the alleged realized eschatological convictions of Paul: the coming of Christ has established a new era and thereby rendered the law obsolete. Not surprisingly, this approach is often combined with a strong christological³³ or

²⁴ Sanders, *Law* (1983), which is an exegetical substantiation of his view suggested in *Palestinian Judaism* (1977) and *Paul* (1991). With varied nuances, the term 'identity' is currently in vogue among Pauline scholars. Cf. Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 132; Davies, 'People of Israel' (1977) 10.

²⁵ Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism* (1977) 470–472, 501, 544. Cf. pp. 491–495; *Law* (1983) 5–10.

²⁶ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 18, 20; *Paul* (1991) 50. The point is, no doubt, to eliminate the theological, more specifically, *soteriological* connotation.

²⁷ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 52, n. 20. The intention of Sanders is clear: since Paul's polemic is not against 'works-righteousness', 'the quality and character of Judaism are not in view' (19). Throughout his discussion, Sanders takes issue with Hübner.

²⁸ Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism* (1979) 441–442, 515–518; *Paul* (1991) 21–22, 26–33.

²⁹ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 20 (emphasis original).

³⁰ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 46.

³¹ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 45–46; *Paul* (1991) 59.

³² Moo, 'Law' (1987) 292; Stanton, 'Law' (1996) 105.

³³ The 'sacramental' reading of Brinsmead, *Response* (1982) is a prominent case in point (e.g., p. 197). See also Campbell, 'Coming' (1999).

theocentric³⁴ orientation. An obvious merit of this perspective is that, like the sociological one, it provides an attractive way out from the difficulty of explaining Paul's polemic against the law. By focusing on the eschatological decisiveness of Christ, one can render the law 'obsolete' without actually having to criticize it.³⁵

Beker³⁶ provides an ironic example of this approach. Despite his emphasis on 'future apocalyptic'³⁷ as the core of Paul's gospel, Beker fails to make Galatians support his case and admits that the letter 'almost presents us with a "realized eschatology", since the fullness of eschatological reality coincides with the Christ-event' (98–99).

Indeed the eschatological present dominates the letter, for the crisis situation demands the either/or of bondage under the law or freedom in Christ. And this either/or is so centrally grounded in the death of Christ as the annulment of slavery under the Torah (Gal 2.19–21; 3:1, 12–14; 4:5; 6:14) that the apocalyptic future with its basis in the resurrection of Christ does not receive its proper emphasis.... Indeed, *if we ignore the future apocalyptic hints in Galatians*, the letter can be easily interpreted as a document of realized eschatology' (58).³⁸

³⁴ B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) gives a 'realized eschatological' reading in which he combines a strong theocentric perspective (35–67) with an equally strong emphasis on morality (69–88; 147–171).

³⁵ See McLean, *Curse* (1996) 113–119; Davies, 'Pitfall' (1982) 4–16; Barclay, *Truth* (1988) 240. The solution is, however, more apparent than real since eschatological logic alone is in reality nothing but a chronological variant of Sanders; 'because it is *not* Christianity' is now phrased 'because it is *before* Christianity'.

³⁶ Beker, *Paul* (1980).

³⁷ After Schweitzer, Käsemann has been most influential in spreading the 'apocalyptic' Paul. 'Apocalyptic' in *Questions* (1969) 108–137. Cf. *Perspectives* (1971).

Despite its popularity, the term 'apocalyptic' is fraught with ambiguity. Inevitably, each interpreter gives the term his/her own definition. Using the same term does not prevent interpreters from subscribing to widely different views (cf. the 'future apocalyptic' of Käsemann and Beker vs. Martyn's 'realized, cruciform apocalyptic') and using different terms does not necessarily mean that their views differ (e.g., B. Longenecker's 'eschatological' view shares much of the 'apocalyptic' views of Beker and Martyn). This state of affairs renders the value of the term questionable. See Stanton's review of Martyn's commentary. An excellent critical review of the ways in which major interpreters use the term for their own theological programs is available in Matlock, *Unveiling* (1996).

³⁸ Italics added. For Beker, the dictation of the situation makes Galatians 'a first-level polemical response' and not 'a second-level dogmatic proposition': Paul's logic is 'cryptic, intuitive, and often inconsistent', with no 'fundamentally consistent picture' emerging. Since 'the Christocentric focus of Galatians pushes Paul's theocentric apocalyptic theme to the periphery', 'Galatians cannot serve as the central and normative guide for all Paul's letters and theology', because it is utterly 'contingent'. Thus, by exaggerating the contingency of Galatians Beker minimizes its negative impact for his thesis of (future) 'apocalyptic Paul'. Here we see how his hermeneutical scheme of 'coherence and contingency' serves his case. We shall see that, ironically, Galatians

The point is clear, but a question immediately pops up: how can a fundamentally realized eschatological perspective accommodate at the same time an equally unambiguous note of future eschatology in the letter?

An easy way out is to excise the disturbing part. So Beker says that Galatians will present a neatly realized eschatology 'if we ignore the future apocalyptic hints in Galatians'. B. Longenecker, like many others,³⁹ takes this route. His silence on future eschatology is made more poignant by his uncompromising emphasis on morality as part of salvation itself.⁴⁰ As with Barclay, morality is understood as a 'demonstration' of God's established triumph in Christ rather than as the precondition of God's future salvation. As in the sociological approach, however, the problem of expurgation is too obvious to ignore.

There is another difficulty here, however, namely, the problem of confusing the categories of theology or christology and anthropology. How does the announcement of God's accomplished triumph relate to the contingency of human life which is far from complete? More specifically, how does the talk of *God's* triumph serve as an effective response to the problem of *human* backsliding? Martyn, who puts a strong emphasis on the realized eschatological thrust of Galatians, illustrates this problem most acutely: 'Paul speaks of our redemption as an accomplished fact, giving no indication that any aspect of it is as yet incomplete' (90). This note of 'already' concerns God's victory, which is, of course, grounded on the cross of Christ, the 'centerpiece' of God's rectifying apocalypse.⁴¹ The thrust of Paul's argument is thus clear:

There was a "before," the time when we were confined, imprisoned; and there is an "after," the time of our deliverance. And the difference between the two is caused...by the coming of Christ and his Spirit. ... In a significant sense, the time of

provides one of the strongest pieces of evidence for Beker's 'future apocalyptic' interpretation of Paul.

³⁹ See e.g., Barclay, *Truth* (1988) 102–103; Keck, *Letters* (1988) 72–73; Hong, *Law* (1993) 27, 76–78, 88–89; *idem*, 'Perspective' (1991) 1–16; Wright, 'Gospel' (1994); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 73–74, 142–146, 182, 217.

⁴⁰ B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998). A case in point is his heavy use of 5:6 ('faith active through love') which stands in stark contrast to his complete silence on 5:5, despite the explicit connection between the two.

⁴¹ This notion of *cruciform* apocalyptic constitutes one of the most crucial aspects of Martyn's 'apocalyptic' reading of Paul, generating a framework of realized eschatology with the note of absolute disjuncture from the past. For his view of 'apocalyptic' see Martyn 38–39, 97–105, 163–167, 263–275; *Issues* (1997) 77–84, 141–156, 279–297. See also his 'Events' (1991) 166, n. 2, 179. Also see the evaluation in B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 5–8.

cosmic enslavement is now past, and *its being past is a central motif of the entire letter* (99).⁴²

With God's redemptive work already accomplished, 'the turn of the ages is no longer ... an event in the future' (101). What Paul proclaims in Galatians then is the indicative truth of 'God has done it!' (103).⁴³

Martyn is not, however, oblivious to the consummation in the future. He is, as Sanders, sensitive enough to be surprised at the futuristic note Paul frequently strikes (550). He even says that 'Christian life is essentially oriented to the future, being determined by Christ's future no less than by his past' (*Issues* 65). How then can God's 'already' produce a meaningful combination with future 'consummation'? Is it just a matter of time, with no human contingency whatsoever, not even apostasy, ever affecting the final result? Martyn sums up the matter in this way: 'God's rectification in Christ is *accomplished*' but still '*remains under attack*' by the enslaving flesh. 'God's rectification is therefore consistently *to be lived out*', continuously '*finding its concrete form* in the daily life of the church' (478–479).

Here Martyn becomes quite dialectical, even paradoxical. A rectification at once accomplished and yet to be lived out, already accomplished but still to find its concrete form, does not go down the throat smoothly. Further still, God's 'powerful' rectification that is at once completed and yet still under attack also puzzles us.⁴⁴ His point is that *God's* accomplished rectification expresses itself in the life of *believers*. It is precisely at this *anthropological* turn that his *theological* and *christological* affirmation of 'already' falters, since the contingency of human obedience, as well as God's judgment, still remains (498, 479). Of course, God's triumph is never doubted, but the Galatians' participation in it, which has a lot to do with their obedience, remains an open question. Indeed, it seems to be this anthropological (ethical) problem that reduces Paul to such desperate measures as we see in Galatians.⁴⁵

Hence one-sided focus on God's or Christ's faithfulness does not seem to take us to the bottom of the matter. After all, Martyn seems to end up with the

⁴² Emphasis added. Similarly, Bornkamm, 'Revelation' (1974) 95.

⁴³ See also pp. 104, 275, 475; *Issues* (1997) 64–65; cf. pp. 279–297.

⁴⁴ Cf. B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 77: 'To promote "works of law" is to incorporate matters of the flesh into the gospel, thereby *stripping it of the power of the sovereign God* who brings into existence a united community transformed into the image of the self-giving Christ' (italics added). If one turns Paul's talk of human behavior into the theocentric talk about God's victory, the Galatians' present disobedience is also elevated to an effective threat to God's powerful activity, damaging 'God's reputation' (cf. 46). Would Paul approve such a statement?

⁴⁵ This is pointed out by Engberg-Pedersen in 'Response to Martyn' (2002), which is his response to Martyn's criticism in 'De-apocalypticizing Paul: An Essay focused on Paul and the Stoics by Troels Engberg-Pedersen' (2002).

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