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A. Andrew Das

Paul and the Law

Gentiles and Jews

Mohr Siebeck

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Introduction

From the Reformation until the late twentieth century, the scholarly consensus had the apostle Paul championing God's grace against the works-righteous Jews of his day – what would prove to be a caricature. E. P. Sanders forced Pauline specialists to recognize a fact that Jewish scholars had long known: the Jews of Paul's day understood themselves to be an elect people of God. Sanders's personal favorite was a quote from the Mishnah that all Israel has a share in the world to come (m. Sanh. 10:1). The next paragraphs of the Mishnah go on to identify those Israelites who did *not* enjoy a place in the world to come; they had clearly chosen to contravene God's will and abandon their status among God's elect. Ordinarily, when the Jews failed to obey God's will as embodied in Moses's Law, they enjoyed divine mercy. Sanders pointed to the sacrificial system as a key component of what he labeled "covenantal nomism." The observance of God's Law remained embedded within a larger system dominated by God's gracious election and covenant with the provision for failure. The publication of Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* ushered in a "new perspective on Judaism" among Pauline specialists.¹ This approach has since been nuanced by John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift*, which identified differing ways, or modes, God's grace may express itself.² Although Barclay brought greater precision to the discussion, Sanders's seminal contribution that Judaism should not be thought of as a strict system of works righteousness has remained largely unchallenged.³

With Sanders's new perspective on Judaism and an apostle no longer chastising his peers for their works-based approach to salvation, a new question emerged. What, then, was Paul's problem with the co-religionists of his day given this revised understanding of Second Temple Judaism? Sanders's own approach was that Paul had reasoned from the Damascus Road and God's solution

¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Belief* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

² John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

³ See, however, the rejoinders in Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993); Robert H. Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Bib* 66 (1985): 1–38; Timo Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 115 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), and Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

in Christ to the plight of his fellow Jews. God's salvation is simply in Christ and not through Moses's Law.⁴ Sanders's work on Paul would not be as compelling as his understanding of Second Temple Judaism. Soon James D. G. Dunn championed a new approach, one already suggested by N. T. Wright, what would be called "the new perspective on Paul."⁵ While Wright's and Dunn's overall approaches differ, they both agreed that Paul was arguing for the inclusion of gentiles among God's chosen people. The Jews had been guilty of ethnic pride and exclusivism and had not appreciated how their Scriptures had anticipated a day when gentiles would stream into Zion to join God's own people Israel. In the wake of the existential threat posed two hundred years earlier by Greek overlords, the Jewish people had emphasized the "works of the Law." They would not again be found lax in maintaining their religious identity. Dunn initially defined the "works of the Law" as those elements of Law observance that distinguish the Jews as a people: circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. After being pressed, Dunn loosened his definition of "works of the Law" to the *entirety* of Law observance, but still with particular focus on those laws that were defining for a given group of Jews or in a particular situation with outsiders.⁶ Again, when Paul used the phrase, the emphasis would still be on circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws.

Another key figure emerged at the time of Sanders, Wright, and Dunn: Lloyd Gaston. He contended that Paul was writing to gentile audiences and strictly for gentile ears. The apostle was not addressing the role the Law played for Jews. Further, Christ was God's means of salvation for *gentiles*. God would save his own people Israel apart from the instrumentality of Christ's death.⁷ Gaston's approach, a boon for Jewish-Christian relations, was soon championed by John Gager.⁸ In the early 1990s Stanley Stowers placed Gaston and Gager's claim for Paul's audiences on firmer footing by making a case for Paul's Letter to the Romans as addressing an encoded gentile audience.⁹

⁴ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁵ James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95–122, repr. in James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 183–206; N. T. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," *TynBul* 29 (1978): 61–88; James D. G. Dunn, "An Insider's Perspective on Wright's Version of the New Perspective on Paul," in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright*, ed. Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F. Bird, WUNT 2/413 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 347–58.

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective: Whence, What, and Whither?," in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 1–97, here 23–24, also 25–28.

⁷ Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987).

⁸ John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹ Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

More recently, a “radical” new perspective has been championed by Jewish Pauline scholars and others.¹⁰ Building on the work of Gaston and Gager, as well as Sanders, these scholars agree that Paul was writing strictly to gentiles and assumed that his own ethnic people would continue abiding by the Law God had given them. In fact, even gentiles should abide by the Law of Moses *as gentiles*. They should not convert to Judaism since God had always planned for gentiles to join with Israel in the worship of Israel’s God.

Each of these major movements in the last half century have had their detractors, and none has garnered a consensus, although Sanders’s “new perspective on Judaism” comes close. The essays that follow are a product of the times, but also critique these times. Many were published in venues that are not easily accessible, especially to those outside the United States, and are brought together for the first time in this volume.¹¹

The four essays in the first section of what follows offer a testing ground for Paul, the Law, and the gentiles: the gentile audience of Romans. In *Solving the Romans Debate*, I strove to integrate Stowers’s *Rereading Paul* with discussions not only of the audience of Romans but also its situation. This more focused case for a gentile audience also includes a discussion of how the Roman gentiles, who had learned of the Messiah Jesus in the synagogues, had been forced to meet separately after their Jewish Christ-believing peers had drawn on themselves the negative attention of the emperor.¹²

The first essay in this present volume, “The Gentile Encoded Audience of Romans: The Church Outside the Synagogue,” both summarizes and advances *Solving the Romans Debate* while offering a different situation for the letter than the intra-synagogal approach of Paul-within-Judaism advocate Mark Nanos.¹³ For Paul’s perspective on the Mosaic Law or on the relative places of Jews and gentiles in God’s plan, the Letter to the Romans remains the best starting point because of the apostle’s extended treatment of these topics throughout. The situation behind this letter, however, has been a hotbed of controversy, at least since the middle of the twentieth century. Karl Donfried titled his classic collection

¹⁰ E.g., Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul and Judaism at the End of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

¹¹ This introduction to the Pauline landscape is not intended to be comprehensive but targeted toward the following essays. For a wider-ranging introduction to the same issues with the key sources, see B. J. Oropeza and Scot McKnight, “Paul in Perspective: An Overview of the Landscape More Than Forty Years after *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,” in *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views*, ed. Scot McKnight and B. J. Oropeza (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), 1–23.

¹² A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

¹³ Nanos, *Mystery*.

of essays *The Romans Debate*.¹⁴ Mark Nanos called his first book *The Mystery of Romans*. Mysteries are hard to resist. The best clue to the Romans situation lies with the encoded audience of the letter. Paul addresses the Romans at key points – especially the beginning and end of the letter – not as inclusive of Jews but strictly as gentiles and thus the rightful recipients of the ministry God had given him. Evidence for a Jewish contingent in the audience is not as strong as once thought.

The gentile encoded audience of Romans appears at least somewhat familiar with Judaism and appreciative of the Jewish Scriptural heritage, whether or not they are scripturally literate.¹⁵ Some of the Roman gentiles were adopting practices prescribed by the Law that befit them as gentiles while others saw little reason to observe Jewish customs at all. These contrasting gentile attitudes are explicable if Roman gentile Christianity began in the synagogues but had since begun meeting independently. New members were joining the movement who were less appreciative of the Jewish roots of the Christ-believing faith, and Paul's letter navigates the divide. The edict of expulsion of Jewish Christ-believers that took place under Claudius, attested to by Suetonius (*Claudius* 25.4; cf. Acts 18:2) and when properly understood, dovetails with what may be garnered from the letter itself.

To adopt this more recent perspective on the Roman audience as gentile means that Paul is talking *about* his own people and the role of the ancient Law of Moses and not *to* his own people. For the gentiles to appreciate the role of the Mosaic Law in their lives, they must understand the role of the Law more generally, including how it affects the Jewish people. This contention is at odds with the Paul-within-Judaism movement's restriction of Paul's claims about the Law to gentiles with no implications for the Jews themselves. Paul-within-Judaism adherents would limit Paul's expressions of freedom from "under" the Law to gentiles and not Jews. Paul, for them, is not expressing a universal or absolute view. Paul-within-Judaism interpreters stress that Paul remained a faithful Jew. He remained personally within Judaism. Regardless of how far one assesses the impact of the letter for the Jewish people, the starting point of the discussion remains the gentiles addressed by Paul.

The claim of a gentile audience for the letter was soon panned for not having adequately addressed the Jewish "weak" and gentile "strong" of Rom 14:1–15:13. Richard Hays considered Rom 15:7–13 the Achilles' Heel for an all-gentile audience.¹⁶ The second essay in the volume, "'Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles':

¹⁴ Karl Paul Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, rev. and enl. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

¹⁵ Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 136–70.

¹⁶ Richard B. Hays, "'The Gospel Is the Power of God for Salvation to Gentiles Only'? A Critique of Stanley Stowers' *A Rereading of Romans*," *CRBR* 9 (1996): 27–44, here 37.

The Encoded Audience of Romans 15:7–13,” is a response to the critics on this potentially troublesome “hotspot.” First, the most defensible solution to the infamous syntactical challenges posed by Rom 15:8–9a places the focus on *gentiles* who now glorify God as result of Christ’s servanthood: “For I say that the Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truthfulness of God in order to confirm the promises to the patriarchs and in order that the gentiles glorify God for [his] mercy.” The gentiles as God’s fulfillment of the promises to Israel and the gentiles’ glorification of God both make good sense in a letter addressed to gentiles. Were Paul addressing a mixed encoded audience, one would expect a balanced emphasis encouraging both gentiles *and* Jews to glorify God for the confirmation of the promises to Israel’s patriarchs. Second, after criticizing the physically circumcised who are not circumcised in their hearts earlier in the letter (2:25–3:30; 9:18), to identify a potential Jewish audience contingent as “the circumcision” is not winsome or likely. Third, Rom 15:6–9a links the Roman audience’s mutual welcoming “for the glory of God” to the *gentiles’* glorifying God, which makes sense were Paul admonishing differing gentile parties at Rome to unite in praising God. Fourth, the Scripture citations in 15:9b–12 remain riveted on God’s purpose for the gentiles and, again, address the audience as gentiles. Fifth, Rom 15:12–13 links the Roman audience’s hope with the hope of the gentiles. Sixth, the preceding paragraphs in Rom 14 identify the “weak” by the specific Jewish customs that were popular among gentile sympathizers of Judaism in Rome and not by their circumcision or by identifying them as “Jews.” Finally, in Rom 15:14–21 Paul says that he boldly writes the Romans precisely because of his calling to be a minister of Christ to the gentiles. Paul’s identification of the audience as the recipients of his gentile ministry conforms to a pattern elsewhere in the letter. What is a key problematic text for a gentile encoded audience, in fact, offers strong support for an exclusively gentile audience.

The third essay of the volume turns to the yet unaddressed verses of that troublesome passage, Rom 14:1–15:6. Four evangelical commentators on the Letter to the Romans were editing a dedicated volume on the letter and requested an essay on this chapter from the perspective of the letter’s audience, which they took as both gentile and Jewish.¹⁷ Fortunately, they graciously accepted a conclusion at variance with that perspective. The essay inquires about: “Romans 14:1–15:13 and Jewish Christianity in Rome?”

The interpretive task is never complete until one has taken an imaginary seat within the original audience of the letter as it was first being read.¹⁸ A concrete

¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo, Thomas R. Schreiner, Eckhard Schnabel, and Frank Thielman, eds., *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Theological Essays* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2023).

¹⁸ See the attention to the situation behind each of the undisputed letters in A. Andrew Das, “The Pauline Letters in Contemporary Research,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline*

situation greets the hearer in Rom 14:1–15:6. In the context of their household gatherings, some of the Roman Christ-believers were judging and disputing with their peers over what was being eaten and drunk. The “weak” were avoiding the “unclean” meat and wine of the “strong,” preferring “clean” vegetables. “Clean” and “unclean” are standard terms in antiquity used to describe what the Jewish people partook of or avoided in their diets. Paul, for his part, does not identify the “strong” as gentile or uncircumcised, nor does he identify the “weak” as Jewish or circumcised, even though he has been writing about circumcision, uncircumcision, gentiles, and Jews all through the letter – just not in Rom 14:1–15:6. The “weak” also esteem some days over others, but Paul does not mention Sabbath observance or Jewish festival days. His description of the apparent dispute remains at a general level.

A gentile “strong” Christ-believer would not be in authority or control in a synagogal context, a problem for Mark Nanos’s Paul-within-Judaism proposal.¹⁹ A non-Christ-believing Jewish weak would not likely accept an apostle to the gentiles’ admonishment of their behavior, especially given the apostle’s admission elsewhere of how his own people received his message (2 Cor 11:22–24). “Brothers (and sisters)” is the language Paul uses for Christ-believers, unless qualified otherwise. The “faith” of Rom 14 remains stubbornly Christ-centered, a difficulty were the “weak-in-faith” non-Christ-believers. For that matter, Paul describes non-Christ-believing Jews elsewhere in Romans as *without* faith (e. g., Rom 4:3; 11:20, 23). First century Roman authors described their gentile peers’ avoidance of meat and wine when influenced by Jewish customs. Since nothing elsewhere in Rom 14 suggests a Jewish contingent, the situation Paul describes makes best sense *after* the gentile Christ-believing movement had begun to meet separately from the synagogues.

The gentile weak’s avoidance of meat and wine was not because Jews expected gentiles to adhere to the Law’s ritual purity requirements. Jewish ritual purity laws did not apply to gentiles, which would explain why the Roman “weak” are not seeking to observe *other* purity requirements, such as those required for clothing. Paul’s concern earlier in the letter had been with the gentiles’ *moral* purity. His declaration of all foods as “clean” or “pure” in Rom 14:20 should be taken, then, not as a blanket statement about the Law as such but in relation to the gentile audience. The food is clean *for them*. Gaston’s thesis limiting Paul’s statements to the gentiles would work in Rom 14, at least. The gentile Christ-believers would be worried about idolatrous meat and wine. Also, legal purity involves *intention* and is not intrinsic. Few have taken seriously Paul’s claim in

Studies, ed. R. Barry Matlock and Matthew Novenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 237–57.

¹⁹ Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*. See the most extensive critique of Nanos’s *Mystery* in print in Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 115–48.

Rom 14:14 that food is not impure *by itself* but *is so to those who deem it as such*. Turning to the early verses of Rom 15, Paul admonishes the “strong” to bear the weaknesses of the weak. The strong are not to act without regard for others. Paul talks *about* the Jews in Rom 15:1–6 with nothing indicating Jews actually in the audience. What emerges from Rom 14:1–15:6, then, is *not* a picture of gentile “strong” and Jewish “weak” Christ-believers, but of gentiles disagreeing among *themselves* about the Jewish customs that had become popular in Rome.

One of the claims in this essay, however, bears correction: that Paul’s comment in Rom 14:20 about everything being clean could not have been made to Jewish Christ-believers. As Gudrun Holtz observed, Law-observing Jews could likewise claim that nothing is impure “of itself.” Even as Paul accommodated the Jews’ practice of circumcision in Rom 4:9–12, he would surely be able to accommodate their dietary laws as well. Paul is, nevertheless, *relativizing* practices he expects will continue.²⁰ Holtz’s approach was seconded and furthered by Daniel Schwartz, who pointed to m. Ketub. 13:2, Roš Haš. 2:8 (along with m. ‘Ed. 3:2), and m. Qidd. 3:10 to illustrate how the rabbis viewed human decisions/reckoning as endowing legal status irrespective of what a nature dictates.²¹ To rephrase the insight in terms of Paul, food may not be unclean to one person but it *is* to another who *considers* it to be so. Schwartz correlates Paul’s judgment here with the “converting” function of the Law in Rom 5:13 where the recognition and knowledge of the Law causes the sin to be “reckoned” as such. Similarly, in Rom 7:7 the “I” would not have known sin apart from the Law (also 3:20).²² Thus, in view of the later rabbinic discussions, Paul *could* have made such a claim as in Rom 14:20 to Jewish Christ-believers. He could *also* have said as much to gentiles attracted to Jewish customs.

The Jewish Scriptures remained largely unknown to gentiles who did not have experience in the synagogues. Christopher Stanley therefore contended that one should not assume that gentile readers would recognize unflagged Scriptural allusions and echoes.²³ The fourth essay in this volume tackles as a test case: “Περὶ Ἀμαρτίας As the Sin-Offering in Romans 8:3: A Critique.” N. T. Wright, early in his career, championed a reference in this verse to the Jewish sin-offering, a position now viewed as certain by many specialists.²⁴ In

²⁰ Gudrun Holtz, *Damit Gott sei alles in allem: Studien zum paulinischen und frühjüdischen Universalismus*, BZNW 149 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 247–51.

²¹ Daniel R. Schwartz, “‘Someone Who Considers Something to Be Impure – For Him It Is Impure’ (Romans 14:14): Good Manners or Law?” in *Paul’s Jewish Matrix*, ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor, Studies in Judaism and Christianity (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011), 293–309, here 305–8.

²² Schwartz, “‘Someone Who Considers,’” 297–99, 301–2.

²³ Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*.

²⁴ E. g. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 502–3. Beverly Gaventa’s recent commentary offers a refreshing dissent as she rightly points out that περὶ ἁμαρτίας is used in Lev 5:6 for the animal being brought to the

support, Wright noted how in the Old Greek translation of the Scriptures sacrificial language imbues the contexts of forty-four of the fifty-four instances of the anarthrous *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, a shortened form of the fuller *τὸ περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας* used for the sin-offering. Wright then pointed to the context of Rom 8:3 and the lament of the “I” over unwilling sin, precisely what the sin-offering would have addressed. Wright did not realize that nine of the ten exceptions to his thesis are not actually exceptions. Is his thesis therefore more assured? Wright overlooked that what renders these results compelling is the presence of syntagmatic markers for sacrifice in each instance. Wright further overlooked how frequently the similar phrase *περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας* is used for individual sin in non-sacrificial contexts. Even Isaiah 53:10 uses *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in a generalized sense, “for sin.” While Philo uses the anarthrous phrase in sacrificial contexts for the sin offering, one Second Temple text (T. Reub. 4.3) follows the pattern of using the arthrous phrase for individual sin in non-sacrificial contexts. The author of Hebrews uses the anarthrous phrase for the sin-offering but not where the context is non-sacrificial. Other NT texts use the arthrous and anarthrous phrases in non-sacrificial contexts for sin and not the sin-offering. Thus the sin-offering, when present, is always signaled by a sacrificial context, but such a context is not present in Rom 8:3 as Paul discusses individual sin or the power of Sin in what precedes. Apart from contextual markers of sacrifice, *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* simply means “for sin.” Without that contextual cue, one should not expect a gentile reader to recognize an allusion to a particular Jewish sacrifice from the Jewish Scriptures. Paul is writing about *sin* and how God addresses it for his readers *as gentiles*.

The second section of what follows turns from the gentile audience of Romans to the thesis of *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*²⁵: that Paul had reconceptualized the gracious elements of Judaism in terms of the Messiah Jesus and that this reconceptualization renders Law observance apart from Christ an exercise in empty works since the Law of itself does not save nor does it offer a place in the world to come. I had labeled this at the time a “newer perspective” on Paul and the Law. Independently, Martin Hengel concluded that Paul viewed the ritual demands of the Torah fulfilled in Christ and that the rituals of temple worship had lost their ability (or never had the ability) to offer redemption, forgiveness of sins, and a place in the world to come. Those gracious and saving benefits, for Paul, are only in Christ.²⁶

priest *before* the sacrifice is actually offered. The animal is being brought “for sin”; *Romans: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024), 224 n. 124.

²⁵ A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

²⁶ Martin Hengel, “The Beginnings of Christianity as a Jewish-Messianic and Universalist Movement,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity: A Collection of Articles*, ed. J. Pastor and M. Mor (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005), 85–100, esp. 94–98.

An invited essay offered a chance to synthesize the results in a way that would serve as an introduction: “Paul and the Law: Pressure Points in the Debate,” the fifth essay in this volume. The host of interpretive questions in the vast literature on Paul and the Law begged some organizing or categorization: the key pressure points. The starting point was E. P. Sanders’s watershed 1977 *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, which mapped out a “new perspective on Judaism” as a religious system not based on works righteousness but with a robust conception of God’s grace and mercy. The ensuing debate questioned the relative balance of human works and God’s grace within the Judaism of this period. Some scholars maintained that Second Temple Jews were, at least in some sectors, legalistic in their perspective, although definitions of “legalism” are not always clear and where and how legalism might figure in the interpretation of Paul’s letters.²⁷

The center of gravity was shifting to a “new perspective” on Paul in which the apostle was not combating legalism or works righteousness but the “works of the Law,” defined as (or especially as) those aspects of the Law that distinguished Law-observant Jews from others, works such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, and food laws. As the debate raged over this “new perspective,” more traditional exegetes interpreted “works of the Law” as involving human effort and activity in observing the Law. Was ethnic exclusivity, as posited by the “new perspective,” at the *heart* of Paul’s critique of the Mosaic Law? Perfect obedience of the Law and its “works” appears unavoidable in some Pauline texts. Also, dispute rages over the meaning of the Greek word for “Law” (*nomos*), with some arguing for a coherent core across the letters and others seeing multiple meanings (e. g., Mosaic Torah vs. principle). Still another pressure point: Does Paul view the Mosaic Law as normative in the life of the Christ-believer? Again, scholars differ. Lastly, returning to Sanders’s seminal work, Paul is not entirely comfortable with the concept of “covenant,” preferring a “new” covenant over the “old” one, with the Mosaic Law associated with the old. In mapping out these various questions, certain key texts – Romans 4:4–5 and Galatians 3:10 – beg further discussion.

The sixth essay in this volume turns to one of the passages that is a stumbling block for the “new perspective on Paul”: “Paul and Works of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4–5 as a ‘New Perspective’ Case Study.” While Rom 4:4–5 in its wider context has not only proven difficult for “new perspective” interpreters, it also poses problems for traditional interpreters since Paul never identifies legalism on the part of his peers as a motivation for his views. Jewish authors in the Second Temple period held a strict judgment according to works in a tight relationship with a salvation by God’s gracious election and mercy. Those who believe that the Jews were boasting in their works as attaining life and salvation have difficulty accounting for the gracious

²⁷ Again, see the works cited above of Schreiner, Gundry, and Westerholm.

elements of Second Temple Judaism and must ignore how Jewish authors, such as the author of Jubilees, celebrated God's enabling grace as empowering an individual's good works. The Qumran covenanters could enjoin members to perfect obedience while at the same time confessing that the perfect path is not possible apart from God's prior activity and cleansing for sin and failure. God effectively erases those sins from the ledger. The Wisdom of Solomon recognizes God's strength as the source of human righteousness and praises God for mercy in the face of failure. Early Christian writers, then, are not unique in recognizing God's empowering activity in the individual's life of good works, even as Paul too stresses a strict judgment according to works. Again, the provision of mercy in the face of failure should not lead the interpreter to overlook or discount the requirement in Second Temple Judaism of strict obedience. Perfect obedience remains the standard and thus Jubilees' praise of those who lived perfectly as models for others.

Paul in Rom 4:4–5 contrasts a salvation according to “works” as something due rather than as a gift of God's grace. This ostensibly traditional works-grace contrast follows not long after Paul speaks of the “works of the Law” in the context of God's actions toward Jews and gentiles (3:28). Advocates of the new perspective have therefore rushed to salvage the phrase “works of the Law” in Rom 3:28 from the *crux* posed by Rom 4:4–5. John M. G. Barclay mitigated the challenge by claiming that the dominant focus in the immediate context remains on circumcision and Israel's ethnic boast. Michael Cranford questioned whether Rom 4:4–5's “works” are even concerned with human striving. Kari Kuula pointed to the role Abraham plays in Second Temple Judaism as the father of an ethnic people. Finally, James D. G. Dunn wondered whether Paul as a Second Temple Jew would even contrast God's grace and human works in the first place. These responses have failed to blunt the challenge Rom 4:4–5 pose for the new perspective. While Paul's grace-works contrast has proven difficult to set aside, a return to a traditional view that the Jews of Paul's day were legalists is unlikely. Paul views the “works of the Law” negatively because of his Christological convictions.

Kuula's highlighting of Abraham's role as the father of a people overlooks the *other* aspect of the patriarch's two-fold description in Paul's day, thus the seventh essay in this collection: “The Obedient Abraham and Isaac in the Aqedah.” In Second Temple literature, certain Aqedah features remain prominent: Abraham's near sacrifice exemplifies his obedience of the Mosaic Law more broadly. Some Second Temple authors even considered Abraham to be a model of *perfect* obedience. Those authors employ interpretive devices to exonerate Abraham from his apparent failures in the Genesis narrative. The Testament of Abraham satirizes these paeons of praise. Further, Abraham is a Second Temple model for unconverted gentiles of leaving behind the idolatry, astrology, and wickedness