

Right Standing, Right Understanding and Wright Misunderstanding: A Response

N. T. Wright, St Mary's College, University of St Andrews

I am grateful for these responses, not least because my colleagues have clearly given my work a good deal of close attention, something every scholar craves. I can well imagine the hours and days of labour they have inserted into already busy lives. I am grateful, too, for the tone of generous engagement which they almost uniformly employ. Some of them have been good friends of mine for many years, and I hope this exchange will deepen that friendship rather than damaging it. I am particularly aware of the demands which the book's length has imposed on them, and I thank them especially for rising to that challenge.

Length is not the only problem. The present reviews remind me of a story from my Montreal days in the early 1980s. When the *Parti Québécois* came to power, they passed a law banning English signs in public places. In the middle of the city, opposite the Anglican Cathedral, stood the headquarters of a famous jewellery company. Carved in large letters on its stone façade were the words 'Henry Birks & Sons'. The *Office de la Langue Française* sent the company a letter – so the story goes – ordering them to obliterate this sign. At the same time, however, the government's Historic Buildings department also wrote, telling the company that their façade was on the official preservation list and should under no circumstances be tampered with. Rumour has it that the company forwarded the first letter to the second department and the second to the first, and left it at that.

I had a similar sense reading these reviews. Markus Bockmuehl was surprised at how many issues I had missed out (the Paul of Acts, pseudonymity, and a host of other things), while Beverly Gaventa likened me to David Lodge's character Morris Zapp, trying to get in everything there was. (I was glad that Beverly made it clear that this was the only parallel with Zapp she had in mind.) Bockmuehl also wanted my Paul to be a lot more Jewish, while Martin de Boer wanted him to be a lot less. Beverly Gaventa wanted more about grace and gift, Tom Schreiner wanted more about sin and wrath. Gaventa, again, wanted a lot more about the ordinary life of the church (despite chapter 6, which has quite a bit about that, and which, by thus foregrounding ecclesiology, might perhaps have caused Bockmuehl to think twice about saying that this was a protestant picture of Paul), while Schreiner was worried about my emphasis on 'horizontal' ecclesiology rather than 'vertical' soteriology. Gaventa and de Boer wanted more 'apocalyptic' of one sort, Schreiner wanted more about the Parousia ('apocalyptic' of a different sort). Michael Gorman wanted me to expand the meaning of the word 'justification' to include not only participation but also transformation, while Tom Schreiner thought I had already gone too far in that direction by talking about the 'works' which will be assessed at the final judgment. Markus Bockmuehl wonders if I might after all agree with a Pope, while David Starling and Tom Schreiner, without actually citing the great sixteenth century reformers, clearly want me to return to that particular fold. And so it goes on. I take all these points, and agree with many of them.

A few preliminary remarks on method. As I have said at various points throughout my larger project, I have normally employed the method known as 'abduction'. Martin de Boer wishes I only wrote deductively, starting from the text and working out from there: well, I have written commentaries where that is the more normal mode, but even there – as de Boer's own remarkable work on Galatians demonstrates – one is constantly saying, in effect, 'Here is the

data, full of puzzles; if we stand *here*, and look from *this* angle, and particularly if we assume that *this is what was going on at the time*, then this is the sense the text will make.’ The best example of this in recent work, ironically, is J. L. Martyn’s celebrated commentary on Galatians, in which Martyn, following de Boer’s earlier work, constructed an elaborate historical sketch of ‘The Teachers’ against whom Paul was writing, and then used this sketch as a template for deciding what the details of the letter were about, and in particular which things Paul only said, somewhat through clenched teeth, because his opponents pushed him to do so. Actually, of course, all work on any text, be it Plato or *Parsifal*, proceeds by a hermeneutical spiral, puzzling over the text, looking for help to the wider context (particularly, in the case of a text from another time and culture, to avoid anachronisms and false assumptions), coming back again to the text, and so on. That is how it has been for me, autobiographically: I was reading and even expounding Romans, Galatians and the rest long before I embarked on a serious study of second-temple Judaism (though, to be sure, I was trained in the classical world from an early age). But the way one’s own thought develops is not necessarily the best way to present a case to a wider audience. In the present instance I decided – having discovered what happens if you don’t do this – to set out as fully as I reasonably could the larger context of Paul’s multiple overlapping worlds before plunging in to Paul himself. One could, of course, write commentaries on all Paul’s letters, following the sequence of the text and only pausing to fill in the context as occasion demanded. But such a project would be at least twice as long as the present book, and would be much more jerky and repetitive. Martyn, again, inserts numerous ‘Comment’ sections into his verse-by-verse commentary, discussing the larger issues necessary to understand the text at that point; nothing is lost by gathering such ‘comments’ into a separate preliminary (or subsequent) volume, as indeed Martyn did. All exegesis is a constant to-and-fro between *this* text and the larger survey which locates it on a particular map.

There is, after all, a time for setting off on a country ramble and only consulting the map when the path becomes unclear. There is also a time for studying the map so that one knows in advance where the steep or even dangerous parts may be. When you study the map ahead of time, and then, coming round a corner, spot a distant mountain peak, you say, ‘Look! There’s Ben Nevis’ (or whatever it is). And if someone (in this case Markus Bockmuehl) says to another companion, ‘Wright doesn’t tell us how he knows this’, the answer is that all the indications from earlier study, from the larger narrative in which we are living, and from the length of time we’ve been walking, have suggested that just now we should be able to see the mountain in question, and lo and behold, there it is. Of course, one can then back up the judgment by walking further, taking compass bearings, and so on. But the suggestion, regularly made against the abductive method, that I or others are making things up as we go along, ought to be ruled out by the careful and thorough historical work which has gone on in advance. Long live the hermeneutical spiral: we are all on it, and there’s no point pretending otherwise.

Within that larger historical setting I have, yes, paid special attention to Paul’s Jewish world. I have tried to avoid saying ‘All Jews of the time believed’ this or that, but I have sometimes said, in effect, ‘It looks as though most Pharisees at least would have thought’ this or that. No doubt our sources only tell us a fraction of all the things people believed, thought and hoped for. But in this presentation of second-temple Jewish thought-patterns I aimed for a ‘thick’ description, setting out a multiplicity of texts. I was keen to allow precisely for the richly variegated traditions which Beverly Gaventa suggests I have ignored. No doubt there are yet further angles of vision I could have noted, and I’d like to explore those further. In particular, though, I wanted to demonstrate the fact that, from many different angles, Jews of the period

thought in terms of a single large narrative which had yet to reach its goal. I am not sure what Martin de Boer means when he speaks of ‘a curious combination of Scripturally based narrative and documented, critically reconstructed history extending from the covenant with Abraham to the time of Jesus.’ I was not concerned here with critically reconstructed history of that period (I have done a bit of that work in *The New Testament and the People of God*). I was and am concerned with *the way many Jews from many angles told the story of Israel from Abraham to their own day*, highlighting different themes but always with a sense of forward movement, frequently shaped by certain key prophetic passages. When I find Paul telling substantially the same story in substantially similar ways – with, to be sure, radical differences of which the main one is obviously the crucified and risen Messiah, and allowing the fact of the crucified Messiah to reshape those older narratives in striking ways – then it seems to me foolish not to examine the possibility that Paul really does belong on that map. Never let it be said that N. T. Wright has invented a ‘narrative’ and wished it upon the documents. The evidence is there: take it up with the Psalms, *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, Qumran, Josephus, The Wisdom of Solomon, *4 Ezra* and the rest if you wish, but not with me. (And, yes, I do think *4 Ezra* is fairly typical of Jewish apocalyptic literature of the period, but the features of that work to which I draw attention are found equally and solidly in *1 Enoch*, in Qumran, and elsewhere. Martin de Boer quite rightly asks for more engagement with his reading of certain apocalyptic texts, and I hope to provide that elsewhere.)

This is not, however, to put the second-temple cart before the gospel horse, as de Boer seems to think. I note that de Boer himself, in his 1988 work upon which much of his and Martyn’s subsequent writing has depended, offered a brief sketch of what he saw as two types of second-temple apocalyptic, and he used that sketch, as did Martyn, as the template for their own readings of Galatians, with Paul expounding one version of ‘apocalyptic eschatology’ and his opponents another. Does that not mean that de Boer’s Paul, just as much as mine, was contextualized within that part of the second-temple world? In any case, Paul’s own defining summaries of the gospel, in (for instance) Romans 1.1-5 and 1 Corinthians 15.3-8, stress that the gospel events happened *in accordance with the scriptures*. When Paul says that explicitly, and then draws, in rich detail, upon Genesis, the Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and so on to explain what his gospel is about, I see nothing wrong methodologically with asking how he was using those texts, whether other Jews of his day were using them in similar ways, if so whether Paul was in implicit dialogue with them, and so on. When I find that asking these questions illuminates, again and again, the text of Paul himself, then I see no reason to abandon the project. As with all ancient Jewish ‘apocalyptic’ for which we have evidence, the fact that people believed Israel’s God was going to do a radically new thing – or, in Paul’s case, the fact that he believed Israel’s God *had* now done a radically new thing – was not set over against either the covenant, or the long, dark and confused narrative of promise and failure, of rebellion and restoration and rebellion again, of which the texts speak.

The suggestion that I am working in a ‘Tillichian’ rather than a ‘Barthian’ fashion strikes me as very strange. I am no Barth scholar (and even less of a Tillich reader), and I will be glad to learn more. Such bits of Barth as I know a bit, including for instance *Church Dogmatics* 3 and 4, incline me to think that though we may have differences I am quite close to the Basel master in seeing God’s action in Jesus Christ within the larger context of God’s covenant dealings with Israel. Here, as elsewhere, I wondered whether Martin de Boer was after all approaching the first century with twentieth-century categories in his head, which he then uses as a Procrustean bed – as when, elsewhere, he accuses me of following Bultmann in demythologizing the ‘powers’ into mere human acts of sin, a charge a happily resist. (As I was drafting this, a rather different review came in from someone grumbling that I talk about

the power of Sin, and the cross as God's liberating victory over that power, rather than about actual sin and the guilt it brings! So it goes.)

Talk of other places brings me back to another of Markus Bockmuehl's questions: what is happening to my larger project, the study of Christian Origins and the Question of God? The best answer I can give to that at the moment – it is not wise to ask someone finishing a sixteen-course dinner what sort of Full English Breakfast he would like early the next morning – is that (a) the question of what Christians mean by the word 'God' has from the start been bound up with questions of what exactly happened, and what people thought about it, in the first century, (b) our evidence for what exactly happened in the first century has as its two most solid points the public career and proclamation of Jesus and Paul, so that (c) I have now given an account, up to a point, of these two, and would like to work outwards from there into the less sharply defined areas. There are of course other ways of addressing the same huge and complex issues.

We all, of course, make choices about conversation partners. The only way of ensuring one has taken all views into account is to write long monographs on small topics. I am grateful to have my deficiencies in this area pointed out once more. I wish I were young enough to be able realistically to contemplate the further work that would be necessary to fill in all the gaps. But of course at this point (this is no excuse, but it's the truth) we are all guilty: nobody today can read more than a fraction of what is published. There is a time for standing back and trying to sketch a larger picture, even though that means not being able to include all the details. As well as mounting the big argument, I wanted to give readers plenty of engagement with the actual text of Paul, and I chose to foreground that rather than pursue all the possible intra-scholarly debates.

This leads to a final point about method. Any serious or systematic study of Paul must give a major place to Romans – not because the western tradition of Protestant dogmatics has turned it into a manual of soteriology, indeed despite that distorted reading, but because Paul himself really does seem in this letter to have taken more than usual pains over the construction and display of his material. Why Paul did so, in this one letter rather than the others, is debated. That he did so ought not to be. I recall with delight various conversations on this topic with Beverly Gaventa, and we look forward eagerly to her commentary in which, perhaps, all will be revealed. But I have tried not to privilege Romans; indeed, starting the book with Philemon was intended partly as a sign of contradiction against any such suggestion. So, too, was the sustained attention to 1 Corinthians, and the debates there with David Horrell, in chapter 6, at the start of my exposition of Paul's own thought-world. Romans is vastly important, of course. It is one of the great books of any tradition anywhere in the history of human thought. But I have done my best to interpret Paul by Paul, and, as with any first-rank thinker, it makes sense to look for a larger coherence, for thematic convergences, for illumination from one work to another.

Before I get to detailed areas of concern, let me express a certain puzzlement. Even Tom Schreiner, whose review starts with a long and mostly accurate summary of the whole book, does not mention what, to me, is the central point of the whole enterprise – and what I thought I had made clear. The central thesis of my book, not mentioned by my respondents, is that Paul invented a *discipline*, for a specific *purpose*. He didn't just teach certain things he believed to be true. Give someone a fish, the saying goes, and you feed them for a day; teach someone to fish and you feed them for life. My main overall point in the book is that Paul believed he was called not just to give people true doctrines but to teach people to think

Christianly. ‘Be transformed’, he urged, ‘by the renewal of your minds’; the alternative is to be ‘conformed to the present age’. This firmly puts the *task* of ‘theology’ – what later generations came to call ‘Christian theology’ – on the agenda for the entire Christian community. This, by the way, is my best response to Beverly Gaventa’s challenge, that I don’t pay sufficient attention to the question of epistemology, of Paul’s famous challenge to a new way of knowing. I should perhaps have drawn more attention to the fact that I saw that as the very centre of the book: for this worldview (Part II), you need not only new beliefs but a new way of believing and knowing (Part III). Perhaps I should have made that clearer. Certainly I do not think there is a substantial difference between Gaventa and me on this point.

Let me spell this out just a bit. The argument which structures the book is that when we examine Paul historically (within his Jewish, Greek and Roman worlds – this was the point of starting the book with a comparison of Paul and Pliny) we see him eager to promote a new worldview in which the unity and holiness of the renewed and mutually reconciled messianic people of God is the central symbol (Part II). How can this vision be realised and maintained? For Paul, the answer is: ‘through the whole church *doing theology*’ (Part III). By ‘theology’ (this is our shorthand: Paul doesn’t use the word) I mean what Paul is inculcating in the church: a corporate discipline in which the whole church is prayerfully, scripturally and practically reflecting on who God is, who God’s people are, what God’s future for the world is to be, where they fit within all of that and what it all means at the table, on the street, in the home. This task, this activity, this fresh new *way* of knowing appropriate for the new *content* of that knowledge, is the activity which alone can sustain that unity and holiness. To get this kind of community you have to engage in this kind of task. No other community in the ancient or the modern world has ever made ‘theology’ loadbearing in this sense. Paul believed this was necessary because of the nature of this community itself, rooted in the very being and self-revelation-in-action of the one God. Actually, one of the reasons the book needed to be this long was to sustain this quite new proposal and argument, by showing how it worked out in detail. Sadly, the detail seems to have distracted attention from the proposal. But, to repeat, *the whole book was about Paul’s vision of a new, gospel-initiated way of ‘knowing’ which he believed necessary if the new community was to be true to its gospel-initiated vocation.* I am sorry if this was not clear: perhaps, like the mountain outside the window, it was so large that it didn’t get noticed. And this is why, though I do indeed talk about what Paul *did* (especially in chapter 16), this book concentrates not only on what Paul *thought* but on his aim of getting Messiah-followers to *think in a new way* about new topics. That was the point.

If this vision of the forest was lost among the details of the trees, something similar seems to have happened with my treatment of Paul’s view of Jesus’ death, to which some think I have given insufficient attention, and which others imagine I have moved away from the ‘centre’. Again, I hoped I had flagged this up. One of the great things about Micheal O’Siadhail’s poems, which I use as markers between the different sections of the book, was that the middle one – the one for which I made my initial request to him – provided me the image for which I was looking. The Japanese sign *Chū*, which means ‘centre’, is in Chinese the symbol for China itself: the middle of everywhere, with everything else either east or west of China. Any dynasty, says the poet, would know the axis of everything, would draw a line through their world. The crucifixion of Jesus stands at the middle of the middle of Paul’s theology – in other words, within my structuring of theological topics, at the middle of my chapter 10, which itself stands in the middle of Part III. Section 3 of chapter 10, ‘Israel’s Messiah as the Focus of Election’, shows step by step how the purpose of Israel’s election, seen in retrospect

from Paul's point of view (how this could be thought Tillichian I have no idea: I made it very clear that Paul had radically revised everything in the light of the cross), devolved on to Jesus precisely as Israel's Messiah. (Yes, I could have said more on Jesus as Messiah; in the light of other recent work such as Matthew Novenson's *Christ Among the Messiahs* I had hoped that ten detailed pages, backing up earlier arguments, might be enough to make the case.) And the focus of Jesus' messianic task was, in Paul's mind, his faithful death (here I am surprised that de Boer did not express enthusiasm, since he too sees the cross as the action which embodies the *pistis Christou*). This section of the book reaches its sustained summary and climax, after a lot of detailed exegesis, on pages 908-911, where my deliberate echoes of O'Siadhail's poem, whose symbol is itself cruciform, had (so I thought) made the point:

'At the centre of it all, with the sharpest paradox, there stands the cross. The cross is, for Paul, the sign of the centre: the centre for Israel, the centre for humankind. It is the middle of everywhere, the definite line which refocuses edge-lured minds, the axis of everything.' (910)

In this context, too, I give full weight to the fact that, for Paul, the cross is the point at which the 'powers' are defeated. That is another reason why O'Siadhail's poem was so apposite: the cross, standing in the middle of world history, is seen by Paul to be embodying the *kingdom* through which 'death itself would be defeated, so that with that defeat all the powers of the world might be called to account'. Again, I had thought that de Boer and others would rather have liked that. I am routinely taken to task, by those for whom the Pauline meaning of the cross is reduced to God's dealing with human sin, for my insistence on some variety of the 'Christus Victor' motif. I don't see this as an either/or. I intended to make it clear, as much by its position at the centre of my exposition as by the explicit things I said, that the defeat of the powers of Sin and Death is central to Paul's vision of what happened at the cross. I am sorry if that didn't in fact stand out as clearly as I hoped it would, and grateful for the chance for further reflection on how to say it better in future.

A third structural point, again within chapter 10: this relates to the debates about justification which most reviewers have mentioned. By placing the third section of that long chapter (election reworked around the Messiah) before the fourth (election reworked around the Spirit) I sought to do two things at a structural level which were then explained in detail. First, I sought to make it clear that the action of Israel's God in the Messiah and particularly in his faithful death was prior in every way to anything that might be said about how that death affects anyone else. The cross was the act of God which, for Paul, had changed everything. Only when that is in place does any mention of 'justification' make sense. Thus, once more, I had hoped that the themes of 'grace' and 'gift', which Beverly Gaventa thought conspicuous by their absence, were actually built into the structure of the argument. Obviously I should have said that more explicitly, and again I am grateful for the nudge. Second, I sought to make it clear – as it is not clear in the discussions of Schreiner and Starling in particular – that for Paul 'justification' cannot be properly or fully explored without bringing the Spirit into the picture. Too many discussions of justification rely basically on Romans 1–4, as though that were Paul's basic and defining statement of the doctrine, so much so that chapters 5–8 is often thought to be 'about' something else (perhaps 'sanctification'). In fact, the whole of chapters 1–8 is about justification, because for Paul that moves from the initial statement of the last judgment (2.1-16) to the subsequent statement (8.1, 31-39), with the *present* verdict held in between. And actually the argument continues right through to Romans 11, since Romans 1–4 reaches its climax in Paul's exposition of Genesis 15 in chapter 4, and it is with Abraham that he restarts the train of thought in chapter 9, a train of thought which reaches its own climax in 10.1-11 with a brief

but explosive statement of justification and salvation. Thus to discuss my views of justification without recognising this larger context is merely an exercise in restating the problem. (Schreiner also reports me as saying that the work of the Spirit doesn't contribute to either initial or final justification, which I find baffling. For Paul, it is essential for both, and again I thought that was clear both in the structure and in the detail.)

Michael Gorman, of course, goes the other way, wanting me to expand the meaning of 'justification' itself to include the transformation which, we agree, belongs intimately with it. I have sat and stared one more time at Romans 5.1-11, 1 Corinthians 6.9-11 and Galatians 2.15-21 – the texts to which Gorman appeals – and I still don't see it. Nor do I think that Paul in Romans 4 talks (as he does in Romans 6) about believers themselves being raised from death to life, but only of their believing in the God who raises the dead. I see a very close correlation (this is particularly clear in Galatians 2): justification is not to be played off against 'being in the Messiah' or, still more important for Gorman, 'the Messiah in me'. Paul is describing a single, whole event and a single, whole new reality, just as in 1 Corinthians 6.11 he can speak in a single breath of being washed, sanctified and justified. But I still don't think that the word 'justified' itself *denotes* those other things, and particularly the transforming work of the spirit or the indwelling of the Messiah. It's a question of the whole and the parts. Gorman, like Barth (and Küng in agreeing with him) uses 'justification' in a wide sense, to cover the whole business of 'becoming a Christian'. I think Paul uses it in a much narrower sense. If I welcome you to my home, I will show you the guest room, the bathroom, the kitchen; I will invite you to eat with the family at the dining table and relax with us in the sitting room. I might even, as I turn the key in the lock of the front door, say to you, 'Now we are at home'. But the front door is not the home; nor is the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen, the dining room or the sitting room. Each of those mean what they mean in relation to the others. There may be connecting doors joining several of them. But they cannot be collapsed into one another. At least Mike Gorman and I agree that all these rooms belong in the one house. We just disagree whether the word 'justification' denotes the whole house or one room in particular. One could, perhaps, argue that Paul uses 'justification' at least as a synecdoche, the part for the whole. I don't think Gorman would be satisfied with that, but I don't think Paul would be either – for opposite reasons.

Mention of justification, and Romans, leads us inexorably back to Romans 2, 3 and 4, where Beverly Gaventa and Tom Schreiner have both raised questions, though from different angles. Gaventa suggests that I have not taken account of the subtle textures of Romans 2, but I want to pose the same question to her. I have written more about this in an article in this periodical, reprinted in *Pauline Perspectives*, but let me just say this. In Romans 2.17-20 Paul is citing, *and affirming*, a fairly common and biblically warranted Jewish understanding of the place of Israel in the world, i.e. that God called Israel to be the means of rescuing the world from its plight. Israel really is 'a guide to the blind, a light to people in darkness, a teacher of the foolish, an instructor of children'. Torah really does supply Israel with what it needs for this vocation. That is what lies behind my reading of 3.2. Here, within the larger section (1.18—3.20) in which Paul demonstrates and declares that all, Jew and Gentile alike, are 'under the power of sin' (so, Yes to the 'apocalyptic' reading of Sin as a Power), *and* are guilty of actual sins (so, Yes to that as well – the division between actual sins and Sin as a Power is another either/or I resist, at least in first-century understandings), Paul includes this passage, which is not at this point 'proving that Jews are just as guilty as Gentiles', but 'proving that Israel's boast, to be the means of rescuing the world, cannot be made good', and doing so from Israel's own scriptures, not as a new point – though to be sure it was the gospel that had alerted Paul to the problem, and to the scriptures which had articulated it long before.

Paul wants to do this, at this point in the letter, because he is highlighting Israel's *unfaithfulness* (3.2) in order to emphasize God's *faithfulness* (3.3) which then creates a puzzle: if God has said he will save the world through Israel, how is that now to be accomplished? (Here, by the way, is the deep flaw in so much western Christianity. At a popular level, one still meets the older view that Israel was a kind of strange early attempt on God's part to make people good, and that when that didn't work God tried a different way; or, worse still, that Israel and Jesus are as it were competitors in some kind of religious contest, which Israel lost. I would not have believed that this sort of idea still existed, but I heard it on a would-be serious podcast on the day I was drafting this article.) The whole point of Romans 3.21-22 is then that *this* is how God has been faithful to the covenant: *through the Messiah's faithfulness*, i.e. his faithful and obedient death, through which God's purpose for Israel, and through Israel for the world, has been fulfilled. That is why the exposition of the divine righteousness that begins in 3.21 needs to run forward all the way to the exposition, in Romans 4, of the original covenant in Genesis 15. And that is why I am bound to read the description of the strange Gentile lawkeepers in 2.26-29 as a hint of what is to come later: these are Gentile Christians, to whom Paul is astonishingly, paradoxically and polemically pre-assigning the name 'Jew' (2.29). This is not to read 2.17 and 3.2 in isolation, as was suggested, but precisely to take seriously the entire argument, word by word. And all this, of course, means that Paul is bound to come back to these questions in more detail, which is what he does in chapters 9—11.

On those chapters, I take Beverly Gaventa's point that 'God' remains the theme in chapter 10, not just in chapters 9 and 11; the point I was making was really about the occurrence of the word itself. And I agree that my rather loose characterization of the sections in chapter 11 ('Can any Jews be saved?' and 'Can any *more* Jews be saved?') could and perhaps should have been rephrased to read something like, 'Is God therefore saving Jews now?' and 'Will God therefore save *more* Jews in the future?' My earlier headings could have been taken as passives for divine action, but let that pass. Certainly I did not intend to suggest, as Gaventa takes me to suggest, that the emphasis was then falling on human activity or initiative. Far from it: the entire section of the letter is about the single and sovereign saving plan of the one God. That, of course, is why I have such trouble with a reading of Paul which places so much emphasis on God's radical invasion of the world that there is little room left for the covenant with Abraham – which, despite de Boer's protests, is indeed something I see in Martyn's commentary on Galatians. Martyn does indeed allow Paul some positive statements about Abraham. But his suggestions that 'Paul's interest in the patriarch is quite limited' (434), that 'in the final analysis Paul marches clean off the Abrahamic map', albeit 'as that map is drafted by the Teachers' (306), and that in Galatians 3.15-29 we find 'the denial of a promissory/ethnic link between Abraham and Christ' (576-7) are indicative of the stance I have in mind. Of course, I agree that Paul specifically breaks the *ethnic* link, or rather, sees that it has been broken on the Messiah's cross; but Martyn seems to me to go much further than this.

All this leads inexorably back to the place of Israel in Paul's theology – and in its various contemporary construals. The basic point I have tried to make, and stand by, is this. In Martyn's commentary on Galatians he says that Paul 'saw that Judaism was now revealed to be a *religion*, as distinguished from God's apocalyptic and new-creative act in Christ', and that Paul 'is consistently concerned to say that the advent of Christ is the end of religion' (164, echoed frequently). I leave aside the question of the word 'religion', which, had Paul used it, would have resonated in his first-century world quite differently from how the word resonates today (none of my respondents commented on my chapters 4 and 13, where this is

specifically discussed). I leave aside, also, the way in which German theology moved from a post-Hegel position, in which Judaism was the ‘wrong’ sort of ‘religion’ while (it was implied) Christianity was the ‘right’ sort, to a position articulated by Barth and then particularly Käsemann, in which ‘religion’ itself, as a whole, has become the problem – and is typified by Judaism, with ‘the Jew’ being for Käsemann the type of ‘homo religiosus’ and thus the target of Paul’s polemic. (For Barth’s similar comments on Galatians see, for instance, *Church Dogmatics* 4.1.640-42). This is quite different from the ‘supersessionism’ we see in Qumran, for instance, where one Jewish group claims that Israel’s God has secretly re-launched the covenant and that it alone is therefore the true inheritor of the promises. That kind of view, not entirely unlike Paul’s, affirms the goodness and God-giveness of the great story of Israel and claims that a radical new moment has occurred in which that story finds a surprising new fulfilment. This, and Paul’s view, is precisely not ‘replacement theology’, as Bockmuehl suggests. Did the Essenes think they were ‘replacing’ what had gone before? Did Akiba think that the bar-Kochba movement was ‘replacing’ something? Of course not. The point was precisely an unexpected fulfilment.

But the line from Barth to Käsemann to Martyn (representing different points on the line, but the line is clearly visible) is different. It is saying that with the ‘apocalypse’ the whole system of covenant, the whole narrative of Israel, is quite simply out of date: God has done something new which renders it redundant. What Paul is offering, from this point of view, stands over against this ‘religion’ of covenant and narrative: that, for Martyn and de Boer, was what the ‘Teachers’ were offering, and Paul is standing against it, emphasizing (one cannot miss the strong Protestant emphasis here) the sovereign grace of God rather than human works and tradition. When I have spoken of the dangers of rejecting or ignoring the covenantal framework and reference of Paul’s discussions, particularly in Romans and Galatians, this is what I have had in mind. Of course, as Gaventa rightly points out, I do indeed highlight the way Paul expounds Torah so as to bring out its deeply paradoxical nature, particularly in Romans 7. That, to my mind, is the point: Paul sets the Abrahamic promises and the effects of Torah in a complex dialectical relationship with one another, though even the negative work of Torah is, for him, God-given, as in Galatians 3.22 or Romans 5.20 and 7.7-25. (Romans 7.7—8.4, by the way, in answer to Tom Schreiner, is the place where Paul explains that God used the good Torah to draw Sin on to one place so that it could be condemned in that place, namely, in the Messiah’s human flesh.) But Paul is at pains to affirm – in Galatians, too! – the goodness and God-giveness of Torah, even as it performs its necessarily and properly negative function. I suspect that in these debates most of us are in fact, at some levels, closer to one another than we realize. Beverly Gaventa might be worried to hear me say it, but I usually find her work congenial and our disagreements oblique rather than head-on. But it would take a few good seminars (and perhaps a few good bottles of wine) to sort out where precisely our agreements and disagreements lie.

While on this whole subject, let me clear up a (to me) surprising linguistic muddle. On p. 808, in note 109, I suggested that Martyn’s answers to the charge that his Paul was opposed to ‘Judaism’ itself were ‘mere prevarication’. Gaventa has understood this to mean that I am accusing Martyn of lying, and she wags the Golden Rule at me for making such unworthy comments. I checked the word ‘prevaricate’ and its cognates in Chambers Dictionary. It referred the word, as I expected, to the general idea of deviating or quibbling, of evading an issue; of dodging the real point. Nothing about ‘lying’. The *Oxford English Dictionary* agreed: the word means ‘to speak or act in an evasive way’, giving as an example ‘he seemed to prevaricate when journalists asked pointed questions’. The whole point of prevarication, in English English, is precisely that it is *not* lying; it is sidestepping the issue, perhaps by

changing the subject just slightly. The online version of the *OED* has a helpful tab which notes words that are sometimes confused with the original, and in this case it suggests ‘procrastinate’. Obviously that doesn’t mean the same thing, but one can see how the English meaning of ‘prevaricate’ (to dodge the point, to evade the issue, to put off the questioner) can slide, in careless use, to ‘putting something off’ in a temporal sense. This, anyway, is the English use which I was employing. But I then checked the Merriam-Webster *American* dictionary; and I find, to my surprise, that when you cross the Atlantic in a westerly direction the word can indeed be used as a synonym for ‘lie’. I did not know this, and I apologise for the unintentional impression I gave. The word will join my increasingly long list of terms which, as that well known Anglo-American writer T. S. Eliot pointed out, slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision, and will not stay in place.

So, once more, to justification. Many (not all) of Tom Schreiner’s points are simply repetitions of a well-known position rather than engagements with what I have written. (The same is true for the recent book by Stephen Westerholm which he cites.) On 2 Corinthians 5.21 I would urge readers to look at the actual detailed exegetical arguments I mount; Schreiner’s comments do not, I think, touch my main points. On ‘legalism’ in Judaism, the problem comes because there is still confusion, as there never is in Paul, between present justification and future justification. When Paul looks at the ultimate day of judgment, he says repeatedly that this judgment will be in accordance with the life one has lived. On this point he is at one with his Jewish contemporaries. Because, however, their rare discussions of justification are almost all about that future judgment, not a present verdict which anticipates that future one, they only very occasionally supply a parallel to his present-oriented point, and they naturally refer to works. When they do mention a present verdict, as in 4QMMT, it is indeed on the basis of ‘works’, but not in the sense of a proto-Pelagian ‘legalism’, but rather referring to certain cultic ‘works of Torah’ which would mark out one group of Jews from another, as I describe in detail in my article on the subject. As is well known, Paul speaks about a final judgment according to works not only in Romans 2.1-16, but also in 14.10 and not least 2 Corinthians 5.10: ‘We must all appear before the judgment seat of the Messiah, so that each may receive what has been done through the body, whether good or bad.’ He warns in various places about certain styles of life whose practitioners will never enter God’s kingdom. When I speak near the top of page 1028 about this final judgment being made on the ‘basis’ of the life that has been lived, I mean exactly what Paul says here, neither more nor less. The word ‘basis’ was once a perfectly acceptable word for this purpose; I have heard it rumoured that even John Piper himself used to utter it in this context, though he seems now to have given that up. The passage in which I use the word has been picked up by several reviewers already; what has not so often been quoted is the larger context, or indeed what I say three sentences later: ‘We note again, for the avoidance of doubt, that Paul sees all these three points as utterly dependent on the basic gospel events of the Messiah’s death and resurrection...’

The tension people then feel – if future justification depends on the whole life after all, how can my assurance stand? – is addressed by Paul throughout Romans 8. Beginning with the assurance that there is ‘no condemnation’, he continues by expounding the work of the Spirit, through which God’s people are led to their inheritance. On that journey, they have some bracing challenges to meet (Romans 8.5-8, 12-16), and if they don’t meet those challenges Paul warns of potential disaster. But his view remains that ‘the one who began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it by the day of the Messiah Jesus’ (Philippians 1.6). Try to explain justification without the Spirit and you will fail. Put the Spirit back in, and things will

become clear. Since I said all this at length, I was surprised that Tom Schreiner should say that I never attempted to answer the relevant question.

But what then does ‘righteousness’ actually mean? David Starling insists on the *ethical* meaning of the word, which then plays out in terms of a restatement of double imputation. This seems to work like this (oversimplified, no doubt): (a) God wants humans to be ethically righteous; (b) humans fail in this task; (c) Jesus has lived a life of perfect obedience, so he now has ‘righteousness’ in full measure; (d) this ‘righteousness of Christ’ – often assumed to be identical with the ‘righteousness of God’ – is imputed, or reckoned, or otherwise conveyed, to the believer, thus restoring them to the state desired by God (a). It is significant that Starling, like some other careful exegetes in this tradition, acknowledges that (c) and (d) are not explicitly stated by Paul, so that the doctrine hailed by some as the very centre of Paul’s thought is something he never actually says. And this is where we must insist that Paul understands the *dikaïos* root not simply in relation to ethical behaviour, but also – as its frequent use in the LXX in relation to the *tsedeq* root makes clear, and as many exegetes in many traditions have noted – in relation to the *covenant relation* between YHWH and his people, on the one hand, and (in Romans at least) in relation to the *lawcourt* on the other. This, to be sure, results in a subtle and complex overall picture, but nothing is gained by reducing the complexity. It is perfectly true that in an ordinary ancient Hebrew lawcourt one would hope that the effect of the judge’s verdict (to declare someone ‘in the right’) would correspond to the moral character with which that person entered the court (that they were ‘righteous’ in their behaviour): that is what the judge is supposed to do. But that doesn’t diminish the sense that when the judge makes the declaration the person receives a new, public status: having been under investigation, he or she is now proclaimed to be ‘in the right’. The courtroom setting puts a microscope on ordinary behaviour, and raises a public and official question about it, so that the post-verdict situation and status, though commensurate with the pre-trial behaviour (if the court has done its job properly), has the quality of a public and official declaration. Paul can and does continue to use the *dikaïos* root in relation to moral behaviour, as Romans 6 indicates. But in Romans 1—3 at least he clearly and carefully sets up a law-court scenario in which the judge’s verdict is a surprise precisely because it appears to contradict the manifest guilt of those in the dock (3.19-20).

It should also be clear, from Romans 4 in particular, that Paul also has the *covenant* in mind. Beverly Gaventa suggests that if Paul had wanted to give a covenantal reading of the Abraham story he should have quoted (in 4.11) the word *diathēkē* from the LXX of Genesis 17.11. I think the reverse is the case. Paul wants to read Genesis 17 in the light of Genesis 15.6, and wants to read the whole narrative in the light of the overarching theme of the *dikaïosynē theou* – which, like Käsemann, I understand as God’s own righteousness, specifically, his faithfulness to both covenant and creation (though, unlike Käsemann, I see Paul relating this covenant faithfulness to Abraham rather than to Moses). Paul is therefore retaining the word *dikaïosynē* to refer to the ‘covenant membership’ or ‘covenant status’ which Abraham was given in Genesis 15, where God promised him a family and a land, promises explicitly taken up and expanded by Paul into the global family and the inherited ‘world’ (4.13). This is not the place to make once more the whole argument of *PFG* 912-1032. But it does seem to me that only the combination of ethical, forensic and covenantal meanings of *dikaïosynē* – all held, of course, within a framework of inaugurated (and ‘apocalyptic’!) eschatology – will steer us through the key passages.

What about the Parousia? Schreiner’s comment that it didn’t seem to matter to me very much reminds me of what some critics said when I published *Jesus and the Victory of God* without

a chapter on the resurrection. Perhaps, they said, it wasn't important for him. I trust the subsequent publication of *The Resurrection of the Son of God* put that one straight. Actually, the same book gives Schreiner his answer: because though the topic of that book was resurrection, I couldn't avoid saying quite a bit about the Parousia as well, including detailed exposition of the relevant Pauline passages such as 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18. It may be cold comfort to say that I decided not to make the present book any longer than it already was; in the light of my treatment elsewhere, to which I referred, I shortened the discussion to pages 1082-5. (I might also refer to *Surprised by Hope* chapters 7, 8 and 9.)

And what about peacemaking? I agree with Michael Gorman that Paul's theoretical and practical emphasis on reconciliation might well be taken in that direction. I did not develop this very far, but then I don't think Paul himself did either: the command to live peaceably, so far as possible, with all and sundry (Romans 12.18) is important, but neither Paul nor his churches were in much of a position to develop this into a larger social strategy. However, it is certainly true that anyone who takes Paul's theology seriously ought to see that his vision of reconciliation is as wide as the world, in addition to being sharply focused on *this* slave and *this* master, on Euodia and Syntyche, on these Jewish Christians and these Gentile Christians eyeing one another across the table. If we allow Ephesians into the discussion, it would be hard to read the first three chapters without glimpsing a vision of God's plan to bring all things together in the Messiah. And if that purpose has been inaugurated through the Messiah's death and resurrection, there is no reason why the church should not work to make it a reality wherever possible, and every reason why it should. Perhaps even scholarly debates might partake of the same dynamic. Now there's a radical idea.

I close by repeating my gratitude to my interlocutors for their careful work on my book, to the journal for the chance to respond, and to all my readers for the messages of encouragement they regularly send me. Scholarship is a necessarily public business, and as Käsemann said mutual discussion is the duty of us all. Long may it continue.