Paul and the Faithfulness of God

Wright, N. T.

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4. Election Reworked around the Spirit: the Messiah's Justified People

(i) Introduction

I shall now approach what is arguably Paul's most famous doctrine, and for many theologians the centre of his thought. I shall come at it from an angle that most will find unfamiliar. I believe that this way in, despite its apparent novelty, offers a direct route to its very heart. I propose that we envisage Paul's soteriology, including but going wider than his 'doctrine of justification', in terms once more of his reworking of the Jewish doctrine of election, dependent on the christological understanding we have just studied, but this time particularly in the light of the spirit. If the election of Israel was the solemn and unbreakable divine promise to save the world through Abraham's seed, Paul sees that promise as accomplished in the Messiah and applied through the spirit. And 'justification' is something that happens, as it were, right in the middle of that work. Those who have just read the previous chapter will perhaps realize that the fresh vision of 'justification' which I am proposing stands squarely on the foundations of Paul's fresh vision of 'monotheism'.

In terms of the history of Pauline interpretation, this proposal aims to accomplish four important things. First, it enables us to show, in terms of the structure of the argument as well as its detailed content, that the stand-off between 'judicial' and 'participationist' themes in Paul can be resolved once and for all by the appeal to the more basic Jewish category of God's plan for Israel and through Israel: that is, through a fresh appreciation and appropriation of the language of 'election' and particularly 'covenant', the larger category within which the language of the law court and the language of incorporation nest comfortably side by side. Second, and consequent upon this, it locates 'justification' solidly within Paul's vision of the Messiah as Israel's representative; that is, in traditional dogmatic language, it places 'justification' within the 'in Christ' complex - but without thereby relativizing it or implying that it plays only a minor function, as in the tradition which has followed Wrede and Schweitzer all the way to Sanders and now Campbell. Third, it will enable us to differentiate between the many different aspects of Paul's thought about how the people of God-in-the-Messiah are rescued from sin and death, and about who and what they now really are, without dividing these different aspects or playing them off against one another. Fourth, in and through all of this we can insist both (a) that Paul's vision of justification and salvation remains rooted in the promises given to Abraham and his 'seed' (in other words, he does not sweep these to one side in favour of mere novelty; he remains a deeply and utterly Jewish theologian) and (b) that this vision does not supplant ethnic Israel in favour of 'the church', but rather sees ethnic Israel and its election summed up gloriously in Israel's own Messiah and his death and resurrection, generating an 'Israel' which is then defined, once more, through and in relation to him precisely as Israel's Messiah. This will satisfy neither the ardent 'sweeping supersessionist', for whom nothing short of a new act without historical antecedent will do, nor the ardent 'anti-supersessionist' for whom nothing will do short of a denial that Jesus was Israel's Messiah. Paul will not please either party, and neither shall we. We shall aim merely to satisfy the criteria of historical and theological investigation by demonstrating the deep structural and exegetical coherence of his thought at this, one of its most contested points.

It is important to note, before going any further, that the word 'justification' has itself had a chequered career over the course of many centuries of debate. As the major historian of the doctrine has noted, the word has long since ceased to mean, in ecclesial debates, what it meant for Paul himself - which is confusing, since the debates have gone on referring to Paul as though he was in fact talking about what they want to talk about. It is as though the greengrocer treated you to a long discussion of how onions are grown, and how best to cook with them, when what you had asked was how much he would charge for three of them.379

The range of the word 'justification' has sometimes been expanded to the point where it has been used to denote the whole of soteriology, starting with the mysterious grace of the creator God and going all the way through to final salvation. 'Justification' has then regularly been confused with 'salvation' (a problem exacerbated by many translations that have muddled up the words for 'righteousness' and 'salvation', not least in Isaiah 40--55).380

This has had a dangerous double effect. On the one hand, when people have seen how the different elements of Paul's soteriology are all interconnected they have sometimes used the word 'justification' as though it covered all of them. They have then highlighted one or other of those elements as if it were itself the heart of 'justification' rather than a vital part of 'salvation', irrespective of the actual meaning of the word itself and its very specific job in its contexts. On the other hand, it has been possible for people who see the sharp and focused job the word actually performs to suppose that this precise meaning can then be isolated, put on a pedestal and used to relativize, or even to warn against, all the other interconnected elements of what Paul actually says. The first expands the word to cover too much data. The second shrinks the data to fit the actual word.

Thus, in the first category, we have the famous discussion of Hans Küng, in which, by expanding 'justification' to mean more or less 'how people get saved', he discovers that, at that level of generality, he agrees with Karl Barth.381 More recently, we have had proposals that the actual meaning of 'justification' itself can be focused on the inner transforming work of the

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379 See McGrath 1986, 1.2f., discussed in Wright 2009 [Justification], 59f. (US edn., 79f.). Cf. my earlier treatment in e.g. Wright 1980 (Justification), reprinted in Perspectives ch. 2).
380 It is startling to find so careful an exegete as Schreiner (1998, 68 n. 12) saying that he does not distinguish as sharply as some between 'righteousness' and 'salvation'.
381 Küng 1964 [1957].
spirit. In the second category, we have the fierce reaffirmation of a strict protestant emphasis, in which 'justification' denotes simply the divine declaration pronounced over faith, through which 'the righteousness of Christ' is imputed to the believer, and in which any attempt to add anything else - 'transformation,' 'being in Christ,' 'ecclesiology,' 'ethics,' whatever - is deemed to be a dangerous dilution of divine prerogative, leading people to rely, for their sense of identity and assurance, on something about themselves rather than solely on the sovereign grace of the one God.

Over against both of these positions, and mindful of the impossibility in a book of this size of debating with more than a limited selection of conversation partners, I wish to argue for a third option. I agree with the first viewpoint that Paul's language of 'justification' is closely, carefully and consistently integrated with all other aspects of his soteriology. But I agree with the second that the word 'justification' itself retains a very particular and clear-cut meaning which cannot be expanded to cover those other aspects. Is it possible to hold these two things together?

Only if we include all three of Paul's basic elements. Too often discussion has been confined to two: (a) the grace of the one God and (b) the work of the Messiah. These are obviously vital, but for Paul they are intimately connected with (c): the work of the Spirit. As we have seen, this forms a key part of his redefinition of monotheism itself, and what he says about justification, as with the larger category of election itself, grows directly out of that. The holy spirit is, in fact, the usually forgotten element in justification, and I am convinced that only when we come at the doctrine from this angle (taking as read all that has already been said about the one God and the Messiah) can we gain the full Pauline picture.

(ii) Election Redefined: Gospel and Spirit

The obvious place to begin is with 'the gospel.' Paul defines himself as a gospel-person: his chosen self-designation, at the start of his most carefully thought-out letter, is that of someone 'set apart for God's gospel.' He can state the content of his 'gospel' in a variety of ways, always focused on something the creator God has done, in fulfilment of promise, in and through Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's Messiah:

Let me remind you, brothers and sisters, about the good news which I announced to you. You received this good news, and you're standing firm on it, and you are saved through it, if you hold fast the message I announced to you - unless it was for nothing that you believed?

What I handed on to you at the beginning, you saw, was what I received, namely this: The Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Bible; he was buried; he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Bible; he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve; then he was seen by over five hundred brothers and sisters at once, most of whom are still with us, though some fell asleep; then he was seen by James, then by all the apostles; and, last of all, as to one ripped from the womb, he appeared even to me.

Paul, a slave of King Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for God's good news, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the sacred writings - the good news about his son, who was descended from David's seed in terms of flesh, and who was marked out powerfully as God's son in terms of the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead: Jesus, the Messiah, our lord! Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about believing obedience among all the nations for the sake of his name. That includes you, too, who are called by Jesus the Messiah.

Two significantly different definitions, but with a single ultimate content: prophetic promise, God's action in the Messiah and his death and resurrection, and the resulting summons to believing obedience.

We can track each element of this a little further. The prophetic promise is what we should expect from the word 'gospel' itself, since its obvious biblical background is found in one of Paul's favourite texts, the central section of Isaiah. There, the 'good news' is that the covenant God has fulfilled his ancient promises and is now rescuing his people from the slavery caused by their own sin, defeating the pagan empire that has held them captive and sending them home to their promised land - and, in so doing, is revealing himself, his sovereign kingship, his righteousness, his salvation and above all his glory. And all this happens through the work of the 'servant.' The second time we meet 'the one who tells good news' is immediately before the final poem in which the suffering and death of the 'servant' effects forgiveness and liberation for God's people.

The other obvious context for 'gospel' in Paul was the world where Caesar reigned supreme. In that world, Caesar's birth, his accession and his rule itself were spoken of as 'good news' - as indeed they were, in a fairly limited sense, for those who had suffered the chaos of civil war and all that went with it. By Paul's day that threat had receded for the moment; the notion of 'good news' was no doubt received with the usual measure of detachment and cynicism which accompanies the self-glorying of empires.

But when Paul spoke of 'gospel' he thereby denoted a message which, in fulfilment of the scriptural prophecies and in implicit confrontation with...
the newer imperial realities, declared the 'good news' of God's kingdom in and through the life, messianic achievement and supremely the death and resurrection of Jesus. This gospel message far transcended the individualistic message of 'how to be saved' which the word 'gospel' has come to denote in much contemporary western Christian expression. It remained intensely personal in its radical application, but only because it was first cosmic and global in scope: the world had a new lord, the Jewish Messiah, raised from the dead. That is why, as we saw, for Paul the 'gospel' even included the news of the just divine judgment against all human wickedness. In a world of moral and social chaos, 'judgment' is good news, as the Psalms insisted repeatedly.388 Now, for Paul, the 'good news' of Jesus told a story which (a) stretched backwards to Abraham and the prophets, (b) looked on to an eschaton in which the creator God would be all in all, (c) focused on the crucial events to do with Jesus as Messiah and (d) challenged his hearers to respond with hypakoe pisteos, 'faithful obedience'.390

This brief discussion of Paul's gospel thus indicates that, for him, the gospel, also translatable as 'the good news', was the power of the creator God. It is tempting to say, the gospel carried this divine power or, the gospel conveyed this power. Paul simply says it is this power:

14 If I am under obligation to barbarians as well as to Greeks, you see; both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 I am not ashamed of the good news; it is God's power, bringing salvation to everyone who believes - to the Jew first, and also, equally, to the Greek. 16 This is because God's covenant justice is unveiled in it, from faithfulness to faithfulness. As it says in the Bible, 'the just shall live by faith'.

It is important to note that the 'gospel' here in Romans 1.16 does not mean 'how to be saved'. Nor does it mean 'how to be justified', as in some popular readings of verse 17. The logic of the sentences indicates without any doubt that the 'gospel' here must refer back to what he has already said in 1.3-4: that, the statement about Jesus, is the content of the gospel, and what is described here in 1.16-17 is its effect. In the original there is a clear sequence marked out by the repeated gar, 'for': 'I am eager to preach the gospel to you in Rome, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power to salvation, for God's dikaiosyne is revealed in it'. Turning these 'for' clauses the other way around, into 'therefore's, we read: God's dikaiosyne is revealed in the gospel, therefore it is God's power to salvation, therefore I am not ashamed of it, therefore I am eager to preach it to you in Rome. Either way the result is the same. The gospel is 'not itself 'how to be saved' or 'how to be justified'. The gospel is God's good news, promised long ago, about his dying and rising son, the Messiah, the lord of the world. When this message is announced, things happen: (a) the creator God is shown to be 'in the right' in that he has kept his promises, (b) people of all sorts, Jew and Greek alike, receive 'salvation' as a result of the divine power, (c) Paul is not ashamed (as he might have been, announcing a message which he knew to be folly to Greeks and a scandal to Jews) and (d) he is the more eager to preach the same message anywhere and everywhere, not least right under Caesar's nose in Rome.

But how then does this 'power' function? Paul is in no doubt: when he tells the story of Jesus as the long-promised crucified and risen Messiah of Israel, and announces that he is now the world's true lord, God's spirit is at work. Gospel and spirit go tightly together in his theology. Paul does not envisage a sequence of events in which first he tells people about Jesus, then they decide whether or not they are going to believe his message, and only then does the spirit descend upon those who have already believed. For Paul, belief itself is something which is effected on the one hand through the spirit and on the other through the word of the gospel - which he can also summarise as 'the word of the cross', especially when he wants to rub his hearers' noses in the shocking reality of that shameful event.392

This ought not to be controversial, because some of the central passages where Paul says more or less exactly this are straightforward and clear. The faith which believes the gospel is the faith which believes that Jesus rose from the dead, and that he is now the world's true lord: that is what Paul says in Romans 10.6-13, which is full of resonances with 1.15-17. But 'nobody can say "Jesus is lord" except by the holy spirit': that is a basic criterion which he sets out for the muddled Corinthians at the beginning of his discussion of spiritual gifts.393 This should alert us to the fact that, although he does not mention the spirit expressly in Romans 10, at the crucial point in his argument he quotes from Joel 2.32 ('all who call on the lord's name will be rescued'), which is the continuation of the great promise that in the last days the covenant God promises to 'pour out his spirit upon all flesh'.394 I and others have argued elsewhere that we must understand the same work of the spirit here as Paul alludes to elsewhere.

In particular, we might notice the 'new covenant' passages such as Romans 2.25-29, 2 Corinthians 3 and Romans 7.4-6. It should be clear from these, and especially from Romans 8.9-11 where Paul insists that anyone who does not possess the spirit of the Messiah does not belong to him, that the gift of the spirit is not a further gift, out beyond original Christian experience or even initial Christian faith, but is rather the life-giving energy by which someone is enabled, in the first place, to believe that the one God raised Jesus and to confess that Jesus is lord.

This is the import of one of the most striking Pauline affirmations of God's reworking of 'election' through powerful word and spirit:

388 e.g. Ps. 67.4; 96.10-13; 98.7-9.
389 e.g. Rom. 1.5; 16.26.
390 Rom. 1.15-17.
391 1 Cor. 1.18-2.5.
392 1 Cor. 12.3.
393 Joel 2.28.
394 see Wright 2002 [Romans], 666 and e.g. Schreiner 1998, 562. It is surprising to find that Fee 1994 has no mention of Rom. 10.13.
Dear family, beloved by God, we know that God has chosen you; therefore our gospel did not come to you in word only, but in power, and in the holy Spirit, and in great assurance.398

'We know that God has chosen you': this, in Greek, is *eidotes tén eklogen hymón*, 'knowing your election'. We could have deduced as much from the title 'beloved by God', but this confirms it. Here we have an explicit statement of 'election reworked': the notion of 'election' is of course rooted in the scriptures, but Paul is cheerfully restating it in relation to those who have heard and received the gospel. And the sign of that *eklogan* that 'election' - of a small bunch of pagans in a busy seaport in northern Greece! - is that 'the gospel' has not simply come to them in an empty 'word', but in power, in the Spirit and with 'great assurance', *plérophoria polle*. The word *plérophoria* already means 'full conviction'; adding *pollé* might seem over-egging the pudding, but the result is as much conviction as a sentence can possibly carry, 'full and complete conviction', 'total assurance'. Whatever it was that the Spirit was doing, it worked.

Paul describes his 'gospel' a few verses later in a different but related way.

The Thessalonians, he says,

turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who delivers us from the coming fury.397

That is a thumbnail sketch, from another angle, of the same message we find in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 15. The elements are the same: the God of creation and covenant; the son of God whom he raised from the dead; the coming day of judgment; the assurance of deliverance.

The second Thessalonian letter offers a similar compact expression of what Paul thought happened when people believed the gospel. Here, after having sketched the terrible fate awaiting those who refuse to love and believe the truth, Paul refers once more to what happened to the Thessalonians when he preached the gospel to them:

13But we always owe God a debt of gratitude for you, my family beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits of his work of salvation, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief of the truth. 'To this he called you through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.396

The gospel', then, is the instrument through which the covenant God 'calls'; and when Paul says 'call' he means an effective, powerful summons.399 The Spirit is the driving force behind this; belief of the truth is the first consequence, as one key element in being 'set apart' by the spirit for the divine purposes. Ultimate glory is the goal; redefined election is the overall picture.

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396 1 Thess. 1.4f.
397 1 Thess. 1.9f.
398 2 Thess. 2.13f.
399 For the sense of 'call' here see the summary statement in Kruse 1993, with earlier biblio.
hearing, or even the organ of hearing, i.e. the ear, can also mean 'the thing which is heard', in the sense of a report, a rumour, a message, an account. This is the sense in which ex akeos pistos more regularly, and I believe rightly, taken. The message itself is the thing which does the work - and the work here is the work precisely of the spirit.

The second key word here, pisto, 'of faith', could then have at least two meanings and be taken in at least two senses, depending on how the genitive is read. Pistos can mean 'faith' or 'faithfulness', and the genitive by itself is sufficiently flexible to mean either 'which concerns' or 'which produces'. We thus have:

1. The message which concerns faith: i.e. a message about faith itself. This is unlikely: Paul announces the Messiah. Faith is what results from that announcement, not the content of the announcement itself.

2. The message which produces faith. This is quite likely. Certainly Romans 1.15-17 and the passages above from the Thessalonian letters assume that the gospel message evokes faith.

3. The message which concerns faithfulness. This is quite possible as we have seen, one way of Paul's telling the story of Jesus was precisely to do with his death as the great act of faithfulness. It is quite likely, as we saw, that Paul was referring to the Messiah's faithful death in Galatians 2.16-21.

4. The message which produces faithfulness. This is possible, but less likely. Paul does believe that gospel-believers are called to be 'faithful'. That is probably the meaning of pistis in Galatians 5.22. But the main thing here seems to be that the Galatians, like Abraham, believed the good news when it was spoken to them.

The likely options, then are (2) and (3), and for our present purposes it does not much matter which we choose. The point, either way, is that the agency through which the spirit has worked in their lives is the message through which the covenant God has worked - the message which, indeed, may well have been couched in terms of the Messiah's faithfulness, and certainly resulted in the production of 'faith' in the hearers. As we shall see, that nexus, across what seems to us a quite substantial gap between two different meanings of pistis - a gap which may have seemed much smaller to Paul - is part of the point: when the gospel is announced, the spirit works through the message that is proclaimed. The result, one way or another, is 'faith'. That is what Paul is talking about for at least half of Galatians. At the start of the vital chapter (Galatians 3) in which the whole point is precisely the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham concerning his family; and the reshaping of that family not around Moses but around the Messiah. Paul sees the work of the spirit, through the gospel, as foundational. This is, for him, what the reworked election looks like in practice.

If the work of the spirit, producing the reshaped family, is thus one of the immediate and necessary correlates of Paul's gospel, we should expect to see the most dense and powerful, and decisive for understanding several other Romans 2.25-29, especially the final verse. Here, in the middle of what is normally but misleadingly thought of simply as a demonstration of universal sinfulness, Paul sketches the spirit-shaped version of 'election' which continues to resonate throughout much of the letter:

Circumcision, you see, has real value for people who keep the law. If, however, you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. Meanwhile, if uncircumcised people keep the law's requirements, their uncircumcision will be regarded as circumcision, won't it? People who are by nature uncircumcised, but who fulfill the law, will pass judgment on people like you who possess the letter of the law and circumcision but who break the law.

The Jew isn't the person who appears to be one, you see. Not is 'circumcision' what it appears to be, a matter of physical flesh. The 'Jew' is the one in secret; and 'circumcision' from humans, but from God.

This is as clear a statement of election-reworked-by-the-spirit as any we find in Paul. Following on from the dismissal of the 'boast' of the 'Jew' in 2.17-present moment in the letter, that the covenant God is not going to be restricted in his purposes by the failure of 'the Jew'. The covenant God has not given up on the category of 'circumcision', on the idea of there being an elect people; he has merely redefined it, as in Philippians 3.3. Nor is the idea of such a redefined circumcision a hypothetical category which Paul will later declare to be null and void. The 'poetic' sequence of Romans, that is, the way things are laid out in the letter itself, by no means corresponds; as generations have misleadingly supposed, to the implicit 'referential sequence', the ordo salutis beloved of dogmatists, in which Romans 1.18-3.20 is only about 'demonstrating that all are sinful', 3.21-4.25 only about 'justification by faith' and 5-8 only about 'being in Christ' (or whatever). That is not how Paul writes. He is once again 'borrowing' from his

407 So BDAG 36.
fuller expositions – in this case, Romans 8 and Romans 10 – in order, briefly, but powerfully, to show what, in his view, ‘circumcision’, and even ‘Jew’ itself, now mean. Other Jewish writers, notably Philo, had discussed the question of circumcision and its meaning, but Paul, though not here shifting from strictly Jewish and indeed biblical arguments (in other words, not moving into a Platonic mode of thought), is nevertheless far more radical than Philo or any other contemporary Jew had been.  

We note four things in particular about this revised election. First, these people who are now to be called ‘circumcision’ actually ‘keep the law’s requirements’ (2.26); they ‘fulfil the law’ (2.27). Paul has not yet, of course, explained in Romans how such a thing can be.  

For the moment the idea of uncircumcised people keeping the commandments sounds like an oxymoron, much as 1 Corinthians 7.19.  

He clearly has in mind a different sort of law-fulfilment, to which he will refer again obliquely in 3.27 and 8.5–8, and again, still more obliquely, in 9.31–32, before suddenly explaining what he means in 10.5–13, and then going on to a wider application in 13.8–10. How this works out we shall see in due course. But for the moment we can say that the proposal that there might be a category of people to be called ‘circumcision’, who in some sense keep the law, and yet who are not themselves circumcised Jews, is indeed a drastic reworking of election. And, though Paul does not mention Jesus in this short section (of course, Paul would say Jesus was presupposed), he does mention the spirit as the agent by which election has been reworked.  

Second, remarkably, Paul claims that these ‘uncircumcised lawkeepers’ will judge the ‘circumcised lawbreakers’. The idea of the elect people sitting in judgment, which we find again in 1 Corinthians 6.2, goes back to Daniel 7.22. It is, very specifically, part of the idea of the chosen people. Now this, too, is reworked, and in a shocking way: instead of the Jews judging the nations of the world, Paul envisages these uncircumcised lawkeepers as judging those Jewish law-breakers. (We should think about what ‘law-breakers’ here is also is a redefined category.) It is hard to overstate just how powerful this point of redefined election actually is.  

Third, Paul draws a contrast between ‘Jew’ and ‘Jew’: the outward one and the ‘secret’ one. This anticipates, among other things, his distinction of ‘Israel’ and ‘Israel’ in 9.6. To show exactly what he means, he takes the word ‘Jew’ itself, which in its Hebrew form means ‘praise’, and declares that the ‘Jew in secret’ gets ‘praise’ – in other words, receives this noble appellation – from the covenant God rather than from humans.  

The emphasis on the ‘secret’ echoes 2.16, which speaks of the coming judgment of the secrets of the heart; and the echo is confirmed by the reference here to the ‘circumcision of the heart’. This finally tells us what the passage is all about. Heart-circumcision is what the Torah itself had declared would be necessary if Israel was to be brought back from exile, released from the covenantal curse and enabled to be the true people of the covenant God. This reference to Deuteronomy 30.6, and to prophetic texts most likely dependent on it, goes with a string of texts which speak of the restored covenant in terms of the renewed heart.  

We should be in no doubt that this is what Paul has in mind here. This is ‘election reworked’, but exactly in line with what the prophets had promised.  

Finally, he makes the contrast which occurs again in an explicit ‘new covenant’ context in 2 Corinthians 3.6, again right after speaking of the work of the spirit in the heart. The ‘Jew’, the ‘circumcised person’, of whom he speaks – despite some translations, he does not add the adjectives ‘renewed’, or ‘true’, with either of these – has this status ‘in the spirit not the letter’ (en pneumati ou grammati). This contrast has passed into such frequent proverbial use in contemporary English (‘the spirit of the law versus the letter of the law’) that it is important to step back from that meaning, and its regular use as a kind of liberating excuse for ignoring what the law actually says, and examine Paul’s point afresh. He has already spoken of the circumcised person as having the gramma, the ‘letter’, of the law (2.27). This in context must refer to ancestral possession of the Mosaic code (as in 2.19–20). Here in 2.29, as in 2 Corinthians 3.6, the same meaning forces itself upon us. Nor is the contrast of ‘letter and spirit’ simply a question of hermeneutical method, as some have suggested with reference to 2 Corinthians 3; or, if it is, it is a ‘hermeneutical method’ of a drastic sort, namely the principle that the people who not only understand Torah but also ‘keep’ and ‘fulfil’ it (Romans 2.26, 27) are people who have undergone a radical transformation from the Mosaic code.  

415. So e.g. Dunn 1988a, 123; Fitzmyer 1993, 323, and many others. Käsemann 1980 [1973], 77 dismisses this idea, which he says comes from an ‘initially English tradition’, on the grounds that a Roman audience would not have understood it. That is unproveable, and anyway beside the point. Even as ‘purposive communicators’ (Barclay 2011, 74, agreeing with Käsemann) may use word-play that not all hearers will understand. The attempt of Käsemann (77) to suggest that this passage resonates, not with a Jewish context, but with the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius 4.19.12; 12.11 is a fine example of Schweitzer’s point about people getting water from far away in leaky buckets when there was a flowing stream right beside them.  

416. Cf. too Dt. 10.16; Lev. 26.41; Jer. 4.4; 9.25f.; Ezek. 44.7, 9. The theme of heart-circumcision (or lack thereof) is echoed in the NT (Ac. 7.51) and in other second-temporal writings, e.g. 1QS 5.5; IQQ 2.18; IQQ Hab. 11.13; IQQ 177 185; Jub. 1.23; Od. Sed. 11.1–3; Philo Spec. 1.305. Migr. Abr. 92, sometimes cited here, makes a different point.  

417. Jer. 31.33; 32.39f.; Ezek. 11.19; 36.26–8; the Ezek. refs. also speak of the transforming gift of the spirit,  

418. His implicit antithesis not only between ‘spirit’ and ‘letter’ (see below) but between ‘spirit’ in v. 29 and ‘letter’ in v. 28 likewise belongs closely with his regular antithesis, stated already in relation to Jesus himself in 1.3–4 and developed in e.g. 8.5–8. For a full line-up of regular anthesis, cf. Gal. 4.21–31.  

419. Cf. BDAG 205f., with classical parallels both for the sense of gramma as a book and for the contrast between (a) a ‘living’ law and (b) a ‘dead’ one which becomes a mere gramma.
of the heart. Paul would no doubt have said that the obedience which flows from the renewed heart does indeed constitute a fresh hermeneutical activity. He is here referring to the Mosaic law, and saying that in the renewed election, the new covenant, the spirit will accomplish 'what the law could not do'. He is, of course, referring to the divine spirit, promised by the prophets, and now, he believes, poured out upon a people consisting not only of believing Gentiles (as we might have imagined from this passage alone) but also, of course, of believing Jews.

One cannot stress too strongly that none of this implies a 'critique of Judaism'. As in 2.17–20, Paul is not saying there is anything wrong with being Jewish, or that Jewish religion is inherently bad (or, with Martyn and others, that all 'religion' is bad, with Judaism forming the immediate example!). Rather, as Keck stresses, 'Paul’s argument is actually an expression of Judaism’s conviction about God’s impartiality.' One could go further: Romans 2.25–29 is a careful thinking through of what precisely is meant by the warnings and promises stated clearly in Judaism’s own scriptures. It is a following through of the eschatological narrative of scripture itself, as Romans 10.1–13 will make clear.

These five verses at the end of Romans 2, then, form a dense but classic statement of reworked election. As I have indicated, Paul will return to this theme again and again. Its statement here, in advance of any explanation of justification itself, indicates well enough that within at least the rhetorical strategy of Romans he has no intention of allowing the build-up of forensic metaphors in chapter 3 to stand by itself. What he has to say about (a) the unvelling of the divine righteousness and (b) the pronouncement of a righteous status for all who believe (with (a) being the ground of (b), not the same thing), takes place, as 3.24 itself declares, as one key moment within the creation of the family of the renewed covenant.

The paragraph at the close of chapter 2 continues to resonate throughout the letter. Those with ears to hear will continue to detect echoes in passages such as 3.27–31; 4.11–12; 4.16–17; 7.4–6 (where, in verse 6, the spirit/letter antithesis is repeated, as though to remind readers to have 2.25–29 in mind throughout what follows, all the way into chapter 8); 8.1–11; 8.27; and indeed 8.31–39 itself. Then, in chapters 9–11, we find the same only more so. The discussion of 'Israel and Israel' in 9.6; the shocking inclusion of Gentiles in 9.24–26; the Gentiles 'obtaining dikaiose' while Israel does not 'attain to the law' in 9.30–33; and, above all, the strange spirit-driven fulfilment 30 (10.4–13); all these speak of the reworked election in ways which echo 2.25–29. Some of them explicitly speak of justification; others do not. But the way in which these themes resonate across the letter indicates beyond any doubt that in this letter at least Paul explicitly locates his exposition of justification within his understanding of the way in which, by the spirit, the ancient biblical notion of election itself has been definitively reworked.

(iii) Faith, Justification and the People of God

(a) The Shape of Justification

My case, here and elsewhere, is that the language of ‘justification’ - the various Pauline uses of the dikaios root - have their Pauline home within the redefinition of election, the subject of the present chapter. That is, they create God; (b) that this purpose had to do with the creator’s ultimate plan forward through the setting to rights of human beings. That complex of comes to birth in what for us may appear a complex framework of thought, though for Paul it will all have fitted together so well that it appeared simple and could be encapsulated in short, pithy summaries.

How is one to display an argument like this to best advantage? As with all major Pauline topics, we face the choice of either working through the relevant passages and then drawing conclusions, or setting out a working hypothesis and then showing how the key passages reflect it. For present purposes I choose the latter course. There is also a choice (to say the least) of conversation partners, where the demands of space impose their own rather severe limitations.

423 Of course, either method takes its place on the larger hermeneutical spiral of many years of reflection, recorded in part in Perspective and in commentaries etc.; the move from historical exegesis to justification as a topic in historical and systematic theology, and what follows, was inevitably have what Paul actually says is supposed to be decisive and determinative!). However, it will of course not be possible to engage with details. For an important recent symposium see McCormack 2006b.

424 For much of my career I have been in implicit and sometimes explicit debate with Timmy Dunn, and in the present section we may refer esp. to Dunn 1998, 335–89. Since we are often lumped together as ‘the new perspective’, it is worth recalling, as people often do not, that an early advocate of especially Howard 1970 and 1979.

425 ABCD see Fitzmyer 1993, 323 on patristic understandings of the phrase.
Here then is my proposal. Paul's redefinition of election on the basis of the work of the Messiah and around the work of the spirit can be seen in relation to a complex but clear sequence of ideas. In other words, one can only understand Paul's 'justification by faith' as the leading edge of this narrative, this sequence of thought. The doctrine itself - properly, justification by grace through faith in the present time on the basis of the work of the Messiah - comes as the crucial seventh and final element in this sequence. The first six, which are necessary for the full impact of that final move to be felt, are presented here in brief, having been discussed earlier in the present book. This admittedly rather dense summary looks back to the summary of 'righteousness' language in Judaism (section 2 (ii) above), and shows how Paul now transforms it in the light of Messiah and spirit. It offers (a) an explanatory narrative for the many things Paul says about justification and (b) a range of technical terms which, though somewhat clunky, may be useful shorthands for discussion.

So to the detail. I include in bold type some technical terms that will be useful in subsequent discussions.

1. God the creator intends at the last to remake the creation, righting all wrongs and filling the world with his own presence. This is the 'end' or 'goal', the 'eschaton', towards which God is working. This is 'eschatology'; perhaps specifically 'creational eschatology', distinct from (say) a 'gnostic' eschatology which would look for a future in which the created order was abandoned rather than rectified.427 We shall study this further in the next chapter. Paul's overarching statement of hope is seen most fully in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15. Once that larger picture is grasped it can be glimpsed in many other passages, such as Philippians 3.20-21. The creator's intention to do this, and his 'justice' in putting things right, is what stands behind the mediaeval idea of a 'justitia distributiva' by which the one God rewards the good and punishes evil.

2. For this to happen, humans themselves have to be 'put right'. The main problem standing in the way both of the original purpose of creation and (now) of its renewal and restoration is the failure of humankind to act as God's imagebearers in the world. God must therefore put humans to rights in order to put the world to rights. (One might call this focus 'anthropological eschatology'.) This problem is due to human idolatry, and to the consequent fracturing of human behaviour, which means that humans have failed to bring the creator's

fruitful ordering to bear on the world. (This complex of idolatry and dehumanizing behaviour is what Paul calls 'Sin', which can refer to (a) the specific acts which embody such behaviour, (b) the state in which those who behave that way are living, and/or (c) the dark power that appears to drive them in that direction.428) Paul's statement of the problem of sin and evil is classically found, of course, in Romans 1.18-2.16, and summarized again in 3.9-20.429 It is drawn on in the statements about Adamic humanity in Romans 5, and in many other passages such as Ephesians 2.1-3 and the various descriptions of pagan humanity scattered throughout the letters.430 I argued in chapter 9 that Paul had grasped a wider and deeper vision of this problem through his redefinition of monotheism by means of Messiah and spirit. It was this problem which generated the specifically Pauline, and then Christian, view of 'salvation'. It is important to note, as I have done on many occasions before, that despite popular Christian parlance 'justification' and 'salvation' are emphatically not the same thing, and to confuse them is to make careful exegesis, not to mention theology, ultimately impossible.431 It would be easy to skip straight from here to the 'forensic' eschatology of point 4 below, but to do that would short-circuit the underlying biblical narrative to which Paul, at least, pays close attention. The next move, therefore, has to do with the covenant people.

3. God's way of accomplishing this is through the covenant. God's purpose of rectifying the world, setting it to rights, following the failure of humans and the corruption of the world, was focused on the call to Abraham and his 'seed'.432 As we have seen already, from Paul's perspective the covenant which the creator God established with Abraham was the chosen means of dealing with 'sin' in order to implement 'creational eschatology': hence the promise to Abraham that he

427 The problem of evil non-human forces ('powers'), which Paul sees as defeated in the Messiah's death (Col. 2.15), is to be understood within this larger picture: see above, e.g. 632, 740, 752-71.
428 I have argued above, and at more length in Perspectives ch. 30, that 2.17-3.8 have a different purpose, relating not to the sinfulness of Israel in itself but to Israel's failure to be 'faithful' to the vocation to be the light of the world.
429 e.g. 1 Cor. 5.6; Gal. 5.4; Eph. 1.47-5.20; Phil. 3.18ff; Col. 3.5-11; 1 Thess. 4.4-6.
430 Even Sanders sometimes lapses at this point: e.g. Sanders 1977, 451ff. 545. I am at a loss to know why so careful a scholar as O'Brien should suppose I have confused the two (O'Brien 2003, 431). Clearly the final event when the One God creates a new world and raises the dead will constitute both the ultimate 'rescue' of his people from death, i.e. 'salvation', and the ultimate verdict in their favour (Justification, as in Rom. 2.15; Gal. 5.3). Clearly, too, Paul can speak of present 'salvation' just as he can of present 'justification' (e.g. Rom. 8.24). Both terms, then, can denote the same event or fact. But they connote quite different things: the one, rescue, as from a danger or plight; the other, vindication, as in a lawsuit. I note, as I have elsewhere, that both 'justification' and 'salvation' are major themes of Rom, but that 'salvation' is absent from Gal: food for thought.
431 For this whole section see esp. ch. 2 above, and also section 2 of the present chapter. It is noteworthy that Schreiner 2003, 190-92, summarizing 'justification' as it relates to Galatians, manages not to mention Abraham. Contrast e.g. Gathercole 2006a, stressing the importance of understanding righteousness in covenantal terms.
would have a worldwide family, which is where Paul picks matters up in Galatians 3 and Romans 4. This was the necessary move in setting the whole creation to rights. Once Israel's God had made these promises, the scriptures insisted that he would be faithful to them, doing what he had promised not only for Israel but through Israel. This, in other words, is 'covenantal eschatology'. To add 'covenant' to 'setting right' is specifically not, as it has often been portrayed, a matter of adding a 'horizontal' dimension to a 'vertical' one. This is to miss the point entirely, which is that the creator God called Abraham to be the means of rescuing humans and the world: a doubly 'vertical' theme, if you like. This divine faithfulness to the covenant, spelled out in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in terms of both punishing the covenant people for sin and subsequent merciful restoration, is spoken of in several key passages in terms of the righteousness of the one God (tsedaqah elohim, dikaiosyne theou). This was seen as the divine characteristic because of which the creator would do what he had promised. The theme of 'covenant' and 'covenant faithfulness' is the full biblical setting for what has often been spoken of as the 'relational' aspect of the notion of tsedaqah/dikaiosyne. By itself, the word 'relational' is vague, suggesting that 'justification' is about 'someone's relationship with God'. That, in a very general sense, is not untrue, but to substitute 'relation' for 'covenant' is to take a large step away from historical moorings.

Paul's own covenantal eschatology is the radical development of a basic second-temple Jewish line of thought which Pharisees and some others might be expected to hold. Most Jews of the period were not, it seems, asking themselves how they might escape from a post mortem judgment and arrive safely in some kind of other-worldly bliss. They were not, that is, concerned about the questions with which the word 'justification' has come to be associated in today's western world. Many first-century Jews were, however, principally concerned about the question of how and when the one God would come in power to rule the world, rescuing his people and establishing his 'kingdom', the long-awaited 'age to come'. Within that, many were concerned about their own membership in that coming 'age'. Many of them, as we saw in chapter 2, were living out of some version of the narrative which combined Deuteronomy 27–32 and Daniel 9: they had a sense, in other words, that after long years of 'curse' and 'exile' there would come a great new moment of 'covenant renewal', of rescue and redemption. Many of them, then, might have put the question like this: (a) Israel's God will bring about his new world, raising his people from the dead to share in it; (b) clearly, not all Jews will have a share in this new world, so (c) how can we tell, in the present time, who will be among that newly constituted, resurrected and reigning eschatological people? That is the precise context in which questions about 'works' might arise though, since 'justification' is not a major topic in second-temple Judaism, this is rare, with Qumran providing (in 4QMMT) the only solid example (see below).

Saul of Tarsus would probably have answered that question by speaking of the law-based covenant status outlined in Philippians 3.5–6 and hinted at in Romans 9.31 and 10.2–3. Serious, 'zealous' Torah-keeping in the present time would mark out in advance those who, in the age to come, would be raised from the dead and have a share in judging and ruling within the reign of the one God. 'Marked out' would of course be literally true in the case of circumcision. This, together with the other ethnic badges such as food-laws and sabbath-keeping, and behind these the entire way of life focused on Torah and Temple, formed a nexus of 'works of Torah' through which one might tell in advance who would be declared to be tzaddikim/dikaioi, 'righteous', 'covenant members', in the future. There is, however, not much evidence that pre-Christian Jews spoke of that kind of 'advance marking out' in terms of 'justification'. This already presents us with an apparent oddity: might it be the case that not only Paul's particular view of justification, but also the idea of any 'doctrine of justification', let alone its apparent central importance, is itself a Christian innovation, like some of the others we have seen? Did Paul introduce the category out of nothing? Why then would he speak, looking back at his former self, of 'justification by...
works of the law? Was that whole idea a Christian back-projection? Here we are once more, clearly, faced with the question of 'plight and solution.' And, again, the answer is more subtle than a simple either/or will allow.

The clearest pre-Christian statement of something like 'justification' is in Column C of 4QMMT.\(^4\) There, those who keep particular 'works of Torah' in the present time will have 'righteousness' reckoned to them. Such people, in other words, will be reckoned to be part of the covenant family now, in the present, against the day when the new age arrives and all will be revealed. That question, of the advance signs of future vindication, was thus already on the table in second-temple Judaism. I see no sign that it was central, but it was present and thinkable—especially among sectarian groups who wanted to assure themselves that, despite their present marginal status, they would in fact be seen as the true covenant people once the new age arrived. One might even suggest that, with Qumran at least, some kind of inaugurated eschatology was present: now that the Teacher of Righteousness had led the way, the new covenant had been secretly launched. Belong to this group now, marked out by these signs and symbols, they might have said, and you will be among those to be vindicated when the moment comes. We have no reason to suppose that hard-line Pharisees like Saul of Tarsus held a similar secretly inaugurated eschatology, but the same line of thought would still be relevant. If you clarify and intensify Torah-keeping in this way ('zeal'), you will certainly inherit the age to come. You may even help to bring it about.

That model (the signs in the present which tell, already, who will inherit the coming age) remains in Paul. His doctrine of 'justification' has a similar shape. But the content has shifted dramatically in four ways, each as a result of Messiah and spirit.

First, eschatology has been inaugurated in a new and dramatic way. Paul believed that the new age had already arrived with the death and resurrection of the Messiah and the gift of the spirit. The moment for which Pharisees and Essenes were hoping had already come about. The question of who would be vindicated, and who would be ruling and judging, in the future, had been answered: it was the Messiah himself. He was the King; he would rule; he would judge. He was, that is, the vindicated-Israel-in-person. We should be clear about whom the covenant God himself declares, in advance of the resurrection, the cross meant (as we saw in chapter 9) that the 'problem' had been far worse than anyone had imagined. Israel as a whole shared fully in the plight of the world. No longer, therefore, could one look ahead to the age to come and envisage some zealous Jews already being well qualified to share in its life, in the coming divine reign. The only way into the age to come would be by dying and rising again.

Third, the outpouring of the spirit indicated to Paul that the promises of Deuteronomy 30, and the echoing promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, had been fulfilled. The Messiah had been vindicated; but he was not alone. Somehow, he would share his status and role with his people.\(^4\) There was now already a circumcised-heart people, in whose common life and individual transformation a strange new form of 'law-keeping', both related and unrelated to the Pharisaic keeping of Torah, had now appeared. This offered a kind of parallel to the Pharisaic hope of a present zealous keeping of 'Torah through which one might be marked out in the present with a 'righteousness', a covenant status, that would be vindicated in the future. But the new kind of life was of an utterly different kind, not least in that it was a fresh and free gift from the covenant God himself.\(^4\) In particular, the first and most characteristic sign of this people, which became its badge, had nothing to do with the 'works of Torah' which marked out the Jew from the pagan (or with the sectarian 'works of Torah' which marked out one sect from another, as in 4QMMT). Its badge was the Messiah-badge, namely p\(\textit{pistis.}\) This is the explanation (which the structure of the present chapter is designed to set forward) of why p\(\textit{pistis}\) is the single badge by which the single Abraham-family, 'justified sinners', are recognized. P\(\textit{pistis}\) is, in other words, the Israel-characteristic which, according to Romans 3.2 and 3.22, was lacking in Israel itself and provided by the Messiah. P\(\textit{pistis}\) is therefore the appropriate sign that a human being is a Messiah-person, 'in the Messiah', 'belonging to the Messiah': part of the covenant people, one of those about whom the covenant God himself declares, in advance of the final declaration which will consist in resurrection itself, that this person is dikaios, part of Abraham's single, sin-forgiven covenant family. Within this p\(\textit{pistis}\) we must therefore include all that Paul includes: cross-and-resurrection-shaped belief, trust and faithfulness.

Fourth, therefore, and most radically, the circumcised-heart people, marked out by p\(\textit{pistis}\), was a company that included Jews and Gentiles alike. Nor was this simply a generous if surprising extension. It

\(^{4}\) This is the only explanation for passages like Rom. 5.17; 1 Cor. 6.2.

\(^{4}\) Phil. 3.7-11.
was the whole point all along. The Messiah would be lord of the whole world, and Paul has glimpsed how that broad vision and hope is put into detailed practice by the actual working of gospel and spirit.

This actual working involved the application of the Messiah’s death and resurrection to the whole people. If the Messiah had died and been raised, this was to be the paradigm for the people as a whole, Israel (and any and all Jews) would have to die in order to be raised; and in that death they would bid farewell to the God-given markers of ethnic identity which had rightly sustained them up to that point. For the same reason they would therefore welcome, as equals within the Messiah’s strange new family, all those Gentiles who had made the same death-and-life journey and who, like them, were marked out by the badge of pista itself. This is more or less exactly what Paul means when he speaks of the gospel bringing salvation ‘to the Jew first, and also, equally, to the Greek’.

These four points compel a further important reflection. Much as with the idea of ‘resurrection’ in second-temple Judaism and early Christianity, something that was previously peripheral has now become central. This parallel is not accidental. ‘Justification’ was not a hot topic in first-century Judaism. It became so in Paul’s work and thought for the reasons set out a moment ago (1: inaugurated eschatology through Messiah and spirit; 2: radical redefinition of the ‘plight’; 3: the new work of the spirit; 4: redrawing of the symbolic world to include believing Jews and Gentiles on equal terms). All this means that attempts to address the question of what pre-Christian Jews thought about ‘justification’ are regularly flawed. First, to ask what pre-Christian Jews thought about ‘how to be saved’ is not quite the same question. Second, when such Jews did talk about something like what Paul was talking about their discussions were not loadbearing in the same way that his became.

This fourfold revision and radicalization of what we may somewhat anachronistically refer to as a second-temple view of ‘justification’ means that we can now propose, as a possible new theory within the history of that doctrine, a hypothesis about how Paul came to develop it in the way he did. He began, as a Pharisee, in the line of zealous Jews indicated in passages such as 1 Maccabees 2. He believed that those who were zealous for Torah would, like Phinehas, have ‘righteousness reckoned to them’, that is, that they would be marked out in the present as true covenant members in advance of the coming new age. But the fact of the crucified and risen Messiah, and the gift of the spirit, indicated that the new age had already been inaugurated in the present, and with an unexpected character. And part of that character was the recognition that the new age could be brought about only if the creator God dealt, more radically than had been imagined, with what now appeared as the full and awful plight of the human race, Israel itself included.

How could that be done? Ancient Israelite culture indicated an obvious answer: the divine law court. The one God would sit in judgment. That was how human judges restored and ‘rectified’ human communities. The divine judge would do that as well. But this raises another obvious question: supposing all are guilty? What will the judge do then? Ancient Israel and second-temple Judaism would answer: this God is in covenant with Abraham, and Abraham’s seed will be spared. Did not the Psalms regularly cry out to the covenant God for vindication against oppressive enemies, casting Israel in the role of plaintiff in the divine law court and the pagans in the role of guilty defendants? The covenant would be the answer to the forensic problem. But Paul has apparently ruled out that option. All are guilty, and the divine judge is impartial.

Then comes the radically new answer. If the Messiah’s death has indicated that the problem was deeper than previously imagined, the Messiah’s death will unveil the deeper solution as well. The divine covenant faithfulness is revealed in the gospel. The covenant is indeed the answer to the forensic problem – but it is the covenant as fulfilled in the faithful obedience of the Messiah and the outpouring of the spirit. The radicalization of the ‘plight’ which we studied earlier, itself the result of Paul’s reflection on the Messiah’s death, went hand in hand with the radicalization of the ‘solution’. In the language of ‘righteousness’ and ‘justification’, already implicit in the covenantal train of thought, Paul found the perfect vehicle to explain how the covenant God, through the Messiah and the spirit, had dealt with the deeper problem of human sin, including Jewish sin.

Here, exactly as with his revision of monotheism, Paul the apostle was compelled by the gospel events to search the scriptures afresh, to ferret out passages and themes which might not have been central in second-temple reflection but which now pressed themselves upon him. To expound this theme he did not need to add a different kind of discourse to that of the ‘covenant’. The covenant had already been expressed in the language of the law court. And, as he radicalized the ‘covenantal’ meaning of the righteousness of both the one God and his people, that meaning opened up to reveal its ‘forensic’ depths. This third point (covenantal eschatology), routinely omitted from discussions of the fourth one (forensic eschatology), is in fact its proper explanatory framework. I shall suggest presently that, though both of them are regularly implied in Paul’s mentions of justification, the covenantal meaning is far more prominent in Galatians and Philippians, while, following an interesting and often unremarked

443 Rom. 1.16.
444 cf. RG 477, 681.
445 For a survey of theories on this subject see Schnelle 2005 [2003], 465–7.
446 Rom. 3.19f; 2.9–11.
4. This is how the creator God will put humans to rights. The covenant will be the means of sorting out the problem of universal human idolatry and sin. Because of the failure of humans and the corruption of creation, when the creator puts things to rights, 'rectifies' the situation, he will be acting in the way a human judge acts when re-establishing 'justice' in a community. The case will be tried. The verdict will be reached, announced and implemented. In human courts in ancient Israel, this means declaring one party 'in the wrong' and the other party 'in the right'.\(^4\) Already we note an important point: the idea of the one God as 'judge' grows directly out of the ancient Israelite perception of this God as 'creator'. This particular God has a responsibility to sort out the mess in his creation, to call it to account, to set everything right. He also has the power and authority to do so in a way that no other being has. Thus the 'law court' or 'forensic' imagery, in Israel's scriptures and on through to Paul, is not simply one miscellaneous metaphor among others. Nor is it a particularly 'legalistic' way of thinking as opposed to some other (e.g. 'relational').\(^5\) It does not mean that one can only think of this God acting in 'legal' or 'law court' (i.e. 'forensic') terms – just as the fact that other ways of thinking (such as 'reconciliation', or 'love' itself) are equally appropriate does not mean that one can then dispense with the 'legal' idea of everything being 'put right' or 'rectified' at last. Such language expresses one important and non-negotiable facet of the whole, even while dovetailing comfortably with other aspects of the wider purpose already mentioned. 'Law-court' language expresses, in a non-transferable way, something vital and central about the determination of the creator God to put all things right at last. One cannot, of course, make the law court the only matrix of understanding, even for 'justification'. We need covenant, eschatology, participation and much besides. Equally, though, one cannot marginalize 'forensic' language and hope to escape scot-free.

\(^4\) Bird 2007, 153 suggests that Gal. is more accommodating for a 'new perspective' reading, and Rom. for a 'reformed' reading. I find this more than a little bizarre; the only thing that might be said for it is that Gal. does indeed concentrate on the question of 'who belongs to Abraham's family', and, unlike Rom., never mentions 'salvation', while Rom. puts the whole picture together in a fresh way.

\(^5\) In ancient Israel there was no 'director of public prosecutions', so all cases were a matter of one person (the plaintiff) against the other (the defendant). Clearly, either might be found 'in the right': if this was the defendant, the declaration would be an 'acquittal', but if the decision went in favour of the plaintiff it would simply mean that his case had been upheld.

\(^6\) One must not confuse 'lawcourt' ideas with 'relational' ones. As we have seen, the notion of 'relational' is by no means 'salvation', and covenant belong together in the sense that the 'relational' language of the latter intrudes upon the 'lawcourt' metaphor. As soon as we think of the 'relationship' between the defendant and the judge it is clear that the 'forensic' image no longer works.

It is therefore proper and natural, within ancient Judaism, to speak of the creator's rectifying work in metaphors drawn from the 'forensic' or 'law court' setting. God, as the righteous judge, will set all things right, and will thereby display his own 'righteousness' in that (forensic) sense. We might call this 'forensic eschatology'. As we have already stressed, the 'righteousness' of a judge, seen from the biblical point of view, consists in trying the case fairly and impartially, being true to the law, punishing wickedness, and vindicating those in the right, with special reference to the helpless (orphans, widows and the poor). Paul's forensic eschatology, envisaging the creator as a judge acting justly ('the righteousness of God') to set creation to rights and to do so impartially, is again seen most fully in Romans, this time in 2.1-16. This God will judge the secrets of human hearts 'through Jesus the Messiah, according to my gospel' (2.16).\(^5\) But it is not only in Romans. The theme of the final judgment at which God will judge righteously recurs again and again. We shall develop this, too, in the sixth point below, and more fully in the next chapter.\(^6\)

We thus find, in Paul, 'covenantal and forensic eschatology', and, with that, a further depth in the phrase 'the righteousness of God'.\(^7\) This God will not only act in fidelity to the covenant; when he does so, that will be the means by which he will put all things right, like a judge finally settling a case. The forensic meaning of the divine righteousness thus originated in the covenantal context in the first place (Israel's belief in the ultimate justice of the one God; Israel's appeal to that ultimate justice as the source of rescue and vindication), and belongs closely with it. If, of course, the covenantal narrative is confronted with the problem that the covenant people, like everyone else, are sinful and guilty before the divine tribunal, the forensic setting will not only make that clear but also offer the appropriate model for displaying the divine solution. Part of the reason why Romans 1.18-4.25, and especially 3.21-31, are as dense and complex as they are is because both of these things, covenant and law court, are being discussed together.\(^8\)

\(^5\) It is the combination of covenant faithfulness with forensic righteousness (especially impartiality) that makes the thesis of Kaminsky 2007 (that the creator God simply does have a 'favourite nation clause') so implausible in terms of Israel's scriptures themselves.

\(^6\) E.g. Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10, etc.

\(^7\) McCormack 2004, 113-7 stresses the importance of the covenant as the context for justification; but my sense is that 'covenant' here has a different meaning to that which I am proposing. The result is that he wants to include 'transformation' within justification itself, which as I argue below is not true to Paul (see also e.g. 117, where McCormack summarizes Calvin: 'God's declaration in justification is revelation, and revelation transforms the whole person'). Vanhoozer 2011, 251 is I think closer to the mark. Fee 1995, 322 n. 36 emphasizes 'God's covenant loyalty' to his people, and that blurs the line between the covenant, lawcourt and forensic readings. But the point is that, however one may talk about the covenant, lawcourt and forensic readings, God is the righteous judge who will set all things right.

\(^8\) The caricature of my and other views offered by Carson 2004, 50-52 – with, as usual, minimal reference to my actual writings – is simply a way of not attending to what is being said.
5. All these themes point forward to the decisive divine judgment on the last day, in other words, to 'final eschatology'. Paul in many passages reaffirms the basic Jewish belief, summing up all the previous four points: (1) there will come a day when the creator will finally call the whole world to account and 'rectify' it at last; (2) this will include the final 'rectification' of human beings, in other words, their reconstitution as fully human beings, through the resurrection, so that they will share the creator's rule in the new world; (3) this will be the ultimate fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, the moment when the creator and covenant God blesses the whole world through Abraham's 'seed', fully, finally and for ever; (4) the resurrection, i.e. the rescue from death itself and the ultimate reconstitution of image-bearing humans, is to be seen as their ultimate vindication in the technical legal, forensic sense. All this will come about because the creator God, who is also the covenant God, will at the last demonstrate his faithfulness to the covenant and hence also to the creation. To pull these apart and with them some key passages in Paul's letters — is to place dogma ahead of historical exegesis.

Within the larger picture which Paul offers in Romans, this forensic verdict which is also the ultimate covenantal declaration is the verdict that will be issued publicly, finally, impartially and righteously, on the last day. Paul sees this as part of the renewal of all things, the establishment of the new heavens and new earth. The future verdict will consist, according to Paul, of the gift of 'life': the dikaiosmos that meant 'death' is matched by the dikaiosmos that meant 'life'. That is why Romans 8 then develops exactly this theme: these people will be raised bodily from the dead to share in the glory of the Messiah (Romans 8.17–30). Once again we note the dovetailing of forensic and covenantal ideas. The 'verdict' here, and in 8.33–34, is certainly 'forensic', but the idea of the two verdicts of 'life' and 'death' is certainly 'covenantal', as in Deuteronomy 30.15–20 and elsewhere. And once again the whole thing is 'incorporative'. The place where the verdict 'no condemnation' is issued is precisely 'in Messiah Jesus'.

This final justification is referred to decisively much earlier in the letter, in Romans 2.12–13, which itself summarizes the larger statement in 2.5–11. These clear and sharp statements are by no means to be set aside, as is the habit of some, on the grounds that they set up categories which Paul will then show to be empty (an odd way of laying the foundation for so carefully crafted a letter) or that Paul is here simply quoting a Jewish perspective which he does not himself share. Here is the full statement in 2.4–11:

Don't you know that God's kindness is meant to bring you to repentance? 5 But by your hard, unrepentant heart you are building up a store of anger for yourself on the day of the anger, the day when God's just judgment will be unveiled — the God who will 'repay everyone according to their works'. 6 When people patiently do what is good, and so pursue the quest for glory and honour and immortality, God will give them the life of the age to come. 7 But when people act out of selfish desire, and do not obey the truth, but instead obey injustice, there will be anger and fury. 8 There will be trouble and distress for every single person who does what is wicked, the Jew first and also, equally, the Greek — and there will be glory, honour and peace for everyone who does what is good, the Jew first and also, equally, the Greek. 9 God, you see, shows no partiality.

The impartiality and 'just judgment' of God: these are essential elements in God's own dikaiosyne, his 'righteousness', in the classic biblical terms of judicial responsibility. This careful statement of a 'forensic' eschatology then contextualizes the following statement (2.12–13) of God's final justification:

12 Everyone who sinned outside the law, you see, will be judged outside the law — and those who sinned from within the law will be judged by means of the law. 13 After all, it isn't those who hear the law who are in the right before God. It's those who do the law who will be declared to be in the right!

Hoi poietai nomou dikaiotesetai — 'those who do the law will be justified': those words have struck terror into the hearts of unsuspecting Protestants. Some have expressed surprise that such words should be found in the New Testament, let alone in a letter by Paul. That, of course, is why some theories have done their best to muddle or neutralize them. But there are plenty of signs elsewhere in the letters that Paul means exactly what he says. The question then is, what does he mean by 'doing the law', and what, in this instance, does he mean by 'will be justified'? Paul will come back again and again to the question of 'doing the law' throughout Romans, with the particular climax to that build-up of thought coming in 10.6–11. To this we shall return. But we must stress here, because it is vital for the logic of this fifth point and the ultimate seventh one, that Paul is here talking about a future and final justification, which the context makes clear will take place on the
last day, the day of final judgment. Paul here envisages the final scene of present world history as a great law court setting in which God the creator, the just and impartial judge, will sum up the complete lived lives of all human beings and declare that some are ‘in the right’ and others not.

This just judgment (dikaiokrisia, 2.5) will be on the basis of the totality of the life that has been led: God will ‘repay to each according to their works’. Paul never for a moment undermines this biblical and traditional saying, widespread across the thought of ancient Israel.601 It is itself part of the ‘righteousness of God’, the ‘just judgment’ in which the creator will be seen to have acted ‘impartially’ (Romans 2.11).602 This is the same picture that we find in the other briefer references such as 2 Corinthians 5.10, to which we shall return in reviewing Paul’s eschatology in the next chapter.

The point which must then be noticed is the all-important difference between the future verdict and the present one – and the reason why this difference occurs, and the consequences which follow from it. To get at this we need a brief digression into the overall logic of Romans 1–8.

Many factors have contributed to obscuring the link between future and present justification in Romans. First, there has been a tendency (already mentioned) to set chapter 2 aside altogether, or otherwise neutralise its force, perhaps by insisting that the only thing Paul is doing there is working towards the conclusion of 3.19–20, that all humans are guilty, and that he must not be allowed to hint at anything else on the way to that point. Second, more specifically, there has been a tendency, which has become thematic in the whole scholarly discipline of reading Paul, to treat the language of ‘justification’ as though it belonged in a quite different seam of thought to Paul’s language about being ‘in Christ’, so that, as we have seen, ‘forensic’ and ‘participationist’ strands of thought have been deemed incompatible and so played off against one another, perhaps in the interest of, or at least picking up rhetorical energy from, an implicit and essentially modern privileging of ‘individual salvation’ over ‘ecclesiology’. This has meant that when Paul speaks of ‘judgment’ or ‘condemnation’, or indeed ‘justification’ and ‘righteousness’, in passages that have been deemed to be ‘participatory’, he is not taken seriously.603 Third, as a result, there has been a tendency to split off Romans 1–4 from 5–8, and both from chapters 9–11, not to mention 12–16; to allow the undoubted transitions in the argument of the letter to be translated into differences of theology. But only when the contribution of each section to the overall whole is taken into account can we understand the particular place of each within the letter, never mind within Paul’s wider theology.

All this has meant that when Paul returns to the language of condemnation and justification in Romans 8 the connection with chapter 2 is often ignored. Yet there it is: Paul’s argument obviously goes through different phases, but it is nevertheless a single argument running seamlessly from chapter 1 all the way to chapter 8 (never mind the further seamless thought that runs into 9–11). The famous opening of chapter 8, ‘ouden ara nyn katakrima tois en Christo Iesou (there is therefore now no condemnation’, for those in the Messiah Jesus) ought to send the reader’s mind straight back to the krima of 2.2, which was then picked up in 5.16 and 5.18 (the katakrima which came on all humanity following Adam’s transgression). The declaration in chapter 8 that this condemnation has been taken away, since it has been borne, exhausted, in the ‘condemnation’ of sin itself in the Messiah’s flesh (8.3), ought to evoke the sense that a problem introduced several chapters earlier has finally been resolved. God ‘condemned’ sin in the flesh (8.3): the katakrinen here is linked closely to the katakrima in 8.1, and thence to 5.16, 18 and back to 2.1–11.604 That is why the answer in 8.34 to tis ho katakrinon, ‘who is there who will condemn?’, is (by obvious implication), ‘nobody’. That is the rhetorical equivalent of the formal, logical conclusion in 8.1. This whole train of thought, coming out finally in chapter 8, answers closely to the set of questions in chapter 2. Only when the two are split off from one another, through the spurious and shallow division of Romans on the basis of two supposedly different types of thought or systems of soteriology, can this point be missed. In Romans 8 we return to the future verdict, and discover that, because of the Messiah (point 6 below) it corresponds to the present one issued on the basis of faith (point 7 below).

By the same token, the future verdict (which will consist, in concrete terms, of the resurrection of all the Messiah’s people, and hence the divine ‘declaration’ about them, as about the Messiah himself in 1.4, ‘this really is my son’) will be in accordance with the dikaiôma tou nomou, the ‘just requirement of the Law’.605 The two terms katakrima and dikaiôma are opposites, corresponding to kriithêontai and dikaiôthêontai in 2.12–13: on the one hand, the negative verdict and the consequent punishment (corresponding to the warnings in 2.8–9), and on the other the positive verdict and the consequent resurrection life (corresponding to the promises in 2.7 and 10). This dikaiôma will be ‘fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh

601 Job 34.11; Ps. 62.12 [xxxi]; Prov. 24.12; cf. too Isa. 59.18; Jer. 17.10; 21.14; 32.19; Ezek. 18.30
602 33.20; Sir. 11.26; 16.12–14; 35.24; 51.30; 4 Ezra 7.35.
603 see the discussion in e.g. Bassler 1982.
604 e.g. at Rom. 6.13, 16, 18, 19, 20; 8.10 (all dikaiosynê); 8.30 (twice), 33 (dikaios); 8.4 (dikaiôma).
605 cf. krima (2.1, twice); katakrima (2.11); krima (2.2, 3); dikaiôma (2.5); the double krithêontai thought to which Paul is referring back in 8.1, 34.
606 I take nomos here, as normally in Paul, to refer to the Torah itself; see below.
but according to the spirit; this in turn corresponds closely with what is said in 2.25–29 about ‘the uncircumcision that keeps the just requirements of the Law’ (ἡ ἀκροβυστία τα δικαίωματα τον ομονοματικού της φυλάσσεται), which can also be spoken of as the ‘naturally uncircumcised that completes the Law’ (ἡ ἐκ φυσικῶν ἀκροβυστία τον ομονοματικού της τον τελέων).

When looking ahead with Pauline eyes at this final verdict it is impossible – though many have tried – to omit the work of the spirit. This whole section of our present chapter, in fact, is designed to highlight the fact that Paul’s doctrine of justification depends strongly upon the spirit just as much as on the Messiah: here, at the heart of the redefinition of election, it is essential. Paul has already hinted at this in 2.25–29, and it comes out into the open first in 5.5 and 7.4–6 and then, at length, in chapter 8. The tendency in some quarters to downplay the role of the spirit, as though one could understand any part of Christian theology without it, has been disastrous. It is the spirit, after all, whose work indicates that Christian living is not a zero-sum game, so that either ‘God does it all’ or ‘we do it all’. That false notion is always raised whenever anyone draws attention to Paul’s strong words about a final justification on the basis of the whole life, with the constant implication that unless one simply says ‘God does it all’ we are forfeiting assurance, or even salvation itself.

We shall come back to this in point 7 below.

The particular thing to notice here is that, at the final judgment, the ‘work of the law’ which will not only cause certain people to be vindicated (2.13) but actually to take part in the ‘judging’ of others (7.27) is the result of the work of the spirit (2.29). This, as we shall see, forms the crucial link with the initial work of the gospel. As Paul says in Philippians, in a passage not sufficiently pondered by those who try to reconstruct his justification-theology: the one who began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it by the day of Messiah Jesus. 466 That is why, in Romans 8.10, he can declare that, though the body is dead because of sin, ‘the spirit is life because of righteousness’. This leads directly to the spirit-driven resurrection of all those whom the spirit indwells. In other words, those who are ‘in the Messiah’, who are the same people as ‘those in whom the Messiah’s spirit dwells’ (though the two phrases do not mean the same thing), already possess the status of dikaiosynē, ‘righteousness’; and the resurrection will reaffirm that status. Thus, as the language of ‘condemnation’ comes back at last in chapter 8, so too does the language of ‘righteousness’ and ‘justification’: ‘It is God who justifies (θεὸς Ἰησοῦς); who will condemn?’ 467 The whole of Romans 8 is every bit as much about ‘justification’ as it is about ‘incorporation’ or the work of the spirit.

This explains the point of 8.12–17, echoing (as I suggested) the declaration of 1.4. As Easter declared that Jesus had all along been ‘God’s son’, so even now the spirit bears witness with the believers’ spirits that they are ‘God’s children’. The resurrection itself will say the same thing, in the language of event rather than word. That is why Paul speaks of believers ‘awaiting our adoption, the redemption of our bodies’ (8.23). That is why, too, the Messiah is seen as the ‘firstborn among many siblings’ (8.29). Indeed, though the theme of ‘adoption’ is comparatively rare in Paul, when we find it, here and in Galatians 4, it emerges as central. One might see it as a key, Messiah-shaped focal point of covenantal theology – which would be why Paul mentions the notion again in listing the privileges of Israel in Romans 9.4–5. 468

All this only makes sense if we allow the striking vision of final judgment in Romans 2 to have its full effect. Take that away, and one of the greatest chapters in Paul (Romans 8) becomes a scatter of general reflections about the spirit, Christian behaviour and cosmic eschatology. These are, in fact, vital and carefully integrated features within a much larger, but still theologically coherent, overall discourse.

Paul’s vision in Romans 1–8, then, has as its framework the all-important narrative about a future judgment according to the fullness of the life that has been led, emphasizing the fact that those ‘in Christ’ will face ‘no condemnation’ on that final day (2.1–16; 8.1–11, 31–39). The reason Paul gives for this is, as so often, the cross and the spirit (8.3–4): in the Messiah, and by the spirit, the life in question will have been the life of spirit-led obedience, adoption, suffering, prayer and ultimately glory (8.5–8, 12–17, 18–27, 28–30). This is not something other than ‘Paul’s doctrine of justification’. It is its outer, eschatological framework. We know bits of this larger, final-eschatology story from other letters – Philippians, already quoted; 1 Corinthians 4.1–5 and 15.20–28, of course; hardly at all in Galatians, though there is one tell-tale reference to a future ‘justification’. 469 But here in Romans it is spelled out most fully, and most tightly integrated. And, to repeat a vital point about the character of Paul’s theology, that integration makes nonsense of all schemes that depend on regarding Romans 1–4 and 5–8 as representing two different types of thought or systems of soteriology. That division results from failing to notice Paul’s larger controlling category, namely, the covenant

466 Phil. 1.6.
467 Rom. 8.33.
promises made by God to Abraham to deal with the problem of the world's sin and its consequences. Those, Paul insists, are the promises to which the covenant God has been true in the Messiah. The faithfulness of this God is the underlying theme of Romans 1–8... as it is also the problem, and then the solution, throughout Romans 9–11.

This digression into the inner logic of Romans, particularly the close ties between the much-loved chapter 8 and the usually ignored chapter 2, has brought us to the point where we can at last appreciate what comes, logically and theologically, in between the two. The point about Christian eschatology is that in the Messiah the hoped-for 'end' has already appeared 'in the present time'. Eschatology has been inaugurated. It is because of the Messiah's unexpected death and resurrection, bursting in upon the present time from the promised future, that the verdict to be announced on the last day can itself be anticipated in the present. Once we have grasped the first five points in this sequence, in other words, we are ready first for the sixth (the Messiah), and then at last for the seventh (the 'justification in the present').

6. The events concerning Jesus the Messiah are the revelation, in unique and decisive action, of the divine righteousness. Everything depends - literally, logically, personally and above all theologically - upon this. The long-awaited future event has come forward into the present in the Messiah (as expounded, in relation to the Messiah himself, in chapter 9 above). This means that the one God has displayed his dikaiosyne in both senses (covenant faithfulness and forensic justice, tightly interwoven, and together working for the rectification of the whole creation) in the events concerning Jesus. He has condemned sin in his flesh, and has vindicated Jesus himself in his resurrection, marking him out as Israel's Messiah and hence as the bearer of the Israel-shaped covenant purpose. This God has thereby fulfilled his Israel-plan in the Messiah, whose death and resurrection are the instruments of this purpose and the first instantiation of it (in the sense that Jesus' death is the condemnation of sin and that his resurrection is the beginning of the new creation). He has decisively launched the creator's project of putting the world itself to rights.

The critical move here is to affirm, with Paul in Romans 3.22, that the Messiah has been 'faithful' to that covenant plan, the plan through which Abraham's seed would bless the world. His 'faithfulness', also expressed as his 'obedience', is the sign that Israel's role in the divine purpose has devolved onto him. And of course, for Paul, what this means in concrete terms is his death on the cross. The Messiah himself, in some versions of this narrative, is referred to as ho dikaios, 'the righteous one'.470 Whether or not we press that point, we see here the main thrust of Romans 1.3–4, and we understand more fully why Paul has used that opening precisely for that letter. The resurrection is the divine declaration that Jesus really was, all along, 'son of God', in all the senses we explored in the previous chapter. To that extent, the resurrection of Jesus was itself a judicial declaration: over against the verdict of the courts of Caiaphas and Pilate, condemning Jesus as a blasphemous pseudo-Messiah, the resurrection declared that he was 'in the right'.471 And if he was in the right, he really was Messiah; the resurrection was a covenantal declaration. He really was Israel's representative. The 'end', the 'goal', the 'eschaton', has thus already arrived prophetically in the present, and with it the announcement of where the new covenant people of the one God, the forgiven-humans, are to be found and recognized.

These events concerning Jesus, and the announcement of them as 'good news', therefore provide a sudden, bright glimpse of the fact that this God is 'in the right' in relation both to the covenant with Israel and to the problem of human sin and cosmic corruption. This vision is what Paul refers to in Romans 1.17 and 3.21 as the unveiling of the divine righteousness.472 One might refer to all this in terms of 'inaugurated forensic and covenantal eschatology'.

This inauguration, then, has taken place in the Messiah. Just as the wilderness tabernacle was as it were a micro-Eden, a miniature new world, so the resurrection of Jesus is to be seen as the sharply focused rectification, putting-right, of the whole created order. The divine verdict against the power of sin on the cross (Romans 8.3) results in the divine verdict in favour of creation in the resurrection. As we saw earlier, the Messiah is thus the revelation-in-action of the divine faithfulness in the full, combined sense. In him the intended 'goal' has come forward into the present. In his physical body he is the living presence of the creator and covenant God (Colossians 1.19–20; 2.9). His dying flesh has borne the weight of sin's condemnation (Romans 8.3); his resurrection embodies the start, and the means, of...
the whole new creation (1 Corinthians 15.23). He is therefore the true 'seed' of Abraham (Galatians 3.16, 19, 29).

The entire Jew-plus-Gentile family, now designated as 'Abraham's seed', has that title because they are 'in him' and 'belong to him' (Galatians 3.26–29); and the badge of that belonging is of course pistis, the 'faith' which believes that the one God raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 4.24–25; 10.9). That 'faith' itself is not, as some might suppose, either an arbitrary standard or a kind of religious characteristic which the creator happens to approve. The cognitive content of the faith (believing that Jesus was raised) corresponds to the character of the faith as the first sign of new life (see 7 below), and grasps above all, in the light of the resurrection through which the cross is seen not as a shameful defeat but as a glorious victory, that the faithful death of the Messiah was the ultimate act of divine judgment on sin, in other words, the covenantal act through which humans are rescued from sin and death and Abraham's blessing flows out to the world.

This is why Paul can describe the divine action of 'justifying' as being 'through the redemption which is in Messiah Jesus' (Romans 3.24). Once we join up the forensic eschatology with the theme of the covenant, there is no longer a problem about integrating any of it with Paul's regular incorporative theme. Were it not such an ugly tongue-twister, one might be tempted to refer to Paul's 'inaugurated/incorporative forensic/covenantal eschatology', or his 'inaugurated-eschatological forensic-covenantal incorporation'. Perhaps it would be easier in German. Or perhaps we should just say, as Paul himself does, 'justified in the Messiah' – remembering all that is now built into that dense phrase.

Because, and only because, the Messiah has died and been raised, fulfilling the creator's covenantal purpose and thereby revealing his righteousness, in all senses, before the world, the bursting of the creator's future purpose into the present time is matched exactly by the declaration, in the present and in advance, of the verdict of the last day (point 5 above). Now at last we can understand Paul's great theme of justification by grace, through faith, in the present time.

7. When Paul speaks about people being 'justified' in the present, he is drawing on the framework of eschatological, forensic, participatory and covenantal thought I have sketched above. He does so in order to insist, from a variety of angles because of the different arguments he is mounting, that in the present time the covenant God declares 'in the right', within the covenant, all those who hear, believe and obey 'the gospel' of Jesus the Messiah.472 The future verdict (point 5) is thus brought forward into the present, because of the utter grace of the one

God seen in the 'faithful' death of the Messiah (point 6) and then at work, as we shall now see, through the spirit in the gospel.

Several things need explaining here: seven of them, in fact, nested within this seventh point itself.

(i) First, as we indicated above, the verb dikaiow is declarative. When the judge in an ordinary Hebrew law court finds in favour of a person, that person is thereby deemed to be 'in the right' (Hebrew tzaddik; Greek dikaios). Though this word can also (confusingly to us) denote the person's character or behaviour, in virtue of which the decision has been made, the meaning of dikaios within the law court setting is not 'rightness' in the sense of 'this person is well-behaved and so deserves to win the case', but rather this person has received the court's favourable verdict.474 The declaration, in other words, is not a 'recognition' of 'what is already the case', nor the creation of a new character, but rather the creation of a new status. Up to that point, within the courtroom metaphor, prisoners in the dock have the status, in terms of the court (and thus of the wider society which the court represents), of being under accusation. Now, after the declaration, they have a new standing in the community. The court has found in their favour; they are 'in the clear', 'in the right'. They can walk away with head held high. Their status has, in that sense, been 'rectified', though to speak thus might easily cause confusion, suggesting that after all the notion of 'personal transformation' might be smuggled in to the very precise meaning of 'justification'. What has happened, rather, is that the social standing of the person within the community has been 'put right'; sorted out, re-established.

The Greek word for this new status is dikaiosyne. This is what it means for righteousness to be either 'reckoned' or 'accounted' to someone. They possess 'rightness' as a result of the judge's declaration.475 Up to the moment when the judge says 'I find this person dikaios', it makes no difference how upright and innocent the person in question may be; until the declaration at the end of the case, they do not possess that status in the forensic context and sense.476 The declaration means for 'righteousness' to be either 'reckoned' or 'accounted' to the person, that person is thereby deemed to be 'in the right' (Hebrew tzaddik; Greek dikaios). This is cognate of course...
'I declare the meeting adjourned.'477 The declaration creates and constitutes a new situation, a new status.478

We stress again: this is a declaration, not a description. It does not denote or describe a character; it confers a status. In that sense, it creates the status it confers. Up to that point, the person concerned cannot be spoken of as 'righteous', but now they can be and indeed must be.479 Thus the status of being 'in the right', reckoned 'righteous', is actually created by, and is the result of, the judge's declaration. That is what it means to say that the status of 'now being in the right', dikaiosynê, has been reckoned to the person concerned.

At this point it ought to be clear beyond any further cavil that this 'status', which the person has as a result of the declaration of the judge, cannot be the same as the 'righteousness' of the judge himself.490 The judge's own 'righteousness' consists in hearing the case fairly according to the law, remaining impartial, supporting widows and orphans, punishing evil and upholding the good. To say that this 'righteousness' is somehow accounted to, or accredited to, the vindicated defendant makes no sense: it would mean saying that such a person is deemed to have tried the case fairly, and so forth, which is obviously not the point. Likewise, the meaning of 'righteousness' as applied to the vindicated defendant (or, indeed, a vindicated plaintiff) is that the person has been declared to be in the right - which is not what is being said when one speaks of the 'righteousness' of the judge. This confusion goes back to the mediaeval ontologizing of justitia as a kind of quality, or even a substance, which one person might possess in sufficient quantity for it to be shared, or passed to and fro, among others. This mistake has been perpetuated, in more recent times, by the proper and understandable desire to affirm the security of the believer's status by speaking of 'the righteousness of God', or even, as Paul never does, 'the righteousness of Christ', as being like a capacious cloak which the believer can put on.441 Paul, however, has other ways of achieving the latter aim, as we shall see.

The fact that being thus 'accounted righteous' has to do with a forensic status rather than with any kind of recognition of an earlier-formed character, or promise of subsequent character-transformation (such as might be implied here by the language of 'rectification'), can be seen if we consider the case of a miscarriage of justice. In a court case it is of course to be hoped that the judge's declaration will correspond to earlier reality: that the person now given the new status of 'righteous' in this forensic sense will in fact have been 'righteous' in the sense of 'having good character', and specifically in terms of being innocent of the charges in the particular case. But in the case of a miscarriage of justice, where a guilty person may have been acquitted, the verdict 'in the right' still means that the person concerned has the status of dikaiosynê. The person concerned might actually be a notorious and wicked character, not well-behaved at all. They might in fact be guilty of the crime in question, and might have obtained the verdict by luck, bribery or judicial incompetence. The fact remains: when the court finds in their favour, they are 'declared to be in the right'.

This kind of miscarriage of justice is, of course, what Paul at first seems to be indicating when he says that all those who believe the gospel are dikaios - despite the fact that a moment before they had been standing guilty in the dock with nothing to say in their defence.452 This is where it looks as if the one God is doing precisely what scripture says a judge must never do - indeed, what this God
himself says he will not do! – namely, acquit the guilty.483 This paradox is of course what centuries of protestant thought in particular have gloried in above all, namely the 'justification of the ungodly', the free and gracious divine act which overrides all questions of desert, merit, qualification or lack thereof, and which gratuitously confers the status 'righteous' on those who have done nothing to deserve it.484

The first thing to get clear, then, is that the word 'justification', within its forensic sense, refers very precisely to the declaration of the righteous God that certain people are now 'in the right', despite everything that might appear to the contrary.

It is all too easy, when thinking through this whole initial line of thought, to suppose that Paul is only talking about human sin and justification. But, as we have seen at length already, he employs the same language, at the same time, to address the issue of Abraham's eschatological family, and the question of whether Jews are automatically in it, and whether Gentiles, coming in, need to take on full Torah-observance, particularly circumcision. Having discovered more precisely how the 'forensic' language works, then, how does it apply to these 'covenantal' questions? The question of the divine 'righteousness' was, after all, raised most acutely in the first century not as an abstract question about how the creator would deal with sin, but as a covenantal question about how and when the covenant God would fulfill his promises and rescue his people.485

When we think of the 'declaration' of the covenant God, in the life of all that has been said so far, it should be clear that for Paul this declaration was made, foundationally, when Jesus was raised from the dead. This event was to be interpreted as the declaration that Jesus really was Israel's Messiah, and that Israel was being reconstituted in and around him. The divine covenantal declaration about the Messiah is then brought forward, through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the spirit, and repeated in the case of believers. What the one God said of Jesus at Easter – the covenantal declaration as well as the announcement of Jesus' vindication in a forensic sense – is now said 'upon faith', epi té pistei. We must explore this further below.

In Paul's theology all this means two tightly interconnected realities, both of which he urgently wants to stress. First, all those over whom that declaration is made are permanently 'in the right'. The status of dikaiosynē is not temporary. It truly anticipates the verdict which will be issued on the final day. This is why 'justification' is the heart of what later generations would rightly see as Christian assurance. Properly speaking, 'justification' is not 'how someone becomes a Christian', but 'how someone who becomes a Christian through believing the gospel and being baptized can be sure they will receive the verdict 'righteous' on the last day'. The judge has already pronounced it, and his word will stand. Second, this declaration, and this status of dikaiosynē, applies equally and on the same basis to all who believe the gospel, Jew and Gentile alike, fulfilling the covenant promise of Abraham's worldwide family. It is in other words the basis, the only basis, for full church membership – because, by their very character, the declaration and the pisteis over which it is made both look back to the Messiah himself who constitutes in himself the renewed people of the creator and covenant God. The second point is the main theme of Galatians, though with echoes of the first; both together, fully interwoven and interlocking, provide the main theme of Romans. Paul would, I think, have said that the second point reinforces the first: it is by being accepted as a member of the single family that people are strengthened in their assurance. This is part of the meaning of agape.

This leads us directly to the second sub-point.

(ii) The second thing that needs explaining is that this present verdict is utterly dependent, for Paul, on the past work of the Messiah (point 6 above). His faithfulness to death (also spoken of as his 'obedience') is the moment when Israel's appointed task, of rescuing humankind and the world, is at last accomplished. The promised future burst into the present in the cross and resurrection, revealing the ultimate judgment and covenant faithfulness of the one God, precisely through his 'faithfulness', for the benefit of all believers (Romans 3.21-22). Paul has a dozen or more ways of talking about the cross as a single, past achievement. All that he says about present status, forgiveness, covenant membership and everything else depends on this. The present declaration 'in the right', 'covenant member', depends on the past achievement of the Messiah's saving death.

We have already stressed this point earlier both in the present section and in the whole chapter. It remains to note, however, that in many discussions words like 'ground' and 'basis' appear (as in 'the cross is the ground of justification' or 'on the basis of faith').486 These words, with their implicit building metaphor, should not be absolutized and then made the subject of inquisition. What counts is the historical narrative in which the actual work of the Messiah opens up the new world over which the word 'forgiveness' is written, the new multi-ethnic family promised in the Abrahamic covenant. A firm grasp of biblical eschatology means that a nervous grasp on non-eschatological terminology can be relaxed. In particular, as we saw

483 cf. e.g. Ex. 15.3, 5; Lev. 16.11; 18.26; 24.17, 19; 2 Chron. 19.6f.; Ps. 82.2, 3; Prov. 19.13; 18.5; 24.23f.; 28.21f.; Eccl. 5.8; Isa. 4.5; 6.14f. [see dikaiosyne, ton asbē hekenen dôrun]; 10.2f.; Jer. 5.28; Am. 5.12; Mal. 2.9. Passages which include a reference to the judgment of the One God himself include Ex. 23.7, Dt. 1.17; 10.17; 2 Chron. 19.6f.

485 see particularly Kasemann 1980 [1973], 112ff. Jewett 2007, 314f. Jewett stresses, against various commentators, that 'faith' is not itself a surreptitious form of 'religious qualification'.

486 see W. Longenecker 1990.
above, this second point should not be ontologized into any idea of the Messiah’s own ‘righteousness’, or his ‘obedience to the law’.

(iii) The people declared to be ‘in the right’ are the people who are incorporated into the Messiah. Present justification is utterly dependent on the past achievement of the cross, but the Messiah is not merely a figure of history whose achievement has created a new possibility. The Messiah is the one ‘in whom’ his people are what they are. The verdict, then, is announced ‘in the Messiah’. One can see the link, perhaps, by saying that the verdict which the living God announced when he raised Jesus from the dead (‘he really is my son’, as in Romans 1.4) becomes the verdict the same God announces over all who are incorporated into the Messiah. What is said of the Messiah is rightly said of those who are ‘in him’. That is why ‘adoption’ in Romans 8 or Galatians 4 is simply a way of exploring the meaning of ‘justification’, rather than a separate category.

It is striking that in each of his major expositions of justification Paul says, almost in one case as an aside, that justification is something that happens ‘in the Messiah’:

They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in the Messiah, Jesus.

If, in seeking to be declared ‘righteous’ in the Messiah, we ourselves are found to be ‘sinners’...

...that I may gain the Messiah, and be found in him, not having a ‘righteousness’ of my own which is out of the law but that which is through the faithfulness of the Messiah, the righteousness from God which is upon faith.

487 I understand the reasons for the drift in this direction (the ‘active obedience of Christ’, as in some strains of Calvinist and indeed Anglican theology). Even Vanhoozer’s gracious advocacy (2011, 250f.) cannot overturn the fact that Paul never puts it like this, and that he writes by quite other means at the goal towards which this formulation is aiming. Yet the faithful are accounted righteous ‘in the Messiah’, but this is not because the Messiah possesses something called ‘righteousness’, earned by his own personal covenantal law-keeping, which he can share with or ‘impute’ to his people, but because the Messiah is the covenant-people-in-person, demonstrated as such by his being raised from the dead. Since I regard the word ‘righteousness’ as having ‘covenant membership/faithfulness’ as one of its Pauline teachings, one could then say that, since those who are ‘in the Messiah’ have his ‘covenant membership/faithfulness’ reckoned to them, this counts as a form of ‘imputed righteousness’; but again Paul never says that, and this is not at all what the advocates of ‘imputation’ are thinking of.

488 If, in the present debate (joining together ‘incorporative’ and forensic’ languages, as Paul himself does). McCormack 2004, 110 seems to me wrong to make the idea merely functional, speaking of a ‘conformity of my life to [Christ’s] life of obedience... a union of wills’. He is anxious to avoid a ‘Greek ontology of pure being’ according to which the idea of ‘union with Christ’ would mean ‘a substantial participation in the being of Christ’ (112), but might there not be – as Schweitzer thought – precisely a Hebrew concept of such participation?

489 This is the point which, going back within the protestant tradition at least to Calvin, is rightly stressed by Vanhoozer 2011. I had thought I had emphasized it in earlier writings, but in case I had not made it sufficiently clear I am glad to do so now. On ‘adoption’ see now the important study of Burke 2006.

490 Rom. 3.24; Gal. 2.17; Phil. 3.6f.; all translated fairly literally.

In other words, the Messiah’s death constitutes the past event which enables justification to take place, and the Messiah’s present incorportive life is the context within which it makes sense for the one God to make the same declaration over people now that he made over the Messiah himself in the resurrection. The verdict pronounced over the Messiah’s pistis is now pronounced over the pistis of those who are ‘in him’. The Messiah died to sin, once for all; this person is ‘in the Messiah’; therefore this person is deemed, reckoned, accounted to have ‘died to sin’. That is exactly what Paul says in Romans 6, but it is not a new point; it is simply a restatement in other terms of what he had said in chapter 3. Indeed, if we see 3.24 (redemption in the Messiah) as an advance shorthand summary, chapter 6 is not even really ‘in other terms’. It is drawing out what was already hinted at. Thus the present declaration ‘in the right’, rooted in the Messiah’s death, is pronounced over all who are ‘in the Messiah’.

This is not, however, a matter of the Messiah possessing in himself the status of ‘righteous’, and this ‘righteousness of the Messiah’ somehow being ‘imputed’ to the believer.492 I understand the almost inevitable pressure towards some such reading, granted the mediaeval context to which the Reformers were responding, and the pastoral needs which such an idea of ‘imputed righteousness’ is believed to address. But it is not Pauline. (a) Paul never speaks of the Messiah having ‘righteousness’. In the one place (1 Corinthians 1.30) where he comes closest, he also speaks of him having ‘become for us God’s wisdom – and righteousness, sanctification and redemption as well’. So if we were to speak of an ‘imputed righteousness’ we should add those others in as well, which would create a whole new set of doctrinal puzzles. (b) The second half of the apparent ‘exchange’ of 2 Corinthians 5.21 is not about ‘the Messiah’s righteousness’, but about ‘God’s righteousness’; and it is not about ‘imputation’, but about Paul and those who share his apostolic ministry ‘becoming’, that is, ‘coming to embody’, that divine ‘righteousness’ as ministers of the new covenant.493 (c) When Paul does speak of things that are true of the Messiah being ‘reckoned’ to those who are ‘in him’, the focus is not on ‘righteousness’, but on death and resurrection (Romans 6.11). That is actually a much stronger basis for the pastoral application which those who teach ‘imputed righteousness’ are rightly anxious to safeguard. Those who belong to the Messiah stand on resurrection ground.

489 Among the voluminous recent discussions see the helpful historical note in McGowan 2006, 153f.; see Bird 2007, ch. 4. Gundrey 2004 is in my view correct to contest the classic notion of ‘imputation’, though his own way of putting things creates to my mind almost as many problems again.

490 For a more extended discussion, see Wright 2002 [Romans], 533–41. Rom. 5–8 & Paul’s ‘argument for assurance’; and at its heart we find crucial passages such as 8.5–8, 12–17.
As we have seen, the sign that one is 'in the Messiah' is twofold: baptism and faith. The former we shall come to presently; the latter needs attention at this point. We can set aside the older views that 'faith' is an 'easier' kind of 'work', something people will be able to do having failed the harder test of keeping the law; or that 'faith', as opposed to 'legalism', is of the kind of religious attitude that the creator had wanted all along, the kind he therefore rewarded when he found it in Abraham. Faith, in Paul's sense, is the Messiah-badge, because it was his faithfulness in the sense of his faithfulness to the covenant, his obedience unto death, that accomplished the divine purpose; and also because it is the belief that the one God raised him from the dead.\(^\text{494}\) The word 'faith' functions like the word 'view' in the sentence 'do you have a view from your room?' it is defined in relation to its object. The 'view' from the room is not something you possess. It consists precisely in being able to see the distant scene. The 'faith' in Paul's sense is not valued for a 'quality' it possesses in itself. It is defined entirely by, and in terms of, its object. It is what it is because it looks away from itself, and looks towards, and leans all its weight upon, the single act of the one God in the Messiah. It then becomes, as with Abraham, the sign of truly human life, giving glory to the powerful creator and believing that he does what he promises.\(^\text{495}\) And it becomes, in particular, the sign of the new covenant, the true 'doing of the law'.\(^\text{496}\)

(iv) All this comes true in personal reality because of the work of the spirit.\(^\text{497}\) This point alone justifies the placing of this entire discussion under the head of 'election redefined through the spirit'. The place of the spirit in all this is often either misunderstood or not even grasped, but it is fundamental for Paul. The spirit works, through the proclamation of the good news of the Messiah, to generate faith in humans and to constitute all those who believe as the single forgiven family promised to Abraham.\(^\text{498}\) Nobody, says Paul, can say 'Jesus is lord' except by the spirit; and, as he elsewhere explains, 'Jesus is lord' is the most basic Christian confession, the outward and verbal sign of the inward belief in Jesus' resurrection.\(^\text{499}\) 'The gospel came to you in power, in the holy spirit, and with full conviction', he says to the Thessalonians; 'it was, after all, not a human word, but the divine word which was at work in you believers'.\(^\text{500}\) In explaining to the Philippians that their suffering is itself a gift of God, he brackets this along with the earlier gift of faith, and this resonates with the statement a few paragraphs earlier that 'the one who began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it'.\(^\text{501}\) Faith, it seems, is the beginning of the 'good work' begun as a sheer gift. 'You have been saved by grace, through faith', he explains in the circular we call 'Ephesians'; and 'this doesn't happen on your own initiative; it's God's gift'.\(^\text{502}\) This raises other questions for us, and indeed for Paul himself: why, for instance, do some believe and others not?\(^\text{503}\) That has pushed some towards Jacobus Arminius, saying that 'faith' as it were comes from the human side, with justification and the gift of the spirit consequent upon it. It has pushed others towards a kind of Barthian position (whether or not Barth would have held such a thing), saying that 'justification' itself happens before all time, or at least in the one-off events of Jesus' death and resurrection, and certainly prior to anything 'happening' in the believer. The former delays divine action until the human initiative has taken place; the latter insists on divine initiative to the point where human response is hardly necessary. But if we stick with Paul there can be no doubt that he saw the work of the spirit, through the proclamation of the crucified and risen Jesus as lord, as the effective and immediate cause of people coming to believe that the One God had indeed raised Jesus from the dead. And that was, of course, the pistis which Paul described as relating directly to the divine verdict in the present.\(^\text{504}\) Election, redefined around the Messiah through the resurrection, is then opened up by the spirit to include all those who are 'in the Messiah'. The faith because of which the One God declares those in the Messiah to be 'in the right' is itself the work of the spirit through the proclamation of the gospel.

We should note, in the light of what we have said earlier, that when Paul speaks of the work of the gospel he is saying things which he might just as well have said of the spirit. That which God has done once for all in the Messiah is put into effect in the lives of communities and persons through the spirit-energized announcement of the messianic achievement. Thus, though the spirit is not mentioned as

\(^{494}\) Rom. 4.24f.; 10.9.
\(^{495}\) Rom. 4.18-22, reversing 1.18-26.
\(^{496}\) Rom. 10.5-11.
\(^{497}\) Bird 2007, 173 says that this effectively shifts the material cause of future justification, from christology to pneumatology. I deny the distinction: the spirit is in any case the Messiah's own spirit, and everything the spirit does is done by applying the work of the Messiah, which remains foundational.
\(^{498}\) Jewett 2007, 315: 'The Spirit was understood to evoke positive responses to the gospel, making persons know in the depth of their despair and disillusion that together they could call God "Abba" and live as honored "children of God"'. One might want to integrate Jewett's sociological 'despair and disillusion' back into the more usual theological analysis, but his point about the sovereign faith-evoking work of the spirit is well taken. So too e.g. McCormack 2004, 108: 'Paul understands faith to be a gift of God wrought by his grace in the human heart.' Quite so (against e.g. Schreiner 2001, 194, 208 who suggests that the gift of the spirit is consequent upon justification). Historically, this brings us to the questions often considered under the Latin tag of ordo salutis, the attempt to line up chronologically the various elements which take someone from the unregenerate state of sin to the ultimate state of salvation (see e.g. McGowan 2006). Paul does not discuss these questions, though some have seen Rom. 8.29f. as a hint in that direction.
\(^{499}\) 1 Cor. 12.3; Rom. 10.9f. Here too the spirit is present just behind the argument, through the quotation from Joel 2.32 in Rom. 10.13: see below, e.g. 1077, 1161-6, 1249.
\(^{500}\) Thess. 1.5; 1.23.
\(^{501}\) Phil. 1.29; 1.6.
\(^{502}\) Eph. 2.8.
\(^{503}\) E.g. Rom. 10.14-21.
\(^{504}\) cf again Rom. 10.9; cf. 4.24f.
such in Romans 3 and 4, Galatians 2, or Philippians 3, the other places where the spirit is brought into the picture make it clear that Paul is presupposing it elsewhere also. One cannot, in writing dense theology, say everything one might in principle have said on every occasion - though the pressure to do so, lest someone accuse you of missing something out, can become acute.

Does this mean that ‘justification’ is dependent upon, or subsequent to, ‘regeneration’? I am sometimes accused of saying this, though since ‘regeneration’ is not a term that occurs in any of Paul’s discussions of justification it is not a way of speaking I would favour. ‘Regeneration’ is primarily a Johannine concept, and we should be wary of superimposing it on Paul’s careful language and categories. The fear, of course, is that ‘justification’ would after all depend on ‘something in me’ - the beginnings, some might say, of subsequent ‘ethical transformation’, taking us back to the earliest Reformation debates. Well, if the alternative is to say that ‘justification’ is the divine declaration made in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is then simply enjoyed in faith, we would be on the way to a universalism which, however popular in some circles, would not be favoured by my ultra-Reformed critics. Nor, more to the point, would it make sense in the light of Romans 2.1-11. We need, rather, to make a distinction.

It is true that the spirit who, through the gospel, inspires the first whisper of faith is the same spirit who then goes to work so that the person who has believed ‘does the work of the law’ in the way spoken of in Romans 2, 3, 8 and 10. To that extent, as Paul insists in Philippians 1.6, ‘the one who began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it by the day of Messiah Jesus’. There is continuity; and the spirit, Paul would insist, remains sovereign throughout. But the point is that the first sign of the spirit’s work through the gospel is different in character from all that subsequent development. The first sign, the bare confession that Jesus is lord, the first sense in the heart that the creator God raised him from the dead, is precisely as we have seen a looking away from oneself and an utter trusting in the divine action in the Messiah. To turn that utter self-abandoning trust into a possession - like someone trying to possess the view from their room - would be instantly to falsify it. The faith because of which one is declared ‘righteous’ consists simply of the helpless trust in what the one God has done in Jesus. Everything that comes later, the hard moral work of producing ‘the fruit of the spirit’, the putting to death of the deeds of the body and so forth - all that has a very different character from this initial utterly astonished and utterly humble spirit-inspired, gospel-driven confession that the crucified and risen Jesus is lord.

The later moral work matters. But the verdict dikaios, ‘righteous’, ‘forgiven’, ‘covenant member’, which is issued, as Paul says, ‘upon that faith’ (Philippians 3.9) - this verdict is not dependent upon that subsequent work. This is where we must sharply distinguish the meaning of ‘justification’ from the concomitant fact not only of personal renewal but even of theosis (see below). ‘Justification’ does not denote those things. It is the initial verdict of God. Indeed, it is only the person who has heard that initial verdict, and understood what it really means, who can then go to work, still of course entirely in the power of the spirit, to do the things which Paul describes in Romans 8, Galatians 5 and elsewhere.

The character of this initial faith, inspired by the work of the spirit, because of which the verdict dikaios is issued in the present time, means that ‘assurance’ - of membership in the single family, of the favourable verdict at the final assize - really does depend on something ‘outside oneself’, namely the unique and unrepeatable death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. Christian faith is precisely the glad and grateful grasping of that death as ‘for me’. The proposal in some theology to ontologize this by speaking of a ‘justitia aliena’, an ‘alien righteousness’, that is, a ‘righteousness’ which is and remains ‘someone else’s’ as opposed to ‘my own’, is a vain attempt to say again what Paul says in Philippians 3.9: ‘not having my own dikaiosyne defined by Torah, but the dikaiosyne from God which is given to faith’. But the crucial mistake here - which a focus on the reshaping of election through the spirit helps us to avoid - is to separate what Paul explicitly joins in Philippians 1.6 and elsewhere. The confusion comes, I think, not least through the talk of ‘regeneration’ which has intruded into the conversation at the point where Paul speaks of the ‘call’ (what some theologians call the ‘effectual call’). The point about the ‘call’ is that it is not ‘an invitation to enjoy a new kind of religious experience’. It is a sovereign summons to acknowledge the risen Jesus as lord. It, like the ‘faith’ which it inspires, is all about Jesus, not about oneself. And what Paul elsewhere says even about all subsequent Christian life and work applies to the ultimate degree to the faith which responds to the call: ‘yet not I, but the Messiah who lives in me’; ‘it wasn’t me, but God’s grace which was with me’; ‘struggling with all the energy which is powerfully at work in me’. To speak in this way is not to court, as people sometimes
sneeringly say, 'synergism' within a zero-sum understanding of Christi
tian living (God does this bit, I do that bit, so we co-operate). Leaving
aside the fact that Paul himself uses the word in a positive sense in 2 Corin
thians 6.1 (as we work together [with God]' synergoumenvs), we must stress
that a confluence between the divine life and the gospel brings about. But for
that we need to move to our next category.

(v) The fifth basic point requires care and caution. What about
transformation? The old protestant-catholic debates about justification
have focused on the question of whether justification preceded or
followed any change or transformation in the individual. Protes-
tsants regularly insisted that it preceded any such change, making it
clear that justification was an act of utter, unmerited grace, not simply
responding to a prior act of the individual. Catholics regularly saw
'justification' as being an infusion of grace as a character-transform-
ing power. Debates aside, however, it is clear, as we have seen, that
for Paul (a) 'justification', the declaration of 'righteous' over a person,
is made epi tê pisteis, 'upon faith', as in Philippians 3.9; (b) the 'faith'
in question is, specifically, the belief that the One who raised Jesus
from the dead, and that he is therefore Messiah and Lord, as in Romans
10.9-10; (c) this faith itself arises from the work of the spirit through
the gospel, as in Romans 10.13-15; (d) the work of the spirit
can also be spoken of as having the initial result of the believer crying
'Abba, father', signalling adoption (Romans 8.15; Galatians 4.6).
Clearly any attempt at an oversimplification, omitting the work of
the spirit from the picture, will not do – however 'normal' such an omissions
has been in western theology.

But it is this same spirit which then, according to Paul, brings
about the final resurrection (Romans 8.9-11); and the spirit is spoken
of in that same passage as 'the spirit of the Messiah', or even just 'the
Messiah' himself. The same passage also emphasizes that the gift of
this indwelling Messiah-spirit is basic to all Christian existence: anyone
who doesn't have the spirit of the Messiah doesn't belong
(R.9b). This is closely cognate with the famous statement in Galatians
2.20: 'It isn't me any longer, it's the Messiah who lives in me.' When
we put all this together, it is clear that, for Paul, the work of the spirit
is basic to all Christian existence; that the spirit effects both the Abba-

response of the adopted child to the one God and the pistis whose
content is the resurrection of the crucified Messiah; and that the
declaration dikaios, 'in the right', is therefore bestowed on those who
are both 'in the Messiah' and indwelt by the Messiah's spirit, by the
Messiah himself. Everything else Paul says about the spirit, not least in
the adjacent passages in Romans 8, leaves us in no doubt that it is the
same spirit that produces the radically transformed life which Paul
insists must characterize the Messiah's people. And this is all well
explained, of course, by what we saw in chapter 9: that Messiah and
spirit together have provided, for Paul, the fresh meaning of Israel's
one God himself. The complex simplicity of nascent trinitarian
monotheism undergirds the simple complexity of Pauline
soteriology.

This is where some have said that therefore the word 'justification'
actually denotes the inner transformation which is effected by this
indwelling. My negative response to this is not driven by any knee-
jerk desire to maintain my protestant credentials. Those have long
since been taken from me, whether rightly or wrongly; perhaps that,
too, will be sorted out on the last day. No: my response to the
proposal to identify 'justification' with the spirit's transformation is
that this is what the word means, either in itself or in its contexts.
'Justification' denotes the divine declaration. This word, 'in the right',
is pronounced as an act of utter grace on the basis of the Messiah's
death. The people over whom this declaration is pronounced are
those who believe the gospel message about Jesus; and this faith is the
first sign of the work of the spirit. That is why Paul declares, as though
to sum up the entire argument of Romans 5-8, that 'the one who
began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it by the day of
Messiah Jesus' (Philippians 1.6). That provides the key distinction.
'Justification' does not take place on the basis of any developed char-
acter-change. Nor does the word even denote the first beginnings of
that, the work of the spirit by which someone calls the one God 'Abba'
and believes in the risen Jesus. The word denotes the sovereign
declaration of the covenant God.

Nor do the adjective 'righteous' and the abstract noun 'righteous-
ness' denote anything about the change of heart whose first flutterings
produce that faith. They denote the 'standing' which the believer has
from that moment on, on the basis of the divine declaration, as a full,
forthright member of the single people of the covenant God. And it is

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512 Bird 2007, 174 stresses that the statements of assurance in Rom. 5.1 and 8.1 look back to the work of
Jesus. So they do; but they are both explained, in the latter case at length, by the work of the spirit.

513 For an updated and erudite - but to my mind inconclusive - continuation of this conversation see
Reumann, Fitzmyer and Quinn 1982; and see the suggestive article of Lane 2006. Part of the trouble here
is that the word 'grace' is easily misunderstood: Paul it is a shorthand way of speaking of the
grace bestow of utterly merciful act of the one god, but one can easily (but wrongly) suppose that it refers
to a kind of spiritual or supernatural substance. Bird 2007, 67 n. 33 helpfully skews the false antithesis
between the 'imputation' and 'infusion' of 'righteousness'.

514 Gorman 2009, 4 is perhaps misleading to speak of an 'easy interchange' here; the passage is
complex, and Paul's language is precise throughout.

515 Gorman 2009, 2, 40, 44. Oddly, at the same time Gorman seems to omit other key dimensions of
justification, such as the place of Abraham or the Pauline emphasis on the coming together of Jew and
Gentile (eg. 53).

516 I may perhaps invoke, on my own account, 1 Cor. 4.5.

517 Sethi 2004, 149, misunderstanding this point, accuses me of saying that justification 'is construed
as a pronouncement upon a human quality'. In the same passage he accuses John Piper of 'standing
outside a Reformational framework' (149) and of advocating something 'nearly Tridentine' (150). Let the
reader judge - or perhaps, in view of 1 Cor. 4, refrain from doing so.
because of the spirit, working in this way, that Paul can argue throughout Romans 5—8 that the future verdict announced over the entire life (Romans 2.1—16; 8.1, 31—39) will correspond to the present verdict that has been issued over nothing but pistis (3.21—4.25). That is the point of the advance summary of 5—8 in 5.1—5. Thus the spirit’s work is vital; the inner transformation by the indwelling of the Messiah himself is vital; but neither of those is what the word ‘justification’ means, or what the word ‘righteousness’ refers to.518

This tricky and somewhat tortuous discussion might not have been necessary if more attention had been paid to Romans 2.25—29. That is where, within the actual argument of Romans, Paul has already sketched out (before we get anywhere near 3.21—31, the formal exposition of justification in the present) what is involved in belonging to the people of the renewed covenant. There is such a thing as heart-circumcision, as Deuteronomy had said. And this results in a new form of ‘keeping the law’ – whether or not the person concerned is a circumcised Jew.

As it stands this is teasing and provocative: what can this ‘law-keeping’ consist of? Only in Romans 10 does it finally become clear: it consists of confessing Jesus as lord, and believing that the one God raised him from the dead. But we should allow Paul to state his own terms, not least the ones he formulates in, it seems, a deliberately paradoxical way. When he speaks of people being justified by grace in the Messiah (3.24) and through pistis (3.25), and then goes on to speak of the nomos pisteos, the ‘law of faith’ (3.27), those who have read 2.25—29 ought already to catch on to what he is saying. When they reach 10.1—13 they should nod in recognition: this was what it was all about. Once the multiple misunderstandings of various ecclesial traditions have been put to one side, Paul is after all not so unclear. What he says in one place cryptically, he regularly explains more fully later on.519

‘Transformation’, then, is emphatically part of the Pauline vision, the full picture both of ‘covenant membership’ and of ‘salvation’. The indwelling of the Messiah-spirit is a basic, not a secondary or subsequent, element in all Christian existence. But the powerful work of the spirit, in and through the proclamation of the gospel, is not the same thing as ‘justification’. ‘Justification’ is the declaration of the one God, on the basis of the death of Jesus: this really is my adopted child, a member of Abraham’s covenant family, whose sins are forgiven. And that declaration, in the present, anticipates exactly the final verdict which can also be described as ‘adoption’ (all this language, of course, reflects Israel’s ‘adoption’ as ‘God’s son’ at the Exodus520): ‘we who have the first fruits of the spirit’s life within us are groaning within ourselves, as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our body’ (Romans 8.23). Whichever way you look at justification, whichever Pauline context you line up beside it, it always retains this character: the ultimate future brought forward into the present, and the two joined by the link of the spirit.

What then has happened to the ordo salutis, the hypothetical ‘order of events in the process of salvation’? This is not, as we have said, something which Paul addresses head on, though the partial summary in Romans 8.28—30 points in that direction. It is the fruit of later attempts to construct a single scheme out of his various statements. But his answer would, I think, be fairly clear. We must remember, of course, that what to the theologian may appear as separate and consecutive ‘moments’ are likely to appear, to the new convert or indeed to the evangelist who is preaching the gospel, as a confusing jumble, just as the moment of falling in love, which a psychiatrist or even physiologist might explain in terms of minutely analyzed separate stages, most likely is not experienced in that way at the time. But we may at least try, even though the stages do not sound as exciting as the reality.

First, the spirit works through the proclamation of the gospel.521 This powerful work of the spirit upon the human heart is what Paul labels the ‘call’. Second – though as I say it may not feel like a subsequent event – the person answers the ‘call’ by ‘confessing with the lips that Jesus is lord and believing that the one God raised him from the dead’. This is the faith like Abraham’s, because of which, third, the one God declares, covenantally, that this person is a member of the family, and forensically, that this person is ‘in the right’, that their sins are forgiven. The word for both of these ‘declarations’ – which are of course not two but one – is ‘justification’; the present and inalienable status resulting from both of them is ‘righteousness’. That status is the basis both for assurance of final salvation and for assurance of membership in the single family; and the single family is the company of those with whom, according to Romans 5.17, the sovereign God will share his rule over the world. Those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Romans 8.30).

Turning this sequential model round and looking at it from another angle, we discern that all of this happens through, in and for the Messiah: Those he foreknew, he also marked out in advance to be
shaped according to the model of the image of his son, so that he might be the firstborn of a large family" (8.29). That is why, among other things, the intermediate state between initial justification and the final verdict is to be marked, again as in Romans 8, by the Messiah-shaped cruciform life of holiness and suffering, by the spirit's transforming work, including the famous 'groaning' in prayer (8.26-27). None of these larger issues, even though they contextualize what Paul means by 'present justification', are the same thing. Justification is the divine declaration, creating the new status of 'righteous', 'adopted child', because of which the believer can move forward in the Christian pilgrimage. At every stage it utterly presupposes the one-off decisive work of the Messiah; at every stage it utterly requires the work of the spirit. This is the beating heart of redefined election.

(vi) The divine declaration issued over faith — 'in the right' in terms of the law court, 'adoption as sons and daughters' in terms of the covenant family — is the basis of unity 'in the Messiah' across traditional barriers. In other words, the declaration 'righteous' made by the one God is also, inescapably and centrally, the declaration that all those so designated constitute the Messiah's people, 'the Jew' of Romans 2.29, 'the circumcision' of Philippians 3.3.

This is further clarified, importantly for present debates, by recalling that 'the Jew', 'the circumcision', is basically, for Paul, the Messiah himself, and only secondarily those who belong to him. But the point of justification on the basis of Messiah-faith rather than on works of the law is now clear: this justification, precisely by 'justifying the ungodly', brings into this single Messiah-family, a great company from every nation. The verdict dikaios issued in justification declares that the Messiah's people form the single worldwide family. One could put it even more strongly. The reason the divine declaration 'righteous' is issued, on the basis of the Messiah's death and 'for the benefit of all believers', is to constitute that single family, whatever its moral or ethnic background, as the worldwide company which the covenant God had always promised to Abraham. This is how Jew and Gentile are joined together 'in the Messiah'. This is how the Messiah's people are to share his work, indeed his rule (5.17), in all the world. They are 'saved' for a purpose; and they are 'justified' in the present so that they may be assured that they are already a full part of that saved-for-a-purpose family.

This is where the 'covenantal' meaning of justification reasserts itself within the 'forensic' framework in which the future verdict is anticipated in the present. This is where, in other words, the third point above (the covenantal meaning) is revealed as the other side of the coin of the fourth point (the forensic meaning). In terms of 'how people get saved from sin and final judgment', one might say that the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant in the Messiah is the way by which the forensic verdict, future and present, is reached. In terms, however, of Paul's actual arguments, first in Galatians and then also in Romans, we will shortly suggest that it works the other way round. The underlying point of Paul's arguments in both letters is covenantal: this is how Jews and Gentiles belong, in the Messiah, in the single family. And for that to happen the verdict 'condemnation' must have been replaced by the verdict 'righteous'. In other words, to over-simplify just a little: if we ask the sixteenth-century 'forensic' question, 'how can I find a gracious God?', the answer is 'through the covenantal work of Messiah and spirit'. But if we ask Paul's question, 'how can believing Jews and Gentiles form one body in the Messiah?', the answer is 'through the announcement, in the present, that all who believe in the gospel are dikaios, that the future verdict 'no condemnation' has been brought forward, through the faithfulness of the Messiah, for the benefit of all who have faith.' This is Paul's inaugurated eschatology in full covenantal and forensic balance.

The creation of the single family in place of the divided peoples of the world — with the Jew/Gentile split being the most obvious division for a Pharisee! — was in fact the central message that Paul wanted to get across to the muddled Galatians. It was the starting-point for what he wanted to say to the church in Rome. Paul could use it as the springboard for what he wanted to say in Philippians 3. And it is 'justification' — the divine declaration on the basis of Messiah-faith — that alone can constitute such a family. Once we have worked through the first five preliminary points, we ought to realize that this sixth one is where it has all been going. Those who are declared or accounted 'righteous', 'adopted child', because of which the believer can move forward in the Christian pilgrimage. At every stage it utterly presupposes the one-off decisive work of the Messiah; at every stage it utterly requires the work of the spirit. This is the beating heart of redefined election.

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But the community of the Messiah's people cannot be defined by Israel's law and the 'works' which it requires. The two reasons for this are the first together, as we see in Galatians 2.16–18. On the one hand, everyone 'in the law' has in fact broken the law. On the other hand, the effect of Israel's law is to divide the human race into two. The justification of the ungodly, by the fresh act of divine grace, is not only the divine means of forgiving sinners. It is also, for the same reason and as part of the same act, the divine means of creating the single Abraham-family. Indeed, it is because of the forensic verdict that the covenantal declaration can take place: the one God 'justifies the ungodly', bringing them into the one family. The fact that the one God has done this is the main reason why Paul sees the gospel of Jesus as the announcement that this one God has been 'faithful'. At this point we realize precisely that 'the righteousness of God' itself is not just forensic but covenantal, and that these are not two but one. And here we understand at last the full and urgent significance,
within his historical and ecclesial context, of Paul's doctrine of justification. It is central, not marginal; polemical, yes, but not merely polemical.\textsuperscript{522}

This sixth point, then, shares with the whole scheme a stress on inaugurated eschatology. Paul holds before the Roman church (15.7–13) the vision of a single community united in worship of the one God. That is the ultimate goal, which is properly anticipated in the present by the declaration that all who believe the gospel share equal membership in Abraham's family. Just as the life of the age to come is to be seen in advance in the personal and bodily behaviour of believers,\textsuperscript{523} so the church as a whole, in its present life, must anticipate the ultimate unity on the basis of what has already been announced in the present verdict 'dikaios'. Believing Jews and believing Gentiles already have dikaiosynê reckoned to them, and their present koinônia must reflect that fact. That is the point of the whole letter to Galatia, and within Romans the specific point of 14.1–15.13. The verdict of the future has been brought forward into the present, redefining election around Messiah and spirit. Those caught up in this work of the gospel must live already as the single family for whom Messiah-faith, generated by the spirit, is the only badge of membership.

(vii) There remains the seventh point, and it will come as a surprise to some – but not to those who know Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians and Colossians. The actual event in the present which corresponds in advance to the actual event (resurrection) on the last day is baptism.\textsuperscript{524}

Baptism does, outwardly and visibly (as the sacramental textbooks say), what justification says. Justification is the declaration made by the one God himself; baptism makes that divine word tangible and visible. Baptism, like justification, points back firmly to the death and resurrection of Jesus as the ground and means of the single divine saving action. Baptism, like justification, is inextricably linked with the work of the spirit through whom the whole church, now incorporating new believers, confess that Jesus is lord, affirm that the one God raised him from the dead and commit themselves to living under that lordship and trusting themselves entirely to his saving accomplishment.\textsuperscript{525} Baptism, like justification, brings people from every background into the single family whose incorporative name is Christos, providing the basis for their common life.\textsuperscript{526} In justification, the covenant God 'reckons' that all who believe are 'righteous'; in baptism, Paul tells the Romans to 'reckon' that what is true of the Messiah is true of them – specifically, his death to sin and his coming alive to the one God.\textsuperscript{527} Justification provides the solid platform, the new status of 'righteousness' as a pure gift, on which the entire edifice of Christian living is constructed; baptism reminds the whole church, and tells the new candidates, that they stand on resurrection ground. Justification brings the future verdict into the present; baptism brings the future resurrection into the present – and the future 'verdict' is of course the 'forensic' dimension precisely of that future resurrection.\textsuperscript{528} Both ensure, when properly understood, that the entire Christian life is known to be 'in the Messiah', planted and rooted in his death and resurrection, and enabled by the spirit. Both are subject to the same problems: an over-concentration on the 'objectivity' and the 'extra nos' of justification can lead to a carelessness about actual faith, never mind actual moral life, and an over-concentration on the 'objectivity' of baptism can lead to a similar casual or careless approach to actual Christian obligations. Paul addresses the first of these in Romans 6 itself, and the second in 1 Corinthians 10.

In exegetical terms, Romans 6 belongs intimately with Romans 3 and 4, as the combination of the same themes in Galatians 3 indicates. Once again, the argument of Romans 6–8 does not offer a different kind of soteriological thought to that of chapters 1–4; they are part of a single, though complex, train of thought. Baptism is as it were the public celebration of justification by faith, the active and visible summoning up of the Exodus-events which were themselves freshly encoded in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the constitution of the believing community as the Exodus-people who have firmly and decisively left Egypt behind and are being led by the spirit to their inheritance. It emphasizes, as does justification, the emphatic 'now' of Christian faith and life and the equally emphatic 'not yet', and holds them in proper balance. Here, in Romans 6, is the true Pauline 'imputation': 'calculate yourselves as being dead to sin, and alive to God in the Messiah, Jesus.'\textsuperscript{529} Though Paul does not mention baptism in Galatians 2, those who know Romans 6 will have no difficulty detecting the baptismal resonances of 2.19–20. We have quoted it more than once before, but it bears repetition:

\textsuperscript{522} Bird 2007, 30 is wrong, then, to lump my view along with those of Wrede, Schweitzer and others; see too Schreiner 2001, 192–9.
\textsuperscript{523} As, for instance, in Rom. 6.11–14; 12.1–2; 13.11–14; 1 Thess. 5.1–11.
\textsuperscript{524} See Schnelle 2005 [2003], 465. On baptism see above, 417–27; and e.g. Wright 2002 [Romants], 533–6.
\textsuperscript{525} 1 Cor. 12.1–3, 12–13.
\textsuperscript{526} Gal. 3.27, in the context of 3.26–9.
\textsuperscript{527} Rom. 6.11 with 4.3–5, 10f, 23f, cf. Gal. 2.19f.
\textsuperscript{528} Despite an older view which insisted that 'present resurrection' was found only in Eph. and Col., it is in fact quite clear in Rom. 6: 'you' must 'reckon yourselves' to be 'alive to God' (6.11). This is not an invitation to imagine something which is not true. Rather, it is (a) the direct meaning of 6.3, 8 and (b) the necessary prelude to 6.12–14: the baptized are to yield themselves to God hósei ek nekrón zôntas, 'as those alive from the dead'. Unless there is a sense in which they are already raised, this is mere fantasy. See further e.g. Catchpole 2004; Gorman 2009, 74–6; and Wright 2002 [Romants], 538; 2003 [JSS], 251–4.
\textsuperscript{529} Rom. 6.11.
Through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with the Messiah. I am, however, alive - but it isn't me any longer, it's the Messiah who lives in me. And the life I do still live in the flesh, I live within the faithfulness of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

That is the statement of the larger reality within which 'justification' nests. All these things have to happen, and do happen, when someone 'becomes a Christian'. 'Justification' is the declaration that those to whom they happen, those who now find themselves 'in the Messiah', with his death and resurrection 'reckoned' to them, are the single, sin-forgiven family promised by the covenant God to Abraham. And baptism is the action which turns that declaration into visible, concrete, symbolic praxis. Those who are baptised, in the ceremony that confesses Jesus as the crucified and risen lord, are therefore as it were in themselves small working models of inaugurated eschatology. They are also, in Paul's mind, designed to be agents of that same inaugurated eschatology in the world; but that is a further point to be explored later.

And, talking of small working models, we have now completed this sevenfold working model of what I take Paul's teaching on 'justification' to be all about. It is therefore almost time to turn to the relevant texts to see how it all works out in specific contexts.

Before we plunge into these passages more fully, though, a couple of reflections suggest themselves about where we have now arrived.

The notion of justification was at best marginal to the second-temple belief in election. It was not needed, except (as in Qumran, and perhaps the Psalms of Solomon) when different groups began to think of themselves as in some sense the true remnant, the real 'Israel'.\(^5\) With Paul, as we have seen, justification comes right into the centre, not despite but because of the fact that it is necessarily polemical. This observation enables us to see the ways in which this redefinition of election stands in very close parallel to the redefinition of monotheism we observed in the previous chapter. As we saw, in Paul the creational and covenantal monotheism characteristic of a devout first-century Pharisee is reconfigured around Messiah and spirit. Within that, we can trace the origin of christology through the themes of YHWH's return to Zion; through the resurrection and enthronement of the Messiah; and through the evidentiary work of the spirit. Now it appears that justification itself is built on more or less identical foundations. Justification depends on the fresh revelation in action ('apocalypse!') of the covenant God. Justification is unveiled through the resurrection of the Messiah, indicating that he and his people are the new covenant people, and that his death has defeated the ultimate enemy. Justification is effected through the work of the spirit, active in the preaching of the gospel to bring about the faith which joins up with the first two points, calling the one God 'father' and hailing the Messiah as the risen lord. We should not be surprised that in Paul monotheism and election join up. The faith that says 'Jesus is lord' and 'the covenant God raised him from the dead' is simultaneously (a) acclaiming this revised monotheism in the power of the spirit and (b) displaying the badge which says, 'Justified'.

This redefinition of 'election', initially around the Messiah (as earlier in this chapter) and now through the work of the gospel and the spirit, is the main theme of Romans 3 and 4, Galatians 2, 3 and 4 and Philippians 3.2-11.\(^6\) Without pretending to offer the complete millimetre-by-millimetre exegesis that one might ideally want, we may suggest that the following reading of these key passages will provide a coherent and satisfying account, not least of the verses and phrases which are sometimes thought to point in other directions. Despite some of my critics, I persist in the claim that the best argument is always the sense that is made of whole passages in Paul rather than isolated sayings.\(^7\)

As already in this chapter, I defer a consideration of Romans 9—11. Though it obviously has to do with the redefinition of election, its tight argument makes it difficult to extract individual themes. Its eschatological orientation makes it natural to tackle it in chapter 11 below.

So, though I am now inevitably going over ground already traversed elsewhere, I do so with one or two fresh aims in mind.

In particular, I am intending now to test my tentative hypothesis about the origin and development of Paul's view of justification. In Galatians and Philippians one can read the 'justification' language almost entirely in terms of 'covenant' and its redefinition, whereas in Romans that meaning is interwoven with the 'law court' imagery. My developmental proposal, then, is that since the only sort of 'justification' of which we are aware in second-temple Judaism had to do with the redefinition of covenant membership, there is a possibility that Paul, having used the language in that primary sense in Galatians, went on from there to explore and develop its potential forensic meanings as a second layer. This then ties in with our exposition of 'plight and solution': Paul did not, we suppose, begin with the question of 'how can I be justified' in a modern western sense, but came to his mature view, with all the varied elements fully integrated, initially through the sharp controversy in Galatia and then through various other pressures. At the same time, it is clear that already by the time he writes 1 Corinthians 4 he has firmly in mind, and running off the tip of his tongue, ideas and phrases which he will incorporate into Romans 2, which as we have seen is a key passage, a linch-pin of much of this thought.

But we must proceed in order. The main aim now is to show, through brief consecutive exposition, how the sevenfold doctrine of justification is

\(^5\) It is noteworthy that the Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism (Collins and Harlow 2010), while naturally having an article on 'election', has none on 'justification'.

\(^6\) I have recently tried to set this out afresh (see Wright 2009 [Justification] chs. 5, 6 and 7). What follows now reflects both continuity with, and development beyond, what was said there.

\(^7\) It is noticeable that throughout Bultmann's account of Paul in his Theology, the actual arguments of whole passages are very rarely mentioned.
presented in these passages and how the seven themes of Paul's soteriology, by which we mean 'forensic', 'participatory' and above all 'covenantal' eschatology, with their apocalyptic, anthropological, salvation-historical and transformational meanings all resonating, cohere and nest within one another throughout. And if all these sevens make the present exposition sound like something out of Revelation, that may after all not be inappropriate. Paul does after all announce the doctrine in terms of the apokalypsis of the divine righteousness.

(b) Galatians 2.15—4.11

We must now explore the way in which, in the central argument of Galatians, the election of Israel is redefined not only around the Messiah but also around the spirit. The gospel, as we saw, works through the spirit to produce 'faith'. That 'faith' becomes the boundary marker of Abraham's family, trumping all other contenders, particularly the traditions of table-fellowship and circumcision that would keep Jews and Gentiles apart even within the Messiah's baptised and believing people.

The reason Paul was talking about 'faith' in Galatians is because it was, for him, the key answer to the question raised by the Antioch incident on the one hand and the Galatian problem on the other. The question at Antioch (2.10–14) concerned table-fellowship: were believing Jews to eat with believing Gentiles or not? Peter, by his behaviour, was turning this round, in a way which anticipated the problem in Galatia: were (male) gentile believers to be required to join the inner circle of God’s people, of Abraham’s family? In other words, were they to ‘ Judaize’, to get circumcised? In both cases, Paul’s answer was expressed in terms of justification, of faith and particularly of Jesus himself and his death – and with, as we noted, baptism either explicitly or implicitly part of the mix. But the context indicates well enough that these themes are to do with membership in the people of Israel’s God; in other words, they were ‘covenantal’.

In Antioch, ‘those who came from James’ believed that the answer to the question about table-fellowship had to do with the basic Jewish identity-marker of circumcision. To Paul’s horror, Peter and Barnabas, who had previously been happy to eat with Gentiles, went along with the new arrivals. For those from Jerusalem, circumcision was the badge of the covenant, the key marker of the elect people. Paul, however, regarded circumcision as irrelevant for Jesus’ followers and their identity, because election itself had been redrawn around Jesus himself. In its place there was another marker,

which equally well drew a line in the sand, but drew it at quite a different place: Messiah-faith.534

We are Jews by birth, not “gentile sinners”. But we knew that a person is not declared “righteous” by works of the Jewish law, but through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah.535 With these words (2.16a), Paul states the working principle to which he held, fiercely, in Antioch, in the controversy in Galatia, in the Jerusalem Conference (whenever it was held) and, so far as we can tell, throughout his ministry.536 We saw in the earlier part of this chapter that this principle was rooted, not in a piece of missiological pragmatism (we must somehow get Gentiles to join in, but we’ll have to make it easy for them), nor in a sense of laxity towards Jewish traditions (as though Paul was typical of Diaspora assimilation537), but in the fact of the crucified Messiah, the one upon whom Israel’s destiny and identity had devolved and who, through his crucifixion, had put to death all human ‘identities’ in order to bring them through into a new existence corresponding to his own risen life. What we now notice is that it is the pistis Iesou Christou, the faithfulness (i.e. the faithfulness- unto-death) of Jesus the Messiah, which then constitutes the appropriate badge of the community that finds itself redefined around him in turn. In response to ‘the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah’, Paul declares (2.16b) that ‘this is why we too believed in the Messiah, Jesus; so that we might be declared “righteous” on the basis of the Messiah’s faithfulness, and not on the basis of works of the Jewish Law.

It is of course possible to translate this occurrence of ek pisteos Christou as ‘on the basis of faith in the Messiah’. Actually (to the chagrin, no doubt, of the hard-liners either way) I do not see that much hinges on this here. The point still stands, that it is the faithful death of Jesus that reconstitutes the people of God, and it is the faith of believers which therefore appropriately marks them out as members of that people. And, though I do think that pistis Christou really does mean ‘the Messiah’s own faithfulness’ here in 2.16 and elsewhere (in 3.22, for instance), the point of pistis for much of

534 This scarcely means that Paul faced with the ‘villain’ missionaries, was being ‘equally sluggish and coercive’ (see Eastman 2000, 313). This assumes, first, that Paul is opposing to his opponents because they were teaching the wrong sort of religion while he was teaching the right sort, whereas in fact he was announcing eschatological fulfilment. (Eastman 2010, 3/8, following Marnin 1997a, 41, tries to get off the hook of making Paul anti-Jewish by suggesting that the whole argument of Gal. including such passages as 1.13, 2.15 and the whole Abraham-argument, that there is no Jewish horizon in Galatians, but this is absurd.) Second, it assumes that his criterion for the right sort of religion was some kind of modern ‘inclusivist’ relativism, whereas his criterion for eschatological fulfilment was the crucified Messiah himself. His objection to the missionaries in 4.17 was not that they were being ‘exclusive’ or ‘cliquish’ or even ‘coercive’ per se, but that they were defining the people of God in terms of Torah rather than in terms of the (crucified) Messiah, as in 2.15–21. Paul’s ways of dealing with these issues to that identity, in the Corinthian correspondence as well as Gal., would scarcely meet the stern and inflexible demands of today’s liberal relativism. On Eastman see also Dunne 2013.

535 On the ‘but here, as a translation of tauto meta, see Hays 2000, 237’ in dialogue with e.g. B. N. Longenecker 1999, 83f; Dunn 1993, 137f. Hays has recently pointed out to me that if it is in Rev. 21.27 strongly supports the reading ‘not’... but... as opposed to the reading ‘not’... as the case of... We might also compare e.g. 1 Cor. 14.46.

536 Though see Campbell 2011.

suggest that he does something similar here.\(^{623}\) My proposal is that he has here used a very rare word for a very precise purpose. ‘Watch out,’ he says, ‘that nobody uses philosophy... to take you captive.’ The word he uses for ‘take captive’ is *syllogóein*, here in the present participle *syllogópèn*; it is the only occurrence of the word in all early Christian literature, and indeed one of only three surviving occurrences of the word from across the many centuries of ancient Greek.\(^{624}\) Paul had other words available to him if he wanted to say ‘take prisoner’ or ‘enslave’.\(^{625}\) Why would he choose such an unusual term here?

My proposal is to treat the word as an ironic pun on the Greek word *synagogè*, ‘synagogue’. There is no verbal form of this word, but it would not be difficult to imagine one. Nor would it be difficult to see how the two words would resemble one another. ‘Watch out,’ he might be saying, ‘that there isn’t anybody there who might “en-synagogè” you’: *blepète mé tis hymas estai ho synagogòn*, as opposed to *blepete mé tis hymas estai ho syllogópèn*. Paul’s letters were of course designed to be read out loud, and phonetically the two are extremely close. So close, in fact, are the liquid ‘l’ sound and the nasal ‘n’ sound that grammarians regularly lump liquids and nasals together. They share elements of morphological behaviour, and under certain circumstances can easily be swapped.\(^{626}\)

That is perhaps the most important thing to remember. But visually something similar happens as well. Written in small Greek letters, you only have to turn a lambda upside down to create a nu with a tail: from λ to ν. Written in block capitals, as are all our early manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, the ‘n’ and the ‘l’ are even closer: ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΩΝ as against ΣΥΛΛΟΓΩΝ, the capital N adding the final vertical stroke to the capital Α. But, granted the setting and the intention of oral performance, it is the phonetic proximity that counts first.

It is of course impossible to prove that this was in Paul’s mind. That is how it is with this kind of hypothesis. The proposal has the merit, though, that it fits tightly with a tight reading of Colossians 2; that it resonates with Paul’s verbal trickery at two closely cognate moments in other letters; and that it gives to the whole passage a sense of allusive irony which seems to me to belong at this point. Serious scholars who would never dream of word-play in theological discourse may of course object, but I think it cannot be lightly dismissed.\(^{627}\) Paul is consciously remoulding the entire notion of election around the Messiah, and he is well aware of the extraordinary theological task he is undertaking. We should not be surprised if in the process he attempts also some mildly extraordinary verbal tasks, in order to embody, as well as to express, the revolution he sees taking place.

With all this, we turn at last to Romans.

\(g\) Romans 3.21—4.25

Romans 3.21—4.25, one of the great passages in this, the greatest of all letters, is founded on the same belief that Paul announced prophetically in 1.16–17: that in the ‘gospel’, that is, the message about Jesus the Messiah and his death and resurrection as the fulfilment of God’s scriptural promises, ‘God’s righteousness’ is revealed.\(^{628}\) Though the spirit is not mentioned in this passage, Paul draws on several themes which he elsewhere, both in this letter and in Galatians, associates closely with the spirit’s work. This is the beginning of the single argument which, reaching its height in chapter 8, provides Paul’s most thorough exposition of the spirit-driven reworked election.

However Irish it may seem, the proper place to begin a discussion of Romans 3.21 and onwards is with Romans 3.20. Here Paul refers to Psalm 143.2 [LXX 142.2]. Though not a direct quotation, it is close enough for a strong echo: ‘in your sight shall no living creature be justified’, *ou dikaióthè-seitai enopion sou pas zôn*. At the front of this, Paul has added *ex ergon nomou*, ‘by works of the Law’; he has substituted *sarx*, ‘flesh’, for *zôn*, ‘living creature’; and, because he is speaking in the third person rather than the second, has substituted *autou* for *sou*: ‘by works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight’. He has rubbed in the point of his addition about the law by adding, at the end, ‘through the law, you see, comes the knowledge of sin’—an idea to which he will return, particularly in chapter 7. (That ought to function as an advance sign—one of many—that Romans 1—8 is not the stitching together of two different types of theology, but a single coherent flowing argument. Once we grasp that, we see that it is true also of Romans 1—11... but of that more anon.)

As has often been pointed out, this echo of Psalm 143.2 massively under-girds the assumption that the underlying subject is God’s own ‘righteousness’.\(^{629}\) The Psalm opens with an invocation:

Hear my prayer, YHWH;
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness (en té aletheia sou);
answer me in your righteousness (en té dikaiosynè sou).\(^{630}\)

This fits closely with Romans 3.3–7, where God’s faithfulness (*pistis*), his truthfulness (*aletheia*), his righteousness (*dikaiosynè*), his judgment (*epi pòs krinei ho theos ton kosmon*), his truthfulness (*aletheia*) again and his

\(^{623}\) Against e.g. Witherington 2007, 154. The passage in Phil. 3.2 also begins with blepèta, ‘watch out’.

\(^{624}\) BDAG 955 and LSJ 1671 give only two other uses: the AD C3 novelty Heliodorus (10.35) and the obscure C5 public speaker Aristeaenus (2.22).

\(^{625}\) He uses *doulouggè* in 1 Cor. 9.27; *aichmalatizò* in Rom. 7.23; 2 Cor. 10.5; cf. 2 Tim. 3.6.

\(^{626}\) cf. Moulton and Turner 1906–1963, 2.103, para. 42. I am grateful to Jamie Davies for his linguistic expertise on this point.

\(^{627}\) e.g. Moo 2008, 185; contrast the more positive note in Bird 2009b, 75. Dunn 1996, 147 simply records the proposal without comment, though it would cohere well with his own position.

\(^{628}\) see on the difference between 1.17 (apokalyptetai) and 3.21 (pepaneretoain). On the divine righteousness see above, 480, 801–4, 841, 928, 991; and below, 1003, 1054–6, etc.

\(^{629}\) see Williams 1980, Hays 2008, 50–60, and elsewhere.

\(^{630}\) Ps. 143.1 [LXX 142.1]. *Aletheia* here corresponds to *emanah*, and *dikaiosynè* as usual to *tsedeqah*. 
glory (doxa) are all introduced in quick succession. The subject of the passage is the one God himself, and the way in which these various divine attributes or characteristics, apparently called in question, will in fact be vindicated. By invoking the opening of Psalm 143, Paul is continuing this train of thought: the Psalmist is appealing from this position of helplessness ('in your sight shall no one living be justified') to God's truthfulness and righteousness as the divine characteristics because of which the one God will nevertheless come to his aid. He is thereby standing on exactly the same ground as the great prayers of Daniel 9, Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9.631 The helplessness of God's people causes them to cast themselves on the truth and righteousness of God. That is the underlying logic of Romans 3.20, solidly supported in the passage that now follows.

It is important to see 3.21–4.25 as a whole. What we call chapter 4 is not merely a 'proof from scripture' of 3.21–31. It consists of a sustained and quite detailed exposition of Genesis 15, the chapter in which God makes the covenant to which, Paul is arguing, he has now been faithful.632 When we remind ourselves what, in second-temple Jewish thought, was seen as the purpose of the Abrahamic covenant, namely the undoing of the sin of Adam and the reversal of its effects, we realize that this is precisely what, here and in chapters 5–8, Paul says has been achieved through Jesus the Messiah. All this builds up intense pressure for us to accept the normal biblical and postbiblical reading of the phrase 'God's righteousness'. The phrase does not denote a human status which Israel's God gives, grants, imparts or imputes ('a righteousness from God' as in Philippians 3.9), or a human characteristic which 'counts' with God ('a righteousness which avails before God').633 Nor does it denote the saving power of the one God, as Käsemann and others argued in a last-ditch attempt to prevent Paul from affirming Israel's covenant theology.634 It retains its primary scriptural meaning, which is that of God's covenant faithfulness. This includes, and indeed focuses on, God's faithful justice, his determination to put the world to rights through putting humans to rights, and within that his faithfulness to the promises made in the Torah, promises to Abraham in Genesis about a worldwide family and the Patriarch: 'You are a blessing to me ... and the rights of your people; this builds up intense pressure for us to accept the normal biblical and postbiblical reading of the phrase 'God's righteousness'. The phrase does not denote a human status which Israel's God gives, grants, imparts or imputes ('a righteousness from God' as in Philippians 3.9), or a human characteristic which 'counts' with God ('a righteousness which avails before God'). Nor does it denote the saving power of the one God, as Käsemann and others argued in a last-ditch attempt to prevent Paul from affirming Israel's covenant theology. It retains its primary scriptural meaning, which is that of God's covenant faithfulness. This includes, and indeed focuses on, God's faithful justice, his determination to put the world to rights through putting humans to rights, and within that his faithfulness to the promises made in the Torah, promises to Abraham in Genesis about a worldwide family and the Patriarch: 'You are a blessing to me ... and the rights of your people.'

For the older German debates, see Brauch 1977. See further the major review in Williams 1980. Jewett 2007, 272–5 offers a curious mixture: in Rom. 3.21 he reads dikaiosynē theou as a subjective genitive, referring to 'God's saving activity', rooting this in the OT but without reference to the covenant (272f); then on 3.22 he says one should assume 'that an objective genitive is employed here as in the preceding verse' (my italics), referring to a 'righteousness deriving from God' which is 'imputed to all who have faith. When he goes on to speak of people having 'access to the righteousness of God' (278) we seem to have left the biblical and Jewish base behind altogether.

On pisteis Christos here see Jewett 2007, 277.

This is the proper emphasis of Jewett 2007; though Jewett then plays this off against the 'forensic' meaning of justification, to avoid a legalistic theory of salvation (290) – a somewhat bizarre way of saying he wants to avoid the normal theories in which 'legalism' is seen as the problem, not the solution. This also explains, in reverse as it were, the continuation of 'justification' language in the more obviously 'incorporative' section of the letter, chs. 9–8. See also e.g. 891, 900–3, 1011–13, 1024f.
writes, we might anticipate that he will express all this in a tight, dense phrase; and here it is: 'Through the redemption which is in Messiah Jesus' (3.24). It will take all of chapters 5–8 to unpack what that actually means, but Paul here brings the whole of that subsequent section into play within the specific argument about the manifestation of the divine faithfulness in the present time.

For the moment, however, we must focus on what he says here, in verses 25 and 26, about the effect of Jesus' death. Actually, the words 'death', 'die' and so on do not occur here, and nor do 'cross' or 'crucify'. The one word which specifically refers to the events of Jesus' execution is 'blood', indicating already that Paul is thinking in sacrificial terms. But we should be in no doubt: the central way in which Paul sees 'the righteousness of God' unveiled is in Jesus' death, as described in this dense and crowded little passage. And it is Jesus' sacrificial death, of course, which accomplishes justification, as Paul says in the summary statement at 5.9.

The present passage is dense because Paul is saying (at least) three things at once, and combining as he does so allusions to, and echoes of, several different though related biblical and post-biblical themes. The framework, emphasized in the remarkable repetition of 'righteousness' in verses 25 and 26, is the unveiling of God's covenant faithfulness, whose meaning becomes more fully apparent in chapter 4: this is how God has accomplished what he promised to Abraham, namely, that the world described in 1.18–2.16 would be put right at last, would be rescued - through the call of Israel (as in 2.17–20) to be the light that would shine in the darkness. The complexity comes not least from this point: whereas in most biblical and post-biblical thought the divine covenant faithfulness was appealed to in favour of what God might do for Israel, here the point is what God always planned to do through Israel, and has now done through the faithfulness of the Messiah, the 'faithfulness' which led to and climaxed in his self-giving to death. Paul is thus taking themes to do with the establishment and renewal of the covenant with Israel and using them, completely consistently with his vision of the covenant purpose through Israel, to explain what the covenant God, who is also the creator God, has now done for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. This is all part of his redefinition of election.

When we find a concentration of language such as we do here, with the unveiling of God's righteousness mentioned no fewer than five times in five verses (and two uses of the cognate verb), the obvious thing to do is to look for a biblical passage with a similar concentration of the same theme; and the obvious candidate is Isaiah 40–55. Nothing there approaches this average of once per verse, but the words tsedeq and its cognates occur thirty times in these sixteen chapters, thus possessing a good claim to be one of the section's major themes. And of course the figure which appears within that whole section, like a tone emerging in the middle of a complex tone poem, only to be paused, reprimed, developed and at last brought to a triumphant climax, is the Servant. He is both Israel and one who stands over against Israel; he will not only restore the people of Israel from their exile but will be a light to the nations. His obedience leads to a shameful and shocking death, shocking partly because of its shamefulness, partly because of its vicarious character and partly because, uniquely in Israel's scriptures, it constitutes a human sacrifice. What almost happened to Isaas actually happened to the Servant. He is 'the righteous one' who will 'make the many righteous' and will 'bear their iniquities'. Within the larger flow of the section, the Servant's successful mission accomplishes the renewal of the covenant (chapter 54) and of creation itself (chapter 55), with the open invitation going out to 'everyone who thirsts' to share in the covenant originally made with David.

All this resonates with Paul's thought at many points, but perhaps nowhere so powerfully as in this section of Romans. There is much more that could be said, but this is enough. I think, to warrant the firm conclusion that when Paul describes the death of Jesus in sacrificial language, emphasizing in every line that this is how the divine righteousness has been revealed, he is deliberately setting up a complex chain of allusion and echo in which Isaiah 40–55 in general, the figure of the Servant in particular and the fourth Servant Song climactically, are central and loadbearing. Whatever else Paul thinks 'justification' is about, it is certainly about the fulfillment of the divine covenant plan for, and through, Israel. Attempts to avoid this conclusion are simply missing the point.

This highlights once more the theme we saw earlier: the faithfulness of the Servant-Messiah as the quality through which all this has been accomplished. It is because of this faithful act that the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled, bringing the 'ungodly' into the single covenant family, as in chapter 4 and as is summed up in 5.6–11.

This essentially covenantal reading of Isaiah 40–55 and Romans 3.21–26 contains within itself the forensic or lawcourt imagery we have already seen to be prominent in the passage. Paul has built up in the earlier sections a great barrage of accusation, resulting in all humankind standing defenceless in the dock, a situation summed up in 3.23: all sinned, and so on do not occur here, and nor do 'cross' or 'crucify'. The one word which specifically refers to the events of Jesus' execution is 'blood', indicating already that Paul is thinking in sacrificial terms. But we should be in no doubt: the central way in which Paul sees 'the righteousness of God' unveiled is in Jesus' death, as described in this dense and crowded little passage. And it is Jesus' sacrificial death, of course, which accomplishes justification, as Paul says in the summary statement at 5.9.

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639 see above, 843–6. The present account, as part of the theme of justification, is closely complementary to the earlier one, as part of the theme of the Messiah's faithfulness.

640 I take it for granted that whether or not Paul was quoting, or even adapting, a formula, he used these words because they expressed exactly what he wanted to say.
fired short of God's glory. This is a greater 'exile' even than that addressed by
Isaiah, but because of the vocation already envisaged in Isaiah 49 Paul
finds himself justified in extending the effect of the Servant's death as the
means of dealing with this entire load of human sin. The 'righteousness'
of God which was called into question by the failure of Israel to be 'faithful'
to the divine commission (3.2–3) has been put into effect through the faithfulness
of the Messiah. Up to that point, God's 'kindness and forbearance' (2.4)
meant that sin had not been punished as it deserved. Now God is seen to be
simultaneously 'in the right' himself, principally in terms of his faithfulness to
the covenant and secondarily, within that, in terms of the implicit law-court
scene, and 'putting right', that is, 'justifying', ton ek pisteos Iesou, 'the
one from the faithfulness of Jesus', the '耶稣-faith' people. The divine act
of dealing with sin through the sacrificial death of the faithful sin-bearing
Servant is central to the passage; which means that the forensic account of
sin, punishment and atonement is to be located within, and only understood
in relation to, the wider covenantal theme.

The same is true in relation to the 'faith' which is the badge of membership
in Abraham's single family, as chapter 4 will make clear. Jesus' pisteis
evokes the pistis of all those who believe the gospel, and this pistis thereby
becomes the appropriate badge both of their membership in the covenant
family and of their sharing in the results of his 'faithful' sin-bearing vocation.
'Justification by faith' is not only 'forensic' or only 'covenantal'. It is the one
because it is the other; and Paul might well have been frustrated at the thought that we, like someone whose spectacles are out of focus, persisted in
talking about two things when he, thinking biblically, could only see one.

Paul seems thus to have taken what up to then might have been read as a
statement of how YHWH's election of Israel itself would be confirmed, and
has transformed it, in line with what he perceived as its true intention; into a
statement of how YHWH's election of Abraham's whole family would be accomplished. That is characteristic of his whole hermeneutic, as well as his
whole theology.

The Messiah's redemptive death, thus applied to believers, then unveils the
redefinition of election:

32 So what happens to boasting? It is ruled out! Through what sort of law? The law of
works? No: through the law of faith! 43 We calculate, you see, that a person is declared to be
in the right on the basis of faith, apart from works of the law.

The 'boasting' of 'the Jew' (as in 2.17; that is the obvious reference which
explains this sudden question) is ruled out. This 'boasting', as we saw, was
not simply the boast which said 'we are automatically morally superior,
because we are God's chosen people and we possess the Law'. It was, more
specifically, the 'boasting' which said, 'We are the solution to the problem of
humankind because, as God's chosen and law-possessing people, we are the
guide to the blind, the light to those in darkness, and so forth.' 44 This boast

64 Jewett 2007, 297 suggests that 'the Jewish concept of law is thus rendered ambivalent', and
points to the development, in chs. 4, 7 and 8, of 'an interpretation of the law that excludes boasting'. He might
have included 2.25–29 and 10.11–13, too. Jewett is in my view wrong then to suggest (303) that at least in
3.31 Paul is thinking of 'law in general' rather than the Jewish law.

65 cf. 8.3: the one God has done what Torah could not do, by sending the Messiah and the spirit.

66 On Kaminsky 2007 see above 806.

67 That would be the proposal of a hard-edged 'supercessionism' (see above, 806f), of which some are
still accused. Jewett 2007, 330 is wrong to say that Moo 1996, 278f. and Schreiter 1998, 231 'believe that
Paul eliminates Jews from Abraham's promise': they say what Jewett himself says, that Paul 'includes
Jewish as well as Gentile believers'.

68 see Perspectives ch. 30.
this radical reworking of election is not the abolition of Torah, but what Torah intended all along (3.31).

The whole of Romans 4 then follows, not as a ‘proof from scripture’ of a ‘doctrime’, nor as an early example of an ‘experience’ of a person of faith, nor as a mere polemical aside against hypothetical opponents who have brought Abraham into the argument even though Paul himself would not have done so. Romans 4, rather, is Paul’s exposition, in line with Galatians 3 but going further, of the covenant made in Genesis 15.

More specifically, Romans 4 spells out the way in which this covenant with Abraham is now being fulfilled. The Messiah’s faithful death and resurrection is basic (4.24-25), and its result is the calling into being, as a kind of resurrection from the dead on the one hand and a creation out of nothing on the other (4.17), of a single Jew-plus-Gentile family marked off by the pistis which reflects Abraham’s own. The language of ‘justification’ in 4.25, summing up the whole chapter and indeed the various sections of the letter (from 3.21, from 1.18, and indeed from the very beginning) that here reach a preliminary climax, is emphatically both forensic and covenantal. Jewett sees this point well, albeit through the lens of the ‘honour/shame’ question which dominates his commentary:

When converts accept the gospel in faith, they are ‘reckoned’ to be right before God and are placed in a community in which honor is dispensed according to a new principle of equality… This ‘our’ [as in ‘our justification’ in 4.25] encompasses both the Jewish and the Gentile believers for whom the gospel’s power is effective for righteousness… They are all heirs of Abraham’s promise, sharing his faith that God is the one who [sic] gives life to the dead and calls that which does not exist into existence.

In other words — in the categories which Jewett does not use, but to which his exposition points throughout — election has been redefined. Abraham’s family has been redrawn not only around the Messiah but to include all those who, through the spirit-driven work of the gospel (compare 1.16), believe in this life-giving God.

Romans 4, then, is through and through covenantal; hardly at all soteriological, though of course the whole point of Abraham’s calling was to be the means of rescuing the world from its plight. That summary sentence, in good Pauline fashion, reduces a much longer argument to shorthand. To spell it out just a bit more: Paul takes us back to Genesis 15, where we read that God promised Abraham a ‘reward’ (15.1). Abraham questioned how he could inherit this ‘reward’, since he had no child; the ‘reward’, we are given to understand, would consist of a family, and a land for them to live in. God then promised him ‘seed’ like the stars in heaven (15.5); Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’ (15.6). This faith was not, then, simply about believing that this God could do the impossible. Nor was it simply (though this is closer to the mark) a matter of believing that this God would give life to the dead and call into existence that which did not exist. It was a matter of Abraham’s ‘reward’, which I take (in Genesis 15.1 and here in Romans 4.4) to be a reference to his ‘inheritance’, on the one hand, and his limitless ‘seed’ on the other. This is what was promised, and this is what, through the creation of the family characterized by pistis, Abraham has now received on the basis of the work of the Messiah. That is, after all, what Romans 4 is all about, as we shall see in a moment.

This way of reading the chapter resolves the problem about the apparently difficult opening question. The chapter is about Abraham’s family, about the question of the ‘inheritance’ which the covenant God had promised him — in other words, about the subject-matter of Genesis 15, and particularly about the promise which Abraham believed and to which, Paul is arguing in this continuation of his exposition of the dikaiosyne theou, his God has been faithful.

Here, then, is verse 1: ‘What shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?’ In other words, if we have come to be part of the family of God, as in the radical revision of election in 3.27-31, does this mean (as the Galatian converts had supposed) that one had to become part of the physical, ‘fleshly’ family of Abraham? This question is then backed up by a counterfactual statement (4.2): If Abraham had been ‘justified by works’, he would have kauchëma, a ‘boast’ — but (Paul quickly adds) ‘not before God’. (That ‘before God’ is going to be important all the way through, coming back at last in the conclusion of the main argument in verse 17). The point here is that even though ‘the Jew’ in 2.17 has had that ‘boast’ removed, perhaps Abraham might be able to ‘boast’ that he was, in himself, the one through whom God’s answer to Adam’s problem had been provided. No, says Paul: it was just that Abraham believed the promise God made to him. Hence the reference to the ‘reward’: this has nothing to do with ‘a reward for meritorious action’, in some abstract system of ‘making yourself good enough for God’, but is a clear reference to Genesis 15.1: ‘Do not be afraid, Abraham, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great’. The point of verse 4 (‘Now when someone “works”, the “reward” they get is not calculated on the basis of generosity, but on the basis of what

65 I refer to the patriarch as ‘Abraham’ throughout to avoid confusion, although of course he is ‘Abram’ until Gen. 17.
66 Carson 2004, 51 n. 15 cites Seifrid 2001, 424 to the effect that in the Hebrew Bible the terms berith and tzedeq (sic sc. tzedeqah) ‘almost never occur in close proximity’. He does not see that Gen. 15, one of Paul’s favourite texts, is precisely one of the places where they come together; or that in Rom. 4.11 Paul substitutes dikaiosyne for the LXX’s diathèke. For fuller refutation of Seifrid on this point see e.g. Bird 2007, 36-9. Jewett 2007 manages to make it right through the chapter with only one mention of ‘covenant’, and that a negative one (see above).
67 See Perspectives ch. 33.
68 See Perspectives 759-84.
69 Note: again, this ‘boast’ is not about ‘look how morally virtuous I am; I don’t need saving’, but about ‘I can be the one through whom God rescues the world’.
70 Against e.g. Gathercole (and cf. Seifrid, who notices the reference but not the point). For the notion of ‘shield’, magen, see Dt. 33.29, where Israel is ‘a people saved by YHWH, the shield of your help’, resulting in victory over enemies.
they are owed’) is not to highlight the position of the putative Pelagian, but to stress that Abraham's 'reward', the inheritance he was promised and the seed who would inherit it, was not something God was forced to give him because Abraham had deserved it. Rather, as in verse 5, Abraham simply believed God; and, says Paul, when someone 'believes in the one who declares the ungodly to be in the right', then they have done nothing to earn the status of being 'world-inheritor' (4.13). Rather, 'that person's faith is calculated in their favour, putting them in the right'.

It has been normal, in the exegetical tradition, to say that by referring here to God 'justifying the ungodly', Paul is referring to God's justifying of Abraham himself. He was (it is said) a convert from paganism, who had come to believe in the one God (though that in itself hardly makes him 'ungodly'). He was not even circumcised at that point. But this is not what Paul is talking about. Paul is saying that, when God promised Abraham this massive family, that he would be 'the father of many nations' (Genesis 17.5, quoted in 4.17), this required of Abraham the faith that God would indeed 'justify the ungodly' - not himself and his physical family, who were in that sense 'Godly', but the nations outside, who were by definition not 'Godly'. That then refocuses the question, not on 'how Abraham got justified', as though by an inner analysis of his moral condition or lack thereof, but on 'how Abraham believed that God would give him this extraordinary family', which is after all what the chapter is about.

Look at it this way. God told Abraham what his 'reward' would be: he would inherit the world, and be the father of many nations (4.13, 17). If he was to believe this, Abraham would have to believe that God would 'justify the ungodly': that he would, in other words, bring into his family Gentiles who at present seemed totally outside it. That reading of 4.5 coheres exactly with the reading just given of 4.1, looking back also to 3.27-30. It also looks onto the quote from the Psalm which follows: David declares the divine blessing on people whose transgressions are forgiven, on the one to whom the true God does not reckon sin. (It also goes closely with Galatians 3.8, where the promise that all nations would be blessed in Abraham is interpreted by Paul as 'scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith'.)

This 'blessing', according to verses 9-12, comes on the uncircumcised. Paul is not here talking about Abraham needing to be forgiven for his sins, but about the fact that, in order to fulfil his promise to Abraham, the covenant God was going to forgive the 'sins' of the 'Gentile sinners' (see Galatians 2.15) who would be brought into the family if the promise to Abraham was going to hold. That then keeps the focus of 4.9-11 firmly on the fact that, even at the moment of receiving the covenant sign of circumcision, Abraham was becoming the model for others who would come into the family through their uncircumcision, having 'righteousness' reckoned to them as well. Verse 12 then completes the picture, just in case anyone should suppose that covenant membership was now going to be for Gentiles only: the circumcised, too, are Abraham's children, provided that they copy what Abraham did (i.e. believe God's promise) when uncircumcised. This radical redefinition of election - which Paul does not intend as a redefinition of Genesis 15 itself, but as a true and proper reading, however much against his own earlier tradition - comes back at last to the 'reward' that is, the 'inheritance' which God promised Abraham. In Genesis, of course, the 'inheritance' is the promised land. Here, as in some earlier Jewish tradition and indeed arguably in the line of thought indicated by Genesis itself (in the Abraham/Adam nexus), it is the whole world, the kosmos. And it is Abraham's worldwide 'seed', the sperma, who will inherit it: the promise to Abraham and his sperma that they should inherit the kosmos.

That is how Paul is reading Genesis 15. Here, picking up the point of 3.21 ('apart from Torah') and 3.28 ('apart from works of Torah') and echoing the longer argument of Galatians 3, he declares that this world-inheriting promise cannot come about through the mediation of Torah. The all-important distinction is not between 'people who make a moral effort and achieve moral standing' and 'people who do not', but between Jews (hosi ek nomou, 'those of the Law') and pan to sperma (4.16), 'the whole seed'.

Exactly as in Galatians 3, then, the single seed and the worldwide inheritance dominate the picture. If Torah were to take over, the promise would be snuffed out, and Abraham's 'faith' itself would be emptied: not just in that he would appear to have believed in vain, but in that the specific faith he had - belief that the covenant God would call Gentiles to be part of his family, i.e. belief that this God would 'justify the ungodly', and belief that this enormous 'family' would 'inherit the world' - would be unfounded. If his God were to decree, instead, that inheritance and membership in his 'seed' would be through the medium of Torah, this could not happen. As in Galatians 3.22, Torah shut everything up under sin; here Paul says that it 'works wrath'. Left to itself, Torah would then mean the end of the promise, the end of the multi-ethnic seed, the end of the worldwide inheritance. But - tantalizingly anticipating 6.14 and 7.4-6 - 'where there is no law, there is no transgression'. And that in turn points on to 8.12-25, where the 'worldwide inheritance' is the redeemed cosmos which the Messiah will share with his people. Once again the 'normal' lines of division between Romans 1-4 and Romans 5-8 prove illusory. It is the same argument all through. The covenant with Abraham, here expounded at length,
provides the best vantage point from which to see all the varieties of forensic, incorporative, anthropological, salvation-historical, apocalyptic and transformational categories of Paul's soteriology in their proper light and perspective.

Verses 16 and 17 can now come into their own. 'Normal' readings of Romans 4 leave them somewhat stranded, a convoluted ramble about Abraham's seed and God's promise. They are instead, as they stand, the quintessence of the whole thing, even though as often with Paul's quintessences they are boiled quite dry: *dia touto ek pistose hina kata charin eis einai bebaian ten epaggelian panti to spermati* ..., literally 'therefore by faith so that according to grace so that the promise might be valid for the whole seed'. It was not, in other words, Abraham who put everything right for the world, reversing Adam's sin; it was the one God. Otherwise, if it had been by anything other than 'faith', it would no longer have been by God's grace, and Gentiles could not have come in to take up their promised membership as part of 'the whole seed'. And, by contrast to what would have happened if 4.13-15 had gone the other way—if, in other words, the Torah had indeed been the medium by which the Abrahamic promises had had to be carried forwards—the 'whole seed' would now consist not only of the 'seed' that were 'from the Law', in other words, the Jewish element in Abraham's family, but also (the 'seed', understood) who were 'out of the faith of Abraham'.

Abraham is thus 'the father of us all': the stone that some exegetical builders have refused is in fact the climax, the head of the corner, the answer to the question of 4.1. We do not have to regard Abraham as 'our forefather according to the flesh', Paul is concluding, because he is the father of us all, Jew and Gentile alike, in accordance with the promise of Genesis 17.5 which made him 'the father of many nations'. That repetition says it all: this is what the chapter is all about, the way by which election is redefined. This is the way the one God always intended to work (and this is what Abraham always believed that he would do) in order to include Gentiles in his 'seed'. What this always meant, and still means for Paul, is something about the character of the one God himself. That, indeed, is what the whole discussion is about. The character of 'faith' alters depending what sort of God one believes in. In 4.5 it was 'the God who justifies the ungodly'; here it is also 'the God who gives life to the dead and calls the non-existent into existence'. In 4.24-25 it will be 'the one who raised from the dead Jesus our lord, who was handed over because of our trespasses and raised because of our justification'. The same God, of course, viewed from three complementary angles.

This shows that the *all'ou pros theon* of 4.2 has its full effect. Did Abraham have a 'boast'? Not before the one God! Abraham was not, in himself, the means by which the problem of the world was to be resolved, because the character of the God in whom he believed was the character of 'ungodly-justifying', of grace, of raising the dead. And this in turn answers, fully and finally, the opening question: have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh? No: he is 'the father of many nations'. Membership in the family the covenant God had promised him was always 'by faith, so that it might be by grace'. That is the outworking of Paul's radical revision of the second-temple Jewish doctrine of election, based on the fact of Israel's Messiah and now worked out through consideration of the people who, by faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, have come to belong to Abraham's family.

With that, the main argument of the chapter is done, and Paul can move into the exposition, which is more regularly understood, of how all those who believe 'in him who raised from the dead Jesus our lord' share the faith of Abraham (4.18-25). This passage also includes, as again is commonly noted, the explicit reversal of the description of human degeneration in 1.18-25, and the consequent fruitfulness (despite earlier barrenness) of the primal couple in God's family.666 The strands of Genesis 15 are thus tied together. The whole seed; the whole inheritance; guaranteed through the Messiah, as himself the gift of the one God,667 to all those who share (by the spirit, Paul might have said) the faith of Abraham. Election redefined.

This brings us at last to one of the most celebrated passages—but also one of the most misunderstood—anywhere in Paul's writings.

### (h) Romans 5—8

As we shall do with Romans 9—11 in the next chapter, I want to begin this brief discussion of Romans 5—8 in the middle. Often swamped by the major debates going on to left and right, Romans 7.4-6 connects closely with the themes of spirit-driven redefinition of election which we have seen elsewhere, not least in Romans 2.25-29 and 2 Corinthians 3. In both of those, especially the former, we discovered a breathtaking redefinition of election, parallel to Philippians 3.2-11 and in direct intentional continuity with the promises of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah:

The 'Jew' isn't the person who appears to be one, you see. Nor is 'circumcision' what it appears to be, a matter of physical flesh. 25 The 'Jew' is the one in secret; and 'circumcision'...
is a matter of the heart, in the Spirit rather than the letter. Such a person gets 'praise', not from humans, but from God.668

We note again: not 'the true Jew', or 'the real Jew': simply 'the Jew'. Paul's warrant for this remarkable claim is found in Israel's scriptures themselves.

The promise of the circumcision of the heart is part of the vital 'new covenant' and 'return from exile' passage in Deuteronomy 30, and was drawn on elsewhere, particularly by Jeremiah. This was not, then, a new idea thought up by Paul as a way of distancing himself from his Jewish context. It was the belief expounded by the Jewish sacred texts themselves, picked up by Paul to explain what he believed had happened, on the basis of the Messiah's work, through the spirit of the Messiah. As with the Israel's Messiah himself, the spirit is not some alien force, but rather the fresh (though long-promised) manifestation of the one God of Jewish monotheism.

This notion of covenant renewal through the spirit, adumbrated in Romans 2 and picked up here in Romans 7 (and developed in Romans 8) gives us a clear hint of the main point to be made in this sub-section (which cannot, of course, provide anything like a full commentary on this major section). By the end of Romans 4 Paul has developed his argument that all who believe the gospel are the true, forgiven family of Abraham, no matter whether they are Jews or Gentiles. This is the manifestation, in the present time, of the 'righteousness', the covenant faithfulness and justice, of Israel's God, the creator. But Paul had set up this discussion of justification by sketching quite an elaborate and detailed scenario of the final judgment in chapter 2. How will the verdict issued in the present correspond to the verdict on the last day? What are the assurances that the present verdict will not be overturned, leading to false hope? And, since the promise to which the one God has now been faithful in Jesus the Messiah involved not only Abraham's Jew-plus-Gentile family but also their inheritance of the world, how - how on earth, we might say - will this be accomplished? Perhaps the most vital thing to grasp here is that Romans 5—8 is not expounding a different set of questions and answers, or using a different type of theology ('participationist' or 'mystical', say, as opposed to 'forensic') from what we found in chapters 1—4. As we saw in our earlier brief account of the doctrine itself, there are hints all the way through 5—8 that Paul is still thinking of 'righteousness' and its cognates. The dramatic concluding statement in 8.1, and its outworking in 8.31—39, confirms that he has been moving slowly but surely towards answering the questions left open at the end of chapter 4. (He has also, of course, set up the questions which must then be addressed in chapters 9—11, but we shall come to that later.) And, as should by now be expected, my argument here is that in Romans 5—8 as well the underlying framework of his thought is covenantal, in the senses already explained, holding together not only 'forensic' and 'incorporative' ideas but also our other old friends, 'anthropological', 'salvation-historical', 'apocalyptic' and 'transformational'. Indeed, it is the tumbling together of all these strands in these spectacular chapters that gives them their particular vibrant energy.

I begin, then, with the opening of Romans 7, where the 'new covenant' theme already noted in 2.25—29 comes to the fore. In 7.1—6, following the marriage illustration which has given commentators so much unnecessary trouble,669 Paul offers a compressed summary of what has happened to those who, formerly having been 'in the law' (in other words, Jews or proselytes), have now had their lives transformed through the death and resurrection of the Messiah. To that extent, this passage is quite a close parallel to Galatians 2.19—20, and should be interpreted in that light.

We need to begin by clarifying one or two things about 7.1—3:

Surely you know, my dear family - I am, after all, talking to people who know the law - that the law rules a person as long as that person is alive? The law binds a married woman to her husband during his lifetime; but if he dies, she is free from the law as regards her husband. So, then, she will be called an adulteress if she goes with another man while her husband is alive; but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress if she goes with another man.

The first point to get clear is that 'the law' is not the 'first husband'. It is the legality that binds husband and wife together. Second, Paul is still expounding the line of thought that has come out of chapters 5 (particularly 5.12—21) and 6 (particularly 6.6), which means that 'the first husband' is best taken as 'Adam', or as the 'old human' (6.6). Third, therefore, it is natural for Paul to switch to and fro, when talking about the person who has 'died', between a third party ('the old human' in 6.6; the 'former husband' in 7.2—3) and the first person ('we') or second person ('you'). The shift between 'we' and 'you' is equally visible in chapter 6, where 'we' died with the Messiah (6.2), 'we' are baptised into his death (6.3), 'we' were buried with him (6.4) and where 'you' must reckon yourselves dead to sin (6.11). So here in chapter 7 'you, too, died to the law through the body of the Messiah' (7.4a) so that 'we' could bear fruit for God (7.4b and similarly in 7.5—6). In other words, the 'old husband' is indeed the 'old human', the 'old Adam' - but, exactly as in chapter 7 'you, too, died to the law through the body of the Messiah' (7.4a) so that 'we' could bear fruit for God (7.4b and similarly in 7.5—6). In other words, the 'old human' is the 'old human', the 'old Adam' - but, exactly as in chapter 6, this is not some character other than 'you'. The 'you' personalizes and gives rhetorical force and direction to the earlier more general exposition. And from all that has been said so far, both in chapter 2 and in the opening sections of the present chapter, it ought to be clear: if the Adam-problem is being addressed, this will be through the covenant. Only, as we now know from Romans 2.3 and 4, the covenant family 'according to the flesh' is incapable of providing the solution. Has Paul then abandoned the covenant? No: his whole thesis is that the covenant God has been faithful by renewing it, just as he promised he would.

Now that that little matter is cleared up - if we follow Paul's train of thought through the previous chapters it becomes relatively straightforward - we can focus on the spirit-driven redefinition of election that is contained in a nutshell in 7.4—6. 'In the same way', says Paul,

668 Rom. 2.28f. See above, e.g. 362, 539, 812—4, 836f., 921—3, 958; and below, 1432, 1642.

669 see Wright 2002 [Romans], 558f.
you too died to the law through the body of the Messiah, so that you could belong to someone else - to the one who was raised from the dead, in fact - so that we could bear fruit for God. For when we were living a mortal human life, the passions of sins which were through the law were at work in our limbs and organs, causing us to bear fruit for death. But now we have been cut loose from the law; we have died to the thing in which we were held tightly. The aim is that we should now be enslaved in the new life of the Spirit, not in the old life of the letter.

The ‘you’ consists now, it seems, of two people: one who died and the other who now has a new life. This ‘you’ has come to this new state through the Messiah, who died and was raised from the dead. The first half of this is very close to Galatians 2.19 (‘through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with the Messiah’), but the second half is developed further. In Galatians 2.20 Paul says, ‘I am, however, alive - but it isn’t me any longer, it’s the Messiah who lives in me’. In the present passage this is expanded: he speaks both of the spirit and of the renewed humanity. ‘Bearing fruit’, as in 7.4b, may be an allusion to Genesis 1.28 (in the light of the still-echoing story of Adam from chapter 5 and on into 7.7–12). Whereas previously the Adamic humanity was producing fruit for death, with Torah being used by sin as its base of operations (7.8), the death of the Messiah has set ‘us’ free from the old humanity and from the ‘Torah which enslaved ‘us’ to it, and the aim is now that ‘the new life of the spirit’ should replace ‘the old life of the letter’. To all this, with its many analogies to other passages, Paul adds another theme, which in his Jewish context could only mean one thing. Those who belong to the Messiah are now, he suggests, married to him, in a fruitbearing relationship. The obvious echoes are of the relationship of YHWH with his people, a theme which comes into prominence precisely in the context of the ‘divorce’ of exile and the ‘remarriage’ of return. Unless we are to say that Paul did not intend such resonances, we should assume that the whole passage is about the renewal of the covenant through the Messiah, the ‘new husband’, the last Adam.

This passage, closely cognate with 2 Corinthians 3 and Romans 2.25–29, is thus a further example of Paul’s reworking of election in the light of the spirit. It does not in itself give voice to ‘jurist’ or ‘apocalyptic’ themes, but as we shall see the surrounding passages supply them in good measure. It is emphatically covenantal, and obviously participational and transformational. It has a salvation-historical dimension (the move from old covenant to new), and obvious anthropological content (from the passions of the flesh to the new life in the spirit). It has the same character of inaugurated eschatology that we have seen in the doctrine of justification itself, which is hardly surprising considering that Paul has not, after all, stopped talking about it when he reached the end of chapter 4. It sums up a great deal that has already been said in Romans 5 and 6, and it points on towards what is to come in Romans 8 in particular. It functions, then, as an appropriate gate-way into the larger unit at whose centre it falls.

Romans 5–8 is structured with tight rhetorical skill. It is far and away the most formally presented and carefully elaborated of any such sustained passage in Paul; it is impossible to think of it as a random train of thought, dictated off the top of the apostolic head, pausing here and there on a whim to change direction or answer detached ‘objections’. This tight structural control is evident not least in the way in which the opening and closing (5.1–11; 8.18–30 and 31–39) highlight the same themes. It looks as though Paul has deliberately stated them up front, as is often his way, and then argued through to them at a deeper level.

Equally, it is important to stress that this section belongs exactly where it is in the argument of the letter as a whole. Like the second movement in a symphony, it has its own complete and careful integrity, but it also picks up themes and energy from the opening movement and carries them forward towards the third and fourth. From the opening ‘therefore’ in 5.1 to the concluding flourish with all its resonances with Romans 2, the section offers itself as a further development of, not an alternative theological structure to, chapters 1–4. Equally, in its retelling of the Exodus-story in a new mode, the section highlights themes which point forward (see below). Romans 5–8 describes what Israel’s God has done in and through Israel’s Messiah, and this necessarily sets up both the question of 9–11 and the further, though organically related, question of 12–16, particularly its heart, 14.1–15.13.

Romans 5–8, in other words, means what it means in relation both to 1–4 and 9–11 and, indeed, 12–16. It is not possible here, of course, to trace or comment on all the dozens of links, but it is vital to recognize that they are there. Without this, it would be easy to imagine that one could lift chapters 5–8 out of Romans whole and entire, using the passage to construct a ‘Pauline soteriology’ or some such thing which would be free from the ‘juristic’ language of chapters 1–4 and the ‘Israel’-dimension of chapters 9–11, and free instead to exhibit an unsullied version of ‘participationist’ thought. But this, though often attempted by implication and sometimes by bold direct frontal assault, is disastrous both exegetically and theologically.

Consider, for a start, how most if not all of the elements of both 1–4 and 5–8 and 9–11 are found, not separated out, but stitched tightly together, in both Galatians 2, 3 and 4 and Philippians 3. (We have made the same point above from the other side of the fence, as it were, but it is important to remind ourselves of it here as well.) Granted, there are many elements of Romans 5–8 which are not echoed in those passages. That is inevitable. But we have the supposedly separate main themes (justification, being-in-Christ, baptism, the question of Abraham’s family) as part of the same discourse, supporting and interacting with one another, not as disparate elements floating uneasily on top of one another like oil and water. Unless

670 Though Paul’s word, karpophoreo, is almost unknown in the LXX and certainly does not occur in Gen. 1. On the possible resonances of the word see Jewett 2007, 435.

671 cf. e.g. Isa. 50.1 with 54.5–8; Hos. 1–2, esp. e.g. 2.16–19. Hos. 2.1, 23 is quoted by Paul in a similar context in Rom. 9.25f.

672 For a discussion of the recent proposal of Campbell 2009, see Interpreters.
we are to say that between writing Galatians and Philippians on the one hand and Romans on the other Paul had a sudden realization that he was combining different schemes of thought, which he then proceeded to separate out, we will naturally conclude that the rhetorical demands of his presentation in Romans have caused him to highlight certain features at certain times but without having now come to regard them as radically different or even incompatible.675 All through all these passages he is concerned with the radical redrawing, round the Messiah and the spirit, of Israel's scripture-based covenant theology. Within that project, these various themes can be presented in several different ways, but always in full compatibility with one another.

In particular, when we come to Romans 5—8 with the question in mind, How did Paul rethink the election of Israel around the Messiah and the spirit?, we cannot but notice that many of the themes he explores in these chapters are precisely the themes which he then lists as a summary of the privileges of Israel in 9.4—5:

“They are Israelites; the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises all belong to them. “The patriarchs are their ancestors; and it is from them, according to the flesh, that the Messiah has come—who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen!”

’Sonship’ is obviously a major theme of 8.12—17; ‘glory’, of 8.17—30. The covenants’ are more controversial, but I am inclined to say that this is seen in Romans 4 on the one hand (Abraham) and Romans 7 on the other (Sinai). The giving of the Law likewise looks back to Romans 7 and various earlier references. ‘Worship’ is what the human race refused to give to the creator in 1.18—23 and what Abraham gave instead in 4.18—21, but the word more naturally refers to temple-worship, and I believe that reference is more subtle, hinting both at the life of prayer of God’s people (as in the ‘Abba’-prayer of 8.15) and, not least, at the temple-theme in chapter 8.674 The promises’ takes us back to Romans 4, as does the reference to the ‘patriarchs’, at least to one of them. The Messiah himself is one of the main themes of 5—8 as a whole, whose every section ends with a refrain, like a great bell: through our Lord Jesus the Messiah; in the Messiah Jesus: The achievement of Jesus, who is the Messiah, and the incorporative life of Messiah, who is Jesus, are central to both form and content.675 When Paul writes Romans 9.4—5 he cannot be unaware that he is listing privileges which he has just set out with great care as now being ascribed to the Messiah himself and, in and through him, to all those who belong to him. That is why the agony of 9.1—5 is what it is. But that means that he is aware that ‘election’, in the way he would have thought of it as Saul of Tarsus, is not just redefined around the Messiah. It is also redefined by the spirit, in, for and around all those who belong to the Messiah.

These, however, are just pointers to the deeper material in chapters 5—8. Our quest here is first to see how justification itself ‘works’, particularly in relation to the spirit (and these chapters are vital for understanding that), and second to see how the regularly separated elements of Paul’s thought, especially ‘juridical’ and ‘participationist’ on the one hand, ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘salvation history’ on the other, and also ‘transformation’ and ‘anthropology’, are held together within an essentially covenerntial framework.

First, we note the distinct marks of covenant renewal. In this section Paul develops, little by little at first and then dramatically, his view that the spirit enables all those who are justified by faith to live as the biblical people of God. For a start, they are enabled to love the one God from the heart. This is controversial in terms of 5.5,676 but not in terms of 8.28. As we saw in the previous chapter, the latter passage resonates with the Shema which, already hinted at in 3.30, may be thought to stand behind even such notions as ‘the obedience of faith’. In the faith and love which the spirit generates, this worldwide people of the creator God offer to him the worship which was most centrally characteristic of Israel. Paul may even be hinting in 8.26—27 at the ‘prayer of the heart’, the habitual and eventually subconscious praying of a prayer such as the Shema which forms the innermost life of the one who thus prays. When, in the next breath, he refers to ‘those who love God’, we should take this as a sign that the prayer inspired by the spirit, and heard by ‘the one who searches the hearts’, may well be the Shema itself, perhaps in its Messianic reworking.677

But loving the one true God, though central, is by no means the only sign in these chapters of Paul’s spirit-centred redefinition of election. The hint of new covenant theology in 7.6 (a hint confirmed, as we saw above, by the parallel in 2 Corinthians 3) explodes into life in chapter 8, where the ‘law of the spirit of life in the Messiah Jesus’ liberates those ‘in the Messiah’ from sin and death and enables them to have the ‘mind’ which is ‘life and peace’—a pairing of abstracts which is interestingly reminiscent of biblical covenant language.678 Here, in particular, we find themes familiar from second-temple Judaism: new Exodus, suffering, inheritance, the fulfilled law, the rebuilt temple, the call to holiness, the new creation. In fact, ‘new Exodus’ is such an all-embracing theme that the best way of expounding Paul’s redefinition of election in the present chapters is to let that narrative take us through, and to note the other themes as they occur.

The ‘new Exodus’ theme, like so much else in Romans and Galatians, is rooted in the divine promise made to Abraham. The covenant promises in Genesis 15 were focused on the seed and the inheritance; the patriarch was

673 This means that I am precisely not forfeiting the combination, within a larger view of Paul’s soteriology, of ‘participation’ and ‘justification’ in Romans, as Gorman suggests (2009, 102f.); merely indicating how they make their particular points in particular passages.

674 cf. too Phil. 3.3 (‘we worship by the spirit of God’): see above, 985 n. 591.

675 5:1, 11; 6:11, 23; 7:25a (and cf. 7.4—6); 8:11, 17, 29 and supremely 39. The Messiah is also, of course, discussed at length in several of these paragraphs.

676 see Wright 2002 [Romans], 517.

677 Above, 661—70.

678 e.g. Mal. 2.5; cf. too the ‘covenant of peace’ in Num. 25.12; Isa. 54.10; Ezek. 34.25; 37.26; Sir. 45.24. Many of these passages from the prophets are in contexts which are echoed strongly in Rom. 8.
told that the seed would obtain the inheritance by first being enslaved and then being rescued and brought home to their promised land. This Passover-sequence — liberation from slavery by coming through the Red Sea, arriving on Sinai and being given the Torah (with all the resulting problems) and finally being led by the presence of YHWH himself in the pillar of cloud and fire until they arrived in the land — this sequence is now recapitulated, majestically (but to most commentators invisibly) in chapters 6—8. Once the stage is set — the promises to Abraham now fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah (chapter 4) and the whole Adam-to-Messiah sequence revealed (5.12—21) — then the story can begin.

First, the crossing of the Red Sea. In chapter 6, the old-Adam people who were enslaved to sin are liberated through the water of baptism, in which the Messiah's 'death to sin' and 'coming alive to God' is 'reckoned' to them. As the Messiah's people they are therefore the new-Exodus people, the freed former slaves, who have to learn new habits of heart and body commensurate with their freedom (6.12—23). The old ways are 'unfruitful' (6.21); the new ways have their telos, their 'goal', in 'eternal life', the life of the age to come, which Paul will eventually describe more fully in chapter 8. With this, we are very close, though in different ways, both to Galatians 3.23—29 and to Galatians 4.1—7.

The freed slaves then arrive at Mount Sinai, and that is the next stop in Paul's narrative. Here in Romans 7, with such considerable and sophisticated artistry that it has remained opaque to most modern commentators, he weaves together the story of Israel at Sinai with the story of Adam in the garden — a classic rabbinic-style move, allowing two great scriptural narratives to interpret one another and to generate a third. In 7.7—12 the 'commandment which was unto life', that is, the 'Torah itself (which really did promise 'life'), stands in parallel with the forbidden tree in the garden and, mysteriously, with the Tree of Life that remained untouched. Israel is lured by sin into breaking the commandment, just as Adam and Eve were lured by the serpent into eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Apart from the law, sin is dead. "I was once alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. The commandment which pointed to life turned out, in my case, to bring death. For sin grabbed its opportunity through the commandment. It deceived me, and, through it, killed me."

This is the story of Israel under Torah, exactly as in 5.20: 'the Law came in alongside, so that the trespass might be filled out to its full extent'. The arrival of Torah precipitates Israel into recapitulating the sin of Adam. Grasping this, and its range of implications, is at the heart of grasping Romans in general and the question of redefined election in particular.

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679 For this theme see 'New Exodus' in Perspectives ch. 11.
680 cp. Gal. 3.21; cf. Lev. 18.5 etc.
681 Rom. 7.8b—11.

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The story of Israel's 'fall' might, after all, seem remote and scarcely interesting to Gentile Christians in Rome. I sometimes wonder whether such imagined incomprehending listeners are really the coded presence of modern western scholars and preachers who are hoping that Paul will, in his every sentence, say something readily accessible to the deeply non-Jewish concerns of our own day. But what is of most concern to Paul, speaking as he says 'to those who know the law' (7.1), is to tell the story of Israel because it is the story of the world's redemption. 'Those who know the law' might mean Jewish Christians, but might well mean Gentile Christians who had been proselytes or God-fearers; Paul, in any case, is articulating a narrative which far outstrips any small-scale concerns of this or that group. To tell the story of Israel is not to focus attention back on a matter that interested another group at another time. Paul might have put it like this; if you want to know how you will arrive at 'eternal life', the promised inheritance, you have to learn that 'salvation is of the Jews', and you have to understand how the story of Israel actually works, even though to begin with it may appear (to Gentiles?) remote or irrelevant. One cannot, in other words, appreciate the fruit which grows in Romans 8 unless one has understood the roots — the very Jewish roots — in Romans 7.

The chapter focuses on verse 13, which as we saw has the all-important double hina, reflecting the hina in 5.20. This is the divine purpose: that sin be drawn onto this one place, onto Israel, so that it can be dealt with conclusively by the covenant God himself in the person, in the flesh, of Israel's Messiah, the son of this very God (8.3). Here is the significance of the story of Israel, which will be at once picked up in chapter 9: Israel's vocation is to be the bearer of this terrible destiny, a destiny meant not for Israel as a nation but for Israel's Messiah, in other words, for Israel's God himself in the person of his son. The potential tragedy, though, is never far away, and will come if Israel, so keen on being the bearer of this destiny, insists on keeping it for itself rather than allowing the son to take it instead ... and then if those who claim to follow that son decide to make that position of Israel permanent. That is what chapters 9—11 are all about, and without this understanding of chapter 7 they will be incomprehensible, as indeed they have often appeared. The point of Israel's election was not 'for the creator God to have a favourite people' but for the sin of Adam to be dealt with. Election itself, and Torah as the gift which sealed election, was designed — this is Paul's point — to draw sin onto that one place so that it could be successfully condemned right there. Paul has, as we saw, redefined election around Israel's crucified Messiah. Now he redefines it around the people who, in the spirit, discover themselves to be the Messiah's people.

But the story which arrives at that point in Romans 8 has one more twist in its tail. Adam's descendants began with the murderer Cain, regarded by the Rabbis as the classic example of a man with a 'double heart', leb wa-leb, the man who was told that sin was crouching at the door, desiring him, but
that he must master.\footnote{On this see Wright 1991 [Climax], ch. 12.} The double heart of Cain is reflected closely in Paul’s account of the ‘divided self’ – if that is what it is – in 7.14–20. This passage is not primarily a description of general human moral incompetence, though it has plenty of resonances at that level. It is certainly not an account of Paul’s own pre-conversion unsuccessful struggles with moral obedience: what use would a one-dimensional autobiography be in such a sustained piece of theological writing? One counter-example, one person who could say that they had not experienced such a struggle, would undermine the whole argument. Nor is it at all an attempt to discuss, and perhaps to upstage, the Stoic question of ‘self-mastery’, though no doubt those familiar with that discourse would hear echoes as well. Nor is it (the favoured interpretation of the older existentialist theology) an account of the ‘meta-sin’ of supposed Jewish ‘legalism’, where the gift of the law lured Israel into trying to keep it and thereby to establish a works-righteousness before the one God.\footnote{This was, famously, the line taken by Kümmel, Bultmann and others: see Wright 2002 [Romans] 554.} Had that been the case, Paul should not have written ‘I can will what is right, but I cannot do it’, but rather ‘I can do what is right, but I ought not to will it.’ Nor, despite many advocates, is Romans 7.13–20 a description of the normal life of the Christian, wanting to be holy and failing.\footnote{Even though I once read the passage in this way, I read it thus no longer.} That is not to say that echoes of all these other discourses cannot be heard here. That, indeed, is part of Paul’s skill in writing as he has. But his much deeper purpose is to describe, from the inside (through the rhetorical ‘I’, rather than by way of pointing the finger from a safe distance), the plight of Israel under Torah, seen indeed with Christian hindsight but looking back upon a journey which was the necessary journey of the people of God, the deep, dark roots of the tree which has now borne the fruit of life.

The point is that Israel, given Torah, genuinely and rightly delights in that Torah. ‘The Jew’ – and here we are safe in saying that Paul knows first hand what he is talking about, even though ‘autobiography’ is not the point

\footnote{The best known exponents of this viewpoint are Cranfield 1975, 340–70 and Dunn 1988a, 374–412. The Achilles heel of all such proposals is the direct contradiction between 7.14, where the ‘I’ is ‘carnal, sold under sin’, and the strong statements of chapter 6 which indicate that this is precisely not the Christian’s status.} really does love Torah: two of the greatest poems in scripture, perhaps in all the world, are the Psalms we call 19 and 119, the latter celebrating Torah from every possible angle, the former balancing it with the power and glory of the sun itself. That is what Torah is like. Not to recognize that is to take a large step towards Marcion, or indeed towards the Gnosticism that would scorn the created order as well. But the people of the creator God, though rightly delighting in Torah, find that there is a radical mismatch between Torah and the ‘fleshy’ existence of Israel itself. The problem, once again, is that Israel too is ‘in Adam’. The life of Israel under Torah thus becomes like the life of Adam’s descendants, only more sharply focused – but with salvific intent: Israel’s plight, clinging to Torah for dear life but thereby finding it to be the means of condemnation, has one end only in view. The end in question is condemnation, but the condemnation in question is the condemnation of ‘sin’ itself.

This is why Paul cannot and will not describe this plight in terms of ‘they’, but only of ‘I’. The ‘plight’ does not mean that it was a bad thing to be a Jew, or a stupid thing to love and cherish Torah. (Notice how we are here in similar territory to the start of chapter 3.) It means that this was a good and God-given vocation which was cognate with, and the absolutely necessary prelude for, the good and God-given sending of the son, Israel’s representative, to fulfill all righteousness, to complete the unfinished agenda, to be the embodied self-revelation of the covenant God, appearing ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin-offering’, to take upon himself, in his flesh, the condemnation which was waiting to fall, not indeed upon Israel, certainly not upon Torah (which was only doing its God-appointed job), but upon sin itself. The force of 7.13–20 comes in the statement which Paul repeats in verses 17 and 20: it is no longer ‘I’ that do it, but ‘sin’. There is nothing wrong with being Israel; nothing wrong with Torah. What is wrong is ‘sin’. And that is what is to be dealt with. The struggles described in 7.13–25 are the necessary vocation of the people who bear the Abrahamic promise forward, through the strange, dark time of Torah (just as in Galatians 3), to the point where ‘the obedience of the one man’ will establish the many as ‘righteous’, so that where sin abounded through the strange gift of Torah, grace might also super-abound (5.20–21). This is not a ‘salvation-history’ of smooth development, an evolutionary process. This is a long and difficult story filled with agony and puzzlement, and yet being seen as the single story of the chosen people – in the light of the fresh, shocking revelation of the son and his crucifixion and resurrection.

The summary conclusion of chapter 7 (note the language of verse 21, which is that of drawing the conclusion of a calculation) is then all about the law, the Torah. The attempt to turn nomos into a general ‘principle’ at this point constitutes a failure to read the text, a folly which results in futility.\footnote{The first version of my paper on peri hamartias in Rom. 8.3 (in Studia Biblica 1978 vol. 3, ed. E.A. Livingstone: Sheffield: ISOT Press, 453–9) included a final note agreeing with Cranfield (and also Dunn 1975b). By the time the publication appeared I had already changed my mind to the position now expounded in Weight 1991 [Climax], ch. 10 and Wright 2002 [Romans], 561–72. When the original paper was revised for Climax (ch. 11) the ending, like the ‘old Adam’ in 6.6 or the ‘former husband’ in 7.1–4, was done away with.} The whole chapter has been a close and careful account of what happens when Torah arrives in Israel and when Israel then lives with it. To say that
the conclusion has nothing to do with the main subject of the previous discussion is like rearranging the final movement of Mozart's 'Jupiter' symphony for a rock band.

The problem is, of course, that at this point it is not simply the 'I' that appears to be divided (though, as we have seen, the 'I' is not actually divided, but ends up in verses 17 and 20 on the right side of the equation, with 'sin' on the wrong side). It is Torah itself:

This, then, is what I find about the Torah: when I want to do what is right, evil lies close at hand; 21 I delight in God's Torah, you see, according to my inmost self; 22 but I see another 'Torah' in my limbs and organs, fighting a battle against the Torah of my mind, and taking me as a prisoner in the Torah of sin which is in my limbs and organs. 23

There is no point trying to soften this. Paul knows what he is doing and fully intends the dramatic effect. Torah woos 'me' into the love of God; Torah imprisons 'me' in my sin. Is this not what he said already in Galatians 3.22? Torah shut up all things under sin, even while holding out, in the Shema and elsewhere, the most wonderful promise of life and love. That is the calling of Israel prior to the coming of the Messiah: to be the people in whom this agony, which is also Adam's agony, created in the divine image but now dead because of sin, is experienced and clung to against the day when, in the Messiah, it will be resolved once and for all.

The final word of chapter 7 sets up the scene for just such a resolution:

24 What a miserable person I am! Who is going to rescue me from the body of this death? 25 Thank God—through Jesus our Messiah and Lord! So then, left to my own self I am enslaved to God's law with my mind, but to sin's law with my human flesh. 689

'Left to myself': autos egō, the phrase Paul will use at the start of chapter 9 when he is describing his own agony precisely over his 'kinsfolk according to the flesh' (9.3). Indeed, chapter 9 is incomprehensible without chapter 7, just as chapter 7 is incomprehensible without 2.17—3.9 and such previous hints as 5.20 — and just as chapter 7 itself has raised massive questions to which only a discussion such as that in chapters 9—11 can serve as at least a preliminary answer. The carefully co-ordinated complexity of Romans has to be followed through in depth for it to yield its secrets. Here we have the conclusion of chapter 7, which rightly finds expression in the form of a lament. The problem is not Torah; the problem is not the vocation to be Torah-people; the problem is the Adamic humanity, 'the body of this death', corresponding to the 'body of sin' in 6.6. What is required is what Paul has already hinted at in 7.4—6, which indeed sums up the whole of 7.7—8.11 in advance. Here is the story of the covenant people, redefined around the Messiah and now around the spirit: election redefined. Through Jesus, the Messiah, Jesus, released you from the Law of sin and death.

We have already spoken of the Messiah's role in this explosive moment. The point now is the redefinition of election in and through the spirit, for the whole renewed people of God, both those who spent long generations in the theological thlipsis of 7.13—25 and those who, coming in from outside, look on with awe and gratitude at the Israel that bore the 'messianic woes' all the way up to the Messiah's own coming. Now at last the law's God-given intention, translated into the work of the spirit, is going to be fulfilled: the dikaioma tou nomou in 8.4, the 'right and proper verdict of the Torah', will be accomplished when the 'dead body' of 7.24 is raised to life by the spirit, because the indwelling spirit has replaced the indwelling 'sin' of 7.17, 18, 20:

688 7.21—23.
689 7.24f.

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10: The People of God, Freshly Reworked 1019
can now discover that its beloved Torah was itself acting as jailor and judge—a task for which the covenant God had given it in the first place. 690 But Israel can then, through Messiah and spirit, find release, and discover that the life promised by Torah is available at last.

At that moment, exactly consonant with the whole thrust of 3.21—4.25, the Israel that has lived under Torah and found it bringing only condemnation (3.19—20; 4.15; 5.20) is transformed into the people promised to Abraham by the covenant God. The natural branches of the tree have been joined by a great company from outside, together forming a plant which grows out of the pain borne for so long by Israel and now concentrated on, and exhausted in, the Messiah himself. Thus, by the spirit, the creation of the new-covenant people has taken place in a great act of Torah-fulfilment and election-redefinition:

1. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those in the Messiah, Jesus! 2 Why not? Because the Law of the Spirit of life in the Messiah, Jesus, released you from the Law of sin and death.

3. For God has done what the law (being weak because of human flesh) was incapable of doing. God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin-offering; and, right there in the flesh, he condemned sin. This was in order that the right and proper verdict of the Law could be fulfilled in us, as we live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. 691

10. But if the Messiah is in you, the body is indeed dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of covenant justice. 11 So, then, if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives within you, the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies, too, through his Spirit who lives within you. 692

688 7.21—23.
690 5.20.
691 8.1—4.
692 8.10f. The parallel and hence contrast between the two 'indwellings' of chs. 7 and 8 has not been sufficiently remarked. On the questions of whether the 'spirit' here is the divine or human spirit, and the relation of 'covenant justice' (dikaiosyne) to the earlier uses of the word in the letter, see Wright 2002 (Romans), 584. I have, in the intervening decade, changed my mind on dikaiosyne here: I now think it refers to the believer's status, though of course the divine covenant faithfulness is always to be seen standing behind that again. 'The spirit is life because of righteousness' could be read as a summary of 5.1—
It is just as Paul said in Philippians 3.7–11. The resurrection from the dead, the ultimate hope of Israel, the gateway to the 'life of the coming age', is the prospect for those who through the spirit constitute the renewed (though still suffering) 'elect', the transformed and now worldwide people of the one God. The spirit is doing 'what the Torah could not do, because it was weak through the flesh'; that is, giving the life it promised (7.10) but could not deliver because of the Adamic humanity of its original recipients. This is the exact same point as we find, within the different epistolary contexts, in Galatians 3 and 2 Corinthians 3. The point is that the death of the son of God has dealt with that Adamic humanity, so that now, by the spirit, all who are part of the Messiah's people (all this still depends upon the incorporeal vision of baptism-into-Messiah in Romans 6) will share the bodily resurrection for which the earlier 'resurrection' which takes place in baptism itself is the advance signpost.

The tell-tale sign that the spirit is at work is found in verses 5–9. The mind that is focused on the flesh will die, but the mind that is focused on the spirit will have life and peace. All this depends once more on status: flesh or spirit? Paul is clear: those who are in the Messiah, indwelt by the spirit, are not defined in terms of sarx: 'you are not in the flesh, you are in the spirit, if indeed God's spirit lives within you'. This does not mean, of course, that they have ceased to live a normal human 'bodily' life; merely that the sarx, which for Paul is always a negative term, always pulling down towards decay and death, towards the old creation which is subject to futility, is no longer the defining factor. Instead, the 'life that the law had held out is given at last: there is a direct line from 7.10 ('the commandment which pointed to life') to 8.1 ('the law of the spirit of life in the Messiah, Jesus') and on to 8.6 (focus [the mind] on the spirit, and you'll have life and peace) and thence, via 8.10 ('the spirit is life because of covenant justice') to the climactic 8.11 ('the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies, too, through his spirit who lives within you').

Here, then, is the Sinai-element in the story of the 'new Exodus'. Telling this story at all, in relation to the whole people of God in the Messiah, is itself, for Paul, a massive act of redefining election: we, the Messiah's people, are the ones in whom Israel's greatest narrative has come true in the new way we always hoped for. We are, in ourselves, the new tabernacle (see below), and even Torah itself is now coming alongside to cheer us on the homeward road. This is the very centre of Paul's redefinition of election around the spirit. The multiple echoes of Romans 2.25–29 in 8.1–11 make the point graphically: where the spirit has done and is doing all this, we are to recognize 'the Jew', 'the circumcision'. The lament of 9.1–5 strongly confirms this analysis. Had the redefinition been less clear, the lament would have been less necessary.

But before we proceed we need to notice one other factor which has sneaked up on us almost unwares. If this renewed people, the Messiah's
where the Messiah will 'dwell (katoikēsai) in your hearts through faith'. In Colossians, of course, the Messiah is himself the one in whom all the divine fullness was pleased to dwell (katoikēsai). And with that we are tapping into a large biblical frame of reference, focused more or less equally on the wilderness tabernacle, constructed after the debacle with the Golden Calf but nevertheless providing the movable home for Israel's God for the next few hundred years, and on the temple in Jerusalem, where according to the Psalms and the Deuteronomic narrative the one God had designated to 'dwell'.

It might be thought that the hints about the spirit, or the Messiah, 'indwelling' God's people in Romans 8.9–11 was quite a slender basis on which to propose a Pauline theology of 'new temple' and, thereby, of the theōsis of God's people. But Paul himself builds on this foundation in verses 14 to 17, which explain the moral challenge of living by the spirit, not the flesh, in terms of the journey of the people of God, the journey that will lead to the 'inheritance':

12 So then, my dear family, we are in debt—not but to human flesh, to live our life in that way. 13 If you live in accordance with the flesh, you will die; but if, by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

All who are led by the Spirit of God, you see, are God's children. 14 You didn't receive a spirit of slavery, did you, to go back again into a state of fear? But you received the Spirit of sonship, in whom we call out 'Abba, father!' 15 When that happens, it is the Spirit itself giving support witness to what our own spirit is saying, that we are God's children. 16 And if we're children, we are also heirs (kleronomos, cognate with kleronomia), 'inheritance'): heirs of God, and fellow heirs with the Messiah, as long as we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

The challenge here is cast in terms of the continuing Exodus-narrative: you are on the road to your 'inheritance', your promised land, the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham (4.13); so don't even think of going back to Egypt! 'You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to go back into a state of fear': as in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul is echoing the story of the wilderness wanderings in order to urge the Messiah's people to learn from the mistakes of that generation. In particular, they must recognize that the one they call 'father' in the spirit-inspired expression of faith by which they call out 'Abba', has adopted them as his 'children', fulfilling the Exodus-story in this respect also: Israel is my son, my firstborn.

That statement should be gently modified; the adoption is at one remove. As always, Paul is clear that election is redefined first in Israel's Messiah. He is the 'firstborn among many siblings' (8.29). But here the status of 'God's children', derived from his, is reaffirmed and the consequences drawn: if children, then inheritors, inheritors of God and co-inheritors with the Messiah. The 'inheritance' is now clear, from its first hint in Romans 4.13 to its

full expression in 8.18–25: it is the whole world. That is what God promised Abraham, according to Paul. It is what God promised the Messiah, in the foundational messianic Psalm 2. It is now what God intends to share with all his people: that is what it means to be 'heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with the Messiah'. We are here very close to Galatians 3.21–4.7, and with the same import: election redefined, first around the Messiah, now around the work of the spirit.

But the idea of being 'led' by the spirit, on this journey through the wilderness to the 'promised land', indicates that the implicit temple-theme of 8.9–11 is being followed through in terms of the guiding presence of God himself in the wilderness tabernacle, in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. 'All who are led by the spirit are the children of God': the 'leading' of God in the wilderness is now fulfilled in the 'leading' of the indwelling spirit. And this means that, for Paul, the indwelling spirit is taking the place, within the church as a whole and within each of the Messiah's people, of that fiery, cloudy pillar, the living and dangerous presence of God himself. We might have deduced all this already from 2 Corinthians 3, but here we have it at the heart of the great story, the Exodus-narrative itself replayed through Messiah and spirit all the way to new creation.

The natural consequence, of course, is once again theōsis, divinization. But it is, as has recently been stressed, a cruciform 'divinization', involving the constant life of putting to death the flesh and coming alive to the spirit. That has been the point ever since chapter 6, and it is reaffirmed here and in the other cognate passages. In particular, we think of Philippians 3.9–11, where the sufferings of the Messiah are the means of 'sharing', or 'being conformed to', his death, and are thus also the pathway to the resurrection; and 2 Corinthians 3, leading as it does straight into the description of cruciform apostleship in chapters 4–6. The similar train of thought in the present passage indicates that we are in the same territory: if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him (8.17). This then opens up the 'new creation' passage in 8.18–25, where the present sufferings and groanings of God's people are mapped onto the larger picture of the groanings of the whole creation, waiting for God's new world to be born. All this recalls so many aspects of second-temple Jewish identity and aspiration that there should be no doubt what is going on. Paul is retelling Israel's narrative (including the theme of being the true humanity through whom the world is to be brought back into the creator's design) around Jesus and the spirit.

That, after the further brief mention of the spirit's work in the heart, producing the true Shema, the love of God, leads Paul into the hammer-blow conclusion of 8.29, in which everything that might be said about Israel is now said about the people of the one God in the Messiah and the spirit:

696 e.g. 1 Kgs. 8.27 (one of many); and e.g. Ps. 132.8, 13f.; 135.21, etc.
697 see above, on Gal. 4.6.
698 Exod. 4.22.
It will be obvious to anyone who knows Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and the Psalms (to look no further!) that these great affirmations are drawn directly from the longer and longer narrative of the covenant people. They constitute, in the first instance, a massive claim about the Messiah: upon him has now devolved the identity of the covenant people of the one God. They then constitute, following from this, an equally massive claim about those who are indwelt by the spirit: they are 'in the Messiah', and as such they are to be seen as the single family promised by the one God to Abraham, however much they may at present look like a somewhat strange and motley crew, having come in from Gentiles as well as Jews.

Election is redefined. Around the Messiah; through the spirit.

And all this means that Romans 5—8 has indeed developed the earlier theme of 'justification' to its proper conclusion. The verdict issued in the present over pístis will indeed correspond to the verdict of the last day. The same inaugurated eschatology undergirds the whole scheme. Indeed, without Romans 5—8 the inaugurated eschatology of 1—4 has not been fully explained. (That is why an exposition that fails to treat chapters 5—8 as part of 'justification' ends up also marginalizing chapter 2.) The katakríma of which Paul warns in 2.1—11 has disappeared for those 'in the Messiah', because the 'condemnation' which 'sin' required has been meted out in the Messiah's death (8.3). This, of course, that we read the dense statements about the cross in 3.24—26, 4.25, 5.6—11, 7.4—6 and 8.3 as all interrelated, drawing on an implicit fuller understanding although only saying, on each occasion, what is required by that specific argument.

It is justification, indeed, that occupies Paul almost to the end of the section. When the question is raised in 8.34, 'who is to condemn', the answer is, by implication, 'nobody', because 'it is God who justifies', by means of the Messiah's death, resurrection and now heavenly intercession (8.33—34). When we allow Paul to develop the 'forensic' language in his own way and at his own pace, we see that he himself dovetails it completely – just as in Galatians 3 or Philippians 3, but at far greater length! – with his 'incorporative' language, as indeed he indicated in 3.24 ('justified ... through the redemption which is in the Messiah'). Both are held within the overall exposition of an essentially covenantal theology.

The two statements 'we are justified by pístis' and 'there is no condemnation for those who are in the Messiah' are thus functionally equivalent. Each means what it means in close relation to the other. To attempt to separate them, and to treat Romans 1—4 and 5—8 as though they were expositions of different kinds of soteriology, is to transform the rhetorical strategy of this particular letter into a theological dichotomy.

Within this, the other elements make themselves at home. Anthropology, transformation, and our old friends 'apocalyptic' and 'salvation history'; there is plenty of each in Romans 5—8. Once again, when we hold them within the covenantal theme, they lose the angular character that has made some play them off against one another.

The covenantal theme that undergirds all of these, and which finally re-emerges into the open, bringing the music back into the major key, is the language of love. The obvious background for this is the relationship of YHWH to his people as described in Israel's scriptures.\(^{703}\) Paul states the theme in advance in 5.1—11, and then, after exploring it from all the angles of the intervening material, returns to it as he draws the whole section to its rhetorical climax. This passage itself picks up the long biblical tradition of trusting the covenant God through thick and thin and combines it with the messianic theme expounded throughout the chapter so far:

Who shall separate us from the Messiah's love? Suffering, or hardship or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As the Bible says, 'Because of you we are being killed all day long; we are regarded as sheep destined for slaughter.' Nor in all these things are we completely victorious through the one who loved us. I am persuaded, you see, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor the present, nor the future, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in the Messiah, Jesus our lord.\(^{704}\)

The unbreakable covenant love of YHWH for his people, arguably the most central expression of Israel's election, has been focused on, and revealed in, the son. And this unbreakable love is the secure resting-place of all those who, by the spirit, are 'in the Messiah'.

This is not something other than 'justification by faith'. This is what justification looks like in solid reality: battered, but believing; suffering, yet sustained by the spirit; dying, but knowing that death itself has been defeated. The pístis Christou of 3.22 is the agapé Christou of 8.35, and the answering pístis of the believer has become, as in 8.28, the answering agapé which, by the spirit, keeps the Shema. At this point Paul's reworking of both monotheism and election come together in typical Jewish expression: a celebration of divine love, a trust in divine victory. God himself, and his covenantal faithfulness, are unveiled in the Messiah and unleashed through the spirit, within the eschatological horizon of the whole new creation.

There is of course one more section of Romans which has a direct bearing on 'justification', namely 9.30—10.13. Since we shall deal with this section more fully in the next chapter we here put it to one side, though in several important senses it completes the picture, being the clearest exposition to be

\(^{702}\) 8.28—30.

\(^{703}\) Through him who loved us (8.37), being in the aorist, refers back to the crucifixion itself, as in e.g. Gal. 2.19f.; see e.g. Cranfield 1975, 1979, 441; Jewett 2007, 549. The theme which re-emerges here is of course that stated already in 5.6—11. On the love of YHWH for his people, as a model for the relationship between Messiah and believers, see Tilling 2012.

\(^{704}\) 8.35—39.
found anywhere in Paul of his belief that Messiah-faith was the sure sign of covenant renewal, and that both justification and salvation were to be seen in those terms and no others.\textsuperscript{705}

(i) Conclusion: Justification in Christ, by Grace, through Faith, in the Present Time

We have now studied the large-scale themes of Paul's redefinition of election, and shown those themes, drawn together in and around the Messiah, are then replayed in and through the Messiah's people, who, through the work of the spirit, bear the primary and distinguishing badge of pístis. Once this larger picture is in place, we notice other smaller-scale but tell-tale markers of the same phenomenon, markers which by themselves might only raise an eyebrow, but which when located on the main map serve as genuine signposts to what Paul has in mind. We may simply note these as we move towards the summing-up of this chapter.

Two obvious verbal clues come in Paul's regular address to his churches. First, they are 'called'. We have seen this in its full setting in Romans 8.28; but Paul also refers to Messiah-people as 'the called' in various passages - not to mention the cognate 'called out', in other words, ekklesia. There is the opening greeting of Romans itself, where he addresses the church as 'you also, called of the Messiah (kletai lésou Christou)'. This is repeated in the next verse with a different connotation which we shall address in a moment.\textsuperscript{706} A similar greeting in 1 Corinthians is followed later in the first chapter by the use of 'the called' as a way of referring to the Messiah's people, deputizing as it were for the more normal 'believers': to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks.\textsuperscript{707} The cognate noun, 'call', is used in the same sense in various passages.\textsuperscript{708} The verb itself, in this sense, is more frequent again.\textsuperscript{709} The resonances with the ancient 'call' of Israel, particularly in Isaiah 40—55, make this both powerful and poignant,\textsuperscript{710} and set up in particular the discussion of Romans 9—11, where the divine 'call' is one of the central themes.\textsuperscript{711}

The natural twin theme here is that God's people are called to be holy. Paul can of course draw out this in his various passages of ethical exhortation. But what is quite telling is the way he can refer to the Messiah-people as hagioi, 'holy ones' or 'saints', as a kind of title. In the greeting in Romans this is coupled with another Israel-title, 'God's beloved, called to be saints',\textsuperscript{712} and in various later references in the letter it is simply a way of saying 'God's people'.\textsuperscript{713} The Corinthians, too, are 'called as saints', kletai hagioi, not (I think) in the sense that they are, as it were, called to be saints eventually but have a long way to go before that word can truly be used of them, but rather that, having been 'called', they are 'saints', set-apart-for-God people, whether or not they behave like it.\textsuperscript{714} The same pattern is repeated in other greetings,\textsuperscript{715} as well as in other casual references to the Messiah-people.\textsuperscript{716}

These small signposts, I repeat, point to the larger reality which we have studied. It is time now to sum this up, and to make some necessary distinctions between the different aspects of this redefined election. In particular, we must clarify as sharply as we can the central point: how does Paul's doctrine of 'justification by faith in the present time' relate to this larger whole of election redefined?

I have argued throughout this chapter that the ancient Israelite, and second-temple Jewish, sense of what it meant to be the chosen people of the creator God was transformed in Paul's understanding. He saw it as having been reworked around Jesus, Israel's Messiah, and particularly by his crucifixion and resurrection; and, in consequence, it was further reshaped around the Messiah's spirit, who through the powerful gospel message 'called' people of every background and type to belong to the single family which the one God had promised to Abraham. I have argued, in particular, that to understand 'justification by faith' it is necessary to see that the 'faith' in question is not a particular way of being religious (a 'trusting' way, say, as opposed to a 'hard-working' way), but is rather the way of being 'faithful' to the divine call and gospel which echoes, and re-encapsulates, the 'faithfulness' of the Messiah himself, which was in turn the representative 'faithfulness' of Israel (Romans 3.22 with 3.2). All this shows, I believe, that for Paul the whole business of 'justification' was tied tightly together with his larger theology, though playing a particular role of its own. Now that we have surveyed nearly the whole of the Pauline evidence on the subject of redefined election, it is time to look at the role of 'justification' more precisely.

\textsuperscript{705} see below, 1165—81.
\textsuperscript{706} Rom. 1.6f.
\textsuperscript{707} 1 Cor. 1.2, 24.
\textsuperscript{708} 1 Cor. 1.26; 7.20; Eph. 1.18; 4.1, 4; perhaps also Phil. 3.14 (though in a somewhat different sense); 2 Thess. 1.11; 2 Tim. 1.9.
\textsuperscript{709} 1 Cor. 1.9; nine times in 1 Cor. 7.15—24, where 'to be called' is Paul's shorthand for 'hearing and believing the gospel and becoming a member of the Messiah's people'; Gal. 1.6; 2.5; 5.8, 13; Eph. 4.1, 4; Col. 1.12; 3.15; 1 Thess. 2.12; 4.7; 5.24; 2 Thess. 2.14. Cf. too 1 Tim. 6.12; 2 Tim. 1.9.
\textsuperscript{710} e.g. Isa. 42.6; 43.22; 48.12; 49.1; 51.2 (the 'call' of Abraham). Most uses of kaled in the lxx are of the actual naming of people, which may also be significant particularly in Rom. 9—11.
\textsuperscript{711} 9.7, 12, 24, 25, 26; 11.29.

\textsuperscript{712} Rom. 1.7.
\textsuperscript{713} Rom. 8.27; 12.13; 15.25, 26; 31; 16.15.
\textsuperscript{714} 1 Cor. 1.2; cf. 6.1, 2, where 'the saints' is a clear ref. to Dan. 7.18, 22 and 27, and ascribes to the Christian community in Corinth the eschatological role ascribed in early first-century readings of Dan. to the righteous within Israel; cf. 1 Cor. 14.33; 16.1, 15.
\textsuperscript{715} 2 Cor. 1.1; Eph. 1.1; Phil. 1.1; Col. 1.2.
\textsuperscript{716} 1 Cor. 8.4; 9.1, 12; 13.12; Eph. 1.15, 18; 2.19 (where the hagioi are specifically the people of Israel to whom Gentile believers are now joined in fellowship but, despite the refs. in Rom. 15 and 2 Cor. 8 and 9 to the 'saints' in Jerusalem, it is certainly not the case that Paul reserves this title either for Jewish believers or for believers in Jerusalem); Eph. 3.5, 8, 18; 4.12; 5.3; 6.18; Phil. 4.21; 2 Cor. 1.4, 12, 26; 3.12 (a remarkable cluster of redawn-election motifs: 'as God's chosen, holy and beloved', touts ekklesia tou theou, hagioi kai agapémenoi); 1 Thess. 3.13 (though there the 'saints' are those who have died; cf. 2 Thess. 1.10); 2.27; 1 Tim. 5.10.
As we saw, Paul makes a clear distinction between the future 'justification', the verdict which will be issued on the last day on the basis of the totality of the life led (which in the case of the Messiah's people will be a life generated and sustained by the spirit), and the present justification which is the verdict announced on the basis of nothing but Messiah-faith. Once we locate both of these events, as Paul does again and again, within the larger picture of the work of gospel and spirit, and once we see as clearly as Paul did that all that is said of the Messiah's people is said precisely because they are 'the Messiah's people', and can be spoken of as being 'in him', it ought to be clear that there is a threefold sequence, each part of which is importantly related to the others though playing significantly different roles. This threefold summary is an attempt, in the light of the intervening exegesis, to say again in even shorter form what was set out above in seven somewhat longer points. 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 events in which Israel's God dealt with sin and launched his new creation. As Paul puts it in Galatians 2.17, the basic position which the Messiah's followers trust they occupy is 'to be justified in the Messiah', dikaiothenai in Christo.

1. There is the powerful work of the spirit through the gospel, which 'calls' people to faith. It is on this basis alone that people are declared to be 'in the right', the correlate of which is that they are, again on that basis alone, full members of the family, the people of Abraham, the people of the Messiah. This is justification by grace through faith in the present. Because of the Messiah's death and resurrection, the ancient people of God has been transformed and its doors thrown wide open to people of all sorts and conditions, and the gospel message of Jesus' scripture-fulfilling death and resurrection does its work of summoning people to the 'obedience of faith'. The two events which Paul sees as tightly joined together, baptism 'into the Messiah' on the one hand and the emergence of faith on the other (calling God 'Abba'; believing that he raised Jesus from the dead; confessing Jesus as lord), are the necessary and sufficient evidence that the spirit has been at work through the gospel, that this person has died and risen with the Messiah, that this person has the Messiah's death and resurrection 'reckoned' or 'imputed' to them (Romans 6.11) and that this person has passed beyond the sphere where 'sin reigns in death' (Romans 5.21) and so is quit of any obligation to 'sin' as a power or a sphere. In terms of the argument of Galatians 2.3 and 4, such a person is every bit as much a full member of the family, every bit as qualified to share table-fellowship with every other member, as the most senior apostle. (Paul has some wry words about seniority among apostles, but that is another story.) In terms of the argument of Romans 3 and 4, such a person is a full and proper part of the family which the one God promised to Abraham in the first place, though of course nobody had seen it like this until after the coming of the Messiah. In the case of such a person, the entail of sin which had run from Adam through the whole human race, bringing with it the threat of wrath and ultimate death, has been turned away. The logic of justification by grace through faith thus comes full circle: from (a) the faithful death and resurrection of the Messiah, as the rescuing act in which the one God fulfilled his ancient promises by sheer grace, through (b) the declaration that those who (through gospel and spirit) come to believe are the Messiah-people, the faithpeople, the forgiven people, the Abraham-people and back again (c) to the Messiah himself as the one 'through whom are all things'. That is the initial, present, dramatically new divine gift in the gospel of Jesus the Messiah.

2. There is the unbreakable promise that, by the same spirit, all the people thus described will in the end be raised from the dead to share the 'inheritance' of the Messiah, the worldwide inheritance promised to Abraham, "The one who began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it by the day of the Messiah Jesus." It is the spirit who will raise these people from the dead, the spirit who indwells all those who belong to the Messiah (Romans 8.9). So, among the advance signs that this will happen, we note that the same spirit enables these people to put to death the deeds of the body, to walk 'not according to the flesh but according to the spirit'. This is how Paul has finally explained the otherwise unusual description of the people in Romans 2.7 who 'patiently do what is good, and so pursue the quest for glory and honour and immortality', and who will be given 'the life of the age to come', zōē aiōnios. These are the people who do 'what is good' and so receive 'glory, honour and peace' (2.10); they are the people who 'do the law' and so 'will be declared to be in the right'. As we saw earlier, the anxious protestant principle of never allowing anyone to 'do' anything which appears to contribute to any sort of justification has pushed exegetes into declaring that these solemn statements are either strange irrelevancies or, at most, the setting up of categories which Paul will then declare to be empty. But the close correlation of these statements in 2.7–10 with the similar ones in 2.25–29 (coupled with the fact that Romans 1.18–2.16 is a rather different sort of passage from what that older exegesis had imagined) means that we should read them as referring in advance to Messiah-believing people, Jews and Gentiles alike (2.10). They are then more fully described in the 'new covenant' language of 2.25–29 (where the...
focus is on Messiah-believing Gentiles, but the point is the same), and more fully again in chapters 5–8 and especially 8.4–17. There is after all no reason, except exegetical tradition, why the rhetorical flow of Paul's argument in Romans should follow the chronological flow of an *ordo salutis*, though the assumption that this is the case has been so firmly planted in the exegetical and theological traditions that it may be hard to uproot it.

3. Between (1) the beginning of the work of the spirit and (2) its triumphant conclusion, Paul envisages a spirit-led life which does not in any way contribute to initial justification, or to the consequent assurance of final justification which that initial justification brings, but transforms the life of the person who has already come to faith. This transformation enables such a person to 'live by the spirit and not fulfil the desires of the flesh' (Galatians 5.16); or, in the language of Romans 8, to have the 'mind of the spirit', the *phronēma tou pneumatos*, rather than the 'mind of the flesh', the *phronēma tēs sarkos*. Such people will then 'put to death the deeds of the body'; from a study of Paul's own congregations we may conclude that he knew as well as we do that this does not happen automatically or easily.721 It is too shallow to call this 'ethics', since it goes way beyond either a deontological framework (discovering the 'rules' and trying to keep them) or a utilitarian/consequentialist framework (figuring out and implementing the greatest happiness of the greatest number) which the word 'ethics' regularly refers to. It obviously works quite differently from existentialism, which reduces ethics to 'authenticity'; and to emotivism, which reduces ethics to personal predilection or prejudice.722 It is better to speak, at this point, of the transformation of character which is such a regular Pauline theme:

We also celebrate in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patience, 
'patience produces a well-formed character, and a character like that produces hope. 723 Hope, in its turn, does not make us ashamed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit who has been given to us.'

So, my dear family, this is my appeal to you by the mercies of God: offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Worship like this brings your mind into line with God's. 'What's more, don't let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you can work out what God's will is, what is good, acceptable and complete.'

I have written about all this elsewhere.725 For the present purpose, the point is made sufficiently that, when we factor the spirit into the reworking of the Jewish doctrine of election, we can see both the centrality and uniqueness of present justification by faith and its relation to the two other 'moments', the ultimate future justification and the life of transformed character.

This is important in relation to current debates. Some have tried to insist that 'justification by grace through faith' is so all-encompassing that it must have nothing to do with the final judgment according to works.726 Paul's statements about the latter must then be set aside or at least neutralized. Others have tried to suggest that Paul's whole soteriology is contained in Romans 5–8, where a 'participatory' framework rather than a 'juristic' one is offered, and that we must therefore exclude the 'juristic' from consideration.727 Others again have tried to subsume the specifically 'juristic' note – justification as the verdict in the divine law court, ahead of the production of any 'works' of any sort whatever – within the larger context of the transformation of character, whether conceived in terms of virtue-ethics or of *theōsis*, or, in a measure, both.728 I agree that transformation is important, and I have tried to show how I think it is related to justification by grace through faith. But it is not the same thing. One cannot suddenly expand Paul's very precise dikaiosynē terminology to cover a much larger range of soteriological material, however much the church, forgetting its roots in Jewish covenantal theology, moved in that direction. A child, knowing that a Disneyland vacation was in the offing, might wrongly imagine that the entire trip, including a coast-to-coast drive, was all in a sense taking place in 'Disneyworld', mistaking the part for the whole. That, I think, is what has happened here, though of course one would not want to suggest that the resulting theories had a certain Mickey-Mouse flavour to them. Thus, even though Romans 3.21–31 is part of the same flow of argument as Romans 5–8, and Galatians 2.15–21 is part of the same flow of argument as Galatians 4–6, and even though these two larger arguments do develop a view of the spirit's work in the transformation of character which can properly be seen both as virtue and as *theōsis*, this does not take away from the fact that when Paul speaks of *initial justification by faith* he means it as a very particular, specific claim. What then does this initial justification mean? It means that, ahead of any transformation of character other than the bare, initial *pistis* which by definition looks helplessly away from itself and gratefully towards the saving work of the Messiah, this person is welcomed into the sin-forgiven family, with the badge of membership being that confession of faith and nothing else. The inaugurated-eschatological assurance which this welcome provides is thus both *forensic* (the verdict of

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721 Rom. 8.13; Col. 3.5, 9.
722 On the superficial similarity between an emotivism that stresses 'doing what comes naturally' and a Pauline emphasis on acting out of the transformed heart and mind, see Wright 2010 [Virtue Reborn (UK): After You Believe (US)], chs. 5, 6.
723 Rom. 5.3–5.
724 Rom. 12.1–2.
725 Wright 2010 (as n. 722 above).
726 The main charge against me on the part of e.g. Piper 2007 is that, by insisting on the *final justification* in the language of Rom. 2, I am bringing back 'human works' into the equation and so making 'assurance' depend on 'performance', rather than on the supposed 'imputed righteousness of Christ'.
727 Campbell 2009.
728 See Gorman 2009.
'not guilty' in the present will be repeated in the future) and *covenantal* (full membership in Abraham's family is granted at once and will be reaffirmed in the resurrection). The two dimensions join up in practical ecclesiology: the mutual welcome which Paul urges in Romans 14 and 15 is the concrete, bodily form which 'forgiveness' is supposed to take in the present time.

Once we take into account the overall covenantal framework, then, we see why initial justification is so important. It is not just because of the need for 'assurance', in the terms of classic Protestant theology, though that remains important. It is because of the need to be clear that *all* such believers belong to Abraham's single family. Paul never forgot the battles in Antioch and Galatia.

This argument has brought us, step by step, to more or less the same point that Paul reached at the end of Romans 8, or indeed the middle of Galatians 4. This naturally projects us forward into the question of 'Israel according to the flesh', which might be thought to be the heart of his reworking of 'election'. However, quite apart from the already cumbersome length of the present chapter, what Paul says about Israel, particularly in Romans 9–11, belongs properly with his eschatology. We must therefore defer the question to the next chapter. For the moment there is one more pressing matter to address, albeit briefly.

(j) What Then About Torah?

Kindling the flames of an old debate may be a risky thing to do, but it cannot be helped. We spoke about Paul's view of Israel's law in chapter 7, in discussing the complex and interlocking narratives in which his worldview came to expression. Now, in the light of this discussion of election, we must revisit the question. I have suggested at several points that what Paul believed about the 'Torah was a function of what he believed Israel's God had purposed to do in and through his people, and had now accomplished in the Messiah and the spirit. We are now in a position to draw these threads together. Fortunately, we do not have to retrace our exegetical steps: enough has been said about the key passages. Likewise, to annotate these points in relation to the hundreds of debates about 'Paul and the law' which have raged this way and that over generations would be cumbersome and in any case unnecessary.729 Unlike most expositors, I have chosen to locate this discussion within the wider question of 'election', which means attempting to understand the narrative roles of Torah within the complex stories Paul is telling (above, chapter 7). The main question in recent debate has been, Is what Paul says about the Jewish law consistent and coherent, and if so, how do we explain its various parts? To suppose the only real question to be whether Paul thought the law was a good thing or a bad thing is to guarantee that one will not understand half of the relevant passages. At this stage, the best thing to do will be simply to set out, in a series of propositions, the ways in which Torah functions within Paul's view of the divine covenantal purpose. The supporting exegetical arguments for these propositions are all contained in either the present chapter or chapter 7.

1. Easily the most important place to start is with Paul's ringing affirmation that Torah was and remained the *God-given law, holy and just and good*. Nothing he says about those functions of Torah which some have labelled 'negative' detract from this. The mention of angels assisting in the giving of Torah, or of its being given through a 'mediator', in no way suggest that Torah is less than fully God-given and God-intended.730 What is more, Paul saw Torah not simply as a set of commands, but as a *narrative*: the story of creation and covenant, of Adam and Abraham, focused particularly on Exodus and finally articulated in the covenantal warnings and promises at the end of Deuteronomy. All this Paul fully affirmed as divine in origin, positive in intent, and fulfilled (albeit in unexpected ways) through the gospel.

2. Inside this affirmation, however, not undermining it but explaining it, is Paul's sense of the *specific purpose for which Torah was given to Israel*. Of course, if one starts (as many do) with the assumption that the obvious reason for giving Israel the law must have been to enable the people to keep it perfectly and so be 'saved' by their moral efforts, then the purpose that Paul articulates will indeed appear 'negative'. However, for Paul this was a *necessary* 'negativity'; indeed, a *God-given* negativity. 'It was added because of transgressions', he says; 'scripture concluded all things under sin'; 'the law came in alongside, so that the trespass might be filled out'; the law was given *so that* sin might appear as sin, and so that it might become 'exceedingly sinful' through the commandments.731 This appears, too, in his comment that the people to whom Torah was given were themselves hard-hearted.732 The problem Moses faced was not that Torah was a bad thing, but that it necessarily and rightly pronounced condemnation on its hearers. Neither Torah nor Israel's God himself could collude with hard-hearted stubbornness and its consequent behaviour. There

729 In recent decades, one may cite the notable discussions of Dunn 1998, 128–59, 625–69 (while questioning whether the placement of the initial section, within the overall category of 'Humankind under Indictment', was likely to do it full justice); Schnelle 2005 (2003, 506–21) (within the section headed 'Anthropology: The Struggle for the Self'). The main treatment in Scheiner 2001 is a chapter headed 'Dishonoring God: The Violation of God's Law' (103–25), though references to the law are scattered throughout the book. Major treatments in the 1980s include Sanders 1983 and Rüssen 1986 (1983), both arguing for serious Pauline inconsistency (on which see Wright 1991 ['Climax'], ch. 1; and, on key exegetical questions, chs. 7–12). Further back again, Bädder 1975 (1966) offers a main treatment of the law as part of 'The Life in Sin' (91–158), though he has a later section on the 'third use of the law' (278–88); Cranfield 1979, 845–62 remains a masterpiece of Reformed exegesis, though in my view insufficient to explain the full contours of the Pauline landscape. Thielman 1994 offers a mediatrix

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Position. The key section in Wolter 2011 (351–8), though short, explores the question from a variety of angles.

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Gal. 3.19f.

Gal. 3.21, 22; Rom. 5.20; 7.13.

2 Cor. 3.14.
may be some systems in which lawmakers tone down the ideal standards to fit people's capabilities, but Israel's Torah was not like that. That is why it already contained provision for sin in terms of repentance and the sacrificial system; which is why, as we saw, someone like Paul could say of his former self what Luke says of Zechariah and Elizabeth: 'blameless.' But this did not mean that the law would then cease to condemn Israel as a whole; or that, when it did so, it was acting outside the will of the God who had given it.

3. This 'negative' purpose had a double function, related directly to what Paul saw as the divinely intended purpose of there being a covenant people, and hence a law, in the first place. The plan was never simply to create and perfect a pure people. It was that, through Abraham's family, the creator would rescue the rest of the world. This would be accomplished, specifically, by the work of Torah in drawing 'sin' onto one place, in order that it might be condemned there. This train of thought, expounded in Romans 7 and 8 and reaching its peak at Romans 8.3, is what Paul is hinting at in those other 'negative' remarks. Second, however, it was necessary to keep Israel as it were under lock and key - or, to use Paul's own metaphor, under the rule of the paidagogos - until the Messiah's arrival. But from Paul's perspective there was no chance that anyone, however devout, would in fact keep Torah perfectly: 'through the law comes the knowledge of sin.' From one point of view this might be taken as a further demarcation of Israel: through the law comes the knowledge of the sin which those pagans out there are committing. To that extent, the law did indeed function as a fence around Israel. But for Paul 'through the law comes the knowledge of sin' meant, more particularly, that those who embraced Torah for themselves - i.e., the Jewish people - were themselves under the covenantal curse which Torah pronounced on those who broke it. Moses himself, at the climax of Torah in Deuteronomy, had warned that this curse would unfaillingly fall on Israel itself. Whatever Torah says, it speaks to those who are under Torah' - in other words, to Israel.

4. However, these different overlapping and interlocking functions meant that devout Jews like Saul of Tarsus were bound to treat Torah not as a puzzling vocation but as a badge of privilege. Torah set Israel apart from the world; very well, Israel was to be for ever the set-apart people. The signs of this set-apartness were well known both to Jews and to non-Jews in the first century: the specific 'works of Torah' which consisted of circumcision, sabbath and the food laws, together with a geographical focus on Jerusalem and its temple and a widely assumed (though no doubt often flouted) endogamy. It was assumed that Torah as a whole was to be kept, and would maintain the separation between Israel and the nations; but these were the 'works' which would stand out in particular as having that function. Paul the Apostle put these different functions of the law together, and concluded that Torah declared that the devout Jew (his own former self) had in fact broken it - at the very moment when he was rightly clinging to it. Or, to put it another way, the law functioned as the marriage-document to bind Israel, not after all to YHWH as one might suppose, but to Adam. Saul of Tarsus would have said that zealous Torah-keeping in the present would indicate who from among the covenant people would be vindicated in the future by being raised from the dead. No, says Paul the Apostle: that is a covenant status of my own [i.e. of ethnic Israel], based on Torah. However much one 'pursues Torah', or a 'righteousness' based on it, one will never in fact 'fulfil Torah'. Anyone who makes such an attempt will therefore 'stumble'. However, because of (2) above, even this stumble will turn out in retrospect to have been part of Torah's purpose. Paul expresses these paradoxes by speaking of a 'double Torah': the one in which the loyal Jew delights, and the one which is at work in his or her Adamic humanity to breed sin and death.

5. Within these paradoxes and puzzles, Paul discerned the strange vocation of Israel. Torah was a narrative - and he believed that it had devolved onto Israel's single representative, the Messiah. That is why Paul declares both that the Messiah died under the law's curse, and that the Messiah was the telos, the goal, of the law. The former was not, as many have supposed, a way of saying that the law had overreached itself, and had then been proved wrong when Jesus was vindicated in the resurrection. It was, rather, a way of saying that the necessary and appropriate curse of the covenant had fallen on the Messiah as Israel's representative. He had borne in himself the result of Israel's failure, so that the blessing promised not just to Abraham but through Abraham could now flow to the Gentiles. The God-given law had to do what it did, but once that had been done, and the curse exhausted in Jesus' representative death, the entire Mosaic dispensation would be seen as a long bracket within the story of Abraham's people. The law, it seems, had a God-given but time-limited purpose. Once that purpose had been fulfilled it was no longer relevant as the
marker of the covenant people. One of the basic mistakes of modern scholarship has been to flatten this eschatological narrative into an abstract scheme in which the law must be either a bad thing now happily pushed out of the way (as many within an older Lutheranism supposed) or a good thing now fulfilled and vindicated (the basic 'Reformed' view). The only way to understand Paul is to transpose these questions into the more many-sided Israel-and-Messiah narrative that he tells and retells. Within that, all the apparent 'negativity' about the law in Galatians is fully taken care of, without moving, as many have done, towards the basically Marcionite position of suggesting that not only the law but the Abraham story itself was something Paul would happily get rid of. To understand the 'curse of the law' one must understand the Deuteronomic framework within which it made the sense it did.

6. Exile would be replaced by restoration. Torah said it would happen, and despite its earlier negative role Torah would still have a part to play when the great day came. Exile was where the Israel-narrative had got to, Paul believed; but in Deuteronomy (and Isaiah, and Daniel, and many others) exile would be followed by restoration. Paul believed that this restoration had now happened in the Messiah. When Jews and Gentiles alike found themselves called by the gospel to believe in Jesus as the risen lord, Paul was clear that this very belief was the true fulfilment of Torah itself. As we shall see in the next chapter, he draws in Romans 10 on Deuteronomy 30 to make the claim that when someone confesses Jesus as lord and believes that the one God raised him from the dead they are in fact doing what Torah itself, looking forward to the return from exile and the renewal of the covenant, had always promised would happen. This is what Paul is referring to when, cryptically, he speaks of Torah in terms of 'the law of faith'.

7. Social, indeed ecclesial, consequences follow at once. All those who believe are now demarcated as the true Torah-keeping people, in other words, the people of the renewed covenant. Torah, as now redefined around Messiah and spirit, retains its community-shaping and community-defining function. This then produces new paradoxes: neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, since what matters is 'keeping God's commandments'. But, with this new-covenant redefinition, we find the characteristically Pauline rejection of any attempt to go on defining the covenant community by 'works of Torah' in the earlier sense (4 above). Once again, there are two reasons. First, if Torah-works such as circumcision and food laws defined the new covenant people, that would perpetuate the Jew/Gentile division which has now been overcome in the Messiah and spirit. The law of commandments and ordinances functioned like a wall to keep the pagans out, but it is now demolished. Second, even within the apparent safety of an Israel living within the 'fence' of Torah, there was no way through to the new covenant. Torah merely brought wrath, by revealing the Adamic sin which had not been dealt with.

8. This leads to Paul's remarkable developed statements about the way in which Messiah-people do in fact keep Torah. They 'fulfil its decrees' Torah is actually upheld through Messiah-faith. Again and again Paul speaks of the work of the spirit as enabling people to fulfil Torah in a way previously impossible. This appears to go beyond the 'faith' spoken of in point (6) above, and into the transformation not only of the heart but of the entire life.

9. Once this is grasped, and within this context, we can understand how Paul can develop the point to include a fuller range of ethical behaviour as a new form of Torah-keeping. The spirit produces agape, and this agape is the fulfilling of Torah - though we note with interest that certain aspects which would have maintained Jew/Gentile separation, such as the sabbath, are never mentioned in this connection.

10. Now at last it becomes apparent what Paul means by the fulfilment of the dikaiōma of the law in Romans 8.1–11: 'Torah's aim, to give life, is fulfilled in the resurrection. Paul had already spoken of the Torah being 'unto life'. Now, by the spirit, not only is the principle of life implanted in the hearts of believers; the ultimate fulfilment is assured. And that is not just a miscellaneous, however glorious, future hope. It is specifically and uniquely the hope of Israel. That is exactly the point both of Philippians 3.2–11 and Romans 8.1–11. When Paul speaks of the spirit indwelling believers and giving them new bodily life, he is saying that what Torah had promised is now at last to be accomplished. 'Do this', says Torah, 'and you will live'; Paul, radically redefining 'do this' around Messiah and spirit, looks ahead and sees that what Torah could not do, through no fault of its own, Israel's God has done in the Messiah and will do for all his people. The promise of Torah, the hope of Israel, was 'life'. It was, in fact, nothing other than resurrection.

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74 Eph. 2:14f.
75 Rom. 4.15 with 7.7–25; cp. Gal. 2.17f. Holding these two things together (Torah as separating Jew and Gentile; Torah as condemning its possessors for failure to keep it) is vital to avoid reducing 'works of Torah' simply to the outward symbols, however important they are. I would like to think that this move would reduce the gap between myself and e.g. Gathercole 2006a, 237–40.
76 Rom. 2.26f., looking back to 2.7, 13, etc.
77 Rom. 3.31.
78 Rom. 8.5–8. On the way all this works out see further e.g. below, 143f.
79 Rom. 13.8–10; Gal. 5.14; cf. 5.23.
80 Rom. 7.10; cf. Gal. 3.2.
5. Conclusion: Election Redefined

There is no need for a lengthy conclusion. All that remains is to point outwards, from the detailed discussions we have had, to the larger world of Pauline questions to which this chapter contributes.

First, and perhaps most important, there should be no question that Paul remained a deeply Jewish thinker. However much his 'kinsfolk according to the flesh' might have gnashed their teeth at his conclusions, his entire argument was that Israel's one God had been faithful to his word. He had done what he said he would do – even though this had only become clear with the dramatic and unexpected unveiling-in-action of his covenant purposes in the Messiah and the spirit. At every point Paul was at pains, not merely to 'illustrate' his argument with scriptural quotations (as though he were a mere proof-texter), but to argue precisely that the covenant God had done what scripture had all along predicted.

What we have seen, in fact, is a redefined Jewish perspective, which is neither that of a simplistic 'salvation history' nor that of a simplistic 'apocalyptic'. As we shall see more fully in the next chapter, the narrative of Israel was anything but a smooth and evolving 'history of God's mighty acts'. If anything, it was a history of divine judgment, of Israel being cut down to a remnant, of the covenant people apparently being led up a blind alley. That, of course, has been the strength of the anti-'salvation history' movement in recent times. The labels 'salvation history' and 'apocalyptic' are in reality two inadequate, half-broken signposts to a larger, richer reality than either had imagined. That is the reality which, I have suggested, is better described with (mutually defining) words such as 'messianic' and 'covenantal' – provided those are seen as heuristic devices to signal what Paul is saying, not Trojan horses in which other types of thought might be smuggled in.

If we manage to get beyond the false stand-off between 'salvation history' and 'apocalyptic', and also between 'participatory' and 'juridical', we should also manage, with this analysis, to transcend the low-grade either/or that has been taking place between 'old' and 'new' perspectives. I have shown in this chapter the rich integration of the various themes, with the redefined theology. Not only do they function as a whole, but it is clear that the 'apocalyptic' with 'participationist' language and thought. As with the other two great divisions that have bedevilled the discipline, we have argued that the two coexist perfectly coherently in Paul and, once more, should not be played off against one another. The 'juridical' language – the running law court metaphor of Romans 3, the language of 'justification' and so on – is not just 'one metaphor among many', because in Israel's scriptures, certainly the way Paul read them, the obligation of the one God to 'judge' the world was absolute. The alternative would be chaos come again. The creator must, in the end, put all things right. 'Juridical' language is not a mere pragmatic offshoot of something more fundamental, introduced solely (as Wrede thought, with Schweitzer at this point largely agreeing) for the sake of pressing the point about gentile inclusion. It is basic and non-negotiable. Nor can the language of the law court be reduced to the rationalistic parody in which unbelievers are bludgeoned into accepting a strange pseudo-intellectual logic which leads them to some kind of conversion. Paul's juridical language is simply not like that. Equally, Paul again and again makes it clear that 'justification' is something that happens because of the messianic events of Jesus' death and resurrection, and through the spirit-driven means of gospel, faith and baptism by which people come to be 'in the Messiah'. Schweitzer's basic instinct was right – he was, after all, heir to the Calvinist tradition as well as several others – when he said that the language of 'justification' belonged ultimately within the language of 'being in Christ'. Where he was misleading was first in labelling the latter reality 'mysticism', and second in using his true insight about (a) the nesting of circumcision, was intense; and of course it is trivial to think of such things as irrelevant 'works-righteousness' in an older protestant sense. But of course Paul was dealing with the biggest issues in the world: the question of creator and cosmos, of humans and their idols, of sin and death and of ultimate rescue from both of them, of Israel and the nations and, at the centre, of Jesus and his cross and resurrection, and of the gift of the spirit. And of course all these things joined up, since the theology itself pointed again and again to the intention of the creator God to live in and among his people, so that their common life was no mere accident, an incidental function of their pragmatic desire to meet up for worship from time to time, but the rich redefinition of nothing less than Israel's central symbol; the temple. Part II of the present book thus integrates fully with Part III, the worldview-analysis with the redefined theology. Not only do they belong closely together in the sense simply of sitting side by side and keeping one another company. By this stage of the argument we see more clearly, I think, that this worldview needs something like this theology to sustain it. The combination of the two presents a sketch of Paul's world of practice and belief in which the false antitheses regularly found in analyses of Paul may perhaps be eliminated.

In particular, we have shown in this chapter the rich integration of 'juridical' with 'participationist' language and thought. As with the other great divides that have bedevilled the discipline, we have argued that the two coexist perfectly coherently in Paul and, once more, should not be played off against one another. The 'juridical' language – the running law court metaphor of Romans 3, the language of 'justice', 'justification' and so on – is not just 'one metaphor among many', because in Israel's scriptures, certainly the way Paul read them, the obligation of the one God to 'judge' the world was absolute. The alternative would be chaos come again. The creator must, in the end, put all things right. 'Juridical' language is not a mere pragmatic offshoot of something more fundamental, introduced solely (as Wrede thought, with Schweitzer at this point largely agreeing) for the sake of pressing the point about gentile inclusion. It is basic and non-negotiable. Nor can the language of the law court be reduced to the rationalistic parody in which unbelievers are bludgeoned into accepting a strange pseudo-intellectual logic which leads them to some kind of conversion. Paul's juridical language is simply not like that. Equally, Paul again and again makes it clear that 'justification' is something that happens because of the messianic events of Jesus' death and resurrection, and through the spirit-driven means of gospel, faith and baptism by which people come to be 'in the Messiah'. Schweitzer's basic instinct was right – he was, after all, heir to the Calvinist tradition as well as several others – when he said that the language of 'justification' belonged ultimately within the language of 'being in Christ'. Where he was misleading was first in labelling the latter reality 'mysticism', and second in using his true insight about (a) the nesting of
'juridical' language within 'participationist', and (b) the function of justification within Paul's arguments for gentile inclusion, to suggest that justification was a mere polemical tool for use in key debates. Once again, we need better categories. I hope the present chapter has helped to provide them. We shall revisit this discussion towards the conclusion of this book.

For the moment, however, we may say this on one of the most important topics of all. I hope to have laid to rest the extraordinary and persistent notion both that Paul used the word Christos as a mere proper name and that the notion of Jesus' Messiahship plays no particular role within the apostle's theology. I would actually put it the other way round: the failure of many generations of scholars even to glimpse the rich messianic meaning which pervades so much of Paul's writing is a measure of how inadequate such readings have been, and helps to explain why so many other issues have remained puzzling and unresolved. There are big questions waiting in the wings at this point, of course, not least the question of politics: if Jesus is Messiah, does this mean that Paul is committed to some version of the Jewish political dream? Paul's answer comes in passages like Philippians 2.6-11, 1 Corinthians 15.20-28 and Romans 8. For Paul, Jesus as Messiah is the world's true Lord. That is what ancient Israel's expectation of the coming king always stated. Paul celebrates that belief unreservedly: it has been fulfilled, he believes, in Jesus. Jesus' shameful death on the cross has radically redefined the very notions of power, empire, kingdom and lordship; but his resurrection has radically reaffirmed them all, albeit in this radically redefined form. Perhaps, after all, that is at the root of the rejection of resurrection in so much liberal protestant theology: Easter would blow the lid off the Enlightenment settlement in which the church looked after 'spirituality' while allowing the politicians and imperialists to run the world. That position will be implicitly undermined in chapter 12 below.

But the question of Christology, seen in this chapter as part of the redefinition of the ancient Jewish doctrine of election, must ultimately join up with the question of Christology in the previous chapter, where it is part of the redefinition of ancient Jewish monotheism. Confusion has often reigned in Pauline scholarship when these two have been squashed together, for instance in the attempts to demonstrate the historical derivation of early Christian worship of Jesus in terms of exalted (pre-Christian) ideas about a Messiah, or in the proposal that Paul's incorporative Christology is itself a sign of a belief in Jesus' 'divinity'. As I suggested in chapter 9, I do not believe that the earliest Christians had started with ideas about exalted human (or angelic) figures, or even abstractions like 'wisdom', and, attaching them to Jesus under the impulse of remarkable 'experiences', had built up to a picture of his 'divinity'. They were starting, I argued, with promises that Israel's God had made concerning the things he was intending to come and do in person, and they were telling those stories once more in the shocked belief that Israel's God had done what he promised — in and as Jesus of Nazareth. They were not telling stories about humans and discovering that they could reach up to the one God. They were telling stories about the one God in the dazed, awed belief that they were now telling these same stories about a human being.

That remains true even if any sense of an 'incorporative Messiah' were to be bracketed out of the picture. But once we add that element into the mix, as we have done in the present chapter, we find ourselves returning to the theme which played a central role in chapter 9. The temple in Jerusalem, and behind that the tabernacle in the wilderness, drew together monotheism and election: the God who deigned to dwell with his people, and to be known in terms of that dwelling, provided, in himself and his presence, the ultimate definition of his people. If he was 'the God who dwells in Jerusalem', Israel was the people who structured their life around the call to worship him there. In Israel's scriptures, these elements were joined in the person and work of the king, who would build or cleanse the temple and lead the people in worship. We have no clear evidence that any pre-Christian Jews had tied all these strands together in such a way, though some features of this picture are visible at Qumran. But for Paul, as he drew out the significance of what all the earliest Christians believed about Jesus' messianic life, death and resurrection, the categories of monotheism and election themselves came together and generated a new combined picture in which the temple itself came into fresh prominence. The promise that one day YHWH would return to the temple, rescuing his people and bringing justice to the world, turned into the announcement that he had indeed returned, in and as his people's representative. He was himself, in some sense, the one who built the temple and the one who would dwell in it. And the temple he built was not made of timber and stone, but of flesh and blood. Here the major themes of Paul's thought meet and merge: Israel's God, coming back to rescue his people and the world and to dwell with them for ever; Israel itself, God's people, redefined around the Messiah and spirit who were themselves the means and mode of that dwelling.

Perhaps the closest Paul comes to saying all this is that remarkable catena of quotations which suddenly bursts out as he reflects on the church's vocation to be God's Temple:

We are the temple of the living God, you see, just as God said:

I will live among them and walk about with them;
I will be their God, and they will be my people.
So come out from among them,
and separate yourselves, says the Lord;
no unclean thing must you touch.
Then I will receive you gladly,
and I will be to you as a father,
and you will be to me as sons and daughters,
says the Lord, the Almighty.79

79 2 Cor. 6.16–18, quoting or echoing Lev. 26.11f; Ezek. 37.27; Isa. 52.11; Ezek. 20.34, 41; 2 Sam. 7.14.
The final promise takes what the covenant God said to David about his royal son, in connection with David's plan to build the temple, and turns it into a promise for, and about, all his people. The living presence of the one God is promised to the Messiah's people, as part of the kaleidoscopic array of promises which, in context, speak not only of temple-building but of resurrection, of divine victory and divine kingdom.

But, since all of these are precisely elements of the future hope both of ancient Israel and of second-temple Judaism, we must now turn to the final chapter of Part III. Monotheism has been rethought around Messiah and spirit. Election has been similarly reworked. There remains Eschatology.

Chapter Eleven

GOD'S FUTURE FOR THE WORLD, FRESHLY IMAGINED

1. Introduction

Many ancient Jews clung on to a hope which had specific content and shape. Rooted in scripture, this was a hope not just for an individual future after death, but for a restoration and renewal of the whole nation, and perhaps even for the entire created order. Such Jews were distinguished from their pagan neighbours, however, not simply by the precise content of this hope, but by the fact that they had any large-scale hope at all. To be sure, some elements of Jewish hope for a life beyond the grave have antecedents, and then parallels, not least among the peoples further east, though our evidence for ancient Babylonian and Persian eschatology is by no means as full as we would like, and certainly not sufficient to mount a detailed comparative study. Egypt, too, had a particular tradition of future hope, though this seems to have been simply for a significant life in the world of the dead, not for the renewal of present national fortunes, let alone of the world. But the peoples of Greece and Rome, and the lands into which the culture of the former and the empire of the latter had made such powerful inroads, were, by comparison with the Jewish people, 'without hope'. That is Paul's blunt verdict. If there was a 'golden age', it was in the distant past, not in the future. It would be very odd for a Dictionary of Judaism not to have a substantial entry on 'Hope', even if, after the scholarly custom for preferring five syllables to one, such an entry might be called 'Eschatology'. There is no such entry in the Oxford Classical Dictionary.

The verdict 'without hope' might at first seem harsh. Did not many hope for a blissful life beyond the grave, whether in the Elysian fields, conversing with fellow-philosophers, or at least for a reincarnation in which a better fate might await them than they had previously enjoyed? Well, yes, they did. But the judgment remains. There is nothing in the literature of Greece

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1 On CI Jewish hope see NTPG ch. 10; and above, ch. 2, esp. 108-75.
2 On all this see RSG 124f., pointing out that the older attempts to 'derive' developed Jewish beliefs from e.g. ancient Persia now seem considerably less secure. See too Collins 2000b, distinguishing 'political eschatology', 'cosmic eschatology' and 'personal eschatology' and tracking the varied beliefs of many cultures.
3 Eph. 2.12.
4 On the apparent exception of Virgil Ec. 4, see below. For the idea of rotating historical periods, with the golden age eventually reappearing, see JVG 451 n. 32. On these see Collins 2000b.
5 see RSG 47-51, 77-80.