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**CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST:
AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
PAULINE IMAGE-VOCABULARY PASSAGES
FOR PAUL AND THE GENTILE PROBLEM**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy (5129)

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Fremantle Campus

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgment has been made.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of primary and secondary sources follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*. The following may be found herein.

Hebrew Bible and New Testament

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------|------|-------------|
| 1-2 Cor | 1-2 Corinthians | Lk | Luke |
| 1-2 Chr | 1-2 Chronicles | Mic | Micah |
| Acts | Acts | Mk | Mark |
| Col | Colossians | Mt | Matthew |
| Dan | Daniel | Num | Numbers |
| Eph | Ephesians | Phil | Philippians |
| Ex | Exodus | Prov | Proverbs |
| Ezr | Ezra | Rev | Revelation |
| Gal | Galatians | Rom | Romans |
| Isa | Isaiah | Tob | Tobit |
| Jer | Jeremiah | Zech | Zechariah |
| Job | Job | | |

Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

| | | | |
|---------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1-2 Esd | 1-2 Esdras | Wis | Wisdom of Solomon |
| Jdt | Judith | <i>1 En.</i> | 1 Enoch |
| Sir | Sirach/ Ecclesiasticus | <i>Jub.</i> | Jubilees |

Josephus

| | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| <i>Ant.</i> | Jewish Antiquities |
|-------------|--------------------|

Philo

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Agriculture</i> | On Agriculture |
| <i>Alleg. Interp.</i> | Allegorical Interpretation |
| <i>Confusion</i> | On the Confusion of Tongues |
| <i>Dreams</i> | On Dreams |
| <i>Drunkenness</i> | On Drunkenness |
| <i>Embassy</i> | On the Embassy to Gaius |
| <i>Flight</i> | On Flight and Finding |
| <i>Heir</i> | Who is the Heir? |
| <i>Migration</i> | On the Migration of Abraham |
| <i>Moses</i> | On the Life of Moses |
| <i>Posterity</i> | On the Posterity of Cain |
| <i>QE</i> | Questions and Answers on Exodus |
| <i>QG</i> | Questions and Answers on Genesis |
| <i>Virtues</i> | On the Virtues |

Modern Bible Versions

| | |
|------|------------------------------|
| JB | Jerusalem Bible |
| KJV | King James Version |
| NIV | New International Version |
| NJB | New Jerusalem Bible |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| REB | Revised English Bible |
| RV | Revised Version |

ABSTRACT

To investigate Paul's thought on the Gentile problem is to ask how, in Paul's understanding, the Gentiles have come to be included as the recipients of the blessings promised to Abraham's descendants when, in fact, they are not Abraham's descendants. Constructing a satisfactory response, however, is fraught with difficulty. Paul's theological assertions concerning his Gentile mission do not always fit neatly together and the variegated nature of Pauline scholarship has made his thought on the Gentile problem appear differently across many perspectives. Is Paul's Gentile mission best understood through the Jewish "eschatological pilgrimage" tradition, as some scholars suggest? Or is it simply the outflowing of his insistence on faith in Christ, as the "Old Perspective" championed? Is he chiefly concerned with extending covenantal membership to Gentiles, as the "New Perspective" proffers? Or is he adamant that the Gentiles remain Gentiles and not become Jews, as the "Radical New Perspective" argues? Does he ever turn to Stoic physics or the Roman legal context to incorporate Gentiles into the covenant community? Attempting to answer questions such as these can help one appreciate the fact that the Gentile problem has become something of an academic battleground. In contemporary discussions on the matter, however, little attention has been addressed to Paul's language of "image" in passages that speak of being or becoming an "image" of Christ. The distinctive contribution of the present study is that it begins to fill this gap in Pauline scholarship by intertextually analysing three such passages (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) and asking afresh how these two aspects – Paul's language of "image" and his thought on the Gentile problem – belong together. By doing so, it seeks to identify and explore any insights that emerge from this analysis and shed new light on Paul's thought vis-à-vis the Gentile problem.

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CHAPTER I: PAUL, JUDAISM, AND THE GENTILES

Paul is famous in the history of Christianity as the “apostle to the Gentiles.”¹ Yet, it has become increasingly difficult to ascertain his thought on the Gentile mission, the influences that shape it, and its significance for present times. His theological justifications for the Gentile mission do not always fit neatly together, and the variegated nature of Pauline scholarship has made his thought appear differently across many “perspectives.”² Is Paul’s Gentile mission best understood through the Jewish “eschatological pilgrimage” tradition, as some scholars suggest? Or is it simply the outflowing of his insistence on faith in Christ, as the “Old Perspective” championed? Is he chiefly concerned with extending covenantal membership to Gentiles, as the “New Perspective” proffers? Or is he adamant that the Gentiles remain Gentiles and not become Jews, as the “Radical New Perspective” argues? Does he ever turn to Stoic physics or the Roman legal context to incorporate Gentiles into the covenant community? Attempting to answer questions such as these can help one appreciate the fact that the “Gentile problem” has become something of an academic battleground.³ One can only ask with a sense of caution, if not outright trepidation: can anything more be added to scholarly conversation on the matter?

In the abundant discussion on the Gentile problem, however, little attention has been addressed to Paul’s vocabulary of “image,” even though Paul repeatedly employs it in ways that signal its usage is no mere rhetoric (cf. Rom 8:29, 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15,

1. The two modern English words commonly used to translate the Greek τὰ ἔθνη, Gentile and pagan, have two different connotations: “Gentile” refers to ethnicity but seems religiously neutral, “pagan” refers to religion but seems ethnically neutral. As Fredriksen and others insist, this distinction between ethnicity and religion is not native to ancient Mediterranean cultures. In antiquity, ethnicity and religion were so intertwined that humans were born into obligations towards their ancestral gods. Religion was tied to family, inheritance, and ancestral customs, even if ethnicity was, in some respects, a constructed rather than primordial phenomenon. On this point, see Paula Fredriksen, “Why Should a “Law-Free” Mission Mean a “Law-Free” Apostle?,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134, no. 3 (2015): 639-42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jbl.2015.0026> That being stated, the word “Gentile” is used throughout this study, unless “pagan” appears within a quotation.

2. For an overview of these “perspectives,” see Michael J. Gorman, “Pauline Theology: *Perspectives, Perennial Topics, and Prospects*,” in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 197-213; N. T. Wright, “Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship,” *The Expository Times* 123, no. 8 (2012): 367-81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524612440763>.

3. The term “Gentile problem” is explicit in the title of Thiessen’s recent book *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, where it refers to the problem of relating Gentiles to Israel and Israel’s God. It has since been used by other authors, and it is being borrowed here. See, *inter alia*, Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 76; Christine Hayes, “Thiessen and Kaden on Paul and the Gentiles,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and his Letters* 7, no. 1-2 (2017): 68, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jstudpaullett.7.1-2.0068; Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 76.

3:10).⁴ In fact, the language of *being* or *becoming* conformed to the “image” of Christ is distinctive to Paul’s writings; no other New Testament writer employs such language or makes similar assertions. And if Paul’s theology is, as it is now widely accepted, articulated in the context of his Gentile mission, how do these two aspects – his image-language and his thought on the Gentile problem – belong together?⁵ Does his image-language shed any light upon the place of Jews and Gentiles within God’s redemptive action in Jesus Christ? The distinctive contribution of the present study is that, in the first instance, it begins to fill this gap in Pauline scholarship. It does so by an intertextual analysis of three passages (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) to explore the significance of Paul’s image language vis-à-vis the Gentile problem.

The study proceeds in five chapters. This chapter introduces the Gentile problem and explores the diversity of Second Temple Jewish strategies for Gentile inclusion that form the context to Paul’s Gentile mission. The second chapter briefly explores the variegated terrain of Pauline scholarship on the matter, with the aim of reinforcing the point that Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem remains a contentious, yet significant, aspect for Pauline studies. In doing so, it also introduces the scholarly conversation to which the present study seeks to contribute. In chapter three, the research task and methodology are sketched, and the tasks of outlining its goals, offering preliminary responses to possible objections, and providing a realistic appraisal of its limitations are taken up. Chapter four then intertextually analyses the three passages under consideration, and chapter five concludes the present study by exploring the significance of its findings in conversation with some of the issues raised in the first two chapters.

4. For a brief defence of the Pauline authorship of Colossians, see Michael F. Bird, *Colossians & Philemon*, New Covenant Commentary Series, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2009), 4-9; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 35-39; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 28-41. Those who assume Colossians to be authentically Pauline include Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 9; Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 29; Gordon D. Fee, "Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians: Reflections on Pauline Christology and Gentile Inclusion in God's Story," in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, ed. Sang-Won (Aaron) Son (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 201. Others who have expressed confidence about Pauline authorship include Richard B. Hays and Douglas A. Campbell.

5. Gorman, for instance, speaks of the “contextual sensitivity” that was at the heart of Paul’s pastoral responsibility and the fact that Paul’s letters are occasioned by the need to interpret the coherent Gospel message in the light of the concrete and contingent situations experienced by the churches that he addresses. See Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: a Theological Introduction to Paul and his Letters* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2017), 94-95.

Paul, the Gentiles, and the “Gentile Problem”

That the mission to the Gentiles occupies an integral, if not central, place in the life and work of Paul is hardly a point of contention. His preaching of the “good news” to Gentiles in the Roman empire is noted both in his own writings and elsewhere (cf. Acts 9:15, 13:46-48, 15:12, etc.). Concern for the Gentiles appears as an axiomatic aspect of his self-understanding (cf. Rom 1:5, 13; 15:15-18; Gal 1:16, 2:2, 7-8; Col 1:25-27; Eph 3:1-6), and “apostle to the Gentiles” is even a self-identification in his letters (Rom 11:13). He asserts that the “revelation” of God’s Son to him was for the sake of the Gentile mission (Gal 1:16) and creates communities comprising of both Jews and Gentiles. For the sake of these unconventional communities, he develops and defends a controversial policy whereby his Gentile converts are exempt from Jewish customs such as circumcision and dietary laws (cf. Gal 5:1-6). Indeed, it is in writing to these communities that he articulates and develops his theology, seeing in them the visible sign of the power of the “good news” that he preached, and the fulfilment of the covenantal promises once made to Abraham (Rom 4:16-25, 15:8-12; Gal 4:21-31).⁶

How do these two aspects of Pauline theology – the inclusion of Gentiles into communities that bridge the gap between Jews and Gentiles and the covenantal promises made to Abraham – cohere? After all, one of the ways that both Paul and other Second Temple Jews conceived the world was as being composed of two communities: Jews, and everyone else (Gentiles, “the nations”; Hebrew, גוים; Greek, τὰ ἔθνη).⁷ They held that God had made certain promises to Abraham and his descendants, and had entered covenantal

6. In both Galatians and Romans, Paul attempts to relate Gentiles to the Abrahamic promises, thereby indicating that he does not intend to circumvent the problem of Abrahamic descent. In fact, he goes so far as to call the uncircumcised Gentile believers both “sons” and “seed” of Abraham in Gal 3.

7. The scholarly view that Second Temple Jews held a concept of the Other in a binary, undifferentiated, and generalised manner (so that one was either a Jew or a non-Jew) synchronically with differentiated conceptions of the Other, has recently been challenged by Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, who argue that the former did not exist at the time. Instead, they proffer that it is the invention of tannaitic rabbis of the first to early third century CE, with some help from Paul. See Ishay Rosen-Zvi and Adi Ophir, “Paul and the Invention of the Gentiles,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 105, no. 1 (2015): 1-41, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/43298709>; Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Goy: Israel's Others and the Birth of the Gentile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). As helpful as their conceptual distinctions between the differentiated and undifferentiated Other might be, the argument is not entirely persuasive. For a critical response to their case, see Christine Hayes, “The Complicated Goy in Classical Rabbinic Sources,” in *Perceiving the Other in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, Wolfgang Grünstäudl, and Matthew Thiessen (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 147-67. Furthermore, “Gentile” [τὰ ἔθνη] is not the only designation applied by Second Temple Jews to non-Jews; Greeks [Ἕλληνες], uncircumcised or “the foreskin” [ἀκροβυστία], and lawless [ἄνομος] are other such designations. For a nuanced survey of these terms, see Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 71-84. Paul appears to be at home in this standard antithesis and its stereotypes (cf. Gal 2:15, 3:28; 1 Cor 1:18-25; Rom 1:16-25).

relationship with Israel alone. Jew, and by implication Gentile, were divinely instituted identities; Israel's God was not indifferent to descent.⁸ Covenantal self-understanding and faithfulness thus involved, among other things, remaining distinct from the Gentiles. This makes it fitting to speak of a "Gentile problem," that Christine E. Hayes succinctly expresses in asking, "How are the Gentiles to be included in the experiences of God's promises if they are not the descendants of Abraham? How are they to be brought into the community of those who will receive the benefits and blessings of God's promise?"⁹

The Gentile Problem Obscured

On this issue, however, Christian interpretations of Paul have often been characterised by a tendency to present him as an antithesis to the Judaism of his day. It is frequently assumed that the central theological problem in his letters, around which everything else finds its place, is the problem of universal sinfulness.¹⁰ Given Paul's language of faith and justification – indeed, "justification by faith" (cf. Rom 5:1; Gal 2:16) – interpreters portray him as the theologian of "grace" who resisted the "legalism" of the Judaism of his day.¹¹ Other Second Temple Jews are assumed to have preached a "works-based" religion, while Paul preaches a "faith-based" religion, asserting that sinful humanity is acceptable to God through faith in Christ, not works that attempt to merit one's salvation. In fact, the "traditional" Paul would appear so convinced about the pervasiveness of sin, that he considers Torah-based religion not only incapable of being salvific but also detrimental to

8. For an informative discussion of this aspect and its strangeness to modern sensibilities, see Paula Fredriksen, "How Jewish Is God? Divine Ethnicity in Paul's Theology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 1 (2018): 193-205, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1371.2018.342426>.

9. Hayes, "Thiessen and Kaden on Paul and the Gentiles," 68. As Donaldson has observed, the Gentile problem is, in part, due to a tension inherent to Israel's understanding of the covenant. Israel's God is both the creator of all and the God who covenants with Israel alone. As the former, the Gentiles cannot simply be excluded from God's purposes. As the latter, the Gentiles cannot simply be included without threatening Israel's identity and election, since Israel is a nation defined over against other nations and must remain distinct from them if it is to remain faithful to its election. Israel must, in fact, repeatedly reckon with the place of other nations in God's plans amid various socio-political contexts throughout its history. Its Scriptures, however, provide no clear indication of how this tension is to be resolved. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 75.

10. Cf. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 4-6. For a helpful analysis of the way this plays out in the so-called "Lutheran" Paul, see Stephen Westerholm, *The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics: Perspectives Old and New on Paul* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 88-97.

11. See discussions in John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2017), 79-146; Westerholm, *The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics: Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 3-87.

one's salvation since it fosters prideful self-reliance rather than humble dependence on God's grace.¹²

This assumption of sinful humanity as the fundamental problem for Paul has had the effect of obscuring his apostolic concern for the Gentiles by simply taking for granted that Paul's Gentile mission is explained by the universal plight of generic humanity and his emphasis on faith in Christ. The categories of Jew and Gentile are thus secondary, if not irrelevant; "grace, not race," as N.T. Wright has expressed it.¹³ Access to the one God has been possible on identical terms for Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and this would seemingly explain how the Gentiles found a place in Paul's thinking.¹⁴ It is not surprising, then, that Paul's interest in the Gentiles as a Jew did not raise the slightest curiosity within the "Old Perspective" that dominated Christian interpretations through the ages.

Bound up with this characterisation of Paul is the characterisation of Christianity as a universalistic religion that sheds the particularities central to Judaism.¹⁵ It has been widely assumed that Christianity is transcendent and open to all people, in contrast to Judaism which emphasises kinship, territory, and boundary markers to inscribe and preserve its notions of identity and alterity. Second Temple Judaism is frequently conceived as being monolithic, particularistic, and exclusivist: Second Temple Jews erected a boundary between themselves and Gentiles, and Gentiles crossed that boundary only by "becoming" Jews. Pauline scholarship has often borrowed and applied these caricatures of Judaism as foils for Paul's thought on the Gentile problem.¹⁶ The "opponents" with whom Paul contends are thus identified as other Second Temple Jews who are deeply ethnocentric and

12. This more extreme reading is seen, for instance, in Bultmann and Hubner. As Byrne describes their readings, "even the very attempt to keep the law is already sin, because it is done in a self-regarding way, neglectful of the sovereignty of God." See Brendan Byrne, "Interpreting Romans: The New Perspective and Beyond," *Interpretation* 58, no. 3 (2004): 248, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430405800303>.

13. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 247.

14. Consider, for example, Cerfaux's explanation of the Gentile mission: "The principle by which Israel had lived is done away with. The abolition of the law and the call to the pagans are correlated, since in the divine plan revealed to Paul the heathens do not enter the Church through the intermediary of Judaism, but through the wide-open door of mercy. [...] The whole of Judaism is obsolete; the works of the flesh are useless. The death of Christ suppresses the law in its entirety." Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), 69.

15. Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Paul and Ethnicity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

16. Baur, for instance, argued that in the history of religions, Christianity was the "higher" form of religion because it rejected Jewish particularism, and that it was Paul who "broke through the barriers of Judaism and rose out of the particularism of Judaism into the universal idea of Christianity." F.C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, vol. I (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 47.

who insist on “works of the law” as the only way of incorporating Gentiles within the community. In contrast to these “opponents,” Paul preaches a message free of ethnocentricity and rails against “boundary-markers” like circumcision and dietary laws vis-à-vis Gentile inclusion.¹⁷

A New Paradigm, A New Problem

In recent decades, these caricatures of Second Temple Judaism have been significantly undermined. E. P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* successfully rejected the caricature of Judaism as a religion of “works” and instead represented it as a religion of “covenantal nomism,” explicitly founded on grace, election, and covenant.¹⁸ In its aftermath, interpreters found “grace” everywhere in Second Temple Judaism, rendering claims of “grace” being the point of contention between Paul and his interlocutors untenable.¹⁹ That Paul and other Second Temple Jews agreed that “grace” and “works” were not alternative roads to salvation was, in fact, the *sine qua non* of the “New Perspective” (NPP).²⁰ The NPP insisted that Paul’s theology of justification was articulated not just in the context of the Gentile mission but for the sake of the Gentile mission; that his theology

17. On the one hand, Paul is himself partly responsible for this characterisation because of his polemical rhetoric against his interlocutors. It is no little challenge to distinguish Paul’s reconstructions from his interlocutors’ actual arguments. On the other hand, as Barclay has observed, there has always been a temptation, even in scholarly circles, to “dress up Paul’s opponents with the clothes of one’s own theological foes.” See John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987): 81. Barclay perceptively observes, “I suspect this is why, in Protestant circles, Paul’s opponents have so often been described as legalistic and mean-minded Jewish Christians, with a streak of fundamentalist biblicism: in exegeting and supporting Paul one can thereby hit out at Jews, Catholics, and fundamentalists all at once!”

18. As Sanders put it, “election and ultimately salvation are considered to be by God’s mercy rather than human achievement.” He arrived at this conclusion by analysing various Jewish sources like the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha (Ben Sira), the Pseudepigrapha (1 Enoch, *Jubilees*, Psalms of Solomon, and Tannaitic literature). He contended that salvation in them is always by the grace of God, embodied in the covenant, even though the terms of the covenant demanded obedience. 4 Ezra, he believed, was the only exception to this pattern of “covenantal nomism,” since it was characterised by “legalistic perfectionism.” Sanders’ challenge to then-prevalent caricatures of Judaism that utilised Reformation categories to denigrate it as a religion of “works-righteousness,” though not without its own limitations, had been widely influential and has largely informed subsequent discussions of Paul and Second Temple Judaism. See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 422.

19. Thanks to the magisterial work of Barclay on the matter, it can now be said, “Grace is everywhere in Second Temple Judaism but not everywhere the same.” Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 6, 319.

20. Though the “New Perspective” – so dubbed by James D.G. Dunn – is far from homogenous, a helpful listing of ten characteristics may be found in Byrne, “Interpreting Romans: The New Perspective and Beyond,” 245-47. Sanders rightly considered (and rejected) the alternative possibility that Paul simply misunderstood the Judaism of his day. The alternative is also not widely held in contemporary scholarly circles. See Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 297.

was not polemical but apologetic.²¹ One of the consequences of this shift was that the Gentile mission, formerly seen as axiomatic, now began to appear problematic: if Paul's earlier life in Judaism was a life of "covenantal nomism," how did his subsequent "faith" in Christ spur his "law-free mission" to the Gentiles?

Some NPP proponents argued that the crux of the matter was "ethnocentrism"; that Paul dismisses "works of the law" (cf. Rom 3:27-28; Gal 2:16, 3:1-13) not because of "works-righteousness" (as the "Old Perspective" had been said to claim) but because they were misused by his contemporaries to exclude Gentiles from the covenant community.²² This assertion distinguished the "New Perspective" from the "Old Perspective" that emphasised the individual's relation to God – a concern that the NPP dismissed as the outcome of "Western" preoccupation with sin and guilt, its Augustinian-Lutheran patrimony – rather than social relations between groups.²³ To state it differently, whereas the "Old Perspective" was thought to have seen justification as the solution to the predicament of human sinfulness, the "New Perspective" portrayed it as a "social, horizontal, or ecclesial reality."²⁴ Paul's distinctive thought on the Gentile problem was taken to lie in his conviction that "justification is not confined to Jews as marked out by their distinctive works; it is open to all, to Gentile as well as Jew, through faith."²⁵

This characterisation of Second Temple Judaism as ethnocentric and exclusivist has also been recently challenged. In this regard, two distinct but interrelated observations may be made. On the one hand, there is a lack of evidence suggesting Second Temple Jews developed aggressive and systematic campaigns aimed at proselytising Gentiles and

21. Cf. Stendahl's contention: "We think that Paul spoke about justification by faith, using the Jew-Gentile situation as an instance, as an example. But Paul was chiefly concerned about the relation between Jews and Gentiles – and in the development of *this* concern he used as one of his arguments the idea of justification by faith." Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 3. Emphasis in original.

22. See, *inter alia*, James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 118-19, 45, 363, 68-69; N. T. Wright, "Romans," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 480. To be fair, Dunn also speaks of Paul's "rediscovery" of what was already there in Judaism, rather than presenting Paul as a simple antithesis of Second Temple Judaism. Paul's interlocutors, nonetheless, are still characterised as ethnocentric and lacking in openness to all. James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 369.

23. Or as Moo puts it, "The result is a shift in the axis of Paul's teaching from the vertical – sinful human beings and a just God – to the horizontal – the selfish Jewish people and estranged Gentiles." Douglas J. Moo, "John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* and the New Perspective on Paul," *Themelios* 41, no. 2 (2018): 281.

24. Gorman, "Pauline Theology: *Perspectives, Perennial Topics, and Prospects*," 199.

25. Dunn, *New Perspective*, 199.

recruiting them into Judaism.²⁶ There is little evidence to show that Judaism was self-consciously “missionary” or that there was a widely held ethos that sought to persuade Gentiles to abandon their ways of life and adopt a Torah-based life.²⁷ On the other hand, Second Temple Jews did hold a variety of views on Gentiles and there were “conscious attempts to give pagans a positive disposition to Judaism, to defend Judaism against criticism, to demonstrate the parity of the Jewish way of life with Hellenism, [...] a willingness to receive incomers” and “great pride in the number of Gentiles who imitated or adopted the Jewish way of life.”²⁸ Second Temple Jews envisaged differing degrees of permeability in boundaries, attempted to positively relate Gentiles to Israel’s God, made provisions for non-Jewish membership within the community, and even accepted full-fledged border crossings. Such “patterns of universalism” – as Terence L. Donaldson has helpfully termed them – attest to the diversity within Second Temple Judaism regarding Gentile inclusion.²⁹ Paul’s views on the matter, then, cannot simply be represented as the antithesis of an exclusionary Second Temple Judaism. And if the distinctiveness of Paul’s thought is to be rediscovered, it cannot be without carefully resituating him within his original Jewish context.³⁰ It is thus important to construct the matrix of Jewish “solutions” to the Gentile problem to recognise how Paul’s thought coincides and conflicts with them.

Contesting Universalism

“Patterns of universalism,” nevertheless, do not exhaust the ways in which Second Temple Jews sought to relate to Gentiles. It would be unjustified to assume that there was even a

26. Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 149. See also John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities: The shape, extent and background of early Christian mission* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 49-50.

27. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 151.

28. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 150. As Fredriksen puts it, “Judaism, of course, did not have views of Gentiles; Jews did. Their encounter with other nations, across cultures and continents, resulted in a jumble of perceptions, prejudices, optative descriptions, social arrangements, and daily accommodations that we can reconstruct from the various literary and epigraphical evidence only with difficulty.” See Paula Fredriksen, “Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1-2,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 42, no. 2 (1991): 533-34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23965314>. Of course, Gentiles had diverse views about Jews as well, some of which have been documented in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-84).

29. The term is explicit in the title of Donaldson’s book. Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007).

30. Cf. “Any proper understanding of the Gentile mission in the early Church needs to recognise that the early Church movement came to birth in an environment that was already universalistic. Early Christian debates about whether and on what terms Gentiles could be included in the movement are to be seen not as *sui generis* but as variations of debates that were already well established within Judaism.” Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 9.

universal interest in the Gentile problem within Second Temple Judaism.³¹ Some, if not many, Jews might have been simply indifferent to debates surrounding Gentile inclusion and the realities of Jew-Gentile relationships in the world that they inhabited. Alongside these strands of indifference, however, lies the strand that responded to the question of whether Gentiles could positively relate to Israel and its God with a resounding ‘No.’ It conceived of Gentiles as something like Augustine’s *massa damnata et damnabilis*: the Gentiles were intrinsically, and thus irremediably, precluded from membership within the covenant community.³² These sectarian tendencies were given extreme articulations in the post-exilic period with Ezra’s unprecedented definition of Israelite identity as derived from two fully native Israelite parents with no admixture of non-native genealogy as well as his attempt to banish all foreign spouses (male and female) and their offspring from the community (Ezr 9:1-5). As Hayes argues, Ezra rationalises his extension of genealogical purity and endogamy – hitherto demanded only of priests – to all Israelites by asserting that the “holy seed” of Israel must not be profaned by intermingling with the “profane seed” of non-Israelites.³³ He can make this dramatic claim because, for him, the designations of “holy” and “profane” seed are divinely instituted, and therefore fixed, immutable, and utterly unalterable by human effort.³⁴ By associating Israelite identity and Gentile identity with “holy” and “profane” seed, Ezra denies any possibility of assimilation and hybrid-identities. Jew and Gentile are rendered binary and impermeable categories like “holy” and “profane” seed.

While Ezra’s innovation was by no means universally accepted, it was neither universally abandoned. It is pursued with vitriolic hostility in *Jubilees*, which Donaldson describes as “without a doubt, the most unrelentingly negative characterisation of the status of the Gentiles.”³⁵ *Jubilees* condemns and prohibits unions with persons of foreign descent. It also insists that those born outside the covenant community are permanently excluded from its membership; they are “children of destruction” who are destined to be “destroyed

31. Cf. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 12, 23.

32. Such sectarian tendencies, of course, were by no means without a biblical basis. Alongside biblical texts that depict the assimilation of foreign women through intermarriage as well as the uncontested identity of children born of foreign wives, there are texts that espouse a more separatist position. See, for example, Simeon and Levi’s argument in Gen 34; 1 Sam 18; Ezek 44:6-9. See also Thiessen’s discussion of the conflicting attitudes towards assimilation in these texts in Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43-63.

33. Christine Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law?: Early Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 142.

34. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 142-43.

35. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 52.

and annihilated from the earth” (15:26). *Jubilees*, moreover, is not alone in such segregation. The Qumran community that viewed everyone outside their own sect as “of the lot of Satan” and doomed to be destroyed, also rarely displays even a glimmer of interest in Gentile inclusion.³⁶ Both Fourth Ezra and Pseudo-Philo, though less extreme, are also less enthusiastic about Gentile inclusion – at least before the eschaton – because they are pessimistic about Gentile ability to keep the Law.³⁷

Jewish Patterns of Universalism: From Gentile to Gentile

While some Second Temple Jews thus appear to have insisted that Gentiles could not become Jews, others held that Gentiles need not become Jews for them to positively relate to Israel and its God. In his comprehensive survey of the evidence from the period, Donaldson detects three paradigms in which Gentiles were related to the community as Gentiles and not as Jews: sympathisation, ethical monotheism, and eschatological participation.³⁸ In what follows, these are briefly explored in turn, reinforcing the point that not all Second Temple Jews insisted that Gentiles become Jews to be related to the covenant community.

Sympathisation

Perhaps the simplest way that Gentiles found themselves related to Judaism was by being amiable towards Jews or admiring various aspects of Judaism. They might also have acknowledged and venerated the God of Israel, or even included Israel’s God into their own pantheon (without adopting any exclusive loyalty).³⁹ Jewish literature contains numerous references to benevolent Gentiles who bestowed favours on Jews, protected their rights, and

36. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 53; Hayes, *Divine Law*, 143. Similarly, in 4QFl i:3-4, *gerim* (“resident aliens”) are permanently excluded from “the congregation of the Lord” and 4QMMT continues Ezra’s concern for genealogical purity and endogamy by prohibiting not only unions with non-native Israelites but also unions between genealogically distinct classes internal to Israel (priests and lay Israelites).

37. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 53-54.

38. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 469-82, 93-505. Parallel treatments may be found in Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 19-41; Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 1 (1989): 13-33, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1509510>; Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 99-115.

39. The Jewish Scriptures attest to “sympathisers” of various kinds. Jethro hears the story of the Exodus and proclaims the power of the “God of the Hebrews” (cf. Ex 12:10-11). Hiram, the king of Tyre, is so impressed by Solomon that he too praises the God of Israel (2 Chr 2:11). The Book of Daniel places similar proclamations in the mouths of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (Dan 2:47, 6:25-27; cf. 3:28, 4:34-37). Cyrus’ benevolence, though perhaps more motivated by political considerations than by personal piety, is later interpreted by Ezra as obedience to the God of Israel. Cyrus is even said to enjoy the favour of Israel’s God, the “God of heaven” (Ezr 1:1-2).

acceded to their requests.⁴⁰ In other references, Gentiles are said to adopt customs and rituals associated with Judaism and thus engage in Jewish behaviour. These “sympathisers,” though, remain Gentiles and polytheists, even as both Jewish and Gentile writers widely recognise – and at times, like Seneca, lament – the phenomenon in antiquity.⁴¹

Ethical Monotheism

Some Jewish texts go further by describing Gentiles who were so taken with Israel’s God that they abandoned their ancestral customs and gods, venerated the God of Israel alone, and followed a way of life based on “universal law,” even though they did not adopt other Jewish laws and customs such as circumcision.⁴² The Jewish novella *Joseph and Aseneth* describes Aseneth as a Gentile of this kind. Aseneth destroys her idols, renounces polytheism, abstains from food sacrificed to idols, and devotes herself to exclusive veneration of Israel’s God, but there is no indication of her observance of other Jewish laws.⁴³ It is not difficult to see why Gentiles like Aseneth constituted an oddity in antiquity, wherein “gods ran in the blood.”⁴⁴ Renouncing their ancestral customs and gods, and instead declaring exclusive allegiance to Israel’s God, might have led to a Gentile being thought of as a Jew by other Gentiles, but this does not mean that other Jews regarded such Gentiles as Jews.⁴⁵ Rather, they remain Gentiles within this paradigm; they act in ways pleasing to Israel’s God as Gentiles and not as Jews.⁴⁶

Eschatological Participation

Other Jews turned to a different context in relating Gentiles to Israel’s God: that of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, wherein the eschatological fate of the Gentiles ranges from

40. On this point, see Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 17-18.

41. Cohen cites Seneca’s complaint that “the customs of this accursed race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout the world.” Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 20.

42. Jews whose thinking fit within this paradigm evidently believed in two distinct but coexisting sets of laws: the “universal law” applicable to the whole of humanity, the “Jewish law” applicable only to Jews.

43. Cf. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 21.

44. Fredriksen, "Law-Free" Mission," 640.

45. In *Bel and the Dragon*, when Daniel destroys the dragon with the Gentile king’s approval, the Babylonians conclude that “the king has become a Jew,” but neither the narrator nor Daniel make the same inference. See Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 22-23. Donaldson observes that “many of the relevant texts [from the Second Temple period] are clearly apologetic in intent; the accounts of ‘God-fearing’ Gentiles are often intended to function as a vindication of the claims of Judaism, for the benefit of Gentile, or occasionally, Jewish readers, rather than as an indication of how such Gentiles would have been viewed and received by the Jewish community itself.” See Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 67.

46. Thiessen insists on this reading in Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 21. Cohen, on the other hand, suggests that what is clear in theory is not always clear in practice, and that such Gentiles are rather difficult to classify.

destruction to rehabilitation and inclusion.⁴⁷ Among these, some Jews held that though Gentile repentance and Gentile worship of Israel's God might not be probably in the here-and-now, Israel's God would himself intervene and bring about a change in Gentiles when he also rectifies Israel's situation. Both Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah, for instance, voice hope that during the eschatological restoration of Israel, the Gentiles too will stream towards Israel and Israel's God (cf. Isa 2:2-4; 55:5).⁴⁸ Such Gentiles will have turned from idolatry to worship Israel's God alongside a reconstituted Israel. As Paula Fredriksen has argued, eschatological turning [ἐπιστρέφω in these texts], though, is not – at least not necessarily – eschatological conversion.⁴⁹ The Gentiles remain Gentiles, albeit Gentiles who have renounced idolatry and worship Israel's God alone. To be clear, they join with Israel but do not join Israel.⁵⁰ They might lay claim to the title of "Israel" according to the spirit, but not according to the flesh.⁵¹ They do not "become" Jews as they would have through assimilation into the community.

Jewish Patterns of Universalism: From Gentile to Jew

The claim of "joining" Israel or "becoming" Jews, rather, belongs to those in two other paradigms: intermarriage and conversion.⁵² Only within these did Gentiles have the possibility of ceasing to be Gentiles and being assimilated into the ethnos. This discussion concludes with a brief exploration of these paradigms.

Intermarriage

Social convention in Roman antiquity dictated that wives assumed the gods of the husband's household upon marriage. Thus, if a Gentile woman married a Jewish man, she was expected

47. For texts that are pessimistic about the eschatological fate of Gentiles, see Isa 49:23; Mic 5:8-9, 15; 7:16-17; 10:7; *Jub.* 15:25-26; *I En.* 91:14. A brief survey may be found in Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 68-74.

48. See also Zech 8:23; Tob 13:11; 14:5-7; *I En.* 10:21; *Moses* 2:43-44.

49. Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope," 547-48. See also Fredriksen, *Paul*, 75-76; Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 22; Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 97-98.

50. As Fredriksen succinctly states it in Fredriksen, *Paul*, 75. Thiessen observes that in the second century BCE text *Animal Apocalypse*, God transforms the Gentiles (portrayed as unclean animals) into white bulls (that is, clean animals). The Jewish people, however, are consistently portrayed as a different species – sheep. God thus purifies the Gentiles but does not transform them into sheep. Even within the eschaton, the Gentiles remain Gentiles. Donaldson is also inclined to this reading of the eschatological texts. See Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 22; Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 74.

51. This is Hayes' nuance to Fredriksen's formulation. See footnote 13 in Hayes, *Divine Law*, 147.

52. Donaldson does not include or treat intermarriage as a separate paradigm in his work. Yet, it would be well to include it because as Fredriksen points out, "For pagan women – all but invisible in our Greco-Roman evidence – the normal way to enter into the people of Israel seems to have been through marriage." Fredriksen, *Paul*, 66.

to abandon her Gentile gods and assume Israel's God, the God associated with her husband's ethnos.⁵³ There was no ritual for Gentile women to become Jews; the act of marriage was *de facto* an act of assimilation.⁵⁴ It is less clear, however, if assimilation in such cases was equivalent to "becoming" a Jew. The scriptural paradigm of assimilation by intermarriage Ruth the Moabite, the story of Moses' two non-Hebrew wives, and the uncontested Israelite identity of many Israelite kings born to foreign mothers would indicate that intermarriage did offer access to Israelite identity.⁵⁵ Regardless, marriage would appear to be the normal way for a Gentile woman to be included within the covenant community.

Conversion

Finally, some Jews held that Gentiles could receive a new identity and be included within the community through a process that is commonly referred to as "conversion." This would be the paradigm in which the Gentile expressly ceases to be Gentile and becomes a convert or proselyte [προσήλυτος], even a "confirmed Jew" [βεβαίως Ἰουδαίος].⁵⁶ For a Gentile man, this would entail exclusive devotion to Israel's God, social integration into the Jewish community, and adopting the whole of the Jewish law as one's way of life – including circumcision (in the flesh).⁵⁷ Donaldson notes that such making of "proselytes" is widely observed in literature of the period and that in most contexts, circumcision was the entry ritual and distinct marker of Jewish ethnicity for male converts.⁵⁸ This is certainly clear by the second century BCE; Tacitus and Juvenal both confirm Josephus' view that the

53. Fredriksen, *Paul*, 66.

54. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 25.

55. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 142. It is difficult to state precisely how the fact that, at least before the second century CE, children followed the ethnos of their fathers is to be related to this point. The system is presumed by various sources (such as Josephus and Philo) even in the first century CE. The children of Jewish fathers and Gentile mothers were reckoned Jewish; the children of Gentile fathers and Jewish mothers were Gentile. Only with later rabbinic law does the child's ethnos begin to follow that of the mother, and a ritual for women's conversion to Judaism is introduced. Perhaps the distinction between assimilation into the community and "becoming" a Jew was not as significant in antiquity as it is for contemporary scholarship.

56. On this point, see Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 54-60; Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 26-30.

57. In the book of Judith, for instance, an Ammonite named Achior becomes a Jew after God's intervention on Israel's behalf against the threat of Holofernes and the Assyrians. The three elements of his conversion process are explicitly noted by the author: Achior "believed firmly in God, [...] was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel, remaining so this day" (Jdt 14:10). In the first century CE, a Jew named Eleazar argued that Izates, king of Adiabene, needed to undergo circumcision and adopt the entire Jewish law (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.17-47).

58. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 58-59.

acceptance of circumcision is the acceptance of Judaism.⁵⁹ Strangely enough, the most demanding (and misunderstood) paradigm of Jewish universalism was, in this way, the most expressly inclusive, achieving – at least in the minds of some Second Temple Jews – a complete incorporation of a Gentile into the community.⁶⁰

Conclusion

A survey of the ways in which Second Temple Jews attempted to relate Gentiles to Israel and Israel's God attests to the diversity of "solutions" to the Gentile problem that forms the backdrop of Paul's Gentile mission. If the characteristic elements of Paul's thought in this regard are to be discovered afresh, he must be related to this diversity of approaches, with attempts being made to explain how and why Paul coheres and conflicts with his contemporaries within this complex matrix. The task, however, is fraught with difficulty, and Pauline scholarship has increasingly recognised that explaining the coherence of Paul's thought on the Gentile problem is no easy matter. The next chapter explores the variegated terrain of Pauline scholarship on the topic, with the aim of reinforcing the point that Paul's thought on the Gentile problem remains a contentious, yet significant, aspect for Pauline studies. In doing so, it also introduces the scholarly conversation to which the present study seeks to contribute.

59. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," 27. Thiessen and Hayes have argued that Jews who accepted the practice of circumcision as a conversion rite as well as Jews who rejected it may have both looked to Gen 17 as the foundational text for their positions. In Gen 17, after stipulating the eighth-day circumcision for every male throughout Israelite generations, the text specifies: "including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not your offspring" (Gen 17:12). Hayes contends that some Jews took this as a clear indication that Gentiles could be incorporated into the community through circumcision, not just as Gentiles but as Jews. The inherent ambiguity of the text, however, might have led other Jews to the view that circumcision cannot serve as a rite of conversion since the eighth-day requirement, properly observed, preserves Israelite identity against foreigners. Thiessen makes his argument based on textual variants and versions of Gen 17:14, but his conclusion is essentially the same as Hayes'. See Hayes, *Divine Law*, 144; Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 13.

60. Thus, "where modern scholars from Baur to Wright and Dunn see ethnocentrism and particularism, ancient actors might very well have seen inclusivism and universalism." Matthew Thiessen, "Remapping Paul within Jewish Ideologies of Inclusion," in *Paul and Matthew Among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honour of Terence L. Donaldson*, ed. Ronald Charles (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 92.

CHAPTER II: PAUL AND THE GENTILE PROBLEM

Even though Paul was evidently involved in disputes about Gentile inclusion within the early church (cf. Gal 2:11-14; Acts 15:1-35), ascertaining the coherence of his thought on the matter can be an arduous affair. The Gentile problem is not a “problem” for him if “problem” is seen as a topic on which he reflected and then systematically presented and defended his positions. Paul, rather, provides a wide variety of theological justifications for the Gentile mission in his letters. The coherence of these assertions is not easily discernible, however. And yet, as one interpreter writes, “Paul is complicated, and Pauline scholarship is even more complicated.”¹ Paul’s interpreters – as the previous chapter began to show – have read him differently, making his thought on the Gentile problem, or whether he even believed the problem was relevant, appear differently across many “perspectives.”² This chapter briefly explores these two distinct but interrelated aspects in turn to reinforce the point that Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem remains a contentious, yet significant, aspect for Pauline studies, and thereby introduces the scholarly conversation to which the present study seeks to contribute.

Defending the Gentile Mission

Donaldson has rightly remarked that at least part of the responsibility for there being a wide variety of interpretations of Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem rests with Paul himself.³ His solution to the Gentile problem, in the first instance, does not fit neatly within the Second Temple paradigms previously explored (chapter 1). Like ethical monotheists and proselytes, Paul’s Gentile believers abandoned their native gods. Unlike ethical monotheists, they abandoned some of their ethnic loyalties and social practices. Unlike proselytes, they did not adopt the bulk of Jewish ancestral customs, especially male circumcision. Like sympathisers, they resisted full proselytism. Unlike sympathisers, they refused to honour pagan gods and adopted exclusive allegiance to Israel’s God.⁴ Paul’s rationale for this idiosyncratic and controversial arrangement, moreover, is far from being

1. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 250.

2. For an overview of these “perspectives,” see Gorman, “Pauline Theology: *Perspectives, Perennial Topics, and Prospects*,” 197-213; Wright, “Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship,” 367-81.

3. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 29.

4. As Barclay puts it, Paul’s Gentile believers could be described as either defective proselytes or hyper-committed sympathisers. John M. G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 18.

neatly laid out in his writings, and given the highly contextualised nature of his letters, it would be strange to expect them to resemble a systematic treatise on the matter. Paul, rather, grounds the Gentile mission in a variety of theologoumena.⁵ But as Pauline scholarship has increasingly recognised, explaining how these diverse and even conflicting justifications for the Gentile mission belong together is no easy matter. Donaldson, for instance, identifies eight such theologoumena that ground the Gentile mission, listing them in increasing positive significance accorded to Israel:

- [1] That Israel's failure to accept the Gospel has led to the Gentiles "replacing" them in God's purposes. As the RSV and NRSV translate Rom 11:17-20, the Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree "in place of" the Jewish branches that have been broken off.
- [2] That the barrier that once stood between Jews and Gentiles has now been removed since Christ has brought an end to the custodial role of the Law (cf. Gal 3:23-28; Rom 10:4).
- [3] That Jews and Gentiles are now acceptable to God on the same terms ("faith," rather than "works of the law") which has rendered the Jew-Gentile distinction irrelevant so that the Gospel might be preached to all humanity (cf. Gal 2:14-16; Rom 3:27-30).
- [4] That the Jew-Gentile distinction is irrelevant because God is the God of Jews as well as Gentiles (cf. Rom 3:29-30).
- [5] That the salvation of Gentiles was God's plan since the beginning, a plan that can now be implemented because of Christ (Gal 3:8 citing Gen 12:3).
- [6] That the Jew-Gentile distinction is irrelevant because Christ is Lord of all (cf. Rom 10:12; Phil 2:5-11).
- [7] That in Christ, Israel has been redefined to include both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Gal 3:6-9; Rom 4), or that the *ekklēsia* is the true and redefined Israel (cf. Phil 3:3; Rom 2:26-29; Gal 6:16).
- [8] That Gentile salvation is a consequence of the fulfilment of God's dealings with Israel in Christ, that Gentiles now share the blessings given to the remnant of Israel through faith in Christ (cf. Rom 15:26-27; JB translation of Rom 11:17).

5. For a comprehensive treatment, see Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 29-32. This section is heavily based on Donaldson's analysis.

These assertions, it may be seen, do not – at least not *prima facie* – fit neatly together. For example, they do not clearly lead to a single conclusion about the theological significance of Israel for the Gentile mission. Are Israel and its election irrelevant for the Gentile mission as [3] – [6] appears to suggest, negatively relevant as [1] – [2] suggest, or positively relevant as [8] suggests? Likewise, has the Jew-Gentile distinction, in any sense, been nullified within the *ekklēsia* as [7] might suggest or been rendered soteriologically irrelevant as [3], [4], and [6] suggest; or does it persist as significant theological categories for the *ekklēsia* as [1] and [8] suggest? Is Gentile salvation the fulfilment of the promises to Israel as [5] suggests, or tied to Israel’s failure to accept the Gospel as [1] suggests? If Israel itself has been redefined to include Jews and Gentiles [7], or if Jew and Gentile salvation are both based on faith in Christ [3], why is the Gospel “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (cf. Rom 1:16)?

Naturally, some have argued that Paul’s argumentation is inherently self-contradictory and inconsistent, and that attempting to provide a coherent and systematic account of his thought is thus a futile enterprise.⁶ Nevertheless, as Matthew Thiessen insists, “interpreters must exhaust all other possibilities before coming to this conclusion.”⁷ The present study takes this contention, widely held within Pauline scholarship, as its working position. Of course, Pauline scholarship is nonetheless variegated terrain; there is little consensus on the nature of Paul’s theological centre and a wide variety of perspectives are said to hold ground. And such variety is, at least in part, because Paul’s theological assertions are themselves amenable to a wide variety of conflicting perspectives. Each of these perspectives can, and in fact does, find support for its readings in one or more of these assertions. In what follows, a brief survey of the multiplicity of ways in which contemporary Pauline scholarship interprets Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem is presented.

Paul Through His Interpreters

To survey the various ways in which contemporary Pauline scholarship interprets Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem, it might be helpful to proceed by focusing on a single

6. For example, Heikki Räisänen who argued that “contradictions and tensions have to be *accepted as constant* features of Paul’s theology of the law.” Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 10-11. Italics in original.

7. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 4-5. Also, Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 29-34.

aspect: the role of ethnic identities within the church. In this regard, interpretations might be said to broadly fit within one of three categories claiming that Paul

- [1] not only emphasised but also reinforced the Jew-Gentile dichotomy;
- [2] sought to expand covenantal boundaries, even though he understood ethnic distinctions as, in some sense, persisting;
- [3] understood identity in Christ as erasing or transcending ethnic distinctions.

A few caveats, though, need to be offered. First, the classifications here are intended to make the point that there is considerable diversity among interpreters on the matter, and it must suffice to show that the three categories imply different interpretations of Paul's thought on the Gentile problem. Second, some interpreters defy categorisation or only loosely fall within a category. Nevertheless, these categories do reflect a set of convictions related to "ethnic reasoning" in Paul (or lack thereof) shared by these interpreters.⁸ Third, the categories do not intend to minimise the significant differences among interpreters placed in a category, whether those differences relate to detail, emphases, or approach. Interpreters within a category might come from differing perspectives, and while they might agree on the aspect in focus, they remain in considerable disagreement over other aspects. In what follows, the diversity of scholarly interpretations is explored by taking up each of the categories in turn and discussing a few examples for each category.

Paul Within Ethnic Distinctions

The most recognisable interpreters who fall within the category that claims Paul reinforced the Jew-Gentile dichotomy are from among the "Radical New Perspective."⁹ Fredriksen, for example, argues that the key to Paul's controversial Gentile policy lies within the framework of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology and that the best parallel for Paul's Gentile believers is that of the "eschatological Gentiles."¹⁰ As discussed previously, strands of Jewish

8. Cf. Denise Kimber Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition," *Harvard Theological Review* 94, no. 4 (2001): 451, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3657417>. See also Hodge, "Paul and Ethnicity."

9. On the "Radical New Perspective," see Gorman, "Pauline Theology: *Perspectives, Perennial Topics, and Prospects*," 197-213.

10. Fredriksen, *Paul*, 73-77; Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope," 553-64; Fredriksen, "'Law-Free' Mission," 646-50; Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56, no. 2 (2010): 240-44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688509990294>. To state it differently, Fredriksen contends that for Paul, the "eschatological Gentiles" which were hitherto merely an imaginative construct (a purely theoretical category), had become a social reality. Even though Paul did not invent the category, he had "become convinced" (cf. Rom 13:11) that the biblically prophesied eschatological vision was now a reality in Christ.

apocalyptic eschatology envisioned an eschaton in which, prompted by God's intervention, the Gentiles would stream towards Israel's God. These "eschatological Gentiles" would remain Gentiles, albeit Gentiles who have turned away from idolatry to worship Israel's God alongside a reconstituted Israel at the eschaton. The eschaton could thus reflect the present distinction between Jews and Gentiles as well as preserve the concentric circles of the Temple precincts in Jerusalem.¹¹ Fredriksen proffers that Paul's experience of "the strange success of the Gentile mission" in the early church led him to connect the triumphant apocalyptic messiah figure to the figure of Jesus of Nazareth.¹² He thus saw his Gentile believers – "ex-pagan pagans" in her words – as the living embodiment of God's eschatological triumph over the pagan gods and the confirmation of the covenantal promises.¹³ He also believed that in Christ, these Gentiles had been made what Israel is by prior designation ("holy," i.e. set apart). They had been given Christ's holy spirit [πνεῦμα] so that they, together with Israel, could form a community set apart for Israel's God.¹⁴ They were, in this way, absorbed into the family of Abraham according to the spirit – κατὰ πνεῦμα; not κατὰ σάρκα [according to the flesh] – and made heirs of the Abrahamic promise as eschatological Gentiles. Paul thus insists that were to live as such, without fully "Judaising," in the time between Christ's resurrection and imminent parousia.¹⁵ In this way, Fredriksen's Paul not only emphasises but also clearly reinforces the Jew-Gentile dichotomy.

11. On this issue, Fredriksen rightly notes that some apocalyptically minded Jews in Paul's era believed that the eschaton would preserve the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and that God's eschatological kingdom would map neatly into the concentric circles of the Temple precincts in Jerusalem (see, for example, 4QFlor, 4Q1741I, 3-4). Fredriksen, "Judaising the Nations," 249-50. Whether Paul shared this belief is a matter of contention.

12. Fredriksen, *Paul*, 167-68. Fredriksen also mentions Paul's Christophany as well as the arrival and pneumatic behaviour of the new Gentile members into the early church as decisive factors that affirmed Paul's belief that the eschaton was at hand.

13. Fredriksen, *Paul*, 168-69. Fredriksen uses the term "ex-pagan pagans" to denote the ambiguous or in-between status of Paul's Gentile believers who were neither proselytes to Judaism nor merely Gentile sympathisers, but Gentiles of a special sort. She is not alone in her assessment that Paul does not clearly define what these Gentiles have become. See also Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Question of Identity: Gentiles as Gentiles - but also Not - in Pauline Communities," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 153-74. Like Fredriksen, Hodge sees Paul as reinforcing the Jew-Gentile dichotomy. Hodge has elsewhere argued that Paul's Gentile believers are grafted onto the Jewish family tree as subordinate boughs, not on an equal footing (cf. Rom 11:24), while nevertheless carrying many marks of Jewish identity. See Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford, 2007).

14. Cf. Fredriksen, "Judaising the Nations," 247-49.

15. Of course, Paul's Gentile believers, by renouncing their ancestral gods and religious practices, worshipping Israel's God alone, accepting Israel's Scriptures, and accepting Israel's Christ, were "Judaised" to some extent. Paul resists full proselytism for these believers.

Fredriksen is not alone in looking to Jewish apocalyptic eschatology for the key to Paul's thought on the Gentile problem.¹⁶ According to Pamela Eisenbaum, Paul's experience of the risen Jesus led him to believe that the new eschatological age had dawned, setting both the time (the time between Christ's resurrection and parousia) and the mode (through faith in Christ and as Gentiles) of Gentiles turning to Israel's God.¹⁷ The difference between Paul and other apocalyptically minded Jews, for Eisenbaum, was Jesus himself; Paul was convinced that the resurrection of Jesus was a sign that the eschaton had been inaugurated and that the ingathering of the nations was to be realised, other Jews were not.¹⁸ Eisenbaum's Paul also reinforces the Jew-Gentile dichotomy: "To put it boldly," she writes, "Jesus saves, but he saves only Gentiles."¹⁹ Abraham, then, fits into this picture by being not simply a model of faith for Gentiles but also by being the "father" of faithful Gentiles through the promises made to him. Paul's Gentile believers can claim him as their father because of their "existing relatedness" with him (for Eisenbaum, this is the fact that Abraham too was once an idolater and polytheist), the scriptural claim that his faith resulted in the promise of blessings for the Gentiles, and because these Gentiles now embody the fulfilment of that promise of bringing together many nations into one family.²⁰

Jewish apocalyptic eschatology is not the only conceptual framework employed to explain Paul's thought on the matter, however. Thiessen turns to Greco-Roman ideas, particularly Stoic physics, to describe how Gentiles are incorporated into the Abraham family via Christ.²¹ He first argues that Paul is more accurately located within the category of Second Temple Jews who held that circumcision could not serve as a rite of conversion since the Jew-Gentile identities were fixed and immutable, and thus that only God could remedy this Gentile predicament (the "Gentile problem").²² He then contends that Paul believed God had provided the "solution" to the Gentile problem in Christ. Thiessen's

16. See, for instance, Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*; Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism: Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017).

17. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 198.

18. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 198.

19. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 242. Eisenbaum appears to restrict the significance of Christ for Jews to a mere "cosmic significance," with Paul envisioning that his fellow Jews will eventually recognise Jesus' role in the "marking of the messianic age."

20. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 204-07.

21. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 129-60. See also Hayes, "Thiessen and Kaden on Paul and the Gentiles," 68-79; Matthew Thiessen, "Paul, Essentialism, and the Jewish Law: In Conversation with Christine Hayes," *Journal for the Study of Paul and his Letters* 7, no. 1-2 (2017): 80-85, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jstudpaullett.7.1-2.0080.

22. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 41.

hypothesis is bold, but simple: Faith in Christ leads Gentiles to receive Christ's πνεῦμα (spirit; cf. Gal 3:1-5, 3:14).²³ In Stoic physics, πνεῦμα is an invisible but material substance that can blend with other substances without altering them or being altered by them.²⁴ Since Christ is the σπέρμα [seed] of Abraham, receiving Christ's πνεῦμα incorporates, in a fully concrete and material sense, the Gentiles into Abraham's σπέρμα (cf. 3:16).²⁵ The Gentiles in Christ thus gain a "pneumatic genealogical connection" to Abraham via Christ; they quite literally undergo a material change (change in substance) to become members of his family and heirs of his blessings.²⁶ Importantly, since only Gentiles (not Jews, because they are already descendants of Abraham) have a "problem" and need Christ, Thiessen's Paul reinforces the Jew-Gentile dichotomy even as he seeks to overcome the challenges it creates.

Readings that see Paul as reinforcing the Jew-Gentile dichotomy and limiting the soteriological relevance of Christ to Gentiles are challenged by the fact that humanity appears to be a significant category in Pauline thought and that Paul frequently seems convinced of not merely a "Gentile problem" but a humanity problem *ante Christum*. Both Jews and Gentiles are said to deal with the problem of sin in some passages (cf. Rom 3:23), and Christ's death is portrayed as effecting reconciliation with God for both Jew and Gentile alike, independently of the Torah (cf. Rom 3:21-26). And Paul is insistent that the profession 'Jesus is Lord' acknowledges his Lordship over all – not just Gentiles or another slice of humanity (cf. Rom 10:12). Not all scholars who see Paul as reinforcing the Jew-Gentile dichotomy insist that Christ is soteriologically relevant only for Gentiles, however.²⁷ Hayes proffers that Christ's redemptive relevance for the Jews might be found in prophetic writings (cf. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27) that envision an eschaton in which the ingathered exiles are able to observe the Law without struggle or effort, what she terms "robot-righteousness."²⁸ This effortless observance of the Law is what justification in Christ

23. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 111.

24. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 112-13.

25. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 114-15.

26. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 115-18; Thiessen, "Paul, Essentialism, and the Jewish Law," 82. Thiessen sees "pneumatic genealogical" descent as one of the many ways in which Paul and his contemporaries answered the question of how Israel's God reckoned descent, the others being patrilineal descent (Genesis), matrilineal descent (later rabbis), bilateral descent (Ezra-Nehemiah), and descent by imitating Abraham in undergoing conversion and adoption of the Law (Paul's interlocutors). Thiessen rightly observes that four of these five ways emphasise a material connection between ancestor and descendant, and likens pneumatic change (understood in a material sense) to gene therapy – it addresses the genealogical deficiencies of Gentiles as well as the problems of "morality" and "mortality."

27. Fredriksen, for instance, insists that Christ bears soteriological relevance for Jews precisely as the eschatological Davidic messiah.

28. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 149-51.

supposedly offers to Law-observant Jews. They are given freedom from bodily passions and desires belonging to the shared human condition, so that they can fulfil the Law perfectly.²⁹ Faith in Christ thus frees Jews not “from the Law” but from “the state of sin that prevents them from fulfilling the Law as intended.”³⁰ Even in Christ, Jews must continue to observe the Law because the Law marks “their greater proximity to the divine” and preserves their genealogical distinction from the Gentiles.³¹

Paul Expanding Boundaries

A second category of interpreters argue that Paul sought to overcome ethnic boundaries by including Gentiles within the covenant community, even though he understood ethnic distinctions as, in some sense, persisting. NPP Interpreters such as Sanders and James D.G. Dunn who have affirmed Paul’s Jewishness as well as argued that he criticises the misuse of “boundary markers” to “exclude” Gentiles might be reasonably located here.³² As previously observed, Sanders, having traced “grace” everywhere in Second Temple Judaism, contended that Paul and his contemporaries agreed on the principle that “grace” and “works” were not alternative roads to salvation, and thus that Paul’s problem with Judaism was not “works-righteousness.” Rather, Paul disagreed with his contemporaries because of the exclusivism of his soteriology (if Christ saves, the Torah cannot and does not) and in his conviction that through faith in Christ, salvation is open to all on the same terms.³³ If Paul criticises Judaism, it is for an “assumption of Jewish privilege,” exemplified in its insistence on the efficacy of election “according to the flesh” and its “lack of equality for Gentiles.”³⁴ Paul denies that that one needs to “become” a Jew to become a descendant of Abraham or receive the Abrahamic blessings. Sanders believed that by drawing together Jews and Gentiles into a single family that claimed Abraham as their “father,” Paul had unintentionally created a “third race” which is the functional equivalent of a “true Israel,”

29. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 149.

30. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 149.

31. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 149. That Paul persisted in Torah-observance and insisted that Jewish believers in Christ do the same is a widely held conviction within the so-called “Paul within Judaism” or “Radical New” Perspective, serving as a clear sign that Paul reinforced the Jew-Gentile dichotomy even with ecclesial praxis.

32. See, *inter alia*, Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Dunn, *Paul*; Dunn, *New Perspective*.

33. Sanders insists, “The basis of Paul’s polemic against the law, and consequently against doing the law, was his exclusivist soteriology. Since salvation is only by Christ, the following of *any* other path is wrong.” Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 489-90, 550. Italics in original.

34. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 30-34, 38, 155, 60.

defined by “participation in Christ” rather than ethnicity.³⁵ Ethnic distinctions persist within this family, but function as a sign of faith in Christ being the means of entering the covenant community. Even as Jews and Gentiles stand on an “equal footing” with an “equal status,” they remain, in a certain sense, Jews and Gentiles.³⁶

Dunn likewise argues that those criticised by Paul are Jews who restrict covenant membership along ethnic lines; Jews who use “boundary markers” like circumcision to preserve the separation between Jews and Gentiles.³⁷ Such blinded zeal to police boundaries had led these Jews to a “narrow” understanding of God’s plan, preventing them from seeing that God through the Christ-event had broken down barriers and drawn the Gentiles into the Abrahamic family.³⁸ Dunn writes that for Paul, “Israel had become, as it were, Judaism. It had shifted the focus of the covenant in which God chose Jacob by grace and made him Israel, and had focused the covenant in a law understood as limiting that grace and preventing the Jacobs of his day from participating in it.”³⁹ In this way, a distinction between Judaism and Israel reappears in Dunn: Judaism is defined along ethnic and social lines; Israel is defined by one’s relationship to God, thus transcending ethnicity.⁴⁰ Membership in the latter is open to all through “faith in Christ,” “the more fundamental identity marker” of the covenant people.⁴¹ Naturally, Dunn’s Paul does not think that being “in Christ” through “faith” erased one’s ethnic identity; the Abrahamic promise includes both Jews and Gentiles (as Jews and Gentiles), and the universal Gospel is its planned fulfilment.

35. Sanders believed that Paul viewed the *ekklēsia* as a “third entity,” “not just because it was composed of both Jew and Greek, but also because it was in important ways neither Jewish nor Greek,” and asserted that Paul would have been “horrified” at the idea of a “third race.” Strangely enough, Sanders also insisted that Paul and the Jews who punished him must have still considered Paul as remaining within Judaism since “punishment implies inclusion.” To sum up, Sanders’ Paul, on the one hand, did not see himself as leaving Judaism but he had come to radically reimagine what it meant to be a Jew – which is why Sanders is listed within this category here. On the other hand, he also recognised that the *ekklēsia* was neither Jewish nor Gentile. The dissonance between the two renders the relationship of Paul and his churches vis-à-vis Judaism somewhat “ambiguous” – to use Bird’s description. See Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 171-79, 92; Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 15.

36. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 489-90; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 5, 18, 27.

37. Dunn, *New Perspective*, 1-17.

38. Cf. Dunn, *New Perspective*, 69.

39. James D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), 147-48.

40. On this issue, see especially Dunn, *Paul*, 499-532.

41. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster, 1990), 190.

Another example of Paul reworking the Jew-Gentile boundary is Richard Hays' reading of Romans 4.⁴² Hays argues that the problem with which Paul wrestles in the chapter is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Christ.⁴³ The problem surfaces because he has insisted in the preceding verses that since God "is one," the God of Jews as well as Gentiles, God will justify Jews and Gentiles on the same terms – through faith (3:29-30). By introducing the figure of Abraham – even if it means doing so abruptly – Paul seeks to show that in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles can claim a common relationship to Abraham that is not "according to the flesh" [κατὰ σάρκα; cf. Rom 4:1]. He attacks a "narrow" conception of Abraham's fatherhood that restricts it to people by natural physical descent.⁴⁴ Against his interlocutors, Paul contends that the Christ-faith of both Jews and Gentiles mirrors Abraham's faith in God, and that the destiny of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ is prefigured in Abraham. Jews and Gentiles are thus descendants of Abraham in a way more significant than genealogical descent. Abraham foreshadows the believers' justification by faith since the blessings were given to him, as to these believers, not "κατὰ σάρκα" but "κατὰ χάριτι" [according to grace; cf. Rom 4:1, 16].⁴⁵ And he serves as a scriptural precedent for the idea that the "faithfulness of a single divinely chosen protagonist can bring God's blessing upon 'many' whose destiny is figured forth in that protagonist's action" and is thus a typological foreshadowing of Christ.⁴⁶

While Hays insists that Paul's theological reinterpretation of Abrahamic descent is nevertheless still Jewish, David Kaden situates Paul's thought within the Roman imperial

42. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 61-84.

43. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 69.

44. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 67, 73-74. Hays argues that Rom 4:1 should be translated with Abraham as the direct object of the infinitive εὐρηκέναι: "What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham (to be) our forefather according to the flesh?" The idea that Paul saw Abraham as father to both Jews and Gentiles in the same way is also found in Joshua Garroway, *Paul's Gentile-Jews: Neither Jew nor Gentile, but Both* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012). Garroway writes, "Faith, in Paul's view, turns Gentiles into authentic descendants of the patriarchs, authentic Israelites, authentic ethnic Jews, because the death and resurrection of Christ fundamentally altered the way that the identity of Israel was to be reckoned in the last stage of human history. Where descent from the patriarchs, gentile circumcision, and observance of the Law had designated the extent of Israel in previous generations, now each of those ethnic markers could be achieved through Christ and Christ alone. Faith in Christ made a person into a descendant of Abraham." In contrast to Hays for whom the Gentile believers remain Gentiles, Garroway contends that Paul's Gentile believers are both Jews and Gentiles, a *tertium quid*. He describes them as "Gentile-Jews," noting that his term "reflects" rather than "resolves" Paul's incapacity to describe the new identity of the Gentile-believers.

45. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 78.

46. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 84.

context.⁴⁷ As it is now recognised, Roman jurists in Paul's time relied on "legal fiction" to incorporate non-citizens within its legal framework in the face of expansions to the empire.⁴⁸ These legal fictions, intended to adapt the law to new circumstances without introducing new law or undermining existing law, allowed these jurists to treat non-Romans as Romans and thereby subject them to Roman civil law. Non-Romans did not become Romans; they were simply treated as such for juridical purposes. Kaden argues that these legal fictions are an analogy for Paul's logic. Paul, on his own authority, draws Gentiles (non-Jews) into the community on equal terms with Jews by a kind of *fictio*, extending Jewish identity to them even as they do not cease being Gentiles.⁴⁹ Even though Kaden's theory faces significant hurdles, it represents a common scholarly view that Paul somehow worked to "challenge" ethnic boundaries and incorporate Gentiles into the covenant community in contradistinction to his ethnocentric contemporaries.⁵⁰ As mentioned previously, this characterisation of Second Temple Judaism as ethnocentric and exclusivist has been significantly undermined in the light of the "patterns of universalism" traced in Second Temple literature, with the effect that Paul's Gentile mission can no longer be simply presented as challenging the "narrow" or restrictive soteriology of his contemporaries. Following this development, the readings within this category have yet to identify the theological basis of Paul's Gentile mission.

Paul Transcending Ethnic Distinctions

A third category of interpreters see Paul as somehow transcending the ethnic categories of Jew and Gentile. Love Sechrest, for example, posits that Paul conceived of Jews and

47. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 78; David A. Kaden, *Matthew, Paul, and the Anthropology of Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 78. See also Hayes, "Thiessen and Kaden on Paul and the Gentiles," 68-79; David A. Kaden, "Paul, the Law, and Indigenous People: A Response to Christine Hayes," *Journal for the Study of Paul and his Letters* 7, no. 1-2 (2017): 86-93.

48. Kaden, *Matthew, Paul, and the Anthropology of Law*, 171.

49. Kaden, *Matthew, Paul, and the Anthropology of Law*, 192. To this end, Kaden adduces the fact that Paul speaks with the rhetorical markings of legal fiction in Rom 2, an example being "uncircumcision be regarded [λογισθήσεται] as circumcision" (Rom 2:26).

50. Hayes notices one of these limitations: there is good evidence that Paul intentionally redefined and significantly reconfigured the Law for his Gentile believers, whereas Roman law did not change when it was applied to non-Romans. She concedes, nevertheless, that "analogs are by definition never identical." See Hayes, "Thiessen and Kaden on Paul and the Gentiles," 71.

Gentiles who had become Christ-believers as constituting a third race, a τρίτον γένος.⁵¹ Michael Bird also advocates a “third-identity” interpretation but stresses that some nuance is necessary to not press the discontinuities between Paul and Judaism too far.⁵² He argues that the new “identity” of believers does not entail a complete erasure of ontological or cultural “identities.” One does not, for instance, cease to be male or female, or Jewish or Greek. Rather, these different “human identities” are transformed and drawn into a single hybrid identity “in Christ,” with the effect that they are relativised and lose their ability to cause differentiation or become vehicles of superiority.⁵³ In Christ, Jews and Gentiles possess a shared “meta-identity” that is defined by “being ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ”; modelled on Israelite identity but instead “centred on Jesus as Messiah and the inclusion of Gentiles as part of the mandate of the Abrahamic covenant.”⁵⁴

Bird’s position resembles that of N.T. Wright, who has long argued that Paul announced the fulfilment of God’s plans for one, multi-ethnic, and united family in Christ – plans that were prefigured in the Abrahamic covenant.⁵⁵ Paul sees Christ as fulfilling what Israel had failed to do because of its “meta-sin,” the determination to hold on to ethnic privileges over and against God’s plans for a social reality that includes both Jews and Gentiles.⁵⁶ The *ekklēsia* that fulfils this reality, then, stands apart as a kind of “third race” separated from both the Jewish and Gentile world.⁵⁷ And yet, Israel has theological significance for the *ekklēsia* since the *ekklēsia* is Israel redefined around the figure of Jesus Christ. It is anchored in Jewish history and its worldview as well as rooted in God’s faithfulness to Israel.⁵⁸ Bird

51. For Sechrest, this means “a completely new ethno-social particularity.” She writes, “Paul identified himself as an Israelite who was born a Jew but was no longer one. Paul’s perspective on and response to the Christ-event apocalyptically altered his relationship with God, his relationship to his kinsmen, and his interactions with the radically Other. That is to say, Paul and his Jewish-born and Gentile-born Christian family had become members of a new racial entity.” See Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 164, 210.

52. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 12.

53. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 53.

54. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 53, 56.

55. N. T. Wright, *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978-2013* (London: SPCK, 2013), 199, 202. The fulfilment, Wright contends, is still “paradoxical.” He writes, “The apocalyptic intervention of God in Israel and the world, sweeping aside all that stands in the way of the dawning new day, is paradoxically for Paul the completion, the fulfilment and the climax of all that God had done and said to and for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

56. So, Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 240. “A kind of meta-sin”: “the attempt to confine grace to one race.”

57. In this way, Wright attributes to Paul precisely what Sanders was hesitant to attribute to him: the intentional creation of a “third race.” Wright explicitly states, “I find Sanders’s argument here so strong that it is not clear to me why he then doubts that Paul would have thought of a ‘third race’.” See N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1444.

58. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1447-49. Where Sechrest sees the *ekklēsia* as a completely new ethnic reality, Wright retains a relationship between the *ekklēsia* and ethnic Israel.

summarises Wright's position well when he writes, "Christ-believing identity clearly has a Jewish DNA, so even if it has mutated somewhat, there is still a family resemblance."⁵⁹

Finally, John Barclay argues that the "identity" of believers does not operate on the same level as human ethnic identities but is rather an "identity from God" that comes to its climactic and definitive expression in the Christ-event.⁶⁰ As a God-given identity, it is not in competition with ethnic identities. Believers neither cease being Jewish or Gentile, nor do they need to. These ethnic identities, however, are re-evaluated in the light of the Christ-event: because the Christ-gift is given without reference to any positive or negative worth that humans attribute to these identities, they are effectively relativised because of it.⁶¹ Furthermore, Abraham and Gentile believers share the fact of their God-given identity, "not something that they are or have, but something that they expect or are given."⁶² They share a common relation to a divine reality; the gift of a promise that calls them into existence constituted by God and that is radically contingent on God's creative mercy. As Barclay puts it, Abraham and Gentile believers enjoy a form of kinship that is "manifestly dependent on a divine creative *fiat*."⁶³ Such existence out of God's creative *fiat* is what Paul also regards Israel as being. Israel is not a typical ethnic group but a "unique phenomenon for Paul, a people created and sustained by God through a merciful design."⁶⁴ What Gentile believers come to receive in Christ is thus not Israelite ethnicity but the same "form" of ethnic identity proper to Israel: an identity that is always derivative from God, that is given and sustained by God's creative mercy. Barclay writes, "They [Gentile believers] do not become Israel, but they join with Israel in becoming a 'sharer in the root of richness,' that is, in the mercy or grace of God."⁶⁵

59. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 18.

60. John M. G. Barclay, "An Identity Received from God: The Theological Configuration of Paul's Kinship Discourse," *Early Christianity* 8, no. 3 (2017): 354-72, <https://doi.org/10.1628/186870317X15017545210224>. This contention may also be found in his readings of Galatians and Romans in Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 331-561.

61. Barclay, "Identity Received from God," 370. Cf. "Paul understands the *single* event of Christ to bring into question *every* pre-existent classification of worth." Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 567. Italics in original.

62. Barclay, "Identity Received from God," 359.

63. Barclay, "Identity Received from God," 363, 70. Hence, "their identity is no longer reducible to human terms."

64. Barclay, "Identity Received from God," 371.

65. Barclay, "Identity Received from God," 369.

Conclusion

By cataloguing the various theologoumena that Paul offers in defence of the Gentile mission as well as briefly surveying the ways in which contemporary scholarship interprets it, this chapter has reinforced the point that Paul's thought on the Gentile problem remains a contentious, yet significant, area for Pauline studies.⁶⁶ Scholarly attention to Paul's theological assertions and polemic – given their direct relationship to the Gentile mission – has, no doubt, been richly rewarding even if it seems that Paul's face has, in a certain sense, become obscured; the “real” Paul lying beneath a multiplicity of “perspectives.” Can anything more be contributed to scholarly conversation on the matter? The next chapter suggests that a path that is worth exploring for its relevance to the Gentile problem is Paul's repeated use of the vocabulary of image [εἰκόν] in passages that speak of *being* or *becoming* conformed to an “image.” It provides a brief rationale for the approach and then outlines the research methodology of the present study.

66. Although it has sufficed for present purposes to restrict discussions to a few notable examples within each category, it would be well to name a few other studies that merit mention. To the first category might be added Kathy Ehrensperger who argues, based on the paradigm of multilingualism, that Paul was involved in the process of theologising about the Christ-event at the crossroads of two cultures in a way that appreciated them both but did not eradicate either. See Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures: Theologizing in the Space-Between* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). To the second category might be added Jason Staples' argument that Paul identifies his Gentile believers with the tribes of northern Israel scattered among the nations. This might be interpreted as Paul expanding the boundaries of Israel to include more than ethnic Jews. Jason A. Staples, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'?: A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25-27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011): 371-90, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41304206>. In the third category might belong Ole Jakob Filtvedt's argument for a “metaphorical,” “non-ethnic” reading of Pauline identity that nevertheless has “something irreducibly Jewish” about it. Ole Jakob Filtvedt, "A "Non-Ethnic" People?," *Biblica* 97, no. 1 (2016). Also, Daniel Boyarin's argument that Paul was “motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy.” Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

CHAPTER III: SKETCHING THE RESEARCH TASK AND METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter showed that various attempts have been made with the aim of understanding how Paul's diverse and seemingly conflicting justifications for his Gentile mission belong together. Scholarly attention to Paul's theological assertions (especially those directly about the Gentile mission: faith, circumcision, the Law, and the place of Israel in God's salvific plan, etc.) and his polemic against his interlocutors has, no doubt, been fruitful, despite the variegated nature of Pauline scholarship making his thought appear strikingly different across many "perspectives." In the abundant discussion on the Gentile problem, however, little attention has been given to the vocabulary of "image," even though Paul repeatedly employs it in ways that signal its usage is no mere rhetoric (cf. Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15, 3:10). The present study, in the first instance, begins to fill this gap in Pauline scholarship as it explores the significance of Paul's "image" language in three such texts (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) vis-à-vis the Gentile problem. This chapter sketches the research task and methodology employed to this end. It begins with a brief rationale for its selection of passages. It then defines the terminology employed herein and sketches the methodology applied for the investigation in the next chapter. Finally, it outlines the goals of the study, offers preliminary responses to some possible objections, and provides a realistic appraisal of the limitations of the methodology employed.

The Image Passages

At various points in his letters, Paul speaks of *being* or *becoming* an εἰκὼν [image]. In Romans, he asserts that God has "predestined" the elect to be conformed to the image of the Son (Rom 8:29). In Colossians, the life of a believer in Christ is said to involve being "no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free" but being "renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator" so that Christ "is all and in all." Christ himself is described as the "image of God" in addition to being "the firstborn of all creation" and the one through whom all things have been reconciled (Col 1:15, 3:10-11). To the Corinthian church, Paul speaks of bearing the "image" of Christ, the "man of heaven," and of "being transformed into the same image." (1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18). There appears to be something fundamentally Pauline about such claims. After all, the language of being or becoming conformed to the "image" of Christ is distinctive to his

writings; no other NT writer employs such language or makes similar assertions. And if Paul's theology is, as it is now widely accepted, articulated in the context of his Gentile mission, how do these two aspects – his language of “image” and his thought on the Gentile problem – belong together? Might his image-language shed any light upon the place of Jews and Gentiles within God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ? At least *prima facie*, then, Paul's image-language appears to be a path that is worth exploring for its relevance to the Gentile problem, even though it has received little attention in scholarly discussions on the matter.¹ The present study, by exploring the significance of Paul's language in three such texts (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) vis-à-vis the Gentile problem, begins to fill this lacuna in scholarship.

A few more preliminary remarks may be added here. Several commentators have suggested that the image-language in these passages relates to the Adam story in Genesis 1–3. To be sure, in both First Corinthians and Romans, Paul does make an explicit Adam–Christ contrast while describing the significance of the Christ-event. And as Brendan Byrne perceptively observes, “the countervailing ‘Adam’ story is far from marginal to Paul's presentation of Christ.”² Importantly, Paul also appears to suggest that the scope of the Gospel includes “all” humanity, especially by presenting the consequences for “all” of sin and death stemming from Adam's transgression, and then contrasting them with the redemption that comes through Christ for “all.” Humanity – and not just Jews and Gentiles – would thus appear to be a significant category within Pauline thought. If the εἰκόν passages indeed continue the Pauline reference to the Adam narrative and thus deal with the category of humanity, what significance might they have for the Gentile mission?

Furthermore, in at least two of these letters (First Corinthians and Romans), Paul's use of εἰκόν occurs within an eschatological context, wherein he anticipates a final and definitive victory of God over sin and death, and where the whole of creation comes to share in the glory of God's reign. Paul also insists that Christ is the “first fruits” of this victory

1. Seyoon Kim, for instance, laments that it is “little appreciated in scholarship even to this day.” See Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 165-66. Besides Kim, studies in which Paul's image vocabulary receives prominence include G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul's Theology of Glory in Romans* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018). They do not, however, explore its significance vis-à-vis the Gentile problem.

2. Brendan Byrne, “A Pauline Complement to *Laudato Si'*,” *Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (2016): 312, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563916635117>.

and that believers have already secured their own victory through Christ. Given that the “eschatological pilgrimage” tradition has been variously connected by scholars to Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem, what might the eschatological implications of these εἰκόν passages contribute to scholarly discussion? Paul does not merely look ahead, however; there is also a strong sense of protology in these passages. He looks back and speaks of an “order” of redemption (1 Cor 15:23), of God’s foreknowledge, calling, and predestination of believers (Rom 8:29-30), of Christ being the one “before” all things, the one through whom and for whom all things have been created, and the one through whom all things hold together (Col 1:16-17). Might Paul be addressing God’s fundamental purposes for humanity in these passages even as he also addresses the place of Gentiles within those purposes? And if that is the case, what implications might the Pauline protology within these passages have for the Gentile problem?

These preliminary remarks indicate the appropriateness and significance of the exploration proposed in the present study. In what follows, the “intertextual” process that is employed in the following chapter is sketched out.

Intertextuality

The term “Intertextuality” has come to cover a plethora of varying strategies, making a uniform definition of the term elusive. Even so, it is widely recognised that attempts to study a given scriptural text by analysing its connections with texts outside itself and how these texts impact its interpretation have been richly rewarding.³ Intertextuality opens attentive readers to the great biblical and extra-biblical tradition in which the authors of Scripture stand, and brings new possibilities beyond the traditional categories – of midrash, allegory, prophecy/fulfilment, and type/anti-type – to which connections between texts have often been restricted. To use an analogy from Wright, intertextuality brings an appreciation of the “great concerto” in which an individual author of Scripture plays but a solo part while all the other instruments of the scriptural orchestra provide the harmony and counterpoint.⁴

3. For a brief overview of the matter, see Steve Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical studies: A Review,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 23, no. 2 (2002): 418-31, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v23i2.1211>; Stanley E. Porter, “The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology,” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 84-88. See also Russell L. Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology,” *Biblica* 95, no. 1 (2014): 280-91.

4. N. T. Wright, “Israel’s Scriptures in Paul’s Narrative Theology,” *Theology* 115, no. 5 (2012): 323, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571x12450261>.

This appreciation, of course, is not in itself new. Alongside a certain Marcionite bias that has plagued Christian readings of Scripture through the centuries, there has been a vibrant and fruitful awareness of the significance of the Old Testament for reading the New Testament.⁵ NT interpreters have variously insisted that the earliest Christian communities interpreted the Christ-event in the light of scriptural texts that subsequent Christians would come to call the Old Testament. These communities did so, not only because the Old Testament was the only “Scripture” for them but also because they professed that the story of Jesus was, in fact, the continuation and the consummation of the ancient biblical story.⁶

For Pauline studies especially, ever since Hays applied the literary-critical approach of Intertextuality to select passages from the Pauline corpus, there has been a profound appreciation of the significance of Israel’s Scriptures for Paul, and of Paul as an interpreter (and for some, a misinterpreter) of Israel’s Scriptures. Investigations into alleged OT “quotations,” “allusions,” and “echoes” within the Pauline corpus have abounded.⁷ The task of defining these terms as well as dealing with some preliminary concerns about the intertextual approach need to be taken up, especially in relation to the purposes of the present study. It is not essential, however, to first define those terms in order to appreciate what Hays captured when he wrote:

The vocabulary and cadences of Scripture – particularly of the LXX – are imprinted deeply on Paul’s mind, and the great stories of Israel continue to serve for him as a fund of symbols and metaphors that condition his perception of the world, of God’s promised deliverance of his people, and of his own identity and calling. His faith, in short, is one whose articulation is inevitably intertextual in character, and Israel’s Scripture is the ‘determinative subtext that plays a constitutive role’ in shaping his literary production.⁸

Taking Paul’s dependence on OT thought and vocabulary seriously, in its turn, leads to an appreciation of the need to go beyond the words as they appear in any text of the Pauline

5. Cf. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and The Fourfold Gospel Witness* (London: SPCK, 2015), 5. For an illuminating discussion on the matter, see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1-27.

6. Augustine, for example, wrote that “the New Testament lies concealed in the Old, the Old lies revealed in the New.” Cf. *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, 2.73. Martin Luther made a similar point when he movingly wrote that the Old Testament is the “swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies” in his preface to the German translation of the Pentateuch in 1523. The relevant passage is translated and quoted in Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 1.

7. For a list of these, see footnote 4 in Beetham, *Echoes*, 1-2. This is not to deny the significant literature predating Hays’ work, such as that of W. D. Davies and Adolf von Harnack.

8. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 16.

corpus and to draw on the wider OT context that they evoke. As Hays has recently put it, readers are beckoned to “more of the original subtext in order to grasp the full force of the intertextual link.”⁹ The present study can be situated within this approach; it carries out an “intertextual” analysis of the three image passages and seeks to rediscover Paul’s voice in these passages through his use of OT “quotations,” “allusions,” and “echoes.” In what follows, these terms are defined, the criteria employed for their discernment are outlined, and the overall methodology of the present study to analyse their significance vis-à-vis the Gentile problem is expounded in some detail.

Terminology

When it comes to terminology associated with intertextuality in biblical studies, Stanley E. Porter has observed the “astounding” number of terms that have been used with some regularity in important works on the topic.¹⁰ Furthermore, while some have suggested that one or many of those terms be subsumed under other terms, others insist on maintaining fine distinctions among them. For the purposes of this study, it suffices to restrict discussions to the three basic categories of quotation, allusion, and echo that are most prevalent in literature and appear most widely accepted. The following definitions offered by Christopher A. Beetham will be adopted and applied consistently herein.

Quotation An intentional, explicit, verbatim or near verbatim citation of a former text of six or more words in length. A *formal* quotation is a quotation accompanied by an introductory marker or quotation formula; an *informal* quotation lacks such a marker.¹¹

Allusion A literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be understood fully. An allusion is less explicit than a quotation, but more explicit than an echo.¹²

9. Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 42.

10. Porter, "Old Testament in the New Testament," 80.

11. Beetham, *Echoes*, 17.

12. Beetham, *Echoes*, 20.

Echo A subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor. An author's wording may echo the precursor consciously or unconsciously and/or contextually or non-contextually.¹³

A few remarks on these definitions are warranted. In this study, as in Beetham's, a verbatim or near verbatim reference of five words or fewer to a previous text is considered an allusion, unless accompanied by a quotation formula.¹⁴ An allusion need not exist in the form of a linear phrase but could instead be fragmentary, which is to say, "broken up and woven into the passage."¹⁵ It could also exist in the form of a "word cluster" where several key words, phrases, or images from the identifiable source are incorporated and scattered in the new text.¹⁶ Authorial intention is a necessary marker of an allusion; an author intends that the allusion to the source be recognised. This, however, also presupposes that the author and implied audience to whom the author is writing share a common language and tradition, so that the audience recognise the sign, realise that it is deliberate, remember relevant aspects of the source, and make the relevant connections to get the author's point.¹⁷ Furthermore, as Jerry L. Sumney observes, there is some evidence to suggest that ancient authors employed allusions in ways that included not only specific texts but also persons and events.¹⁸ In cases where the allusion is to scriptural persons or events, the allusion depends on the audience's ability to recognise the specific characteristics or details concerning the person or event.¹⁹ In the case of Paul, for instance, when he urges believers

13. Beetham, *Echoes*, 24.

14. Beetham, *Echoes*, 17.

15. Beetham, *Echoes*, 17.

16. Beetham, *Echoes*, 17.

17. Cf. Beetham, *Echoes*, 19. The questions of what Paul's first-century readers knew and did not know as well as what they were able and unable to recognise are contentious issues. They are pursued rigorously by Stanley who challenges several one-sided assumptions frequently involved in relevant scholarship. See Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 38-61. One needs to be wary, however, of insisting on the competence of Paul's audiences beyond a certain point. As Wright has observed, even if one could be sure of how familiar or unfamiliar Paul's readers were with Israel's Scriptures, one should also consider the fact that a major feature of early church life was teaching, and that "it's a poor writer who does not put into the text considerably more than the first audience, or even the hundred and first, will pick up straight away." See Wright, "Israel's Scriptures in Paul's Narrative Theology," 325. Scholars have argued, furthermore, that for a letter like Romans, the bearer of the letter Phoebe (cf. Rom 16:1-2) might have also been involved in its reception and interpretation. See, for instance, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *When in Romans: An Invitation to Linger with the Gospel according to Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 9-14.

18. Jerry L. Sumney, "Writing 'in the Image' of Scripture: The Form and Function of References to Scripture in Colossians," in *Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley, SBL Early Christianity and Its Literature (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 186.

19. Sumney, "Writing 'in the Image' of Scripture," 188.

in Corinth to not “put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were killed by snakes” (1 Cor 10:9), he certainly assumes that his audience will recognise the specific episode from Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness (Num 21) and make the relevant connections to their own temptations concerning idolatrous worship.²⁰

Echoes, unlike allusions, are at times subtle and other times “so loud that only the dullest or most ignorant reader could miss it.”²¹ At the same time, it is impossible to judge authorial intention concerning them with certainty, since an echo might simply be a faint trace of a text, unconsciously finding its way into the writing of an author soaked in Israel’s scriptural heritage. Thus, even though echoes might have a single identifiable source, they do not require awareness of that source to be understood. Yet, echoes might enhance and colour the understanding of the new context when they are recognised. For example, the last part of Phil 1:19 is in exact agreement with the LXX of Job 13:16, but the citation is not marked and what Paul says is quite understandable without reference to Job 13:16. However, when the former is read as an “echo” of the latter, there are associations, connotations, similarities, and dissimilarities that emerge and colour the reader’s understanding of Paul’s words. They are powerful enough to not be easily silenced.²²

Process

With the terminology employed herein now clearly defined, the process that will be used for exploring the significance of the three passages vis-à-vis the Gentile problem can be broadly sketched. It is outlined here as a series of five stages, with a few relevant questions identified for each stage and without prejudice to how the outcomes of one stage will affect the details of another.²³

20. Cf. Francis Watson, “Paul and Scripture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

21. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 23.

22. Interestingly, the echo of Job 13:16 in Phil 1:19 is the kind of echo Hays considers so faint and having little semantic significance, thus choosing to not pursue in his landmark study. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 21-24.

23. The process sketched here has been constructed and is indebted to the methodologies outlined in Beetham, *Echoes*, 27-40; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29-32; G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 31-40; Jeannine K. Brown, “Metalepsis,” in *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts*, ed. B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise (Eugene: Cascade, 2016), 33.

Stage I: Determination of Intertextual Reference using Basic Criteria

The first stage of the process – the detection of quotations, allusions, and echoes in the texts – involves the following criteria:

Availability. Was the proposed source available to the author? As Hays has observed, this is rarely a problem for Paul vis-à-vis the Old Testament. Paul’s writings manifestly demonstrate a familiarity with “virtually the whole body of texts that were later acknowledged as canonical within Judaism.” He also “expected his readers to share his acknowledgment of these texts as Scripture.”²⁴

Volume. What is the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns within the proposed source text? What is the rarity of the words or concepts that are shared?

Thematic Coherence. Do the texts cohere in some way? How well does the proposed quotation, allusion, or echo fit into Paul’s line of argument? Are there similarities in issues being addressed?

Recurrence. Is the proposed OT text alluded to or cited elsewhere in the Pauline corpus?

Scholarly Assessment. Have other scholars observed the proposed quotation, allusion, or echo? If so, how did they describe and classify them?

Stage II: Textual Analysis of Proposed OT Influence(s)

This stage involves examining if there is an essential interpretive link between the proposed OT influence and the Pauline text. Does the proposed OT source illumine the understanding of the Pauline text in any way? Does it produce a sensible and satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation? Does it unlock a riddle within the Pauline text? That the original context is an essential subtext to the new context is fundamental for the intertextual reference to be classified as an allusion. If, however, the OT influence is not essential for understanding the Pauline text, the latter might merely contain an echo of the OT text. If so, what is the influence of the echo on the Pauline text?

24. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 30. See also Watson, "Paul and Scripture."; Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, 38.

Stage III: Investigating the Relevance of the Jewish Hermeneutical Tradition

NT authors – including Paul – were, quite plausibly, steeped not only in the Jewish Scriptures but also in the Jewish hermeneutical tradition and were thus well-versed in Jewish methods of reading Scripture. As Hays observes in his responses to critiques, discussions of Paul’s intertextual hermeneutics must allow for the possibility of “extrabiblical echoes and influences” in his letters regardless of whether these come from the tradition of Jewish biblical interpretation or from the Greco-Roman culture.²⁵ In this stage, therefore, the possible relevance of the Jewish hermeneutical tradition – albeit in a way restricted to the εἰκῶν vocabulary – will be explored vis-à-vis the Pauline text.

Stage IV: Investigating Possible Implications of the Greco-Roman Context

Having examined the possible Jewish hermeneutical influences in the previous stage, the relevance of the Greco-Roman context will be examined in the fourth stage. Paul’s implied audiences, no doubt, were predominantly Gentile and it is important to consider whether the socio-political context of the Greco-Roman world might have influenced the reception of the quotation, allusion, or echo in any way. This relevance of the Greco-Roman context will be restricted to the use of εἰκῶν vocabulary in the broader socio-political world that Paul and his audiences inhabited, and its implications on the reception of Paul’s own εἰκῶν language.

Stage V: Analysing the Rhetorical Quality and Hermeneutical Use of the Intertextual Link

The final stage of the process builds on the insights derived from the previous stages and asks how they all fit together. What was Paul trying to accomplish within these passages and with quotations, allusions, and/or echoes to other texts from Scripture? What insights might be gained from the intertextual references vis-à-vis the Gentile problem and Paul’s efforts to shape the thinking and behaviour of the implied audiences? Or as Beetham puts it, “What ripples does the predecessor make in the new?”²⁶ In other words, what do these intertextual references do, and not just say?

25. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 164-66.

26. Beetham, *Echoes*, 36.

Limitations of the Research Project

In providing the research methodology outlined above, it is worth emphasising a point that Hays, Beetham, and others dedicated to intertextuality in the New Testament have repeatedly made. The process, while helpful, is not intended to be an airtight or forensic methodology that always produces right and indisputable answers. The nature of intertextuality is such that allusions and echoes involve “an element of intuition of judgment” in their detection and verification; it is both an art and a science.²⁷ Of course, one needs to be careful enough to avoid proffering the presence of allusions and echoes simply because one can. Hays’ methodology has, in fact, been sometimes criticised for its subjective element and alleged unfalsifiability.²⁸ However, as Rafael Rodríguez has expressed it, Hays is right to eschew a cold and clinical objectivity that fails to account for the fact that reading, as an art form, demands these elements of intuition and judgment, and that Scripture itself frequently and explicitly beckons its hearers to creative reception in asides such as “Let those who have ears hear” and “Let the reader understand.”²⁹ Hays, no doubt, begins on solid ground, given the fact that he moves from Paul’s explicit quotations of OT texts in his letters to what lies more implicitly, not on the surface but underneath. And as Hays’ own work ably demonstrates, the methodology he outlines involves “responsible, discursive subjectivity,” not fanciful speculation.³⁰ One need not, therefore, reject the whole intertextual approach for fear of error tied to its subjectivity. Rather, a worthy goal for interpreters – as Beetham observes – is to become like Paul himself: saturated with the Scriptures of Israel. In turn, interpreters might become better attuned to overhearing Paul’s own allusions and echoes of OT texts.³¹

One must, however, concede that it will always be possible to question certain aspects of the methodology outlined, such as whether the proposed criteria are sufficiently

27. Hays writes, “We must reckon with varying degrees of certainty in our efforts to identify and interpret intertextual echoes. [...] Precision in such judgment calls is unattainable, because exegesis is a modest imaginative craft, not an exact science.” Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29. See also Beetham, *Echoes*, 35; Benjamin D. Sommer, “Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger,” *Vetus Testamentum* 46, no. 4 (1996): 485-86, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1584960>.

28. See, for instance, William Scott Green, “Doing the Text’s Work for It: Richard Hays on Paul’s Use of Scripture,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 60-61; Chris Keith, “Richard Hays on the Gospel of Mark and the Method of His Argument,” *The Jesus Blog*, 2016, <http://historicaljesusresearch.blogspot.com/2016/08/richard-hays-on-gospel-of-mark-and.html>.

29. Rafael Rodríguez, “Reading the Gospels, Hearing the Scriptures,” (Syndicate, 2019). <https://syndicate.network/symposia/biblical-studies/echoes-of-scripture-in-the-gospels/>.

30. Cf. Rodríguez, “Reading the Gospels, Hearing the Scriptures.”

31. Beetham, *Echoes*, 35.

responsible for discerning the presence of intertextual references in these texts. To what has already been stated regarding the fine line between intuition and responsibility, it might be added that one can also reasonably expect authors (in this case, Paul) to signal such intertextuality and guide the reception of intentional intertextual references.³² The present study attempts to discern these references in ways that follow Paul's cues. It is not within the scope of this project to rebut critics who are generally unconvinced about the value of the intertextual approach, however. Those who dismiss the method as "insufficiently suspicious" and "falling into mere descriptiveness," for instance, are perhaps unlikely to change their minds about these aspects.³³

That being stated, a realistic appraisal of the limitations of the present study must also be made. The present study, no doubt, is limited in its focus. Paul's thought on the Gentile problem is not only notoriously complex and grounded in a variety of theologoumena but also intricately connected with aspects of his thought – aspects such as his views on the Law, circumcision, faith in Christ, ethnicity, the significance of Israel in the light of the Christ-event. Any satisfactory explication of Pauline thought must account for these aspects. Word limits, however, prevent this study from exploring how its own limited endeavour relates to these other aspects in a systematic and satisfactory way. Furthermore, the project is limited in its scope. As previously stated, it cannot undertake a thorough investigation into all aspects of the Jewish hermeneutical tradition or Greco-Roman context that are relevant for the reception of these texts. It must restrict itself to a few examples that are relevant to Paul's image vocabulary for the former, and the use of εἰκὼν in the imperial context for the latter. Likewise, it can only consider some of the more prominent scholarly literature in the Anglophone world for its comparison of detected quotations, allusions, and echoes. It cannot survey the whole reception history of the Pauline texts under consideration, nor can it systematically assess if and how the same OT texts have been used elsewhere in the New Testament. Finally, one must also concede that selecting a specific approach to a problem always entails gains and losses. The present study experiences certain limitations by the simple fact of its selections, that it selects some passages and not others from an abundance of material, that it selects one methodology and not another from the multiplicity

32. Cf. Rodríguez, "Reading the Gospels, Hearing the Scriptures."

33. These are Green's criticisms of Hays' intertextual approach in Green, "Doing the Text's Work for It: Richard Hays on Paul's Use of Scripture," 62-63. See Hays' response in Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 172-77.

of methodological options.³⁴ Such a limitation is a consequence of the complexity and size of the topic, but the undertaking nevertheless appears worthwhile in the light that it is an approach both less pursued in Pauline studies and with the potential of shedding significant light on an issue of considerable contention.

Conclusion

Thus far, the research task and methodology of the present study have been stated and sketched out. This chapter has introduced the three passages under consideration and provided the rationale behind their selection. It has defined the terms being employed and broadly sketched the methodology applied to the passages in the next chapter. It has also offered some preliminary responses to objections and a realistic appraisal of the limitations of the study. Before taking up the research task and analysing each of the passages under consideration, the goals of the present study are restated ahead. First, it seeks to discern and explore the presence of quotations, allusions, and/or echoes, using the methodology outlined above, in three Pauline passages (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) that contain the language of being or becoming an image. Second, it discusses the significance of Paul's use of these quotations, allusions and/or echoes for the interpretation of these passages. Third, it explores the protological and eschatological insights gained from reading these passages in the light of the intertextual references. Finally, it seeks to identify any insights that emerge and might be gained from these discussions which shed new light on Paul's thought vis-à-vis the Gentile problem and scholarly discussions on the topic.

34. Albert Schweitzer's sobering analysis might perhaps be fitting here: "In the effort to understand Paul some started out from his anthropology, others from his psychology, others from his manner of thought in his pre-Christian period (as though we knew anything about that!), others from his personal idiosyncrasy, others from his attitude to the Law, and others from the experience on the way to Damascus. In thus taking hold of any thread which came to hand they tangled the skein to start with and condemned themselves to accept an inexplicable chaos of thought as Pauline teaching." See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Seabury, 1968), 40.

CHAPTER IV: INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE PASSAGES

Having outlined the research methodology, the task of intertextually analysing the three passages under consideration (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) may now be taken up. This chapter takes up the passages in turn, seeking to discern and discuss the presence of quotations, allusions, and/or echoes in them using the outlined methodology. It also discusses the significance of the intertextual references for interpreting the passages and explores the protological and eschatological insights gained from reading these passages in the light of the intertextual references. The next chapter explores the implications of the findings for understanding Paul's thought vis-à-vis the Gentile problem.

1 Corinthians 15:42-49: The Image of the Heavenly Man

In 1 Cor 15, Paul deals with the question of bodily resurrection, presumably because it is a matter of considerable dispute with the church at Corinth.¹ He appears concerned to set right both scepticism about the resurrection of the dead as well as disdain for the idea that this resurrection would be bodily (cf. 15:12, 35-49). To the first end, he asserts as a matter of “first importance” that the “good news” he received and proclaimed among them, which the Corinthians came to believe, and through which they are being saved, is simply incompatible with a denial of the resurrection of the dead (15:3, 12-19). He forcefully insists that the resurrection of Christ itself entails the resurrection of believers with an Adam-Christ contrast. Christ is the “first fruits” [ἀπαρχή], and through him all have received the hope of resurrection; just as through Adam, death entered the world and extended itself to all (15:20-22). Paul then launches into a vivid description of the return of Christ and of God's eschatological triumph. Death is the “last enemy” to be destroyed, alongside every other “ruler” and “authority” and “power,” and those who belong to Christ will be made alive in him and subject to him, until Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father (15:23-28). To the second end, concerning the Corinthians' disdain for the idea of bodily resurrection, Paul argues that the resurrection involves “spiritual bodies” (15:44).² The Adam-Christ contrast

1. Although scholars are divided over the reason why sections of the church at Corinth were at odds with Paul on the matter of bodily resurrection, the issue need not be settled here. A balanced and plausible solution, argued by Oropeza, is that those who denied the bodily resurrection of believers denied it for various reasons. See B. J. Oropeza, "Corinthian Diversity, Mythological Beliefs, and Bodily Immortality Related to the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15)," in *Scripture, Texts, and Tracings in 1 Corinthians*, ed. Linda L. Belleville and B. J. Oropeza (Lanham: Lexington, 2019), 213-47.

2. “Spiritual body” is the NRSV translation of the Pauline Greek σῶμα πνευματικόν. On the Pauline notion of πνευματικός, see especially Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 205-16.

returns, as does a description of the eschaton. Paul contends that if Adam is the “man of dust,” then Christ, the “last Adam,” is the “man of heaven,” and that just as the first man, Adam, has significance for the rest of humanity, so does the “last Adam,” Christ (15:45-49). At this point, he used the vocabulary of image. Depending on how the passage is translated, he either asserts that just as “we” have borne [ἐφορέσαμεν] the image [εἰκόνα] of the “man of dust,” “we” will bear [φορέσομεν] the image [εἰκόνα] of the “man of heaven,” or he urges the readers to also bear the image of the “man of heaven” just as they have borne the image of the “man of dust” (15:48-49).³ Finally, he insists that bodily resurrection is crucial to God’s eschatological triumph over not only death but also sin and the law, before sounding a note of thanksgiving to God for this “victory” through Christ and an imperative to the Corinthians to live in light of this victory (15:50-58).

Ascertaining the Intertextual Referent

Although 1 Cor 15:42-49 is generally recognised as difficult to translate and interpret, its use of the Old Testament is straightforward. Paul explicitly indicates his use of quotation in 15:45a with the formal marker οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται, “thus it is written,” and draws on the LXX wording of Gen 2:7 which speaks of the “man from the dust of the ground” becoming a “living being.” The relevant texts are placed side-by-side below with the citation being marked in bold.

| Gen 2:7 LXX | 1 Cor 15:45 |
|---|---|
| καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν | οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν . ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν |

Three textual differences are evident. First, Paul leaves out the initial καὶ to conform the quotation to its new context. Second, the LXX lacks the word Ἀδὰμ after ἄνθρωπος, although Theodotion and Symmachus have Ἀδὰμ before ἄνθρωπος [the Adam man] in their texts. As Ciampa and Rosner argue, the dual rendering of Ἀδὰμ ἄνθρωπος in these versions

3. Thiselton, Wright, and Jacob insist that φορέω is used metaphorically and should be translated as “to wear” rather than “to bear.” See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1289-90; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 356; Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 154. The issue will be revisited after the analysis of the passage in this study.

is probably meant to clarify the ambiguous sense of the Hebrew אָדָם which can be a generic noun or a proper name.⁴ Paul's wording, then, might reflect a common exegetical tradition or an earlier written version that he was using. Third, Paul adds the word πρῶτος [first] before ἄνθρωπος [man], but the addition is not surprising in its context. It anticipates ἔσχατος [last] in 15:45b (that becomes δεύτερος [second] in 15:47) and thus formally expresses the contrast between Adam and Christ that Paul begins in 15:21 and forms the backbone of his argument.⁵ Paul has previously insisted that there are different sorts of "bodies" (15:35-41) and that the body one receives is, ultimately, the body that God has chosen to give (15:38). Now, he insists that even though the resurrected body is, in some sense, continuous with the present body, there is also discontinuity between the two (corruptible/incorruptible, dishonour/glory, weakness/power).⁶ This discontinuity between the present body and the resurrected body is reinforced with the Adam-Christ contrast. While the Adam-Christ contrast is employed in 15:20-22 to describe Adam as the first of many under the power of death and Christ as the first of many to be resurrected, the contrast is pressed further in 15:42-49 to describe the bodies proper to each category. Seen together, however, the two instances of the Adam-Christ contrast make the same point. Adam and Christ are prototypical representatives of two modes of existence and solidarity, and just as Adam has significance for the rest of humanity, so does Christ.⁷ Just as human beings are like Adam – both in their subjection to death (15:22a) and their kind of bodies (15:48a) – so too will they be like Christ both in the fact of his resurrection (15:22b) and in the kind of his resurrected body (15:48b).

What Paul's use of εἰκόν in 15:49 adds to the argument, however, is not immediately apparent. To some extent, it depends on how the phrase φορέσωμεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου is read. If φορέσωμεν is taken as an aorist subjunctive, then the line is hortatory: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, let us also bear the image of the man of heaven." If it is instead a future indicative, it reads, "Just as we have borne the image of

4. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "1 Corinthians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 747. Also Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 570.

5. Cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 570; Ciampa and Rosner, "1 Corinthians," 747.

6. The use of sowing-and-reaping imagery (15:42-44) helps hold together the fundamental continuity and discontinuity between present and future bodies.

7. Cf. J. Paul Sampley, "The First Letter to the Corinthians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 988; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 794.

the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.” The former is better attested in ancient manuscripts.⁸ The latter, though considerably less supported, is favoured by almost all modern translations on grounds of internal evidence since the future indicative seems to fit better with Paul’s eschatological emphasis in the surrounding literary context.⁹ Both readings, however, must account for whether 15:49 merely reinforces the paradigmatic functions of Adam and Christ or adds something further to the argument with its use of εικόν vocabulary.

Given the quotation of Gen 2:7 LXX at 15:45a as well as the prevailing Adam-Christ contrast, there is a strong possibility that 15:49, in fact, alludes to Gen 1:26-27 LXX and 5:3 LXX; the former (1:26-27) speaking of human beings made in the εικόν of God, the latter (5:3) speaking of Adam’s son, Seth, bearing Adam’s εικόν, and itself related to the former. This proposal meets the first tier of criteria outlined previously (chapter 3). Regarding availability, Paul clearly displays an awareness of Genesis as well as quotes from the Genesis creation motifs just a few verses before.¹⁰ Regarding volume, the texts intersect directly only at the use of εικόν, but the case in terms of volume is strengthened in the light of the quotation at 15:45a. As regards thematic coherence, these texts all involve the concept of one person being or bearing the εικόν of another. Regarding recurrence, it is generally recognised that Paul repeatedly uses the Genesis creation narratives in his letters. He quotes the Jewish Scriptures seventeen times in the letter, frequently introducing his citations with the lemma γέγραπται, “it is written.”¹¹ He specifically uses the creation motifs in writing about the relationship between men and women (6:16; 11:7-9). Regarding scholarly assessment of the allusion, there is not only widespread agreement that Paul cites and alludes

8. P⁴⁶, κ, A, C, D, F, G, Latin VSS, Coptic, Bohairic, Clement, the Latin of Irenaeus, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa attest to this reading. Thiselton notes that Tertullian raged against Marcion, “He says, ‘let us wear [or bear]’ as a precept, not ‘we shall wear [or bear] in the sense of promise.’”

9. The NRSV, NIV, REB, NJB, RV, KJV as well as most commentaries opt for this reading, with some noting the variant. It is also found in *GNT*⁴, B, several other ancient manuscripts, and attested to by Jerome and John Chrysostom.

10. And as Byrne observes, “The seemingly casual, *en passant* nature of the Adamic allusions in 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, addressed to a community Paul had founded, suggests a recall on his part of something that he had taught them in the course of his initial instruction in the faith.” Byrne, “Pauline Companion,” 313. See also, Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 263-64.

11. Eleven citations are marked by introductory formulae (1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19, 20; 4:6; 6:16; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:54-55); six unmarked (2:16; 5:13; 10:26; 15:27; 15:32, 33).

to Genesis at various points in the Corinthian correspondence but also recognition that 15:49 depends on the Adam narrative in Genesis in some way.¹²

Examining the Interpretive Links

It is worth investigating, therefore, the interpretive links between Gen 1:26-27 LXX, 5:3 LXX, and 1 Cor 15:49. The first half of 15:49, that “we” have borne the εἰκὼν of the man of dust, is evidently dependent on Gen 5:3. Paul extends Genesis’ claim of Adam’s son, Seth, being in Adam’s εἰκὼν to all of Adam’s descendants.¹³ His claim in 15:49a is only explainable with Gen 5:3 in the background, and it seems that Paul fully expects his readers to understand this allusion to the OT text. In Gen 5:3, Adam is described as becoming father to a son who bears his εἰκὼν. This focus on Adam’s creative activity, however, is itself placed in the context of God’s creative activity (Gen 5:1b-2). Adam, born of the creative activity of God, becomes the agent of the creation of a human family of which he is the progenitor. Recovering this significant detail of the original context helps one to grasp the full force of the intertextual link and Paul’s parallelism in 1 Cor 15:49. Paul sees in the resurrection of Christ, as in the creation of Adam, the activity of God. The creed that Paul hands on to the Corinthians affirms that Christ “was raised”; ἐγήγεραται being in the perfect passive and the passive suggesting divine agency in the resurrection.¹⁴ This proclamation is echoed throughout 15:12-20 with ἐγήγεραται appearing six times in these verses. In fact, Paul leaves no doubt about the divine agency in Christ’s resurrection when he asserts that in bringing the good news (cf. 15:1) to the Corinthians, he testified that God raised Christ, ὅτι ἤγειρεν τὸν Χριστόν. The parallelism in 15:49, when seen in this light, beckons readers to recognise that the εἰκὼν of the heavenly man referred to and received by those who, like him, are raised from the dead, is the εἰκὼν of the risen Christ who himself, born of the creative activity of God, becomes the agent of the creation of a human family of which he is the progenitor and the “first fruits,” the ἀπαρχὴ of a much greater harvest (15:23).

12. See, *inter alia*, Byrne, "Pauline Companion," 313-15; Beale, *NT Biblical Theology*, 438-42; Ciampa and Rosner, "1 Corinthians," 746-47; Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 151-59; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 272-74; Sampley, "First Corinthians," 988; Wright, *Resurrection of the Son*, 356. The theory that an *Urmensch* myth of the Gnostic kind was behind the references to a “heavenly man” and not the Genesis Adamic narratives, once popular in mid-twentieth century German scholarship, has been discredited and is certainly out of favour with contemporary scholarship.

13. Cf. Watson and Collins make the connection but do not adequately exploit its implications in Watson, "Paul and Scripture."; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 572. Other commentators (Jacob, Hays, Orr and Walther) gloss over this connection to Gen 5:3 and skip directly to Gen 1:26-27.

14. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 530.

In other words, Paul appears to be attributing to the risen Christ an active agency in bringing others to the fulfilment of God’s purposes in the resurrection of the dead.¹⁵ The heavenly man, himself raised to life by the creative activity of God, imparts to others the life that he has received from God and recreates them in his εἰκών. If Paul is indeed working out “his own new-creation reading of Genesis,” then it is crucial that readers recognise its thorough Christocentrism.¹⁶ Christ is not merely, so to speak, the prototype to whom many others will conform but is also the one through whom the Creator will accomplish this work of “new creation” (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). In fact, this interpretation of 15:49b throws light on the notoriously contentious assertion back in 15:45b when Paul says that the last Adam became a πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν, a “life-giving spirit.”¹⁷ Christ, the last Adam, raised to life by the spirit of God becomes, by his own resurrection from the dead, the one who effuses this life-giving spirit to others, the others who in 15:49 are described as bearing his εἰκών.

The use of εἰκών in 1 Cor 15:49 though, like its use in Gen 5:3, also harks back to Gen 1:26-27 wherein God is said to make humankind in his image, his εἰκών [LXX]. Despite interpreters variously understanding the εἰκών of God in terms of ontological aspects in human beings – or more specifically in rational, volitional, and moral terms – the εἰκών in the original Genesis context is described primarily in functional terms.¹⁸ Human beings are commissioned to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to rule over the rest of creation (Gen 1:28). Yet again, this task is placed in the context of God’s own creative activity. Just as God subdues the chaos, rules over it, creates the earth and fills it with life (1:1-25), so too are those created in God’s εἰκών commissioned to continue these actions

15. Wright arrives at the same point along a different route in Wright, *Resurrection of the Son*, 354-55. See also Byrne, "Pauline Companion," 315; William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *I Corinthians*, Anchor Bible, (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 348. Cf., especially, Phil 3:21: “He [the Lord Jesus Christ; 3:20] will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory”

16. Cf. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son*, 353.

17. “Life-giving spirit” [πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν] is the Pauline counterpart to the Genesis (NRSV) “living being” [ψυχὴν ζῶσαν]. Pace Dunn, a primary reference to the “Holy Spirit” is unnecessary to posit and Paul is not mixing the roles of the risen Christ with the “Spirit” of God. Paul’s assertion is fully explicable in the light of his (counter) Adam Christology. As Adam is progenitor of an existence vivified by the ψυχή, Christ is progenitor of an existence vivified by the πνεῦμα. Cf. Dunn, *Paul*, 261.

18. Cf. Beale, *NT Biblical Theology*, 30-33. The use of εἰκών in the Genesis narrative has its basis in the ANE ideology that kings were “images” of gods since they represented gods by acting like them in virtue of their exercising dominion over the land. To be in the “image” of a god meant that the god’s presence and dominion was manifested through the human king. J. Richard Middleton cites numerous examples of pharaohs that were said to be in the image of a god as well as treats the ANE context in rich detail in J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005). The Genesis εἰκών motif claiming that humanity was created to exercise dominion over the rest of creation also represents a particular assault against other ANE creation stories in which humans are the menials of gods.

with their own activities.¹⁹ There is thus an important corollary here. On the one hand, human beings “image” God by accepting God’s dominion over creation, accepting the divine mandate, and reflecting God’s dominion to the rest of creation with their own activities. On the other hand, human beings can fail to accept God’s dominion, refuse the divine mandate, fail to reflect God’s dominion to the rest of creation, and thus fail to “image” God to the world. The human beings in the Genesis narrative, in fact, are soon said to disobey God (3:1-7) and lose the tranquil stewardship they once enjoyed over creation (3:15, 17).

In 1 Cor 15:20-28, Paul evidently interprets this transgression as allowing death to enter the world and human history. He is not alone in interpreting the Genesis narrative of Adam’s disobedience in this way.²⁰ For now, however, it is important to recognise that Paul speaks of death not merely as a feature of human existence but as an active power in the world.²¹ Through Adam’s primal sin, Death enters and unleashes itself upon the world and is thus an “enemy” to be destroyed.²² It is among those whom Paul calls the rulers and authorities and powers of this world. Death exercises dominion in the world; it rules over humanity. In 15:54-56, Paul speaks of Death as having two other partners in a cosmic battle that is waged against God and God’s creation: Sin and the Law. Based on the limited description in 1 Cor 15, it is possible to speak of Sin and Death as “cosmic terrorists” that have “all” since Adam under their sway and must either be served or defeated.²³

19. The functional aspect, of course, is not meant in contrast to the ontological aspect. It presumes that human beings possess certain rational, volitional, and moral attributes that enable them to know and carry out the divine mandate. The functional aspect, nevertheless, is primary in Genesis’ depiction of what it means for humankind to be in God’s εἰκόv. Cf. Beale, *NT Biblical Theology*, 32.

20. This tradition has its basis in Gen 2:17 (“in the day that you eat of it you shall die”). There is, however, tremendous diversity in the way Second Temple Jews interpreted the transgression as allowing death to enter the world and human history. Ben Sira, knowing the universal scope of death (Sir 41:1-4), blames “a woman” – presumably, a reference to Eve (cf. Gen 3:6, 12-13) – for its entry into human history (Sir 25:24). The *Wisdom of Solomon*, on the other hand, blames neither the man nor the woman of the Genesis narrative but “the devil’s envy” (Wis 2:24). The *Life of Adam and Eve* blames both the man and the woman, while Philo appears to blame neither and simply presumes that death is inevitable for the earthly humankind. *4 Ezra* blames Adam’s sin and his “evil heart” (3:21-26); as does *2 Baruch* who blames the “darkness of Adam” and repeatedly associates mortality with Adam’s transgression (4:3; 17:3; 18:2; 19:8; 56:6). As Dunn notes, there is enough evidence to indicate considerable reflection on the Adam tradition within Second Temple Judaism, and that at least some Second Temple Jews did not believe death to be the simple consequence of humanity’s constitution but the result of some primal transgression. Cf. Dunn, *Paul*, 90.

21. On Paul’s “apocalyptic language,” see especially Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 125-36; Gaventa, *When in Romans*, 23-46; Susan Eastman, “Participation in Christ,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

22. Henceforth, Death and Sin are capitalised when they refer to instances in which Paul regards them as cosmic powers.

23. Cf. Gaventa, *Paul*, 130.

To state it differently, Paul places the Genesis narrative of Adam’s disobedience in his own apocalyptic context. In failing to accept God’s dominion, Adam not only loses his own dominion over the rest of creation but also himself (with his entire human family) becomes subject to another cosmic power, Death. Paul thus understands and portrays the resurrection of Christ as the inauguration of God’s apocalyptic “victory” (cf. 15:54c, 55a, 57) over Death.²⁴ In this sense, the resurrected Christ might himself be said to “image” God (cf. 2 Cor 4:4) since he reflects the ultimate sovereignty of God over every ruler and authority and power, including – and especially – the most formidable of them, Death and Sin. By implication, when Paul speaks of bearing the εἰκόν of the heavenly man, Christ, he means a sharing in this eschatological “victory” of cosmic proportions that has begun in Christ but that will also be fully accomplished only with the bodies of believers themselves being modelled on Christ’s own resurrected body.²⁵

With the use of εἰκόν, Paul thus ties protology and eschatology together. Since the beginning, God has desired a people who image to the world God’s absolute sovereignty (cf. Gen 1:26). For Paul, the eschatological Adam is the beginning of this “new creation” (cf. 2 Cor 5:17); the resurrection of Christ the “eschatological *creatio ex nihilo*” of the God who brings life where there is no life.²⁶ The effects of the Christ-event spill over into salvation for the whole world, calling into existence a people who fulfil what the original creation failed to do when they allowed themselves to become subject to powers hostile to God and God’s creation. Put differently, God has entered the world held captive by the powers of Sin and Death, to fashion a people in the εἰκόν of his Son; a people in whom God’s eschatological victory over these enemies has already begun but is yet to be fully accomplished and manifest. This is most evident in the fact that Paul already celebrates God’s apocalyptic victory by quoting the prophet Isaiah who envisioned God’s ultimate

24. Also note the apocalyptic battle imagery that dominates 1 Cor 15:23-28. When Paul speaks of an “order” in the victory over death, he uses τάγματι, “rank,” a military term usually denoting a unit of soldiers. Likewise, καταργήση, ἀρχὴν, ἐξουσίαν, δύναμιν, βασιλεύειν, ἐχθροὺς, ὑποτέτακται all contribute to the metaphor of conquest against a hostile enemy who must be vanquished. Needless to say, in Pauline thought, God carries out this conquest not with the clashing of swords but with the foolishness of the cross (cf. 1:18).

25. Despite good arguments to the contrary, this use of εἰκόν is better captured by taking φορέσομεν in the future indicative. Also, Samra rightly observes that this fits Paul’s general pattern of beginning in the present (15:12-21; 15:35-48), then moving into the future using the Adam-Christ contrast (15:22; 15:49) and concluding with exhortations related to the present (15:29-34; 15:56-58). Cf. James G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 105. Thus, 15:21 and 15:48 in the present tense, 15:22 and 15:49 in the future indicative. Furthermore, since Paul means a sharing in Christ’s mode of being, translating φορέω as “to bear” does no injustice to Pauline thought even if it does flatten the supposed metaphor.

26. Cf., especially, Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 90. “For the point of the resurrection is not survival beyond the grave but an eschatological *creatio ex nihilo*.”

destruction of the power of death for the salvation of all peoples, Jews as well as Gentiles (cf. Isa 25:8 LXX in 15:54b). Paul's protological and eschatological affirmations are thus thoroughly Christological; for him, God's purposes for the world are fulfilled only through [διὰ; cf. 15:57] Christ and in [ἐν; cf. 15:22] Christ.

Hearing the Jewish Interpretive Tradition

The full force of Paul's protological and eschatological affirmations in 1 Cor 15 may be especially felt when they are heard against the context of Second Temple Judaism that witnessed a revival of interest in the people and motifs of the early Genesis narratives.²⁷ The *Greek Life of Adam and Eve (GLAE)*, a Greek translation of the hypothetical but no longer extant Hebrew original *Life of Adam and Eve*, is one such document that explores the fate of humanity with the advent of sin and suffering by expanding the narrative in Gen 2-3.²⁸ Of crucial significance is the connections between the sin of Adam and Eve, loss of glory and dominion, the introduction of death, and the promise of resurrection and immortality that *GLAE* makes. After she is tricked by the serpent, Eve recounts her experience as a loss of glory: "At that moment my eyes were opened, and I knew that I was stripped of the righteousness with which I had been clothed, and I wept and said to him [the serpent]: 'Why have you done this to me? You have separated me from the glory with which I was clothed'" (*GLAE* 20:1-2).²⁹ Later, Adam makes the same association between sin and the loss of glory: "O wicked woman [Eve]! What have you done to us? You have separated me from the glory of God" (21:6). Likewise, the experience is also said to result in a loss of dominion over the rest of creation. On one of the journeys, Seth and Eve have an exchange with a beast that is attacking Seth (10-11). Though the beast should have been subject to Seth as the "image" [εἰκόν] of God (10:3), it is no longer because of the primal sin (11:1) and God later explains this as a loss of dominion over created order (24:4), promising that Adam will return to his place of dominion (39:2-3). The loss of glory is also associated with the "rule" of death over "all" by a parallel statement in which Adam cries out, "O Eve, what have you done to us? You have brought the great wrath of death upon us, which will rule over our entire race" (14:2). The arrival of death, in fact, becomes a major focus of the text as future deliverance

27. On this point, see Dunn, *Paul*, 84-90.

28. See parallel discussions of *GLAE* in Ben C. Blackwell, "The *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* and Romans 8:14-39: (Re-)creation and Glory," in *Reading Romans in Context: Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 108-14; John R. Levison, "Adam and Eve in Romans 1:18-25 and the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*," *New Testament Studies* 50, no. 4 (2004): 519-34, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688504000293>.

29. All citations of *GLAE* used here are from the translation in Blackwell, "*GLAE*," 108-14.

is portrayed as resurrection in the last days. Michael the angel tells Eve: “[Comfort] will not be yours now, but at the end of the times all flesh from Adam until that great day will be raised up, all who are the holy people. Then the delights of paradise will be given to them, and God will be among them” (13:3-5).

Paul was probably acquainted with some of the traditions *GLAE* represents even if, admittedly, he likely did not read it.³⁰ Clearly, he is not alone in Second Temple Judaism in associating the transgression of Adam with the eschatological promise of resurrection. Nor is he alone in associating the Adamic condition with mortality, lack of glory, and loss of dominion. There are also clear correspondences in the ways in which Paul and *GLAE* both link eschatology and protology: the eschaton fulfils God’s purposes in creation, re-establishing in humanity what was lost by Adam’s sin and restoring them to the glory and image of God. Yet, Paul also stands in striking contrast with his Christological re-centring of eschatology and protology. Hearing these “extra-biblical echoes” can thus amplify Paul’s Christological affirmations.³¹ The eschatological restoration, for Paul, has already begun with the resurrection of Christ and involves not a return to an original vision but a future “transformation” [ἀλλαγησόμεθα; cf. 1 Cor 15:51b] to the reality of Christ. And as seen above, this “victory” (15:57) over the powers of Sin and Death comes only through Christ and in Christ, who himself imparts to “those who belong to him” (15:23) the life that he has received from God and transforms them into his εἰκόν.

Another text that has been suggested as relevant to 1 Cor 15 is Philo’s *Allegorical Interpretation*. In his allegorical exegesis of Genesis, Philo of Alexandria finds two distinct Adams within the text of Genesis 1-2: the first Adam in Genesis 1 and the second Adam in Genesis 2 (I:31-32, 92-95).³² The archetypal primal Adam is the heavenly man [ουράνιος; cf. 1 Cor 15:47-49], created according to the image [εἰκόν] of God, entirely spiritual, an incorruptible intelligence free from the disturbances of corporeality, perfectly virtuous and needing no instruction, and following God’s law in its purest and unwritten form - the rational order governing the cosmos. The earthy man [γέϊνος], on the other hand, is composed of both soul and body, susceptible to the disturbances and passions of the body, and thus needing written law and instruction. Redemption for the twice-fallen humankind

30. Cf. Blackwell, "*GLAE*," 111; Dunn, *Paul*, 87; Levison, "Life of Adam and Eve," 521.

31. See defence of this point in the sketching of the research methodology (chap. 3).

32. See, especially, Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch, ed. George W. MacRae, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 286.

(first fallen from purely spiritual into a bodily existence and then fallen into a life of sense-perception and passions) in Philo's interpretation thus involves returning to the primal state, a departure from the world of corporeality into an existence of pure mind and spirit.

The debate concerning the relationship of 1 Cor 15 with Philo's *Allegorical Interpretation* need not be adjudicated here.³³ There are evidently some correspondences, especially in a common distinction between the heavenly man and the earthy man, but also some fundamental differences in what Paul and Philo are addressing.³⁴ Hearing the correspondences as echoes, however, can amplify Paul's Christological affirmations in the text. For Paul, it is not the heavenly man who is first, but the earthy man (cf. 15:46). The heavenly man, moreover, is Christ, who is not in some purely spiritual existence but who has a resurrected body. He is not found in the Genesis text but known as Son, Lord, and the true image of God through the proclamation of the good news. And for Paul, the real destiny of humanity is not a return to some primal state of pure "spiritual" existence but the future transformation of our bodies into the likeness of Christ's resurrected body and the new creation that has already begun in Christ.³⁵

Hearing Within the Greco-Roman Context

Paul's Christological affirmations may also be heard against its Greco-Roman context, especially in the associations of εἰκών with the imperial cult. The Greek word εἰκών used by the LXX to translate the Hebrew עִלְוֹת originally meant an artistic representation such as a painting, statue, or an impression on a coin, and later began to be applied to mental images, reflections, apparitions, or even the sense of a "living image" or embodiment.³⁶ Of particular significance was its application to the engraving of an emperor's head on a coin or an emperor's statue within the imperial cult.³⁷ Coins in the Greco-Roman world, for instance, which were "one of the most prevalent and efficient means of communicating the themes of

33. Fee rejects any reference to Philo in Fee, *First Corinthians*, 791. Hays considers the reference likely in Hays, *First Corinthians*, 273. Wright considers it to be possible in Wright, *Resurrection of the Son*, 353.

34. Philo's concern was not the eschatological mode of being but the justification of the existence of the Mosaic Law to a Greco-Roman context in which the divine, universal, immutable, and rational law could be discerned in nature and was thus unwritten. See especially Hayes, *Divine Law*, 134-37.

35. Cf. "The resurrection carries with it no myth of eternal return but the promise of new creation." Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1284.

36. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1965), II.388.

37. Cf. the use of εἰκών in the Synoptic tradition (Mt 22:20; Mk 12:16; Lk 20:24) where Jesus asks whose image is engraved on the Roman denarius, and the εἰκών of the "beast" in Rev 13:14-15; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 19:20; 20:4.

imperial ideology visually,” often expressed the Greco-Roman idea that the gods had predestined the emperors to exercise authority for them and that the emperor stood at the interface between the divine and the human.³⁸ As that idea came to be focused on the person of the emperor, they were often addressed in terms that invoked their divinity. From Augustus onwards, emperors were often honoured as sons of God, and included within the general worship of the Roman gods. A coin minted during the reign of Tiberius, for instance, reads “Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, son of the divine Augustus” with an image [εἰκόν] of the deified virtue of justice, Iustitia, enthroned and holding a laurel branch and sceptre on its reverse side.³⁹ Likewise, Arrian refers to a statue [εἰκόν] of Philip II in the sanctuary of Artemis built by the Ephesians around 336 BCE as a sign of gratitude.⁴⁰

As seen above, Paul’s use of εἰκόν is not in the first place a veiled attack on the Roman imperial cult but rather an apocalyptic charge against the cosmic powers that are in opposition to God.⁴¹ It is also firmly rooted in the tradition of Jewish Scriptures, and his use of the Genesis motifs for his Christological purposes. The use of εἰκόν in the Greco-Roman world nonetheless also carried certain political implications. And it is possible that Paul not only knows but also exploits the associations of εἰκόν with authority and divinity with which his predominantly Gentile audiences would also be familiar. If these echoes are heard, they only serve to amplify his Christological affirmations. Where εἰκόν is associated with imperial authority, Paul’s words beckon his Gentile audiences to recognise the true authority of Christ, the eschatological Adam. In contrast to the imperial claims of bringing the world to its intended order, Paul heralds the dawn of a new creation that will fulfil God’s purposes by being conformed to the εἰκόν of Christ.⁴²

38. Neil Elliott and Mark Reasoner, *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 138, 41.

39. Elliott and Reasoner, *Documents and Images*, 138.

40. Alexandra Bartzoka, "The Poleis at the Center: Attribution of Divine Honors to Living Monarchs? The Case of Amyntas III and Philip II," in *Political Religions in the Greco-Roman World: Discourses, Practices and Images*, ed. Elias Koulakiotis and Charlotte Dunn (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2019), 75-76.

41. The relationship between Paul and the Roman Empire is another matter of considerable scholarly contention, but why Pauline language is not firstly anti-Roman polemic is argued well in John M. G. Barclay, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 363-88.

42. Cf. "For the inhabitants of the Roman colony Corinth – who walk about a city replete with statues and temples dedicated to the glory of the Roman rulers – Paul’s words serve as one more summons to a conversion of the imagination, seeing the world as standing ultimately under the authority of another who will overturn the arrangements of power that now exist. Resurrection of the dead is a subversive belief because it declares that God alone is sovereign over the created world." Cf. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 265.

Paul's Intertextuality

The preceding discussion makes it possible to summarise a few key insights about Paul's use of the allusion in 1 Cor 15:49. Paul's assertions in 1 Cor 15, as Francis Watson has put it, are the "product of an encounter between his gospel and the Genesis narrative."⁴³ They are not, so to speak, exegetical claims about the Genesis text; Paul does not believe that Genesis speaks directly of Christ. Rather, he understands the Christological potential of the Adamic narrative, sets it within his own apocalyptic framework, and employs it within a specific pastoral context. His use of the allusion both intersects with other readings of the Genesis narrative within Second Temple Judaism and contrasts with them in its adamant Christocentrism. While Paul makes the same connections between the Genesis image motif, dominion, glory, and immortality as some other Second Temple Jews, he differs from them in his insistence that the eschatological age has already dawned with the resurrection of Christ. Even though the new creation has yet to reach its full scope and manifestation – given that Death still stalks the world – it is nonetheless a present reality in which believers already participate. The imperial context of the Greco-Roman world likewise amplifies his Christological emphases, as Pauline theology affirms that Christ, not eternal Rome, has the final word about the world and human history.

Paul's εἰκόν language is thus deliberately chosen and must be allowed its full import. In the light of the allusion to the Genesis text, the eschatological and protological claims in 1 Cor 15:42-49 are given a firmly Christological basis. Paul carefully argues that God's purposes for the world are fulfilled only through Christ and in Christ, and that the real destiny of humanity involves bearing the image of Christ which, as seen above, is sharing his mode of being. Yet, Paul's Christology is at the same time "ecclesiotelic"; the significance of Christ cannot be stated apart from those destined to share his resurrection, and Paul insists that Christ, as the eschatological Adam, is the initiator and prototype of a people brought into existence through him.⁴⁴ Like the eschatological Adam, this eschatological family (cf. Gen 1:28) draws its existence from the creative activity of God who brings life out of death. Moreover, just as Adam's role in establishing the universality of death implies the universal significance of Christ's resurrection, so too does the

43. Watson, "Paul and Scripture."

44. "Ecclesiotelic," a term coined by Hays, captures well the fact that God's activity is directed towards the formation of a people. Richard B. Hays, "On the Rebound: A Response to Critiques of *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 77, 94.

universality of Christ's significance correspond to the "all" from which Christ's people are drawn. In Christ, God has fashioned out of the "all" of humanity – Jews as well as Gentiles – captive to the powers of Death and Sin, a people who fulfil what the original humanity failed to accomplish. The implications of this aspect for the Gentile problem will be treated in the next chapter. In what follows, the next passage under consideration (Rom 8:28-30) is taken up and explored together with references to the ways in which it coheres and contrasts with what has already been stated above.

Romans 8:28-30: The Image of the Son

In the Letter to the Romans, in which the Gentile problem is recognisably a major theme, the εἰκόν language is also present (8:29) and the context of its use resembles 1 Cor 15 in certain ways. Among these, the Adam-Christ contrast and its apocalyptic framework in 5:12-21 are perhaps most notable, but one may also include the strongly eschatological underpinnings of Rom 5-8 generally.⁴⁵ Paul asserts that through Adam, Sin and Death entered the world, that Death exercised dominion by extending itself throughout humanity, and that Sin also increased and enslaved humanity. In contrast, all of this has been overturned by Christ, through whom grace abounds "all the more" and itself exercises dominion (5:20-21). Whereas Adam brought condemnation for all, Christ brings justification and life for all (5:21). Believers are located within this conflict between the powers of Sin and Death on the one hand, and God and the power of God's grace on the other (chaps. 6-8). Once slaves of Sin and Death, they walk in "newness of life" (6:4) and are themselves "weapons of righteousness" (6:13) anticipating God's final triumph over these powers (8:10-11). Once held by a spirit of slavery, they have received a spirit of adoption that enables them to cry out to God as Father (8:15). Once subject to futility, they have received the "first fruits of the Spirit," have already been saved in hope, and wait for the whole of creation to be freed from bondage to decay and for the revelation of the children of God (8:18-25). Rom 8:28-30 then emphatically articulates what God has done for believers, and Paul employs εἰκόν here as he asserts that those whom God knew beforehand God also preordained to be "conformed to the image that his Son is" [συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ Υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ] so that "the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers"

45. On Paul's "apocalyptic language," again see Gaventa, *Paul*, 125-36; Gaventa, *When in Romans*, 23-46; Eastman, "Participation in Christ."

(8:29).⁴⁶ What being conformed to the εἰκών which the Son is, however, is not immediately clear and thus merits closer scrutiny.

Ascertaining the Intertextual Referent

James Dunn has persuasively argued that 8:18-30 stands as the bookend to the section that begins in 1:18.⁴⁷ As he observes, there are clear verbal associations: κτίσις (1:20, 25; 8:20-22), ματαιότης (1:21; 8:20), δοξάζειν (1:21; 8:30), δόξα (1:23; 8:18, 21), εἰκών (1:23; 8:29), σώματα (1:24; 8:23).⁴⁸ The argument in 8:20-21, moreover, draws on the narrative in which the original purpose of creation was also frustrated when human beings, in the person of Adam, fell from favour with God, and thus evokes the account of humanity's fall in 1:18-23.⁴⁹ Finally, the dominance of this Adam motif paves the way for the strongly Christological affirmations in 8:28-39 by which the dim analysis of 1:18-32 is inverted in a manner reminiscent of the Adam-Christ contrast in 5:12-21. Indeed, the strongly Adamic undertones of the three passages (1:18-30; 5:12-21; 8:19-21) signal that Paul's use of εἰκών language in 8:29 must also be related to the Adamic narrative and thus that the εἰκών in Rom 8:29 must allude to Gen 1:26-27 which describes the divinely instituted role of human beings in terms of bearing God's εἰκών.⁵⁰ Paul must, in fact, fully expect that his readers will understand what it means to be "conformed" [συμμόρφους] to an "image" [εἰκών] given that there is no explication of the idea within its literary context.

The proposed allusion might once again be adjudicated beginning with the basic criteria previously defined. Regarding availability and recurrence, Paul both displays an awareness of as well as employs the Genesis narratives concerning Adam (5:12-21) and Abraham (4:1-25) at various points in his letters even if unlike 1 Cor 15, there are no explicit quotations of Genesis in Romans. In terms of volume, the texts only intersect in the use of εἰκών, a term

46. As Byrne et. al. note, if the complete phrase is not to become tautologous, the second genitive τοῦ Υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ must be exegetical, with τῆς εἰκόνος and τοῦ Υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ thus being mutually explicative; "the image that his Son is" rather than the NRSV's "the image of his Son." See Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 272; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 485; Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 193.

47. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 467.

48. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 467. Cf. also Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 192.

49. See especially the "common fate" principle discussed in Byrne, *Romans*, 254-62.

50. For a defence of the Adamic underpinnings of Rom 1:18-32, see Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 73-87. Also, as Beverly Roberts Gaventa argues, the language of "handing them over" in Rom 1:18-32 is apocalyptic language of God conceding humanity to "anti-God powers" for a time, which links Rom 1:18-32 to 5:12-21 where these "anti-God powers" of Sin and Death, and the Law whom they co-opt, are introduced and described in considerable detail. See Gaventa, *Paul*, 113-23.

hardly exclusive to Genesis, and this poses a difficulty since there are other traditions and texts that speak of humanity being made in the εἰκών of God (cf. Sir 17:3; Wis 2:23-24; *Alleg. Interp.* I:31-32; *GLAE* 10:3, 2 Esd 8:44).⁵¹ These other traditions and texts, however, are themselves developments of the Genesis motif (1:26-27). The strongly Adamic undertones of the preceding verses (8:19-21) and the connections of the section to 1:18-30 and 5:12-21 described above, furthermore, bolster the case for reading εἰκών in the light of the Genesis motif. As for thematic coherence, the themes of the divinely instituted purpose of creation as well as the common fate of humanity and the rest of creation in the preceding verses (cf. Rom 8:20-21; Gen 3:17-19) are clearly correspondences between the Pauline text and Genesis. Finally, regarding scholarly assessment of the allusion, those that see the εἰκών in 8:29 as containing an implicit reference to Gen 1:26-27 include Beale, Blackwell, Byrne, Jacob, Schreiner, Wright, et. al.⁵² As shall be seen, the case for the allusion rests more securely on the interpretive links between the two passages, and the similarities it bears to the allusion in 1 Cor 15:49.

Examining the Interpretive Links

If the use of εἰκών in 8:29 is to be allowed its full significance, it must be explored with respect to its function in the literary context in which Paul places it. The theme that concerns Paul in the surrounding verses is evidently the presence of suffering in the lives of believers (8:18), and the ensuing argument expresses his firm conviction that the divine plan that is underway, despite the difficulties of the present age, proceeds unyieldingly to its intended goal (8:28). As a sign of hope, Paul points to the presence of “groaning” in three distinct subjects: creation (8:19-22), believers (8:23-25), and the Spirit (8:26-27). The reference to creation [κτίσις], and especially to its subjection to “futility” [ματαιότητι] by a will not its own (cf. 8:20), evokes the Adamic narrative that Paul has previously employed in 1:18-30 and 5:12-21.⁵³ Paul appropriates a Jewish tradition that, referring to the curse of the earth in

51. Paul uses εἰκών one other time in Romans (1:23), a text that, though primarily dependent on Ps 106:20, is also an indirect reference to the Genesis εἰκών motif, lamenting humanity’s failure to bear God’s εἰκών by ironically falling into idolatry. See especially the argument in Byrne, *Romans*, 68.

52. See Beale, *NT Biblical Theology*, 442; Blackwell, “*GLAE*,” 111-13; Byrne, *Romans*, 272-73; Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 191-98; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018); Wright, “Romans,” 601-02.

53. Despite some good arguments to the contrary, the “creation” that is the subject of the groaning in 8:19-22 is the non-human, non-angelic section of creation, presented by the biblical creation stories as the essential context for human life and activity. Byrne considers all the alternatives, offering a persuasive argument in defence of this assertion in Byrne, *Romans*, 255-56. Byrne also compellingly argues based on linguistic considerations that the “will” that subjects creation to “futility” is Adam’s, rather than God’s. Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

Gen 3:17b-19, believed the fate of the rest of creation to be intimately bound up with the fate of humanity.⁵⁴ In this tradition, when Adam transgressed and fell from favour with God, creation was also impacted. It suffered a frustration of its original purpose since the one who was meant to exercise dominion over it as God's image-bearer on earth failed to exercise the responsibility entrusted to him.⁵⁵ This tradition, therefore, also harboured the hope that creation itself would experience eschatological restoration to God's original design when humanity would be rehabilitated to its position of dominion over the rest of the created world.⁵⁶ Paul, in fact, uses a common apocalyptic symbol when he characterises creation's yearning to be set free from "slavery" as creation's "labour pains" (cf. Isa 13:6-8; 26:16-18; Jer 6:24; Mic 4:9-10; Mk 13:8; Rev 12:2; 1QH^a 11:6-8), creation's awaiting of the final vindication of God's elect and the fulfilment of its divinely intended *telos*. The apocalyptic connotations of these verses hark back to the Adam-Christ contrast in 5:12-21 where the apocalyptic drama is first introduced in terms of conflict between the powers of Sin and Death on the one hand, and God and the power of God's grace on the other.

In Rom 5:12-21, as in 1 Cor 15, Paul interprets the Genesis narrative of Adam's disobedience as Adam not only losing his own dominion over the rest of creation but also himself (with his entire human family) becoming subject to the cosmic powers of Sin and Death. Again, the Adamic narrative is employed not for itself but for the presentation of what has been accomplished in the Christ-event. Where Adam is associated with sin, death, and condemnation (5:12, 15, 18a), Christ brings righteousness, life, and justification for all (5:18b-19). The mismatch between the two events, however, is more strongly emphasised here than in 1 Cor 15: the gift is not like the sin; it reverses the unyielding momentum of sin and unleashes its transformative power so that it abounds "all the more" (5:15-17). In fact, where Sin and Death once exercised dominion, grace now exercises dominion "through justification" (5:21); the Christ-event sets up an alternative regime of power.⁵⁷ Paul contends that believers already find themselves within this new dispensation, the new mode

54. Byrne, *Romans*, 256.

55. As Byrne points out, *ματαιότητι* is used in the LXX to mean a frustration of purpose, a lack of "anything to give meaning or usefulness to existence." It is the word that the LXX of Ecclesiastes uses to translate the concept of "vanity." Byrne, *Romans*, 260.

56. Cf. the manifold references in prophetic literature to salvation extending to all creation: Ezek 34:25-31; Isa 11:6-9, 43:19-21, 55:12-13; Hos 2:18; Zech 8:12; as well as references in later apocalyptic tradition: *1 Enoch* 45:4-5; 51:4-5; *4 Ezra* 8:51-54; *2 Baruch* 29:1-8.

57. Barclay summarises the message eloquently when he writes, "There is no neutral zone in Paul's cosmos, no pocket of absolute freedom, no no-man's land between the two fronts. The gift of God in Jesus Christ has established not liberation from authority, but a new allegiance, a new responsibility, a new "slavery" under the rule of grace." Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 497.

of existence that he speaks about as “newness of life” (6:4). Their incorporation into this new existence has been enacted in their baptism into Christ’s death, and believers now live drawing on the “life from the dead” (6:3-11; cf. 11:5) that was inaugurated by Jesus’ resurrection – something Paul repeatedly draws attention to in Rom 6-8.⁵⁸ This “newness of life,” however, is present within still mortal bodies for believers (6:12).⁵⁹ While they indeed are “dead to sin and alive to God” (6:11), they still inhabit “bodies of death” (7:24; cf. 6:12); they still “groan” for the “redemption of their bodies” (8:23). Put differently, whereas Christ has finished with death, believers have not. They are still bound to death as part of their Adamic legacy; they must still look forward to their own resurrection and immortality, to when “he who raised Christ from the dead” will also give life to their “mortal bodies” (7:11). To use Barclay’s words, believers are described by Paul as *simul mortuus et vivens*; “on the one hand doomed to death, in a body that is bound by mortality, believers are also and at the same time the site of an impossible new life, whose origin lies in the resurrection of Jesus and whose goal is their own future resurrection.”⁶⁰ Given that the life of believers is presently marked by this incongruity, Paul associates the full and definitive *telos* of the Christ-event with the bodily resurrection of believers, for which the former remains both the guarantee and basis.⁶¹

Like 1 Cor 15:49, therefore, the use of εἰκὼν in Rom 8:29 is tied to Paul’s apocalyptic framework and the Pauline motif of Christ reversing the effects of the Adamic transgression. The strong connections between Rom 1:18-30, 5:12-21, and 8:18-30 suggest that the affirmations in 8:18-30 must be read not only as affirmations concerning Christ but also as continuing the counter-Adam narrative. To state it briefly: God’s ultimate sovereignty over all powers, including the powers of Sin and Death, is manifested in the resurrection of Christ, which is, as in 1 Cor 15, portrayed as the “eschatological *creatio ex nihilo*” of the God who brings life where there is no life, who “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (4:17c).⁶² By his faithful obedience (cf. especially 5:18-19) and

58. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 501.

59. On this point see especially Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 500-03.

60. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 502. As Barclay argues, Luther’s *simul iustus et peccator* reading of the same passages is not what Paul has in mind here.

61. As in 1 Cor 15, Paul hopes for redemption *of* our bodies (Rom 8:23), not redemption *from* our bodies.

62. Both Barclay and Byrne notice, albeit with a slight difference, the Pauline parallels between the promise made to Abraham, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and the life of believers in Christ. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 490; Byrne, *Romans*, 155. At the heart of all three is the creative activity of God who brings life out of no-life. On the use of “eschatological *creatio ex nihilo*,” see earlier reference to Käsemann.

through his own resurrection, Christ restores the state of humanity, and thus the state of creation, to their divinely intended purposes. And by doing so, Christ successfully plays the role in which the original Adam failed.⁶³ Born of God's creative activity, the resurrected Christ is the eschatological Adam, the true εἰκών of God, modelling the fullness of humanity that God intended from the beginning. Yet, as Gen 1:26-28 makes clear, the divine plan has always been to create not just an individual but a people who fulfil this responsibility, and thus that if Christ is himself the eschatological Adam, he must also be merely, so to speak, the first among many others who will come to share in this new creation which he inaugurates. Paul, no doubt, is convinced that the effects of the Christ-event must spill over into redemption for many others; the others who share in Christ's sufferings (cf. 8:17) and who through Christ are freed from slavery to Sin and Death (cf. 8:2). The significance of the eschatological Adam can be no less universal than the first Adam's significance as the one who unleashed the reign of Sin and Death upon all humanity and who was himself a "type of the one to come" (cf. Rom 5:14). The allusion to Gen 1:26-27 in Rom 8:29 provides this essential interpretive link; it summarises the divine *telos* as the creation of a new human family, drawn from all peoples in Christ, who sharing in his glorious state, will reflect to the rest of creation the absolute sovereignty of God in the eschatological age for which creation and "we" (8:23) now eagerly await.

This inseparability between the εἰκών which Christ is and the human family that comes into existence through him and bears his εἰκών is reinforced by the way in which Paul constructs the eternal plan of God [πρόθεσις] in 8:28-30. Summarising the hope that believers possess even amidst the sufferings of the present age, he writes that "all things work together for the good of those who love God," the good [ἀγαθόν] being the full and definitive realisation of God's plan for them. Believers find themselves within the unfolding design of God's eternal plan that proceeds unyieldingly towards its intended goal. This unfolding design is presented as a sequence containing five verbs in 8:29-30: foreknew [προέγνω], predestined [προώρισεν], called [ἐκάλεσεν], justified [ἐδικαίωσεν], glorified [ἐδόξασεν]. As Byrne observes, each of the five verbs are words associated with the Jewish self-understanding of Israel as the People of God that Paul uses to describe the family of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ.⁶⁴ Foreknew [προέγνω] and predestined [προώρισεν] have

63. As Byrne notes in Byrne, *Romans*, 272-73. So also, Wright, "Romans," 602; Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 191-98.

64. Byrne, *Romans*, 268-70.

the biblical sense of God's election. Likewise, called [ἐκάλεσεν] is associated with God's creation of a people for himself. Justified [ἐδικαίωσεν] refers to the apocalyptic expectation of God's vindication of his people at the final judgment. Glorified [ἐδόξασεν] denotes the eschatological destiny of God's people, their final arrival at the goal that God has prepared for them since the beginning. None of these words has individual human lives as its object; the divine plan involves a human family that fulfils God's original designs for humanity.

Paul clearly takes this family to include both Jews and Gentiles but insists on a thoroughly Christocentric definition of this family. He does this by interrupting the ordered pattern of the verbs in 8:29 to define the predestination [προώρισεν] of believers in Christological terms. The *telos* of the divine plan, throughout its unfolding in history, is the creation of a family (cf. Gen 1:28) around the risen Christ who models the fullness of humanity that God has desired for human beings since the start.⁶⁵ In this sense, there is only one real destiny for the whole of humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike: to be bearers of the εἰκών, the glorious way of being of the Son that is his as the risen Lord, and to be members of God's eschatological family composed of both Jews and Gentiles in which Christ is the "firstborn" (8.29). Put differently, at the heart of the divine plan that unfolds throughout history lies an event that has repercussions for the whole of the cosmos: the faithful self-giving of the Son who, having died for the ungodly, was raised to life and installed as "Lord" by the God who brings life out of death, and who becomes the "firstborn" of God's new creation. What Paul emphasises in these verses is not so much the *ordo salutis* as it is the *historia salutis*; the Christ-event as being the definitive lens through which the whole of history, in all its ebbs and flows, must be viewed.⁶⁶

Hearing the Jewish Interpretive Tradition

As in 1 Cor 15, Paul's use of the Adamic transgression is comparable with other Second Temple readings of the same motif, even as it differs from those traditions in its Christological reconfiguration of the shared eschatological anticipations.⁶⁷ The connections and contrasts with one such Second Temple text, *GLAE*, dealt with previously apply here

65. Cf. "God's plan from the start was to create a Christ-shaped family, a renewed human race modelled on the Son." Wright, "Romans," 601.

66. Cf. Jacob, *Conformed to the Image*, 231.

67. For a brief discussion of the relevant Second Temple texts, see Dunn, *Paul*, 84-90. Word limits here preclude an in-depth treatment of how Paul relates to each of these texts.

also and need not be repeated.⁶⁸ The centrality of the Christ-event in 8:28-30, however, is perceived even more forcefully when readers hear a secondary echo from another source in Second Temple Judaism: the *Wisdom of Solomon* (hereafter, *Wisdom*), a Greek text probably composed in Alexandria between 200 BCE and 70 CE that was included in the Septuagint. The relationship between Romans and *Wisdom* is, in fact, an old issue that is unlikely to be settled any time soon, but as shall be seen, there is something to be gained in reading the assertions of Rom 8:28-30 in the light of its correspondences with *Wisdom*.⁶⁹ In what follows, a secondary echo to *Wisdom* in these verses is first defended and its significance for the Pauline text is then explored.

The same basic criteria for discerning the presence of allusions and echoes defined earlier also applies here. Regarding availability and recurrence, scholars have long noticed the striking parallels between Rom 1:18-32 and Wis 13-14 with analysis showing that Romans follows *Wisdom* not only at individual points but in the whole construction of its argument.⁷⁰ Francis Watson is right to note that the cumulative force of the parallels is such that it seems inadequate to speak merely of a shared tradition between the two. He concludes, “There seems no good reason to doubt that Paul is consciously basing his argument on the template provided by *Wisdom*.”⁷¹ Likewise, scholars have variously argued a Pauline relationship with *Wisdom* again in Rom 9.⁷² Regarding volume, Rom 8:28-30 and *Wisdom* intersect, importantly for the purposes here, at the vocabulary of εἰκών. Whereas Paul uses εἰκών to speak of the Son (8:29a, see above), *Wisdom* speaks of the personified figure of Wisdom as the εἰκών of God’s goodness (Wis 7:26). More interesting, however, is Paul’s use of “all things” [πάντα] in Rom 8:28.⁷³ *Wisdom* repeatedly uses “all” [πᾶς] to speak of the universal and comprehensive scope of Wisdom’s nature and activity. Wisdom

68. See the discussions in Blackwell, “GLAE,” 108-14; Levison, “Life of Adam and Eve,” 519-34.

69. For the history of research into the relationship between Romans and *Wisdom*, see Jonathan A. Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul's Letter to the Romans: Texts in Conversation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 13-20.

70. See, *inter alia*, Byrne, *Romans*, 64-65; Dunn, *Paul*, 85-86; Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 408; Ben Witherington, III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 63.

71. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 405. *Pace* Byrne, *Romans*, 65. Watson’s assessment is shared by Campbell, who provides his own argument in Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 360-62.

72. See, *inter alia*, Witherington and Hyatt, *Romans*, 258; Campbell, *The Deliverance of God*, 777-78; Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 180-81.

73. There is considerable dispute about whether Paul uses “all things” as the subject in 8:28 or whether the subject is instead “God” or “the Spirit.” Byrne considers all three possibilities, concluding that “all things” as the subject renders the smoothest rendering of the Greek. Byrne, *Romans*, 271-72. The secondary echo proposed here is not dramatically affected if “God” or “the Spirit” are preferred instead.

is all-powerful [παντοδύναμον; 7:23, 18:15] and oversees all [πανεπίσκοπον; 7:23]. She penetrates and pervades all things [πάντων; 7:24], can do all things [πάντα; 7:27], and understands all things [πάντα; 9:11]. She fashions all things [πάντων; 7:22] and renews all things [πάντα; 7:27]. She orders and manages all things [τὰ πάντα; 8:1] and is the active cause of all things [τὰ πάντα; 8:5].⁷⁴

The use of both εἰκόν and πάντα, in fact, happens within a thematic context that is common to both Romans and *Wisdom*: hope amidst a world of trials and tribulations. *Wisdom* seeks to assure its readers of God's just governance of history, of a regulative cosmic order to which all things conform. Paul, as seen above, seeks to assure his readers of their being enveloped by a divine plan that strains towards its fulfilment and towards which all things work together. Another thematic overlap might also be addressed. Scholars have variously noted the presence of a "new exodus" motif in Rom 6-8, and Hays detects an intertextual link to the exodus narrative in the immediate proximity of 8:28-30.⁷⁵ Hays draws attention to Paul's contention that the whole of creation yearns to be set free from "slavery to decay" in hope of obtaining "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" and his language of creation "groaning" (cf. Rom 8:22; Ex 2:23-24; Ex 6:5) in the process, arguing that Paul transposes the exodus paradigm onto his eschatological vision, describing the eschatological redemption of all creation as a new and final exodus in which the whole cosmos will share Israel's experience of liberation and freedom.⁷⁶ If Hays is right, Paul is not alone among Second Temple Jews in his interest in the Exodus narrative. The longest section of *Wisdom* (Wis 10-19) is an extended reflection on the same narrative, with *Wisdom* intent on clarifying the events of the Exodus as exemplifying God's justice on behalf of God's people, the "holy people and blameless race" (Wis 10:15).⁷⁷ This shared preoccupation with the exodus narrative between Paul and *Wisdom* when dealing with the prospect of hope amidst trials and afflictions merits noticing.

74. It might also be added that although *Wisdom* itself does not refer to the personified Wisdom as "firstborn," other Second Temple texts do (cf. Prov 8:22, 25; Philo, *Drunkenness* 30-31; *QG*. 4.97), and Paul might have been aware of this association (cf. Rom 8:29b).

75. See Richard B. Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2020), 215-18. For the "new exodus" motif in Rom 6-8, see Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and his Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); N. T. Wright, "New Exodus, New Inheritance: The Narrative Substructure of Romans 3-8," in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 26-35.

76. Hays, *Grain of Scripture*, 216.

77. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 202-06.

Finally, although the criterion of scholarly assessment does not work in its favour – given that scholars have generally failed to detect an intertextual link to *Wisdom* in Rom 8:28-30 – this need not deter the present study from proposing it if doing so proves literarily and theologically illuminating. There is, of course, no way to be sure of Paul’s intention, and it is possible that he was not consciously echoing *Wisdom* at all but that *Wisdom*’s repeated language of “all things” and use of εἰκόv in the shared concern of the sufferings of God’s people was part of his “encyclopaedia of production” at a subconscious level.⁷⁸ Furthermore, an intertextual link to *Wisdom* is not essential to Paul’s message in Rom 8:28-30. As seen above, the text remains primarily an allusion to Gen 1:26-27 that Paul uses to advance Christ’s role as the eschatological Adam who models the fulness of humanity intended by God in creation. It would thus go well beyond the available evidence to assert that Paul calculatingly drew upon *Wisdom* in Rom 8:28-30 in a way that his readers would unmistakably hear the intertextual link and make the relevant connections. The intertextual link to *Wisdom*, therefore, is being classified here as a secondary echo.⁷⁹ It offers a fresh perspective on how the text in Rom 8:28-30 might be heard within the matrix of other Jewish writings of the Second Temple period in which *Wisdom* also belonged.

It is neither possible here to treat Paul’s “engagement” with *Wisdom* in any detail, nor is it within the scope of the present study to do so.⁸⁰ Rather, it is worthwhile to focus on *Wisdom*’s central claim and make the connections pertinent to the secondary echo in Rom 8:29.⁸¹ In a world marked by the enigma of injustice and human suffering, *Wisdom* famously asserts that the outcome of life is neither the product of chance nor the hapless result of unchecked evil. God’s goodness is found precisely in the cosmic order by which all things are regulated, in the justice by which wrongdoing is both detected and with which it is dealt. *Wisdom* insists that everything corresponds to a moral and rational order, an order to which God – the God of life and justice – is committed. Thus, despite the universe often appearing arbitrary, unjust, and chaotic, *Wisdom* through its own re-telling of history insists that there has been nothing random or unfair. Everything since the beginning has been governed by

78. Hays uses Umberto Eco’s term “encyclopaedia of production” to refer to the cultural framework in which a work was produced by its author. See, for instance, Hays, *Grain of Scripture*, 206.

79. To be clear, “secondary” here (and in subsequent uses) implies that the echo is semantically less significant than the allusion (which remains “primary”), not that there is a hierarchy of echoes themselves.

80. As Watson observes, it is more appropriate to speak of engagement rather than dependence. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 405.

81. For a detailed treatment see especially Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 25-92. For a briefer treatment, see Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 194-211. See also Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 380-411.

“Wisdom,” the regulating principle that is the εἰκὼν of God’s goodness, manifesting God’s sovereign power over “all things” (πάντα; see above). History, as told by *Wisdom*, is a narrative in which the goodness and power of God are demonstrated above all in the ways in which the righteous have always been ultimately vindicated (even if that vindication is life after death; cf. 3:1, 4:10-15, 5:15) and the wicked have met with retribution for their wickedness.

This distinction between the righteous and the wicked is central to the logic of *Wisdom*; the drama of history must be neatly divided between two opposing factions of actors. The righteous may not “take the form of sinless perfection,” but they have at least renounced the one transgression that *Wisdom* loathes most: idolatry.⁸² They are those who acknowledge and belong to the God of Israel, and *Wisdom* frequently characterises them as particularly being the God of Israel’s own people. They are “yours” (15:2), “your people” (12:9; 15:14; 16:2, 20; 19:5, 22), “your sons, whom you loved” (16:26; cf. 12:19; 18:4), “your holy ones” (18:1, 5), the “children of God” (12:7), the “holy nation” (17:2), “a holy people and blameless race” (10:15); the “righteous ones” (10:20; 12:0; 18:20). Their election as God’s people is not by arbitrary choice but because they are fitting recipients of divine beneficence. *Wisdom* indeed elides the fact that these “righteous ones” were ever tainted by the sin of idolatry.⁸³ Rather, *Wisdom* insists that these righteous ones have always been rescued by *Wisdom* from their troubles (10:9), even as the ungodly have been punished by the very means in which the righteous have benefited (11:5). To put it another way, *Wisdom* insists that “all things work together for good for those who love God” (cf. Rom 8:28) because at the heart of the unfolding of the divine plan within the cosmos lies a principle that permeates and governs “all things,” that ensures that they are just and non-arbitrary, that makes God’s sovereignty known amidst a world marked by paradox and seeming chaos, and that rewards the righteous while punishing the ungodly. Those who belong to God can rest assured knowing that everything ultimately corresponds to the moral and intellectual structure of the universe created by God.

Like *Wisdom*, Paul speaks of the εἰκὼν that manifests God’s absolute sovereignty and the hope which “those who love God” might cling to amid the sufferings they must bear. Like *Wisdom*, Paul asserts the presence of a reality that extends to “all things” and governs

82. Cf. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 410.

83. See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 204-06.

the whole cosmos. But where *Wisdom* insists on a principle that makes God's goodness and power known in a paradoxical and seemingly chaotic world, Paul appeals to an event: the death and resurrection of the Son through which the "righteousness of God is revealed" (cf. Rom 1:17).⁸⁴ And where *Wisdom* insists that "those who love God" are the holy nation Israel, the fitting recipients of divine beneficence, Paul insists that "those who love God" are precisely the once "ungodly" (5:6), Jews and Gentiles alike, who were "still sinners" (5:8) when Christ died for them but who are now reconstituted by the Christ-event and made a new creation. Where *Wisdom* sees a regulative principle behind the election and vindication of the righteous in history, Paul sees a startling reversal within history through the Christ-event by which sinners have been made saints (cf. 1:7), the dead have been given life (cf. 6:4), and the condemned have been made God's adopted children (cf. 8:15). In place of *Wisdom's* story of the vindication of a holy nation, Paul tells the story of the justification of the ungodly humanity. In place of *Wisdom's* just moral order inherent to the functioning of the cosmos, Paul appeals to another reality that invades the cosmos and establishes its own reign: the love of God made known in Christ for all humanity, Jews as well as Gentiles. And thus, where *Wisdom* sees God's εἰκὼν in a transcendent divine power, Paul sees God's εἰκὼν in an actual historical figure: the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus.

As Watson notes, "Pauline dependence on *Wisdom* also expresses a degree of independence."⁸⁵ Indeed, what he shares with *Wisdom*, Paul also reconfigures in Christological terms.⁸⁶ An intertextual perspective can help one acknowledge the sophisticated superimposition of Paul's Adam Christology and *Wisdom* Christology within the single text, Rom 8:28-30. After all, if Rom 8 is indeed a "highly skilful and elevated rhetorical composition," one must allow for the possibility that the text is laden with multiple intertextual resonances, even if those intertextual links are not all equally significant.⁸⁷ Hearing not only the primary allusion but also the secondary echo in this case can help one reflect on the "complex semantic effect produced by their simultaneous presence" and acknowledge the illuminating theological reflection that can occur within "the metaphorical field created by these textually resonant images."⁸⁸ Certainly here, the hearing of the

84. This insight is particularly indebted to Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 177-226; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 326.

85. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 407. Cf. Campbell's "Paul seems to undermine the theological program of the Wisdom of Solomon far more than he leans on it." Campbell, *The Deliverance of God*, 362.

86. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 326.

87. Cf. Hays, *Grain of Scripture*, 211.

88. Cf. Hays, *Grain of Scripture*, 217, 18.

multiple resonances amplifies the one message that is central to the passage: the Christ-event as the focal point of the history of the cosmos, illuminating its origins and modelling its ultimate destiny. The same message is also thrown into sharp focus against Paul's imperial context of the Greco-Roman world. Against the totalising claims of the Roman emperor, one discovers the crucified Messiah whose Gospel goes out to the whole world – an aspect that, having been dealt with in the section on 1 Cor 15:42-49, may be applied here *mutatis mutandis* and thus need not be revisited here.

Paul's Intertextuality

A few key insights about Pauline intertextuality in Rom 8:28-30 may now be summarised. As in 1 Cor 15:49, Paul's εἰκών language in Rom 8:29 presumes an Adamic backstory, a backstory that Paul presents within an antithetical and apocalyptic framework to emphasise the surpassing power of Christ. Thus, although Rom 8:29 alludes to Gen 1:26-27 in which Adam is said to be created in the εἰκών of God, it is Paul's Christological emphases that drive the allusion, not the other way around. As in 1 Cor 15, Paul understands the Christological potential of the Adamic narrative, sets it within his own apocalyptic framework, and employs it within a specific pastoral context. In the way it is used, the allusion in Rom 8:29 is comparable with the allusion in 1 Cor 15:49. The associations that Paul makes in 1 Cor 15 among the Genesis image motif, dominion, glory, and immortality, are present also in Rom 8. Even though the latter is less explicit than the former, these associations drive Paul's presentation of Christ as the "Last Adam" (cf. 1 Cor 15:45b) who succeeds where the first Adam failed and emerges as the prototype for a new eschatological family that comes into existence through him. In Romans too, Paul insists that the full and definitive *telos* of the Christ-event involves the bodily resurrection of believers. And the εἰκών language again allows him to bind together protology and eschatology within a firmly Christological perspective, as he argues that God's purposes for humanity involves their sharing the image of the Last Adam, which is sharing the mode of being proper to him as the risen and exalted Lord.

As in 1 Cor 15, the ecclesial dimension of this sharing in Christ's εἰκών cannot be over-emphasised. Paul's Christological affirmations are necessarily ecclesiotelic; the significance of Christ is inseparable from those destined to share his resurrection. As the eschatological Adam, Christ is the firstborn among many brothers and sisters, who already draw their new lives from his resurrection, from the "life out of the dead" that is his as risen Lord. And as

part of God's new creation, believers constitute even now the people who fulfil what the original humanity failed to accomplish, even as they live in the period between Christ's resurrection and their own resurrections and must look forward to the redemption of their own bodies. Rom 8:28-30 evidently applies this "new creation" motif to Jews and Gentiles alike. Indeed, the scope of Christ's role can be no less universal than Adam's role of progenitor of the whole human family and archetype of human alienation from God. But Rom 8, in contrast to 1 Cor 15, makes even more explicit that at the heart of this new creation lies an event that has repercussions for the whole of the cosmos and which is the definitive lens through which the whole of history must be viewed: the faithful self-giving of the Son of God who, having died for the ungodly (Jew as well as Gentile), was raised to life and installed as "Lord" by the God who brings life out of death, and who becomes the "firstborn" of God's new creation. Again, the implications of these aspects for the Gentile problem must be left for the next chapter. In what follows, the final passage under consideration within the present study (Col 1:15-23) is taken up and explored.

Colossians 1:15-23: The Image of the Invisible God

The inclusion of the Gentiles within God's salvific plan is a prominent theme in the Letter to the Colossians. Paul not only speaks of the Gospel being welcomed by the Gentiles (cf. 1:3-6, 25-27) but also dramatically declares that the life of a believer in Christ involves being "no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free" (3:11). The Gentile believers are said to have received a "spiritual circumcision" (2:11) and Paul asserts that they have been made alive by God when they were "dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of [their] flesh" (2:13). Importantly, he uses εἰκὼν language twice within the letter. First, he asserts that Christ is the image [εἰκὼν] of the invisible God in addition to being the "firstborn of all creation," the "firstborn from the dead," and the one through whom all things have been reconciled (1:15, 18, 20). Second, he speaks of the "new self" being "renewed in knowledge according to the image [εἰκόνα] of its creator" (3:10). At least *prima facie*, these statements resemble the notion of being or becoming an "image" found previously in First Corinthians and Romans. Yet, the significance of the εἰκὼν language in its literary context here is far from immediately apparent, and scholars have variously attempted to explain Paul's uses of εἰκὼν as

intertextual references to the Adam narrative, Wisdom literature, or both.⁸⁹ In what follows, an intertextual analysis of 1:15-23 is carried out, with particular attention devoted to its use of εἰκόν language.

Ascertaining the Intertextual Referent

The weight of contemporary scholarly opinion considers Col 1:15-20 to be a pre-Pauline “hymn” that has been carefully integrated (with some editorial insertions) into the train of thought begun in 1:12.⁹⁰ Two preliminary points of significance concerning this might be made. First, even if 1:15-20 is pre-Pauline in origin, there is no reason to suppose that it has been uncritically adopted within the Pauline letter and that it does not truly represent Paul’s own thinking. In fact, Paul’s sentence structure and grammar indicate that 1:15-20 cannot be detached from the preceding verses and its concerns. Furthermore, 1:15-20 lays the foundations for the principal themes that mark the rest of the letter.⁹¹ The careful integration of the “hymn” demands close attention to the way it functions within the letter, rather than as just an independent unit. Second, the quest for the “background” of the hymn need not dominate concerns here, and it is beyond the scope of the present study to adjudicate, for instance, whether the hymn originates in Rabbinic Judaism or Hellenistic Judaism.⁹² Rather, it might be helpful to begin by observing the many clear parallels between the text’s claims about Christ and the claims about Wisdom that are found in the Second Temple Wisdom

89. On the use of εἰκόν in 1:15 as an intertextual reference to the Adamic narrative see, *inter alia*, Fee, “Intertextuality in Colossians,” 201-20; Andrew T. Lincoln, “Colossians,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 595-601; G. K. Beale, “Colossians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 841-70. On its use as an intertextual reference primarily to Wisdom literature see Beetham, *Echoes*, 113-41; Sumney, “Writing In the Image of Scripture,” 185; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 58-70; Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin, Word Biblical Commentary, (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 42-45; Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 554-58. On its use as interweaving both intertextual references, see Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2018), 145-50; Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 28-35; Ben Witherington, III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 128-33; Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 113-14.

90. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Colossians and Philemon,” in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 123.

91. Lincoln, “Colossians,” 601; Witherington, *The Captivity Epistles*, 136.

92. For a succinct discussion on the various proposals for the “background” of the “hymn,” see O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 37-40. Note also Hooker’s sobering “There is, however, no real evidence, in spite of the ingenuity of exegetes, that such a hymn ever existed” in juxtaposition with Witherington’s “It is hardly surprising in a discourse that exhorts believers to sing hymns (3:16) that one such hymn might be quoted, modified, or even created by the author.” Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 122; Witherington, *The Captivity Epistles*, 130.

tradition. In this regard, Beetham offers a helpful comparative chart that is slightly adapted and simplified below.⁹³

| Col 1:15-20 | Wisdom Tradition |
|---|---|
| Christ as the “image” of God 1:15a: εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου | Wisdom as the “image” of God Wis 7:25-26; Philo, <i>Alleg. Interp.</i> 1:43, 2:4; 3:96. |
| Christ as “firstborn” 1:15b: πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως | Wisdom as “firstborn” Philo, <i>Confusion</i> 146-147; <i>Dreams</i> 1:215; <i>Agriculture</i> 51; <i>Heir</i> 117-19; <i>Drunkenness</i> 30-31; <i>QG</i> . 4:97 |
| Christ as the “beginning” 1:18b: ἀρχή | Wisdom as the “beginning” Prov 8:22; Philo, <i>Confusion</i> 146-147; <i>Alleg. Interp.</i> 1:43. |
| Christ as existing before creation 1:17a: πρὸ πάντων | Wisdom as existing before creation Prov 8:23-25 (LXX; πρὸ); Sir 24:9; Wis 9:9 |
| Christ as the agent of creation 1:16: τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ [...] ἔκτισται | Wisdom as the agent of creation Wis 7:22; 8:6; 9:1; Philo, <i>Alleg. Interp.</i> 2:49, etc. |
| Christ sustains creation’s order 1:17b: τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν | Wisdom sustains creation’s order Philo, <i>Flight</i> 112; <i>Heir</i> 187-88; cf. Wis 1:6-7. |
| Christ’s all-encompassing nature and activity Col 1:15, 16a, 16f, 17a, 17b, 18d, 19, 20 | Wisdom’s all-encompassing nature and activity Wis 7:22, 23, 24, 27, 8:1, 5, 9:1 |
| Christ as agent of reconciliation Col 1:20: ἀποκαταλλάξαι | Wisdom as agent of reconciliation Philo, <i>Heir</i> 205-06 |

The parallels between what is said about Christ in 1:15-20 and the claims about Wisdom in the Wisdom tradition are striking, suggesting that Paul has portrayed Christ in the light

93. Beetham, *Echoes*, 135-36.

of Wisdom literature's portrayal of the personified Wisdom figure. As Beetham observes, the intertextual reference is not, in a strict sense, to a specific text but to an interpretive tradition concerning the figure of Wisdom that was "in the air" of Paul's day.⁹⁴ Those familiar with this Wisdom tradition would have recognised that Paul is portraying Christ in language typically employed regarding Wisdom. This intertextual reference meets the basic criteria previously outlined for allusions and echoes. Regarding availability and recurrence, there is no sufficient reason to doubt Paul's awareness of the Jewish Wisdom tradition. He clearly displays an awareness of the Book of Proverbs and quotes it at Rom 12:20 (Prov 25:21). Paul's relationship with *Wisdom*, that has been dealt with previously, might also be counted in support here. In terms of volume and thematic coherence, there are clearly numerous intersections between Col 1:15-20 and the Wisdom tradition (see chart above). There are also repeated mentions of "knowledge" and "wisdom" (cf. 1:9, 10; 2:2, 3, 8, 23; 3:10, 16) suggesting that a thematic concern with "wisdom" is not marginal to the letter.⁹⁵ Finally, the intertextual reference to the Wisdom tradition finds good support in scholarly literature, with scholars generally recognising that the Christological statements in Col 1:15-20 resemble the various predicates and activities ascribed to Wisdom in the Jewish Wisdom tradition.⁹⁶

Before moving on to exploring the significance of this intertextual reference, it is necessary to address the contrary view that the use of εἰκὼν in 1:15 derives not from the Wisdom tradition but from Paul's Adam Christology. Fee is a notable proponent of this claim, having insisted that Paul's use of εἰκὼν in 1:15 has greater resemblance to Gen 1:26-28 than it does to Wis 7:26.⁹⁷ A few observations about Fee's argument might be made here. First, Fee focuses excessively on Paul's use of εἰκὼν, ignoring the other points of intersection between Col 1:15-20 and the Wisdom tradition. Second, there are no other clear indications in the surrounding literary context or in the whole letter that Paul is developing an eschatological Adam Christology. If cues within the text are followed, the evidence as seen above is overwhelmingly in the favour of linguistic parallels with the Wisdom tradition. Third, Fee's argument is largely based on the dissimilarities between Col 1:15 and one

94. Beetham, *Echoes*, 113.

95. Cf. Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation, (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 103.

96. In support of this point, see footnote 89 above.

97. Fee is notable in his complete rejection of the Wisdom tradition as a background for Col 1:15-20. See Fee, "Intertextuality in Colossians," 212-15.

specific text from the Wisdom tradition, Wis 7:26.⁹⁸ The significance of these dissimilarities fades when the larger Wisdom tradition is considered, and Genesis alone fails to account for the linguistic overlaps between Col 1:15-20 and the Wisdom tradition. That being stated, one reason why Fee rules out a reference to Wisdom Christology is that when Paul says Christ is the εἰκών of the invisible God (1:15), Fee reads him as saying that by way of the Incarnation, the eternal Son perfectly bears the Father's image (which Adam bore before the Fall) – a reading that coheres well with the gist of the preceding verses. What also works in Fee's favour is that this reading is bolstered when one reads 3:10 – the only other time in the letter where εἰκών appears – as a plausible reference to Genesis' use of εἰκών.

The case that an intertextual reference to Wisdom literature stands in sharp contrast to a reference to Genesis, however, is largely overstated, especially in the light of recent scholarly arguments proposing a relationship between the two.⁹⁹ For example, Wright argues that even the various texts of the Wisdom tradition must themselves be set within the broader Jewish theology of creation and redemption as belonging to the one God. The Wisdom traditions took the Genesis motif of humankind being made in the εἰκών of God and applied it to the personified figure of Wisdom, with the implication that the dwelling place of Wisdom (Israel) could be described as the place of redeemed humanity. To speak of God's wisdom as inhabiting Israel, of being active within it, and enabling it to be what the Creator intended, was an effective way of distinguishing Israel vis-à-vis the rest of unredeemed humanity and establishing Israel as God's true humanity envisioned in Gen 1:26-28.¹⁰⁰ To state it differently, these traditions held that Wisdom – which at times was correlated with the Torah (cf. Sir 24:23-29; Bar 3:9-4:4) – enabled humans to fulfil the vocation outlined in Gen 1:26-28 and succeed at what Adam failed to do. In the light of this connection, an intertextual reference to Wisdom literature in Col 1:15 need not rule out an

98. Fee rightly observes that in Wis 7:26, Wisdom is described as the εἰκών of God's goodness rather than the εἰκών of God; that εἰκών is merely one of twenty-eight descriptors applied to personified Wisdom, receives no prominence in the Wisdom text, and is closely associated with two other mirror-concepts (reflection, spotless mirror), and that the εἰκών in Wis 7:26 has no obvious connections to Paul's claim that the incarnate Son makes the unseen God known.

99. Back in 1926, C.H. Burney argued that Col 1:15-20 was an exegesis of Gen 1:1 in the light of Prov 8:22. See C.H. Burney, "Christ as the APXH of Creation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 27, no. 106 (1926): 160-77, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/os-XXVII.106.160>. Those who have followed Burney in emphasising this relationship include W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 150-52; G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 175; N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 444-68. See also Bird, *Colossians & Philemon*, 73.

100. Wright, "Colossians 1.15-20," 452-55.

implied Adamic backstory.¹⁰¹ With the appropriate caution of maintaining that an intertextual reference to the Wisdom tradition is primary, a secondary reference to Genesis can also be sustained. Indeed, there is no reason why the two cannot coalesce to bring out the full significance of the εἰκὼν language. Reversing the order hitherto followed, the Jewish interpretive tradition that stands behind Paul's Wisdom Christology is first briefly explored ahead.

Hearing the Jewish Interpretive Tradition

Although it is not possible to examine the breadth of the Jewish Interpretive Tradition that might stand behind Paul's allusion in Col 1:15-20, it might be helpful to briefly mention three representatives of this tradition: the Book of Proverbs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Philo of Alexandria.¹⁰² Readers encounter the personified figure of "Wisdom" first in the Book of Proverbs where "Lady Wisdom" (Prov 1:20-33; 8:1-9:12) appears as a woman of nearly divine stature.¹⁰³ She beckons readers to the good life, with subtle erotic connotations (8:17, 35) that suggest her attractiveness. She promises life, prosperity, wealth, and honour to those who follow her counsel (1:33; 8:18-21), even as she emphasises that she is superior to material wealth (8:10-11). What she proposes is by no means secret or esoteric knowledge; Wisdom takes her place in public, in the busiest parts of the town, earnestly crying out to those who would listen - indeed to all of humankind, even to the simple and dullards (8:2-5). She praises her own teachings, aligning herself with prudence, knowledge, foresight, and nobility (8:12, 16). In a dramatic move, Wisdom also relates herself directly with God, recounting her creation and presence during the creation of the world (8:22-31). She insists that she preceded even the deep, the most primordial of existing entities (8:28; cf. Gen 1:2), and that she was God's חַכְמָה [master worker; 8:30 NRSV] during creation.¹⁰⁴ With such unparalleled credentials and her origins stretching back even before creation

101. Beetham can thus speak of a "secondary echo" to Gen 1:26-27 at Col 1:15. Cf. Beetham, *Echoes*, 132.

102. For a parallel and more detailed treatment, see Beetham, *Echoes*, 115-30.

103. Various theories have been proposed to account for the origins of the personification of Wisdom including a Canaanite wisdom goddess (none known), the Egyptian Ma'at – goddess of truth and justice, and the Egyptian Isis – goddess of wisdom, but none have been definitively upheld by available evidence. The literary personification of Wisdom in Proverbs is probably Proverbs' own memorable and unique way of speaking about wisdom. So Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 278; Michael V. Fox, "Proverbs," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1440.

104. Fox notes that the word חַכְמָה may be interpreted in three basic ways: (1) artisan, implying that wisdom aided God in creation (2) constantly/faithfully, and thus as a "confidant" (3) ward/nursling, implying that wisdom was at play while God worked, arguing that the third way fits the context best. Fox, "Proverbs," 1451.

itself, Wisdom sets herself as the ultimate mediator between God and humanity, unmatched in the knowledge of God and in the awareness of God's purposes and designs.¹⁰⁵ In this way, Wisdom offers optimism – “even complacency” – that God's designs ensure the existence of a moral order and that the life of “wisdom” is worth living.¹⁰⁶

A literary personification of Wisdom appears also in *Wisdom* where the figure of Wisdom is again portrayed by the author as the expression of God's purposes and designs (Wis 1:4-7; 6:12-11:1).¹⁰⁷ Wisdom was present when God made the world, and it is through her that God makes humankind in his image (9:1-3, 9). As in Proverbs, Wisdom is described as the agent of God's creation, the τεχνῆτις [fashioner; 7:22] through whom all things exist. She dwells with God in the heavens and sits by God's throne (9:4, 10). In a series of doublets and triplets (7:22-26), the author extols Wisdom's incomparable superiority by calling her, among other titles, the reflection of eternal light, the mirror of God's activity, and the image [εἰκόν] of God's goodness. The author is also emphatic about Wisdom's comprehensive scope, repeatedly employing πᾶς to describe Wisdom's activity and nature. She is all-powerful [παντοδύναμον; 7:23, 18:15] and oversees all [πανεπίσκοπον; 7:23]. She penetrates and pervades all things [πάντων; 7:24], can do all things [πάντα; 7:27], and understands all things [πάντα; 9:11]. She fashions all things [πάντων; 7:22] and renews all things [πάντα; 7:27]. She orders and manages all things [τὰ πάντα; 8:1] and is the active cause of all things [τὰ πάντα; 8:5]. In her role as the principle that permeates and governs all things, Wisdom ensures that they are just and non-arbitrary, making God's sovereignty known amidst a world marked by paradox and seeming chaos, and rewarding the righteous while punishing the wicked. As in Proverbs, Wisdom assures readers that everything in the world corresponds to a moral and rational order, because Wisdom herself is fundamental to the cosmos.

Philo similarly employs two related concepts, Word and Wisdom, both associated with God's reason in his writings.¹⁰⁸ He often attributes the same characteristics to both concepts, recognising them as pre-existent and as agents in the creation of the world (*Alleg. Interp.*

105. Gale A. Yee, "An Analysis of Prov 8:22-31 According to Style and Structure," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94 (1982): 66.

106. Christine Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 323.

107. See chart of parallels between Col 1:15-20 and *Wisdom* in Witherington, *The Captivity Epistles*, 130.

108. See Beetham's argument that Word and Wisdom are conceptually related, closely intertwined and at times virtually identical, though not fully interchangeable in Beetham, *Echoes*, 122-25. So, also, McKnight, *Colossians*, 148; Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 112. The treatment of Philo here is heavily indebted to Beetham's fuller discussion.

3.96; *Flight* 109, et.al.) and considering them to be heavenly archetypes of earthly wisdom (*Alleg. Interp.* 1.43). He also uses titles such as “Beginning” and “Image” for them (*Alleg. Interp.* 1.43, 3.96; *Confusion* 146-47) and describes the Word as “Firstborn” (*Confusion* 146-47) to designate its primacy in rank. The Word/Wisdom is “before all that has come into existence,” the “rudder” by which God “guides all things on their course,” and the “instrument” God used when “fashioning the world” (*Migration* 6; *Virtues* 62; *Dreams* 1.241). The Word (and thus, Wisdom) is also the “harbinger of peace” and the “artisan of peace,” serving as the “mediator and arbitrator” between God and humanity (*Heir* 205-06; *QE* 2.68). It is that which “contained all [God’s] fullness” (*Dreams* 1.75). It is the “glue and bond” that holds all things together, the “bond of all existence” that “holds and knits together all the parts” (*Heir* 187-88). The Word/Wisdom is also the source of all kinds of knowledge and virtue, raising those who draw from its fountain to divine realities (*Posterity* 125). Such characterisations of the Word/Wisdom were in service of Philo’s ultimate concern, which was to demonstrate that the Torah was harmoniously attuned to this universal Word/Wisdom principle and to show that the true philosophical life is to be found in the Torah.¹⁰⁹ As the law of nature, the Torah was, for him, the only way through which the universal goal of “seeing God” (*QE* 2.51; *Embassy* 4) was attainable.¹¹⁰ Philo’s attempts to creatively reconcile Hellenistic philosophy with the Torah, no doubt, mark an important development in the Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom tradition. Having briefly noted these relevant details, the interpretive links between this Wisdom tradition and Col 1:15-23 may now be investigated.

Examining the Interpretive Links

“It is an axiom of Pauline studies,” notes Hooker, “that every letter has a *Sitz im Leben*: the apostle always wrote to a particular situation, and for a particular purpose, and the exegete’s task is to recover that situation and purpose.”¹¹¹ The *Sitz im Leben* that prompted the Letter to the Colossians, however, has proven notoriously elusive for Pauline studies, and scholars have variously proposed one of the indigenous Phrygian cults, the mystery religions associated with deities such as Attis, Cybele, and Mithras, a nascent form of Gnosticism, a syncretistic form of Hellenistic Judaism with mystical tendencies, and the presence of “Judaising” elements insisting on full Gentile adherence to the Torah within the community,

109. See, especially, Hayes, *Divine Law*, 134-37; Hava Tirosh-Samuels, “The Bible in the Jewish Philosophical Tradition,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1917-19.

110. Tirosh-Samuels, “Jewish Philosophical Tradition,” 1918.

111. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 121-22.

as possible solutions to fill this lacuna and make sense of the Colossian “error” that Paul considered inimical to the gospel of Christ.¹¹² Paul himself offers no formal explication of the “error,” but its contours have been largely traced by more recent scholarship based on the scattered passages in which Paul seems to attack certain slogans and watchwords. For example, Paul explains that he is reminding the community of certain facts so that no one may deceive them (2:2-4). He urges them to beware of anyone who would subjugate them through “philosophy and empty deceit” which are related to “human tradition” and “the elemental spirits of the universe” (2:8). He warns them against those who would “condemn” them in matters of “food and drink,” “observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths” (2:16). He cautions them against strictures which might be related to ascetic sensibilities (2:20-21) and have the “appearance of wisdom” but are of no real worth (2:23). The situation that confronts Paul in Colossae might thus be summed up in two aspects. First, it is possible that the Colossians had qualms about the existence of spiritual powers – the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (cf. 2:8) – and their ability to affect the destiny of believers.¹¹³ Second, it appears that the Colossian converts were under some pressure to conform to traditions practiced in their pagan and Jewish environment; traditions which were attractive for their promise of spiritual progress and maturity. The nascent converts might have been particularly susceptible in turning to the regulations of the Torah as a means of standing firm against the hostile supernatural powers in addition to relying on extreme asceticism and visionary experiences.¹¹⁴

This minimal, though plausible, account of the situation at Colossae can help explain the intertextual reference to the Wisdom tradition in the Christological hymn of 1:15-20. Paul must offer hope to a community amidst the trials it faces and encourage them to stand firm in their faith in Christ, confident that not even hostile supernatural powers have control over them.¹¹⁵ He must also deal with a community that, borrowing from Witherington, “has not grasped the christological nettle and are not holding onto the head in both faith and

112. For a brief survey of these proposals, see especially John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, ed. Michael A. Knibb, Andrew T. Lincoln, and R. N. Whybray, T&T Clark Study Guides, (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 39-50.

113. On how to interpret the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, see discussion in Lincoln, “Colossians,” 565-67.

114. One need not adjudicate here the debate on whether “false teachers” are a source of this “error” or whether the pagan environment of the Colossian converts and their own pagan histories itself suffices in accounting for their fears about supernatural forces that exercised control within the universe and their attraction to the practices Paul deems facile. The literary evidence, however, does attest to the specifically Jewish character of the “error,” a point emphasised by Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, 53-54.

115. In this sense, the situation of Colossae resembles that addressed in Rom 8:18-39.

praxis.”¹¹⁶ As previously seen, the personified figure of Wisdom was also meant to convey hope amidst life’s uncertainties and tribulations. The Wisdom tradition expressed that everything since the beginning has been governed by “Wisdom,” the regulating principle that is the εἰκὼν of God’s goodness, manifesting God’s sovereign power over all things. Wisdom was the principle fundamental to the cosmos, the integrating centre of all reality and the key to salvation history; she permeated and governed all things, ensuring that they are just and non-arbitrary, and rewarding the righteous while punishing the ungodly. Wisdom secured God’s people in their status of being recipients of divine beneficence and allowed them to rest assured that everything was ultimately governed by God through his agent, Wisdom.

By employing the various predicates and activities ascribed to Wisdom in the Jewish Wisdom tradition and applying them to Christ, Paul makes a dramatic reconfiguration of the Wisdom tradition. To be sure, Paul also goes beyond what was said about Wisdom, with Christ being not only the agent and mediator of creation but also its goal (cf. εἰς αὐτὸν; Col 1:16). The basic point of the “Wisdom Christology,” however, is that the scope of Christ’s role and supremacy extends to the whole of created and redeemed reality.¹¹⁷ He is supreme not only in terms of creation (1:15-17) but also redemption (1:18-20); he is the “firstborn” (1:15b, 1:18b) on whom all else depends. Christ is “pre-eminent” (cf. 1:18c) in everything.¹¹⁸ This universal supremacy is repeatedly asserted with “all things” that appears twice in 1:16, twice in 1:17 and is said to include the powers in the heavens and the earth, the visible and invisible of the created world. Likewise, Christ’s place as the “head” of the body where the new creation is constituted (1:18a) secures his supremacy over the new creation. To state it differently, the point of the “hymn” is to assert that there is something even more fundamental than a principle that governs the cosmos; the whole of history is governed by the Christ-event which is an even surer source of hope. The εἰκὼν that makes God’s power known, as Wright puts, is “no mere hypothetical hypostasis” but a “human figure, an ‘image of God’ of recent memory.”¹¹⁹

116. Witherington, *The Captivity Epistles*, 164.

117. The term “Wisdom Christology” is used here with the understanding that Wisdom language is used entirely at the service of Christology. Paul’s point is not that Wisdom is to be identified with Christ.

118. As McKnight puts it, “His [Christ’s] status is superior because temporally he is before all things, hierarchically he is above all things, and ontologically he sustains all things.” McKnight, *Colossians*, 149.

119. Wright, “Colossians 1.15-20,” 458.

The intertextual reference to the Wisdom tradition thus directly addresses the concerns that affect the community at Colossae.¹²⁰ If the Colossians had qualms about the existence of spiritual powers – the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (cf. 2:8) – and their ability to affect the destiny of believers, Paul assures them of a more fundamental power that exercises control over even these spiritual powers. Nothing is more powerful than Christ, and nothing more is needed to stand firm against the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου than Christ himself. The mention of the various powers of the universe (1:15), in the heavens and on the earth as well as invisible and visible, is a direct reference to the hostile powers that might be intimidating the Colossian converts but over whom Christ is nevertheless sovereign. The assertion of Christ’s supremacy also looks back to 1:13 where Paul speaks of believers being rescued from captivity to the “power of darkness” and being transferred into the “kingdom” of God’s beloved Son. If Christ is indeed supreme over all powers, then the Colossians need not fear nor submit themselves to the powers which once dominated them. Christ’s supremacy is enough to guarantee the reality of the Colossians’ rescue from the power of darkness. So long as they hold fast to Christ, they remain within the Son’s “kingdom,” protected from the supernatural forces that threaten their redemption. After all, Christ has “disarmed” these powers through his triumph over them and made them a “public spectacle” (2:15 NIV) as vanquished enemies. Yet, the danger of returning to “captivity” [συλλαγωγῶν; cf. 2:8] remains real, and Paul cautions believers to not succumb to “philosophy and empty deceit” that are not founded on Christ and through which the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου will regain control over them (2:8). Rather, they are instructed to “walk” in Christ, to be “rooted,” “built up,” and “established” in him (cf. 2:6).

That Christ alone is necessary for the Colossians to remain secure in their redemption also directly addresses the second of Paul’s concerns: that the Colossian converts would turn to certain practices (prescriptions of the Torah, extreme asceticism, and spiritual visions) as the source of their hope. If “Wisdom” was hitherto identified with the Torah, Paul’s identification of Wisdom with Christ has specific implications for the relationship of believers and the Torah. The Wisdom Christology of Col 1:15-20 makes the startling claim that Christ, rather than the Torah, is the εἰκὼν of God’s glory and the definitive revelation of God’s purpose for humankind.¹²¹ It is Christ in whom “all the treasures of wisdom and

120. Or to put it more effectively with Barclay’s words, Col 1:15-20 is not merely “a quite innocent exposition of the gospel and the cosmic role of Christ” but “designed to stockpile the theological weapons necessary for the attack in ch. 2.” Cf. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, 37.

121. Cf. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 135.

knowledge” are hidden (2:3). For the community constituted by the Christ-event, the legal requirements of the Torah have thus been done away with; now displaced by Christological realities. This explains the dramatic reconfiguration of Jewish symbols in 2:11-14. Circumcision gives way to baptism into Christ, a “spiritual circumcision” applicable also to the Gentiles (cf. 2:11-12). The Law and its demands give way to life in Christ, offered even to the Gentiles while they were still dead and without regard to their lack of circumcision (cf. 2:13-14; also 1:21-22). To state it differently, Paul sees the Christ-event as the focal point of the divine plan, constituting a people without regard to pre-existing classifications (cf. 2:13), and thereby subverting the authority of the Torah and calling into question its normative authority for the community of believers brought into existence by the Christ-event.¹²² The “new selves” of believers (cf. 3:10) are rather constituted by their relationship to Christ and no longer determined by the criteria established by the Torah, with the effect that the distinctions envisioned by the Torah do not possess normative status for the community (cf. 3:11). Instead, believers are to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (cf. 3:17), orientating their lives towards Christ alone (cf. 3:1-4), and remaining united in their common faith in Christ (cf. 3:13-15).

Hearing Within the Greco-Roman Context

The interpretive links between the Wisdom tradition and Paul’s message in the letter as well as the linguistic and conceptual overlaps between the two lend support to the view that Col 1:15-20 is a carefully crafted and well-integrated section that deliberately draws upon the Wisdom tradition for the sake of Paul’s Christological affirmations. Since authorial intention and essential interpretive links have been considered here as necessary markers of an allusion, the intertextual reference to Wisdom literature in Col 1:15-20 is being classified as an allusion. Whether the full import of this allusive language was felt by a predominantly Gentile audience in Colossae is not easy to ascertain, however. Hearing the allusion presupposes that Paul and the predominantly Gentile audience of the letter share a common language and tradition, so that the audience recognise the signs of its use, realise that the allusion is deliberate, remember relevant aspects of the source, and make the relevant connections to get Paul’s message. Two details must be allowed their full weight here. First, the church in Colossae was almost certainly not founded by Paul or the letter’s co-sender

122. To be clear, this does not necessarily mean that the Torah is “obsolete.” The matter is the ongoing validity of Torah-observance for those constituted as an *ekklēsia* by the Christ-event.

Timothy (1:1; see also 2:1), but by Epaphras (1:7-8) who was likely himself a Colossian. Second, while there is good reason to suppose that the Genesis narratives (to which the previous εἰκόν uses alluded) were part of the initial instruction in the faith within Pauline communities, awareness of the Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom tradition among the Gentile believers stands on less secure grounds.

That being stated, a few other details support the view that Paul expected his audience to recognise the allusion and draw the relevant conclusions. First, while the community at Colossae might have been predominantly Gentile, there is every reason to assume that there were also Jewish believers within it (cf. 3:11). Second, as Fee observes, there is no reason to doubt the Lukan presentation of Pauline communities, that they began in the Jewish synagogues and that the Gentile believers included the “God-fearing” Gentiles who were well-versed in the Jewish Scriptures and were thus attuned to even the Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom tradition.¹²³ Third, although Epaphras, and not Paul or Timothy, is credited with bringing the Gospel to the Colossians, Paul describes Epaphras as acting as his representative and a beloved “fellow” servant to Paul and Timothy (1:7). It is probable, as in the case of other Pauline letters, that Paul expects his representative to be a faithful explicator of his thought.¹²⁴ There is thus no reason to suppose that Paul’s allusive use of the Wisdom tradition would be completely lost on his Colossian audience.

Paul’s Intertextuality

The foregoing discussion might again be summed up in a few key insights about Paul’s allusive use of the Wisdom tradition in Col 1:15-20. As in the previous two allusions, Paul’s use of the Wisdom tradition presumes an awareness on the part of his audience of the intentional nature of the allusion, the essential interpretive links, and shared thematic contexts to ascertain the full significance of the intertextual link. Pauline dependence on the Wisdom tradition, however, also exhibits a remarkable independence, with Paul’s Christological affirmations driving the allusion (not the other way around). The use of the Wisdom tradition emphasises the surpassing power and definitive nature of the Christ-event, around which Paul’s protological and eschatological affirmations are configured. As in First Corinthians and Romans, the significance of the Christ-event is incomparable, so that what

123. Fee, "Intertextuality in Colossians," 202.

124. Another possible explicator is Tychicus, who is meant to report on Paul’s condition and who is apparently also the bearer of the letter (4:7-9).

has been accomplished in it is nothing short of the birth of a new paradigm, a “new creation,” constituted around the Lordship of Christ who is pre-eminent over both creation and redemption. Christ is the *telos* of human history, as he is its beginning [ἀρχή; 1:18]; the only real destiny for the cosmos is Christ being all and in all (3:11).

Importantly, and as in First Corinthians and Romans, these Christological affirmations have significant implications for ecclesial praxis. Paul’s Christology is again ecclesiotelic; the significance of Christ is inseparable from the community that is constituted by the Christ-event. Christ is the “head of the body” and “the firstborn from the dead,” the risen Lord from whose “fullness” the *ekklēsia* draws its life (1:18-19; 3:4). This *ekklēsia* born of the Christ-event necessarily comprises of both Jews and Gentiles, a point driven home in Colossians by two Pauline contentions. First, the scope of Christ’s role cannot be less than universal. The risen Lord stakes claim over “all things” (cf. 1:15-20), drawing Jew and Gentile alike into his “kingdom” (cf. 1:13) and sharing with them his “inheritance” (1:12). Second, the *ekklēsia* of God is defined Christo-centrally. The Christ-event is the Pauline focal point of the divine plan, constituting a people without regard to pre-existing classifications, even those classifications envisioned by the Torah (cf. 1:12-14; 2:13-14). The “new selves” of believers (cf. 3:10) within the *ekklēsia* are thus constituted by their relationship to Christ alone and no longer determined by the criteria established by the Torah, with the effect that the distinctions defined by the Torah are not normative within the *ekklēsia* (cf. 3:11). This *ekklēsia* of Jews and Gentiles, furthermore, fulfils God’s original designs for humanity, constituting even now the people who bear God’s εἰκών in Christ and await the full eschatological realisation of the Christ-event (cf. 3:10-11).

Conclusion

The task of intertextually analysing the three passages under consideration (1 Cor 15:42-49; Rom 8:28-30; Col 1:15-23) has been carried out in this chapter. Taking up the passages in turn, the use of quotations, allusions and/or echoes in them has been discerned and explored. The chapter has also discussed the significance of Paul’s intertextuality within its respective literary contexts as well as its implications for Pauline protology and eschatology. The next chapter revisits the “Gentile problem” and the scholarly interpretations concerning it (explored in chaps. 1 and 2) in the light of these findings. It discusses the implications of the intertextual analysis carried out for understanding Paul’s thought vis-à-vis the Gentile problem and contributing to the scholarly conversation on the matter.

CHAPTER V: PAUL AND THE GENTILE PROBLEM REVISITED

With the task of intertextually analysing the three proposed passages completed, its implications for understanding Paul's thought on the Gentile problem might be explored in some detail. This chapter takes up the task in the light of three important insights that emerged from the intertextual analysis carried out in the previous chapter: the Christ-event as ecclesiotelic, the emergence of a new dispensation with the Christ-event, and the universal scope of Christ's significance. It does so in dialogue with the scholarly conversation introduced in the first two chapters, asking afresh where Paul might be placed on the variegated matrix of Second Temple "solutions" to the Gentile problem (chapter 1) and how these findings relate to the diversity of scholarly readings of Paul's own thought on the matter (chapter 2). As shall be seen, Paul's use of εἰκών language sheds new and significant light on the matter, while also offering a new approach for rediscovering the characteristic elements of Paul's thought and mission. In what follows, the issues raised in the first two chapters are revisited under three headings that explore more fully the implications of the insights derived vis-à-vis the Gentile problem.

The Christ-event as Ecclesiotelic

Paul's use of εἰκών language in the three passages encapsulates a variety of distinct but carefully interwoven Christological and soteriological affirmations in a way that spans all of history and involves the whole cosmos. In 1 Cor 15:42-49 and Rom 8:28-30, the allusion to the Adamic narrative is pressed in service of Paul's portrayal of Christ as the eschatological Adam who models the fullness of humanity that God intended from the start and who succeeds where the first Adam failed. As the eschatological Adam, Christ reflects the absolute sovereignty of God over the "powers" and "authorities" – of which Death is the final and most formidable – and through his own resurrection signals God's imminent victory within the apocalyptic battle that is underway. In Col 1:15-23, the allusion to the Wisdom tradition is similarly pressed in service of the conviction that Christ is supreme over all of reality and that Christ alone is the integrating centre of the whole cosmos and the key to understanding its history. The εἰκών vocabulary, furthermore, allows Paul to ground the soteriological emphases of the three passages in these Christological affirmations. In 1 Cor 15:42-49, the reference to bearing the εἰκών of Christ captures the Pauline conviction that redemption for believers necessarily involves sharing in Christ's own mode of being

and that God's eternal purposes are fulfilled only when the Adamic condition of believers (who are still subject to the power of Death as part of their Adamic legacy) is transformed into the eschatological mode of existence proper to the resurrected Lord.¹ It asserts that eschatological redemption is not a return to some primal "spiritual" existence (such as the kind Philo supposed), but the accomplishment of "new creation" (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) begun in Christ. The same conviction is also reflected in Rom 8:28-30, which further insists that the whole of history proceeds inexorably towards this divine goal and that the Christ-event is the definitive lens through which the whole of salvation history must be viewed. Likewise, the dramatic reconfiguration of the Wisdom tradition in Col 1:15-20 underscores the same message of the whole cosmos being regulated by the Christ-event, with Christ not only illuminating the origins of "all things" but also modelling their ultimate destiny. Creation and redemption are thus seen in the light of the Gospel as being essentially Christ-shaped.

The εικόν language also strongly attests to the ecclesiotelic nature of these affirmations. The three passages are remarkably similar in their insistence that the significance of Christ is inseparable from the people that is destined to share his resurrection and that the effects of the Christ-event must spill over into salvation for others. On the one hand, this ecclesial dimension is repeatedly emphasised by the assertions that accompany Paul's use of the εικόν language. Christ is the "first fruits" (1 Cor 15:23) of a much greater harvest; the resurrection of Christ is the sign and guarantee of what is to come for "those who belong to him." He is the "firstborn" (Rom 8:29) among many brothers (and sisters) whom God has called, foreknown, predestined, justified, and glorified within the divine plan that proceeds unyieldingly to its goal (cf. 8:28-30). He is the "head of the body" and the "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18), inseparable from the *ekklēsia* that is constituted by the Christ-event, that is drawn into his "kingdom" (1:13), and that shares his "inheritance" (cf. 1:12). On the other hand, the ecclesiotelic nature of Paul's Christological affirmations are driven home by the allusions in 1 Cor 15:49 and Rom 8:29 to the Adam narrative. These intertextual references beckon readers to recover more of the original Genesis context, particularly the assertion that since the beginning, God has desired a people who "image" to the world God's absolute sovereignty. Like many of his contemporaries, Paul understands that this original

1. This is not to deny that Christ nevertheless retains a unique status in Pauline theology, one that human beings can never acquire (cf., for instance, Col 2:9). This uniqueness is preserved to a considerable degree by the Pauline terminology of "first fruits" (1 Cor 15:23), "firstborn" (Rom 8:29; Col 1:18), "head" (Col 1:18), etc., applicable only to Christ.

purpose was frustrated when the original humanity failed at being God's "image"-bearers by allowing themselves to become subject to powers hostile to God and God's creation. By alluding to this narrative, he draws together – in a way common to some other Second Temple Jews (eg. *GLAE*) – his eschatology and protology, making the claim that God's eschatological redemption would involve, as all of God's activity throughout salvation history, the formation of a people who fulfil the role in which the original humanity failed. Paul's eschatological and protological affirmations, however, are ultimately Christocentric in their focus; for him, the fashioning of a people that fulfils God's original purposes for humanity has been accomplished in Christ. To speak of Christ as the eschatological Adam modelling the fullness of humanity is thus also to speak, in Pauline soteriology, of the renewed humanity that comes into existence through him. Christ, the eschatological Adam, is the initiator and prototype of God's eschatological family; merely, so to speak, the beginning of God's "new creation." God's apocalyptic invasion of the cosmos in the Christ-event brings into existence a renewed humanity, a new family that is destined to share in the εἰκόv of its progenitor: the resurrected and exalted Lord.

The presentation of Christ in Adamic terms, furthermore, underscores the Pauline conviction that the renewed humanity is drawn from both Jews and Gentiles. The assertion that there are no exceptions to the dominion of Sin and Death, that "all" (Jew and Gentile alike) are under their rule (cf. 1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5:12, 18), forms the foil for Paul's presentation of what has been accomplished in Christ. Just as Adam's role in establishing the universality of death implies the universal scope of Christ's resurrection, so too does the universality of Christ's significance as the eschatological Adam correspond to the "all" from which the renewed humanity is drawn, the "all" who are still under Sin and Death's hegemony. The role of the eschatological Adam as the initiator and prototype of the eschatological family can be no less comprehensive than the role of the original Adam as the initiator and prototype of the whole human family (cf. Gen 1:28, 5:3). Even the line separating creation from the "new creation" is thus reconfigured by Paul in Christological terms; it separates those who "belong to Christ" from those who do not (cf. 1 Cor 15:23), those who will be "conformed to his image" from those who will not (cf. Rom 8:29), those transferred into his "kingdom" from those who are not (cf. Col 1:13). It neither runs between Jews and Gentiles nor does it regard other conventional distinctions (slave and free; male and female; cf. Col 3:11). It therefore grounds the formation of novel communities in the Roman empire that cross these divides and embody the pattern of the Christ-event.

Paul's Gentile mission, in other words, is rooted in this theology of "new creation." The resurrection of Christ is "good news" (cf. 1 Cor 15:1) to "all" – Jews as well as Gentiles– whom Paul understands as being under the reign of Sin and Death and sharing in Adam's legacy. In fact, Paul's innovative communities that comprise of both Jews and Gentiles bear witness to the fact that this "new creation" is underway; their unconventional configuration attests to the singular and universal significance of the Christ-event. In this regard, the "Old Perspective" can be affirmed in its insistence that Paul's Gentile mission has theological roots. His grim anthropology and understanding of the Christ-event as the solution to humanity's plight provide sufficient theological rationale for the Gentile mission; Paul's soteriology underpins his ecclesiology. The resurrection of Christ ushers in the eschatological age in which the "good news" can go out to the "all" held in captivity by Sin and Death. And the *ekklēsia* of believers that comes into existence by the preaching of this "good news" embodies, even now, the "new creation" defined in Christological terms. None of this, however, implies that the categories of Jew and Gentile are secondary in Pauline thought.² The formation of communities that bridge the gap between Jews and Gentiles (and other social distinctions) is not merely the context in which Paul's soteriology is articulated but is also the *telos* of that soteriology. These communities are the visible sign of the power of Paul's "good news." The universality of the Christ-event needs to be realised in social praxis; otherwise, it ceases to be universal. To state it differently, the social praxis of Paul's communities (and Paul's insistence that Gentiles do not "become" Jews) bears theological significance. Gentile inclusion (as Gentiles – rightly insisted by interpreters identified within the first category) is the necessary expression and fulfilment of Pauline soteriology; it witnesses to the "new creation" begun in Christ as well as embodies the *telos* of the divine plan, which is the creation of a renewed humanity modelled on Christ and defined in relation to him.³

The Christ-event as New Dispensation

This specifically Pauline thrust of the Christ-event as the beginning of "new creation" must be allowed its full significance, even vis-à-vis the Gentile problem. The Christ-event does not merely involve a fulfilment of what is lacking in an existing world order with a return

2. To use Hodge's words, Paul is not articulating a "spiritual, non-ethnic faith that would become Christianity." Cf. Hodge, "Paul and Ethnicity."

3. This is not to deny strains in Pauline thought in which the involvement of Gentiles precisely as Gentiles is emphasised even more forcefully (see especially Rom 15:6–12). Their exploration, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

to old calibrations and relationships in its aftermath. The freedom of believers who have been rescued from slavery is the freedom under a new “Lord,” it entails a new relationship with new responsibilities and expectations. It is nothing short of the birth of a new dispensation; it creates a new order and brings new calibrations that affect all things (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Otherwise, it cannot be “new creation.” Paul has a distinctive way of characterising the birth of this new dispensation in two of the three εἰκόων passages (1 Cor 15:49; Rom 8:28): it emerges from the creative activity of God who brings life out of its opposite, death. The resurrection of Christ is nothing short of an eschatological *creatio ex nihilo*, the beginning of life where there is no life.⁴ Christ is the eschatological Adam also in this sense; the progenitors of both creation and new creation are born of the creative activity of God who “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4:17). The life of believers in Christ is this “life from the dead”; a life that is Christ’s rather than their own, a life derived from Christ’s resurrection even if it is still present in Adamic mortal bodies.⁵ This “new creation” reading aligns with Barclay’s contention that if believers share an “identity” in Christ, it is “not something that they are or have, but something that they expect or are given,” the gift of a promise that calls them into an existence that is constituted by God and that is radically contingent on God’s creative mercy.⁶ And precisely because it is “life from the dead,” radically contingent on God’s creative mercy, Paul sees it as acting without regard to all pre-existing categories, including the categories of Jew and Gentile. It is why the line separating creation from the “new creation” is not a line between Jews and Gentiles. There are Jews and Gentiles on both sides of the divide; what matters is solely one’s orientation to Christ (cf. Rom 15:7–12; Col 3:15), the source of this “newness of life” (cf. Rom 6:4) and whose resurrection inaugurates the “new creation.” While ethnic distinctions might continue to persist as part of believers’ Adamic humanity, they are declared insignificant with respect to the “new creation” that believers are summoned, even now, to embody in social praxis. This does not mean that Paul envisioned, *pace* Sechrest and Wright, a “third race.”⁷ The Christological (new creation) “identity” of believers does not operate on the same level as Adamic “identities,” even if it does require a recalibration and re-evaluation of the latter with the effect that social

4. Cf. Barclay’s contention that Paul perfects the “incongruity” of grace, tracing patterns of life from the dead, the justification of the godly, and mercy without regard to worth. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 568.

5. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 500-03.

6. Barclay, “Identity Received from God,” 359, 63, 70.

7. Cf. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 164; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1444.

praxis contingent on Adamic “identities” becomes an effective vehicle for witnessing to the reality of the new Christological “identity” of believers.⁸

The implications of this reorientation in the lives of believers, it has been seen, are spelt out by the allusion to the Wisdom tradition in Col 1:15-23 that relates directly to the question of Torah-observance within the *ekklēsia*. Paul’s identification of Wisdom with Christ in that passage makes the dramatic claim that Christ, rather than the Torah, is the new focal point for the community constituted by the Christ-event. The Christ-event does not merely fulfil the demands of the Torah so that believers are empowered to return to a paradigm characterised by Torah-obedience. Rather, because the Christ-event constitutes a community without regard to the distinctions envisioned by the Torah (cf. Col 2:13), it subverts the authority of the Torah, calls into question its normative authority for the community of believers that it brings into existence, and establishes its own dispensation in the process (cf. 3:11).⁹ The “new selves” (3:10) of believers are thus no longer constituted by their allegiance to the Torah but by their relationship to Christ. They are to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (3:17), orientating their lives towards Christ alone (cf. 3:1-4), and remaining united in their common faith in Christ (3:13-15). While the ethnic distinctions envisaged by the Torah continue to persist, they are relativised within the new paradigm in which “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (3:11)

The thoroughly Christocentric nature of the new dispensation is accompanied by another distinctively Pauline conviction about the relationship between the Christ-event and the whole of history. The intertextual references in Rom 8:28-30 and Col 1:15-23 attest to the Pauline conviction that the *telos* of the divine plan, throughout its unfolding in history, is the creation of a family around the risen Christ who models the fullness of humanity that God intended from the start.¹⁰ Since this divine plan lies at the heart of the cosmos, illuminating its origins and modelling its destiny, Paul sees the whole of salvation history

8. Cf. “Paul acknowledges the multiple identities members of the assembly manifest, and he argues that these be subordinated to the most important identity, being in Christ. This request does not necessarily imply that other identities be erased. On the contrary, a multifaceted and situational model of ethnicity suggests that people routinely manage several identities simultaneously. Hodge, “Paul and Ethnicity.” Bird’s concept of “meta-identity” in Christ (see chapter 2) might also capture some of the complexity of Pauline identities. Cf. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 53, 56.

9. Again, to be clear, this does not necessarily mean that the Torah is “obsolete.” The matter is the ongoing validity of Torah-observance for those constituted as an *ekklēsia* by the Christ-event.

10. Cf. Wright, “Romans,” 601.

in the light of the Christ-event. This is evident, for instance, in the way that Paul reads the Adam narrative to which these intertextual references allude. His reading of the Adam narrative is Christological; it is his Christological affirmations that drive the allusion, not the other way around. Reading Paul in comparison with other Second Temple readings of the same narrative reinforces this interpretation.¹¹ There is diversity among these readings, for instance, about whether death is the simple consequence of humanity's constitution (as in the case of Philo), the result of some primal human transgression (Paul, Ben Sira, *GLAE*, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch), or attributable to some other supernatural source (*Wisdom*). Second Temple Jews who agree that death is the result of a primal human transgression nevertheless disagree about whether Adam alone is to blame (Paul, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch), or Eve alone (Ben Sira), or both (*GLAE*). The reason why Paul reads the Adam narrative in the way that he does is because he reads it in the light of the Christ-event. Paul's Adam narrative is Christomorphic; it is incorporated within his apocalyptic framework and pressed entirely in service of his presentation of Christ, so that Christ can be presented in Adamic terms.

Given that Paul works retrospectively, from Christ to Adam, it is reasonable to expect that Paul also reads the rest of salvation history, including the Abrahamic narrative and the story of Israel, in the same way. Wright's conflicting thesis that sees Paul essentially working forwards – understanding the Adamic vocation as passing onto Abraham's family, then to Christ who succeeds where Israel failed, and finally with those “in Christ” who can embody the renewed creation – can neither be explored here nor definitively ruled out based on what has been stated.¹² The Pauline conviction discovered here, however, inclines one to see Paul as working backwards, rather than forwards. As Barclay puts it, “Paul reinterprets the whole of Scripture, which grounds his theology inasmuch as it contains echoes of the good news”; “the story he tells is not a common Second Temple narrative with a Christological conclusion: it has a newly discovered plot-line.”¹³ Paul discovers this “plot-line” within Israel's scriptures in the light of the Christ-event, the lens through which he views “all things” (cf. 1 Cor 15:27-28; Rom 8:28; Col 1:16-20). This insight can be particularly illuminating for the Gentile problem, and interpretations of Paul must account for the fact that one reasonably expects Paul to see even the Gentile problem through the lens of the Christ-event. To ask how, in Paul's thought, Gentiles become descendants of

11. See, *inter alia*, Dunn, *Paul*, 24-90; Blackwell, “*GLAE*,” 108-14.

12. Wright's thesis is explored in tremendous detail in Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. It is also taken up by Beale in Beale, *NT Biblical Theology*.

13. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 568.

Abraham requires first asking what it means to be a descendant of Abraham in the light of the Christ-event.¹⁴ To ask how, in Paul's thought, Gentiles are brought into the covenant community requires recognising that the terms of covenantal participation have, for Paul, been redefined by the Christ-event. Paul and other Second Temple "solutions" to the Gentile problem might coincide and conflict in various ways, but the reason why Paul does not fit neatly into any of "patterns of universalism" outlined previously (chapter 1) is that Paul and other Second Temple Jews have two different focal points of history that colour their respective understandings of what it means to be descendants of Abraham and members of the covenant community. In this sense, Paul's "Gentile problem" is a problem different from the one with which his contemporaries are engaging.¹⁵

Paul's idiosyncratic response to the Gentile problem in the light of the Christ-event is evident when one compares, for instance, the Pauline eschatological convictions emerging from the intertextual analysis here with the "eschatological participation" paradigm that scholars including Fredriksen and Eisenbaum (see chapter 2) insist is the pattern most akin to Paul's solution to the Gentile problem. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Paul does not emphasise the relevance of the Temple for believers. Temple-concepts are developed in a metaphorical, not literal way, in Paul's letters, and he does not expect Gentile believers to be oriented to the Temple in any practical way such as pilgrimages or financial contributions.¹⁶ More importantly, however, Paul interprets the "eschatological pilgrimage" tradition in a dramatically inverse way.¹⁷ For him, it is not Israel's vindication but Israel's failure that leads to the Gentiles streaming towards the God of Israel (cf. Rom 11:11-12). In fact, Paul can assert that it is the redemption of Gentiles that will lead to Israel's vindication, rather than the other way around (cf. 11:13, 25-26). And unlike other Second Temple Jews who see the eschaton centred upon the Law and modelled upon Temple precinct, Pauline eschatology is thoroughly Christocentric and defined in Christological terms. The grounds for this reconfiguration lie in the fact that even the eschatological anticipations that Paul

14. One can conjecture that this is the reason why Paul in Rom 4 insists that Abrahamic descent is, as Hays argues (see chapter 2), to be seen not "κατὰ σάρκα" but "κατὰ χάριν." Cf. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 78.

15. Pace Donaldson, Paul's approach to the Gentile problem might be seen, at least in this sense, as *sui generis*, not merely as a variation of the debate that was already well established within Second Temple Judaism or as another response to the same problem. Cf. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 9.

16. Cf. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 18-19.

17. Cf. Gaventa, *Paul*, 156. Gaventa also notes that many texts of the "eschatological pilgrimage" tradition are concerned with the vindication of Israel. By contrast, Paul is less concerned with the vindication of Israel than with the vindication of God.

shares with his contemporaries, he sees through the lens of the Christ-event; his understanding of the eschaton is shaped by his distinctive theology of “new creation” in Christ.

Paul’s reconfiguration of the Gentile problem in Christological terms is likewise apparent in the fact that Paul defies social convention in the case of intermarriage. Though Fredriksen is correct in observing that social convention in Roman antiquity dictated that wives assumed the gods of the husband’s household in marriage, Paul’s response to the question of Gentile spouses in 1 Cor 7:12-16 operates without regard to social convention. While he does assume that within the community, there will be Gentile believers – both men and women – with Gentile spouses who are not believers, Paul clearly does not appeal to social convention as the solution to the problem. He does not assume that wives (whether believers or not) will simply have to defer to the religious affiliations of their husbands. He also does not assume that believers who are husbands can simply compel their unbelieving wives to join the church. Paul can defy conventional expectations because, once again, he operates in the light of the Christ-event whose pattern is that it disregards established conventions and criteria. His response here is a good example that what matters for Paul is not social convention but one’s relationship to Christ. Attempts to place Paul on the variegated matrix of Second Temple “solutions” to the Gentile problem must thus account for his idiosyncratic terms of engagement that are shaped by his understanding of the Christ-event.

Universal Scope of Christ’s Significance

Drawing together some of the assertions related to Paul’s “new creation” theology in these passages can help one recognise that the significance of the Christ-event in Pauline soteriology is nothing less than universal – it encompasses all of history and the whole of the cosmos. The divine *telos* is the creation of a new family that is brought into existence by the Christ-event and destined to share in the image of Christ, the eschatological Adam. This family is drawn from the “all” who are held under the sway of Death as part of their Adamic legacy and for whom the Christ-event is the “good news” of redemption. The *ekklēsia* in which this “new creation” is constituted in the period between Christ’s resurrection and Parousia, is likewise Christologically defined and focused. The “new selves” of believers are constituted by their relationship to Christ alone, and both Jewish and Gentile believers are united in their common orientation to Christ (Col 3:10-11; Rom

15:7). As the eschatological Adam, Christ alone models the fullness of humanity that God intended for all people of all times and spaces, Jews as well as Gentiles.¹⁸ In this sense, there is only one real destiny for the whole of humanity: to share in the mode of being proper to Christ as resurrected Lord as well as to become members of God's eschatological family in which Christ is the "firstborn" (Rom 8:29). Jews as well as Gentiles reach this destiny by walking in Christ and being rooted, built up and established in him (Col 2:6-7). They draw from the "life from the dead" whose origin is Christ's own resurrection, even as they still inhabit "bodies of death" (cf. Rom 7:24) and must "groan" for the "redemption of their bodies" (cf. 8:23) as part of their Adamic legacy. Paul, it has been seen, also attributes to the risen Christ an active agency in bringing believers to the fulfilment of God's purposes for them by imparting his own resurrection-life to them and recreating them in his image (1 Cor 15:45, 49). For Paul, evidently, it is only through Christ and in Christ that God chooses to accomplish the work of "new creation."

Given the overwhelming evidence that the Christ-event bears singular and universal significance in Pauline theology, the interpretations of Eisenbaum, Hayes, and Thiessen (chapter 2) are difficult to sustain. If God's purposes for the whole of humanity are, for Paul, revealed and accomplished only through Christ, *pace* Eisenbaum, it is necessary to assert "Jesus saves, and he saves both Jews and Gentiles."¹⁹ Of course, this leaves open the possibility that "Jesus saves," but he saves Jews and Gentiles differently – Hayes' reading that attempts to account for the relevance of Christ for Jews, while still reinforcing the Jew-Gentile dichotomy for believers in Christ.²⁰ This reading too, however, is difficult to sustain, given Paul's understanding of the Christ-event as bringing about a "new creation" involving new calibrations and affecting all things. As argued above, the Christ-event does not merely fulfil the demands of the Torah so that believers are empowered to return to an earlier dispensation characterised by Torah-obedience. Rather, it inaugurates a new dispensation, calling into existence a new human family defined Christologically and in which the "new selves" of believers are no longer constituted by their allegiance to the Torah but by their relationship to Christ. Furthermore, Paul's soteriology in the three passages unmistakably attributes to Christ a greater role vis-à-vis Jews than merely empowering them to effortlessly

18. Cf. "Adam is not simply the prototype for the Second Adam, but Christ is the prior Eikōn-template used to create Adam and Eve. Christ may be the Second Adam, but Adam, then, is the Second Prōtotoskos-Eikōn." McKnight, *Colossians*, 149.

19. Cf. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 242.

20. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 149.

keep the Law. And he makes no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in his eschatological convictions; believers (Jews as well as Gentiles) are all destined to be conformed to the image of Christ, the eschatological Adam, who alone models the fullness of humanity that God intended from the start. It is similarly difficult to sustain Thiessen's claim that Paul saw only Gentiles as having a "problem."²¹ Paul clearly believes that both Jews and Gentiles are under the hegemony of Sin and Death as part of their Adamic condition, and that the resurrection of Christ as God's eschatological *creatio ex nihilo*, independent of the Torah, is God's apocalyptic response to this plight.²²

Importantly, it is the universal significance of the Christ-event that also grounds the solidarity of Jews and Gentiles in Pauline theology. In this regard, Paul's use of image language can be particularly illuminating when contrasted with how the same language has come to be employed in subsequent Judeo-Christian tradition. Paul does not employ Genesis' image motif (Gen 1:26-27) to ground his Gentile mission in the conviction that Jews and Gentiles are bound together because they share a common human dignity. The Gentile mission is not based on a conviction of innate solidarity between humans. Paul nowhere asserts that Jews and Gentiles both share the "image of God" before criticising his contemporaries for denying this solidarity between Jews and Gentiles. At least in the way the image motif is drawn upon, what Paul sees Jews and Gentiles as sharing is not a common human nature but a common subjection to the powers of Sin and Death that itself forms the essential context to the shared and universal gift of the Christ-event. While subsequent Judeo-Christian tradition has come to emphasise the "image of God" in its concern for the dignity of all human persons, Paul conspicuously makes no such appeals. He is less concerned about the "image of God" in its generality than he is about the specific relevance of the "image of Christ" for the community constituted by the Christ-event.

In this light, the language of "equal footing" and "equal status" characteristically applied to Paul by the NPP (see especially the interpreters in the second category of chapter 2) can be further nuanced by asking from where Paul sees this "equality" emerging.²³ At least in terms of the image language, the "equality" Paul propounds is not an equality based on a notion of innate Gentile self-worth owing to their being created in the image of God. If Paul

21. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*.

22. *Pace* Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 14-15.

23. See, for example, Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 5, 18, 27, 155, 60; Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 489-90.

– as proponents of the NPP suggest – sees his interlocutors as “narrowing” or “limiting” God’s purposes, it is not out of a new philosophical preference for humanity over Judaism or a newly discovered (or rediscovered) appreciation of the notion that Jews and Gentiles are one in their humanity even within the Jewish Scriptures.²⁴ Paul’s starting point for the Gentile mission is not anthropological but Christological. It is the singular and universal nature of the Christ-event that compels and grounds the crossing of boundaries and norm-defying social configurations of the Gentile mission. To speak of “equality” or “narrowness” when interpreting Paul’s polemic against his interlocutors can thus be more obscuring than revealing of Pauline convictions in the modern context, especially if the source of Paul’s concern for the Gentiles is not simultaneously identified as Christological and not anthropological.

Conclusion

The distinctive contribution of the present study has been its exploration of the significance of three image-vocabulary passages for understanding Paul’s thought on the Gentile problem, a path largely unpursued in contemporary Pauline scholarship on the matter. By intertextually analysing the three selected passages, it has sought to rediscover some essential convictions of Pauline theology that relate to Paul’s Gentile mission and that can thus contribute to the continuing scholarly conversation on the matter. The task, no doubt, has been limited in its focus and no attempts have been made to relate its findings to Paul’s statements on faith, the Law, Israel’s place within salvation history, et. al., which is necessary for any comprehensive exploration of Paul’s thought on the matter. In this regard, a few avenues for further research can be easily stated. First, a fuller treatment of Paul’s εἰκόν language would include passages that have been left unexplored here (1 Cor 11:7–9; 2 Cor 3:18–4:6; Col 3:9–11). In fact, the treatment of the εἰκόν language here has itself been somewhat homogenised, with little attention paid to the diverse forms of expression – the image of Christ (1 Cor 15:49); the image that Christ is (Rom 8:29); Christ, the image of God (1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) – and their significance within these passages. A fuller treatment would also include ascertaining the significance and relationship among these

24. Cf. Dunn, *New Perspective*, 69.

various expressions.²⁵ Second, one could systematically explore how Paul’s εἰκόν language relates to terms such as μορφή [form; cf. Phil 2:6; συμμόρφους in Rom 8:29] and concepts such as δόξα [glory; cf. Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 4:4] and πρωτότοκος [firstborn; cf. Rom 8:29; Col 1:15]. Third, one might attempt to relate the significance of Paul’s εἰκόν language to other aspects of Paul’s thought that bear direct relevance for the Gentile problem: *inter alia*, faith, the Law, the relevance of Israel for the *ekklēsia*.

The intertextual analysis of the three εἰκόν passages carried out has nonetheless been illuminating for Paul’s thought vis-à-vis the Gentile problem, and it has explored this relevance under three insights: the Christ-event as ecclesiotelic, the emergence of a new dispensation with the Christ-event, and the universal scope of Christ’s significance. By way of conclusion, a few key insights might be briefly restated. Like the Old Perspective, it has found Paul’s Gentile mission to be grounded in Paul’s soteriological convictions about the Christ-event. It agrees, however, with the insistence of the New Perspective and Radical New Perspective that the categories of Jew and Gentile are not secondary to Pauline thought. The social praxis of Paul’s communities (and Paul’s insistence that Gentiles do not “become” Jews) bears theological significance. Gentile inclusion is, for Paul, the necessary expression and fulfilment of his soteriology. It witnesses to the “new creation” begun in the Christ-event (which Paul sees as God’s eschatological *creatio ex nihilo* and apocalyptic solution to humanity’s plight) and embodies the *telos* of the divine plan, which is the creation of a renewed humanity modelled on Christ and defined in relation to him. While ethnic distinctions might continue to persist as part of believers’ “Adamic” humanity, they are at the same time revealed as insignificant with respect to the “new creation” and rendered incapable of causing differentiation within the community constituted by the Christ-event. Jewish and Gentile believers thus share a common orientation to Christ, whose resurrection-life is the source of their own “new lives,” and are united by a common destiny of conformity to his image: the mode of being proper to him as resurrected Lord. And since the Christ-event thus illuminates humanity’s origins and models its destiny, Paul sees “all things” – even the Gentile problem itself – in its light, making his solution to the Gentile problem fit awkwardly within the patterns of universalism prevalent in Second Temple Judaism. Unlike

25. Admittedly, 2 Cor 3:18–4:6 and Col 3:9–11 display – at least *prima facie* – rich possibilities for exploration of the Adamic motif in Pauline theology that has been central to the present enquiry. The scant attention to them, considered especially in the light of the prominence given to the Wisdom motif in Col 1:15–23, might strike some as puzzling. Selections entail gains and losses, but these passages undoubtedly merit exploration in a future project.

his contemporaries, Paul's terms of engagement with the Gentile problem are deeply entrenched in his Christological convictions. It is his understanding of the Christ-event that grounds the crossing of boundaries and norm-defying social configurations of his Gentile mission, not anthropological considerations, or even a philosophical preference for universality over "narrowness." He also clearly asserts that the Christ-event bears singular and universal significance throughout these passages, and Radical New Perspective interpretations that suggest Christ's soteriological relevance solely for the Gentiles (or a limited soteriological significance for Jews) are difficult to sustain in this light. The central message of these passages, it has been seen, is that Christ brings for both Jews and Gentiles alike a "new creation," which is why Paul can state elsewhere: "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!" (Gal 6:15).

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