

PREFACE

Anyone embarking on a book of this size would be well advised to consult the map before setting out. Here it is:

Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV
Paul's World	Paul's Mindset	Paul's Theology	Paul in His World
	6, 7, 8	9, 10, 11	
	5: first-century empire	12: Paul and empire	
	4: ancient religion	13: Paul and religion	
	3: ancient philosophy	14: Paul and philosophy	
	2: Paul's Jewish world	15: Paul in his Jewish world	
1: Introduction			16: Conclusion

The way up and the way down are one and the same. The real climax of the book is Part III (chapters 9–11), where I have offered a fresh account of Paul's theology, using as controlling categories the three main theological themes within the Jewish world both of his day and of our own, and proposing that his entire theology is best understood in terms of his reworking of those themes in the light of the Messiah and the spirit. But for that to make the sense that it made to Paul we have to understand him historically, that is, within the complex and confusing world of his day. Or rather, worlds. I have tried in Part I to give as reasonably detailed a description of Paul's multiple contexts – Jewish, Greek, Roman – as I can within the space available. That I regard as essential. Without it, too many generalizations creep in, too many hostages are given to fortune. I have some particular arguments to make in relation to his Jewish world in chapter 2, but for much of chapters 3, 4 and 5 I am not proposing any very novel ideas (though the idea of a Roman *Heilsgeschichte* is not normally drawn out as such). But if we are to understand Paul within his own actual context there are certain features which have to be put in place.

C. S. Lewis, speaking of what he had learned from literary historians, described the effect for which I am striving. Such writers have helped me, he says, by placing works in their proper setting,

thus showing me what demands they were meant to satisfy, what furniture they presupposed in the minds of their readers. They have headed me off from false approaches, taught me what to look for, enabled me in some degree to put myself into the frame of mind of those to whom they were addressed.¹

¹ Lewis 1961, 121f. That Lewis did not always take his own advice – as, for instance, in his dismissing of historical-Jesus research and his preferring of a blatantly anachronistic reading (Lewis 1955, Letter 23) – does not of course undermine this point.

If Part I has that effect for readers of Paul, I shall be glad. Then, having examined Paul's worldview and theology in the two central Parts of the book, my aim has been to work back through the same contexts and see what can be said, at least in a preliminary way, about where Paul belongs in relation to them all. Of course, since part of the overall argument of the book is that Paul remains a decidedly and determinedly Jewish thinker, his relationship to his Jewish context has a different character from his relationships to the other 'worlds' in which he lived. But there are still important issues to be faced when we get to that point.

I should perhaps add here that though there is thus a chiasmic balance between Parts I and IV there is no similar balance between Parts II (chapters 6, 7 and 8, on Paul's worldview) and III (chapters 9, 10 and 11, on his theology). But I hope that the overall structure will help the intrepid reader keep his or her own balance in following the shape of the argument. Part of the point of this structure is to highlight rhetorically the main thesis of the book, which can be briefly stated thus: Paul developed something we can appropriately call his 'theology', a radical mutation in the core beliefs of his Jewish world, because only so could he sustain what we can appropriately call the 'worldview' which he held himself and which he longed for his churches to hold as well. Other worldviews have their sustaining and shaping practices, but for Paul these markers (circumcision, the food laws, and so on) had been set aside as inappropriate for the new messianic day, for the new messianic people. Only a robust reappropriation of the Jewish *beliefs* – monotheism, election and eschatology, all rethought around the Messiah and the spirit – would do. 'Theology' – a category not unknown in the wider non-Jewish world, but never before loadbearing in this way – was necessary if the church, otherwise adrift in a world of a thousand cultural pressures, was to stay united and holy. My proposal is that Paul actually *invents* something we may call 'Christian theology', in this particular way (Jewish beliefs about God, reworked around Messiah and spirit), for this particular purpose (maintaining the new messianic people in good order). We only understand the need for Part III, in other words, when we have understood Part II; and we only truly understand both of these together when we see them within the wider world mapped in Part I and engaged with in Part IV.

Here we may note one particular result of this proposal. Most works on 'Pauline theology' have made soteriology, including justification, central. So, in a sense, does this one. But in the Jewish context 'soteriology' is firmly located within the understanding of the people of God. God calls Abraham's family, and rescues them from Egypt. That is how the story works, and that is the story Paul sees being reworked around Jesus and the spirit. This explains why chapter 10, on 'election', is what it is, and why it is the longest in the book. I hasten to add, as readers of that chapter will discover, that this does not (as some have suggested) collapse soteriology into ecclesiology. Rather, it pays attention to the Jewish belief which Paul himself firmly endorses, that God's solution to the plight of the world begins with the call of Abraham. Nor does this mean that 'the people of God' are defined, smugly

as it were, simply as the *beneficiaries* of salvation. The point of the Jewish vocation as Paul understood it was that they were to be the *bearers* of salvation to the rest of the world. That, in turn, lies at the heart of his own vocation, issuing in his own characteristic praxis.

Readers of my earlier works have been reminding me for some while that this book has been a long time coming. It is the fourth ‘volume’ (for all it now appears in two physical volumes) of the series *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, which SPCK in London commissioned in 1990 and whose first three volumes, *The New Testament and the People of God*, *Jesus and the Victory of God* and *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, appeared in 1992, 1996 and 2003 respectively, each being published in the USA by Fortress Press in Minneapolis. These volumes are designed to form neither a ‘New Testament Theology’ nor a ‘New Testament History’, but a kind of dialogue between the two, aiming always at practical as well as theoretical synthesis. As the time-lag between volumes has increased – four years, then seven, and now ten – I may perhaps be excused the sense that I have been measuring out my life, not in coffee-spoons, but in ever larger soup-ladles. I hope I shall live long enough to complete the series, but since my earliest intention in relation to these projects was principally to write about Jesus and Paul the present volume may after all be regarded as an important milestone. And I must express at once my gratitude to my friends and colleagues at both SPCK and Fortress for their patience while it has all been going on.

It is important to note that the present book really does belong as part of this series; in other words, that all kinds of things I might have said by way of preliminaries are to be found in the earlier volumes, particularly in *NTPG*. Chapter 2 of the present volume represents a sharpening and a bringing into closer focus of *NTPG* Part III, but there is much in that earlier treatment that is simply presupposed (for instance, the question of ‘Who were the Pharisees?’). Nor has it been possible or desirable constantly to refer back to this or that point. I have done quite enough self-referencing in the present book as it is (partly because reviewers often say, ‘But why did you not deal with this, or that?’, when I have done, but elsewhere). For the same reason there is considerably less in the present book about Paul’s view of resurrection than there would otherwise have been, since that was the main subject of *RSG* Part II. I have repeated a certain amount about what I mean by the contested term ‘worldview’, and the closely related ‘mindset’ (I use ‘worldview’ in relation to communities and ‘mindset’ in relation to individuals within communities), since they are so important for both the structure and the content of the present book. But the basic principles were set out in *NTPG* Parts I and II, and remain constant. These discussions, I discover, are coming into their own here and there as a new generation asks fundamental questions once more. One of the great difficulties in present-day biblical scholarship is the explosion of aims, methods and approaches, so that true debate becomes difficult, there being fewer and fewer fixed points from which to begin. It is important to be clear about one’s own starting-points, and that is what those earlier treatments were meant to offer.

In particular, I would like to stress that my picture of Paul's complex world, Jewish and non-Jewish, has put itself together in my mind over many decades, through many twists and turns of reading texts both ancient and modern, with different elements making their presence felt in different combinations, and with different emphases, at different times. Critics have sometimes accused me of first inventing a picture, or a 'controlling story', and then superimposing it on the early Christian writers. This is naive. Everyone comes to the text with pictures and controlling stories – and indeed with philosophical, theological, cultural, social and political assumptions and presuppositions. The question is whether these are laid out for discussion, and whether the subject-matter under investigation is given the chance as it were to object or answer back. The picture I have of Paul's multiple and overlapping worlds, especially but not only his Jewish world, is necessarily complicated (though nowhere near as complicated as the reality must have been; that is the curse of all history, modern as well as ancient), and I have developed it over the years in constant dialogue with the texts themselves. To suggest that I started with one idea and simply forced the texts to fit into it is the kind of charge that sometimes rebounds.

Much of this has to do with the method of argument I have explained and justified earlier, which can loosely be called 'critical realism'. What I mean by this is the application to history of the same overall procedure as is used in the hard sciences: not simply the mere assemblage of 'facts', but the attempt to make sense of them through forming hypotheses and then testing them against the evidence.² Unless we are explicit about this there is a constant danger that exegetes will simply talk past one another, labelling one another's proposals as 'unconvincing' because they have not glimpsed the larger hypotheses within which those proposals might make sense.

Even when one does recognize those larger hypotheses, however, sometimes the best thing to do is to attempt an outflanking move, rather than engage in hand-to-hand fighting. That is the effect that I hope this book will have over against some of the other large proposals that have been advanced in recent years. The problem is, of course, that in arts disciplines in general (as opposed, say, to engineering or mathematics) people do not normally take any notice of the fact that they have been outflanked unless the move is backed up with detailed refutation. (One of the virtues of analytic philosophy is that its practitioners could see only too clearly what was going on. I remember the refreshing answer given by the then elderly A. J. Ayer, the doyen of mid-century logical positivists, to the question of what had been the problem with his philosophy. Basically, he said, it was wrong.) Since there is often no space for detailed engagement, we must be patient. Some weeds can

² See Malina and Neyrey 1996, ix–x, referring to this in terms of 'abduction' (as opposed either to induction or deduction). The term 'abduction' was introduced into philosophy by Peirce 1958, 89–164 to deal with what he called 'the logic of discovery' and the economics of research. Another familiar term for the same process is 'inference to the best explanation', seen to good advantage in detective stories such as those of Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie. On 'critical realism' (a phrase I borrowed from Meyer 1989, and use heuristically without intending a full evocation of the way it has been used as a technical term by philosophers like R. W. Sellars and A. O. Lovejoy) cf. *NTPG* 332–7.

be rooted out in one go. Others will creep back time and again. With some, all you can do is cut them back and hope they will die off. Some, of course, may turn out to be flowers, awaiting recognition as such . . .

Something similar must be said about the problem of diachronic and synchronic readings of Paul: about whether, in other words, we should first study the letters one by one (diachronic, going through time) and only later attempt a single overall presentation (synchronic, placing all the different ‘times’ together). One of the most thorough recent books on Paul’s theology attempts exactly that.³ There is a noble vision behind that sequence, but a glance at the size of the present volume(s) raises natural questions about its practicability. In any case, I have written this book in my sixties, having studied, taught and preached Paul for the past forty years, including producing a series of popular commentaries on every book of the New Testament, more substantial commentaries on Colossians and Romans, and numerous articles on individual passages and books. Thus, though I have not collected that diachronic work together as the explicit foundation for the present book, I think it is fair to assume it.

There are in any case, however, two problems with the ideal of beginning diachronically. First, we do not know the exact order in which Paul wrote his letters. We have some idea. We all think 1 Thessalonians was early (though perhaps not the earliest?) and Romans late (though perhaps not the latest?). We assume that 1 Corinthians was written before 2 Corinthians. But beyond that it is hard to proceed. Second, most scholars place all the ‘main’ letters within quite a short period, a decade at most out of a missionary career spanning at least thirty years. Granted (a) that Paul had been an evangelist, teacher, missionary and pastor for a long time before he wrote anything that we still possess, and (b) that almost all his time was taken up, not with writing letters, but with that complex and never-ending personal ministry, especially in teaching, it is misleading to imagine his letters as successive ‘statements’ or ‘publications’ in which, like a research scientist, he was setting out his latest ‘findings’. That is part of the problem of scholars imagining the apostles after their own image.⁴

Pastors can make the same mistake. ‘Pastoral work’ may be quite different in a first-century tentmaker’s shop from what it is in a twentieth-century clergy study. Nevertheless, many pastors find that, though a particular situation may force them to think something through in a new way, they are normally drawing on and attempting to condense years of study, training and experience into a short interview, or letter, or email. As I argue in chapter 11 below, I find it inconceivable that Paul had not faced and pondered a thousand times the questions he deals with in Romans in general and chapters 9–11 in particular. He has arranged his presentation in such a way as to lead from one difficult question to another; but that, I am convinced, is not because he is thinking these things through afresh as he writes the letter. It is because he wants *his hearers* to think them through in that way, to sense

³ Schnelle 2005 [2003].

⁴ cf. Hooker 1975.

the drama of the argument. The letters consist of a few bucketfuls of water drawn from a deep well, poured out into whichever vessels Paul thought appropriate for the audience and the occasion.

We should therefore expect to find that Paul says briefly and cryptically in one place what elsewhere he spells out in more detail. We should expect to be able to interpret one letter with the help of another, while of course respecting the flow of argument proper to each. In other words, diachronic study is important and must everywhere be presupposed, but synchronic presentation, at least in the forming of hypotheses, is always necessary too. After all, even the most resolutely diachronically minded scholar still has to presuppose, whichever letter is under the microscope at the time, that there is *some* affinity of mind between, say, the Paul who wrote Galatians and the Paul who wrote Philippians. Some of us tried the experiment, over a decade ago, of discussing the theology of the individual letters one by one as though there were no others. It was a useful and important experiment, but I do not think the results called into question the parallel task of synchronic hypotheses.⁵

The subject we are here investigating is of course immense. So is the body of scholarship that surrounds it. This is nothing new. Virgil, writing over two thousand years ago to the emperor Augustus, declared that his subject was so vast that he must have been almost out of his mind to have begun the work in the first place; and that was long before printing and the internet.⁶ Modern scholars in many fields express what I have found day after day in writing the present work:

The bibliography ... is enormous, and I could have increased the size of this book two- or threefold by debating divergent views. In every paragraph, if not in every sentence, I could have argued explicitly for or against the opinions of several scholars.⁷

I recall in this connection the dour Scot who was assigned the three-day task of packing up my books when we moved from Auckland Castle to the Fife coast in the summer of 2010. ‘What I cannae get my mind around,’ he declared, ‘is – all them books, all on the one subject!’ There is a serious point here. We are long past the time when one could read, or even skim-read, ‘everything’. As in many other fields, so with biblical scholarship, one has to choose certain conversation partners, and that is what I have done in this book. There are moments when, at particularly crucial turns in the road, I have tried to be a little more comprehensive, but for much of the time I have concentrated on expounding themes and passages with a fairly light touch on the footnotes. I apologize to friends, colleagues and indeed experts in the field whose work receives less attention than I would have liked. I had originally planned a chapter or two on the recent history of Pauline research,

⁵ See the series of volumes that emerged from the SBL Pauline Theology seminar in the 1990s: Bassler 1991; Hay 1993; Hay and Johnson 1995; Johnson and Hay 1997. On the whole problem of syntheses of Paul, and the extent to which his thought developed, see the interesting article of Sanders 2008b.

⁶ As quoted by Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.24.

⁷ Galinsky 1996, ix.

but this has grown into a separate book (*Paul and His Recent Interpreters*), and even there it has not been possible to discuss some recent writing – I think, for instance, of the massive work of Douglas Campbell – as fully as I would have liked. Almost every day a new monograph or article has come to my attention which could in principle have been included, even if the world itself could not then have contained the extra volumes that would have been written.

Another problem with any thematic treatment of any writer is the necessary repetition. Either one must write a set of commentaries on all the texts from end to end, in which case one must repeat the necessary general statements on key topics every time they come up (or collect them into ‘excursuses’); or one must expound one’s chosen themes, in which case one must perforce repeat elements of the exegesis of this or that passage. I have chosen the latter route. A glance at the index (in which the key discussions of frequently referred-to passages are marked in **bold type**) will show where exegetical overlap has been inevitable.⁸ I regret the occasional overlap, but those who come to this book for a treatment of a particular topic may be glad to find the relevant material in one place.⁹

All kinds of linguistic challenges emerge in a project like this. We used to speak blithely of ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’, but people now warn that the first of these did not mean then what it means now, and that ‘Christian’ and ‘Christianity’ are anachronistic in the first century. That has not stopped the production of serious books with such words in their titles, but it is enough to give us pause, and I have tried to think historically about the first century and to avoid implying too much continuity with what came after. We have become aware, in particular, that the suffix ‘-ism’ has carried all kinds of nineteenth-century overtones which we would do well to avoid.¹⁰ A particular problem attaches to the way we speak about those of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries who did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel’s Messiah. They used to be called ‘non-Christian Jews’ or ‘unbelieving Jews’; some perceive the former as anachronistic, the latter as pejorative. I have attempted various circumlocutions, recognizing that we all face our own versions of these challenges.¹¹ So, too, the word ‘pagan’ is heard as pejorative by some, though as elsewhere I have continued (in company with many others from many backgrounds) to use it as a convenient shorthand. The same goes for the abbreviations AD and BC; for the phrase ‘Old Testament’; and for reflecting first-century Jewish and Christian usage by speaking of ‘he’ in relation to the one God.

But should that one God be so designated? In earlier volumes, determined not to beg the question as to ‘which god we were talking about’, I usually retained the lower-case initial letter for the word ‘god’. If we are trying to

⁸ See the reflections of Fee 1994, 10f.

⁹ The major exception is Rom. 9.30–10.13, which cries out to be included under ‘justification’ in chapter 10, but which needed to be treated along with its whole section in chapter 11.

¹⁰ See Meeks 2001; and e.g. Lang 2004.

¹¹ See, for instance, the elaborate paraphrases in Nanos 2010a.

understand Paul's own mind, however, this makes less sense. When Paul referred to the God of Israel, he believed that he was talking about the one and only being to whom the word 'God' might be properly applied. He knew, of course, about 'other gods'; but I have taken the decision to attempt to reflect his own point of view by referring to them without the capital.¹²

I have referred to Paul himself, in his pre-Damascene years, as 'Saul of Tarsus'. I hope he at least will not mind.¹³

Unless otherwise noted, I have used my own 2011 translation of the New Testament (*The New Testament for Everyone*, or in the USA *The Kingdom New Testament*, published in London by SPCK and in San Francisco by HarperOne). Where, however, I sometimes pushed the boat out in that work and translated *Christos* as 'king' (which I still think appropriate), I have here usually made it 'Messiah'. I have also occasionally adopted that translation in other ways. For the Old Testament and Apocrypha I have normally followed the NRSV, except that I have written YHWH instead of 'the LORD'.

It would take several pages to name everyone who has encouraged me in the writing of this book. Many people I have never met have emailed me to say they are waiting for it eagerly, and I hope they are not now disappointed. Many have told me they are praying for me (and perhaps also for my wife and family, the chief sufferers through this process). Many have read chapters, sections, or whole Parts, and in some cases almost the entire book, and have given me shrewd and helpful comments and advice from which I have tried to profit. They have helped to bear my burdens, even though now I must take full responsibility and carry my own load. Without specifying which of the following alphabetical list have done which of the tasks listed above, I simply name with great gratitude Andrew Angel, John Barclay, Michael Bird, Markus Bockmuehl, Richard Burrige, Martin de Boer, Michael Gorman, Scott Hafemann, Richard Hays, Simon Kingston, Christopher Kirwan, Michael Lloyd, Bruce Longenecker, Grant Macaskill, Gordon McConville, Scot McKnight, Carey Newman (who wanted me to miss bits out, but also to add bits in), Oliver O'Donovan, William Pugh, John Richardson, Peter Rodgers (who nudged me into writing chapter 4), Kavin Rowe, Philip Seddon, David Seemuth, Elizabeth Shively, David Starling, Katie Thomas, Bill Tooman, Alan Torrance, Brian Walsh, Francis Watson, Sean Winter and Julian Wright (who suggested a new way of approaching chapter 16). It is extraordinary for a scholar in his sixties to include two of his undergraduate tutors in such a list, and I am especially grateful to Christopher Kirwan and John Richardson for picking up once more, for a brief moment, a tutorial relationship broken off in 1971. (That reminds me to pay homage to my two Pauline teachers, George Caird and Charlie Moule. George died long before the present series was even dreamed of. Charlie read the first

¹² Barclay 1996, 15 n. 6 faces the same problem and makes the generous decision to use 'God' for all deities, 'since it customarily conveys respect for the beliefs and practices of the relevant worshippers'. Longenecker 2010, 14f. goes the other way, referring to 'Israel's deity' alongside other ancient deities.

¹³ The reasons he gave up that name have been interestingly explored by Leary 1992. It is possible that Paul echoes the distant memory of King Saul, like him from the tribe of Benjamin, in Rom. 11.1f. (see p. 1223).

three volumes with his customary sharp-eyed care, and his handwritten letters, stuffed into my working copies, are treasures. Alas, this volume will not be similarly graced.) I am particularly grateful to the graduate students at St Mary's College, St Andrews, who in early 2013 ploughed through large portions of Part III and emerged not only with a fistful of misprints but also with insightful comments and challenging questions. Special thanks to Ernest Clark, Andrew Cowan, John Dunne (who also gave important help at proof stage), John Frederick, Haley Goranson, Christoph Heilig, Keith Jagger, Janghoon Park and Norio Yagamuchi. Thanks are due, in a different category, to my friend Stuart Lyons CBE, who in addition to combining a stellar industrial career with innovatory scholarship on Horace (reflected fleetingly in chapter 5 below), has been one of the most profound and searching 'lay' readers of the previous books in this series and will, I hope, enjoy the present one as well.

I continue to be grateful to Kevin Bush, who has run 'my' website (www.ntwrightpage.com) for several years now and has thereby earned the appreciation of many whom I know neither by name nor by sight. During the many years of planning and writing this book I have been helped by a splendid string of research assistants whose tireless energy and cheerful support has been a real encouragement as well as a great practical boon. I am delighted still to be in touch with them all and hope they enjoy the fruit of the labours in which they have all had some share. Nick Perrin was with me in Westminster; Archie Wright and Ben Blackwell in Durham; Chad Marshall in Princeton; and now, here in St Mary's, Jamie Davies has borne the burden and heat of the final years. Warm thanks to them all.

As with *Jesus and the Victory of God*, there is a sense in which I have been writing this book most of my life.¹⁴ There is a clear genealogical line both from my first article on Paul, published in the 1978 *Tyndale Bulletin*, and from my doctoral dissertation, completed in 1980, to several strands in the present book. However, there has of course been enormous change, growth, development and transformation as well. Had I written this book in the 1980s, as I dearly longed to do, it would have been very different. Most of what I now think most important I had scarcely begun to glimpse. I hope now that the long delay, and the preparatory work in other books and articles, will help to create a solid platform on which this work may stand. I am glad that, as a companion volume to this work, more or less all my Pauline articles (other than those in *The Climax of the Covenant* [Edinburgh and Minneapolis: T.&T. Clark and Fortress Press, 1991/1992]) are being made available under the title *Pauline Perspectives*, itself a nod of homage towards one of the greatest German scholars of the last generation, Ernst Käsemann.

Five more much-felt thanksgivings. First, to the publishers. Philip Law at SPCK commissioned this series nearly a quarter of a century ago. I do not think that either of us expected we would still be working on it so much

¹⁴ cf. *JVG* xiv.

later, but he has remained a source of cheerful encouragement and shrewd advice. Simon Kingston and Joanna Moriarty have been a great support and encouragement as always. Their staff editors (especially Duncan Burns), proofreaders (Mollie Barker, Joanne Hill), publicists and sales team (especially Alan Mordue) have given me nothing but the best of help and enthusiasm. In the USA, I have been delighted to get to know Will Bergkamp and the new team at Fortress Press. They, too, cannot have anticipated this time-lag, but they have been cheerful and co-operative in working within the limits of the possible. Once again I am grateful to Steven Siebert and his co-workers at *Nota Bene* for help and advice in using their remarkable software to generate the actual pages. Their software is second to none, as many have testified. But Steve himself has gone further. He has been generous to a fault with his time and expert help. His friendship and support have been an essential element in the production of this book.

Second, to colleagues. The serious writing of this book began when I was on sabbatical at Princeton in the autumn of 2009. I am more grateful than I can say to my dear friend and colleague the Right Reverend Mark Bryant, Bishop of Jarrow, who looked after the Diocese of Durham in my absence, with neither of us imagining that he would be doing it again a year later after I had left for St Andrews (in order to write this book!). Certainly neither of us supposed for a minute that he would have to do it yet again after my short-lived successor was scooped up to become Archbishop of Canterbury. My thanks to him, to the Archdeacons, to my staff and all who supported me through that time of extended leave. And my gratitude, too, to Dr William Storrar and his colleagues and the Trustees at the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton, where I spent a happy and productive four months re-acquainting myself with the world of Pauline scholarship. It was a life-transforming time. The breathing space after years of intense work in church and state; the wonderful Library of Princeton Theological Seminary literally next door; the fellowship and companionship of the other residents during that time – all this made for a rich and memorable experience. Then, to my surprise and delight, I have been welcomed warmly at St Mary's College, St Andrews, where my shrivelled academic heart has recovered a measure of greenness, and where the support of colleagues, led from the front by the Dean, Professor Ivor Davidson, has created an atmosphere of happy and collaborative work. This has been a major and wholly unexpected move for me and my family, and as I write this looking out across the Firth of Forth I have nothing but gratitude.

Mention of family brings me to the third and greatest thanksgiving. My children and grandchildren have put up with my writing habits all their lives and have remained encouraging and supportive. Maggie has been her usual magnificent self, never allowing me to think my work was more important than it actually was, but always nudging me to get on and get it done. She has carried the heavy end of several logs, and taken a good deal of the flak that comes with the strange vocation I have pursued. I am grateful to them, and particularly to her, more than I can say, for the balance of love, fun, challenge and delight which they provide.

Those who skim through this book may be surprised at one particular feature. Micheal O'Siadhail, whose poetry (and friendship) I have enjoyed for many years, emailed me early in my time in Princeton. I had been thinking that I needed something – a poem, or even a picture – to stand in the middle of the book, in the blank space between Parts II and III. On a whim, I asked Micheal for suggestions. Within minutes he sent me back not one poem, but three, from his then forthcoming collection *Tongues*.¹⁵ These extraordinary poems explore the inner meanings within Japanese characters, and the way the characters combine to produce further meaning. Micheal did not know that actually the book had four parts, and that the three poems he sent, individually and in sequence, would fit so exactly into the three inter-Part spaces. (When the volume became two books, we decided to print the middle poem twice, at the end of the first book and the beginning of the second; ideally it ought to sit right in between the two books.) Nor did he know, sending me poems about three birds on a tree, now collected into one, that I had been thinking about ways in which to link Paul together with his three worlds, Jewish, Greek and Roman. Nor did he know, with that first poem about the bird and the chestnut tree, that moments before his email arrived the large red hawk that lived by the Princeton Seminary library had flown over to the chestnut tree outside my window and had stared in at me, eyeball to eyeball, for a full minute. There was no choice. I celebrate a great gift from a great artist, and am privileged to give his three birds fresh lodging in this unexpected tree.¹⁶

One of my greatest debts is reflected in the dedication. Richard Hays and I first met in November 1983 at the SBL conference in Dallas, where he presented a paper on Romans 4.1 and I offered one on Adam in Pauline theology.¹⁷ Within minutes of the conclusion of his paper we were sitting at a table with Greek Testaments open and Texas-sized gins and tonic to hand. Thus it has been, through the twists and turns of life and scholarship, with many times of family relaxation and many of gritty textual debate. We do not, of course, always agree. But even when I have taken a very different line from his (I think, for instance, of his description of Paul's exegesis of Deuteronomy in Romans 10 as 'outrageous'¹⁸) I do not think I would have got there without his unlocking the rusty gate that was blocking the way. To change the picture, if I have sometimes explored dark paths which have led to places where he has not been, it is partly because he lent me his torch in the first place. We are very different in other ways. I have written lots of books, like someone trying to shoot rabbits in the dark, blasting away with a shotgun in the hope of the occasional hit. Richard has paused, pondered, and

¹⁵ O'Siadhail 2010, 144–6.

¹⁶ I am grateful to my nephew the Revd Robert Crofton, ornithologist *extraordinaire*, for helping me to identify my unexpected visitor.

¹⁷ See Hays 1985 (now reprinted in Hays 2005, 61–84). My 'Adam' piece, originally published in the 1983 *SBL Seminar Papers* (ed. K. H. Richards), 359–89, was revised and expanded for Wright 1991 [*Climax*], ch. 2.

¹⁸ Hays 1989a, 82.

written masterpieces that have changed the whole discussion. I see this book as a kind of semi-colon after thirty years of Pauline conversation, and hope that the rest of the sentence will be as stimulating and fruitful.

I said that I had been working on this book most of my life. There was a hiatus: I did not think much about Paul between the ages of five and fifteen. But he was my point of entry. I have written elsewhere about my first experience of the Bible.¹⁹ It was 2 June 1953: my mother's birthday, and the Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth II. My parents gave my sister and me each a Coronation Bible (King James, of course). Mine was, like me at the time, small and chunky. My sister and I retreated to our bedroom, sat on the floor, and leafed through this extraordinary object. I had after all only just learned to read, and was not quite ready for Romans. But we came upon the letter to Philemon: a single page, with something like a real story. We read it together. That is where I began. And that is one of the reasons, though not the only one, for beginning this book where I do. The Queen is still on the throne; my mother is celebrating another significant birthday; and Philemon is still a good place to start.

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¹⁹ See *Perspectives*, 407f.

And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th'upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support,
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1.17–26

θεός, ἀληθινὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ
καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ κρίσεις·
θεός πιστός, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀδικία,
δίκαιος καὶ ὁσιος κύριος.

Deuteronomy 32.4 LXX

... St Paul is often criticized
By modern people, who're annoyed
At his conversion, saying Freud
Explains it all. But they omit
The really vital part of it:
Which isn't how it was achieved
But what it was that Paul believed ...

Betjeman 1982, 68 (italics added)

Our beloved brother Paul, writing in all his letters according to the wisdom given to him
... in which are some things hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to
their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

2 Peter 3.15–16