N.T. WRIGHT’S
PAULINE ODYSSEY


It is commonly believed that Martin Luther (1483-1546) declared Justification to be the "article upon which the church stands or falls" - articulus stantis †vel cadentis ecclesiae. Although the statement's provenance is disputed,1 quite a number of persons today disbelieve "Luther's" assertion, no longer believing it is binding for all protestant sects of Christendom. Theoretically it needs to be redefined for a new age of believers who are unaware of, and not subject to, medieval mindsets. In these days, uncooperative arguments of Orthodox Christians, Protestants and Roman Catholics seem old fashioned to not a few people. The volume under review is a collection of learned essays which in some measure have prompted another revival of the study of "Luther's" vital claim.

For over 3 decades N.T. Wright (=W) has distinguished himself as a New Testament scholar. Productive and creative, he is a vivid writer, argues vigorously, and sees himself as one on a mission: similar to Odysseus, of Homer's adventure tale, the Odyssey, W desires to return [home] ad fontes, to the sources.² His New Perspective on Paul has all the beauty of Calypso's Isle. It is attractive, remote and enthralling; it is harder still to escape. Fleeing this diversion is no easy task for those who maintain that the ship which sails homeward must take a different route if it is to arrive safely.

W's Essays is a well produced publication. Luxuriating over 600 pages, it is a book, whose primary concern is the descriptive character of perspectives on Paul, i.e., he proffers an inventive, contextual definition of justification, and the consequences of that meaning for reflecting on Paul's writings during the post-Augustan Principate phase of the Roman Empire. W seeks to untie justification from the traditional meanings ascribed to it later by some Patristic writers, by most Renaissance-age Reformers and by their heirs. What any of the earliest Apostolic Fathers stated on this subject goes unrecorded; the starting point for W is the work done by certain scholars of the previous century: e.g., cf. W's Paul and his Recent Interpreters (Fortress, 2015) or The Paul Debate: Critical Questions for Understanding the Apostle (Baylor, 2015). This is an eclectic affiliation of scholars of similar thought. To mention no more than three whose work is well-regarded: E.P. Sanders' contributions are often cited (e.g., p.238). In Paul and Palestinian Judaism (SCM, 1977) Sanders argued that the Old Testament, in essence, was a covenant of grace very much like the New Covenant, that ancient Jews were not works-oriented, but they served God on account of their love for him.³

Likewise J.D.G. Dunn's approach, cf. The New Perspective on Paul, (rev. ed., Eerdmans, 2005) treats the Jews in a less polemical way: believing the Law/Gospel anti-thesis, so firmly established by the Protestant Reformers, to be overwrought, to be no more than a basic reaction instigated by their preoccupations with Roman Catholic dogma. R. Bultmann's (1884-1976) scholarship, too, is esteemed in various degrees: he was heralded by many persons to be the best New Testament scholar of his era. One of his better known works is his 2 volume Theology of the New

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1 It is attributed to Luther by Francis Turretin (1623-1687) in Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, cf. 'Locus XVI.1 De Justificatione', (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), in which he states: 'Luthero dictur Articulus stantis, et cadentis Ecclesiae'. For a concise synopsis of scholarly opinions that are opposed to its ascription to Luther, see Sun-young Kim, Luther on Faith and Love: Christ and Law in the 1535 Galatians Commentary (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2014), p.11, fn.21.

2 In the essay 'The Shape of Justification' Wright stated he believed his work in restoring the Pauline meaning of justification to be an exact parallel of Martin Luther's efforts during the Reformation when he redefined the meaning of 'metanoia'. It appears that Luther's labors moved the church away from the Catholic idea 'do penance' to the Protestant sense of 'repent', p.220.

3 Sanders' claims did not go unnoticed, and his main theses were ably rebutted in a review by G.B. Caird (1917-1984) in The Journal of Theological Studies, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Oct. 1978), pp.538-543.
Testament (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-1955). Bultmann's foundational theories regarding "demythologizing" collapsed long ago. There may remain some who roam the deteriorated ruins looking for something of substance; but it cannot be reassembled. Those capable of knowing, now recognize, though Bultmann's scheme was derived from his study of biblical texts, his was never a truly Christian model: at least not one which would have been known by followers of the earliest Apostolic Fathers.

Description of volume


**Part IV: St Andrews:** (28) Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body: All for One and One for All - Reflections on Paul's Anthropology in His Complex Contexts (2011); (29) Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship (2012); (30) Romans 2.17-3.9: A Hidden Clue to the Meaning of Romans? (2012); (31) Messiahship in Galatians (2012); (32) Israel’s Scriptures in Paul’s Narrative Theology (2012) and (33) Paul and Patriarch: The Role(s) of Abraham in Galatians and Romans (2013). The volume concludes with a 14 page bibliography and several indices.

I. For anyone interested in how one man set out to defend the truth against what he perceives to be the modern myths of traditionalists, or in how he sought to overthrow the traditional

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4 This procedure of exegesis depreciates the supernatural elements recorded in the New Testament, regarding them as spurious. Bultmann, in his famous lecture Neues Testament und Mythologie, given April 21, 1941, deplored miracles. In elucidating his thought, Bultmann's biographer wrote "Since the mythological world has become obsolete for people of today, they find the mythological language incredible, and both their empirical worldview and self-understanding preclude them from holding onto the mythological ideas of the New Testament. Among the motifs that Bultmann brusquely declares to be "finished" are the ascension of Christ to heaven, belief in spirits and demons, miracles as actual happenings, the mythical eschatology, the idea of a supernatural agency of the Spirit and the sacraments, the conception of death as punishment for sin, the doctrine of satisfaction, and the understanding of the resurrection as a physical occurrence. To the degree that any of these involve miracles, Bultmann sums up his conclusion thus: "We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means, and at the same time believe in the New Testament's world of spirits and wonders", see Konrad Hammann, Rudolf Bultmann: A Biography (Salem: Polebridge Press, 2013), pp.325-326.

5 The assured results of the reconstructive efforts of New Perspective scholars in modern times are not visible in Christian commentaries derived from Late Antiquity. Patristic scholars have yet to turn up any credible proof in Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic or Arabic annotations which resembles current critical Pauline models.

6 I shall refer to each essay by its number throughout this review, e.g., #19.
forms of reason used by New Testament scholars, this book will be of use. Ws’ collection of papers is all-inclusive in some respects, and over the decades he has narrowly focused on select aspects of the interpretation of Pauline thought in Romans and Galatians. His elongated titles are ambitious. The table of contents bears witness to his achievement. By the end of Part II the nucleus of his interests is unmistakable. Much of his writing has been reviewed elsewhere. This review will explore his approach to justification, to his modified views on the form ancient Judaism took in Jesus’ day, and to the specific, political overtones of Paul’s epistles. Below are placed several extended statements by W on what are perceivably his principal positions. To begin with, an idea of the manner in which “justification” has been commonly regarded in Protestant Christendom must be given.

Of justification, Geddes MacGregor (1909-1998) wrote:

A theological term of great importance in the history of Christian thought and the subject of much controversy, especially in the context of Reformation theology. The English word comes from the Latin *justicia* (plainly *justus facere*, “to make righteous”). Many theologians, however, following Luther at this point, note that the Latin is unwarranted by the original Greek *dikeiōsis*, used much by Paul. They contend that it need not have the connotation the Latin form gives it and can signify, rather the divine act of *attributing* righteousness to a sinner on the ground of his or her faith in Christ, so that the individual is *declared* rather than made righteous. See Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy (1989).

W would agree with the first three lines, even the etymology is no hindrance. However, the way justification was understood prior to and subsequent to the Reformation is the crux of the matter. He believes Paul has been wrongly construed. He proposes to correct the traditionalists by stating (p.22):

"In the lawcourt, justification is the judges’ verdict in favour of one party or the other (cases in Jewish law were simply between accuser and accused, there being no Director of Public Prosecutions). The basic meaning of the term is therefore not forgiveness: a favourable verdict implies that justice, not (at this stage) mercy, is being carried out. Nor is ‘acquittal’ quite strong enough: justification has a positive sense, indicating not merely absence of guilt but a positive standing in the right. This status is termed ‘righteousness,’ which in this context does not refer primarily to the character or morals of the person concerned, but simply to his status in the court on the basis of the judge’s declaration. Justification is the judge’s verdict that someone is in the right. Righteousness is the status before the court which results from that declaration."

7 Of larger tomes on the market, the standard, but older, reference volume on justification still is The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of its History in the Church and of Its exposition from Scripture (T & T Clark, 1867) by J. Buchanan; a recent volume, which maintains the traditional view, is J.V. Fesko’s, Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine (P & R, Publishing, 2008).

8 According to W, Abraham, too, is misunderstood by church historians and theologians. The popular misconstruing of Abraham’s justification-by-God is illustrated by W on pp.564-565 where he contrasts his own views with those of traditionalists.

9 W’s view is largely a popular description of justification. For a more academic statement one could turn to W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, The International Critical Commentary (5th ed., T & T Clark, 1902), pp.28-30. Although dated it remains unsurpassed: “*dikaios*, *dikaiōmen*.” In considering the meaning and application of these terms it is important to place ourselves at the right point of view - at the right point of view, that is, of St. Paul himself, a Jew of the Jews, and not either Greek or mediaeval or modern. Two main facts have to be borne in mind in regard to the history of the words *dikaios* and *dikaiōmen*.

The first is that although there was a sense in which the Greek words covered the whole range of right action (Eth. Nic. V. 1. 15 *dikaiōmen = ἔπεμψα ἑαυτῷ* with the single qualification that it is ἐπὶ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ, the duty to one’s neighbor), yet in practice it was far more commonly used in the narrower sense of Justice (distributive or corrective *ibid. 21ff.)*. The Platonic designation of *dikaiosyne* as one of the four cardinal virtues (Wisdom, Temperance, and Courage or Fortitude, being the others) had a decisive and lasting influence on the whole subsequent history of the word in the usage of Greek philosophy, and of all moral systems which have their roots in that fertile soil. In giving a more limited scope to the word Plato was only following the genius of his people. The real standard of Greek morals was rather *τὸ καλόν* - that which was morally noble, impressive, admirable - than *τὸ δίκαιον*. And if there was the tendency to throw the larger sense of *dikaiosyne* into the background in Greek morals, that tendency was still more intensified when the scene was changed from Greece to Rome. The Latin language had no equivalent at all for the wider meaning of *dikaiosyne*. It had to fall back upon *justitia*, which in Christian circles indeed could not help being affected by the dominant use of the Bible, but which could never wholly throw off the limiting conditions of its origin. This is the second fact of great and outstanding significance. We have to remember that the Middle Ages derived one half of its list of virtues through Cicero from the Stoics and Plato, and that the four Pagan virtues were still further thrown into the shade by the Christian triad. Happily for ourselves we have in English two distinct words for the two distinct conceptions, ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’. And so especially from the time of the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, the conception ‘righteousness’ has gone far to recover its central importance. The same may perhaps be said of the Teutonic nations generally, through the strength of the Biblical influence, though the German branch has but the single word *Gerechtigkeit* to express the two ideas. With them it is probably true that the wider sense takes precedence of the narrower. But at the time when St. Paul wrote the Jew stood alone in maintaining the larger sense of the word full and undiminished.”
The corollary of that claim is found in the next sentence:

"In theology, therefore, justification is not the means whereby it becomes possible to declare someone in the right. It is simply that declaration itself. It is not how someone becomes a Christian, but simply the declaration that someone is a Christian".

W is a man of independent judgment; the word "simply" (or a locution denoting similar sense) is encountered often in the above quotes. The simplicity easily is erased by the hundreds of pages he utilizes to explain this uncomplicated expression. For W justification is distinct from pardon (cf., essay #18, pp.285-289); but the effects of the former on one's moral standing or righteousness are minuscule, being (to use his word) "simply" a declarative act.10 It is more than a declaration. Just as Jehovah/Yahweh said 'Let there be light' and illumination resulted, the declared-righteous verdict is in direct correspondence to the in-wrought righteousness or right relationship affected. It must be performative. Otherwise the declared status is unreal. There is little that is simple about the process of finding a guilty party innocent when he or she is plagued by culpability, especially if a lawcourt is in possession of reliable evidence against the one indicted. The evidences must be set aside in order for pardon to have its full effect. To speak forensically, if individual justification means anything it denotes a precise form of exoneration or 'justified enrichment', whereby the beneficiary's condition or status is improved via the performance of another. W sees it otherwise, reiterating on page 215:

"Justification "is the recognition and declaration by God that those who are thus called and believing are in fact his people, the single family promised to Abraham, that as the new covenant people their sins are forgiven, and that since they have already died and been raised with Messiah they are assured of final bodily resurrection at the last" (cf. essay #13).

Certainly that is a new approach to Paul. In W's New Perspective paradigm, the news of Jesus' substitutionary, penal sacrifice is disregarded11 (cf., p.366ff). Ostensibly that kind of sacrifice is a bad idea in scholarly discussion, an unacceptable ideal for academics. But the Christo-Redemptive model of scripture propounds the Gospel (of justification) in this manner: 'that an individual is a sinner, upon whom God looked with benevolent love, subsequently sending and sacrificing His own son: with the eternal intent that in the place of the sinner Jesus would live the life that he or she should have lived in obedience to the Old Testament Law, and die the death he or she should have died as punishment for one's failure to obey. Thereby, rendering to the sinner, by imputation, His righteousness so that one now may be reckoned a child of God and no longer an alien to His promises; but that growth in grace, and rejoicing in the same, would continue on the basis of Christ's intercession, which sustains the believer in the advancement of his or her spiritual life.' This entire scheme is muted in W's advocacy of a 'new-look' reading of justification (p.215) for New Perspectivalists.

II. Moreover W is careful in a post-Holocaust world to avoid any promotion of anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic themes. In recent years (cf., essay #29, written in 2012) he wrote:

"...Whereas one of the major features of earlier German scholarship had been the attempt to rescue Paul from Judaism (anything too Jewish, or 'covenantal', in his writings was seen as a pre-Pauline formula or a mere response to opponents), a major recent feature has been the enthusiastic attempt to place Paul once again in his Jewish world. This reflects a further contemporary element: a horrified reaction to the Holocaust, and to anything reminiscent of the ideologies that led to it. Nobody wants to be anti-Jewish, still less anti-Semitic. This has generated its own distorting and moralizing rhetoric" (p.475).

10 In his description of how the believer's redemption is described in terms of experience, Princeton theologian Otto Piper (1891-1982) wrote, "the idea of transformation as understood by Paul implies a radical change. Paul does not think of the kind of change Ovid describes in his *Metamorphoses*, where things merely change their appearance while they retain their nature". See 'The Transforming Power of the Gospel' in *Theology Today*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Jan. 1956), pp.436-450.

11 Presumably, this may explain in part his 2011 statement made in #28, p.456: "I'm afraid I do regard the traditional Christian preaching about everyone having a 'soul' which needs 'saving' as now almost hopelessly misleading."
Corroboration for the argument in the final line is needed. A sweeping statement is given as a
description of "earlier German scholarship." No
dates for "earlier" are given. Equally cogent
views contrary to his claims would not be hard to
produce. A few of the works of Adolph Schlatter
(1852-1938) come to mind. One must assume he
aims at e.g., W. Wrede (1859-1906) who consid-
ered Paul the true originator of the earliest form
of Christianity. Maybe F.C. Baur (1792-1860) too
is a main target. But Baur's chapters on negative
and positive aspects of "The Doctrine of
Justification, (1845) resemble various concep-
tions of Pauline scholarship informed by tradition-
alisors today (cf. vol.2, Paul the Apostle of Jesus
Christ); these are models which W vociferously
attacks.

W's hypothesis of the archetypal Judaism of
Paul's day is less traditional. To re-orient
Christians to a better and proper view of ancient
Judaism he offers this revisionary scheme:

"One of the central points in the view I propose is
that Paul regarded the historical people of Abraham
as God's answer to the problem of the sin of Adam.
He would have agreed in principle with the Rabbi
who put into God's mouth the words 'I will make
Adam first: if he goes wrong Abraham will come to
restore everything again.' Romans 4 and Galatians 3
are best explained not as arbitrary proofs of justifica-
tion by faith, but as an exposition of the true nature
of Abraham's faith and his family. Paul, in other
words, read Genesis 12ff. as the sequel to Genesis 1-
11. Where Paul differs from Jewish understanding,
however, is in the next step of the argument:
Abraham's people intended as a light to the world,
provided only darkness. Israel, as Psalm 8 implies,
were meant to be God's new humanity, taking Adam's
place under God in obedience and over the world in
authority, but Israel failed in this task. Their failure
whose nature I shall come to in a moment - meant
both that the task had to be undertaken by their rep-
resentative, alone, and also that they would them-
selves need saving. By acting out on a grand scale
the sin of Adam, Israel not only could not redeem the
world, but also needed redeeming herself" (p.6).

Again, the corollary of the above claims is found
in the following:

"If we ask how it is that Israel missed her vocation,
Paul's answer is that she is guilty not of 'legalism; or
'works-righteousness' but of what I call 'national
righteousness,' the belief that fleshly Jewish descent
guarantees membership of God's true covenant peo-
ples" (ibid).

The above summary is a measured account,
derived from deep reflection. W has assumed
that ancient Judaism has been downgraded by
New Testament academics because of the explic-
it biases of commentators unfamiliar with the
varied classes of Jews of Second Temple period
Judaism, but he seems to be unaware that he has
erred in another direction. If a privately held
belief in 'national righteousness' leads one to
conclude that he or she is exceptional, i.e.,
favored by God because of ethnic descent or as a
result that Israel failed in this task of obedience to
stipulations of a compact made between
redeemer and redeemed, then the effect of
adherence to such requirements denotes the
legal standing of the indentured and of each
devotee. Therefore individual compliance,
unless wholly actuated by God, still is a form of
self-effort. The case for reinterpreting the
scheme as one of 'national righteousness' is
equivocal, and is no less offensive or off-putting
than is the verdict rendered by Paul in Romans
10:3. W's construal dissolves on scrutiny.

III. W's other area of modest, scholarly contribu-
tion revolves around the belief that Pauline epis-
tles display strong political overtones. He states
that "Paul's proclamation clearly carried a politi-
cal message at its heart..." (p.189). He seems to
agree with the theses put forward in Richard
Horsley's publication Paul and Empire: Religion
and Power in Roman Imperial Society (A&C Black,
1997)12. W writes:

12 Readers should be skeptical of the major claims made in Horsley's volume. The overemphasis of Imperial cult - exceptionally in essays #15,
#16 and #27 - as a controlling factor in the politics of ancient Roman Empire, and in the reactions of Paul in his literary projects is mislead-
ing. This idea was undermined through the publication of Rome and Religion: a Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult, (2011) Jeffrey
Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed (ed.) Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. But opinions are divided. For a compelling and expert analysis (from
the point of view of a classicist) of current conclusions of New Testament Scholars on this point, see Karl Galinsky's opening article "The Cult
of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?", p.5, where he says: "In short, it is an overstatement to label the cult of the emperor as "the dom-
inant cult in a large part of the empire." J.M.G. Barclay, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, stood strongly against Wright's views in their debate
on November 18 2007 in the Society of Biblical Literature session on Pauline Theology.
One thesis of this important book stands out starkly in my mind… The evidence now available, including that from epigraphy and archaeology appears to show that the cult of Caesar, so far from being one new religion among many in the Roman world, had already by the time of Paul's missionary activity become not only the dominant cult in a large part of the empire, certainly in parts where Paul was active, but was actually the means (as opposed to overt large-scale military presence) by means of which the Romans managed to control and govern such huge areas as came under their sway” (p.170).

As evidence of Paul's political stance in his literary projects, he offers a new reading, entitled, 'Paul's Coded Challenge to Empire: Philippians 3,' in which section W argues:

"The solution I propose is that Paul, for neither the first time nor the last time, has Judaism and paganism, particularly, in this case, the Caesar-cult, simultaneously in mind, and is here using warnings against the former as a code for warnings against the latter. Paul's main concern here is not to warn Philippians against Judaism or an anti-Pauline Jewish-Christian mission. We have, after all, no hard evidence that this danger threatened the churches in Greece as it had those in Asia. His concern is to warn them against the Caesar-cult and the entire panoply of pagan empire. But his method of warning them, and of encouraging them to take a stand for the counter-empire of Jesus, is given for the most part in code. He tells them his own story, the story of how he had abandoned his status and privileges in order to find the true status and privilege of one in Christ, and he encourages them to imitate him. Read this way, the chapter gains both in coherence and in subtlety" (p.182).

And the effect of all the above terminates in this way:

"God has unveiled in Jesus his true kingdom, his true empire. It stands to all other empires, Caesar's included, somewhat as true covenant membership stands to Judaism which remains opposed to the Gospel message of the Messiah… when the gospel of Jesus is unveiled it reveals the true empire, the true citizenship, and in that light all the pretensions of empire, not least the arrogant and blasphemous claims of the emperor himself, are shown up, just as those who pride themselves on their circumcision are shown up as being 'the mutilation'” (p.186f.).

W is a master of invention. He collects many kinds of analogues. Symbolism, however, as an instrument of exegesis, is not wielded to the best of his abilities. One receives the distinct impression that his notions display inadequate critical power. His sentences certainly are convoluted; the arguments above are not well produced, often resembling Karl Barth's (1886-1968) dialectic style, which affirms certain ideas and at the same time contradicts those same ideas, all the while sounding critical but yet being altogether illogical. For example, the following sentences are a creation of mine but are reminiscent of statements made by K. Barth: 'I believe the resurrection of Jesus to be a proven, historical fact. However, historical events are not confirmable by innate powers, or by the senses; even more, the technical equipment available to scholars, although scientific, cannot confirm the verity of Christ's resurrection.'

So many political angles supposedly have gone unnoticed in Paul's epistles that one has to wonder how Paul's alleged intent could have been overlooked not only by the earliest Apostolic Church Fathers, but also by writers of early Christian apocryphal literature. Jesus was handed over to Roman authorities by Jewish leaders and crucified because of Roman distrust of a misunderstood claim to royal power. Later, Christians were persecuted because of a stern allegiance to the resurrected Christ, their sole King. As the slow progression of conversion to

13 See K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (6th ed., London: Oxford University Press, 1963), trans., E.C. Hoskyns, in which one finds these observations by Barth on Jesus' resurrection (p.30): "In the Resurrection the new world of the holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it. And, precisely because it does not touch it, it touches it as its frontier - as the new world. The resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as it there 'came to pass', was discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not the 'coming to pass', or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all." For two recent, positive analyses of Karl Barth's efforts as a theologian, see Clifford B. Anderson and Bruce L. McCormack, Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); and Clifford B. Anderson and Bruce L. McCormack, Karl Barth and the Making of Evangelical Theology: A Fifty Year Perspective, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

14 These modern efforts, of the sort reproduced by Wright, resemble failed attempts by scholars who decades ago ascribed political propaganda to texts of the Rhetorica ad Herennium. Cf. A.E. Douglas, Clausulae in the Rhetorica ad Herennium as Evidence of Its Date, Classical Quarterly (1960), pp.65-78.
Christ occurred throughout the later Roman Empire, how is it that Roman authorities were unable to discern such political intent in Paul's writings if it really existed? There were very skilled interpreters laboring in the empire. The empire was protected by a fierce and formidable security apparatus. Roman leadership was not indifferent towards literature or speech it deemed threatening and subversive. When it was discovered that oracles in Eastern provinces were foretelling the collapse of the empire, terms such as aeternitas and ubs aeterna were utilized to forestall the intrusion of dissident remarks in discussions of Rome's mastery of nations. Historically, Roman response to malevolent behavior was swift. It is partly for this reason that Ovid (43BC-17AD), the composer of Ars Amatoria, was exiled to the city of Tomi on the Black Sea.

W's thesis of the existence of a 'Pauline code' is remarkable only because he and a cadre of (deceased and) contemporary fellows believe themselves to be the first to discover it, and seemingly to have become the only true Pauline code-breakers in the history of the church. Their originality does not prove their thesis; nor does it dispose of it, but such innovation should be subjected to evidentiary tests. There is a reason which accounts for why students of Paul and Peter in ancient times did not read Pauline texts in the fashion that is now being recommended. It is because no one of them perceived motive and intent of this kind in the letters he issued.

As for the strengths of The New Perspective, it is a movement that is characterized by several original theses. There is a desire to represent honestly Paul's original thoughts, and a desire to embody Second Temple Judaism beliefs in its correct form. This is commendable. Nonetheless, the new perspectives are revealed to be defective on close examination by the advocates' dismissive attitudes toward all earlier [non-new-perspectival] theological opinion. The Good News, as they understand it, has less to do with that of a theandric savior than with a heroic being, and with some supposed political ideas of Paul. The lexical innovations, themselves, are augmented by some pronounced weaknesses in Greek and Hebrew philology. The present age is not a happy time in this arena of Pauline studies. Modern scholarly discussions turn on agreements and disagreements; assertions which adjudge another's conclusions to be right or wrong are unwelcome. These papers manifest a dizzying array of inaccuracies and misleading data. There may be a way to redefine 'justification,' 'empire' and Christian 'citizenship' in the Kingdom of God. However, it is not realized through the means by which W performs his exegesis.

Some points of detail deserve to be considered.

1. Ancient Near East Themes: the "law-court" analogy regularly is cited with an indefinite sense (e.g., pp.22,114,217,286). It is not always clear to which law-court he is referring. Does he allude to an Athenian one (Cf., Victor Bers, Genos Dikanikon: Amateur and Professional Speech in the Courtrooms of Classical Athens. Hellenic Studies 33 (2008) or does he allude to an ancient Near Eastern one? One must read through several hundred pages, up to essay #21, before one learns the expanded details of the law-court language itself (p.333), that it is of Jewish orientation. In W's estimation, the Hebrew word mishpat may mean, not only a 'judgment' (i.e., verdict) against someone, but also a 'judgment in one's favor. Accordingly, it too can be a form of 'justification.' This new sense gives out false impressions. For a more coherent view of Jewish regulative principles,

15 For a brief sketch cf., H.S. Gehman's 1914 PH.D dissertation presented to the University of Pennsylvania, The Interpreters of Foreign Language among The Ancients: A Study Based on Greek and Latin Sources, pp.47-48. Furthermore, Paul requested that certain of his letters be read among nearby congregations (e.g., Col. 4:16). When they were read orally to congregants this gesture transformed them into community documents. Rome employed persons whose duty was to translate certain public documents into Latin for Roman officials stationed abroad; undoubtedly they would have heard of and taken notice of correspondences containing subversive elements.

16 If one has the stamina to read Wright's volume of more than 600 pages on Pauline Perspectives, one should also skim the 700 page book, The Writings of Saint Paul, edd., W.A. Meeks and J. Fitzgerald (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007). A multiplicity of viewpoints is offered; in the reviewer's opinion, the bulk of the commentators maintain opinions which are closer to the normative representation of Paul of scripture than the post-WW II, portrayals given by New Perspective adherents.

17 In fn.7 on p.334, W attempts to show the Abrahamic/Pauline-Qumranic connections in regard to 'attributive righteousness'. The dissociations are glaring and do not stand up to close scrutiny. He admits there may be no connection at all: "This introduces some necessary caution into the discussion of parallels. Even if MMT is in some ways parallel to Paul, it will not necessarily be the case that it states exactly the sort of thing Paul had believed before his conversion, or the sort of beliefs or practices his converts were being forced to accept" (p.336). Yet his inferences from the text of 4QMMT are the sort of beliefs he assumes contemporary Christendom should embrace.

In W's paper on 4QMMT, a translation by G. Vermes is provided of 1QS 11.2-3; 12; 13-15, in which mishpat is 3 times translated "justification". But neither of those passages are examples of Hebrew "Law-court" proceedings. The court-room analyses provided in the essay have no bearing on his case. How they possibly are connected to Pauline thought never materializes. The dispassionate term 'judgment' was/is apt in the Qumran texts cited on p.333. Since the speaker may not have been innocent-with a view toward his vindication, but actually guilty of trespass, it is best to read, "He will draw me near by His grace, and by his mercy will he bring my judgment". This restores in English idiom the balance of the Hebrew language.

More than a dozen times in these essays "covenant faithfulness" is proposed by W as the true meaning of the New Testament Greek words translated in English as 'righteousness [of God]' (δικαιοσύνη: e.g., pp.73,313), which is why the reviewer was stunned to take note of a brief memory lapse: see W's confession on p.430, "I was surprised to hear it said elsewhere...". Yet he loads that verb with data regarding the resultant actions of the verb's direct object [the Jews] which wander from main the point. The verb "entrust" in English and in Greek does not demarcate what the recipient is to do or will do upon the reception of a given object. Success or failure is not foreseeable in the verb. Even in its passive form "entrusted" [by God] does not reveal a specific futuristic action performed upon the Jews reception of the oracles.

On page 491, of Romans 3:3, he denies that the use of the word apistia/unbelief in this instance means 'Israel did not believe the oracles given to them', but that 'Israel was supposed to be faithful to the commission regarding the oracles that God had entrusted to her for someone else, but has failed in that trust.' So the Greek term is not about belief/unbelief at all, but it is about Israel's 'failure' (this argument is restated on p.585, fn.107). His meaning in English is clear; but the evidence is absent in the Greek form. His conclusions frequently are made ineffective by the fact that the Greek text makes nonsense of his English renderings. What emerges is startling: W seems to believe that a word is able to mean, semantically, whatever it is that he is able to describe [in context], whether or not it is lexically possible. W invents his own gist for various phrases, creates contexts out of whole cloth,
and of course this activity inspires the production of its own lexicon of redefined terms. Readers are besieged by these new word-classifications. These descriptions, although critical, are inexact and one is thankful they have not been entered in *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (2015).

iii. Miscellanea: So much of book is undocumented. W's antipathy toward traditional [Martin] Lutheran views of Justification and of Israel is ubiquitous; he prefers some aspects of Reformed views on such matters [i.e., John Calvin's views]. Never does he engage the writings of the plethora of Reformed writers with whom he says he disagrees: he seems unaware of the work done by e.g., Wilhem Pauck (1901-1982) or Heiko Oberman (1930-2000). One hopes that in future decades W is not neglected in the manner he disregards them. He contends that those of modern Reformed traditions hold to their own sectarian creeds with the fervor once used to deprecate the alleged servile beliefs then found in the medieval sect of the Roman branch of Catholicism.

Repeatedly he takes up texts, believed by most sects of Christendom to be of salvific import, only to state 'this is not a text about how one is to get saved' (cf.,p.558). However, in no place at all does he treat of, or speak candidly of, those passages he believes speak in that way. What someone may intuit, but which may not reflect W's inward belief, is that personal, emotive salvation is a fiction. Again, assertions are made without attestation: on p.179 he states that Paul's letter to the Romans was composed to confront the pagan goddess of Rome Iustitia - no evidence is cited. So, presumably, one may believe too that Galatians was written to oppose some ancient Hittite god or goddess.

Conclusion

W writes with enthusiasm. His narratives are captivating. There is something to ponder on every page. Few persons exhibit cleverness of this kind at this level and in this way. Through hundreds of pages readers must follow along, hoping to keep pace. It is as if they are taken by the hand of a mature guide in a dream, wandering through re-imagined worlds, only then to be awakened to reality if and when the Pauline Greek texts are thrust before their eyes. From an academic standpoint W's arguments are not always sophisticated. This set of collected papers was produced over a long a period of time, and has been extremely influential in modern Pauline scholarship, but by and large they remain utterly detached from a truly biblically-historical perspective. What does it mean for the future of biblical scholarship - and for Pauline scholars' handling of classical literatures - if this is the new road *ad fontes*? Things do not bode well. W is the writer of these essays: in the course of many years he has piloted readers through strong winds, over rough waters and into quite a lot of misadventures. It is to be hoped that the sea will be calmer in *Paul and The Faithfulness of God* (2013), his two-volume digest on Paul's theology.

DECONSTRUCTING MANILIUS' MOTIVE IN ASTRONOMICA


It is not surprising that a limited number of critical scholars, again, have turned their attention to the *Astronomica*. It is a poem of great merit. The anthem he sings would be lost to us if not for its composition; as a work of art judgments on it vary. Discrimination of its ideas certainly is needed. Astrology is the study of planets and their relation to human behavior. Horoscopy was not regarded as plain superstition millennia ago. This is indicated by the many texts on that subject which were written and preserved. Among select groups, individuals' futures were foretold; travel and career paths were planned in accordance with natal signs. In olden days

19 Although W considers his labor to resemble the efforts of Martin Luther, reviewers of Wright's work on justification generally have noted his refusal to cite or wrestle with the primary sources of that Reformer or with those of any of the Reformers. The veracity of their specific claims stands uncorrected. There is no need to reexamine it. Professional reviews in recent times are numerous, e.g., see Douglas Moo, Paul and Faithfulness of God in *The Gospel Coalition*, Nov. 2013; Tom Schriener's review, *Reformation21* (July 2014). For some other, recent, academic reviews of Wright's various positions, see [Journal for the Study of Paul and his Letters, 4.1, Spring 2014](http://journalforthesstudypaulandhisletters.westernchristian.edu/).