

# Introduction

“ALTHOUGH THEOLOGIANS HAVE WRITTEN about God the Father for centuries, the endeavor has been largely Christological, rather than a focus on the Father-God motif. Therefore there has been little apparent progress in understanding the concept, and by default it has assumed increasingly negative connotations.”<sup>1</sup> This study takes up Tasker’s challenge to keep this Christological perspective in balance with the Father-God motif that has its roots in OT and is prominent in the Second Temple period (hereafter 2TP). It argues that for Paul God is the Father who redeems. The OT imagery that shaped Israel’s conception of God’s interaction with them, and was a basis for God’s future restoration of the nation despite their unfaithfulness, is central to Paul’s explanation of the new salvific act of God the Father in Christ, the faithful and obedient Son.

1. Tasker, *Ancient*, 4. There is a problem with fatherhood language in relation to God because it interferes semantically with a human image of fatherhood that may have negative connotations. Although I acknowledge the problem, I do not focus on issues raised by feminist theologians, sociologists, psychologists, or anthropologists in relation to fatherhood language. I take the view that God the Father is a biblical term that renders divine reality rather than a secondary model that is created on the basis of negative human experience. I attempt to draw a biblical picture of God the Father gaining the theological content from the character of God and from the narrative identification of God who is involved with his people and wants to redeem them. See more on that below in “Statement of the Problem”.

## Background Assumptions

The initial data that includes the reasons for writing a letter or the actual social, cultural, and religious context of Paul's thought is helpful when studying Paul's teaching in Romans.<sup>2</sup>

It is commonly recognized that the letter was written by Paul in the middle to late 50s of the first century, from Corinth or somewhere nearby. Paul had never visited Rome despite his intentions to go to Jerusalem and thereafter to Rome and thence to Spain (1:8–15; 15:14–33).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, he claims to be their apostle as he is the apostle for all the Gentiles, and is eager to fulfill his responsibility in declaring the gospel of God's Son (1:1, 9, 15; cf. 1 Cor 10–13).

Paul wants understanding and appreciation of the message he proclaimed for the nations. He needs the support and backing of the Roman Christians in the venture of the mission of God to Jerusalem, to Spain and to Rome itself.<sup>4</sup> J. Crafton shows that this reflects Paul's "theological purpose in the epistle (namely the uniting of the nations in Jesus), which demonstrate[s] explicitly Paul's own function within the rhetorical world of the text, and which invite[s] participation by the Romans in that world."<sup>5</sup> Paul calls Roman Christians to participate in his vision—moreover in God's bigger vision—to bring all the nations into the obedience of faith that Paul gradually discloses in his letter.

The recipients of Paul's letter are identified by scholars as a community consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>6</sup> The Roman church was originally strongly Jewish in character and combined belief in Christ with an adherence to the Jewish law in whole or in part. This form of Christianity may have been espoused by some Gentiles who had already been in contact with the Jewish synagogues or some Jews who had been in frequent contact with Jews in Jerusalem and Palestine.

But other mostly Gentile Christians were dispensing with the need for obedience to the Jewish law as such. This group grew especially when the Jewish stream within the Roman church had been seriously weakened by Claudius' disciplinary measures against members of the

2. Wedderburn, *The Reasons*; Jewett, *Romans*, 1–91.

3. References to scripture without indication of the book will be to Romans.

4. Well presented by Jewett, *Romans*. See also Wedderburn, *The Reasons*, 22.

5. Crafton, "Paul's Rhetorical Vision," 326.

6. Wedderburn, *The Reasons*, 50; D. Moo, *Romans*, 9–13; Crafton, "Paul's Rhetorical Vision," 317–39; Jewett, *Romans*, 18–20, 58–59, 70–72.

Jewish community.<sup>7</sup> By the time Paul wrote, Claudius was dead and the Jews could freely move back into Rome. As a result, the Jewish tradition in the church would be increased again, bringing “further troubles in the form of friction between proponents of the Law-free gospel and their Jewish and Judaizing neighbours.”<sup>8</sup> The conflict situation in Rome is clearly seen in the discussion of the relations between the strong and the weak (14:1–15:7). Paul’s warnings to the Jews against taking pride in the possession of the law and circumcision (2:17–24; 3:27), and to the Gentiles against placing themselves above the Jews (11:17–21), as well as his admonitions to both parties not to think of themselves more highly than they ought (12:3), are evidence that these were problems among the Roman Christians.

At the same time Paul does not suggest that the Roman Christians deserve rebuke for any deficiency, for they are filled with all knowledge and are able to instruct each other (15:14; 16:17–20). Paul writes to those who are already saved and holy (1:1–15) but who are probably “being threatened by another salvific scheme, hence their assurance of salvation is being threatened”<sup>9</sup> in the sense of whether the followers of Christ still have to follow the Jewish practices (cf. 3:27–31).

Paul writes to both Jews and Gentiles to affirm and to clarify the roots of their belief and practice. His message is the gospel of God that was promised beforehand and is now revealed in Christ. What has happened in Christ that is so important for Paul and for his audience? God has sent his Son to deal with sin (8:3). Christ is raised by the glory of the Father (6:4). God’s righteousness has been revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (3:22).<sup>10</sup> Through Christ’s obedience many will become righteous (5:19). Paul shows that Christ’s obedience is crucial in fulfilling the promise of the Father, which is redemption<sup>11</sup> for the Jews and

7. Tobin, *Paul’s Rhetoric*, 17; Jewett, *Romans*, 18–20.

8. Wedderburn, *The Reasons*, 65; Jewett, *Romans*, 72; Crafton, “Paul’s Rhetorical Vision,” 322.

9. Campbell, *The Quest*, 205.

10. More on the faith of Christ in chapter 4.

11. Redemption has its background in the OT imagery of the exodus story. God’s redemption is the deliverance of the people of Israel so that they can be his possession, people, even more importantly, his family (Exod 4:22). More generally, it is divine deliverance from the bondage of slavery, suffering and affliction; it is God’s saving activity toward Israel. See chapter 2 below. Although the word ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption) itself appears a couple of times in Romans (3:24; 8:23), divine redemption as God’s deliverance in Christ is prominent in Paul. Redemption in Paul, as we shall see

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the Gentiles (3:21–26; 5:1–21). Christ is the fulfillment of the law (10:4). Paul wants to ensure that the Roman Christians continue following the gospel of God revealed in Christ and continue or join the mission of God, the one that Paul himself is on. Although Paul writes to the Romans, his message extends to all actual readers for they are part of God's eternal plan involving all the peoples of the earth, even all creation (8:1–27).

### Statement of the Problem

Paul's encounter with the risen Christ did not change his faith orientation but did precipitate a significant change in nuance in his understanding of God. Hays, Dunn, Grieb, Witherington III, and Wright<sup>12</sup> all argue that Jesus did not bring a new concept of God, "but he demonstrated in action the full extent of God's redemptive will for the world which was from the beginning."<sup>13</sup> In this light, "a hope depicted in the prophets as the return of the exiles to their home and as the return of the children of Israel to God as Father" has been realized in Christ.<sup>14</sup> But precisely because this hope has been realized in Christ, the apostle Paul unfolds it in reference to the renewal and restoration of Israel as children of God and to the inclusion of the Gentiles as a part of God's bigger purposes from the very beginning.

The first part of the claim is essential to the question of God's faithfulness or truthfulness to the promises given to Israel. The second part raises the question of God's character and relation to the whole world. The two questions are related. The starting point for both questions is God, his relation to and redemption of the Jews and the Gentiles in Christ and it shapes the direction of Paul's argument.

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in this research, is referred to in terms of deliverance from sins (6:18), justification and salvation through Christ's blood (5:9), reconciliation with God through Christ (5:11) as God's righteousness revealed through Christ (1:17; 3:21), and adoption into the family of God (8:14–17). See also Morris, "Redemption," 784–86; Schneider and Brown, "λύτρον," 189–223.

12. Hays, *Echoes*, xiii; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, lxxi–lxxii; Grieb, *The Story of Romans*, xxii–xxiii; Witherington III, *Paul's Narrative*, 81–85; Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," 397–405.

13. Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 358.

14. M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 18.

Paul assumes many axioms about God without expounding them but they nevertheless flow from the overall context of his beliefs.<sup>15</sup> One of these axioms is that God the Father who redeems Israel out of Egyptian and Babylonian captivity, and who promises to redeem and restore Israel in the future, is the One who acts in his Son Jesus Christ calling people from all the nations into obedience of faith.

Traditionally, scholars have recognized the father image as a central “doctrine of God’s nature and work” through Christ in the NT in general, and in Paul in particular.<sup>16</sup> In fact, it has become the dominant figure to describe God in his relationship to Jesus and to his followers. God the Father has been described from “the point of Christological confession” that begins with the NT and moves on from there without deep engagement with the whole of scripture.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it has been viewed as original, creative and wholly new.<sup>18</sup> However, the idea of God the Father that is rooted in the OT and prominent in the 2TP, has received insufficient attention<sup>19</sup> and consequently is “in danger of being eclipsed without . . . the hope of the final realization of the promises of God made to Israel and guaranteed in Israel’s Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, the concept of God’s fatherhood is “not just another idea peripheral to the central core of biblical teaching and needs to be recognized as such.”<sup>21</sup>

M. Thompson offers a careful study of the meaning of the fatherhood of God in the biblical narratives. She emphasizes the concept of God’s fatherhood not as new or original in the NT but as a concept that evokes Israel’s ancient and corporate hope of God’s saving power and covenant faithfulness.<sup>22</sup> The idea of God’s fatherhood in the OT illuminated by the role of the father in Israelite society has three distinctive

15. Dunn, *The Theology*, 28–29.

16. Machen, *The Origin*, 162–64; Hamerton-Kelly, *God the Father*, 82ff. He reaffirms his position in the later article “God the Father,” 101; Jeremias, *Prayers*. Also, Barr, “Abba,” 28–47. However, no systematic work has been offered on God’s fatherhood in Paul, especially in Romans.

17. M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 157.

18. Lidgett, *The Fatherhood of God*, 2. Bousset, *Jesu Predigt*, 242; Jeremias, *Prayers*; Kittel, “ἀββᾶ,” 6.

19. Nunnally emphasizes this fact in his dissertation, “The Fatherhood.” See also Tasker, *Ancient*; M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 3–15, 156; D’Angelo, “Abba,” 611–30.

20. M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 157.

21. Tasker, *Ancient*, 1.

22. M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 164.

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characteristics according to Thompson. God the Father is the origin of the family who also provides an inheritance (whether land or eternal life) for his children. God the Father protects and provides for his children. He is also the figure of authority to whom obedience and honor are properly rendered.<sup>23</sup> From these perspectives Thompson considers the idea in NT teaching. For Paul God the Father is the founder of the family who gives an inheritance to his children (8:14–17).<sup>24</sup> The very love and mercy of God that elected Israel now elects all those in Christ, including the Gentiles who are also honored children of Abraham.<sup>25</sup> God called them to be saints and to belong to Christ granting them a new status.

Thompson argues that all three characteristics in Paul appeal not to what God is but what he does, namely to God's mercy and righteousness, his saving actions in Christ in whom God's promises made to Abraham open up the orientation toward the future.<sup>26</sup> Following this discussion two important ideas become worth further exploration. First, to speak of God as Father is to emphasize the redemptive work of God that Paul displays in a rich vocabulary, including reconciliation, adoption, and salvation. Second, the relationship of God the Father with his children for Paul is the result of the redemptive activity of God through his Son. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about God the Father who redeems without addressing the actions of the Son, particularly his faithful obedience to the Father. While the idea of God the Father who redeems in the OT and in Romans will be addressed more thoroughly in chapters 2 and 3, and the obedience of the Son will be discussed in chapter 4 and 6, one more explanation in relation to the language of God's fatherhood needs to be pondered.

The term "father" for God is problematic since it evokes "male" imagery. Contemporary feminist theologians see male imagery for God as idolatrous and anti-women.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, some of them attempt to consider God as Father in combination with other images that are not exclusively male, such as "mother," or "parent."<sup>28</sup> Others believe that this issue cannot be so easily resolved and continue to emphasize the problem

23. Ibid., 38, 54.

24. Ibid., 116.

25. Ibid., 121.

26. Ibid., 132.

27. E. A. Johnson, *She Who Is*, 33–41; Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*; M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 3–13.

28. Van Wijk-Bos, *Reimagining God*, ix.

of male imagery for God that legitimizes patriarchy and provides a paradigm of male hierarchy.<sup>29</sup>

Although this study is not engaged in feminist discussion, as stated earlier, it holds the opinion that naming God according to our conception of human fathers relegates God to the level of a human construct. The significance of calling God the Father goes much deeper than a helpful analogy; it begins with God.<sup>30</sup> The proposition of this study is that in the OT and Judaism God as Father is used as a family concept and corporately, that God is like a Father of Israel, like a loving parent (embracing fatherly and motherly characteristics as, for example, in Isa 49:14–16) of his people or of the righteous ones within Israel. Moreover, God as Father is the One who acts on behalf of his people and redeems them. In this respect the words of Thompson are significant, when she says that understanding “God the Father has less to do with certain attributes or characteristics that might be assigned to God, and much more to do with the way in which God’s mercy and faithfulness persistently seek out a people as heirs of the divine promises.”<sup>31</sup>

The NT and Paul in particular call God the Father of Christ and of those who are in Christ, because it is a reality for those in Christ, when his Father becomes our Father. This concept emphasizes corporate, covenant and family relationships. God the Father redeems through his Son so that we all (Jews and Gentiles, male and female) may have access into his family. God the Father language describes a reality that exceeds “the capacity of ordinary,” “commonsense discourse,” this reality is of God’s “suffering love.”<sup>32</sup> God’s fatherhood and his redemption in and through Christ concern all people and rather express a universal, cosmic and gender-neutral inclusion. The idea of the Son if viewed as the embodiment of Israel and humanity also helps to overcome the maleness of the word.

The second part of this research focuses on how God’s faithfulness is extended to the Gentiles and how God deals with Israel’s unfaithfulness. Two recent scholars look carefully at the faithfulness issue but their work leaves these questions unanswered.

29. Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 23; Brown and Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy*; M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*.

30. Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, viii–xv; 255–61.

31. M. Thompson, “Mercy upon All,” 207.

32. Davis and Hays, eds., *The Art*, 13.

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Johnson suggests that the idea of God's faithfulness toward his people is expressed especially in Paul's account of chapter 9–11, where Paul insists on God's faithfulness to Israel despite its faithlessness and God's purposes toward the Gentiles. She stresses a tension in the relationship of God's faithfulness to Israel with his impartiality and notes that this is present throughout Israel's history. This tension does not allow God's faithfulness to overcome God's impartiality and *vice versa*. She writes that God's faithfulness is impartial, inclusive, and independent of human right or worth. This is the tension that allows Paul to declare the inclusion of the believing Gentiles without excluding unbelieving Jews.<sup>33</sup> The inclusion of the Gentiles has been accomplished in the same terms as God's call of Israel, namely at God's initiative. Johnson implies that an explanation for God's faithfulness to Israel may be found in the beginning of Israel's history when God calls them a nation and redeems them out of Egypt. God's election is independent of human worth and thus, it is as true of the Gentiles as of Israel.<sup>34</sup> This means that "God's impartial treatment of Jews and Gentiles is therefore a demonstration of God's faithfulness to Israel rather than an abrogation of it."<sup>35</sup> Johnson is right in identifying the divine character and relationship to Israel and to the world as a starting point for Paul's discussion. However, she does not directly answer how God's call and faithfulness to Israel extend to the Gentiles and how Paul deals with Israel's failure to attain the righteousness of God. Nor does she discuss the role of Christ in God's purposes.<sup>36</sup> The question is then where does Christ's faithfulness find its place in the whole discussion? This underlines the importance of considering Paul's whole narrative, his bigger picture and not only chapters 9–11. Second, what role does Christ play in relation to God's faithfulness and eventually in relation to both Jews and Gentiles? And finally, who are the children of God according to Paul?

Caroline Hodge takes a different approach. She studies the idea of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God and of God's redeeming purposes for Israel from an ethnic point of view. While underlining ethnicity and kinship as crucial to Paul's understanding of the relationship between the God of Israel and humans, she believes that Jews and

33. E. E. Johnson, "Romans 9–11," 225.

34. *Ibid.*, 224.

35. *Ibid.*, 227.

36. *Ibid.*, 230.

Gentiles as different ethnic groups do not collapse into one but have a relationship that can be rearranged and renegotiated. This becomes a key for unfolding Paul's idea of the renewal and restoration of Israel as children of God and for the inclusion of the Gentiles.

Hodge suggests that "polar opposites" (Jews and Gentiles in Romans) are connected by sharing common ancestry descending from Abraham and having a shared God but that they are not merged.<sup>37</sup> By using the phrase "first the Jews, then the Gentiles" Paul does not join these groups together but maintains the hierarchy, placing Jews at the top. This cultivated tension between them propels Paul's "version of salvation history, ultimately bringing about the salvation of both peoples."<sup>38</sup> While Jews and the Gentiles, as branches of the same tree, are descendants of the same ancestor, as separate branches they are independent in genealogy. This leads her to conclude that, "Jews and gentiles are distinct peoples and remain so; the Jews claim their link to Abraham by birth (and God's promises) and the gentiles by adoption (and God's promises)."<sup>39</sup> As the "natural" branches the Jews are higher in hierarchy.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, God will restore the Gentiles to a subordinate rank, when the full number of them responds. Then all Israel will be saved. Thus, for Hodge, God's choice of Israel, as his first people, is the means to bring in the Gentiles.<sup>41</sup> So, the overall tension between Jews and Gentiles in Paul describes the process of the restoration of Israel. The Gentiles' reconciliation to God through Christ serves this larger goal.<sup>42</sup>

Caroline Hodge rightly re-addresses the issue between Jews and Gentiles in relationship to God as relating to their origin: how the peoples become God's in the first place. This idea again raises the question of God's fatherhood. Secondly, Hodge is correct that Paul recognizes Israel's "special relationship" with God. Paul reminds his reader that

37. Hodge, *If Sons*, 138.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, 146–47.

40. The language of ethnic, status and gender distinction, according to Hodge, is also seen in passages like Gal 2:15 (Paul's distinction from the Gentiles), Gal 2:7–9 ("the spread of the gospel as segregated ethnically"), Gal 4:21–31 (master/slave relationship, the role of women as mothers and the distinction between chosen and non-chosen lineage). She underlines that Paul's focus on ethnicity is vivid in his "stay as you are" advice. See *ibid.*, 128–29.

41. Hodge agrees with Nanos on this. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*.

42. Hodge, *If Sons*, 147. See also Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 223.

theirs is still the adoption, the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, etc. (9:4–5). Jewish identity as a part of Israel’s destiny is a positive value for Paul. Christ himself is a Jew by physical descent (9:5; cf. 1:3; 11:1). The universally gracious God would not be trustworthy if he were not faithful to Israel.

For Paul, however, this special relationship does not describe a superiority of the Jews in relation to God through Christ. Paul affirms sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles before God (1:18–3:20) and that the Jews are no better than the Gentiles (3:1–9). They all need to receive a spirit of adoption and be children of God (8:14–17). As Esler convincingly shows, “prior to their recategorization as believers in Christ, the Jews and Greeks are equal in respect to a negative status, their subjection to sin, although from entirely different routes—the Greek apart from the law and the Jews under the law.”<sup>43</sup> Although ethnicity remains, Jews and Gentiles are equal in the status that they have attained in Christ through whose obedience they have now received reconciliation (5:11) and have become children of God’s family (8:14–17).

Perhaps Hodge’s model of hierarchical relationship and superiority of the Jews over the Gentiles derives from her narrow understanding of the role of Christ in Paul. She describes Christ Jesus only as a way for the Gentiles to join in Israel as additional people.<sup>44</sup> She does not emphasize the significance of Christ for the Jews. They will be saved when the full number of the Gentiles comes in (11:25) but they are already God’s people.

Hodge’s view is problematic at this key point: in Paul the centrality of Jesus’ work and his obedience to God the Father serves as the means for unfolding God’s purposes not only for Israel but to Israel and through Israel for the whole world from the very beginning. Paul’s whole logic of arguing that Jews and Gentiles are children of Abraham and of God himself corresponds with the idea of their adoption and the inheritance of both parties. Paul’s message of God’s redemptive activity is inseparable from God’s acceptance of both Jews and Gentiles into his family as children and accordingly heirs (8:14–17). These are the key points that will be investigated more fully later on.

Although from different perspectives both Hodge and Johnson attempt to study God’s nature and work in relation to humanity, they lessen the significance of Christ in Paul’s scheme. This consequently does not

43. Esler, *Conflict*, 360–61.

44. Hodge, *If Sons*, 147.

clarify how God's call and faithfulness to Israel extends to the Gentiles and how Paul deals with Israel's failure to attain the righteousness of God.

This study focuses on how God redeems Israel and the nations without losing the "eschatological trajectory," meaning that Christ through his obedience fulfills his Father's promises to his people, "first Israel and then also the Israel of the renewed covenant."<sup>45</sup>

Paul's extensive comparison between Adam and Christ (5:12–21) points to placing all people under Adam and under sin because of Adam's disobedience (cf. 1:18—3:20). The whole point of the obedience of the Son is that he enters the age that was begun by Adam and "through his obedience shatters its power and inaugurates a new age of human history."<sup>46</sup> Through Christ's obedience many will become righteous (5:19). Paul builds up his argument in Romans in such a way that Christ's obedience in 5:12–21 in God's redemptive purposes becomes an explicit explanation of Christ's faithfulness, πίστις Χριστοῦ, as he has unveiled it beforehand (especially in 3:22) and that deserves special attention.

Since the Reformation Romans has often been read with an emphasis on the faith of the believers through which the ungodly are justified by God's grace. Luther was struggling with the medieval religious system that seemed to place people in the position of having to earn God's favor by doing various rites. In Romans he found the explanation of "justification by faith" in Christ alone. This understanding has exercised a powerful influence on the subsequent reading of Romans. Critical to this has been the translations of Paul's phrase, πίστις Χριστοῦ/(faith of Christ) in 3:22, 26 and other letters as an objective genitive where Christ is seen as the object of faith. So faith is the faith of the believers through which they are justified by God's grace. It leads, in a sense, to reading Paul "as putting one human activity (fulfilling stipulations of the law) over against another human activity (believing)."<sup>47</sup> Besides, Luther's explanation has little room for understanding God's redemption as interpreted against the Jewish background where the theme of faithfulness and obedience is a prevailing factor for the people of God. The question of God's redeeming activity through the faithful obedience of Christ was left largely unexplored.

At the beginning of the century Adolf Deissmann notices that Paul's faith indicates a mystical fellowship with Christ and in this fellowship

45. M. Thompson, *The Promise*, 156.

46. Cousar, *The Letters of Paul*, 128.

47. *Ibid.*, 130.

is union with God.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, it is difficult to find an acceptable translation for πίστις Χριστου/ (German *Christusglauben* implies both faith in and of Christ himself). Even though Deissmann does not explain whether the phrase implies Christ's faith or faith in Christ, he observes that through πίστις Χριστου/there is a "fellowship" with God and it is a mystical unity.

Another German scholar, Adolf Schlatter, pointed more in the direction of the subjective understanding of faith saying, "But faith arises from what Christ is and does. It is based on Christ's conduct toward mankind."<sup>49</sup> However, Schlatter does not develop this understanding in a coherent way.

A shift of understanding πίστις Χριστου/as a subjective genitive in modern scholarship is associated with the ground-breaking research of Richard Hays. It is the faith that Christ himself has. In his *The Faith of Christ* Hays begins with Gal 3:22 but then also refers to the letter to the Romans. He argues that Paul uses both the subjective genitive in reference to the faith of God, πιστιν του θεου/ (3:3) and from the faith of Abraham, εκ πιστεωj Αbraαμ (4:12, 16). There is no indication in the surrounding context of 3:21–26 that Jesus Christ is to be considered the object of faith. Christ's faith is surrounded by two notions of "an atoning sacrifice" and "his blood" that focus on Christ rather than a believer. Accordingly, all three terms are descriptive of Jesus in his obedient death on the cross. There is an addition to Jesus' faith, the phrase that refers to the believers separately: to all who believe, ειj πανταj τουj πιστευονταj (3:22b). So, it makes sense to read the beginning of the verse as the righteousness of God revealed through the faithfulness of Christ.<sup>50</sup>

The Greek word πιστιj for "faith" has a broad range of meaning, including not only trust or faith, but also obedience, faithfulness, reliability, and fidelity. Paul connects faith and obedience in ways that make them virtually synonymous (1:5; 16:26). If the subjective reading is in view then the possibility of being righteous comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, through his faithful obedience to the will of God so that because of that the many will be made righteous (5:19; cf. Phil 2:8). This certainly does not deny the necessity of Christians to have faith in Christ as 3:22b (cf. Gal 2:16; Phil 1:29) shows, but it indicates that God's

48. Deissmann, *Religion of Jesus*, 205–6.

49. Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles*, 24.

50. Hays, *The Faith*, 170–74.

redemptive purpose is fulfilled through Christ's faithful obedience. Since the publication of the first edition of Hays's PhD dissertation the debate over the meaning of πίστις Χριστου/has intensified.<sup>51</sup>

This study argues that the subjective reading fits Paul's overall narrative in terms of the obedience and submission of the Son to the loving will of the Father (5:12–21; cf. Phil 2:5–11).

Mark Reasoner is afraid that “the subjective reading can run the risk of making human participation in Christ's faithfulness a work that eclipses the mystery of the redemption accomplished by Christ's death.”<sup>52</sup> However, this does nothing to diminish the mystery of redemption. Paul himself admits the mystery of God's revelation (16:25–26). It just shows that there are no simple answers to the concept of redemption. Perhaps, we need to look at Christ's act with new eyes within God's redeeming activity and consider it against its Jewish background. The Christological understanding of πίστις Χριστου/can bring a change in which “salvation, the Law and the righteousness of God take on new meanings.”<sup>53</sup>

As the debate concerning πίστις Χριστου/ continues,<sup>54</sup> this study may be a further contribution to the subjective understanding of it as a part of Paul's bigger theme of the divine initiative and redemptive purposes accomplished through Christ's obedience.

## Methodology

There are four approaches that are essential for this particular research.

51. B. Longenecker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ” 478–80; L. T. Johnson, “Romans 3:21–26,” 77–90; Hooker, “PISTIS CRISTOU,” 321–42; Keck, “‘Jesus’ in Romans,” 443–60; Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 57–85. For the objective understanding of faith, see Hultgren, “The *Pistis Christou*,” 248–63; Dunn, “EK PISTEWS”; Esler, *Conflict*, 159; Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle*, 39; Porter and Pitts, “Πίστις,” 33–53; Matlock, “Saving Faith,” 73–89; Watson, “By Faith (of Christ),” 147–63. Some scholars present a “third view” on πίστις Χριστου, namely, as the gospel message about Christ. However, in essence they do not depart far from the subjective understanding of faith. They just emphasize more precisely that the subjective understanding does not exclude the objectivity of faith in Christ. See Sprinkle, “Πίστις Χριστου” 165–84; Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 263. For further bibliography on the debate of the meaning of πίστις Χριστου, see also online, “Faith(fulness) in/of Christ Bibliography,” Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, <http://epistletothegalatians.wordpress.com/faithfulness-inof-christ-bibliography.htm>.

52. Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle*, 39.

53. Stubbs, “The Shape of Soteriology,” 139.

54. See the collection of essays in Bird and Sprinkle, eds., *The Faith*.

A key approach of this study is intertextuality. Intertextuality is defined as “the imbedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one.”<sup>55</sup> In relation to Paul, this approach is particularly fruitful because Paul is a Jew and his theology is rooted in the Jewish scriptures. He repeatedly refers to Israel’s scriptures. They determine the “subtext that plays a constitutive role in shaping his literary production.”<sup>56</sup>

Within intertextuality, according to R. Hays, there are both obvious intertextual references such as quotations or allusions and subtler ones such as echoes.<sup>57</sup> Although scholars realize that this criterion is complicated and it is often difficult to be certain that particular scriptural passages lie behind certain NT texts, yet intertextuality needs to be undertaken because earlier texts have left their marks in the NT in very concrete ways.<sup>58</sup> The intertextual correspondence between texts is characterized by linguistic and contextual parallels,<sup>59</sup> or by “overlap in shared intertextual exegetical combinations.”<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, intertextuality denotes the “transposition of earlier material to something new;” it is about “observing the transformation of influences.”<sup>61</sup> R. Hays observes in this regard that, “if we are to arrive at a properly nuanced estimate of Paul’s theological stance toward his own people and their sacred texts, we must engage him on his own terms, by following his readings of the text in which he heard the word of God.”<sup>62</sup>

Paul reads the scripture through his own understanding of the gospel. At first glance, it may appear that Paul re-writes the story of Israel to fit into his own scheme (see, for instance the bald statement, “and that rock was Christ” in 1 Cor 10:4 in reference to the rock in the wilderness from Num 20:8–10). However, Paul re-reads Israel’s entire story in the light of Christ because in his view the action of God has always been centered in Christ. Consequently, the gospel concerning his Son is now indispensable for a proper understanding of the words of the scripture. In Paul’s view, he now sees history clearly for the first time rather than

55. Hays, *Echoes*, 14.

56. *Ibid.*, 15–16.

57. *Ibid.*, 23–29.

58. Brooke, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 70; Hays, *Echoes*, 23, 70–71.

59. Beavis, “The Resurrection,” 51.

60. Brooke, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 93.

61. *Ibid.*, 73.

62. Hays, *Echoes*, x.

revises it. As Cousar concludes, “Paul provides a radical reading of Israel’s history and scriptures in terms of the revealed gospel. It is the latter that defines the former, and not *vice versa*.”<sup>63</sup> Paul’s keen awareness of living in the time when the OT pronouncements are being fulfilled in Christ, allows him “imaginative” freedom in the usage of the OT in his teaching.<sup>64</sup> Paul’s Christological approach provides the essential hermeneutical lens.<sup>65</sup> For him the Jewish scriptures serve in God’s plan as a witness to the gospel, which is to be the final revelatory act of God in Jesus Christ, for the Jews first, but then also for the Gentiles.

Second, this research applies a narrative approach to Paul’s letter.<sup>66</sup> This approach does not necessarily consider Paul’s letter as a narrative or even narratives, but it looks at the text as a “reflective discourse” based on a story of God culminated in death and resurrection of Christ, which provides the “narrative substructure” for Paul’s theology and which is alluded to in Paul’s discourse.<sup>67</sup> A narrative approach helps to look beyond the literary markers, and behind all the literary patterns and conventional speeches of the letter to the Romans to see Paul’s essential teaching on Christ’s obedience within the bigger picture of God’s relationship with his children. The inner logic of Paul’s thought helps the reader to follow the arguments of the letter.

The narrative approach should be also applied to Paul’s usage of the scripture. As Matlock puts it, “a ‘narrative’ reading of Paul is both a type of approach and a type of argument.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, when Paul refers to or echoes scripture he “derives coherence from their common relation to the scriptural story of God’s righteousness. Though the quotations appear eclectic and scattered, they usually must be understood as allusive

63. Cousar, “Continuity,” 210.

64. Hays, *The Conversion*, ix. This approach to Paul’s usage of the Jewish scriptures has become especially prominent since the discoveries of a similar phenomenon in Qumran. Stendahl, *The School of Saint Matthew*, 194–201, was one of first ones to point out that the eschatological conviction explains the freedom in relation to the text in both Qumran *pesharim* and the NT. Ellis appropriated the term for that technique, *midrash pesher*, in *Paul’s Use*. Stanley, *Paul*, 29, develops a further careful approach suggesting that Paul adapted the biblical quotations to communicate his own understanding of the passage.

65. See Watson, *Paul*, 16–17.

66. Hays, *The Faith*; Witherington III, *Paul’s Narrative*; Dunn, *The New Perspective and The Theology of Paul*; B. Longenecker, ed., *Narrative Dynamics*.

67. Hays, *The Faith*, 28.

68. Matlock, “The Arrow and the Web,” 53.

recollections of the wider narrative setting from which they are taken.”<sup>69</sup> Paul does not even always indicate quotations (e.g., Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17), attributing them to the wider context of the scripture as a whole.<sup>70</sup> Paul reads the scripture narratively as the story of God’s election and redemption of his people that has been fulfilled in Christ.<sup>71</sup> Even through the lens of Christ Paul’s gospel stands in coherent continuity with the witness of Israel’s scripture<sup>72</sup> to the faithfulness of God to Israel, not only for the sake of Israel but also for the sake of all people.

Third, the actual underlying argument of the letter needs also to be considered within the wider worldview and belief system on which Paul draws. N. T. Wright holds that all societies have a “worldview” that serves as “the grid through which reality is perceived and experienced.”<sup>73</sup> For him such fundamental perspectives form a matrix of thought that must be understood in order to interpret the thinker. So, to understand Paul and his thinking one must place him within the symbolic world of second temple Judaism that includes Jewish writings, traditions and practice.<sup>74</sup> In these frameworks, chapter 2 explores Jewish texts<sup>75</sup> where God is referred to as the Father in relation and actions to the people of Israel.

Fourth, P. Alexander posits a heuristic approach that considers later information as shedding light on first-century texts.<sup>76</sup> The function of the later data “would be to act as a possible model with which we explore” Paul’s writing. Applying this approach “we can plausibly fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge by disciplined historical imagination based on comparative models.”<sup>77</sup> This approach helps to show the potentiality of the text and is applied in chapter 5 on the Aqedah.

69. Hays, *Echoes*, 157–58.

70. Watson, *Paul*, 45.

71. Hays, *The Conversion*, xvi.

72. Hays, *Echoes*, 157.

73. N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” 32.

74. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament*, 145–338.

75. This category includes both OT and other Jewish texts of 2TP. Although there is a distinction between biblical texts and other Jewish literature in terms of authoritative status, together they constitute a valuable reference source for Paul’s Jewish background. They all are 2TP literature that form Paul’s worldview. See further Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*; Brooke, “The Rewritten Law, 31–40.

76. Alexander, “The Qumran Songs,” 349–72.

77. Alexander, “Orality,” 183.

## Outline

For Paul the good news of the gospel of God is precisely concerning his Son (1:3, 9), who is obedient to the Father (5:19) and in whom ancient promises and claims of God's intervention and redemption were reaffirmed (3:21–26). Accordingly, to understand Paul's message of redemption adequately, this study examines the OT and 2TP texts where the language of God as Father and Redeemer is viewed in relation to Israel and those within Israel. The chapter concludes that God as Father is redeemingly involved in the whole story of Israel. It highlights both the importance of the obedience of the people of God so that the name of God will be proclaimed in all the earth and the failure of God's son Israel to remain obedient to God the Father and, thus, to be a light to the nations. Despite this fact, God as Father and Redeemer is expected to act in the life of his people on behalf of his righteousness/faithfulness to them. There are expectations that God as Father and Redeemer will act through a messianic figure to accomplish his promises.

On the basis of this background chapter 3 deals with Paul's teaching on redemption as the act of the Father accomplished in the Son. Paul develops the idea that in Christ God's dealing with Israel continues but it continues in such a way that Christ becomes the key for the interpretation of God's purposes derived from the Jewish scriptures. This retrospective reading of Israel's story in the light of Christ enables Paul to reconsider the idea of God the Father and Redeemer of Israel as the Father of Christ and of all who are in Christ. It also enables him to redefine the family of God universally in relation to both Jews and Gentiles.

The main focus of chapter 4 is the extent to which Paul reflects the idea of God the Father who redeems in terms of God's own covenantal faithfulness/righteousness revealed in Christ's faithfulness. This chapter is a part of overall debate concerning πίστις Χριστου/ This thesis contributes further to the subjective understanding of it as a part of Paul's bigger theme of the divine initiative and redemptive purposes accomplished through Christ's obedience.

Chapter 5 refers to the story of Abraham in Romans and presents an array of arguments of how Abraham's faith helps Paul to unfold the narrative of God's redemption through Christ's faithfulness. The second part of the chapter explores Abraham's obedience within the Aqedah tradition and Paul's reflection on the Aqedah motif for the story of God's redemption in Christ. It argues that Paul shifts the significance of human

obedience in Abraham's story to God's righteousness/faithfulness, mercy and love for the whole of humanity. He reinterprets the Aqedah in the light of the divine redemption that came about through Christ's obedience.

In Romans 5:12–21 Paul's discussion on obedience becomes an explicit explanation of Christ's own faithfulness as the fulfillment of God's purposes for the world. Chapter 6 brings to the forefront Paul's contrast between Adam and Christ. This contrast allows Paul to illuminate the superiority of Christ, who being like Adam did not sin, but obeyed God till death and condemned sin, thus reconciling humanity to God. This chapter includes Paul's overall conclusive claims about Christ who has not only accomplished the redemptive work of Israel but who has also reversed the fall of Adam.

Chapter 7 draws together the main conclusions of the research indicating its contributions in the area of Pauline interpretation.

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