

Preface

This collection of thematically related, exegetical essays owes its existence to the encouragement of three people. Robin Parry, the respected editor of Cascade Books, invited me to put these articles together into a whole that has become greater than the sum of its parts. Robin's own work as a serious biblical-theological scholar made this invitation all the more encouraging. Tim Fox, one of my research students here at St. Andrews, did the hard work of organizing and reformatting all of the articles. It was only Tim's diligent, timely, and meticulous work, together with his cheerful attitude through all of the tedium of such labor, that made the completion of this project "doable." Finally, Mark Elliott, our Head of School, helped to make the project possible by providing monies through our Deas Fund to support Tim's efforts. Mark's collegiality, commitment to what is important, and striking erudition play a significant role both in my life and in the work of St. Mary's College. Thank you to all three. I know how fortunate I am for these gifts (1 Cor 4:7).

All of the essays presented here have been published previously. I am thankful for the permission granted in each case to reproduce them in this new context. Their current arrangement under the two rubrics of "message" and "ministry," and in this order, is intentional. For the driving force of these articles, taken as a whole, is to demonstrate that Paul's message of "the gospel of Christ" (cf. 1 Thess 3:2; Gal 1:7; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 10:14; Phil 1:27; Rom 15:19) was determinative for the character of his ministry (1 Cor 2:1-5; 4:9-13; 2 Cor 2:14; 4:7-11; 6:3-10; 12:7-10). To imitate Paul was therefore to imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1). The "stumbling block" and "foolishness" of the crucified Messiah that Paul proclaimed (i.e., the central content of his kerygma: 1 Cor 1:21-23) was embodied in the "weakness" that characterized his proclamation (i.e., the essential manner of his kerygma: 1 Cor 2:3-5), all of which took its shape from the contours of

the history of redemption as expressed in the dawning of the new covenant (1 Cor 11:23–26).

Given their common themes, some overlap in the articles here collected is thus inevitable. Part of the reason for this as well is that many of the essays are “Corinthians-centric,” especially 2 Corinthians. Though 1–2 Corinthians too often live in the shadow of Galatians and Romans, it is important to keep in view that Paul most likely wrote the Corinthian correspondence against the backdrop of what he had learned in Galatia and that he wrote Romans against the backdrop of what he had experienced in Corinth, having written his letter to the Romans from Corinth itself before returning to Jerusalem with the collection. Second Corinthians in particular consequently offers a central vantage point for examining the development of Paul’s thinking at a crucial turning point in his life and ministry.

The articles also interrelate because Paul’s message and ministry emerge from a history-of-redemption framework that fueled his theology. Indeed, as A. M. Hunter observed in 1943, the concept that best describes “the manifold wisdom of God” displayed both in the gospel of the kingdom and in the church it creates (Eph 3:8–12) must be borrowed from the Germans—namely, “the *Heilsgeschichte*” that “treats of a Saviour, a Saved (and saving) People, and the means of Salvation. . . . For the ‘story’ is of the consummation of God’s saving purpose for his People (Ecclesiology) through the sending of his Messiah (Christology) and of the means of Salvation (Soteriology) . . . all of these are so closely connected that one implies the other—and all lead to the one centre, the *Heilsgeschichte*.”¹ In a related word, one could say that Paul’s thinking takes place within a historically oriented “eschatology.” More specifically, Paul’s theology centers on the salvific and ecclesiological implications of the dawning of the new age (Gal 1:4) of the new creation (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17) of the new covenant (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; cf. Gal 4:24) in the midst of this evil age.

By the “covenant perspective” of Paul’s message and ministry I therefore intend three interrelated realities, depending on the context. First, “covenant” can refer to God’s overarching promise(s) as that which determines his actions. In this sense, for example, Paul talks about God’s “promise to Abraham” in Rom 4:13, 20, which in view of the passages quoted in the context from Gen 15:6 and 17:5 makes it clear that he is referring to the Abrahamic “covenant” (cf. Rom 4:9, 17, 18, 22; for the same use, see

1. *Unity of the New Testament*, 9, 19. For the still-programmatic development of the concept, see Cullmann, *Heil als Geschichte*. For the history of this minority, but significantly persistent, school of thought, see Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy?* and my review of it in *TJ* 29 (2008) 153–56. For what this perspective looks like in practice, see Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Grundlegung*.

Rom 9:4, 7–9 [Gen 21:12; 18:10, 14;]; Rom 15:8; 2 Cor 7:1; Gal 3:14, 16; etc.). Second, in view of these promises, “covenant” can refer to Paul’s understanding of a linear, promise-fulfillment relationship between the history of Israel as the “old covenant” and the history of the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ as that of the “new covenant” (2 Cor 3:6, 14; cf. 2 Cor 1:20; Rom 9:7–8; 11:1; Gal 3:19, 29; 4:28; Eph 2:12; 3:6; etc.). Third, by “covenant” I also refer to my understanding of the implicit substructure of the relationship that exists between God and his people throughout the history of redemption. This relationship is determined by and consists of 1) God’s covenant-creating redemption via acts of unconditional grace, 2) the covenant-defining stipulations that inextricably express this redemption, and 3) God’s covenant-consummating promises of blessing and curse that fulfill redemption in relationship to the covenant stipulations.²

Though implicit, this threefold covenant structure, which Paul inherited from the Scriptures, can be detected throughout his writings. The first two senses of “covenant” have often been treated in Paul’s writings and are minor themes in the essays that follow. It is Paul’s elaboration of the covenant relationship, though often implied in his argumentation and in my treatment of it, that is the primary frame of reference for what follows. This threefold covenant relationship can be summarized and outlined as follows:

The Threefold Covenant Structure

Covenant Prologue

(The Past Indicatives of Redemption)

Covenant Stipulations

(The Present Expression of Redemption in Imperatives)

Covenant Blessings or Curses

(The Promised Future Indicatives of Redemption and Judgment)

This threefold covenant structure may be outlined as follows:

God’s Unconditional Acts of Provision

by which he establishes the covenant relationship

(The Redemptive Foundation of the Covenant,
given as an act of grace in the past)

2. For an explication of this threefold covenant relationship throughout the canon, see my essay, “The Covenant Relationship.”

which entails

The “Conditional” Stipulations
through which the covenant relationship is expressed
(The Commands of the Covenant
to be kept in the present)

which entails

The “Conditional” Promises or Curses
by which the covenant is consummated,
in regard to keeping or not keeping the covenant
(The Consummation of the Covenant,
to be fulfilled in the future)

It is my hope that in the following essays the tightly woven web of Paul’s “covenant” perspective might become more apparent. In republishing these essays I have taken the liberty only to clarify their grammar and syntax and on occasion to add a small bit of information or to make more explicit the flow of the argument. My one regret in presenting this work, however, is its lack of interaction with more recent developments in scholarship, which would sharpen and refine my arguments in various important ways.³ My review of Pauline scholarship in chapter 1 stops short of the latest debates. It especially lacks an awareness of the contemporary emphasis on Paul and the Roman Empire.⁴ And most of the other essays were written before the current fissure opened up between those who emphasize an apocalyptic, participatory interpretation of Paul’s theology and those who stress its historical, covenantal framework.

At the same time, this limitation also has a positive side. One value in looking at these “older” essays from the perspective of the present-day debates is to be able to see the ways in which current issues in Pauline scholarship are yet another instantiation of the fundamental difference between the “new perspective(s)” on the one hand and the understanding of the law/gospel contrast inherited from F. C. Baur on the other (see chapter 1). While the former began with a strong emphasis on the rediscovery of Schweitzer’s

3. Of special interest is the recent work on Paul’s hermeneutics in the Corinthian correspondence and its impact on early Christian exegetes by Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, as well as the recent commentaries and specialized studies of 2 Corinthians.

4. For a programmatic example of this emphasis, see Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*.