

Preface

In 2010, I published *Maccabean Martyr Traditions in Paul's Theology of Atonement: Did Martyr Theology Shape Paul's Conception of Jesus' Death?*¹ I argued that Paul's presentation of Jesus' death should be understood as an atoning sacrifice and as a saving event because Maccabean martyr theology shaped his understanding of Jesus' death.² The book has five chapters, but the central exegetical section is chapters 2–4. Chapter 2 investigated martyrdom in 2 and 4 Maccabees. Chapter 3 investigated martyrdom in the Hebrew Bible by analyzing selected texts that mention human sacrifice. Chapter 4 investigated martyrdom in selected letters that bear Paul's name. I focused much of my investigation on Rom 3:25 and 4 Macc 17:22 because these two texts are the only places in any extant literature where an author applies ἱλαστήριον to the deaths of Torah-observant Jews for the soteriological benefits of non-Torah-observant sinners.

Several factors, however, warrant my current and related project. First, the present monograph focuses on representation and substitution exclusively in Romans and the Jewish martyrological background behind these concepts in Romans.

Second, many years have passed since I completed and successfully defended the original doctoral thesis in 2007 at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and since I published it in 2010. From 2007 to the present, I have spent much time reflecting upon the origins of Paul's understanding of Jesus' death, upon the impact of his Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ, upon his presentation of Jesus' death, and upon the available

1. Throughout the monograph, I will use the phrases “martyr theology,” “martyr traditions,” “martyrological,” “Jewish martyrological narratives,” or “martyr texts” to refer to 2 and 4 Maccabees and to other Second Temple Jewish texts that contain the concepts of pious, Torah-observant Jews who died for the soteriological benefits of non-Torah-observant Jews. For a working definition of Jewish martyrology, see Van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People*.

2. Williams, *Maccabean Martyr Traditions*, 2.

first-century cultic, economic, and social categories, concepts, and traditions from which he readily borrowed to present his understanding of the meaning and significance of Jesus' death for others.

Third, since the publication of my 2007 doctoral thesis in 2010, I have given numerous lectures in both university and seminary contexts about atonement and soteriology in Second Temple Judaism and about Jesus' death in Paul. I have also presented numerous papers at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) along with or in the presence of experts in Pauline theology, experts in Romans and Galatians, experts in Second Temple Judaism, and experts in early Christian origins. These diverse groups at SBL have provided me some new conversation partners regarding the origins of Paul's understanding and presentation of Jesus' death in Romans, conversation partners whose work I had only read but with whom I had not interacted face to face when I wrote the original doctoral thesis. Additionally, I have been involved in numerous conversations and debates with significant scholars in the area of early Christian origins via email and at SBL's 2010–14 national meetings in the Function of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha on early Christianity study group, in the Cult, Sacrifice, and Atonement study group, in the Pauline Epistles study group, in the so-called Disputed Pauline Epistles study group, and in the African-Americans Biblical Hermeneutics group, not to mention the numerous conversations and debates on Jesus' death in Paul with Greek text open at SBL over breakfast, lunch, dinner, or at the book exhibitions with many of the scholars with whom I was in close dialogue in my previous work and with whom I have either strongly or partially disagreed in recent publications.³ These priceless conversation partners have provided stimulating critique of my previous work, they have provided provocative dialogue about my work, they have raised new questions in my mind, and they have made me aware of both the problems with reading Paul *exclusively* through the lens of Jewish martyr theology and with forcing one theological model of Jesus' death on Paul's letters.⁴

Instead of arguing that martyr theology *primarily* or *exclusively* shaped Paul's conception of Jesus' death by analyzing every Pauline statement that mentions Jesus' death or the benefits of his death for others—which is what

3. I am extremely grateful to Cilliers Breytenbach, Steve Finlan, Simon Gathercole, and Mike Gorman for individually meeting with me throughout the weekend at the 2013 national SBL meeting in Baltimore, MD. Their input and pushback have tremendously helped me to think more precisely about the best way to execute my thesis in this monograph, and their different insights helped me to see the benefit of narrowing my thesis to Romans in this monograph.

4. Daniel P. Bailey has been especially helpful in presenting challenges and pointing out some weaknesses in my thesis.

I originally wanted to argue when I first conceived of this project—I think that it is more plausible to argue that martyr theology was one tradition (among other traditions) that influenced both Paul's *conception* of and *presentation* of Jesus' death and the benefits of his death for others in his letters and that the Jewish martyrological narratives have a prominent background in Paul's presentation of Jesus' death as both a substitute for and representative of Jews and Gentiles in Romans. However, these traditions neither show up in every letter that bears his name nor are they the only background in front of which we should read Paul's presentation of Jesus' death in his letters. Since Paul often used a variety of Greco-Roman and Jewish and first-century social and economic metaphors that refer to the benefits of Jesus' death for others and since he simultaneously conflates these metaphors in his letters to present the effects of Jesus' death for others, I can plausibly argue in this monograph that martyr theology was a background behind his presentation of Jesus' death as both a substitution and representation for Jews and Gentiles in Romans, although this does not need to be the case for every Pauline letter.

This above modification from my previous work allows me to take seriously the force of Paul's Damascus Road experience in his initial encounter with Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ,⁵ and the numerous additional traditions from which Paul borrowed to communicate the meaning and significance of Jesus' death for others (e.g., Jewish cultic, economic, law court).⁶ Moreover, this modification also prevents me from forcing one specific background or model on Paul's other letters in which he mentions or discusses Jesus' death. Once Paul encountered Jesus—the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Lord and Messiah—on the Damascus Road, virtually everything that he had believed about YHWH, Torah, Gentiles, and the crucified criminal from Nazareth radically changed. It is reasonable that Paul believed Jesus was rightly crucified as a criminal before Damascus (per his efforts to destroy the church, as narrated in Acts and as he states in his letters). But after he encountered Jesus as the resurrected and exalted Lord, he began to reconsider and reformulate his conception of Jesus' death. In addition to the OT cultic traditions and Isaiah 53, he likely looked to additional Jewish traditions that appropriated those traditions to the deaths

5. So Kim, *Origins of Paul's Gospel*.

6. I am especially thankful to Steve Finlan for pointing this out to me. In both his work on the background behind Paul's cultic atonement metaphors and in a personal conversation at the national meeting of SBL 2013 in Baltimore, MD, he persuaded me that it is incorrect to limit Paul's background influences to only one. For his major work on Paul's atonement metaphors, see Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors*.

of Torah-observant Jews for non-Torah-observant sinners to achieve their soteriological benefits.

For example, after he encountered Jesus on the Damascus road, he argued that if Jews compelled Gentiles to conform to a Jewish way of life, the Gentiles would be placed under the Deuteronomic curse (Gal 2:14), that “everyone who is from the works of the law is under a curse” (Gal 3:10). His conduct toward Christ-followers changed radically after his vision of Christ (cf. his treatment of Christ-followers within former conduct in Judaism).⁷ He now preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he began to identify with a multi-ethno-racial Gentile-inclusive Christian community (Gal 1:13—2:21). Paul’s soteriological framework after he saw the Damascus Road vision of Jesus was entirely different from his view of YHWH, Torah, Jesus, Gentiles, and Christ-followers prior to his faith in Jesus (cf. Deut 27:1—28:62; Acts 7:58—8:4; 9:1–2; Gal 1:13–14).

Thus, shortly after his conversion, Paul more than likely thought very carefully about scriptural concepts and metaphors in the Jewish Scriptures, in other Jewish writings, and in available oral Jewish traditions to communicate to others the significance and meaning of Jesus’ death for others, since his vision of the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Lord presented him with a major soteriological problem. Namely, if Jesus is in fact the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Lord, then YHWH no longer accepts people within his believing community exclusively based on Torah observance, and he no longer provides atonement for sins by means of the Hebrew cult. Instead, Jesus—the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Lord—is the one who saves Jews and Gentiles alike, by faith.⁸ Contrary to Sam K. Williams, I do not think that the tragedy of Jesus’ death caused early Christians to search for its significance and meaning. Instead, the jubilation and the shock of his resurrection enabled them to think carefully about the significance and meaning of his death for others. Paul likely thought that since in fact YHWH resurrected the crucified Christ, then the reality of his resurrection must mean that his death has a specific soteriological significance, both now

7. I am aware of the many discussions regarding the complexities of Second Temple Judaism.

8. I affirm that Paul’s letters reflect that he believed at some level the human plight needed the solution of Jesus’ cross, resurrection, and exaltation. However, my point above is simply that Paul’s vision of Jesus on the Damascus Road caused him to re-think and maybe even un-think some of his pre-conversion and pre-calling conceptions about the non-Torah observant and Gentile inclusive nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For Paul’s soteriological framework as solution to plight, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. For Paul’s soteriological framework as plight to solution, see Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*.

and eschatologically, for Jews and Gentiles, apart from Torah-observance.⁹ Paul's Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ explains in part why both his views of the crucified Jesus and of Christians dramatically changed. He persecuted Christians prior to his vision of the risen Christ (Acts 7:58—8:3; 9:1–19).

Fourth, I published my third monograph *For Whom Did Christ Die* in 2012. In this work, I spent an entire chapter (chapter 4) defending the thesis that Paul believed that Jesus' death was *exclusively* for *all* elect Jews and Gentiles whom God predestined to be united to the believing community by faith in Jesus because martyr theology shaped his understanding of Jesus' death.

Fifth, in 2012, I published an essay in a Brill Academic volume along with an international team of biblical scholars who specialize in early Judaism, early Christian origins, or both.¹⁰ My essay is titled "Martyr Theology in Hellenistic Judaism and Paul's Conception of Jesus' Death in Romans 3:21–26." This essay borrowed material from my 2010 work, but I presented fresh insights and new evidence that support martyr theology's influence on Paul in Rom 3:21–26. For example, I offer an up-to-date history of research in the current work, and I present additional lexical, grammatical, exegetical, and conceptual arguments to support my thesis in the current monograph.

Sixth, J. W. van Henten's critical review of my 2010 monograph in the *Review of Biblical Literature* was especially helpful to me.¹¹ Van Henten's review was generally positive, but he helpfully pointed out weaknesses. He noted that the monograph often made assertions without substantiating its claims, and he stated ways to make the arguments stronger.¹² This current monograph seeks to rectify a few of the weaknesses in the first monograph and to build upon my previous work by focusing on representation and substitution and by focusing on Paul's Jewish martyrological background for these categories by analyzing the relevant texts in Romans.

9. For the significance of the resurrection of Jesus in early Judaism and in early Christianity, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

10. For the complete volume, see Porter and Pitts (eds.), *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism*.

11. His review is in the *Review of Biblical Literature* January 2013 at www.bookreviews.org/. . /8091_8847.pdf.

12. My 2012 Brill essay offered some fresh arguments for a martyrological reading of Rom 3:25. Brill originally planned to publish the essay in 2009. However, since one of its editors became ill, there was a delay in publication until 2012. Since I submitted the essay in 2009 and since it did not appear in print until 2012, several works were published, of which I was not aware, between my original submission in 2009 and the actual publication in 2012.

To complete this book has taken nearly five years. By means of many toils and snares, I have finished it with God's help, by God's grace, and with much prayer. As with every publication, there are many people to thank.

I owe many thanks to Jim Tedrick and Robin Parry at Wipf and Stock for their eager willingness to publish this monograph. I owe a special thanks to Robin for his editorial work.

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I owe many thanks to my colleagues, who participated in the Function of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha study group from 2010–12, at the national meetings of the SBL. I owe an additional thanks to my colleagues who participated in the Pauline Epistles group in 2012 Chicago, IL and in the Cult and Atonement study group at the 2013 national meeting of SBL in Baltimore, MD. Scholars like Dan Bailey, David DeSilva, Robert Doran, Stephen Finlan, Caroline Johnson-Hodge, Brigitte Kahl, Amy-Jill Levine, Mark Reasoner, and so many others in these groups have sharpened this current monograph with their critical engagement of my presentations related to it. I also owe many, many thanks to David DeSilva for his many helpful comments and suggestions about my work on Jewish martyrology and Paul. I am particularly thankful for his friendship and for the constant encouragement that he has given me in my scholarly work and pursuits. I am especially thankful for his gracious and kind words of encouragement during a professional difficult time in the fall of 2012 and in the spring of 2013. I owe thanks to Jan Wilhelm van Henten for his helpful critical review of my 2010 monograph on Jewish martyrology and Paul in the *Review of Biblical Literature*, and I am thankful for his critical engagement with my

work in numerous emails from my days as a doctoral student in 2005–7 and for our personal interaction over coffee at SBL 2009 in New Orleans, LA.

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I owe thanks to the publishers and journals that permitted me to use material from previous publications. Brill Academic, Broadman and Holman Academic, Paternoster, and Wipf and Stock allowed me to use some material from work that I published with them in 2010–2012. In addition, the *Princeton Theological Review* and the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* likewise allowed me to reproduce some material that I originally published with them in 2007 and 2010.

I owe a special, special thanks to all of my colleagues at Southern Seminary and to all friends associated with this beloved institution! I especially thank Drs. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (President), Russell Moore (former Provost and current president of the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention), Randy Stinson (Provost), Gregory Wills (Dean of the School of Theology), and Thomas R. Schreiner (Associate Dean of Scripture and Interpretation) for their full support of me, for their confidence in me as a young scholar and minister of the gospel, and for entrusting me with the stewardship of the gospel and scholarship at our beloved institution. In addition, I offer a special thanks to my colleagues in the NT department at Southern Seminary. Drs. Bill Cook, Jonathan Pennington, Rob Plummer, Mark Seifrid, Tom Schreiner (now Professor of Biblical Theology), and Brian Vickers (now Professor of Biblical Theology) welcomed me onto the faculty in the fall of 2013 with open arms and continue to offer me much love and support in all of my scholarly pursuits. My short time at Southern as a full-time associate professor of NT has brought me back home to the place in my life where my wife and I spent our happiest

days as a newly married seminary couple. I am so thankful and blessed to serve at this institution with colleagues committed to the gospel, the church, and scholarship!

Scholars have lives apart from scholarship—at least, this one does. The most important people in my life are my wife, Ana, and my beloved six-year-old son, Jaden. They have sacrificed so much time, money, and energy for me. Ana literally left her country of Costa Rica to become my wife. She has faithfully loved me for thirteen years of marriage in spite of my many, many flaws! I owe many thanks to Ana and Jaden for enduring so much to support me in the joyful and yet painful calling to the ministry of academic scholarship and in the joyful and painful calling to gospel ministry in the church. I would not have finished this book without their prayers, love, support, and sacrifices. Even as I write these words, I recall Jaden innocently praying so fervently many times for Jesus to help “daddy” finish this book so I could play with him. I am so thankful that Jesus heard and answered his prayers!

I owe a final word of thanks to Tom Schreiner, my *Doctorvater*. Anyone who spends a little time with me knows that I deeply love and respect Tom and I owe him an infinite amount of gratitude. He is my mentor, *Doctorvater*, former pastor, friend, colleague, and office neighbor in Norton Hall at Southern Seminary. He has invested many years into my life and continues to do so. In the fifteen years that I have known Tom, he has been quick either to encourage or to rebuke me when I needed one or the other. He has simultaneously been both the most critical person of my scholarship (besides me) and the biggest supporter of my scholarship (besides my wife). His criticism has never torn me down, but has always built me up. I aspire to the high standard that he so humbly sets forth with his scholarship, which is always marked by sharp acumen and Christian charity. In my pursuit of Christian obedience and in my constant search for and pursuit of what a rigorous Christian NT scholar should be, I often look to him as an example as he imitates Christ in his scholarship. It is, therefore, with much love, appreciation, and admiration that I dedicate this book to Tom Schreiner, my *Doctorvater*, mentor, and friend, because of his willingness to speak the truth to me in love and because of his love for the cross of Jesus Christ! I pray that this book would make him forever proud to be my *Doctorvater*!

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