

## A “Different” Rereading

*Rereading Galatians from the Perspective of Paul's Gospel: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, by Yung Suk Kim. Cascade Books, 2019.

In *Rereading Galatians from the Perspective of Paul's Gospel: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, hereafter *Rereading*, Yung Suk Kim, Associate Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at Virginia Union University's Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, contends that “Paul writes Galatians not to argue for ‘justification by faith’ but to make explicit the gospel he proclaimed—the good news that all can become children of God through faith” (13). *Rereading* acknowledges the inability of the works of the law to justify, either in an objective legal sense or in an ongoing subjective sense in our living: “Ultimately, the issue [in Galatians] is not about how one achieves a new legal status but how to live faithfully to God” (42). In its advancement of this argument, *Rereading* properly treats *Christ* as a subjective genitive of *faith*. *Rereading's* interpretive shift in focus from the process of justification to the issue of the justifying process—sons of God—is well taken. *Rereading* further asserts that, as sons of God, believers can participate in the faith or faithfulness of Christ by living according to the faith of Christ, a living that involves primarily a life of moral sacrifice and love for humanity. With its limited emphasis on moral sacrifice and justice, however, *Rereading* falls short of presenting the unsearchable riches of Christ that are available as the gospel to the sons of God for their subjective experience.

In its discussion of the content of Paul's gospel, *Rereading* posits a novel but mistaken interpretation of the term *different* in 1:6, an interpretation that allows for the possibility of two different versions of the gospel—a Jewish version that accommodates the continuation of Jewish practices and culture as long as these elements do not precede faith and a Gentile version based solely on faith without the imposition of Jewish practices, such as circumcision and dietary regulations. *Rereading* considers this Jewish version to be a positive means for resolving the tension over the role of the law for Jewish believers in the age of faith, when, in fact, it demonstrates only that the promulgation of different gospels that go beyond what Paul announced is a present as well as ancient phenomenon. *Rereading* also contains isolated but troubling statements concerning Christ's incarnation that weaken and undermine this crucial aspect of the faith. Other than its shift in focus from the justifying process to the gospel and its use

of *Christ* as a subjective rather than objective genitive, there is little else that can be affirmed in this rereading.

## The Faith or Faithfulness of Christ

In its discussion of faith, *Rereading* focuses on the faith of Christ with *Christ* being a subjective genitive to *faith*. This focus is contrastive to the more common practice of translating *Christ* as an objective genitive when paired with *faith*. As a subjective genitive, *faith* refers to the living and operative faith of Christ Himself; as an objective genitive, *faith* refers primarily to the acceptance of facts related to Christ. *Rereading*, however, argues correctly that faith is related to more than just facts, saying, “Faith is not mere belief *about* God” (43). It further states,

Christian faith is not merely to accept Jesus or his salvific death as such, but to participate in his faithfulness. If so, Gal 2:16 is understood differently. One can live righteously through Christ's faithfulness. A new life in the Spirit is not merely possible by faith in Christ but through his faithfulness. To be faithful to God, one must know Jesus's faithfulness to God...Here again, we interpret *pistis christou* as a subjective genitive, which makes better sense than the objective genitive. Paul's point is not that he wants to live “by faith in Christ” but that he wants to live “by Christ's faithfulness” because Christ is everything to him. (8)

Elsewhere, *Rereading* notes that the use of a subjective genitive points to Christ's own faith, stating, “*Pistis christou* phrases in Rom 3:22 and Gal 2:16 are taken as a subjective genitive (‘the faithfulness of Christ’ rather than ‘faith in Christ’). Paul emphasizes the primacy of Christ's faithfulness that revealed God's righteousness, which is primarily understood as God's love and justice” (2). *Rereading's* emphasis on the faith of Christ, as opposed to faith in Christ, is a laudable contribution to the ongoing and progressing scholarly acceptance of Christ's faith being the source of a believer's faith. However, *Rereading* severely limits the application of Christ's faithfulness to earthly considerations of a new life full of love and justice directed primarily toward the oppressed and poor. The Lord certainly spoke of these matters in Luke 4:18 when He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed.” The Lord's words here seemingly confirm *Rereading's* interpretation of the focus of Christ's faithfulness, but the words *poor*, *captives*, *blind*,

and *oppressed* should not be understood simply as referring only to those who are materially or physically affected, because in our sin-corrupted world all humanity is poor without God, a captive of Satan, blind by nature, and oppressed in circumstances. Christ's faithfulness in addressing these conditions also should not be understood as involving just outward actions, because being poor, being captive, being blind, and being oppressed speak of spiritual conditions that require the subjective application of Christ's divine attributes to overcome them. Paul alludes to the manifestation of these attributes when he speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel" (Eph. 3:8). The unsearchable riches of Christ accessed through the faith of Christ certainly include justice and love, but much more is included. *Rereading's* limited focus on justice and love as the content of the faithfulness of Christ may have led Kim to carelessly say, "This good news is not about Jesus but about God who rules the world with justice and peace" (10). It is possible that *good news* here is not a semantic reference to the gospel but is being used merely as a common noun with a descriptive modifier. Such a statement, however intended, nevertheless undermines a clear understanding of the focus of the gospel—the person and work of Christ. In contradistinction to the claim that the gospel is not about Jesus, for example, Mark 1:1 refers to the gospel as "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (His person); Acts 5:42 refers to the gospel as "the gospel of Jesus as the Christ" (His work); Romans 15:19 refers to the gospel as "the gospel of Christ" (His person and work); and Ephesians 3:8 refers to the "unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel" (His person with all His divine attributes and His work of imparting all His obtainments and attainments).

### Different Is Different

*Rereading* articulates a modified version of Pamela Eisenbaum and John G. Gager's two-paths theory of Paul's gospel. The two-paths theory promotes the idea that "there are two different gospels or two different ways of justification or salvation—one for the Jews and one for the gentiles" (5). According to the theory, Paul continues to obligate Christian Jews to keep the entirety of the law. To support this stance, two-paths proponents view Paul's utterance in Galatians 5:3, which says, "I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law," as a positive admonition to continue to keep the law. However, in this verse Paul is only reiterating the futility and impossibility of keeping the law because of the weakness of the flesh.

*Rereading* does not align itself fully with the two-paths theory. Instead, it modifies it by suggesting that Paul allows for a "different version of the gospel, that is for Jews, who may keep the Jewish law and practices" (4). *Rereading* regards this "different version" as a positive development in its rereading of Galatians, but in reality, this version is just the opposite, because it opens the door to other "gospels"

based on misplaced accommodative tendencies. Indeed, how could any "gospel" ever be characterized as being different according to Kim's interpretation of the term? By speaking of a "different version" of the gospel as opposed to different paths, *Rereading* attempts to separate itself from the two-paths theory, but in this effort Kim offers only a distinction without a difference: "In this reading, the gospel is one and the same for both Jews and gentiles. The only difference is Jews *may* [emphasis mine] keep their religious traditions while staying in Christ. That is what 'a different gospel' means and it may work with them" (9). Despite *Rereading's* modification, it is still a different gospel according to Paul's use of the term. In its effort to avoid the appearance of taking a harsh two-paths position, *Rereading* says,

While there may be different implications of the gospel for Jews, the gospel is one and the same for both Jews and gentiles. Even if there may be a cosmetic change about the gospel, the essence of the gospel remains the same, as faith is one and the same for all. (5)

At its best, this "cosmetic change" tacitly tolerates a continuing call for Jewish believers to keep the law; at its worse, it perverts the gospel of Christ (1:7). It is doubtful that *Rereading's* advancement of a Jewish version of the gospel is rooted in an intentional desire to pervert the gospel, but that does not make it any less of a perversion. For Paul any gospel that goes beyond that which was announced is a different gospel worthy of condemnation. The significance of Paul's strong denunciation of the Galatian situation in relation to the gospel is illustrated by the fact that his condemnation occurs at the very beginning of the Epistle.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the introduction to the Epistle in 1:1-5, Paul writes,

I marvel that you are so quickly removing from Him who has called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another gospel, only there are some who trouble you and desire to pervert the gospel of Christ. But if even we or an angel out of heaven should announce to you a gospel beyond that which we have announced to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, now also I say again, If anyone announces to you a gospel beyond that which you have received, let him be accursed. (vv. 6-9)

*Rereading* attempts to support its "Jewish version" of the gospel by interpreting the word *different* completely out of its negative context in Galatians 1:6-9, saying,

While not thinking of the two different gospels—one for Jews and one for the gentiles, Paul acknowledges that the one gospel applies to Jews differently, as they may keep the law. This idea is seen in the phrase "a different gospel" (*eis heteron euangelion*, 1:6), which hints at that idea. Here "different" conveys the idea that this Jewish version of the one gospel is not wrong but different. This particular version of the gospel may work well with Jews. That is, for Jews, faith

may go side by side with Jewish laws and culture. Likewise, for them, faith and circumcision may work together. But even in this Jewish version of the gospel, the law does not take priority. As long as faith takes priority over other things, their gospel is not wrong, but different. (4)

The use of *different* in this way also goes against Paul's use of the term in his charge to Timothy: "Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things" (1 Tim. 1:3). Based on his harsh tone toward different gospels and his charge to Timothy, it is doubtful that Paul would accept *Rereading's* misappropriation of the word *different*. The promulgation of a different, Jewish version of the gospel is a negative development that goes beyond Paul's teaching that there are no Jewish or Gentile elements in the one Body of Christ produced through the death and resurrection of Christ. In His death on the cross, Christ abolished in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances (i.e., Jewish practices) that divided Jews and Gentiles, reconciling both in one Body, making peace, and then He came in resurrection as the Spirit to preach the gospel of this peace (Eph. 2:15-17). A Jewish version of the gospel with its subsequent recognition of distinctions in practices overturns this peace. The lack of peace among the churches in Galatia concerning the requirement of circumcision aptly illustrates this point. In Christ, whose members have put on of Christ through baptism, there cannot be Jew or Greek (Gal. 3:27-28). A Jewish version of the gospel with its subsequent recognition of racial distinctions violates the oneness that currently exists in Christ and inhibits the renewal of the one new man in the image of Him who created him (Col. 3:9-10). The promotion of a Jewish version of the gospel cannot be viewed in isolation merely for the sake of cultural accommodation; it must be viewed from the perspective of its subsequent impact on the unfolding development of the truth related to the Body of Christ, including the making of peace in the one Body of Christ, the putting on of the one Christ, and the renewal of the one new man. *Rereading's* Jewish version negates all these advancements in God's purpose and plan in His eternal economy.

### Shortages Related to the Truth of Christ's Person

Scattered throughout *Rereading*, there are isolated statements concerning the person of Christ, which, if taken as the actual sentiments of Kim, give rise to serious doubts as to his adherence to one of the basic tenets of the faith—the virgin birth of Christ. Christ's incarnation involved a virgin birth,

as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14, which says, "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel." The New Testament fulfillment of this prophecy is confirmed by Matthew when he writes, "Now all this has happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel' (which is translated, God with us)" (1:22-23). Despite these clear references to Christ's virgin birth, Kim writes, "Paul never talks about Jesus's virgin birth. He probably knew that Jesus was born just like any other human being" (75). It is one thing for Paul to not speak directly of the virgin birth in his Epistles—a fact that can be documented through a review of the New Testament text—it is another thing to suggest that this means he "probably" did not believe in Christ's virgin birth. Paul in fact alludes to Christ's incarnation and

the significant economical consequence of His virgin birth by speaking of His coming in the likeness of the flesh of sin to condemn sin in the flesh. Romans 8:3 says, "That which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin,

condemned sin in the flesh." If Jesus had been born "just like any other human being," He would have been born with the flesh of sin, just like any other human being. Such a natural and common human birth would have immediately disqualified Him from being the spotless, redeeming Lamb of God. Kim's statement may have been written for the sake of provoking thought, but it is a serious denial of an item of the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). *Rereading* should have avoided such a sensationalistic claim.

The virgin birth involved a union of two natures—humanity ("The Lord God will give to Him the throne of David His father," Luke 1:32) and divinity ("The Holy Spirit will come upon you," v. 35). His humanity came from an earthly source, a human being living on the earth. His divinity was of a heavenly source. There was no need to "send" the humanity of Jesus from its earthly source; His human nature was present already in the humanity of the virgin Mary. However, there was a need to send the Son with His divinity from a heavenly source, because it was not present in the humanity of Jesus. Consequently, Christ's incarnation necessitated the sending of the Son from His source in the heavens. Kim nevertheless downplays such a heavenly sending to the point of denial, saying, "God's sending of his Son in the right time is a theological statement meaning that Jesus worked for God and on behalf of people. Otherwise, the language of 'sending of his Son' is not

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to be taken literally in the sense that he came down from heaven” (74). Kim’s position cannot be sustained, because it ignores clear statements to the contrary by the Lord Himself, who acknowledged His coming down from the heavens in His incarnation. In John 6:51 He said, “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven,” and in verse 58 He repeated this point, saying, “This is the bread which came down out of heaven.” It is hard to see what *prima facie* purpose is served by Kim’s denial of the virgin birth and the sending of the Son from heaven. These denials are especially troubling given that the Gospels of Matthew (1:23) and Luke (1:27, 31, 35) both begin with an account of Christ’s virgin birth.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps in an overzealous effort to distinguish his rereading of the gospel in Galatians from what is in the formally recognized Gospels in the canon of the New Testament, Kim unnecessarily undermines a reader’s receptivity to his larger argument.

### Conclusion: The Need for a Different Rereading

*Rereading’s* assertion that Paul’s emphasis in Galatians is on the gospel, beginning with the promise of the gospel—the Spirit—being spoken to Abraham prior to the giving of the law, is well stated, and its assertion that Galatians is much more than a strident polemic against justification by works of the law is well presented, but in its depiction of what is the content of Paul’s gospel, *Rereading* errs significantly: The content of the gospel includes much more than a new human life filled with moral sacrifice, justice, and love. It is about the justifying faith of the Son of God operating in individual believers to produce the one corporate Body of Christ, where there cannot be Jew and Greek, much less a Jewish version of the gospel. *Rereading* needs to reread its rereading of Paul’s gospel to bring it in line with the truth of the gospel.

by John Pester

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The fact that Paul begins this Epistle with concerns related to the gospel rather than to justification by faith lends tacit support for *Rereading’s* basic thesis but not for its subsequent development of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup>The Gospel of John speaks of Jesus Christ as the God-Savior and, therefore, provides no record of His virgin birth, as He is one “without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Heb. 7:3). John does, however, speak of Christ’s incarnation, saying, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (1:14). There is no record of Christ’s incarnation and virgin birth in the Gospel of Mark because Mark portrays Christ as the Slave-Savior, and a slave is never memorialized with the dignity of a formal genealogy. According to Philippians 2:7-8, however, when the One who was equal with God took the form of a slave, His coming was in the likeness of men, and He was found in fashion as a man, which speaks to His incarnation.

## Broadening and Limiting Pauline Soteriology

*Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul’s Theology and Spirituality*, by Michael J. Gorman. Baker Academic, 2019.

Widely considered as one of the top Pauline interpreters of this generation, Michael J. Gorman is at the forefront of a burgeoning movement within biblical studies that aims to move beyond purely forensic interpretations of Paul. *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul’s Theology and Spirituality* (hereafter, *Participating*) is the fruit of two decades of examining the cruciform shape of New Testament soteriology, its relationship to theosis, and its dual ecclesial and missional foci.<sup>1</sup> Lucidly written and attentive to Scripture, there is much to affirm about Gorman’s conceptual framework; however, specific elements warrant critique, especially those related to the believers’ experience of God’s salvific economy. *Participating* is comprised of eleven chapters, nine of which have been previously published as articles. Each essay simultaneously functions as an exemplar of Gorman’s overall thesis and a unique lens highlighting specific aspects of his intellectual topography.

### An Overview

After delineating current scholarship examining participatory theology (xv-xxiv), Gorman employs a thirteen-point schematic in chapter 1 to summarize key arguments undergirding the ensuing chapters. Five points (3, 5, 6, 10, and 11) are especially helpful in illuminating the contours of his portrayal of Pauline theosis:

3. The cross is not only the definitive revelation of Christ and of God (i.e., it is both Christophany and theophany) but also the definitive revelation of what humans and the church are to be (10).

5. Cruciformity is also theiformity, or theosis: that is, cross-shaped existence is God-shaped existence, and this existence is for both individuals and communities in the Messiah (14).

6. Cruciformity/theiformity is a matter not of imitation but of transformative participation: being in the Messiah / the Spirit and having the Messiah/the Spirit within (mutual indwelling) (15).

10. Paradoxically, cruciform (cross-shaped) existence is also resurrectional (resurrection-suffused); cruciform ministry is life-giving because the death of the Messiah means life for all who share in that death (22).

11. The church is called not merely to *believe* the gospel but also to *become* the gospel and thereby to *advance* the gospel; the church is a living exegesis of the gospel (24).<sup>2</sup>

These propositions are all accounted for within Gorman's definitions of Pauline soteriology as "transformative participation" and "corporate, cruciform, resurrectional, missional theosis" (234).

Chapter 2 discusses the centrality of the cross in Paul's thinking. For Gorman 1 Corinthians 2:2 does not merely relate to Pauline Christology; rather, it informs Paul's "pneumatology, ministry, ecclesiology, spirituality (in-Christ-ness), anthropology, epistemology, and morality (or ethics)" (29). In other words, the crucified Messiah (Gorman's preferred title in lieu of Christ) is the controlling factor (or rather, person) formatively shaping all things Pauline, inclusive of the cruciformity of God, the Christian life, and the church (51-52). However, this singular focus on cruciformity may appear inattentive to other aspects of Jesus' narrative: per Gorman, "Where is the resurrection?" (52).

Chapter 3 addresses this concern in dialogue with Stephen Finlan, Rachael Tan, and especially Andrew Boakye, all of whom characterize Pauline soteriology as "anastiform," "resurrectiform," or "reviviform" (55). Though Gorman affirms claims forwarded by these authors (e.g., believers worship the God of resurrection), he contends that Paul prioritizes a cruciform shape of the Christian life that is nevertheless "resurrection-empowered" and "resurrection-suffused" (74). Moreover, he suggests that cruciform existence "is paradoxically the manifestation of divine power—indeed, of resurrection power" (69). A scandal to some—whether to his interlocutors or Paul's Corinthian audience—Gorman calls this antinomical existence "resurrectional cruciformity" (74).

Chapter 4 contains the volume's most linguistically technical discussion. Here, Gorman introduces a new translation of Philippians 2:5—a "participatory interpretation" (83)—which offers a third possibility beyond the over-rehearsed ethical-kerygmatic debate (called "imitative" and "locative" by Gorman) found in nearly every commentary on Philippians published in the past seventy years. Philippians 2:5 contains multiple exegetical quandaries, yet the heart of the debate concerns how the missing verb in  $\delta\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ [\text{verb}]\ \epsilon\grave{\nu}\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega\ \text{'}\text{I}\eta\sigma\omega\upsilon$  is translated. Gorman's exegesis is sound, albeit unorthodox; whether readers will be convinced by his translation is uncertain. Still, the motivation undergirding his translation is important—to emphasize that Paul is not directing believers to merely imitate Christ. Gorman states,

Paul's mode of exhortation, then, is not simply to present Christ as an example of the correct inner attitude, nor even

of correct actions. Rather, Paul emphasizes the "in the Messiah Jesus" dimension of the church's existence, grounding his exhortation in that dimension: those who live in the Messiah are to be conformed to the pattern of his self-humbling and self-emptying, not merely as imitators of a model, but as persons whose fundamental identity is to participate in him and thus in his story. Paul may speak of "obedience" (Phil. 2:12), but it is an obedience to the Obedient One (2:7) and enabled by participation in him. (94)

Additionally, Gorman suggests that Philippians 2:5 is not merely a textual bridge linking the church's mode of existence to Christ's kenosis but also a "theological one: a bridge from Paul to the doctrine of the Trinity and to the spirituality of theosis, or deification: transformative participation in the life of the Triune God" (95).

In chapter 5 Gorman enters into another perennial debate—apocalyptic versus covenantal interpretations of Paul. He proposes that Paul inhabits both theological spheres—apocalyptic, insofar as he receives a divine ἀποκάλυψις (revelation), and covenantal, since he proclaims a new covenant wherein God's Spirit

and God's law invade the hearts of God's people (97-98). Three claims form the crux of this chapter's thesis: (1) the "law of the Messiah" is equivalent to the indwelling law prophesied in Jeremiah and refers to the indwelling of Christ, which per Richard Hays, is Christ's "life-pattern" expressed as "self-giving love that gives expression to the faith, or faithfulness, of Christ" (107); (2) the Spirit prophesied in Ezekiel is always the Spirit of the Son who is simultaneously within and upon the believers (112-113); (3) "by means of the Spirit, the church is to be an apocalypse of the apocalypse, a living manifestation and exegesis of the surprising new covenant" (113).

In chapters 6 through 8 Gorman traces his conception of justification from Galatians 2:15-21 through 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 to the entirety of Romans. He argues that Pauline justification: (1) is by a faith that "entails more (though not less) than either intellectual assent or affective trust" (129); (2) incorporates "co-crucifixion" (129-134); and (3) is best characterized as "corporate participatory transformation" (172). Ultimately, he concludes that "the wall between justification and sanctification is in many ways collapsed" by these Pauline passages (175); yet, this is not problematic, nor does it exclude forensic accounts of justification. Rather, he argues that his conception permits "rapprochement between Protestants and Catholics, between West and East, and among Pauline interpretative schools" (147).

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Chapter 9 is the apex of Gorman's overarching argument: Paul (notably in 2 Corinthians) presents an inescapably theotic conception of salvation. He focuses on three verses—2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:21, and 8:9—each of which has been “noted as theotic by virtue of its textual logic, its historical context, or its patristic reception” (214). Speaking on 2 Corinthians 3:18, Gorman follows M. David Litwa and Ben C. Blackwell, who suggest that Paul conceives of theosis in terms of both present and future glory. Present glory is “power in weakness, life in death, glory in suffering...It is *resurrectional* cruciformity” (219); future glory is conformation to “the resurrected and immortal Christ,” which ultimately is to “share in the glory—the radiant splendor—of God” (218). For Gorman the continuity between these two glories is a key benefit of characterizing Pauline soteriology as theosis. Speaking on 2 Corinthians 5:21, he notes,

To be sure, the doctrine of theosis is about more than moral transformation, or what is often called “sanctification” in the West. It includes both present and eschatological transformation, understood as a single and continuous salvific reality, the former dimension corresponding largely to moral transformation, the latter to the eschatological resurrection and glorification of the body. (225)

When discussing 2 Corinthians 5:21 and 8:9, Gorman aptly mentions that both verses have been noteworthy described by Morna Hooker as “interchange” passages—that is, verses matching the Irenaean formula whereby God in Christ becomes what humans are so that humans can become what He is (214-215). In 5:21 Christ became sin so that men could become the righteousness of God, and in 8:9 Christ became poor so that men could become rich. In patristic language, God became man so that men may become God. As a final note, Gorman suggests that theosis is paradoxical: as humans become more divine, they become more fully human—that is, they become the image of God that they were meant to be. Hence, deification is humanization (225).

Chapters 10 and 11 bring participatory theology into conversation with the contemporary church. Chapter 10 is an imagined epistle written on behalf of Paul that links the North American church's transformation with the righteousness of God. Gorman exhorts the church to: (1) embrace non-violence; (2) exhibit care toward strangers (e.g., immigrants, refugees, and minorities); and (3) abhor immorality, idolatry, absolute rights, and absolute power. Chapter 11 urges Christian leaders to preach about the present experience of the resurrection. For Gorman preaching that resurrection is primarily about going to heaven is misleading; rather, “resurrection is first of all about new life here and now” (259). This new life is: (1) shaped by the cross; (2) countercultural (i.e., it values the body and abhors immorality); and (3) missional, insofar as it feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and works for God's justice on earth (260-262).

## Broadening and Limiting Theosis

Per Witness Lee, deification is defined as God becoming man so that man can become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. He calls deification “the high peak of the divine revelation” (*Crystallization-study* 99). It is the highest truth revealed in the Scriptures, the highest calling of the human life, and the highest identity of the church—indeed, it “embodies the entire revelation of God's New Testament economy” (Kangas et al. 4). As such, any proclamation of it demands appropriate praise; any misaiming regarding it necessitates measured critique.

Within the modern academy generally and biblical studies specifically, Gorman's *Participating* presents one of the broadest conceptions of Pauline theosis, inclusive of four key elements. First, Gorman's clarity concerning what theosis entails—resurrectional cruciformity, or in Pauline language, the continuous experience of being conformed to Christ's death by the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10)—is to be commended without reservation. Second, Gorman's insistence that Pauline theosis is not consistent with *imitatio Christi* but, rather, predicated upon the believer's participation in Christ is similarly laudable. Third, Gorman's insightful recognition of the inextricable link between an individual believer's salvific experience and the church—that is, the corporate aspect of Pauline theosis—is well taken. While other studies examining deification in Paul delimited their investigations to individualistic conceptions, *Participating* integrated this ecclesial orientation into its articulated conception of Pauline theosis as a necessary and telic reality. Gorman's conception truly reflects the Pauline vision of Christ the Head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22; 4:15) and Christ the Body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27) being ontologically united as the corporate Christ (v. 12)—the one new man where Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11; cf. Eph. 2:15). Fourth, Gorman's claim that the church in its missional orientation must become the “living exegesis of the gospel” (52) via transformative participation is well argued and wholly consonant with Paul's notion that the church is the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh for His expression (1 Tim. 3:15-16).

However, one shortage is present within Gorman's portrayal of Pauline theosis—the suggestion that the believers' present experience of theosis corresponds “largely to moral transformation” (225). He is not alone in promoting this notion—both Blackwell (*Christosis* 197) and Litwa (*Transformed* 290) present identical arguments in recent monographs. Though deification includes moral transformation, to circumscribe its present effects to mere morality misapprehends Paul's vision of Jesus and the life that He lived and grossly underestimates the effect of God in Christ as the Spirit indwelling the believers. Paul surely believed that Jesus was morally perfect—yet he did not consider this to be an exhaustive definition of Jesus *qua* Jesus. Thus, for Paul

any notion of transformation (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:4) and/or conformation to the image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29) necessarily exceeds the bounds of moral perfection. The transformation effected by deification was exhibited in Paul's life and ministry. An imprisoned Paul sang praises to God, resulting in his captor's salvation (Acts 16:25-34). Also while a prisoner, Paul was the life-guarantor and implicit leader of two hundred seventy-five souls, including his captors, during a potentially life-threatening voyage at sea (27:14-44). He was mistaken for a god in chapters 14 and 28. In Philippians his affections are identified with the inward parts of Christ (1:8). None of these occurrences are reducible to mere morality. Rather, they are the result of Christ and Paul being united in life, mingled in nature, and incorporated in person to the point that everything that was Christ's—i.e., His intention (Acts 16), His ministry (ch. 27), His expression (chs. 19, 28), and His deepest affections (Phil. 1:8)—became Paul's. When people met Paul, they were not impressed by his morality—which ironically, was a boast of his life before his encounter with Christ (cf. 3:6). Rather, they were affected by his magnification (1:20), living (v. 21), and fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15). When others saw Paul, they saw God expressed in humanity. This is the *telos* of deification—the duplication of Christ's God-man living, both individually and corporately, in all that it entails.

### Judicial Redemption versus Organic Salvation

Gorman is keen to rescue Pauline soteriology from sterile forensic interpretations—an admirable goal. To do so, Gorman incorporates co-crucifixion, participation in Christ, and deification within the doctrine of justification. While rightly recognizing that salvation includes more than a momentary declaration of righteousness and a life of awaiting the hereafter, this exercise in theological expansionism misses the clarity with which Paul describes the Christian life. Pauline soteriology is best understood as comprising two aspects: judicial redemption and organic salvation. The former is an accomplished objective fact; the latter is an ongoing, subjective experience.<sup>3</sup> Both are present in Romans 5:10: "If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." Here, Paul states that believers "were reconciled" (κατηλλάγημεν; past tense) through the death of Christ and emphasizes this accomplished reality by restating its occurrence—"having been reconciled"—with the aorist participle καταλλάγέντες. Reconciliation occurs when believers are justified by faith, and it is a key component of God's judicial redemption. Still, *contra* purely forensic accounts, this is not God's goal. Judicial redemption, though sufficient to save men from eternal perdition, is a vehicle that allows believers

to receive the life of God, and thereafter, experience, enjoy, and express Christ in the deifying process. This thought is expressed by Paul's proclamation that believers "will be saved" (σωθησόμεθα; future tense) "much more" in Christ's life, which describes organic salvation, a salvation involving an ongoing experience of the eternal life of the Triune God.

Though often debated, a proper apprehension of Pauline anthropology and eschatology illumines why judicial redemption and organic salvation should be properly demarcated. Concerning the former, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 clearly states that human beings are tripartite—possessing a spirit, a soul, and a body—and Hebrews 4:12 affirms the divisibility and differentiation of soul and spirit. This is noteworthy because it corresponds to Paul's identification of Christ as the wisdom of God fulfilling His salvific economy within the tripartite man: "Of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Righteousness refers to the believers' past, is tied to justification, and prepares the human spirit to receive the divine life; sanctification is presently experienced by the believers and refers to the transformation of the soul; and redemption refers to the future experience of the believers having

their bodies transfigured. Succinctly stated, the deification of a complete individual (spirit, soul, and body) is predicated upon justification but presently is being carried out via progressive sanctification as stated in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly."

Concerning eschatology, "The Word of Righteousness" in the April and October 2005 issues of *Affirmation & Critique* meticulously discusses the millennial kingdom as a reward to the mature believers, while the Spring 2009 and Spring 2012 issues are dedicated to detailing the kingdom of God, inclusive of its present reality as the proper church life (Rom. 14:17) and its future manifestation during the millennium. The relationship between the kingdom and the present subject is that though God is faithful to fully deify all those who receive His life (1 Thes. 5:24), believers who do not cooperate with Him will not be matured in the present age. Indeed, Paul alludes both to the believers' need to work out their salvation (Phil. 2:12) as well as the possibility of gaining or losing entrance into the millennial kingdom as a reward (1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; cf. 1 Cor. 3:8, 14). In other words, believers can be judicially redeemed and experience the first stage of organic salvation (i.e., regeneration) and yet not become mature in the divine life during their lifetime. Such ones will be saved from eternal perdition, but not be saved "much more" in Christ's life; such ones are justified, but have not experienced co-crucifixion, transformative participation, or theosis to the fullest extent.

GORMAN SUGGESTS THAT THEOSIS IS PARADOXICAL: AS HUMANS BECOME MORE DIVINE, THEY BECOME MORE FULLY HUMAN—THAT IS, THEY BECOME THE IMAGE OF GOD THAT THEY WERE MEANT TO BE. HENCE, DEIFICATION IS HUMANIZATION.

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## Conclusion

Gorman's apt dismissal of soteriological accounts emphasizing *imitatio Christi*, his keen awareness of theosis being inextricably linked to resurrection-empowered conformation to Christ's death, and his foregrounding of the ecclesial and missional implications of theosis are to be commended. However, his expansion of the doctrine of justification is not consonant with Paul's distinguishing between aspects of salvation that are objective and have been accomplished in this age (i.e., judicial redemption) and those that are ongoing experiences of organic salvation, which require the believers' cooperation during their lifetime. Moreover, Gorman's portrayal of believers' present experience of theosis—while correct in what it includes—excludes the totality of what it means to become God. Notwithstanding, these critiques are not meant to minimize *Participation's* positive contribution to Pauline studies. May the Lord continue to advance in the hearts of His seekers and recover the unadulterated reality of deification both within the academy and beyond.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Monographs in this line of inquiry include: *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*, 2001; *Reading Paul*, 2008; *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology*, 2009; *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, 2015; and *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 2018. Two of Gorman's publications—"Romans: The First Christian Treatise on Theosis," 2011 and *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 2018—have previously been reviewed in *Affirmation & Critique* (Fall 2011 and Spring 2019 issues, respectively).

<sup>2</sup>Italics, both here and elsewhere, are used by Gorman for emphasis.

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that while judicial redemption is an objective and accomplished fact, it needs to be applied in an ongoing manner so that believers can maintain their organic salvation. Concerning this, Witness Lee states,

God's organic salvation needs to be maintained constantly through God's judicial redemption. You should not say that since you have the judicial redemption and therefore have entered into the organic salvation, you no longer have anything to do with the judicial aspect and you do not need the judicial aspect. No, you still need God's judicial redemption. God's organic salvation needs to be maintained constantly through God's judicial redemption. For example, when the fellowship of the believers with God is interrupted due to their sins, they need to have their fellowship restored through the redeeming blood of Christ. (*Organic Aspect* 74-75)

by Michael Reardon

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## Missing Paul's Central Point in Galatians

*Galatians: Worship for Life by Faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord*, by John Paul Heil. Cascade Books, 2019.

**I**n *Galatians: Worship for Life by Faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord* (hereafter *Worship*). Professor of New Testament John Paul Heil introduces two proposals in his study of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The first involves a demonstration of new macro- and microchiastic structures in Paul's writing to the churches in Galatia. The second proposes that a key theme of Galatians is the liturgical, cultic, ritual, and ethical worship for "the present way of living as well as to future eternal life" by the believers' faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ (1). Regrettably, *Worship's* dependence on its proposed scheme of Galatians' literary structure skews its perception of the Epistle's context, thereby directing its exegesis toward the lesser theme of worship and away from Paul's emphasis on Christ as the promised life-giving Spirit living and operating in the sons of God as the new creation and as the Israel of God (3:14; 6:15-16).

### "Worship for Life by Faith"

*Worship* posits that Paul's Epistle to the Galatian believers was read to its intended audiences and relied "upon chiasms for their structural organization and punctuation," which apparently was common in "orally performed texts" (2). According to its literary function, "a chiasm works by leading its audience through introductory elements to a central, pivotal point or points, and then reaching its climatic conclusion by recalling and developing, via the chiastic parallels, aspects of the initial elements" (2). *Worship* proposes that "the text of Galatians naturally divides itself into thirteen distinct literary units based upon their microchiastic structures as determined by very precise linguistic parallels found

in the text” (2). It argues that many of the units within Galatians follow either a three-element (A-B-A') or four-element (A-B-B'-A') chiasmic pattern, though a chiasm can have any number of elements. Since the advent of the printed word, believers have had the luxury of being able to simply read the biblical text and discern its meaning through its written construction and presentation. Paul's audiences, *Worship* surmises, experienced by hearing “the chiasmic phenomenon unconsciously as an organizing dynamic that aided their perception and memory of the content” (2). *Worship* proposes that “these thirteen microchiasmic units form a macrochiasmic structure based upon very precise linguistic parallels found in the text of the parallel chiasmic units” (2) and follow the A-B-C-D-E-F-G-F'-E'-D'-C'-B'-A' “macrochiasmic structure unifying and organizing the entire letter” (19). *Worship* goes on to argue that today the ability to view the chiasms within Galatians, presumably structured intentionally by Paul, greatly facilitates the interpretation of his Epistle.

After the initial chapter of introducing the thirteen microchiasmic units, *Worship* proceeds to expound each unit in its own chapter, under the unifying theme of worship for life by faith in the crucified and risen Lord. Since the Epistle begins and ends with “acts of epistolary worship,” *Worship* theorizes that liturgical and ethical worship for both the present life and future eternal life is the “main theme and thrust of Galatians” and that worship for life by faith in the crucified and risen Lord “expresses a prominent and primary purpose of Galatians” (23). According to this unifying theme, *Worship's* interpretation of each chapter of Galatians may be summarized as follows.

In the opening chapter, Paul, who asserts his apostolic authority (v. 1) and states that his gospel is derived from divine revelation, announces the good news of Jesus Christ, whose resurrection by God the Father inaugurated a “new and final age” (25). Christ gave Himself to a sacrificial death for man's sins so that He might free sinners from the present evil age of death (vv. 3-4). Paul's “doxological worship” of God in verse 5 “sets the tone for the whole letter” and “indicates that proper worship for life is a main concern and the intended outcome for the letter to follow” (31). Having established this central theme, Paul proceeds to warn the Galatians, who were turning to a different gospel from that from which they received the grace of Christ (vv. 6-7). Paul served Christ as a slave by his moral behavior as “ethical worship” that “complements” his doxological worship of God the Father (vv. 10, 4-5) (31). Paul reinforces the legitimacy of his gospel (this is in contrast to any other gospel), which is the gospel of Christ, by testifying that God set him apart from his mother's womb and called him through His grace to preach to the Gentiles

(vv. 7, 15-16). *Worship* argues that Paul's indicating that God was pleased to reveal His Son in him further reassured the recipient believers that the apostle's gospel was acquired through the revelation of Jesus Christ (vv. 12, 15-16).

In Galatians 2 Paul affirms that sinners are not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ and “upon accepting the divine grace of a new life” (58) when they believed in the resurrected Christ. Paul preached this gospel to the Gentiles to free them from the requirement of observing Jewish laws, including circumcision. Paul and all other believers are dead to the law so that they might live to God (v. 19), that is, “live one's present life in a way pleasing to God through cultic and ethical worship” and live in a way “oriented to the implicit promise of future eternal life” (58). Since all believers have been crucified with Christ, the life of the believers is “animated and directed” by the risen Christ who lives in them (58). Although every believer still lives

in the flesh, he has been freed from “the mortality of the present evil age” by “accepting the grace of a new life from the risen Christ” so that he might live to and for God and thereby worship God in the present age with a view of the eternal life in the age to come with the resurrected Christ (59). If we

were able to be justified by the works of the law, as the Galatians were misled to think through a different gospel, then Christ would have died without purpose (v. 21).

In Galatians 3 Paul questions the Galatians as to why, having been justified by faith and having begun their Christian life with the Spirit, they turned back to the works of the flesh for its completion (vv. 2-3). The flesh in verse 3 “sarcastically refers to the cutting of the flesh of foreskin in the ritual of circumcision” and “to their returning to a life dominated by the mortality and weakness of the human flesh in this present evil age” (65), thus negating the gifts of the Spirit that had been supplied that they might “live to and for God...through their worship” (65). Foreseeing that the Gentiles would be justified out of faith, God announced the gospel with its “promise of eschatological life” to Abraham so that those who believe would be “blessed with justification...for new life” (72) rather than cursed by doing the works of the law (vv. 8-9). One who is justified will “live presently a life of worship from faith (not law)” (73). It was for freedom from the curse of the law and to give us a blessed life that Christ was cursed by being crucified on a tree (v. 13). We were redeemed from the curse of the law in order that the promise of the Spirit, “the promise of eschatological life that believers receive by being justified through faith and that the Spirit will bring to fulfillment” (73-74), could come to the Gentiles (v. 14). Despite the inability of the law to justify or to give life, it was added

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because of transgressions—to be our guardian until the one descendant of Abraham, Christ, would come to inherit the promise of eschatological life (vv. 19-24). Those who have been baptized into Christ “in an act of communal worship that ritualizes their faith in Christ have clothed themselves with Christ” (79), implying that they have died to the law, are indwelt by the risen Christ, and are identified with and united with Christ (vv. 27-28). Simultaneously, those who are clothed with Christ, who are the sons of God, are likewise descendants of Abraham and heirs to the eschatological life according to the promise (v. 29).

In Galatians 4 Paul indicates that before Christ came, the law acted as our guardian, and we were enslaved under the “evil and demonic elemental powers of the world” (87), under the curse of not carrying out the law because of the power of sin (v. 2; 3:22). However, at the fullness of time, God sent His Son, Christ, who was born of a woman and under law, so that He might redeem those under law and free them from enslavement. God sent the Spirit into the hearts of the believers, who became sons through faith, to enable them to praise and thank Him as their Father in acts of filial worship (4:6). As sons, the believers are also heirs who will inherit the promised eschatological life bequeathed to them by their Father God (v. 7). Paul feared that the Galatians, by being circumcised and observing the ordinances of Judaism, would become slaves again under the curse of the law, “serving and worshiping the weak and destitute elemental powers...associated with the law” (96). Hence, Paul implores the Galatian believers to become as he is by living an “eschatological life by faith in the Son of God...rather than by works of the law” (96). Addressing the Galatians as his children, Paul compares his zeal with that of the Judaizers, who are likewise zealous for the Galatians but not in a commendable way, because they seek to exclude the believers from “worshiping as members of the people of God unless they are circumcised” (94). Paul, who had brought the Galatians initially to faith in Christ through his gospel, again experienced the birth pangs, desiring that Christ would be formed in them (v. 19). Continuing in the “maternal metaphor” (96), Paul reveals that the believers are children of “the heavenly, eschatological Jerusalem” (106), which corresponds to the free woman, having been born through their believing, rather than children of the earthly Jerusalem, which corresponds to the slave woman, Hagar (106). As children of the free woman, the believers will inherit the promise of Abraham, like Isaac did. This caused Paul to lead the Galatians to a laudatory worship of God with rejoicing, which complements the laudatory worship of the Father in verse 6 and the doxological worship of God in 1:5 for the resurrection of Christ to “eschatological life in heaven” (106).

In Galatians 5 Paul warns the Galatians that if they return to the slavery of the law by circumcision, Christ will not benefit them (v. 2), and they will be separated from Christ and fall away from grace (v. 4). Instead, believers should await the hope of justification, the promised “eternal eschatological life” (120), by the Spirit and from faith (v. 5).

Paul even wishes that the ones persuading the Galatians to be circumcised would castrate themselves for hindering the believers from being persuaded by the truth (vv. 7-12). Paul goes on to remind the Galatians that God called them to the truth and to freedom, though not a freedom to exercise their flesh to enslave themselves again to the law through circumcision but the freedom to be slaves to one another through “Christ-like self-sacrificial love” (v. 13) (121). The Spirit and the flesh are “diametrically opposed” (129) to one another (v. 17). For this reason Paul counsels the Galatians to walk by the Spirit, for the Spirit leads those who do to “practice the self-sacrificial love that is the preeminent fruit of the Spirit...as the ethical worship by which every believer might ‘live’ to and for God” (130-131).

In Galatians 6 Paul encourages the believers in Galatia to bear one another’s burdens, including restoring those involved in the works of the flesh, with a spirit of humility. If they do so, they will fulfill the law of Christ (vv. 1-2). At the same time, they should examine themselves so that they would not be similarly tempted, become conceited, and be self-deceived (vv. 3-5). The Galatians are cautioned to not be led astray, for he who sows to the “flesh of ‘himself’” (136), that is, he who is self-deceived (through, for example, being circumcised), will reap destruction, but he who sows to the Spirit by living and walking by the Spirit will reap eternal life (vv. 7-8). Moreover, Paul points out that the Jews who were goading the believers to be circumcised did not keep the whole law themselves—their goading was so that they could “boast to Jewish authorities about the circumcised flesh of the Galatians to avoid persecution” (140). Paul, in contrast, boasted only in the cross of Christ, through which the world has been crucified to him and he to the world (v. 14). This means that through the crucifixion of Christ, Paul had “died and been freed from slavery” to “the demonic and deadly elemental powers of the ‘world...’, the present evil age...”, so that he may now live the eschatological life of the risen Christ” (141), which is the life of the new creation. The Galatians needed to be those who follow the rule that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is what matters (v. 15). Those who follow this rule will receive peace and mercy from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; those who follow this rule are the Israel of God (v. 16). Eternal life is a matter of grace, the “gift of eschatological life” (143), that frames the entire Epistle.

### “A New Creation Is What Matters”

*Worship’s* observation/presentation of Galatians’ microchiastic and macrochiastic structures is an interesting but ultimately fruitless endeavor. While it might be plausible that Paul chose a chiastic presentation for the benefit of his audience, *Worship’s* overreliance on literary structures as its preferred hermeneutics leads readers astray from the apostle’s intended goal and emphasis, which are revealed in the substance of his Epistle. Based on Galatians’ macrochiastic pattern, specifically Paul’s praises of God the Father at the beginning and the conclusion, *Worship* determined

that the overall theme of the Epistle is a life of worship by faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ. The same observation could be made of other apostolic letters<sup>1</sup> that begin with some form of doxological worship (giving either glory or blessing to God (e.g. 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3, 6)); however, none of Paul's Epistles are centrally concerned with worship for eternal life. Paul has a distinct subject and main point in each of his Epistles, regardless of literary style or textual arrangement. Paul declares his central point and emphasis in Galatians near the end of the Epistle: "Neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters" (6:15). Despite being mentioned only once in the Epistle, the new creation, or the Israel of God from a different perspective, is the goal and issue of Paul's trajectory in this Epistle and requires an accurate interpretation of the key points leading up to it for its proper unveiling.

The general subject of Galatians, as noted by Witness Lee in his outline of this Epistle, is Christ replacing the law and being versus religion and tradition. Contrary to *Worship's* interpretation, the present evil age is not merely an age of death filled with the mortality and weakness of the flesh. Paul clearly understands that the present age is evil because it is part of the satanic religious system, designed to distract all peoples, including believers, from being justified through faith in Christ, from receiving His grace, and from fulfilling God's purpose. In the context of Galatians, Paul strongly points to religion in general and to Judaism in particular as the evil worldly system. Galatians 6:14-15 affirms that circumcision is part of the religious world, from which all believers should be extricated. Broadly defined, religion is any system of worship of God and work for God apart from God Himself. Paul was rescued from his zeal for Judaism and from his persecution of the church of God allegedly in the name of God (1:13-14).

Another key point in chapter 1 is that God was pleased to reveal His Son in Paul and to call him through the grace of Christ to be a minister of Christ and to announce Christ as the gospel to the Gentiles. According to verses 15 and 16, the inward, subjective revelation of God's Son was a turning point for Paul, turning him from Judaism to Christ, indicating that the revealed Christ is versus religion and its associated elements—traditions, regulations, rules, and ordinances. Contrary to what is presented in *Worship*, God's revealing of His Son in Paul is not merely the confirmation of Paul's apostleship and the source of his gospel but also the preliminary step in the formation of God's new creation by his receiving of Christ as life and the revelation of Christ's superiority over and His being the replacement of the law.

Based on this revelation, the key point in Galatians 2 is our having died to the law that we might live to God. Paul teaches that man is not justified out of works of law but through faith in Jesus Christ, in and with whom all believers were crucified and thus are dead to the law so that they might live to God (vv. 16, 19). *Worship* sees the believers' living to God in their ethical living to please God, but Paul's understanding is much deeper. On the one hand, we have been crucified with Christ and no longer live; on the other hand, we live by Christ's living in us through His resurrection. Although we are crucified with Christ, we are not replaced but, rather, through regeneration, have a mingled living of one life and one living with Christ (v. 20). This revelation became the truth, that is, the reality, of Paul's gospel. For the truth of this gospel Paul became a slave of Christ, steadfastly defended its integrity when he opposed Peter to his face, and yielded nothing to the Judaizers who perverted the gospel and sought to corral the freed believers back to slavery under the law (vv. 4-5, 11-14; 1:10).

BROADLY DEFINED, RELIGION IS ANY SYSTEM OF WORSHIP OF GOD AND WORK FOR GOD APART FROM GOD HIMSELF. PAUL WAS RESCUED FROM HIS ZEAL FOR JUDAISM AND FROM HIS PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD ALLEGEDLY IN THE NAME OF GOD.

The key point that connects the truth, the reality, of Paul's gospel with our Christian life and ultimately the new creation is Christ as the life-giving Spirit (3:2-3, 5, 14; 1 Cor. 15:45). *Worship* critically misjudges the promise of the Spirit in Galatians 3:14, considering it to be the promise of the eschatological or eternal life fulfilled by the Spirit. Actually, the Spirit Himself is the eternal life and, more significantly, the promised blessing of Abraham received by believers (v. 2). Witness Lee says,

[Galatians 3:14] indicates that the Spirit is the blessing that God promised to Abraham for all the nations and that has been received by the believers through faith in Christ. The Spirit is the compound Spirit...and actually is God Himself processed in His Trinity through incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and descension that we may receive Him as our life and our everything. This is the focus of the gospel of God. (*Recovery Version*, v. 14, note 3)

The Spirit is not only compounded with the processes of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection but is also the consummation of the Divine Trinity (John 14:26; 15:26; 20:22). The entire Triune God is embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit; hence, what is supplied bountifully to the believers through faith in Christ is much more than eternal life and nothing less than God Himself as our life, nature, life supply, and everything. Furthermore, *Worship's* failure to see that the Spirit is the promised blessing of Abraham means that *Worship* also misses the vital revelation concerning Christ as the fulfillment of the type of the good land. In the same footnote Witness Lee continues,

The physical aspect of the blessing that God promised to

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Abraham was the good land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; 26:3-4), which was a type of the all-inclusive Christ (see Col. 1:12 and note 2). Since Christ is eventually realized as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), the blessing of the promised Spirit corresponds with the blessing of the land promised to Abraham. Actually, the Spirit as the realization of Christ in our experience is the good land as the source of God's bountiful supply for us to enjoy.

The good land was the promised blessing and all-inclusive resource that met all the needs of the children of Israel. The good land is the unique type of the all-inclusive Christ, who is realized as the all-inclusive Spirit—our bountiful supply to meet all our needs in our Christian life and walk.

Although *Worship* accurately synthesizes Paul's arguments concerning the futility of the law to justify us and to give life and correctly discerns the Spirit's role in a Christian's ethical living, it fails to recognize the full import of the life-giving Spirit's operation in bringing forth the new creation and the Israel of God, which are two aspects of the same entity and which fulfill God's eternal purpose to produce many sons for His corporate expression. God sent His Son to redeem those under law so that they might receive the sonship (4:5), and He sent the Spirit to impart the divine life into them so that they might become His many sons in reality (v. 6). Though we have been justified out of faith in Christ (3:24), have been regenerated by the Spirit with the divine life to be sons of God (4:5-6), and have been baptized into and have put on Christ (3:27), we must proceed to grow in life to maturity in the divine sonship until we become heirs of the promised blessing (v. 29; 4:7). This entails Christ's living in and being formed, fully grown, in us until we inherit God's promised blessing (v. 19).

To this end, every believer must cooperate with the operation of the Spirit by living and walking according to the divine life within them. In chapter 5 Paul reveals two kinds of walk, distinguished by two Greek words, that a Christian must have. The first walk (*peripateo*) is to walk by the Spirit in a general way, to act and move in our ordinary life according to the Spirit's leading and regulation (vv. 16, 18). The second walk by the Spirit (*stoicheo*) is more regulated and denotes an orderly walk resembling the keeping in step in a military march (v. 25). The first walk denotes our daily Christian walk, and the second walk denotes our taking God's eternal goal as our purpose and direction in life. This second walk directly ties to the goal and issue of the Spirit's living and operation in the believers—the new creation and the Israel of God. Concerning the new creation, Witness Lee says,

The old creation is our old man in Adam (Eph. 4:22), our natural being by birth, without God's life and the divine nature. The new creation is the new man in Christ (Eph. 4:24), our being that is regenerated by the Spirit (John 3:6), having God's life and the divine nature wrought into it (John 3:36; 2 Pet. 1:4), having Christ as its constituent (Col. 3:10-11), and having become a new constitution. This refers to the nature, the

inward and intrinsic organic constituent, of the church. Thus, the new creation is composed of sons; it is a corporate, divine sonship ([Gal.] 3:26; 4:5, 7) brought forth through Christ's redemption, the Spirit's regeneration, and God's dispensing of Himself into us, and through our entering collectively as this new man into an organic union with the Triune God.

The old creation was old because it did not have God's element; the new creation is new because it has God as its element. Although we are still the old creation, we experience the reality of the new creation when we walk according to the Spirit (5:16, 25). The main issue in this book is that we are the new creation and that we should live by the new creation through an organic union with the Triune God. This new creation fulfills God's eternal purpose, which is to express Himself in His sonship. (*Recovery Version*, 6:15, note 1)

Galatians 6:16 goes on to say, "As many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, even upon the Israel of God." Those who walk by this rule, referring to those who walk by the new creation and also to those who walk in an orderly, regulated fashion according to God's goal and purpose, are the Israel of God. This indicates that the sons of God who walk according to the Spirit, having God's element as their constituent, are the real Israel, the true sons of Abraham, who inherit the promised blessing, express God in His image, and execute God's authority for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

## Conclusion

*Worship's* presentation of microchiastic and macrochiastic structures in Galatians and positing worship for life by faith as the key theme in Galatians do not correspond to Paul's key points and goal in the Epistle. *Worship's* dependence on a literary structure plausibly governing the Epistle leads its interpretation to focus on a minor theme of a life of worship rather than Paul's revelation of Christ as the life-giving Spirit living and operating in the sons of God to bring forth the new creation and the Israel of God. Ultimately, *Worship* misses the central point in Galatians because it fails to see that God does not simply desire laudatory praise but, rather, desires a glorious corporate expression of Himself in and through His many sons.

by Kin Leong Seong

## Note

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the central points of the four crucial Pauline Epistles—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—see Jim Batten, "The Heart of the Divine Revelation," *Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 18, no. 1, Spring 2013, pp. 85-89.

## Work Cited

Lee, Witness. Footnotes and Outlines. *Recovery Version of the Bible*, Living Stream Ministry, 2003.