

Jeruselems Above and Below: A Critique of J. L. Martyn's Interpretation of the Hagar–Sarah Allegory in Gal 4.21–5.1*

BRENDAN BYRNE, SJ

*Jesuit Theological College (University of Divinity), 175 Royal Parade, Parkville, VIC
3052, Australia. email: bbyrne@jtc.edu.au*

In several studies of Galatians, J. Louis Martyn has argued that in the allegory of Hagar and Sarah (4.1–5.1), the 'two covenants' of 4.24b, traditionally identified with Judaism and Christianity respectively, refer, on the one hand, to a Christian Jewish Law-observant Gentile mission, Teachers from whom are disturbing Paul's Galatian converts, and to the Law-free Gentile mission promulgated by Paul, on the other. In the light, particularly, of Paul's overall usage of 'covenant', Martyn's interpretation is not sustainable – though this need not imply a return to an anti-Jewish interpretation of the text.

Keywords: Galatians, Hagar–Sarah, allegory, covenant, mission slavery

The allegory of Hagar and Sarah with which Paul reinforces his argument to the Galatians remains one of the most provocative and controversial texts in his letters. It seem to turn the plain meaning of a scriptural passage (Genesis 16–21) on its head. It also stands out among New Testament texts casting a dark shadow over Christian attitudes to Jews and Judaism. A traditional interpretation sees Paul identifying Judaism with the slave-girl Hagar and Christianity with the free-woman, Sarah. On the basis, then, of the divine injunction in Gen 21.10, echoed in Gal 4.30, this interpretation regards Judaism as permanently displaced and replaced by Christianity in the line of salvation.¹ Oft quoted as giving recent

* An earlier version of this article was discussed in a seminar at the 68th SNTS General Meeting, Perth, Western Australia, July 2013. I gratefully acknowledge that attendance at the conference was assisted by a MCD University of Divinity Conference Travel Grant provided for this purpose.

1 E.g. J. B. Lightfoot, who speaks in connection with this passage of Paul as having sounded 'the deathknell of Judaism' (*Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan, 1890¹⁰) 184; cf. M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul: Épitre aux Galates* (Paris: Gabalda, 1926): 'Le judaïsme est une religion de crainte, une religion d'esclaves. Il est bien évident qu'il doit céder la place à la religion des fils' (121).

classic expression to this view are statements of Hans Dieter Betz in his monumental *Hermeneia* commentary on Galatians: ‘Paul’s intention is clear; he wants to create a dualistic polarity between “Judaism” and “Christianity,” in order to discredit his Jewish-Christian opposition’;² ‘in Galatians there is no room or possibility for an eschatological salvation of Judaism ... Judaism is excluded from salvation altogether’.³

In the face of this traditional interpretation of the allegory, J. Louis Martyn in several studies leading up to his *Anchor Bible Commentary* on Galatians argued that what Paul was identifying with the ‘covenant’ (διαθήκη) represented by Hagar and corresponding to the ‘present Jerusalem’ (v. 25b–c) was not Judaism as such but the present Christian–Jewish Gentile mission emanating from Jerusalem, whose representatives (‘the Teachers’) were disturbing his Gentile converts in Galatia.⁴ On this understanding the controversy behind Paul’s use of the Hagar–Sarah allegory was an intra-Christian affair with no immediate bearing or judgement upon Judaism as such. It revolved around two very different conceptions of the terms upon which converts from the non-Jewish (Gentile) world were to be admitted into the eschatological people of God.

Understandably, in the post-Holocaust sensitivity to the heavy burden of responsibility that anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic interpretations of Christian Scripture must bear for the suffering of Jewish people down the ages, Martyn’s reinterpretation of this passage has received a ready welcome. It has been embraced with enthusiasm by many subsequent interpreters of Galatians – notably in the commentaries on the letter by Richard Hays,⁵ Frank Matera,⁶ Ben Witherington III⁷ and Martinus C. de Boer⁸ – and in shorter studies of the

2 H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (*Hermeneia*; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 246.

3 *Ibid.*, 251; cf. earlier E. de W. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921) 262.

4 J. L. Martyn, ‘The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah’, *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (ed. J. T. Carroll, C. H. Cosgrove, E. E. Johnson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 160–92, reprinted, much reduced, as ‘The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah: Two Covenants and Two Gentile Missions’, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997) 191–208; *id.*, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) Comment #45 (‘The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah: Two Covenants and Two Gentile Missions’) 447–56. References to ‘The Covenants’ in this critique will be to the original version of the article in the Meyer Festschrift. Martyn’s interpretation follows a line suggested earlier by Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT IX; Freiburg/Basle/Vienna: Herder, 1974) 325.

5 R. B. Hays, ‘The Letter to the Galatians’, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. XI (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000) 181–348, esp. 302–7.

6 F. J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP 9; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 76–9.

7 B. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 330–2.

8 M. C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011) 287.

passage in question.⁹ In a recent article, Susan G. Eastman feels able to describe this interpretation as a ‘new consensus’, which is largely displacing the ‘traditional understanding’.¹⁰

In the context of the renewed appreciation of Christian responsibility in regard to interpreting the Scriptures in a post-Holocaust era and of the grave ethical issues involved, it is no light thing to challenge what in the eyes of many has been a very positive and necessary development in the interpretation of this particular Pauline passage. I am not, however, convinced that it represents an accurate or adequate interpretation of Paul or of Paul’s attitude, when writing Galatians, towards his ancestral religion. In making this point, I in no way wish to return to the stark dichotomies of the older interpreters or to revive grounds for Christian attitudes to Judaism of a supersessionist nature. I would, however, maintain that responsible Christian interpretation must rest on an accurate reading of Paul and be prepared to accept that in a particular letter, directed to a particular context, he may exhibit views unacceptable on a wider theological understanding – views which he himself may have modified or clarified in later writings, most notably when discussing Israel’s future in Rom 11.11–32.¹¹

What I propose to do in this paper is to expound and critique Martyn’s analysis and to indicate the grounds upon which, in the light of a renewed examination of aspects of the allegory, I believe it to be unsustainable. In conclusion, I shall indicate that a return to an interpretation of the passage in a more strictly covenantal sense is consonant with Paul’s overall argument in Galatians and need not imply a return to anti-Jewish interpretations of old.

- 9 M. C. de Boer, ‘Paul’s Quotation of Isaiah 54.1 in Galatians 4.27’, *NTS* 50 (2004) 370–89, esp. 381; Michael Bachmann, ‘Die andere Frau: Synchrone und diachrone Beobachtungen zu Gal 4.21–5.1’, *Antijudaismus im Galaterbrief? Exegetische Studien zu einem polemischen Schreiben und zur Theologie des Apostels Paulus* (NTOA; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) 127–57 (English translation: ‘The Other Woman: Synchronic and Diachronic Observations on Gal 4:21–5:1’, in M. Bachmann, *Anti-Judaism in Galatians? Exegetical Studies on a Polemical Letter and on Paul’s Theology* (trans. R. L. Brawley; Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2008) 85–100, 176–95 (Notes)). (References to Bachmann in this present article will be to the German original.) R. Brawley, ‘Contextuality, Intertextuality, and the Hendiadic Relationship of Promise and Law in Galatians’, *ZNW* 93 (2002) 99–119, likewise rejects any sharp polarity between the Abraham and Sinai covenants emerging from Gal 4.21–31.
- 10 S. G. Eastman, ‘“Cast Out the Slave Woman and her Son”: The Dynamics of Exclusion and Inclusion in Galatians 4.30’, *JSNT* 28/3 (2006) 309–36, esp. 311. For Eastman, when Paul quotes Gen 21.10 in v. 30, he is not commanding the Galatians to expel anyone from the community but rather wanting them to overhear in the text a divine warning not to risk exclusion from the inheritance by yielding to inclination to take on circumcision and commitment to the Law.
- 11 Even in Romans 9–11 Paul goes on a long journey to arrive at the more hopeful presentation of Israel’s future in the latter half of chapter 11. The early part of the sequence, especially 9.6b–9, has strong echoes of Gal 4.21–31.

1. Martyn's Thesis

Though not dealing directly with the Hagar-Sarah allegory, Martyn cleared the way for his subsequent interpretation of this passage in an important article in which he – convincingly to my mind – established the existence of a Law-observant Christian mission to Gentiles alongside and very much in rivalry with the Law-free mission to Gentiles pursued by Paul and his immediate co-workers.¹² In a further article published in the same year,¹³ Martyn, initiating an approach that was to become characteristic of his interpretation of Paul, argued that Galatians was no exception to the thoroughly apocalyptic cast of Pauline thought. Central to the case was the existence in the letter of sets of radical antinomies characteristic of apocalyptic – a crucial instance being provided by the pairs of opposites set out in Paul's allegorical interpretation of Abraham's two sons in 4.21–5.1.¹⁴ In this article, without entering further into the matter, Martyn noted in regard to the polemic contained in the set of antinomies: 'It is crucial to see that the polemic is not focused on Judaism, but rather on pairs of opposites.'¹⁵

In his 1990 contribution to the Paul Meyer Festschrift Martyn expounded in detail the case for an intra-Christian interpretation of Gal 4.21–5.1. He concedes that 'the dominant interpretation', while accentuating the antinomies involved in the passage – in particular identifying the slavery in question with Judaism and the freedom with Christianity – nonetheless 'stands on solid ground'. On one side of the sharp polarity some of Judaism's major symbols (Sinai, the covenant of Sinai, Jerusalem) are present; the mention of persecution in v. 29 recalls the allusion to Jewish persecution of the churches in Judea in 1 Thess 2.14–16; the issue of 'inheritance' (cf. v. 30c) was a major area of contention between mainstream Judaism and nascent Christianity (cf. Mark 12.1–12).¹⁶

12 J. L. Martyn, 'A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles', *SJT* 38 (1985) 307–24; a revised edition of this article was included in the collection *Theological Issues*, 7–24; reprinted in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. M. D. Nanos; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002) 348–61.

13 J. L. Martyn, 'Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians', *NTS* 31 (1985) 410–24. A revised and reduced version appears in *Theological Issues*, 111–23; this omits discussion of Gal 4.21–5.1.

14 'Apocalyptic Antinomies', 418–20. On the demarcation of the pericope as running from 4.21 to 5.1 (rather than concluding at 4.30 or 4.31), see Martyn's analyses of the literary structure of sections of the letter in *Galatians*, 294–6, 409, 432–3. While undoubtedly forming something of a bridge to the exhortatory section to follow, 5.1 resumes and rounds off the slavery/freedom opposition introduced in 4.22 and recurrent throughout 4.23–31; cf. de Boer, 'Paul's Quotation', 372 n. 5.

15 'Apocalyptic Antinomies', 420.

16 'The Covenants', 169.

Introducing his alternative view of the Hagar–Sarah allegory, Martyn draws attention to the need to explain the passage within its wider context.¹⁷ Why does Paul, following a sustained personal appeal in 4.12–20, revert to this scriptural argument, which in many ways would seem to be better placed in immediate association with the similar scriptural considerations in chapter 3? In this connection we should note, first, that Martyn wholeheartedly embraces the thesis of C. K. Barrett that Paul concerns himself with the Abraham texts in Galatians because the Teachers had invoked them as powerful arguments for the demands they were making.¹⁸ It is not surprising, then, that he feels obliged to counter every aspect of the use the Teachers have made of these texts, including those dealing with the rivalry of Hagar and Sarah in Genesis 16 and 21. Secondly, Martyn maintains that the allegory in 4.21–5.1 flows naturally out of the passage immediately preceding, 4.11–20. There Paul highlights his disappointment with the Galatians in the light of the personal relationship forged with them through the circumstances of his initial coming among them. In particular, for Martyn, the exclamation, ‘My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you’ (v. 19), leads very naturally into the ‘giving birth/begetting’ (γεννᾶν) language used with reference to the founding of communities in the Hagar–Sarah allegory.¹⁹

Paul’s sustained use of the verb γεννᾶν in the allegory itself (v. 23; v. 24; v. 29) is in fact a major plank, possibly the major plank, upon which the overall thesis stands. Martyn points out that in dealing with the Genesis traditions Paul is necessarily selective and indeed creative, suppressing several motifs and introducing others.²⁰ In the Abraham stories of Genesis the births of Ishmael and Isaac are consistently referred to in the LXX translation by the verb τίκτειν, the verb γεννᾶν being conspicuously absent.²¹ Yet Paul uses or implies γεννᾶν throughout Gal 4.21–5.1 – three times explicitly, five times if implicit usage in v. 23 and v. 29 is included. For Martyn this represents a deliberate choice on Paul’s part against the LXX usage, which normally reserves γεννᾶν for male begetting and τίκτειν for female giving birth. Paul does in fact preserve τίκτειν when he quotes Isa 54.1 in Gal 4.27. Martyn notes that, had he employed τίκτειν as the birthing verb in his references to the narratives of Genesis 16 and 21, it would have provided him with a useful argument for connecting the two texts on a *gezerah shawah* basis.²² The fact that he resiles from this possibility of connection

17 ‘The Covenants’, 170–1.

18 C. K. Barrett, ‘The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians’, *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982) 154–70; cf. Martyn, ‘The Covenants’, 170 n. 24; also Matera, *Galatians*, 175; Hays, ‘Galatians’, 300.

19 ‘The Covenants’, 170–1; cf. Matera, *Galatians*, 173.

20 ‘The Covenants’, 173–4.

21 The appearance of γεννᾶν in Gen 17.20 is not relevant to the births of Ishmael and Isaac.

22 ‘The Covenants’, 176–7; cf. also Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 331.

further shows the intentionality of his choice of γεννᾶν – a choice which Martyn sees to be motivated by Paul’s association of this verb with mission and the founding of churches. Paul employs γεννᾶν when speaking of the Christian birth of Onesimus through his ministry (Phlm 10) and also in regard to his founding of the church in Corinth (1 Cor 4.15). For Martyn, then, the appearance of this verb in Gal 4.21–5.1 has a similar reference to the current ‘birthing’ of communities of believers, whether this be ‘into slavery’ on the part of the rival, Law-observant mission (v. 24c) or, by implication, into freedom on the part of his own missionary labours (cf. v. 23b; v. 26; v. 31). The movement from the historical paraphrase of the Genesis narrative in vv. 22–3 to the present tense (γεννῶσα) of the allegorical interpretation in vv. 24–8 shows that two concurrent and rival missions are in view, rather than the kind of sequential presentation – from the Sinai dispensation to that of faith (cf. Gal 3.23–25) – as presupposed in the traditional interpretation.²³

In that traditional interpretation the contrasting phrases modifying γεννᾶν in Paul’s allegory – ‘begotten according to the flesh’ // ‘begotten via the promise’ (v. 23); ‘bearing children into slavery’ (v. 24); ‘a child begotten according to the flesh’ // ‘the child begotten according to the Spirit’ (v. 29) – are understood adjectivally, that is, as referring to two classes of persons: those born into slavery and those born into freedom. Martyn on the contrary insists that the prepositional phrases attached to γεννᾶν are to be understood adverbially, that is, as referring to two different processes or modes of giving birth.²⁴ Paul is speaking of two different ways in which churches are being born *at the present time* and thus of two different missions.²⁵ The reference to ‘persecution’ in v. 29 derived from the tradition about Ishmael’s ‘playing’ with Isaac in Gen 21.8–14 refers, then, not to Jewish persecution of nascent Christian churches but to the ‘odious missioning work of the Teachers’.²⁶ Finally, Paul’s reference to the Hagar covenant as corresponding to ‘the present Jerusalem who is in slavery together with her children’ (v. 25b) is not a simple geographical reference to the city. It is more likely to be Paul’s way of referring to the Jerusalem church in so far as it is sponsoring the Law-observant mission.²⁷

In view of the fact that Genesis speaks of only one covenant in the Abraham stories, the one defined precisely in terms of commitment to circumcision (Genesis 17), Martyn addresses Paul’s anomalous allegorical interpretation of the two women as ‘two covenants’ (v. 24b).²⁸ Earlier in Galatians (3.15, 17)

23 ‘The Covenants’, 177; also Hays, ‘Galatians’, 302 n. 225.

24 ‘The Covenants’, 178–9; also *Theological Issues*, 201 n. 16.

25 ‘The Covenants’, 179.

26 *Ibid.*, 180.

27 *Ibid.*, 182–3. Martyn considerably develops this point concerning ‘Jerusalem’ in the essay ‘A Tale of Two Churches’, *Theological Issues*, 25–36, which reproduces Comment #46 in *Galatians*, 457–66.

28 ‘The Covenants’, 186–7.

there was mention of a single διαθήκη and that in connection with Abraham, not Sinai. Here Paul speaks of two 'covenants' (διαθήκαι), associating the Hagar covenant with Sinai and slavery (v. 24c-d). For Martyn the two covenants do not represent Judaism and Christianity respectively but refer to the two rival missions to the Gentiles: the Law-observant and the Law-free. Paul is driven to 'the holy madness' of affirming two covenants 'in order to establish the integrity of God's one church'.²⁹ Those who carry out the Law-observant mission to Gentiles are furthering the enslaving covenant of Hagar and persecuting the Spirit-born churches of God. The Galatians, heeding Scripture's command (Gen 21.10, cited in 4.30), are to cleanse their congregations by driving out the intrusive Teachers and remaining firm in their true identity as children of the Law-free mission. In conclusion, Martyn concedes that 'Judaism stands somewhere in the background'. However, in this paragraph, Paul is 'far from launching a comprehensive attack against Judaism'.³⁰

2. Critique of Martyn's Interpretation

It is in fact in connection with 'covenant' that a critical review of Martyn's interpretation should begin. As is regularly pointed out, 'covenant' (διαθήκη) is a word of relatively infrequent occurrence in Paul. This does not mean, however, that it plays an insignificant role in his theology. As W. S. Campbell has pointed out, 'what is generally presumed need not always be explicitly noted'.³¹ When in Gal 3.15, 17 Paul presents the promises God made to Abraham (Gen 13.15; 17.8; cf. 24.7) as a testamentary διαθήκη that cannot be set aside or have further conditions or clauses written in to it, he explicitly states that he is appealing here to the image of a human will (3.15). But the image, while it illustrates an aspect of the divine promise, does not engulf it completely: the meaning of a divine disposition in the covenantal sense remains.³² Paul does not at this point go on to describe the intrusive Sinai dispensation as a διαθήκη. That would confuse the image.³³ He

29 Ibid., 187 (emphasis original).

30 Ibid., 188. It is interesting that Susan Eastman, while very sympathetic to Martyn's view in general, acknowledges the weakness of the distinction he draws between the Sinai covenant in itself and the covenant as imposed upon Gentiles; 'the implicit link between Sinai and slavery remains'; see 'Cast Out the Slave Woman', 316-17 n. 16.

31 W. S. Campbell, 'Covenant and New Covenant', *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne *et al.*; Downers Grove/Leicester, UK: Intervarsity, 1993) 179-83, esp. 179. It should be noted that in this article Campbell thoroughly endorses Martyn's interpretation of Gal 4.21-5.1, referring the 'covenants' of 4.24 to rival Christian missions.

32 Cf. Matera, *Galatians*, 126.

33 For Martyn, Paul 'de-theologizes' διαθήκη in Gal 3.15 (= 'will'), in order to disassociate it from the Sinai covenant, and then 're-theologizes' it (= 'covenant') in connection with God's promise to Abraham in 3.17 (*Galatians*, 338, 341, 344-6).

simply speaks of ‘the Law’ (vv. 17–24). The reference of αἱ διαθήκαι included in the listing of the privileges of Israel in Rom 9.4 is very open: in mind could be the reiterated patriarchal promises; the Sinai covenant and its several renewals; or the entire range of covenants mentioned in the Scriptures of Israel.³⁴ Likewise, the instance of διαθήκη in a phrase derived from Isa 59.21 in the composite quotation in Rom 11.26–7 simply specifies that the operation of God’s abiding fidelity to Israel will consist in the removal of human sin exactly as in the case of those who have already come to faith (Rom 3.21–6).³⁵

Setting aside the ‘covenant’ reference in Gal 4.24, this leaves the reference to ‘new covenant’ in a eucharistic context in 1 Cor 11.25 (‘new’ implying the existence of and distinction from an ‘old covenant’), together with the explicit references to a ‘new covenant’ in 2 Cor 3.6 and to the ‘reading’ of the ‘old covenant’ a few lines later in 3.14. Those who, following the lead of Martyn, adopt the new consensus reading of the covenants in Gal 4.24 usually contest the relevance to the Galatians issue of these references in 2 Corinthians.³⁶ The sequential (‘new’/‘old’) sense of the ‘covenant’ references in 1 Cor 11.25 and especially those in 2 Cor 3.6–18 is at odds with the present tense of the assertion in v. 24 (‘These are two covenants’). In contrast with that assertion of the contemporaneous existence of the covenants, what is being argued, especially in the 2 Corinthians midrash, is a sequence of ‘old’ and ‘new’ – as is also the case in Galatians 3.³⁷

In fact, however, though the reference to Moses’ behaviour in 2 Cor 3.13 is historical and couched in the past (ἐτίθει),³⁸ Paul understands his behaviour with the veil to be continued (cf. ‘until this day’ (vv. 14, 15)) in the reading out of the ‘old covenant’ (by his representatives) in the present. In other words, while in Paul’s view ‘the old covenant’ (v. 14), with its verdict of condemnation (v. 9), *should* have yielded to the proclamation of the new, this has not in fact happened universally; it only occurs when in faith one ‘turns to the Lord’ and contemplates

34 Cf. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1996) 563. The selection of terms in the six-member list could be rather arbitrary and determined as much by formal considerations (parallel and assonance) as by strict consciousness of content; see B. Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996) 285, 287.

35 Cf. Byrne, *Romans*, 355.

36 Martyn, ‘The Covenants’, 191 n. 59; R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989) 114–15; Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 331–2; Bachmann, ‘Die andere Frau’, 148.

37 In the same note just mentioned (see preceding note) Martyn also makes the point that ‘[whereas] in Galatians 4 Paul speaks of his Law-free mission as the [Sarah] covenant itself, in 2 Corinthians 3 his mission is in the *service* of the [new] covenant’ (emphasis original). This, however, presumes the thesis being argued by Martyn that the ‘covenants’ in Galatia refer to missions, not to the covenants promulgated by the mission.

38 The imperfect tense expresses reiterated action; cf. J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (SP 8; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999) 52.

his glory with unveiled face (3.17–18). Because of the continuing unbelief of the bulk of Israel ‘the same veil lies over their hearts’ (v. 15). Wrongly, in Paul’s view, the old covenant continues to be proclaimed – not only by Jews who have not come to faith in Christ but also by Christian Jews who think that it can and should co-exist with faith and, in the shape of the Mosaic Law, regulate the lives of believers, Jewish and Gentile.³⁹

It is missionaries of the latter group who are disturbing the freedom of Paul’s Gentile converts in Galatia, just as the activities of rival Christian missionaries of a similar persuasion constitute the threat concerning which he warns the Philippian church in sharp tones in Phil 3.2–19. It is not easy to discern in 2 Corinthians the identity of those threatening the allegiance to Paul of his converts in Corinth. However, they are certainly Jewish Christians, who appear to derive authority from Jerusalem.⁴⁰ Paul’s claim that they are proclaiming ‘another Gospel’ (2 Cor 11.4) recalls Gal 1.6–9. The issue behind the extended midrash on Moses that Paul deploys in 2 Cor 3.7–4.6 is not the imposition of circumcision or ‘works of the Law’ but rather the legitimacy of his claim to independent apostolic authority. Paul sets out the midrash to assert that he and his co-workers enjoy a self-legitimizing authority (‘glory’) stemming from the very covenant that they are proclaiming, a covenant possessing a glory far surpassing and indeed overtaking the (fading) glory that attended the covenant promulgated by Moses. The issue is different but the argument involves the same relegation of the Mosaic covenant to inferior and temporary status as in the allegory elaborated in Gal 4.21–5.1.⁴¹

In the light, then, of these references to ‘covenant’ in other Pauline contexts, it seems highly contrived to interpret the ‘two covenants’ of Gal 4.24 as pointing to two Christian missions, rather than as designating the covenants (‘old’ and ‘new’, to use the language of 2 Corinthians 3 and 1 Cor 11.25) that each of those missions, respectively, rests upon and proclaims.⁴² Moreover, early Christian usage

39 The continuance of the proclamation of the ‘old covenant’ in this way explains Paul’s use of the present tense in Gal 4.23–4, so eliminating the argument of Bachmann (‘Die andere Frau’, 150–1) that Paul is speaking of covenants here in a way different from that in 2 Corinthians 3.

40 Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1973) 40–1; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 7.

41 The phrase, εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου, at the end of v. 13 is often taken as referring to the ‘glory’ accompanying the proclamation of Sinai covenant (so, e.g., NRSV). However, if the reference were to the δόξα, the passive participle would be in the feminine. The neuter participle refers to Moses’ ministry in a more general way and to the Mosaic covenant promulgated in that ministry; cf. V. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; New York: Doubleday, 1984) 207, 208; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 52.

42 J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1993) 249, suggests that in referring for the purpose of his exegesis to two covenants in Gal 4.24, Paul is in effect simply describing two ways of understanding the one covenant purpose of God through Abraham and his seed. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 330, rightly points out that this fails to grasp the radical character of Paul’s argument.

of διαθήκη more generally would appear to render the restriction of the διαθήκη ‘from Mount Sinai’ (Gal 4.24c) to a particular faction within Jewish Christianity (the Law-observant Gentile mission) very singular.⁴³ Far more likely is a reference simply to the Sinai covenant, the applicability of which to Gentile converts that faction was proclaiming.

Indeed, if the reference in 4.24–6 is primarily to the two contrasting missions, one wonders why Paul would have introduced the term διαθήκη at all – especially as it had dangerous overtones for his case in view of its explicit and reiterated association with the circumcision command in God’s dealings with Abraham (Gen 17.10–14, 23–6). Avoiding the necessity to make the tortuous association of Hagar with Sinai and then with Jerusalem, Paul could simply have associated the Law-observant mission with Hagar, on the basis that both involved slavery (as already established for those under the Law earlier in the letter (4.1–3, 7, 8–11)), and the Law-free mission with the free-woman Sarah. He could then have proceeded to make his point about who was and who was not destined to inherit the promised salvation on the scriptural basis provided by Gen 21.10, cited in in vv. 30–1.

3. A Survey of Gal 4.21–5.1

Let us then review the text as a whole, understanding the διαθήκαι in v. 24 to refer to ‘covenants’, rather than to missions, in the sense explained. Paul begins by insisting that the Galatians who ‘want’ to be ‘under the Law’ are not really ‘listening [= “obeying”] the Law’. He is here exploiting an ambiguous understanding of νόμος to which he has not infrequent recourse in his letters.⁴⁴ νόμος can refer to Scripture in a holistic sense, or more particularly to the Pentateuch (in distinction from ‘the prophets’ (cf. Rom 3.23; Romans 4)); alternatively, νόμος can refer to the legal code, with its multiple requirements and prohibitions promulgated by Moses on Sinai. In this latter sense νόμος is a ‘law of works’ (Rom 3.23); to observe it in this sense is to adopt a way of life ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Gal 2.16 (three times); 3.2, 5, 10; Rom 3.20, 28; or, in shorthand, ἐξ ἔργων (Rom 4.2, 6; 9.10, 32; 11.6)). When one ‘listens’ (Gal 4.21) to the νόμος as Scripture, however, there is a double message: on the one hand, one hears a divine verdict of total failure in regard to human attempts to observe the law as a ‘law of works’ (Gal 3.22a [cf. Rom 11.32a]; Rom 3.9–19); on the other hand and

43 So Matera, *Galatians*, 179.

44 Cf. W. Gutbrod, ‘Νόμος’, *TDNT* 4.1069–71; J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980) 251–2; Betz, *Galatians*, 241; Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 328; D. Sängler, ‘Sara, die Freie—unsere Mutter’, *Neues Testament und hellenistisch-jüdische Alltagskultur* (ed. R. Deines, J. Herzer, K.-W. Niebuhr; WUNT 274; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 212–39, esp. 224 n. 43.

precisely in the face of that failure, one hears the expression of a divine intent to justify and save human beings on a wholly other principle: that of grace and faith (Gal 3.22b (cf. Rom 11.32b); Rom 3.21–6; 4.1–25; 9.30–3; 10.5–13).⁴⁵

It is in the light of this latter understanding that Paul requires his Galatian audience to ‘hear’ what the νόμος has to say (v. 21). Rather than citing any particular text, he summarises (vv. 22–3) the differing circumstances whereby Abraham acquired two sons (Ishmael and Isaac) as told in Genesis 16–21. He avoids direct quotation doubtless because of the reiterated mention of circumcision with reference to ‘covenant’ commitment in Genesis 17. From the start he sets up the antithetic parallelism that will run throughout the passage: one son is born from the slave-girl (Hagar) ‘according to the flesh’ (κατὰ σάρκα), and one from the free-woman (Sarah) ‘through a promise’ (δι’ ἐπαγγελίας) (v. 23).⁴⁶ Of course, in the actual story Sarah’s son Isaac is born, though belatedly and in her old age, ‘according to the flesh’ in a literal sense: that is, by the natural process of birth, as is also the case with Hagar’s son Ishmael. Paul sidesteps this difficulty by focusing upon the fact that, in fulfilment of a divine promise (Gen 18.10–14), Isaac was born in the face of ‘impossibility’ on the human side (the advanced age of Abraham; the barrenness of Sarah: cf. Rom 4.17b–21) by means of the power of God operative through the Spirit (cf. κατὰ πνεῦμα in v. 29).

When Paul goes on (v. 24a) to say that ‘these things are spoken allegorically’,⁴⁷ he is indicating that a deeper meaning is expressed in the differing processes of giving birth and in the differing results (slavery or freedom) in each case. In the light of the new creation that has already dawned through God’s action in Christ, the deeper meaning expressed in these processes of giving birth is their reference to ‘two covenants’ (v. 24b). The first covenant Paul locates (v. 24c) as proceeding from Mount Sinai and giving birth to slavery. Through an ingenious – and to us quite arbitrary – wordplay linking ‘Hagar’ with Arabia and so with Sinai, a mountain in Arabia (v. 25a), he identifies this covenant with Hagar (v. 24d),⁴⁸

45 Cf. B. Byrne, ‘The Problem of Νόμος and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans’, *CBQ* 62 (2000) 294–309, esp. 306–7.

46 I would agree with Martyn, ‘The Covenants’, 178–9, that the prepositional phrases in this verse – as also those in v. 29 – should be interpreted adverbially – though with an emphasis not simply upon the process but also upon the result, as is especially the case with ‘unto slavery’ (εἰς δουλείαν) in v. 24c.

47 On this rendering of Paul’s phrase (rather than ‘are to be interpreted allegorically’), see especially S. Di Mattei, ‘Paul’s Allegory of the Two Covenants (Gal 4.21–31) in Light of First-Century Hellenistic Rhetoric and Jewish Hermeneutics’, *NTS* 52 (2006) 102–22, esp. 104–9; also Sängner, ‘Sara, die Freie’, 227–8 n. 60.

48 Explanations of how Paul sees a connection between the various entities (Hagar–Arabia–Sinai) in this troublesome verse, beset as it also is with textual variance, are legion and need not trouble us here. Most plausible would seem to be awareness of a Targumic tradition based upon a wordplay linking ‘Hagar’ with a mountainous region, Hagra, in Arabia; cf. Di Mattei, ‘Paul’s Allegory’, 111–12, who gives further references to the discussion (112 n. 37).

and so with Hagar's giving birth which, as in the Genesis story, is a giving birth that results in progeny born into slavery.

This covenant, identified with Hagar, 'corresponds' (συστοιχεῖ) to 'the present Jerusalem' (v. 25b). Paul justifies (cf. γόρ) this 'correspondence' with the added remark (v. 25c) that 'she' (= Jerusalem) is in slavery along with her children. The basis for this latter observation is presumably that Jerusalem is the centre from which is promoted observance of the Law, an observance already identified with slavery (4.1–6, 9). In strict logic Paul's reasoning would incur the charge of resting upon an 'undistributed' middle term: Hagar is a woman giving birth unto slavery; the present Jerusalem is in slavery with her children; therefore Hagar can represent Jerusalem.⁴⁹ Paul's swiftly moving argument glides over such difficulties. He has identified the slave-mother Hagar with the Sinai covenant, the centre of whose propagation is and remains the city of Jerusalem.

Martyn, of course, has maintained that 'the present Jerusalem' here means Jerusalem in the sense of the centre or community sponsoring the Law-observant Gentile mission from which have come the Teachers disturbing Paul's Galatian churches.⁵⁰ In fact, as we have seen, Martyn interprets all mentions of Jerusalem in Galatians as referring to the community of believers there rather than to the city in a purely geographical sense. There is, however, no compelling reason – aside from the case he is making – for regarding the three references to Jerusalem in Galatians prior to the present passage (1.17, 18; 2.1) in anything other than a geographical sense, even if in each case Paul was visiting the community of believers in the city. Rather than limiting the reference to the group sponsoring the Law-observant Gentile mission, we can far more naturally refer 'the present Jerusalem' in 3.25 to the city as such. As the centre of the Jewish people, the vast majority of whom, despite the proclamation of the 'new covenant' (2 Cor 3.6), remain firmly attached to the Sinai covenant, Jerusalem can readily be portrayed as a woman giving birth to progeny enslaved under the Mosaic Law (4.25c). In so far as the propagators of the Law-observant Gentile mission are promulgating adherence to that Law they are of course bound up with the wider Jewish ambience and so part of 'the present Jerusalem' and her (for Paul) enslaving mothering. But they do not exhaust the range of the reference of that phrase.⁵¹

49 Cf. Hays, 'Galatians', 303: 'The link works, he [Paul] claims, because Hagar, Sinai, and Jerusalem are all in the "slavery" column'; also H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (MeyerK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971^[14]) 221; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 323; T. Löfstedt, 'The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah: Gal 4.21–31', *EstBib* 58 (2000) 475–94, esp. 480. Hays' attempt to find a second level of association of the present Jerusalem with slavery on the basis that 'the city of Jerusalem symbolizes Israel, which is, empirically speaking, in slavery under the dominion of Rome' ('Galatians', 303) would seem to introduce a consideration remote from the context; cf. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 333.

50 Cf. *Galatians*, 457–66 (Comment #46); 'A Tale of Two Churches', *Theological Issues*, 25–36.

51 Cf. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 334.

On the opposite side of the antithetic allegory Paul does not mention the free-woman Sarah by name but goes immediately (v. 26) to what she implicitly represents: in contrast to 'the present Jerusalem who is giving birth for slavery', 'the above Jerusalem' is 'free' and it is she 'who is our mother'. In parallel with the earlier identification of Hagar and the *διαθήκη* represented by her with the Law-observant Gentile mission, Martyn sees 'the above Jerusalem' as designating the Law-free mission promulgated by Paul and his associates. Once again, this identification seems to be too narrow. The epithet 'above' more plausibly points to the transcendent origin of the community of the new creation which is being realised in the world through mission of the Son (Gal 4.4–7). The 'above Jerusalem' in this sense is not simply equivalent to the church.⁵² The ἡμῶν, for instance, in v. 26b indicates believers who are on earth, while the Jerusalem that is their 'mother' is a heavenly reality.⁵³ The 'above Jerusalem', then, is the new covenant that is being promulgated from heaven, the current abode of the risen Lord and the source from which he sends the Spirit.⁵⁴ It is the working out of the covenant (*διαθήκη*) God promised to Abraham (Gal 3.15–18), and is thus continuous and ultimately identical with that covenant.

Though he still has not mentioned Sarah by name, Paul links the covenant she represents with this 'above Jerusalem' by adducing a quotation from Isa 54.1 in v. 27. In its original setting the Isaiah passage referred to the post-exilic restoration of the actual city of Jerusalem, presently reduced to barrenness in her state of desolation. The linkage of the Isaianic text with Sarah is forged through this motif of barrenness – more specifically through a state of erstwhile barrenness followed by abundant fertility, a transition notably realised in Sarah's case in fulfilment of the promise of God (Gen 17.15–16, 19; 18.10–14; 21.1–7).⁵⁵ With the

52 So Schlier, *Galater*, 223–4; de Boer, 'Paul's Quotation', 380; Löfstedt, 'The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah', 482–3; against this, cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 248; Dunn, *Galatians*, 254.

53 On the background and associations in Jewish literature of this sense of a heavenly Jerusalem, see A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 9–32; A. M. Schwemer, 'Himmlische Stadt und himmlisches Bürgerrecht bei Paulus (Gal 4,26 und Phil 3,20)', *La Cité de Dieu/Die Stadt Gottes* (ed. M. Hengel, S. Mittmann, A. M. Schwemer; WUNT 129; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 195–238, 238–43 (Bibliography); Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 334–5.

54 'At this point cosmic and eschatological dualism intersect, so that the present manifestation of the future, embodied in the community itself, is understood as owing its life to the world above' (C. H. Cosgrove, 'The Law Has Given Sarah No Children (GAL. 4.21–30)', *NovT* 29 (1987) 219–35, esp. 231). 'Theologically, this image suggests that the hope of Israel rests in God's transcendent grace rather than in the results of a human historical process' (Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 118); also, Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 24–5; Dunn, *Galatians*, 254.

55 On the motif of barrenness as the point of connection, see K. H. Jobes, 'Jerusalem, our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4.21–31', *WTJ* 55 (1993) 299–320; see also Betz,

growth of communities of believers in Christ the heavenly Jerusalem that had been 'waiting', bereft of progeny, until the promise should have been fulfilled was now at the 'fullness of the time' (Gal 4.4) giving birth to a multitude of 'children'.

Moving to the final stage of his argument (4.28–5.1),⁵⁶ Paul can assure the Galatians that, as sons and daughters of such a mother (Sarah = 'the above Jerusalem'), they are 'in the line of Isaac, children of (the) promise' (v. 28; cf. Rom 9.8). That is, they have been brought into being through the exercise of God's Spirit in fulfilment of a promise (cf. Gal 3.14). As such, they are heirs destined to inherit the blessings promised to Abraham 'and to his offspring' (Gal 3.15–16, 25–9).

But, Paul continues (v. 29), an episode recounted in the biblical story points to something occurring in the present (eschatological) time: the son born 'according to the flesh' (Ishmael) persecuted (the son born) according to the Spirit (Isaac). In line with later rabbinic traditions, Paul interprets Ishmael's 'playing' with the infant Isaac – an activity that incurred Sarah's displeasure (Gen 21.9–10) – as actually involving injury or abuse. He then finds in this a foreshadowing of the 'persecution' (διώκειν) that proponents of the Mosaic Law are currently inflicting upon descendants in the line of Isaac, those born, that is, according to the Spirit.

The traditional interpretation of the passage has generally taken this statement to refer to early Jewish persecution of the communities of believers (cf. 1 Thess 2.14–16b). The new consensus has to interpret such persecution as referring to the harassment and pressure to adopt the Law currently being inflicted upon the Galatian Gentile believers by the intruding Teachers.⁵⁷ It is not at all certain, however, that the activity indicated by the strong term διώκειν (regularly used by Paul of his own pre-conversion career as persecutor (1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13, 23; Phil 3.6)) could really amount to nothing more harmful than such pressure.⁵⁸

In the light of this persecuting behaviour foreshadowed in the Ishmael–Isaac story, Paul indicates that Scripture has a further instruction (v. 30; cf. v. 21). He quotes (LXX) Gen 21.10 in such a way that the demand originally voiced by Sarah is taken over by the divine voice spoken in 'Scripture' (γραφή): 'Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free-woman' (v. 30). The new consensus places the emphasis

Galatians, 249; Cosgrove, 'The Law', 231; Sanger, 'Sara, die Freie', 236–7; de Boer, 'Paul's Quotation', 377–9; di Mattei, 'Paul's Allegory', 115, 118.

56 On v. 28 as signalling a new departure and separate stage of the argument, see Cosgrove, 'The Law', 222.

57 Cf. Martyn, 'The Covenants', 180; Matera, *Galatians*, 178; Hays, 'Galatians', 305–6; de Boer, 'Paul's Quotation', 382–3; earlier, Burton, *Galatians*, 266; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 330–1.

58 Cf. Schlier, *Galater*, 226–7; Dunn, *Galatians*, 256–7; Cosgrove, 'The Law', 224 n. 26, 229.

here upon the 'drive out' command, in the specific sense of the Galatians being instructed to expel the intrusive Teachers from their congregations.⁵⁹ Paul's intensification of the negative before 'inherit' (adding μή to the original οὐ) suggests, however, that the emphasis falls upon the motif of (non-)inheritance.⁶⁰ The slave son (Ishmael) and the adherents of the Sinai covenant that he represents are not to have a share in the inheritance (of the blessings promised to Abraham (Gal 3.8–9, 16–18, 22, 27–9; 4.7). Only the free son (Isaac) and those born as children in his line of freedom (Gal 4.28) are to inherit; the slave will not.

Hence, Paul's conclusion (4.31–5.1).⁶¹ As children, not of the slave-woman but of the free-woman (v. 31), the Galatians should remain ('stand') in the freedom with which Christ has set us free. They should not submit again to the yoke of slavery (5.1), forfeiting thereby not only the freedom won for them by Christ but also the inheritance that, as divinely indicated (v. 30), will accrue only to the free.

4. The Significance of γεννᾶν

Now to address the strongest point in Martyn's case: Paul's choice of the term γεννᾶν to refer to the process of giving birth rather than the verb τίκτειν, which features in the LXX translation of the Genesis chapters in question. For Martyn this choice is an argument that the διαθήκαι indicate the rival missions because on two other occasions, Philemon 10 and 1 Cor 4.15, Paul uses this term with reference to his own 'begetting' of converts into the community of believers. The question is whether this use of γεννᾶν is of sufficient logical weight to tell against the arguments for the traditional interpretation as set forth above.

As Martyn notes,⁶² the Septuagint distinguishes carefully between γεννᾶν and τίκτειν, employing the former to designate male begetting, the latter to designate a woman's giving birth. Martyn, with characteristic honesty, also concedes that it is not altogether surprising in the light of this LXX usage that Paul, having begun (v. 22) by speaking of Abraham's having two sons, should go on to employ γεννᾶν (in the perfect passive, γεγέννηται) to speak of their births (v. 23; cf. also the use of γεννηθέντων with respect to Jacob and Esau in Rom 9.11).⁶³ Nor is it surprising that he retains the same verb in the passive construction in v. 29, when he describes 'the one born (γεννηθεῖς) according to the flesh' persecuting the one

59 Martyn, 'The Covenants', 187; Matera, *Galatians*, 178; Hays, 'Galatians', 306.

60 Cf. Sängler, 'Sara, die Freie', 230 n. 66.

61 On taking v. 30, introduced by διό, closely with 5.1 as a warning conclusion and bridge to the exhortatory section to follow, cf. Cosgrove, 'The Law', 232–3.

62 'The Covenants', 174.

63 *Ibid.*, 175.

(born) according to the Spirit. This leaves only the one explicit use of $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ to designate a woman (Hagar = Sinai covenant) giving birth in v. 24c. Since, aside from the LXX usage, $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\nu$ can be used of both male and female procreation, it is not all that remarkable that Paul, having begun with this term, has chosen to remain with it – especially as $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\nu$ occurs six times in his authentic letters, whereas $\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ appears only in the scriptural text, Isa 54.1, from which he quotes exactly in Gal 4.27.⁶⁴

In regard to this quotation from Isaiah, Martyn, as we have seen, notes that Paul could have been tempted to use $\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ in order to forge an exegetical link with the prophetic text on a *gezerah shawah* basis. He refrained from doing so, in Martyn's view, because of the higher significance of $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\nu$. This consideration, however, falls away, when one sees, as I have explained above, that the basis of association is through the common motif of 'barrenness' rather than verbal linkage as such.

In fact the argument that $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ refers to missionary activity in the sense of Paul's giving birth to new converts into freedom – and the Teachers, correspondingly, into slavery – runs into the difficulty that it is the 'covenants' (v. 24a), represented by Sarah and Hagar respectively, that are the subject of this procreation. This is made clear in v. 26, when Paul, implicitly linking the unnamed Sarah with 'the above Jerusalem', states that 'she is our mother' (v. 26b). Here Paul identifies himself with the community he has founded and indicates the 'above Jerusalem-Sarah-covenant' as their common 'mother'. His argument cannot then *at this point* (in contrast to Gal 4.19) be operating with his own sense of 'mothering' the community as Martyn's interpretation of $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ requires.⁶⁵ Thus the case that Martyn builds up upon Paul's usage of $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ can rest only upon the instance in v. 24c. This does not bear the weight required for the argument to be cogent overall.

5. Conclusion

In the light of these considerations it would appear that the attempt by Martyn and those who have embraced his view to identify the 'covenants' in Gal 4.24b with the two Christian missions, Law-observant and Law-free respectively, rather than with the Sinai covenant and the 'new covenant' inaugurated

64 *ibid.* 177, followed by Hays, 'Galatians', 302; Bachmann, 'Die andere Frau', 150–1, sees the present tense of $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ as significant for indicating a mission currently being carried out. However, the tense can just as easily designate the continued birth of offspring into the Sinai covenant so long as Israel persists in adherence to that covenant, as noted above.

65 Cf. Eastman, 'Cast Out the Slave Woman', 317; also Bachmann, 'Die andere Frau', 144 n. 46. Martyn does note the difficulty briefly in 'The Two Covenants', 191 n. 13, but his bare reference to Paul's description of his mission in 2 Corinthians 3 as being 'in the *service* [emphasis original] of the (new) covenant' does not solve the problem, as Eastman points out.

in Christ, cannot be sustained. Of course, Paul's immediate concern is with the work of the intrusive Teachers. What is obnoxious about them, however, is their seeking to reimpose the obligations of the Sinai covenant on those who, through his labours as attested by the Spirit (3.2-5; 4.6-7), are already heirs in the line of Isaac (4.28, 30-1).

This in no sense implies a return to the kind of language – 'the deathknell of Judaism', for example – that older commentators employed with respect to this passage and from which Martyn and others have, with great sensitivity, recoiled. What Paul is saying in the allegory of 4.21-5.1 concerning the Sinai covenant does not go beyond what he has been implying from the beginning of Galatians 3 onwards:⁶⁶ that the Sinai covenant, focused upon the Law, is one that involves slavery (4.1-4, 7) and that it is a temporary dispensation, over which the covenant spoken in promise to Abraham (3.16-18) leapfrogs, so to speak, to become the 'new covenant' inaugurated by Christ and appropriated by faith (3.19, 22, 23-5).

Had the issue of Israel's current persistence in unbelief been put to him at the time of writing Galatians, Paul's response may well have been similar to the one he ultimately gives in chapter 11 of Romans.⁶⁷ But the fate of Israel as such is not in view in Galatians since it is masked and pushed into the background by Paul's concern about the threat posed by the intrusive Teachers.⁶⁸ Every letter of Paul, because of its occasional nature – not excluding Romans – gives only a partial presentation of his total theology. Dear though it be to the Reformation tradition, we cannot press out of Galatians a complete theology but must subject it to a critical reading in the light not only of subsequent Christian tradition but of more recent historical events in which its interpretation may have played a regrettable part.

66 Cf. Di Mattei, 'Paul's Allegory', 121-2. This is to dispute the sense of synthesis between the two covenants through the Spirit proposed by Brawley, 'Contextuality' (see n. 9 above).

67 Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 259.

68 However, as Susan G. Eastman has plausibly argued in a recent study ('Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-Reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9-11', *NTS* 53 (2010) 367-95), there are good grounds for seeing in Paul's prayer-wish for 'mercy upon the Israel of God' in Gal 6.16 a foreshadowing of the discussion of Israel's destiny in Romans 11, where divine 'mercy' is – unusually for Paul – a significant motif. I am indebted to John Barclay for drawing attention to this in the SNTS seminar where this paper was originally discussed.