The grammar of the gospel: justification as a theological criterion in the Reformation and in Paul's letter to the Galatians

Jonathan A. Linebaugh

Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge University, Cambridge CB3 9BS

jal212@cam.ac.uk

Abstract

Since at least the time of Albert Schweitzer's attempt to move justification from *die Mitte* to the margins, the question of the centre of Paul's theology has included a criticism of the Reformation's classification of justification as 'the lord, ruler, and judge' of theology. For the reformers, however, this designation is not so much a claim about the centrality of the vocabulary of justification as it is a claim about the grammar of the gospel: justification, because it is articulated as an antithesis, says both what the gospel is not and what the gospel is. With this understanding of the theological function of justification in view, the role of justification in Paul's letter to the Galatians can be reconsidered: the antithetical grammar of justification is a critical and hermeneutical criterion in Galatians, both identifying and negating the 'other gospel' even as it picks out and proclaims 'the gospel of Christ'.

> "Theology is a grammar of Holy Scripture"
> J. G. Hamann

'The Reformation fought and conquered in the name of Paul.'[1] So begins Albert Schweitzer's *Paul and his Interpreters*. As the subtitle to the English translation suggests, however, this is a 'critical history', and Schweitzer's opening is thus both a critique of the Reformers and a diagnosis of Pauline scholarship: 'Reformation exegesis reads its own ideas into Paul, in order to receive them back again clothed with Apostolic authority.'[2] The only way behind this apostle of Reformation faith and back to the Paul of history, as

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[1] Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 2.

[2] Ibid.

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Schweitzer told the story, was for 'the spell which dogma had laid upon exegesis to be broken'.[3]

For Schweitzer, dispelling Reformation dogma meant, in part, demoting the doctrine of justification from its reformational rank of *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* to being 'merely a fragment of a doctrine of redemption'.[4] William Wrede had already insisted that justification was Paul's *Kampfeslehre*, a polemical teaching that Paul used to argue against the imposition of the Jewish law onto the religious lives of his Gentile converts.[5] Krister Stendhal later extended Wrede's thesis: 'justification by faith was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the rights of Gentile converts'.[6] For E. P. Sanders, like Schweitzer before him, the 'real bite of Paul's theology' – the originating hub – is not justification but rather 'the participatory categories' that express the christological interpretation of the triumph of God.[7]

In each case, this de-centring of justification – its movement from *die Mitte* to the margins of Paul's theology – is part of Schweitzer's summons to break the spell of Reformation dogma. Wrede's concern was that too many readings of Paul were filtered through 'die Seelenkämpfe Luthers'.[8] For Stendhal, 'we all, in the West, and especially in the tradition of the Reformation cannot help reading Paul through the experience of persons like Luther or Calvin. And this is the chief reason for most of our misunderstanding.'[9] In Sanders' words, 'Luther's problems were not Paul's,

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Seabury Press, 1931), pp. 220–1.

[5] William Wrede, 'Paulus', in K. H. Rengstorf (ed.), *Das Bild des Paulus in der neueren deutschen Forschung*, WdF 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), pp. 69, 71. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* tended to marginalise justification because its Jewish origins failed to match their identification of the Hellenistic mystery cults as the religio-historical background to Paul. It is worth noting in this regard that Käsemann's reassertion of the significance of Paul's *Rechtfertigungslehre* included an argument for Jewish apocalyptic, and particularly that tradition's understanding of the 'righteousness of God', as the conceptual wellspring for Paul's theology of justification. See his '"The Righteousness of God" in Paul', in *New Testament Questions Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1969), pp. 168–82; cf. Ernst Käsemann, 'Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (ZTK)* 57 (1960), pp. 162–85.

[6] Krister Stendhal, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 2.

[7] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1977), pp. 5, 502, 549.

[8] Wrede, 'Paulus', p. 42.

[9] Stendhal, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, p. 12.

and we misunderstand him if we see him through Luther's eyes.'[10] For Wrede, and especially for Schweitzer, Stendahl, and Sanders, exegesis is a way of exorcising the spirits of the Reformation.

This dethronement of the Reformation's doctrinal *rex* continues to pose a question to readers of Paul: what is the 'centre' of Paul's theology?[11] Faced with the range of cultural-religious caches from which Paul's language seems to spring, readers of the Pauline letters are forced to ask if and how the different linguistic registers cohere and whether a particular tradition-historical background and/or soteriological metaphor functions as a kind of hermeneutical hub – the centre of the Pauline wheel from which the various spokes radiate. Put this way, the elevation of one context or image can appear arbitrary. Why the legal language of righteousness rather than the political and military motif of reconciliation? Why the participatory image of being in Christ rather than the liberative metaphor of redemption? Why the cultic language of temple sacrifice and atonement rather than the legal and familial vocabulary of adoption?[12] Not surprisingly, some have refused to pick one from the list, either denying the coherence of Paul's theology,[13] or locating it in something more general like 'the triumph of God'[14] or 'the kerygmatic story of God's action through Jesus Christ'.[15]

But perhaps there is a way through this post-Schweitzer stalemate. Prompted by a line in Luther, the eighteenth-century provocateur Johann Georg Hamann wrote, 'theology is a grammar of the language of Holy Scripture'.[16] If we let this sentence reframe our research, the question is not so much which image, linguistic register, lexical set, or religio-historical

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[10] E. P. Sanders, *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), pp. 53, 57–8.

[11] See e.g. R. P. Martin, 'Center of Paul's Theology', in G. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. Reid (eds), *The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1993), pp. 92–5; and J. Plevnik, 'The Center of Paul's Theology', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989), pp. 460–78.

[12] Among those who have argued for the centrality of justification in Paul are Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden, Brill: 1992) and H. Hübner, 'Pauli Theologiae Proprium', *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980), pp. 445–73.

[13] Heikki Räisänen, 'Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law', *Studia Biblica 1978*, vol. 3 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 301–20.

[14] J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[15] Richard B. Hays, 'Crucified with Christ: A Synthesis of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians, and Galatians', in D. J. Lull (ed.), *SBL Literature 1988 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 324.

[16] J. G. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, 6 vols, ed. J. Nadler (Vienna: Herder, 1949–57), vol. 2, p. 129, 7–9. Hamann passed the 'remarkable quote from Luther' onto his brother in a letter from 1760. Luther's words, which Hamann encountered in Bengel's *Gnomon*,

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context is the 'centre' of Paul's theology. Rather the question is: does Paul write all his words and metaphors according to a common grammar? Do the sentences that draw on diverse conceptual traditions share a shape? Is there a Pauline pattern of speech, an evangelical grammar, that governs the way the words run when sentences speak the Pauline gospel? The various vocabularies Paul employs throughout his letters are united in the single apostolic task of preaching 'the gospel of Christ' (Gal. 1:7). Different vocabulary does not imply a different gospel, for as Paul seems to shout in Galatians, a 'different gospel' is in fact 'no gospel' (1:6–9). A new question then: what is the grammar of the Pauline gospel? Focusing specifically on the epistle to the Galatians, this essay supplies an old answer: justification.

To make this case, I will make recourse to the Reformation dogma that Schweitzer tried to dispel. First, I will revisit the Reformation claim that justification is the 'lord, ruler, and judge of every kind of doctrine' and argue, mostly with reference to Luther, that such rhetoric does not deny the polemical function of justification in Paul, nor does it imply that justification is the exclusive or even primary vocabulary of the gospel. Rather this is a grammatical argument from the 'not, but' structure of Paul's justification formulae, a claim that justification – specifically justification 'not by works of law' but 'by faith in Christ' – functions as an evangelical criterion: it says 'no' to not-gospels while norming the saying of the gospel.[17] With this understanding of the function of justification in view, I will, second, turn to Galatians in an effort to sketch the grammar of justification in Galatians 2:16 and argue that the 'not, but' grammar of justification relates to the rest of the letter as both a critical and hermeneutical criterion: that is, it functions

were 'Theology is nothing but a grammar of the words of the Holy Spirit' (Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, ed. W. Ziesemer and A. Henkel (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1956), p. 10).

[17] In George Lindbeck's terms, justification is criteriological not because the juridical metaphor it evokes should be privileged over other soteriological images, but because of the way its 'grammar … informs the way the story [of the gospel] is told': *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), p. 80. This requires a distinction between identifying justification as criterological because of its grammar and because of its metaphor (e.g. Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, trans. J. F. Cayzer (London: T&T Clark, 2001), p. 48: 'the doctrine of justification has this strength of a hermeneutical category because it brings all of theology in the dimension of a legal dispute'). This essay is making only the former claim, which means that other instances of this antithetical and christological grammar in Paul's letters (e.g. the identification as Christ as 'our wisdom' in exclusionary contrast to human wisdom in 1 Cor 1:18–30) do not need to be read as derived from justification, but rather as parallel instances of the same grammar.

critically to enable Paul to identify other- or not-gospels (Gal 1:6–7), and hermeneutically to give the grammar according to which he proclaims 'the gospel of Christ' (Gal 1:7).[18]

Rector et iudex: justification in Reformation rhetoric

'It is well-known that the … reformers proclaimed [justification] as the doctrine by which the church "stands or falls". It is, one fears, not so well-known why they would have done so.'[19] Robert Jenson wrote these words in 1978, but they still invite an under-asked question: What did the reformers mean when they said things like justification is the 'main hinge on which religion turns',[20] or that 'when this article stands the church stands; when it falls the church falls'?[21]

Part of the answer to this question is that justification names the site of a sixteenth-century battle and the flag the reformers followed when they 'fought and conquered in the name of Paul'. For Luther, however, justification was more than just a battle site or standard; it was the 'single solid rock'.[22] This is, at its core, a pastoral claim, as justification identifies God's unconditioned grace as the only ground of 'rest' for 'your bones and mine'.[23] But it is also a statement about the distinctive theological function of justification, as exemplified by statements like, 'The doctrine of justification must be learned diligently. For in it are included all other doctrines of our faith; and if it is sound, all the others are sound as well.'[24] Or the claim that justification is 'the lord, ruler, and judge of every kind of doctrine, which preserves and governs Christian teaching'.[25]

It is as an interpretation of these kinds of sentences that the specification of justification as a doctrinal 'centre' develops. Martin Kähler had already called justification the *evangelische Grundartikel*, but according to Risto Saarinen, it was Hans Iwand's *Glaubensgerechtigkeit nach Luthers Lehre* (1941) that shaped

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[18] It is worth noting that an appendix to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* includes the following: 'the criteriological significance of the doctrine of justification … still deserves to be studied further'.

[19] Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 36.

[20] John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. *Ford Lewis Battles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.11.1.

[21] Martin Luther, *WA* 40/III, p. 352.

[22] Luther, *WA* 40/I, p. 33.16; *LW* 27, p. 145.

[23] Luther, *LW* 26, p. 27.

[24] Luther, *WA* 40/I, p. 441.29; *LW* 26, p. 283.

[25] Luther, *WA* 39/I, p. 205.

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the subsequent language of *Mitte* and *Zentrum*.[26] As Iwand read Luther, justification stands as the 'immovable centre'.[27] This description, however, is interpreted by a contrast and a series of supplementary images: justification occupies the 'centre' rather than the 'periphery'; justification is 'critical' as opposed to 'secondary'; justification is the 'core' and functions as the 'critical axis from which we can decide whether or not the church preaches the gospel'.[28] These images invited a proliferation of centralising characterisations of justification: it is the theological 'discrimen', the 'Grund und Grenze', and the 'Mitte und Grenze reformatorisher Theologie'.[29] But just as Iwand used the language of 'centre' to indicate the function of justification as a 'critical axis from which we can decide whether or not the church preaches the gospel', words like *Mitte* and *Zentrum* are ways of describing 'Die Rechtfertigungslehre als Kriterium' or, in the words of Gerhard Gloege, 'als hermeneutische Kategorie'.[30] Within this language-game, the predicate 'centre' does 'not give preference to one Christian doctrine amongst many others'; rather it points to 'the proper function of the doctrine of justification', identifying it as the 'touchstone of theology' or the 'standard of theological judgment'.[31] Justification is a criterion, an evangelical canon that makes possible the judgement: this is or this is not the gospel.

For Luther, the unique significance of justification is tied to its critical and hermeneutical function. Justification 'preserves and governs all Christian teaching', and 'if it is sound, all the other [doctrines] are sound as well'.[32] As a critical criterion, 'nothing in this article can be given up', because 'on this

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[26] Risto Saarinen, 'Die Rechtfertigungslehre als Kriterium: Zur Begriffsgeschichte einer ökumenischen Redewendung', *Keryma und Dogma* 44 (1998), p. 98. For Kähler's language, see *Die Wissenschaft der christlichen Lehre von dem evangelischen Grundartikel aus im Abrisse dargestellt* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996 [1905]), pp. 67–79.

[27] Hans J. Iwand, *The Righteousness of Faith According to Luther*, ed. V. F. Thompson, trans. R. H. Lundell (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), p. 15.

[28] Ibid.

[29] For 'discrimen', see Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), p. 15; for 'Grund und Grenze', see Oswald Bayer, *Leibliches Wort: Reformation und Neuzeit im Konflikt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), pp. 19–34; see also E. Wolf, 'Die Rechtfertigungslehre als Mitte und Grenze reformatorische Theologie', in *Peregrinatio*, vol. 2, *Studien zur reformatorische Theologie, zum Kirchenrecht und zur Sozialethik* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1965), pp. 11–21, and Eberhard Jüngel, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum des christlichen Glaubens*, 3rd edn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

[30] Gerhard Gleoge, *Gnade für die Welt: Kritik und Krise des Luthertums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 34–54.

[31] Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), pp. 111, 113.

[32] Luther, *WA* 39/I, p. 205; *WA* 40/1, p. 441.29.

article rest all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world'.[33] As a hermeneutical criterion, justification is 'the lord, ruler, and judge of every kind of doctrine'.[34] In Eberhard Jüngel's phrase, justification is 'the heart of the heart' because it is hermeneutical: 'the best way to express the central function of justification is to highlight its hermeneutical significance for the whole of theological knowledge'.[35]

But hermeneutical how? In what sense does all 'we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world' rest on justification? How does justification rule, judge, preserve, and govern theology? The answer: as an antithesis. Justification is a critical and hermeneutical criterion because it is 'the either/or article'.[36] Because justification is both 'not by works of law' and 'by faith in Jesus Christ' – because it specifies both what the gospel is not and what the gospel is – it says a 'no' and a 'yes'. And it is as an antithetical grammar – not as one soteriological image among many – that justification relates to theological discourse as *rector et iudex*. As Jenson put it, 'It is the mission of the church to speak the gospel . . . Theology is the hermeneutic of this work. Theology must therefore have norms by which to make the judgment, "this is/is not the gospel".'[37] The Reformation contention is that justification, with its 'not, but' structure, is this norm. Because it is 'not by works of law' it enables the identification of not-gospels; because it is 'by faith in Jesus Christ' it authenticates and makes audible the preaching of the gospel.

Implicit here is a distinction between first-order and second-order discourse. The first-order language of faith, for the reformers, is preaching, praise and prayer. In this register, justification takes its place alongside other biblical motifs and metaphors. But as second-order discourse – that is, as the critical and hermeneutical shaping of the sentences of faith – justification relates to preaching, praise and prayer as a grammatical rule: to speak the gospel, do not condition the grace of God by any human criteria; rather give Jesus Christ in the form of an unconditioned promise.[38] It is as this kind of grammar that Paul Tillich calls justification 'the central doctrine of

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[33] *Smalcald Articles*, II.1, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), p. 301.

[34] Luther, *WA* 39/I, p. 205.

[35] Jüngel, *Justification*, p. 47.

[36] Iwand, *Righteousness of Faith*, p. 15.

[37] Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune God*, vol. 1 of *Systematic Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 23; Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 79–84.

[38] Cf. Jenson, *The Triune God*, pp. 13–20. I prefer Oswald Bayer's alternative to first- and second-order discourse, what he calls the distinction and relationship between 'monastische und scholastische Theologie', because it focuses theology on 'das

the Reformation', or in his preferred phrase, 'the first and basic expression of the Protestant principle': the 'not, but' grammar of justification means that 'in relation to God, God alone can act and that no human claim … no intellectual or moral or devotional "work", can reunite us with him'.[39]

The extent to which these formulations capture what Paul's 'not' excludes and what his 'but' names will be considered below. For now, the crucial point is that it is as a reading of the grammar of Paul's justification discourse that the reformers identify the unique criteriological function of justification. The Geneva Bible of 1560, for example, can call Galatians 2:16 'the principal scope' of the letter, because Paul's argument against the 'other gospel' (Gal 1:6) and for 'that which I preached to you' (1:8) has both its 'no' and its 'yes' in Galatians 2:16: not works of the law, but faith in Jesus Christ.[40] Similarly, Luther can state the *argumentum* of Galatians as 'the difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness', because the Pauline 'not by works of the law' says an anthropological no even as 'by faith in Jesus Christ' says a christological yes: 'do we do nothing and work nothing in order to obtain this righteousness? I reply: Nothing at all' – that is the no; 'Christ … is my righteousness' – that is the yes.[41] It is also the case that the 'not, but' grammar of justification often does this theological work without the specific vocabulary of justification. Luther's catechisms and sermons, for instance, often surprise readers with the paucity of references to justification, and yet the shape of both reflect the relationship between and movement from justification's 'no' to its 'yes': the excluding and including grammar of justification functions as an evangelical gold-pan, separating and filtering out all human criteria such that all that remains as gospel is the pure gold of grace of God in Jesus Christ.

These examples indicate that the identification of justification as an evangelical criterion is not a claim about justification being the exclusive or even primary vocabulary of the gospel. Rather, it is the 'not, but' grammar of justification that enables it to function as a criterion: because it says what the gospel is not and also what the gospel is, justification functions both critically and hermeneutically. This means that justification's criteriological significance is tied to its occasional character as a *Kampfeslehre*. It is as Pauline polemic that justification says 'no' to the not-gospel and sets this excluded

Klarwerden von Sätze der Verkündigung in ihrem bestimmten Sitz im Leben': *Handbuch: systematischer Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus, 1994), pp. 27–31, 439.

[39] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1978), vol. 3, pp. 223–4.

[40] *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), p. 87 verso.

[41] Luther, *LW* 26, pp. 4, 8–9.

alterative in antithesis to 'the gospel of Christ' (Gal 1:7). An 'other-gospel' (Gal 1:6) occasioned Paul's 'not, but' grammar in Galatians, and it is this grammar that gives justification its criteriological function: as a critical criterion the 'not' of justification identifies 'other-gospels' as 'not-gospels'; as a hermeneutical criterion the 'but' of justification both picks out and guides the proclamation of 'the gospel of Christ'.

Justification and the grammar of Galatians

The grammar of Galatians is antithetical. Paul is an 'apostle, not from human beings or through a human being, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father' (Gal 1:1). The gospel Paul preaches is not κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, but 'through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (1:12–13). Paul's autobiography is also antithetical, shaped by the christological apocalypse that interrupts his 'former life in Judaism' with the call to 'preach the faith he once tried to destroy' (1:13, 23) and polarised by a crucified past and a christological present: 'I no longer live' but 'Christ lives in me' (2:20). The gospel Paul received and is sent to proclaim, moreover, announces the act of God in Christ that delivers sinners and slaves from 'the present evil age', crucifying the old cosmos and inaugurating a 'new creation' (1:4; 6:14–15). And this contrast between the old cosmos and the new creation contains still more polarities: the flesh and slavery belong to the old; the Spirit and freedom are part of the new. With these 'newly minted distinctions', as John Barclay writes, 'Paul's letter to the Galatians … remaps reality'.[42]

But this raises a question: what criterion shapes Paul's cartography? Is there a source – an event, tradition, idea or experience – that shapes the antitheses that dot the map of Pauline theology? It would be easy to assume the obvious reformational answer: justification. But to single out justification as the antithesis that sources and shapes all the others is, at least as a reading of Paul, to skip a step. All of the antitheses that Paul articulates in Galatians occur as part of an argument against the 'other gospel' (1:6) and for 'the gospel of Christ' (1:7). The 'other gospel' is in fact no gospel because it cuts off from Christ and so enslaves in the present evil age (5:2–4); 'the gospel of Christ' is good news because it gifts the one 'who loved me and gave himself for me' and thereby effects life and freedom in the new creation (2:20; 5:1; 6:15). Read within the either/or between the 'other gospel' and 'the gospel of Christ', Paul's antithetical remapping of reality appears to operate according to an evangelical and christological criterion: 'the gospel

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[42] John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), p. 338; cf. J. Louis Martyn, 'Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to Galatia', *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), pp. 410–24.

of Christ', in antithesis to any 'other gospel' (cf. 1:8–9), is the 'canon' of Paul's cartography of the new creation (6:14–16).

This, however, still leaves one crucial question: according to what evangelical criterion is Paul able to make the judgment 'this is the gospel of Christ' or 'this is a different gospel'? How does Paul know that the gospel of the agitators is a 'different gospel' than 'the gospel of Christ'? It is as an attempt to answer these kinds of questions that the antithesis of Galatians 2:16 stands out: justification is not ἐξ ἔργων νόμου but ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (Gal 2:16). This lexical set (i.e. righteousness, law, faith) is not the only language Paul speaks when speaking the gospel. In Galatians, salvation is figured as forgiveness, deliverance, participation, liberation and adoption. But what is unique about justification is that it is articulated as an antithesis: not ἐξ ἔργων νόμου but ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ. This either/or alternative is introduced as an argument *against* the 'other gospel' and as an argument *for* 'the truth of the gospel' (2:14). And it is in this context – both polemical and proclamatory – that justification functions in Galatians as a critical and hermeneutical criterion: when Paul says justification is 'not by works of law', he identifies and says no to the other gospel; when Paul says justification is 'by Christ-faith', he picks out and preaches 'the gospel of Christ'.[43]

To interpret the antithesis of Galatians 2:16 is therefore to identify, at least in the context of the crisis that occasioned the letter, both what the gospel is not and what the gospel is. For Paul, as regards justification, ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ are antithetical: justification is not by ἔργα νόμου 'but' (ἐὰν μή) by πίστις Χριστοῦ (16a); Paul and other Jewish Christians (ἡμεῖς) trust in Christ to be justified on the basis of πίστις Χριστοῦ 'and not' (καὶ οὐκ) on the basis of ἔργα νόμου (16c).[44] As Martinus de Boer notes, the effect of this antithesis is a kind of grammatical chemistry, 'separating justification' from ἔργα νόμου 'and binding it instead and

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[43] This distinction between 'the gospel of Christ' as the canon of Paul's theological cartography and justification as Paul's evangelical criterion suggests that the identification of justification as the 'centre' of Paul's theology is imprecise: 'the gospel of Christ' is the theological *radix*; justification relates to that gospel both critically and hermeneutically, naming not-gospels and norming the articulation of the gospel.

[44] Paul's use of ἐὰν μή to articulate this antithesis is a source of much scholarly discussion, as ἐὰν μή is almost always exceptive rather than contrastive; see e.g. A. A. Das, 'Another Look at ἐὰν μή in Galatians 2:16', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000), pp. 529–39; de Boer, *Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), pp. 144–5. The exceptive sense can be read within the overall antithesis, taking ἐὰν μή with the opening clause (i.e. 'a person is not justified … except through πίστις Χριστοῦ'), but de Boer is right to insist that however ἐὰν μή is translated, in Gal 2:16 the phrase is part of Paul's articulation of an antithesis (ibid., p. 144).

exclusively to' πίστις Χριστοῦ.[45] As part of Paul's evangelical *Kampf* this antithesis is an argument (or announcement) about 'the truth of the gospel' (2:14). It is not just that justification is not ἐξ ἔργων νόμου but ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ; Paul's contention is also that justification ἐξ ἔργων νόμου is not the gospel whereas justification ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ is. But why?[46]

As noted above, the 'Protestant principle' answers this question by reading the negation of ἔργα νόμου, in Tillich's words, as a 'no' to any 'human claim' – that is, to any 'intellectual or moral or devotional "work"'. This interpretation, which is especially strong in the tradition stemming from Augustine (and including Luther), emphasises the ἔργα in the phrase ἔργα νόμου: 'works' names the fundamental form of idolatry that is the identification of the self as the subject of salvation.[47] Paul, however, at least in Galatians, abbreviates ἔργα νόμου as νόμος, suggesting to some that the accent is on the law and, given the situation in Galatia, particularly on the way the law erects boundaries between Jew and non-Jew.[48] But Paul's 'no' seems both more comprehensive and more christological. The occasionally formulated 'no' to 'works of law' occurs in an antithesis that rhymes – grammatically – with other antitheses in Galatians that negate all that is anthropological and old: the 'gospel of Christ' is neither 'from a human source' nor 'in accord with human norms' (1:11–12); the cross of Christ crucifies the old cosmos and renders the religious and cultural criteria of that world irrelevant (6:14–15). These not-clauses limn the negative grammar of the gospel: 'the gospel of Christ' is unconditioned by the criteria of the old

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[45] Ibid., p. 155; cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 251; D. J. Moo, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 154.

[46] This question is, in part, about the interpretation of ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ, but it is less concerned with what de Boer calls their 'referential meanings' and focuses instead on what he terms their 'theological ones' (*Galatians*, p. 144, n. 209). In the case of ἔργα νόμου, the referential meaning takes its bearings from Ἰουδαϊκῶς in 2:14 and the ongoing argument about the time and purpose of the Mosaic law in God's promissory and christological economy. This suggests that νόμος refers to the whole law (cf. 5:3) and ἔργα, as the references to ποιέω from the quotations of Deuteronomy and Leviticus indicate (Gal 3:10, 12), refers to the observance of the law.

[47] Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 271, who speaks of Paul setting 'an act of God' (πίστις Χριστοῦ) 'over against … an act of the human being' (ἔργα νόμου). This critique of human agency is distinguishable from, though often linked with, an argument about the impossibility of keeping the law – a point Paul does seem to make in Galatians: see e.g. the insertion of σάρξ in the echo of Ps 142:2 LXX in Gal 2:16d, the scriptural logic of Gal 3:10–12, and the denial that righteousness comes through the law because the law is unable to give life in Gal 3:21.

[48] See e.g. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul of the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 354–9.

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age and the predicates of the old ἄνθρωπος.[49] For Paul, this cosmic and anthropological 'no' is spoken in the cross. Both the cosmos and the human 'I' are crucified with Christ (6:14; 2:20). Paul's negations are therefore a christologically grounded reduction to nothing – the 'no' is de-creation and death.[50]

'But': this adversative, which lives in Paul's antitheses at the site of nothingness and death, opens clauses that name Christ as the one who contradicts the conditions of the old cosmos. Where the old age ends: 'new creation' (6:14–15). Where the human 'I' dies: 'Christ lives in me' (2:20). The grammar of the gospel, in its antithetical expression, is a grammar of nothingness and creation – a grammar of death and life. This is evident in Galatians 2:16 in the incongruity between the gift that gives righteousness and its recipients: it is not given to those considered righteous by the law but to those the law diagnoses as 'sinners' (Gal 2:15, 17). The divine action communicated by the verb δικαιόω is thus necessarily creative rather than confirmatory: God does not ratify a righteousness regulated by the law; he gives Christ to those whom the law labels sinners and thereby recreates them as righteous. The antithetical grammar of Galatians 2:16, therefore, expresses a fundamental contrast between the old and the new, between death and life. Within the dispute about the law that occasioned Galatians, 'not by works of law' is the contextual way of saying 'no' to the old and the anthropological. But if the range of Paul's 'no' is as wide as the old world, the rationale for this negation is as specific as a single name: Jesus Christ, the gift who contradicts the old and creates the new.

Galatians 2:21 concludes the paragraph of 2:15–21 with the same contrast that opens it: 'I do not reject the grace of God, for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died in vain' (2:21). The terms νόμος, Χριστός, and δικαιοσύνη pick up the antithesis of Galatians 2:16. But this is more than a restatement; it is a theological interpretation: justification ἐξ ἔργων νόμου invalidates the gift of Christ and voids the cross, while justification ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ names Christ crucified as the gift that gives righteousness. This suggests that the rationale for Paul's rejection of ἔργα νόμου as the basis or source of justitication is 'charismatic' and

[49] Martyn is right to hear the 'harmony' between the antitheses of Gal 1:1, 11–12 and 2:16, but he unnecessarily limits the anthropological/christological either/or to an antinomy of agency (*Galatians*, p. 271). Paul's polarity certainly includes a negation of human action *qua* a condition of the gospel, but it also includes a 'no' to all other anthropological predicates, whether inherited or acquired.

[50] To distinguish this negative work of God against the old from the gospel that creates the new, the reformers called it the *opus alienum Dei* in distinction from the *opus proprium Dei* and argued that God does these two works through two words: law and gospel.

christological – that is, it is about 'the grace (χάρις) of God' and the death of Christ (Χριστός). Galatians 1:6 and 5:4 confirm this: for Paul, the Galatians' attraction to 'works of law' (3:3, 5) amounts to an abandoning of 'the one who called you in the grace (χάρις) of Christ' (Χριστός, 1:6); to allow circumcision and so to be 'justified by the law' is to be 'cut off from Christ' (Χριστός) and to 'fall away from grace' (χάρις, 5:3–4). For Paul, 'the truth of the gospel' in Galatia, as in Jerusalem and Antioch before (2:5, 14), is either/or: *either* the law and its works *or* the divine gift that is the self-giving of Christ (cf. 1:4; 2:20). It is the death of Christ, not the law, that justifies, and it is this christological gift – the cross – that is 'the grace of God' (2:21). The antithetical grammar of justification therefore poses a mutually exclusive alternative: either not-Christ or Christ. Justification ἐξ ἔργων νόμου is not the gospel because the gospel is always and only 'the gospel of *Christ*'.

In saying that justification is not by 'works of law', then, Paul is saying what the gospel is not: the gospel is not all that is not-Christ. The other side of the antithesis in Galatians 2:16 says what the gospel is: Christ. In Galatians 2:15–21, Paul uses the language of righteousness and justification to interpret the death of Christ. 'If righteousness is through the law,' Paul argues, 'then Christ died for nothing' (2:21; cf. 2:16–17). It is this 'grace of God' – the death of Christ – that Paul does not 'reject' (2:14), because whereas justification by 'works of law' voids the cross, justification ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ confesses 'the one who loved me and gave himself for me' as the justifying gift. It is in this sense that the phrase 'but by Christ-faith' communicates the gospel. Justification ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ means 'to be justified in Christ' (2:17). Justification ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ means that the gift that justifies is Christ crucified (2:21; cf. 1:4; 2:20). This suggests that πίστις Χριστοῦ is a way of naming Jesus Christ as the gift that gives righteousness – or better: as the gift who is 'our righteousness' (cf. 1 Cor 1:30). In the theology and exegesis of the Reformation, the translation 'faith in Christ' means exactly this: it identifies Jesus Christ as the *one* by, in and on the basis of whom God justifies the ungodly.[51] But however πίστις Χριστοῦ is translated, it articulates 'the gospel of Christ' in antithesis to a 'different gospel' because it proclaims rather than rejects 'the grace of God' that is the cross of Christ. It is as an antithesis – as the mutually exclusive alternative of *either* not-Christ *or* only Christ – that justification gives the grammar of

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[51] See Jonathan A. Linebaugh, 'The Christo-Centrism of Faith in Christ: Martin Luther's Reading of Galatians 2:16, 19–20', *New Testament Studies* 59/4 (2013), pp. 535–44.

the gospel. As the reformers might put it, πίστις Χριστοῦ, in antithesis to ἔργα νόμου, is a Pauline way of saying *solus Christus*.[52]

The grammar of the gospel, then, as it comes to expression in the antithesis of Galatians 2:16, is christological and just so charismatic, incongruous and creative. It is Christ crucified: an unconditioned gift, given to sinners, which recreates them as righteous. This grammar says 'no' to any 'other gospel': anything that is not Christ is not the gospel. But this grammar also says 'the gospel of Christ': at the site of sin, slavery, nothingness and death, God gives Christ as the gift that creates *e contrario*: righteousness, freedom, new creation and life.

A critical criterion

Galatians repeatedly says 'no' to not-gospels, to the agitators, the ψευδάδελφοι and to Peter. But how does Paul distinguish 'the truth of the gospel' from a 'different gospel'? What criterion enables the critical judgement that something is not the gospel?

The occasion of Galatians can only be tentatively reconstructed, but Paul says enough to indicate the correspondence between the prior events in Jerusalem and Antioch and the current crisis in Galatia (2:1–10, 11–14). While the majority of the believers in Galatia are of non-Jewish origin (4:8), there is a compulsion to join their commitment to Christ with the observance of the Torah. Paul's use of the phrase 'another gospel' (1:6), his appeal to analogous disputes in Jerusalem and Antioch with Jewish believers in Christ (2:1–14), and the language of 'starting' and 'finishing' (3:1–5) all suggest that those Paul perceived as opponents were Jewish Christ followers.[53] This means that their message was likely one of complementarity rather than competition: that is, Paul's opponents likely argued that it is not Christ *or* Torah; it is Christ *and* Torah. It is here, where a Pauline 'or' confronts an un-evangelical 'and', that the grammar of justification functions as a critical criterion.[54]

Paul's 'no' to the 'different gospel' takes the form of saying 'no' to justification by works of the law.[55] The occasion helps to account for the

[52] The reformers used a term from Latin grammar, *particula exclusiva*, to express the excluding function of Paul's antithesis.

[53] For a different view, that 'the influencers' were non-believing Jews local to Galatia, see M. D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), pp. 62–72.

[54] For the theology of Paul's opponents, see John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), pp. 45–60.

[55] Gal 2:15–21 is lexically and thematically connected to both 2:11–14 and 3:1ff. For the former, see Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, p. 370. For the latter, see H.-J. Eckstein, *Verheissung*

specific language Paul employs: the terms 'righteousness', 'law' and 'faith' have Israel's scripture as their source (Gal 3:6, 10–12) and the Gentile mission as their *Sitz im Leben*. The vocabulary of Galatians 2:16, in other words, is traditional and occasional. The grammar, however, is uniquely Pauline: justification is *not* by works of law, *but* by Christ-faith.[56] This 'not, but' grammar, as argued above, poses an evangelical either/or: either not-Christ, or only Christ. It is as this mutually exclusive alternative that justification functions in Galatians as a critical criterion. Where the agitators put an 'and', Paul puts an antithesis: not 'Christ and the law', but simply 'Christ'. Righteousness comes either through the law or through the death of Christ (2:21). 'To be justified by the law' – in this case, to undergo circumcision – does not complement or complete 'the gospel of Christ'; it 'cut[s] off from Christ' (5:4). 'In place of the agitators' synthesis of faith in Christ and the law', writes Moo, 'Paul insists on an antithesis: it is Christ and therefore not the law.'[57]

There is little indication, however, that Paul's antithesis between Christ and the law is grounded in an opposition to the law *per se*: uncircumcision, just as much as circumcision, is 'not worth anything' (οὔτε...τι ἰσχύει, 5:6; cf. 1 Cor 7:17–19). As Luther might put it, the issue is not whether the law is good; the issue is whether the law is the gospel. In Barclay's words, 'to require circumcision … is to place the Christ-event within the parameters of worth defined by the Jewish tradition, and that would make the Christ-gift conditioned by something outside and before itself'.[58] The problem, in other words, is that the agitators' 'and' erases the gospel's 'alone' – the *solus Christus*. Paul's critique is an application of this grammatical rule in the opposite direction. 'Christ alone' erases any 'and' that is a non-christological condition of the gospel: neither uncircumcision nor circumcision, neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female (5:6; 3:28). To condition the gift of Christ by any religious, cultural, moral or social criteria is to disqualify its essential character as an unconditioned gift. The 'gospel of Christ', Paul insists, is only and exclusively Christ.

It is as an expression of this exclusivity – that is, as a grammar that excludes – that the antithesis of Galatians 2:16 functions as a critical criterion. The terms of Paul's argument target the situation in Galatia and

und Gesetz: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Galater 2,15–4,7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), p. 79. Gal 2:15–21 should therefore be read both within the context of the incident in Antioch and as part of Paul's argument against the 'different gospel' that has come to Galatia.

[56] Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 264, n. 158; Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, pp. 842–7.
[57] Moo, *Galatians*, p. 154.
[58] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, p. 392.

recall the disputes in Jerusalem and Antioch. The not-clause of the antithesis identifies and critiques the 'other gospel': justification is not by works of the law. This 'not', however, is not grounded in a 'no' to the law. 'Not by works of law', rather, is the contextual spelling of the 'un-' that defines Christ as an unconditioned gift. It is as an expression of this either/or that the 'not, but' grammar of justification is a critical criterion. The grammar of Galatians 2:16, as an antithesis, says Christ alone.

A hermeneutical criterion

Justification functions as a critical and hermeneutical criterion in Galatians because it says 'no' to the 'other gospel' even as it says 'the gospel of Christ'. As an argument against the 'other gospel' and for 'the gospel of Christ', Galatians 2:16 says what the gospel is not and what the gospel is: the gospel is not conditioned by any of the non-christological criteria of the old cosmos; the gospel is Jesus Christ, the gift who contradicts the old and creates the new. The previous section considered the critical side of this criteriological function. This section will demonstrate that justification also functions as a hermeneutical criterion.

'Hermeneutics', as Jenson puts it, concerns the fusion of two horizons that occurs 'where past hearing turns to new speaking'.[59] Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia is 'new speaking', but it includes the interpretation of 'past hearing': Israel's scripture is listened to and reread, the gospel the Galatians once heard is recalled and repreached, and Paul's 'former life' is remembered and retold. The hermeneutical function of justification is traceable, in a limited way, as Paul uses terms from the 'semantic domain' of justification to interpret these texts and histories: the language of law, righteousness and faith permeate Paul's engagement with Israel's scripture, his account of the Galatians' reception of the Spirit is cast in terms of the contrast between faith and 'works of law', and the paradigmatic 'I' of Galatians 2:19–20 dies 'to the law' and lives 'in faith'.[60] For Paul, however,

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[59] Jenson, *The Triune God*, p. 14.

[60] This language is native to Israel's scripture, as Paul's quotations from Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Habakkuk indicate (Gal 3:6, 10–13). But Paul's selection of these texts – and not others – and his distinctive reading of them (i.e. distinguishing law from promise and faith) suggest that his personal and missionary experience and his antithetical theology of justification inform his scriptural interpretation. The source of Paul's justification *vocabulary* is Israel's scripture; the origin of Paul's justification *grammar*, however, is theological and experiential – i.e. the antithesis of justification and the specific experience of the self-giving of Christ to sinners *qua* sinners (both Paul and the Gentiles, 1:13–15; 2:16–17, 19–20; 3:1–5; 4:8–9). This theology and experience, however, establish a hermeneutical frame within which Paul

these are not just discrete histories; they fuse at the horizon he calls 'the gospel of Christ': Israel's canonical texts 'pre-preach the gospel' (3:8), the Galatian believers are being drawn towards a 'different gospel' and away from 'the gospel of Christ' (1:6–10), and Paul's 'calling through grace' (1:15) culminates in Paul 'preaching the gospel' (1:23). Justification is therefore a hermeneutical criterion in Galatians not only as it informs Paul's interpretations, but also (and especially) as his interpretations identify these pasts as promises and paradigms of the gospel.

Justification functions in just this way, I will argue, as a grammar. It is as an antithesis that Galatians 2:16 gives the grammar of the gospel: not not-Christ, but only Christ. This is not an isolated antithesis, however; it is a Pauline pattern of speech – it is the grammar of the gospel according to which Paul writes Galatians. Even in those places in the letter where the vocabulary of justification is (largely) absent, the christological and antithetical grammar of Galatians 2:16 moulds Paul's stories and readings of scripture into the shape of the gospel: not the old cosmos, but the unconditioned and creative gift of Christ.

Graham Stanton has noticed this hermeneutical function of Galatians 2:16: the 'antithesis between those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and those who are ἐκ πίστεως' introduces 'key musical notes in contrasting thematic phrases'. For Stanton, the 'sound map' of Galatians is divided by this antithesis, with some 'satellite words and phrases' going with πίστις (e.g. ἡ ἐπαγγελία, ἡ κληρονομία, υἱοί and τέκνα of Abraham or of God, and the δικ- word group) and others going with νόμος (e.g. ἡ κατάρα and δοῦλος).[61] This list of 'satellites' could be expanded, with terms such as 'grace', 'Christ', 'Spirit' and 'calling' dotting one side of the Pauline map, while 'curse', 'flesh', 'cosmos', στοχεῖα and ἄνθρωπος dot the other. This is what Stanton means when he suggests (quoting the words of G. S. Duncan) that Galatians 2:16 'is the text on which all that follows in the Epistle is commentary'.[62] The antithesis of Galatians 2:16 plays the 'key

does not so much create as discover the antithetical grammar of the gospel within his canonical tradition, a discovery that in turn informs the shape of his theology and the interpretation of his experiences. In this sense, justification functions as a hermeneutical criterion in a mutually interpretative relationship with Paul's calling in grace, the Gentile mission, and Israel's scripture, all of which source and shape his justification formulae even as his theology and grammar of justification inform his renarrations and rereadings of those events and texts.

[61] Graham N. Stanton, 'The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ: Galatians 3:1–6:2', in James D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), p. 101.

[62] Ibid., p. 103, n. 11.

notes' that shape the 'sound map' of the letter – that is, the antithesis between 'works of law' and 'Christ-faith' functions as a hermeneutic as it provides the headings under which other parts of the letter can be grouped.

Applied to the stories Paul recounts and the scriptures he interprets, the antithetical grammar of Galatians 2:16 shapes Paul's speech as it splits each story he tells into two. There is, in Galatians, no unbroken story of the self or of salvation history. There is an old story and a new story, an old self and a new, an old cosmos and a new creation, a time 'before' and 'the fullness of time' (4:4). Paul can narrate history κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, but that means talking about his 'former' (ποτέ, 1:13) life, remembering the condition of the Galatians 'then' (τότε, 4:8) and tracing the history of Israel 'before' (πρό, 3:23). This side of the stories consists of what Stanton calls the 'satellites' that correspond to Paul's negation of νόμος in Galatians 2:16. Paul's 'former life' is situated within a cultural, ethnic, familial and religious context identifiable as 'Judaism' (1:13). Within this sphere he is the subject of his own existence and his progress and zeal are measurable both according to a standard ('the traditions of my ancestors') and relative to his peers ('I advanced beyond many of my people of the same age', 1:14). For the Galatian believers, their 'then' was a time of theological ignorance and enslavement – slaves both to 'beings that by nature are not gods' and to 'the elements of the cosmos' (4:3, 8). Similarly, if more surprisingly, Israel's time 'before' – their time 'under the law' – is interpreted as an era of 'captivity', a time of being 'imprisoned until …' (3:21–5; cf. 4:21–31).

In Paul's telling, however, each of these old stories ends. Paul's autobiography is interrupted: 'but when God' (1:15). The Galatians' time of 'not knowing God' is contradicted and overcome: 'But now you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God' (4:9). Israel's imprisonment under the law ends: 'But now that faith has come' (3:25). On the far side of these adversatives, Paul's new stories consist of the 'satellites' that correspond to the but-clause of Galatians 2:16. Paul is 'called through grace' (1:15), just as the Galatians are 'called by grace'.[63] The Galatian believers, like those formerly under the Jewish law, are 'set free' or 'redeemed' (4:5; 5:1); they are made children of Abraham or the promise and so of God – they are no longer slaves but adopted children who have received the Spirit and so say 'Abba' (3:26–4:7; cf. 4:8–9).

The grammar of Galatians 2:16, however, does more than play two contrasting notes. As an antithesis the 'not, but' grammar of justification

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[63] On the connection between 1:6 and 1:15, see O. McFarland, 'The One Who Calls in Grace: Paul's Rhetorical and Theological Identification with the Galatians', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 35 (2013), pp. 151–65.

names and negates the old as it identifies and announces the new. Paul's theology, in other words, is not about the kind of balance or equilibrium indicated by the word 'and' in pairings like 'old and new', 'death and life', 'sin and righteousness'. As an antithesis, Galatians 2:16 does not say 'and'; it says 'not, but', and thereby limns a grammar that both names a battle and proclaims the victor: the end of the old cosmos and from that nothingness, new creation (6:14–15); the old I 'no longer lives', but from that death, resurrection – 'Christ lives in me' (2:20). This unconditioned and creative grace patterns Paul's stories and reading of scripture. Paul's 'calling through grace' occurs without regard to his 'former life in Judaism' because God's act of setting Paul apart took place before there is a Paul (1:15).[64] The Galatians were 'called by grace' (1:6) while they were still enslaved and theologically ignorant (4:3, 8–9), just as Israel was still imprisoned under the law when they were redeemed from the curse of the law (3:21–4:7; cf. 3:13).[65] In Paul's stories the old self, sin and slavery are terms that name the nothingness from which God's grace creates *e contrario*: a new 'I' (1:15ff.; 2:20), righteousness (2:16; 3:8; 5:5) and freedom (4:5; 5:1).

The grammar of Paul's stories and scriptural interpretation is, like the grammar of Galatians 2:16, antithetical: there is a rupture between the old and the new – a death and a resurrection. The grammar of Galatians 2:16 – that is, the grammar of the incongruous and creative gift – is the grammar according to which Paul reads scripture and writes stories. The language of death and resurrection, however, is not just a metaphor of reversal. It identifies an event: the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. For Paul, it is through the cross of Jesus Christ that the old cosmos is crucified (Gal 6:14) and the new creation that exists out of this nothingness (6:15) only is 'in Christ' (3:28; 5:6; cf. 2:20; 4:16). As argued above, while Paul's language of justification is scripturally sourced and occasionally situated, the origin of his antithetical grammar is christological. Similarly, as he retells the histories

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[64] In 1 Cor 15:8–10, Paul's former life is interpreted as a condition of unworthiness that is met with an incongruous and identity-creating grace. For the theological shape and function of Paul's autobiographical remarks, see John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975), pp. 114–58; Beverly R. Gaventa, 'Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm', *New Testament Studies* 28 (1986), pp. 309–26.

[65] This unconditioned grammar is echoed in the antithetically structured depiction of the calling of the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1:26–31: 'Consider your calling … Not many were wise … not many were powerful … not many were of noble birth . . . But God chose.' A similarly antithetical dynamic shapes Paul's interpretation of the genesis of Israel: Isaac is not a child of the flesh but of the promise, Jacob is chosen not on the basis of works but by the one who calls (Rom 9:7–13).

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of Israel, the Galatians and himself, the caesura is always christological. Paul's apostleship is 'through Jesus Christ' (1:1), and he received the gospel 'through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (1:12). It is this event that interrupts his past and recreates him as a preacher of the gospel: 'But when God … was pleased to reveal his son to me' (1:13–24). The Galatians' time of ignorance and enslavement ends with Paul's proclamation, an instance of 'hearing' that makes present the crucified Christ (3:1–5; 4:13–14).[66] Israel's captivity under the law was an imprisonment 'until faith came' – that is, 'until Christ' (3:23–5).

For Paul, however, Christ does not just contradict and crucify the old; he is the gift that creates the new. The deep grammar of the gospel, the incongruity and creativity of grace, is seen most sharply at the point of radical cosmological and anthropological discontinuity. The old cosmos ends; the old ἄνθρωπος dies. But there is, to borrow from the Song of Songs, a 'love as strong as death' (Song of Sol 8:6). As Barclay writes, 'at the human level, the Christ-event is a matter of discontinuity'; it is 'God's counter-statement to the previous conditions of the possible' and 'narrates disjunction, not progress'.[67] The discontinuity, to use Pauline language, is as deep as death. But as Paul's antithetical grammar signals, there is also a reversal as radical as resurrection: from immaturity and captivity to adoption (3:19–4:1–7), from ignorance to being known (4:8–9), from sin to righteousness (2:16–21), from slavery to freedom (4:21–5:1), from the crucifixion of the old cosmos to new creation (6:14–15), from death to life (2:19–20). For the old ἄνθρωπος, in Martyn's metaphor, there are 'no through trains from' the old cosmos 'to the gospel of God's son'.[68] The old ἄνθρωπος does not survive his or her own salvation; she or he dies (2:20). But the gospel gives a gift to the dead – this is its full incongruity. And the gospel also gives a gift that makes alive – this is its full creativity. The old ἄνθρωπος dies, but the gospel of Chirst says, in the words of the novelist Walker Percy, 'I love you dead.'[69]

This love has a surprising way of holding together the histories it also fractures. For Paul, this love is enacted in the self-giving of Christ, the 'one who loved me and gave himself for me' (2:20). It is this christological gift that Paul calls 'the grace of God' (2:21). This 'grace of God', however, also

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[66] See E. Güttgemanns, *Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr: Studien zur paulinischen Christologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), p. 185.

[67] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, pp. 412–13.

[68] J. Louis Martyn, 'Paul and his Jewish-Christian Interpreters', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 42 (1987–8), p. 6.

[69] Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins* (New York: Picador, 1971), p. 68.

fulfils the promise of God (3:8, 14, 16) and accomplishes the purpose of God (note the ἵνα-clauses in 3:22, 24; 4:5). 'The Christ-gift is' thus, as Barclay puts it, 'both entirely congruous with the promise of God and wholly incongruous with the prior conditions of human … history'.[70] But, as love and gift, it is not wholly incongruous with the human. That Christ 'loved *me* and gave himself for *me*' gestures towards a continuity of the self, not in the sense that the 'I' lives, but in that the 'I' is loved – with a love 'strong as death'. There is, for Paul, a 'me' that is killed, but this 'me' is the one whom Christ loved and gave himself for (2:20). There is an 'us' whose deliverance from 'the present evil age' goes through death, but this 'us' names those for whom 'Christ gave himself' (1:4).[71] The grace of God is there before Paul's former life, just as the promise to Abraham that includes Israel and the Gentiles (3:8, 14) 'pre-preaches the gospel' (3:8). These histories, then, broken into before and after by the advent of Christ, also have Christ as their beginning and end.

This grammar patterns the paradigmatic account of the 'I' in Galatians 2:20. The biography of the 'I' is both broken into two and connected through the incongruous and creative gift of Christ. The 'I' dies ('I no longer live'), yet there is life out of this death: 'the life I live in the flesh I live by faith'. What fractures this story of the self is the cross of Christ ('I have been crucified with Christ'), and yet the life out of death is also christological: 'Christ lives in me.' For Paul, this evokes a dialectical confession: I no longer live, but I am loved. The hermeneutical function of the 'not, but' grammar of Galatians 2:16 is traceable here as this christological death and life is articulated as an antithesis: 'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' Death and life with and in Christ is 'not, but': it is not I, but Christ. And this, in Galatians, is the grammar of the gospel: a no to all that is not Christ, and a yes to only Christ. This antithetical grammar, as the reformers insisted, functions as both a critical and hermeneutical criterion: it identifies and negates any 'other gospel' even as it picks out and proclaims 'the gospel of Christ'. The 'no' here is death – 'I no longer live.' But: there is a 'love as strong as death', a love for 'me', a love that says, incongruously, 'I love you dead', and a love that says, creatively, 'Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead.'

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[70] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, p. 413.

[71] This begins to address Daphne Hampson's concern that a soteriology of death and resurrection is inherently misanthropic; see her *Christian Contradictions: The Structures of Lutheran and Catholic Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 239–40.