

A REVIEW ARTICLE

Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

This volume is the incarnation a Ph.D. thesis presented to the University of Durham, under the supervision of J. D. G. Dunn. The book is of particular interest because the stance assumed by the student is conspicuously at odds with that of the teacher. In the preface, Gathercole compliments his mentor as “a tireless, gracious, and tolerant sparring partner in debate;” but, I would add, a *sparring partner* all the same. In personal conversation, Professor Dunn confirmed that, in fact, his interaction with Gathercole was comprised of several years of very intensive exchange.

Gathercole tackles the question of “early Jewish soteriology” from the vantage point of Israel’s boasting as it pertains to her confidence before God and her distinctiveness from the nations. Structurally, the book follows the more or less traditional pattern of a research project, in this instance: (1) an introductory survey of boasting and related matters in recent scholarship; (2) a study of pertinent Jewish texts that bear on the issue of obedience and final vindication in early Judaism; (3) an exegesis of Romans 1-5.

1. Summary of Gathercole's Argument

Much of the **Introduction** is occupied with a review of the New Perspective (NP), as represented prominently by the work of E. P. Sanders, J. D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright. In this survey, Gathercole singles out statements of Dunn and Wright, in agreement with Sanders, to the effect that (supposedly) in Jewish thinking final acceptance by God at the judgment does not rest on obedience to the Torah. Clearly, says Gathercole, *if* this picture of Jewish soteriology is right, then boasting in obedience, or basing one’s confidence of final salvation in one’s observance of Torah, is very unlikely to be in evidence. Accordingly, the model of boasting articulated by Dunn and Wright, of confidence based on national election and vocation, would more likely be the correct one.

However, Gathercole is adamant that this model is *not* correct. Indeed, it is “dangerously one-sided,” because obedience as a condition of and basis for final vindication and salvation at the eschaton is fundamental to Jewish thought. He qualifies that the reconstruction of NP scholars is not always wrong in what it asserts, but “it is extremely one-sided and leads to serious distortions when we come to examine the relation between early Judaism and Paul” (13).

Since the purpose of this book is to assess the role of boasting in Paul's response to Jewish soteriology, Gathercole summarizes the issue in these terms: "The debate hinges on whether these works are identity markers, defining one as belonging to the true people of God, or whether these works also have a functional role as a criterion for final salvation. Broadly, adherents of the New Perspective on Paul hold the first position, while critics of the New Perspective emphasize the second position" (13). Gathercole thus presents us with an either/or option; and ultimately he will come down on the side of boasting as a species of human "achievement."

Integral to this either/or schema is the "grace-works axis" (K. L. Yinger). On the one side are scholars who emphasize the continuity between Judaism and Paul as pertains to the relation of grace and works. Yinger, for example, maintains that Paul and Judaism alike are no more "monergistic" or "synergistic" than each other. Indeed, Paul's stance toward works in relation to the final judgment is entirely consistent with Jewish precedents.¹ On the other side, interpreters such as T. Laato and T. Eskola adopt an "anthropological" approach, according to which Paul's appraisal of human nature is much more pessimistic than that of Judaism. For these scholars, Paul stresses predestination and grace, whereas his Jewish contemporaries, with their "higher view" of human nature, are "synergistic" in their sympathies.

The introduction is rounded off by various methodological considerations. Here, Gathercole is concerned to underscore a number of factors. (1) Sanders downplayed the eschatological dimension of Second Temple Judaism. (2) Judaism is to be understood not only on "its own terms," but as well on "Paul's terms." (3) Hellenistic Jewish texts have not been given the weight they deserve in the reconstruction of Jewish soteriology. (4) Nomenclature such as "legalism" and "works-righteousness," as traditionally conceived, is not appropriate for the literature of this period. The real point is that not enough of a distinction has been made by the NP between salvation as *getting in* and final vindication at the last judgment.

Gathercole then epitomizes his book as being concerned with the impact of two key questions on the exegesis of Paul. (1) What were the criteria for God's saving vindication at the eschaton, according to Jewish thought? (2) Did Jewish groups believe they would be vindicated on the basis of God's election, or on the basis of their own obedience? His thesis argues that Jewish soteriology was based both on divine election and on final salvation by works. Paul, by contrast, opposes the view that justification is by obedience to the Torah (as contra the NP).

¹ Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 105 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

After the introduction commences **Part I: Obedience and Final Vindication in Early Judaism**. This survey of materials subdivides into five segments that canvass a variety of literature, including selected New Testament passages.

Gathercole's conclusion from the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Qumran is just what was stated in the introduction: "God is portrayed as saving his people at the *eschaton* on the basis of their obedience, as well as on the basis of his election of them" (90). As far as the Dead Sea Scrolls in particular are concerned, he is bothered that the Sanders-type reading of the sources upsets the balance between realized and future eschatology. For him, "final judgment on the basis of works permeates Jewish theology" (111). This, in turn, sets the stage for the argument that Paul was reacting against a Judaism which believed that one earned final salvation as a result of works.

The treatment of Jewish soteriology in the New Testament yields the same conclusion: works are a precondition to a favorable verdict in the last judgment. In this, the New Testament itself is in line with Jewish precedents. Particularly as regards Paul, the theology of final judgment according to obedience exhibits both continuity and discontinuity in relation to Jewish texts: continuity as to obedience being a criterion for final judgment, discontinuity as to the character of the obedience. Therefore, Paul's theology does not fit comfortably into either a Lutheran or Reformed framework. But neither can covenantal nomism suffice as a description of either Judaism or Christianity because of the function of works at final judgment. If it seems like Jewish and Pauline soteriological patterns are more or less the same, Gathercole assures us that such a comparison runs aground on the rocks of Paul's pneumatology. In his conception, unless the apostle's contemporaries were synergistic, "then the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost for nothing" (134)! Nevertheless, there has not been sufficient recognition of the common ground between the traditions of early Christianity and early Judaism. "It is not that both consist in initial grace that fully accomplishes salvation, followed by works which are evidence of that; rather, *both share an elective grace and also assign a determinative role to works at final judgment*" (135 [italics mine]).

The chapter on obedience and final vindication in the aftermath of 70 CE surveys 4 *Ezra*, 2 *Baruch*, Josephus and rabbinic literature, including the targums. The findings are the same as in the case of the previous materials: works count in the final judgment, thus rendering the covenantal nomism model inadequate. Of particular note is that in summarizing and embracing F. Avemarie's work on the Tannaitic materials,² Gathercole

² Avemarie, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 55 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996).

chides Sanders for a systemizing approach that, on the one hand, underinterprets texts that are problematic for him and, on the other, stretches supporting texts beyond their limits.

The treatment of boasting in Second Temple Judaism endeavors to steer a course somewhere between traditional views of Israel's boasting and the outlook of the NP. According to the former, Paul sees lack of assurance as one of the most significant problems within Judaism. The problem is solved by the gospel of justification by faith. For the latter, the people of God based their confidence in final vindication purely on God's election and not on their works. Their assurance of vindication came from God's faithfulness to his promises and was not earned by their own obedience. In contrast to both, this chapter "aims to demonstrate that the element of obedience was indeed believed by a number of Jewish writers to be not only possible but also accomplished, both by the nation as a whole as well as by individuals. As a result, it can be said that works too, not just divine election, are a basis for confidence in final vindication" (163).

Gathercole's consideration of the Jewish materials is rounded off by the chapter on boasting in Second Temple Judaism. He discovers that Israel's boasting was not only in election and national distinctiveness, but in actual obedience to the law. In brief, the Israelite had to perform the Torah in order to be considered faithful to it. Gathercole believes that this latter strand of boasting has been excluded by the NP, because, in his words, "obedience, as well as election, is the basis of Israel's confidence before God" (194). Predictably, Sanders continues to be the whipping boy. In the face of so much evidence that boasting is grounded in real performance, Gathercole feels compelled to take Sanders to task for a "minimalistic" understanding of covenant faithfulness that reduces righteousness to "mere intention."

The remainder of the book is comprised of **Part 2: Exegesis of Romans 1-5**. The first segment of this division pertains to "Paul's Assessment of Jewish Boasting in Romans 1:18-3:20." The discussion here is organized around Paul's problem with his interlocutor in Romans 2:1-16: what was he guilty of? For Gathercole, Paul's dialogue partner is unrepentant and apostate. This Jew, who represents Israel as a whole, believes he is far better than he actually is. Therefore, all of Paul's energies in this portion of Romans are directed toward convincing this person of the extent of his guilt, because "...*this was precisely what was missing in the self-assessment of the Jewish nation*" (211 [italics his]). It is to this end that Gathercole adduces passages from Romans 2 and 3, which indict the Jew of his failure to keep the law.

Given his conclusions from the previous survey of the Jewish materials, in Romans 2, Gathercole maintains: "Paul is countering the Jewish view that obedience to Torah is the way to final justification, not that salvation is restricted to a certain sphere" (214). He is of

the opinion that numerous Jewish texts speak of “a sense of innocence as far as sin was concerned” (214). This means that Paul is opposing “a Jewish confidence at the final judgment that is based on election in conjunction with obedient fulfillment of Torah. Paul is trying to persuade his interlocutor that his sin runs much deeper than he thought, and so the interlocutor’s obedience to Torah is by no means comprehensive enough for his justification” (214).

All this is set in contrast to the NP, which, supposedly, mainly views boasting as possession of the Torah only, not performance of its requirements. Such “antinomian ethnocentrism” is objectionable because “God’s election and Israel’s obedience are consistently held together, and neither is emphasized at the expense of the other” (203).

The exegesis of Romans 1-5 carries on with “Paul’s Reevaluation of Torah, Abraham, and David in Romans 3:27-4:8.” In this chapter, Gathercole revisits the views of Sanders, Dunn and Wright, with more criticisms offered, mainly relating to the perceived imbalance on the part of the NP that restricts Jewish “works” to the boundary markers and does not extend to include comprehensive obedience to the law. Gathercole offers comments on Paul’s use of Abraham and David in Romans 4 and presses the point that both were justified as “ungodly” sinners, thus providing the paradigm for Israel which is disobedient and ungodly. The issue is not boundary markers, but Israel’s failure to keep the law.

The final chapter bears the title of “The Resurrection of Boasting in Romans 5:1-11.” Here, Gathercole takes up the relationship between boasting in Romans 2:17 and 5:2, 3, 11. The first passage condemns a certain kind of boasting, while the latter ones resurrect a form of boasting that Paul not only approves of but actually commends. In agreement with the consensus among commentators, Gathercole defines boasting as the confidence or assurance of eschatological salvation. He offers the pertinent exegetical observation that Paul’s use of the preposition “in” as construed with the verb “boast” specifies the ground of Christian boasting: the hope of the glory of God, our sufferings and God himself. The final segment of the chapter, and of the book, considers the difference between Jewish and Pauline boasting. The difference is twofold. (1) The Christian’s boast in God *through Christ*. (2) The boasting of Paul’s Jewish interlocutor in Romans 2 is illegitimate and unfounded because he is unrepentant and unable actually to fulfill the law because of his sinfulness; thus, the ground of the Jew’s confidence is undercut.

2. Response

Dr. Gathercole is to be congratulated for a fine piece of scholarship. His book is exemplary as a well-researched, well-argued and attractively presented thesis. The writing style as a whole is easy enough to follow. In places, a more deliberate phrasing would have facilitated the reading process, but only infrequently does he get bogged down by excessive subordinate clauses and parenthetical explanations, a fairly rare achievement in this kind of literature.

The argument itself is comprised of two intertwining themes: judgment according to works and the consequent boasting of those who have performed such works as to be approved in the final judgment. As to the first, it is not, he says, a matter of initial grace that fully accomplishes salvation, followed by works that are (mere) evidence of that grace; rather, *elective grace assigns a determinative role to works at the final judgment* (135). Given such a premise, the second point follows naturally enough, that boasting entails more than pride in election and national privileges; actual performance lies at the root of the boast. I should think that Gathercole has established both prongs of his thesis beyond any reasonable doubt, and to the extent that these findings provide a necessary counterbalance to some approaches to the Jewish sources, we are in his debt.

By way of critical response, a number of observations are in order. It will be possible only to respond in principle to those aspects of the book that are liable to criticism, and not to offer a detailed appraisal of much of the exegesis of Romans 1-5.

(1) As pertains to the relation of works to judgment, Gathercole's thesis is not unique: that (covenantal) works loom large in the literature of this period has hardly escaped the notice of scholars. One acknowledges that he is attempting to insert the thin end of the wedge into the door of the NP; and anyone who has engaged in a similar research project can well appreciate that a Ph.D. thesis hinges on a creative use of materials that have been explored countless times. Nevertheless, Gathercole has not really advanced us beyond Yinger's work. He has devoted more detailed attention to some of the sources than Yinger, for which we are thankful; but, in principle, he has not told us anything that Yinger and others before him have not already said. I might add that a number of other secondary sources were only glanced at or ignored altogether.

(2) Gathercole's representation of the NP is misleading and prejudicial in some particulars. For one thing, he paints a rather reductionistic picture. The main target in his crosshairs is the Sanders-Dunn-Wright axis, with occasional references to other scholars such as Yinger. One is not surprised by this, and his occupation with the "big three" is not out of line. In fairness, Gathercole acknowledges that there are discrepancies between these

three particular scholars (221). Nevertheless, the phrase “New Perspective” is normally used in such a manner as to convey impression that the movement that bears this title is, more or less, a monolithic entity. In point of fact, such is not the case. It is surely telling that D. A. Carson acknowledges that the NP cannot be reduced to a single perspective. “Rather, it is a bundle of interpretive approaches to Paul, some of which are mere differences in emphasis, and others of which compete rather antagonistically.”³ Some of us who embrace a modified form of the NP are entirely in agreement with Gathercole that works count in the last judgment and that Israelite boasting pertains not merely to possession of the Torah and national privileges, but as well to an actual and factual performance of the law. Given that such is the case, the edge of his argument is blunted to a certain degree, at least in the case of those of us who believe that the NP is not a “package deal” that has to be bought into lock, stock and barrel.

Second, the book starts off on the wrong foot by pressing a rather rigid either/or distinction between works as identity markers and works as serving as a criterion for final salvation.⁴ In fairness, he does state that “broadly” adherents of the NP hold the first position, while its critics emphasize the second position (13). Yet as the thesis unfolds, the former is almost exclusively attributed to a highly selective number of proponents of the NP. As intimated above, I, for one, do indeed think that works as tokens of election and works as the precondition of final acceptance go hand in hand. Dunn offers this very observation: if Sanders has been criticized for polarizing in favor of election at the expense of obedience, Gathercole is in danger of polarizing in the opposite direction. Those who come in on the next phrase of the debate will have the responsibility to ensure that the pendulum settles in a truer position.⁵ I would add that Gathercole tends to chide Sanders for his systematic methodology. Yet his own determination to have works as the basis of final salvation is as systematic as Sanders’ approach ever was. Only this is a systemization in reverse: whereas Sanders is open to the charge that his approach resulted in a downplay of works, Gathercole’s systemization gives rather short shrift to election and the covenant.

As Dunn further points out, for all that Sanders is open to criticism, his key phrase, “covenantal nomism,” does attempt to provide a balance—covenant *and* law. This is

³ D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume I. The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 1.

⁴ A similar false distinction crops up when Gathercole alleges that the NP stresses sociological categories to the exclusion of soteriological issues (225), as though the two were mutually exclusive. But, in point of fact, the works required for covenant obedience are just the works that distinguished Israel from the nations. See my discussion in *‘The Obedience of Faith’: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2/38 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991), 265-66.

⁵ In a personal communication from Professor Dunn.

nowhere more evident than in Sanders' treatment of the Dead Sea Scrolls. According to Sanders, there is no layer in the Qumran materials in which obedience to the law is not required or in which transgression is not punished. Obedience to the commandments was not thought of as earning salvation, which came by God's grace; but obedience was nevertheless required as a condition of remaining in the covenant, and not obeying the commandments would damn.⁶ Sanders writes in pointed terms that at Qumran "obedience is the condition *sine qua non* of salvation."⁷ If nothing else, such statements give the lie to Gathercole's allegation that Sanders reduces obedience to "mere intention" and operates with a "minimalistic" conception of the works required by the covenant (182-84, 187-88). To attribute to Sanders the attitude that "it doesn't matter what you do as long as you are sincere" (183) is a grave injustice to him.

Third, Gathercole's portraiture of the work of Dunn is at least in need of qualification. As quoted by him (12), Dunn would appear to distance himself from the proposition that, in Jewish theology, final acceptance by God is conditioned on obedience.⁸ However, in his monumental work on Paul's theology, Dunn agrees that judgment according to the law was taken for granted: "...the need actually to *do* the law was characteristic of historic Judaism."⁹ Moreover, the citation of Dunn's comment on Romans 4:2 needs to be set in context. Dunn does say: "Paul is not speaking about 'good works' done by Abraham, but about faithful obedience to what God requires."¹⁰ But the fact that "good works" is placed in inverted commas is a giveaway that he means "works" *in the pejorative sense of earning salvation*. This is evident from the introduction of his commentary, where he explains that the traditional approach to Judaism has assumed that Paul, in Romans, addresses "the *merit of good works*."¹¹

Gathercole also perpetuates the common misconception that Dunn reduces the entirety of "the works of the law" to the boundary markers. The truth, however, is that Dunn recognizes very clearly that these "works" encompass the whole Torah. But within the period of the Second Temple, certain aspects of the law became especially prominent as the badges of Jewish identity: prominently circumcision, food laws, purity laws and

⁶ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 320.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁸ Dunn, "In Search of Common Ground," *Paul and the Mosaic Law*. ed. J. D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 312.

⁹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 135-36. This consciousness of judgment by works stems from the Torah itself, in particular Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 4:1, 10, 40; 5:29-33; 6:1-2, 18, 24; 7:12-13, with the familiar refrain, "this do and live."

¹⁰ Dunn, *Romans*. Word Biblical Commentary 38 a, b. 2 vols. (Dallas: Word, 1988), 1.200.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, lxv (*italics his*).

sabbath. He states, in point of fact, that circumcision and the other ordinances were *not* the only distinguishing traits of Jewish self-identity. However, they were the focal point of the Hellenistic attack on the Jews during the Maccabean period. As such, they became *the acid tests of one's loyalty to Judaism*. "In short...the particular regulations of circumcision and food laws were important not in themselves, but because they *focused* Israel's distinctiveness and made visible Israel's claims to be a people set apart, were the clearest points which differentiated the Jews from the nations. The law was coterminous with Judaism."¹² No wonder, Dunn justifiably issues a note of protest.¹³

In the fourth place, Gathercole joins a growing list of scholars who have enlisted the labors of Avemarie as a counterbalance to Sanders' reading of rabbinic literature. Admittedly, Avemarie has provided an exacting and invaluable study of these materials, and his results are to be weighed carefully. If nothing else, his findings remind us that neither Sanders nor anyone else is to be accepted uncritically. However, like Mark Seifrid before him,¹⁴ Gathercole leaves the impression from Avemarie's book that rabbinic religion was heavily works-oriented in the "legalistic" sense. In point of fact, Avemarie includes lengthy engagements of such matters as obedience to God from the vantage point of "knowledge of God and community."¹⁵ The conclusion to that particular discussion is that "the Torah not only comes from God, *it leads to him as well*."¹⁶ The conclusion to the entire book is: "The Torah is, according to the rabbinic understanding, the means and way to life, the medium of salvation. But it is more than that. Israel keeps it because God has given it and because she loves it."¹⁷ Even more strikingly, Avemarie grants that throughout this literature it *is* possible to speak of a "covenantal nomism" (*Bundesnomismus*)! The Torah of the rabbis cannot be divorced from the context in which the law was given. In this sense, Sander's coinage of his phrase, says Avemarie, is certainly justified!¹⁸

(3) A fundamental flaw of this thesis is that Gathercole, like other scholars of his persuasion, tends to abstract Jewish "works" or "obedience" from the covenant. To be sure, he is not unaware of the factor of covenant and often enough speaks of obedience in covenant terms. Nevertheless, in practical terms, a notable distancing of obedience from

¹² Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), 526. See further his "Yet once more—'The Works of the Law': A Response," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992), 99-117.

¹³ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 358, n. 97.

¹⁴ Seifrid, "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism," *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume I. The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*. eds. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien, and M. A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 415-42.

¹⁵ Avemarie, *Tora und Leben*, 244-61.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 261 (italics mine).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 584.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 584, n. 40.

covenant is in evidence. As Dunn reminds us, Sanders did not characterize Judaism solely as a “covenantal” religion, because the key phrase he chose conveyed a double emphasis—“covenantal nomism.” And Sanders made it clear that the second emphasis was not to be neglected. But given the traditional emphasis on Judaism’s “nomism,” it is hardly surprising that Sanders should have placed greater emphasis on the “covenantal” element in the twin emphasis, though in his central summary statements he clearly recognized that both emphases were integral to Judaism’s self-understanding.¹⁹ It is just this balance of “covenant” and “nomism” that is lacking in Gathercole’s presentation of the materials. Consequently, he persists with the old notion that the Judaism contemporary with Paul was self-reliant and exhibited no real sense of dependence on the grace and mercy of God. Many examples could be cited to the contrary, but here I would refer only to a couple of the Dead Sea Scrolls (*Community Rule* [1QS] 11:1-3, 5, 11-12, 13-15 and *Hymn Scroll* [1QH] 4:30-33; 7:30-31; 13:17) and the considerable penitential prayer tradition of Second Temple Judaism.²⁰

Apart from effectively disjoining law from covenant, Gathercole has not appreciated *the implications of covenant as the matrix of obedience*. Particularly given the setting of Deuteronomy, the Sinai covenant was established by grace and maintained by grace. The declaration of Deuteronomy 5:6, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,” roots the covenant in none other than “redemptive grace.” Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures generally, the pervasive metaphors of father/son and husband/wife, to depict Israel’s relationship to Yahweh, carry connotations of love, intimacy and *enablement*. If Gathercole and others are prepared to charge Jews of this period with a kind of autosoterism, then Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is liable to the same accusation. Says Moses: “*You can do it*” (v. 14)! But, of course, the underlying assumption is that one can do the law as enabled by the Lord of the covenant himself. To suppose that Second Temple Jews were unaware of the way the covenant operates makes for presuppositionalism, not historical objectivity. It is only an effective

¹⁹ From Dunn’s review of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, *Trinity Journal*, forthcoming at the time of this writing (my thanks to him for an advance copy of the review).

²⁰ See R. A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution*, Society of Biblical Literature: Early Judaism and Its Literature 13 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). Werline’s work is completely overlooked by Gathercole. That these and other prayers were rooted in biblical texts has been shown by M. J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 277 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); J. H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, Society of Biblical Literature: Early Judaism and Its Literature 14 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999). A penitential prayer consultation has now been established at the annual meeting of Society of Biblical Literature. Papers and bibliographies can accessed at: <http://macdiv.ca/prayer>.

bifurcation of covenant and obedience that sparks the quantum leap from works as the precondition of final salvation to “earning salvation” and “synergism.”

An even more glaring omission is Gathercole’s failure to connect works with faith in the Jewish materials. One gains the impression that faith was practically a nonentity in the life of the Jewish communities and the peculiar possession of the Christian church. At the risk of tooting my own horn, Gathercole might have had a look at my thesis (*Obedience of Faith*), also written under Dunn’s supervision, in which I endeavored to demonstrate that the Second Temple texts are replete with the language of faith, especially in connection with obedience. Indeed, it was my conclusion that Paul actually coins the phrase “the obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5; 16:26) with Jewish precedents in mind. I would call attention to a passage such as Sirach 1:14, where the scribe Jesus Ben Sira equates trust in God with the “fear of God,” the nearest Old Testament circumlocution for “religion.”²¹

In light of the realities of covenant grace and faith, Gathercole’s depiction of obedience in Judaism and Paul respectively as an “apples and oranges” kind of comparison (my phrase) falls by the wayside. With a wave of the hand, he disavows any close parallels to Paul’s theology of divine empowerment by the Spirit in Second Temple literature, except at Qumran, and even that, he thinks, is questionable. However, this claim founders on the evidence presented by C. S. Keener that the Spirit does appear as the Spirit of purity (and prophecy) in numerous texts.²² It is evident enough, from Keener’s data, that the Spirit cleanses and creates a new heart; one is not left to one’s own devices.²³ Especially lame is Gathercole’s contention that references to the Spirit in the Dead Sea Scrolls pertain to illumination rather than empowerment. It is highly doubtful that the community would have distinguished the two.

Provocative, to say the least, is the contention that unless Judaism was synergistic, the Spirit came for nothing on Pentecost! To be sure, the doctrine of the Spirit does not emerge with conspicuous clarity until the advent of the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17); and it is just the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit that marks out the community of Jesus as the latter-day Israel endued with power from on high. Nevertheless, to characterize predestruction Judaism as a religion practically devoid of the enablement of the Spirit borders on the irresponsible. To say, as he does, that Paul has an understanding of obedience that is “*radically different* from that of his Jewish contemporaries,” because

²¹ Garlington, *Obedience of Faith*, 19-20.

²² Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 6-48. One may agree with Keener that in early Christian literature the Spirit distinguishes Jesus and his community as the true servants of God, who have begun to experience the radically new power of the kingdom era (*ibid.*, 27).

²³ See also J. R. Levison, *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 73-76.

“for him [as opposed to Judaism] divine action is both the source and the continuous cause of obedience for the Christian” (264), simply begs the question.

(4) In line with scholars such as Eskola and Laato, Gathercole plays the “anthropological card” in support of his thesis. In reviving a very old position indeed, he reiterates the notion that ancient Jews thought they were much better than they actually were, with some supposed innate ability to perform the will of God apart from divine aid. Such, however, is supposition not fact. A glance at the Qumran Hymns and the penitential prayer tradition, as referenced above, is a sufficient argument to the contrary, along with Keener’s (and Levison’s) survey of the Spirit in the relevant materials. Gathercole’s claim that Paul and his contemporaries “clearly disagree” about whether human obedience without transformation by Christ and the Spirit can ever be the basis for justification (249) is only partially correct. As we shall see momentarily, the real difference between the two revolves around christology.

I would submit that Paul’s actual critique of his interlocutor in Romans 2 has to do with *idolatry*, a significant substratum of Romans 1:18-3:20 that goes unnoticed by Gathercole. Without attempting to reproduce my previous study of this motif,²⁴ suffice it to say that Israel’s idolatry, according to Paul’s allegation, consists in her tenacious clinging to the law to the exclusion of Christ. His debate partner, who engages in sacrilege or idolatry (the verb *hierosuleô*, 2:22), is the none other than the one who boasts in the law. The implication is that Paul’s polemic is directed not toward such moral shortcomings that would render the Jew “sinful” or “unworthy” in the most general terms. Rather, he is addressing Israel’s age old problem: idolatry. Only now the face of the idol has changed—it is the nation’s own Torah!

(5) Closely related to the charge of idolatry is the central issue between Paul and his contemporaries, namely, *christology*. If the Jew is idolatrous, for Paul, it is because he has refused to have Jesus of Nazareth as his Messiah and Lord. He has refused to submit to God’s righteousness which has now been localized in Christ (Romans 10:3-4). Given the premise that Christ is the “end” (*telos*) of the law (Romans 10:4), both as the law’s goal and its termination, not to believe in him is to prove unfaithful to God’s eschatological purposes. Gathercole insists that the interlocutor is unrepentant. True enough, but he is unrepentant with regard to Christ, not with regard to his covenantal duty under the Torah.

²⁴ D. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 79 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994), 32-43, as seconded by J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 318.

The Jew is not the “bad” person, morally speaking, Gathercole portrays him to be;²⁵ rather, he is the one who has effectively renounced Yahweh’s plan for the end of the ages in his Son. It is in this sense that the interlocutor may be regarded as apostate.²⁶ For all that Protestantism has insisted that justification is the “article of standing and falling of the church” (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*), *christology* really is. *The church stands or falls with Christ.*

(6) Naturally, the phenomenon of boasting itself calls for some comment. Germane to Gathercole’s argument is that Jewish boasting is bad because it entails “performance,” as taken in the disapproved sense of “earning salvation.” I would submit that boasting in performance is not necessarily a bad thing and that Gathercole has placed too negative a spin on the activity in question. His tack overlooks a noteworthy text such as Psalm 119, in which the Psalmist “boasts” over and over again. He makes no bones about it: he has loved the law of God and has kept its statutes. Other Psalmists rejoice in the fact that Yahweh has rewarded them according to their righteousness and integrity (Psalm 7:8; 18:20, 24). Just as striking, Paul, in Galatians 6:4, commends boasting in one’s own work, as opposed to denigrating the character of others. Ultimately, the believer’s boast is in Christ and his cross (Galatians 6:14); but stemming from this boast is the ability to perform such “work” (*ergon*) as one may glory in.²⁷ In Romans 2, Paul’s problem with the interlocutor is not that he boasts as such, but that the object of his boasting is wrong: instead of the Torah, his

²⁵ Gathercole points to the charge of Romans 2:21-22 that the interlocutor has engaged in theft, adultery and sacrilege. Commentators such as C. K. Barrett and D. J. Moo note that these three often appear side by side in lists of vices (e.g., Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues* 163; *Special Laws* 2.13; 4.87). C. E. B. Cranfield senses the problem occasioned by Paul’s application of these three sins to contemporary Israel and opts for the view that Paul is radicalizing the law in much the same manner as Matthew 5:21-30 (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. ICC. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979], 1.168-69). This makes more sense than the supposition that the typical Jew overtly engaged in such activities. In any event, given the whole sweep of Romans 1:18-3:20, the debate partner’s main problem is his idolatrous boast in the Torah, not in Christ, as God’s definitive provision for sin. It is certainly noteworthy that in the Old Testament and later literature, adultery stands as a symbol of idolatry (Garlington, *Obedience of Faith*, 190; R. C. Ortlund, *Whoredom: God’s Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology*, New Studies in Biblical Theology [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996]). It should be added that engagement in such sins as Paul enumerates hardly renders the Jew an apostate from the Mosaic standards, as per Gathercole’s claim. If that were so, then many Christians could be considered apostates from the new covenant!

²⁶ I have argued that in Galatians 3:10-13 the “Judaizers” fall under the same condemnation because, for all intents and purposes, they too assume a stance on the wrong side of the eschatological divide and subvert God’s plan for the Gentiles. See my “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.10-13,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 65 (1997), 85-121.

²⁷ See my treatment of the passage in “Burden Bearing and the Recovery of Offending Christians (Galatians 6:1-5),” *Trinity Journal* ns 12 (1991), 178-82; and *An Exposition of Galatians: A New Perspective/Reformational Reading* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 272-74.

boast should be in Christ. This becomes evident as one keeps reading further in the letter. In representing Jewish boasting in the manner he does, Gathercole treads the same path as D. A. Carson's study of divine sovereignty.²⁸ That is to say, Jewish attitudes are made to exist in a kind of time-warp between the two Testaments, in which people lapsed into a retrograde legalism. For such scholars, the "intertestamental period" serves as a convenient foil for various theses pertaining to New Testament theology.

(7) In the company of numerous scholars, Gathercole believes that in both Jewish and Pauline eschatology there is a tension between election and grace, on the one hand, and final vindication according to works, on the other (226, 265). Yet this is where Gathercole could have profited from Yinger's work. Yinger's thesis is precisely that, in the Jewish milieu, there is no actual tension between the two categories; the tension exists only in the minds of Western (systematic) theologians. Psalm 62:12, normally considered to be the source of Romans 2:6, actually says: "to you, O Lord, belongs *steadfast love*, for you requite a person *according to his work*." Apparently, the Psalmist is unaware of any "tension." Gathercole's own formulation is that "elective grace assigns a determinative role to works at the final judgment." Such is not a tension, but the logical outworking of grace; and Paul is not "radically different" after all from his Jewish contemporaries. Nor are Paul's criteria for past and future justification "slightly different" (266). Both are due to the believer being "in Christ." If for the sake of a theological formulation we wish to categorize Paul's thought, then the "basis" of justification, now and in the judgment, is *union with Christ*.²⁹

(8) In view of the above, Gathercole's portrayal of Jewish justification requires some examination. The case is made that Abraham's justification, in various texts, was not eschatological, nor was it justification at the beginning of his covenant relationship. Rather, it was an event that took place at some point subsequent to the promise and Abraham's belief, as well as subsequent to his obedience to the commandments. What we find in all these texts, he says, is that faith/faithfulness becomes evident subsequent to Abraham's trials, in contrast with the biblical portrayal of faith being clearly present before the trials. So, justification, in the Jewish mindset, is subsequent to trials and to being found faithful.

²⁸ Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*, New Foundations Theological Library (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981). Gathercole seconds Carson's claim that, in the Jewish sources, God responds to the "merit" of Israel (15). The problem is that what Carson calls "merit" is actually the people's required response to the covenant. If God responds to "merit" in the postbiblical materials, then the same must be true of Deuteronomy 28:1-14. But, we may presume, neither Carson nor Gathercole wants to go there.

²⁹ Cf. my *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance*, 70-71.

This formulation is right and wrong at the same time. Right because the vindication (justification) of Abraham does take place subsequent to his entrance into the covenant relationship; but wrong because the biblical portrayal of Abraham does in fact depict the patriarch as faithful/believing in the midst of trials. Abraham's vindication, according to Genesis, is subsequent to trials and to being found faithful. In support of this alternative interpretation, I would call attention to the fact that Gathercole and other commentators understand Genesis 15:6 as Abraham's "conversion;" before this point in the Genesis narrative, Abraham is only an "ungodly idolater" (250). However, this supposition founders on the progression of the Genesis story itself. Abraham's pilgrimage of faith begins in Genesis 12, as confirmed by Hebrews 11:8: "*By faith Abraham obeyed* when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going."

By the time the narrative reaches chapter 15, Abraham's faith is beginning to wane. But once God assures him again of the promise, Abraham continues to believe and is declared to be a righteous, covenant-keeping person.³⁰ This is his "justification" in Genesis: the Lord's vindication of him as a faithfully obedient person. All this plays into Paul's hands in Romans 4. One of the "exegetical traditions" of Judaism was that Abraham kept specifically the law of Moses (Sirach 44:20; *Damascus Document* 3:2; *2 Baruch* 57:2).³¹ In a rather glaring omission, Gathercole does not even call attention to this datum, apart from simply quoting *Damascus Document* 3:2. Here we have the actual background to Romans 4 and the point of dispute. Based on the chronology of the biblical record, it is Paul's contention that Abraham was considered to be a righteous person before circumcision and the law. Not surprisingly, Romans 4:9-15 takes up none other than these two "pillars" of Jewish faith and life: circumcision and the Torah. The polemical value for Paul is that Gentiles can be received as the faithful ones of God apart from the assumption of Jewish identity. All they need do is "walk in the footsteps of Abraham" *who had faith before his circumcision*. In order to be the children of Abraham, it is not first necessary for them to become "honorary Jews."

In pursuing this objective, Paul predicates "ungodly" (*asebês*) of Abraham in the same sense that Jews of this period would have used the term, that is, *uncircumcised and non-Torah observant*. Herein resides the irony of the situation. The same Abraham who was confirmed as a righteous person in Genesis 15:6 would have been deemed "ungodly"

³⁰ See my discussion of the linguistic data of Abraham's vindication in my review of John Piper's *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?*, *Reformation and Revival Journal* 12 (2003), 45-113.

³¹ See further Garlington, *Obedience of Faith*, 37-40; T. R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 215-17.

by many of his first-century descendants! But by a simple “back to the Bible” tack, Paul is able to bypass a considerable layer of tradition and assert that Abraham and the nations are in the same boat. Consequently, analogously to former, the latter need only put their faith in Christ. In blunt terms, Gentiles can forget about the Torah! Therefore, Gathercole’s contention that Paul’s doctrine of the justification of the ungodly by faith without works is not integrally related to the inclusion of the Gentiles (251) is simply wrong. From the outset of the Roman letter, Paul has maintained this very thing: God’s righteousness is for *all who believe, Jew and Greek* (1:16-17).

All this being so, the schema constructed by Gathercole is at least in need of modification. On his reading, Jewish obedience results in justification, and justification results in boasting (250). Given that “justification,” or “vindication,” in the Jewish outlook, normally pertains to the last judgment, this sequence is correct. The problem is that Gathercole attempts to set this formulation over against Pauline justification and boasting. By this time, it is necessary only to reiterate that in Paul’s mind too a favorable eschatological judgment rests on covenant obedience, to which Gathercole himself assents. The difficulty is that he tries to equate Jewish justification, which is eschatological, with “phase one” of Pauline justification, an “apples and oranges” comparison. In so doing, Gathercole confuses the works of “getting in” with the works of “staying in.” The reality is that ancient Jews were born into the covenant and could expect their ultimate vindication as a result of covenant faithfulness. Over against this expectation, Paul retorts that justification/vindication is to be found in Christ, and Torah works have nothing to do with it. For him, justification from beginning to end is christological: it is *in Christ* that one becomes the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21), now and in the last day. It is for this reason that the Christian boasts not in the law, but *in the Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Gathercole certainly does acknowledge that the christological dimension of the Christian’s boast is a “crucial new component” (261). But having said that, he lapses into the anthropological mode by insisting that the Jew is sinful and unrepentant, with the result that his boast is “something very different from the boast of the Christian” (261). He is right, but not for the reasons given. Rather, the two boasts emerge from two separate spheres: Torah and Christ. One cannot dwell in both at the same time. Again, Gathercole plays up anthropology at the expense of christology.

(9) Gathercole’s argument from Paul’s use of David in Romans 4 does present a legitimate challenge to at least some proponents of the NP. He is quite sure that David is the “smoking gun” that proves that Paul’s focus is on anthropological matters, not the badges of Jewish identity. His point is that both Abraham and David were “ungodly” in the same sense of moral failure. By way of citing some Jewish sources as a foil, he refers to the

“exegetical tradition” that David was accepted by God and justified on the basis of his works (the Qumran Scrolls *Damascus Document* [CD] 5:5 and *Some of the Works of the Torah* [4QMMT], cols. 24-25). The problem is that neither text speaks of *justification*! David is simply viewed as a righteous man whose deeds ascended to God and who was delivered from his enemies. Gathercole is here in danger of “parallelomania.”

Even so, an honest reading of Romans 4:6-8 requires that we come to terms with the role of David in Paul’s argument, as derived from Psalm 32. Gathercole is so confident that David is the “smoking gun” that he can write: “*It is crucial to recognize that the New Perspective interpretation of 4:1-8 falls to the ground on this point: that David although circumcised, sabbatarian, and kosher, is described as without works because of his disobedience*” (247 [italics his]). His case is compelling in that David’s behavior is called to the fore and challenges the assumption that Paul’s polemic in Romans 4 is concerned *only* with boundary markers. Nevertheless, there is a failure to recognize that “ungodly” carries strong overtones of covenant infidelity. It is this very term, along with “lawless” and “sinners,” that the writer of 1 Maccabees employs in his denunciation of Jews who apostatized to Hellenism.³²

One may quite legitimately speak of David’s ethical failure, but it is the very nature of that failure that made him as one outside the covenant. By his twofold sin of adultery and murder, David lowered himself to the level of the pagan world and ceased to be the representative of Yahweh on earth. *He became as one uncircumcised, as an idolater*. Such a reading makes perfect sense of Paul’s argument, because Gentiles may be assured that they are acceptable to God in a sense qualitatively similar to David, who, at the time of his forgiveness, was no better *covenantally speaking* than they. No wonder, Paul can say that David pronounces a blessing on those who are forgiven apart from “works.”

Gathercole recognizes a certain validity to this reply, but he avers that in this case Paul would be conceiving of the entirety of Israel as under sin and outside the covenant since they are without works of Torah (247). But this rejoinder is simply unmindful of the idolatry motif of Romans 1:18-3:20, with its attendant irony. Paul fully concedes that his contemporaries have performed Torah-works. But that is precisely the problem! It is their zeal for the works of the law that have obscured their vision of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and a recognition that God’s righteousness has now been embodied in him (Romans 9:16; 10:2-3).³³ As argued above, it is Israel’s rejection of God’s eschatological

³² See Garlington, *Obedience of Faith*, 91-102.

³³ Gathercole, as many commentators, takes Romans 10:3 as a statement of Israel’s attempt to “establish” its own righteousness (228), an interpretation that carries definite “works-righteousness” overtones. Yet his overview of the Septuagint usage of the verb *histêmi* does not include significant passages in which it means not “establish,” but “maintain” the

plan in Christ that has rendered her unfaithful, especially considering that perfect obedience was never required of Israel as God's covenant partner. The issue was never moral imperfection, but idolatry.

Whether one accepts this explanation or not, the fact remains that Gathercole's argument respecting David is valid only in the case of those who maintain that Paul's concern is restricted to boundary markers. His critique does indeed apply to some NP scholars, but there is a notable company who would wish to dissent.

3. Summary

Gathercole's book serves as a useful and welcomed corrective to an imbalance on the part of some practitioners of the NP. It is true, as he notes many times, that there has been a tendency to play up sociological matters (Jewish distinctiveness and self-identity) and to play down the Torah's own requirement that one really and truly "do the law." As stated above, the divide between the two on the part of certain notable scholars is not as stark as Gathercole would have us believe. Nevertheless, to the degree that he has redressed the balance in favor of a reading of Judaism and Paul that more accurately reflects the actual data, we are in his debt.

Perhaps the book's most valuable contribution is actually a byproduct of its main intention. Gathercole joins the growing consensus of New Testament scholars who believe that the eschatological vindication (justification) of "the doers of the law" (Romans 2:13) is to be understood in actual, not hypothetical, terms. *Even in Paul, works do count in the judgment.* Gathercole does think that this portion of the Roman creates a tension within Paul's overall theology, which, in my view, falls short of his otherwise insightful exposition. Nevertheless, he has honestly come to terms with the language and implications of the text, which many in the Reformed and Evangelical tradition are reluctant to do.

On the problematic side, Gathercole continues to perpetuate some of the same wrongheaded ideas about the character of Second Temple Judaism as his many of his predecessors. His approach to the sources is certainly an improvement over the imposition

covenant. To be sure, in some cases, it does refer to God's establishment and/or maintenance of covenant relationships (Genesis 6:18; 9:11; 17:7, 19, 21; 26:3; Exodus 6:4; Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 8:18; 9:5; 29:13; Jeremiah 11:5; Sirach 17:12; 45:7, 24). But most relevantly, in other instances, the verb speaks of Israel's responsibility to "maintain" the covenant (Jeremiah 34[Septuagint 41]:18; Sirach 11:20; 44:20; 45:23; 1 Maccabees 2:27). Particularly relevant in view of Paul's acknowledgment of Israel's zeal are Sirach 45:23: Phinehas "stood firm" [*stênai*] when the people turned away; and 1 Maccabees 2:27: "everyone who is zealous for the law and who maintains (*histôn*) the covenant, let him come after me." This is Paul's real point: Israel is zealous to *maintain* "her own" (*tên idian*) covenant righteousness and refuses to submit to God's latter-day embodiment of righteousness in Christ.

of terms like “legalism” and “works-righteousness” onto the Jewish materials by the likes of Schürer, Weber, Billerbeck, Bultmann, etc. But even so, his conclusions, in the end, are close enough to the “old school” approach to call for the criticisms proffered above. What he presents is a more enlightened and sensitive approach to the materials; but, at the end of the day, Judaism remains a religion devoid of the Spirit and dependence on the grace of God. While avoiding some of the extremes of traditional Christian assessments of predestruction Judaism, essentially Gathercole’s book is but another reassertion of the Reformation understanding of the character of Paul’s controversy with his Jewish contemporaries.

As much as anything else, this book wrongly endorses the “majority report” that soteriology as such is the lead item on Paul’s agenda in Romans (and elsewhere). To be sure, the gospel is God’s power to save everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). Yet prior even to salvation is the datum that Paul’s gospel concerns *God’s Son* (Romans 1:3). It is on this note that Paul begins the letter, making it the embodiment of his *christological gospel*.³⁴ In a very real sense, Romans 10:4 is the fulcrum of the epistle: Israel’s striving to perform her covenantal duty is vain (9:16; 10:2-3) because the law is now passé; Christ is the *telos* of the law. The actual showcase of the apostle’s thought is *not* justification, as time-honored as that notion is in traditional theology. It is, rather, union with Christ or the “in Christ” experience. From this vantage point, Colossians 1:18 exhibits the very life blood of Paul’s preaching—that *in all things he may have the preeminence*.

In context, it is none other than christology that occasions Paul’s very question, “Where is Boasting?” Of course, the answer is that “it is excluded” by virtue of “the law of faith” as opposed to “the law of works” (Romans 3:27). But given that faith, for Paul, is always specifically trust in Christ (“Christic faith”), the juxtaposition of “faith” and “works” is but his familiar contrast of old and new covenants. That Paul was not opposed to boasting as such is evident from Galatians 6:4, as observed above. The Christian has not ceased to boast, but now his boasting is in Christ, his cross, and in the hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2; Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:3). Philippians 3:3 is especially telling inasmuch as it relocates boasting from the law to Christ: believers are those who “boast in Christ Jesus and place no confidence in the flesh.” “Flesh,” as the ensuing discussion

³⁴ N. T. Wright, “The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans,” D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1980. Much of this material is included in Wright’s *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

clarifies, is Paul's former pedigree as a "Hebrew of Hebrews." In a nutshell, Paul replaces Torah-boasting with Christ-boasting.³⁵

This review perhaps represents a "mediating position" between Gathercole and some exponents of the NP. But it simply underscores that the movement known generically as the "New Perspective" is flexible enough to allow for individual thought and refinement of convictions.

³⁵ In principle, Gathercole acknowledges this, but his analysis is marred by his insistence that the Jew who boasts is unrepentant (261).