

A SURVEY OF RECENT GALATIANS STUDIES

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*P*aul's letter to the Galatians is one of the most important documents in the New Testament.¹ The letter has been very influential in the history of Christian thought.² It has also played an important role in understanding pivotal themes of Pauline theology, such as Paul's attitude to the law and first century Palestinian Judaism, the truth of the gospel, justification, the Spirit, salvation-history, and Paul's ethics. Another important role of the letter is that it testifies to the character of early Christianity.³ Specifically, the letter describes the inter-Christian debates on several crucial issues such as the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God, social relationship between Jewish Christians with Gentile, and circumcision.⁴ Since the Reformation, the letter has been a favorite epistle in pursuit of the theology of Paul and the historical situation of early Christianity. The letter was foundational to Luther's

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¹H. D. Betz calls it "one of the most important religious documents of mankind" ("Spirit, Freedom, and Law: Paul's Message to the Galatian Churches," *SEA* 39 (1974), 145-160 (145)).

²Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 133-145; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990), xlii-lvii.

³J. D. G. Dunn points out the importance of Paul's letter to the Galatians in understanding the theological foundation of Pauline Christianity and the nature of early Christianity. The letter, "helped to shape the character and self-perception of early Christianity, both in terms of its fundamental principles and in relation to the Jewish matrix from which Christianity emerged" (*The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 2).

⁴J. M. G. Barclay notes the significance of the disputes between Paul and Peter in Antioch, and Paul and Paul's opponents in Galatia. These disputes, according to him, involved the interpretation of Scripture, the significance of the law, the relationship of the churches to Judaism, and many related moral and theological issues (*Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 1).

interpretation of Paul's view of the law and justification. It was an important epistle in F. C. Baur's investigations into Paul's opponents in Galatia and the historical context of early Christianity.⁵

II. A SURVEY OF RECENT GALATIANS STUDIES

In the last decades a considerable number of significant commentaries, monographs, and articles have focused on the letter. Many studies on Galatians have focused on the identity of Paul's opponents in Galatia. Interpreters have proposed various hypotheses about the identity of Paul's opponents in Galatia, i.e. 'the agitators.'⁶ On his interpretation of 6:13, J. Munck suggested that οἱ ἑκ περιτεμνομένων refers not to the Judaizers from outside but to the Gentile Christians in the church of Galatia.⁷ This hypothesis is based on his assumption that the Gentile Christians in Galatia thought from their interpretation of the Old Testament that God required of them circumcision and the observance of the commandments of the law.⁸ On his interpretation of 5:3 and 6:13, W. Schmithals insisted that the agitators were Gnostics.⁹ R. Jewett argued that Paul was fighting two sets of agitators at Galatia.¹⁰ According to Jewett, on the one hand, Paul was arguing against legalistic nomism imported from Jewish Christians under the persecution of Zealots. On the other hand, Paul was fighting libertinism which existed in the church of Galatia from the beginning because of their Hellenistic background. N. Walter argues

⁵F. C. Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1876), 105-145.

⁶Paul's opponents in Galatia are traditionally called judaizers, but Barclay (*Obeying the Truth*, 36 n. 1) and Dunn (*The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 10) appropriately criticize this label. The term "the agitators" is Paul's own language about his opponents in Galatia, found in Gal 1:7 and 5:10 (cf. 5:12).

⁷J. Munck, "The Judaizing Gentile Christians," in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SPCK, 1959), 87-134.

⁸Munck, "The Judaizing Gentile Christians," 132.

⁹W. Schmithals, "The Heretics in Galatia," in *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1972), 13-64.

¹⁰R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," *NTS* 17 (1971), 198-212.

that the agitators were some of the non-Christian Jews who persecuted the church and intended to abolish the circumcision-free Christian mission.¹¹ Most commentators, however, believe that the agitators were Jewish Christians.¹²

We have also seen some investigations into the letter to the Galatians by means of the rhetorical approach.¹³ Pioneering rhetorical criticism to the letter, H. D. Betz claims that Galatians is an 'apologetic letter.'¹⁴ Although Betz's idea has been welcomed by some scholars,¹⁵

¹¹ N. Walter, "Paulus und die Gegner des Christusevangeliums in Galatien," in A. Vanhoye (ed.), *L'Apôtre Paul* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 351-356.

¹² E.g. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 86-87; J. Bligh, *Galatians* (London: St. Paul, 1969), 35; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 25-27; Dunn, *Galatians*, 11; I.-G. Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (JSNTSup 81; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 120; G. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia* (SNTSMS 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1-19; W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 298-301; Longenecker, *Galatians*, xciv; G. Luedemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (trans. M. E. Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 99-103; J. L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 120-126; F. J. Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina 9; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 10; H. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 16-18; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 18. Interestingly, J. B. Tyson ("Paul's Opponents in Galatia," *NovT* 10 (1968): 241-254) argues that Paul's opponents in Galatia are Jewish Christians native to Galatia. F. R. Crownfield ("The Singular Problem of the Dual Galatians," *JBL* 64 (1945): 491-500) claims that Paul's opponents in Galatia are Jewish Christian syncretists.

¹³ For recent scholarship, see R. D. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (Kampen: Pharos, 1996), 111-167; P. Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul's Epistle* (SNTSMS 101; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 43-56.

¹⁴ H. D. Betz, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 21 (1975): 353-79 (354); idem, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 14-25.

¹⁵ In particular, B. H. Brinsmead, *Galatians: Dialogical Response to Opponents* (SBLDS, 65; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982).

a considerable number of scholars have criticized his analysis. Some scholars claim that the letter belongs to the deliberative genre.¹⁶ J. D. Hester considers that it is an 'epideictic letter.'¹⁷ R. Longenecker argues that Paul's letter to the Galatians is a 'rebuke-request' letter.¹⁸ However, R. D. Anderson argues that the letter cannot be classified into any one of the three most popular rhetorical genres (apologetic, deliberative, epideictic).¹⁹ Recently P. Kern also challenges the widely accepted view that the letter to the Galatians should be understood in light of Graeco-Roman rhetorical handbooks.²⁰ He claims that the letter cannot be analyzed according to Greco-Roman rhetoric not only because Galatians does not conform to Graeco-Roman rhetorical handbooks or to extant speeches but also because these handbooks cannot assist the search for a distinctly Pauline rhetoric.²¹ J. L. Martyn contends that the letter is a highly situational sermon.²² Concerning the current rhetorical approach to the letter, J. D. G. Dunn argues that Galatians does not accord closely with any ideal rhetorical type and indicates both a

¹⁶D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1987), 203; J. Fairweather, "The Epistle to the Galatians and Classical Rhetoric: Parts 1 & 2," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994), 1-38; idem, "The Epistle to the Galatians and Classical Rhetoric: Part 3," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994), 213-243; R. G. Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 106 (1987): 277-287; G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 144-152; J. Smit, "The Letter of Paul to the Galatians: A Deliberative Speech," *NTS* 35 (1989): 1-26; B. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary of St Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998).

¹⁷J. D. Hester, "Placing the Blame: The Presence of Epideictic in Galatians 1 and 2," in D. F. Watson (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric* (Festschrift G. A. Kennedy; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 281-307; idem, "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Galatians 2:1-14," *TZ* 42 (1986): 386-408.

¹⁸Longenecker, *Galatians*. It was followed by G. W. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

¹⁹Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 167.

²⁰Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians*.

²¹Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians*, 259.

²²Martyn, *Galatians*, 23.

danger an analysis of the letter will be too much determined by fitting it on to a grid drawn from elsewhere rather than by the natural flow of the argument and a danger that too much emphasis on rhetorical considerations may blur the extent to which the letter is driven by theological logic and passion.²³

Scholarly attention has also concentrated on a sociological approach to Paul's letters.²⁴ Some scholars have focused on Paul's authority in relationship with the churches in Galatia.²⁵ Most interpreters have agreed that one of the critical issues in Galatia is the social issue of how Gentiles enter the people of God.²⁶ Thus, commentators have argued that Paul's Gospel of justification by faith is to be understood in light of this social issue.²⁷ Many scholars shed

²³Dunn, *Galatians*, 20.

²⁴E.g. B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980); idem, *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990); A. J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2nd edn, 1983); W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); J. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998); J. E. Stambaugh and D. L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (LEC 2; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986); G. Theissen *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982). For a succinct survey of the field, see S. C. Barton, "The Communal Dimension of Earliest Christianity: A Critical Survey of the Field," *JTS* 43 (1992): 399-427.

²⁵H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (SNTSMS 26; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 114-158; N. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (JSNTSup 66; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 75-139.

²⁶See, in particular, Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 20 and Matera, *Galatians*, 29-30.

²⁷Notably, according to K. Stendahl (*Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 2), the doctrine of justification by faith "was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the rights of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs of the promises of God to Israel." This point has been observed by several other scholars. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 202; Howard, *Paul*, 46; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 18, 159; N. T. Wright,

some new light on the issue of Paul's attitude to the law and Judaism and the disputes between Paul and the agitators in Galatia by means of such a sociological approach. In particular, Dunn highlights 'the social function of the law' which he believes to be important for understanding the mind-set with which Paul is engaging in Galatians.²⁸ He argues, "Unless this social, we may even say national and racial, dimension of the issues confronting Paul is clearly grasped, it will be well nigh impossible to achieve an exegesis of Paul's treatment of the law which pays proper respect to historical context."²⁹ Dunn is distinctive in understanding the social function of the law that "serves both to identify Israel as the people of the covenant and to mark them off as distinct from the (other) nations."³⁰ In light of the social perspective on the law, Dunn understands the works of the law "as not only maintaining Israel's covenant status, but as also protecting Israel's privileged status and restricted prerogative."³¹ Analyzing the social context of the letter to the Galatians with the help of sociological theories, F. Watson argues somewhat differently that the goal of Paul's arguments in the letter was that 'the church should separate from the Jewish community.'³² On the basis of his sociological approach to the letter, he also claims, "The essential issue in Galatians is thus whether the church should be a reform-movement within Judaism or a sect outside it."³³ Recently P. Esler provides a social-scientific reading of Paul's letter to the Galatians by employing Mediterranean social-

"Justification," in G. Reid (ed.) *The Great Acquittal* (London: Collins, 1980), 22.

²⁸Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 89-264.

²⁹Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 219.

³⁰Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 223.

³¹J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 355.

³²F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64.

³³Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 49. He also argues, "Paul's sole aim in discussing Judaism and the law is to maintain and defend the separation of his Gentiles Christian churches from the Jewish community" (p. 22).

identity theory.³⁴ In particular, Esler draws attention to the connection between Paul's theology in Galatians and the social dimensions of the Galatian context.

Above all, many significant studies of the letter have concentrated on the theological issues in Galatians, such as 'Paul and the Mosaic law',³⁵ the theology of Galatians,³⁶ and the meaning and significance of *e;rga no,mou*³⁷ and *pi,stij Cristou*/.³⁸ Most important of

³⁴Esler, *Galatians* (London: Routledge, 1998). See also Esler, "Family Imagery and Christian Identity in Gal 5:13 to 6:10," in H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997), 121-149; idem, "Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians," in M. G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 215-240; idem, "Making and Breaking an Agreement Mediterranean Style: A New Reading of Galatians 2:1-14," *BibInt* 3 (1995): 285-314.

³⁵Notably Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law*, 89-264; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*; Howard, *Paul*, 66-82; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (SNTW; trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984); H. Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays* (JSNTSup 43; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); idem, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983); Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*. For a comprehensive bibliography of works published during 1980-1994, see J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (WUNT 89; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996), 335-341. For a concise survey of the subject, see V. Koperski, *What Are They Saying About Paul and the Law* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001).

³⁶J. D. G. Dunn, "The Theology of Galatians," in J. M. Bassler (ed.) *Pauline Theology Vol. I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 125-146; idem, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*; B. R. Gaventa, "The Singularity of the Gospel: A Reading of Galatians," in J. M. Bassler (ed.) *Pauline Theology Vol. I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 147-159; J. L. Martyn, "Events in Galatia: Modified Covenantal Nomism versus God's Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel," in J. M. Bassler (ed.) *Pauline Theology Vol. I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 160-179; N. T. Wright, "Gospel and Theology in Galatians," in A. L. Jervis and Richardson (eds.), *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (Festschrift R. N. Longenecker; JSNTSup 108; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 222-239.

³⁷M. Bachmann, "Rechtfertigung und Gesetzeswerke bei Paulus," *TZ* 49 (1993): 1-33; idem, "4QMMT und Galaterbrief, *ma'ase hatorah* und *ERGA*

NOMOU,” *ZNW* 89 (1998): 91-113; C. E. B. Cranfield, “‘The Works of the Law’ in the Epistle to the Romans,” *JSNT* 43 (1991): 89-101; Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law*, 215-241; idem, “Yet Once More – ‘The Works of the Law’,” *JSNT* 46 (1992): 99-117; D. Fuller, “Paul and ‘the Works of the Law’,” *WTJ* 38 (1975): 28-42; L. Gaston, “Works of the Law as a Subjective Genitive,” in *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 100-106; R. H. Gundry, “Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Bib* 66 (1985): 1-38; D. Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” *WTJ* 45 (1983): 73-100; T. R. Schreiner, “‘Works of the Law’ in Paul,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 217-244; H. Hübner, “Was heißt bei Paulus ‘Werke des Gesetzes’?,” in E. Grässer *et al.* (eds.), *Glaube und Eschatologie* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985), 123-133; H. B. Mijoga, “The Pauline Notion of ‘Deeds of the Law’,” (Ph. D. Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1995); J. B. Tyson, “‘Works of Law’ in Galatians,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 423-431.

³⁸D. A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26* (JSNTSup 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 58-69; idem, “Romans 1.17 – A *Crux Interpretum* for the PISTIS CRISTOU Debate,” *JBL* 113 (1994): 265-285; idem, “False Presuppositions in the PISTIS CRISTOU Debate: A Response to Brian Dodd,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 713-19; B. Corsani, “EK PISTEWS in the Letters of Paul,” in W. C. Weinrich (ed.), *The New Testament Age* (vol. I; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 87-93; W. Dalton, *Galatians Without Tears* (Collegiville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 41-46; B. J. Dodd, “Romans 1:17 – A *Crux Interpretum* for the PISTIS CRISTOU Debate,” *JBL* 114 (1994): 470-473; J. D. G. Dunn, “Once More, PISTIS CRISTOU,” in E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay (eds.), *Pauline Theology Vol. IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 61-81; J. Dunnill, “Saved by Whose Faith?,” *Colloquium* 30 (1998): 3-25; R. A. Harrisville III, “PISTIS CRISTOU,” *NovT* 36 (1994): 233-241; D. M. Hay, “*Pistis* as ‘Ground for Faith’ in Hellenized Judaism and Paul,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 461-476; R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (SBLDS 56; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); idem, “Jesus’ Faith and Ours: A Re-reading of Galatians 3,” in M. L. Branson & R. R. Patilla (eds.), *Conflict and Context: Hermeneutics in the Americas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 257-268; idem, “PISTIS and Pauline Christology,” in E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay (eds.), *Pauline Theology Vol. IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 35-60; M. D. Hooker, “PISTIS CRISTOU,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 321-342; G. Howard, “Faith of Christ,” *ABD*, II, 758-760; A. J. Hultgren, “The *Pistis Christou* Formulations in Paul,” *NovT* 22 (1980): 248-263; L. T. Johnson, “Romans 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus,” *CBQ* 44 (1982):

all has been the extensive reassessment of Paul's view of the law and of his attitude to first century Judaism. Before the groundbreaking book of E. P. Sanders appeared,³⁹ it was widely accepted that first-century Judaism was a legalistic religion in which one earned righteousness before God through meritorious observance of the law.⁴⁰ Luther himself understood first-century Judaism to be legalistic in light of his struggle with a tormented conscience and a works-righteousness orientation of sixteenth-century Roman Catholicism. Recent studies argue, however, that the imposition of the interpretive grid of the Reformers, especially by Luther, does not do justice to the issue of Paul and the law. The long-maintained view that first-century Palestinian Judaism taught that one could earn righteousness through meritorious works of the law has

77-90; L. E. Keck, "'Jesus' in Romans," *JBL* 108 (1989): 443-60; V. Kopferski, "The Meaning of *Pistis Christou* in Philippians 3.9," *Louvain Studies* 18 (1993): 198-216; B. W. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community," in J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (WUNT 89; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996), 75-98; idem, "*Pistis* in Romans 3.25: Neglected Evidence for the Faithfulness of Christ," *NTS* 39 (1993): 478-80; idem, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 95-115; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 87-88, 93-94; Matera, *Galatians*, 100-102; Martyn, *Galatians*, 263-275; S. K. Stowers, "EK PISTEWS and DIA THS PISTEQS in Romans 3:30," *JBL* 108 (1989): 665-674; I. G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* (SNTSMS 84; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); S. K. Williams, "Again *Pistis Christou*," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 431-447; idem, "The Hearing of Faith: AKOH PISTEWS in Galatians 3," *NTS* 35 (1989): 82-93.

³⁹E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977). According to Sanders, the first century Palestinian Judaism could be characterized as "covenantal nomism": "Briefly put, covenantal nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression" (p. 75). For a full summary, see pp. 180-182 and 422.

⁴⁰However, there have been several scholars who did not follow the line of Luther. E.g. M. Barth, "The Kerygma of Galatians," *Int* 21 (1967): 131-146; C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul* (London: Max Goschen, 1914); Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*.

come under severe criticism notably by K. Stendahl,⁴¹ E. P. Sanders,⁴² J. D. G. Dunn,⁴³ H. Räisänen,⁴⁴ and F. Watson.⁴⁵ The challenge of recent studies has resulted in a “paradigm shift,”⁴⁶ in understanding the nature of first-century Palestinian Judaism. Moreover, recent studies of Paul’s view of the law brought about a “new perspective,”⁴⁷ on the nature and role of the law in first-century Palestinian Judaism.⁴⁸

Recently J. L. Martyn produced a provocative and paradigm-shattering commentary on Galatians. Since it is impossible in this short review to do justice to the rich texture of Martyn’s superb commentary,⁴⁹ it is sufficient to point out some major themes pertinent to the present study. Martyn effectively raises the consciousness of Pauline scholarship to the presence of apocalyptic theology in Galatians. He interprets Paul’s letter to the Galatians as Paul’s proclamation of the apocalyptic gospel of God’s invasion into the world through Christ (cf. Comment #4). Concerning Paul’s apocalyptic theology in Galatians Martyn concludes,

God would not have to carry out an invasion in order merely to forgive erring human beings. The root trouble lies deeper than

⁴¹“The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215.

⁴²*Paul and Palestinian Judaism; Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People.*

⁴³*Jesus, Paul, and the Law.*

⁴⁴*Paul.*

⁴⁵*Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles.*

⁴⁶The term is used by R. Jewett in “The Law and the Coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in Romans,” *Int* 39 (1985): 341-56 (341).

⁴⁷See Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 183-214.

⁴⁸For recent critical evaluations of Sanders’s portrayal of Palestinian Judaism (i.e. “covenantal nomism”) and the “new perspective,” see A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001); S. J. Gathercole, “After the New Perspective: Works, Justification and Boasting in Early Judaism and Romans 1-5,” (Ph. D. Thesis, University of Durham, 2001); D. A. Carson, *et al.* (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism Vol. I: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (WUNT 2/140; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001). For further, see Gathercole, “After the New Perspective,” 25-30.

⁴⁹For a fine review, see G. N. Stanton, “Review of *Galatians* (J. L. Martyn),” *JTS* 51 (2000), 264-270.

human guilt, and it is more sinister. The whole of humanity – indeed, the whole of creation (3:22) – is, in fact, trapped, enslaved under the power of the present evil age. That is the background of God’s invasive action in his sending of Christ, in his declaration of war, and in his striking the decisive and liberating blow against the power of the present evil age.⁵⁰

He also understands the apocalyptic motif of God’s sending forth his Son to liberate those who were enslaved under the power of the law as the theological center of Galatians.⁵¹ The apocalyptic motif of God’s invasive action to liberate humanity from the power of the present evil age is carried throughout the commentary.

In his recent studies on Galatians, furthermore, Martyn convincingly demonstrates that Galatians presents the reader with ‘apocalyptic antinomies’ (e.g. antinomies between ‘the world’ and ‘new creation,’ between ‘the Spirit’ and ‘the Flesh’) which owe their birth to God’s new creation.⁵² He argues that the framework of the world-view of Paul in Galatians is represented in the ‘antinomy’⁵³ between ‘the power of the cosmos’ and ‘the power of God.’⁵⁴ The power of God manifested through his sending of Christ and the Spirit destroys the power of the cosmos (e.g. the present evil age, sin, and elements of the world) and sets one free from it. According to Martyn, the antinomy between the cosmos and God is clearly present both in 3.19-4.7 where God’s victory over the anti-God powers is described (Comment #41, 42) and in 6.15 where ‘the disappearance of the old antinomies’ by the new creation is expressed (Comment #51).

In his provocative study on Galatians, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God*, B. W. Longenecker highlights the eschatological or apocalyptic

⁵⁰Martyn, *Galatians*, 105.

⁵¹Martyn, *Galatians*, 388.

⁵²J. L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 111-123.

⁵³For Martyn’s idiosyncratic definition of the term, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 570 n. 79 and 587. Martyn (*Galatians*, 23) notes the distinction between antithesis and antinomy in an idiosyncratic way. I prefer to use the term “antithesis.”

⁵⁴Martyn, “Events in Galatia,” 179.

dimension of Paul's thought in Galatians. He contends as follows:

Paul's conviction concerning the obliteration of one "world" and its replacement by another lies at the heart of his programme in Galatians, and is arguably fundamental to the whole of Pauline theology. Eschatological eruption is not for Paul about the introduction of a new religious configuration on to the scene of world history. Instead, it is about God's triumph over competing suprahuman forces, about God's invasion into the order of this world in order to set things aright in a new sphere of existence where God's reputation as the cosmic sovereign is vindicated.⁵⁵

This theme is developed in chapter 3 and is linked to all other features of this book. In Chapters 4 and 7 Longenecker deals with Paul's understanding of the triumph of God in relation to Christian moral identity. In Chapters 5 and 6 he investigates "the way in which Paul imagines God's triumph in Christ to relate to God's dealing in history--with Israel (chapter 5) and in relation to the law (chapter 6)."

From this very brief survey of recent studies on Galatians, one can observe that rhetorical and sociological approaches have shed some fresh light on the interpretation of the letter. Above all, we may notice that the theological reading of the letter plays a pivotal role in interpreting Galatians not only because the issue at stake in Galatia seems primarily theological but also because Paul's argument in Galatians is theological in nature.⁵⁶ We may also note that, among recent Galatians studies, the most crucial debate has concentrated on the theological issues of the letter.

⁵⁵Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God*, 3.

⁵⁶Most commentators have agreed that the subject of the letter is theological in nature. Notably, Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 242; Esler, *Galatians*, 176. According to Martyn (*Galatians*) and Longenecker (*The Triumph of Abraham's God*), apocalyptic theology is the *Leitmotif* of Galatians.