

GALATIANS
AND
CHRISTIAN
THEOLOGY

Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics
in Paul's Letter

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I

Messiahship in Galatians?

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Introduction

Question and Method

My question in this essay brings together an unusual combination. Most scholars who write about Galatians pay no attention to messiahship; most who write about messiahship spend little time on Galatians. A long tradition of Pauline scholarship has assumed that Paul used the word *Christos* simply as a proper name, and even those who have allowed Paul some residual messianic meaning have not usually seen such meaning in this letter. Why, people might ask, would this letter, warning Paul's gentile converts against the attractions of Judaism, make use of such an obviously Jewish notion as messiahship? I nevertheless want to propose that Jesus's messiahship is central and vital in Galatians. For reasons of space, I shall concentrate on chapter 3 in particular.

In my proposal I am encouraged by Matthew Novenson's recent book *Christ among the Messiahs*.¹ Novenson has made a strong case for seeing *Christos* in Paul neither as a name, nor exactly as a "title," but as an "honorific," somewhat like *Augustus* in the triple phrase *Imperator Caesar Augustus*, where

1. Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messianic Language in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Imperator is a title, *Caesar* the personal name,² and *Augustus* an honorific, adding an extra halo of meaning. Novenson wisely restricts himself to certain key texts, and though he naturally mentions Galatians (particularly 3:16), he does not venture far into its complexities.

There are problems of method and historical background in approaching a question like this, but there is no space here to set them out. In particular, I regard it as a red herring to discuss *Christos* as the possible carrier of Paul's incarnational Christology. First-century meanings of "Messiah" were varied and complex, but incarnation was not among them.³ When we look not only at key texts but also at actual first-century men and movements who grabbed at vague royal expectations and bent them to their own purposes,⁴ we see that expectation was focused primarily on the nation, not on an individual,⁵ that a variety of scriptural texts was available to back up messianic claims,⁶ and particularly, that though we must assume that messianic or similar movements were inevitably "political," looking for a radical change in their society, this too does not make them monochrome. A movement that beats its plowshares into swords and marches on Jerusalem is "political"; so is a movement that symbolically reenacts Joshua's entry into the land by plunging people into the Jordan.

How then can one make the case for messianism in Galatians? I begin with two preliminary points concerning large-scale features of the first-century landscape.

The Landscape

First, as I have argued before, the idea of Jesus as Messiah was alive and well, actively not merely presuppositionally, in every other form of Christianity we know in the first century, including the Gospels, Acts, Hebrews,

2. Which, admittedly, was already carrying an important connotation (heir to the divine Julius Caesar) as well as its denotation by the time Augustus was putting it on coins.

3. Cf. Jacob Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), a sustained polemic against uniform notions of "messiahship."

4. Cf. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), chap. 7.

5. "The main task of a Messiah, over and over again, is the liberation of Israel, and her reinstatement as the true people of the creator God" (*ibid.*, 320); how this happens varies considerably: so 307–20, esp. the conclusions on 319–20. I therefore resist Novenson's suggestion (*Christ among the Messiahs*, 3n6) that I have simply picked up from earlier scholarship a monochrome messianic portrait and applied it to Paul.

6. E.g., Gen. 49:10 (the "scepter"); Num. 24:17 (the star and the scepter); 2 Sam. 7:4–17; Pss. 2; 8; 110; Isa. 11:1–10.

Revelation, and also the apostolic fathers.⁷ Some who suggest that Paul must have abandoned messianic belief as irrelevant or even repellent to the wider gentile world do not seem to notice that the same should then be true for Luke, or John, or Ignatius of Antioch, and it obviously is not.⁸ We recall the emperor Domitian's investigating Jesus's blood relatives on the assumption that they were part of a royal family,⁹ and Josephus's referring to James as "the brother of the so-called Messiah" (had *Christos* been a mere name, one would not write "so-called").¹⁰ The earliest church was firmly rooted in Jesus-based messianism.¹¹ If, therefore, Paul made no use of the messianic significance of the word *Christos*, he would be the sole exception in an otherwise universally messianic movement,¹² making it all the more peculiar that he should distinguish the word *Christos* so carefully from both *Iēsous* and *Kyrios*.¹³

Second, we must remind ourselves of the widespread and diverse Jewish practice of retelling the single ancient biblical story. The Bible itself contains such retellings, such as those in Deuteronomy, both the "wandering Aramaean" speech (in chap. 26) and the great prophetic covenant narrative

7. I assume that the *Gospel of Thomas* and similar texts come from the second century at the earliest; see N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity?* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006).

8. This theme has been repeated with monotonous regularity, from Adolf Deissmann a century ago in *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 133: "The dogmatic Messiah of the Jews is fettered to his native country. The spiritual Christ could move from place to place"; to several in our own day, e.g., M. Zetterholm, ed., *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 40.

9. See N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 41–43. The Domitian story is in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.19–20.

10. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.206; cf. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 353–54; here we leave out of the account the famous but controversial passage about Jesus in *Ant.* 18.63–64; cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 439–40.

11. One can also cite the use in Antioch of *Christos* (Acts 11:26), which, *Pace* Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), 72, does not mean that the word had been "firmly established . . . as a 'proper name' over a fairly long period of time."

12. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (1995; New York: Doubleday, 2010), 2, describing as "astonishing" the claim of John G. Gager in *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) and Lloyd Gaston in *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987) "that Paul did not regard Jesus as the messiah." Collins cites Rom. 1:3–4, but it is precisely the obviously messianic meaning of that passage that has led many to discount it as a statement of Paul's own position; cf. A. Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 111n16.

13. On the distinction, see Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 44; and, e.g., "Romans 8:9–11" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. L. E. Keck et al., 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004), 583–85.

in chapters 27–30. There are the psalms, particularly 105 and 106, and the Davidic psalms, which indicate the transfer of the Abrahamitic promises to the royal house.¹⁴ The prophets tell the same story, looking back to Abraham from the time of exile and looking onward to redemption. The narrative prayers of Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9 do the same, with the Daniel narrative linking up with chapters 2 and 7 to provide a long-range story of successive world kingdoms that will be overthrown by the coming kingdom of God. We know from Josephus that Daniel was being read in the first century in terms of a world ruler who would arise from Judaea.¹⁵ The same point emerges from many Second Temple texts, both the complacent list of heroes in Sirach and the history of revolutionary zeal in 1 Maccabees 2. Works such as the Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch and the historical visions of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch tell the same story from different angles, as do some of the Qumran documents. We might also compare, of course, *Jubilees*, Pseudo-Philo, and many others.¹⁶

Six things about these narratives need to be noticed. First, they are of many types, shapes, sizes, and emphases. There is no standard model. Second, they always get the historical order right: whichever heroes or villains they choose, they know and use the full implicit narrative. Third, however they tell this story, they always perceive it not merely as an ancient story from which one might cull types and patterns, examples and warnings, but as a *single continuous story* in which they themselves are now living.

Fourth and most important, almost all these retellings of Israel's story are more about Israel's rebellion and sin, and God's judgment upon them, particularly in the exile, than they are about a smooth upward journey toward the light. (Obvious exceptions might be Psalm 105 and Sirach.) The nineteenth-century idea of immanent development has no foothold in these texts. Ancient Judaism regularly told its story in terms of persistent failure and God's fresh redemptive actions; the Abrahamitic covenant was invoked not as the start of a triumphalist progression, but as the ultimate hope for grace when otherwise the story had become a nightmare. The "apocalyptic" message of most of these extremely varied Jewish texts nests within the solid and unbroken covenant theology they all evince.

Fifth, we see the same tradition of Jewish-style storytellings continuing through the first two generations of the Christian movement, not least in the

14. Pss. 2: 72; cf. Ps. 89.

15. Cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 6.312–15; see discussion in Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 312–13.

16. On all these now see N. Calduch-Benages and J. Liesen, eds., *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

Gospels, Acts, and Hebrews. The New Testament as a whole, however varied its sociocultural context, does not abandon the Jewish tradition of fresh tellings of the biblical story as a covenantal narrative that had passed through many dark and catastrophic times but was now emerging into clarity and focus because of Jesus.¹⁷ Paul does the same in Romans 9 and 10.

Sixth, and most obviously relevant to our topic, these stories frequently point forward to a coming climactic figure, and that figure is often, admittedly not always, messianic: the warrior king in the *Psalms of Solomon*, the lion in 4 Ezra, the fountain and vine in 2 Baruch, arguably also the large white bull in the Animal Apocalypse, and not least the world ruler who, in first-century readings of Daniel, would arise from Judaea. One could indeed turn the point around. Not all Israel stories climax with a Messiah. Not all Messiahs, when they are there, look alike. But all Messiah narratives come at the point where an implicit Israel narrative is being resolved. They come in fulfillment of the ancient promises, especially those to Abraham, and they concern the rescue of the nation from the appalling mess into which its many rebellions have landed it.

You will see where this is going. But before we move to exegesis, let me introduce you to some statistics.

Vital Statistics

We have all learned to beware of word statistics. They can lead to mere concordance worship, or the left-brain attempt to turn theology into mathematics. Nevertheless, the word usage in Galatians does, I think, offer a straw in the wind.

If you were to ask someone reasonably biblically literate what Galatians is about, they might say "salvation from sin," "Paul's gospel" or "justification by faith." They might perhaps say "Paul's theology of the cross" or "Paul's critique of the law." Those have all been major themes in the tradition of interpreting this letter. Conversely, Galatians has regularly been invoked in discussions of soteriology, where those ideas cluster together. But the sheer numbers raise a question mark. Paul never uses *sōzein*, *sōter*, or *sōtēria* in Galatians. He mentions *hamartia* only three times.¹⁸ The *dikaios* root, likewise, is comparatively

17. See Matt. 1: 24:25–27, 44–46; Acts 7: Heb. 11 (further in N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 2 [London: SPCK; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013]). Some have suggested that there are "embedded" scriptural narratives in James (e.g., 5:10–11, 17–18; and the mention of Abraham and Rahab in 2:21–25). This seems to be far-fetched.

18. Gal. 1:4; 2:17; 3:22; of those, 1:4 is in an opening formula, and 2:17 goes closely with the two occurrences of *hamartia* (2:15, 17), suggesting that the concern is there with the status of gentiles rather than with actual sin.

infrequent, as is *stauros* and *stauroō*.¹⁹ The gospel, *euangelion*, is found seven times, as is the verb *euangelizomai*, almost all in the first two chapters.²⁰

A higher strike rate occurs for *pistis* , "faith" or "faithfulness," which occurs twenty-two times, and for the law, *nomos* , which is found thirty-two times, almost as many as *ou* , *ouk* , and *ouch* (36x altogether), or Paul's vital connective *gar* (37x).²¹ Even *theos* is found only thirty-one times, and *pneuma* a mere eighteen. Out beyond them all is *Christos* , forty times or more (depending on variant readings), and backed up with a couple of key messianic references to Jesus as "Son of God."²² By contrast, the title *kyrios* is found only five times: twice in the opening and closing greetings, and once in the reference to James, "the Lord's brother."²³ Even the proper name "Jesus" is found only eighteen times, again allowing for variant readings. *Christos* , in other words, is far and away the most frequent term in Paul's theological vocabulary in this letter. We might contrast Romans, where we find 155 uses of *theos* and 68 of *Christos* ; similar proportions occur in the two Corinthian Letters.²⁴ To find words in Galatians that occur more frequently than *Christos* , we have to look to *hymeis* in all its cases (47x) and, inevitably, *kai* and *de* (58x each).²⁵ *Christos* is not far behind even these.

Now perhaps this means nothing at all. Perhaps Paul uses *Iēsous* or *Christos* interchangeably, and here just happens more often to call him *Christos* , as a mere proper name.²⁶ But there are enough scholars who have insisted, against the trend, that Paul does use *Christos* with *active and not merely residual*

19. One use of *dikaios* itself (Gal. 3:11), 4 of *dikaiosynē* (2:21; 3:6, 21; 5:5); 8 of *dikaiosō* (2:16 [3x], 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4). We find *stauros* in 5:11; 6:12, 14; and *stauroō* in 3:1; 5:24; 6:14. The resurrection is mentioned only in the opening greeting (1:1), though it is arguably present just below the surface of the argument in many passages in the letter: see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 219–25.

20. We find *euangelion* in Gal. 1:6–7, 11; 2:2, 5–7, 14; *euangelizomai* in 1:8 (2x), 9, 11, 16, 23; 4:13. The important word *epangelia* , "promise," is found 10x, with one use of the cognate verb, almost all in the second half of chap. 3: *epangelia* in 3:14, 16, 17, 18 (2x), 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28; *epangelomai* in 3:19.

21. Two other regular connectives, *ara* and *otn* , appear only 6x each; *alla* , "but," is found 23x; the preposition *dia* occurs 19x.

22. For "Son of God" see 2:20; 4:4, 6 (and cf. 1:16).

23. See 1:3, 19; 5:10; 6:14, 18. The reference in 4:1 is part of the illustration of the young "master" of the household, which could count as an oblique advance hint for the arrival of the "Son of God" in 4:4.

24. Thus, e.g., in 1 Corinthians: *theos* , 106x, and *Christos* , 65x; in 2 Corinthians, *theos* , 79x, and *Christos* 47x; in 1 Thessalonians, *theos* , 36x, and *Christos* , 10x.

25. Counting the contracted form *kagoō* for *kai ego* .

26. Thus Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation* , 114 (cf. 111), representing the majority of scholars: "The sheer quantity of usage of *Christos* in itself proves nothing." His next sentence, however, is a challenge: "What matters is the way (and contexts) in which it is used, and these suggest hardly anything specifically messianic." That depends. When a scholar resolutely puts the telescope to a blind eye, there is no knowing what signals may go unnoticed. The master at this is W. G.

messianic significance here, that his arguments do turn on this, and that we should be encouraged to look afresh at the way, and the contexts, in which the word is used.²⁷ That is the task to which I now turn. I shall argue, first, that *Christos* does indeed mean "Messiah" in Galatians and that this meaning is active within the argument, not merely as a residual memory; second, that the word *Christos* seems to be at the heart of Paul's incorporative ecclesiology in Galatians; and third, rather obviously granted the first two but not granted the history of scholarship, that the first of these explains the second.

Christos as "Messiah" in Galatians

My first and most important move has to do with the *narrative* that dominates Galatians. The very idea of such a narrative has often been ruled out or ascribed to Paul's opponents rather than to him. But I persist.²⁸ Throughout the letter, Paul regularly sees Jesus as the one in whom Israel's long, strange, and often dark narrative has come to surprising but appropriate fulfillment. The point is obvious, in the light of our earlier quick survey of biblical, Second Temple, and early Christian retellings of the story of Israel: if we discover a narrative, starting with Abraham and continuing with Moses and the law, finding itself in deep trouble but then finding a God-sent deliverer through whom promises are fulfilled after all, the trouble is resolved, and God's new age is ushered in—then, almost whatever words might be used for such a figure, the natural assumption would be that this person is Israel's Messiah. When we find, in a letter that frequently tells or alludes to that story, that the person whose arrival has brought this narrative to its appointed goal and has accomplished the promised deliverance is referred to as *Christos* , we ought to say "game over." This is the Messiah. And his messiahship means what it means within that narrative.

Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (London: SCM, 1966), e.g., 209 on *Christos* preceded by the article. "In no case can we discover an appropriate reason for the determination."

27. Cf. N. A. Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* , ed. D. H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), chap. 1, though he seems almost to give away the farm with his first sentence: "Paul's Christology can be stated almost without referring to the messiahship of Jesus." By the end of the essay, however, he is clear that "Jesus' messiahship actually had a fundamental significance for the total structure of Paul's Christology" (22). Among Germans, interestingly, cf. Gaudier Borrkamm, *Early Christian Experience* , trans. P. L. Hammer (London: SCM, 1969), 76; Oscar Gullmann, *The Christianity of the New Testament* , rev. ed. (1957; repr., London: SCM; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 134 (though neither develops the idea in the way that I am doing); Albrecht Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* , 3rd ed. THKNT (1937; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 159.

28. See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* , chap. 7.

The narrative in Galatians particularly comes in chapters 3 and 4 and is alluded to at many other points. The attempt of some to say that Paul is referring to the story of Abraham only because his opponents have forced him onto their preferred territory, and that he gives no positive sense to Israel's long history, is demonstrably flawed.²⁹ That is not—to use the category regularly invoked in support of such a position—how apocalyptic works. Apocalyptic writing frequently retells Israel's story, taking it through dark and gloomy pathways but pointing onward to a sudden, surprising, yet appropriate and (not least) *covenantal* resolution. So it is here: Paul is indeed an apocalyptic theologian, but “apocalyptic” does not mean “nonhistorical” or “noncovenantal.”

Paul's narratival world can run back to Adam, but in Galatians he takes it back to Abraham. Galatians 3 engages with Genesis 15, where God makes the covenant with Abraham, which brings into fresh focus the original promise in Genesis 12 that in Abraham all the nations would be blessed. The question of how this can come about, granted all the barriers that appear to be in the way is precisely the question with which Paul wrestles throughout chapter 3, until the eventual resolution in verse 29: if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. In terms both of Paul's argument and of the underlying biblical narrative, this is the QED moment. We have a miniature version of the story of Israel, working forward from Abraham, through the puzzles and problems of the law, and ending with *Christos*: How can this not be the Messiah?

The same is true of the further fresh telling of the story, this time echoing the exodus traditions, in 4:1–7. This story nests within the earlier one, a link made explicit in Genesis 15, where the “exodus” promise is part of the covenant with Abraham. Here the resolution to the problem of slavery is the sending of God's Son and then the sending of the Spirit of the Son. The obvious parallel in Romans shows that this too is clearly messianic: in Romans 8, another retelling of the exodus story, Paul draws on Psalm 2, where the Son's promised inheritance consists of the whole world.³⁰ Paul does not use Psalm 2 in Galatians, but its theme of *kleronomia*, “inheritance,” is correlated in Galatians 3:18 with the promise to Abraham. This theme then comes at what we might call the messianic moment in the narrative in 3:29, being reaffirmed at the “inheritance” moment in the miniature exodus narrative of 4:1–7: if a son, then an heir through God (4:7).

By itself, an exodus narrative would not generate a messianic fulfillment. It was Moses who brought the people out of Egypt, under the ultimate leadership

29. Cf., e.g., Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 120.
30. See Rom. 8:17–25.

of the pillar of cloud and fire. However, given the way in which, in Second Temple Judaism, the ultimate redemption was seen as a new exodus, an echo of the exodus might well point to messianic fulfillment, as in Isaiah 40–55 and indeed Daniel 9. In Second Temple literature, whether “apocalyptic” or not, if we found a passage promising a new exodus and highlighting the role of one man as instrumental in bringing it about, this would probably be the Messiah. If Paul is saying that those hopes are realized and that destiny is fulfilled, and speaks of *Christos* and/or God's Son as the one through whom this has come about, it is ridiculous to say that he did not mean the word to carry this meaning, or that this meaning was merely residual but theologically irrelevant.

A more detailed survey of Galatians 3 and 4 fills out the point. The single argument of 3:6–4:7 divides into four parts, each telling the same story in miniature.³¹ In each case the story begins with the earlier history of Israel, faces the problem into which that history has run, and postulates *Christos* as the one through whom the problem has been resolved and the original purpose fulfilled. In each case there are much stronger echoes of Genesis 15 than are usually brought out. Of course, the passage is regularly regarded as a tour de force on Paul's part, making texts and words dance about in a manner we find fanciful and unhistorical. This is normally explained in terms of Paul's rabbinic methods of exegesis, yet even if this were the right way to approach the passage, the result would still stand. The more rabbinic we make Paul, the more we would know that when he wrote *Christos* he meant “Messiah.”³² The context in Genesis offers many clues to a different and less apparently arbitrary way of reading the chapter, to which we shall return. For the moment we look at the three stages of Galatians 3.

Starting in 3:6, Paul states the promise and then poses the problem: God's purpose is to bless the world through Abraham, but the curse of the Torah has intervened to block this intention. For our purpose we simply note that in 3:10–14 it is *Christos* who has come to set it all right, to enable the original divine purpose to be fulfilled despite the blockage.³³

31. There is no space here to explore the structural balance of the segments, but it is noticeable that Gal. 3:6–14 has 150 words; 3:15–22 has 156; 3:23–29 with 87 is much shorter; and 4:1–7 has an additional 100 words. Did Paul perhaps think of 3:23–4:7 as a unit, making three similar units (150; 156; 187 words), flanked by an introduction (3:1–5, with 62 words) and conclusion (4:8–11, with 51 words)? Or four units (150; 156; 87; 100 words), with that introduction and conclusion?

32. See, e.g., Deissmann, *Paul*, 105; Philip F. Esler, *Galatians* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 193. Even James Dunn in *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1993), 184, who wants to rescue Paul from the charge of arbitrary or fanciful exegesis, explains the argument as “thoroughly rabbinical.”
33. See Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, chap. 7.

The same is true in the more complicated passage 3:15–22,³⁴ for which we need a firm grasp on Genesis 15, which Paul is expounding. God promises Abraham a reward, understood in terms of his inheritance (*klēronomia*), both human and geographical. The promise is then spelled out and repeated (15:4): Abraham's own physical offspring will inherit. God then invites Abraham to contemplate the stars and declares, "so shall your seed be," *houtōs estai to sperma sou*—in other words, your family will be uncountable (Gen. 15:5 LXX). This is the promise that Abraham believed, with the consequence that "it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:5, quoted already in Gal. 3:6). The theme of *klēronomia* is repeated again and again (many translations fail to bring this out), and this is the point of the covenant that is then made. Abraham's *sperma* will be slaves for four hundred years, but then they will be rescued and will finally gain their *klēronomia*. Thus when Paul speaks of a *diathēkē* in Galatians 3:15, continues to speak of the *sperma* and the *klēronomia* in the following verses, and mentions the length of time between the promise and the Torah, it seems perverse to deny that he is expounding the themes of covenant, seed, and inheritance as we find them in Genesis 15. This is especially so when we glance ahead to Galatians 3:29 and see that those are the terms in which he sums up the whole chapter.

We should then interpret Galatians 3:15–22 in parallel to 3:6–14: God makes promises, the Torah gets in the way, but God's initial purpose will be realized. And the point of all this for our present argument is verse 16: the terms of the covenant do not specify a plurality of families, but a single family "who is Christ," *hos estin Christos*.³⁵ Postponing again the particular puzzles here, we merely note that once again *Christos* is the final moment in the implicit narrative. This is then picked up at the conclusion of the paragraph in 3:22, where the *Christos* that inherits the promise is further defined in terms of *pistis*, picking up the *pistis* of Abraham in 3:6–9. Again we should be clear that we are looking at a narrative, from Abraham to the present time, which (like so many of the Second Temple retellings of the story) passes through a dark and puzzling phase but arrives at resolution. For Paul, the marker of that resolution is *Christos*. In terms of the implicit Jewish narrative, there is every reason why this should mean "Messiah" and no reason why it should not. The absence of messiahship in scholarship on Galatians is directly related to the screening out of Paul's retelling of the scriptural story.³⁶

34. See *ibid.*, chap. 8.

35. This is the point, not least, of the much-puzzled-over 3:19–20, on which see *ibid.*, chap. 8.

36. What is more, the argument of 3:16–22 has drawn attention to a double feature of Gen. 15 that becomes prominent in Gal. 4:1–7—as slavery and freedom: (1) Abraham's slave may have looked as though he was to inherit, but in fact Abraham's own son will do so. (2) Abraham's

What about the promise of the land? Paul has not spiritualized this promise, as so many have assumed.³⁷ The clue is in Romans 4 and 8, and in their retrieval of the messianic promises in Psalms 2 and 72: the whole world is now God's holy land, subject to the rule of the Messiah. Thus, despite the blockages put in its way, the Abrahamic promise on the one hand has come through the new exodus and on the other hand has come through the messianic figure whose presence demands the extension of the promise from land to world. The figure so designated in Scripture is the son of David, who is the Son of God; in Galatians, it is the *Christos*, who is the Son of God. It becomes increasingly clear not only that when Paul writes *Christos* here he means "Messiah" but also that this meaning is more than a mere background acknowledgment of a now irrelevant reality. Paul's argument makes the sense it does only on the basis that this *Christos* really is Israel's Messiah, the anointed Davidic king. Take that away and we are left with somewhat problematic proof texts for an argument about something else.

All this comes to a head in 3:23–29. Paul does not now begin with Abraham, but with the blockage that has stood in the way both of the promises and of their *pistis* fulfillment, as in 3:22. The Torah kept Israel under lock and key (3:22), under the close supervision one might give to a young and unruly child (3:25), until the eschatological moment. And the arrival at the eschatological moment is described as *eis Christon* (3:24). Again, faced with an implicit Jewish narrative that arrives at an eschaton and finds a particular character there, we might expect that character to be either the Messiah or someone approximating thereto, and when the word used to designate this figure is *Christos*, we should look for no other alternatives. It makes no sense to deny that for Paul this word here means "Messiah," or to suggest that messiahship plays no significant role in Paul's argument.

The final step in this part of our own argument is provided by 4:1–7. Here Paul tells the new version of the exodus narrative in order (among other things) to work toward his designed conclusion in 4:8–11, where, as in the exodus itself, the redemptive action unveils the full and true character of God himself, over against all pagan idols.³⁸ And for a fourth and final time, descendants, his *sperma*, will be slaves in a foreign land and will then be brought out and given their inheritance at last.

37. E.g., W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 161–220. Cf. the critique in Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 170–83.

38. Cf. Exod. 3:6, 13–15. Note that Exod. 3:16–22 harks back to Gen. 15: the promise of the land of the Canaanites, the rescue from the enslaving nation, the coming out with great possessions, etc.

the narrative comes to its climax with a particular figure. This time, however, the figure is not called *Christos*; he is called *huios theou*, Son of God; and he bestows "sonship," *huiothesia*, on those who receive "the Spirit of the Son," so that they are no longer slaves, but sons. And in case we might forget, "if sons, then heirs," *kleronomoi*. Like the Abrahamic promise that would come true when the sins of the Amorite were at last full,³⁹ so this promise came true "when the fullness of time had come," *hote de ethen to pleroma tou chronou* (4:4). Paul is not embarrassed, as some of his readers have been, at a chronological sequence that ends with a final fulfillment. Indeed, he has been developing the idea, in line with Genesis and Exodus, on and off throughout the chapter. The chronological sequence of Israel's history, starting with Abraham and surmounting all the problems and challenges on the way, has reached its fullness. Any Second Temple Jew would know that the figure who then emerges as the agent of that fulfillment might well be the Messiah. When Paul calls this figure *Christos*, we should take him seriously.

Our preliminary conclusion, then, is that *Christos* in Galatians 3 and 4 really does refer to Jesus as Israel's Messiah, through whom the One God has accomplished the long-awaited liberation. The word cannot be reduced to the status of a name, or even of a name with residual (but theologically irrelevant) memory of an earlier titular meaning.

This leads to my second basic point: that *Christos* in Galatians, whether or not it carries positive messianic meaning, is the vehicle for Paul's *incorporative* or *participatory* vision of the people of God.

Christos and Incorporation or Participation

Galatians contains some of the best-known statements of Paul's theology of incorporation or participation. This category, increasingly recognized as central, has nevertheless proved difficult to understand. My own proposal on that front follows from my central argument here, but for the moment we simply note the way in which, within the argument of Galatians 3 and 4, this incorporation or participation focuses on *Christos*.

Galatians 3:24–29 offers a whole range of *Christos*-based incorporative language. Beginning with verse 24, we noted earlier that the long-awaited fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises has arrived through a historical sequence that leads *eis Christon*. This results in justification on the basis of

39. Gen. 15:16 LXX, *antepleromai*.

piests, in being no longer under the *paidagogos* of Torah (3:25).⁴⁰ But this is explained, not in terms of a forensic scheme as in Romans 3, but in terms of *incorporation into Christos*, as a result of which believers are said to be "sons of God" (3:26).⁴¹ This in turn is further explained (*gar*) by the fact that they have entered *this incorporative reality* by being baptized *eis Christon* and by *putting on Christos* (3:27), also presumably at the time of baptism. *Christos* seems to be, for Paul, a kind of flexible receptacle into which people come, whether by plunging into the water, which (as in Rom. 6) symbolizes his death, or by putting him on like a suit of clothes. Once that has happened, they are then "in him." Some have made heavy weather of the different prepositions and cases, but so far this seems straightforward to me.

This complex statement of believers' eschatological identity (3:24–27) then leads to the real crunch of Paul's argument. It is stated in two points, one negative and the other positive, both vital for the whole argument of the letter, both again incorporative, and both again having *Christos* as the focus of that incorporation. Negatively (3:28), the distinctions of Jew and Greek or slave and free have become irrelevant, and even the two-sided creation of male and female is beside the point; Paul, obviously, is referring both to the divided table fellowship in Antioch and the threatened imposition of the male-only rite of circumcision in Galatia.⁴² These divisions have been left behind, he says, because "you are all one in *Christos*" (3:28b). Then comes the positive point in 3:29, building on that explanatory clause of 3:28b: "If you are *Christos*, you are Abraham's *sperma*, and in accordance with the promise you are *kleronomoi*." This obviously picks up the key points of 3:16–22, and with it the meaning of Genesis 15: the promise of the single *sperma*, which is not to be thwarted by Torah's divisive work, and the resulting Abrahamic and, indeed, messianic inheritance. The fulcrum of this dense final statement, too, remains *Christos*: the *ei de* at the start of verse 29 indicates that Paul intends the genitive *Christos* to carry the same meaning as *en Christō* at the end of 3:28. Paul's whole argument has been that the Galatian Christians are already part of the family of Abraham. He has made the point by telling the story from Abraham to the present, from one angle after another, always bringing that great biblical narrative to its goal in terms of *Christos*.

40. This move from a kind of slavery to implicit freedom is the same move that we note in 4:1–7 and again in 4:21–5:1.

41. I use the surely not gender-specific "sons," rather than, say, "children," to resonate with Paul's exposition esp. as it arrives in 4:1–7 and with, e.g., Exod. 4:22.

42. Might it also have been the case that several of the gentile converts were slaves, while the Jewish believers were free?

Standing back from this tightly packed argument, we see preliminarily what has happened. The narrative sequence of the Abrahamic promises and their fulfillment has expressed that fulfillment in terms of *Christos*, not simply in the sense of an individual Messiah whose arrival and achievement mark the goal of the story and the accomplishment of redemption and liberation, but in the sense of an incorporated body, a whole in whose identity believers participate. The single family, the *kléronomia* promised to Abraham, was the goal toward which the promises had always been aiming. Paul has given that single Abrahamic family a name: *Christos*. How does this work?

As we saw, Paul is here expounding Genesis 15 in its entirety. He is reading it in the light of other passages such as 12:3⁴⁵ and the various repetitions of the promise concerning the “seed” that will inherit the land.⁴⁶ The “seed,” indeed, carries much of the load both in Genesis 15 and in Galatians 3, and it is here, particularly in Galatians 3:16–22, that my proposal solves the double problem of 3:16.⁴⁵

First, it is routinely forgotten that throughout the Genesis passages the collective noun *sperma* means not simply “descendants,” as though the *sperma* were simply a collocation of individuals, but more specifically “family.” That is the perfectly good English collective noun corresponding to *sperma*.⁴⁶ Ironically, commentators often point out the collective meaning of *sperma* in order to criticize Paul for apparently ignoring it in 3:16, failing to see that it is precisely the collective or corporate meaning that Paul intends in the chapter as a whole. People regularly take Paul to task for his apparently individualizing exegesis of *sperma*, and then continue to read the passage as being about something else, as though *hos estin Christos* is simply a fancy and perhaps fanciful way of getting from the distant patriarch to the all-important Savior. Perhaps it is we who have individualized Paul’s meaning.

Second, commentators on 3:16 have also usually ignored the fact that here Paul is building toward the chapter’s climax, in which the word *Christos* is used incorporatively six times in the final six verses. The meaning of *Christos* here really does seem to be “the people of God,” “the people promised to Abraham,” and tellingly in the final verse, “the promised *sperma*.” These two problems—ignoring the meaning of “family” for *sperma*, and ignoring the obvious incorporative meaning of *Christos* at the end of the chapter—cancel

43. Quoted in Gal. 3:8; cf. too Gen. 18:18.

44. Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 24:7.

45. For what follows, see Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, chap. 8.

46. One might speculate on why this has been avoided; perhaps it is because of the assumption that Galatians as a whole is talking only about the salvation of individuals, not the identity of the church.

each other out and provide an excellent, if striking, exegesis of 3:16. Paul is well aware of, and intends, the collective meaning of *sperma* and lines it up precisely with the incorporative meaning of *Christos*. But if that collective meaning is “family,” it can also have its own plural, “families.” This offers a straightforward reading of 3:16: the promises did not say “to your families,” as though referring to two or more families, but to one, “to your family”—*hos estin Christos*, which is *Christos*. The end of the chapter should leave us in no doubt that this does not mean “which is the single person Jesus,” but rather, “which is the single *Christos* in whom the people are now incorporated.”⁴⁷

I submit that if it had not been for that final phrase *hos estin Christos*—and for the useful role it has played in enabling scholars to laugh up their sleeves at Paul’s apparently bizarre exegetical habits!⁴⁸—there need have been little controversy about 3:16, or about Paul’s whole sequence of thought. God made the promises to Abraham and his family, singular, not his “families,” plural. This is of obvious and immediate relevance both to the Antioch incident in chapter 2, where the action of Peter and Barnabas implied that there were, after all, two families, and to the specifically Galatian situation, where the actions of the agitators likewise implied that uncircumcised gentile Christians were part of a family separate from Jewish Christians. We must therefore suppose that Paul is happy to use the word *Christos* to refer to a collective, an incorporative whole. That is what God promised Abraham, and nothing can stand in its way. Hence 3:19–20: Torah, given by God through the hand of Moses the mediator, could not by itself create the single seed, but “he is not the mediator of the one,” of the singular *sperma*. God is one, however, and as in Romans 3:29, he therefore promised and will produce a single family of Jews and gentiles together. God will therefore deal with the blockage that Torah places between the Abrahamic promises and their fulfillment. The result is that now, as in 3:22, the promise is given to believers on the basis of the *piŝtis Iason Christou*. This explanation of the incorporative or participatory sense of *Christos* is confirmed elsewhere in the letter.⁴⁹

47. Paul seems to assume that his hearers know already, without the later explanation, that *Christos* carries this incorporative meaning. He is, to be sure, capable of teasing people by saying something cryptic and explaining it only later, but since 3:17–22 depends on this point being grasped (hence the confusion among commentators who misunderstand 3:16 when they then get to 3:19–20), we must assume that he thinks the point will be clear.

48. Cf. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, 183: “Did Paul really expect the Galatians to be impressed by his argument from the singular form of the Greek noun ‘seed’ in Galatians 3:16?”

49. There are the typical uses of *en Christō*, as in 1:22 (the *ekklēsiai* of Judea that are “in Christ,” differentiated presumably from the ordinary non-Christian Jewish synagogues in the region). There are the sharp warnings of 5:1–6, where Paul speaks of the benefits that *Christos* gives, which would be lost if one were to be separated *apo Christou*, and where he repeats in

We must conclude that the incorporative or participatory sense of *Christos* has come to be used as a shorthand for “the church” or “the people of God”—though, of course, the people of God have been radically redefined by Paul, not least here in Galatians. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises has been no smooth crescendo, no easy ascent into the light, no straight path leading to glory. It has been a matter of shocking, startling, world-changing divine action—as the promises had always foretold. The only way the covenant can be fulfilled is through apocalypse, though the converse of this is that the One God, when unveiling the new reality, makes it clear that this had been in mind from the start.

So how does this notion of “incorporation” or “participation” actually work? And what must we say about the relationship between the two points we have now established, on the one hand that Paul says *Christos* because he is thinking of Jesus as Israel’s promised Messiah, and on the other hand that when he says *Christos* he is thinking of this figure as the one in whom God’s single family, promised to Abraham, is now summed up? The obvious answer has long been resisted but now, I suggest, should be obvious: for Paul, the Messiah represents his people. They are summed up “in him.” When God looks at the *Christos*, he sees all those who belong to him, who have come “into him” in baptism, who are “clothed with him,” who are “one in him”—and who, in particular, have died and risen with him, as in 2:19–20. To risk an overused word, he constitutes their *identity*. They are, in other words, “Israel,” Abraham’s family.⁵⁰ Incorporation and participation are central Pauline ways of speaking about the church; for him, the church is Israel, and that identity is focused on Israel’s Messiah. To expound this we need a new section.

Messiah and Israel: The Heart of Paul’s Participatory Soteriology

These themes have been largely ignored for two reasons. First, the subject of Galatians has been assumed to be soteriology; whereas it is in fact ecclesiology, the definition of God’s single family and the struggle to maintain that identity in the face of sharp pressure. (Soteriology is, of course, presupposed.) Second, Pauline soteriology, especially here, has been identified in terms of a different form the point of 3:29: *en Christo lesou* neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, but rather “faith working through love” (5:2, 6). And the genitive in 3:29a is repeated in 5:24: *hoi tou Christou*, those who belong to *Christos*, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

50. See Dahl, *Jesus the Christ*, 21: “Because Jesus is the Messiah, the ones who believe in him are the ‘saints’ of the end of time, the *ekklēsia* of God, the true children of Abraham, and part of the ‘Israel of God.’” See further Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, chaps. 11 and 15.

“justification by faith,” and so it has been defined as the polar opposite of a Jewish scheme of thought identified in terms of “justification by works,” with the result that “Paulinism” itself has been seen as the polar opposite of “Judaism.” In consequence, Jewish categories of thought—messiahship, patriarchs, covenants, “Israel” itself—have been seen as part of “the problem,” the thing Paul is reacting against. To the contrary, what we have here is a radically redefined Jewish ecclesiology—something that, on both counts, Protestant exegesis has neither wanted nor recognized.

What then is the connection between *Christos* as “Messiah” and *Christos* as “the one in whom God’s people are incorporated, the one in whom they participate”? Here again, what seems obvious to some of us has been resisted or simply ignored. On the evidence of this letter alone, it looks as though the Messiah *represents* Israel, represents Abraham’s family. As we noted before, in first-century movements various leaders shaped their *individual* profiles and propaganda to the *national* aspirations. Messiahship varied according to the type of national hope of which it was a function. There is then fluidity of thought between king and nation, the one and the many. If we had no other evidence for this, Galatians 3:16 in the light of 3:24–29 should have provided enough to clinch the point.

Part of the problem, I think, is that after earlier attempts to understand something that was called “corporate personality,” associated with writers such as H. Wheeler Robinson, a reaction has set in, especially within an individualist and Protestant mind-set. The long-running investigations of Paul’s “in Christ” language have not produced any startling successes, though the promise to Abraham (“*in you* all the nations will be blessed”), echoed in the promises to Isaac and Jacob, has been plausibly suggested as a possible source, especially when “in your seed” is added to “in you.”⁵¹ Some might suggest that because Paul saw the *Christos* as the true *sperma Abrahami*, he was then able to develop his distinctive *en Christo* and related language from that Abrahamic beginning.

This seems to me less likely than the other way around. I suspect that the line of derivation may have gone from (1) an awareness of God’s purposes for his people being summed up in the Messiah to (2) a way of highlighting their original basis in the Abrahamic promises. In Paul’s mind the most obvious link between the Messiah and the people of God is the resurrection. God has done for Jesus in the middle of history—the Jesus who has been crucified as a messianic pretender!—what Paul had expected God to do for all Israel at the

51. Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, “Some Observations on Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘in Christ’ and ‘with Christ,’” *JNTS* 25 (1983): 83–97. See Gen. 12:2–3, “in you”; 18:18, “in him”; 22:18, “in your seed”; 26:4 (to Isaac), “in your seed”; 28:14 (to Jacob), “in you and in your seed.”

end.⁵² The demonstration at Easter that Jesus really was and is Messiah is thus simultaneously the demonstration that he really was and is Israel in person. If this realization, I suggest, that sparked Paul's view of Jesus as both Messiah and the incorporative representative of Israel. I would be happy to see indications of fluidity between king and people anywhere in ancient Judaism, but with such evidence either absent or controversial, I would settle for the hypothesis that the resurrection itself generated this link in Paul's mind. We should not be afraid of postulating radical innovation, especially since belief in Jesus's messiahship is so clearly bound up with belief in his resurrection, which itself provided the unanticipated shock of a partially inaugurated eschatology. If Israel's God has done for Jesus what he was to have done for the people as a whole, that might well generate a new manner of incorporative speech, with a long-range analogy to Abraham and a more specific analogy to David. That implicit narrative has a lot going for it, not only in Paul. When, therefore, in Galatians we meet at the same moment (1) a *Christos* in and through whom God's eschatological rescuing purposes are effected and (2) a *Christos* in whom God's people participate and are summed up, one who is the *sperma Abrahā*, in whom his people become "inheritors" of the promise, we are entitled to declare our own QED. It is because Jesus is the anointed king of Israel that he thus represents and incorporates the single family of Abraham. Messiahship is central, and theologically load bearing, for the entire argument.

We are therefore in a position, on the basis of Galatians alone, to answer the question posed by Ed Sanders toward the end of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.⁵³ Paul's thought hinges, he says, on "participation in Christ," but he has no theory to propose as to how this concept works. The answer lies partly in Paul's Israel-shaped ecclesiology, partly in the incorporative meaning that Paul gives to *Christos*, and wholly in the combination of the two. To belong to the Messiah is to belong to Israel, and vice versa. That is more or less exactly what Paul says in Galatians 3:29.

All this would enable us, but for the constraints of space, to move back at last to 2:15–21, where Paul states in a dense, allusive, but rhetorically charged summary what has happened in and through the Messiah. If the Messiah represents Israel, to belong to this "Israel" one must follow the Messiah, specifically in his *pisitis*, which is the one and only badge of membership in the single family. Because the Messiah has died and been raised, to belong to "Israel" one

must die and rise with him. This incorporative death and resurrection mean that the Messiah's people die to the "flesh," where circumcision is the marker, and come "alive to God," to the One God, who desires the single family. The continuous narrative from Abraham to the Messiah is anything but smooth and easy. It is marked, all through, by the cross.⁵⁴ But it is a narrative nonetheless.

At the climax of chapter 2, however, Paul brings in two apparently quite different meanings, or at least implications, of *Christos*. First, the new life that the believer possesses is not a return to the previous identity: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *the Messiah lives in me*." This is not the same thing as "being in the Messiah." To be "in the Messiah" is a matter of *status*, of who one is in God's eyes. To have the Messiah living within one is a matter of actual, personal, inner transformation.⁵⁵ The Galatian believers are already *en Christo*. That is the basis of Paul's argument. But he can still speak of himself as a mother being in labor with them once more, not until they come right *into the Messiah*, but until the Messiah is fully formed *in them* (4:19).⁵⁶ Elsewhere Paul says the same thing by talking of the Spirit, or the Spirit of the Son.⁵⁷ This transformation ("*theōsis*," indeed, if you will) is vital for Paul, and it is effected through the Messiah's transformative indwelling. It is not the same thing either as "being in Christ" or as the "justification" that takes place through that new status.⁵⁸

There remains a fourth and final messianic meaning, which emerges at last in 2:20: "The life I do still live in the flesh, I live within the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Here, as in 4:4, there should be no doubt that "Son of God" means "Messiah."⁵⁹ Equally, again as in 4:4 and Romans 8:3, the Son is the one who, sent from the Father, embodies and enacts the Father's own love.⁶⁰ Sometimes Paul can speak, as here, about the Messiah's love, and sometimes about God's love expressed in the sending and death of the Messiah.⁶¹ This makes sense only with an implicit but very

54. This is exactly borne out by the equally cutting remarks, and their christological content in particular, in Gal. 5:2–7 and 6:11–16.

55. A long time, going back at least to Deissmann, *Paul*, 123–28, has seen the expressions as interchangeable; but this, in line with Deissmann's overall project, collapses "theology" into "religion."

56. See Beverly R. Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 29–39.

57. In this letter, Gal. 4:6; elsewhere, e.g., Rom. 8:9–11.

58. Against, e.g., Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

59. As in Ps. 2 and elsewhere.

60. This is central to the very similar argument in Rom. 5:6–9, esp. 5:8. God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died for us while we were still sinners.

61. Cf. Rom. 8:31–32, 35, 37, 39.

52. On the "messianic" charge against Jesus, see, e.g., Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 41–58; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, chap. 11; idem, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 559–63.

53. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), 522–23.

high Christology. It is nonsense to say that God loved people so much that he sent someone else to do the difficult job.⁶² None of this, in Galatians 2 or elsewhere, is said simply for the sake of defining who Jesus really was and is, vital though it is to get that clear. It is said in order to ground the new messianic reality—the Israel reality, the reality of Abraham's single family—in the action and the very life of Israel's God.⁶³

Certain scholars have attempted to explain the rise of incarnational Christology on the basis of sundry figures in Jewish writings who seem to have occupied a suprahuman status: angels, other mediator figures, maybe even messiahs.⁶⁴ I do not find this helpful. The Jewish texts in question are not so clear. There is no indication in the New Testament that anyone was saying, in effect, "Ah, well, if Jesus was or is Messiah, then perhaps that means he is God incarnate." The evidence points in the other direction. The forgotten element in New Testament Christology is the forgotten element in Second Temple eschatology: Israel's God himself had promised that he would come back in person, to deal with Israel's exile and the world's injustice. The "second coming" of Jesus borrows biblical and Jewish language about the coming of Israel's God; so too, I suggest, does the "first coming." I do not see in pre-Christian Judaism any indication that people were anticipating a divine Messiah. I see two things: (1) a longing for Israel's God to return in rescuing power and judgment; and (2) a hope, expressed in some circles though not others, for a Messiah who would, at the most, be the specially accredited agent of this God at that moment. Paul, I believe, creatively combined these two strands; the title "Son of God," up to this point indicating either Israel or the Messiah, is the place where we can watch this combination happening. It is not a matter of earlier figures who might conceivably stretch upward toward some kind of divinity. It is a matter of Israel's God's "sending forth his Son," revealing—as part of the shocking apocalypse!—that messiahship, like image-bearing humanness itself, was all along a category designed, as it were, for God's own use. I see no indication that anyone had thought like this in pre-Christian Judaism. I see every sign that Paul grasped this point and wove it into the very heart of his highly charged and passionate letters.

Thus the multiple interlocking meanings of *Christos* in Galatians, all held within the basic meaning of messiahship in terms of bringing Israel's narrative

62. As in Rom. 9–11, Jesus is Israel's Messiah according to the flesh and also "God over all, blessed forever," and in that dual but still totally messianic identity, he is both the *telos nomou* and the *kyrios panton*. Rom. 9:5 (with echoes of 1:3–4); 10:4, 12.

63. See esp. Gal 4:9: "now that you have come to know God, or rather be known by God."

64. See particularly W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998).

to its God-ordained climax and summing up God's people in himself, hold together what later theology would see as the objective and subjective poles of God's saving action. Those categories, though, like "divinity" and "humanity," are far too abstract and bloodless to do justice to Paul's passionate prose. Once we recognize that throughout Galatians Paul really does mean "Messiah" when he calls Jesus *Christos*, and with that meaning he has specifically in mind both the Messiah's bringing of Israel's long story to its strange, revolutionary, and indeed "apocalyptic" climax and his representative summing up of his people in himself, we see how a great many otherwise puzzling features of his theology fit together in mutually supporting sense.

For that, however, we need a final concluding section.

Conclusion: Messianism and Pauline Theology

Out of many possible concluding points, I here highlight only two. First, there is after all no distinction in Paul's mind between two types of thinking, "juridical" on the one hand, and "participationist" on the other. Just as those other false polarizations, "covenant" and "apocalyptic," belong firmly together, so when Paul speaks of being "justified in Christ," we should take him at his word. "Participation," for Paul, is ecclesiological, containing within it the juridical soteriology that Paul develops elsewhere. And all is messianic.

Second, if Jesus really was Israel's Messiah, we are bound to raise the question of Messiah in a political sense. Galatians does not emphasize Jesus as *kyrios*. But it does warn against "another gospel" (1:6). The only "other gospel" for which we have any evidence in the world of first-century Anatolia was the gospel of Caesar and Rome. Whether it was Ancyra or Pisidian Antioch that was the center of Paul's "Galatia," the title of the most recent archaeological survey of Pisidian Antioch says it all: "Building a New Rome."⁶⁵ Once we have "justification" and "participation" properly related to each other, perhaps it is time to ask once more about "gospel" and "empire."⁶⁶

65. E. K. Gazda and D. Y. Ng, *Building a New Rome: The Imperial Colony of Pisidian Antioch (25 BC–AD 700)* (Ann Arbor, MI: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 2011).

66. See, e.g., Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010); and an increasing number of others, though not without some strong protests, e.g., J. M. G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), chap. 19 (discussed in Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, chap. 12).