

# The Prophet in the Apostle: Paul's Self-Understanding and the Letter to the Romans

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THE PROPHET IN THE APOSTLE:  
PAUL'S SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND  
THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of  
LICENTIATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY  
by

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Love, I shall perfect for you the child  
Who diligently potters in my brain  
Digging with heavy spade till sods were piled  
Or puddling through muck in deep drain.

Yearly I would sow my yard-long garden.  
I'd strip a layer of sods to build the wall  
That was to keep out sow and pecking hen.  
Yearly, admitting these, the sods would fall.

Or in the sucking clabber I would splash  
Delightedly and dam the flowing drain  
But always my bastions of clay and mush  
Would burst before the rising autumn rain.

Love, you shall perfect for me this child  
Whose small imperfect limits would keep breaking:  
Within new limits now, arrange the world  
And square the circle: four walls and a ring.  
—Seamus Heaney, “Poem”

This study came to me like a child whose persistent playfulness has never failed to provide an endless supply of work, often for others. Far more credit, and my heartfelt gratitude, goes out to those who have toiled as I played. As I accommodated breaches in my walls, remeasured limits, and delighted in the flow of reading and interpretation, Fr. Thomas Stegman and Dr. Andrew Davis labored to guide me toward a responsible and coherent presentation. Tom is the model pedagogue; understanding and demanding, his passion for students and the work of scholarship have continually inspired me to stay the course. He encouraged me to follow my passion into Biblical Studies; his example and support keep me here. Andrew's gracious enthusiasm and gentle corrections shored up my weaknesses and reassured me when I wavered. Additional thanks is due to Fr. Richard Clifford, S.J. and Dr. Angela Harkins, who both freely gave their time and advice during the early stages of the project. The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning provided a Junior Scholars Research Grant that enabled me to dedicate myself more fully to study and writing; I am grateful for their support.

My family, friends, and parishes have supported and loved me throughout this process. Throughout the years of study, my parents, Dr. Peter and Patricia Rugg, have been a source of support and my most enthusiastic readers. My wife, Beckey, and son, Neil, have tolerated my absence from home, always affirming another year of studies; their sacrifices have made it possible for me to pursue my passion, and I am eternally grateful. They have shown me the patience and kindness of love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:4, 7). They have borne the burden as I wrestled with this intruding idea, and dedicating this small work to them is but a small sign of the enormity of my gratitude.

## INTRODUCTION

We all know that Paul is an apostle. He states it over and over again, and he defends it whenever it is called into question. We celebrate “Saint Paul, the Apostle” in our liturgical calendars and read selections from his letters almost every Sunday. Through much of Christian history everyone knew who you meant when you said “the Apostle;” we say “apostle” almost as if it were Paul’s first name. But what do we mean by “apostle”? What did Paul mean?

My basic assumption with respect to this question is to take Paul at his word. As someone who instructs others to “imitate me as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1),<sup>1</sup> interpreters should read Paul with Jesus in mind. And if we recognize in Jesus the ministries of a priest, prophet, and king, then an examination of Paul’s understanding of his apostolic status and ministry should begin by looking for evidence of these roles. We can’t presuppose that there will be evidence, but it seems to me to be a solid enough framework for asking questions. Of these three roles, “prophet” has been frequently examined with respect to Jesus’ ministry<sup>2</sup> and often overlooked with respect to Paul’s.<sup>3</sup> It, therefore, makes sense to establish Paul’s prophetic credentials as a first step toward a fuller investigation into “apostle” as a Christian term encompassing all three offices. I will not explicitly connect Paul to Jesus, but I do intend the connection.

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<sup>1</sup> All scriptural quotations are my own translation.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 147-443. Nearly half of Wright’s examination of Jesus’ ministry comes under the category of “Profile of a Prophet.”

<sup>3</sup> See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 1: “Far hotter issues are raised by the phrase [‘Paul and Judaism’] than whether or not Paul should be called Jew or Christian...Is [Paul] to be primarily understood as a Jewish apocalypticist, a Hellenistic mystic, a Rabbi who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, a Hellenistic Jew? Or as none of these or as some combination of them?” While discussion of Paul’s prophetic self-identification has taken place since Sanders’s famous study, the possible categories for understanding Paul that Sanders lays out have remained the dominant suggestions.

I have chosen to attempt to establish Paul's prophetic credentials for an additional reason. Among the ministries of priest, prophet, and king, I consider the prophet to be the articulation between the others. Articulation is an intriguing word because it can mean two different things. As a noun, it is a joint, like an elbow or knee, that enables the motion and movement of body parts. The vocation of a biblical prophet places him or her between God and the community, and, like a joint, the prophetic vocation makes possible a range of movement and coordination between the two. The prophet also articulates the relationship between priests and kings because their vocation spans both the spiritual and profane. That is not to anachronistically project anything like the religious and secular dichotomy that exists today in the West, but biblical prophets do critique and challenge both kings and priests. It is a vocation that keeps the other parts of the body from going off on their own, while still allowing them the movement they need to accomplish their tasks and live into their vocations.

Articulate is also a verb describing the attempt to speak or write words or ideas clearly. I emphasize that it is the *attempt* and not the success that is important. Isaiah's unenviable commission to "go and say to this people: Listen carefully, but do not understand! Look intently but do not perceive" (Isa 6:9) should be a warning to any would-be prophet who might think that a "word from the Lord" might clarify a thing or two. But prophets do the best they can, trying to articulate God's message for the community, and sometimes, the community's concerns back to God. As an articulation (in both senses) the prophetic vocation is vital, and we would do well in our faith communities to ensure support for the prophets God sends.

My second assumption relates to the application of prophecy today. "Speaking for God" is playing with fire, not just because supernatural claims are *démodé* but also because some who claim to speak or act for God end up saying and doing horrific things. Having responsible

understandings of what prophecy is and isn't can help to avoid both ends of extremism, the indifferent and the violent. When I read Paul, I am constantly struck by his continuous care for community, not just the communities he forms and supports but also the community of texts that shape his thought and words. Highlighting this intersection between community and prophecy is one step toward developing a responsible sense for its application. Implicit in this assumption is another: that prophecy needs to be applied in Christian communities today. Again, I will not make any explicit claims as to how that can be done, but my hope is that by highlighting Paul's prophetic sense and ministry, others might find their own applications.

Investigating Paul and prophecy is also a worthy interpretive experiment. It requires thinking behind the text, in front of the text, and between the lines. There is great joy in puzzling over a text long enough to make a connection; reading Paul through prophecy will not disappoint. As an interpretive experiment, reading Paul through the prophetic lens is an act of restorative reading that aims to recover the loss of metanarrative meaning, a loss stemming primarily from the historical-critical approaches. Identifying Paul's prophetic self-conception is an effort to locate that narrative not only within the biblical texts but also within the Church today.<sup>4</sup> If Paul considers his own vocation to be fundamentally prophetic, and if the prophetic vocation is fundamentally oriented toward the proclamation of God's continual and on-going

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<sup>4</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 5: "When Paul's letters are read in worship, the church hears them as the stimulus to self-examination, both individually and communally. The congregation does not ask in such a setting whether Paul is accurately reporting the events in Galatia or Corinth, but how Paul's response to his historical situation – as found in the specific rhetoric of his letters – might have significance for believers today ... We can borrow Paul's own words concerning ancient Israel's story in Scripture: 'these things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us' (1 Cor 10:11). Whatever the events of the past might have been, it is the actual scriptural story that instructs and warns. Paul states similarly in Romans 15:4 'Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.'"

presence with Israel, then this thesis accomplishes two important rehabilitations: prophecy can be restored within the apostolic, and Paul can be restored within a Jewish frame of reference.

This is not as straightforward a task as it might sound. The idea of re-framing Paul as a prophet is not altogether new, and its history is problematic. Nineteenth century philologists and historians of religion developed the idea of Christianity as a “prophetic” religion, but did so by defining prophecy in a Graeco-Roman/Hellenic paradigm in decidedly anti-Semitic ways. More recent scholarship has corrected this error, but subsequently defined “apostle” as the New Testament word for prophet. The former distorted prophecy; the latter distorted apostleship. Each, as a result, removed important elements of an integrated picture of Paul.

I propose re-framing Paul’s self-understanding as a prophet by reading him with the canonical prophets collectively. This prophetic frame presents his continuity with Jewish categories of religious experience and ministry in a more holistic manner. Prophecy is the lens that also allows us to make sense of Paul’s “discontinuity” (reading Scripture through the lens of the Christ event); understanding previous revelations in light of new divine activity, a hermeneutic of continuity and fresh heralding, is itself a bedrock characteristic of biblical prophecy. This offers grounds for approaching Paul’s Jewishness from a perspective sympathetic to both Christian and Jewish interpretations.

At the same time I will acknowledge that this is not the only narrative operating. The point is not to shift Paul between supposedly conflicting/equivalent categories (prophet versus/as apostle, Jew versus/as Greek); rather, it is to re-prioritize categories that open ground for reflection within systematic theology and ecclesiology. Paul’s prophetic language, rhetoric, and self-identity expands the available texts by which biblical scholars and systematic theologians can understand the phenomena of prophetic experience and, more generally, understand the

fundamental theological understanding of “revelation.” This can have a dramatic impact on hermeneutical discussions for philosophers by offering Paul as an example and model of self-engaged reading. When we place the prophetic *within* the apostolic, we also leave open a greater range of diversity in ministry while opening opportunities for revitalizing ecclesial ministries.

While holding these considerations in the background, each chapter will address different perspectives. In Chapter One, I sketch the problematic history of historical-critical approaches to biblical interpretation that result in a separation between Hellenic and Hebraic culture with clear racial bias. I will then provide a brief literature review of studies linking Paul and prophecy since the 1960’s and argue for a collective model of prophecy based on the canonical prophecy. Before outlining the contours of this perspective, I will address methodological problems inherent to the study.

Chapter Two outlines the basic elements of this corporate conception of prophecy. As human beings who speak for God, prophets are commissioned to mirror the divine pathos and retell Israel’s vocational narrative as a call for further fidelity in light of new events. Through the retelling of the exodus-conquest, the community is re-formed and liberated for participation in the new activity of God and assured of YHWH’s future rectification. In this speaking-for-God, the prophet is also one who fully mediates God to the community and the community to God. Each of these characteristics of prophecy will be located within Paul’s letters. Looking at the components cumulatively, Paul’s prophetic self-understanding can be established.

Chapter Three then takes up the application of Paul’s prophetic self-understanding to the Epistle to the Romans. I argue that Romans is the best “test case” letter, and sketch an overview of the letter when read from a prophetic perspective. Analysis of Rom 1:1 will provide a detailed reading of how Paul’s titles in his greeting relate to the prophetic commission to speak for God. I

will then establish Paul's retelling of the exodus-conquest using 3:24 and 8:23 as narrative "brackets." Finally, Paul's prophetic praxis will be established in Rom 15:18-21.

Finally, the Conclusion will close out the interpretive task by looking to identify applications for ecclesial ministry, Jewish-Christian dialogue, and suggestions for further study.

## CHAPTER ONE: PROPHETIC PROLEGOMENA

The question of whether the Apostle Paul considered himself a prophet, or at the very least wrote about himself, his mission, and his ministry in prophetic language, engages a complex set of historical and methodological criteria. Both must be addressed before any consideration of Paul's self-understanding can be meaningfully assessed. The appropriation of prophecy and its relationship to Christianity has a troubling anti-Semitic history, which must be acknowledged and criticized out of loyalty to the Jewish roots of both Jesus and Paul.<sup>5</sup> It requires the rectification of the past by encountering and doing history differently.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, contemporary scholarship has problematized the comparison between Old and New Testament frames of reference, in no small part by redefining "apostle" as simply a New Testament reference for "prophet." Expanding the apostolic to incorporate the prophetic while re-engaging the prophetic within the narrative worldview of the biblical texts, offers the possibility of moving beyond these problems. By looking over where we have been, we can avoid missteps while distinguishing this study from others.

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<sup>5</sup> See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (New York: HarperOne, 1998), 25: "An embrace of tradition must be undertaken with an awareness of the risk involved: the willingness to learn Jesus in the context of tradition demands a combination of loyalty and criticism, and either without the other becomes distorted ... The best sort of critical intelligence insists that the community's loyalty must be directed to the living Lord, not to its own precedents. It is the Lord to whom the tradition is always answerable, not vice versa. But if loyalty without criticism becomes lifeless, so also can criticism without loyalty become mere carping and complaining."

<sup>6</sup> See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 21: "Our task, then is not to cleanse and purify the science we have inherited — such efforts, in any case, always seem to end up whitewashing our own situation rather than rectifying the past — but rather it is a matter of being historical *differently*." As will be obvious, Masuzawa and I differ quite starkly in the way that we attempt to be "historical differently." Nevertheless, her assessment of the task is prescient and wise. In part, it informs the necessity of cataloging how I think we ended up getting Paul so wrong. Restoration cannot be a process of whitewashing over centuries of scholarship as if no progress had been made. Nor can it be a process of carrying forward what can be retained as if the structure it came from was inconsequential.

This chapter will ground my analysis of biblical texts in the following chapters.

Examining the preference for the Hellenic over the Semitic within the history of linguistics and historical-critical analysis points to the need to expand the repertoire of self-critical rather than other-critical approaches to interpretation. I will then transition to contemporary attempts to connect Paul to prophecy, where I will provide a brief literature review of studies. We can then address methodological considerations pertinent to my own study.

## THE AUSPICES OF PROPHECY: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY LINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL DETOUR

The History of Religions school and the birth of modern biblical studies did not spring from a vacuum.<sup>7</sup> Tracing this history is beyond our purpose here, but as intellectual movements they were as contextualized as any other, having ideals, goals, and methods that addressed their own cultural-historical location as much as their subject matter. Historical-critical, source-critical, and linguistic methods are indispensable to the proper study of the Bible, but they are merely a heuristic tool within a larger framework of interpretive possibilities.<sup>8</sup> Within this brief

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<sup>7</sup> Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3: “Scripture died a quiet death in Western Christendom sometime in the sixteenth century. The death of scripture was attended by two ironies. First, those who brought the scriptural Bible to its death counted themselves among its defenders. Second, the power to revivify a moribund scriptural inheritance arose not from the churches but from the state. The first development was the Reformation, and the second was the rise, two hundred years later, of modern biblical scholarship.” See also Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University; 1974), 41-65; Frei also traces the religious divisions of the Reformation to the “polarization between hermeneutical extremes, corresponding to theological affirmation and denial of the positivity of revelation” (64). He identifies the split referenced here as a division over authorial intention as a reliable means of historical credibility.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., “Reading the Bible Critically and Religiously: Catholic Perspectives,” in *The Bible and the Believer: How to Read the Bible Critically and Religiously* (eds. Marc Zvi Brettler, Peter Enns and Daniel J. Harrington, S.J.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 95: “Whatever the merits, Troeltsch’s three principles [criticism, analogy, correlation] assume a world where the biblical witness is generally discounted on philosophical grounds – a world very different from that assumed in the Bible and in the Jewish and Christian traditions. At least from a Catholic perspective, these principles rest on debatable philosophical presuppositions, and the fact that in some circles they have been elevated to the status of the only criteria for judging what really happened in biblical times is unfortunate and misleading. Their rigid application is incompatible with, and not part of, the positive

sketch of the bias present in the historical and linguistic analysis of nineteenth century scholars, I will argue for a nuanced approach, one that recognizes the problems of early attempts to connect Christianity to Jewish prophecy while insisting that the bias is not always bound up with the approach.

Tomoko Masuzawa has traced the problematic emergence of the term “world religions” and in so doing has provided helpful insights into the cultural presumptions that have infected the *Religionswissenschaft* from the beginning.<sup>9</sup> More apropos to our current concern is her genealogical unfolding of the discursive practices of early comparative philology and comparative religion. Because biblical studies involves the study of biblical languages, Masuzawa’s research and critique expose some of the less frequently considered pitfalls of our discipline.

The emergence of Biblical Studies as a discrete discipline was an event in the development of the modern academy. Such events are naturally historical, but Masuzawa insists that “it is essential that we begin by recognizing with utmost seriousness, that these events are, first and foremost, rhetorical events.”<sup>10</sup> Not only do disciplines emerge out of particular contexts, they emerge with a language that valorizes certain assumptions. It is not a coincidence that biblical studies and *Religionswissenschaft* emerge when and how they do. What Masuzawa terms the “historical-realist” position is caught up not just in a particular approach to the analysis of religious texts, but also in “a particular assumption about the nature of language”<sup>11</sup> — the representational theory. In representational theories of language, language roughly approximates

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Catholic understanding of historical criticism as an indispensable tool in biblical interpretation.” See also pg. 88: “The now official Catholic position is that historical-critical analysis, properly understood, is the indispensable (though not completely sufficient by itself) method for the scientific study of a biblical text.” See also Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 10, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 29-30.

<sup>11</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 31.

or re-presents reality; thus, it “presupposes a particular ontology”<sup>12</sup> in which language derivatively describes the way things actually are.

This ontological assumption within language is transferred with ill effect to the “science” of history.<sup>13</sup> The study of history and the language through which texts are transmitted are attendant developments in the divisions of academic disciplines, and through them “history became for the first time essentially a work of research, whose cardinal objective now was to establish certain facts about the past.”<sup>14</sup> When texts become the primary means of establishing facts about the past, narrative texts must have their “facts” parsed out. The narrative that the text presents is placed in service to a later narrative (never identified as such), a present-tense presentation of assumed possibility steeped in the worldview of the contemporary age. As objects for research, reading narratives becomes a mining operation for data of historical objectivity that can be transposed into a matrix with other extractions to form a representation of the past in another language. And because such research was oriented to *the* objective meaning of the events represented in the words, interpretation can be reduced to either/or propositional statements; “meaning” is singular and thus true or false, objective or mythological.<sup>15</sup>

For Matsuzawa, “these new sciences became viable and effective as ways of understanding European society.”<sup>16</sup> The role of religion was a particularly important subject;

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<sup>12</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Note that Leopold von Ranke’s now démodé description of the task of history, “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*,” in *Geschichten der romanischen und germansichen Völker von 1494 bis 1513* (3rd. ed.; Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1885), vii, would also assume that one has a language to properly describe “what actually happened” that precedes the epistemological assumption that one can know “what actually happened.”

<sup>14</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> While today we can rightly point to a greater appreciation for literary and rhetorical readings of biblical texts, the notion that texts or verses operate at *one* level or have a *singular* “meaning” remains an active bias. Thus, ‘what’ Paul discusses or teaches still holds primary place in interpretation over ‘how’ he says it. The “less clear” is often disregarded in favor of a “more clear” interpretation. Because Paul never “clearly” says he is a prophet (and a prophet in this sense rather than that), less attention is paid to its possibility.

<sup>16</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 16.

thus, this process “provided opportunities for modern Europeans to work out the problem of their own identity and to develop various conceptions of the relations between the legacy of Christianity on the one hand and modernity and rationality on the other.”<sup>17</sup> Religion in the nineteenth century “came to be recognized above all as something that, in the opinions of many self-consciously modern Europeans, was in the process of disappearing from their midst, or if not altogether disappearing, becoming circumscribed in such a way that it was finally discernible as a distinct, and limited, phenomenon.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the secularization of nineteenth century European society became the model of development, the standard by which “modern” and “progress” would be judged.<sup>19</sup> Under such a model of progress, the prophets, who purport to transmit a divine word, would find themselves torn away from the relational dynamic of their vocation and thrust into the universalist needs of a progressive sense of history. Paradoxically, their claim to direct inspiration also allows them to be used as bearers of an epistemic clarity. When the prophets can be made to agree with European progress, they will become powerful supports for liberal democracy and a non-Semitic European identity.

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<sup>17</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 19. She continues: “Meanwhile, the two new sciences pertaining to non-European worlds, anthropology and Orientalism, promoted and bolstered the presumption that this thing called ‘religion’ still held sway over all those who were unlike them: non-Europeans, Europeans of the non-modern past, and among their own contemporary neighbors, the uncivilized and uneducated bucolic populace as well as the superstitious urban poor, all of whom were something of ‘savages within.’ For as those enlightened moderns of the nineteenth century - as represented by those who wrote and those who read the ever-growing number of books on the subject of religion, magic, and superstitions - observed with an admixture of horror and fascination, the oppressive supernaturalism of hidebound traditions and umbrageous priestcraft continued to control and command those hapless others’ thoughts and acts in myriad idiosyncratic ways.”

<sup>19</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 16: “In effect, the logic here seems to be that these new sciences became viable and effective as ways of understanding European society because this society had finally reached maturity, that is, had sufficiently developed in accordance with rational principles and established itself on the basis of the rule of law, instead of on some real or imagined supernatural authority. In contrast, every region of the nonmodern non-West was presumed to be thoroughly in the grip of religion, as all aspects of life were supposedly determined and dictated by an archaic metaphysics of the magical and the supernatural.”

Progress was the struggle for European identity, one that increasingly became identified as “Indo-European” and distinguished from the “Semitic.” Matthew Arnold, for example, in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) identified two central elements of European development: Hellenism and Hebraism. Europe received from its Hellenic roots democracy, art, and science: those things of “sweetness and light;” from its Hebraic roots, Europe received its puritan habits of frugality, an ethic of duty, and obedience.<sup>20</sup> Once this distinction is made,<sup>21</sup> progress and religion become opposed and separated on racial grounds. The racial distinction between Jew and Greek in terms of culture becomes mirrored in the distinction of language.<sup>22</sup>

A representational realism in linguistics mandates the connection between the people who use a language and the capabilities of a language to optimally refer to the world; the assumptions work in tandem. Thus, determinations about the “superiority” of one language over another will ultimately determine the “superiority” of some peoples over others. For nineteenth century linguists, the decisive factor was verbal inflection.<sup>23</sup> Nineteenth century scholars, with

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: Rethinking the Western Tradition* (ed. S. Lipman; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 93. To be fair to Arnold, who had his own intriguing manner of being “religious;” he seeks to praise both Hellenism and Hebraicism in conjunction, but he reserves Hebraicism for the “most praise” because gives “fire and strength.”

That science should take such a high place should come as no surprise for one who “objected to our carrying on a flirtation with mystic maybe’s and calling it religion.” Quoted by Kevin Hart, “Mystic Maybes,” in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy* (ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis; New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 208. For Arnold, and typical of rationalistic approaches to religion, we don’t need to start with an “unverifiable assumption to start with, followed by a string of other unverifiable assumptions of the like kind, such as the received theology necessitates;” Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (ed. R. H. Super; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968) vi: 151; also quoted in Hart, “Mystic Maybes,” 208.

<sup>21</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 149: she argues that “neither Hebraism nor Hellenism was an established concept prior to the nineteenth century.”

<sup>22</sup> N. T. Wright, drawing on his own experience of teaching and in public debate, has similarly noted that the epistemological assumptions of the Enlightenment continually wish to separate Jew and Greek, Paul and Jesus. See N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 156: “I have been made aware again and again that within our post-Enlightenment world the pressure to resist the covenantal and apocalyptic framework for both Jesus and Paul — the pressure more or less, to de-Judaize both of them, or to allow only one of them to be ‘Jewish’ and then only within a post-Enlightenment version of what ‘Judaism’ might be ... is the default mode into which our culture slips when it is faced with the whole topic.”

<sup>23</sup> The valorization of grammar by both the ancient Indians and Greeks reinforced the nearly exclusive emphasis among nineteenth century philologists on grammatical structure; see Matsuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*,

their new knowledge of Sanskrit texts and the subsequent identification of the Indo-European (Aryan) family of languages, developed the tools of comparative linguistics. Western language groups were found to have a “pure” form of inflection; the Semitic syntactical modification of root words was termed “agglutination,”<sup>24</sup> a simpler, less elegant, and less creative solution that “the majority of nineteenth-century philologists maintained ... was decidedly imperfect and inchoate in inflectional capability, and with this imperfection came all the limitations that characterized their native speakers as a race.”<sup>25</sup> Agglutination and the cultures it created would retain this derivative characteristic<sup>26</sup> of being “‘fixed,’ ‘rigid,’ and inimical to *Bildung* (growth, development, culture).”<sup>27</sup>

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169, n. 28; see also pg. 24: “Metaphysically and abstractly imagined rather than historically documented, inflection was construed as a syntactical structure resulting naturally and directly from the innermost spiritual urge of a people (*Volk*), and as such it was said to attest to the creativity and the spirit of freedom intrinsic to the disposition of those who originated this linguistic form.” This is a notable and major difference between early linguistics and post-modern/post-structuralist emphases. See Paul de Man, “Resistance to Theory,” in *Resistance to Theory* (Theory and History of Literature, vol. 33; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 3-20, for an example of how the opposite view has become dominant. Language is valued for its rhetoric, its figurative ability, precisely because it breaks the connection between the *trivium* disciplines of grammar and logic.

<sup>24</sup> See Friedrich Schlegel, *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*, in *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Frederick von Schlegel* (trans. E. J. Millington; London: Henry G. Bohn 1849), 425-533, esp. 428-458. Available online here: <http://www.scribd.com/document/145955138/Schlegel-F-On-The-Language-And-Wisdom-Of-The-Indians-1849>. Link verified January 4, 2017. Schlegel opens his analysis by noting that “this resemblance or affinity [of Sanskrit to Greek, Latin, Persian, and German] does not exist only in the numerous roots, which it has in common with both nations, but extends also to the grammar and internal structure; nor is such resemblance a casual circumstance easily accounted for by the intermixture of the languages; it is an essential element clearly indicating community of origin” (429).

<sup>25</sup> Matsuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 25. See also her analysis of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s contributions to comparative philology, 157-163.

<sup>26</sup> See Ernest Renan, *History of the People of Israel* (trans. C. B. Pitman and D. Bingam; Boston: Little, Brown, and Company: 1905), I:7-8: “The languages of the Aryans and the Semites differed essentially, though there were points of connexity between them. *The Aryan language was immensely superior, especially in regard to the conjugation of verbs. This marvelous instrument, created by the instinct of primitive man, contained in the germ all the metaphysics which were afterwards to be developed through the Hindoo genius, the Greek genius, the German genius. The Semitic language, upon the contrary, started by making a capital fault in regard to the verb. The greatest blunder which this race has made (for it was the most irreparable), was to adopt, in treating the verb, a mechanism so petty the expression of the tenses and moods has always been imperfect and cumbersome.* Even at the present time the Arab has to struggle in vain against the linguistic blunder which his ancestors made ten or fifteen thousand years ago [*emphasis mine*].” I will deal with Ernest Renan more extensively in the next section, but this statement made towards the end of his life exemplifies all of the points raised here.

<sup>27</sup> Matsuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 162.

Thus, nineteenth century Europe was presented with a choice — a choice delineated on historical and linguistic grounds — between its Graeco-Roman (Indo-European/Aryan) and its Hebraic roots. The former was presented as the *Bildung* choice: progressive, creative, and decidedly non-religious. The latter was the option of reversion to an outmoded past, an unreasonable religious perspective, and a cultural conversion to the disparaged other — the Oriental (Islam) and Semitic (Jewish).<sup>28</sup> This choice, according to N. T. Wright, “has now been discredited on historical grounds, though like a not-quite-exorcised ghost it still haunts the libraries and lecture-halls of New Testament scholarship.”<sup>29</sup> The argument over a Greek or a Jewish Paul (and Jesus) and the choice between Greek and Jewish prophecy within the New Testament bear the markers of this past without its explicitly racial overtones.

### **Prophetic Misunderstandings: Renan and the Hellenization of Prophecy**

The connection between the preference for the Hellenic and the concept of prophecy can be witnessed through the thought of Ernest Renan (1823-1892), a philologist who contributes to the quests for both the historical Jesus and Paul. Renan manages to make a non-Jewish Jesus, a very Jewish Paul, *and* identifies prophecy as the core of (as opposed to derivative of) Judaism, an origin for Judaism that is altogether not Jewish.

Until Renan, the historical-critical approach of the Tübingen school, and the work of F. C. Baur (1792-1860) particularly, failed to achieve much influence in Catholic countries and

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<sup>28</sup> Matsuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 149-171, 181-206.

<sup>29</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 16. See also Leander E. Keck, *Christ's First Theologian: The Shape of Paul's Thought* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2015), 15: “Although a few still talk this way, on the whole, today both Jewish and Christian scholars are probing the persistent Jewishness of [Paul's] thought, and some Jewish scholars are reclaiming him as a significant figure in Jewish history even though they disagree with him. The current scene implies that in some important ways both Jews and Christians have misunderstood him.”

academies.<sup>30</sup> Renan was one of the most distinguished scholars of the late nineteenth century, publishing his *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (1855)<sup>31</sup> and his most well-known work, the first volume of his *Histoire des origines du christianisme, Vie de Jésus* (1863).<sup>32</sup> Renan's presentation of Jesus earned him Schweitzer's ire,<sup>33</sup> a justifiable reaction — and one I share even as I question whether Schweitzer himself avoids the same sentimentalism he critiques. But in order to approach Renan sympathetically, we have to acknowledge his attempt to salvage Jesus in the face of academic skepticism and in line with his intellectual values. For our purposes, it is enough to note that this impulse to salvage Jesus “by cultivating universalism — that is, by casting him as the historic proponent of the most attractive humanism available”<sup>34</sup> — reveals Renan's influence over even contemporary approaches to the quest for the historical Jesus.<sup>35</sup>

This impulse to salvage Jesus has often come at the expense of Paul.<sup>36</sup> Renan's third volume of *Histoire des origines du christianisme* is devoted to Paul, and contrary to so many

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<sup>30</sup> Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture: The Apostle and His Critics through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 76.

<sup>31</sup> Ernest Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1855). Available online here: <http://archive.org/details/histoiregnrale03renagoog>. Link verified January 4, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus (Histoire des origines du christianisme, livre premier)*; Paris: Nelson Éditeurs, 1863). Available online here: <https://archive.org/details/viedejesus05renagoog>. Link verified January 4, 2017. Numerous English translations have been made; one readily available translation is Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, (trans. William Hutchinson; London: W. Scott, 1897); available online here: <http://archive.org/details/a605884100renauoft>.

<sup>33</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (NY: MacMillan, 1948), 180-92.

<sup>34</sup> F.J. van Beeck, “The Quest of the Historical Jesus: Origins, Achievements, and the Specter of Diminishing Returns,” in *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation on the Work of John Dominic Crossan* (ed. Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 88; quoted in Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 46, n. 92.

<sup>35</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 46-7: “Indeed it has been argued that Crossan's book places itself firmly in the company of the great line of writers from Schleiermacher through Renan to Schweitzer himself, who Crossan, in short, is to be located well and truly on the map of nineteenth and twentieth-century seekers after Jesus — even if the manner of his pursuing the Quest, and the results he achieves, are in some ways strikingly different from those of his predecessors.”

<sup>36</sup> Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture*, 7. See also Daniel R. Langton, “Paul in Jewish Thought,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 585-587: “Broadly speaking, the Jewish relationship with the apostle to the Gentiles has been, and remains, a bitter one. He was largely ignored until the Enlightenment, with Jewish interest gathering real momentum only in the nineteenth century, in tandem with the growth of Protestant biblical scholarship. Thereafter, Paul was frequently

critics of Christianity, Renan does not hail Paul as the true founder of Christianity, even as he faults him for the ruination of Jesus' genius.<sup>37</sup> Instead, Renan grants Paul the "honor" as the founder of Christian theology,<sup>38</sup> a distinction that bears the markers of the dichotomy between Hellenic and Hebraic culture:

It is no longer the Epistle to the Romans, which is the resumé of Christianity — it is the Sermon on the Mount. True Christianity, which will last forever comes from the gospels — not from the epistles of Paul. The writings of Paul have been a danger and a hidden rock — the causes of the principal defects of Christian theology. Paul is the father of the subtle Augustine, of the unfruitful Thomas Aquinas, of the gloomy Calvinist, of the peevish Jansenist, of the fierce theology which damns and predestines to damnation. Jesus is the father of all those who seek repose for their souls in dreams of the ideal. What makes Christianity live, is the little that we know of the word and person of Jesus. The ideal man, the divine poet, the great artist, alone defy time and revolutions.<sup>39</sup>

It is the betrayal of a non-theological Jesus of "sweetness and light" by the Jewish Paul who entrenches "the ideal man" with a moat of theological and moral (non-scientific) principles that bears all the markers of post-Enlightenment bias.<sup>40</sup>

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lambasted as the real founder of Gentile Christianity, under whose influence the lachrymose history of the Jews unfolded. In contrast to the figure of Jesus, who has, in the main, been reclaimed as a good Jew of one sort or another, Paul remains an object of hostility and suspicion. While there have been a number of scholarly exceptions to this rule, one should not expect him, whose likening the Law to 'sin' and 'death' still echo down the centuries, to enjoy a more general Jewish reclamation any time soon" (587). See also, Daniel R. Langton, "Jewish Literary Treatments of the Apostle Paul: The Novels of Sholem Asch and Samuel Sandmel," *Modern Judaism* 27.3 (Oct. 2007): 284-309; Langton's analysis of Sandmel is particularly apropos as his unpublished novel, *The Apostle Paul*, apparently stresses "the continuity of Paul's message with those of previous 'prophets' who had similarly criticized those who prioritized external activities (e.g. ritual and written codes) over internal ones (e.g. communion with God)" (291-2). This sympathetic view intriguingly also takes up themes of German Protestant scholarship where prophet and priest are so strongly contrasted; see Jonathan Klawans, *Purity Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 75-100.

<sup>37</sup> See Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 271-276. The high praise of Renan for Jesus sounds very much like the eulogy for a hero of the French revolution. Jesus is the paragon of republican virtues. That Jesus is the revolutionary betrayed by the reactionary Paul ought to make us wonder how much French politics Renan wrote back into the first century.

<sup>38</sup> This, as we might suspect, is not praise from one who considers "all the professions of faith [to be] disguises/distortions (*travestissements*) of the idea of Jesus." in Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 276, translation mine; original: "Toutes les professions de foi sont des travestissements de l'idée de Jésus."

<sup>39</sup> Ernest Renan, *Saint Paul* (trans. Ingersoll Lockwood, New York: G. W. Carleton, 1869), 330; quotation taken from Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> A bias very similar to the "spiritual" Jesus and the "religious" Paul in vogue today; see Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture*, 143-156.

Renan can admit, on the one hand, that “Jesus never left the Jewish circle by his action,”<sup>41</sup> but the religion of Jesus was anything but Jewish. Patrick Gray sums up Renan’s movement in this way: “Christianity will fulfill its potential in returning to Jesus, but not by returning to Judaism.”<sup>42</sup> Renan actually seems to concede initially a Jewishness to Jesus, but what makes Jesus so remarkable is actually his ability to transcend the tribalism of Judaism; Jesus’ departure marked a rupture with the Jewish *esprit*.<sup>43</sup> Jesus’ rupture with the Jewish spirit—here we cannot help but hear the genealogical assumptions of the Hebraic *Volk*—is manifested as a universalized character, which implicitly circumscribes the Jewish spirit with a national and ethnic understanding. Renan writes, “In this way we can comprehend how, by an exceptional destiny, pure Christianity presents itself again after eighteen centuries with *the character of a universal and eternal religion*. It is because the religion of Jesus is, in some respects the definitive religion . . . . After him, all that’s left is to develop and fertilize.”<sup>44</sup> To the point that we have been making, Renan only sees a return of Christianity in his own day; the universalism of

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<sup>41</sup> Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 271 (my translation); original: “Jésus, on le voit, ne sortit jamais par son action du cercle juif.” This is the working out of what Renan considers his historical obligation; see pg 10: “Pour être historien, j’avais dû chercher à peindre un Christ qui eût les traits, la couleur, la physionomie de sa race” [In order to be an historian, I was forced to attempt to paint a Christ who had the traits, color, and physiognomy of his race.] We should not miss Renan’s assumption that what constitutes Judaism is the physical characteristics of their race not a narrative of a narrative of covenant or even a people with a cultural identity.

<sup>42</sup> Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture*, 78. It is a rough proximation of what Renan explicitly states; see note 40.

<sup>43</sup> Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 280: “Sans doute Jésus sort du judaïsme.” This stark reversal over so few pages cries out for a response and makes it obvious that Renan is working on two levels: the historical and the ideal. For the reversal see 280-1: “Loin que Jésus soit le continuateur du judaïsme, il représente la rupture avec l’esprit juif. En supposant que sa pensée à cet égard puisse prêter à quelque équivoque, la direction générale du christianisme après lui n’en permet pas. L’arche générale du christianisme a été de s’éloigner de plus en plus du judaïsme. Son perfectionnement consistera à revenir à Jésus, mais non certes à revenir au judaïsme. La grande originalité du fondateur reste donc entière; sa gloire n’admet aucun légitime partageant.” [Far from being the continuator of Judaism, Jesus represents the break with the Jewish spirit. Assuming that his thoughts on this subject may lend some ambiguity, the general direction of Christianity after him does not permit it. The general theme of Christianity was to move away from Judaism more and more. His perfection will consist in returning to Jesus, but certainly not to return to Judaism. The great originality of the founder therefore remains entire; His glory does not admit any legitimate sharing.]

<sup>44</sup> Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 273, 275 (translation and *emphasis* mine); original: “On comprend de la sorte comment, par un destinée exceptionnelle, le christianisme pur se présente encoure, au bout de dix-huit siècles, avec le caractère d’une religion universelle et éternelle. C’est que la religion de Jésus est bien à quelques égards la religion définitive . . . . Après lui, il n’y a plus qu’a développer et a féconder.”

Enlightenment principles has offered a means to find Jesus without the doctrinal or ecclesial baggage that has attended him over the centuries,<sup>45</sup> rescuing Greek ideals from Semitic culture.

Renan's "rescue operation"<sup>46</sup> was nothing short of an attempt to realign Christianity with the acceptable virtues of Greek culture; for a Hebraicist, Renan was an enamored Hellenophile. If progress for Renan consists "in constantly developing what Greece has conceived, in executing the designs which she has, so to speak traced out for us,"<sup>47</sup> and if Jesus is the epitome of progress, then it only stands to reason that Judaism's function, her "ardent genius," was to supply an eternal religion to Greece: "Greece had only one thing wanting ... her religions were merely elegant municipal playthings; the idea of a universal religion never occurred to her. The ardent genius of a small tribe established in an outlandish corner of Syria seemed created to supply this void in the Hellenic intellect."<sup>48</sup> But Renan was all too aware of the Jewish provenance of Jesus to suggest that Christianity had sprung entirely out of the intellectual ocean of the late Hellenic world, a mistake not unknown to modern historical-critical studies of early Christianity.<sup>49</sup> Masuzawa argues forcefully that

this transethnic, universalistic element [within Judaism] was identified as the prophetic tradition, the most central and essential spirit of the Hebrew Bible. A ready implication here was an idea as bold as it was astonishing, namely, the notion that there was at the very core of Judaism something not really Jewish .... Renan's scientific interpretation of the biblical narrative thus relocated the generative moment of Hebrew history ... what was nonfictional and nonmythical, and therefore permanent and true in the ancient Israelite tradition, was the

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<sup>45</sup> Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 273, 275 (translation and *emphasis mine*); original: "On comprend de la sorte comment, par un destinée exceptionnelle, le christianisme pur se présente encoure, au bout de dix-huit siècles, avec le caractère d'une religion universelle et éternelle. C'est que la religion de Jésus est bien à quelques égards la religion définitive ... Après lui, il n'y a plus qu'a développer et a féconder."

<sup>46</sup> Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (trans. Arthur Goldhammer; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 63-79.

<sup>47</sup> Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, (5 vol.; 1887-1893) I:vii; quoted in Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 174.

<sup>48</sup> Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, I:vii; quoted in Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 174.

<sup>49</sup> See for example John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998).

resounding voice of the prophetic exhortation tirelessly admonishing the people to repair themselves to the blessed way of justice and righteousness.<sup>50</sup>

We should not miss the invective Masuzawa finds in Renan's turn to the prophetic tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures. That the prophetic critique of Israel is joined with the racial and linguistic critique of Hebraic culture is as natural as it is insidious. What is more important for our purposes is the observation that prophecy is valued as something "permanent and true," and therefore not Hebraic but Hellenic. The role of Israel's prophets was to reveal to the Greek world that what was sought in their philosophy *also* pertained to religion; this transposition of Israel's prophets *outside* of Judaism enabled prophetic critique to become a model of Israel's failure to live up to Greek ideals.

Such a narrative must be countered, whether the narrative persists in academic responses to Paul or in appropriations of religious language for use in redemptive social policy. The effect of such narrative distortions is always the same: the excising of the relational Jewish narrative from the prophetic task and to place it at the service of some other (often rational) ideal.<sup>51</sup>

Narratives are not changed by different "facts;" they are changed by different narratives. Doing

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<sup>50</sup> Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 191-2. She returns again to this noting that "it was in this singularly alien prophetic monotheism of the Hebrews that Gentile theologians customarily sought, and found, the essential beginning of their own 'unique and universal' religion" (299). The irony is that Judaism was the last of the "great religions" to be included as a "world religion." Judaism gained this distinction by "identifying itself exclusively as the ancient prophetic faith of the Hebrews ... In effect, Judaism shed its long-standing ethnic-nationalist label and claimed its universal essence just as it was co-opted into a dominant universalist scheme of Christianity, particularly Protestant Christianity, which appropriated the austere Hebraism of the prophetic tradition for itself, in part against Catholicism, but also against various forms of secularism then on the rise" (301).

<sup>51</sup> See Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), xxiii: "The prophets understood the possibility of change as linked to the emotional extremities of life. They understood the strange incongruence between public conviction and personal yearning. Most of all, they understood the distinctive power of language, the capacity to speak in ways that evoke newness 'fresh from the word.' It is argued here that a prophetic understanding of reality is based in the notion that all social reality does not spring fresh from the word. It is the aim of every totalitarian effort to stop the language of newness, and we are now learning that where such language stops we find our humanness diminished." He argues that such newness is oriented toward a community of alternative consciousness on pg. 3: "*The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us. Thus I suggest that prophetic ministry has to do not primarily with addressing specific public crises but with addressing, in season and out of season, the dominant crisis that is enduring and resilient, of having our alternative vocation coopted and domesticated [emphasis original].*"

history differently requires the fresh perspective born of a renewed encounter with Paul on his own terms and within his own narrative. Richard Hays has it right:

If indeed we must reckon with ‘death fruit’ [a reference to George Steiner’s characterization of the results of Paul’s hatred of the Jews] of the Christian tradition in our century, that fruit grows from soil made fertile by *Christian theology’s perverse incomprehension of Paul’s vision for eschatological reconciliation, a vision that seeks—in Romans above all—to embrace Jews and Gentiles alike* within the scope of God’s unfathomable mercy. If we are to arrive at a properly nuanced estimate of Paul’s theological stance toward his own people and their sacred texts, we must engage him on his own terms, by following his readings of the texts in which he heard the word of God.<sup>52</sup>

What we need is a different narrative appropriation of both prophecy and Paul.

## RECENT APPROACHES TO PAUL AS PROPHET

Before turning to the contours and dimensions of the prophetic tradition, it is necessary to review a second component of my approach to Paul’s prophetic self-understanding. While scholarship on Paul’s prophetic self-understanding remains sporadic and sparse compared to other topics in Pauline studies,<sup>53</sup> distinct trends can be discerned in the scholarly development of this thesis.<sup>54</sup> German scholars began suggesting in the 1930s that Paul had modelled himself on

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<sup>52</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), x [*emphasis mine*].

<sup>53</sup> Tobias Nicklas, “Paulus – der Apostel als Prophet,” Joseph Verheyden, Korinna Zamfir & Tobias Nicklas, eds., *Prophets and Prophecy in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (WUNT II/286; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 77–104 (78 n. 5): “Verglichen mit anderen Themen um Paulus ist dieses tatsächlich kaum berücksichtigt worden;” quoted in Lutz Doering, “The Commissioning of Paul: Light from the Prophet Jeremiah on the Self-Understanding of the Apostle?” in *Jeremiah’s Scriptures: Production, Reception, Interaction, and Transformation* (ed. H. Najman and K. Schmid; JSJSup 173; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2017): 544-565; available on academia.edu. My citations to Doering will refer to his publically available manuscript, 1-24.

<sup>54</sup> See Doering, “The Commissioning of Paul,” 1-3. Most of the interest in the twentieth century has been in German circles. Doering is to my knowledge the only author to trace the scholarship along its trend lines.

Jeremiah.<sup>55</sup> Scholarship, again largely German, from the 1960's forward suggested Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah in particular, as his model. Each of these positions has merit, a dual modeling based on Jeremiah *and* Isaiah emerged as a result.<sup>56</sup> One particularly prescient study by Jacob Myers and Edwin Freed<sup>57</sup> analyzed Paul's letters and the Acts of the Apostles to compare Paul to the prophets generally on the basis of the "parallel and proximate parallel characteristics in the experience of both."<sup>58</sup> They draw two notable conclusions: 1) that "these similarities between Paul and the Prophets of the Old testament are suggestive ... that Paul does evidence prophetic qualities," and 2) that "there may be, in the final analysis, not very much difference between Old Testament and New Testament apostle."<sup>59</sup> Both of these conclusions have a garnered considerable support in more recent studies.

The groundbreaking work of E.P. Sanders and the subsequent emergence of the "New Perspective"/ "Fresh Perspective" have refocused much of contemporary scholarship on restoring Paul to his first-century Jewish milieu. The success of this project has shifted the terms

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<sup>55</sup> See Doering, "The Commissioning of Paul," 1, n. 3. See also Scott J. Hafemann, "Paul's 'Jeremiah' Ministry in Reverse and the Reality of the New Covenant," in *Remapping Mission Discourse* (Festschrift George Kuruvila Chananikammannil; ed. Simon Samuel and P.V. Joseph; Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 72-83.

<sup>56</sup> See Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul — One of the Prophets?*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991). 6, who cites H. Windisch, *Paulus und Christus: Ein biblisch-religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (UND 24; Leipzig, 1935), particularly chapter 4, pgs 77-85, "Paulus der Prophet;" also cited is J. Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte* (Acta Jutlandica, Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet XXVI, 1; Teologisk Serie 6; Aarhus: København, 1954). See also Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM, 1997), 95. There is also a suggestion that Jonah could also be a model. See Albert C. Sundberg, Jr. published "Paul: A Christian Jonah" in *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Sanders* (ed. Dennis E. Groh and Robert Jewett; Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 45-58, in which he suggested that "it may be too strong to suggest a close parallel between Paul's change from preacher to Diaspora Jews to preacher to the Gentiles and Jonah, God's grossly reluctant prophet to Nineveh. But it does afford a basis for asking, somewhat whimsically: Paul: A Christian Jonah?" (58). The question is whimsical; I cannot find even a hint of an echo between the LXX translation of Jonah and Paul's letters. The closest connection of the texts would be the location of Tarshish in Spain, but it is far more likely that Paul had Is 66:18-20 in mind when he set out his missionary plans.

<sup>57</sup> Jacob M. Myers and Edwin D. Freed, "Is Paul also among the Prophets?" *Interpretation* 20 (1966): 40-53.

<sup>58</sup> Myers and Freed, "Is Paul also among the Prophets?" 40. These characteristics are: call, intimate council, extension of the personality of Christ/YHVH, and attitude toward religious authorities.

<sup>59</sup> Myers and Freed, "Is Paul also among the Prophets?" 53.

of the debates well away from the problematic dichotomy outlined in the previous section.<sup>60</sup> Krister Stendahl certainly deserves considerable credit for his participation in this correction; importantly, as he moves to correct the historical problem of Paul’s “conversion,” he turns to the prophetic commission as an alternative category.<sup>61</sup> As the New Perspective has steadily gained ground, so has the gradual recognition of the prophetic quality of Paul’s self-understanding and self-presentation. Richard Hays stands at the front of the line with his statement: “To read Paul against this background of ‘inner-biblical exegesis’ is to understand his place in the stream of tradition in a new way. He saw himself as a prophetic figure, carrying forward the proclamation of God’s word as Israel’s prophets and sages had always done, in a way that reactivated past revelation under new conditions.”<sup>62</sup> Karl Olav Sandnes was the first to produce a full length study of the subject.<sup>63</sup> Sandnes argues that Paul “made some use of the traditions and vocabulary of the prophets while communicating his apostolic authority to his communities,”<sup>64</sup> particularly in Paul’s description of his call in Gal 1:15-16, but also on the basis of other texts (Rom 1:1-5; 10:14-18; 11:25-36; 1 Cor 2:6-16; 9:15-18; 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 2:19-3:7; and 1 Thess 2:3-8).

Sandnes’s suggestion—that

[t]he potential impact of the Old Testament prophetic tradition on the shape of Paul’s self-presentation and rhetoric, however, need not be limited strictly to the material that constitutes canonical 2 Corinthians ... there remains room to extend the basic hypothesis that Paul stands among the prophets through the development of systematic explanations of the influence of the prophetic nature of Paul’s

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<sup>60</sup> Keck, *Christ’s First Theologian*, 15: “Although a few still talk this way, on the whole, today both Jewish and Christian scholars are probing the persistent Jewishness of [Paul’s] thought, and some Jewish scholars are reclaiming him as a significant figure in Jewish history even though they disagree with him. The current scene implies that in some important ways both Jews and Christians have misunderstood him.

<sup>61</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7-23.

<sup>62</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 14, citing Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, 11-35, and Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 7-23.

<sup>63</sup> See Sandnes, *Paul — One of the Prophets?*. This monograph is his “slightly amended” doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Oslo in 1988. Hays does not cite Sandnes, and I see no reason to think that he had access to Sandnes’s dissertation, making the Hays’s assessment and Sandnes’s study independent confirmations.

<sup>64</sup> Sandnes, *Paul — One of the Prophets?*, 17.

apostolic persona and language upon material at other points of the Pauline corpus<sup>65</sup>

—is a generative component for this study. Jeffery Aernie has also taken up Sandnes’s gauntlet, arguing for Paul’s prophetic self-understanding in Second Corinthians as evidenced in the presentation of his apostolic identity and through an analysis of his rhetoric.<sup>66</sup>

Two of the most notable voices in New Perspective research, James Dunn and N. T. Wright, have dipped their toes in the prophetic characterization. Dunn, for example, can state that “prophecy was the most valuable of all the *charisms* for Paul,”<sup>67</sup> but seems to distinguish prophecy and apostleship primarily on the grounds of authority. Where the charism of prophecy is subject to the community, apostleship is “always subordinate to the gospel . . . it mirrored the character of its message as the proclamation of the crucified one.”<sup>68</sup> Dunn is not actually arguing for a split between prophecy and apostleship, but neither does he make any connection between them. If we think of prophecy and apostleship as two separate *charisms*, we will be more likely to force distinctions where there may not be any. The danger of restricting discussions of prophecy in Paul’s writings solely to the exuberance of the prophetic *charism* is that we lose sight of the narrative *context* of Paul’s reference to “the Prophet(s)” and the prophetic vocation within Israel’s national narrative; I will highlight these features in chapters two and three.

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<sup>65</sup> Sandnes, *Paul — One of the Prophets?*, 250.

<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey W. Aernie, *Is Paul also among the Prophets: An examination of the Relationship between Paul and the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition in 2 Corinthians* (LNTS, 467; London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 556 (*emphasis mine*). Prophecy is most valuable *because of its community building capacity*; this is an important observation and connection to the most important aspect of Paul’s “theology.” It should also be noted that addressing “prophecy” under the category of charisms is a far narrower net, and is a topic that I will not deal with in this study. See also Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 132-5; Witherington provides a short section entitled “Paul the Eschatological Prophet,” where he focuses on Paul’s prophetic utterances.

<sup>68</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 580.

A clearer set of examples can be found in the works of Wright. He can speak of Paul's "theological self-understanding" through his narrative use of the Second Servant Song in Isaiah as "all part of the covenant ministry of the servant, and of the apostle,"<sup>69</sup> making at best an implicit connection between apostle and prophet. Wright later makes a more direct statement about Paul's prophetic self-understanding: "Paul clearly saw himself not only as a 'herald' but also as a 'prophet'; but the ancient prophetic agenda had been transposed into the startling new key required by the gospel."<sup>70</sup> It is intriguing that Wright needs to use inverted commas with reference to Paul's prophetic self-perception; this signal could be taken as a wink to J. Ross Wagner<sup>71</sup> or a slight distancing from the full application of the title. Whatever Wright's meaning, his recognition of the "transposition" of prophecy onto the gospel is a key insight that I will use frequently in my reading of Romans.

Roger Stronstad has also argued that Paul "understood himself to be a prophet,"<sup>72</sup> a vocational understanding that overlapped with other charisms. Stronstad is right, Paul's understanding of "apostle" is more than "prophet"—but not less.

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<sup>69</sup> N.T. Wright, "Israel's Scriptures in Paul's Narrative Theology," reprinted in *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul 1978-2013* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 552. Originally published in *Theology*, 115.5 (27 July 2012), 323-329.

<sup>70</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1507.

<sup>71</sup> J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul 'In Concert' in the Letter to the Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Roger Stronstad, "The Rebirth of Prophecy: Trajectories from Moses to Jesus and His Followers," *JBPR*, 5 (2013): 24. Specifically referencing Romans 15:8, he asserts "that *all* of Paul's witness about Jesus was prophetic ... Of course, he was more than a prophet. He was, variously and overlapping, a prophet who was an apostle, an evangelist, and a pastor and a teacher (Eph 4:11)" (25). I agree with Stronstad's conclusions and commend his observation that the churches are also "prophetic communities" (25) for Paul. But Stronstad's sweeping argument often overlooks the complexities of the material he treats; we should take the boldness of Stronstad's assertions as an invitation to dig deeper and build the argument in a more disciplined way.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND DISTINCTIONS

Before beginning to present my case for Paul's prophetic self-understanding, we have to grapple with the problems inherent to making such a claim and theorizing a means to support it. Constructing *a* definition of "prophecy" is mired in problems.<sup>73</sup> "Prophecy" is a named phenomenon in both the New and the Old Testaments, *and* throughout the Ancient Near East and Graeco-Roman worlds.<sup>74</sup> None of these "prophetic traditions," to the extent that we can delineate them clearly, are static; prophetic traditions are significantly variegated among themselves (e.g., 1 Sam 9:9). In order to assert that Paul presents himself as having a prophetic mission, it is necessary to specify which "prophecy" and what kind of "prophet." The fluidity of these terms and the boundary-crossing nature of Paul's life and ministry require a short examination of the available perspectives.

### **A Comprehensive Model: David Aune**

David Aune has provided a thorough study of prophetic phenomena throughout the ancient Mediterranean world in his effort "to understand prophets and prophecy as historical phenomena in the history of early Christianity."<sup>75</sup> He also notes that "the major problem in achieving this objective is the formulation of objective criteria whereby such fragments of prophetic speech may be identified."<sup>76</sup> Aune's treatment of this subject is comprehensive and

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<sup>73</sup> See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 1-39 for a thorough treatment of the problems and history.

<sup>74</sup> Canonical texts like Jer 27:1-15 will even reference the prophets of other nations. Like divinities — where it can be said that there might not be any agreement on *a* god, we can at least be certain that there were no atheists — prophetic phenomena were well known, even if there wasn't necessarily overlap in understanding of what it was.

<sup>75</sup> David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 15.

<sup>76</sup> Aune, *Prophecy*, 247.

scholarly, and he also concludes that Paul presented himself as a prophet.<sup>77</sup> I wish, however, to make two distinctions between Aune's approach and my own.

First, he has privileged oracular sayings and speeches. This sets up a difficulty when analyzing early Christian texts, as these lack the formulaic literary structures of both the Old Testament and Graeco-Roman oracular texts.<sup>78</sup> If the New Testament contains prophetic material, it presumably must be identified in some way,<sup>79</sup> and Aune suggests the following three criteria: (1) oral material, whether a saying or a speech, attributed to a supernatural being; (2) predictions about the future that the prophet would have no natural means to know; and (3) introductory formulae.<sup>80</sup> The presupposition and criteria are clear, testable, and perhaps necessary for textual analysis, but they implicitly presume a very narrow understanding of prophecy. That prophets speak for the deity is not disputed; indeed, it is an essential component of a prophet's experience and mission. But when we reduce prophecy so sharply, the wider context of prophetic praxis and narrative can be lost or overlooked. The recognition that the prophet speaks for the divine and must, therefore, make such a relationship known is helpful as a criterion for the identification of prophetic speech, but it hobbles the concept of prophecy by giving it only one leg to walk on.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Aune, *Prophecy*, 249: "All of this evidence combines to suggest that Paul was a prophet who experienced many revelatory phenomena, some of which he communicated to others."

<sup>78</sup> See Ulrich Luz, "Stages of Early Christian Prophetism," in *Prophets and Prophecy in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (ed. J. Verheyden, K. Zamfir, and T. Nicklas; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010): 57-75, esp. 56-61; and Christopher Rowland, "Prophecy in the New Testament," in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 418; Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 18-21.

<sup>79</sup> Aune, *Prophecy*, 248: this as a "presupposition," namely that "prophetic speech tends to retain its identity in the various literary contexts in which it is incorporated. Prophetic speech, after all, can only function as such when it is recognizable."

<sup>80</sup> Aune, *Prophecy*, 247-8.

<sup>81</sup> This approach shares some similarity with the limitations of form criticism, where the differentiation of forms has the effect of breaking up the text at the expense of the narrative. Form criticism and the recognition of prophecy as foundationally oracular are indispensable to the identification of prophetic discourse; nevertheless, prophetic praxis and the wider interplay of narrative cannot be overlooked, even if it is less clearly demarcated and harder to identify. See Richard J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second-Isaiah* (New York: Paulist,

Second, Aune approaches the “experience” of prophetic phenomena as inspired speech. His interest is in the identification of fragments of prophetic speech, and this criterion serves his purpose well. He can identify a plethora of texts in which Paul appears to make direct claims to revelatory phenomena<sup>82</sup> — a helpful and important advance. Such findings not only ground Paul’s language, and with it its content and form, in inspired proclamation, but also helps to tie this phenomenon directly to the understanding of prophecy in the Second Temple period. But I am more interested in what it “means” for Paul to display signs of prophetic speech. The utility of characterizing Paul’s self-presentation as “prophetic” lies in the room we leave for the questions “why” and “to what end.” In short, if prophecy is to be applied for theological appropriation, it will require a framework that expands beyond an historical enclosure.<sup>83</sup>

Without losing the benefits of Aune’s analysis and keeping with the developments made by New Perspective scholars, I will focus on the prophets and prophecy of the Old Testament as the most likely source of the form, content, and narrative of Paul’s prophetic self-presentation; Paul’s prophetic praxis derives from his appropriation of the biblical prophets for his self-

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1984), 34: “The most damaging result of the overdominance of form criticism on Second Isaiah is the determination of the length of units by considerations from genre rather than from the logic of the particular piece. The result has been the atomization of the chapters into small units on the assumption that the poem’s length is coextensive with the form that is used. The poet is thus stripped of his ability to write long and complex orations. The message is drained of subtlety and persuasive force.” This critique can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Aune’s analysis of Paul. But just as Clifford makes extensive use of form criticism while acknowledging its limitations, so too, we should note the progress that Aune’s scholarship offers, while noting the limitation it applies to the interpretation of Paul’s prophetic vision.

<sup>82</sup> Aune, *Prophecy*, 248-261: **Rom 11:25-26**; 1 Cor 2:13; 7:10, 40; 9:14; **12:3**; 14:6, 18, **37-38**; **15:51-52**; **2 Cor 12:9**; 13:3; Gal 2:2; **5:21**; 1 Thess 1:9; 2:3; **3:4**; **4:2-6, 15-17**; and **2 Thess 3:6, 10, 12**. **Bolded** verses are highlighted as those that Aune directly lists “with varying degrees of confidence, we suggest ... contain oracular sayings” (261).

<sup>83</sup> Aune distinguishes himself on these grounds, charging that “since the First World War, NT scholars have been profoundly influenced by the theological tendency subsequently labeled Neoorthodoxy ... While it is not my intention to criticize or reject the theological approach to the Bible as either inappropriate or illegitimate, I do wish to emphasize that different methodologies can be successfully employed in studying the biblical text for different interpretive and critical goals ... To that end the literary heritage of early Christianity will be examined for evidence pertinent to the reconstruction of the history and character of Christian prophecy” in *Prophecy*, 15. Aune is correct; different methodologies serve different ends. My critique of the historical approach exclusively asks what I consider to be the necessary follow-up: what are the ends of historical study and does leaving the theological issue out actually color the history that is constructed.

understanding within the “new thing” of the eschatological implications of the Christ event. The canonical prophets, a group of texts with an interplay of forms and narratives that latently or patently take place between them, have the most influence on Paul. This is a broader approach that necessarily points beyond the texts and allows for a better integration of a “phenomenological” approach to revelation and “the role of language as a medium in prophecy and prayer” that show up in early Jewish literature.<sup>84</sup> This is not the place to argue for such understandings, but the way I have understood prophecy and my reading of Romans can assist phenomenological hermeneutics and make important theological connections between reading and prayer.

### **Problematizing Biblical Prophecy**

While selecting the canonical prophets pares down the possible textual material, we cannot simply assume that the Old and New Testament texts are referring to the same phenomenon. Such methodological problems need not paralyze comparison and research, and, before we look at the problems, it is worth noting the benefit of finding the means to make such comparison possible. Working within biblical prophecy helps us to read the New Testament in a less anachronistic way. New Testament writers understood themselves as operating within a broader tradition, as Ulrich Luz notes:

Using the term *προφήτης* is an act of self-interpretation of early Christianity: the earliest Christians saw their own, variegated experiences of divine presence, auditions, visions, inspired speaking, etc. in the light of the biblical tradition as *prophetic* experience, i.e. as an empowered, public speaking under the mandate of

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<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Ben-Dov, “Language, Prayer and Prophecy: 1 Enoch, the Dead Sea Scrolls and 1 Corinthians,” in *Ancient Jewish Prayers and Emotions: Emotions Associated with Jewish Prayer in and around the Second Temple Period* (ed. S. C. Reif and R. Egger-Wenzel; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 241-255. Ben-Dov looks at Isaiah 6 and 28, 1 Enoch 14:1-3 and 91:1; 1QH<sup>a</sup> column IX, and 1 Cor 14:2-3, 18 for support. I am not suggesting that Ben-Dov is doing what I am attempting, but the recognition that there is a relationship between prayer and prophecy is an important foundation.

God. They understood themselves ‘biblically’, in continuity with or as revival of the biblical prophets.<sup>85</sup>

More specifically related to Paul, Walter Moberly has noted that “when Paul speaks of his ministry as an apostle, he is not in principle, *mutatis mutandis*, speaking of anything different from the Old Testament conception of a Prophet.”<sup>86</sup> Such recognition from such an eminent Old Testament scholar should encourage New Testament scholars. Yet, we ought to wonder how much is hidden under those “necessary changes having been made.”

Taking biblical prophecy as a category, however, still presents us with problems of categorization. Spanning a 250-year period and 15 or 16 writers,<sup>87</sup> the writing prophets are a diverse group—and this is already a limit vis-à-vis the far broader category of non-writing prophets.<sup>88</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp notes that the term prophecy in popular diction

can refer to prediction, emotional preaching, social activism, the ability to enlighten and communicate insight, the founding of a new religion (Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad are all regarded as prophets), or the leadership of a cult group ... [and] none of these connotations corresponds exactly to the social reality of prophecy in ancient Israel.<sup>89</sup>

Reducing prophecy to a singularly-referential definition does not work, but the complexity of grouping such diversity encounters both the post-modern suspicion of constructing meta-

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<sup>85</sup> Ulrich Luz, “Stages of Early Christian Prophetism,” 60.

<sup>86</sup> R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>87</sup> This depends on how one categorizes Daniel. Re-categorizing Daniel as an apocalyptic work only entangles us in another problem, namely, that the distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic is far from precise. See David Hellholm, “The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John” in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting* (Semeia, 36; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 13-64; Lester L. Grabbe, “Poets, Scribes, or Preachers? The Reality of Prophecy in the Second Temple Period” in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 193-7, esp. notes 4, 5, 6, and 7 on ppg. 195-6.

<sup>88</sup> See Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 9: “According to a rabbinic dictum (*b. Meg.* 14a) there were forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses in Israel, a conclusion no doubt based on a head count over the entire Hebrew Bible.” I will largely limit my analysis to Paul and the writing prophets. This is not intended to exclude the former prophets, however. In a study of this length, the inclusion of the former prophets would require additional methodological complexity due to the difference of textual and narrative framing. This is a regrettable but necessary choice; I do not wish to further reinforce the enclosure of texts within this Christian categorization of genre

<sup>89</sup> Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 27.

narratives<sup>90</sup> and the suspicion of direct appeals to divine revelation within academic biblical scholarship.<sup>91</sup> I don't find these concerns compelling enough to warrant silence.<sup>92</sup> Contemporary discomfort is not a reason to avoid engaging ancient texts on their own terms. At the same time, dismissing those concerns cannot be a license to compare in whatever way seems most convenient.

A greater problem for determining “biblical” prophecy is the differences between the phenomenon within the two canons. Much work is required and is made possible when we can see beyond the problem.<sup>93</sup> First, it is unclear whether prophecy was perceived to have persisted

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<sup>90</sup> See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), xxiv, where his primary demarcation for “post-modern” is “incredulity toward narratives.” As Lyotard correctly notes, the incredulity of metanarrative legitimates Enlightenment assumptions of narrative, what Horkheimer and Adorno had termed our “disenchantment” with the world. See also Lyotard, xxiv, 4-8; Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1. But I contend that what Lyotard has qualified as post-modern is in fact an extension, albeit an extreme one, of the modernist project. See my note 95.

<sup>91</sup> See William Abraham, “The Offense of Divine Revelation” in *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 251-64, esp. p. 254: “If truth be told, the contemporary academy does not find the appeal to divine revelation at all attractive. Outside theology, and often within theology itself, the appeal to revelation is simply not permissible.”

<sup>92</sup> These critiques are related and can be dealt with together. First, the prioritization of a reader who is in command of the whole of historical facts implicitly adopts a narrative, namely the “modernistic logic of overcoming;” Gianni Vattimo, *End of Modernity*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 25. As a result “the historian who knows that all epochs and all historical phenomena are equally justified before God approximates that image. Thus, the historian’s consciousness represents the perfect culmination of human self-consciousness. The more he is able to recognize the unique, indestructible value of every phenomenon — that is, to think historically — the more his thought is God-like;” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (rev. and trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 214-15. That such epistemological aspirations have been unachievable should come as no surprise, as documented extensively by Hyden White, *Metahistory The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), ix, 7-9, 13, 30-31, 426-31. Second, the seeming impossibility of historical reconstruction has left us with the sense that history is “the attempted imposition of a meaningful form onto a meaningless past;” Keith Jenkins, *On “What is History?” From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995), 137 quoted in B. H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 88, n. 32. While subtly legitimizing the narrative objectivism of historicism, hypermodern thinkers have elevated humanity to a new place as sole authors of history (the constructors of metanarratives) and subsequently doubted the accuracy of such narratives on the grounds that the intentions of the human author are impure. See McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 80: “the theory of historicism presupposes a metaphysics of the rational subject ... [and therefore] the crisis of historicism is actually a crisis of the metaphysics of the rational subject.”

<sup>93</sup> See Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 14-15: “No major scholar, the best of my knowledge, has attempted to engage this question [or authenticity] in relation to Old and New Testaments together, never mind in relation to practices of critical discernment in classic Christian theology and spirituality ... To be sure, those whose primary focus is the Old Testament regularly have cross-references, notes and excursus that refer to the New Testament; and

as a phenomenon in the Second Temple period.<sup>94</sup> This would not be a barrier for early Christians to focus on prophecy as a key referent for the Messianic Age; texts like Joel 3:1 (cf. Acts 2:17-21) reflected a promise for a renewed prevalence of prophecy that early Christians believed was being fulfilled.<sup>95</sup> Second, what “counts” for prophecy is a problematic question. Whether prophecy had ceased and resumed, or whether it continued along some developing continuum, it is not clear that the experiences and descriptions of prophecy in the New Testament constitute a similar enough grouping to compare what is presented under the same name in the Old Testament. If we turn to Second Temple Jewish and early Christian literature, “what counts” becomes more complicated as it involves the question of “to whom.” The religious diversity within Second Temple Judaism(s) requires a further specification of *which Judaism* we should turn to. These historical problems make it difficult to draw any widely applicable conclusions.

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vice versa. But in no work of which I am aware is comparable analytic attention given to both testaments. The notion that it might be fruitful to compare Jeremiah’s criteria for prophetic discernment with Paul’s criteria for apostolic discernment, indeed that they might be differing facets of one and the same issue, seems not to have been seriously entertained.” While Moberly is speaking of a far more specific topic of authentic discernment of prophecy and not the phenomenon (or the set of phenomena) itself; that such an elementary criterion of comparison has been left without serious reflection is indicative of the problem generally.

<sup>94</sup> Benjamin Sommer, “Did Prophecy Cease?: Evaluating a Reevaluation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 31-47. Studies on Josephus’s own self-understanding have called this general understanding into question. See Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7-79; and Lester L. Grabbe, “Thus Spake the Prophet Josephus ... The Jewish Historian on Prophets and Prophecy” in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 210-239. See also John R. Levison, “Philo’s Personal Experience and the Persistence of Prophecy” also in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, 194-209. See also Axel Knauf, “Kings Among the Prophets” in *The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; London: Equinox, 2009), 131-149, where he argues for the book of Kings as a theological introduction to the Later Prophets. He argues that “prophecy is a thing of the past, everything that was announced has been fulfilled. The task of the prophets was to teach Torah during the temporary absence of the Book; now, their books provide an opportunity for further discussion and interpretation of Torah by the circles that create books. The biblical prophet was not a proto-romantic inspired, religious genius as conceived in the nineteenth century; neither is he a proto-Protestant preacher of social unrest as conceived in the twentieth century. He is a literary and theological construct of the Persian period: the medium for the production of a series of divinely authorized books, in the case of Moses, and the authorities for the production of a second series of semi-authoritative books, in the case of the prophets” (144-5). His conclusions are sweeping and are largely directed against the Christian division of Kings and the subsequent failure to see the relationship between Kings and the prophets. Nevertheless, his characterization of prophecy as complete and solely oriented toward the production of texts gives us a modern example of the cessation of prophecy argument.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Justin Martyr, *Dial.*, 39.5; 51; 52.4; 81.2; 87.2-88.2.

If we look beyond these objections, we have a new and opposite problem. When we decide that the comparison of prophecy between the Testaments can be made, we have far too much data to reasonably work with. Christopher Rowland, for example, can state that “the New Testament is about prophecy from beginning to end;”<sup>96</sup> he achieves this characterization even as he notes conflicting understandings of what prophecy is within the New Testament. If we take Rowland’s contention that the entire New Testament deals with prophecy, and we note that almost half of Tanakh is dedicated to the texts of the “prophets,” in addition to various other texts in the Torah and Ketuvim that relate prophetic activity, we suddenly find ourselves awash in texts that relate a wide variety of experience and narrative. Even if we limit ourselves to the New Testament, prophecy under Rowland’s open categorization “becomes very difficult to disentangle it from other strands of early Christian experience.”<sup>97</sup>

Finally, when we accept the task and try to compare texts, it is immediately apparent that the New Testament lacks the speech format of the Old Testament prophets.<sup>98</sup> Explicit references to prophecy in the New Testament give the impression of an inspired mode of exegesis or predictive statements that support belief in Jesus as Messiah. While this aids in the comparison to other Second Temple Judaism, <sup>99</sup> the problem of a lack of uniformity is still present. We cannot,

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<sup>96</sup> Rowland, “Prophecy in the New Testament,” 410.

<sup>97</sup> Rowland, “Prophecy in the New Testament,” 412.

<sup>98</sup> Luz, “Stages of Early Christian Prophetism,” 59: “This is the reason why it is almost impossible for scholars to agree on where in our sources we eventually find traces of the voices of early Christian prophets.”

<sup>99</sup> See Leo Duprée Sandgren, *Vines Intertwined: A History of Jews and Christians from the Babylonian Exile to the Advent of Islam* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 293. Sandgren also limits prophecy to proclamation, but calls inspired interpretation “the more subtle office of prophet,” noting that “both Qumran Covenanters and Pharisees had vied with priests and Sadducees for this office” (293).

for example, assume on this basis that early Christians, the Qumran community,<sup>100</sup> or the Pharisees<sup>101</sup> understood “prophecy” to be a univocal concept.

Examining prophecy requires more than any one method of inquiry can provide. Without discounting studies that look to prophetic traditions outside of the presentation of prophecy in the canonical texts of the Old Testament, I find it more reasonable to approach Paul from his own frame of reference. Assuming a more Jewish Paul in concordance with New Perspective approaches and following Paul’s own textual citations warrants focusing our attention on the presentation of prophecy within the Septuagint.

### **Which Prophet?**

The book of Isaiah, and Deutero-Isaiah in particular, was a dominant influence on Paul. Roughly thirty-five percent of all of Paul’s direct quotations in the undisputed letters are taken from Isaiah,<sup>102</sup> and half of those quotations come from only nine chapters: six from chapters 28-29, and ten from chapters 49-55. The number of citations and the uncanny parallels between Paul’s mission and Isaiah’s vision of restoration leave no doubt: Isaiah is “statistically and substantively the most important scriptural source for Paul.”<sup>103</sup> Within the Letter to the Romans, the subject of the latter portion of this study, the evidence is more decisive. Wagner has convincingly demonstrated that

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<sup>100</sup> See Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine*, 92-106.

<sup>101</sup> See Albert I. Baumgarten, “Pharisaic Authority: Prophecy and Power (*Antiquities* 17.41-45)” in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism* (ed. W. O. McCready and A. Reinhartz; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 81-96. See also, Gray, 148-152.

<sup>102</sup> See Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 25. Here Hays relies on D. A. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (BHT 69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 21-24 for the tabulation: 31 quotations out of 89 overall. J. Ross Wagner finds 21 direct citations, limiting the number by his additional criteria of “those with a citation formula of some sort” in *Heralds of the Good News*, 4 n. 17.

<sup>103</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 162.

Paul finds in Isaiah a fellow preacher of the gospel, the message that reveals God's righteousness for all who believe, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. He uncovers in Isaiah's heralds a veiled prefiguration of his own mission to proclaim the good news to those among the Gentiles who have not yet heard news of the victory of Israel's God.<sup>104</sup>

Wagner's work focuses on Romans 9-11 and, as a result, is particularly focused on Paul's application of Isaiah to the problem of unbelief, where "Paul appropriates Isaianic images in order to depict his ministry of the gospel as the proclamation of Israel's long-awaited release and restoration."<sup>105</sup>

Noting that Isaiah was the primary influence on Paul, however, does not mean that Paul has modeled himself after the *person* of Isaiah. Wagner's position is nuanced, showing commendable methodological reserve, and I am in near total agreement with his analysis and conclusions. But Wagner does not make the step that I do, moving from Paul's use of the prophets to Paul's self-understanding. From the outset, Wagner specifies his interest in Paul as an author, which Wagner describes as the "implied author" of literary criticism.<sup>106</sup> This distinction has the benefit of allowing a reader to engage more closely with a text without having to make connections to the writer outside the text. The implied author becomes something of a character, responsible for the text's features and characteristics, but ultimately a persona of the writer. Wagner, citing Wayne C. Booth and Alexander Nehemas, and offering an example from Margaret Mitchell, correctly notes that such author theories do not allow readers to ignore Paul's cultural and historical context;<sup>107</sup> writers after all must make credible authors. Nevertheless, it is this epistemological reservation that results in Wagner's study not making the leap to Paul's self-

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<sup>104</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 356.

<sup>105</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 357.

<sup>106</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 18, n. 68.

<sup>107</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 18, n. 68.

understanding. I agree completely with this hermeneutical approach and caution; at the same time, authorial theories cannot be applied to all texts.

Two features of the texts in question cut against applying authorial theory in support of an epistemological reserve: genre and Paul. Paul is writing letters, and Wagner acknowledges that “Paul intended to communicate with real communities of believers in Rome;”<sup>108</sup> we can both agree that this makes Paul’s letters different from a book published with a rather ambiguous “reader” in mind. Additionally, with the exception of Romans (and possibly Ephesians), Paul is communicating with communities that know him *personally*. When a writer inscribes such an author, we have to assume a very close correspondence between the two. In Second Corinthians, for example, we can make note of a situation where there seems to be a disjunction in the hearers’/readers’ perception. Paul accedes that an interlocutor (based on the personal nature of the correspondence, he probably can picture that “someone”) may say that “the letters are burdensome and strong, but the presence of the body is weak and the word contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10). Paul does not suggest that his letters present a different person — or even an imagined one. Instead, he doubles down, accounting for the difference in circumstances (absence versus presence), and insisting that the application of his authority is consistent (2 Cor 10:6, 8, 11). Paul contends that his authority serves both the purpose of his mission and the benefit of the Corinthians (2 Cor 10:15-16), but he, to my point, does not give an excuse for the medium, as we might when apologizing for a misunderstanding through email, or a fiction writer might when explaining that s/he is not to be mistaken for the narrator in a story. When Paul unapologetically declares “by the grace of God I am who I am” (1 Cor 15:10) in defense of his apostolic identity, we should take that as a textual marker that the persona within the text points directly to the

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<sup>108</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 33.

author/writer. This is not to say that Paul makes no distinction between presence and absence; clearly his presence is preferred. But this is precisely my point.

While Romans may be something of an anomaly among the letters, Paul is careful to provide the personal touch, listing people who know him *personally* and who can convey the meaning of his intent and vouch for his character and gospel (16:1-16). Paul intends the letters to be a substitute for his person, and when an author points to the writer outside of a text, good reading necessitates that we follow the gesture. Therefore, if Paul takes on the persona of a “herald,” it is very reasonable to assume that Paul *is* the herald; and if Paul considers Isaiah a fellow preacher of the gospel, then it also follows that the personal connection can extend and that Paul understands himself to be a preacher *like* Isaiah. Paul’s citations of and connection to Isaiah potent references to a shared self-identity.

This leads us to the second consideration that pertains directly to the approach that I will take with respect to Paul’s prophetic role. To select a specific model for Paul’s ministry misses its narrative element, theology, and reading.<sup>109</sup> Not only is it anachronistic to suggest *Second-Isaiah* as a model of Paul’s prophetic identity—he, like all his contemporary readers, regards Isaiah as a unified whole—it is also anachronistic to think that he would select one element of the Scriptural witness in isolation from others. Wagner observes that “a notable characteristic of Paul’s quotations of Isaiah in Romans is the frequency with which Paul conflates a passage of Isaiah with another text, whether from elsewhere in Isaiah or from another scriptural source.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> By delineating these elements, I do not intend to present them as separate in any way. To understand his activity is to understand Paul; if we reduce our scope to only examine Paul’s thought we will end up with a very dull verisimilitude of the reality. This is not because Paul’s “thought” is dull, far from it. It is because Paul is a far more integrated person that he has historically been given credit for being. If Wordsworth is right, that “we murder to dissect,” (line 28 of “The Tables Turned: An Evening Scene on the Same Subject”) and I find that there have been fewer thoughts that have more accurately described the empiricist epistemological dilemma, then dissecting out Paul’s “theology” or his “hermeneutics” is an endeavor that is bound to fail unless it takes the integrated Paul into account.

<sup>110</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 346, citing Rom 9:20, 27, 28, 33; 11:8, 27; and 14:11.

While this rhetorical strategy suggests the importance of the content in Romans 9-11, where Paul does this most frequently, it also suggests an approach to Scripture that is not as clearly demarcated as our modern approach to citation might prefer.

It may very well be our own academic writing and reading that biases us towards the direct identification of sources and influences that prejudices our reading of Paul. Paul thinks narratively — a claim I will attempt to support in my reading of Romans. And this narrative approach makes it more likely that Paul, through his means of appropriating Scripture,<sup>111</sup> thinks holistically about prophecy and regards the prophets as having a collective identity. This makes sense of his use of scriptural sources in catenae and informs my approach to his prophetic self-understanding.

Having sketched the problems of linking prophecy and Christianity within the scholarship in the nineteenth century, having reviewed more recent attempts to make this connection with respect to Paul specifically, and having acknowledged the problems that remain, we are better prepared to examine biblical prophecy. I do not suggest that my understanding of prophecy answers or solves any of the issues raised; instead, reading the prophets from an experiential understanding that includes narrative praxis opens ground that allows the application and comparison of prophecy across the Testaments beyond of the enclosure of historical analysis.

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<sup>111</sup> See Wagner's discussion of Paul's "reading" of Isaiah in Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 20-28, where he notes "it is far easier to attribute the kind of intricate linking of texts and contexts that one finds in Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans to Paul's memorization of the book of Isaiah than to imagine him repeatedly (at many times and in various places!) rolling and rerolling the scroll, combing the text for passages to excerpt and then making interpretive connections on the basis of those excerpts and his (limited) recollection of their contexts" (25). He continues, "Rather than posing the question in terms of mutually exclusive alternatives — *either* memorization *or* use of written texts with anthologies of excerpts — we should imagine Paul interacting with scripture in a *variety* of modes, including meditation on memorized passages, hearing of spoken texts, personal reading of written texts, and collection of and reflection on excerpts of larger texts" (25-6).

## CHAPTER TWO: PAUL AND THE PROPHETS

The relationship of Paul to prophecy, as we have just traced, forces us to engage with the prophets collectively. This, however, does not make the connection between Paul and prophecy more obvious. “Prophecy” is a complex set of personal experiences *and* communally-oriented phenomena; it cannot be reduced to a checklist. Nevertheless, if a connection between Paul and prophecy is to have any credibility, it requires that we describe the grounds on which such a comparison can be made. To that end, I will examine several descriptive components of prophecy. This comparative approach, when taken on the whole, will suggest a strong correlation between the prophets and Paul’s own self-identity and community-forming ministerial work. This correlation of vocation and praxis provides a foundation on which to assert Paul’s prophetic self-conception.

To make this connection, I will first examine the linguistic links between “prophet” and “apostle.” I will then describe prophecy in terms that initiate a movement from static ontological identification to dynamic literary contextualization. The prophet is one who speaks for God as a commissioned herald, mirroring the divine pathos and contextualizing Israel’s narrative (the exodus-conquest) in light of events or crises faced by the community.

### LINGUISTICALLY TYING PROPHET AND APOSTLE

The New Testament presentation of “apostle” is ambiguous.<sup>112</sup> Luke’s definition in Acts 1:21-22, for example, problematically excludes Paul as apostle in the same way as the Twelve

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<sup>112</sup> See C. K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle* (London: Epworth, 1970), 71-3.

were regarded as such.<sup>113</sup> When we turn our attention to Paul’s self-understanding, however, we cannot overlook his insistence that he *is an apostle*.<sup>114</sup> Four of the seven undisputed letters (Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians) begin with Paul’s self-identification as apostle. Whatever we make of the authorship of the six disputed letters, this self-descriptor is firmly planted in the minds of the “Pauline” authors; five of the six disputed letters (Colossians, Ephesians, First and Second Timothy, and Titus) also begin with this title. Additionally, when Paul lists charisms to the Corinthians, he gives pride of place to apostleship above prophecy (1 Cor 12:28). Much of the Corinthian correspondence—letters I consider to be the best examples of Paul’s personality, ministry, and thought—deals not only with the responsibilities, rights, and ministry of apostleship (cf. 1 Cor 3:5-4:20; 5:1-5; 9:1-27; 2 Cor 2:14-6:13; 10:1-13:30; cf. 1 Thess 2:7; Phlm 22), but also with the connection of the office to Christ (1 Cor 11:23; 12:12).

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<sup>113</sup> Luke characteristically has Peter taking charge of the community. Peter’s speech, highlighting the need to replace Judas, gives this criterion for selection: δεῖ οὖν τῶν συνελθόντων ἡμῖν ἀνδρῶν ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ᾧ εἰσηλθεν καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος Ἰωάννου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἀνελήμφθη ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, μάρτυρα τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ σὺν ἡμῖν γενέσθαι ἓνα τούτων. (Acts 1:21-22). The specific criterion of a man who had been together with “us” for *all* the time that Jesus was coming and going among “us” is further specified as pertaining to the time between Jesus’ baptism and his resurrection. This would clearly exclude Paul from the formal title of “apostle.” Only two times in Acts is someone not among the reconstituted 12 called “apostle” (cf. Acts 14:4, 14). In both instances, Paul and Barnabas are the referents. See C. K. Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), *lix*, 213; Barrett attributes this discrepancy to the Antiochene source. This concurs roughly with Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (14th ed.; trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 420, and Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. J. Limburg, A.T. Kraabel, and D. H. Juel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 108, who both think Luke has not edited his sources carefully in this passage. For an opposing view, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 206; Gaventa finds the passage to be consistent in Lukan vocabulary and style, and notes that Paul and Barnabas witness to the resurrection in their ministry.

<sup>114</sup> Paul’s “definition” of an apostle seems to be one who has seen the risen Lord Jesus and received a commission (1 Cor 9:1; 12:28; 15:3-10). See also Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 57 n. 11: “Paul never claims the title ‘prophet,’ though he clearly sees himself in continuity with the biblical prophets and appears to exercise the gift of prophecy (inspired speech). This is likely because he sees the title ‘prophet’ in the church as a reference to someone who speaks inspired oracles but, unlike an ‘apostle,’ has not seen (or been commissioned by) the resurrected Lord as Paul, Peter, and James have (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28 with 9:1-2 and 15:3-10). Acts, on the other hand, expresses Paul’s continuity with the biblical prophets by repeatedly showing the similarity of his function and fate to theirs.”



The noun ἀπόστολος was not a Christian neologism nor was it common in classical Greek. Attic inscriptions reveal the word to have a nautical context, translated as “fleet,” “naval expedition,” or “envoy by sea.”<sup>117</sup> The word can also be a synecdoche for the vessel itself, occurring often with the name of its owner.<sup>118</sup> The metaphorical connection between nautical voyages and the diplomatic carrying of messages converging within a single term would have made the term ideal for adoption by the early Christian community. It is particularly intriguing when we apply the ambassadorial reference to Paul’s title, ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; and 2 Tim 1:1), most especially in Second Corinthians where the ministry of reconciliation is discussed with diplomatic terminology (5:20).<sup>119</sup> The

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<sup>117</sup> See J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), 70.

<sup>118</sup> Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 70: ἀπόστολος is used for a “ship” in P Oxy III. 522 (ii/A.D.). In this document (cf. also P Tebt II. 486, ii/iii A.D.), which is an account of the expenses of corn-transport, it is of interest to notice that each ἀπόστολος is known by the name of its owner, e.g. λόγος ἀποστόλου Τριαδέλφου, “account—for the ship of Triadelphus.” In P Oxy IX. 1197<sup>13</sup> (A.D. 211).”

<sup>119</sup> See Thomas D. Stegman, S.J., *Second Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 142-3: “Paul explains his own role in God’s work of reconciliation: he is an **ambassador** for Christ. An ambassador, *like an apostle*, is commissioned by someone to represent him or her. Here Paul asserts that *he represents Jesus*, a point he emphasizes by twice deploying the phrase *hyper Christou* (translated **for Christ** and **on behalf of Christ**). And just as God worked through Jesus in his earthly ministry, so now **God is appealing through Paul**. Thus it is *God’s* word – and not mere human words (1 Thess 2:13) – that he proclaims when he **implores** people, **be reconciled to God!** Paul emphasizes here the vertical dimension of reconciliation, that is, *his primary focus is on God’s invitation to people to be brought into right relationship with him*. The ministry of reconciliation also entails a horizontal dimension – the reconciliation of people who are at enmity with one another (see Eph 2:14-16) ... In addition, he is about to exhort the *entire* community to be fully reconciled with him (i.e., with the Apostle; 6:11-13; 7:2-4) [*emphasis* in italics or bold are original; *my emphasis* is both bolded and italicized].” This ambassadorial representation of Christ with its vertical and horizontal dimensions is precisely what I will emphasize in the prophetic vocation. It is, therefore, no accident that Paul emphasizes “apostle” as “ambassador,” an implicit recognition of the terms profane usage.

See also Aernie, *Is Paul also Among the Prophets?*, 147-9. Aernie focuses on reconciliation as “reliant at this point on the concept of restoration developed broadly in the Isaianic narrative and, more specifically, in God’s work through the servant’s sacrificial activity in 52.13-53.12” (148). The emphasis of the Fourth Servant Song on proclamation reinforces Aernie’s connection of Paul and prophecy. However, Aernie notes that “the focus of the restoration of Isaianic restoration was not solely on a return to the land, but on a restoration of Israel (and the nations) from sin and disobedience. Likewise, the work of the servant is not primarily centered on bringing people back to the land but in proclaiming salvation through his atoning work (Isa. 42.18-25; 43.24; 53.5-6, 10, 12)” (149). The narrow presentation of “the land” misses a key narrative point in Isaiah and Paul. The “conquest” part of the narrative breaks the geographical confines of “Israel” as a distinct nation to appropriate the whole of creation as the “land.” I will expand on this point in Paul’s understanding of this narrative dimension in chapter three.

themes of obedience and service are never far from Paul’s use of titles and his notions of authority; “apostle” is no exception. It bears the marks of position but is exercised in service.

The noun *ἀπόστολος* would have also had a recognizable relationship with the *verb* *ἀποστέλλω* [I send, order, banish, etc.,]. The verb is very common, used with prominent frequency in the prophets—especially Moses, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.<sup>120</sup> In one of the most classic scenes of prophetic commissioning, Isaiah “heard the voice of the Lord saying: who will I send and who will go before this people?” Isaiah responded, “ἰδοὺ εἰμι ἐγὼ *ἀπόστειλόν* με,” (“Look, I am [here], **send** me”; Isa 6:8). Immediately, Isaiah received his unenviable prophetic commission (Isa 6:9-13). Not *every* use of *ἀποστέλλω* is this significant, but the verb’s use in prophetic commissioning formulas ought to at least make us pause to consider the *potential* for prophetic signification when we read it.

The participial form of *ἀποστέλλω*, especially when it is used substantively, makes for a ready association with *ἀπόστολος*. It retains the valence of sending messages by sea (See Isa 18:2),<sup>121</sup> and the close aural correspondence between the noun *ἀπόστολος* and the participle *ἀποστέλλον* makes linguistic “slippage” between the two words probable. Fine tuning our linguistic microscope allows us to begin to see the close correspondence between “one who is sent” and “prophet.” Two LXX passages make this connection explicitly clear: 2 Chr 36:15-16 and Jer 25:4. The content of these passages were the subject of New Testament comment or

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<sup>120</sup> For Moses see Exod 3-4. For Isaiah, see: 6:6; 6:8 (2 times); 9:7; 10:6, 16; 14:12; 16:1; 16:8; 18:2; 19:20; 20:1; 33:7; 36:2, 12; 37:2, 4, 9, 17, 21; 39:1; 43:14; 48:16; 57:9; 58:6; 61:1. It is far more frequent in Jeremiah, see 2:10; 7:25; 9:16; 14:3, 14, 15; 16:16 (2 times); 19:14; 21:21; 23:21, 32, 38; 24:10; 25:4 (2 times); 25:9; 30:8; 31:12; 32:15, 16, 17, 27; 33:5 (2 times), 12, 15; 34:3, 15, 16; 35:9, 15; 36:1, 3, 9, 25, 28, 31 (2 times); 41:10, 14; 42:15; 43:14, 21; 44:3, 7, 15, 17; 45:14; 46:14; 47:1, 5, 14; 49:5, 6, 20, 21; 50:1, 2, 10; 51:4 (2 times).

<sup>121</sup> “ὁ *ἀποστέλλον ἐν θαλάσῃ* ὄμηρα καὶ ἐπιστολὰς βυβλίνας ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος πορεύονται γὰρ ἄγγελοι κοῦφοι πρὸς ἔθνος μετέωρον καὶ ξένον λαὸν καὶ χαλεπὸν τίς αὐτοῦ ἐπέκεινα ἔθνος ἀνέλπιστον καὶ καταπεπατημένον νῦν οἱ ποταμοὶ τῆς γῆς” (Isa. 18:2). This is Isaiah’s description of Ethiopia (Kush), where Egypt has been sending ambassadors (ὁ *ἀποστέλλον*) at cross purposes to God’s plans.



verb; it is not always a “divine” verb, meaning God is not always the subject. But when it appears with God or Christ as the explicit or implicit subject, we ought to be prepared to hear a possible prophetic motif. Finally, the passage from Jeremiah makes an equivalency between δούλος and προφήτης, a connection we can suspend and defer until we return to Paul’s greeting to the Roman churches.

Having traced the relationship of ἀπόστολος to biblical roots in the verb ἀποστέλλω, we can make the leap back to Hebrew, where the rabbinical word שָׁלֵחַ was “especially used to denote someone given full authority, for some particular purpose and for a limited time, to represent the person or persons from whom the delegate comes.”<sup>124</sup> While dating rabbinical literature is a perennial challenge, the institution of שְׁלִיחַת הַדָּבָר, the sending out of official letters,<sup>125</sup> has some precedent in biblical Hebrew.<sup>126</sup> Luke seems to be aware of this practice (Acts 9:2; 15:22; 28:21). Given that prophets certainly undertook missions of this type (Isa 6:8; 61:1ff; Jer 1:7), the connection of “apostle” to an Old Testament context need not rely on the LXX alone. More apropos to our study, Paul tells us that he commissioned an envoy to the Corinthians,<sup>127</sup> sending Titus and two unnamed brothers. Paul asks the Corinthians to welcome them in a manner befitting his boasts. Titus is clearly in charge; Paul names only him and calls him “my partner and co-worker for you—κοινωνὸς ἐμὸς καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός (2 Cor 8:23). The other members of this entourage, ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν (“our brothers”), Paul calls ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, δόξα Χριστοῦ (“**apostles** of the assemblies, the glory of Christ”) (2 Cor 8:23). The tendency to translate ἀπόστολοι with envoy terminology rather than apostolic terminology certainly tracks

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<sup>124</sup> Otto Betz, “Apostle,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 41.

<sup>125</sup> See Xavier Léon-Dufour, “Apostles,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2nd Ed.; trans. P. Joseph Cahill, S.J.; Ijamsville: The Word Among Us, 2000), 24.

<sup>126</sup> See 2 Kgs 5:5; 20:12; Esth 3:15, for example.

<sup>127</sup> This is consistent with Paul’s practice; see Rom 16:1; Phil 2:19-23; Col 4:7-9; Phlm.

*our* need to keep terminology distinct and recognize the high status that Paul accords to his own apostleship,<sup>128</sup> but he seems not to have the same concern.

It may help us to make things clearer if we reserve “apostle” for Paul and “emissaries” for those he commissions for a task, but it also illustrates clearly that *Paul* has wider range of signification available for ἀπόστολος than we do. And that is my main point. Recognizing the prophetic in the apostolic requires that we begin by noticing that “apostle” is not wrong but too narrowly constrained.

## DESCRIBING PROPHECY

The complexity of defining prophecy does not prevent us from saying something about it. As we saw in the previous chapter, discussions of prophecy in general and its comparisons with Paul in particular have been distorted by the language used to describe what we are discussing and the worldviews inherent to such articulations. The choice to attempt a description of prophecy from *within* the biblical tradition is an attempt to rectify such problems, and in the previous section I have tried to acknowledge fairly that such a move does not alleviate all ambiguity.

As humans who speak for God, prophets are spokespeople for the divine. Their intermediary role begins with a call and commission, which initiates the prophet into sympathy with God, feeling what God feels and oriented towards God’s vision for God’s people. Through this initiation, prophets receive and transmit Israel’s vocational narrative (the exodus-conquest), involving them in critiques of their contemporary society to get the community to repent and to

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<sup>128</sup> Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 250, note 16: “Given Paul’s typical use of the term apostle — as one who, like himself, has seen the risen Lord and been commissioned to exercise a distinctive position of leadership—it is preferable not to render *apostoloi* in v. 23 as apostles. The translation of the NJB (“emissaries”), NIV (“representatives”), and REB (“delegates”) convey better Paul’s meaning here.”

assure them that YHWH's rectification, involving both punishment and salvation, was near at hand. The prophets recapitulate Israel's story as it is reflected in the light of the "new" activity of God (cf. Isa 43:19; Jer 31:22), and, through this retelling of the story of Israel's formation, re-engage and re-constitute the called-forth community to a renewed formation and participation in the new activity of God.

The divine communication engages both the prophet and the community within particular historical contexts and circumstances, while retaining the narrative context that makes the crisis of current circumstances comprehensible within a divine plan. The beauty of each prophetic moment is its particularity; it is a word for that prophet and community. The endurance of the prophetic moment is its truth; it is a word that binds all prophets and all the communities they are called to address. The "word" the prophet receives is not a platonic form, not a timeless essence that becomes corrupted by mimesis; rather, repetition *is* its perfection. The "utterance" offered is not a gift for the prophet's enjoyment, but a proclamation for the prophet's vocation. It is the donation that shapes the vocation, uniting God, prophet, and community in the unity of God through the diversity of circumstance.

Paul presumes an understanding and a deep awareness of the "holy writings" to which he refers. Within the description of prophecy that follows, the narrative plot must be retained as a unifying articulation of the whole. The repetition/imitation of the action is the plot.<sup>129</sup> The

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<sup>129</sup> For "plot," see also Tom Thatcher, "The Plot of Gal 3:1-18," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40.3 (Sept 1997): 401-410, specifically the double meaning of "plot" as a "linear organization of events in narrative time" and "a plot of space" (401); Thatcher argues that "while Paul perhaps conceived of salvation in terms of a divine story, the surface rhetoric of [Gal] 3:1-18 is not undergirded by a linear narrative. The passage plots an area, not a line, and forms not a salvation story but a sacred space" (401). I will implicitly evoke this double meaning of "plot" in reference to the exodus-conquest narrative and its overlay with liberation-formation/creation and new creation. There the narrative plot and the plot of land converge in important ways in Paul's discourse.

I am intentionally invoking Aristotle's definition of tragedy (and epic poetry); see Aristotle, *De poetica*, 1449<sup>b</sup>9-1450<sup>a</sup>14 in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (ed. and trans. Richard McKeon; New York: Random House, 1941), 1458-1461. The better translation for our purposes can be found in *Classical Literary Criticism* (trans. Penelope Murray and T. S. Dorsch; New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 64: "In tragedy it is action that is imitated,

connection to the Old Testament prophets cannot be explicitly drawn because there is nothing as straight-forward as Paul's injunction to "be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).<sup>130</sup> Instead, the linguistic idiom, "way(s) of the Lord," is the most prevalent and ready parallel.<sup>131</sup> Following "the way(s)" meant that one reflected divine attributes: justice, faithfulness, mercy, and loving kindness (cf. Lev 19:2; Isa 45:13; 55:11; 64:4; Jer 7:3-5, 23; 10:23; 27:5). This is an example of the contextualization of prophecy. For the Old Testament prophets, "imitation" was subject to perplexing obscurity (e.g., Isa 55:8), but for Paul the "new thing" (cf. Isa 43:19; Jer 31:22) of the incarnation and ministry of Christ gave him a very clear image to follow (2 Cor

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and this action is brought about by agents who necessarily display certain distinctive qualities both of character and of thought, according to which we also define the nature of actions; and it is on their actions that all men depend for success or failure. The representation of the action is the plot of the tragedy; for the ordered arrangement of the incidents is what I mean by plot." Here we find a description of a dramatic form that engages each of the elements that I will discuss in reference to the vocation of prophecy. The connections between the literary aspects of tragedy, particularly its relationship to catharsis, cannot be addressed here. Two elements, however, deserve a good deal more theological and exegetical attention. First, biblical prophets offer the divine word in poetic form in nearly all cases. That the word of God comes as poetry ought to pique the interest of literary theorists. Second, the effects of the dramatic plots of Scripture deserve theological attention – at least a greater emphasis than the identification of the plot for exegetical purposes (e.g., that the plot helps us to understand how troublesome verses "fit" in the big picture). In dealing with Paul the epistolary form will supersede the poetic transmission, but the narrative plot is what is most helpful to engage the content. Chapter 9 of Aristotle's *Poetics* is, therefore, of additional significance; the poet's function is not to provide a description of what actually happened (history) but to look to what could or might happen through the lens of necessity (subject to the plot). (Compare this to Brueggemann's articulation, building off of David Noel Freedman: "The prophet engages in futuring fantasy" in *The Prophetic Imagination* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 40. This is what makes poetry more philosophical and more important than history. In applying this to prophecy, it is not the poet who is the creator of plots (Aristotle), but the creator God who is always at work, representing the plot on the canvas of human history. This is more or less what I mean when I speak of Paul's narrative appropriation of the biblical plot. See also John G. F. Wilks, "The Prophet as Incompetent Dramatist," *Vetus Testamentum* 53.4 (Oct. 2003): 530-543, where he argues against taking the text of Second-Isaiah as a drama in favor of reading it as dramatic poetry.

<sup>130</sup> "Imitation" is the problem; see Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 413. The ineffability of God and God's perfection make it impossible. For Christians, as a result of the Incarnation, "imitation" is less problematic.

<sup>131</sup> The natural resonance of "ways" in English would be to "following" and "obedience," and they tend to have negative rather than positive associations. While there is naturally a sense of repentance of turning from one's own ways to the ways of God (e.g., Isa 55:7; 65:2; 66:3; Jer 7:3; 21:8; 23:2; 25:5 Zech 1:4, 6; Mal 2:8-9); Isa 63:17 attributes the errancy to God. The idiom also bears the sense of guidance (Isa 2:3; 8:11; 30:21; 42:16; 48:15-17), such that walking in the way allows one to act like God (Isa 45:13; 55:11; 64:4; Jer 7:3-5, 23; 10:23; 27:5); Jer 33:3 and 13 show God offering repentance for repentance, God's turning back from the evil thing that is about to befall the people in exchange for the repentance of the people.

Imitation in the Old Testament prophets can perhaps be best exemplified by the prophet's enactment of God's pathos. Hosea would be the clearest example, marrying a woman of fornication (Hos 1:2; possibly two 3:1-3) as an example of God's anguish over Israel's infidelity (Hos 4:1). Isaiah famously preached naked (Isa 20:1-6) Jeremiah continuously engages in symbolic actions (Jer 16:1-4; 19:1-13; 28)

4:4; Col 1:15; cf. Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21). It is the imitation of God through the icon of Christ that engages Paul's hope, cementing him within the prophetic tradition and transmitting that tradition through the apostolic ministry of building and supporting the called-forth communities of faith.

### Speaking for God

At its most basic, and perhaps irreducible level, a prophet is one who speaks for God.<sup>132</sup>

Receiving a “word from the Lord”<sup>133</sup> is the *sine qua non* of prophetic discourse,<sup>134</sup> and this is

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<sup>132</sup> Jonathan Ben-Dov, “Language, Prayer and Prophecy,” 242-3: “Prophets in the Hebrew Bible consider pure speech a necessary requirement for true prophecy. Thus, Moses, the first and ideal prophet, was initially denied the right to officiate as *nabi*’ because of his speech impairment (Exod 4:10; 6:12), and Aaron replaced him in that office (Exod 4:16; 7:1). Hosea (7:16) accuses foreigners of speaking in unclear language, one that cannot be understood and thus necessarily conveys nothing more than nonsense. Isaiah (8:19) mocks those diviners who ‘moan and chirp’ while delivering their message, promoting his own lucid prophecy.”

<sup>133</sup> The phrase “thus says YHVH (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה)” is among the more common, occurring 291 times: Exod 4:22; 5:1; 7:17, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3; 11:4; 32:27; Jos 7:13; 24:2; Jdg. 6:8; 1 Sam 2:27; 10:18; 15:2; 2 Sam 7:5, 8; 12:7, 11; 24:12; 1 Kgs 11:31; 12:24; 13:2, 21; 14:7; 17:14; 20:13, 14, 28, 42; 21:19; 22:11; 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16; 2:21; 3:16, 17; 4:43; 7:1; 9:3, 6, 12; 19:6, 20, 32; 20:1, 5; 21:12; 22:15, 16, 18; 1 Chr 17:4, 7; 21:10, 11; 2 Chr. 11:4; 12:5; 18:10; 20:15; 21:12; 34:23, 24, 26; Isa 8:11; 18:4; 29:22; 31:4; 37:6, 21, 33; 38:1, 5; 43:1, 14, 16; 44:2, 6, 24; 45:1, 11, 14, 18; 48:17; 49:7, 8, 25; 50:1; 52:3; 56:1, 4; 65:8; 66:1, 12; Jer 2:2, 5; 4:3, 27; 5:14; 6:6, 9, 16, 21, 22; 7:3, 21; 8:4; 9:6, 14, 16, 22; 10:2, 18; 11:3, 11, 21, 22; 12:14; 13:1, 9, 12, 13; 14:10, 15; 15:2, 19; 16:3, 5, 9; 17:5, 19, 21; 18:11, 13; 19:1, 3, 11, 15; 20:4; 21:4, 8, 12; 22:1, 3, 6, 11, 18, 30; 23:2, 15, 16, 38; 24:5, 8; 25:8, 15, 27, 28, 32; 26:2, 4, 18; 27:2, 4, 16, 19, 21; 28:2, 11, 13, 14, 16; 29:4, 8, 10, 16, 17, 21, 25, 31, 32; 30:2, 5, 12, 18; 31:2, 7, 15, 16, 23, 35, 37; 32:3, 14, 15, 28, 36, 42, 33:2, 4, 10, 12, 17, 20, 25; 34:2, 4, 13, 17; 35:13, 17, 18, 19; 36:29, 30; 37:7, 9; 38:2, 3, 17; 39:16; 42:9, 15, 18; 43:10; 44:2, 7, 11, 25, 30; 45:2, 4; 47:2; 48:1, 40; 49:1, 7, 12, 28, 35; 50:18, 33; 51:1, 33, 36, 58; Ezek 11:5; 21:8; 30:6; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:12; 5:4, 16; 7:17; Mic 2:3; 3:5; Nah 1:12; Hag 1:2, 5, 7; 2:6, 11; Zech 1:3, 4, 14, 16, 17; 2:12; 3:7; 6:12; 7:9; 8:2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 19, 20, 23; p 11:4; Mal 1:4. Even this criterion, recognizable from the frequent use of the formula, has been subject to indeterminacy. Ludwig Köhler found that this formula had an origin in the ANE messenger formula in *Deuterojesaja (Jesaja 40-55) stilkritisch untersucht* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1923), 102-109. A. Graeme Auld has also suggested that the formula was inserted into the texts at a later stage of production and may not have originated with the early prophets in “Word of God and Word of Man: Prophets and Canon” in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1988), 237-251.

<sup>134</sup> See von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 66-7. Helpfully von Rad points to this as a distinction that can be made between prophetic and priestly theology. He writes, “The prophets’ statements about the word [of] Yahweh are relatively independent of those made by the priestly theology. With the former we encounter what is obviously a self-contained set of ideas and traditions. The term, ‘the word of Yahweh’, occurs 241 times in the Old Testament writings; of these no less than 221 (92 percent) relate to a prophetic oracle. There can, therefore, be no doubt but that this collection was used as a technical term for an oral prophetic revelation. The phrase, ‘the word of Yahweh came to so and so’ (123 times), is particularly characteristic, because it represents the apperception of the divine word as event, a unique happening in history, which a man is looking for or takes him by surprise, and which therefore in either case sets the person concerned in a new historical situation. It is very significant that the phrase appears with the definite article, *the* word of Yahweh’, and never in the indefinite form, ‘*a* word of Yahweh’, as a superficial glance at the extremely large number of such ‘word events’ might have led one to expect ... Paradoxical as it may seem, in principle the prophet says the same thing to everyone; he plays variations upon it only to meet differences

consistent across both the Old and New Testaments. When Benjamin Sommer responds to arguments that question Second Isaiah's prophetic self-understanding,<sup>135</sup> he argues that "Deutero-Isaiah claims that he conveys YHWH's words, not his own, and hence it is appropriate to term Deutero-Isaiah a prophet."<sup>136</sup> Moberly notes that "although 'prophecy' as a spiritual gift within the New Testament is much more narrowly defined than 'prophecy' as a vocation in the Old Testament (though apparently more widely distributed), it still involves speech on God's behalf in some form or other."<sup>137</sup> Such speech must be validated in some way, and the failure to identify reliable means for ascertaining true prophecy is one of the major contributions to the crisis of prophecy in the Second Temple period.<sup>138</sup> In 1 Cor 14:37, he reflects this most basic criteria: "If

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in the conditions of his audience. This is the main reason why it is so difficult to set out a prophet's teaching. We are bound to make the attempt, but at the same time there is no possibility of achieving the result by taking, as it were, the average of his ideas as the sum total of his prophetic *logia*."

<sup>135</sup> See Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (trans. Carlyle Witton-Davies; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016 [1949]), 254. Buber sees Second Isaiah occupying "this singular intermediate position between the full prophetic immediacy of receiving and uttering, and the acquired status of an interpreter who explains words handed down." Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusions in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 176 quotes Julius Wellhausen from *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies; New York: Meridian, 1957 [1885]), 403-4: "The writer of Isaiah xl. seq. might ... be called a prophet, but he does not claim to be one; his anonymity, which is evidently intentional, leaves no doubt as to this. He is, in fact, more of a theologian: he is principally occupied in reflecting on the results of the foregoing development of which prophecy had been the leaven; these are fixed possessions now secured; he is gathering in the harvest." Both of these quotations are illustrative not only of the problems inherent in categorizing "prophets" but also because there are close parallels to why Paul is not thought of in prophetic terms. We can note the failure to identify oneself as a prophet and the identification of Paul as a theologian. See Keck, *Christ's First Theologian*.

<sup>136</sup> Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 177.

<sup>137</sup> Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 170.

<sup>138</sup> Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 228: "Tension between 'the written word' and oral communications delivered to prophets is certainly a feature of religious life beginning in the last decades of the kingdom of Judah, but it is not very helpful to speak of prophetic inspiration dying out without explaining why it happened then and not at some other time. It is also misleading to assume that the preexilic canonical prophets represent the apogee of religious development so that whatever followed would inevitably be construed as a declension from that high ideal. In one sense the change in the forms and understanding of prophecy in the Second Commonwealth resulted from the failure of earlier prophecy to solve certain crucial problems, especially the problem of discriminating between true and false prophecy. It also became increasingly apparent that prophecy is incapable of providing a firm basis for the ongoing life of the community. And finally, it is not self-evident that the consolidation of scribalism in the Second Temple period, with the emergence of an intellectual and theological tradition into which prophecy was inevitably drawn, must be viewed as a synonym of decline. Simply put, the problem for those who preserved these texts and took them seriously was: How can the word of god addressed to our ancestors who lived in a different age and faced different problems become a word of God for us today." Blenkinsopp's short summation of a wide field of scholarly debate is helpful; certainly, the decline in status of the "prophet" combined with the emergence of the scribe, sage, and teacher require careful historical and sociological analysis. Whatever the factors that will assist scholars to make sense of this proves, the more pressing interest for me

anyone reckons himself a prophet or spiritual, he should recognize that which I write to you because it is the Lord's command" (Εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός, ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή). This is an important verse that grounds our considerations going forward. Paul invokes the recognition of his own writings as the criterion for a true prophet. It is an ingenious (and slightly manipulative) means of establishing the authority of his letters, but its correspondence to the need for proper order and the interpretation of prophecy (1 Cor 14:23-33) would indicate that Paul is claiming his letters as prophetic words for the community *and* using them as a means of sorting out true prophets from false.

The Greek word προφήτης contains in its etymology precisely Paul's declaration that he writes at the Lord's command. Its root verb, φημί (προφητεύω), "speak or utter," receives the prepositional prefix, προ-, making a προφήτης "one who speaks for" someone, usually a deity. The choice of the LXX translators to select προφήτης over other options<sup>139</sup> provides at least an interpretation of prophecy as fundamentally related to communication. This is supported contextually within the biblical texts, where the speaking of YHWH and the prophet's work are closely tied.<sup>140</sup> It is the "central issue of prophetic identity ... [and] indicates that the prophet

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as I examine Paul and early Christian communities is what discerning measures early Christians took to answer these problems. I cannot outline a full response here, but I am convinced that the convergence of multiple models of leadership (both Second Temple religious leadership [e.g. scribe, sage, teacher, etc.] and biblical leadership [e.g. priest, prophet, king]) within an emerging understanding of "apostle" constitutes a response to the problems inherent to each model in isolation. This is clearly beyond the scope of this project. The largest amount of work needs to be done in the area of prophecy – thus the need to focus solely on its rehabilitation here.

<sup>139</sup> See Blenkinsopp, 27, where he notes the choice of *prophētēs/prophēteuein* over *mantis/manteuomai* reflects a suspicion of the more ecstatic elements of prophecy in favor of the more "declarative aspects of Israelite prophecy."

<sup>140</sup> The phrase "utterance/oracle of YHVH (הַדְבָרִים יְהוָה)" occurs almost 300 times: Gen 22:16; Num 14:28; 1 Sam 2:30; 2 Kgs 9:26; 19:33; 22:19; 2 Chr 34:27; Ps 110:1; Isa 14:22, 23; 17:3, 6; 22:25; 30:1; 31:9; 37:34; 41:14; 43:10, 12; 49:18; 52:5; 54:17; 55:8; 59:20; 66:2, 17, 22; Jer 1:8, 15, 19; 2:3, 9, 12, 29; 3:1, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20, 4:1, 9, 17; 5:9, 11, 15, 18, 22, 29; 6:12; 7:11, 13, 19, 32; 8:1, 3, 13, 17; 9:2, 5, 8, 21, 23, 24, 12:17; 13:11, 14, 25; 15:3, 6, 9, 20; 16:5, 11, 14, 16; 17:24; 18:6; 19:6, 12; 21:7, 10, 13, 14; 22:5, 16, 24; 23:1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33; 25:7, 9, 12, 29, 31; 27:8, 11, 15, 22; 28:4; 29:9, 11, 14, 19, 23, 32; 30:3, 8, 10, 11, 17, 21; 31:1, 14, 16, 17, 20, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38; 32:5, 30, 44; 33:14; 34:5, 17, 22; 35:13; 39:17, 18; 42:11; 44:29; 45:5; 46:5, 23, 26, 28; 48:12, 25, 30, 35, 38, 43, 44, 47; 49:2, 6, 13, 16, 26, 30, 31, 32, 37, 38, 39; 50:4, 10, 20, 21, 30, 35, 40; 51:24, 25, 26, 39, 48, 52, 53; Ezek 13:6, 7; 16:58; 37:14; Hos. 2:15, 18, 23; 11:11; Joel 2:12; Amos 2:11, 16; 3:10, 15; 4:3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; 6:8, 14; 9:7, 8, 12, 13; Obad 1:4, 8; Mic 4:6; 5:9; Nah 2:14; 3:5; Zeph 1:2, 3, 10; 2:9; 3:8; Hag. 1:9, 13; 2:4, 8, 9, 14, 17, 23; Zech 1:3, 4, 16; 2:9, 10, 14; 3:9, 10; 5:4; 8:6, 11, 17; 10:12; 11:6; 12:1, 4; 13:2, 7,

typically saw himself or herself as the intermediary between the people and their God.”<sup>141</sup> The word may be placed directly in the prophet’s mouth, as was the case for Jeremiah and Isaiah (Jer 1:9; cf. Isa 51:16); Ezekiel’s experience reveals that this event was not always pleasant (Ezek 2:8-3:9). Nevertheless, the power of the word was activated by transmission. It was always a prescient message for a people in a particular, and often perilous, predicament. Von Rad makes this beautifully clear:

[The prophet’s] concern was not the faith, not even the ‘message’: it was to deliver a specific message from Yahweh to particular men and women who, without themselves being aware of it, stood in a special situation before God ... what we are in the habit of calling a prophet’s ‘message’ is a very problematic entity. We do not gain understanding of the prophet’s ‘message’ either by reducing the sum total of his sayings to general basic religious concepts, or by coordinating the separate sayings to make a synthetic whole ... each saying was, for those to whom it was addressed, the word of Yahweh. There is, therefore, strictly speaking, no such thing as a ‘message’ to which each single word was subordinate and from which each single announcement was derived; all that we have are the various individual words in which, on each specific occasion, the word of Yahweh was proclaimed in a different guise.<sup>142</sup>

Prophets, in other words, were not philosophers seeking the always-already true (though that may be what they receive). The direction of influence flowed in the opposite direction. They are recipients of time-sensitive communications and must communicate the message by any means necessary.

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8; Mal 1:2. The phrase, “the word of YHWH came to me (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה)” appears some 83 times: 1 Sam 15:10; 2 Sam 7:4; 1 Kgs 6:11; 13:20; 16:1; 17:2, 8; 21:17, 28; 2 Chr 11:2; Isa 38:4; Jer 1:4, 11, 13; 2:1; 13:3, 8; 16:1; 18:5; 24:4; 28:12; 29:30; 32:26; 33:1, 19, 23; 34:12; 35:12; 36:27; 37:6; 42:7; 43:8; Ezek 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26; 13:1; 14:2, 12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1, 11; 18:1; 20:2; 21:1, 6, 13, 23; 22:1, 17, 23; 23:1; 24:1, 15; 25:1; 27:1; 28:1, 11, 20; 30:1; 33:1, 23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 37:15; 38:1; Jon 1:1; 3:1; Hag 1:3; 2:20; Zech 4:8; 6:9; 7:4, 8; 8:1, 18. Jeremiah also has an individualized version of this phrase, “the word which came to Jeremiah from YHWH (וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי),” and it occurs 4 times: 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 30:1. The related phrase, “YHWH said to me (וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי)” appears 32 times: Deut 1:42; 2:2, 9, 31; 3:2, 26; 5:28; 9:12, 13; 10:11; 18:17; Isa 8:1, 3; Jer 1:7, 9, 12, 14; 3:6, 11; 11:6, 9; 13:6; 14:11, 14; 15:1; 24:3; Ezek 23:36; Hos 3:1; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Zech 11:13, 15.

<sup>141</sup> Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 34.

<sup>142</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 100-101.

From a canonical/narrative perspective, Moses is the prophet *par excellence*. It is certainly true that the biblical presentation of Moses as prophet has been reworked according to various writer's or compiler's understandings of prophecy,<sup>143</sup> but we also have to recognize that this is our own modern approach to reading such texts. Hosea's well-cited reference to Moses—"By a prophet YHWH brought up Israel from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded" (Hos 12:13/14)—is one of the earliest references to this tradition. The stories about Moses and the activities he undertakes shape the prophetic traditions, retrospectively or otherwise.<sup>144</sup> To make the connection between Paul and biblical prophecy requires that we link Paul to Moses in a meaningful way.

In Exod 7:1, YHWH responds to Moses' protest that he is *ισαγόφωνος/ עָרְלִשְׁפִּתִּים* (a stammerer or one with uncircumcised lips, perhaps a cleft pallet) by volunteering Aaron to serve as his assistant. The order of the relationship is demarcated in a clear hierarchy, showing the unidirectional communication of the spokesperson: "See! I have set you [as a] god/heavenly being to Pharaoh, and Aaron, your brother, will be your prophet" (Exod 7:1). God will speak to Moses; Moses will tell Aaron; Aaron will tell Pharaoh "everything that I command you" (Exod 7:2, *כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה*). An alternate version of this same event contains the motif of "placing the words in his mouth" (Exod 4:15), with the reassurance that God will teach them what to do.

Again, the hierarchy establishes the order of communication: Aaron will be Moses' mouth, and

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<sup>143</sup> Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy*, 50.

<sup>144</sup> It is certainly the case that Moses' status had undergone a variety of alternations for a variety of reasons with the potential cessation of prophecy and the growth of the sapiential tradition. Within the Talmudic tradition there is the well-told story of Moses being transported to R. Akiba's school, where he "sat at the back of eighteen rows of students [back with the dunces], but he did not understand what they were saying" (*Bavli Menahot* 29b); citation taken from Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 19. Despite this clear demotion, Rubenstein maintains that Moses remained "a political and spiritual leader, for the sages he was first and foremost the highest rabbinic authority" (94). Whatever Moses authority or status as a prophet in the Second Temple period, it would be natural for Christians who interpreted a "return" of prophecy to turn again to Moses as the exemplar of the prophetic tradition.

Moses will be as a god/heavenly being to him (Exod 4:16). This narrative kernel blossoms in the more explicit experiences of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and provides a clear example of the prophet as the mouth or spokesperson of higher authority.

Paul also reminds his communities that the source of the gospel he preached was Christ (Gal 1:1, 11-12; 1 Cor 1:17; 2:1; 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor 12:1-3; Eph 3:3); the defense of the authority of the gospel that he received in Gal 1:11-12 provides the most unambiguous evidence of the divine source of Paul's commission. But it is his earliest extant letter that provides the clearest example of Paul's spokesperson role presented as a prophetic commission. Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul continually reminds them "of what he had told them, what they knew, and of warnings he had given them."<sup>145</sup> While this letter is unique in that Paul never quotes from the Old Testament,<sup>146</sup> his characterization of his ministry, his reception of the gospel, and his preaching of the gospel all overlap significantly with prophetic characteristics. "Our gospel," Paul says, "did not come (in)to you in word only but in power (δύναμις) and in the Holy Spirit and a plenitude of assurance (πληροφορία πολλῆ)" (1 Thess 1:5). This reception was not the only indication of the power of the gospel that Paul brought; Paul himself became "emboldened" (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα)—an inceptive aorist denoting a "decisive moment,"<sup>147</sup> perhaps marking a change in Paul's state of mind after his "outrageous mistreatment" in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2) — and spoke the gospel of God to them, albeit ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι (in much strife).<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 55.

<sup>146</sup> Paul seems to allude to the OT in 1 Thess 2:4, 16; 4:5, 6, 8; 5:8, 22.

<sup>147</sup> Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 136; Malherbe calls it an ingressive aorist.

<sup>148</sup> Paul unfortunately does not specify what this great trial/struggle/contest was. Given that the most frequent uses of ἀγών in Greek involve assemblies for athletic contests or games, Paul's description of the Thessalonians receiving the gospel "in great persecution (ἐν θλίψει πολλῆ)" (1 Thess 1:6), interpretation has naturally tended to envision some element of external opposition to Paul's preaching; see Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 137-8. This need not be necessarily what Paul is indicating. There is overlap of key terminology with the athletic metaphors of Stoic and Cynic philosophers; see Abraham J. Malherbe, "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983): 249. In this context, ἀγών could refer to either an internal or an external struggle. The word is not very

For this task, Paul has been “approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel” (1 Thess 2:4; cf. Gal 2:7; Jer 11:20). This approval and entrusting places Paul’s description of his call in the tradition of the biblical prophets.<sup>149</sup> “Approval” (δοκιμάζω—here in the perfect tense, which can indicate a past event with ongoing significance in the present) is a word frequently used by Paul. Many times he uses it in the sense that it has here, as an “approval” either by God or conscience (Rom 1:28 [here it is the Gentile *disapproval*]; 2:18; 12:2; 14:22; 1 Cor 11:28; 16:3; Phil 1:10). But Paul uses the root word twice in 1 Thess 2:4: once with this sense of approval, and a second time with the sense of “testing,” where “God tests/judges our hearts” (cf. 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 8:8, 22; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 6:4; 1 Thess 5:21; [Eph 5:10; 1 Tim 3:10]).

This second sense of δοκιμάζω as testing carries prophetic weight as a ministerial model.

The key reference here is Jer 6:27:

בְּחִיבֵי אֶת־עַמִּי וְבָחַן אֶת־בְּרִיָּהּ  
 δοκιμαστήν δέδωκά σε ἐν λαοῖς δεδοκιμασμένοις καὶ γνώση με ἐν τῷ δοκιμάσαι  
 με τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτῶν

There are slight but significant differences between the two texts. The Hebrew text reads: “I will give you [to be] an assayer (someone who tests metals)<sup>150</sup> for my people; you will know and examine their ways.” The LXX gives an almost paradoxical reading: “I will give you [to be] a tester among a people having been tested, and you may know *me* when I test/approve their

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frequent in biblical literature; where it is used, it refers mainly to battles (2 Macc 10:28; 14:18; 14:43; 15:9; 4 Macc 9:23; Wis 10:12). Four Maccabees uses it frequently to refer to the agonies/struggles of the martyrs (11:20; 15:29; 16:16; 17:11); Paul does seem to use it in this sense in Phil 1:30, where he refers to the Philippians’s struggles as the “same conflict” as Christ faced. Athletic contests and metaphors appear to be the context in 2 Macc 4:18; Wis 4:2; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; and Heb 12:1. Nevertheless, given the potential connection to Moses and his speech impediment and the possibility that Paul’s illness could have been a speech impediment (Gal 4:13; cf. 2 Cor 10:10; 2 Cor 12:7), it is possible, however improbable, that the struggle here is a struggle in speaking. This fits with Paul’s emboldened preaching and makes further sense of the inceptive aorist.

<sup>149</sup> Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 141.

<sup>150</sup> The difficulty in this verse is figuring out what to do with בְּחִיבֵי. John Bright suggests that it may be a gloss that confuses *bāḥōn* with *baḥan* or taken with “bronze and iron” in verse 28 in *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 49. I’ve tried to blend both in my translation.

ways.” The addition of the pronoun “me” as the object of “know,” and the objective subject of the infinitive “to test/approve,” shifts the emphasis slightly, making the relationship between God and the prophet almost univocal; this univocality may be what the LXX is attempting to emphasize. The Greek rendering also inserts, latently or patently, positive elements of divine judgment. This provides a lens on the exile rectification of Israel. God is made known in judgment, the same theme we will take up in our examination of the prophet’s role in reconstituting Israel through the recapitulation of Israel’s story. Paul also makes use of this smelting imagery (1 Cor 3:13) and having tested/approved one whom he is sending (2 Cor 8:22-24).<sup>151</sup> Looking beyond the scope of a single word, the broader context of Jeremiah reveals more significant overlaps. Paul comes to a people chosen (1 Thess 1:4; cf. the “people previously approved/tested” in LXX Jer 6:27), albeit with some reluctance (1 Thess 2:2; cf. Jer 6: 10-11a); Paul is emboldened by God to speak (1 Thess 2:2; cf. Jer 6:11b-12).

In 1 Thess 1:5, Paul’s description shifts significantly from Jeremiah’s discourse. Jeremiah preaches a message of condemnation (6:13-15), offers a choice to the people (6:16), observes their failure (6:17), and predicts their punishment (6:18-26), a classic prophetic sequence.<sup>152</sup> Paul, however, preaches by signs and humble example (1 Thess 1:5)—an example that is maternally gentle (2:7-8) and paternally demanding (2:11-12); the Thessalonians imitate him

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<sup>151</sup> See Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 205: “Having asserted the integrity of the gathering and administration of the collection, Paul goes on to commend a second unnamed brother he is sending to Corinth. The fact that he refers to him as **our** brother may indicate that this ‘brother’ comes from Paul’s own network of laborers for the gospel (although we learn in v. 23 that this second brother is also to be regarded as sent by the Macedonian churches). In any event, Paul informs the community that he has **often tested** (*dokimazō*) this brother and *can vouch for his character*, which is marked by earnestness.” Admittedly, this is not the testing/approving of a community, but the ‘charism’ to discern an individual’s character is not so far removed from the ability to examine a community’s ways. Paul need not have Jeremiah in mind here (it is perhaps more likely that he simply means to provide a recommendation for someone who needs the trust of the community as he will be handling a large amount of coin. In either case, Paul is either exhibiting a feature of the prophetic vocation to the community or exercising an apostolic task, one linked closely to the commissioned understanding of “ἀπόστολος.”

<sup>152</sup> Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 137.

(1:6), they turn away from idols (1:9), and the gospel not only transforms them but the whole region (1:6-10). Where Jeremiah finds only dross (Jer 6:30), Paul discovers a purified model (τύπος) for other believers (1 Thess 1:6). These differences in style and outcome should not make us squeamish over the applicability of the comparison or question the potential textual echo. Prophecy is a contingent vocation; the prophet is commissioned with a word for a community at a particular time.<sup>153</sup> It is more important to recognize that the prophet's message is geared to the community's response and follows a patterned discourse.

The positive response of the Thessalonians to the gospel is good reason for Paul to give profuse thanks, and it is the cause for Paul to remind these models of transformation what it was they received. “Not a human word,” Paul reminds them, but “καθώς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν” (1 Thess 2:13—“thus it is truly a word of God, which is working among you who believe”). Here we can witness the human speaking for the divine and its effect. Moberly also recognizes and explains Paul's thanksgiving:

The divine nature of his words is implicitly attested by their continuing impact amongst the believing Thessalonians; there is thus an implicit nexus between divine origin (‘God's word’), transformative impact (‘at work’), and the responsiveness of faith (‘in you believers’). Paul is of course well aware that the hearing of his words as the word of God may not happen—as it did not happen on numerous occasions during his ministry, as both Acts and his letters make clear. This is why he in no way takes such hearing for granted but sees it as the cause of thanksgiving.<sup>154</sup>

The prophetic speech is conditional by its very nature. Announcements of impending disaster are speech-act warnings; announcement of good are speech-acts of invitation.<sup>155</sup> The differences

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<sup>153</sup> This is not to call into question the permanence of the “word of the Lord.” In Paul's case he certainly believes he has received the “last word” in a manner of speaking (cf. 1 Cor 15:8).

<sup>154</sup> Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 3.

<sup>155</sup> R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 120: “Such response-seeking language, while especially characteristic of prophecy, is common in human relationships more generally. Prophetic announcements of coming disaster can be seen to have the logic and dynamics of *warning*. If someone says to a person carelessly stepping onto a busy road, ‘You're going to be run over,’ the words are a warning, unconditional in form but conditional in substance, whose purpose is to

between Paul’s and Jeremiah’s approaches follow the logic of the message they have received. This accounts for the similarity of the sequence of their rhetoric without getting lost in the particular contingencies of the communities that they are addressing.

### Commissioned Heralds

Where the Greek etymology of *προφήτης* assisted us to understand the prophets’s “speaking,” the Hebrew *נביא* assists us to contextualize this speaking as initiated by a call. The root verb *נבא* within biblical literature has an “inclusive range of meaning,”<sup>156</sup> running from unhinged behavior (1 Sam 8:10-11; Jer 29:24-28) and ecstatic experience (1 Sam 10:11; 19:20; 1 Kgs 22:12) to rational discourse (1 Kgs 22:8; Ezek 37:10). On the basis of an editor’s interpolation in 1 Sam 9:9, *נביא* replaced an earlier terminology of “seer,” *רֹאֵה*. The earliest derivation for *נביא*, at least to the extent that comparative derivation is instructive, is to the Akkadian verb *nabū*, “to call,” where the passive form would refer to “one who is called,” and the active form to “speaking.”<sup>157</sup> The etymology reinforces the multivalence of the (e)vocation, holding together words that are not necessarily related in English (e.g. call, commission, preach).

The prophet’s commission is a specific subcategory of the “spokesperson” model of prophecy. For us, the “call” of the prophet is essential to connect prophet and apostle. The call is

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bring about a response (moving off the road) such that what is spoken of does not happen. Comparably, prophetic announcement of coming good have the logic and dynamics of *invitation*. If one person (with genuine intention) says to another, ‘I love you,’ they are inviting a response along the lines of ‘I love you too,’ which will lead to enhanced relationship—though of course the person addressed is able to decline the invitation (‘Thank you, but no thank you’), and what happens next (how the love of the first speaker will be realized) differs entirely according to whether the invitation is accepted or declined [*emphasis original*].” Moberly specifically references speech-act theory in his footnote. While I have borrowed his differentiation of warning and invitation, within speech-act theory these would both be commissive illocutionary speech-acts carrying the perlocutionary force of avoidance/performance. While I do not engage speech-act theory in this study, it is a helpful way to approach prophetic pronouncements, particularly given the participatory component of such speech (e.g., I cannot promise without committing myself) and the realization that words *do* things and are *events*.

<sup>156</sup> Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 28.

<sup>157</sup> See Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 28 and n. 34 on p. 250.

certainly its own literary motif, one we will examine shortly, but it is more importantly oriented towards the commissioning, or “sending,” of the prophet. Helpfully, Paul writes of this calling, sending, and preaching in Rom 10:14-15:<sup>158</sup>

How then may they call upon one whom they have not believed; and how may they believe of whom they have not heard; and how may they hear apart from preaching; and how may they preach unless they have been sent?—πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέσονται εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν; πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οἳ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; πῶς δὲ ἀκούσωσιν χωρὶς κηρύσσοντος; πῶς δὲ κηρύξωσιν ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσιν.

We’ll have the opportunity to examine the content of the preaching in the following sections; for now, it is enough to note the rhetorical circle which points to God’s initiative and purpose in the call and the sending of those with a message to preach. Humans cannot call upon the name of God to be saved (Rom 10:13) if they do not know “into”<sup>159</sup> whom they should trust/believe (10:14); because believing comes by hearing, they cannot hear apart from preaching (10:14), which first requires sending (ἀποστέλλω; 10:15). Prophetic preaching never originates in the prophet’s own initiative. The prophet is called, the word is received, and the prophet is sent. The sending is a key element of the prophetic motif. The verb πλῶ appears at the heart of God’s

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<sup>158</sup> See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (Dallas: Word, 1988) II, 621, and Craig A. Evans, “Paul and the Prophets: Prophetic Criticism in the Epistle to the Romans (with Special Reference to Romans 9-11)” in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 115-128, esp. 116. Both Dunn and Evans point to this text as containing an allusion to Isa 61:1. Paul quotes Isa 52:7 at the end of his rhetorical questions; sending and announcing/preaching are shared across both texts. The desire to get Isa 61:1 to adhere to these “apostolic” texts relates to Ferdinand Hahn’s proposal that the early Christian understanding of “apostle” is based primarily on a reading of Isa 61:1; see Ferdinand Hahn, “Der Apostolat im Urchristentum: Seine Eigenart und seine Voraussetzungen,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 20 (1974): 54-77.

<sup>159</sup> This construction, πιστεύειν εἰς, is an odd construction in Greek that seems to be a Christian construction, receiving far more attention in John’s Gospel, where it is used 39 times (1:12; 2:11, 23; 3:15, 16, 18 (2x), 36; 4:39; 6:29, 35, 40, 47; 7:5, 31, 38, 39, 48; 8:30; 9:35, 36; 10:42; 11:25, 26, 45, 48; 12:11, 12, 36, 37, 42, 44 (2x), 46; 14:1 (2x), 12; 16:9 (in the negative); 17:20); three of these instances refer specifically to “the name of him,” πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ: 1:12; 2:23; 3:18. Paul has a remarkably similar use of this phrase at least three decades before John makes such prominent use of it (cf. Rom 10:13, ἐπικαλέσθηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται, and Rom 10:14, εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν).

commissioning of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (Exod 3:10, 13, 15; 4:28; 7:16; Deut 34:11; Isa 6:8; Jer 1:7; Ezek 2:3); in each example the LXX translates πλσ as ἀποστέλλω.<sup>160</sup>

The call of the prophet is a particularly dramatic moment, and it “gave rise to a new literary category, the account of the call.”<sup>161</sup> This new literary form, stylized though it may be, grounds an essential function of the prophetic vocation, one that helps us to identify significant overlap with Paul’s account of his own call *and* the function that the recounting of his call has within his letters. Von Rad offers a helpful distinction in purpose between the call itself and its written account:

The men who speak to us in these accounts ... were faced with the need to justify themselves both in their own and other people’s eyes .... This makes clear that the writing down of a call was something secondary to the call itself, and that it served a different end from the latter. The call commissioned the prophet: the act of writing down an account of it was aimed at those sections of the public in whose eyes he had to justify himself.<sup>162</sup>

The dual relationship of the prophet should be given a prominent position; the prophet’s relationship *to the community* (horizontal) and the prophet’s relationship with God (vertical) intersect in the prophet, enabling prophetic intermediacy to be bi-directional (e.g., the prophet intercedes for the community to God, and acts as an intermediary for God to the community).

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<sup>160</sup> In Jer 1:7 and Ezek 2:3 the more emphatic ἐξαποστέλλω is used. This form is by no means rare, and it is not exclusively prophetic. Nevertheless, Luke uses it intriguingly in Acts in relation to Paul’s ministry; cf. Acts 9:30; 17:14; 22:21; cf. Acts 11:22 and 13:26. In a text where Luke effectively denies Paul the title of apostle, he includes terminology suggestive of a prophetic vocation.

<sup>161</sup> Von Rad, *Message of the Prophets*, 33.

<sup>162</sup> Von Rad, *Message of the Prophets*, 34. I have removed from the quotation two aspects of von Rad’s analysis that need to be corrected. First, he suggests that the prophet by his call is isolated away from the community and before God. This is not correct. Prophetic critique is always insider-critique; it may place the prophet in a minority position, or it may force the prophet to conscientiously adopt a minority status, but the continuation of critique should always be presented within the prophet’s perspective. Second, von Rad is generally reliable; he was a scholar of considerable importance and remarkable learning. Nevertheless, his Lutheran leanings appear in prominent places. Here, the notion of the prophet isolated before God and burdened with an individual task gives an all-too-recognizable picture of justification by faith.

But beyond the immediacy of the prophetic experience on the vertical axis, the words of the prophet are a later development with the community as the sole recipient.<sup>163</sup>

What von Rad locates forcefully and succinctly is an important element of the purpose of the prophet's call. The prophet's commission, like an ordination to ministry, reveals the prophet to the community. On the level of the prophet's own telling, it provides for the prophet's self-defense and justification to the community he or she challenges. On the later level of the narrative writing, the commission grounds the prophet within the tradition, signaling the readers to locate themselves not just as subject to the prophet's critique, but also then to join with the prophet's articulation of events from God's perspective.<sup>164</sup>

Galatians provides a helpful example of this process for Paul. Michael Gorman diplomatically states that "it is difficult to imagine a more passionate, angry, and yet caring pastoral letter than Paul's dispatch to the churches of Galatia."<sup>165</sup> Galatians is certainly a bracing letter, lacking a thanksgiving section, filled with blunt and excoriating attacks, and ending with an exhausted warning ("In the future don't give me trouble—Τοῦ λοιποῦ κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω;" Gal 6:17) before the final blessing. The cause of Paul's passionate rebuttal is that the Galatians have gone over to "another gospel" (Gal 1:6) after some destabilizing troublemakers

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<sup>163</sup> This secondary process would also allow for a more reflective than experiential process, where the prophet's self-understanding could be described in more hermeneutical terms.

<sup>164</sup> John Barton argues that the understanding of the prophet as one to be imitated reflects a New Testament interest in the prophets as people that grows out of the Second Temple interest in prophets as heroes, in *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 96-105. He notes that there is "plenty of evidence that in Judaism the prophets were revered as great teachers, but it is less often suggested that their *lives* are meant as a paradigm for later generations." His distinction is well taken and helpful for distinguishing textual trends. Nevertheless, the distinction is not entirely sustainable. Regarding the prophets as great teachers would certainly entail putting such teaching into practice, which is not so very far away from imitating the prophet (unless there is some suggestion that the prophet lived as a reprobate). Even in 1 Clement 17:1 where the Corinthians are encouraged to imitate the prophets, there is little likelihood that it was intended to mean *in all things*, like preaching naked, running around with yokes, marrying prostitutes, etc.

<sup>165</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 183.

(Gal 1:6-8; 5:10, 12) convinced them Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆν (Gal 2:14).<sup>166</sup> What is at stake for Paul is the absolute completeness of the work of Christ. Observance of the whole Law (3:5, 10, 12; 5:2-4), the division of humanity into Jews and non-Jews (Gal 3:27-29), the calendar of feasts (4:9-10), and especially circumcision (5:2-12; 6:12-13) are not unimportant, but they are relativized as inconsequential in light of the Christ event. Paul regards the Galatians as having set aside his gospel, his ministry, and, most important to our discussion here, himself (Gal 1:6-10).<sup>167</sup> Given von Rad's recognition that the writing down of the narrative call serves to justify the prophet to the community, we should not be surprised to find that it is here, in Galatians, that Paul provides us with the most detailed and sustained autobiographical account of his revelation, transformation, and commission (Gal 1:11-24), where it functions as a justification for Paul's authority, which has been questioned (Gal 1:6-10).

On the one hand, to highlight Paul's calling as a commission runs over well-established ground. His insistence on his divine commission is consistent throughout his letters (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor; 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 15-16; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:13; cf. Phil 4:9; Phlm 8). The similarities between Paul's recollection of his own call in Gal 1:15-16 and Jeremiah's calling (Jer 1:5) are also sufficiently uncontroversial; Paul's return to themes unique to Jeremiah, "building" and "demolishing" (Gal 2:18; cf. Jer 1:9),<sup>168</sup> reinforce this commission in vocational terms. On the other hand, there are two elements that should startle us. First, the recounting of the commission

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<sup>166</sup> I've altered to the text only to make it fit the grammar of my sentence. It is Paul's question to Peter: εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν? Paul tells the Galatians of his confrontation with Peter in Antioch because he considers the content of the controversy the same, cf. Gal 2:15-21.

<sup>167</sup> Clearly, it is Christ that Paul indicates is being set aside, as 1:7 makes clear with the addition of the "gospel of Christ." Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the rejection of "the one who called you" and Paul's immediate shift to first person pronouns in 1:8-10, reveals the slippage. To reject Christ is to reject Paul, and vice versa.

<sup>168</sup> Paul's vocabulary does not exactly match up with LXX of Jeremiah. Paul uses the verbs καταλύω and οικοδομέω; the verbs in Jeremiah are κατασκάπτω, ἀπόλλυμι, and ἀνοικοδομέω. If Paul is referring to the text from memory, as is likely, the transposition of prefixes in κατασκάπτω and ἀπόλλυμι and the loss of the prefix on ἀνοικοδομέω would be understandable. On the thematic level the two presentations are harmonious.

is different from his description of the gift of prophecy; at no point does Paul suggest that those who manifest these gifts in the church must have received a lifelong vocation to their task. The prophetic aspect of Paul's commission "from [his] mother's womb" (Gal 1:15) should indicate that we are dealing with something different and lifelong. Second, and more important for Paul's self-understanding, we should ask why Paul *needs* to recount his commission at all, and so elaborately at that.<sup>169</sup> Having a direct experience of God interpreted through the literary motif of a prophetic call is not the *only* means of establishing religious authority; it is not even the best means, given the apparent diminution of prophecy through the Second Temple period.<sup>170</sup> Once we are startled out of the complacency of "what happened" by contemplating how else Paul might have expressed his authority and responsibility—were he free to do so—we will be open to the significance of his self-expression. The connection of authority in the community to prophecy is a link that Paul himself makes by referring to a revelation (Gal 1:12) and gesturing to prophetic commissions (Gal 1:15). The need to justify his ministry and preaching in the face of challengers is understandable; choosing to do so by recounting his commission is prophetic.

### **Called to Mirror the Divine Pathos**

In the preceding sections, we have followed the implications of the prophet as a "spokesperson for God" whose ministry of speaking is initiated by a call and commission. This most basic understanding of the prophet might in some ways get us close to what a prophet "is," but, as I have indicated, I am more interested in what a prophet *does*. Before we can bridge the gap between being and doing, we need to look to what is *happening* in the prophetic call. The

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<sup>169</sup> The question could be well applied to the Gospel accounts of Jesus call to the disciples/apostles. If there is something inherently prophetic about the ministry that the future apostles will have, as I strongly suspect that there is, the call motif is a primary means of making the narrative gesture.

<sup>170</sup> See my note 140 on page 63.

prophetic call is not merely a summons to be sent in speech; it is an initiation into a profound personal communion, where the prophet not only delivers a “word” from God, but conveys the divine pathos that contextualizes the word to the community.

Abraham Joshua Heschel is, in his own way, prophetic for his insight into and sensitivity for those strange biblical figures who speak “one octave too high for our ears,”<sup>171</sup> making “no concession to man’s capacity.”<sup>172</sup> The prophets are compelling because they are propelled by the overabundance of the heart of God; they are not dispassionate proxies but an “approximation to the pathos of God.”<sup>173</sup> Heschel explains:

An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet’s reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. The typical prophetic state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos . . . . It is not, like love, an attraction to the divine Being, but the assimilation of the prophet’s emotional life to the divine, an assimilation of function, not of being. The emotional experience of the prophet becomes the focal point for the prophet’s understanding of God. He lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God [cf. Gal 2:20]. The prophet hears God’s voice and feels His heart. He tries to impart the pathos of the message together with its logos.<sup>174</sup>

This emotional experience, what Heschel identifies as sympathy, is to be distinguished from *imitatio*.<sup>175</sup> For Heschel, imitation is oriented backwards towards a world-denying static

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<sup>171</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 12.

<sup>172</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 10.

<sup>173</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 413.

<sup>174</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 31.

<sup>175</sup> It is important to note that Heschel’s characterization has not gone unchallenged. Martin Buber, for example, has argued against Heschel in *Prophetic Faith*, 139: “This does not mean at all that he ‘feels with’ God, as some think; the sensation assailing him is the sensation of his own love and suffering, but in feeling it he feels that he is following in the divine footsteps. In his own feeling the divine feeling is figured so strongly that in every stage he can read from his own lot the course of relations between YHWH and Israel . . . just because of this, [he is] bound up with the secrets of God and, just because of this, [he is] able to embody them in the form of signs. This is to be understood only from the world of Israelite faith, where the blood and soul of the theomorphic man know about his likeness character, which alone makes possible for him the imitation of God.” Buber’s correction is a positive one; his language preserves the human dimension of discernment better than Heschel. However, it does appear that Buber has oversimplified Heschel’s argument. In the previous quotation from Heschel we can see how Buber and Heschel are, in fact, much closer than Buber would have us believe. Like Buber, Heschel has located the focal point of the prophet within the prophet’s own emotional experience.

reality;<sup>176</sup> this is an overly platonic criticism and is not a necessary or helpful distinction. The prophet's sympathy is oriented towards a present "actual historical situation," where "in sympathy, divine pathos is actually experienced in the moment of crisis."<sup>177</sup> The prophet remains oriented towards the present-tense of the crisis, not judging "the people by timeless norms, but from the point of view of God. Prophecy proclaims what happened to God as well as what will happen to the people."<sup>178</sup> Prophetic "prediction," therefore, is less predictive than descriptive, and the description is *relational*. When the prophet pronounces judgment upon that community for failing to live up to the vocational "imaging" of God for all of creation,<sup>179</sup> the choice is a relational opposition. The community can continue on its current trajectory with the effect that the relationship will continue to deteriorate, or they can recommit themselves and thereby be reconstituted by turning to God. It is the prophet's ability to voice this crisis, and do so honestly because he has felt the heart of God, which allows him to be distinguished from the "false" prophet.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Heschel, *Prophets*, 412. This terminological distinction should not be carried forward when we look at Paul's "imitation" of Christ; imitation is not looking backwards for Paul — it is a relational term and carries much of the weight that Heschel ascribes to sympathy.

<sup>177</sup> Heschel, *Prophets*, 413.

<sup>178</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 29. See also James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology* (Walter Zimmerli Festschrift; eds. G.W. Coats and B.O. Long; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 22-41. See also James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 86-90. Sanders contention that the "false prophets" largely maintained a hermeneutic of continuity as opposed to the "true prophet" whose interest was bound to God's interests rather than the people's.

<sup>179</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion* (New York: Harper One, 2016), *passim*, esp. 76-87.

<sup>180</sup> See Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, 128: The Israelite prophet utters his words, directing them into an actual and definite situation. Hardly ever does he foretell a plainly certain future ... it is something of this kind the 'false prophets' pretended, as when they stood up against Michaiah (v. 11 ff) and prophesied to the king, 'God up and prosper!' Their main 'falsity' lay not in the fact that they prophesy salvation, but that prophesy is not dependent on question and alternative." See also, Craig A. Evans, "Paul and the Hermeneutics of 'True Prophecy,'" 560-570, esp. 560-1: "The false prophets and other 'official theologians' (i.e., priests and wisemen) maintained a hermeneutic of continuity ... Thus, the official theologians attempted to limit, localize, and domesticate God for the immediate and short-range interests of Israel. Such a hermeneutic sought to manipulate God ... Their messages had failed to explain to Israel who her God was and what he was like ... The hermeneutic of the true prophet primarily stressed God's role as creator rather than his role as sustainer."

Walter Brueggemann, heavily influenced by Heschel, argues that the prophetic mirroring of the divine pathos is extended to the community in hope: “Hope is the primary prophetic idiom . . . . Hope is what the community must do because it is God’s community invited to be in God’s pilgrimage. And as Israel is invited to grieve God’s grief over the ending, so Israel is now invited to hope in God’s promises.”<sup>181</sup> The prophet takes on the divine perspective and fundamentally orients himself human-ward, but not in a human way. The prophet enters into the relationality of the divine, feels what God feels, and desires the building of community as God desires it. The prophet’s outward orientation becomes an icon of the divine ethos because the “divine ethos does not operate without pathos . . . God is all-personal, all subject. His ethos and pathos are one.”<sup>182</sup> The pathos and ethos of God are fundamentally communal; so too, the prophet only becomes a prophet in the context of the communal relation of God to the world, and of the prophet to the community.

The primary location for Paul’s experience of divine pathos and the reading of history for the “signs of the times” is Romans 9-11 (esp. 9:1-5; 11:11-15, 25-29, 30-32). Outside of Romans, this prophetic identification can be recognized in Paul’s characterization of the gospel as presenting humanity with a choice. This good news is a *judgment* of God that reveals both the breach of the relationship, and God’s willingness to provide the means of reconciliation and

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<sup>181</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 66.

<sup>182</sup> Heschel, *Prophets*, 218. With Heschel’s recognition of this unity the ontological “movement” of my presentation of prophecy can begin to take shape. The model of this movement is Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (trans. Joan Stambaugh; rev. Dennis J. Schmidt; Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Obviously a full explication of this movement cannot be approached here; nevertheless, the movement can be briefly described by showing the concordance with Heideggerian terminology. The prophet is not a self-contained entity (*Vorhandenheit*) and more than a mere instrument (*Zuhandenheit*); the prophet is directed in an ever-outward world disclosure (*Erschlossenheit*) of relation in an event (*Ereignis*) that constitutes the wholeness of the prophet and the community. The terminology is helpful to note the movement away from ontologically static “definitions” of prophecy as it opens out to a “history” of event in time, a movement that continually seeks an intelligibility of the world (*Sein*). It is precisely this movement from a static entity to an acting “character” (see Aristotle on characters and improvement in repetition in *De poetica* 1148<sup>a</sup>2-5; 1448<sup>b</sup>10-24), especially a character who is advancing a plot, that allows for this presentation of prophecy to be open to a variety of philosophical unpacking.

rectification for the redemption of humanity. Paul’s prophetic crisis is the human wandering in unrighteousness marked by the infidelity of idolatry. Through the gospel’s message of hope, people have the opportunity to turn to God by conforming themselves to sanctification in Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Thess 4:3-8) through the imitation of Paul in his sympathy with Christ (1 Cor 4:16; Phil 4:17; cf. 1 Thess 1:6). This is entirely relational, as Paul’s *synkrisis* between the new and Mosaic covenant in 2 Cor 3:7-18 reveal. Thomas Stegman has argued persuasively that the conclusion of this dense passage—ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος (“And we all reflecting<sup>183</sup> the glory of God with unveiled face are being transformed into the same image from glory into glory”)—is a densely layered linguistic image, relating face, image, and glory with Christ, and κατοπτριζόμενοι (gazing/reflecting) with “enlightenment” and new creation.<sup>184</sup> Stegman writes, “I suggest that the apostle’s working assumption here is this: The Spirit *empowers* its recipients to take on more and more of Jesus’ way of thinking, perceiving, and valuing, and thus to embody more and more his character .... In Paul’s case, proper moral behavior entails continuing the story of Jesus by taking on the latter’s *ethos*.”<sup>185</sup> When this important observation is merged with Heschel’s recognition of the unity of the divine ethos and pathos,<sup>186</sup> Paul’s prophetic engagement can be seen in a new and vivid light. He can

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<sup>183</sup> I agree with Thomas Stegman that “gazing” is a better translation, though I would not go so far as Stegman in suggesting that “reflecting” “misses the thrust of Paul’s argument.” See *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin to Paul’s Argument in 2 Corinthians* (Analecta Biblica, 158; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005), 241, n. 660. In this case I have chosen to translate κατοπτριζόμενοι as “reflecting” primarily because the English resonance of “reflecting” captures the implied mirror in the Greek, while hinting at the connection to “image.” “Reflecting” also preserves additional resonances: reflecting → thinking, contemplating, etc. The context of the argument in this case makes it clear that God’s image is operative, and, thus, avoiding Stegman’s criticism of N. T. Wright’s interpretation that the reflection of God’s glory is “one another.” In all, “gazing” is less likely to be misunderstood, and serves as a better all-purpose translation.

<sup>184</sup> Stegman, *The Character of Jesus*, 233-247.

<sup>185</sup> Stegman, *The Character of Jesus*, 243. See also 173-4 where his analysis of 2 Cor 5:15 illustrates the preceding vertical dimension of “living for Christ” and the following of the horizontal dimension “who lived for others.”

<sup>186</sup> Heschel, *Prophets*, 218.

not only point to the transformation of the mind in its Greek sense of “thinking, perceiving, and valuing,” but also indicate the Jewish relational revelation of heart. It thus becomes a prophetic call to turn to God’s heart, the decision-making *and* feeling organ that unites *logos* and *pathos*. This is no mere sentimentalism; it is prophetic vocation.

### Contextualizing Narrators of Israel’s Story

In terms of highlighting the internal dynamics of the description that we are working through, we can now mark the movement away from what Blenkinsopp terms the prophet’s “self-awareness and God-awareness”<sup>187</sup> to the *Sitz im Leben* categories dealing with community and social function. When I use these terms, I do not mean the historical social context of the prophets, but rather their narrative social location that disencloses their continual disclosure in the ongoing relationship of word to world. The previous sections have been necessary to set the comparison of Paul with the prophets on firmer ground, and each one has progressively pointed to a communal relationship of the spokesperson with his call. Now, we can advance this connection by noting that the prophet’s speech connects the prophet and community together through the recapitulation of the core biblical narrative. The prophet reminds the community of in their shared vocation as royal and priestly ministers of God over creation through the liberation and formation of the leitmotif of the exodus-conquest.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 31.

<sup>188</sup> Here I am in broad agreement with N. T. Wright’s articulation of this narrative throughout his writings. His most recent summary can be found in *The Day the Revolution Began*, 86: “The Bible, then, offers an analysis of the human plight different from the one normally imagined. ‘Sin’ is not just bad in itself. It is the telltale symptom of a deeper problem, and the biblical story addresses that deeper problem; it includes the ‘sin’ problem but goes much farther. The problem is that *humans were made for a particular vocation, which they have rejected; that this rejection involves turning away from the living God to worship idols; that this results in giving to the idols—‘forces’ within creation—a power over humans and the world that was rightful that of genuine humans; and that this leads to a slavery, which is ultimately the rule of death itself, the corruption and destruction of the good world made by the Creator [emphasis original].*” This human vocation is the call to be a royal priesthood (77-84) that due to the human failure in this vocation must now be redeemed from their slavery and reconstituted as genuine humans to share in the

Admittedly, such a broad claim must be inferred from what stands in the background of various texts and even then cumulatively constructed. We can complain with Blenkinsopp that “it begins to look as if little importance was attached to the prophet’s life, activity, and social status prior to the commissioning, which severely limits our ability to answer [these historical social-location questions].”<sup>189</sup> As a result, the “occurrence of the term *navi*’ will not serve as a reliable guide to the social functions and roles of those to whom it is attached. These can be recovered, if at all, only by careful attention to the literary contexts in which language about prophecy occurs.”<sup>190</sup> The social role and function of a prophet, what a prophet “does,” is marked within the literary movements in the texts that are revealed by paying careful attention to the narratives that the prophets invoke.

Pulling von Rad’s exposition of the prophetic call motif forward as a narrative justification for the prophet’s ministry allows us to recognize that the call/commission of the prophet already contains the social dimension of the prophet’s mission. The prophet’s call cannot

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reign of the Messiah (84). I share Stegman’s reservation in *The Character of Jesus*, which still applies to Wright’s articulations, that “at the center of Wright’s argument in an assumption [that Abraham’s family was the response to the problem of Adam’s sin], based on his constructed Jewish worldview, which Paul is supposed to have made. It posits what cannot be found anywhere in the apostle’s writings, namely that Israel was by her obedience to remedy the sin of Adam. And it assumes the theologically objectional view that the gathering of sin *upon Israel* was part of God’s plan” (84). This is a position (albeit modified) still held by Wright; see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 510: “The point is that God’s plan, through Israel, for the rescue of the human race (and thus for the rescue and restoration of the whole creation) meant that Israel had to become the place where ‘sin’, the personified power opposed to God’s plan and purpose, would be ‘increased’, would ‘appear as sin’, would ‘become exceedingly sinful’. *And Torah was playing its God-given role within this strange purpose [emphasis original].*” Stegman is right to criticize this position on theological grounds, especially as Wright insists on using language that purports to suggest an understanding of “God’s plan.” On narrative grounds (and excised of the epistemological bravado of knowing God’s mind), I find it less objectionable to posit a narrative as a grounds for investigation. Narrative worldviews, by their nature, must be constructed; it runs in cross-purposes to literary function for authors to *state* their narrative frame, and even if they did we would be forced to question the nature of this frame within the text (i.e., is this a character’s, writer’s, author’s frame; does the frame control the meaning simply because the author states it, etc.). The framework of the story must be posited by an interpreter as part of the hermeneutical process (whole to part, part to whole). Literary analysis can neither be inductive nor deductive; it is less logical than metaphorical. Academic writing forces the logical reduction, but we can still make opening gestures to indicate where an argument can be broken open for further questioning.

<sup>189</sup> Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 34.

<sup>190</sup> Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 29.

be separated from the community to whom he is called to preach. The prophet's message was not a personal revelation intended for private *gnosis*. The content of the "received word" was communal, as Marc Zvi Brettler notes:

Contrary to popular perception, the prophets were not predominantly forecasters of the future, ancient fortune-tellers. Rather, they were *intermediaries between God and the people, spokesmen, and had a crucial role in critiquing and trying to change society to bring it in line with God's commandments*. Predictions of doom and destruction were intended to get Israel to repent and change its behavior. But when it seemed that Israel had gone too far, and must be punished (see esp. Jer. Ch 25), the main role of the prophet was to assure the nation that their punishment, which derived from God, was deserved."<sup>191</sup>

"Getting Israel to repent" necessarily involved preaching, but such preaching was not a moralistic wagging of the finger. Repentance was just as much a turning away from sin as it was a turning towards God, as von Rad expresses well:

the prophets believed, therefore, that salvation could only come if Yahweh arose to perform *new acts upon Israel* ... to 'look to' what was to come, and *to take refuge in Yahweh's saving act, which was near at hand*. The prophets were therefore the first men in Israel *to proclaim over and over again* and on an ever widening basis that *salvation comes in the shadow of judgment*.<sup>192</sup>

To turn toward YHWH, Israel would be reminded "over and over again" that YHWH had indeed redeemed him whenever he repented. This constant retelling of the saving acts of God is the primary social function of the prophet: the re-tellers of Israel's story who mold it and conform it to God's "new acts" to speak to Israel's contemporary context. Judgment and redemption cannot be separated; judgment is an act of rectification.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Marc Zvi Brettler, "Nevi'im" in *The Jewish Study Bible* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 435 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>192</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper, 1962) I, 185 (*emphasis mine*). See also James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," 22-41. Also James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972): 86-90. Sanders contention that the "false prophets" largely maintained a hermeneutic of continuity as opposed the "true prophet" whose interest was bound to God's interests rather than the people's.

<sup>193</sup> I've taken this translation of מִשְׁפָּט from conversations with Richard Clifford.

There is no greater redemption story in the Bible than the exodus. It is the core of the biblical narrative. Frequently permeating texts by allusion,<sup>194</sup> it is the hermeneutical principle of both the New and the Old Testaments.<sup>195</sup> The exodus is not a one-time act of redemption, but the manifestation of God’s very way of being; an act of redemption and creation<sup>196</sup> bound together by God’s covenant love. Moses, for example, sings to God following the exodus: “you have led this people you redeemed by **your covenant-love** (אֲהַבְתָּנוּ)” (ὠδήγησας **τῆ δικαιοσύνη σου** τὸν λαόν σου τοῦτον ὃν ἐλυτρώσω παρεκάλεσας τῆ ἰσχύι σου εἰς κατάλυμα ἅγιόν σου”; Exod 15:13),<sup>197</sup> a narrative recapitulation that links the community to God’s leadership through God’s loving-kindness. The exodus is *the* act of redemption that God will repeat: dethroning ruling powers<sup>198</sup> to call his people to covenanted service.<sup>199</sup> At its heart lies the prophetic paradox: “Israel’s freedom lies in their subjugation to YHWH.”<sup>200</sup> God liberates for further service—“a movement from one form of slavery to another, to a form of slavery that paradoxically emancipates and liberates.”<sup>201</sup> God’s liberating activity is not meant to free humanity from obligation; rather, service to God places humanity in its proper place, the emancipated privilege

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<sup>194</sup> Michael D. Coogan, “The Exodus,” *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 211. See also M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuch Traditions* (trans. B. W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 54: “The story of the saving from Egypt forms the crystalizing point of the entire Pentateuch narrative.” Famously Gerherd von Rad has called it the “little historic creed” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch* (NY: McGraw Hill, 1966). See also Gerherd von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 175-6, where he calls it “confessional in character ... Israel’s original confession.” Von Rad’s diction here reveals more about his own theological priorities than the text’s. We can attribute von Rad’s interest in the creedal significance of scriptural passages to his Lutheran presuppositions; without diminishing his insights about the significance of the texts recalling God’s saving act from Egypt, it is important to note their narrative contexts. Even in Ex 6 the instruction for parents is to tell their children the story, not provide them with a propositional creed.

<sup>195</sup> Richard Clifford, “The Exodus in the Christian Bible: The Case for ‘Figural’ Reading,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 358.

<sup>196</sup> Clifford, “The Exodus in the Christian Bible,” 348.

<sup>197</sup> I have bolded the relationship between the Hebrew “אֲהַבְתָּנוּ” and the Greek “τῆ δικαιοσύνη σου” as this will become a point of emphasis in my reading of Romans.

<sup>198</sup> Isa 41:11-12; 45:1-3; Ezek 20:33-34; Dan 5:21; Rom 8:38; Eph 3:10, 6:12; Col 2:15, *inter alia*.

<sup>199</sup> Jer 31:28-34; Ezek 20:35-38; 36:24-38; cf. 1 Cor 11:25; Mt 26:26-29 // Mk 14:22-25 // Lk 22:14-20, *inter alia*.

<sup>200</sup> Jon D. Levenson, “Exodus and Liberation,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 13.2 (1991), 157.

<sup>201</sup> Levenson, “Exodus and Liberation,” 158. Levenson notes that this notion is congruent within rabbinic writings and the Pauline theologies – a notion with ought to shape both Christian and Jewish spirituality.

of a task rather than the unencumbered liberty of an idea.<sup>202</sup> The redemption of the exodus has healed Israel (Exod 15:26; cf. Deut 7:15), so that, restored to justice (Deut 6:25), Israel is free to serve God (Ps 105:43-45; cf. Deut 6:25). Thus, biblical liberation is the salvation offered by God through personal encounter, enabling loving service, and establishing the dialectic between God's activity and the human response.<sup>203</sup>

The prophets understand this dialectic intimately (Amos 2:9-16; 3:1-2; 9:7; Hos 1:9; 6:7; 8:1, 11:1; 12:9, 14; 13:4; Ezek 20:34-35) and none more explicitly expresses this than Jeremiah (Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 31:31-34) and Second Isaiah (40:3-5; 41:17-20; 42:13-16; 43:16-21; 48:20-21; 52:11-12). Richard Clifford convincingly posits a single national narrative consisting of the exodus-conquest.<sup>204</sup> This national story was not merely a recital of how Israel came to be a people; Israel was *constituted* through its telling and reenactment.<sup>205</sup> With the prophets, Clifford observes that "the ending of the traditional story is changed in the prophetic tradition. Israel is to encounter Yahweh now not in his land but in his act of judgment. Israel may, after the judgment, regain possession of the land, *but only that part of Israel who have accepted the judgment* .... *The task of the prophet was to prepare Israel for the new ending of the story.*"<sup>206</sup> As this narrative

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<sup>202</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 660: "They would be a people with a task, not just an idea."

<sup>203</sup> Moberly, *Old Testament Theology*, 143: "On the one hand, God acts on His own initiative, calling people with a call that is irrevocable precisely because it depends on God and not on the one called. On the other hand, the relationship thus initiated is a real one in which there is everything to be gained or lost according to how people live within that relationship with God. It depends on God, and it depends on human response. The gift is free and unconditional; yet to respond rightly, do as to enter into the gift and appropriate it, remains crucial. This is surely, in essence, the dynamics and logic of love."

<sup>204</sup> Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 18-27. This story exists in two ideal types, the historic and cosmogenic. The historic places a higher emphasis on the human actors and is generally preferred by the prophets, while the cosmogenic emphasizes God's direct conquest of typological, other-worldly forces and generally appears in the narrative sources and the Psalms. It is "Second Isaiah, like his predecessors, retells the national story. He differs from them, however, in his easy movement between the historic and cosmogenic types, and in holding each in exquisite balance" (20).

<sup>205</sup> Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 23: "Israel defined itself by reciting the story. When Israel told its story, especially in the self-conscious solemnity of liturgy in the Temple court (which expressed in a special way the sacrality of the land), it actualized itself as Yahweh's people in an intense way."

<sup>206</sup> Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 23.

repeats throughout Second Isaiah, we can observe that the good news—“Yahweh is returning to Zion in a new Exodus-Conquest”<sup>207</sup>—calls for the prophet to “show [God’s] people how they are to respond”<sup>208</sup> to this good news through a series of addresses that are meant to turn Israel away from bondage and towards redemption by returning to their land. To re-enact the story *is* to bring Israel back from the chaos of the mighty waters (43:16), to lead Israel out of non-existence into existence. But only part of Israel will be engaged in the enactment of this narrative. This is the context of the Servant Songs (42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-11; and 52:13-53:12). For this task, “one group is obedient, the servant; the other is not. But as long as that one group does return, the other group somehow comes into being. One group’s faith-filled sacrifice of its reputation, goods, and safety rescues the other group from non-existence. The servant and the people are bound inextricably together.”<sup>209</sup> The importance of Clifford’s analysis cannot be overstated.

We will return to this exodus-conquest narrative in the next chapter, locating it within Romans. For now, it is enough to close out our discussion of Paul and prophecy by noting the general concordance between Paul’s ministry and these prophetic tasks. Paul’s familial conception of his own work (1 Thess 2:7-12) and the pastoral occasions of his writings indicate that his “goal is always to guide those to whom he writes toward a way of life, an ongoing pastoral narrative, that is more congruent with the gospel narrative of the death and resurrection of God’s Messiah.”<sup>210</sup> Narratives contain and explicate content and provide the opportunity for engagement which informs practice, and Paul recasts the biblical metanarrative with its central pinions of monotheism, election, and eschatology<sup>211</sup> into the newly revealed mold of a crucified

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<sup>207</sup> Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 76.

<sup>208</sup> Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 76.

<sup>209</sup> Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 58.

<sup>210</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 77.

<sup>211</sup> Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 610-618.

Messiah.<sup>212</sup> This is a fresh retelling of the narrative, an announcement of the new thing that God has done. It also initiates a “new ending” to the story, an in-between time of realized eschatology. It is because Paul lives within this narrative that he reacts with such urgency, founding communities “in word and deed” (Rom 15:18). Paul’s recognition propels him out to the world as the called emissary and servant of God (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 7:22, 23; 2 Cor 5:20; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1), founding communities who are called to follow his example as he imitates of Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Paul’s guidance for these communities continually teaches and reminds those who have made the redemption journey how they ought to respond to God’s gracious act of new creation. The formation of community is not just a response to the narrative, but the means of continuing and deepening the narrative within an eschatological framework.

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<sup>212</sup> See Alain Gignac, “Espaces géographiques et théologiques en Rm 1 :1-15 et 15 :14-33 : regard narratologique sur la ‘topologie’ paulienne,” *Biblical Interpretation* 14.4 (2006) : 385-409, especially 388 : « Le *kairos* Jésus-Christ, centre sur la mort fidèle de celui-ci, provoque un recomposition et une nouvelle mise en perspective identitaire, éthique et croyante. On serait en présence d’une *histoire* réduite à sa plus simple expression, d’une *intrigue* ramenée a un avant et un après de la croix, d’un *récit* qui, par la répétition de scènes parallèles et l’emploi de métaphores, situerait le narrataire non dans un cheminement de transformation, mais devant une interpellation. Bref, au lieu d’une structuration chronologique, on aurait une structuration topologique du discours paulinien [emphasis original] »

### CHAPTER THREE: READING ROMANS THROUGH A PROPHETIC LENS

Paul's Letter to the Romans can make a strong claim for the most analyzed piece of literature in the Western literary canon. Certainly, the amount of secondary literature written about this letter is mind-numbingly astounding. The interpretation of nearly every verse has been controversial at some point, and key terminology continues to be a matter of dispute. I offer no pretense of solving all or any of these issues by highlighting those elements and structures of Romans that correspond to prophetic themes and discourse. Controverted verses will remain controverted, even when read through a prophetic lens.<sup>213</sup> But reading Romans through a prophetic lens *does* help to recognize the literary coherence and integrity of Paul's missionary appeal and the story that frames it. Building off the elements of prophecy that we encountered in chapter two, Paul's retelling of Israel's narrative with reference to his sympathy with the divine pathos *and* his mission of community formation in light of that narrative constitute the context and content of his commission as a spokesperson of Christ.

To demonstrate this reading, I will outline why Romans makes the best "case study" for the identification of Paul's prophetic self-understanding. I will then sketch how Romans fits together when read through a prophetic lens before offering a close reading of Paul's prophetic

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<sup>213</sup> Unlike A. Andrew Das, to pick one example, I make no claim to "solve" the so-called "Romans Debate." See A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). I am less interested in finding "solutions" than I am in opening further readings. Rather than identifying a solution by imagining a Gentile-only audience for Romans, as Das does, I would prefer to speak of perspectives on the text. Each perspective, plausible or not, has the capacity to find fresh readings. We can identify readings as better or worse, based on shaky assumptions or plausible historical interpretations, and open or closed (based on their ability to open further discourse or close discourse into an enclosure). In brief, my insistence that "my" perspective does not "solve" controversial verses or passages remains a philosophical and theological resistance to enclosing around a new or different center. It is not to claim that such perspectives have little importance and, less still, an indication that I think all readings are of equal value in their relative relationship with each other rather than the text.

commission in Rom 1:1, the exodus-conquest narrative of Romans 3-8, and Paul's ministerial self-articulation in Rom 15:18-21.

### THE UNIQUENESS OF ROMANS?

Romans is unique in the corpus of Paul's undisputed letters for two reasons. First, it is the longest letter and contains lengthy sections of didactic material. Second, in all the other undisputed letters, Paul addresses a community that he has founded and with whom he has (or at least he defends) a leadership role; this leadership role means that he has authority as well as responsibilities (1 Cor 3:10-15, 4:14-20, 9:1-12; 2 Cor 12:11-13:10; 1 Thess 2:7; Phlm 8, 22). Paul has a very different relationship to the Roman churches. He acknowledges that he does "not build on another's foundation" (Rom 15:20) and that he has not yet visited them (Rom 1:11, 13); as established communities with whom he has had no personal encounter, we (and they) can expect the letter to be very different.

Paul is so unaccustomed to this new type of communication that he slips up in his dictation to Tertius (Rom 16:22).<sup>214</sup> As he is praising the Roman churches in the thanksgiving section, he writes, "for I long to see you, so that I might share with you some spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened (στηριχθῆναι, lit. settled, confirmed, established like a house or stone)" (Rom 1:11; cf. 1 Thess 2:8, 17; 3:2, 10, 13). Paul seems to catch himself, adding with a bit of awkwardness in phrasing: τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν συμπαρακληθῆναι ἐν ὑμῖν διὰ τῆς ἐν ἀλλήλοις πίστεως ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ — "I mean, to be encouraged together [at the same time] in you through each other's faith, yours and mine" (Rom 1:12). It is as if Paul has to remind himself that his role is

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<sup>214</sup> It would also be possible for Tertius to have recognized Paul's inconsistency and amended the discourse. In either scenario, we would be witnesses to Paul's lack of practice addressing communities that he has not founded.

different, and that this will be a very different kind of appeal.<sup>215</sup> The uniqueness of the situation provides an opportunity to search for modified expressions of his apostolic self-identification.

While Romans is unique because Paul does not personally know his audience, it does share similarities with other letters. Paul, for example, always addresses communities with an *ad hoc* purpose; Romans is no different. The tendency to regard Romans as totally unique has stemmed from an interpretive misunderstanding that regarded the letter as primarily doctrinal in nature.<sup>216</sup> This lens was challenged by F. C. Baur, who pointed out that all of the undisputed

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<sup>215</sup> To be clear, it isn't necessary to interpret Rom 1:11-12 as a slip requiring a clarification. Depending on how one imagines Paul composing the letter the τοῦτο δέ ἐστίν, "that is," might simply be a clarification to *avoid* a misunderstanding. See Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 52-3: "Paul apparently realizes that, in both the letter convention and in his posture as desiring to visit the Romans, he might be misconstrued as promoting a merely one-sided relationship. The repetition of words to include everyone serves to ensure that Paul's inclusive language captures all. Paul does not specify what this spiritual gift is. What is clear is that he sees the gift functioning within the church for mutual encouragement." See also John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 4567-7 and 566-574; the gift terminology and motif is a central component of Paul's thought and ministry, reshaped around the "gift" of the Christ event. The mutuality of the gift is a consistent theme for Paul and the clarification he provides here need not be a slip at all. Nevertheless, Paul makes no correction in this way in any other letter, and Rom 1:12 is the only place we find συμπαρακαλέω in Greek literature. For this reason I agree with Fitzmyer in his sense that Paul "diplomatically rephrases his relation to [the Roman Christians];" see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 75.

<sup>216</sup> Philipp Melancthon, for example, famously called Romans "*caput et summa universae doctrinae christianae* — the head and summary of universal Christian doctrine" in *Dispositio orationis in Ep. ad Rom. Philippi Melanthonis opera quae supersunt* (28 vols.; ed. C.G. Bretschneider; Halle: Schwetschke, 1834-1860), 15:445. This view was maintained, under modified phrasing, by T. W. Manson and Günther Bornkamm. See T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans — and Others," in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (ed. M. Black; Manchester: Manchester University, 1962), 225-241; Manson argues that Romans serves as a summary of Paul's thinking as it developed during his missionary struggles and that the letter serves as a handbook of doctrine. See Günther Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," *Australian Biblical Review* 11 (1963): 2-14; reprinted in *The Romans Debate* (ed. K. P. Donfried; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 16-28. Bornkamm's conclusion: "This great document, which summarizes and develops the most important themes and thoughts of the Pauline message and theology, and which elevates his theology above the moment of definite situations and conflicts into the sphere of the eternally and universally valid, this letter to the Romans is the last will and testament of the Apostle Paul." I would also include Daniel J-S Chae in this same grouping; see Daniel J-S Chae, *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles: His Apostolic Self-Awareness and its Influence on the Soteriological Argument in Romans* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 14-17. Chae challenges what he perceives to be "the post-Holocaust view that Paul writes Romans in order to correct an 'anti-semitism' among the Roman Gentile believers," and asserts instead that Paul writes "to secure the legitimacy of Gentile salvation by affirming the equality of Jew and Gentile" (16). Chae's concern with asserting the consistency of Paul's "theological argument in favour of the Gentiles" (300) produces "a summary of Paul's missionary convictions" (301). See also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 71-72 for a chart of the structure of Romans with verse references to other undisputed letters that would support the impression of a "general or encyclical letter, an essay letter." This is not Fitzmyer's position, but it does help to understand how this idea remained the default position of exegetes for so long. Fitzmyer, for his part, argues for a multi-purpose approach to Romans (80).

letters are written for an *ad hoc* purpose, not as general treatises; therefore, the historical conditions that Paul mentions in the letter (e.g., Rom 15:24, 28) ought to drive the interpretation of the letter itself.<sup>217</sup> Paul's stated reason for writing to the Romans is that he desires to "proceed on [his] way to Spain" and "be sped on his way (προπεμφθῆναι) there by [the Roman churches]" (Rom 15:24). Fitzmyer notes that "the recent modern respect for Baur's contention has resulted in an interpretation of Romans that has consequently introduced some of the occasion into the discussion of the purpose itself. Much of the 'Romans debate' of recent times has been precisely devoted to this aspect of the interpretation of Romans."<sup>218</sup>

This interpretive move, to highlight the occasion for writing as central to the purpose of the letter, opens the interpretation of Romans to the possibility that a shared vocational self-understanding makes it less unique and more like other Pauline texts. Paul, for example, continuously reminds the Romans of his apostolic status (Rom 1:15; 11:13; 15:16). When we can begin to see Paul's letters as driven *both* by exigent circumstances within individual communities *and* as one of the means through which he lives and practices his vocation,<sup>219</sup> the substitutionary *parousia* of the letter, and its importance for him and the addressed communities,

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<sup>217</sup> F. C. Baur, "Über Zweck und Veranlassung des Römerbriefs und die damit zusammenhängenden Verhältnisse der römischen Gemeinde: Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* (1836): Heft 3.59-178; citation taken from Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 81.

<sup>218</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 75.

<sup>219</sup> I mean this is the sense that Wayne Meeks uses Paul's "authority." Meeks has argued in *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 122 that the Corinthian correspondence was driven by "different kinds of authority." Paul's exercise of authority involved visits, emissaries, and letter writing. Meeks says that "the letters themselves are instruments used intentionally to exert authority; they therefore exhibit the strategies of influence that Paul and his co-workers though would be effective" (117). Paul's authority, from Paul's perspective, derives from his vocation — a vocation that requires "strategies of influence" for the purpose of extended relationship. Attaching these elements to vocation rather than raw authority presents a more charitable reading of Paul than one who seeks "social control" (117; cf. 113-4). See also, Patrick Miller, Jr. "The World and Message of the Prophets: Biblical Prophecy in its Context," in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker* (ed. J.L. Mays, D.L. Petersen, and K. H. Richards; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 102: "The issue of prophetic authority rises constantly within the stories and implicitly within the prophetic oracles. The call stories and the accounts of prophetic disputations represent an effort to establish the credentials of the prophets."

can come into full theological significance. To walk out on an admittedly speculative limb, one of the reasons why we have relatively few self-references within Paul's letters is that the letter is itself a lived out vocation; prophetic *praxis* unites the disparate audiences of the individual letters under the prophetic activity of preparing the community for the end of the story with a message from God relayed by an appointed messenger. Paul's desire to preach the gospel and found communities where no one has heard of Christ (Rom 15:20), his vocation as the apostle to the nations/Gentiles (Rom 11:13), is evidenced not only in event but in text. From this perspective, Romans is not unique but paradigmatic.

The dynamic interface of a unique address to a community that Paul has not founded and the paradigmatic unfolding of vocation offer the possibility for clarity with respect to the paradigm. By explicitly denying his authority within the Roman community while maintaining an authority with respect to the community,<sup>220</sup> Paul offers us a small but potent window into the grounds for his authority. It is the uniqueness of the circumstances of his address that requires Paul to emphasize a different mode of authoritative address, namely the prophetic. But it is the similarity of Romans with his other letters that allows us to suggest that his prophetic authority and identity have been present throughout his ministry. The prophetic mode was not an *adopted* role for the purpose of convincing the Romans to assist the mission; it was a characteristic of Paul's own self-conception that is responding to the exigent circumstances of the letter's address.

This unique/similar dichotomy is clearly evidenced when we compare Paul's treatment of gifts in Romans and First Corinthians.<sup>221</sup> The texts read:

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<sup>220</sup> See Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 38. Wagner notes Paul's use of a trusted emissary to deliver his message as a further means to provide an authority of presence, as he does in other letters (1 Cor 16:15-18; 2 Cor 8:16-24; Phil 2:19-24). The emissary functioned as an initial reader, empowered to interpret the letter properly, via the rhetorical means of the time, to the community and convey Paul's perspective and experience of the situation he was addressing. Beyond the initial reading, such emissaries could also serve as an ongoing resource for the conveyance and interpretation of Paul's own teaching (e.g. 1 Cor 4:16-17; 16:10-11; 2 Cor 8:16-24; Phil 2:19-24).

<sup>221</sup> Eph 4:11 is also relevant, but because of its disputed status I offer it here for reference only.

Rom 12:6-8	1 Cor 12:28	Eph 4:11
<p><sup>6</sup> ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητείαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως,</p> <p><sup>7</sup> εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ, εἴτε ὁ διδάσκων ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ,</p> <p><sup>8</sup> εἴτε ὁ παρακαλῶν ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει· ὁ μεταδιδούς ἐν ἀπλότητι, ὁ προϊστάμενος ἐν σπουδῇ, ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἰλαρότητι.</p>	<p>Καὶ οὗς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.</p>	<p>Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους</p>
<p>6 And having various gifts according to the gift having been given to us, whether prophecy according to the proportion of faith,</p> <p>7 whether ministry in ministering, whether one who teaches, in teaching,</p> <p>8 whether one who exhorts in exhortation; one who distributes, in integrity; one who leads, in diligence; one who does mercy, in cheerfulness</p>	<p>And some accordingly God placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then powers, then gifts of healings, helpers, administrators, varieties of speech</p>	<p>And he [Christ] gave some accordingly apostles, and some prophets, and preachers of the gospel, and some shepherds and teachers</p>

Clearly, Paul’s theology of gift and understanding of charism are more complex than can be addressed here.<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, the numbering given in First Corinthians clearly establishes a hierarchy of gifts, and the grammatical similarity of the listing of the first four gifts in Romans offers a similar approach.<sup>223</sup> What is more important for our discussion is the *absence* of

<sup>222</sup> For a full treatment of the complexity, see John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

<sup>223</sup> Porter, *Letter to the Romans*, 236-7: “The grammatical structuring might be used to differentiate the first four gifts, but then to lump the last four together, as if they had something in common, or again it may simply be a stylistic variation designed to keep interest in the sequence as it is presented, without the need to differentiate each one from the others ... However, the different historical contexts of these letters and the addresses to which they are written should encourage caution in such an equation.” Such caution should be noted. But as I am precisely addressing the differing circumstances of the letters (and as we have little choice but to compare similar passages in the letters of Paul in order to interpret), comparison is justified; “equation” presents something of a straw man, given

“apostles” in the Romans list. Given Paul’s reference to his apostolic status (Rom 1:5; 11:13; 15:16), this absence *must* be addressed, even in its perplexity.

As I see it, there are three basic interpretive options for addressing this absence: an unintentional gaffe, an intentional exclusion based on audience, and an intentional exclusion based on author. First, Paul could have forgotten to include apostles in this list of gifts; this is exceptionally unlikely and can be dismissed out of hand.<sup>224</sup> Second, given the potential lack of an apostolic foundation for the Roman churches, Paul has subsumed the apostolic gift under his broader purpose of financing his mission to Spain; the “mission appeal” makes it plausible that he would want to avoid raising differences that would distract from his central purpose. This comports with the “‘mother lode’ of early Christian confessional material”<sup>225</sup> found in Romans — material intended to provide protreptic (and parenetic)<sup>226</sup> persuasion, as well as to establish commonality. A third option would take account of Paul’s use of his listing of ministries in First Corinthians, where it serves both to elevate Paul’s discussion of his apostolic rights and authority (ch. 9) and to correct an over-emphasis on charismatic revelatory experiences (chs. 13-14).

Paul’s use of the list of gifts in 1 Cor 12:28 would count as a self-reference that reinforces the

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that equation in literary texts is rarely appropriate. Porter is correct in his assertion that the list itself “probably represents a group of representative and helpful functions that need to be performed within the community, rather than an exhaustive list of all the callings that God give his people” (238).

<sup>224</sup> I know of no interpreter who takes this position, and I’ve listed it only as a logical possibility. Given Paul’s totalizing insistence on his apostolic identity and authority, I find no possibility that Paul discusses spiritual gifts without addressing the gift of apostleship.

<sup>225</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 245. Longenecker continues, “suffice it here to say (1) that these pre-Pauline affirmations and materials were presumably known (whether in whole or in part) to Paul’s Christian addressees at Rome (whether ethnically Jews or Gentiles), and (2) that Paul evidently used them to build bridges of commonality with his addressees, thereby instructing them in ways that they would understand and appreciate” (247). I am in complete agreement and would add that the establishment of a common agreement is in accordance with the missionary appeal of the letter. These common elements are intended to erase any potential doubt as to what the content of Paul’s preaching will be in Spain. See also Longenecker’s similar hypothesis with respect to Paul’s discussion of righteousness (304-5).

<sup>226</sup> See Stanley Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Westminster: John Knox, 1986), 92. The differentiation of protrepsis and paraenesis is fuzzy in antiquity.

authority he uses as justification for his style of address. The Romans list in 12:6-8 could, therefore, serve a similar purpose, establishing the very mode of authority Paul wishes to emphasize in his address.

Reading Paul through a prophetic lens would allow for the permutation of options two and three, providing an explanation for how prophecy would necessarily straddle the communal and authorial interpretations. Prophecy would be a mode of authority known to the Roman churches (Rom 12:6-8) *as well as* the dominant mode of authority Paul is using in his address. The two points are mutually reinforcing under a prophet who serves as an intermediary between God and the community, and the community and God. The uniqueness of the Letter to the Romans allows for this interpretation, and the consonance of address allows us to support the relationship of apostle and prophet throughout Paul's writings.<sup>227</sup>

Through the rest of this chapter, I will argue that it is specifically the prophetic dimension of Paul's apostolicity that governs Paul's address to the Romans. This is not to imply that other elements of apostolicity are not present. Certainly, the priestly dimension can be seen clearly (e.g., 12:3; 15:16), and Paul's assumption of a recognized authority and leadership would give insight into a kingly dimension of apostolicity. Focusing exclusively on the prophetic perspective does not indicate that it is the only perspective worth looking through; it is, however, the

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<sup>227</sup> Throughout this analysis I have glossed over a differentiation of prophecy within Paul's letters. For the purposes of simplicity, I have attempted to differentiate an office of prophecy, or what might be better termed vocational prophecy, and ecstatic prophecy. Vocational prophecy would be authoritative in its own right; ecstatic prophecy is contingent and requires interpretation. The discussion of prophecy within the Corinthian community in 1 Cor 13-15 would fall into the category of manifestations of prophecy; whereas the prophecy discussed in Romans 12:6-8 would fall into the category of authoritative prophecy. Frank Matera defines the use of prophecy in Romans as "the gift to discern God's will and plan through the power of the Spirit" in *Romans* (Paideia Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 291; this is clearly a leadership faculty and different from the inspired speech, which seems to be the sense of "prophecy" in First Corinthians. My sense throughout is that prophecy and apostleship are not in contrast or competition but are mutually reinforcing gifts.

perspective least looked-through and the subject of our study. To make this case, I will begin by offering a sketch of how adopting a prophetic perspective would effect our reading of Romans.

## READING ROMANS THROUGH A PROPHETIC LENS

Before turning to specific passages in Romans, two preliminary points need to be made. First, if we are to address a reading through a prophetic lens, we should acknowledge that Romans is written with an epistolary structure. The formal elements of this structure *ultimately* determine both the structure and content of individual sections, although the open-ended “body” of the epistolary structure allows for a wide range of flexibility. Translating elements across these structures is not indicative of any desire on my part to re-categorize Romans as something other than what it is. As discussed in the previous section, the letter is itself an element of prophetic praxis, but its form corresponds to a genre that is not itself prophetic.

Second, comparing content across genres requires a certain level of abstraction and generalization. Such generalizations require a telescopic vision, but offer the benefit of seeing larger connections than a microscopic view would allow.<sup>228</sup> Telescopic perspectives are necessarily constructed, and as constructions, the zoomed-in image might not match up precisely with the larger picture. An example might help to illustrate what I mean. Georges Seurat’s *A Sunday on La Grand Jatte*<sup>229</sup> (any of Seurat’s paintings would work, as would impressionist paintings) offers some parallel to the perspective. From afar, the contours and shapes of the landscape and figures are clear; the scene takes shape at a distance. As one zooms in to singular

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<sup>228</sup> See Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University, 1998), 7-25 for a fuller treatment of telescopes and microscopes. I’ve taken this vocabulary from her.

<sup>229</sup> Georges Seurat, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, 1884, Oil on Canvas, 81 3/4 x 121 1/4 in., Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Available here: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/27992>; accessed March 28, 2017.

points on the canvas, the scene disappears and one realizes that the dots of color are distinct and brushed over so as to mingle with their surroundings. So too with Paul's writing. The broad schemes have to be discerned with some abstraction, and as a result some perspective *must* be adopted. When we zoom into individual verses and phrases, the picture disappears; sentences and sections can blend multiple elements, and the dialectical style of Paul's argument will dominate.

In developing my reading of Romans, I have attempted to hop back and forth<sup>230</sup> between individual sections and the broader picture, altering my interpretation of each as I go along. Looking to Romans 9-11 can provide an example of how this hopping works. Clearly the content of these chapters requires a much more detailed analysis than is possible here, but its complexity offers a good reason to start there. Nearly one quarter of the *total* quotations from the Old Testament in *all* of the undisputed letters occur in Romans 9-11, and this intensity of citation is interwoven with exceptionally condensed argumentation. This indicates that it has been laboriously composed. Identifying a compositional structure here would offer a strong case for authorial intent and offer justification for searching for similar structures throughout the text.

In the previous chapter, I suggested a similarity between Paul's and Jeremiah's preaching where the "content" of their commissioning unfolded in a more or less "classic" prophetic sequence of presenting a choice, observing the response, and then giving a warning/promise of judgment/rectification. This constructed "classic" sequence bears a striking similarity to Rodrigo Morales's division of Romans 9-11 "into three broad subsections: (1) 9:6-29: God's Election; (2)

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<sup>230</sup> I owe my terminology to Clifford Geertz, "'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28.1 (Oct. 1974): 43. "Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explications of one another."

9:30-10:21: Israel’s Unbelief; (3) 11:1-36: Israel’s Ultimate Fate.”<sup>231</sup> Thus, if Romans 9-11 resembles prophetic criticism in its rhetorical sequence, and if it as an integral part of the letter as a whole, then the presence of other prophetic motifs would suggest that the letter is, at least in part, a demonstration that the author wishes to present himself as a prophet.

When we add in the other elements of prophecy that I have suggested—the prophet’s commission, the retelling of Israel’s story, and prophetic praxis—a fuller picture comes into view, a picture that can be laid onto Romans with a repeating correspondence. Looking through a prophetic lens offers the following perspective on the broad flow of Romans:

Call and Commission of the Prophet	1:1-17
Prophetic Condemnation	1:18-2:11 (Gentiles); 2:17-24 (Jews)
The Presentation of Choice	2:12-16 (Gentiles); 2:25-29 (Jews)
Election and the Failure of Vocation	3:1-20
Promise of Judgment/Rectification	3:21-31
Retelling Israel’s story (Exodus, Abraham, Adam)	3:21-4:25; 5:12-14
New Thing	5:1-11
Promise of Judgment/Rectification	5:15-21
Retelling Israel’s Story (exodus/conquest)	6:1-7:12
Election and the Failure of Vocation	7:13-24a
The Presentation of Choice	7:24b-8:8
Promise of Judgment/Rectification	8:9-39
Prophetic Praxis	9:1-3
Election and the Failure of Vocation	9:4-29 (Jews)
Prophetic Condemnation	9:30-10:21
Promise of Judgment/Rectification	11:1-11:32
Prophetic Praxis	12:1-15:13
Call and Commission & Prophetic Praxis	15:14-16:27

There is not enough space here to discuss or justify each of the choices and interpretations that inform such an outline, and I would admit to a fair amount of overlap within

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<sup>231</sup> Rodrigo Morales, “‘Promised through His Prophets in the Holy Scriptures’: The Role of Scripture in the Letter to the Romans,” in *Reading Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (ed. Jerry L. Sumney; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 118. Morales helpfully characterizes Paul’s use of scripture as prophetic: “Like the prophets before him, Paul re-appropriates the language of earlier biblical texts to address problems in his own day” in “‘Promised through His Prophets in the Holy Scriptures,’” 110. In my proposal, I am going beyond Morales to suggest that it is not only in Paul’s use of biblical texts but also in Paul’s adoption of the basic narrative progression of those texts as well.

sections. Just as in the analogy to Seurat’s painting, no categorization is distinct. The cumulative effect of layering each of these elements is the means to discover the prophetic aspect of Paul’s self-understanding in Romans.

## ESTABLISHING SPECIFIC PROPHETIC MOTIFS

### **The Prophetic Commission: Romans 1:1**

Paul’s greeting (1:1-7) to the Romans is an important section, identifying Paul for his audience and laying the frame for the expository portion of his letter. What will be most important for us will be Paul’s self-identification. Frank Matera suggests that “Paul carefully introduces himself in a formal way, as if he were an ambassador presenting his diplomatic credentials.”<sup>232</sup> The ambassadorial role that Matera recognizes relates precisely to the prophetic dimension of the commission; the relationship between commission, apostle, and prophet have already been discussed. To examine some of this different speech and what it could mean about Paul’s own self-identification, the phrases δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (“slave of Jesus Christ”), ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ (“appointed for the purpose of the good news of God”), and προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίας (“[the good news] was announced before through his prophets in the holy writings”) deserve further analysis.

#### *Slave/Servant*

The phrase “δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ — slave/servant of Jesus Christ” — could easily be passed over without remark. But Paul’s repetition of δοῦλος (6:16 [2x]; 6:17; 6:19[2x], 6:20; cf. a similar repetition of the word in 1 Cor 7) and the associated verb δουλεύω (6:6; 7:6; 7:25; 9:12;

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<sup>232</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 26.

12:11; 14:18; 16:18) suggests on the literary level that the diction here is not only a title but a proleptic reference to important points in the letter.<sup>233</sup> Recognizing the distinct literary use of δοῦλος gains strength by noting that only Philippians offers this phrase in the greeting (Phil 1:1),<sup>234</sup> where δοῦλος is also repeated significantly in the Christ hymn (Phil 2:7; cf. 2:22 — δουλεύω with Timothy as subject).<sup>235</sup>

Paul's use of δοῦλος reflects a vocational rather than an ontological understanding. Paul uses this title not just to "stress his total submission and commitment to Jesus Christ,"<sup>236</sup> but to highlight this connection with his κύριος, to make clear to his hearers/readers that he speaks *for* this κύριος.<sup>237</sup> He also uses this title, like the greeting in Philippians, to highlight his imitation of the servant leadership of Christ. The full integration of elements that converge in δοῦλος makes it less likely that Paul claims only to be one who "will claim no social standing in his approach to the greatest imperial capital his world had ever known;"<sup>238</sup> instead the term is a convenient short-

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<sup>233</sup> This is consistent with Paul's use of other theologically significant terminology within the greeting section of the letter. Faith, obedience, and grace are repeatedly referenced throughout the letter in ways that could hardly be accidental.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. "ἀπόστολος" 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1. 1 Thessalonians has no title included in the greeting; in Philemon Paul describes himself as a prisoner: δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. In Gal 1:10 Paul will refer to himself as Χριστοῦ δοῦλος where his service is paired by contradistinction with πείθω and ἀρέσκω. Both are persuasion verbs; this is obvious with πείθω. We often translate ἀρέσκω as "please," but its use in monumental inscriptions suggests that it carries a sense of being useful to the city or empire; see Moulton-Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, 75. This reinforces the "servant" understanding as a spokesperson and one who acts for the benefit of a greater power or authority. In the disputed Letter to Titus the author uses the title δοῦλος θεοῦ, ἀπόστολος δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Tit 1:1). The Letter of James also begins with the author identifying himself as θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος (Jas 1:1).

<sup>235</sup> In Philippians the proleptic use of δοῦλος, like its use in Romans, reinforces, rather than undermines, Paul's use of the term as a title. The authority implicit in so strong an identification with Christ and his 'style' of leadership (Philippians) and the ambassadorial approach (Romans) mutually reinforce each other. The use of δοῦλος in Romans 6 (as will be argued later) certainly carries exodus resonances, but these are better understood in vocational terms. Being a servant of Sin or a servant of God is rooted in the human vocation from Gen 1:26-28.

<sup>236</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 231.

<sup>237</sup> See also David E. Aune, "The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John," in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 176: "The notion of 'servant,' often used to characterize the authors of early Christian letters, is not necessarily a title suggestive of lowliness and humility, but may be understood from OT usage as an honorific title."

<sup>238</sup> Wright, *Letter to the Romans*, 415.

hand for “an integration of life, thought, work, prayer, and not least the building and maintaining of communities.”<sup>239</sup>

The real problem is that neither slave nor servant adequately capture the use of δοῦλος in the LXX. The LXX frequently translates עֲבָדִים as δοῦλος, although παῖς is also used. It can describe the patriarchs (Gen 26:24; 24:14; Ezek 28:25), Moses (Exod 14:31; Josh 14:7; 2 Kgs 18:12), David (2 Sam 3:18; Ezek 34:23; 37:24), other kings (2 Chr 32:16; Hag 2:23), worshipers (Ps 134:1; 135:1), and, most importantly for our purposes, the prophets (Amos 3:7; 2 Kgs 9:7; 10:10; Jon 1:9; Ezra 9:11; Ezek 38:17). Here עֲבָדִים הַיְהוָה, “servants of the LORD,” can refer to a broad spectrum of individuals united in reference by “a total subservience of these individuals to the will of the Lord.”<sup>240</sup> The limitations of the English slave/servant dichotomy does not help us to express a frame of reference that can include kings and captives. Nevertheless, recognizing the inadequacy of the terminology forces us to pay particular attention to the context in which the word appears. For Paul, it offers a polysemic term that carries both the imitation of the divinity who took form of a slave, displaying a servant leadership (Phil 2:7), and the commissioned messengers and servants.

Wagner’s conclusion that “Paul finds in Isaiah a fellow preacher of the Gospel”<sup>241</sup> and “at numerous points in the letter the prophet Isaiah virtually takes on a life of his own and becomes a second voice, speaking in concert with the apostle”<sup>242</sup> offers a specific context to in which to examine Paul’s use of δοῦλος. Helpfully, there are only nine instances of δοῦλος in Second Isaiah (42:19; 45:14; 48:20; 49:3; 49:5; 49:7; 56:6; 63:17; 65:9). With the exception of 45:14,

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<sup>239</sup> Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1475.

<sup>240</sup> Raymond F. Collins, “Servants of the Lord,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vol.; ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005) 5.190.

<sup>241</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 356.

<sup>242</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 2.

which clearly refers to “slaves” in its ownership sense, all the other uses of δούλος refer to what are best described as “servants.”<sup>243</sup>

Several verses stand out for further consideration as potential echoes. Isaiah 48:20 describes God’s teaching for an Israel exiled in Babylon: φωνὴν εὐφροσύνης ἀναγγείλατε καὶ ἀκουστὸν γενέσθω τοῦτο ἀπαγγείλατε ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς λέγετε ἐρρύσατο κύριος τὸν δούλον αὐτοῦ Ἰακωβ — “Announce (ἀναγγέλλω) a rejoicing sound and it may be heard; announce (ἀπαγγέλλω) this as far as the end of the earth: the Lord has delivered his servant (δούλος) Jacob” (Isa 48: 20). In 56:6 foreigners that serve (δουλεύω) the Lord and love God’s Name become servants (both δούλος and δούλη). 65:9 has the elect and servants in apposition, or at the very least a collective subject;<sup>244</sup> these are the ones who will be led out to inherit and dwell on the holy mountain. Finally, in 49:5 (Second Servant Song) the servant has been formed by God in the womb and commissioned by God to gather Israel and Jacob. This is the servant in whom God will be glorified (Isa 49:3), who announces that the commission to gather in Israel will be the servant’s glorification before God.<sup>245</sup> All of these echoes gain volume because the context of the original passages neatly fits with the context of Paul’s announcement of the gospel to the Gentiles.

As we proceed through Paul’s introductory vocabulary, we should not lose sight of the more obvious reference for slave/servant, one that correlates closely to Israel’s vocational commission and to the importance of the prophetic retelling of the exodus-conquest event. When we turn our attention to Paul’s own recapitulation of the exodus, now imbued and overlaid on the

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<sup>243</sup> 49:7 is ambiguous in the LXX; the MT seems less so. The “slave” here is Israel, who will be exalted, so this text could also have both the “servant” and the “slave” sense

<sup>244</sup> καὶ ἐξάξω τὸ ἐξ Ἰακωβ σπέρμα καὶ τὸ ἐξ Ἰουδα καὶ κληρονομήσει τὸ ὄρος τὸ ἅγιόν μου καὶ κληρονομήσουσιν οἱ ἐκλεκτοί μου καὶ οἱ δούλοι μου καὶ κατοικήσουσιν ἐκεῖ (Isa. 65:9).

<sup>245</sup> δοξασθήσομαι ἐναντίον κυρίου καὶ ὁ θεός μου ἔσται μου ἰσχύς (Isa. 49:5).

Christ event, the “new thing” that God has done, we will have an opportunity to examine Paul’s two uses of ἀπολύτρωσις (“redemption”)<sup>246</sup> in 3:24 and 8:23. Paul’s use of δοῦλος as a title at the very outset sets up a major movement that will take shape throughout the letter.

Wright has also noted the key correspondence of the redemption-terminology: “the word ‘redemption’ is almost a technical term for ‘Exodus’; it of course awakens echoes of slave markets, but the primary biblical slave market was the Egypt from which God freed the descendants of Abraham.”<sup>247</sup> In other words, δοῦλος is far more than an off-handed reference or a hastily adopted self-identification. The term is replete with positive connotations that emerge only in light of the vocation at the heart of the biblical narrative. The “slave/servant of Christ Jesus, called [to be] an apostle” are not separate titles in a list, but mutually interpreting words in apposition.

Given Paul’s proleptic use of δοῦλος in Philippians (cf. Phil 1:1; 2:7), it stands to reason that Paul has also used δοῦλος as both a title and a precursor to his larger thematic development throughout Romans. The biblical resonance of the word resounds a multivalent calling to an office, a commission which carries the obligation of an intermediary, *and* marks the beginning of Israel’s national story of convocation. Admittedly, that is a lot to ask a word to carry, and it requires some heavy lifting to read. But δοῦλος here is not just a word; it is a gesture to a whole set of narrative possibilities that I argue cohere with the recognition of its underlying consonance with prophetic vocation.

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<sup>246</sup> The lemma, λυτρόω, occurs 99 times. Paul only uses the form ἀπολύτρωσις, where the prefixed preposition ἀπό renders an intriguing range of modifying interpretations. In any case, the use of λυτρόω in Isaiah offers an impressive array of possible echoes: Isa 35:9; 41:14; 43:1; 43:14; 44:22; 44:23; 44:24; 51:11; 52:3; 62:12; 63:9. It is significant (and perhaps predictable) that the only appearance in First Isaiah is in chapter 35. It is clearly a key term in Second Isaiah, where its positive outworking of Second Isaiah’s vocation of preaching comfort (ch. 40) would not have been missed by Paul.

<sup>247</sup> Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 271.

### *Set Apart for the Gospel*

The term that we translate as “set apart,” ἀφορίζω, is also a flexible term,<sup>248</sup> used to indicate divisions and separations for everything from rivers in the beginning (Gen 2:10) to sheep and goats at the end (Matt 25:32). It generally has a more cultic meaning, suggesting times, places, animals, and situations that are “set apart” and thereby consecrated to God (Exod 19:12, 29:27; Lev 20:25-26; 27:21; Ezek 45:1, 4, etc.). Paul uses the verb only four times (Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 6:17; Gal 1:15, 2:12). In 2 Cor 6:17 ἀφορίζω appears in a quotation of Isa 52:11; this is important but not determinative for understanding Paul’s use of the verb.<sup>249</sup> In Gal 2:12 Peter’s self-separation from table fellowship is the subject, and Paul is likely being a bit “playful” with a cultic term. Peter has separated *himself* from Gentile fellowship in a misguided attempt to maintain purity and peace. Paul’s disgust centers on Peter’s self-distancing from the holy “new thing” that God has accomplished through the Messiah, namely the gathering together of Jews and Gentiles. That Paul’s use of this word in a context where Paul believes his vocation to be ultimately vindicated (Gal 2:9-10) makes it at the very least a relevant (if not ironic) word when it becomes a self-reference in Rom 1:1. The ironic aspect of taking a term used to criticize Peter, an action by which Peter “stood condemned” (κατεγνωσμένος; Gal 2:11), should force us to consider that Paul must mean something different when he applies the term to himself here. At a grammatical level, we can note the difference between active and passive, imperfect and perfect (ἀφώριζεν in Gal 2:12 versus ἀφωρισμένος in Rom 1:1; cf. ὁ ἀφορίσας με in Gal 1:15, a quasi passive construction) that makes sense of the accusation and self-reference.

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<sup>248</sup> The appearance of the term in Isaiah offers a good example. It appears there four times: Isa 29:22; 45:24; 52:11; and 56:3. Each appearance translates a different Hebrew verb within a different idiom.

<sup>249</sup> This does not automatically mean we can discount the appearance of ἀφορίζω here. Paul has selected the quotation for a reason. See Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 168.

It is the earlier use of ἀφορίζω (Gal 1:15) that is more significant and relevant to the greeting in Romans, because the purpose clauses that follow are so similar (cf. Gal 1:16: ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν — “so that I might announce the good news [about God’s Son] to the nations”; Rom 1:1: εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ — “for the purpose of the good news announcement of God”). These similarities oblige us to consider how the statements might be operating in concert. Paul reminds the Galatians (Ἠκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν — “for you heard about my earlier behavior”; Gal 1:13) about his call to be an apostle; the wording here makes it unclear whether they have heard this from Paul or heard this about him. In either case, it was likely a topic that Paul had to address frequently. And just as stories that we tell about ourselves (personal and autobiographical narratives) will accumulate “sticky” words and phrases over time, I suspect that ἀφορίζω is just this kind of sedimented word for Paul.

The use of ἀφορίζω is curious because Paul specifies that he is “separated/set apart” with the additional specification ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου — “out of my mother’s womb” (Gal 1:15). The addition of “out of my mother’s womb” is helpful because this phrase gives us a clear reference to the prophetic commissions of Second Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa 49:1, 5 and Jer 1:5; cf. Sir 49:7).<sup>250</sup> But ἀφορίζω does not accompany either of these prophetic self-descriptions.<sup>251</sup> At first glance, this makes it difficult to apply the embedded contextual meaning in Galatians to Romans. If ἀφορίζω, however, is a term that has become sedimented within Paul’s own self-narrative,<sup>252</sup> then its use in the greeting in Romans begins to make more sense.

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<sup>250</sup> Given the similarity in vocabulary, I concur with Sandnes that Isaiah remains the most likely reference; see Sandnes *Paul—One of the Prophets?*, 61: “A brief comparison between Gal 1:15b and these texts suggests that the similarities between Gal 1:15b and Isa 49:1, 5 are more significant than those with Jer 1:5.”

<sup>251</sup> Isa 49:1, 5 contain καλέω/ κηρ and πλάσσω/ ρψ respectively. Jer 1:5 contains πλάσσω/ ρψ.

<sup>252</sup> There are a number of reasons that might explain how the word gets there. The first and most likely to me is that Paul has misremembered the text of Isaiah, fusing 44:1-2 and 49:1, 5 together to produce a word that makes a certain sense of all three verses. If it is intentional, ἀφορίζω would make an excellent candidate for an indication of priestly ministry, making Romans 1:1 a verse in conjunction with 1:5 that would evidence all three elements of apostolic meaning: kingly, priestly, and prophetic.

Following κλητὸς ἀπόστολος (Rom 1:1), ἀφορίζω as a short-hand term for Paul's commission makes logical, grammatical, and contextual sense of the verse. "Having been set apart" is a perfect participle, modifying *both* ἀπόστολος and δοῦλος, thereby indicating that *both* slave and apostle are vocational terms related to a past event with ongoing significance in the present. Porter identifies "the participle [as] in the perfect tense-form and grammaticalizes stative aspect—Paul is in a state of being 'set apart' by God for a task." He is, of course, right, but I would prefer to take this "stative aspect" in its commissioned sense. It is a term that Paul uses in the context of references to other prophetic calls and that signals his own understanding of call. All of the operative self-descriptors (δοῦλος, κλητὸς, ἀπόστολος, and ἀφορισμένος) in the opening line of Romans, therefore, have strong prophetic resonances.

Romans 1:2 consists entirely of a subordinate clause modifying εὐαγγέλιον in verse 1. The related verb (εὐαγγελίζω) is only used four times in Isaiah (40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1). Isaiah also announces the good news in 61:1, in reference to the call of the prophet, but there employs an infinitive form, εὐαγγελίσασθαι, as Paul does in Phil 2:22 and 2 Cor 2:12. Paul's use of the noun form in Romans allows him to use it with a genitive construction, giving greater specificity as to the origin of Paul's gospel (cf. Gal 1:11-12). Thus, he presents "the gospel as being no innovation but [a] continuation and fulfillment of the promises to the Fathers."<sup>253</sup> This continuation, and Paul's recapitulation of this prior promise, sets up the major narrative string that holds Romans together.

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<sup>253</sup> Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets?*, 148.

## CONTEXTUALIZING ISRAEL'S NARRATIVE: PAUL'S RECAPITULATION OF THE EXODUS-CONQUEST

Given the space we have taken to establish Paul's prophetic credentialization in the very first verse of Romans, it would be natural and forgivable to groan at the prospects of following a similarly detailed argument across six chapters. Fortunately, such a detailed analysis of Paul's reference to the exodus-conquest motif is beyond the parameters of this study. This presents a secondary challenge; in order to provide an analysis that is comprehensive and based on the text, I will take Paul's use of ἀπολύτρωσις ("redemption") in 3:24 and 8:23 as "brackets" for the intervening material.<sup>254</sup> To move expeditiously through it, I will first make note of Richard Clifford's "Exodus as Hermeneutical Principle" and Richard Hays's observation of Paul's hermeneutic as analogous to the prophetic hermeneutic. This will prepare us to look at the prophetic "criticism" in chapters nine through eleven before returning to the bracketing of chapters three through five.

### **Hermeneutical Considerations**

Central to my recognition of Paul's prophetic recapitulation of Israel's formative event is Clifford's case for a "figural" reading of the Bible organized around the paradigmatic use of the Exodus throughout the Old and New Testaments.<sup>255</sup> Clifford locates this paradigmatic theme in

three principal clusters or "moments": (1) the thirteenth-century Exodus in the Book of Exodus and some pre-exilic psalm and prophetic texts (Exodus I); (2) the sixth-century return from exile, interpreted by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah 40-55 as a new Exodus (Exodus II); and (3) the work of Jesus in the first century C.E., interpreted by New Testament writers as a new Exodus (Exodus III).<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> I do not suggest that these are *actual* structural brackets. I have here taken them as a convenient means to present a reading.

<sup>255</sup> See Clifford, "The Exodus in the Christian Bible," 345-361.

<sup>256</sup> Clifford, "The Exodus in the Christian Bible," 345.

Narrative strings run through and connect each of these exodus moments; creation, formation, and liberation describe in some sense what exodus “is” and its purpose. Clifford notes that “it is easy to miss the importance of the Exodus in the New Testament because of the subtlety of its references.” In reference to Paul, he observes that “liberation consists in dethroning powers thought to be ruling the world, the ‘powers and principalities’ spoken of in Romans 8:38; Ephesians 3:10; 6:12; and Colossians 2:15.”<sup>257</sup> Finally, Clifford concludes the exodus is the hermeneutical principle of the Bible as a whole and the New Testament in particular, observing

that the Christian Bible, at least a significant part of it, organizes itself with regard to the Exodus as three successive crystallizing moments, each moment incorporating the previous one. *The Exodus became an analogy for interpretation as Israel went through crises of diminishment and of restoration, or, to use biblical language, endured divine judgment and renewal.*<sup>258</sup>

This narrative analogy to an event of liberation — a movement that we noted in the last chapter goes from subjugation under a false god to an emancipated service to the true God, from idolatry to mystagogy — interprets *contemporary events* in light of their cosmic significance: the formation of a people and the creation of a new reality. As a paradigm, this “new” reality is built upon the preceding iterations of the exodus moment, and its “newness” is determined by the contemporary “crisis,” etymologically: the judgment, to which it responds. I cannot overstate the importance of Clifford’s articulation of this over-arching principle; it is what unites prophetic praxis with Paul’s mission.

To assist in the expansion of Clifford’s conceptual and textual framework, Hays has analyzed Paul’s use of Scripture through the lens of literary criticism. Working off Craig Evans’s

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<sup>257</sup> Clifford, “The Exodus in the Christian Bible,” 357.

<sup>258</sup> Clifford, “The Exodus in the Christian Bible,” 358 [*emphasis mine*]. Applying this idea to Pauline theological studies in a more comprehensive way is a task that requires more attention.

“hermeneutics of prophetic criticism,”<sup>259</sup> Hays offers two insights that are directly relevant here. First, he endorses Evans’s contribution with the caveat that “*Paul puts his own distinctive spin on the inherited traditions.*”<sup>260</sup> This distinctive spin is the way in which “the kerygma of the cross becomes the hermeneutical lens through which Paul refocuses the classical hermeneutics of prophetic criticism.”<sup>261</sup> I suggest that we take Hays in light of Clifford; the *krisis*/judgment of the cross is the “new” frame, or “distinctive spin,” of Paul. This allows for a more expansive understanding of Hays’s second insight:

Paul’s gospel transposes the hermeneutics of prophetic criticism into a new key by proclaiming God’s embrace of Gentiles on the same terms as Israel (i.e., through the grace of Jesus Christ), οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή (Rom 3:22). One may contend — as Paul did — that this message was already latent in Scripture and/or in the very logic of monotheism, but at the same time it must be acknowledged that no Jew before Paul, so far as we are able to tell, drew the same conclusions from the prophetic texts that Paul drew. Paul’s Gentile mission creates a new hermeneutical context within which the classical prophetic hermeneutic is *metaphorically reconfigured*. That reconfiguration is what I mean to emphasize when I say Paul ‘extends a typological *trajectory* begun already in the texts themselves’; Paul’s hermeneutic is *analogous* to the prophetic hermeneutic, not a simple continuation of it.<sup>262</sup>

Taking Hays again in light of Clifford, we can provide an explanation for what he identifies as Paul’s unique conclusions. That “no Jew before Paul” could reach the same conclusions is due to the very “newness” of the Christ-event. Paul’s reading of the Scripture through the lens of the revelation of “the righteousness of God out of faith to faith” (Rom 1:17) is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, for the Jew first and then the Greek” (Rom 1:17). These

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<sup>259</sup> See Evans, “Paul and the Hermeneutics of ‘True Prophecy’”: 560-70. Here Evans suggests that “the hermeneutic of the true prophet stressed God’s role as creator rather than his role as sustainer” (561). It is “the false prophet and other ‘official theologians’ (i.e., priests and wise men) [that] maintained a hermeneutic of continuity” (560). False prophets, therefore preach primarily comfort to Israel, emphasizing YHWH as the “God only of the Hebrews and never of the enemy” (560). This understanding, based largely on the work of J.A. Sanders, allows Evans to suggest that Paul’s harsh criticism of his own people, particularly evidenced in Romans 9-11, fits within the hermeneutic of the ‘true’ prophet as found within the Old Testament.

<sup>260</sup> Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 167 [*emphasis original*].

<sup>261</sup> Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 168.

<sup>262</sup> Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 168-9 [*emphasis original*].

verses are widely recognized as the “thesis statement” of Romans, and following the themes that we have suggested within Paul’s greeting, they are very much the “content” of his commission. Given that Paul has noted that this “content” was “promised before through his prophets in the holy writings” (Rom 1:2; cf. 3:21), we have a textual basis to support what Hays sees as continuous in Paul’s reading. Hays is also correct that Paul’s hermeneutic is “*analogous*,” but he has misplaced the application. It is a hermeneutic that is *reapplied* but in a new and higher key,<sup>263</sup> one that acknowledges both meanings of the prefixed ἀνά— in *analogous*.

To be fair, both Evans and Hays are discussing a hermeneutic of prophetic *criticism*, those moments where the prophet critiques (often in the harshest terms) the comfortable reliance on Israel’s privileged status; for Evans, this feature of the prophets is the criterion for determining a true or a false prophet. As I noted in the last chapter, this judgment motif is best understood under the umbrella of prophetic pathos, feeling what God feels as a phenomenological means to approach the divine ethos. When we look to Paul’s introduction to his prophetic critique of Israel in Romans 9-11, this is precisely how he begins the discourse.

Rom 9:1-2 reads:

Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυρούσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, ὅτι λύπη μοί ἐστιν μεγάλη καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὀδύνη τῇ καρδίᾳ μου.

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my integrated knowing [often consciousness or conscience] giving integrated witnessing to me in the holy spirit that my grief is great and [I have] unceasing anguish in my heart.

It is the *krisis* inaugurated by the Christ-event that has Paul so distressed (like Jeremiah, cf. Jer 8:18) because not all of Israel, those offered the promise (Rom 9:8), have not responded to the vocation of God’s elective plan (Rom 9:11). Paul, like Moses (Exod 32:32), prays that he might

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<sup>263</sup> Or “one octave too high;” see Heschel, *Prophets*, 10-12.

be cut off from Christ for the sake of his brothers “according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3), an indication of both prophetic intercessory prayer (Exod 32:11; Num 14:13-19; Deut 9:25-29; 1 Kgs 17-24) and imitation of Christ (cf. Gal 3:13). As Paul moves through his prophetic criticism, he is constantly at pains to point to this perennially future hope (a hope that does not disappoint; see Rom 5:5): for mercy/loving-kindness (Rom 9:22-24; Ex 15:13), for salvation/deliverance (Rom 10:1; cf. Exod 15:2), and for the mystery of healing/making whole/saving (Rom 11:25-26; cf. Rom 9:18; Exod 4:21; 11:9). This *positive* hope amidst critique under judgment is a far more integrated read of the prophets.

Making sense of Paul’s “hermeneutics of prophetic criticism” requires that we take Paul’s contextualization of that criticism seriously. This means that we must recognize that Romans 9-11 is not truly an excursus on the fate of Jewish non-believers in Jesus as Messiah, but rather an application of the implicit narrative Paul has rehearsed through chapters three through eight. In what follows, we can then look at this newly reiterated word with an eye both towards the prophetic hermeneutic that recasts the same story for a new people, recognizing the same movement towards a new creation. This narrative recapitulation reveals the prophetic understanding that Israel is newly constituted by the re-telling of the exodus-conquest in light of new events. The new event of the Messiah’s death and resurrection is what has made the liberation-formation of the exodus available to all, and undergoing this exodus process is what re-forms Israel, now an Israel made up of those who were formerly enslaved to Sin and Death, both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 3:21-23).

### Romans 3:24 and 8:23

<p>3:24-25</p> <p>δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς <b>ἀπολυτρόσεως</b> τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων</p> <p>[All who believe (from 3:22)] are justified gratuitously by his grace through the <b>redemption</b> which is in Messiah Jesus, whom God appointed [as the] place of propitiation by means of the faithfulness of his blood in order to be a demonstration of his justice through the liberation from former sins.</p>	<p>8:22-23</p> <p>οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν· οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν <b>ἀπολύτρωσιν</b> τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν</p> <p>For we know that all creation laments and groans together up until now, not only that, but even ourselves, having the first-fruits of the Spirit, we groan in ourselves eagerly awaiting adoption, the <b>redemption</b> of our bodies.</p>
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The convenient “bracketing” of chapters three through eight is based on Paul’s use of ἀπολύτρωσις, a word he only uses only twice in Romans.<sup>264</sup> These appearances of an uncommon form of a common (and significant) noun stand out not just because of the uniqueness of the word, but also because of its appearance in two very significant sections of discourse. By reading these verses together, we can recognize the exodus narrative at work in the logic, but together they combine both the “already” and “not-yet” of new creation. This is not to suggest or imply that Paul’s use of this narrative schema is restricted to these chapters or this word; as the brief discussion of chapters nine through eleven demonstrate, the narrative of the exodus-conquest runs throughout Paul’s discourse. As such, the narrative of exodus-conquest is the natural place

<sup>264</sup> This prefixed form is rare in biblical literature, appearing in the OT only in LXX Dan 4:34. It is an interesting verse, indicating that Nebuchadnezzar’s madness was a kind of enslavement and redemption. The restoration of Nebuchadnezzar is then presented with the verb δουλεύω; it is significant that after his redemption Nebuchadnezzar is told by an angel “to serve to the Holy God of the Heaven, give glory to the highest, and give back to him the palace of the nations/Gentiles (καὶ ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν ἐπτά ἐτῶν ὁ χρόνος μου τῆς ἀπολυτρόσεως ἦλθε καὶ αἱ ἁμαρτίαι μου καὶ αἱ ἄγνοιαί μου ἐπληρώθησαν ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐδείθηται περὶ τῶν ἄγνοιῶν μου τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν θεῶν τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος εἷς ἐκάλεσέ με ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγων Ναβουχοδονοσορ δούλευσον τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ δὸς δόξαν τῷ ὑψίστῳ τὸ βασίλειον τοῦ ἔθνους σου σοὶ ἀποδίδεται.” There are significant narrative overlaps with Paul’s self-narrative, enough to warrant an investigation into Paul’s use of LXX Daniel as a prophetic/apocalyptic model. NT references: Luke 21:28; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15 and 11:35.

for Paul to turn in his attempt to understand his own revelatory experience, the means by which he comes to understand the crucifixion and resurrection.

The narrative within these “brackets” can be established based on the resonance of the root noun, λύτρωσις, and its associated verb, λυτρόω.<sup>265</sup> Two resonances are particularly important here. First, the association of λυτρόω and λύτρωσις with the sacrificial system is immediately evident; one animal of sacrifice can be redeemed for another. This is not merely a mode of exchange; its meaning — a narrative spacialization of cultic practice<sup>266</sup> — is derived from its earlier narrative association with the redemptive “passing over”<sup>267</sup> of the first-born of the Israelites. This second meaning recalls God’s realized promise of redemption ἐν βραχίονι ὑψηλῷ καὶ κρίσει μεγάλη — “by a high arm [meaning outstretched] and great judgment/*krisis*” (Exod 6:6), where the climax of liberation results from the death of the Egyptian first-born sons (and animals) and the sparing of those of the Israelites (Exod 11). The sparing of the first-born son is to be remembered forever (Exod 12:14, cf. 12:24; 13:42), not just in the celebration of Pascha but with every birth, human or animal (Exod 13:2; cf. Exod 34:20). If the first-born animal is not a sacrificial animal, it can be **redeemed** with a sacrificial animal (Exod 13:13), and *all* first-born

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<sup>265</sup> Exod 6:6; **13:13, 15**; 15:13; **34:20**; Lev **19:20**; 25:25, 30, 33, 48, 49, 54; 27:13, 15, 19, 20, 27 [here it translates ἕνα], 28, **29**, 31, 33; Num 3:49 [ἐκλύτρωσις]; **18:15**, 16 [λύτρωσις], **17**; Lev 25:29 [λύτρωσις] (2x); 25:48 [λύτρωσις]; **Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:6; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18**; Judg 1:15 [λύτρωσις] (3x); **2 Sam 4:9; 7:23; 1 Kgs 1:29; 1 Chr 17:21; Neh 1:10**; Esth 4:17; 1 Macc 4:11; Pss 7:3; **24:22; 25:11; 30:6; 31:7; 33:23; 43:27; 48:8**, 9 [λύτρωσις], **16; 54:19**; 58:2; **68:19; 70:23**; 71:14; 73:2; 76:16; **77:42**; 102:4; 105:10; 106:2; 110:9 [λύτρωσις]; **118:134**, 154; 129:7 [λύτρωσις ], 8; 135:24; 143:10; Odes 1:13; 9:68 [λύτρωσις]; Prov 23:11; Sir 48:20; 49:10; 50:24; 51:2; Ps. Sol. 8:11, 30; 9:1; **Hos 7:13; 13:14**; Mic 4:10; **6:4**; Zeph 3:15; **Zech 10:8**; Isa 35:9; 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:22, 23, 24; **51:11**; 52:3; 62:12; 63:4 [λύτρωσις ], 9; Jer **15:21**; 27:34; 38:11; Lam 3:58; 5:8; Dan. 3:88; 4:27; 6:28; Luke 1:68 [λύτρωσις ]; 2:38 [λύτρωσις ]; 24:21; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:12 [λύτρωσις ]; 1 Pet 1:18. Bolded verses indicate a translation of πῖπ. Other instances of πῖπ are Lev. 27:27 [ἀλλάσσω; cf. Rom 1:23], 29; 1 Sam 14:45; Job 5:20; 6:23; 33:28; Ps 130:8; Isa. 1:27; 29:22; 35:10; Jer. 31:11.

<sup>266</sup> I’ve borrowed this terminology from Andrew R. Davis, *Tel Dan in Its Northern Cultic Context* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 16. He means this as “literary representations of social space.” While I’ve borrowed the terminology, I’ve transposed it into a different meaning and context. Here I would define my meaning as the narrative elements implicit within cultic practice that create the space for meaning (both ritual and literary).

<sup>267</sup> The LXX Greek uses σκεπάζω to translate the Hebrew, פָּסַח, “to cover” for “to limp/pass over.” This verb is not used in the NT.

sons *must* be redeemed (πᾶν πρωτότοκον ἀνθρώπου τῶν υἱῶν σου λυτρώσει; Exod 13:13) by the sacrifice of a sheep. This act of redemption is accompanied, as an explanation of meaning after the fact (Exod 13:14; cf. 12:26; 13:8), by the *recapitulation* of the narrative of redemption (Exod 13:8-10, 14-16). The re-narration of the relevant portion of the narrative completes the act of redemption (λύτρωσις), making the word a *mise-en-abyme* for the whole exodus narrative and its perennially present meaning for the community.

This is precisely how λυτρώω functions in the summation verse of the hymn of commemoration sung by Moses and the Israelites. “For/by your **justice** you led your people whom you **redeemed**; you summoned [them] by your strength into your holy dwelling — ὠδήγησας τῇ **δικαιοσύνῃ** σου τὸν λαόν σου τοῦτον ὃν **ἐλυτρώσω** παρεκάλεσας τῇ ἰσχύι σου εἰς κατάλυμα ἅγιόν σου” (Exod 15:13[ **emphasis** added]). Whether we interpret τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σου and τῇ ἰσχύι σου as datives of agent or purpose is less relevant here than noting that λυτρώω can stand in for all that precedes (Exod 15:1-12), and that it has a particular relationship to δικαιοσύνη (justice/righteousness) in the Septuagint.

The exodus-conquest narrative and its attendant perennially present meaning stands in the background of Paul’s presentation of justification in Rom 3:21-26, a background painted with the artful arrangement of diction. The Messiah Jesus is now the agent and place (ἰλαστήριος; Rom 3:25) of redemption; the ἰλαστήριος (תְּרָפֶזֶת) is the lid of the ark of the covenant (Exod 25:17, 19; 37:6), the location within the Temple of God’s presence (Lev 16:2) that is sprinkled with the blood of the purification offering (Lev 16:15). And it is helpful to remind ourselves, as I think Paul is insinuating, that the exodus narrative does not culminate in the giving of the Law (that is a momentous and necessary step) but in the building of the tabernacle. When Moses demands that Pharaoh release the Israelites from their enslavement, it is so that they go into the wilderness

to makes sacrifices, hold a feast for God (Exod 3:18; 5:1, 3; 8:23) and serve (ἰσχυρῶς)<sup>268</sup> God (Exod 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). Pharaoh even agrees before the tenth plague to let the Israelites go, if they only leave their livestock (Exod 10:24), but Moses insists that the livestock are required for the sacrifice (Exod 10:25). These purpose statements await the ratification of the covenant in Exodus 24; only then, after the people have been sprinkled with blood (Exod 24:8) is there a feast with God (Exod 24:9-11) and the construction of the tabernacle begins (Exod 25-31).<sup>269</sup> This process culminates at the very end of Exodus with the cloud of the Lord covering the tent of meeting leading “all the house of Israel in all their journeying” (Exod 40:38). Paul invokes this whole narrative, and its culminating vision of a leading presence by referring to Jesus as the ἱλαστήριος (Rom 3:25). Jesus is both the site of redemption and the lamb whose blood makes possible and renews the redemptive act. The redemption itself is a demonstration of δικαιοσύνη (Rom 3:26) and a liberation from ruling powers (e.g., Sin and Death; see 6:12-14; 7:5-6; 8:38).

The layering and weaving together of these terms provides a clear literary overlay of the redemption of the Christ-event with the redemption of the exodus. When Paul continues in Rom 3:26, he hammers the emphasis on God’s δικαιοσύνη:

ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ,  
εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ

in the forbearance of God, with a demonstration of his justice in the now-time,  
because he is just and justifying [the one who believes] out of the faithfulness of  
Jesus” (Rom. 3:26).

What Paul has tellingly added is that this is a “new thing” God has done in the “now-time.” Just like Second Isaiah’s oracular announcement ἰδοὺ ποιῶ καινὰ ἃ νῦν ἀνατελεῖ — “behold, I make

<sup>268</sup> The repetition of ἰσχυρῶς throughout the narrative, referring to both the enslavement of the Israelites and their service to God further underscores the dual-reference of Paul as “slave” of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:1).

<sup>269</sup> The recapitulation of the earlier story occurs from Exod 31:12-34:35 but it still culminates again in the construction of the tabernacle (Exod 35-40).

a new thing which now will dawn” (Isa 43:19) after his retelling of the exodus event (Isa 43:16-17), Paul presents the Christ-event as the present demonstration of God’s righteous redemption. The retelling of the “old” narrative is renewed by its recapitulation, now updated with the latest (and last) fulfilling event.

This context sets the scene for chapters four through seven. Chapter four takes the narrative into an earlier frame to Abraham, to the point in the story before he receives a proleptic exodus-conquest formula of God’s self-identification (Gen 15:7) and a prediction of the four-hundred-year slavery in Egypt (Gen 15:13-14). This backwards movement continues Paul’s renewed discourse on the law begun at 3:27, allowing Paul to point to justice (δικαιοσύνη) before the law by quoting Gen 15:6 (Rom 4:3). Working the woof of time over the weft of narratives, Paul maneuvers the exodus-conquest motif through the promise of the *kosmos* for Abraham and his descendants (Rom 4:13) and the reconciling death of the Messiah (Rom 5:1-11). This anticipates the eschatological new creation in Rom 8:14-39, but not before shuttling back to the origins of humanity in creation for an examination of why exodus, exile, and new creation are necessary (Rom 5:12-21).

Adam sets the type for humanity and the human disobedience that results in the failure of vocation — to be just (δίκαιος) images/representatives of God to creation (Gen 1:26-28). Instead of responding to their vocation, humans failed to live within the proper worshipful arrangement of creation. The Gentiles “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image” of mortal creatures (Rom 1:23), while the Jews, who have the law (Rom 2:17; cf. 7:13), do not follow it (Rom 2:21-24); the failure of the Jews to fulfill the law will be clarified in chapter seven. Both spheres of transgressions are acts of idolatry (cf. 1 Cor 10:7) that have unleashed (and continuously empower) the demonic force of Death (Rom 5:12). Adam, whose initial

transgression opened the door to these powers and principalities, is, therefore, the anti-type to the obedience of the Messiah (Rom 5:19). The failure of vocation is countered by the fulfillment of vocation, and the reconciling effects are made available to all humanity (5:17-5:21). This is all prescript to the exodus drama of reconciliation; Paul will take this up in chapter 6.

Through the perverse human idolatry, Death and its cohort, Sin, have enslaved humanity (Rom 6:16). Humans, δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας (“slaves of sin”; Rom. 6:17), require redemption and liberation. The process of this redemption follows the typology of the redemption of Israel from Egypt: through the waters, this time not through the mighty waters (Isa 43:16) of the Red Sea, but through the waters by baptism and into Christ (Rom 6:3-11). Just as the original exodus effected the redemption from slavery to Pharaoh to the liberating service of YHWH, baptism reverses the pattern of disobedience for an obedience that comes from the heart (Rom 6:17), setting humanity free from the enslavement to Sin for the liberating enslavement to justice (δικαιοσύνη) (Rom 6:18). Then, before moving to the next piece of the narrative (Sinai and law), Paul again reminds us where he is headed. The redemption in Jesus through the waters of baptism is not one component of an endlessly repeating mythic structure; the exodus looks forward to the conquest, just as baptism has its own “land” in sight: τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωῆν αἰώνιον — “the end/goal is life in the coming age”<sup>270</sup> (Rom. 6:22).

As Paul continues to follow the string of the exodus narrative, he has to work through the difficulty of acknowledging the law as a gift of God (Rom 7:12), and therefore as something good, and the effect of the law amidst a humanity enslaved to sin — “the law weakened by the flesh” (Rom 8:3), which can only further ensnare humanity in its bondage to sin (Rom 7:7-11,

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<sup>270</sup> This is based on N. T. Wright’s “expanded translation,” which differs only in the preposition. He uses “life of the coming age,” and it is meant to avoid the confusion of heaven, popularly conceived, and the biblical understanding of eternal life in “New Exodus, New Inheritance: The Narrative Substructure of Romans 3-8 (1999)” in *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978-2013* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 167.

14). To illustrate the problem, Paul writes a carefully constructed speech describing the experience of “the whole of unredeemed humanity *when viewed from the perspective of redeemed humanity*.”<sup>271</sup> Sin’s infiltration of humanity means that even attempting to follow the law will only result in further sinning and enslavement (Rom 7:14-23). Here we see the benefit of Paul’s earlier return to the beginning with Adam. The law is powerless with respect to the disobedience that precedes it (Rom 8:3); the vocational failure can only be addressed by vocational fulfillment, which requires a new and different sphere of participation, one “according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:4). This leads Paul to return to the exodus redemption of the Christ-event as the only solution by which a new people are newly constituted.

We have finally reached the climax of Paul’s exodus narrative, the formation of a new people of God (Rom 8:14-17), who are now properly constituted to receive the divine glory and thereby live into the vocation to administer creation properly (Rom 8:18-27; cf. 1:23). The liberation and formation of this people inaugurates a new time, a vocation marked by the capacity for justice (Rom 8:28-30) enabled by Sin and Death’s ultimate defeat (Rom 8:31-39). Throughout this section Paul refers to not only the exodus redemption but also the conquest of the land; the land of the promise is no longer the limited territorial borders of national Israel, but, just as he hinted in 4:13, all of creation itself (cf. Sir 44:21).

Building off of the discussion of flesh and Spirit (Rom 8:1-13), Paul introduces the conquest narrative by echoing the leading of Israel through the wilderness and into the land (Rom 8:14; cf. Gal 5:18; Exod 13:21; 14:19; 16:10; 19:16; Josh 5:14-15; 24:6, 8, 11-13; Judg 5:4).<sup>272</sup> These children of God are co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), led on their way to the “land”

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<sup>271</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 167 n. 11[*emphasis mine*].

<sup>272</sup> See also Sylvia C. Keesmat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 56-57. Her focus on the exodus narrative, especially within Romans 8 is helpful; I’ve chosen to present my own reading, largely to emphasize those themes that are more relevant to the prophetic presentation.

of creation, which eagerly awaits their arrival because it has also been subjected to the slavery of corrupting forces (Rom 8:19-21). Thus, the “land” of new creation groans in its labor pains (Rom 8:22), struggling to give birth to what it can only produce with the aid of a redeemed humanity, a humanity that has undergone the full process of the New Exodus. This new humanity is required for proper worship through its just obedience, the offering of the first-fruits (*ἀπαρχή*; cf. Exod 22:28; Deut 12:6, 11) of the Spirit. This first-fruits offering is another reference to redeemed sacrifices, coupled as it is in Exod 22:28 with the redemption of the first-born sons; these are the offerings of liberated and redeemed people, ἄνδρες ἅγιοι ἔσεσθέ μοι — “holy men you will be to me” (Exod 22:30).

Elsewhere Paul uses a different word, “pledge, deposit” (*ἄρραβών*), to describe this gift of the Spirit (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14); here in Romans<sup>273</sup> he uses *ἀπαρχή*, a more biblically evocative term.<sup>274</sup> I am not suggesting that Paul’s meaning changes with respect to the gift of the Spirit as the pledge of a more complete fulfillment to come; that is clearly meant here, as the explanation given is an eager expectation of the promise of full adoption.<sup>275</sup> The meaning doesn’t change with the difference in diction, but the valence of the references do. And it is significant that the word change is away from a word without serious biblical reference to a word with exodus and New Israel (cf. Ezek 20:31; 20:40 (2x); 44:30 (2x); 45:1; 45:6, 7 (2x), 13, 16; 48:8, 9, 10, 12 (2x), 18 (2x), 20 (2x), 21 (2x)) connotations.

However evocative the references, the meaning of the 8:23 makes the time frame of Paul’s narrative fuzzy (cf. the present tense of 3:24). The journey toward this new creation is

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<sup>273</sup> And in 1 Cor 15:20, 23 in reference to Christ as the “first-fruits.”

<sup>274</sup> It appears 74 times throughout the LXX, notably in Ezekiel (Ezek 20:31; 20:40 (2x); 44:30 (2x); 45:1; 45:6, 7 (2x), 13, 16; 48:8, 9, 10, 12 (2x), 18 (2x), 20 (2x), 21 (2x)); in Ezekiel 20, 45, and 48 the context is the proper conduct in the land of New Israel. The appearance of *ἄρραβών* is limited to the story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38:17, 18, 20.

<sup>275</sup> Paul’s meaning of *ἀπαρχή* here in 8:23 seems entirely consistent with his meaning of *ἄρραβών* in 2 Cor 5:4-5, even repeating his use of *στενάζω* (2 Cor 5:2, 4; Rom 8:23).

ongoing, even as creation is starting to give birth (ἄρχη τοῦ νῦν, Rom 8:22). We, the humanity that is undergoing this process of New Exodus, therefore also groan (cf. LXX Jer 38:19 (Jer 31:19); 2 Cor 5:2, 4), waiting for the fullness of adoption, the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23). The already-not-yet of new creation and eschatological reality is fully manifest here, and only comes into focus when Rom 3:24 and 8:23 are read together. It is the necessary time frame for vocation (Rom 3:28-30) under judgment. This age has not fully closed, the new age of new creation is not fully here; it is the opportune “now-time” for the prophet’s praxis. This praxis is not just manifested in the retelling of Israel’s story. Prophets guided and formed communities through the process. Hosea clarifies this principle perfectly: ἐν προφήτῃ ἀνήγαγεν κύριος τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου καὶ ἐν προφήτῃ διεφυλάχθη — “by a prophet the Lord led Israel up out of Egypt and by a prophet he was carefully protected” (Hos. 12:14).

### **Prophetic Praxis: Founding Communities as the Reconstitution of Israel (Rom 15:18-21)**

Amidst all of the debate about Paul, who he was, what he thought, what he was up to, the one thing that can be agreed upon is that he was a founder of churches. This has been both a curious oversight in the interpretation of Paul and a more recent reason cause for denigrating him.<sup>276</sup> It is all the more important that we take seriously Paul’s own presentation of his ministry to the Gentiles through the foundation of communities. This was not a matter of ecclesiological theory for Paul: “just as there is an intimate relationship between Paul’s call/conversion and his understanding of the benefits of Christ, so there is an intimate relationship between his call/conversion and his understanding of the church.”<sup>277</sup> When Paul, therefore, tells us in Rom 15:16 that the gift/grace that God has given him is for the purpose of being

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<sup>276</sup> See Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture*, 4 and 151-3.

<sup>277</sup> Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 128.

a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving the good news of God as a priest so that the offering of the Gentiles may be well-received having been sanctified by the holy Spirit

εἰς τὸ εἶναί με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

We should take note of this relationship between call and community, hearing in it both priestly<sup>278</sup> and prophetic tones. As Paul continues his elaboration, he returns to his commission as the source and content of his ministry (Rom 15:18), acknowledging its accompaniment ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων — “in signs and marvels” (Rom. 15:19; cf. 2 Cor 12:12).

Together, σημεῖον καὶ τέρας are biblical shorthand for three intersecting events: the exodus, the formation of a holy people, *and* the manifestation of a divinely ordained ministry.<sup>279</sup> It is no accident that within the context of the explanation for his writing (Rom 15:14-33) and before his appeal for assistance from the Roman churches (Rom 15:22-24), Paul wants to hammer home his divine credentials for the work, credentials that dovetail precisely with the presentation of the gospel as overlaid on the exodus narrative.

In order to ensure that the Romans understand how crucial Paul’s mission is, and thereby the impact that their support will have, Paul ends with a final self-presentation. Having fully preached (or finished preaching)— πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom. 15:19)<sup>280</sup> — in the East, he seeks out new ground, lands without laid foundations. Thus, he is desirous

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<sup>278</sup> This is obviously the direct and proper meaning of Paul’s characterization of this ministry. I do not exclude a priestly ministry from Paul’s apostolic self-understanding. See Richard J. Gibson, “Paul the Missionary, in Priestly Service of the Servant-Christ (Romans 15:16)” in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice* (ed. T.J. Burke and B. S. Rosner; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 51-62.

<sup>279</sup> See Exod 7:3, 9; 11:9-10; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 13:2-3; 26:8; 28:46; Pss (LXX 77:43; (LXX) 134:9; Isa 8:18; 20:3; Jer 39:20-21; Bar 2:1; Ezek 12:11; 24:24, 27; Wis 8:8; 10:16; Dan 4:2; 4:37; 6:28. References in the Gospels present them as warnings of false prophets; see Mark 13:22 // Matt 24:24; John 4:48; cf. 2 Thess 2:9. Other NT references show that the phrase retains its polysemic references: Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; Heb 2:4. Paul uses this same phrase as a self-reference earlier in 2 Cor 12:12.

<sup>280</sup> The perfect tense here leaves open some ambiguity.

(φιλοτιμούμενον)<sup>281</sup> to announce the good news (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) elsewhere. Paul could have easily left that presentation off here; this fits precisely with his presentation of his commission (Rom 15:16-18). But he goes a step further to cite a prophetic text (Isa 52:15) that not only explains but anticipates his important ministry (cf. Rom 8:28-30). Paul has earlier referenced this same section of text as referring to his own ministry (cf. 10:14-18). Here, this use of Isa 52:15

coheres with his use of other scriptural texts in Romans 9-11 to probe the mystery of God's inclusion of the Gentiles and God's concomitant hardening of Israel .... The consonance of Isaiah 52:15 with this larger theme of Romans suggests that Paul has found his own ministry inextricably linked with the mysterious outworking of God's redemptive purpose for Israel as well as for the Gentiles.<sup>282</sup>

Harkening back to the failure of humanity to live into its vocation, Paul identifies and aligns himself in imitation of Messiah Jesus (1 Cor 11:1) as one faithful Israelite who will not (cannot) fail (cf. Isa 52:13), neatly wrapping up both the narrative maneuvering from creation to new creation through the exodus-conquest with his missionary appeal. The Roman churches can assist Paul as midwives to the new creation by contributing to a divinely ordained mission whose success has been preordained.

In short, the quotation from Isaiah, the last scriptural reference that Paul will make in his letter, doesn't force a distinction with Israel's past but proves, in Hays's words, that Paul "saw himself as a prophetic figure, carrying forward the proclamation of God's word as Israel's prophets and sages had *always done*, in a way that *reactivated* past revelation under new conditions."<sup>283</sup> Paul's mission as the spokesperson to the Gentiles reactivates the exodus promise of new creation and establishes it within the formation of a people who are liberated from Sin and Death, and ready to live into the vocation of a redeemed and just people.

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<sup>281</sup> Here we get a confluence of Paul's purpose for writing to the Romans and Paul's language of call. The verb φιλοτιμέομαι suggests something of a philanthropic appeal.

<sup>282</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 335.

<sup>283</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 14.

## CONCLUSION: APPLYING PROPHECY

Throughout this study I have attempted to retrieve the prophetic dimension of Paul's apostolic self-understanding. In chapter one, I addressed methodological problems associated with making such comparisons, noting that the "rescue operation" of biblical studies resulted in "Graeco-Roman" preferences of association for New Testament texts and personalities that perverted and precluded the study of a continuous narrative from a "Hebrew/Semitic" perspective. The relatively recent recovery from this problem has swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, where recent studies of Paul's prophetic self-understanding have tended to identify "apostle" unilaterally with "prophet." In chapter two, I outlined my own approach to prophecy, noting that the resonances of ἀπόστολος (apostle) would naturally point to "prophet" as the frame of reference. Taking the prophetic tradition collectively, I presented four criteria of prophecy that develop outward from the static to the dynamic, from the personal to the communal. A prophet is (1) a spokesperson, (2) called and commissioned to herald, (3) who mirrors the divine pathos, and (4) contextualizes Israel's national story (exodus-conquest) to explain a contemporary crisis/judgment of God. It is this fourth component that gathers the other three into a more dynamic vocation of prophetic praxis. The third chapter applied these criteria of prophecy to Paul's Letter to the Romans, emphasizing his narrative use of the Christ-event overlaid on the exodus-conquest motif as the vocation of prophetic praxis that unites the "content" of the letter and its purpose in the formation of new communities.

Throughout my reading of Romans, I pointed to another thread of vocational analysis. Paul is not exclusively referencing a prophetic task; his vocational understanding also points to a

priestly role.<sup>284</sup> This clearly indicates that Paul means something more than “prophet” when he refers to himself as apostle. But, as I hope I’ve made convincing, “apostle” cannot be properly understood without noting its prophetic dimension. This is why it is so vital to me that we retrieve and restore the prophetic to the apostolic, and it has two primary applications.

First, identifying Paul with the prophetic tradition provides some common ground for Jewish and Christian readers of Paul. The shared resonances of “apostle” with rabbinical terminology and the intersecting narrative engagement with prophetic texts can open new ground for mutual engagement in scholarship. The praxis of the prophetic vocation calls both Jews and Christians to work together towards the realization of the promises of cosmic justice and righteousness. Paul is an important figure in this landscape, because he too struggled to maintain shared communal space for Christ-believing Jews and Gentiles, but also because he struggled to understand the relationship of these Christ-believing communities with the majority of his Jewish family. I am not naïve enough to think that understanding Paul as prophetic will make difficult passages like Romans 9-11 easier to disentangle from the history of supersessionistic discourse. While it does allow us to see Paul as making “insider” critiques and thereby see Paul “within Judaism,” it will not satisfy those who think that “Paul’s task is not to fix Jews, but to fix Gentiles.”<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, Paul’s prophetic imagination might open new ways to express shared

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<sup>284</sup> This priestly vocation has been a major component of N. T. Wright’s presentation of Paul. See *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1491-1519 to take note of the interweaving of sacrifice, Temple, and new creation in sacerdotal language. Wright makes this emphasis explicit by his frequent reference to the vocational “royal priesthood” throughout *The Day the Revolution Began*, 49, 68-80, 89, 99, 128, 159, 165, 166-7, 268-9, 290, 363, 403-407.

<sup>285</sup> Caroline Johnson Hodge, “‘A Light to the Nations’: The Role of Israel in Romans 9-11,” in *Reading Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (ed. Jerry L. Sumney; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 172.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth E. Johnson, “God’s Covenant Faithfulness to Israel,” in *Reading Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (ed. Jerry L. Sumney; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 166.

vocations “within” Judaism without excluding “Christians from their God-given identity as Israel ... [or depriving] Israel of its own Messiah.”<sup>286</sup>

Second, retrieving the prophetic within the apostolic has importance for intra-Christian ecclesiological reflection. “Apostolic” has often been more narrowly discussed in reference to the episcopal office, where the “apostolic succession” resides.<sup>287</sup> The expression and praxis of the bishop throughout ecclesial history has given full weight, sometimes in perverse ways, to both the royal and priestly vocations. The relative lack of attention given to the prophetic dimension of the apostolic vocation needs to be retrieved precisely because of the prophet’s role as an intermediary. The prophet does not only mediate God to the community and the community to God; the prophet’s “social role” often mediates and bridges royal and priestly responsibilities. The biblical prophet is the articulation between kings and priests, opening each vocation to its just ends and calling them to task for their failures and over-reaching tendencies. The opening that this hinge provides for ecumenical dialogue stands alongside my desire to present a biblically integrated picture of Paul.

Identifying a prophetic identity for Paul encourages our own. When Paul greets the Roman churches as “beloved of God” (Rom 1:7), he echoes Ben Sira’s description of Samuel (Sir 46:13). The recognition of a shared (but not identical) vocation introduces his greeting of “grace and peace” (Rom 1:7). Our own prophetic self-articulation stands to be reactivated; no longer enclosed within the negative praxis of criticism, Paul’s prophetic witness can help us to recover the prophetic praxis of community energizing.<sup>288</sup> Prophetic language can help us to find

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<sup>286</sup> Elizabeth E. Johnson, “God’s Covenant Faithfulness to Israel,” in *Reading Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (ed. Jerry L. Sumney; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 166.

<sup>287</sup> See Vatican II, , 28 October, 1965, *Christus Dominus*, I.4, 6 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, New Rev. Ed. (ed. Austin Flannery, O.P.; Collegeville: Liturgical , 2014) 564-610.

<sup>288</sup> Terminology here is taken from Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 9-19. Brueggemann has written a short, intense work; he cannot be faulted for a lack of comprehensiveness in this regard. While he brings the prophetic imagination through the OT to the NT in Jesus (a wholly commendable move), the prophetic praxis

the language to criticize the “already” of our present tense with an openness to the “not-yet” of hope, recovering the willingness to find gestures of resistance and acts of deep hope in a world where it is sometimes difficult to identify with the cosmic promises in biblical texts. Reflecting more fully on Paul’s contribution to this tradition can serve as a reminder that “his powerful imaginative readings continue to generate new communities of readers who are transformed by the renewing of their minds and thereby summoned to lives of self-critical humility and self-giving service.”<sup>289</sup> Paul’s words can and have been the source for such vibrant practice because they take place within an imaginative and open-ended narrative. The prophet as the re-teller of constituting narratives is a critical dimension for humbling and inspiring appropriation. By imagining our stories within the plots of the biblical narrative,<sup>290</sup> and by calling on those narratives as the motivations for our own praxis, the prophetic vocation is refreshed in the “new thing” that God has done. Michael Gorman recognizes this need for performative reading so well:

That leads us, finally, to what may be the most basic need in the Christian churches today with respect to the study of Paul; it is the need for communities that do not merely *read* Paul’s letters but *live* them, embody them, “perform” them. The ultimate goal of all biblical interpretation is for the readers to become a living exegesis of the texts they read . . . . The future of those stories is our present.<sup>291</sup>

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picks up with the current day community without any reflection about how such a community might be recalled to a prophetic self-understanding, aside from the historical and interpretive tasks of retrieving the newness of Jesus. Paul’s prophetic praxis, I suggest, is just the middle ground that is missing.

<sup>289</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, xvii.

<sup>290</sup> I intend the meaning of this to include both personal and ecclesial narrative. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 7: “to read together for the sake of engaging the prophetic challenge posed by a writing to the church as such, this is something that communities seldom do. Yet there is the greatest need for the church – in whatever form it takes – to read precisely as church and, reading as church, to hear how scriptural witnesses speak to the nature and practices of the church as such. Perhaps this is also a utopian expectation. Yet imaginative leaps into utopian visions have a way of becoming real when actually put into practice. The church can be transformed as church by reading together as church.”

<sup>291</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 589.

Paul is the model for this performative appropriation, but we have to read prophet-within-apostle to disclose it fully.

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