



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

“Run That You May Obtain the Prize”

*Using St. Paul as a Resource
for the Spiritual Exercises*

THOMAS D. STEGMAN, S.J.

44/4 • WINTER 2012

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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the first word

All temptations to revert to the cliché about airborne time will be emphatically rejected. But the reality cannot be rejected quite so easily. On October 11, we marked the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. To borrow from the end of John's Gospel—ordinarily not a prose model an English-speaking scribbler would borrow from—it seems that all the world itself could scarcely hold all the books and articles that have been written about “the wake of Vatican II.” Every segment of the ideological spectrum has conscripted the phrase to serve its own ends. It's amazing that the topic still provokes such strong reactions after fifty years. For most, the term “the wake of Vatican II” provides a nautical image: for some it suggests the Barque of Peter leading a flotilla of innovations into a bright new future, or for others a listing hulk, tossed rudderless across stormy waters and leaving a trail of flotsam and jetsam made of its own wrecked traditions and scuttled theology. A more creative interpretation of “wake” suggests a funereal image: a council now deceased and worthy of a few moments of nostalgic recollection before final interment. Good riddance, or untimely tragic passing? Again, the phrase carries whatever weight ideologues want to impose upon it. Will it take another fifty years before we can grasp the meaning of the event with any kind of objectivity?

But we get ahead of ourselves. Last October we commemorated a beginning, not an ending, a launch and certainly not a wake. Try to recall—or for younger people, try to imagine—what the convening of the council meant at the time. As I recall, it meant very little. This comment does not imply the slightest sense of disrespect. It simply means that I for one, and I suspect many other Jesuits and Catholics at the time, had not the slightest appreciation of the momentous events about to unfold in Rome over the next three years and beyond. Changing anything in the Church was a concept so strange that it never entered my mind. Nearly a century had passed since the First Vatican Council (1869-70). It's safe to assert that no one living in 1962 had any personal recollection of Vatican I. Historians and theologians surely grasped its significance, but that had to be a quite select population. We amateurs might have associated it with the controversies surrounding a decree on infallibility. Fifty years ago, we might reasonably have wondered what a council was for and how it worked. If anyone in the Catholic world expected

anything remarkable to happen, and if the periodicals of the time were publishing articles anticipating the council, I was unaware of it.

I was unaware of a lot of things. I was twenty-three years old and serving the second year of my three-year term in the College of Philosophy and Letters of Fordham University. This may seem hard to believe by today's standards, but because of the way the course of studies was structured in those days, a young man entering the Jesuits from high school had not one day of theological studies until he finished regency and went "to theology." We were exposed to books and lectures on Jesuit spirituality, of course, but almost nothing by way of systematics, Scripture, and Church history. Entering in 1956, most of us were products of the parochial-school system and Jesuit secondary education. In elementary school we memorized the Baltimore Catechism with one year each devoted to creed, commandments, and sacraments. Starting in the sixth grade, the three-year cycle was repeated with longer answers the second time around. In high school the standard text was *Religion, Doctrine, and Practice*, by Francis B. Cassilly, S.J., first written in 1934 and reprinted as late as 1959. It followed the same pattern as the Baltimore Catechism, so that by the time we came to the novitiate, we had nine years of memorizing the same answers. Nothing changed. In senior year, we had *Answer Wisely*, a book of apologetics, originally written by Martin Scott, S.J., in 1938. The book fit in nicely with that age of confrontational dialogue with all non-Catholics in general and Communists in particular. No doubt the doctrine was solid—wasn't *solida doctrina* a phrase that popped up in the manuals?—but the text seemed to stress scoring points on an imaginary adversary, which might not have been a terribly healthy approach to religious discourse for a drop-out from the debate team.

Change was not altogether unknown, however. In 1958, just as our class was submerging into two years of classical studies, Pope John XXIII succeeded Pope Pius XII. The difference in appearance of the two men was unnerving. The gaunt, aquiline face of Pius dissolved into the rotund, grandfatherly physiognomy of John. The press provided photographs of the new pope smoking a cigarette at a reception while he was a bishop in the Vatican diplomatic core. The change proved mainly cosmetic, perhaps with a significance as weighty as changing nightly litanies from Latin to English. Over time Pope John eventually emerged as the catalytic figure in the Council and a major influence in the transformation of the Church. But what hit closest to home for us at the time was his decree *Veterum sapentia* (the Wisdom of Elders), which cemented into place neo-Scholastic philosophy as presented in the manuals. Not only were the manuals in Latin, as were the notes that the faculty composed in the Roman model, but the language of instruction was to be Latin as well. What a vision! A Hudson Highlands Greg! Most professors

were sensible enough to accommodate the new legislation to their own abilities and ours. A typical class would begin with a reading of the thesis of the day in Latin, a pause, and then the intonation "*claritatis causa*, English" (for the sake of clarity, English), which would then become the language of instruction for the next fifty minutes. The oral exams were still administered in Latin, however. Fifteen of my classmates went into short course at the end of the first year.

Why wasn't there a palace revolution? Remember that the 1960s had not yet started at the beginning of the council. We were still a fairly passive lot in 1961-62. Student protest had not yet become thinkable at Berkeley, Columbia, or Kent State, let alone at a Jesuit seminary in the wilds of Westchester. John Kennedy was still alive, Vietnam was a local conflict, and the Beatles had not yet landed in America. Through a combination of papal infallibility and Jesuit obedience, we accepted the fact that this was the way things were to be done, and the way they always would be done. Besides, trying to fathom the mysteries of Paolo Dezza's *Metaphysica generalis* didn't leave much time for thoughts of insurrection.

Perhaps the first inkling that our training possibly put too much emphasis on the *solida* part of the *doctrina* came with our weekly commutes to the Fordham Rose Hill campus to begin work on master's degrees before regency. Most of us started graduate programs in areas other than philosophy. Naturally, those of us plowing through two semesters of Chaucer realized that learning to read Middle English would not involve isolating the state of the question, defining technical terms—I still would not recognize "prime matter" if I found a glob of it under my bed—and dismissing a sampling of poor, defenseless adversaries with a snappy syllogism. Chaucer was, after all, poetry, and we studied it with the methodologies the subject demanded. No one could reasonably be surprised to find himself engaged in a two-track intellectual life: Scholastic philosophy and something else. What came as a bit of a shock was the discovery that it was still possible in that enclosed academic environment for some few holdouts either to deny that there was "something else," or if there was, that it had any value.

One anecdote illuminates the rigidity of the system then in place. In the final week of the Fordham academic year, the beadle asked for an evening *haustus*, explaining that the scholastics were working on term papers and would really appreciate a break. The rector insisted there would be a break after the oral exams in philosophy and not until then. Furthermore, he inquired about the meaning of the phrase "term paper" that seemed a key to this unreasonable request. When the stunned beadle explained that, near the end of a graduate course, students were expected to select a topic for their own pri-

vate research and write a twenty-five- to forty-page paper to argue their case and demonstrate their knowledge of the subject matter and competence in research methods. Now it was the rector's turn to be stunned. He found the concept of original research absurd. He explained his unshakable belief that "*educatio est reddere traditionem.*" My recollection of the Latin might be off—I can't find the quotation anywhere—but he was convinced that education consisted in giving back the tradition. In other words, repeating the "*veterum sapientia.*" Clearly, this educational theory, proposed by both Pope John and the rector of a Jesuit seminary, did not place much value in creativity, innovation, and adaptation.

Remember, I am trying to reconstruct academic life at the start of the council, which against all my expectations—based on ignorance and limited experience—came to place a great deal of value in creativity, innovation, and adaptation. My low expectations did not arise from cynicism or pessimism, but rather from a misguided notion about the possibility of changing anything. Based on the little I knew or understood about the Church and churchmen, I didn't think the council had any role beyond "*reddere traditionem.*" The misperception was not misplaced. In the early days of the first session, the press identified Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani as one of the chief architects of the council, and noted with some irony that his episcopal motto was "*Semper idem*" (always the same). While the council moved on, the cardinal remained true to his motto, and as late as 1969 wrote (with Archbishop Marcel Lefevre) a scathing critique of the revised liturgy as "an incalculable error." (As it turned out, Pope Paul VI stuck to his *Novus Ordo Missæ* as the one, universal form for celebration. It was not until much later that the Tridentine Rite underwent some degree of resuscitation.) If the Church was already perfect, *societas perfecta*, then naturally there was no need to change anything. In fact, as Cardinal Ottaviani and his like-minded bishops perceived with perfect logical consistency, any change would necessarily be a detriment rather than an improvement. I, for one, was scarcely equipped to challenge their position. Why even think about the development of doctrine that Cardinal Newman espoused in 1845 if we already had all truth in the deposit of faith?

As the council unfolded, it became obvious that a good many people were thinking and writing about a lot of developments in Catholic doctrine and practice. As one who had never had a course in theology, I had no way of knowing what was going on in the seminaries and universities around the world. It's quite possible I had never heard about DeLubac, Rahner, Küng, von Balthasar, Schillebeeckx, Congar, and dozens of other giants whose study laid the foundations for the decrees and who achieved due recognition in the years following the council. I had heard that John Courtney Murray had pub-

lished *We Hold These Truths* in 1960, but that was only because many of my Jesuit teachers boasted that they had taken classes with him. I had no idea he had been working on issues of church and state for over twenty-years, nor could I imagine the enormous impact his work would have in the life of the Church.

Preparing this current issue of *STUDIES* with Tom Stegman led me to wonder how I read Scripture at the start of the council. I have little doubt that my reading was quite literal. This was the age of “harmonies,” those large-paged volumes with the Gospels printed in parallel columns to show their similarity. Everyone knew that God created the world in seven days, the Garden of Eden was located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and expeditions through the mountains of Turkey were said to have located the wreckage of Noah’s Ark. Preachers like Archbishop Fulton Sheen, in his popular weekly television programs, offered ingenious explanations to show that apparent inconsistencies found in Bible narratives could be easily reconciled. Bible study had little room in the creed, commandments, and sacraments cycle in the catechisms. I remember being surprised to discover that the Ten Commandments do not appear in Exodus in the exact form they took in the catechism. In our early years in the Society, of course, we scholastics grew familiar with the Gospels as material for prayer, but why would anyone want to analyze the texts scientifically?

Again, it was a question of not knowing what was going on. Pope Pius XII had authorized a scientific study of the New Testament in *Divino afflante Spiritu* in 1943, but naturally with the war and its aftermath, it took a while for form criticism and the historical-critical method to work its way through the seminaries to the ordinary Catholics in the pews. As we know now, Catholic Scripture scholars were actively following the new criticism and were engaging non-Catholic peers by the start of the council, but outside their own highly specialized field, who knew then? Certainly, not I. One thinks of Raymond Brown, George MacRae, and Joseph Fitzmyer in the U.S. I’m sure there were dozens of others around the world. I’ll mention only the recently deceased Cardinal Carlo Martini, archbishop of Milan, simply because he stayed with the community at America House one summer in the early 1970s, as part of a mini-sabbatical from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He was a delightful guest and charming conversationalist. Like many European visitors, he confessed to being both fascinated and baffled by American baseball. Some of the more sports-minded denizens took him out to Shea Stadium to see a Mets game. At the time, I had no idea of his great contribution to biblical studies, but I did appreciate his sharing the misery of Mets fans during their annual summer ritual of self-annihilation.

We've come a long way from solid-state, no change theology and philosophy, and Scripture is no different. Even though I was a mediocre student under Father Fitzmyer and his talented younger colleagues, I've always appreciated the excitement of growing beyond literalism to a more sophisticated reading of Scripture under their direction. It was a wonderful educational experience. But as I read Tom Stegman's manuscript, I realized that time moves on. In the forty-some years since Woodstock, scholars have continued to study the texts, and much of what I learned back then, serviceable though it is, is simply outdated. In the lucid first part of his essay, Tom brings his readers up to date on several recent developments in Pauline scholarship. In the second part, he applies these refreshing insights to the Spiritual Exercises. This issue of *STUDIES*, then, has a dual purpose. One can read the first part for information, and ponder the second part for prayer. I'm sure readers will find Tom's work as illuminating and energizing as his colleagues on the Seminar did.

A few second words . . .

Progress on the website for the archive has been moving forward. Recent issues, those already posted on the Jesuit Conference website, have been put up on the archive site and earlier issues will be added as they are scanned. For a trial run at the preliminary stages of the site, you can take a look at <http://ejournals.bc.edu/jesuits>.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.

Editor

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“Run That You May Obtain the Prize”

1 Cor. 9:24

Using St. Paul as a Resource for the Spiritual Exercises

The underlying themes of Paul’s writings show a clear congruence with major themes in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In recent years, as scholars have augmented traditional understanding of the texts, the parallels become even more striking. Structuring an entire retreat around these key concepts provides a refreshing perspective, but one that remains true to the dynamics of the Exercises.

Introduction

Nearly a generation ago, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., remarked, “When one goes through the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*, one is surprised at how little Pauline teaching is part of it.”¹ In particular, Fitzmyer pointed to the lack of emphasis on the role of the Spirit in Christian life in Ignatius’s text. Fitzmyer proposed some reasons for the dearth of influence of Paul’s writings in the *Spiritual Exercises*. On the one hand, late-Medieval Catholic spirituality—the spiritual “air” that Ignatius breathed—was based almost exclusively on the Gospel traditions (i.e., on the four canonical Gospels). Beyond this, the very structure of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with its focus on scenes from the life of Jesus, naturally inclines toward using passages from the Synoptics and John. On the other hand, the specter of the Ref-

¹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Spiritual Exercises Based on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (New York/Mahweh, N.J.: Paulist, 1995), 1.

ormation—especially Martin Luther’s stress on justification by grace through faith, a teaching derived from Paul’s writings—could explain, in part, Ignatius’s reticence vis-à-vis the Pauline texts. Ignatius’s cautious remarks about faith and grace (*SpEx* §366) and about the relationship between faith and works (§368) in his Rules for Thinking with the Church suggest that he had become aware of such controversial issues.²

My experience of studying, teaching, and writing about the Pauline writings has led me to conclude, like Fitzmyer, that they contain several passages worthy of appropriation for making and giving the Spiritual Exercises. Indeed, in the course of directing and preaching retreats, I have found Paul’s letters a fruitful source of meditation on key Ignatian principles and themes. The compatibility of Paul and Ignatius is suggested by two preliminary observations. First, as Ignatius introduces the *Spiritual Exercises* with the analogy of physical exercise (§1), Paul portrays the Christian life along the lines of training for and running a race (1 Cor. 9:24–27; see also, for example, Phil. 3:13–14; 2 Tim. 4:7–8). Second, as Ignatius sets forth the attainment of greater spiritual freedom as the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises (§21), Paul insists that members of his churches grow in the freedom to become servants of one another in love (Gal. 5:1, 13–14; see also 1 Cor. 10:31–11:1); such freedom, for him, is a mark of Christian maturity.

This essay gives some concrete examples in which Paul’s letters can be employed as a beneficial scriptural resource for the Spiritual Exercises. More precisely, it lays out suggestions for making an eight-day “Pauline-Ignatian” retreat. But before setting forth my proposal (in part II), it will be helpful to present some key developments in Pauline scholarship over the last thirty years that I contend strengthen the case for the relevance of so using Paul’s writings. Part I offers a review of these developments. By locating my proposal for a Pauline-Ignatian retreat in the context of recent biblical scholarship, I align myself with the impetus inaugurated principally by David M. Stanley, S.J.:³ to bring the fruits of biblical research to bear on the Spiritual

²Ibid., 1–3. Fitzmyer notes that Ignatius added rules 13–18 to the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* around 1541 (i.e., after his years of study in Paris), thus making it likely that he was aware of the emergence of such controversies. See *ibid.*, 223n.12.

³David M. Stanley, *A Modern Scriptural Approach to the Spiritual Exercises* (The Institute of Jesuit Sources [Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1967]).

Exercises (though mine is admittedly a more modest and delineated project). Because Paul operates out of a theological outlook grounded in Scripture, this essay necessarily contains elements of a biblical theology, though not to the extent found in the classic monograph of Gilles Cusson, S.J.⁴ What follows more closely resembles the works of Fitzmyer⁵ and Carlo Maria Martini, S.J.⁶ Whereas Fitzmyer focuses on the Letter to the Romans, I draw on the larger Pauline corpus; and whereas Martini provides short essays to offer reflections and insightful questions on aspects of Pauline spirituality, space restrictions force me to employ a more schematic approach in part II.

I. Recent Developments in Pauline Scholarship

While a comprehensive review of scholarship is not possible here, three developments are germane for considering Paul’s writings as a resource for the Spiritual Exercises: (1) the new perspective on Paul; (2) the recognition of the narrative dynamics of his Christology; and (3) the appreciation of the extent to which his Gospel—with its basic proclamation, “Jesus Christ is Lord!”—was anti-imperial.⁷

The “New Perspective on Paul”

The new perspective⁸ on Paul was catalyzed by the publication in 1977 of E. P. Sanders’s groundbreaking study of Jewish self-

⁴Gilles Cusson, *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises: A Method toward a Personal Experience of God as Accomplished within His Plan of Salvation*, trans. M. A. Roduit and G. E. Ganss (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1988).

⁵See n. 1 above.

⁶Carlo Maria Martini, *In the Thick of His Ministry*, trans. D. Livingstone (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1990); and *The Gospel according to St. Paul: Meditations on His Life and Letters*, trans. M. Daigle-Williamson (Ijamsville, Md.: The Word Among Us, 2008).

⁷Other developments, such as rhetorical criticism of Paul’s letters and various sociological-cultural analyses, cannot be taken up.

⁸For a brief and balanced presentation, see Kent L. Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, Ore: Cascade, 2011).

understanding.⁹ Sanders's work challenged the prevailing presupposition in Pauline studies that Paul's gospel was in large part a reaction to a cold and calculating Jewish legalism of "works righteousness." This working premise—which had its roots in Reformation readings of Paul (particularly Martin Luther's) and was typical of much nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship—was a gross distortion, however, of Jewish self-understanding found in the majority of Second Temple texts that Sanders analyzed. He countered that Jews focused first and foremost on their gracious election by God as God's special covenant people. This graced choice by God was how Jews enter into their special relationship with God. The Law was understood as the God-given means by which Jews maintain or stay in covenant relationship with God. Therefore, Jews did not regard obedience to the Law as a way to merit salvation; rather, the Law was Israel's privileged gift whereby they could remain loyal to God and God's ways of holiness. Sanders coined the phrase "covenantal nomism" (*nomos* is the Greek word for "law") to capture this Jewish pattern of religion: God initiated the covenant with Israel, one in which Jews remain by faithfully adhering to the Law, which included ways for dealing with disobedience and atoning for sins.

Sanders's study was like an earthquake that changed the landscape of Pauline studies. While aspects of his work have come under question (ironically, his own interpretation of Paul has failed to satisfy), Sanders's basic assertions about covenantal nomism have withstood the test of scholarly critique. A number of scholars have taken Sanders's monograph—which offered, in effect, "a new perspective on Second Temple Judaism"¹⁰—as a springboard for looking afresh at Paul's writings. Most prominent among their number are James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright.¹¹ A distinguishing characteristic of the new perspective on Paul is the commitment to examine his letters within

⁹E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

¹⁰The phrase is taken from James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither?" in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 185 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005]), 5.

¹¹It is important to appreciate that the "new perspective" is not a monolithic movement. There are much debate and disagreement among those who are categorized as adhering to the new perspective.

the context of first-century C.E. Judaism—on which much light has been shed since the middle of the twentieth century, for example, by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls—rather than (whether consciously or not) from issues that arose with the Protestant Reformation.

1. James D. G. Dunn and “Justification by Faith”

The actual beginning of “The New Perspective on Paul” was Dunn’s 1982 lecture by that title.¹² Dunn limited his focus there to an analysis of Galatians 2:16, Paul’s earliest formulation of what has commonly been called his doctrine of the justification by faith alone:

[W]e know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.¹³

This passage was typically interpreted as saying that God saves individuals solely on the basis of their faith in Christ, not on any works they do (however good they may be). Paul is thought to have been reacting to a legalistic Judaism by which a person can merit salvation by doing good works. In fact, the NRSV seems to presume this is Paul’s meaning by inserting the word *doing* in the clause rendered “not doing the works of the law”; the Greek text simply reads, “not by works of the Law” (*ouk ex ergōn nomou*).¹⁴

But if, as Sanders had insisted, Jews in Paul’s time did not think they were trying to earn salvation, was he then really reacting to the attitude and practice of works righteousness? Dunn argues that something else was at issue here. In the first place, he insists that the language of justification in Galatians 2:16 is in fact covenantal terminology. Observe that Paul addresses his words to Peter, and that he does so as a fellow Jew (2:15)—albeit a Jew who is a follower of Jesus (thus I will use the expression “Jewish Christian”). The thrice-repeated verb “justify” (*dikaioō*) should be understood, according to Dunn, in the

¹²This lecture was first published in 1983. It has been reprinted several times, including in Dunn’s collection of essays, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 89–110.

¹³New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

¹⁴Biblical translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

sense of its noun form *dikaiosynē*, which refers in the Psalms and in Isaiah 40–55 (a section known as “Second Isaiah”) to God’s righteousness, that is, to “God’s covenant faithfulness, his saving power and love for his people Israel.”¹⁵

The notion of covenant faithfulness is crucial for understanding what Paul means by the phrase “works of the law.” Dunn contends that it refers to those practices—most notably, the observance of circumcision, food and purity regulations, and Sabbath—that mark out Jews as belonging to God’s people, enable them to maintain their place in the covenant, and differentiate them from Gentiles/pagans. The phrase thus does *not* refer to ways by which Jews thought they earned salvation. What was at issue in the churches in Galatia was how the believers there, all of whom were Gentiles, should manifest that they now belonged to God’s people. A reading of the entire letter reveals that some Jewish Christian missionaries (who arrived after Paul founded the churches in Galatia) were attempting to convince the Galatians that they must take on the traditional Jewish practices—in effect, to become Jews. Indeed, this is how Paul interpreted Peter’s withdrawal from table fellowship in the mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14).

Paul countered that, with the coming of Christ, the only essential mark that manifests membership in God’s people is *faith*, faith in connection with Jesus.¹⁶ What Paul was struggling against, Dunn argues, was an understanding of covenantal faithfulness that expressed itself in an ethnocentric manner. That is, Paul was reacting against a nationalistic delimiting of God’s saving action, an understanding he himself likely had when he was a Pharisee. This was the issue that was at dispute between Paul and the Jewish Christian missionaries in Galatia. For Paul, one of the saving effects of Christ was to break down all the ways that various differences—be they ethnic, socio-economic, class, or gender differences—function to oppress people and to alienate them from one another (see Gal. 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor

¹⁵Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” 97. I will return to the important Pauline phrase “righteousness of God” in the following subsection on N. T. Wright.

¹⁶In the following section, I will take up the issue of what is meant by the disputed phrase *pistis Christou* (“faith in Christ,” as in most translations) or the “faith(fulness) of Christ.”

Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”). Dunn thus asserts that Paul’s teaching on justification by faith “focuses largely if not principally on the need to overcome the barrier which the law was seen to interpose between Jew and Gentile.”¹⁷

Dunn’s interpretation has been characterized, by both allies and foes, as a sociological interpretation. He has continually insisted that his reading is based both on what we know about the Jewish world of the time and on Paul’s mission to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:16). In my opinion, Dunn’s exposition succeeds in highlighting a crucially important dimension of Paul’s letters: his concern for the *ekklēsia* (“church”) and, in particular, for the unity of Jews and Gentiles on the basis of faith (see, for example, Rom. 3:27–31; 12:1–15:13). This ecclesiological accent is a salutary corrective to a reading of Paul that too narrowly focuses on the individual’s relation to God (for example, Luther’s famous question, “How may I, a sinner, find a gracious God?”).¹⁸ It can thereby challenge any appropriation of the Spiritual Exercises that gives insufficient attention to the communal and ecclesial dimensions of the exercitant’s life.

Dunn’s interpretation is confirmed by a number of Pauline texts. One is Ephesians 2:11–22, a passage that describes Jesus’ death as breaking down “the Wall of hostility” (2:14), that is, “the law of commandments and ordinances” (2:15). “The wall of hostility” likely alludes to the barrier in the Temple complex in Jerusalem that prevented Gentiles, upon pain of death, from entering the inner courts. Christ’s purpose in breaking down this wall (figuratively speaking) was to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God and to one another, to “create in himself one new *anthrōpos* in place of the two” (2:16). And the *ekklēsia* is precisely the place where formerly separated peoples now come together in reconciliation on the foundation of Christ himself (2:17–22). As Dunn has rightly observed, such is not just a by-product of God’s saving action through Christ, but rather “the climac-

¹⁷ Dunn, “The New Perspective,” 15. This essay was written in 2004.

¹⁸ A generation earlier, Krister Stendahl had already cautioned against reading Paul from the perspective of Western individualism. See “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199–215.

tic achievement of the gospel, the completion of God's purposes from the beginning of time."¹⁹

2. N. T. Wright and "God's Righteousness"

Appeal to the Letter to the Ephesians is a distinguishing mark of the new perspective on Paul. For generations, students have been taught in introductory courses on Scripture that only seven of the epistles attributed to Paul were actually written (or dictated) by him: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Many proponents of the new perspective have argued that Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians (and, in some cases, 2 Timothy) should also be regarded as "authentic" (in the sense of deriving from Paul and his ministry). They do not see the "high church" perspective found in Ephesians and Colossians as antithetical to Paul's thought. N. T. Wright is among those who hold that Ephesians is from Paul. Similar to Dunn, he argues that "the proleptic unity of all humankind" which the *ekklēsia* should manifest (Eph. 2:11–22) is, for Paul, *the* sign par excellence of the in-breaking of God's kingdom, of God's coming reign over the whole world. Wright has provocatively suggested that, had the sixteenth-century Reformers started with Ephesians and then read Romans and Galatians in its light, "the entire history of the Western church, and with it the world, might have been different."²⁰

Wright's major contribution to the new perspective is his insistence that Paul's theology is thoroughly imbued with the themes of creation and covenant. That is, he sets Paul's exposition within the larger biblical narrative, especially within God's dealings with Israel. A key feature of Wright's work is his interpretation of *dikaiosynē theou*, a phrase that is especially prominent in the Letter to the Romans (for example, 1:17, 3:5, 3:21–22, 10:3). Since Luther, the phrase has been taken by many Christians to signify the righteousness given to human beings by God (this construal can take on several nuances, for example, imputed righteousness or imparted righteousness). Wright contends that, for Paul, *dikaiosynē theou* denotes "God's righteousness," under-

¹⁹Dunn, "The New Perspective," 31 (Dunn's italics).

²⁰N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009), 44.

stood as God’s faithfulness to God’s promises and covenant. It refers both to a quality in God—fundamentally, God as faithful—and to the divine activity that emanates from this quality.²¹

As we will see in greater detail below, Paul states that God’s righteousness has been revealed through Jesus—especially his death and resurrection—and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Wright argues that, for Paul, this revelation of God’s righteousness must be seen in light of, and as the culmination of, the story of God’s righteousness as set forth from the beginning of the biblical narrative.²² According to Wright, creation and covenant go hand in hand with Paul. The notion of covenant presupposes that something had gone drastically wrong with creation. The failure of human beings to be the divine-image bearing creatures God intended—manifested chiefly by their *asebeia* (“un-godliness”) and *adikia* (“unrighteousness/injustice” [Rom. 1:18–23])—resulted in corruption and death. The sin of Adam (Gen. 3:1–24) led to, among other things, the fracturing of human relationships (dramatically illustrated in the story of Babel in Gen. 11:1–9). It is at this point in the story that the figure of Abraham enters (Gen. 12:1–3). Abraham is singularly important for Paul (Rom. 4:1–25; Gal. 3:6–29). God made a covenant with Abraham as a means to set creation back on God’s intended course, to make right what had gone wrong. Thus, in Wright’s interpretation of Paul, it is important to grasp that God had a single plan to deal with sin and the resultant fracturing of human relationships, and that this plan manifests God’s righteousness.

Israel, the family of Abraham, was the chosen people in the divine plan to make right what had gone wrong. Indeed, Paul highlights the promise made to Abraham that, in him, *all* the nations (*ethnē*, the same word translated “Gentiles”) would be blessed (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8). But Israel—the very people who were to be “a light to those in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the Law the complete expression of knowledge and truth” (Rom. 2:19–20)—became part of the problem. That is, Israel joined the rest of humanity in participating in the sin of Adam. Moreover, according to

²¹ See, e.g., N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 100–103.

²² What follows is a summary of what Wright has set forth in many places. See, e.g., *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 21–39.

Wright's reading of Paul (in agreement with Dunn), they "treated their vocation to be the light of the world as indicating an exclusive privilege. This was their meta-sin, their own second-order form of idolatry, compounding the basic forms they already shared with the Gentiles."²³ Israel's failure raised questions: would their faithlessness (*apistia*) nullify the faithfulness (*pistis*) of God (Rom. 3:3)? Would their lack of righteousness (*adikia*) inhibit God's righteousness (*dikaioynē*) from being manifested (Rom. 3:5)?

This is the context for understanding Paul's gospel, the revelation of God's righteousness through Jesus (Rom. 3:21–22). Wright argues that, according to Paul, Jesus fulfills the role Israel was to play in God's plan to make right what had gone wrong. In his "obedience unto death" (Phil. 2:8), Jesus offered to God the perfect obedience Israel should have offered. In giving his life on the cross, Jesus the *Messiah*, the faithful representative of Israel, enacted what Wright calls "the rescue operation the covenant had always envisaged."²⁴ This rescue operation involved both dealing with the problem of sin and bringing together Jews and Gentiles into a single family in the *ekklēsia*. Through Jesus, God has undone sin (Gen. 3) as well as its insidious effects, including the fracturing of human society (Gen. 11). Messiah Jesus is therefore "the climax of the covenant," the one who has definitively manifested God's righteousness, the one through whom God has brought about a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

Wright claims that by approaching Paul as a theologian of creation and covenant, he is able to hold together the great insights of both the new perspective on Paul and the "old." On the one hand, his reading maintains Dunn's fundamental insight that Paul was not responding to Jewish legalism; rather, he was concerned with how God through Christ has brought into being a new people, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, whose covenantal mark is faith. On the other hand, Wright acknowledges Paul's emphasis on the forgiveness of sins

²³ Ibid., 36–37.

²⁴ Ibid., 38. Wright emphasizes that, for Paul, *Christos* should be understood messianically, and not, as it has been by many Pauline scholars, as in effect a proper name or divine title. See *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 18–55. Thus I will frequently use the phrase "Messiah Jesus" to emphasize his messianic identity and role.

through the Christ-event, a fundamental tenet in traditional readings. Wright’s exposition of the narrative context (i.e., the presumed and often implicit biblical narrative) of Paul’s theologizing is, in my opinion, his most significant contribution. As is the case with the Spiritual Exercises, the Christ-event can only be understood and appreciated in light of the larger story of creation, sin, and God’s actions to make right what had gone wrong.

3. Paul and the Law

The issue of Paul and the Jewish Law is notoriously difficult. A cursory glance at Paul’s letters reveals that he makes a number of negative statements about the Law. For instance, in Galatians 3:13 he refers to “the curse of the Law” from which Christ, “having become a curse for us,” has redeemed us. Paul writes of having died to the Law so as to live unto God (for example, Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19). And in 2 Corinthians 3:6 he famously proclaims, “The written letter [i.e., of the Law] kills, but the Spirit gives life.” These examples seem to give ample reason for the antithetical relationship between law (broadly understood) and Gospel that much Reformation theology finds in Paul. While it is not possible here to give a full or even adequate treatment of Paul and the Jewish Law, it is worth offering a flavor of how advocates of the new perspective call into question an unremitting Law/Gospel dichotomy.

Dunn’s sociological reading of the crucial phrase “works of the Law”—as referring to those acts and ritual practices which reinforced Israel’s distinctive identity as God’s covenant people—sheds light on a number of passages where Paul speaks negatively of the Law (for example, Rom. 3:27–31). Paul’s criticism of Jewish “boasting” is grounded in “his fellow kinsfolk’s assumption that the law’s protection continued to give them before God a distinctive and favoured position over the other nations.”²⁵ Israel’s misjudgment vis-à-vis the Law, by which they clung to their privileged (i.e., nationalistic) position was, according to Dunn, a particular manifestation of what Paul describes as the insidious power of Sin²⁶ to co-opt what is good in and of it-

²⁵James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 632.

²⁶For the capitalization of Sin, see, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Transla-*

self—the Law—in order to enslave people (Rom. 7:14–25). In several instances, therefore, the problem is not the Law *qua* Law, but Israel's failure to recognize what Paul came to see was its role as guardian before the coming of Messiah Jesus (Gal. 3:23–26).

Dunn's explanation also leaves room for those passages where Paul's evaluation of the Law is more positive. For example, in Romans 8:4 he asserts that, through the death of Messiah Jesus and the sending of the Spirit, it is now possible to fulfill "the just requirement of the Law." In his comment on this verse, Luke Timothy Johnson asserts that the gift of the Spirit through Christ "leads not to an abandonment of God's will as revealed in Torah but to the fulfillment of its righteous requirement."²⁷ In a similar vein, Morna D. Hooker has observed, "In many ways, the pattern which Sanders insists is the basis of Palestinian Judaism fits exactly the Pauline pattern of Christian experience: God's saving grace evokes man's answering obedience."²⁸ Indeed, Paul can speak of "the law of faith" (Rom. 3:27), "the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2), and "the law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2). In doing so, he draws on the understanding of "law" as expressing covenant relationship with God, although now specified in terms of the self-giving love revealed by Jesus (Gal. 5:1–14; see Rom. 12:1–2; 13:8–10).

A final example of how the new perspective on Paul challenges traditional readings about the Law is Romans 10:4. The first half of this verse, *telos gar nomou Christou*, is often rendered "For Christ is the end of the Law" (in the sense that, with the coming of Christ, the Law has now ceased to have relevance). Wright challenges this reading. He points out that, from Romans 9:6 to the beginning of chapter 10, Paul has been retelling the story of Israel "from the promise to Abraham, through exodus and exile, and on toward the long-awaited covenant renewal."²⁹ Thus, what is meant here by *nomos*—which

tion with Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 411: "Hamartia is the personified malevolent force, Sin (with capital S), hostile to God and alienating human beings from him; it strode upon the stage of human history at the time of Adam's transgression."

²⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 120.

²⁸ Morna D. Hooker, "Paul and 'Covenantal Nomism,'" in *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 157.

²⁹ N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Re-

translates the Hebrew word *torah*—is the *story* of Israel as told in Scripture.³⁰ The term translated “end” (*telos*) can signify “goal” or “completion”; in fact, Wright argues, this is Paul’s typical meaning. Thus, what he means in Romans 10:4 is that, with the coming of Messiah Jesus, the covenant storyline of Israel’s Scriptures is now fulfilled. It is to Paul’s particular understanding of the “story” of Jesus that I now turn.

The “Narrative Dynamics” in Paul’s Christology

It is often remarked that, if we only had Paul’s letters, we would not know much about Jesus’ life and ministry. To be sure, Paul famously focuses on the cross—“I was determined to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus [the] Messiah, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2)—and resurrection of Jesus. Nevertheless, over the last thirty years, several scholars have pointed to elements in Paul’s writings that give a much richer texture to his understanding of Jesus. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 10:1 Paul begins a section of his letter by appealing to “the gentleness and forbearance of Christ.” Notice that he merely alludes to these two characteristics of Jesus. He does not explain or defend them. Presumably, Paul can do so because, in his earlier ministry with the Corinthians (according to Acts 18:11, his founding visit lasted eighteen months), he had taught them in greater detail about Jesus, including the latter’s distinguishing characteristics. It therefore suffices for Paul to make allusions to aspects of his preaching and teaching about Jesus with the expectation that the community will know what he is saying. A mark of much recent scholarship on Paul’s writings is to pay increased attention to such allusions to the character (or *ethos*) and story of Jesus contained therein.³¹

flections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L. E. Keck et al., vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002): 657.

³⁰This is the sense, e.g., of the statement in Rom. 3:21 that “the Law and the Prophets bear witness.” Significantly, what “the Law and the Prophets” (i.e., the Scriptures) bear witness to here is the revelation of God’s righteousness through Messiah Jesus. This verse is also a good example of the way Paul at times uses the term “Law” in different senses: he also says, in the same breath, that God’s righteousness has been revealed “apart from the Law” (i.e., in the sense of “works of the Law” as set forth above).

³¹See Bruce W. Longenecker, ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) for a series of essays that debate the pros and cons of this

1. Richard B. Hays and “The Faith of Jesus”

The pivotal figure in promoting greater sensitivity to Paul’s use of allusive language vis-à-vis Jesus is Richard B. Hays. In his 1981 doctoral dissertation (Emory University), he argued that Paul’s theological exposition in Galatians 3:1–4:11 is built on the “narrative substructure” of the story of Jesus.³² That is, the various allusions to Jesus (for example, to his redeeming death in 3:13; to his Incarnation in 4:4–5) are part of a larger story that the Galatians *already* know because of Paul’s initial preaching to them, a story that moves through three stages: the plight of human beings in need of God’s deliverance; God’s saving action through Messiah Jesus; and the continuation of the story through the Spirit-empowered community of believers. According to Hays, Paul’s strategy entails employment of “the twin narrative properties” of sequence and shape. In terms of narrative sequence, he wants the Galatians to realize where they fit into the story, namely, in the final stage, the time of the Spirit. Therefore it is inappropriate for them to engage in activities that characterized the initial stage (recall the attempt by Jewish Christian missionaries to have them take on Jewish practices). In terms of narrative shape, Paul wants them to conform their lives according to the pattern of the key figure of the story, Messiah Jesus.

Here we come to an important feature of Hays’s interpretation of Paul. In the discussion of Galatians 2:16 above, I mentioned that Paul emphasizes the importance of faith “in connection with Jesus.” The issue here is how God’s people are now to be distinguished and, as set forth in Galatians 3:22, how God’s covenantal promises have been fulfilled. Paul reveals that, in both cases, the answer is *ex pisteōs Christou*. But how should the phrase *pistis Christou* be understood?³³ The phrase is ambiguous, similar to the phrase “love of God,” which can refer either to God’s love (for example, for human beings) or to our

approach.

³²The importance of Hays’s dissertation, initially published in 1983, is shown in its being republished a generation later. See *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, 2nd. ed., Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

³³This phrase, or a close variation thereof, appears in Rom. 3:22, 3:26; Gal. 2:16 (twice), 2:20, 3:22; and Phil. 3:9. See also Eph. 3:12.

love for God. It is the context in which the phrase is used that determines the meaning. Hays contends, against long-standing tradition—which rendered *pistis Christou* as “faith in Christ,” as the faith human beings have in Christ—that Paul’s intended meaning is the “faith of Christ”³⁴ or “Christ’s faith.”

A growing number (now over half) of Pauline scholars agree with Hays’s thesis that, when Paul employs the phrase *pistis Christou*, he refers to the faith—or, as many prefer, the faithfulness—of Jesus the Messiah.³⁵ The sense of Paul’s meaning is most easily set forth by offering a quick summary of Romans 3:21–26. This passage follows a lengthy section (1:18–3:20) in which he has unremittably insisted that all human beings, including Israel, have fallen “short of the glory of God,” that is, have failed in their fundamental identity and vocation to be divine-image bearers (3:23). In the face of human “ungodliness” and “unrighteousness” (1:18), God now manifests God’s righteousness—God’s covenant faithfulness to make right what has gone wrong—*through Messiah Jesus*; specifically, through his faithfulness to God’s will for him (3:21–22) which led to his death on the cross. By means of this death, God has redeemed humanity from the enslaving power of Sin (3:24)³⁶ and offers forgiveness of transgressions/sins through Jesus’ expiating death (3:25). God’s saving action through Christ now invites a response.³⁷ And the proper response is faith, understood not only as belief in what God has done through Messiah Jesus, but also in the holistic sense of faithful living in accordance with God’s will. This is what Paul means when he refers in Romans 3:26 to those *ek pisteōs Iēsou*—to those who through Jesus are now able to participate in his faithfulness to God (a point to which I will return shortly). This is now the “badge” or mark of God’s covenant people.

³⁴As in the alternative translation in the NRSV.

³⁵See Michael F. Bird and Preston F. Sprinkle, eds., *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009) for a series of recent essays on the subject.

³⁶See n. 26 above.

³⁷See, e.g., Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 50–61, and Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 358–59.

Hays's interpretation places the emphasis in Paul's exposition where it rightly belongs: on Christology. The good news he proclaims is first and foremost what God has done in and through Messiah Jesus. Then, and only then, can human beings respond in faith. The nuance of Romans 3:22 is that God's righteousness has been revealed by means of the faithfulness of Messiah Jesus for the purpose of creating a people marked by faith.³⁸ It is this dynamic—God's initiative through Christ which calls forth a generous response—that the *Spiritual Exercises* captures and sets forth so well.

2. Michael J. Gorman and Paul's "Master Story" (Phil. 2:6–11)

Paul's most complete yet succinct narrative concerning Jesus is the famous hymn in Philippians 2:6–11; hence it is often referred to as his "master story."³⁹ This is the story of Jesus' *kenōsis*, his self-emptying as expressed both in the Incarnation and in his offering his life on the cross (2:6–8). And in response to Jesus' self-emptying, God vindicates him by exalting him and bestowing on him the name (LORD) which is above every other name (2:9–11). A crucial interpretive issue is how to render the circumstantial participle *hyparchōn* (usually translated "being," as in "while being") in 2:6. Most translations opt for the concessive sense, "although." Thus, *although* Jesus *was* in the "form of God," he did not exploit this status, but rather emptied himself—both in terms of becoming incarnate and offering his life in service of others in obedience to God.

Michael J. Gorman schematizes this narrative pattern in 2:6–8 as "although [*x*] not [*y*] but [*z*]" : although Jesus possessed a status ("form of God"), he refused to use it for selfish gain, but voluntarily humbled himself for the sake of others.⁴⁰ Paul, as we will see, also employs this pattern to set forth and defend his way of being an apostle as well as to exhort his communities. Gorman argues that this concessive interpretation expresses well the "surface structure" of the text. He adds, however, that there is also a "deep structure" of the text, one that is cap-

³⁸ See Thomas D. Stegman, "Paul's Use of Dikaio- Terminology: Moving beyond N. T. Wright's Forensic Interpretation," *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): 514–18.

³⁹ Whether or not Paul actually created the hymn is still debated. Even if he did not, Paul used it with approval and put his stamp on it, as it were.

⁴⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 88–92.

tured by rendering *hyparchōn* in a causal sense, “because”: “because he was in the form of God.”⁴¹ That is, Jesus’ self-giving—expressed most dramatically on the cross—is theophanic, revelatory of the very nature of God. Jesus’ actions manifest who God is. Jesus’ self-giving, therefore, does not refer to setting aside his divinity but rather is the fullest expression of God’s self-giving. In this interpretation, God’s “bestowing” the name LORD on Jesus is not a “promotion”; instead, “it indicates that God has publicly vindicated and recognized Jesus’ self-giving and self-humbling as the display of true divinity that he already had, and that makes the worship of Jesus as Lord (i.e., YHWH, the God of Israel) perfectly appropriate.”⁴²

Elsewhere, in Romans 5:8, Paul makes clear that Jesus’ self-giving is the revelation of God’s love: “God demonstrates his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Significantly, this verse is found in the middle of a passage on “justification,” in a passage that presumes a covenantal framework. Gorman points out that Paul places the notions of justification and reconciliation, which God has effected through Messiah Jesus, in synonymous parallelism in Romans 5:9–10. That is, God reveals God’s covenant love and faithfulness, God’s impetus to make right what had gone wrong, through the imagery of reconciliation, which recalls the imagery of Ephesians 2:11–22 mentioned above.⁴³

Returning to the Christ-hymn in Philippians 2, Gorman insists that while it is certainly a profound theological statement—God’s love and saving power are revealed in the cross—it also makes an important anthropological point. In 2:6–8 the hymn describes the incarnate Jesus as a “slave” (*doulos*) who freely humbled himself and became obedient even unto death. According to Gorman, “Christ’s death by crucifixion is for Paul a voluntary act of obedience, the culmination of a human life lived as the servant of God. Obedience as God’s servant (despite possessing equality with God!) was, for Paul, Christ’s ‘life-

⁴¹ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 9–39.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 30. For a study of the early development of worship and acclamation of Jesus as God, see Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴³ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 55.

stance' before God, his 'narrative posture.'"⁴⁴ The image of *doulos* is taken, in all likelihood, from Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the fourth song of the Isaian suffering servant.⁴⁵ That song depicts an innocent human figure who bears the guilt of others and offers his life as a sin offering, and then is vindicated by God.

In addition to the Isaian suffering servant, Gorman proposes that the figure of Adam lies in the background of Philippians 2:6–8.⁴⁶ Unlike Adam who attempted to exalt himself (see Gen. 3:5–6), Jesus “lowered” or “humbled himself” (Phil. 2:8). Unlike Adam, who was disobedient, Jesus’ entire life was marked by obedience to God. In fact, Paul elsewhere alludes to Jesus’ obedience vis-à-vis the story of Adam (Rom. 5:15–19). Through his faithful obedience to God in showing forth God’s love, Jesus is truly the “image of God” (*eikōn tou theou*; see 2 Cor. 4:4). Recall the understanding of human beings as divine-image bearers mentioned above. For Paul, Jesus not only reveals God; he also reveals authentic human existence: a life lived in obedience to God’s will that reflects the self-giving-in-love divine nature. Gorman therefore contends that Jesus, especially through his self-offering on the cross, exemplifies covenant faithfulness from the vantage point of how humans should live in relationship to God and to one another. Jesus’ self-offering “was simultaneously an expression of his faithful obedience to God (i.e., love for God) and of his self-giving devotion to others (i.e., his love for neighbor).”⁴⁷ As the “new Adam,” Jesus thereby reveals what life in the “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) can and should be.

Ephesians 5:1–2 encapsulates well Gorman’s cogent treatment of how Paul draws on Jesus’ divinity and humanity: “Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in the way of love, just as the Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.” Notice how Jesus serves, in effect, as the “middle term” between God and humanity. That is, human beings now know how to imitate God by conducting themselves in love after the manner

⁴⁴Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 108.

⁴⁵Paul also interprets Jesus through the figure of the Isaian servant in Gal. 1:15 (cf. Isa. 49:1) and 2 Cor. 5:21 (cf. Isa. 53:6–11).

⁴⁶See, e.g., Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 14–16.

⁴⁷Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 584.

of Jesus’ loving self-offering. This passage also suggests how the “story of Jesus” is to be continued in the life of the Christian community.

3. *How the Story of Jesus Continues*

While the analysis of narrative elements in Paul’s writings has, for the most part, focused on Christology, it also has been applied to two other areas: Paul’s self-presentation as an apostle and his exhortations to his communities.⁴⁸ Although God’s righteousness has been definitively revealed through Messiah Jesus, the cruciform⁴⁹ manifestation of God’s covenantal love *continues* in the life of ministers like Paul and, more broadly, in the life of the Church. This is where Hays’s twin narrative properties of sequence (where are we in the “story”?) and shape (what does the “story” look like?) come into play.

The notion of narrative shape is particularly important for Paul’s self-presentation. His letters reveal him, at times, to be defensive about his claims to be an apostle (for example, 1 Cor. 9:1) and his way of ministering to people (for example, much of 2 Corinthians). Paul’s strategy in defending his identity and way of being an apostle—one that involves suffering and self-sacrifice—is to align himself with the story and character of Jesus. A classic example is 2 Corinthians 4:10–12:

[W]e are always bearing in the body the putting to death (*nekrōsis*) of Jesus in order that the life of Jesus might also be manifested in our bodies. For while living we are constantly being handed over to death on account of Jesus in order that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh. Therefore “death” is at work in us, but “life” in you.

Paul’s sufferings (2 Cor. 4:8–9, 6:4–10, 11:23–33)—including those deriving from the opposition his Gospel message provokes—are evidence of his fidelity to the way of Jesus. Paul’s willingness to “humble himself” (2 Cor. 11:7) by laboring with his own hands in order to

⁴⁸See, e.g., Thomas D. Stegman, *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin of Paul’s Argument in 2 Corinthians*, *Analecta Biblica* 158 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2005), 213–381.

⁴⁹The term “cruciform” (or “cross-shaped”) has been proposed by Gorman (especially in *Cruciformity*) to signify the cross as the revelation of God’s love and as the manifestation of divine power working through what is regarded by many as “weakness,” including Jesus’ example of servant-love.

proclaim the gospel *gratis*, as well as his servant-ministry (see 2 Cor. 4:5, where he calls himself a “slave” to the Corinthians) are ways others receive life through his constant “dyings.”

Observe that Paul’s references to “lowering” / “humbling” himself and to being a “slave” echo the terminology of the master story of Jesus in Philippians 2:6–11. That Paul draws on that story for his own self-understanding and -presentation is also evident from Philippians 3:7–11, where he draws a number of parallels between himself and Jesus. Jesus “was found” to be in human form (2:7); Paul now wants to “be found” in Christ (3:9). Jesus did not “reckon” equality with God as something to be exploited (2:6); Paul now “reckons” his former status and privileges as loss (3:7–8) in light of gaining Christ. Jesus, although he was in the “form” of God (2:6), emptied himself and took on the “form of a slave” (2:7) and was obedient unto “death” (2:8); Paul now seeks to share in the sufferings of Christ and to be “conformed to his death” (3:10)—that is, to the pattern of Jesus’ self-giving love for the sake of others.⁵⁰

Paul uses the narrative pattern “although [x] not [y] but [z],” the way of Jesus set forth in Philippians 2:6–8, in order to hold himself up as an example to others. For instance, in the idol-meat controversy in Corinth (1 Cor. 8:1–11:1), the so-called “strong” members of the community were insisting on exercising their “right” to eat which they claimed was based on the knowledge that “an idol has no real existence” (8:4). Paul counters by aligning himself with the narrative pattern of Jesus. Although as an apostle he possesses certain rights—such as the rights to be remunerated and to be accompanied by a wife (9:4–6)—nevertheless, Paul does not exercise them. Rather, he renounces them in order that he might be free to proclaim the Gospel *gratis* in order not to be a financial burden on those to whom he ministers and, even more important, to reveal the graced quality of what God has done through Messiah Jesus (see 9:12, 18).⁵¹ In fact, such renunciation

⁵⁰See William S. Kurz, “Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ,” in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 103–26; and Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 419–22.

⁵¹Gorman discerns a similar pattern in 1 Thess. 2:7–8. See his *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 436 n. 21.

is one of the ways by which he commits himself to “running the race so as to win” (9:24).

Paul concludes his treatment of the idol-meat controversy by exhorting the Corinthians, “Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). He makes a similar exhortation near the end of Philipians 2–3: “Be imitators [of Christ] with me” (3:17).⁵² While Paul contends that apostles have a special role in the Church (for example, 1 Cor. 12:27–31), *all* members of the *ekklēsia*, whom Paul calls “holy ones” (*hagioi*), have the vocation to grow in holiness (1 Cor. 1:2). The basis of their identity and call is the conferral of the Holy Spirit. (Recall Fitzmyer’s observation about the lack of emphasis in the *Spiritual Exercises* on the role of the Spirit in Christian life.)

What holiness looks like, according to Paul, is being conformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus, “the image of God,” through the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:29). Thus Pauline spirituality has rightly been called *conformatio Christi*.⁵³ This point is so obvious for Paul that, at times, it lies underneath the surface of his exhortations. For example, in Romans 12:2, he exhorts the members of the Roman churches, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God.” The passive voice (“be transformed”) here is the divine passive,⁵⁴ and elsewhere Paul suggests that the transformation is empowered by the Spirit (as in 2 Cor. 3:18). In 1 Corinthians 2:16 he reminds his readers that the Spirit bestows “the mind of Christ”; that is, the Spirit enables people, more and more, to inculcate Jesus’ values, attitudes, and ways of regarding others. In short, the Spirit empowers one to know and to do God’s will, which is what Jesus the new Adam enacted in a manner par excellence (Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:8). With this as background, one can come to Paul’s famous listing of the “fruit” (*karpos*) of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

⁵²For thus understanding *symmimētai mou ginesthe*, see Morna D. Hooker, “The Letter to the Philippians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. L. E. Keck et al., vol. 11 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 534

⁵³Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 23.

⁵⁴That is, the use of the passive voice to indicate divine agency. This convention reflects Jewish reverence for the divine name, which is not to be casually or too frequently uttered.

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”—and can see there a word portrait of what Jesus revealed as authentic human existence.

It is natural to read Paul's exhortations as pertaining to individuals. Indeed, he reminds the Corinthians that each member of the Church is a temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Paul's major emphasis, however, is on *communal* transformation. Thus he also uses the image of God's temple to describe the entire community (1 Cor. 3:16). Paul's most celebrated image for the assembly of holy ones is, of course, the body of Christ (Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–31). While at one level “body” has a metaphorical function, at a deeper level Paul intends an incarnational meaning. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor captures well this deeper sense: “By calling the community the Body of Christ, therefore, Paul identifies it as the physical presence of Christ in the world. The mission of the church is a prolongation in time and space of the ministry of Christ. . . . Its role is to display God's intention for humanity.”⁵⁵

The Church bears witness to the power of the Gospel—that is, to the efficacy of the revelation of God's righteousness through the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus—in an even more fundamental way. For Paul, the great miracle of the local assemblies he founded was that Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, strong and weak, slaves and free persons (including slave owners), men and women were all united together as a single family. As God's adopted children (Rom. 8:14–17), they are truly brothers and sisters in Christ. For this reason, Paul's exhortations stress those attitudes and behaviors that build up the community, that promote the common good. What he rails against most vehemently are attitudes and behaviors that tear communities asunder (for example, arrogance, envy, party spirit, and selfishness).⁵⁶ Thus Paul encourages his churches to participate in the narrative pattern “although [x] not [y] but [z].” For example, Romans 12:1–15:13 is a lengthy parenthesis whose major concern is how Jews and Gentiles in the Roman churches can welcome one another in Christ. Near the conclusion, Paul exhorts the members to seek first not their own agendas but rather to please and edify their neighbors. Most tellingly, he holds up Messiah Jesus as the example par excellence of one who did not

⁵⁵Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., *Paul: A Critical Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 287.

⁵⁶See, e.g., the lengthy vice lists in Rom. 1:29–31 and Gal. 5:19–21.

seek to please himself (Rom. 15:1–3). Once again, Paul’s writings challenge a reading and appropriation of the Spiritual Exercises that focuses too narrowly on the individual.

We are now in position to appreciate another way by which the story of Jesus continues through Paul and the life of the Church: through “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18–19). We have seen that reconciliation is at the heart of Paul’s proclamation of what God has done in and through Messiah Jesus. He understands himself to have been called to be an “envoy” or “ambassador” for Jesus, one through whom God invites people to be reconciled (2 Cor. 5:20)—both to God and to one another. God thereby continues to show God’s covenant faithfulness, restoring the possibility of the vertical (between God and human beings) and the horizontal (among humans) axes of proper covenant relations. Indeed, it can be said that Paul saw the ministry of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6) primarily as the ministry of reconciliation. He labored strenuously to create and foster local churches where the fruits of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), of God’s work of reconciliation, would be visible to all. By participating in the dynamism of God’s covenant faithfulness through the Spirit’s empowerment, the Church—in its individual members and collectively—becomes “the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). It does so by embodying and proclaiming God’s work of reconciliation.

Paul and the Imperial Order

We have seen that the new perspective on Paul challenged scholarly assumptions that had held sway since the Reformation—especially the assumptions that Paul’s theology was primarily concerned with how individual sinners can be saved, and that it was largely a reaction over and against Judaism (wrongly understood as a legalistic religion). A growing number of scholars, however, argue that there are yet other ways in which interpreters of Paul are still caught in the thickets of anachronistic ideas that are imposed on his writings. One of these is the separation of religion and sociopolitical life (including economics). But, it is pointed out, the Roman Empire—the world in which the Gospel was born and spread—was one in which religion and politics were so intricately intertwined as to be inseparable. Thus, Paul’s gospel by necessity had (and still has) strong sociopolitical and economic implications. Many scholars today claim that his Gospel was opposed,

not to Judaism, but to the Roman Empire—or, at least, to much of what the imperial power claimed for and about itself.⁵⁷

For a long time, exegetes have noted that much of Paul's basic vocabulary overlaps with terminology employed by and about the emperor. Caesar was hailed as *kyrios* ("lord") and *sotēr* ("savior"). News about a military victory was known as *euangelion* ("good news"), and military conquests had effected *sotēria* ("salvation"); indeed, the imperial rule (*basileia*) was said to have brought about "peace" (*eirēnē*) and "justice" (*dikaioynē*). The official visit of an emperor to a city was hailed as a *parousia* ("coming"). Such terms, to be sure, were also used in Jewish contexts, albeit with different signification (for instance, the verb *euangelizomai*—"proclaim good news"—appears in Second Isaiah in connection with the return from exile).⁵⁸ What is significant for our purposes is that some scholars now propose that Paul not only draws on the Jewish context of these terms but also employs them as *counter-imperial* rhetoric. As Wright has succinctly observed, "for Paul, Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not."⁵⁹ That is, Jesus' resurrection from the dead confirmed that he is Israel's Messiah and, even more, Lord of the world. If that is so, the imperial propaganda—such as the famed *pax Romana* and *iustitia Romana*—is a false "gospel." Given that Paul evangelized in cities (Philippi, Thessalonika, Corinth, and Ephesus) that went to great lengths to prove their loyalty to Rome, including promotion of the imperial cult, his gospel concerning Messiah Jesus (who had been crucified by the Romans!) was bound to be provocative, even incendiary.

That this is the case can be seen from Luke's description of Paul's ministry in Acts of the Apostles. After a brief time proclaiming the Gospel in Philippi, Paul and his co-workers were forcibly dragged before the magistrates and charged with disturbing the peace and advocating "customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994); and Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997) and *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2004).

⁵⁸ See Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 108–9.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Paul*, 69.

practice” (Acts 16:21). Something similar happened at his next stop, Thessalonika, where they were accused of “acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus” (Acts 17:7). Given that Luke was concerned to show that Christianity was not a threat to the Empire, the inclusion of these stories is all the more remarkable. What they convey is confirmed in Paul’s letters to these communities. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 he writes, “When [people] say, ‘Peace and security,’ then sudden ruin will befall them.” “Peace and security” was typical Roman propaganda, what was claimed to be the beneficial consequence of Caesar’s military might. Paul mocks this claim and insists that God’s judgment will expose its pretense and deception.⁶⁰

In Philippians 3:20 Paul reminds the community that their true “place of citizenship” (*politeuma*) is in heaven (and not Rome). It is from there that they await the coming in glory of their true Savior and Lord, Messiah Jesus. Paul’s counterimperial rhetoric has also been traced to the master story of Jesus (Phil. 2:6-11). We have seen that this passage alludes to the biblical figures of Adam and the Isaian servant. Some commentators claim that, in addition to these, the imperial cult lies in the background. When Paul states that Jesus did not regard being “equal with God” (*isa theō*) as something to be grasped, he contrasts Jesus with Caesar. At the time of Paul, only the emperor was allowed to be accorded the status *isa theō* (at least in terms of the civic cult). The contrast Paul makes is twofold: first, whereas Caesar grasps after power and status, Jesus lowers himself in self-giving service (through which God’s power operates, even via the cross [2:6-8]); and second, whereas Caesar is a pretender to the throne, it is the exalted Jesus who truly reigns as Lord over all (2:9-11).⁶¹ Hence, in 2:12, when Paul exhorts the Philippians to work out their salvation, he challenges them to recall from where their salvation comes and to conduct themselves accordingly—after the manner of Jesus’ self-giving love.

Even in his letter to the churches in Rome, the seat of imperial power, Paul’s counter-imperial rhetoric can be seen. The letter begins with a reference to Jesus as Messiah (“descended from David”), who

⁶⁰Ibid., 74.

⁶¹See, e.g., Erik M. Heen, “Phil. 2:6-11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule,” in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 150.

has been raised from the dead (Rom. 1:3–4). Paul has been given the grace to proclaim the Gospel, which demands the response of “the obedience of faithfulness” (1:5). This Gospel—both its message and proclamation—is God’s “power” (*dynamis*), a power that brings “salvation” (1:16). What is revealed in the Gospel is the “righteousness/justice” (*dikaïosynē*) of God. And it is God who is the one worthy of a faithful response of loyalty / faith (*pistis*; 1:17). Wright contends that it would have been difficult for the letter’s recipients not to hear these counter-imperial signals.⁶² Moreover, the type of community that Paul seeks to inculcate (12:1–15:13)—a community of Jews and Gentiles, characterized by reconciliation, mutual love and service, and even love of enemies—was to be an alternative, countercultural society to the type of society promoted by imperial values.

If there is any merit to such analysis, and I believe there is, then the portrait of Paul that has been drawn chiefly from Romans 13:1–7—a bourgeois figure who encourages his charges to pay their taxes and submit to the Emperor—must be revised. To be sure, this passage cannot simply be cast aside. But notice how it also makes clear that rulers are appointed by God as God’s servants (and, implied, are thus answerable to God). It should be added that Paul’s counter-imperial rhetoric does not call for rebellion. Rather, it warns his communities that God alone is the one to whom love, loyalty, service, and worship are to be offered. This warning, of course, continues to have implications today. Gorman describes Paul’s gospel as “theopolitical” because it is “a narrative about God that creates a public life together, a corporate narrative, that is an alternative to the status quo in the Roman Empire, the American Empire, or any other body politic.”⁶³ Paul’s writings can give us pause to critically assess cultural values and to examine where our true loyalties lie.

Summary

This brief survey of key developments in Pauline scholarship has brought to the surface a number of aspects of Paul’s letters that have been previously underappreciated. The new perspective on Paul highlights his commitment to proclaim the Gospel, not in opposition

⁶²Wright, *Paul*, 76.

⁶³Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Paul* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2008), 45.

to Judaism per se, but as the fulfillment of God’s promises. The beneficiaries of these promises are both Jews and Gentiles whom God calls to be a reconciled family, a living witness to the new creation brought about through Messiah Jesus. Appreciation of the narrative aspects of Paul’s Christology brings into focus his basic insight that the story of Jesus, the one through whom God has definitively revealed God’s covenant faithfulness, is to be continued in and through communities of faith. By walking in the way of self-giving love and service enacted by Jesus the new Adam, the Spirit-empowered Church is the principal locus of the ongoing revelation of God’s righteousness. And awareness of the theopolitical elements in Paul’s writings serves as a reminder that his gospel challenges much that is engrained in the cultural status quo, including that of our own culture.

II. An Eight-Day Ignatian Retreat Using Paul’s Writings

Part I has set forth a number of themes in Paul’s writings that have strong resonances in the *Spiritual Exercises*: God’s covenant faithfulness and love; sin as disobedience; the cosmic scope of Sin and its baneful effects; God’s righteousness that responds to the problem of Sin and human disobedience; the Incarnation of Jesus and his obedience-unto-death on the cross as the revelation of God’s love; Jesus as the new or second Adam who manifests what it means to live in and reflect God’s image; reconciliation and restoration of right relationships; and life in Christ with its values and ways of perceiving and behaving that challenge prevailing cultural standards. This convergence of themes between Paul’s writings and the *Spiritual Exercises* suggests the relevance of using the former for the latter. So too does the presence of the narrative properties of sequence and shape in Paul’s letters. Recall that Paul insists that the story of Jesus continues through the Spirit-enabled *conformatio Christi* of both individuals and communities. Similarly, the *Spiritual Exercises* seeks to inculcate a spirituality of *imitatio Christi*, particularly through the grace prayed for throughout the Second Week: to know Jesus more intimately so that one may love him more intensely and follow him more closely (*SpEx* §104, 113, and so forth). As was Paul’s purpose in writing his letters,

Ignatian retreats help people enter more fully into the story of Jesus, a story which is to continue in the lives of his followers.

Thus are my chief warrants for proposing an eight-day Ignatian retreat that employs passages and key themes from Paul's letters. My primary audience here is fellow Jesuits, although I hope others will be able to adapt the material to their own circumstances. Each of the eight days has an overarching theme: God's love, sin, God's saving action through Messiah Jesus, Jesus the "New Adam," the Spirit's empowerment, cruciform discipleship, new-covenant ministry, and corporate witness. Please notice that my selections focus mostly on movements in the First and Second Weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Thus this proposal differs from eight-day formats that cover all four Weeks.

After recommending a particular grace for which to pray, I provide four passages or sets of passages from Paul, with accompanying exegetical points, for prayerful reflection. For Jesuits I also suggest related texts from the documents of the Thirty-fifth General Congregation. Each biblical passage can be the source for a prayer period, or one might choose to preview all four and move in prayer to where the Spirit leads. Another possibility is combining some of the proposed Pauline passages with the more traditional use of Gospel texts in making the *Spiritual Exercises*. My goal is that readers will be inspired and enabled to make profitable use of the Pauline corpus as a fresh source of material with which to make their retreats. Indeed, Paul's writings are a great source for engaging in the spiritual exercise necessary so that one may run the race so as to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24).

Day 1. God's Love Holds Nothing Back

Grace: I beg for a deepening awareness and appropriation of the great extent of God's love for me and for all God's creation.

Romans 8:31–39: Nothing can separate us from the love of God

- This passage celebrates the irrevocable quality of God's love. God is truly "for us."
- The extent of God's love is manifested in that God has not held back anything from us; indeed, God has "handed over" God's only Son for us.

- While exegetes debate the specifics of Paul’s rhetoric here, it is best to read vv. 31–37 as posing four questions to which he then provides responses. The questions are these: Since God is for us, who can be against? Who will accuse God’s chosen ones? Who will condemn? What can separate us from Christ’s love?
- The responses to the questions merit prayerful reflection: If God would not spare God’s own Son, God will not hold back anything in showing forth God’s love for us. God has justified us, which includes bringing us back into right relationship with God. Christ, who died for us and has been raised by God, now continues to intercede for us, having our best interests at heart. Nothing—not even suffering and death—can separate us from God’s love as revealed through Messiah Jesus.

Romans 5:5–8: God’s love has been poured into our hearts

- God also reveals God’s love by pouring into human hearts God’s Spirit. The Spirit is God’s *gift*, the “down payment” or “first installment” of the fullness of life (see 2 Cor. 5:5 and Eph. 1:14).
- God’s love is demonstrated in that, when we were “ungodly” and “sinners”—that is, in rebellion against God—God acted on our behalf through Messiah Jesus.
- Jesus reveals God’s love by offering his life on the cross in loving obedience to God and out of love for humanity.

Philippians 2:6–11: Because he was in the form of God . . .

- Recall the discussion above about the exegetical possibility of rendering the participle *hyparchōn* causally. It is *because* God’s very nature is self-giving love that Messiah Jesus’ character and life are characterized by *kenōsis*.
- Jesus reveals God’s self-giving love through (1) his Incarnation, the divine taking on human flesh; and (2) his manner of human living, marked by obedience to God and humble, loving service (cf. *doulos*—“slave”).
- Jesus’ self-giving obedience was “unto death, even death on a cross.” For Paul, this is the ultimate manifestation of God’s self-giving love (see also 1 Cor. 1:18–25, which speaks of Jesus’ cross



as the paradoxical manifestation of God's wisdom and power, which call into question human notions of wisdom and the exercise of power).

- God vindicates Jesus' revelation of God's love by raising him and exalting him. Bestowal of the divine name ("Lord"—*Kyrios*) is confirmation of Jesus' way of manifesting God. "Messiah Jesus is Lord!" is our confession and worship; if Jesus is "Lord," then all our allegiance is owed to him.

*Ephesians 1:3–14: Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ*

- This passage is a blessing prayer, a *berakah*, praising God for God's wondrous plan of salvation brought about through Messiah Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit.
- Notice the impressive list of predicates of which God is subject: "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing"; "chose us . . . to be holy and blameless before him"; "destined us in love to be his sons"; and so forth.
- God's plan of salvation is "the mystery of his will," a plan ultimately to reconcile and unite all things in heaven and on earth.

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 3, nos. 13–14.

Day 2. Sin as Enslaving Power and as Disobedience to God's Designs

Grace: I pray for a more profound understanding of the power of Sin and of the ways I fall prey to this power by my disobedience to God. I also ask for true sorrow and contrition.

Romans 5:12–14, 19a: Adam's sin and our sin

- Paul understands the primordial sin as disobedience (v. 19a).
- Adam's sin unleashed the malevolent power of Sin, which is personified in this passage. In effect, Sin enters the stage as an oppressive, enslaving power, and with it comes Death (also personified) which sets up its "reign." These cosmic powers—which

alienate people from God and from one another—are contrary to God’s will for creation.

- Verse 12 contains the famous and highly disputed phrase *eph’ hō*, which sets forth the relationship between Adam’s sin and the sin of all human beings. Exegetically, it makes sense to interpret the phrase as indicating result: “with the result that all have sinned.” The point is that every person ratifies the sin of Adam by his or her disobedience to God.
- The fact that Death “reigned” before the giving of the Law to Moses indicates the cosmic scope of the reign of Sin and Death. This is the context—rebellion against God (Gen. 3:1–24) and the complete breakdown of human relationships (Gen. 11:1–9)—in which God enters into covenant with Israel.

*Romans 1:18–23; 2:17–24; 3:23: All have sinned
and fallen short of God’s glory*

- Romans 1:18–23 sets forth the two major human failures: refusal to recognize and worship God (*asebeia*) and injustice/wickedness toward one’s fellow human beings (*adikia*).
- Romans 2:17–24 indicts God’s people for failing to fulfill their vocation to be a light for the nations, to show forth God’s holiness. (The point is not to focus solely on Israel’s failure, but on ways in which we—as consecrated religious within the Church that has the vocation to be the universal sacrament of unity and salvation [*Lumen Gentium*, 9, 48]—at times fail.)
- “Falling short of God’s glory”: “God’s glory” here refers to the fundamental identity and vocation of human beings as created in the image of God, who is self-giving love.

Romans 7:7–25: I do not do the good I want

- This passage is Paul’s description of the human condition caught up in the enslaving power of Sin (once again, Paul personifies Sin). An analogue today would be the helplessness felt by a person trapped in an addiction.
- Verse 24 expresses the desperate plight of one held captive by Sin: “Who will deliver me?”

Galatians 5:19–21; Romans 1:29–31: The works of the flesh

- “Flesh” here refers to human existence in its fallen state, standing in opposition to God. To be “in the flesh” / “according to the flesh” is to lack the empowerment of God’s Spirit.
- These two passages are examples of “vice lists.” In the list in Galatians 5:19–21, notice how the middle eight terms describe behaviors and attitudes that break down relationships and destroy community (including, by extrapolation, community life among religious). Paul’s strongest criticism is typically reserved for attitudes and actions that destroy community.
- The list in Romans 1:29–31 begins with *adikia* (“injustice,” “unrighteousness,” or “wickedness”), which is the source of the breakdown of the horizontal axis of proper covenant relationship. What follows are various manifestations of the human condition in need of the intervention of God’s reconciling righteousness.

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 1, nos. 14–17.

Day Three: God’s Saving Action through Messiah Jesus

Grace: I ask God to open my heart to receive and appropriate more fully the gift of reconciliation God offers through the cross of Jesus.

Romans 3:21–26: God’s righteousness revealed through Jesus

- In the face of human faithlessness and injustice, God manifests covenant fidelity through Messiah Jesus.
- Jesus’ death on the cross brings about the gift of redemption (v. 24). “Redemption” refers to the action of ransoming slaves or captives (see 1 Cor. 6:20). The slavery from which we are freed is the entrapment of Sin.
- Paul also refers to Jesus’ death as expiatory (v. 25), as the sacrifice offered for the forgiveness of our sins/transgressions.
- Jesus’ faithfulness unto death makes possible and calls forth our response of faith, a faithfulness that participates in Jesus’ obedience to God’s will. The phrase *ton ek pisteōs Iēsou* at the end of v. 26 signifies “the one who participates in Jesus’ faithfulness.”

2 Corinthians 5:17–19: God has reconciled us through Christ

- God has brought us back to right relationship through Messiah Jesus. Verse 19 offers a description of God’s forgiveness: “not reckoning our trespasses against us.” The slate is wiped clean.
- Reconciliation is a manifestation of “new creation.”
- God’s reconciliation through Christ is to continue through the message and ministry of reconciliation that have been given to the Church.

Ephesians 2:11–22: Christ has broken down the wall of hostility

- Through the cross of Messiah Jesus, we are brought near to God and are now at peace.
- The “wall of hostility” is a reference to the wall in the courtyard of the Jerusalem temple beyond which Gentiles were not allowed to pass upon pain of death. For Paul it came to symbolize the ways human beings are alienated from one another. God’s action through Jesus breaks down hostility and creates the possibility of a new family, a family of Jews and Gentiles (i.e., of all peoples), who are now reconciled with God and with one another.
- This new family is also the new temple where God’s Spirit dwells, built on the foundation stone of Messiah Jesus.

Romans 5:9–11: Justified and reconciled

- Paul describes God’s actions as “justifying/making right” and “reconciling.” The verb “justify” (*dikaioō*) comes from the same root as “righteousness” (*dikaiosynē*). Through the death of Messiah Jesus, we are declared innocent and brought into right relationship with God.
- God acted to save when we were at enmity because of our sins. How much more will God continue to act and, ultimately, to save us who are now reconciled with God, through the resurrection life of Jesus (including the bestowal of God’s Spirit)?

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 2, nos. 11–15.

Day 4. Jesus, the New Adam, Shows the Way

Grace: I pray for a deeper, more affective knowledge of how Jesus reveals authentic human existence—lived in obedience to God and in loving service of others.

Romans 5:15–19: Through the obedience of the one man . . .

- Paul contrasts the first Adam with Jesus the second or new Adam. Whereas the first Adam's disobedience opened the way for the powers of Sin and Death to reign and hold humanity captive, Messiah Jesus' obedience to God creates the possibility of human beings living as God intended.
- While the passage compares and contrasts Adam and Jesus and the effects of their actions, notice that Christ's "act of righteousness" (v. 18) and its effects far outweigh and surpass Adam's deed and its effects ("how much more" [vv. 15, 17]).
- Life in the new creation is possible because through Jesus' obedience "the many will be made righteous" (v. 19); that is, they are empowered to partake in the ways of Jesus' self-giving love.

Philippians 2:6–8: Jesus as the new Adam

- One way to understand the first half of the Christ hymn is to see how it portrays Jesus against the background of the story of Adam. Whereas Adam, created in God's image, sought to exalt himself—to seek life in ways not offered to him—and thereby disobeyed God's command, Jesus' way was to lower/humble himself and to take on the role of "slave" (*doulos*) in humble service of others (cf. Mark 10:45). Jesus thereby expressed his obedience to God.
- Jesus' obedience to God "unto death" reflected his love for humanity, a love that knows no bounds (cf. John 13:1).

*2 Corinthians 4:4b–6; 5:14–15: Messiah Jesus
as "the image of God"*

- The risen Jesus reflects God's glory. Observe the imagery from Genesis 1 in 2 Corinthians 4:6. God has vindicated Christ's revelation of self-giving love.

- Jesus’ love impels a new way of being human. His death “for all” has brought about the death of all (“all have died”) insofar as the old way of being—marked by selfish turning in on oneself and by seeking life where it is not offered—can be put aside. Authentic human existence is revealed by Messiah Jesus: living no longer for oneself but for the sake of others.
- Self-giving love for others, in obedience to God’s designs for humanity, makes manifest God’s image and glory.

Galatians 5:1a, 13–14: Set free to become a slave

- “For freedom Christ has set us free”: life in the new creation is no longer held captive by the powers of Sin and Death; this is freedom *from*.
- Messiah Jesus also frees us *for* a particular way of being, his way of being. This freedom is paradoxical because it entails ‘becoming slaves’ (*doulouō*) to one another out of love.
- Like Jesus, Paul teaches that such self-giving love fulfills the divine Law, that is, fulfills what it means to be in right covenant relationship with God and with others.

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 2, nos. 4–7.

Day 5. Transformed and Empowered by the Spirit

Grace: I beg for the grace to open my heart more and more to the working of the Spirit, the Spirit who conforms me into the image of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:17–18; Romans 12:2: Transformed into the same image

- In 2 Corinthians 3:17–18 Paul draws on the story of Moses reflecting the glory of the LORD after their face-to-face encounters (Exod. 34:29–35). He says that Moses’ privilege is now extended to us. Through the Spirit’s power, we can set our gaze on the image of Christ (for example, through prayerful reflection, through the sacraments) and be transformed over time (“from one degree of glory to another”) into the same likeness.



- In Romans 12:2 Paul refers to the transforming power of the Spirit. The Spirit assists us in determining God's will, the *sine qua non* of committing ourselves to obedience to God's designs for us to be God's image bearers to others.
- The verb "transform" in both texts is *metamorphoō*, the same verb used in the Synoptic Gospels to describe Jesus' Transfiguration.

*2 Corinthians 1:18–22: Anointed to participate
in Jesus' "Yes"/"Amen" to God*

- Paul names Messiah Jesus as the "Yes" to all God's promises (i.e., God's covenant promises are fulfilled in him). Jesus fulfills these promises by his own "yes" to God, by his faithful commitment to obey God's will by showing forth God's self-giving love, even to the point of offering his life.
- The second half of verse 20 reads, literally, "Therefore, through him [i.e., Christ] the 'Amen' is to God for glory through us." Paul refers here to his own "Amen," to his "yes" to God that redounds to God's glory. In other words, Paul claims to participate in Jesus' faithfulness by literally becoming a "yes man" (in the most positive sense of that phrase), one fully committed to enact God's will.
- The source of empowerment for Paul's Amen—and for our Amen—is the Spirit. Paul uses the verb "anoint" (*chriō*, from which we get "Christ") to describe God's action through the Spirit. God anoints us to grow into the likeness of Messiah Jesus.

Galatians 5:22–26; 1 Corinthians 2:12–16: Led by the Spirit

- Those who belong to Messiah Jesus are to live by the Spirit. For Paul, it is through the Spirit dwelling within us that Christ is in us (cf. Romans 8:9–10).
- Paul lists the ninefold fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This list aptly describes a person who says "yes" to God, who fulfills the fundamental human vocation to bear the divine likeness.
- Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:16 that we have the "mind of Christ" means that the Spirit enables us to appropriate more and

more Jesus’ ways of looking at others, his attitudes, and his values that bear fruit in loving behavior.

Romans 8:15–17, 26–30: The Spirit of Sonship

- The Spirit of adoption enables us to call out to God as *Abba* (see also Gal. 4:6), the same term of endearment used by Jesus in Gethsemane where, in heart-wrenching prayer, he heroically aligned his will with the Father’s. As adopted children, we are invited to relate to God as *Abba* (cf. Ignatius’s La Storta experience).
- The Spirit intercedes for us “with sighs too deep for words” and “in accordance with God’s will.” The Spirit thereby assists us in committing ourselves to obeying God’s will in imitation of Jesus.
- The Spirit “conforms” us into “the image of [God’s] Son,” the first-born of God’s new family. As members of his family, we are empowered to grow in the family likeness as it has been revealed through Jesus’ humanity.
- The graces outlined above are set within Paul’s confession in verse 28: “We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him.”

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 4, nos. 9–17.

Day 6. Discipleship in Ministry as Marked by Cruciformity

Grace: I ask for the love, strength, and courage to follow in the way of Jesus’ fidelity to God expressed through self-giving love.

*Philippians 3:4–11: Suffering the loss of all things
for the sake of Jesus*

- This passage contains several echoes of and allusions to the Christ-hymn in Philippians 2:6–11 (see the treatment above in part I). Paul aligns himself here with the dynamics of Jesus’ humble, loving service for the sake of others.
- Paul desires nothing more than to be found in Christ and to have the righteousness from God that has been manifested through Jesus’ faithfulness and the outpouring of the Spirit (the latter of which is entailed in the phrase “the power of the resurrection”).



- Openness to the Spirit/resurrection power paradoxically enables Paul to follow Jesus in the way of the cross—that is, in the way of suffering and offering himself completely in loving service of others (cf. also Philippians 2:17).

*2 Corinthians 4:7–15; 6:4–10: Carrying in the body
the putting to death of Jesus*

- Paul understands his life and ministry as participating in the Paschal Mystery. He interprets his sufferings in terms of the story of Jesus—carrying in the body the “putting to death” (*nekrōsis*) of Jesus and “being given up (*paradidōmi*) to death” for Jesus’ sake.
- Suffering entails the opposition and afflictions Paul experiences because he proclaims the Gospel. These are sufferings *endured*, and they challenge us to reflect on our willingness to suffer for the sake of faithful proclamation and embodiment of the good news—especially in the face of cultural/social/political structures that resist the Gospel message.
- Suffering also involves actively *choosing* to sacrifice for the sake of others, putting their needs before my own.
- The image of “earthen vessels” (4:7) reminds us not only of our fragility as ministers; it also conveys that what is at issue is not our power/abilities/energy level (or lack thereof), but rather God’s power at work in and through us.
- What sustains such a way of ministering is hope in the resurrection (4:14).

1 Corinthians 9:1–27: Forgoing one’s rights for the sake of others

- This passage illustrates Paul’s commitment to enter into the pattern of “although [*x*] not [*y*] but [*z*],” the pattern of Jesus set forth in Philippians 2:6–8. Although Paul has “rights” as an apostle—such as the rights to be accompanied by a wife and to be directly remunerated for his ministry—he does not insist on exercising them; instead, he sets them aside in order to serve others.
- Paul refuses direct remuneration for his ministry because he wants his manner of proclaiming the Gospel to reflect its graced quality.

- Such a way of ministering demands much discipline, asceticism, and self-control. Paul’s athletic imagery in verses 24–27 echoes Ignatius’s use of “exercise.” Paul “runs the race” so as to win.

1 Thessalonians 2:1–12: Like a gentle nurse, like a loving father

- Paul recounts for the Thessalonians his way of ministering to them in order to give them an example.
- He compares his manner of ministry to a gentle nurse taking care of those in her charge and to a loving father encouraging his children.
- Paul has shared not only the Gospel but his very self, as one who follows in the way of Messiah Jesus.

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 2, nos. 11–15.

Day 7. New Covenant Ministry as Reconciliation

Grace: I pray for the grace to embrace the grace of God’s gift of reconciliation so that I may be a more faithful and zealous ambassador for Christ in God’s ongoing work of reconciliation.

*2 Corinthians 5:18–20: Christ’s ambassadors
in the ministry of reconciliation*

- Not only has God reconciled people to God’s self through Messiah Jesus; God has also bestowed the message and ministry of reconciliation on those who belong to Christ.
- The ministry of reconciliation *continues*—that is, God continues to extend the gift of reconciliation—through “ambassadors for Christ.” To be an ambassador or envoy for Christ is to be commissioned to represent him.
- While the ministry of reconciliation certainly entails the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Paul’s meaning is broader. Reconciliation involves facilitating “right relationships”—right relations between people and God, and right relations between peoples. It thus includes the hard work of bringing people together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

- The word “ministry” (*diakonia*) in verse 18 picks up on the reference to the new covenant ministry in 2 Cor. 3:6. The ministry of reconciliation is an essential manifestation of the new covenant ministry.

2 Corinthians 2:5–11: Enacting reconciliation

- The particular circumstances and events that lie behind this text are not entirely clear. What can be said is that a member of the Corinthian community had in some way offended Paul and that, after some time, the community had punished this member, probably by ostracizing him.
- Paul now exhorts the Corinthians to reaffirm their love for the ostracized member and to receive him back into the community. Paul takes the initiative in offering forgiveness (all the more striking given that there is no evidence that the offender has repented).
- Paul’s final statement is important: The Evil One’s design is to tear asunder families/groups/communities. Reconciliation is a sign that grace is at work.

2 Corinthians 8:9–15: Reconciliation more broadly understood

- This passage is part of Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians to be generous in giving to the collection he has organized for the Christians in Jerusalem. Tellingly, Paul refers to the collection as *diakonia* (8:4, 9:1), thereby indicating that it is part and parcel of the new covenant “ministry” of reconciliation.
- While Paul was responding to real economic need, the collection for him represented something more: the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. A generous and free financial contribution from the predominantly Gentile communities he founded that would supply the needs of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would signify in a concrete way that they were now brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Verse 9 sets forth Jesus as the source and model of generosity.
- In verses 14–15 Paul also states that God’s intention is for *isotēs* (“equality”), that is, for an equitable, just sharing of divinely bestowed resources. The work of reconciliation thus entails working

for justice—social, economic, political. This resonates with the Society’s commitment to working for the faith that does justice.

*Ephesians 1:9–10; 3:7–12: The witness of the Church/
Christian communities*

- A key theme in Ephesians is the “mystery” (*mystērion*) of God’s will, which is the divine plan “to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10). The fulfillment of the promises of the covenantal God is unity and reconciliation—both the vertical and horizontal axes of covenant relationship.
- In 3:10 the Church is named as the place where God’s manifold wisdom is shown forth to the world. That is, Christian communities (and, a fortiori, Jesuit communities) are to bear witness to God’s reconciling power, the power that is shown forth in self-giving love and mutual forgiveness in assemblies of those who regard one another as brothers (and sisters).

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 3, nos. 12–36.

Day 8. The Body of Christ and Community Witness

Grace: I beg for the grace to commit myself to “community as mission,” to live in community in such a way as to bear witness to the power of the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 12:12–27: The body of Christ

- Paul’s famous teaching about the Church as the body of Christ can be used to reflect on one’s commitment to the quality of community life.
- The image of the “body of Christ” is more than a metaphor for Paul. Communities of believers, when they say “yes” to the Spirit’s empowerment, corporately make Messiah Jesus present and extend his ministry to their time and circumstances.
- Verse 26, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together,” can function as a challenging criterion for gauging one’s generosity, magnanimity, and compassion.

*Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11–17: Community
of love and mutual forgiveness*

- Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 (see also 1 Cor. 12:13) highlights for him the miraculous power of the Gospel, namely, that those things that typically divide peoples—such as religious, ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender differences—are subordinated to the good news about Messiah Jesus. Christ does not obliterate differences, but frees us from the ways those differences can bring about alienation and oppression.
- Jesuit communities, especially those whose membership is international, can bear concrete testimony to Paul's teaching about the power of Christ to bring together disparate peoples as brothers.
- Colossians 3:12–17 uses the metaphor of putting on clothing. We are to put on the characteristics that marked Jesus—especially love and the willingness to forgive. Indeed, Paul reminds us that, just as we have been forgiven, so are we to forgive.
- Colossians 3:16–17 insists on the importance of prayer and thanksgiving for community life.

*Romans 14:10–19; 15:1–3: Pursue what makes for peace
and mutual upbuilding*

- This passage addresses the context of the churches in Rome that were divided along ethnic (Jew and Gentile) lines and by different expressions of piety. Again, there is much here on which to reflect vis-à-vis Jesuit community life.
- Paul cautions against two destructive attitudes: despising others as "weak"; and casting judgment on those whose private devotions do not match one's own.
- Paul reminds us that the Kingdom of God is about "righteousness"—that is, about our continuing the work of God's righteousness, of bringing about right relationships—and the "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Peace and joy "find" us when we are heeding the Spirit's movements within and among us.
- Once again, Paul raises the example of Messiah Jesus as one who sought to serve others before himself.
- Peace comes to the community through "mutual upbuilding."

1 Corinthians 14:23–25: Giving witness to others

- This brief passage challenges us to consider what kind of witness our community life gives to “outsiders”—whether to guests, colleagues, students, future candidates, and so forth.
- Would outsiders who looked in at our community declare that God is really among us?

Suggestion: Prayerfully reflect on GC 35, Dec. 3, no. 41 (“community as mission”) and Dec. 2, nos. 18–19 (“identity, community, and mission” as a “trptych”).

Conclusion

Fitzmyer’s comment about the lack of Pauline teaching and materials in the *Spiritual Exercises*, to which I referred at the beginning of this essay, is not unfounded. His monograph on using the Letter to the Romans to make the *Spiritual Exercises* provided a helpful remedy. It is my hope that this essay opens the door for more people to use Paul’s writings when making an Ignatian retreat. Recent developments in Pauline scholarship, in my opinion, reinforce Paul’s relevance to Ignatian spirituality. The example of an eight-day retreat I have proposed is just that, one example among many possibilities. I have no doubt that others—especially those with more expertise in spirituality and more experience in retreat giving—can improve on my work.

Paul has much to offer in helping us to exercise ourselves spiritually. Let us join him in running the race so as to win “the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will bestow on me, and not only on me but also on all who have loved his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

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