

Without Justification: A Review of Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul*

by Tim Gallant

Different books pose differing challenges to the critical reviewer. There are books which one ought to respond to critically, despite agreement on the basic point, such as when the arguments have been made poorly. There are books where the reviewer disagrees with the point of the book in question, but is taxed to write a compelling review, since the book's argumentation is comprehensive and sophisticated, and cannot be well-handled simply and concisely.

And then there are books where the reviewer perceives the author has . . . well, failed to meet his intended objectives on nearly every level. It is very difficult to write a review of such a book. For one thing, one scarcely knows where to begin. A critical review, after all, is not intended to be a refutation, but an overview that may point to fundamental problems in the work under discussion.

Such a dilemma presents itself in the case of Guy Prentiss Waters's recent little volume, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Response* (P & R, 2004). The book is not large (212 pages +), but it is so pervasively marked by mischaracterization, poor argumentation, *non sequiturs*, and questionable connections that one is frankly at a loss: how to proceed with a constructive and charitable engagement with this book, particularly when it is so *un-constructive* and uncharitable? And yet, how can one avoid the task, given the unfortunate kudos offered it by prominent Protestants (the back cover quotes notables such as D. A. Carson, Al Mohler, Douglas Moo, and others)?

It was therefore with a measure of both trepidation and resolution that I set myself to this task.

Overview

What does Waters hope to achieve in this little volume? Notwithstanding the title of the book, this does not appear to be a general response to the so-called New Perspective on Paul (NPP) in connection with the question of justification. A good rule of thumb in determining a book's purpose is to ask where it is heading. And the end of this book implies what Waters has in his sights from the beginning: he is aiming to discredit certain Reformed and Presbyterian writers and speakers who, as he sees it, are promoting problematic views, particularly with regard to matters connected to justification. But to get there, he has to deal with the NPP, because he apparently supposes that many of these problems are owing to undue influence through that stream, particularly *via* the present Bishop of Durham, N. T. Wright.

Surveys

Waters begins by briefly surveying views on Paul in critical scholarship from the time of F. C. Baur onward. He sweeps rapidly through Baur, nineteenth century liberal scholarship, the "history of religions" school, Albert Schweitzer, and on into the various interpreters of the

twentieth century. Implicit in this outline, and made explicit only on page 203, is Waters's conviction: N. T. Wright's "debts, I hope we have seen, to Schweitzer, Davies, Sanders, and others are patent." Given that conviction, along the way it is necessary for Waters to provide some sort of overview, accounting, and critique of such scholars.

Waters ends his rush with Krister Stendahl on page 33; he then slows down to deal with the NPP itself. The primary objects of his overview and critique will be E. P. Sanders, James Dunn, and (especially) Wright, although he also does spend a little time on Heikki Räisänen (whose idiosyncratic views have had essentially no impact outside of narrow scholarly circles, certainly none among evangelicals).

There are actually two chapters devoted to Sanders: one dealing with his view of Judaism, one with his view of Paul. For the most part, the former is by far the most helpful and compelling chapter in the book; here, Waters draws quotations used by Sanders himself in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* to show that Sanders employed the evidence in a highly selective and misleading fashion. Waters is not, of course, the first to point this out; nor is his critique particularly trenchant in comparison with those of others. In truth, he overestimates the significance of what he has done when in the chapter's concluding paragraph, he writes:

We are assured. . . that the Reformers' recovery of the doctrine of justification and their appeal to Paul was no mere reading of late-medieval soteriology into the mouths of Paul's opponents. While we must appreciate the differences between late-medieval soteriology and ancient Judaism, we must also recognize their fundamental soteriological identity: both are semi-Pelagian systems. The Reformers were *right*, then, to go to Paul in the way that they did - both were concerned to strip down religions that mingled the grace of God with human merit and therefore placed the believer's ultimate confidence not in the grace of God but in his own labor and activity. (58)

This far-reaching paragraph is written on the basis of very little - all that Waters has established to this point is that some texts in ancient Judaism reflect works-righteousness. He has not demonstrated that these texts are reflecting anything pervasive in Judaism. But more to the point, *he has not demonstrated anything whatsoever yet about Paul*. He has simply glanced at the Second Temple texts and assumed that Paul's primary concerns regarding Judaism must have matched his own concerns that are raised by his reading. In short, Waters presupposes what he needs to prove - a common affliction throughout the book.

Waters's critique

In his overviews of NPP writers, Waters occasionally does some implicit criticism, but mostly he saves this for chapter 8, "A Critique of the New Perspective." He divides his critique into three categories: the NPP has *hermeneutical* problems, *exegetical* problems, and *theological* problems.

With regard to the hermeneutical issues, Waters begins, unsurprisingly, by arguing that the NPP builds upon "flawed constructions of Judaism" (151-154). This criticism is leveled, both against Sanders's denial that Second Temple Judaism was characterized by works-righteousness, as well

as against Wright's notion that the period was characterized by a strong sense of continuing exile. Waters then notes that it is problematic to read Paul through the lens of Second Temple literature, for three reasons: (1) it is difficult to know what literature is actually relevant to Paul's readers (a striking admission, I would think, given my quotation above from p. 58); (2) this literature itself is subject to interpretation; and (3) the primary texts (i.e. Paul's letters) must be read on their own terms. Waters further suggests that the NPP guild is functionally acting as a "priesthood of scholars," removing the interpretation of Scripture out of the hands of the layman: Paul is only rightly understood when the experts tell us what Jews of the period believed. Finally, Waters aptly notes that there is a tendency among NPP scholars to collapse the difference between the Old Testament canonical texts and other Jewish literature in terms of its influence upon Paul.

Waters moves on to exegetical issues on pages 158-185. In those 28 pages, he covers Romans 2.1-29 (especially 13-16); 3.20; 3.24-26; 4.4ff; 5.12-21; 10.5; 11.5-6; 1 Corinthians 1.30; 2 Corinthians 5.21; Galatians 3.10-13; 5.3-4; Philippians 3.2-11; and gives a nod to the disputed Pauline epistles.

Waters closes the chapter with "theological problems" in the NPP (185-190). With these, he focuses upon the frequent confusion of matters of grace, legalism, and merit, arguing - quite legitimately - that there is a lack of sensitivity to historical theology among NPP scholars. Because modern scholars are not familiar with the distinction between Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism, they leap all the way from Pelagius to Augustine, as if there were no intervening possibilities (or, perhaps more frequently, such scholars confuse semi-Pelagianism with Augustinianism).

In the remaining four pages of the chapter, Waters charges NPP proponents on three fronts. First, a rejection or ignoring of the Pauline doctrine of imputation. The dire consequences of this include failure to ground "Paul's universal condemnation of humanity. . . in man's solidarity in Adam." The resulting attempts to explain the human plight "generally trivialize or marginalize Paul's assessment of man's condition, and truncate the radical character of the grace taught by the apostle" (187). The result is that covenantal obedience becomes the ground of justification - just as with Paul's fellow Jews.

Second, Waters suggests that the NPP upsets the delicate balance achieved by the Reformers regarding the issues of forensic and transforming grace. "Since the believer's present justification is made in advance of and as an earnest of his final justification, we may fairly conclude that, for Wright, present justification rests on one's covenantal faithfulness," since in Wright's theology "the ground of the believer's final acceptance. . . is his covenantal faithfulness" (188). Meanwhile, Reformed theology says "that faith is ever accompanied by good works," but as an instrument of justification, it functions only receptively, appropriating Christ's merits as the ground of justification (188-189).

Third, Waters complains that in the NPP, *justification* is redefined "as an ecclesiological doctrine, not a soteriological one." Quoting briefly from Charles Hodge and Martin Luther,

Waters insists that in the Protestant tradition, ecclesiology and soteriology were satisfactorily tied together when dealing with justification (189-190).

Reformed fears

In his final chapter ("What's at Stake for Reformed Christianity?"), Water moves on to suggest that the NPP imperils a broad spectrum of doctrines (hermeneutical/theological method, the doctrine of Scripture, the content of the gospel, the meaning of justification, faith's office in justification, why Jesus died, the doctrine of regeneration, the assurance of salvation, and the role of baptism in the Christian life). He adds that the increasing acceptance of the NPP within the Reformed community thus endangers many fundamental beliefs. Although he gives passing recognition to the fact that Norman Shepherd holds to a traditional view of Judaism over against the NPP, Waters insists on linking the two conceptually since there is (he says) a common "'allergy' to the vertical issues pertaining to God and the individual soul that have been emphasized in traditional Pauline interpretation" (205), and further, common to Shepherd and the NPP there is (so says Waters) a belief in "a justifying inherent righteousness" (209), as well as similarities with regard to a strong participationist view of baptism (211).

Waters closes with the claim that "All expressions of Christianity are on the path to one of two destinations, Rome or Geneva," and charges that NPP-influenced men in Reformed circles are destroying Protestantism: "If we examine their arguments carefully, we see that what they are *really* and *increasingly* saying is that Luther and Calvin were mistaken, and that [the Council of] Trent was right" (211-212).

Response

I suggested in my introduction that this book fails on nearly every level. That is a sweeping statement, but unfortunately, there is all too ample evidence. Specifically, the book: (1) fails to provide us a fair and accurate description of the primary target (N. T. Wright), but instead offers a radically distorted and misleading portrait; (2) offers muddy and unhelpful analyses of the positions of others; (3) gives virtually no evidence of wrestling with the difficult exegetical issues relevant to the discussion; (4) makes historical assertions which reflect either ignorance or suppression of historic Protestant viewpoints, particularly with regard to baptism; and thus (5) largely is taken up with fighting straw men by way of weak arguments. And finally, apparently underlying the entire book is a great *non sequitur*: appreciation of the NPP (in whatever form) must mean the giving away of the store - in other words, that appropriation of a good deal of Wright's work is automatically confessionally and doctrinally problematic.

I will not take these matters up quite point-by-point, since that would involve a great deal of overlap and repetition, but I do hope to cover all of this ground below, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the point at issue.

1. Misrepresentation and misleading analysis

By far, my biggest complaint with this book is Waters's radical misrepresentation of the writers under discussion. On the back cover, Donald Macleod's blurb suggests that the book is "a timely, informative, and accessible contribution to one of the most crucial Christian discourses of our

time." In many respects, I can agree that the discussion is crucially important. And certainly, the book is timely, and for the most part accessible (although the *non sequiturs* frequently leave the reader pausing over the argument). But "informative" is not an apt description of a work so marked by *misinformation*. This is particularly so with regard to Waters's handling of N. T. Wright, as well as his closing words concerning people such as Norman Shepherd. I will provide here only a few of the most grievous examples - examples which fundamentally affect the overarching assessment of Waters's targets.

1.a. Taking note that Wright says that the final justification on the last day will take works into consideration, Waters repeatedly states that for Wright, ultimate justification will be *on the ground of* the believer's works (138-139). Interestingly, that is not Wright's language, but Waters's. While it is indeed fair to complain of Wright's choice of wording in his *Romans* commentary ("Justification, at the last, will be on the basis of performance, not possession" - p. 440), there are numerous reasons why Waters's take on the statement is fundamentally misleading.

(1) It ignores the fact that the language of "ground" plays a very specific role in the Aristotelian construction of the classical Protestant exposition of justification, and Wright's use of "basis" is referring to something very different. Wright is not working from a confessional context where the precision Waters seeks is necessary.

(2) It ignores the context in the commentary, where Wright is quite clear that the "performance" he is speaking of is not a straightforward discharge of moral duties, but a mysterious eschatological fulfilling of the law through faith. (Note also Wright's comment concerning these Gentiles of Rom 2.13-16: "they have not *earned* glory, honor, and immortality, merely sought it; they know it remains a gift, however much it will turn out to be in accordance with the life they have in fact lived" [*Romans* 442; italics Wright's]; cf. Wright, 2003 Rutherford House lecture, p. 9: [Paul here] "redefines what 'doing the law' really means.") I do not deny, however, that *if* Wright actually did hold that this "strange fulfillment" were the actual *ground* of justification, he would approach Rome on this single point (subtracting the doctrine of merit). (This observation only applies to the final judgment; Waters's insistence upon "back-dating" the ground of final justification to present justification, simply because Wright [correctly] sees present justification as an anticipation of the last judgment, is unwarranted.)

(3) It ignores the parallel which Wright himself provides in another passage quoted by Waters: "Present justification declares, *on the basis of faith*, what future justification will affirm publicly (according to 2:14-16 and 8:9-11) *on the basis of the entire life*" (*What Saint Paul Really Said* 129, cited in Waters 138-139; italics mine). It is clear enough that Wright does not view faith as the *ground* of present justification, so given the intentional parallel in his language, how likely is it that he is intending to present "the entire life" as the ground of future justification? The point here is not to say that Wright's way of putting things is the best way, or even that it is in no way problematic. It *is* to say, however, that Waters's reading puts an unlikely and uncharitable spin on Wright's words. (Note Wright's use of evidential language on p. 9 of his Rutherford House lecture: these good works "are the things which *show*. . . *that one is in Christ*;" Paul's apostolic

labors will "count to his credit," to be sure, on the last day, but "precisely because they are the *effective signs* that the Spirit of the living Christ has been at work in him" [emphasis mine].)

1.b. Related to the above, Waters on numerous occasions says that justification in Wright (and Shepherd) is a *process*. He nowhere demonstrates this claim, which is in fact explicitly and emphatically denied by Wright himself ("Absolutely not!" says the bishop, in "The Shape of Justification"). In connection with Wright, the apparent assumption is that if justification is in two stages (present and final), it must be a process, but this is a *non sequitur*. "Process" in medieval Roman Catholic theology referred to an *increase* in justification (which of course was not construed forensically). I have never encountered any evidence that any of the writers Waters is critiquing believes in a process with regard to justification. Given the nature of the charge, it was incumbent upon the writer to prove his point, particularly since a process view would be incoherent in terms of Wright's view of justification. (Wright says that justification is God's covenantal and judicial declaration that one is in the right as a member of His family. How such a transaction *could* be a process is scarcely transparent.)

In the case of Norman Shepherd, Waters does give us more of a clue what he is basing the idea of "process" upon, although he is certainly wrong on the point. Because Shepherd speaks of the believer's obedience as being "necessary to his continuing in the state of justification (Heb 3:6, 14)," Waters deduces that Shepherd is saying that justification "is not a single act. . . but is properly a process" (210). *But a state does not imply a process*, and to the contrary, Waters's own Westminster Standards uphold justification as a state into which one enters. WCF XI.V says, not that God forgives the sins of those who were justified, but those who are justified. There is not, and never has been, any difficulty in conceiving of justification as both past act and present state. And neither is it necessarily problematic to speak of obedience as necessary for remaining in such a state. As the *Belgic Confession* states, "faith is an instrument that *keeps us in communion* with Him in *all His benefits*, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins" (Article 22). Since obedience is the necessary and concomitant fruit of faith, and faith is necessary to keep the believer in communion with Christ, obedience is indeed necessary for continuing in the state of justification. This assertion does not imply that such obedience is the ground or the means of such continuance; as Waters surely knows, there are many different sorts of necessity. Thus the reader may be forgiven for declining to follow Waters in his recurrent tendency to put the worst possible spin upon his targets and then to vilify his own construction.

1.c. Waters takes issue with the notion that at the final judgment, good works, obedience, or covenantal faithfulness will be "contemplated," at least in connection with justification (see e.g. 131). Everywhere he mentions this, he instinctively moves to good works as the "ground" of justification (see 1.a above). This reflects serious failure to appreciate Paul's own statements (not to mention those of Jesus), such as in 2 Corinthians 5.10, where Paul clearly and unequivocally says that the works of *believers* ("we all") will be in view at the final judgment. (Interestingly, the only place this passage appears in Waters's index refers us to a *quotation of N. T. Wright*.)

Waters's move from "contemplation" or "consideration" to a grounding of ultimate justification in works is made with even less justice (if such is possible) in the case of his treatment of

Norman Shepherd (see esp. 209-210). Waters quotes Theses 20-23 of Shepherd's "Thirty-Four Theses on Justification" and makes the claim that each of them "departs in some way from traditional Protestant formulations of the doctrine of justification by faith alone" (209). How so? Shepherd says that obedience is "necessary" to the believer's "continuing in a state of justification" and "for his justification in the judgment of the last day."

But the million dollar question is: *In what sense, in Shepherd's view, is obedience necessary?* Waters concedes that several times in these very theses, Shepherd explicitly says that Christ and His righteousness are the exclusive ground of the believer's justification. That is too clear to dispute, so Waters takes another tack: "if we are to take Shepherd's comments at face value, then he can only mean that it is Christ's righteousness *as it has been infused into the believer* that provides the ground of the believer's justification *because faith in justification is not contemplated apart from its fruit*" (210, emphasis his). Here, as elsewhere, Waters has given us a wholesale manufacture of a position and imposed it upon the man he is critiquing. In truth, Waters's reading is not a possible interpretation of Shepherd's own grammar, since the latter clearly *contrasts* "the righteousness of Jesus Christ" and "the personal godliness" or obedience of the believer - even more, Shepherd explicitly says in Thesis 23 that good works, which are done from true faith, are "*not* the ground of justification" (emphasis mine). Norman Shepherd has clearly and consistently upheld the view that justification is upon the ground of Christ's righteousness, and he has given not the slightest warrant for reckless accusations such as Waters has provided here. He has simply defended faithfully what is manifestly true: at the last day, *good works will be examined, and no one will receive ultimate justification apart from them*. That in no way implies justification upon *the basis* or ground of those works at all. Nor yet does it imply justification upon the basis or ground of infused righteousness producing such works; it simply affirms that obedience is a necessary, concomitant condition of salvation.

1.d. Over and over again, Waters claims that for Wright, justification is ecclesiological and *not* soteriological. He repeats this *ad nauseum*, but never provides a single quotation to demonstrate that this is the case. And the truth is that it is clearly *not* the case. As Wright makes abundantly clear, justification has to do with the forgiveness of sins (presumably a soteriological issue):

This present declaration constitutes all believers as the single people, the one family, promised to Abraham (Gal. 2.14 - 3.29; Rom. 3.27 - 4.17), the people whose sins have been dealt with as part of the fulfilled promise of covenant renewal (Jer. 31.31-34). *Membership in this family cannot be played off against forgiveness of sins: the two belong together. . . . 'Justification' is thus the declaration of God, the just judge, that someone is. . . in the right, that their sins are forgiven. ("The Shape of Justification"; emphasis mine; cf. also 2003 Rutherford House lecture p. 13: "God's declaration of forgiveness and his declaration of covenant membership are not ultimately two different things.")*

But even if it were the case that Wright did divorce justification from soteriology, Waters ignores the fact that Wright explicitly says in *What Saint Paul Really Said* that what others wish to affirm in terms of soteriology, he is more than happy to affirm. It is downright false to claim, as Waters

does, that Wright is unconcerned about individual salvation or that he wishes to minimize soteriology. As Wright protests,

it is simply not true, as people have said again and again, that I deny or downplay the place of the individual in favour of a corporate ecclesiology. True, I have reacted against the rampant individualism of western culture, and have tried to insist on a biblically rooted corporate solidarity in the body of Christ as an antidote to it. But this in no way reduces the importance of every person being confronted with the powerful gospel, and the need for each one to be turned around by it from idols to God, from sin to holiness, and from death to life. (2003 Rutherford House lecture 11-12.)

But what does Wright actually say? Justification for Paul "wasn't *so much* about soteriology as about ecclesiology; not *so much* about salvation as about the church" (*Saint Paul* 119). Now, I happen to be dissatisfied with that formulation, and in fact it is Wright at one of his lowest ecclesiological moments - he is not often satisfied to juxtapose church and salvation as if they were so very far apart. But the fact remains that this quotation places the weight of justification upon the ecclesiological issue, but it does not *exclude* the soteriological.

1.e. Waters asserts that for Wright "Baptism has a primacy even over faith in Paul's thought. . . . [and] in certain respects, appears to occupy the role that faith has played in many traditional readings of Paul" (146). This is an interesting suggestion, given that Wright has written so little on baptism - most of what he has written can only be gleaned from snippets, such as his comments in connection with Romans 6. It seems clear to this writer that the charge in question would never have arisen were it not for the fact that Waters is setting a trajectory to attack fellow Presbyterians whose views on baptism make him nervous.

There is little reason to accept Waters's intimation that faith loses its proper role in Wright (particularly over against baptism). As Wright says,

God justifies the one whose status rests on the faithful death of Jesus. Even there, of course, the notion of the believer's own faith is not absent, since it is this faith that precipitates God's announcement of the verdict in the present time. But the basis for this faith is precisely the faithfulness of Jesus seen as the manifestation of the covenant faithfulness of God. (*Romans* 474)

Here, surely, is a sound integration of faith and Christ's sacrifice. (Incidentally, lest one stumble in the opposite direction and claim that by saying faith "precipitates" justification, Wright is making faith a human "work," it must be noted that Wright adds in numerous places elsewhere that this faith is the fruit of God's own effectual call. E.g. "The Shape of Justification": "Again and again in the Thessalonian correspondence Paul declares that this word, this gospel, worked with power in his hearers' hearts, with the result that they came to faith: just as, in Rom. 1.16, the gospel. . . is God's power to effect salvation." A very Reformed sentiment: faith, wrought by God's effectual call, becomes the instrument of justification.)

What, then, of Wright's view of baptism? As Wright noted at a recent conference in Louisiana, he has scarcely written enough on baptism for a reader to construct any sort of theology of baptism from his work. But the question did come up there in an interesting exchange between Wright and Richard Gaffin.

After Wright commented that baptism is "the concrete event" which holds forensic and participationist categories together, Gaffin opined, "You don't want to disassociate faith from that." To which Wright's response was unequivocal:

No - absolutely. The trouble in theology is that you have to say everything all the time or people will say you've deliberately left something out. You cannot say it all at once. When I say baptism, I don't mean, "and therefore not faith". . . . Everything is in Galatians 3.26-29: faith, baptism - all is part of the same single paragraph. That's why I resist the pulling apart of the redemptive-historical and the other elements.

"People will say you've deliberately left something out." One might almost think that Wright was describing Waters's treatment of him. But Wright could scarcely escape this one - he was merely a convenient target to set up in preparation for an attack upon others.

The fact is, neither in Paul nor in Calvin or Luther are baptism and faith set at odds (see below). Baptism is not to be treated alongside of faith as a work of man, but a promissory divine act (even as the Word is); that is why in classical Protestantism it is called *a means of grace*. Therefore, neither Paul's close association of baptism and faith in Galatians 3.26-29, nor his attribution of mighty things to baptism in Romans 6, are problematic for a robust doctrine of *sola fide*. The placing of baptism and faith in competition is an antisacramentalist construct unknown to Calvin, Luther, and to Paul. So similarly, what little evidence Waters has provided regarding N. T. Wright's view of baptism is wholly unproblematic, whether in terms of Scripture or confessional Protestantism.

2. Muddy and unhelpful analysis

2.a. Waters repeatedly employs the language of *vertical* and *horizontal* to criticize both Wright and others. Noting Wright's emphasis on "story," he concludes that Wright has "an inherent bias against doctrinal formulation and linear, logical reasoning, a predisposition against conceiving of the relationship of God and man in *vertical* terms. Rather, Wright is inclined to understand that relationship in essentially *horizontal* categories" (121, emphasis his; cf 205, 209).

This claim is not at all clear. My best guess is that he is complaining that Wright's emphasis on story undercuts the notion that there is some sort of "timeless truth." But even if that were so, how does this make the God-man relationship *horizontal*? It is, after all, still a God-man relationship, and therefore always vertical - something that Wright, to my knowledge, never denies or prejudices, whether explicitly or implicitly. In truth, I don't know what a "horizontal" relationship to God would look like. (Waters calls covenantal categories "horizontal" on p 209, without explanation. How a covenant established sovereignly by God with the creature is

"horizontal," I must confess, is beyond my capacities to detect without further explanation, which is not forthcoming.)

As for the claim that Wright has "an inherent bias" against doctrine, Wright's attention to story (which is all that Waters cites in support of his claim) scarcely demonstrates that. It may well demonstrate that Wright is committed to the view that the Scriptures were not written as doctrinal treatises, as inchoate Berkhofs - but who really believes that?

2.b. Waters repeatedly accuses Wright (as well as Dunn) of being "vague" regarding matters such as the atonement and how people come to have the status of *righteous*. It is in connection with this that Waters repeatedly returns to the theme of *imputation*. The assumption apparently is that if Wright does not have an explicit doctrine of the imputation of Christ's meritorious active obedience, then he is "vague" on the issues.

But is this *shibboleth* helpful? Or is it in fact misleading, particularly in view of the fact that Wright so frequently suggests that his view "gets at" the Reformers' concerns just as well as does an explicitly-articulated doctrine called "imputation"?

At a recent conference, Wright put things this way: imputation "is an attempt to say something that needs to be said." And what is it that needs to be said? "Messiah represents His people, so that what is true of Him is true of them: crucifixion and the Messiah's own new life" (citing Galatians 2.20).

And again:

I can argue through Romans how Paul deals with [guilt] through the propitiatory sacrifice that God has already [provided]. . . . I don't see any need to invoke the idea of imputation of the positive merits of the active obedience of Christ. God condemned sin in the death of Christ. God drew sin into one place - Israel - and as her representative Messiah, His death has borne that. If that's what people mean by imputation, that's what I mean.

In his Rutherford house lecture (p. 14), Wright comments,

Paul's doctrine of what is true of those who are in the Messiah does the job, within his scheme of thought, that the traditional Protestant emphasis on the imputation of Christ's righteousness did within that scheme. In other words, that which imputed righteousness was trying to insist upon is, I think, fully taken care of in (for instance) Romans 6, where Paul declares that what is true of the Messiah is true of all his people. Jesus was vindicated by God as Messiah after his *penal death* [emphasis mine - TG] ; I am in the Messiah; therefore I too have died and been raised. According to Romans 6, when God looks at the baptised Christian he sees him or her in Christ. But Paul does not say that he sees us clothed with the earned merits of Christ. . . . He sees us within the *vindication* of Christ, that is, as having died with Christ and risen again with him.

In brief, Wright most emphatically is very clear on the substitutionary atonement God has provided as the means of dealing with guilt and propitiating His own wrath. Waters should have been alerted to this, not only by Wright's defense of propitiation in his Romans commentary (a doctrine which many evangelicals have jettisoned), but also by his insistence that Jesus saw Himself as the sin-bearing Servant of Isaiah 53 (see e.g. *Jesus and the Victory of God* 588ff), as well as numerous other things he has written. Instead, Waters repeatedly chooses to treat such evidence as inconsequential concessions at best. The issue here is not lack of *clarity* in Wright, but lack of *charity* in his critics, coupled with a rather limited theological imagination.

2c. Even where he is right, Waters's argumentation is sometimes unhelpful. For example, Waters correctly argues that human cooperation with the grace of God is not the ground upon which a believer is justified. However, he relates this to the issue of the *ability* of fallen man: "Provided that some ability remains in fallen man to please God spiritually, what is to prevent the use of that ability in cooperating with the grace of God in order to produce the ground according to which we are justified?" (187). This is an unfortunate line of reasoning. For most emphatically neither Paul nor historic Reformed theology have claimed that believers have no ability to cooperate with the grace of God; rather the opposite, Paul clearly implies that unlike those in the flesh, those who are in the Spirit *can* please God (Rom 8.8 in context). The reason that good works cannot cooperate with Christ in providing the ground for justification does not rest on the inability of the believer.

3. Exegetical over-simplification

As I noted above, the book's exegetical critique of the New Perspective consists of 28 pages. Very little exegetical reflection occurs outside of that section, and given the space, it can scarcely be surprising to anyone when I opine that such a brief accounting of Paul is wholly inadequate to the task of disturbing, much less refuting, a large-scale exegetical project such as Wright (in particular) has engaged in. In truth, Waters seems unaware of tremendous difficulties with readings he adopts, ignores key passages for the discussion, and treats matters with a sort of self-evidence. And even beyond that, a great deal of the exegetical effort that he actually does put in is simply misplaced. For example, Waters operates from the assumption that the NPP depends upon a notion that works of the law have to do with *status*, and *not activity* - at most an *accent*, not an *antithesis* in most NPP thought - and as a result, much of his limited exegetical labor is virtually wasted in proving that "works" in Paul involves activity, which few people would in fact dispute.

I cannot enter into interaction with all of Waters's exegetical conclusions; such a task would clearly be well beyond the task and scope of a critical review, even one of such inordinate length as this. In truth, there is very little to interact with, since so much of the section (necessarily, given the scope in relation to the space allotted) simply consists in sweeping assertions. There is in fact very little resembling close exegesis in the book - despite some rather surprising exegetical moves which, one would think, would require detailed defense (such as consigning not only Romans 2.13-16 to the realm of the hypothetical, but the remainder of the chapter as well - unprecedented in my reading of Reformed exegesis).

I will focus here, however, upon one matter which pops up in various places: Waters's quarrel with the prevalent tendency to take the Greek phrase *dikaio suné Theou* ("the righteousness of God") as referring, not to an imputed object, but to God's "covenant faithfulness." Waters asserts that this meaning is illicitly imported into Paul. "This is the imposition of a foreign biblical-theological model upon the text of Paul. A sounder and more textually faithful method of proceeding is to examine each instance of 'righteousness' where it occurs and to allow the context to define this term for us" (180).

The truth is that Waters does not himself do what he claims is the sound method - he simply cites the various occurrences and asserts what they mean. And he does not provide close enough exegesis of the passage in question (Romans 3.21-26) to support such assertions.

Beyond this, however, is the assumption that the "covenant faithfulness" reading of *dikaio suné Theou* is uncontextual and dependent upon extrabiblical literature. The case is far otherwise. If Waters would study the contexts of the passages Paul cites in the preceding verses of Romans 3, he would discover that *nearly all of them refer to divine righteousness*. (See Ps 51.4, 14 with Rom 3.4; Ps 5.8, 9 with 3.13; Is 59.7-8, 16-17 with 3.15-17; Ps 36.1, 6 with 3.18; Ps 143.1, 2 with 3.20. For further development, see my essay "These Are Two Covenants: The Mosaic Law in Paul's Thought," in *Abiding in the Vine: Essays in Covenant Life*, Athanasius Press, forthcoming; cf. Wright, 2003 Rutherford House lecture p. 6, where he notes the Isaianic roots of Paul's terminology.)

Moreover, in these Old Testament passages, this *dikaio suné* is invariably tied to God's faithfulness with regard to saving His people and upholding His own covenant Word. It seems to this reviewer, therefore, that the "covenant faithfulness" reading (or something very near to it), far from being extrabiblical and uncontextual, is as relevant to the passage as one can possibly get without direct quotation. Waters has simply failed to deal with the force of the view he opposes; his "argument" consists of ignoring the strengths of his opponents and mere assertion of the view he prefers. This will convince no one but the already convinced, and will surely discredit his work in the eyes of biblical students who are concerned for serious exegesis.

4. Historical issues

As we noted above, Waters is critical of the apparently robust view of baptism adopted by Wright. He opines that Wright "perceives [baptism] to be far more realistic than traditional Protestants have taken it" (149). He later consigns various Presbyterian and Reformed men to the road to Rome, presumably (in part, at least) on the basis of their view of baptism. He does not actually demonstrate what Wright believes on baptism, which (as noted above) would be rather difficult from the available materials. But my concern at this juncture is not with the misrepresentation involved in the statement above, but rather the historical assumptions he imports into his critique. Of course, Waters does not define what he means by "realistic," which, one can only suppose, leaves him some wiggle room. Nonetheless, one would be hard-pressed to find more "realistic" statements in Wright (or the Presbyterian targets Waters is angling for) than may be readily found in Calvin, Bucer, or Luther (to say nothing of Paul himself) - all of whom, one would presume, would fit the classification of "traditional Protestants."

The difficulty in demonstrating this point lies, not in finding sufficiently strong material, but in restricting oneself. (Somewhat ironic, I would think, since Waters makes a sweeping charge of "culpable ignorance of what Reformed doctrine has taught" among fellow Reformed men [204].) Here are a few samples of "traditional Protestantism":

We assuredly believe that *by Baptism we are engrafted into Christ*, to be made partakers of his righteousness, by which our sins are covered and remitted (Scots Confession, 1560; emphasis mine).

. . . for us as the water washes away all the dirt of the body, the stains and spots and any kind of impurity, so also the one over whom the baptismal waters have been poured, is received by God's grace, washed by the blood of Jesus and obligated to live a new life (Heinrich Bullinger, quoted in Hughes Oliphant Old, *Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite* 138; interestingly, Bullinger's sacramental theology was considered to be low among his contemporaries).

Almighty God, Heavenly Father, we give you eternal praise and thanks, that you have granted and bestowed upon this child your fellowship, that you have *born him again to yourself through your holy baptism*, that he has been incorporated into your beloved Son, our only Savior, and is now your child and heir (Strasbourg Liturgy 1537, post-baptismal prayer; emphasis mine).

. . . the truth and substance of baptism is comprised in [Jesus Christ]. For we have no other washing than in His blood, and we have no other renewal than in His death and resurrection. But as He communicates to us His riches and blessings by His word, so He *distributes them to us by His sacraments* (John Calvin, 1542 baptismal exhortation; emphasis mine).

As many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (you-know-who).

So how is Wright's view of baptism more "realistic" than those expressed in the above?

But perhaps by "traditional Protestants," Waters intends only antisacramental Southern Presbyterians and modern evangelicals.

Or again, is it the case that Waters is confused in the book's conclusion, and his real conviction is not that the two overarching destinations are Rome and Geneva, but rather that Geneva itself was on the road to Rome, and the only alternative is Thornwell or some Mecca of the Reformed Baptists who have so prominently provided the endorsements for his book?

5. Theological matters

Waters claims that justification is a single act, and that "the future declaration [will be] simply restating and making public the former declaration" (210). On the basis of this starting point, he

identifies all those who hold to an actual future justification as affirming *justification as a process* (as we noted above).

Quite aside from that *non sequitur* (two stages do not imply a process), we must ask whether Waters's position is possible. Is the future justification *merely* a "public restatement" of initial justification? The question here is not whether there are two different justifications - there is *one*, and one only. The question is whether Waters's claim reflects an overrealized eschatology that does justice to the actual biblical witness.

It must be observed, first, that the last day is described by Paul and the other biblical writers as a *judgment* - not only for unbelievers, but for believers. "For we must all appear before the *judgment seat of Christ*, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor 5.10 NKJV). The task carried out at a judgment is to vindicate (justify) and to condemn. If that does not occur, judgment has simply not taken place.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that death is swallowed up in victory *at the resurrection* (1 Cor 15.54). Death is everywhere in Scripture presented as *judgment*. Since the presently justified are still "perishing in the outer man" (2 Cor 4.16), the full benefit of justification has not yet been granted. The full benefit of justification entails resurrection, which is why Jesus' resurrection is the basis of our present justification (Rom 4.25).

Does this imply some huge disconnect between present justification and final justification? Again, no. For as Paul says, "The sting of death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the law. But thanks be to God, *who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor 15.56-57). While death is not yet swallowed up in victory for the believer, it has been swallowed up in victory for our Head. Furthermore, the believer is no longer under Sin (which is the brunt of Paul's argument in Romans 6), and therefore death has lost its "sting."

The point is: *there is only one justification - and our Lord has experienced it in His resurrection*. When Paul says that we have been raised with Christ (Eph 2.5, 6; Col 3.1; cf Rom 6.11), that is just another way of saying that we have (already) been justified.

Nonetheless, Paul is equally clear that, in connection with the final fruition of this one justification, God *will* "contemplate the believer's works." That is the logic of 1 Corinthians 15.58, following so closely on the heels of Paul's statement of present victory over Sin and death through Christ (15.56-57): "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that *your labor is not in vain* in the Lord." It is in prospect of the resurrection to come that Paul says the believer's labor is not in vain. Thus 1 Corinthians 15 teaches us precisely what we are taught in 2 Corinthians 5.10 (not to mention Romans 2.13-16): the final judgment will examine the works of believers, and there will be no justification apart from works. *Present* justification *must* be apart from works, since it is an act of new creation wherein God lifts the ungodly out of death (hence Paul's analogy in Romans 4 between present justification and God's gift of a son to Abraham, who faced the death both of his own loins and that of Sarah's womb). But *future* justification *cannot* be apart from works since,

as the *Heidelberg Catechism* says, "It is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness" (Lord's Day 24, Q/A 64).

6. Hermeneutics and the place of scholarship

Does the NPP guild - presuming one exists - reflect a "priesthood of scholars" that in principle removes interpretation from the simple believer? Is it guilty of a sort of "secularized" form of Rome's doctrine of the all-powerful *magisterium*, which alone had true power to teach Scripture with authority? Waters's claim on this point is problematic for numerous reasons.

(1) There is no scholarly priesthood or academic *magisterium* analogous to that of Rome - anyone may examine the literature in question if he wishes.

(2) Wright has clearly said that his rereading of Paul did not stem from Sanders's project in the first place, but was in fact due to his struggle to correlate Romans and Galatians - in other words, that it was due to *biblical exegesis*, not to High Priest Sanders. (See his 2003 Rutherford House lecture, "New Perspectives on Paul," p. 2.) Simply blaming new readings upon extrabiblical study short-circuits the debate. There are issues of exegesis involved, and not merely of historical background. (This is not, of course, to be taken as a claim that a given NPP reading gets Paul just right; it is, however, a call to pay closer heed to the exegetical task - which clearly, Waters has not done in this book.)

(3) The relationship between extra-biblical scholarship and biblical interpretation is much more complex than Waters's few words might indicate. For example, every lay believer reads a *translated Bible* and is thus already dependent upon extrabiblical scholarship at a basic level (our knowledge of Greek, for example, does not simply derive from study of the Greek New Testament, and even if it did, it would still require linguistic learning tools from outside Scripture). Likewise, there are many things in Scripture that historical knowledge sheds light on. For example, the fact that Caesar was called *kurios* and *sotér* (lord and savior) - surely, even Waters must concede that we have not fully understood the resonance of the biblical texts apart from an awareness of those historical issues?

Waters's appeal to Paul's expectation that his hearers would understand his instructions (156) is simplistic - the texts he cites refer to very practical issues which could scarcely be misunderstood, and furthermore, there were people on hand who could provide explanation. But beyond this, Waters's complaint presupposes that his own reading of Paul is manifestly obvious - suspect indeed, considering that he thinks we must consign essentially the entirety of Romans 2 to the realm of hypothetical possibility. I dare say such a reading would not have occurred to Paul's readers on first hearing, and it certainly has not occurred to many interpreters who have spent their lives in the task of biblical exegesis.

So much for matters of extrabiblical academic study. But what of the other side of the coin - the teaching authority of the Church and its tradition?

While Waters criticizes the supposed "biblicism" of N. T. Wright (203), surely it is important to note that the latter is self-consciously emulating the Reformers in undertaking his task of

interpretation and theologizing. While we must always be wary of the danger of a sort of anti-ecclesiastical individualism, Wright is surely correct when he says,

Of course, prayer and humility before the text do not guarantee exegetical success. We all remain deeply flawed at all levels. But that is precisely my point. If I am *simul iustus et peccator*, the church, not least the church as the scripture-reading community, must be *ecclesia catholica semper reformanda*. Like Calvin, we must claim the right to stand critically within a tradition. To deny either of these would be to take a large step towards precisely the kind of triumphalism against which the Reformers themselves would severely warn us. (2003 Rutherford lecture, p. 4.)

Two conjoined phrases in that quotation are especially important: *stand critically* and *within a tradition*. It is altogether too convenient to say that the Reformation of Luther and Calvin, as sweeping as it was, was legitimate, and then demand to leave things there. The Church remains the body of Christ upon the earth (and therefore her authority is not to be despised) - and it also remains *under the Scriptures* (and therefore her authority, including the authority of her recent tradition, is not to be absolutized). In the final analysis, Wright's exegesis may or may not be fraught with errors, but it is more Reformational in its vision than is Waters's critique. Biblicism is indeed an ever-present danger - but so is idolatry of the tradition.

7. The great *non sequitur*

As we have noted, underlying Waters's entire project in this book is an attempt to get at men in Presbyterian and Reformed circles who have come to appreciate N. T. Wright in profound ways. This motive becomes particularly clear in the closing chapter, where Waters comments about his Reformed peers. He refers to an "uncritical appropriation of and appreciation for [Wright's] scholarship" (198). (Ironically, Waters also refers to "a selective and unpenetrating reading of NPP scholarship" [204]. It seems that he wishes to have it both ways - there is an "uncritical" embrace of the NPP that somehow manages to be "selective" of what it appropriates.) This supposed "uncritical appropriation" is left entirely undocumented. And yet, it is precisely this which Waters must demonstrate in order for his case to make much sense.

There have been times when Reformed theologians were much less paranoid about appropriating the work of biblical scholars outside the tradition. The thing that matters is getting the text right, after all, and if the tradition is right, then the Reformed scholar ought to be able to discern where the error lies. Waters's whole presupposition, however, is reactionary, and fails to recognize that even if many of his worst readings of Wright were in fact spot-on, Wright's work could still be appropriated quite easily with minor adjustments.

Think, for example, of the issue discussed earlier, regarding Wright's view of the final judgment. Waters claims that Wright sees the final judgment to be on the *ground* of the believer's works. I have disputed that. But let us, for the sake of argument, agree that Waters's reading is utterly correct. What would it matter? I have not yet met a Reformed or Presbyterian pastor or elder who has embraced Wright, who thinks that the final judgment of the believer will be on the ground of the believer's works. It is no difficulty to refer to the necessity of works at the final judgment (an

issue which can scarcely be escaped exegetically, as we have noted) as having *evidential* value, rather than as providing the ground of justification.

Or again, I myself disagree with Wright's insistence that justification is not "entry language." Waters takes this to mean that justification is not soteriological in Wright. As noted, that is incorrect - but even if it were not, how difficult is it to tinker with that? Not difficult at all. As I have noted, if justification is a covenantal and juridical declaration that one is righteous, there is a point of commencement - and therefore, of *entry*. Wright's position is inconsistent; my tinkering has the effect of making him more consistent. And by doing so, I further undercut the notion that soteriology is underplayed. (It is interesting and instructive to note that of the numerous Reformed men with whom I am familiar, there is a very pervasive tendency to tweak Wright's view of justification. "Uncritical acceptance" rarely marks those influenced by Wright, in my experience.) So my question is: what is wrong-headed about such "selective" appropriation?

The point, then, is simply that it is illegitimate to attempt to take shortcuts in deciding whether a teacher of the church has views that are out of bounds, by saying: "Oh, he is heavily influenced by so-and-so." If a man needs to be disciplined for his teaching, the criteria must involve *his* teaching, and not another's.

I will also add that those who demonstrate themselves to be incapable of, or unwilling to, characterize another man's views carefully and accurately are not qualified to judge such a man's credentials of orthodoxy. This book has demonstrated a radical failure to understand and interact with those with whom it takes issue, and yet it makes serious charges, some of which, if true, would be matters for ecclesiastical discipline. Neither the author nor those who lean hard upon this sort of "scholarship" should be sitting in judgment regarding the orthodoxy of others.

8. Questionable guiding assumptions

We have seen that Waters is insistent upon putting words in the mouths of his targets - words that they explicitly deny. Why is it that Waters feels the need to charge Wright, Shepherd and others with holding to a notion of justification as *process*, even though they explicitly deny it? Why is it he sees the need to charge them with believing in justification on the *ground* of good works, despite their emphatic claims to the contrary? Why does the theology of others become so transformed in Waters's hands?

The answer, it would seem, lies in two parallel guiding assumptions, one only made explicit at the end of the book, the other implicit in the same claim. As we have noted, Waters insists, "All expressions of Christianity are on the path to one of two destinations, Rome or Geneva" (211). A necessary corollary of this would have to be that Waters assumes that he himself is somewhere in the vicinity of Geneva. On the basis of these assumptions, Waters apparently feels free to drive anyone with whom he disagrees to the ultimate destination, at least with regard to the doctrine of justification.

Quite aside from the intellectual dishonesty involved in pretending that people say that which they have not said, and in fact have emphatically denied, and quite aside from the dubious nature

of the presupposition that Geneva is the irreformable heavenly city, we need to ask whether the "two destinations" assumption is so transparently obvious. And if it is so obvious, we must ask whether Waters himself is so much closer to Geneva than is Durham.

Frankly, both assumptions involved here are rather absurd. Why should we say that there are two, and only two, destinations? Is Lutheranism heading to Rome, or to Geneva? Is pop evangelicalism heading to Rome, or to Geneva? More to the point, is antisacramental Southern Presbyterianism heading for Geneva?

If nothing else, the "two destinations" assumption appears oblivious to the tremendous diversity of historical, confessional Reformed thinking (much of which would look rather out of place in Geneva). For example, several representatives at the Westminster Assembly would have been more than happy to agree with Wright over against Waters that the believer is redeemed through Christ's death and resurrection, apart from any imputation of His active obedience.

Meanwhile, the baptismal statements with which Waters takes issue would seem to trace back to Geneva, while Waters's position would seem better to match that of the Reformed Baptists who adorn the back cover of his book. Likewise, Waters's vilification of "worldview Christianity" scarcely resembles the first-generation Calvinism which so shook the political landscape of Europe. No one supposes that Guy Waters is "on the road to Rome," but one should scarcely suppose that he sits in Geneva's gates.

Getting Back to the Point

There is so much more that could be said. Time would fail me to give an accounting of the unwarranted assumptions, unsubstantiated allegations, and misleading generalizations which mark page after page of *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul* (particularly in its last half). One could go on to complain about Waters's claims that Wright and those influenced by him are uninterested in "soteriological categories," wish "to purge contemplative categories and concerns" from Pauline doctrine, and maintain "that Christians must influence history not one heart at a time but one institution or structure at a time" (201). One could observe that such statements are a combination of outright falsehood (has Waters read anything by Wright on prayer? on the mysterious work of the Spirit? can he explain why Wright churns out so much devotional material?) and unfounded dichotomies (why pit institutions versus hearts? why is it that Kuyper, implicitly attacked by Waters [200], was not only the visionary of a Christian worldview, but also the author of warm devotionals?).

But somewhere the review must leave off. I think it is evident enough that Waters's assessments of others are fundamentally and pervasively untrustworthy, and the reader will not be so unwary as to swallow his claims.

In closing, however, allow me a final word regarding the positive issue at hand with the NPP. This review has largely been defensive, in the sense that it has dealt with unwarranted attacks on persons and ideas. That is clearly important to do. But the other side of the coin is that in all of this hubbub, as so often, the actual positive contribution of the NPP (and yes, there is one) has been shunted aside.

The great contribution of the NPP has been a recovery of the place of new creation-driven ecclesiology in Paul's own agenda. Many have claimed or implied that traditional Protestant theology has given adequate attention to the Jew/Gentile issue in Paul's thought. Well, perhaps at times it has. But one thing is very clear: the knee-jerk reaction to the New Perspective could never arise in a context where Paul's concerns of catholicity were wholeheartedly affirmed and embodied. Are we in the Reformed and Presbyterian world, perhaps, so enmeshed in a history of separation and division - and frequently, closed communion - that the threat of the NPP's Paul strikes a particular negative chord among us? To a tradition nurtured upon separatism, the ecumenical and catholic impulse of the NPP's Paul is bound to be offensive.

It is all very easy for Waters and others to invent motives for Reformed people to embrace the NPP (many of them ostensibly sinister), but perhaps the fundamental motives *derive from Paul himself*. Why, when constructing his interesting list accounting for attraction to the NPP among Reformed men (198-204), did it apparently never occur to Waters that just perhaps there are some very dominant motifs in Paul that are similarly highlighted by men such as Wright? Why is it that almost no one places a similar accent to Paul upon the connection between the Jew/Gentile issue and justification, other than proponents of the NPP? If these matters are so bound up together, and if - as our traditionalist brothers so firmly assure us - justification is at the center of Paul's gospel, well then: Does that not mean that getting Paul's gospel right is an ecumenical project that the NPP has very rightly put before us, front and center?

Perhaps, after all, many in the conservative Presbyterian and Reformed world rightly feel chastised by the NPP. And in the petty squabbles all too familiar in this sector of the Church of Jesus Christ, in this respect, at least, the traditionalists frequently *have* overlooked a key element of Paul's teaching on justification. It may well be that the outcry is so loud, because the shoe pinches. Paul's gospel vigorously opposes the familiar sect mentality, and a great many people are not ready to let it go.

The opponents of the NPP, then, are correct in recognizing this issue as a battle for the gospel. But the locus of that battle does not reside in the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which Wright-influenced men in the conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches continue to uphold as forcefully as ever. The gospel is at stake, because the gospel is not merely a theoretical explanation of the mechanism behind justification, but the divine act which has effected a new creation. And that new creation is a miracle of catholicity and ecumenicity. Paul's letters bear witness to the travail which is always bound up in such a cause. God's gospel will triumph, but not apart from the pangs of birth.

Looking for a fairer critique of the NPP? Check out Stephen Westerholm's Perspectives Old and New on Paul. While I believe that Westerholm leaves many important questions unanswered, his work is much more accurate, circumspect and trenchant than the book reviewed above.