

N. T. WRIGHT, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013). Pp. xxvi + 604; xiii + 605-1658. Paper \$89.

Second Temple Jews, N. T. Wright avers, thought of themselves as in continuing exile, and they awaited God's return to Zion. (God had gone missing since shortly after 586 B.C.E.; see Ezekiel 10–11.) Jesus was the embodiment of Yhwh, and in Rom 9:5, Paul calls Jesus "God." Pharisees were zealously obsessed with purity. Israel *kata sarka* had failed to live up to its divinely appointed role to be a light to the nations. Paul the convert effectively invented "Christian theology." Ancient Pauline eschatology is about ethics and christology in the middle of time, not events at its end. "God's Israel" (Gal 6:16) is the church, the successor to Jerusalem's temple as the place where God dwells. When Paul says, "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26), what he means is that "a remnant" (though perhaps a biggish remnant) of Jewish Israel will eventually accept Christ. Paul certainly dropped Torah observance once he became an apostle. And *Sonderweg* scholars as well as those who have problems with Paul's views (as represented above) need to stop looking at the texts "through the tearful misted-up spectacles of post-Holocaust Western thinkers" (p. 1413).

Readers will recognize in this list the defining concept clusters of W.'s *oeuvre*. He has been going to print with them since at least 1991. ("Much . . . was done nearly twenty years ago, but reading what I have been able to read . . . in the intervening period has not made me wish to change much" [p. 77].) In this, his latest and longest effort, the secondary bibliography is refreshed, but the substance is constant: Wright remains true to his core convictions.

*Paul and the Faithfulness of God* is W.'s *summa theologica*, but he wraps his theology in the rhetoric of historical investigation, his convictions as a forthright, even a brave reconstruction of what Paul believed (p. 79, and *passim*). He works largely with snippets of various ancient biblical texts, recombining them in imaginative patterns to produce what he calls "the grand narrative"—which is, he insists, how Paul conceived of things, too. Master of agonistic rhetoric, W. scolds those who disagree with him. They think anachronistically (this is asserted, not demonstrated); W. thinks historically. They are befogged by political correctness (especially the post-Holocaust variety); W., tough-minded, suffers no such disability. They do not attend to the plain sense of the text; W. does. Or they read only the plain sense of the text, not understanding that its true meaning (always: for Paul) must be metaphorical. Or, finally, they are a guild "who wear their fringes long and their phylacteries wide"—hypocrites? Pharisees? "Jews"?—if they disagree with W.'s nonapocalyptic construction of *parousia* (p. 165). Fun as these polemics are—and W. throughout is in full High Table voice—they account for much of the book's bloat. Less might have been more.

Wright's many contentions coalesce around certain favored themes: God's felt absence, following the Babylonian captivity; inaugurated eschatology (as opposed to "the end of the time-space world"); principled Jewish separatism (which contributed immediately to Israel's failure to be a light to the nations). Let me consider each of these in turn.

*God's absence.* The divine glory departed from the temple when Babylon destroyed it, and "nowhere" in Second Temple literature "are we told that  $\Upsilon\eta\omega\upsilon\chi$  and his glory have at last returned" (p. 189; so similarly 107, cf. 653, 698 bottom, 1044, and frequently elsewhere). Matthew's Jesus, of course, does think that God lives in Jerusalem ("He who swears

by the temple, swears by it and by him *who dwells in it*"; Matt 23:21). True, Matthew is not quite "Second Temple literature." But Paul's letter to the Romans is, and in 9:4 Paul speaks explicitly of God's divine presence in the temple, specifically at Jerusalem's altar.

Romans 9:4 is a passage that W. of necessity misconstrues and arguably even mistranslates (e.g., p. 1012, where he vaguely mentions "glory," and takes "worship"—that is, *latreia*—as "prayer"). Paul writes concerning the divine privileges accorded to his kinsmen: "They are Israelites and . . . to them belong the sonship, the *doxa*, the covenants, the giving of the law, and the *latreia*." *Latreia* means "cult": for Paul in this passage it stands on top of the Hebrew *ʿăbōdâ*, meaning specifically the temple cult. It does not mean "prayer." More forthrightly, *doxa* ("glory") means precisely God's glorious presence in the temple: it rests on the Hebrew *kābōd*. These are Septuagintal translations, not Pauline improvisations. No matter, says W.: what Paul really talks about here, he insists, is Jesus, *not* Israel. ("When Paul writes Romans 9:4-5, he cannot be unaware that he is listing privileges which he has just set out with great care [according to W.'s interpretation] as now being ascribed to the Messiah himself and, in and through him, to all those who belong to him" [p. 1012]). This unlikely reading of Rom 9:4, in brief, is all in service of W.'s elaborate theology of substitution, wherein God = Christ, temple = those who belong to Christ, Israel = *ekklēsia*, and so on.

*Inaugurated eschatology.* "I have sometimes been strangely accused of holding an over-realized eschatology," W. complains on p. 1047, "but I hope the present chapter will put paid to such rumours." Alas, the chapter in question, like the whole of the book, truly does seem to present a very realized eschatology (aided by W.'s insistence that Ephesians and Colossians are also by Paul). W. usually puts "end" in scare quotes, and he chides scholars for associating eschatology with "apocalyptic" (also in scare quotes). "Inaugurated eschatology," he explains, works in the present to transform Messiah-people (e.g., pp. 1048-49 and passim): "The present time is the time when, after the long years in which Israel was called to be a light to the world, the mission to the Gentiles was to be the means of rescuing Israel itself." Paul saw "the hope of Israel *already realized* in the present" (W.'s italics, p. 1049). Long story short: Jewish apocalyptic language is actually metaphorical and, understood properly, refers to political events in history; Paul's apocalyptic language is actually christological and refers chiefly to the death and resurrection of Jesus (e.g., pp. 1061-62 on Israel's hopes being already realized in Christ). "Jesus already rul[es] the world" (p. 1065). "Paul has reworked Jewish eschatology around Jesus" (p. 1089; see also 1138, and 1251 for a de-eschatologized reading of Romans 11).

But what about all those cosmic powers, every *archē* and *exousia* and *dynamis*, whom the victorious returning Christ had yet to defeat (1 Cor 15:24)? the *theos* of this *aion* who was blinding the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4)? the *archai* and *dynameis* that groan along with all creation (8:38)? the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living, which Paul thought he would live to see (1 Thess 4:15-17; 1 Cor 15:51-52)? Aren't these hopes—well, apocalyptic? Wouldn't the day after "the day of the Lord Jesus Christ" look a little different from the day before? Is it really metaphors all the way down, transposed into a realized christological key, or is Paul talking about something actually, historically, indeed empirically happening within "the time-space world"? And wasn't he conceiving of this occurring sometime in the middle decades of what we now call the first century? In his certitude about his (thus, Paul's) vision of "inaugurated eschatology," and for the whole length of his 1660 pages, W. manages not to say.

*Principled separatism.* Pharisees kept themselves apart from other Jews (not to mention non-Jews) in a single-minded pursuit of purity, scrupulously eating together in their own conventicles, thinking that in so doing they lived their zeal for the Torah. “This is what being a Pharisee was all about” (p. 89; see also 93; further, 177 on the Pharisees’ self-image as an “elite corps” dedicated to “absolute purity,” whatever that is. Phineas makes frequent cameo appearances). True in the land of Israel; true also in the Diaspora, “if there were substantial Pharisaic communities in the Diaspora” (p. 193—Were there?). Zealously persecuting other Jews who did not seek to meet such exacting standards was thus naturally part of the Pharisaic *modus operandi* (alluding to Gal 1:14); so were erecting and maintaining a “wall” between “God’s people and the idolatrous pagan world” (p. 194). Small wonder that the nations were not turning to Israel’s god.

What to do? In and through Christ, claims W., Paul found his answer. Mirror-reading his own construction of Paul and of Pharisaism, W. holds that the postconversion Paul transferred his prior categories of meaning—“Temple, Torah, land, family, ‘zeal,’ prayer, scripture” (p. 354)—to Christ, to the new community of faith in Christ, and to its charismatic present *in time* (pp. 384-455, reprised at much greater length in vol. 2, *passim*). This transference crystallizes around Paul’s revisioning of Torah: what had once seemed like God’s blessing was actually—and, Paul now realized, had always been intended as—a curse (pp. 1032-37). Paul the Christian accordingly brings into being a “new creation,” God’s Israel, the church (p. 1447).

Is this not classic, indeed deeply traditional supersessionism? W. swats the term around (“I suspect that the ‘s’-word will retain its perjorative overtones” [p. 1412 n. 10]), disowning it, embracing it, telling misty-eyed post-Holocaust—thus “pro-Jewish”—softies like Krister Stendahl to just deal with it (p. 1129). At one point he ingeniously legitimates it (after all, these are Paul’s views) as “*Jewish* supersessionism” (p. 810, referring as well to Qumran). At the end of the day, stuck between denial (“this is *not* supersessionism”) and rehabilitation (“this is *Jewish* supersessionism”), W. settles on rehabilitation, insisting that what was superseded was actually “fulfilled.”

Wright’s interpretation of Pharisaic “zeal” and his assertions that Jews were generally standoffish toward pagans provide much of his essay’s explanatory muscle: this is why Paul the Pharisee persecuted Christian Jews; this is why Israel failed in its divine mission to turn the nations to its god. W.’s views flow into those of ancient Greek and Roman ethnographers, who sometimes accused Jews of *amixia*, “a taboo on commensality, [which] is not confined to pagan slurs” (p. 1428 n. 60, citing my work in disagreement). But since W. produces no primary references, the question arises: How, other than by his own interpretation of Paul’s letters, does he know this to be the case?

Let us consider the ancient evidence. Hellenistic and early Roman ethnographers did indeed complain about Jewish misanthropy, Jewish impiety (meaning refusal to worship the gods of the majority), and Jewish enmity toward outsiders. But these *particular* accusations characterize most classical ethnographies *in general*. In a work of impeccable scholarship, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), Benjamin Isaac has documented how ancient empire led Greeks and then Romans to produce descriptions of ethnic others that sound like the lyrics of an old Tom Lehrer tune. Persians, Scythians, Celts, Egyptians, Germans, Jews: all were cast in the same mold. (In the world of ancient ethnic stereotyping, historian Gidi Bohak has observed, even the stereotypes were stereotyped.) And since these writers valued the (idealized) sociability

of their own cultures, they accused exotic others of the opposite. So many of the specifically anti-Jewish calumnies survive, as Isaac explains, because they were reused by later gentile Christians.

Then there is the wealth of Jewish inscriptions (see the volumes of Mohr Siebeck's *Inscriptiones Judaicae*). By living in the cities of the Diaspora, Jews lived *within* a pagan religious institution, and they routinely interacted with their immediate neighbors both human and divine. Moschos Ioudaios manumits his slave in a local god's temple; Niketas of Jerusalem subvenes a Dionysiac festival; Pothos liberates Chrysa in a Bosphoran synagogue, calling as witnesses Ge, Helios, and Zeus; ephebes Jesus and Eleazar attend gymnasium, their names appearing on its stele dedicated to Hermes and Heracles, the gymnasium's gods; Glykon directs distributions from his endowment to be made twice yearly, on Pentecost/Shavuot and on Calends. The vast production of Jewish Hellenistic literature attests to the Jews' ease within the world of the gymnasium. In short, except for their principled resistance to involvement in public *latreia*, Jews lived, and lived thoroughly, in their pagan cities of residence. Jerusalem might be their mother city, but their *patria*—be it Alexandria in the first century (Philo *Flacc.* 46) or Magona on Minorca in the fifth (*Ep. Severi* 18.19)—was home.

And pagans frequented Jewish places. Until 66 C.E., they visited with Jews and their god at his temple in Jerusalem or, closer to home, all throughout the Roman period, they showed up in the synagogues of their shared cities. Literary sources both Jewish and pagan and inscriptions both epigraphical and mosaic attest to interested pagans' (and, eventually, Christians') sponsorship of Jewish activities, adaptation and adoption of some Jewish ancestral customs, participation in Jewish fasts and feasts, and presence at Jewish prayer and study. Patriotic Greeks and Romans deplore this (see Menachem Stern's monumental *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* [3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–84]); Church Fathers grouse about it (Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain [135–425]* [Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 166; Paris: E. de Boccard, 1964]; Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* [New York: Doubleday, 2008]); church councils and irate emperors legislate against it (Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* [1987] and *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* [1997], both published by Wayne State University Press, Detroit). But gentiles whether pagan or Christian kept on showing up, from the first century B.C.E. through the end of Roman antiquity. Interested outsiders played a visible role in the community life of Diaspora Jews, just as Jews played a visible role in the community (thus, religious) life of their Diaspora cities. The rhetoric of *amixia* to one side, all of these populations mixed and mingled with one another.

None of this, of course, matters to W.'s construct. His interpretive context is generated not by a critical sifting of primary evidence but by the requirements of his master narrative's plot: how Paul invented a triumphalist, eschatologically realized Christian theology. In this regard, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* represents a return to the good old days, pre-1977 (E. P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress]), pre-1963 (Stendahl's "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56:199-215), indeed, pre-1906 (the German original of Albert Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, with its robust

reconstruction of Jewish apocalyptic hopes). W.'s book is historically important, therefore, for the light it sheds not on Paul but on the last century of Pauline studies. We have not, after all, undergone a paradigm shift. We stand transfixed between two paradigms: Paul the Christian theologian and Paul the apocalyptic visionary. The next step forward still remains to be taken.

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