The Epistle to the Romans
A Commentary on the Greek Text

Richard N. Longenecker

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
Grand Rapids, Michigan
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Foreword

Although there have been many series of commentaries on the English text of the New Testament in recent years, very few attempts have been made to cater particularly to the needs of students of the Greek text. The present initiative to fill this gap by the publication of the New International Greek Testament Commentary is very largely due to the vision of W. Ward Gasque, who was one of the original editors of the series. At a time when the study of Greek is being curtailed in many schools of theology, we hope that the NIGTC will demonstrate the continuing value of studying the Greek New Testament and will be an impetus in the revival of such study.

The volumes of the NIGTC are for students who want something less technical than a full-scale critical commentary. At the same time, the commentaries are intended to interact with modern scholarship and to make their own scholarly contribution to the study of the New Testament. The wealth of detailed study of the New Testament in articles and monographs continues without interruption, and the series is meant to harvest the results of this research in an easily accessible form. The commentaries include, therefore, extensive bibliographies and attempt to treat all important problems of history, exegesis, and interpretation that arise from the New Testament text.

One of the gains of recent scholarship has been the recognition of the primarily theological character of the books of the New Testament. The volumes of the NIGTC attempt to provide a theological understanding of the text, based on historical-critical-linguistic exegesis. It is not their primary aim to apply and expound the text for modern readers, although it is hoped that the exegesis will give some indication of the way in which the text should be expounded.

Within the limits set by the use of the English language, the series aims to be international in character, though the contributors have been chosen not primarily in order to achieve a spread between different countries but above all because of their specialized qualifications for their particular tasks.

The supreme aim of this series is to serve those who are engaged in the
ministry of the Word of God and thus to glorify God’s name. Our prayer is that it may be found helpful in this task.

I. Howard Marshall
Donald A. Hagner
Preface

Paul’s letter to believers in Jesus at Rome has always been highly regarded within the Christian church. It has been, in fact, the most highly acclaimed writing of the NT throughout the entire course of Christian history. It is so because it has been, in very large measure, the heartland of Christian thought, life, and proclamation.

THE VITALITY OF ROMANS FOR CHRISTIAN PIETY AND PRACTICE

In 386 Augustine, having been unable to overcome his sexual addiction, was converted to Christ when he read Rom 13:13b-14: “Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of your sinful nature.” Later, in 400, in speaking of his conversion experience when reading this passage, he wrote: “No further would I read, nor had I any need; for instantly, at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away.”

In 1515 Martin Luther found Paul’s teaching on “the righteousness of God” and “justification by faith” in Rom 1:17 to be the catalyst for his spiritual rebirth, an open door into “paradise,” and “a gateway to heaven,” and so the beginning of his own religious revolution — which, of course, eventuated in the Protestant Reformation. In his earlier days as an Augustinian monk he pondered deeply, with both consternation and sorrow, the meaning of the phrase iustitia Dei (“the justice of God”) in his Latin Bible (though in Greek the phrase is δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, which is better translated “the righteousness of God”). Later in 1545, recalling the resolution of his own spiritual struggles when he came to a proper understanding of this passage, Luther wrote (with the translation of the Latin

1. Augustine, Confessions 8.12.29; cf. 9.2.
I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the justice ['righteousness'] of God,” because I took it to mean that justice ['righteousness'] whereby God is just ['righteous'] and deals justly ['righteously'] in punishing the unjust ['unrighteous']. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just ['righteous'] and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice ['righteousness'] of God and the statement that “the just ['righteous'] will live by his faith.” Then I grasped the truth that the justice ['righteousness'] of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before “the justice ['righteousness'] of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.2

On May 24, 1738, John Wesley, having heard Luther’s “Preface to the Epistle to the Romans” read by someone at the Aldersgate Street Mission in London, wrote in his journal:

About a quarter before nine [that evening], while he [Martin Luther] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone for my salvation: an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.3

And in 1918 Karl Barth, who was then a young Swiss pastor, related in the Preface to his Römerbrief his own reaction to Romans in the following words: “The reader will detect for himself that it has been written with a joyful sense of discovery. The mighty voice of Paul was new to me; and if to me, no doubt to many others also” — which is the response of many people today when first seriously reading Romans.4

2. M. Luther, “Preface to Latin Writings,” in Luther’s Works, 55 vols., general editors J. Pelikan (vols. 1-30) and H. T. Lehmann (vols. 31-55) (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 34.336-37; see also idem, “Table Talk,” ibid., 54.193, 309, 442.
4. K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, 2.
THE CENTRALITY OF ROMANS FOR CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

The letter to the Romans has also been central in the formulation and proclamation of Christian doctrine throughout the church’s history. In 1540 John Calvin wrote regarding Romans:

> Among many other notable virtues the Epistle has one in particular, which is never sufficiently appreciated; it is this: If we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture.5

In 1886 Charles Bigg, then the Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford University, asserted: “The Pauline reactions describe the critical epochs of theology and the Church.”6 And Adolf Harnack, in concluding his chapter on “The Presuppositions of the History of Dogma,” picked up on Bigg’s thesis and expanded it as follows:

> One might write a history of dogma as a history of the Pauline reactions in the Church, and in doing so would touch on all the turning points of the history. Marcion after the Apostolic Fathers; Irenaeus, Clement and Origen after the Apologists; Augustine after the Fathers of the Greek Church; the great Reformers of the middle ages from Agobard to Wessel in the bosom of the mediaeval Church; Luther after the Scholastics; Jansenism after the council of Trent. Everywhere it has been Paul, in these men, who produced the Reformation. Paulinism has proved to be a ferment in the history of dogma, a basis it has never been. Just as it had that significance in Paul himself, with reference to Jewish Christianity, so it has continued to work through the history of the Church.7

It may, of course, be questioned whether Marcion in the mid-second century or Cornelius Jansen in the early seventeenth century were really “turning points” in the history of Christianity. Likewise, it may be debated whether Paul’s thought was only “a ferment” and never “a basis” for the church’s theology. Further, one might wonder why John Chrysostom and his colleagues in the late fourth and early fifth centuries receive no mention in Harnack’s listing. Nonetheless, it remains true to say that whenever and wherever there has been a serious study of Paul’s letters there has occurred in the church some type of renewal, reformation, or revolution.

All this is particularly true with regard to Paul’s letter to the Christians

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at Rome. “In fact,” as Joseph Fitzmyer has aptly noted, “one can almost write the history of Christian theology by surveying the ways in which Romans has been interpreted.”

CHALLENGES IN THE STUDY OF ROMANS

Yet despite its status in the church and its importance for Christian thought, life, and proclamation, Romans is probably the most difficult of all the NT letters to analyze and interpret. It hardly can be called a simple writing.

In the winter of 394–395 Augustine began to write a commentary on Romans. But after commenting on the first seven verses of chapter one, he felt unable to proceed, saying that the project was just too large for him and that he would return to easier tasks. In the early sixteenth century Erasmus, introducing his Paraphrase of Romans, said of Romans: “The difficulty of this letter equals and almost surpasses its utility!” — citing both Origen and Jerome as early Church Fathers who had also found the letter exceedingly difficult to understand. As Erasmus saw it, this difficulty can be attributed to three causes: (1) the style of “speech” or language used, for “nowhere else is the order of speech more confused; nowhere is the speech more split by the transposition of words; nowhere is the speech more incomplete through absence of an apodosis,” (2) the “obscurity of things which are hard to put into words,” or the content of the letter itself, for “no other letter is handicapped by more frequent rough spots or is broken by deeper chasms,” and (3) the “frequent and sudden change of masks” or stances on the part of the author, for “he considers now the Jews, now the Gentiles, now both; sometimes he addresses believers, sometimes doubters; at one point he assumes the role of a weak man, at another of a strong; sometimes that of a godly man, sometimes of an ungodly man.”

Indeed, 2 Pet 3:16 bears eloquent testimony to the church’s mingled attitudes of (1) deep respect for Paul’s letters generally (and Romans in particular), yet also (2) real difficulties in trying to understand them, and (3) a realization of possibilities for serious misinterpretation, when it says of Paul’s letters that they “contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.” In fact, despite all its appearances of being straightforward and clear, no other NT writing presents greater difficulties with respect to “style,” “stance,” and “audience” (to recall Erasmus’s three categories of difficulty) than does Romans. Likewise, no other NT writing challenges the interpreter with as many problems of provenance, purpose, character, incorporation of tradition, rhetorical

8. Fitzmyer, Romans, xiii.
10. See Augustine, Retractationes 1.25.
11. Erasmus, Opera 7.777.
12. Erasmus, Opera 7.777-78.
genre, modes of persuasion, epistolary type, style, structure, flow of argument, and exegesis as does Romans.

Nonetheless, despite all its difficulties and problems, no other letter in the NT is as important as Romans for (1) the thought, piety, and living of Christians, (2) the theology, health, and ministry of the Christian church, and (3) the reformation and renewal of the church’s doctrine and practice, which reforms and renewals must constantly be carried forward within the church of every time, place, and circumstance. It is, therefore, incumbent on all present-day commentators who work on this most important NT letter to attempt to spell out a proper interpretation of what is written, striving always (1) to build on the work of past commentators, but also to be informed by significant studies and insights of interpreters today, (2) to be critical, exegetical, and constructive in the analysis of what is written but also pastoral in its application, and (3) to set a course for the future that will promote a better understanding of this most famous of Paul’s letters and a more relevant contextualization of its message.
Abbreviations

General

$Ep(p)$ Letter(s)
ET English Translation
fl. $floruit$ (flourished)
FS Festschrift
LXX Septuagint
mg. margin
MS(S) manuscript(s)
MT Masoretic Text
n.d. no date
NT New Testament
OT Old Testament
par parallel passage
TR Textus Receptus
$vid$ $videtur$ (it seems or apparently; used to indicate that the reading is not certain, especially in a damaged manuscript)

Bible Translations: Contemporary English Versions

ASV American Standard Version
AV Authorized Version
CEV Contemporary English Version
Goodspeed *An American Translation* (Edgar J. Goodspeed)
JB The Jerusalem Bible
KJV The Holy Bible. King James Version
Knox *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Newly Translated from the Vulgate Latin* (John Knox)
LB Living Bible
ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>Moffatt</td>
<td>The Holy Bible. A New Translation (James Moffatt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NABRNT</td>
<td>New American Bible, Revised New Testament</td>
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<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>New English Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>NET</td>
<td>New English Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<td>NJB</td>
<td>New Jerusalem Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>New King James Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLT</td>
<td>New Living Translation (revision of The Living Bible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillips</td>
<td>The New Testament in Modern English / Letters to Young Churches (J. B. Phillips)</td>
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<tr>
<td>REB</td>
<td>Revised English Bible</td>
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<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEV</td>
<td>Today’s English Version / Good News for Modern Man</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNIV</td>
<td>Today’s New International Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weymouth</td>
<td>The New Testament in Modern Speech (Richard F. Weymouth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>The New Testament: A Private Translation in the Language of the People (Charles B. Williams)</td>
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Texts


Pseudepigrapha

- **Apoc Ab** Apocalypse of Abraham
- **Barn** Barnabas
- **1 En** 1 Enoch
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<td>Jub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let Aris</td>
<td>Letter of Aristeas</td>
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<td>Pss Sol</td>
<td>Psalms of Solomon</td>
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<td>2 Bar</td>
<td>2 Baruch</td>
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<td>2 En</td>
<td>2 Enoch</td>
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<td>Sib Or</td>
<td>Sibylline Oracles</td>
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**Epigraphic and Papyrological Publications**

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**Rabbinic Works**

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<td>b.</td>
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<td>Baba Mes.</td>
<td>Baba Meṣiʿa</td>
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<td>Baba Qam.</td>
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<td>Ber.</td>
<td>Berakot</td>
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<td>Git.</td>
<td>Giṭṭin</td>
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<td>y.</td>
<td>Jerusalem Talmud</td>
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<td>Ketub.</td>
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<td>m.</td>
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<td>Pesiqta Rabbati</td>
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<td>Qidd.</td>
<td>Qiddušin</td>
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<td>Shabb.</td>
<td>Shabbat</td>
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<td>Tanch.</td>
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<td>Yebam.</td>
<td>Yebamot</td>
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Grammatical, Syntactical, and Lexical Aids

**ATRob**

**BAG**

**BDB**

**BDF**

**Burton**

**D-M**

**EDNT**

**LSJM**

**M-G**

**M-M**
*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*, James Hope Moulton and George Milligan. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930.

**Moule**

**M-T**
ABBREVIATIONS


Porter


Thrall


Reference Works

ANF


APOT


CCLat

Corpus christianorum, series latina

CIJ


CSEL

Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum, Vienna Academy (1866ff.).

GCS

Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte

JE


NPNF


NTA


OTP


PG


PL


Statistik


Str-Bil


TDNT

ABBREVIATIONS


Series (Commentaries, Texts, and Studies)

AASF Annales Academiae scientarum Fennicae
AB Anchor Bible
ABD Anchor Bible Dictionary
ACNT Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
ACCS Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AGAJU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib Analecta Biblica
ANRW Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
ANTF Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
ATANT Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BASORSup Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research: Supplement Series
BBET Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BEvT Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCT Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BHT Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BJS Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC Black’s New Testament Commentary
BST Bible Speaks Today
BTN Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica
BZNW Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CB Clarendon Bible
CBBC Cokesbury Basic Bible Commentary
CBC Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBNT Coniectanea Biblica New Testament
CCSL Corpus christianorum, Series Latina
CGTSC Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges
CNT Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
CR Corpus reformatorum
CRJNT Compendia rerum Judaicarum ad novum Testamentum
CTS Cambridge Texts and Studies
DJD Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DSB Daily Study Bible
## ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>EGT</td>
<td>Expositor’s Greek Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EKKNT</td>
<td>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>EPC</td>
<td>Epworth Preacher’s Commentaries</td>
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<td>Exp</td>
<td>Expositor</td>
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# Abbreviations

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Bibliography of Selected Commentaries and Commentary Materials

Note: References to the following commentaries and commentary materials will be by authors’ names and abbreviated titles.

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Introduction to the Commentary

The writing of biblical commentaries has always been, and will always be, an important datum of Christian experience, arising as it does from the interaction of heart and mind, of piety and inquiry. But it is also fair to say that whenever the church has felt itself (1) to have in hand a body of more “critically established” biblical texts, (2) blessed by better translations of those texts, (3) rejuvenated by new approaches to Christian understanding, (4) threatened by teaching that differs from the norm, and/or (5) confused by differing methodologies or competing ideologies — as has occurred at various times in its history and is taking place today — it has turned back to its foundational documents and produced an outburst of biblical commentaries beyond what might normally be expected. At such times the writing of biblical commentaries has been undertaken not only with a desire of achieving a better explication of what the biblical writers originally said and meant, but also with hopes of effecting within the contemporary Christian community something of a consensus regarding (1) the import of their message, (2) how that message should impact the thought and actions of people today, and (3) in what ways the Christian gospel can be more effectively contextualized in our present day. And all these factors and desires are what motivate the author of this present commentary on Romans.

1. ROMANS VIS-À-VIS PAUL’S OTHER LETTERS

Paul’s letter to the Christians at Rome is in some ways very much like the other Pauline writings of the NT. It is also, however, in many ways quite different — particularly with respect to its character, its structures, and its various forms of argumentation.

A. The Character of Romans

Differing opinions regarding the character of Romans were almost entirely unknown from the second through the eighteenth centuries of Christian history,
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for Christians in earlier times usually viewed Romans as a “compendium of Christian doctrine” (as Philipp Melanchthon called it) — or at least as a fairly complete summary of Paul’s teaching and so commonly as something like an early systematic theology of the Christian church. When Romans was understood in this fashion, the question was often asked: “Why are Paul’s other letters (with the possible exception of Ephesians) not like Romans?” During the past two centuries, however, emphasis has increasingly been placed (1) on the historical circumstances in Paul’s writing to believers in Jesus at Rome and (2) on Romans as a letter rather than a theological compendium or treatise — with the result that the writing of Romans has come to be understood, at least in scholarly circles, in more situational manner and circumstantial terms. And when understood as a true letter, the question asked has often become reversed: “Why, then, is Romans not like Paul’s other letters?”

Many earnest Christians today, of course, still think of Romans as a compendium of Christian doctrine, especially those who read it only in a devotional, theological, homiletical, or some “reader response” fashion. Likewise, a number of contemporary scholars continue to view Romans as being, in some sense, a summary of Paul’s teaching, though without wanting to deny its historical circumstances or the particularity of its presentation. A few of those who view it as a summary of Paul’s teaching think of it as having been originally written as a circular letter sent to various churches established by the apostle in order to remind them of his essential message and then delivered (with an appropriate change of address and perhaps a few editorial alterations) to the Christians at Rome. Others who understand Romans as a summary of the apostle’s teaching propose that its basic content was first drawn up before Paul’s final journey to Jerusalem, and so it was originally intended as something like Paul’s “last will and testament” before that crucial (and rather disastrous) visit to Israel’s capital city — and then given epistolary form and sent as a letter to believers in Jesus at Rome. Still others tend to see large portions of the main body of Romans as collections of various Pauline materials — whether sermons, addresses, and/or tractates; whether abstracted or retained relatively whole — that had previously been used by Paul in various contexts during his missionary outreach to Gentiles in eastern regions of the Roman Empire and then sent to the Christians at Rome in the form of a letter to inform them of the nature of his message, thereby bringing them into the orbit of his mission to the Gentile world and seeking support from them for a further extension of his mission to Gentiles into the western regions of the empire.

The majority of scholarly interpreters today, however, prefer not to speak of Romans as a compendium of Paul’s theology or teaching. A major problem with understanding Romans in this way is that, though it is the longest of all the apostle’s extant writings, Romans lacks a number of topics or expositions that seem from his other letters to have been absolutely essential to his thought and his proclamation — most obviously, (1) discussion of the resurrection of believers in Jesus, which was a subject of very great importance in his earlier
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letters (cf. esp. 1 Thessalonians 4–5; 2 Thessalonians 2; and 1 Corinthians 15), and
(2) treatment of the Lord’s Supper, which was a matter of great concern when
Paul wrote to his converts at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 11:17–34). Rather, most contem-
porary interpreters understand Romans as a letter written in the context of a
real historical situation that therefore must be read as reflecting the occasional
character of a real letter and the dialogical nature of its circumstances. So most
modern treatments of Romans have attempted first to spell out the nature of the
problem or problems that must have existed within the Christian congregations
at Rome — whether theological, ethical, or cultural; whether brought about by
outside factors or arising from within — and then to explicate what Paul has
written in a manner that highlights its apologetic and polemical nature, and not
just to deal with the letter as though it contained exposition alone.

B. The Structure and Argument of Romans

Questions regarding the structure and argument of Romans are increasingly
directed to matters having to do with what has been called the letter’s “dual” or
“double character” — that is, (1) it is addressed to a specific group of people and
yet (2) many of its arguments are presented in the form of a more general trea-
tise or tractate. Thus the question is frequently asked: Why are the beginning
sections in 1:1-15 and the concluding sections in 15:14–16:27 so much like a letter,
using many of the epistolary conventions of the day, whereas the large central
section of 1:16–15:13 in its four major parts reads more like a treatise or tractate
(or a collection of treatises or tractates), with few of the epistolary conventions
of antiquity appearing — or appearing, at best, in such a random fashion as to be
considered almost incidental? Others have phrased the question in the follow-
ing fashion: Why do the beginning and concluding sections of Romans speak
so directly about Paul’s purposes in writing and his immediate travel plans,
as though the letter is to be understood in an entirely circumstantial manner,
whereas the large central portion of the letter, in both its doctrinal and its hor-
tatory features, echoes a number of themes and expressions that appear in Paul’s
other letters and so seems to suggest that at least the central portion should be
understood in a more general manner? Further, at other times the question
has been asked: Why do the beginning sections in 1:1-15 and the concluding
sections in 15:14–16:27, as well as the specific address of 11:13 (“I am talking to
you Gentiles”), speak so expressly about the apostle writing to Gentiles, whereas
the two theological sections of 1:16–4:24 and 9:1–11:36, as well as some of what
appears in the ethical section of 12:1–15:13, set out arguments that are couched
in Jewish or Jewish Christian ways and nuanced in a distinctly Jewish manner?

Likewise, the question must be asked when considering the form and
structure of Paul’s letter to Rome: Where is the focus or central thrust of the
letter? Is it to be found in its proclamations of “the righteousness of God” and
“justification by faith” in the thesis statement of 1:16-17 and then more fully in
the development, elucidation, and illustration of that thesis statement in 3:21–4:25? Or is the letter’s focus to be seen in the second section of the body middle of the letter, that is, in 5:1–8:39, wherein is presented a message of “peace” and “reconciliation” with God, a treatment of “death” because of Adam and the gift of “eternal life” through Jesus Christ, and a depiction of relationships that culminate with being “in Christ,” being “in the Spirit,” and Christ by his Spirit being “in the Christian,” who is “adopted” by God into his family? Or is the letter’s central thrust contained in its setting out of relations between Israel and the Christian church in 9:6–11:36? — or, perhaps, in its ethical exhortations that deal with “the obedience of faith” (cf. 1:5 for the expression) in 12:1–15:13? Or in its body closing or “apostolic parousia” section, 15:14–32, which draws together Paul’s desires and requests? And if we take any of the above sections to represent the letter’s central thrust and so to contain the major concern or concerns of Paul when he wrote, we must then ask: How do the other sections of the letter relate to that major section? Or to state the question in another way: How should the presentations in the central “body middle” of the letter — which extends from 1:16 through 15:13 and contains a number of subsections that appear to be almost self-contained units of material — be correlated with what may be determined to be the letter’s focus or central thrust?

Such questions as expressed above deal with highly significant matters. We have attempted to sketch out the issues involved and our own resolutions of these concerns in our recently published monograph Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter. Suffice it here to say that what is presented in this brief introduction is given much more extensive treatment in that earlier publication, and that many of the issues raised here also receive treatment in the exegetical expositions that appear later in this commentary.

2. MAJOR CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF ROMANS

Every serious reader of Romans is faced with a number of critical issues in his or her study of the letter. Here we will only highlight the most significant of these issues, organizing them under the three headings of “matters largely uncontested,” “matters recently resolved,” and “matters extensively debated today” — noting in the process our own proposals, which will guide the exegetical treatments that follow in the commentary proper.

A. Matters Largely Uncontested

Questions regarding authorship, addressees, occasion, and the relative date of Romans have often seemed fairly easy to answer — for the letter’s author (Paul)

and its addressees (the Christians at Rome) seem quite clearly identified in 1:1-15, and its occasion (a letter in lieu of, but in preparation for, a visit) and time of writing (at the end of Paul's missionary endeavors in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, just before his final visit to Jerusalem) appear to be fairly clearly stated in 15:23-29. There have, of course, been a number of opposing views on such matters during the past couple centuries of NT scholarship. But there is today a fairly firm consensus among scholars regarding these rather elementary concerns.

Nonetheless, many of these basic matters regarding provenance have been honed to a finer edge during the past century and so need to be understood today in a somewhat more nuanced fashion. For example, in our considerations of authorship we need also to take into account the parts that Tertius (cf. 16:22) and Phoebe (cf. 16:1-2) played in the composition, delivery, and possible personal elucidation of Paul's letter — as well as the possible involvement of other believers in Jesus in the Christian congregations at Corinth and its port-city Cenchrea. Likewise, such questions as the following regarding the addressees are being increasingly asked today: (1) Were the letter’s addressees Gentile or Jewish believers in Jesus, or was the church at Rome made up of both Gentile and Jewish believers — and if ethnically mixed, in what proportions? (2) How and when was the church at Rome founded? (3) What was the situation of the Jews at Rome at the time, not only legally and socially but also religiously? (4) What was the situation of the Christians at Rome at the time, not only ethnically but also organizationally, socially, and theologically? (5) What relationship did Paul see himself as having with believers in Jesus at Rome, almost all of whom he had never met? And (6) what relationship did the Christians at Rome see themselves as having with Paul, almost all of whom had never met him?

Further, a number of questions may be asked regarding the occasion and relative date for Paul’s writing to Christians at Rome. Most of these questions have to do with matters pertaining to (1) Pauline chronology, which involves a working out of relationships between what Paul says about the course of his ministry in his letters and what Luke writes about Paul’s missionary outreach in his second volume, the so-called “Acts of the Apostles,” and (2) what can be determined from Romans itself with respect to the time when Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome and his purpose or purposes in writing them.

Much of what can be said with respect to these questions has been set out in our book *Introducing Romans*, and more will be said in our exegetical commentary that follows. Suffice it here to affirm that (1) we are convinced that Paul was the author of Romans, (2) we are fairly sure that Tertius and Phoebe were also involved, in various ways and to various extents, in its composition, delivery, and elucidation, and (3) we entertain favorably the possibility that some of the leaders of the Christian congregations at Corinth and Cenchrea had some input in the letter’s composition, particularly as they heard and responded to at least portions of it as those portions were given a preliminary reading in their presence. And while an exact date for Paul’s writing of his letter to the Christians
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at Rome has proven to be somewhat elusive, ranging from A.D. 47 to A.D. 59, we believe that the winter of 57-58 best fits all the data available from the letter itself, from Acts, and from such external sources as are available, and so will assume the general correctness of that date in the exegetical commentary that follows.

B. Matters Recently Resolved

A great amount of scholarly endeavor during the past century and a half has been focused on matters regarding the integrity of Romans, asking questions about (1) whether our present Greek text contains later scribal glosses or interpolations, which need to be pruned from the letter, and whether certain other notations need to be inserted, and (2) whether our present canonical letter is in the form in which it was originally written or needs to be reconstructed in some other manner. All the questions and their proposed answers with respect to integrity are dependent on comparative and evaluative studies of the existing textual tradition of Romans. Happily, there has been a considerable development of understanding during the past 150 years or so with respect to the textual history of the NT (including that of Romans), and so many of the past critical issues regarding the integrity of the letter have been essentially resolved.

Glosses and Interpolations. Individual words, phrases, or statements that appear in the margins or between the lines of MSS are referred to as glosses; foreign or extraneous materials incorporated into the texts are called interpolations. At times, however, glosses were written into texts by copyists and so became interpolations. The expressions “glosses” and “interpolations,” therefore, have often been used somewhat interchangeably.

Based on the facts (1) that interpolations by later authors into earlier writings was a fairly common phenomenon in antiquity, (2) that scribal glosses are rather common in our extant biblical MSS, and (3) that a number of passages in Romans are not only difficult to interpret but also seem obscure or contradictory, some scholars during the past century and a half have argued for a rather large number of glosses or interpolations in the text of Romans — and, further, have claimed to be able to distinguish what Paul originally wrote from such later recensions.

Sadly, some commentators of the past, when faced with a difficulty of interpretation, all-too-often either (1) dispensed with the problem simply by identifying the word, phrase, or passage in question as a gloss or interpolation, and so excised it from the text, or (2) inserted into the text some existing marginal reading, thereby justifying their own interpretation. And remnants of such practices continue in various quarters today. Nonetheless, arguments against any large scale incorporation of glosses or interpolations into the text of Romans based on supposed “improved understandings” of the NT’s textual tradition have proven to be far more convincing to most scholars today than suppositions in their favor. And scholars today are far more prepared to en-
tertain the possibility of difficulties and obscurities — even of contradictions — in the interpretation of Romans than were scholars in previous generations, crediting such matters either to Paul’s own somewhat convoluted logic, to the interpreter’s misconceived perceptions of what Paul ought to be saying, or to both, but not first of all to textual glosses or interpolations.

It is always possible, of course, that minor glosses or extraneous interpolations have somehow become incorporated into a particular biblical text, and every possible instance of such an occurrence needs to be checked by the canons of textual criticism. This constant checking is what we will endeavor to do in the “Textual Notes” and “Exegetical Comments” of the commentary proper. Suffice it here to say that NT textual criticism has come a long way during the past few decades, with the result that a great many of the textual issues with respect to every portion of the NT generally — and of Romans in particular — have been resolved. And it is this understanding of matters that we will attempt to demonstrate and explicate in the present commentary.

The Original Form of the Letter. Questions regarding the original form of Paul’s letter to Rome have also been repeatedly asked during the past 150 years or so. Working backward from those matters of most concern — that is, starting from the most crucial issues that congregate mostly at the end of the letter and moving back to the letter’s beginning — such questions as the following have been asked:

1. Since Marcion and Tertullian seem not to have known chs. 15 and 16, and since the Latin Vulgate and some minor manuscripts do not include them, did Romans originally end at 14:23 — with, perhaps, a doxology like that of 15:33 or 16:25-27 (or, less likely, the weakly attested doxology of 16:24) included to round off that shorter, original composition? Or should the evidence from the major manuscripts be accepted and chs. 15–16 be viewed as integral to the letter?
2. Since the long list of greetings in 16:1-23 includes names of people associated in some manner with the city of Ephesus, was this portion originally a separate letter (either in whole or in part) that was first addressed to believers at Ephesus and only later became somehow attached to the first fifteen chapters of Romans? Or were the greetings in ch. 16 always an integral part of Paul’s letter to Rome?
3. Do the manuscript evidence, the theology, and/or the tone of 16:25-27 suggest that this doxological material was a post-Pauline addition to Romans? Or should it, too, be seen as part of Paul’s original letter?
4. Does the absence of the expression ἐν Ῥώμῃ (“at Rome”) from 1:7 and 15 in Codex G and some texts quoted by Origen and Ambrosiaster indicate that Romans was originally written without a specific Roman address? Or was the designation “at Rome” omitted at a later time when Romans came to be viewed as a theological tractate rather than a letter and was used in the churches in a more universalistic fashion?
Many of these matters were dealt with effectively by Harry Gamble in his 1977 monograph on *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* — particularly in justification of “the long form” of sixteen chapters for the original letter and in support of the designation “at Rome” in 1:7 and 15. The presence of one or more “grace benedictions” at 16:20b and/or 24 is still somewhat debated. And the integrity of the doxology at the end of the letter at 16:25-27 is frequently held in question. But articles by Larry Hurtado and Howard Marshall have gone far in alleviating the criticisms usually raised against the integrity of the concluding doxology, and Jeffrey Weima’s study of the Pauline letter closings has also gone a long way toward positing a positive understanding of what Paul was doing in that doxology. All of these critical issues have been discussed in greater detail in our book on *Introducing Romans* and will be treated in the “Textual Notes” and “Exegetical Comments” where they are relevant in the present commentary — as will also many other matters of this nature that have arisen of late.

C. Matters Extensively Debated Today

There are, however, a number of other critical issues in the study of Romans that are quite extensively debated today. Many of these have also been discussed at length in our volume on *Introducing Romans*, but because of their importance some of them need to be highlighted here as well. Much of what appears in the exegetical materials of this present commentary will, in fact, depend largely on the validity and explication of these particular matters.

*The Identity, Character, Circumstances, and Concerns of the Letter’s Addressees.* Discussions regarding the addressees of Paul’s letter to Rome have been, as noted above, mostly concerned with such questions of identity as: “Were the letter’s addressees Gentile believers in Jesus or Jewish believers in Jesus?” or “Were the congregations of Christians at Rome made up of both Gentile and Jewish believers?” And if the church at Rome was ethnically mixed, “What were the proportions of Gentile believers and Jewish believers in it?”

Raymond Brown in 1983, however, proposed that the most basic issue with respect to Paul’s addressees at Rome — and thus a matter of vital importance for a proper understanding of Romans — is not that of the addressees’ ethnicity, but rather “the crucial issue is the theological outlook of this mixed Jewish/Gentile Christianity.” For, as Brown argued, if we take seriously the witness of Acts 2:10 and 28:21, together with certain statements by the Roman

historian Tacitus (c. AD 56-120) and the fourth-century Christian commentator “Ambrosiaster,” we must give attention to the axis that runs from Roman Christianity back to the Jerusalem church as being of major importance.\(^6\)

Brown’s conclusions were that (1) for both Jews and Christians “the Jerusalem–Rome axis was strong,” (2) “Roman Christianity came from Jerusalem, and indeed represented the Jewish/Gentile Christianity associated with such Jerusalem figures as Peter and James,” and (3) both in the earliest days of the Roman church and at the time when Paul wrote to them, believers in Jesus at Rome could be characterized as “Christians who kept up some Jewish observances and remained faithful to part of the heritage of the Jewish Law and cult, without insisting on circumcision.”\(^7\) Or as Joseph Fitzmyer has described the character of Paul’s addressees at Rome (applauding Brown’s thesis, though without using it as a hermeneutical tool): “Roman Christians seem to have been in continual contact with the Christians of Jerusalem,” with the result that their form of the Christian faith “seems to have been influenced especially by those associated with Peter and James of Jerusalem, in other words, by Christians who retained some Jewish observances and remained faithful to the Jewish legal and cultic heritage without insisting on circumcision for Gentile converts.”\(^8\)

In what follows, it is this understanding of Paul’s Roman addressees that will be postulated: (1) ethnically, the Christian community at Rome included both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus, though with Gentile Christians in the majority, and (2) theologically, all of the Roman Christians — not only Jewish believers in Jesus but also Gentile believers — looked to the Jerusalem church as the mother church of Christianity, followed Jewish Christian liturgical rites and ethical practices, and reverenced the Mosaic law. They were not, however, “Judaizers” — that is, not like those who infiltrated the churches of Galatia with what Paul called “a different gospel, which is no gospel at all” (Gal 1:6-7). Rather, Paul considered them true believers in Jesus, “who thought,” as Charles Talbert has concisely characterized their theology, “in Jewish categories.”\(^9\)

**Paul’s Purpose or Purposes in Writing the Letter.** Two seemingly quite diverse viewpoints have dominated much of current scholarly discussion about the purpose or purposes of Romans: (1) Paul’s motivation for writing Romans originated from within his own ministry and consciousness — whether to introduce himself to an unknown audience, to seek support for a forthcoming mission to the western part of the Roman Empire, to defend himself against criticism and/or misunderstanding, to assert his apostolic authority over a church he considered within the orbit of his Gentile ministry, or to set out his own understanding of the Christian gospel as something of a summary of his message or a “last will and testament.” Or (2) the letter was written to counter

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\(^7\) R. E. Brown, “Beginnings of Christianity at Rome,” 104.

\(^8\) Fitzmyer, Romans, 33.

\(^9\) Talbert, Romans, 16.
some particular problem or set of problems, that is, to deal with some identifiable circumstance or set of circumstances that existed among Christians at Rome — whether doctrinal or ethical, and whether arising from outside the church or from within.\(^\text{10}\) To frame these two stances in a somewhat different manner, it may be asked: (1) Was Paul’s purpose in writing Romans *missionary* in nature, motivated by his own consciousness of being an apostle to the Gentiles, his own sense of mission, and/or his own desire to present to the Christians at Rome something of a summation or testament of his message throughout the Greco-Roman world, perhaps incorporating into that tractate or letter some of the issues that had previously arisen in his ministry and that he wanted to present to believers at Rome for his own reasons? Or (2) was his purpose *pastoral*, motivated by a desire to correct problems, whether doctrinal or ethical, that he knew existed among the Christians at Rome?

These two viewpoints, stances, or sets of questions, while seemingly in opposition to one another, should probably not, however, be understood as mutually exclusive. A number of interpretive possibilities may be seen as existing both between them and within them. Nonetheless, in asking whether Paul’s purpose in writing Romans was motivated principally (1) by factors that arose from within his own ministry or (2) by conditions that were then existing within the Christian congregations at Rome, scholars seem to have come to something of a watershed in their sorting out of issues, determining of priorities, and proposing of solutions. And it is probably not extreme to claim that from this watershed has flowed almost everything that has been said and can be claimed about the character, form, and content of Paul’s letter to believers in Jesus at Rome.

It is the thesis of this commentary that Paul sets out in the epistolary frame of his letter two primary purposes for his writing to the Christians at Rome, with these two primary purposes explicated throughout the letter’s rather large “body middle” (1:16–15:13). These purposes are related to the occasion for his writing and must be seen to have stemmed from his own missionary consciousness and his plans for his future ministry. They are as follows:

1. To give to the Christians at Rome what he calls in 1:11 a “spiritual gift” (χάρισμα πνευματικόν), which he thought of as something that was uniquely his (cf. his references to “my gospel” in 2:16 and 16:25), that he felt his addressees needed if they were to “mutually encourage” one another (1:11-12) and that he evidently wanted them to know in order that they might understand accurately and more appreciatively what he was proclaiming in his mission to Gentiles.

2. To seek the assistance of the Christians at Rome for the extension of his Gentile mission to Spain (cf. 1:13; 15:24), which assistance should probably be understood as including their financial support and their willingness

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\(^{10}\) For a variety of answers to these issues, with some pertinent interaction between them, see Donfried, *Romans Debate*, and Donfried, *Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*. 
to be used as a base for his outreach to the western regions of the empire, just as the Christians at Antioch of Syria had assisted him and served as the base for his outreach to the eastern regions of the empire.

Also important, however, is a purpose that can be discerned by a close mirror-reading of various comments, veiled allusions, and rhetorical expressions of Paul that appear in the explication of his message in the central sections of the letter, as well as a mirror-reading of some of his statements in the epistolary frame surrounding that central portion of 1:16–15:13. But since this purpose is somewhat muted and more implied than directly stated, it seems best to call it not a primary purpose for writing Romans but a subsidiary purpose:

3. To defend against certain criticisms of his person and misrepresentations of his message, with the intent that the Christians at Rome would properly understand his person, ministry, and message and be willing to assist him in his Gentile mission.

Yet two further purposes must also be included in any listing of Paul’s reasons for writing Romans. Both are discernible by a process of mirror-reading, though, admittedly, they carry somewhat different degrees of probability. The first is most probable and can be distilled by mirror-reading the exhortations regarding “the Strong” and “the Weak” in 14:1–15:13, with that situation probably recalled in the additional admonitions of 16:17-20a. The second, while somewhat more inferential, can be ascertained by mirror-reading the exhortations regarding the relation of Christians to civil authorities in 13:1-5 and the quite specific directives to his Roman addressees regarding their responsibility to pay taxes and revenues in 13:6-7, which appear in the midst of the general exhortations on Christian love in 12:9-21 and 13:8-14 and seem to break the continuity of those two sections of ethical maxims. These two purposes we list here as Paul’s fourth and fifth reasons for the writing of Romans, listing them in the order of their greatest probability:

4. To counsel regarding a dispute that had arisen among believers in Jesus who called themselves “the Strong” and other believers who were designated “the Weak,” either within or between the various Christian house congregations at Rome, as he does in 14:1–15:13 and as he seems to recall in the further admonitions given in 16:17-20a.

5. To give directives regarding the relation of Christians at Rome to the city’s government authorities and their responsibilities in paying legitimate taxes and revenues, as he does in 13:1-7.

These, however, should probably be seen as somewhat subsidiary purposes of Paul for writing the letter since, while they reflect certain circumstances of the Christians at Rome, they are not included in those sections of the letter where
the primary purposes and major concerns of a letter writer of Paul’s day would be expected — that is, in the epistolary “salutation” (1:1-7), “thanksgiving” (1:8-12), or “body-opening” (1:13-15) sections at the letter’s beginning, nor in the epistolary “body-closing” or “apostolic parousia” section (15:14-32) at its end.

The Epistolary Genre of Romans. Romans is far longer than a typical non-literary letter of antiquity. Further, it is longer than all of the other NT letters, including those of the Pauline corpus. More significantly, however, it differs from Paul’s other letters with respect to its epistolary genre. For Romans is not, as is Galatians, a “rebuke and request” letter. Nor is it a strictly “paraenetic” or “hortatory” letter, as is 1 Thessalonians; nor a mixed letter of “response, exhortation, and advice,” as is 1 Corinthians; nor a letter of “friendship and advice,” as is Philippians; nor simply a letter of “recommendation,” as is Philemon.

Frequently Romans has been classified as a “literary epistle” or Lehrbrief — that is, a letter written to instruct its readers. But that is a designation far too general, for it could also be applied to most of Paul’s other letters, as well as to a number of other NT epistolary writings. Some have viewed Romans as a “letter of introduction” — perhaps even an “ambassadorial letter of self-introduction.” Chan-Hie Kim has ably discussed the provenance and epistolary features of an ancient letter of introduction (or, as he calls it, “letter of recommendation”) and has reproduced the Greek and Latin texts of eighty-three such letters — most of them, of course, being Greek nonliterary papyrus letters from Egypt. Stanley Stowers has dealt with a large number of Greco-Roman and Christian letters of introduction, which were written from the time of the Roman orator, philosopher, and statesman Cicero (106-43 B.C.), who, as Stowers points out, “wrote numerous letters of introduction and intercession of varying length and intensity”), to the time of Augustine, the great fifth-century Church Father (A.D. 354-430). And letters of introduction, as many have noted, are referred to in both the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures.

But letters of introduction in antiquity, as far as we know, were always written by others on behalf of the person or persons being introduced or accredited, and not by someone presenting his own credentials. Further, they usually included expressions of high praise for the person or people addressed, with those words of praise constituting an important part of the letter. So while Paul in Romans certainly introduces himself and his message to Christians at Rome — and while, more particularly, he undoubtedly considered himself “an apostle of Christ” (cf. Rom 1:1 and passim) and therefore as “Christ’s ambassador” (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) — it may be questioned whether his letter to the Christians at Rome should be classified as merely a letter of introduction or is any more ambassadorial than any of his other NT letters.

11. So, e.g., Michel, An die Römer, 5; Black, Romans, 18.
12. So Jewett, “Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter,” 5-22; idem, Romans, 44-46.
15. Cf. 2 Kgs 5:5-6; Acts 9:1b-2; 18:27; 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 3:1; see also 2 Macc 9:19-27.
A more likely hypothesis was suggested in 1977 by Martin Stirewalt, who argued that among extant letters of Paul’s day there can be found evidence for a distinctive type of instructional letter — that is, an epistolary genre for which the label “literary epistle” is misleading and Lehrbrief is too general, but for which the term “letter essay” would be appropriate.16 Stirewalt acknowledged that a “letter essay” cannot be shown to have been recognized as a discrete epistolary category by any author of the ancient world. Nonetheless, it is just this type of material, he argued, that appears in letters written by the Greek philosopher Epicurus (342/341-271/270 B.C.) and by the Greek rhetorician and historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (died 8 B.C.) and can also be found in certain writings of the Greek essayist and Pythian priest Plutarch (c. A.D. 46-120) — as well as, to an extent, in the Hellenistic Jewish composition known as 2 Maccabees (which was probably written at the end of the second century B.C.) and in the Christian Martyrdom of Polycarp (which was written sometime toward the end of the second century A.D.).

Stirewalt characterizes these writings as “written communications with epistolary characteristics, sent between identifiable parties, on particular subjects.”17 Or, as Stirewalt defines further the ancient letter essays that he has brought together for analysis — with, of course, his underlying thesis being that they offer close parallels to Paul’s letter to the Romans:

The pieces collected here were written out of a genuine letter-setting and they retain the formal and structural epistolary characteristics [of genuine letters]. . . . On the other hand, they are losing some of the form, phraseology, and structure of the letter and are incorporating the more impersonal, objective style of the monograph. In fact, the writers themselves refer to them most often as logoi [i.e., literally “words,” but here connoting “instruction”].18

Somewhat similar to Stirewalt’s thesis is that of Klaus Berger, who in 1984 drew analogies between Paul’s letter to the Romans and Greco-Roman letters in which a teacher writes to his pupils, to a community of pupils, or even to certain cities and gives them instruction.19 Yet Berger also recognized differences between Romans and ancient Greco-Roman didactic letters, principally in that (1) Paul does not write as a teacher who lords it over his pupils, since he was not the one who founded the church at Rome, and (2) the tone of Romans is more that of a general treatise, since Paul did not really know his addressees and so could not speak more personally.20

These theses of Stirewalt and Berger, taken together, offer important contributions for an understanding of the epistolary genre of Romans. They do not, of course, explain why the Christians at Rome were singled out by Paul to be the recipients of such an instructional letter essay. One might have expected, in fact, that Paul would have favored his own converts and his own churches with such a document, rather than writing to believers in Jesus who had not been brought to Christ through his ministry and the great majority of whom he did not know personally. Nor do the theses of Stirewalt and Berger offer any reason that Paul would have chosen the particular time he did to write such an instructional letter. Yet when combined with our theses above regarding (1) the addressees of Romans and (2) Paul’s purposes in writing to them, as well as our thesis below regarding (3) the letter’s basic rhetorical genres and its incorporated rhetorical conventions, an understanding of the epistolary genre of Romans as an ancient “letter essay” — that is, as instructional material set out within an epistolary frame — provides, we believe, the most likely life setting and cultural context for a proper interpretation of the letter. And it is such a view that will be espoused and worked out in the commentary materials that follow. Over the centuries, many manuscripts, editions, and translations of the NT books between Acts and Revelation have titled each as “Epistle” or “Letter” to its named or implied recipients. Titles in the commentary series follow that convention.

The Rhetorical Genres of Romans. It has often been argued during the past few decades that Paul’s argument in Romans — particularly in the long, four-part central section of his letter (1:16–15:13) — is best understood in terms of one or the other of the following ancient rhetorical models: (1) a forensic rhetorical model (assuming that the argument of Romans is comparable to that of Galatians), (2) a deliberative model (highlighting the hortatory features of the letter), or (3) an epideictic model (highlighting the letter’s persuasive features, often with an accompanying emphasis on what is to be viewed as honorable and what as shameful). Several scholars, however, building on earlier studies of protreptic (‘hortatory’) speeches in antiquity, have argued that the course of the argument in the letter’s first, second, and fourth central sections, that is, in 1:16–4:25; 5:1–8:39; and 12:1–15:13, is far better understood rhetorically as expressing a protreptic rhetorical model — that is, as a λόγος προτρεπτικός or “speech [‘word’ or ‘message’] of exhortation” model, which was a type of address intended to win converts and attract people to a particular way of life. Those who have proposed such an understanding of these three central sections of Romans include Klaus Berger,21 Stanley Stowers,22 David Aune,23 Anthony Guerra,24 and Christopher Bryan.25

22. Stowers, Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity, 112-14, 128.
The rhetoric of Romans, as these scholars have pointed out, is different from all the usually proposed categories of ancient “forensic,” “deliberative,” or “epideictic” rhetoric and cannot be made to fit easily within any of them. The letter is not an apology in which Paul defends his apostleship or message; nor is it a polemic that counters false teaching. Further, it lacks some of the important rhetorical sections that usually appear, in one order or another, in forensic, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric — principally an *exordium*, but also a *narratio* and a *propositio*. Rather, as Stanley Stowers argues: “In both form and function, Paul’s letter to the Romans is a protreptic letter.”26 Or as Anthony Guerra enunciates the thesis: “Romans is a protreptic writing seeking to affirm Paul’s ministry and the gospel which he preached.”27

Ancient “words ['speeches’ or ‘messages’] of exhortation” (προτρεπτικοί λόγοι) were characteristically structured in terms of three sections: (1) a negative section, which dissuaded and censured an opposing view, (2) a positive section, which set forth and defended the author’s position, and (3) a hortatory section, which appealed to the hearers or addressees to invite them to accept what was presented in the two previous sections.28 To each of these customary sections of protreptic discourse, however, Paul adds in his letter to the Christians at Rome his own distinctive emphases and gives his own spin to the data he presents — often, as well, speaking to his addressees on their own grounds and interjecting material of particular relevance to them. Notable in this regard is the fact that Paul restructures the first section of his protreptic discourse (1:16–4:25) to include not just negative statements about what he opposes but also positive affirmations about what he holds in common with his Christian addressees.

But the thesis that three of the central sections of Romans are developed along the lines of Hellenistic “protreptic speech” does not explain everything about the rhetoric of the letter. In 9:1–11:36 Paul inserts a further section of material between his first two theological sections (1:16–4:25 and 5:1–8:39) and his fourth, hortatory, section (12:1–15:13). The intervening material is, we believe, best understood in terms of then-current Jewish “remnant theology” rhetoric. And it is this material that would have been of particular interest to believers at Rome who understood and expressed their commitment to Jesus in ways that had been largely transmitted to them by Jewish Christians from the mother church at Jerusalem.

The study of Hellenistic protreptic speech and its relevance for the analysis of Romans is very much in its infancy, and so, as would be expected with any new discipline, differing analyses of some of its details have been proposed. Likewise, Jewish remnant rhetoric has often been neglected in many of the past analyses of chs. 9–11. Nonetheless, viewing three of the central sections of Romans as structured along the lines of an ancient λόγος προτρεπτικός offers,

we believe, a better way of understanding the materials contained in 1:16–4:25; 5:1–8:39; and 12:1–15:13. Certainly such an understanding provides interpreters with a far better diachronic rhetorical model than does a forensic model, a deliberative model, or an epideictic model. And understanding 9:1–11:36 in terms of then-current Jewish remnant theology gives us an important key for unlocking Paul’s argument in what has often been viewed as an extremely difficult set of three chapters.

These two diachronic models of rhetorical argumentation, that is, the Greco-Roman protreptic model and the Jewish remnant model, will be spelled out in the commentary proper. And in spelling them out, we will attempt to show not only (1) how Paul made use of the basic structures of Greco-Roman protreptic discourse and the basic motifs of Jewish remnant thought in writing to the Christians at Rome (whether with deliberate intent, so as to make the greatest rhetorical impact on his addressees, or somewhat unconsciously, simply because these forms and motifs were well known to both him and his addressees, and so provided appropriate rhetorical forms for the communication of what he wanted to say in this particular letter), but also (2) how he filled these ancient rhetorical conventions with Christian theology in order to accomplish his own particular purposes in writing his letter to Rome.

The Focus or Central Thrust of Paul’s Presentation in Romans. Contrary to what has traditionally been argued, it is the thesis of this commentary that the focus or central thrust of Paul’s presentation in Romans is not to be found in the first section of the body middle of the letter, that is, not in 1:16–4:25 — and not even in 1:16–17 combined with 3:21–4:25 — but, rather, (1) that Paul’s focus or central thrust is set forth in the second section of the body middle of the letter, that is, in 5:1–8:39,29 and (2) that the corollary of this focal theological exposition in 5:1–8:39 is expressed in the rather general — though also, it needs always to be recognized, the much more expressly christocentric — ethical exhortations of the fourth section of the letter’s body middle, that is, in 12:1-21 and 13:8-14. So we will argue that it is in 5:1–8:39 that the theological portion of Paul’s “spiritual gift,” which he said in 1:11 he wanted to give to the Christians at Rome and which he calls in 2:16 and 16:25 “my gospel,” comes explicitly to the fore — with the more general, but decidedly christocentric, exhortations of 12:1-21 and 13:8-14 comprising the relevant ethical materials that function as corollaries to the theological materials in 5:1–8:39.

This is not to discredit what Paul writes in 1:16–4:25, for that is what he held in common with his Christian addressees at Rome. Indeed, it was probably on the basis of the truths of 1:16–4:25 that both he and his Roman addressees originally became believers in Jesus. Certainly he believed that what he wrote there was true and highly significant, both in what he argued against and in what he affirmed. In all likelihood, Paul himself had proclaimed in other contexts much of what he argues there, particularly when presenting the Christian

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gospel to Jews in the synagogues of the Jewish Diaspora (as represented in Acts) as well as when writing to Gentile Christians who had been influenced by Jewish Christian thought for the better, as had his addressees at Rome (or when writing to his Gentile converts in the province of Galatia who had been influenced by Jewish Christian thought for the worse, as he did earlier in his missionary career).

But what Paul wanted the believers in Jesus at Rome to know, and therefore what he had a particular desire to present to them in 5:1–8:39 (together with the ethical implications of that exposition as expressed in 12:1-21 and 13:8-14), was the message of the Christian gospel as he had contextualized it in his preaching to those who were ethnically Gentiles and without any preparatory religious knowledge gained from either Judaism or Jewish Christianity — that is, to those who had for all their lives existed apart from any understanding of the Jewish (OT) Scriptures. For the Christians at Rome were dominantly Gentile believers in Jesus, and so, however they had originally come to Christ, Paul viewed them as included within his God-given mandate to Gentiles and therefore within the orbit of his Gentile mission. Thus he desired to strengthen these Gentile believers in Jesus by proclaiming to them his own distinctive form of Christian proclamation. Further, he wanted these Christians at Rome to become partners with him in his further missionary outreach to Gentiles in the western regions of the Roman Empire, just as the Christians at Antioch of Syria had supported him in his missionary outreach to Gentiles in the empire’s eastern regions.

The Christians at Rome, whether ethnically Jews or Gentiles, were all, it seems, very familiar with the biblical accounts of God’s redemptive working within the nation Israel. Likewise, it may be presumed that they were knowledgeable about the theological and ethical teachings of the OT Scriptures. It may, therefore, be postulated that the foundational salvific story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt — as well as the Jewish soteriological themes of “justification,” “redemption,” and “sacrifice of atonement” (“propitiation” or “expiation”) — would have been important to them. But what Paul seems to have discovered in his missionary outreach to Gentiles of the Greco-Roman world was that the story of the exodus and such forensic religious expressions as justification, redemption, and propitiation/expiation — while of great importance in Jewish and Jewish Christian contexts — were largely unknown, without significance, and probably not particularly appreciated by Gentiles who had no Jewish or Jewish Christian background. So in his preaching to Gentiles, Paul, it may be postulated, would have felt it necessary to contextualize the message of the Christian gospel in a manner that he believed would be more intelligible, personal, and significant to them — that is, (1) by speaking of “peace” and “reconciliation” with God “through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1-11), (2) by explicating the more universal, foundational story of how sin, death, and condemnation entered the world by “one man,” but how grace, life, and righteousness have been brought about “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:12-21), (3) by spelling out relations between sin, death, and the law, on the one hand, and grace, life,
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and righteousness, on the other (6:1–7:13), (4) by expressing the plight of all people in their attempts to live by their own insights and strength by the use of a familiar tragic soliloquy drawn from Greek literature and by reference to humanity’s common experience (7:14-25), (5) by highlighting the new relationships that come about when one is “in Christ” and “in the Spirit” (8:1-30), and (6) by closing with a triumphal declaration of God’s love and care for his own “in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:31-39). And it is this same type of contextualization, with the highlighting of many of these same features and themes, that appears also in a number of his other NT letters where Gentile believers in Jesus are addressed directly — as, for example, in 2 Cor 5:11-21 and Eph 2:1-22.

Further, it is in this second section of the body middle (chs. 5–8) of Paul’s letter to Christians at Rome that the three basic modes of persuasion of classical synchronic rhetoric come most fully to expression: logos (the content of the argument), ethos (the character of the speaker or writer), and pathos (the power of the presentation to stir the emotions). It is also in this section that the themes usually considered most distinctly Pauline appear most prevalently — that is, (1) “peace” and “reconciliation” with God, and (2) the believer being “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.” Likewise, it also needs to be noted that it is in Romans 8 that “the heights of the epistle are reached” and that there occurs “a sustained climax which takes the argument across the watershed” — using here J. A. T. Robinson’s language drawn from his characterization of Romans as “a journey by canal across an isthmus” with its “series of locks” rising to and then falling away from “a central ridge.”³⁰

3. DISTINCTIVE EXEGETICAL TREATMENTS OF THE PRESENT COMMENTARY

Many of the more distinctive exegetical treatments of the present commentary are to be found in its expositions of material that we have identified as expressing the focus or central thrust of Romans — that is, in its theological statements of 5:1–8:39, as well as in its corollary ethical exhortations of 12:1-21 and 13:8-14. These include exegetical treatments of (1) the relational themes of “peace” and “reconciliation” with God in 5:1-11, (2) the universal themes regarding relations between sin, death, and the law, on the one hand, and grace, life and righteousness, on the other hand in 5:12-21, (3) the discussions regarding the significance of Christ’s death for Christian living, the function of the Mosaic law, and believers in Jesus being “alive to God in Christ” and “dead to the law” in 6:1–7:6, (4) depictions of the inability of believers in Jesus to live by means of their own insights and strength in 7:7-25, (5) the participationist themes of being “in Christ” and “in the Spirit” in 8:1-17, (6) the apocalyptic themes of “suffering” and “final consummation” in 8:18-25, (7) teachings on prayer, God’s working

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out of his purposes in a person’s life, and the resultant confidence of Christians in 8:26-30, and (8) the triumphant confession of all true believers in Jesus expressed in 8:31-39. Likewise, such distinctive exegetical treatments are also found in the ethical exhortations in 12:1-21 and 13:8-14, where we will argue that Paul sets out a christocentric basis for Christian ethics, with the details of that ethic being (1) derived from the proclamation of the Christian gospel, (2) supported by the example and teaching of the historical Jesus, and (3) in line with certain basic passages of the OT Scriptures. Further, it will be argued that Paul’s presentations in these second and fourth sections of the letter (the doctrinal section of 5:1–8:39 and the moral general ethical exhortations in 12:1–15:13) are based on and come to fullest expression in his teaching about being ἐν Χριστῷ (“in Christ”), together with its cognates (6:11, 23; 8:1, 39; 9:1; 14:14; 15:17; 16:11, 13), and being ἐν πνεύματι (“in the Spirit,” 8:9).

In addition to these fairly distinctive treatments in our exegesis of the second and fourth sections of the body middle of the letter, there will also appear a number of other rather unique exegetical treatments in the present commentary. Most significant among this latter lot are our proposals that Paul makes use of distinctly Jewish and/or Jewish Christian forms of argument throughout the other two major sections of the central portion of Romans — that is, (1) in the first section of his letter’s body middle, that is, in 1:16–4:25, both in presenting his negative statements of 1:18–3:20 and in setting out his positive statements of 3:21–4:25, and (2) in the third section of his letter’s body middle, that is, in 9:1–11:36, where he makes use of the basic features of a then-current Jewish “remnant theology,” reconstituting the central features of that theology into a Christianized “remnant rhetoric” in support of his arguments regarding the relationship of the Christian gospel to Israel’s national hopes. Much of Paul’s negative argument in the first part (1:18–3:20) of the first section will come to a climax in his negative comments regarding the phrase ἔργα νόμου (“works of the law”) in 3:20 and 28 (cf. Gal 2:16; 3:2, 10). And much of what he writes positively about “righteousness” and “faith” in the second part (3:21–4:25) of the first section, as well as throughout the third section of the central portion of the letter in 9:1–11:36, will be based on his understanding of the formula πίστις ᾿Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“faith in Jesus Christ” or “the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ”) in 3:22 and 26b (cf. Gal 2:16 [twice]; 3:22 [possibly also 3:26, as in P۴۶]; Eph 3:12; and Phil 3:9).

Particularly significant for an understanding of the course of Paul’s argument — as well as for an appreciation of the structure of his presentation in the first two major theological sections of the body middle (1:16–4:25 and 5:1–8:39) — will be our textual and exegetical treatments of the main verb of the sentence in 5:1. The question that has always perplexed commentators is whether it should be read as ἔχωμεν (“let us have”), that is, as subjunctive, which would suggest some kind of exhortation to move forward, or as ἔχομεν (“we have”), that is, as an indicative verb, which would signal something of an inference or consequence to follow. There can be no doubt that the textual evidence is
overwhelmingly in favor of the subjunctive ἔχωμεν, “let us have” (see “Textual Notes” on 5:1). Nonetheless, the great majority of interpreters (at least, among most Protestant commentators) have asserted that the context of the passage requires that the verb be read as the indicative ἔχομεν (“we have”), despite the preponderance of external support for ἔχωμεν, and so have usually credited the appearance of the subjunctive to some early scribal error or marginal gloss. Our argument, however, is that (1) the textual history of the passage so strongly supports the subjunctive verb ἔχωμεν that it cannot easily be set aside, (2) a proper understanding of the course of Paul’s argument suggests the appropriateness of the subjunctive, and (3) the subjunctive verb, while it may not demand that 5:1 be viewed as a “hinge verse” that begins a new section — that is, a verse based on what Paul has written earlier in 1:16–4:25, but also a verse that calls on both Paul’s original addressees and his present readers to move forward in their thinking on the basis of what follows in chs. 5–8) — it certainly fits into such a structural understanding. Thus rather than being viewed as something of a textual conundrum, as has so often been the stance taken by commentators, we will argue that this verb in 5:1 should be seen as (1) an important textual clue as to how to interpret the passage and (2) a significant key to the understanding of what Paul presents throughout the whole second section of the body middle of his letter, that is, in 5:1–8:39.

4. PROMINENT THEMATIC FEATURES OF THE PRESENT COMMENTARY

Also to be noted in this brief introduction are some prominent thematic features that will appear in the exegetical commentary proper that follows. Probably the most distinctive of these have to do with the following matters.

A. The Importance of Formal Patterning and Compositional Structures for Interpretation

Past interpreters of Romans (as well as of many of the other biblical writings) have all too often paid relatively little attention to the formal patterning and compositional structures of NT writings — and even less to questions regarding the value of such patterning and structures for interpretation. The result has been that commentary writing on Paul’s letter to Rome has often been something of a “fishing expedition” guided largely by (1) a particular commentator’s own interests and exegetical abilities, (2) the respective lengths of the material allotted by the author to particular topics, or (3) certain themes of Christian theology. It is our thesis, however, that features of formal patterning and compositional structure — as have become apparent from comparative epistolary and rhetorical studies of Paul’s letter to the Christians at Rome vis-à-vis other
ancient letters of Paul’s day (i.e., what may be called “diachronic epistolary and rhetorical analyses”) — not only (1) provide insights into how Paul constructed his letters, but also (2) suggest something regarding the function or functions that the apostle himself wanted his various letters, as well as particular sections within each of his letters, to serve, (3) highlight the importance that he himself placed on various materials in his letters — and, therefore, (4) provide important guidance for the interpreter as to how to understand the course of Paul’s argument in each of his letters. So in the introductory section on “Form/Structure/Setting” at the beginning of our treatment of each passage of Romans, matters having to do with formal patterning and compositional structure will be set out in abbreviated fashion — with what follows in the “Exegetical Comments” being extensively impacted by such explications, whether epistolary or rhetorical in form and whether exegetical or theological in nature.

B. Use of Old Testament Quotations and Allusions

A number of perplexing questions arise when one considers Paul’s use of the Jewish (OT) Scriptures in Romans. For example, one may legitimately ask: Why did Paul quote and allude to so many biblical passages in Romans, when elsewhere in his letters he is more reserved in his use of Scripture? Of the approximately 83 places in the Pauline corpus where biblical quotations are to be found (which total approximately 100 OT passages, if one disengages the conflated texts and separates the possible dual sources), well over half appear in this letter: 45 of the 83 (or 55 to 60 biblical passages of the total of 100 passages). Likewise, Romans contains a rather large number of allusions to OT passages. Yet in the Pauline letters other than Romans there are far fewer quotations of or allusions to Scripture: to count the explicit quotations alone, only 15 appear in 1 Corinthians, 7 in 2 Corinthians, 10 in Galatians, 4 in Ephesians, 1 in 1 Timothy, 1 in 2 Timothy, and none in 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, or Titus.

Also to be asked is why the distribution of biblical quotations in Romans — as well as that of recognizable allusions to Scripture in the letter — is so uneven. To take the more observable and demonstrable case of explicit biblical quotations: about 18 appear in eight or nine places in 1:16–4:25 and about 30 more in twenty-five or so places in 9:1–11:36 — with an additional 10 to be found in the exhortations of 12:1–15:13 and one more in the body-closing or “apostolic parousia” of 15:14–32 — whereas explicit biblical quotations occur only twice, and then somewhat tangentially, in what has seemed to many interpreters to be the apex of Paul’s argument, in 5:1–8:39 (7:7’s illustrative citation of “Do not covet” and 8:36’s quotation of an early Christian confessional portion that makes use of Ps 44:22).

One might, in fact, well ask: Why did Paul use biblical quotations and allusions at all in writing to the Christians at Rome, particularly when he identifies
his addressees as those within the orbit of his Gentile ministry (1:5-6; 13:15; 15:15-16), explicitly calls them Gentiles (11:13), and distinguishes their ancestry from his Jewish ancestry (9:3; 11:14)? One could understand why he quoted Scripture and alluded to it so often when writing Gentile Christians in the province of Galatia and the city of Corinth — particularly if, as seems likely, (1) the problems at Galatia stemmed from certain “Judaizers” who were themselves using the OT for their own purposes, and (2) the “Peter party” at Corinth was proposing some form of Jewish Christian propaganda. The use of Scripture in the letter to Ephesus and the two letters to Timothy, though much more infrequent, might even be justified on the bases of “Ephesians” being something of a circular letter written to mixed congregations in western Asia Minor and the letters to Timothy having been written to one who had been trained in the Scriptures by his grandmother and mother. But Romans cannot easily be “mirror read” so as to identify any Jewish opponents or Jewish Christian protagonists. And Paul’s usual practice when writing to Gentile Christians — especially when writing Gentile Christians who were not affected by a problem of Jewish origin or Jewish Christian influence — was not to quote or allude to OT passages in support of his arguments at all (though, of course, his language was always informed by biblical idioms and expressions), as witness his letters to his Gentile converts at Thessalonica, Philippi, and Colossae and to two Gentile Christians named Philemon and Titus.

Further, when considering Paul’s use of Scripture in Romans it is also incumbent on us to ask: How do Paul’s exegetical practices and procedures in the letter compare with those of Second Temple Judaism and early Rabbinic Judaism, and what effect does an understanding of such cognate exegetical practices have on our understanding of Paul’s treatment of the OT? Likewise when making comparisons we must ask: How does Paul’s use of the OT in Romans compare to his use of Scripture in his other writings, particularly Galatians, where there are an overlap of topics and similar expositions?

And when dealing with the actual quotations themselves and Paul’s use of them, another series of questions arises, such as: Why do the text forms of Paul’s explicit biblical quotations differ from those attributed to Jesus in the four canonical Gospels and those credited to the earliest preachers in the Book of Acts? Paul’s quotations in Romans and his other letters use a rather peculiar mix of textual readings. Over half are either absolute or virtual reproductions of the LXX, with about half of these at variance with the MT. Yet almost another half vary from both the LXX and the MT to a greater or lesser extent. Once in Romans (11:35, citing Job 41:11 in a traditional theocentric doxology), in fact, as well as three times elsewhere in the Pauline corpus (1 Cor 3:19, citing Job 5:13; 2 Cor 9:9, citing Ps 112:9; and 2 Tim 2:19, citing Num 16:5), the text of Paul’s biblical quotation is in agreement with the MT against the LXX. By contrast, however, the texts used by Jesus, the earliest Christian preachers, and most of the NT writers seem to be almost exclusively Septuagintal in form.

Likewise, particularly in dealing with the interpretation of these explicitly quoted texts, it must be asked: How can the wide scope of Paul’s interpretation
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of Scripture be understood, ranging, as it does, from his quite literal “pearl-stringing” approach in Rom 3:10-18 to his seeming disregard of the original text and context in Rom 10:6-8 (where Deut 30:12-14 is cited in an inexact and possibly proverbial manner to the advantage of his argument; cf. also Eph 4:8, where Ps 68:18 is cited in a similar fashion)? Further, when attempting to understand Paul’s use of Scripture, it may legitimately be asked: Why does Paul use Scripture in the two theological sections of 1:16–4:25 and 9:1–11:33 of the body middle of his letter as the bases for his various arguments, whereas in the third, ethical section of 12:1–15:13 he uses OT passages more in support of his arguments that he asserts are principally based in the proclamation of the Christian gospel itself? And, finally, it needs to be asked: What does it mean to speak of Paul’s “christocentric exegesis,” and how did that orientation affect his actual interpretation of Scripture?

C. Use of Christian Confessions, Traditional Religious Aphorisms, and Jewish or Jewish Christian Devotional and Catechetical Materials

A further matter of importance with regard to Romans has to do with Paul’s use of early Christian confessions, traditional religious aphorisms, and devotional or catechetical materials that presumably originated in the contexts of Jewish and/or Jewish Christian worship, instruction, and piety. Form criticism is the necessary tool for identifying these pre-Pauline materials. And content analysis of them serves to highlight their central features and their use in early Christian thought and practice. Most important for a commentary on Romans, however, is the spelling out of how Paul used these materials to structure, support, and summarize the main points of his various arguments in his letter to Christians at Rome.

There are a number of indications that Romans contains a “mother lode” of early Christian confessional material, as well as various aphoristic, devotional, and catechetical formulations — which have yet to be sufficiently mined out and whose nuggets of information can aid in understanding the nature of Paul’s message and appreciating the methods that he used in its proclamation. A rather large number of early Christian confessions, as well as some of the more identifiable pre-Pauline aphoristic, devotional, and catechetical formulations, will be highlighted in this commentary. Many of these confessional materials have, of course, been identified as being somewhat distinctive by previous NT commentators, but have usually been explained in other ways than will be here proposed.

The identification and study of early Christian confessional materials in the NT has been particularly prominent among scholars during the twentieth century.31 What has, to date, been most commonly identified as early Christian

31. For a brief history of such identification and study, see R. N. Longenecker, New Wine into Fresh Wineskins, 5-44.
confessional materials in Romans are (1) the hymn of praise to God in 11:33-36, (2) the christological formulaic passages in 1:3-4; 3:24-26 (or perhaps 3:25-26); and 4:25, and (3) the single-statement affirmation of the Lordship of Christ in 10:9. Portions of the lyrical and almost defiant affirmation of 8:33-39 should probably also be seen as confessional in nature. Perhaps there are also echoes of such material in 9:5b (“who is God over all, forever praised! Amen”) and 14:9 (“Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living”).

Each of these portions has a strategic place in the overall argument of Romans. 1:3-4 appears in the salutation of the letter, which Paul uses to highlight a number of the themes that he intends to develop later in the letter. Similarly, 3:24-26 is included in what most commentators have viewed as a major thesis statement of the letter, that is, the broader paragraph of 3:21-26 — whether that paragraph sets out (or, probably better, “reiterates” from 1:16-17) the thesis of the whole letter or, more narrowly, the thesis of the first eight chapters — or, as we will argue later, the thesis statement of only the first major section of the letter’s body middle, that is, of 1:16–4:25. And 10:9 appears at the heart of Paul’s discussion of the Christian gospel and the hope of Israel in chs. 9–11, while 14:9 appears at the heart of his exhortations regarding the weak and the strong.

Further, some of these confessional portions appear as the final items of their respective sections in the letter and so serve to summarize and conclude what was said in those sections. 4:25 (“Who was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification”) seems to function in this manner, summarizing, as it does, the central statements of 3:21-31 and bringing to a climax the whole presentation of 1:16–4:24. Likewise, the forceful affirmations of 8:31-39, which probably include a number of early confessional statements, summarize and bring to a dramatic conclusion all that is said in chs. 5–8. And while it may be debated whether chs. 9–11 begin with a portion that includes a confessional doxology at 9:5b, certainly the majestic hymn of praise to God in 11:33-36 is confessional in nature and provides a fitting climax to those three chapters.

In addressing Christians at Rome, Paul seems to have used a number of early Christian confessional materials — as well as, it needs always to be recognized, certain Jewish or Jewish Christian aphorisms and various portions of available Jewish or Jewish Christian devotional and catechetical material. And he does so in at least two ways: (1) to support and focus his arguments, as he does in 1:3-4; 3:24-26; 10:9; and 14:9, and (2) to summarize and bring to a climax his presentations in the three main theological sections of his letter, as he does in 4:25; 8:33-39; and 11:33-36. These confessional and traditional materials, it may be assumed, were also known (whether in whole or in part) to believers in Jesus at Rome, and Paul appears to have used them to build bridges of commonality with his Roman addressees and to teach them in ways that they would readily appreciate and understand. It is important in our present commentary on Romans, therefore, to identify and spell out Paul’s use of such early Christian con-
fessional materials. Likewise, we believe it also important to attempt to identify and spell out his use of certain traditional Jewish or Jewish Christian aphorisms and various pre-existing Jewish or Jewish Christian devotional and catechetical materials, even though the latter may be less commonly recognized or discussed.

D. Narrative Substructure

Underlying all of Paul’s statements in Romans, however, is the foundational narrative or story about (1) the redemptive plans and purposes of God the Father, (2) the actualization of divine redemption on behalf of humanity through the work of Jesus the Son, and (3) the bringing about of that redemption in history and people’s lives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is this underlying redemptive narrative that Paul builds on, argues from, interprets (or reinterprets), and uses for his own purposes. And it is this same narrative substructure of all early Christian proclamation that Paul assumes his addressees know, at least in the main, whether they have understood it as one connected narrative of divine redemption or as a cluster of redemptive episodes in history.

This narrative substructure is especially evident in (1) Paul’s use of Abraham as the preeminent example of a person of faith in 4:1-24, (2) his contrast between what Adam brought into human experience and what Christ effected on behalf of humanity in 5:12-21, and (3) his analysis of relations between Israel and the church and his sketching out of “salvation history” in chs. 9–11. But it can also be seen throughout the rest of the letter, particularly in the early Christian confessional materials that Paul quotes and his use of those materials.

The recognition that a narrative substructure or underlying story of redemption is presented in the NT is not new. Christians have always believed that the “good news” of the gospel proclamation is about what God decreed in his eternal counsels and has brought about historically on behalf of humanity — primarily what he brought about at a particular time in the course of human history through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Only recently, however, have scholars come to realize that not only were the principal features of that redemptive story generative for early Christian proclamation and theology, but also such a foundational redemptive story (or, such a cluster of redemptive episodes in history) was instructional in the composition of the NT Gospels and the writing of the NT letters. So a “narrative approach” to the study of the writings of the NT, and particularly to the study of Paul’s letters, has begun to take shape within biblical scholarship during the past few decades.32 And it is this approach that needs to be taken into account at every point when interpreting Romans — both as an exegetical tool and as an interpretive control in analyzing what Paul presents in this particular letter.

32. For a survey and evaluation of scholarly proposals, see B. W. Longenecker, Narrative Dynamics in Paul.
E. Phenomenological Historiography

In any scholarly treatment of a NT letter (or, for that matter, any treatment of any portion of Scripture) it is also necessary, we believe, to be attuned to and involved with what has been called “phenomenological historiography” — that is, the identification and tracing out of similar themes and parallel ways of looking at things in roughly cognate and contemporary materials, with the hope of spawning fresh interpretive insights. In every type of biblical study it is necessary for the interpreter to be a “comparative religionist.” This means, in particular, that in the scholarly study of the NT one must be as familiar as possible with such matters as (1) the piety and religious practices of the Jewish people during the period of Second Temple Judaism, (2) the use of the Torah by the Jewish teachers of that time, (3) Israel’s Wisdom literature, (4) Greek religious philosophies and practices, (5) Jewish apocalyptic writings, (6) the Dead Sea Scrolls, (7) Philo of Alexandria, (8) Josephus, (9) Stoicism, (10) the Talmud and its associated compilations, and (11) the Nag Hammadi texts.

Admittedly, the quest for parallels between roughly cognate phenomena and contemporary writings can be a highly selective process. Often it eventuates in what has pejoratively been called “parallelomania.” But when properly done, with appropriate care, perception, and caution, such a tracing out of similar themes, concepts, expressions, and approaches in cognate materials can prove to be highly significant for one’s interpretation — particularly for the interpretation of Paul’s letter to the Christians at Rome.

F. Developments of Thought and Expression

It is also vitally important in a scholarly reading of Romans that one be involved in observing and tracing out, at least as far as possible, the various developments of thought and expression that appear both within the letter itself and between Romans and the other writings of the NT. For a NT letter is neither an isolated nor a static piece of Christian composition. Within Romans an argument is developed, and between Romans and its neighboring canonical writings there are developments. So just as there is the need for NT scholars to give attention to matters having to do with the provenance of a letter, its historical circumstances, and such chronological relations as can be found to exist between it and other writings, there is also the need to observe and trace out the conceptual, thematic, and expressional developments that exist (1) within Romans itself, that is, within each of the four major sections of the body middle of the letter (1:15–4:25; 5:1–8:39; 9:1–11:33; and 12:1–15:13), (2) between each of these four major sections of the central portion of the letter, and (3) between Paul’s presentation in Romans vis-à-vis his other letters and the other writings of the NT. This endeavor is particularly important in a study of Paul’s letter to Rome because it enables the present-day reader to understand better (1) how the message of Paul
functioned in that day, (2) how it related to the broader scope of early Christian proclamation, and (3) how its message can be contextualized today.

**G. Varied Contextualizations of the Christian Gospel**

A central concern throughout the present commentary is the highlighting of how Paul contextualizes the Christian gospel in Romans — both (1) as expressed in a context that had been extensively influenced by Jewish Christianity (which we will argue occurs principally in sections one and three of the letter’s body middle; i.e., in 1:16–4:25 and 9:1–11:36) and (2) as proclaimed in a strictly Gentile context (which we will argue is portrayed in the second section of the letter’s body middle, i.e., in 5:1–8:39, as well as in the more general portions of the fourth, hortatory section, i.e., in 12:1-21 and 13:8-14). This recognition of Paul’s varied contextualizations of the Christian gospel, which occur in Romans more than in any of his other letters, is vitally important, we believe, not only (1) for an understanding of the letter itself, but also (2) for providing a template or paradigmatic pattern for an understanding of the nature of Christian proclamation and ministry today. And it is the highlighting of this factor in Paul’s letter to the Christians at Rome that is a prominent feature in everything that follows in our exegetical commentary.

**5. THE GREEK TEXTUAL TRADITION OF ROMANS**

Before dealing with matters of exegesis, biblical theology, and contextualization in the commentary proper, attention must be directed to matters of text criticism — that is, to the textual tradition that underlies the Greek text of Romans and to “establishing” the text in those many places where variant readings appear. The textual basis for our exegesis will be the fourth edition of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (GNT⁴) and the twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA²⁷), which were both published in 1993 and set out the same Greek text. GNT⁴ offers in its apparatus, however, a more limited selection of variant readings than does NA²⁷, since its purpose was to present only the most significant textual variations for translators. So in the “Textual Notes” and “Exegetical Comments” of the commentary proper we will discuss every variant in the Greek text of Romans that is cited in GNT⁴, but will also need to deal with other variants noted in NA²⁷ and some other textual issues that have been discussed by various commentators.

**A. Families of Manuscripts in the Greek Textual Tradition**

The genius of Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort in the area of NT text criticism was expressed in their new understanding of “family” relations be-
between the numerous Greek manuscripts of the NT — both those previously known and those that were then being discovered. Building on the work of Karl Lachmann (1831), Constantin von Tischendorf (1841-72), and Samuel Tre- gelles (1857-79), Westcott and Hort set out in 1863 to establish the text of the Greek NT on a more critically assured basis. Hort seems to have been the one who was principally responsible for originating the theory of family relations between the ancient Greek NT textual materials, whereas Westcott took the lead in applying that theory in practice. On all points, however, they worked in close collaboration. And in 1881-82 they published the results of their labors in The New Testament in the Original Greek, Introduction and Appendix, with that book having a profound effect on all NT study thereafter.

Based on Westcott and Hort’s thesis of family relationships, most scholars today recognize three basic types or “families” of Greek texts in the textual tradition of the NT, with various combinations of these families often also identified as subtypes. The earliest and probably the primary family of texts is the “Alexandrian” text, or what Westcott and Hort called the “Neutral” text because it seems relatively uncontaminated by later scribal alterations. It was prominent in the region of Alexandria, and so its name. But it was also used in various churches throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire. A second type is a bilingual Greek-Latin text often called the “Western” text, which may have had its roots among some Christians as early as the mid-second century and was used dominantly in western portions of the empire. A third is the “Byzantine” text, which is also called the “Syrian” or “Antiochene” text because it is thought to have originated in Antioch of Syria during the late third century. This third family of texts has also been called the “Koine” (“common”) text — or often today the “Majority Text” simply because, being represented by a few later uncial manuscripts and the great bulk of minuscule manuscripts from the ninth through the fifteenth centuries, it is numerically the most prevalent. It is frequently also called the “Received Text” since it is generally comparable to the text proposed in the early sixteenth century by the Dutch religious humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536), with that text then developed in the seventeenth century and called the “Textus Receptus.”

The Alexandrian or Neutral text is represented most directly by two fourth-century uncial manuscripts: Codex Vaticanus (B 03) and Codex Siniaticus (א 01), which are usually in agreement — though Westcott and Hort argued that on the few occasions where they differ Codex Vaticanus is most often to be preferred. It also appears in the fifth-century uncial manuscript Codex Alexandrinus (A 02), whose text is Byzantine in the Gospels but Alexandrian in Acts and the letters of Paul, as well as in the fifth-century uncial manuscript Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C 04) — which, as its name suggests, is a palimpsest that was erased in the twelfth century and reused for a Greek translation of thirty-eight tractates by Ephraem — whose text is generally Alexandrian but contains other mixed readings.

Of even greater importance is the fact that the Alexandrian or Neutral type of text is dominant in the biblical papyrus manuscripts of the third and fourth
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centuries. It appears most extensively in P⁴⁶ ("Chester Beatty II"), which con-
tains eight of Paul’s letters and the Epistle to the Hebrews (though with numer-
ous lacunae because of many broken edges in the folios of this papyrus codex and
the omission of 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, and the Pastorals) and which dates
from about A.D. 200 (with some leeway on either side). It is also to be found to
a large extent in P⁴⁵ ("Chester Beatty I"), which contains the Gospels and Acts
(beginning at Matt 20:24 and ending at Acts 17:17) and dates from the mid-third
century. Further, it is dominant in those other manuscripts, whether papyrus,
uncial, or minuscule, included by Kurt and Barbara Aland in Category I below
— and, though with “alien influences” usually derived from the Byzantine text,
in those manuscripts that the Alands have included in Category II.

The so-called Western text appears in the bilingual manuscripts Codex Be-
zae Cantabrigiensis (D 05) of the fifth century, which contains the Gospels and
Acts, and Codex Claromontanus (D 06) of the sixth century, which contains the
Pauline letters — with both manuscripts often identified simply as Codex Beza,
since they were at one time both possessed by Theodore Beza (1519-1605), who
was an important text critic and Latin translator of his day as well as John Calvin’s
successor at Geneva. This type of text, however, seems to have had roots in a
much earlier period, for certain rather distinctive expressions, phrases, deletions,
and additions in the two manuscripts also appear earlier at various places in the
Greek texts of the biblical papyri and the Latin biblical quotations of such Church
Fathers as Tertullian (c. 145-220), Cyprian (died c. 258), and Augustine (354-430).

The Byzantine text is found in some of the uncial Greek manuscripts, prin-
cipally in codices H, L, and P — that is, in H (013), which contains the Gospels
and dates from the ninth century; in H (015), which contains the Pauline letters
and dates from the sixth century; in L (019), which contains the Gospels and
dates from the eighth century; in L (020), which contains Acts, the Catholic
or General Epistles, and the Pauline letters and dates from the ninth century;
in P (024), which contains the Gospels and dates from the sixth century; and
in P (025), which contains Acts, the Catholic or General Epistles, the Pauline
letters, and Revelation and dates from the ninth century. But it appears far more
commonly in the very large number of minuscule manuscripts that date from
the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.

B. A Contemporary Reevaluation of the Greek Textual Tradition

A thorough reevaluation of the Greek textual tradition of the NT, however, has
been undertaken by Kurt and Barbara Aland and their associates at the Institute
for New Testament Textual Research, Münster, Germany. Their results, together
with a proposed new method of analysis, were published in monograph form
in 1983,33 and have been the subject of continued study and revision ever since.

The critical apparatuses and the text of GNT⁴ and NA²⁷, both published in 1993, have been thoroughly revised to reflect this reevaluation of the textual data and history that lie behind our present text of the NT. As a result of the work of Kurt and Barbara Aland and their colleagues, the textual variants of every NT passage in both GNT⁴ and NA²⁷ have undergone a complete review, with different significances often seen in the data from what had been previously accepted, different arrangements of the evidence available made, and different conclusions drawn with respect to particular variants. So, for example, the Introduction to GNT⁴ states:

The selection of passages for the apparatus has undergone considerable revision since the Third Edition (corrected). . . . Accordingly the Committee selected 284 new passages for inclusion in the apparatus. Meanwhile 273 passages previously included were removed, because the variants were of less significance for translators and other readers.³⁴

Likewise, each of the previously assigned letter evaluations of “A” (“certain”) to “D” (“great difficulty in arriving at a decision”) in GNT⁴ — which represent the degree of certainty among the five editors of the Fourth Revised Edition (i.e., Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger) with respect to the readings chosen — have been reconsidered and, where felt necessary, have been revised.³⁵ Further, the “Preface to the Fourth Edition” of GNT⁴ declares that “very careful consideration was given to the selection of representatives for each group of witnesses in order to reflect faithfully the character of the textual tradition and exclude elements of uncertainty.”³⁶ Thus the text-critical analysis of every NT passage must now take into account this most recent reevaluation of the NT’s textual history.

C. Proposed Categories of Texts in the Greek Textual Tradition

The Alands and their associates have grouped the extant papyrus, uncial (or majuscule), and minuscule Greek NT manuscripts into five categories, with that fivefold classification based on the quality of the respective texts and their importance for establishing the original readings of the NT writings.³⁷ These five categories may be characterized as follows:³⁸

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³⁴. GNT⁴, introduction, p. 2*.
³⁵. Cf. ibid., introduction, p. 3*.
³⁶. Ibid., preface, v.
³⁸. As abstracted from ibid., 335-36.
INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARY

Category I: Manuscripts of a “very special quality,” corresponding to the Alexandrian or so-called Neutral text. These manuscripts must always be given primary consideration in attempting to establish the text. To this category belong all the papyri and uncial manuscripts of the third and fourth centuries, and so it represents what the Alands have called the “early text.”

Category II: Manuscripts of a “special quality.” These are manuscripts that, while similar to those of Category I, must be distinguished from the manuscripts of Category I because of the presence of “alien influences,” which have usually been derived from the Byzantine text. To this category belongs the “Egyptian” text, which was evidently developed from the Alexandrian tradition.

Category III: Manuscripts of a “distinctive character” with an “independent text.” These are manuscripts that often exhibit a strong Byzantine influence and so are not to be used as primary evidence for establishing the text. Yet they are important for understanding the history of the textual tradition.

Category IV: Manuscripts of the so-called “Western” text (a designation no longer favored by the Alands but which continued to be used by Bruce Metzger) — that is, principally and perhaps exclusively, D (Codex Beza) in both of its two volumes (05, which contains the Gospels and Acts, and 06, which contains the Pauline letters).

Category V: Manuscripts that exhibit a purely or dominantly Byzantine text.

It is this categorization that has been used in both GNT⁴ and NA²⁷ as the basis for including or excluding a manuscript in the textual apparatus with respect to a given variant reading.³⁹

Thus in its textual apparatus the GNT⁴ includes (1) all papyrus manuscripts, most of which are from Categories I and II, though a few are from Categories III and IV, (2) all uncial manuscripts from Categories I, II, III, and V, and (3) a relatively small group of minuscule manuscripts from Categories I and II, plus some ten manuscripts from Category III that have been selected as representative for the various parts of the NT (i.e., Gospels, Acts, Paul, Catholic or General Epistles, and Revelation). Not included, however, are the minuscule manuscripts in Category IV, which represent the text type of the so-called “Western” text of Codex D, either 05 (the Gospels and Acts) or 06 (the Pauline letters). The major minuscule manuscripts that the Alands have identified as bearing “constant witness” to the Byzantine family of texts are listed in Category V. There are, of course, many hundreds of other minuscule

³⁹. As the introduction to GNT⁴ comments: “The Committee made use of these categories in selecting manuscripts because they provide the only tool presently available for classifying the whole manuscript tradition of the New Testament on an objective statistical basis” (p. 4*).
manuscripts that belong to the more developed Byzantine text. But all of the Byzantine manuscripts included in Category V, as well as the hundreds more of Byzantine manuscripts not listed elsewhere in this catalogue of texts, have been judged by the Alands and their associates as being inferior to the Greek manuscripts of Categories I, II, and III. So these latter textual materials will never be cited in the “Textual Notes” or “Exegetical Comments” of our present commentary.

D. Tabulated Manuscript Evidence for Establishing the Greek Text of Romans

The charts below set out the most important of the Greek manuscripts for Paul’s letter to the Romans according to the five categories cited above. The materials in each category are grouped roughly in terms of the quality of their texts — not in the order of their discovery (as with the papyri), nor according to their dates or some letter or number designation (as with the uncialss) or some assigned number (as with the minuscules). These charts may be used for reference when evaluating the textual tradition of any given reading discussed in the “Textual Notes” and/or the “Exegetical Comments” that follow in this present commentary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category I</th>
<th>PAPYRUS MANUSCRIPTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Papirus Manuscripts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P40</strong></td>
<td>third century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P10</strong></td>
<td>fourth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P36</strong></td>
<td>c. AD 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P31</strong></td>
<td>seventh century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P94</strong></td>
<td>fifth-sixth centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P61</strong></td>
<td>c. AD 700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARY

### UNCIAL MANUSCRIPTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category I</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (01)</td>
<td>fourth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>B (03)</td>
<td>fourth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>A (02)</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>0220</td>
<td>third century</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>C (04)</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dp (06)</td>
<td>sixth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fp (010)</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>048</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0172</td>
<td>fifth century</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category III</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dp (06)</td>
<td>sixth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gp (012)</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hp (015)</td>
<td>sixth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&lt;sup&gt;appr&lt;/sup&gt; (025)</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ψ (044)</td>
<td>eighth-ninth centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>075</td>
<td>tenth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0150</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0209</td>
<td>seventh century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0219</td>
<td>fourth-fifth centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0221</td>
<td>fourth century</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category V</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K&lt;sup&gt;ap&lt;/sup&gt; (018)</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L&lt;sup&gt;ap&lt;/sup&gt; (020)</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>049</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>056</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>0142</td>
<td>tenth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0151</td>
<td>ninth century</td>
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</tbody>
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E. A Summation with Respect to the Greek Manuscripts of Romans

Of the approximately 3,200 manuscripts that make up the Greek textual tradition of the NT, the most important for establishing the text of Romans are the following:

Among the papyrus manuscripts and leaves of manuscripts, eight are of primary importance for establishing the text of Paul’s letter to the Romans. None contains the full text of the letter. Most, however, either date from or reflect a time earlier than the uncial manuscripts that preserve the text in its entirety and so must be considered of great significance in any evaluation of the text of Romans.
INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARY

The most important of these eight, because of both its early date and the uncontaminated nature of its readings, is P 46 in the Chester Beatty collection (“Chester Beatty II”), which can be dated about A.D. 200 and contains eight of Paul’s letters and the so-called Epistle to the Hebrews (though with numerous lacunae because of damaged leaves and the omission of 2 Thessalonians, Philo-

...men, and the Pastorals). It exhibits what the Alands have called a “free” text — that is, a text that does not clearly or consistently correlate with any of the families of texts that developed at a later period. Unfortunately, the first seven folios of P 46, which evidently contained Rom 1:1–5:16, are missing. Further, a number of the remaining folios of Romans in P 46 — particularly those containing 5:17–6:14; 8:15–15:9; and 15:11–16:27 — are somewhat defective because of their damaged edges. Nevertheless, because of its date and uncontaminated or “free” text, P 46 is “a valuable witness to the unrevised Pauline text of the second century and hence to the early component parts of all later textual forms.”

The other biblical papyri that include Category I or Category II texts of Romans contain even smaller portions of the letter. All of these biblical papyri have writing on both sides of the page, on both the “recto” and the “verso,” and so seem to stem from codices (i.e., from a book form that contained folios with pages or leaves) and not from scrolls — as do most other papyri of other parts of the NT. And this suggests that the early Christians used the codex or book form for their sacred writings from the very beginning.

Greek uncial (or “majuscule”) manuscripts of the fourth to the ninth centuries have played a dominant role in NT textual criticism well into the twentieth century, being superseded only in the latter part of the century by the witness of the earlier third- and fourth-century papyri. For Constantin von Tischendorf, who published his two-volume Novum Testamentum Graece in 1869-72, Codex Sinaiticus (א 01) was the critical standard for the establishment of the text of the NT. On the other hand, for Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort, who published their two-volume The New Testament in the Original Greek in 1881-82, the touchstone for all NT text criticism was Codex Vaticanus (B 03), especially where it agrees with Codex Sinaiticus, but also in those relatively few cases where B and א differed. And this B–א textual approach (i.e., basing primary textual dependence on the two fourth-century uncial manuscripts and favoring B over א where they differ) gained almost universal acceptance among NT scholars through its incorporation by Eberhard Nestle in his Novum Testamentum Graece, which was published in 1898.

But as Kurt and Barbara Aland have pointed out in comparing the texts of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus: “The textual quality of Codex Vaticanus is inferior in the Pauline corpus: in the Gospels and elsewhere it is far superior to Codex Sinaiticus (and the other uncials), but not in the letters of Paul.”

even when dealing with these two primary fourth-century uncial witnesses, which together support an Alexandrian or Neutral family of texts, a “reasoned eclecticism” must be invoked — that is, an establishing of the text that takes into consideration for each particular passage not only the external data of the respective manuscripts but also the internal data of the author’s argument and usage (which is, in effect, much the same methodology as that used in establishing the text of the canonical Gospels by the use of both source criticism and redaction criticism).

The minuscule manuscripts have long played an important role in NT textual studies — even a dominant role up through the mid-nineteenth century. For while Desiderius Erasmus knew of Codex Basilensis, the eighth-century Byzantine uncial manuscript that was brought to the Council of Basel in 1431 and is now designated E (07), he depended almost entirely on later Byzantine minuscule texts and seems to have made no use of that well-known Basel uncial in constructing his “received text.” And while Theodore Beza published critical editions of the NT text, he never referred to what is now called Codex Beza and whose two volumes are now designated D (05) on the Gospels and Acts and D (06) on the Pauline letters — even though both of these bilingual volumes were in his possession and are today called by his name. But with new discoveries of many NT manuscripts, new finds of papyri containing Greek biblical materials, and new studies of relationships between the various families of Greek texts — all of which began in the mid-nineteenth century and have continued unabated since — that dominance of the minuscule tradition has been reduced dramatically.

Of the over 2,800 minuscule manuscripts that have been identified, numbered, and studied to date, all stem from the ninth through the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, and more than eighty percent represent the Byzantine or so-called “majority” text almost exclusively. Only a few of the minuscule manuscripts of Romans “offer a valuable early text which can compete with . . . the best of the uncial.”44 Chief among these is the ninth-century minuscule manuscript 33, which has often been called the “Queen of the Minuscules,” and portions of the tenth-century minuscule manuscript 1739 and the eleventh-century minuscule manuscript 1175.

In the “Minuscules” chart above, Category I (i.e., manuscripts of a “very special quality”) and Category II (i.e., manuscripts of a “special quality”) include only a few manuscripts that reflect, to some extent, the Alexandrian or Neutral family of texts — with most of these evidencing, as well, various “alien influences,” which usually means that they represent Byzantine readings. Category III (i.e., manuscripts of a “distinctive character” with an “independent text”) lists a number of textual materials that also often exhibit a strong Byzantine influence, and so, though they may be of some importance for understanding the history of the textual tradition of Romans, cannot be used as primary evi-

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARY

dence for establishing the letter’s text. There are no Category IV or “Western”
text minuscule manuscripts for Romans. And the minuscule manuscripts of
Category V (i.e., manuscripts that exhibit a purely or predominantly Byzantine
text) are inferior to those of Categories I, II, and III and so will not be taken
into account in either the “Textual Notes” or the “Exegetical Comments” of our
commentary proper.

Nonetheless, even though only a small group of minuscule manuscripts
can be included in Categories I and II, some attention must also, at times, be
paid to the Byzantine family of texts when exegeting Romans. And so with re-
spect to certain passages in Romans a “reasoned eclecticism” must also take
into consideration certain Byzantine variants when attempting to establish the
original text of the letter.

F. Other Textual Witnesses and Their Importance

In addition to the Greek papyrus, uncial, and minuscule manuscripts, which
reflect, in whole or in part, a continuous text for Romans, there are also other
textual materials that have a bearing on attempts to establish the original bibli-
cal text. These include early versions of the NT, patristic citations, and church
lectionaries.

The earliest versions of the NT are the Old Latin (Itala or it), the Old Syri-
ac (the Vetus Syra, and as represented by surviving materials derived from
Tatian’s Diatessaron), and a presumed Coptic prototype of the many extant
Coptic translations, which can be dated sometime toward the end of the second
Christian century (probably about AD 180-90). The Latin versions are usually
referred to as the Old Latin (it), a translation that was produced at the end of
the second century or first part of the third century, and the Vulgate (vg) of
the fourth and fifth centuries — with both of these versions represented by a
large number of manuscripts that present a great variety of textual phenomena.
The Syriac versions are (1) the early Old Syriac, which is represented by the
Sinaitic (syr\[^e\]) and/or the Curetonian (syr\[^c\]), as well as by the fifth-century Pe-
shitta (syr\[^p\]), (2) the Philoxeniana (syr\[^ph\]), which was commissioned by bishop
Philoxenus of Mabbug and translated by Polycarp in the year 507-08 (but is
now as a manuscript extinct), (3) the Harklesis (syr\[^b\]), which was translated
in 616 by the monk Thomas of Harkel, who was also at some time bishop of
Mabbug, and (4) the Palestinian (syr\[^pal\]) of the sixth century, which is a partially
preserved translation written in an Aramaic dialect with a Syriac script and so
can only rather indirectly be called a Syriac version. The Coptic versions of the
New Testament are very numerous, with the most commonly cited being the
Sahidic (cop\[^sa\]), the Bohairic (cop\[^bo\]), and the fragmentary Fayyumic (cop\[^fay\]),
all of which stem from some time in the third century or beginning of the fourth
century.

All these versions were either translated directly from the Greek text or
give evidence that they were thoroughly revised from a Greek base if originally dependent on another version. And all these translations, as the Introduction of GNT⁴ expresses matters, “are important witnesses for the Greek text of the New Testament because they derive from a relatively early stage of the tradition. They witness to the early form of the text as it was used at the time and place of their origin and development.”⁴⁵

A number of other ancient versions, however, were either only partially dependent on the Greek text or give evidence of having been only influenced by the Greek text at various later stages in the revision of their texts. These derived versions include the Armenian version and the Georgian version, both of which appear to be based on an Old Syriac type of text. Likewise, the Ethiopic version is probably to be viewed as something of a derived translation. For while the Ethiopic translations of Acts, the General Epistles, and the Apocalypse of John seem to be based on the Greek text, though with subsequent influences from various Coptic and Arabic translations, the character of the readings and their textual sources in many of the other portions of the Ethiopic versions are highly controversial. So like the United Bible Societies’ fourth edition of The Greek New Testament (GNT⁴) and Nestle-Aland’s twenty-seventh edition of Novum Testamentum Graece (NA²⁷) — which both limit the citation of versions in their apparatuses to instances where there is a clear witness to the original Greek text — our policy in all the textual discussions that follow in the commentary proper will be to refer to the early versions “only in instances where their underlying Greek text may be determined with certainty or with a high degree of probability.”⁴⁶

Quotations of the NT by the Church Fathers generally, as well as their quotations of Paul’s letter to Rome in particular, pose numerous problems in any attempt to establish the biblical text. And this is true even when a Church Father writes a commentary on a NT book, where, obviously, the greatest number of patristic citations are to be found. For there was always the temptation, both for the patristic authors themselves and for later copyists of their writings, to rephrase the quoted biblical materials in terms of familiar forms of the text, rather than to give attention to how that text was actually worded in the passage under consideration. Further, there are always problems as to whether a particular Church Father was (1) alluding in a paraphrastic manner to a text or actually quoting a NT passage and (2) quoting from memory or copying from a biblical manuscript. And, of course, when Latin- or Syriac-speaking Fathers wrote in their own language, there is always the additional problem of determining how the text of the translation they quoted relates to the original Greek text.

Nonetheless, as Kurt and Barbara Aland have rightly pointed out: “Establishing the New Testament text of the Church Fathers has a strategic importance for textual history and criticism. It shows us how the text appeared at particular

⁴⁵. GNT⁴, introduction, p. 22*.
⁴⁶. Ibid.
times and in particular places: this is information we can find nowhere else."47 So while a great deal still remains to be done by way of evaluating the use of Scripture by the Church Fathers and identifying the text forms they used, there will be a number of times in our textual analysis in the commentary proper when such patristic citations will be of some importance for establishing the Greek text.

Church lectionaries, of which there are about 2,300 whole or partial manuscripts in existence, are collections of biblical texts divided into separate pericopes and arranged according to their sequence as lessons appointed for the church year. These ecclesiastical lectionaries, however, are not to be related principally to the history of the NT text, but are to be understood more with respect to the history of church liturgy. For they are the products of particular liturgical needs, with the result that their form and wording are to be seen as having been heavily influenced by certain liturgical necessities.

Nonetheless, while only a few may be of any help in establishing the text of a NT passage, the ancient church lectionaries are important for the study of the later history of particular biblical texts. For since scribes, in copying a biblical text, would have been familiar with the constant repetition of that text in their worship services — and so, either consciously or inadvertently, would have incorporated portions of their worship expressions into that text — the lectionaries may be presumed to have exercised some influence on the biblical texts themselves and therefore on the textual traditions that are represented in the later manuscripts. Yet as the Alands have rightly insisted: “We can only conclude that for New Testament textual criticism, so far as the original text and its early history are concerned, nearly all of the approximately 2,300 lectionary manuscripts can be of significance only in exceptional cases.”48

48. Ibid., 169.
COMMENTARY PROPER

Romans is neither a “theological tractate” nor a “compendium of Christian theology.” It is, rather, a letter from the Christian apostle Paul written to believers in Jesus at Rome. When viewed rhetorically, it is best to call it a “protreptic message” of instruction and exhortation, which can be compared to an ancient “word (‘speech’ or ‘message’) of exhortation”; when analyzed in epistolary terms, it should be understood as a “letter essay” of instruction and appeal, comparable to various Greco-Roman letters of instruction.¹

¹. See pp. 12-16 above, and for more extensive discussions R. N. Longenecker, Introducing Romans, 169-235.
THE OPENING SECTIONS OF THE LETTER

As a letter, Romans begins with a “salutation” and a “thanksgiving.” These two opening sections can be fairly well delineated — though it may be questioned as to where exactly the thanksgiving section ends and the body section (or “body opening”) of the letter begins. Both of these opening sections evidence a number of epistolary conventions that were common in Paul’s day. And each in its own way expresses something of (1) Paul’s purposes and concerns when writing and (2) what he wanted to develop more fully in the rest of his letter.
I. Salutation (1:1-7)

TRANSLATION

1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called by God as an apostle, and set apart for the gospel that is from God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures — the gospel concerning his Son,

who was descended from David with respect to his human descent;

who was designated the Son of God with power with respect to his spirit [or 'the Spirit'] of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead:

Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him we received God's special grace of apostleship in order to bring about obedience that comes from faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, among whom you also are those called by God to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those at Rome, who are loved by God and called his holy people: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

TEXTUAL NOTES

1:1 The sequence Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ("Christ Jesus") is supported by P10 and uncial B, as well as by minuscule 81 (Category II), versions itᵃʳ,mon vgʷʷʷʷ,ˢᵗ, and Irenaeus and Origen²/³. The sequence Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("Jesus Christ"), however, appears in P²⁶ and uncial A Dᵇᵈᵇᵈ G P Ψ, as well as in minuscules 33 1175 1739 (Category I) and 1506 1881 1962 2127 2464 (Category II), versions itᵇ,b,g,o vgᵉˡ syrᵖʰ,h,pal, and Irenaeusˡᵃᵗˡᵃᵗˡᵃᵗ mas Ori-gen¹/³ Chrysostom Theodoret Ambrosiaster Jerome Augustine⁵/⁴. Similar occurrences of the name Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ with the designation ἀπόστολος ("apostle") are found in 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; and 2 Tim 1:1 (cf. also Phil 1, though with δέσμιος, "prisoner," and Phil 1:1, though with δοῦλοι, "servants" or "slaves"); whereas Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ appears with ἀπόστολος in Gal 1:1 and Tit 1:1 (cf. also 1 Thess 1:1 and
2 Thess 1:1, though in these salutations “Jesus Christ” appears in addressing “the church of the Thessalonians” as being “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”). In Rom 1:1 the textual evidence for each of these two readings is fairly balanced, though on the basis of P₁⁰ and B, both of which are fourth-century readings, the name Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is to be preferred.

3 The reading τοῦ γενομένου (“the one born” or “descended”) is overwhelmingly dominant in the Greek textual tradition. Uncial 61 of the fifth century (also reflected in sy⁹), however, reads τοῦ γεννωμένου (“the one of the family” or “the one begotten”), but that reading probably stems from an error in hearing or from later christological speculation.

4 The Old Latin, Jerome’s Vulgate, and some Latin writers translated the Greek participle ὁρισθέντος by the Latin praedestinatus, and so read “the one who was predes-tined.” This may suggest that the Greek text they used read τοῦ προορισθέντος. More likely, however, the translation praedestinatus, rather than destinatus or definitus, should be understood as an attempt to soften any perceived “adoptionistic” tone in the Greek ὁρισθέντος at a time when that became a theological issue.

7a The phrase ἐν Ῥώμῃ (“in [or, ‘at’] Rome”) is well supported by P₁⁰, 26 and by uncials  א A B C D 1⁰ P 1², as well as by minuscules 33 1175 1739 (Category I) and 81 256 1506 1881 1962 2127 2464 (Category II). It is also reflected in versions it 1⁰, b, d, o, 1⁰ vg syr 1⁰, h, 1⁰ cop 2⁶, bo, and is supported by Origen gr, lat Chrysostom Theodoret Ambrosiaster. A few witnesses (G 1739 mg 1908 mg 1⁰ Origen), however, omit ἐν Ῥώμῃ, “either as the result of an accident in transcription, or, more probably as a deliberate excision, made in order to show that the letter is of general, not local, application.”

7b The expression ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ (“loved of [or, ‘by’] God”) is widely supported by P₁⁰, 26 and by uncials  א A B C P 1², as well as by minuscules 1739 (Category I) and 81 1962 2127 (Category II). It is also reflected in versions it 1⁰, s, z, 1⁰ vg syr 1⁰, h, 1⁰ cop and by Origen gr, lat Ambrosiaster Augustine. The variant ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ (“in the love of God”) has inferior attestation (uncial G, versions 1⁰, d, g, and Ambrosiaster Pelagius), with some Latin witnesses combining ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ with ἐν Ῥώμῃ and so reading “to all who are at Rome [qui sunt Romae] in the love of God [dilectis / in caritate Dei].” The omission of ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ in the Greek text of Codex Beza (D 06) and minuscule 1915 was probably accidental.

7c The amply attested order χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη (“grace to you and peace”) is reversed in sy⁹ to εἰρήνη καὶ χάρις ὑμῖν (“peace and grace to you”). For Paul’s usual order and usage, see “Exegetical Comments” below on v. 7.

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**FORM/STRUCTURE/SETTING**

Greek letters began with a formulaic prescript or salutation: “A (the sender) to B (the recipient),” or at times “To B from A,” with the greeting χαίρειν (literally: “to rejoice” or “be glad”; colloquially: “welcome,” “good day” or

“hello”; epistolary use: “greetings”). Sometimes a health wish such as ὑγιαίνειν (literally: “to be in good health”; colloquial and epistolary use: “good health”) was connected with the greeting: χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν (“greetings and good health”).

In line with the conventions of his day, Paul also begins his letter to the Christians at Rome with an identification of himself as the sender (v. 1), an identification of the Christians at Rome as the recipients (v. 7a), and a greeting (v. 7b) — all of which are considerably expanded and filled with distinctive theological nuances. This basic threefold structure, together with the fact that a εὐχαριστῶ formula (“I give thanks”) appears at the beginning of 1:8 and so signals the start of the “thanksgiving” section at that point, indicates quite clearly that the salutation of Romans is to be identified as 1:1-7.

The salutation of Romans is in the “running” (εἰρομένη) style of the unsophisticated prose of vernacular koine Greek, not in the “periodic” (ἐν περιόδοις) or “compact” (κατεστραμμένη) style of artistically developed prose that appears in the writings of the classical Greek authors.3 In Greek the salutation of 1:1-7 is only one sentence, with its statements joined together by a number of relative clauses and by the juxtaposition of phrases. Further, it is longer than the prescript of any extant Greek letter — as well as the salutation of all of Paul’s other letters. The most obvious reason for its length is that Paul has incorporated additional material into each of the usual salutatory units of an ancient letter. More importantly, however, the salutation of Romans is longer because in it the apostle sets out in condensed and rather cryptic form a number of highly important matters that he will later take up in his letter — thereby expressing something of his major concerns when writing, anticipating features of his primary purposes for writing, and highlighting certain themes that he wants to develop more fully in the rest of the letter.

In effect, the salutation of Romans, while appearing to be fairly simple in construction and rather straightforward in expression, is one of the most closely packed sections containing some of the weightiest theological statements in all of Paul’s letters — and therefore one of the most extensively debated portions. Not only can it be said that “in recent years, more has been written about this [passage, particularly 1:3-4] than about any other New Testament text,”4 but also that in recent years more (or at least, as much) has been written about the salutation of 1:1-7 than about any other section in Paul’s letters. Therefore, without attempting to enter into every debate or marshal all of the data used in support of every proposed thesis, we need (1) to deal carefully with each item that appears in the salutation, (2) to indicate in a sufficient manner the main theses that have been proposed by way of explanation, and (3) to set out what can be validated with respect to the main points that Paul is making in such a long and highly significant salutation.

3. See Aristotle’s nomenclature in Rhetoric 3.9.
4. Quoting Hengel, Son of God, 59 (with respect to 1:3-4).
EXEGETICAL COMMENTS

1:1a Ἐρωμένος, “Paul,” is a Greek name that literally means “little” or “small.” As a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Phil 3:5), the writer of this letter to Christians at Rome bore proudly the name of Israel’s first king, the Benjamite Saul. As a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16:37-38; 25:10-12), however, he would have had three names: (1) a clan or family nomen, which was preceded by (2) a personal prae
nomen and was followed by (3) a more commonly used cognomen. Greeks and other provincials who had gained in some manner Roman citizenship usually kept their Greek names as cognomens, to which they added Roman praenomens and nomens — the latter being usually that of the one to whom they owed their citizenship. Neither Paul’s prae
nomen nor his nomen appears in the NT. As a Christian missionary to Gentiles, he seems to have used only his Greek name Paul, which, as a Roman cognomen, would have been acceptable to both Greeks and Romans without any nuances regarding ethnicity, nationality, family, or status.

The Church Fathers, as Gerald Bray has noted, “were especially fasci
nated by the name Paul itself and sought to discern why it had been changed from Saul.” Sometimes it was suggested that his name was changed when he was confronted by Christ on the way to Damascus as portrayed in Acts 9:1-30. But that opinion was usually viewed as unlikely since the name “Paul” is not introduced in Luke’s second volume until Acts 13:9. Chrysostom proposed, on analogy with Simon Peter in Mark 3:16 par. (cf. also Matt 16:16-18a), that God changed his name at the time of his “ordination” as depicted in Acts 13:2-3. Pelagius understood Paul himself as taking on a new name when he “advanced in virtues,” arguing:

We should suppose that he did this after the manner of the saints. When they advanced in virtues, they were addressed with a different name so that even in very name they might be new, as, for example, Abraham and Sarah and Cephas.

Frequently the Latin Fathers suggested that he was called Paul because at the beginning of his missionary journeys he converted Sergius Paulus, the proconsul or governor of Cyprus, and so took the name “Paulus” as his own — much in the same way that rulers were in the habit of adding the names of conquered peoples to their titles. To all such proposals, however, Adolf Deissmann has pertinently argued: (1) that ὅ ό καὶ (“who was also”) in the statement of Acts 13:9 (“Saul, who was also called Paul”) “admits of no other supposition than that he

7. Pelagius, Ad Romanos, PL 30.645, alluding to Gen 17:5 and John 1:42.
8. So, e.g., Jerome, De viris illustribus 5, PL 23.646; cf. also Augustine, Confessions 8.4, though see his De spiritu et littera 7.12 and Sermons 279.5; 315-17.
was called Saulos Paulos before he came to Cyprus”; (2) that Luke “uses the one or the other name according to the field of his hero’s labours”; and (3) that in his Gentile mission Paul thought of himself as “Παῦλος ὁ καὶ Σαῦλος — a man who laboured for the future and for humanity, though as a son of Benjamin and a contemporary of the Caesars.”

Most often the Church Fathers simply noted that in Scripture several people were renamed by God or became known by ascriptive surnames, and that many others actually possessed two or even three names. So they concluded that it was customary for Jews to have two or three names — whether given by their parents, by God, or by others; whether given affectionately, honorifically, or pejoratively. Thus Origen in the preface to his Romans commentary writes concerning the name Paul:

It was the custom of the Hebrews to have two or three names; they gave different names to one and the same man. It seems to us that it is in accordance with this custom that Paul appears to have a second name, and that as long as he was ministering to his own people he was called Saul, which was probably the name his parents gave him, but that when he was writing laws and commandments for the Greeks and other Gentiles, he was called Paul. Scripture makes it clear when it says “Saul, who is also called Paul” [Acts 13:9] that the name Paul was not then being given to him for the first time but was already habitual.

Acts 22:28 tells us that Paul claimed to have been born a Roman citizen, which implies that his family had been granted Roman citizenship in Tarsus at some time before his birth — perhaps during one of the Seleucid constitutional settlements with Rome, which would probably have included the incorporation of some prominent Jews as Roman citizens. In all likelihood, therefore, his parents gave him the cognomen Paulus at his birth, which was a common Greek name of the day. It was probably meant to be his ordinary name in the Gentile world, just as Saul was the name they gave him for use among Jews. The NT never refers to Paul’s personal name (praenomen) or his family name (nomen) — which names, it may be assumed, were also given him at birth by his parents since he was born a Roman citizen — just as it never refers to the personal or family names of such Roman officials as Agrippa, Felix, Festus, and Gallio, or

10. E.g., Abram was renamed Abraham, Sarai renamed Sarah, Jacob renamed Israel, Simon became Peter, and the sons of Zebedee became known as “the sons of thunder.”
11. E.g., Solomon who is also called Jedidiah in 2 Sam 12:25, Zedekiah who is called Mattaniah in 2 Kgs 24:17, Uzziah who is called Azariah in 2 Kgs 15:1, Matthew who is called Levi in Luke 5:27, and Thaddeus who is called Lebbaeus in Matt 10:3, as well as others in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings who are referred to by double or triple names.
the personal or family names of such Jewish Christians as Crispus, Justus, Rufus, and Silvanus, all of whom probably also had not only a *cognomen* but also a *praenomen* and a *nomen*.

Immediately after referring to himself by his cognomen, Paul describes himself in this salutation of Romans more expansively than in that of any of his other letters — first as δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ("a servant of Christ Jesus"); then as κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ("one called an apostle"); and finally as ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ ("one set apart for the gospel of God"). These three self-identifications must not be read as mere effusive embellishments that only reflect something of Paul's exuberance when introducing himself to a church he had not founded and to Christians he did not (at least in the main) know personally. Rather, since in the salutations of his other NT letters he gives only rather brief descriptions of himself — and, more importantly, since those descriptions seem to be particularly relevant to the situations he faced when writing each of those other letters (cf. his identification of himself as an ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in 1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1, Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; and Titus 1:1; his reference to himself and Timothy as δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Phil 1:1; his self-identifications δοῦλος θεοῦ and ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Titus 1:1, and his use of δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Phlm 1, though with no such descriptive characterizations appearing in the salutations of 1 or 2 Thessalonians) — it seems likely that here in these self-identifications of Rom 1:1 Paul is tailoring his speech to his addressees' appreciations and speaking to certain concerns among them regarding his person and status.14

1:1b Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, a "slave" or "servant of Christ Jesus," may be understood as simply an expression of humility. Origen long ago argued that understanding the phrase in this manner "would not be wrong," for,

while Paul proclaims in Rom 8:15: "You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, by which we cry Abba, Father!", he also says in 1 Cor 9:19: "Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all" — thereby indicating that he serves Christ not in the spirit of slavery but in the spirit of adoption, for Christ's service is more noble than any freedom.15

Others have proposed that since later in Romans Paul also speaks of Christians generally as being "slaves of God" (cf. 6:22: δουλωθέντες τῷ θεῷ), the phrase δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ may be interpreted as Paul putting himself on a par with other Christians.16 Or the expression may be taken as connoting Paul's

14. As he does elsewhere in Romans at such obvious places as 1:16 and 2:16; cf. also the autobiographical references in Gal 1:1, 10, 11-12; 1 Cor 15:8-10; and Phil 3:4-7.
total submission and complete commitment to Christ Jesus, who as his Lord had absolute ownership over his life — for that is how he uses the language of slavery in 6:16-22.\textsuperscript{17} Or, more particularly, it may be a phrase that Paul himself coined for inclusion in this salutation of Rom 1:1 (also that of Phil 1:1) in contrast to the Roman appellative “Slaves of the Family of Caesar (\textit{Familia Caesaris})” by which slaves and freedpersons of the imperial household were known, thereby giving voice to a higher commitment, a greater Lord, and a more important family as Christians than could be true of any political allegiance — especially when addressing believers in Jesus at Rome (perhaps also at Philippi), some of whom may have been members of the imperial household (or who, at least, were aware of such an imperial appellation).\textsuperscript{18}

But δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in the salutation of Romans (and Philippians) should not be viewed as simply an expression of humility, an identification with his addressees, a declaration of personal commitment to Christ, or a phrase coined by Paul to counter some current Roman imperial appellation — as worthy and defensible as each of these proposals may be. More likely it is to be understood as signaling Paul’s own prophetic consciousness.\textsuperscript{19} And here in Rom 1:1 it is used in writing to Christians who would have been able to appreciate its biblical rootage and significance.\textsuperscript{20} For while “Servant of Yahweh” (עבד יהוה) appears frequently in the OT in an honorific fashion with respect to (1) the nation of Israel,\textsuperscript{21} (2) various leaders of the nation, such as Moses, Joshua and David,\textsuperscript{22} and (3) God’s people generally,\textsuperscript{23} it is also used as a designation for God’s prophets who spoke and enacted his message\textsuperscript{24} and for the promised “Servant of the Lord” in the Isaian Servant Songs.\textsuperscript{25}

Paul’s use of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ here in Rom 1:1 is probably best illuminated by the imagery and wording that he used in Gal 1:15-16a when speaking about Christ having encountered him on the way to Damascus: God “set me apart from birth,” “called me by his grace,” and “was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” Paul’s use of these terms and language reflects the call of certain OT prophets (cf. Jer 1:5) and that of the Servant of Yahweh (cf. Isa 49:1-6). It is a prophetic self-identification, which would probably not have been understood by Gentile Christians generally and therefore does not appear in most of Paul’s other NT letters for circumstantial reasons. But it would certainly have been understood and appreciated by the

\textsuperscript{17} Cf., e.g., Fitzmyer, \textit{Romans}, 231.

\textsuperscript{18} So M. J. Brown, “Paul’s Use of ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΗΙΣΟΥ.”

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Sandnes, \textit{Paul — One of the Prophets?} esp. 146-53.

\textsuperscript{20} See further R. N. Longenecker, \textit{Introducing Romans}, 55-91.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf., e.g., Ps 136:22; Isa 41:8-9; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:120; 49:3.

\textsuperscript{22} Cf., e.g., Josh 1:2; 14:7; 24:29; Judg 2:8; 2 Sam 7:5; 2 Kgs 18:12; Ps 89:3 (MT 89:4); Isa 37:35; note also the title of Psalm 18.

\textsuperscript{23} Cf., e.g., Pss 34:22 (MT 34:23); 113:1; Isa 54:17; 56:6; 65:8-9, 13-15; 66:14.


Christians at Rome, both Jews and Gentiles ethnically, who were steeped in OT teachings — and, presumably, would also have been understood, at least to some extent, by Paul’s Gentile converts in the province of Galatia, who had been adversely affected by certain “Judaizers” who were disparaging Paul and his prophetic mission.

The prophetic self-identification “servant of Christ Jesus,” therefore, is found most clearly in Paul’s letters in the salutation of Romans at 1:1 and the autobiographical reference of Galatians at 1:10 (cf. also the imagery of Gal 1:15-16a and the plural use of δοῦλοι in Phil 1:1). It also appears in the salutations of Jas 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; and Jude 1, which NT letters are probably to be identified as distinctly Jewish Christian writings. The only really different — as well as quite remarkable — thing to note in the use of this prophetic designation by Paul in Romans and Galatians (perhaps also Philippians), as well as by the authors of the afore-mentioned Jewish Christian writings, is the substitution of the name “Christ Jesus,” “Jesus Christ,” or simply “Christ” in the place usually reserved for Yahweh alone.

Many interpreters have viewed the diversity in the order of the names Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ or Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Paul’s letters as being of no particular significance, for both formulations are found throughout his letters, together with the singular name Χριστός.26 The manuscript evidence for these two readings, as noted above (see “Textual Notes”), is fairly balanced, though most scholars on the basis of P10 and Codex Vaticanus (uncial B 03) prefer here Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Other NT authors prefer to use the double name “Jesus Christ” (about forty-seven times) more than “Christ Jesus” (about seven times). Paul, however, seems to prefer “Christ Jesus” (about eighty times) over “Jesus Christ” (about twenty-five times) — with, of course, the exact tabulations being highly dependent on such matters as (1) the authenticity of the various Pauline letters, (2) the proper textual reading in each case, and (3) whether the formulation stems from an early Christian confessional portion quoted by Paul or appears in material written by the apostle himself. Further, the pattern in Paul seems to be that (1) when he speaks of his God-given mandate to minister to Gentiles, he usually speaks of it as being on behalf of “Christ Jesus” (as here in 1:1) or “Christ” (as in Gal 1:10) and (2) when he refers to believers being incorporated either “into” (εἰς) or “in” (ἐν) Christ, the referent is always “Christ Jesus” or “Christ.” All this suggests that while “Christ Jesus,” “Jesus Christ,” and “Christ” were often used interchangeably by him as proper names, Χριστός for Paul still carried with it nuances of the title “Messiah.”27 And this seems to be particularly evident in his letter to Rome — as witness especially (1) his use of “the Christ” (ὁ Χριστός) in 9:5, which appears in a context where the articular form of the name certainly

26. Cf., e.g., Lietzmann, An die Römer, 23; Murray, Romans, 1.2 n. 1; Hengel, “Erwägungen zum Sprachgebrauch von Χριστός bei Paulus,” 137.
27. Cf., e.g., Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 3-4; Käsemann, Romans, 5; Cranfield, Romans, 1.51; N. T. Wright, “The Messiah and the People of God,” 19-32; Moo, Romans, 41 n. 9.
signifies “the Messiah of Israel,” and (2) his use of that same articular form in 15:3 and 7, with “the Christ” (ὁ Χριστός) appearing in the closing portion of a set of exhortations regarding “the strong” and “the weak” in 14:1–15:13.

1:1c Κλητὸς ἀπόστολος (literally “the one called an apostle”) is the second self-identification of Paul here in 1:1. The substantival adjective κλητός, “the one called” (from the verb καλεῖν, “to call” or “designate”), as William Sanday and Arthur Headlam have pointed out, is:

another idea which has its roots in the Old Testament. Eminent servants of God become so by an express summons. The typical examples would be Abraham (Gen. xii.1-3), Moses (Ex. iii.10), the prophets (Isa. vi.8, 9; Jer i.4,5, &c.). The verb καλεῖν occurs in a highly typical passage, Hos. xi.1 [LXX], ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλεσα τὰ τέκνα μου. For the particular form κλητός we cannot come nearer than the “guests” (κλητοί) of Adonijah (I Kings i.41, 49 [LXX]).

And Sanday and Headlam have gone on quite rightly to assert:

By his use of the term St. Paul places himself on a level at once with the great Old Testament saints and with the Twelve who had been “called” expressly by Christ (Mark i.17; ii.14//). The same combination κλητὸς ἀπόστ. occurs in 1 Cor. i.1 [though here, evidently, with Paul needing to spell out for his Gentile converts at Corinth the biblical nuance of κλητός by the addition of διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, “through the will of God”], but is not used elsewhere by St. Paul or any of the other Apostles. In these two Epistles St. Paul has to vindicate the parity of his own call (on the way to Damascus, cf. also Acts xxvi.17) with that of the elder Apostles.

The Hebrew verb קָרָא and the Greek verb καλέω are frequently used in OT Scripture in a mundane sense to signify the naming or identification of someone or something. But throughout both the OT and the NT, one who is given a divine mandate, called to a special responsibility or office, and/or called to salvation is always “called by God.”

The term ἀπόστολος, “apostle,” which Paul uses in association with his name in most of the salutations of his letters (except those of Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon) to epitomize his consciousness of having been commissioned by God to proclaim with authority the message of salvation in Christ, occurs in Romans only here and at 11:13 as a self-identification — also, of course, in 16:7 in the identification of Andronicus and Junia (or Junias).

28. Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 4.
29. Ibid.
30. E.g., Isa 42:6; 48:15; 49:1; 51:2, passim; Rom 4:17; Gal 1:6; 5:8; 1 Thess 5:24; 1 Tim 6:12; Heb 5:4; 1 Pet 5:10, passim.
Ἀπόστολος in the NT connotes personal, delegated authority. It speaks of being commissioned to represent another. It is used broadly of anyone sent by another (cf. John 13:16, “an ἀπόστολος is not greater than the one who sent him”), of Christian brothers sent from Ephesus to Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 8:23, “they are ἀπόστολοι of the churches”), of Epaphroditus sent by the Philippian church to Paul (cf. Phil 2:25, “he is your ἀπόστολον”), and even of Jesus sent by God (cf. Heb 3:1, “the ἀπόστολον and high priest whom we confess”). More narrowly, it is used of a group of believers in Jesus who had some special function,31 with particular reference to the twelve disciples.32 This narrower usage is how the term is most often used in its approximately seventy-six occurrences in the NT. And that is how Paul uses it of himself in his letters — that is, as one with personal, delegated authority from God to proclaim accurately the Christian gospel.

This is not, however, how ἀπόστολος was commonly understood by Gentiles or Hellenistic Jews of the day. Classical Greek writers usually used the term in an impersonal way, most often to refer to a naval expedition for military purposes33 or a “colony to be sent out”34 — even, at times, of a boat used to transport such a naval expedition or colony.35 Josephus’s one clear use of ἀπόστολον carries the verbal sense of “to send out,” with the noun πρεσβεία, not ἀπόστολος, used in the passage for “delegation.”36 In fact, there are only a few references in all of the extant Greek and Jewish Greek writings from the fifth century B.C. through the second century A.D. where the term means, or even could be taken to mean, something like “envoy,” “delegate,” or “messenger,” and thus to connote the idea of a personal and delegated authority.37

Karl Rengstorf has pointed out that although the NT’s use of ἀπόστολος cannot readily be paralleled in the Greek and Hellenistic Jewish writings of the day, it is comparable to the Jewish institution of the shaliach in the Talmud.38 For in rabbinic writings the noun שליח has an assured place as a term that means “envoy” or “messenger” and carries the nuances of personal and delegated authority — as, for example, in the oft-repeated dictum: “A man’s shaliach is as the man himself.”39 According to the rabbis, a man could appoint a shaliach to enter into an engagement of marriage for him,40 to serve a notice of divorce for him,41

31. In addition to Rom 16:7, see also Luke 11:49; Acts 14:4, 14; Gal 1:19; Eph 3:5; Rev. 18:20.
33. So Lysias, Oracles 19.21; Demosthenes, Oracles 3.5; 18.80, 107.
34. So Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Antiquitates Romanae 9.59.2.
35. So Plato, Epistolae 346a.
36. See Josephus, Antiquities 17.300.
37. See Herodotus, History 1.21; 5.38; Corpus Hermeticum 6.11-12; POxy 1259.10; SbGU 7241.48; 3 Kgdms 14:6 (LXX’); Isa 18:2 (Symmachus).
39. As expressed, e.g., in m. Ber. 5:5; b. Ned. 72b; b. Naz. 12b; b. Qidd. 43a; b. Baba Qam. 113b; and b. Baba Mes. 96a.
40. Cf., e.g., m. Qidd. 2:3; b. Qidd. 43a.
41. Cf., e.g., m. Git. 3:6; 4:11; b. Git. 21a-23b.
to perform ceremonial rituals on his behalf, to act as his agent in economic matters, and so on. In fact, the authority of the sender was thought of as so tied up with the *shaliach* that even if the *shaliach* committed a sacrilege, so long as he did not exceed the bounds of his commission, it was the sender and not the *shaliach* who was held responsible.

Rengstorf has further argued (1) that the Jewish institution of the *shaliach* served as the model for Jesus in calling his disciples and sending them out on his behalf and (2) that it was on the basis of Jesus’ usage that the early Christian church used this concept for its own purposes and translated שָלָיחָה by the relatively rare Greek term ἀπόστολος, probably first at Syrian Antioch. And despite a great deal of further investigation and extensive debate, Rengstorf has largely continued to carry the day — not only in (1) establishing an early date for the origin of the *shaliach* institution in Judaism and (2) spelling out a connection between the sending motif of the OT and rabbinic writings and the sending motif of Jesus and the NT writers, but also in (3) correlating linguistically ἀπόστολος as used in the NT with the Jewish term שָלָיחָה.

There are, however, certain significant differences between the rabbinic idea of a *shaliach* and the Christian concept of an apostle. In the first place, the appointment of an agent in Judaism was always a temporary matter. When the task of the *shaliach* was completed, his commission was over. The rabbis did not think of a *shaliach* as having a lifelong calling, as is taken for granted of an apostle in the narrower sense of that term in the NT. More importantly, the *shaliach* was not viewed in a religious context or as a religious office — except, of course, in the sense that law and religion in Judaism were always inseparably intertwined. The term *shaliach*, however, was never used of prophets, missionaries, or proselytizers. So while the concept of a *shaliach* in Second Temple Judaism provides, to some extent, a reasonable background for the use of ἀπόστολος in the NT, it falls short of fully explicating that background or adequately highlighting some of the most important features of an apostle in early Christianity. For such matters, we must look as well to ideas that developed within Israel’s religion having to do with the function of a prophet and to Jesus’ reconstruction of both the *shaliach* concept and traditional prophetology.

Playing on the inadequacy of the Jewish *shaliach* concept to explain fully the NT’s use of ἀπόστολος, Walter Schmithals argued for a gnostic origin of the term. In support, he cited various references from the Church Fathers that

42. E.g., the heave offering, cf. *m. Ter.* 4:4.
43. Cf., e.g., *b. Baba Qam.* 102a, b.
44. Cf. e.g., *m. Meg.* 6:1–2; *b. Ketub.* 98b.
46. Ibid., 1.420–24, 437–45.
47. Cf. 3 Kgdms 14:6 (LXX:), where the passive participle of שָלָיחָה is treated as a noun and translated ἀπόστολος.
speak of so-called “Christian” gnostics as “false apostles,”49 and he argued from these references that it was gnostic teachers who first used the title ἀπόστολος of themselves. In none of these texts, however, is it explicitly said that the gnostics ever used the term of themselves. Rather, every patristic reference cited by Schmithals is better understood as a Christian characterization of the gnostics as being “false apostles” (also “false prophets” and “false Christs”) — which, of course, hardly proves that the title ἀπόστολος itself stemmed from a gnostic self-identity or arose from gnostic nomenclature.

1:1d The clause ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, “set apart [or, ‘separated’] for the gospel that is from God,” is best understood as the third self-identification given by Paul in 1:1 and should be read as parallel with δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ and κλητὸς ἀπόστολος. As Charles Cranfield has pointed out (contra the omission of a comma between κλητὸς ἀπόστολος and ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ in UBS and Nestle-Aland, which suggests that the latter phrase is in apposition to the former): “To take the phrase as in apposition to κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, which is itself in apposition to Παῦλος, would be very clumsy.”50

By the use of the nominative, singular, masculine, perfect, passive, substantive participle ἀφωρισμένος, Paul speaks of himself as “the one who has been set apart,” just as he did by the use of the nouns δοῦλος and κλητὸς. The participle derives from the verb ἀφορίζειν (“to separate,” “set apart,” “appoint”), which is used in the LXX in the sense of being “set apart” or “separated” to God with respect to (1) every firstborn son of a family and every firstborn male of a family’s livestock (Exod 13:12), (2) every first portion of one’s baked goods and every first portion of one’s harvest (Num 15:20), (3) the Levites in their divine service on behalf of Israel (Num 8:11), and (4) the nation Israel, which is set apart or separated from all other nations as God’s special possession (Lev. 20:26). Ἀφορίζειν is often used in association with the noun ἅγιος (“holy”) and the verb ἁγιάζειν (“to sanctify” or “consecrate”) — as, for example, in Lev. 20:26, “You are to be my holy people, because I, the Lord, am holy, the one who set you apart from the nations to be my own” — and so it frequently connotes ideas of being “holy” unto God or “consecrated” by God (cf. also Ezek 45:4, where the verb appears with reference to an area of land consecrated by God for the use of the Levites and the building of the Jerusalem temple).

The fourth-century commentary writer whom Erasmus dubbed “Ambrosiaster”51 understood Paul to be saying in his use of ἀφωρισμένος that “he has

49. As, e.g., Origen, Commentary on John 2.8; Eusebius, Ecclesiae historia 4.22 and 23.12; Tertullian, De praescriptione haereticorum 30; Ps.-Clement, Homilies 11.35.
50. Cranfield, Romans, 53; so also Michel, An die Römer, 35; contra Moo, Romans, 42.
51. Many have argued that “Ambrosiaster” was actually Hilary (c. 315-67), who was an energetic defender of orthodox Christianity, a major author of his day, and the bishop of Poitiers during 350-56. Others have suggested he may have been Evagrius of Antioch; and still others believe he was probably Isaac, a prominent convert from Judaism, in large part because his commentaries on Paul’s letters (including Hebrews) evidence a great deal of interest in the relation of Christianity to Judaism and the Mosaic law (which identification I personally think is most probable).
been set apart [or, ‘separated’] from the preaching of Judaism for the gospel of God, so that abandoning the law, he might preach Christ who justifies those who believe in him, which the law could not do.”  

Likewise, Augustine said much the same in distinguishing between Paul being “called” and Paul being “set apart,” with the former understood to refer positively to his call to “the church, which is acceptable to God,” and the latter to refer negatively to “the synagogue, whose glory had faded away.”

This understanding of what Paul meant by being “set apart” has been advocated, as well, by a number of twentieth-century Pauline interpreters, many of whom have also viewed Paul here as not only saying that he was “separated from the law” but also that he was separated by God from his Pharisaic past — sometimes, in fact, proposing that this distinction between law and gospel is the main theme of Paul’s entire letter to the Romans. And some have attempted to demonstrate a wordplay between the Greek verb ἀφορίζειν (“to set apart”) and the Hebrew verb פורתשׁ (“to separate”), which has often been claimed as the root of the name “Pharisee” — much as Kingsley Barrett has explicitly argued:

The Greek word is not only similar in meaning to, but also has the same consonants as the Hebrew root p-r-sh, which underlies the word Pharisee. Paul had been a Pharisee (Phil. iii.5), supposing himself to be set apart from other men for the service of God; he now truly was what he had supposed himself to be — separated, not, however, by human exclusiveness but by God’s grace and election.

While such an interpretation is possible, it is not the most probable. For in setting out in coordinate fashion his three self-identifications of (1) “a servant of Christ Jesus,” (2) “called [by God] an apostle,” and (3) “set apart for the gospel of God,” Paul suggests that what is understood about one of them must also be understood about all of them — which, in effect, means that all three are speaking primarily in positive terms, without attempting to set up contrasts.

All three, we believe, are to be seen as rooted in Paul’s prophetic consciousness, with that prophetic consciousness based biblically on Jer 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations (προφήτην εἰς ἔθνη),” and as expressed by him earlier in Gal 1:15-16a, “God, who set me apart from birth

52. Ambrosiaster, _Ad Romanos_, PL 17.48.
53. Augustine, _Ad Romanos inchoata expositio_, PL 35.2089.
54. Cf., e.g., Zahn, _An die Römer_, 31–33; Schlatter, _Romans_, 7; Nygren, _Romans_, 45–46; Michel, _An die Römer_, 36, 68 n. 16; though see Käsemann, _Romans_, 6, who simply states that ἀφωρισμένος “does not . . . refer to the contrast with Paul’s Pharisaic past.”
55. Cf., e.g., Zahn, _An die Römer_, 31; Nygren, _Romans_; K. L. Schmidt, “ἀφωριζóμον,” 5.454; Black, _Romans_, 34; and, somewhat tentatively, Fitzmyer, _Romans_, 232.
56. Barrett, _Romans_, 17.
and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles." It is not that Paul viewed himself as having been at his birth appointed by God "a servant" and "an apostle," and then later "set apart for the gospel of God" — whether in contrast to his earlier adherence to the law or his Pharisaic past, or at his "consecration" to a Gentile ministry at Syrian Antioch as represented in Acts 13:2. As the third of his three coordinate self-identifications, this affirmation of having been "set apart" must also be seen as rooted in Paul's prophetic consciousness and expressed in an entirely positive fashion.

The noun εὐαγγέλιον ("gospel") appears here without an article, but koine Greek phrases that have both a preposition and a genitive do not usually have an article in order to signify the definiteness of their subjects. Εὐαγγέλιον in the Greco-Roman world originally meant "a reward for good news," and then, in both its singular and plural forms, the content of that "good news" itself. The verb εὐαγγελίζειν in the LXX means "to announce good news," especially regarding a military victory. More particularly, however, when used in a religious sense, εὐαγγελίζειν (or its aorist middle form εὐαγγελίσασθαι) and its substantival participle εὐαγγελιζόμενος have to do with the in-breaking of God's reign, whether in vengeance or vindication, and the proclamation of God's salvation. And it is most likely on the basis of this OT usage (1) that Jesus identified the content of his preaching as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, that is, "the good news" or "gospel," and (2) that early believers in Jesus continued to speak of their distinctive message, evidently on the basis of Jesus' usage, as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, "the good news [or, 'gospel'] of God," and, it may be added, (3) that at some time after Paul's ministry the canonical Evangelists began to call their writings about the story of Jesus τὸ εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, that is, "a literary Gospel about Jesus Christ.

Scholars have often tried to relate the NT's use of εὐαγγέλιον to language used in the imperial cult of Rome. It was Adolf Deissmann who was most influential in arguing (1) that "gospel" was an important sacred word in the Greco-Roman world of emperor worship, and (2) that the writers of the NT not only knew that it was so used but were also responding to that pagan usage when

57. Cf. Sanday and Headlam, Romans 5, who mention Paul's "consecration" at Antioch as a possible interpretation.
58. See Plutarch, Sertorius 11.8; 26.6; Phocion 16.8; 23.6; Josephus, War 2.420; 4.618, 656.
59. See Jer 20:15.
60. See 1 Sam 31:9; note also 1 Kgs 1:42.
61. Cf. Pss 40:9 (LXX 39:10; MT 40:10); 96:2 (LXX 95:2); Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1; Nah 1:15 (LXX and MT 2:1).
63. As the wording of the traditional material incorporated into Mark 1:14-15 suggests; see also τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας, "the good news [or 'gospel'] of the kingdom" in Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14.
64. As appears in the caption to Mark's portrayals of Jesus in Mark 1:1, with the genitive construction of the name "Jesus Christ" understood as an objective genitive.
they used the term for the much greater “good news” that comes from God and is focused in the work and person of Christ Jesus. Deissmann based his thesis principally on (1) the celebrated Calendar Inscription from Priene, which was inscribed about 9 B.C. and refers to the εὐαγγελία (“good news”) of the birth of Augustus “the most divine Caesar,” another Greek inscription of the time that uses the same plural expression “good news” with reference to the emperor Septimius Geta, and a letter by an Egyptian high-ranking official that speaks in both articular and singular fashion of τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (“of the good news”) regarding the proclamation of Gaius Julius Verus Maximus Augustus as emperor. And many interpreters have accepted this understanding.

Ernst Käsemann, however, has appropriately argued that “the antithesis between the worship of Christ and emperor worship does not play in the primitive Church the role presupposed for such a derivation,” and so has concluded that “it is not satisfactory to derive the NT term in its absolute and technical use from this source.” Likewise, Peter Stuhlmacher — after a full-length study of the pre-Pauline use of εὐαγγέλιον in Jewish and Greco-Roman writings, as well as its use by Jesus, the early Jewish Christian communities of Palestine, and the Hellenistic Jewish Christian communities of the Jewish Diaspora — has concluded (as expressed concisely in the 1994 English translation of his 1989 German commentary on Romans):

The use of the word “gospel” in the Greek royal inscriptions to refer to the good news concerning the birth, inauguration, victories, or good deeds of the emperor may have been known to Jesus, the apostles, and to Paul. But it had no influence on the meaning of the language they used to describe their preaching. Moreover, the influence that it exerted on the understanding of the message of Christ in the churches is not significant enough to be mentioned.

Nor can it be said that Paul picked up the term “gospel” from his rabbinic background. For while the verb בשׂר (“to proclaim good tidings”) and its participle מבקש (“messenger of good tidings”) appear occasionally in later talmudic writings, they occur only at those few places where Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; and 61:1 are actually quoted — that is, where the term is retained within a quotation from Isaiah, but without any comment or theological reflection

70. Käsemann, Romans, 7.
71. See Stuhlmacher, Das paulinische Evangelium, esp. 1.11ff. and 199ff.
72. Stuhlmacher, Romans, 25.
on this verb or participle on the part of the rabbis who are cited as quoting these passages.

“Good tidings” (“good news” or “gospel”) as the content of a message does, however, appear in two places in the Dead Sea Scrolls: (1) in 1QH 18.14, where the substantival participle המבשׂר (“the one who brings good tidings”) seems to be equated with the Teacher of Righteousness, and (2) in 11QMelch 18, where the same participle המבשׂר is identified as the eschatological archangel warrior Melchizedek, who is also “the one anointed by the Spirit.” But these instances, while analogically interesting, must be judged as being too rare, too sociologically and culturally remote, and too ideologically distant to have had any direct bearing on the use of “gospel” in the NT.

It is “the gospel that is from God” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ) that was at the heart of all of Paul’s concerns. As Paul speaks about that “good news” in his letters, he refers to it as a message (1) that has God himself as its source (understanding θεοῦ here in Rom 1:1 as a genitive of source); (2) that has the person and work of God’s Son, “Jesus Christ our Lord,” as its content (cf. vv. 3-4 below; also v. 9: “the gospel of his Son”); (3) that was “announced in advance to Abraham” (as stated in Gal 3:8; cf. esp. Rom 4:1-24); and (4) that was “promised beforehand through his [God’s] prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (cf. v. 2 below). Further, he insists (5) that this gospel is the only message he proclaimed (cf. 1 Cor 1:17-25; 2:1-16; 15:1-11); (6) that it is what God by his Spirit is calling people to accept (cf. Gal 1:6a; 3:1-5); (7) that it is what some of his converts in Galatia were deserting by accepting “a different gospel, which is in reality no truth of the gospel” (cf. Gal 2:5, 14) or not “the word of truth” (cf. Col 1:5); and (8) that it is greater and more important than any of his own personal circumstances (cf. 1 Cor 9:12-23; Phil 1:12-18). And it is commitment to this gospel and the focus of its message, which is “Jesus Christ our Lord,” on which everything else in Paul’s theology and ethics is based.

While an unbroken line of continuity cannot be traced back from the noun εὐαγγέλιον in the NT to the verb εὐαγγελίζειν (together with its aorist middle form εὐαγγελίσασθαι and the participle εὐαγγελιζόμενος) in the OT,73 it may legitimately be argued (1) that it was Jesus who reached back to his Jewish (OT) Scriptures and identified the content of his preaching as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, that is, “the good news” or “gospel,”74 and (2) that the earliest Christians, on the basis of Jesus’ usage, began to speak of their distinctive message as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, “the good news [or ‘gospel’] of God,”75 or as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας, “the good news [or ‘gospel’] of the kingdom.”76 And it was evidently from the earliest Jewish Christian reports about Jesus’ preaching and from the early Jewish Christians’ own use of εὐαγγέλιον that Paul picked up this term to represent

73. Cf. Pss 40:9; 96:2; Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1; Nah 1:15.
75. As in Mark 1:14-15.
76. As in Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14.
the content of what he was called to proclaim — that is, as Peter Stuhlmacher has aptly expressed matters, Paul “took over his language concerning the ‘gospel’ from the apostles before and beside him.”

The noun εὐαγγέλιον, however, appears more frequently in Paul’s letters (some sixty times out of its total seventy-six NT occurrences), and with a greater degree of nuancing, than it does elsewhere in the NT — as does also the verb εὐαγγελίζειν and its cognates. The earliest use of “gospel” among Jewish believers in Jesus seems to have been in the context of the formulation “the gospel of God,” with its stress not only on its content, that is, “good news,” but also on its source, that is, as being “from God” (taking τοῦ θεοῦ as a genitive of source) — thereby understanding the term in this context to mean “the ‘good news’ from God” (cf. the traditional material of Mark 1:14-15; see also 1 Pet 4:17). Paul uses that form of expression as well — and certainly agrees with its emphases — not only here in Rom 1:1 but also elsewhere in his letters.78 Usually, however, Paul simply speaks of “the gospel,”79 as did undoubtedly many other Jewish believers in Jesus before him.

Yet Paul also gives εὐαγγέλιον his own particular emphasis in his highlighting of its distinctive Christian content (understanding the genitive constructions in each case as objective genitives), and so speaks of “the gospel of his [God’s] Son,”80 “the gospel of Christ,”81 “the glorious gospel of Christ,”82 or “the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”83 Further, he speaks in a more personal manner of this “gospel” as “my gospel,”84 “our gospel,”85 or “the gospel that I proclaimed”86 (understanding the genitive constructions as possessive genitives, and with each of these expressions being related to the particular situation addressed). And at times he connects one of the gospel’s intended results — such as “reconciliation,”87 “salvation,”88 or “peace”89 — with the term itself (or a close cognate).

1:2 Having identified in 1:1 the gospel’s source as being “from God,” Paul goes further in 1:2 to highlight a point of great importance for both himself and his addressees: that this gospel is that ὅ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις (“which he [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures”). This statement is hardly “a digression,” as

77. Stuhlmacher, Romans, 24-25.
78. Cf. Rom 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; Gal 1:11; 1 Thess 2:2; 8-9; 1 Tim 1:11.
79. Cf., e.g., Rom 1:16; 10:16; 11:28; 1 Cor 4:15; 9:14, 18, 23; 15:1; 2 Cor 8:18.
80. Cf. Rom 1:9, picking up from 1:3.
82. 2 Cor 4:4.
83. 2 Thess 1:8.
85. Cf. 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 2:14.
86. Gal 1:11.
87. Cf. 2 Cor 5:19.
Ernst Käsemann called it. Rather, it makes a highly significant point that Paul will emphasize throughout the entire letter: that the Christian gospel is integrally related to what God has done redemptively throughout the course of salvation history at earlier times. This point is made abundantly evident in such ways as (1) Paul’s direct characterization of the gospel as proclaiming “a righteousness from God . . . to which the law and the prophets testify” (3:21), (2) his frequent use of OT quotations, with more than half of the biblical quotations in all his extant letters appearing in Rom 1:16–4:25; 9:1–11:36; and 12:1–15:13, and (3) his repeated use of such OT themes and illustrations as “the faith of Abraham” (4:1-24), “the sin of Adam and its results” (5:11-21), the illustration regarding marriage (7:1-3, with its statement “for I am speaking to those who know the law”), and Jewish and/or Jewish Christian remnant theology (on which much of 9:6–11:32 is based).

The verb προεπηγειλατο (“he promised beforehand”), however, appears in the NT only here in the first aorist middle and as an adjectival participle at 2 Cor 9:5 (i.e., “your ‘previously promised’ generous gift”). The phrase διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ (“through his prophets”) is a generic expression that includes all of the inspired people who are called “prophets” in the OT, including such men as Moses (cf. Acts 3:22) and David (cf. Acts 2:30-31) and not just those included in “the prophets,” the second division of the Hebrew Scriptures. Here Paul speaks of the gospel as having been promised διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ, “through his prophets,” but without the adjectives “holy” or “sacred.” Usually Paul does not use “holy,” “sacred,” or “dedicated” with respect to the prophets, but only with reference to “the law” and when speaking of Christians or their children (cf. 1 Cor 7:14). The expression “his [God’s] holy prophets,” however, appears in Zechariah’s Song of praise in Luke 1:70 and Peter’s sermon at the temple gate in Acts 3:21 and so must have been common among both Jews and Jewish Christians.

Also to be noted is the fact that the adjective ἅγιος (“holy”) in connection with “Scripture” or “Scriptures” is not found in the LXX nor anywhere else in Paul’s letters, even though, as noted above, Paul uses the adjective ἅγιος (“holy”) with reference to ὁ νόμος (“the law”) in 7:12 — and even though he repeatedly uses the articular singular ἡ γραφή (“the Scripture”) without that adjective (4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2) and the anarthrous plural γραφαί (“[the] Scriptures,” 15:4). Philo, however, spoke of αἱ ἱεραὶ γραφαί, “the Sacred Scriptures,” as did also Josephus. So it may be presumed (1) that Jewish Christians would have referred to what we now call the OT as “the Sacred Scriptures” or “the Holy

90. Käsemann, Romans, 10.
91. E.g., Rom 7:12.
92. E.g., Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 3:17; Eph 2:21; 2 Tim 1:9.
93. Cf. also Gal 3:8, 22; 4:30; passim.
94. Cf. also 1 Cor 15:3, 4; passim.
95. Cf. Philo, De Abrahamo 61; De congressu 34, 90.
96. Josephus, Contra Apion 2.45.
Scriptures,” (2) that Paul’s addressees at Rome, who were dominantly Gentile Christians ethnically but also indebted to Jewish Christianity theologically and for their central religious expressions,97 would have used such phraseology as well, and (3) that Paul, while he may not have commonly used the adjective “holy” with reference to “Scripture” or “the Scriptures” when evangelizing or writing to Gentiles elsewhere in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, was happy here in 1:2 to condition his words to the forms of expression and sensibilities of his addressees at Rome.

1:3a Previously Paul defined the Christian gospel in 1:1 by its origin and source (“from God”) and in 1:2 by its having been divinely promised (“promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures”). Now at the beginning of 1:3 he defines that gospel further by its content — that is, περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (“concerning his [God’s] Son”). Because of the essential repetition of the phraseology τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (“the gospel concerning his Son”) just a few verses later in 1:9, it seems best to conclude that “concerning his Son” here in 1:3a is to be taken not as part of the quoted material of 1:3b-4, but, rather, as Paul’s introduction of the quotation that immediately follows.

The ascription “his Son” or “God’s Son” is ultimately derived from the coronation decree of God in Ps 2:7, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” For early Christians this ascription came to dramatic expression in the acclamations from heaven of Jesus as God’s Son at his baptism98 and at his transfiguration.99 It seems, in fact, to have been one of the earliest titles ascribed to Jesus by Jewish Christians — as witness, for example, (1) the caption of Heb 1:2 (“in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son [literally ‘a son’], whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he created the ages”), (2) the confessional portion of Heb 1:3-4 (“The Son [literally ‘who’] is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being”), and (3) the first passage from Scripture cited in support of the title in Heb 1:5a (“You are my Son; today I have begotten you”). So while the proclamation of “the gospel” was always at the heart of Paul’s mission, the focus of that proclamation, both among the earliest believers in Jesus and in Paul’s proclamation, was on the work and person of “God’s Son” — that is, on “Jesus Christ our Lord,” as stated explicitly at the end of Rom 1:4.

1:3b-4 What follows in 1:3b-4 has often been understood as an early Christian confessional portion, perhaps even part of an early Christian hymn that is quoted by Paul here. One reason for such a judgment is that these verses contain some words, expressions, and motifs that appear somewhat unusual for Paul and could more readily be understood as the language of early Jewish Christianity — such as (1) the association of Jesus with “seed of David” or “son of David” imagery (cf. also 2 Tim 2:8); (2) use of the verb ὄριζεν (“to appoint”

97. See pp. 8-9 above and further R. N. Longenecker, Introducing Romans, 55-91.
or “designate”), which appears nowhere else in Paul’s letters but is found a number of times in Jewish Christian contexts elsewhere in the NT; (3) the phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης (“spirit of holiness”), which seems to have a Semitic base and not to be part of the vocabulary of Paul (who usually speaks of “God’s Spirit” or “the Holy Spirit”); (4) the contrast of σάρξ (“flesh”) and πνεῦμα (“spirit”) in a somewhat unusual Pauline manner; and (5) the association of Sonship with resurrection (found in early preaching, as in Acts 13:33, where Ps 2:7 is quoted). Further reasons for viewing this material as part of an early Christian confession or hymn are the articular substantival participles introducing each of the two major parts of 1:3b-4, which is characteristic of traditional material, and the fairly balanced structure, which can be set out as follows:

τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ
catatá sárka,
toû orisθéntos uioû theou ἐν dyñámei
catatá pneúma agiōsýnēs
ex ánastásēs υἱὸν νεκρόν,
'Ησυχ Χριστοῦ toû kuriou ἡμῶν.

Further, it needs also to be observed that the flow of thought beginning with “concerning his Son” (v. 3a) and concluding with “through whom we have received grace and apostleship” (vv. 5-6) would run quite smoothly as a sentence if vv. 3b-4 were omitted, as is often the case with material incorporated by an author into his own prose, and that the strophe with its two parts concludes with the naming of “God’s Son” in a somewhat non-Pauline fashion: “Jesus Christ our Lord.” What appears here in 1:3b-4, therefore, is probably to be understood as early Christian confessional material that Paul cites in order to highlight the content of the gospel, to affirm his own acceptance of what his addressees held regarding God’s Son, and to establish rapport with his Roman addressees.

The statement τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατατά σárka (literally “the one born of the seed of David with respect to the flesh”) is the first part of this early Christian confessional couplet. The noun σπέρμα (“seed”) in Jewish thought, and particularly in the Greek OT (LXX) and NT, usually means simply “a human descendant” — though in messianic contexts “seed of David” also conjures up ideas about Israel’s Messiah. The preposition κατά followed by a noun in the accusative case means “with respect to” or “in relation to.” And the noun σάρξ (“flesh”) in non-ethical contexts elsewhere in Romans and Paul’s other letters means simply “human” or “human descent” — though in ethical

100. See our earlier discussion on the formulation “Christ Jesus” or “Jesus Christ” in 1:1.
102. Cf. 2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:3-4; John 7:42; Acts 13:23; 2 Tim 2:8.
104. Cf., e.g., Rom 4:1; 9:5, 8; 11:14; 1 Cor 10:18; Gal 4:23, 29.
contexts, where σάρξ is used in contrast with πνεῦμα (“spirit” or “the Spirit”), it denotes that which is in opposition to God and to all that is “spiritual.” Here, however, the expression “with respect to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα) seems to denote no pejorative nuance. Thus this first part of the couplet can be translated “the one who was descended from David with respect to his human descent (or ‘according to his humanity’).

Establishing a connection between Christ and the lineage of David, however, is not a usual feature in Paul’s letters, being found only here in 1:3 (quoting, it seems, part of an early Christian confession or hymn), in Rom 15:12 (quoting Isa 11:10), and in 2 Tim 2:8 (writing to a colleague who was trained in the OT Scriptures). But it is common in the Synoptic Gospels and seems to come to expression in the NT particularly where an understanding that is typically Jewish Christian is to the fore. Further, it needs always to be recognized that for the earliest Jewish believers in Jesus the ascription σπέρματος Δαυίδ — whether understood as a title (“Seed of David”) or simply as signaling lineage (“descended from David”) — would have carried with it ideas about Israel’s promised Messiah. For the expectation that the Messiah would be the true descendant of David and thus the “Seed of David” as well as the “Son of David” was firmly rooted in Jewish thought.

The affirmation of 1:4a, τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν (“who was designated the Son of God with power with respect to his spirit [or ‘the Spirit’] of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead”), is the second part of the couplet of 1:3b and 4. The articular, substantival, passive participle τοῦ ὁρισθέντος is derived from the verb ὁρίζειν, which when used of persons means “to appoint” or “designate.” Neither ὁρίζειν nor its participle appears anywhere else in Paul’s letters. It is used, however, in Acts 2:23 with reference to Christ’s “appointment” to death and in Acts 10:42 and 17:31 with reference to his “appointment” or “designation” by God as the eschatological judge. And it is with that sense of “appointment” or “designation” that the participle is used here.

The Old Latin, Jerome’s Vulgate, and a number of Latin writers translated ὁρισθέντος by the Latin praedestinatus, and so read “the one who was predestined” (as though the text read τοῦ προορισθέντος). And that understanding of Christ as having been “predestined” to be God’s Son dominated the understanding of many of the Church Fathers (particularly Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine), and has been a continued feature in various segments of the theological tradition of the western church (both Roman Catholic and Protestant).

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105. Cf. Rom 8:4-9, 12-13; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 3:2-3; 5:16-19; Phil 3:3.
108. Cf., e.g., Matt 1:1; Acts 2:30; Rev 5:5; 22:16.
109. Cf., e.g., 2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:3-4; Isa 11:1, 10; Jer 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:14-18; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; see also Pss Sol 17:23 (also 21).
As early as the first half of the third century, however, Origen opposed such an understanding and quite rightly insisted:

Although in Latin translations one normally finds the word “predestined” [praedestinatus] here, the true reading is “designated” [destinatus] and not “predestined” [praedestinatus]. For “designate” [destinatur] applies to someone who already exists, whereas “predestine” [praedestinatur] is only applicable to someone who does not yet exist, like those of whom the apostle said: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined” [Rom 8:29]. . . . Those who do not yet exist may be foreknown and predestined, but he who is and who always exists is not predestined but designated. . . . He was never predestined to be the Son, because he always was and is the Son, just as the Father has always been the Father.110

Likewise, John Chrysostom in the latter part of the fourth century understood τοῦ ὁρισθέντος in a similar fashion — that is, as synonymous with δειχθέντος (“displayed”), ἀποφθέντος (“manifested”), κριθέντος (“judged”), and όμολογηθέντος (“acknowledged”), but not with προορισθέντος (“predestined”).111

While neither ὁρίζειν nor its participle is found anywhere else in Paul’s letters, both the verb and its participle appear in Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26; and Heb 4:7 in the sense of “to appoint,” “designate,” or “determine.” So here in Rom 1:4 the articular, substantival, passive participle should most likely be translated by some such wording as “the one who was appointed” or “designated” — with, of course, God himself being that one who appointed or designated Jesus as his Son.

Since the flat denial by Gustav Dalman and Wilhelm Bousset, many scholars have asserted that υἱος θεοῦ (“Son of God”) had no messianic associations in pre-Christian Judaism.112 Joseph Fitzmyer reflects such a stance when he writes: “The title ‘Son of God’ is not being used in a messianic sense . . . ; nothing is intimated in the text about Jesus’ anointed status or agency, and no OT background relates ‘son of God’ to ‘Messiah.’”113 However in 4QFlorilegium, which is a collection of selected OT passages and interpretive comments dateable to the end of the first century B.C. or the beginning of the first A.D., the words of 2 Sam 7:14, “I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son,” are given explicit messianic import in the comment “The ‘he’ in question is ‘the Branch of David’ who will appear in Zion in the Last Days, alongside ‘the Expounder of the Law.’”114 Likewise in 4 Ezra 7:28-29; 13:32, 37, 52; and 14:9 — which are

111. See Chrysostom, Homilia XXXII ad Romanos, PG 60.397.
113. Fitzmyer, Romans, 235.
114. 4QFlor 1.12-13. For “the Branch of David” as a messianic title, see Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12.
passages written by a pious Jewish author only a few years after the apostolic period of early Christianity, probably about 100-120 A.D. — God is represented as speaking repeatedly of the Messiah as “my Son.” So also 1 En 105:2 in portraying God as speaking in a messianic context of “I and my Son” (though this verse has often for this very reason been viewed as a Jewish Christian interpolation into earlier Enochian material).

It should, therefore, not seem strange that “Messiah” and “Son of God” are explicitly brought together as christological titles at a number of places in the NT. Most obvious among NT instances are the following:

1. Peter’s confession in Matt 16:16 (cf. also Mark 8:29):
   “You are the Christ ['the Messiah'], the Son of (the living) God.”
2. Caiaphas’s question in Matt 26:63 (cf. also Mark 14:61, where there is a locution for God): “Are you the Christ ['the Messiah'], the Son of God?”
3. The demonic recognition of Jesus as “the Son of God” in Luke 4:41, which is said by the Evangelist to have been based on a knowledge that he was “the Christ ['the Messiah'].”
4. Martha’s affirmation in John 11:27: “You are the Christ ['the Messiah'], the Son of God, the One coming into the world.”
5. The Fourth Evangelist’s statement in John 20:31 that his purpose in writing was that his readers “may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ ['the Messiah'], the Son of God,” and that by believing they “may have life in his name.”
6. Paul’s early preaching in the synagogues of Damascus, as represented in Acts 9:20-22, which focused on Jesus as “the Son of God” and as “the Christ ['the Messiah'].”

It should, therefore, not be thought surprising that in the early Christian confessional portion cited by Paul here in 1:3b-4 “seed of David,” with its messianic connotations, and the christological title “Son of God” are juxtaposed.

Actually, apart from its use here in Rom 1:4, “Son of God” as a title for Jesus appears in only two other passages in Paul’s letters — that is, in 2 Cor 1:19 and Gal 2:20. Further, its cognates “the Son” and “his Son” are to be found in his letters only twelve times more — that is, in his introduction of 1:3a to the confessional couplet here in 1:3b-4, and elsewhere in his letters in Rom 1:9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32; 1 Cor 1:9; 15:28; Gal 1:16; 4:4, 6; and 1 Thess 1:10. As Werner Kramer has observed with regard to Paul’s use of “Son of God,” “the Son,” and “his Son” with respect to Jesus: “In comparison with the passages in which the titles Christ Jesus or Lord occur, this is an infinitesimally small figure.”

As Kramer has further noted: “Paul’s use of the title Son of God depends primarily on external factors, in that it is prompted by what has gone before.”

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it is Matthew among the Synoptic Evangelists who gives increased prominence to the Sonship of Jesus,\textsuperscript{117} the Fourth Evangelist who makes this theme the high point of his Christology,\textsuperscript{118} and the writer of Hebrews who highlights in his homily the theme of the superiority of Jesus as God’s Son.\textsuperscript{119}

Thus it may reasonably be concluded (1) that early Jewish believers in Jesus used “Son of God” as a title for their acclaimed Messiah, (2) that they used it in association with the whole complex of messianic ideas and expressions with which they were familiar, (3) that Christians at Rome, being heavily indebted to the theology and religious language of Jewish Christianity, were probably also in the habit of using “Son of God” as a title for Jesus, and (4) that Paul in addressing believers in Jesus at Rome used an early Christian confessional portion — or, at least, part of such a confessional portion — which contained certain christological themes and ascriptions that were familiar to his addressees. It may be assumed that Paul agreed with what the Christians at Rome believed and confessed in the material that he quoted in 1:3b-4. Otherwise he would not have included it in the salutation of his letter. Nor would he have introduced it with the expression περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (“concerning his Son,” 1:3a). But the pattern that Paul exhibits in all his extant pastoral correspondence (likewise, presumably, in all his evangelistic preaching) seems to have been to write (and, presumably, to speak) in ways that could be called “circumstantial” — that is, in ways that were suited to the understanding and appreciation of those whom he was addressing. And this is what he seems to have done here, as well, in writing to the Christians at Rome.

The phrase ἐν δυνάμει (“in” or “with power,” 1:4a) has always been difficult for commentators to interpret. Is it part of the early Christian confessional material that Paul quotes,\textsuperscript{120} or should it be considered a “supplement” inserted by Paul into an earlier church formulation?\textsuperscript{121} Further, is it to be understood adverbially, thereby modifying the participle ὁρισθέντος,\textsuperscript{122} or adjectivally, thereby qualifying υἱοῦ θεοῦ?\textsuperscript{123} Read adverbially, “appointed in power” would emphasize the fact that Jesus was appointed or designated “Son of God” by God’s mighty act of raising him from the dead. Read adjectivally, “Son of God with power” would lay stress not only on the status of Jesus as the Son of God, which was established by God at his resurrection, but also the power that Jesus possesses because of his resurrection and the power by which he is able to


\textsuperscript{119} Cf. esp. Heb 1:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:28; 10:29.

\textsuperscript{120} So, e.g., Käsemann, Romans, 12.

\textsuperscript{121} So, e.g., Barrett, Romans, 18-20.

\textsuperscript{122} So, e.g., Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 9; cf. NEB: “declared Son of God by a mighty act”; NIV: “declared with power to be the Son of God.”

\textsuperscript{123} So, e.g., Cranfield, Romans, 1.62; Dunn, Romans, 1.14; Fitzmyer, Romans, 235; Moo, Romans, 48-49; cf. KJV and NRSV: “Son of God with power.”

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energize all who turn to him as their risen Lord. Both readings have been persuasively argued, and each is linguistically possible. Yet it seems far better — if we (1) assume that ἐν δυνάμει was part of the confessional material quoted, and not words injected by Paul, (2) emphasize the parallelism between τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαύιδ in 1:3b and τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει in 1:4a, with the first speaking of his status as “Seed of David” and the second of his status as “Son of God,” and (3) note that both expressions are immediately followed by a further antithetical parallelism that begins in each case with the preposition κατά (“with respect to” or “in relation to”) — to understand “with power” as being adjectivally connected with the noun phrase “Son of God.” On such a reading, the movement from “Seed of David” to “Son of God” is not a transition from a purely human Messiah to a divine Son of God (as in an “adoptionist” Christology) but, rather, two affirmations of an early and inclusive christological declaration, which speaks first of Jesus’ right to be considered Israel’s promised Messiah because of his birth as the true descendant of David and then of his designation by God as God’s true Son because of his “spirit of holiness” — all of which was decisively authenticated by his resurrection from the dead.

The most difficult question regarding the exegesis of 1:3b-4a, however, has to do with the meaning of κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης in 1:4a. A somewhat bewildering array of interpretations have been proposed throughout the course of Christian history. All of them, however, fall into one of the following categories:

1. The Divine Nature of Christ. This first category of interpretation views κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης as referring to the divine nature of Christ, that is, to his divinity. For just as κατὰ σάρκα in 1:3b has reference to his human nature, so κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης here in 1:4 must be understood in antithetical fashion as referring to his divine nature. This was a common understanding among the Church Fathers.

When Paul speaks about the Son of God he is pointing out that God is Father, and by adding the Spirit of holiness he indicates the mystery of the Trinity. For he who was incarnate, who obscured what he really was [i.e., during his earthly life and ministry], was then predestined according to the Spirit of holiness to be manifested in power as the Son of God by rising from the dead, as it is written in Psalm 84, “Truth is risen from the earth” [Ps 85:11 (LXX 84:11)]. For every ambiguity and hesitation was made firm and sure by his resurrection, just as the centurion, when he saw the wonders, confessed that the man placed on the cross was the Son of God [Matt 27:54].

Likewise, Augustine expressed this understanding when he said:

124. Ambrosiaster, Ad Romanos, PL 17.50.
Christ is the son of David in weakness according to the flesh, but he is the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of sanctification. . . . Weakness relates to David, but life eternal to the power of God.\textsuperscript{125}

And this interpretation has been carried on by such important interpreters as the sixteenth-century reformer Philipp Melanchthon,\textsuperscript{126} the eighteenth-century Lutheran pietist Johann Bengel,\textsuperscript{127} and such nineteenth-century commentators as Charles Hodge,\textsuperscript{128} Robert Haldane,\textsuperscript{129} William G. T. Shedd,\textsuperscript{130} Edward H. Gifford,\textsuperscript{131} and Henry P. Liddon.\textsuperscript{132}

2. The Person and Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit. A second category of interpretation understands πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης as a reference to the Holy Spirit, who indwelled and energized Christ Jesus during his earthly life — and who after Jesus’ resurrection was the source of power that raised Christ up to an altogether higher type of life. In particular, when in the early church the major theological issues had to do not only with Christ but also with the nature and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ, the salutation of 1:1-7 was understood by many Church Fathers to contain a number of proofs by which Christ was demonstrated to be the Son of God. So πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης was taken to be speaking not directly about Christ’s divine nature but about the Holy Spirit, whose sanctifying work stands, along with the resurrection, as evidence of Christ’s Sonship.

John Chrysostom, for example, in the first of his thirty-two homilies on Romans preached at Antioch of Syria, declared with respect to the salutation of 1:1-7:

What is being said here has been made obscure by the complex syntax, and so it is necessary to expound it. What is he actually saying? “We preach,” says Paul, “him who was made of David. But this is obvious. How then is it obvious that this incarnate person was also the Son of God? First of all, it is obvious from the prophets [cf. v. 2], and this source of evidence is no weak one. And then there is the way in which he was born [cf. v. 3, understanding the virgin birth as implied here], which overruled the rules of nature. Third, there are the miracles that he did, which were a demonstration of much power, for the words “in power” [v. 4a] mean this. Fourth, there is the Spirit which he gave to those who believe in him, through whom he made them all holy, which is why he adds “according to the Spirit of holiness” (κατὰ

\textsuperscript{125} Augustine, \textit{Ad Romanos inchoata expositio}, \textit{PL} 35.2091.
\textsuperscript{126} P. Melanchthon, \textit{Loci communes theologici}.
\textsuperscript{127} Bengel, \textit{Gnomon Novi Testamenti}.
\textsuperscript{128} Hodge, \textit{Romans}.
\textsuperscript{129} Haldane, \textit{Romans}.
\textsuperscript{130} Shedd, \textit{Romans}.
\textsuperscript{131} Gifford, \textit{Romans}.
\textsuperscript{132} Liddon, \textit{Romans}.
πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης) [v. 4a]. For only God could grant such gifts. Fifth, there was the resurrection [v. 4b], for he first and he only raised himself, and he also said that this was a miracle which would stop the mouths even of those who believed arrogantly, for he said: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” [John 2:19].133

Likewise, Erasmus in his paraphrase of Paul’s letter to the Romans, which was finally published in 1517, read 1:3-4 as follows:

This is the gospel concerning his Son who was born in time of the lineage of David according to the infirmity of the flesh, but was also revealed to be the eternal Son of the eternal God according to the Spirit which sanctifies all things.134

And Martin Luther in his lectures on Romans, which he delivered at the University of Wittenberg from November 3, 1515 to September 7, 1516, viewed matters in much the same way:

When the passage reads “the spirit of sanctification” rather than the “Holy Spirit,” this does not matter much, for it is the same spirit who in terms of his effect is called either holy or sanctifying.135

This understanding of πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης as “the Spirit who sanctifies” was carried on in all the early English versions from John Wycliffe’s New Testament, which was produced sometime around 1380, through to (and including) William Tyndale’s New Testament of 1534, the Great Bible of 1539, the Geneva Bible of 1557, and the Bishops’ Bible of 1568 (as well as Theodore Beza’s Latin translation of the NT of 1556 and the many vernacular German, Dutch, French, Polish, Hungarian, Icelandic, Finnish, Danish, and Slovakian translations that were produced during the sixteenth century). The translators of the King James Version of 1611, however, were evidently attempting to be somewhat conciliatory by their more literal translation “according to the spirit of holiness” — though, in all probability, their insertion of the definite article “the” was done not merely for literary purposes but also to suggest that the referent should be understood as “the Holy Spirit.”

Likewise, it is this understanding that appears in most commentaries today — as, for example, those written by Franz Leenhardt,136 F. F. Bruce,137

133. Chrysostom, Homiliae XXXII ad Romanos, PG 60.397.
135. Luther, Lectures on Romans, 14.
136. Leenhardt, Romans, 37.
137. Bruce, Romans, 73.
Charles Cranfield,138 and Joseph Fitzmyer.139 And this understanding appears, in various ways, in many modern translations — most expressly in the NIV, which reads in its text “through the Spirit of holiness” (though a footnote in the 1984 edition has “as to his spirit”), and in the NEB, which reads “on the level of the spirit — the Holy Spirit — he was declared Son of God,” thereby making such an understanding quite explicit. NRSV also has this reading in a footnote, where it capitalizes “spirit” to read “according to the Spirit of holiness” (though in its text the lower case of “spirit” implies something other than the Holy Spirit).

3. Jesus’ Own Spirit of Holiness. A third category of interpretation views πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης as pointing not to Christ’s divine nature but to his own “spirit of holiness” — that is, his complete obedience and unswerving faithfulness to his heavenly Father, which he manifested throughout his earthly life. At times this understanding is extended by interpreters to include the “extraordinary supernatural holiness” of Christ’s own human life that “from the time of the resurrection now informs a body to which it communicates a supernatural glorified spiritual existence.”140

It was John Locke, the English philosopher (1632-1704), who seems to have been the first to propose this latter understanding of the expression. Locke devoted the final years of his life to a study of Paul’s letters, with his Paraphrase and Notes on Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians published posthumously in 1705-07. Appended to this work was Locke’s essay entitled “Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul’s Epistles by Consulting St. Paul Himself,” which, as William Sanday and Arthur Headlam characterized it, “is full of acute ideas and thoughts, and would amply vindicate the claim of the author to be classed as an ‘historical’ interpreter.”141 In the Paraphrase and Notes Locke argued that the parallelism of κατὰ σάρκα in 1:3b and κατὰ πνεῦμα in 1:4a was not only highly significant, but also that both expressions must be understood as referring to Christ’s human existence. Or as Locke himself expressed matters: since “according to the flesh” has reference to “the body which he took in the womb of the blessed virgin his mother [which] was of the posterity and lineage of David,” the expression “according to the spirit of holiness” must be seen as having reference to “that more pure and spiritual part, which in him over ruled all and kept even his frail flesh holy and spotless from the least taint of sin.”142

This thesis was also proposed by such nineteenth-century commentators as Frédéric Godet143 and Joseph Lightfoot.144 It was, however, developed by Sanday and Headlam, who argued that κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης does not refer to

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138. Cranfield, Romans, 1.62-64.
139. Fitzmyer, Romans, 236.
140. So B. Schneider, “Κατὰ Πνεῦμα Ἁγιωσύνης,” 369.
141. Sanday and Headlam, Romans, cv.
143. Godet, Romans, 1.130-31.
either (1) the Holy Spirit, “the Third Person in the Trinity (as the Patristic writers generally and some moderns), because the antithesis of σάρξ and πνεῦμα requires that they shall be in the same person,” or (2) “the Divine Nature in Christ as if the Human Nature were coextensive with the σάρξ and the Divine Nature were coextensive with the πνεῦμα, which would be very like the error of Apollinaris.” It refers rather, they say, to the human πνεῦμα, like the human σάρξ, distinguished however from that of ordinary humanity by an exceptional and transcendent Holiness. A number of twentieth-century commentators have also espoused this understanding, such as Marie-Joseph Lagrange, Joseph Huby, A. T. Robertson, Eduard Schweizer, Kingsley Barrett, James Dunn, and Douglas Moo. And the phrase has been translated in this manner by Edgar Goodspeed in his The American Translation of 1948 (“in his holiness of spirit”), Robert Bratcher in his Good News for Modern Man (or, “Today’s English Version”) of 1966 and 1971 (“as to his divine holiness,” which reading was “reviewed and approved” by the American Bible Society), and the Swedish translation of 1981 (“according to the holiness of his spirit”). Likewise, as noted above, it appears as a footnote in the 1984 edition of the NIV.

In evaluating the evidence for these three categories of interpretation, it needs to be noted, first of all, that the phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης does not appear anywhere else in Paul’s letters. Nor does it appear in the Greek translation (LXX) of the Hebrew Bible (OT). For although the Greek πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης is a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase רוח קדשׁ (“spirit of holiness”), when this wording appears in Isa 63:10-11 and Ps 51:11 (LXX 50:13) it is rendered in the LXX as τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον (“the Holy Spirit”) and not πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης (“spirit of holiness”). In T Levi 18:7, however, a passage that has often been seen as an early Christian interpolation (whether in whole or in part) into an earlier Jewish writing, the phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης certainly signifies the Holy Spirit in the statement “the spirit of sanctification [or, ‘holiness’] shall rest upon him [in the water]” — evidently alluding to the Spirit coming upon Jesus at his baptism. And in at least seventeen instances in the Dead Sea Scrolls the phrase רוח קדשׁ refers expressly to the Holy Spirit.

Also to be taken into consideration when attempting to discern the mean-

145. Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 9; citing in support Heb 2:17 and 4:15, “it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren . . . yet without sin.”
146. Lagrange, Aux Romains, 7-8.
147. Huby, Aux Romains, 45.
149. Schweizer, “Römer 1,3ff.,” 187-89.
150. Barrett, Romans, 19.
151. Dunn, “Jesus — Flesh and Spirit,” 51-59; though see his Romans, 1.15, where Dunn states that the phrase “would almost certainly be understood by Paul and the first Christians as denoting the Holy Spirit, the Spirit which is characterized by holiness, partaker of God’s holiness.”
152. Moo, Romans, 50.
153. Cf. Sekki, The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran, esp. 71-93 and 185-91, citing such passages as 1QS 4.21; 8.16; 9.3; 1QH 7.6-7; 9.32; 12.12; 14.13; 16.7, 12.
ing of πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης in Rom 1:4 is the importance the NT places on the full obedience and entire faithfulness of Jesus to God the Father, both throughout his ministry (his “active obedience”) and at his crucifixion (his “passive obedience”) — particularly as expressed in the Christ-hymn of Phil 2:6-11 (note esp. v. 8) and other early Christian confessional portions, but also as found at other places in Paul’s letters, the Gospels, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. In an earlier article I have argued that all the titles ascribed to Jesus in the NT, as well as all the metaphors used in description of the nature and effects of his work, are to be seen as founded ultimately on the early conviction of believers in Jesus regarding his obedience, faithfulness, and/or Sonship par excellence. And such a basic conviction needs to be kept in mind here.

Likewise, it needs always to be taken into account when dealing with Rom 1:3b-4 (1) that these verses incorporate (at least to some extent) various confessional materials that have been drawn (in some manner) from the early church, (2) that confessional materials probably originated in the corporate worship and devotions of the early Christians, and (3) that the language of worship and devotion is often difficult to analyze with regard to what is exactly meant. As I have argued elsewhere:

Devotional material, while having a central focus and expressing essential convictions, is frequently rather imprecise. It attempts to inspire adoration, not to explicate doctrinal nuances. It uses the language of the heart more than that of the mind. It is, therefore, not always philosophically precise, philologically exact, or theologically correct — perhaps, at times, not even logically coherent.

And it is this fact, I suggest, that must be appreciated not only when attempting to exegete some of the other expressions and features of these two verses, but also, and particularly, when trying to understand this phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.

Taking all these matters into account — that is, (1) the linguistic parallels and differences, (2) the early christological motifs of obedience, faithfulness, and Sonship, and (3) the worship and devotional matrices of early Christian confessional material — we are compelled to conclude (1) that the phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης probably came to expression among the earliest believers in Jesus in contexts of worship and devotion that were more functional than speculative in nature, and (2) that it probably originally referred to Jesus’ own “spirit of holiness,” that is, to the complete obedience and unswerving faithfulness to his heavenly Father that he manifested throughout his earthly life. What the phrase came to mean among some Christians when speculative concerns about the person of Jesus later became more prominent (i.e., speculations about


155. R. N. Longenecker, New Wine into Fresh Wineskins, 28-29.
the divine nature of Christ) should not, it seems, be read back into an earlier
time. And what רוח קדשׁ ("spirit of holiness") meant in the Qumran texts (i.e.,
the Holy Spirit) would not necessarily be how the earliest Christians used the
term, for the doctrinal contents of these two groups were decidedly different
and the Teacher of Righteousness of the Dead Sea sectarians was not thought
of in the same way as was Jesus by the early Christians.

It may be that some early believers in Jesus understood πνεῦμα
ἀγιωσύνης in one manner and other believers in Jesus in another — just as
some formulations of the church’s creeds, some statements of its theology,
and some phrases in its hymnody are understood by some Christians today in
one way and by other Christians in another. And it may be that the dilemma
of modern-day NT scholars regarding whether πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης is to be
read “his spirit of holiness” or “the Spirit of holiness” corresponds, at least
in some measure, to a similar dilemma in the early church — with, perhaps,
differing degrees of articulation, but probably with a somewhat similar divi-
sion of opinion.

Thus we believe (1) that πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης was most likely understood
among the earliest believers in Jesus to refer to Jesus’ own obedience and faith-
fulness to God his Father, that is, “his spirit of holiness,” which he manifested
throughout his earthly life and ministry, (2) that the expressions ἐκ σπέρματος
Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα in 1:3b and υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης
in 1:4a were viewed by them as expressions that aptly signaled the two most
significant factors of Jesus’ human existence — and so were set out in one of
their early confessional formulations in parallel form, not in antithetical fashion,
and (3) that at some time later these expressions were understood by at least
some Christians as referring to the Holy Spirit and his sanctifying work. The
phraseology of this confessional portion is somewhat ambiguous (as are many
statements born in a context of worship and devotion) and therefore allows
for a broader range of interpretations than may have originally been under-
stood. Yet though the expression may be somewhat ambiguous, that is how it
was transmitted to the Christians at Rome and how it came to be accepted by
them. And that is how Paul quotes it in seeking to gain rapport with his Roman
addressees and to proclaim his own convictions in terms of their understanding
and their appreciation.

Likewise, the expression ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν in 1:4b, which literally
may be translated “out of resurrection of dead persons,” has been variously
understood by various translators and commentators. Is it to be viewed as a
temporal expression and therefore read “designated the Son of God with power
from the time of his resurrection from the dead”? Or should it be understood as a
causal expression, and so read “designated the Son of God with power because
of [or ‘on the basis of’] his resurrection from the dead”? Probably both are true,
though it is difficult to incorporate both nuances into one English sentence.

The lack of an article with ἀναστάσεως has often been taken to mean
that “resurrection” here means only resurrection generally, without any spe-
cific designation. But ἀνάστασις (“resurrection”) appears in the NT both with and without an article “without appreciable difference in meaning” — and, further, “as a rule” the article is omitted with the genitive ἀναστάσεως. Likewise, the plural νεκρῶν (“of the dead”) has frequently been seen as signaling primarily the idea of an eschatological, general resurrection, which, of course, Jesus’ resurrection served to initiate. But the plural is also used by Paul with reference to Jesus’ resurrection (cf. Rom 4:24), with the genitive understood as a partitive genitive that signifies “from among the dead” (cf. Eph 5:14).

Thus, while many have translated ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν literally — that is, reading “out of [the] resurrection of dead persons,” and so understanding the expression as having only a general resurrection in mind, we believe it best to agree with Martin Luther, who said regarding the phraseology here: “We think it better to translate according to the meaning rather than literally.” So along with such major English translations today as RSV, NEB, JB, and NIV, we would understand the phrase to have as its referent the resurrection of Jesus. And as with the immediately preceding phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης, we believe it necessary to take into account here also the fact that, while it has a central focus and expresses basic convictions, the language of worship and devotion has usually framed its words in rather general terms and is often difficult to analyze with precision.

It was God’s resurrection and exaltation of Jesus that validated Jesus’ messiahship, as well as his Lordship (cf. Acts 2:36: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made [ἐποίησεν] this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”). And it was God’s resurrection of Jesus that validated his designation as “Son of God with power.” According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus at times during his earthly ministry had been acclaimed “Messiah” and “God’s Son” (cf. esp. Mark 8:29 par. for “Messiah”; see also Mark 1:11 par. and Mark 9:7 par. for “God’s Son”). But it was “his resurrection from the dead” that decisively validated the legitimacy of these titles — and it was both after and because of this validation that distinctive Christian thought came into being.

The aorist verb ἐποίησεν of Acts 2:36 (“he made” or “appointed”; cf. 1 Sam 12:6; 1 Kgs 12:31; Mark 3:14; Heb 3:2) and the articular, substantival, passive participle τοῦ ὁρισθέντος of Rom 1:4 (“the one designated” or “appointed”) are functional expressions. And ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, we believe, should be understood in the same manner — that is, as not suggesting that Jesus was at some later time “made” or “designated” something that he was not before (as in an “adoptionist” Christology), but as validating what he had been acclaimed at times to be during his earthly ministry (as in a “functional” Christology). Kingsley Barrett has aptly characterized the situation as follows:

156. So BAG, 537, col. 1.
157. Ibid.
158. So, e.g., Hooke, “Translation of Romans 1.4,” 371.
Undoubtedly the earliest Christology has superficially an adoptionist tinge; but this is not to say that it was ‘Adoptionist’ in the technical sense. The first attempts at Christological thought were made not in essential but in functional terms.\textsuperscript{160}

The expression Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (“Jesus Christ our Lord”) at the close of 1:4b is often viewed as Paul’s own addition to the confessional couplet that he quotes in 1:3b-4 — usually because of the title “Lord,” which is frequently assumed to be not representative of the consciousness of the earliest believers in Jesus. But “Lord” as a christological title was also used by early Jewish believers in Jesus, as witness such passages as Acts 2:36 (Peter’s sermon: “God has made [or ‘appointed’] this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”); 1 Cor 16:22 (the Aramaic prayer addressed to Jesus: “Come, O Lord”); and Phil 2:11 (at the conclusion of an early Christ-hymn: “Jesus Christ is Lord”).\textsuperscript{161} So while many scholars prefer not to include this identification within the confessional material quoted by Paul, I believe it best to include it within the quotation — not just because the name “Jesus Christ” appears frequently in various early Christian confessional materials of the NT and because the title “Lord” was used by Christians before Paul, but also because such a statement nicely rounds off the couplet and the possessive pronoun “our” seems to continue the ring of an early Christian confession.

1:5 After quoting the theologically loaded confessional material in 1:3b-4, which focuses on the christological content of the gospel to which he has been “called” and “set apart,” Paul returns in 1:5 to highlight the nature and purpose of his apostleship. The prepositional phrase δι’ οὗ (“through whom”) at the head of 1:5 signifies the agent, who as the confession of 1:3b-4 has proclaimed is now risen from the dead, through whom Paul’s apostleship came — that is, that Paul’s apostleship came through “his [God’s] Son.” Paul is probably not here “going off at a word” from the explicit identification “Jesus Christ our Lord” at the end of 1:4, which we have proposed should be seen as the concluding phrase of the confessional portion quoted. Rather, he is reaching back to his introduction of that quoted confessional portion to speak further about “his [God’s] Son” — that is, that “his [God’s] Son” is not only the content of the gospel (as in 1:3b-4), he is also the agent of Paul’s apostleship (as here in 1:5). It should be noted that he does not say ἀπ’ οὗ (“from whom”), for the source of Paul’s apostleship has already been implied in the prophetically charged words of 1:1 as being God the Father (though see 1:7, where both “God our Father” and the “Lord Jesus Christ” are cited as the source of “grace and peace”). Nor does Paul say δι’ ὅν (“on account of whom”), as though his apostleship was for the sake of a great person now

\textsuperscript{160}. Barrett, Romans, 20.

\textsuperscript{161}. For a more extended discussion, see R. N. Longenecker, Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, 120-36.
dead, for Jesus’ resurrection not only validated his earthly life and ministry but also signaled his post-resurrection life.

In 1:5a Paul uses the plural verb ἐλάβομεν (“we received”), which has sometimes been viewed as Paul acknowledging that all Christians have received “grace” (distinguishing between “grace” and “apostleship” in the following phrase) — as he does in 12:6a162 or as he does in associating himself with other apostles as recipients of grace and apostleship.163 More likely, however, this should be understood as a “literary plural”164 or an “epistolary plural” “idiomatically used for the singular.”165 The mixture of first person plural verbs and participles with first person singular verbs and participles, with both having Paul himself as the referent, appears frequently in Paul’s letters.166 Here in the salutation of Romans, however, which begins with the singular name “Paul” and highlights Paul’s own call as an apostle in 1:1 — and then is followed in 1:8 by the first person singular verb εὐχαριστῶ (“I give thanks”) — there is no contextual reason for understanding “we received” as anything other than a literary or epistolary plural used by Paul with reference to himself.167

The phrase χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν (“grace and apostleship”) has frequently been read as connoting two things: (1) “grace” or unmerited favor, which all Christians have received from God and which Paul shares with all other believers, and (2) “apostleship,” which Paul received as a special commission from God.168 Probably, however, these two Greek nouns connected by the conjunction καί should be understood as a hendiadys (from the transliterated Greek words hen-dia-dysin, literally “one [idea] through two [words], in which the one word specifies the other”), and so read as “God’s special grace of apostleship” or “the grace of being commissioned an apostle.”169 For as Charles Cranfield has pointed out,

A statement that Paul has received grace through Christ is scarcely necessary here. What is apposite is simply a statement of his authority in respect to the Gentile world. That he should indicate, however, that he had not received this authority because of any merit of his own would be thoroughly appropriate.170

162. Cf., e.g., Augustine, Ad Romanos inchoata expositio, PL 35.2092; Barrett, Romans, 21.
163. Cf., e.g., Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 10; Schlatter, Romans, 10; Dunn, Romans, 1.17.
164. Cf. ATRob, 407.
166. Cf. 1 Cor 9:11-23; 2 Cor 1:12-14; 2:14–7:16; 10:1–11:6; 1 Thess 2:18 [probably]; 3:1-5, passim, though, where the context requires, they must be distinguished (cf., e.g., 2 Cor 1:15-24; perhaps also 1 Thess 2:18 and 3:8-9).
167. So, e.g., Lagrange, Aux Romains, 10; Leenhardt, Romans, 38-39; Cranfield, Romans, 1.65.
168. So, e.g., Origen, Ad Romanos, PG 14.852-53; Augustine, Ad Romanos inchoata expositio, PL 35.2092; Pelagius, Ad Romanos, PL 30.647; Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 10-11; Zahn, An die Römer, 42-44; Lagrange, Aux Romains, 10; Barrett, Romans, 21.
169. Cf. NEB: “the privilege of a commission”; TEV: “the privilege of being an apostle.”
170. Cranfield, Romans, 1.66.
Many interpreters have, in fact, expressly stated that the expression “grace and apostleship” is a hendiadys.\textsuperscript{171} And we are in agreement, believing the phrase is best read as “God’s special grace of apostleship” — though most translators, both ancient and modern, have simply rendered it literally (i.e., “grace and apostleship”) and left it for the commentators to interpret.

The clause εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως (literally “unto the obedience of faith”), which appears here in 1:5 and again in 16:26, has proven to be difficult to interpret. Its difficulty arises first of all from the fact that ὑπακοὴ πίστεως (“obedience of faith”) is not found anywhere else in any of Paul’s other letters — nor anywhere else in the whole of extant Greek literature. There are, of course, other places in Romans where “faith” and “obedience” appear in similar contexts and in roughly parallel statements,\textsuperscript{172} for faith and obedience are inseparable in Paul’s theology. But this specific phrase appears only in the two places in Romans.

Second, the phrase has been difficult to interpret because of uncertainties regarding the nature and impact of the genitive πίστεως (“of faith”). A number of interpretations have been proposed, with the noun’s genitive form understood in the following ways:

1. As an objective genitive: “obedience to the faith,” “obedience to the message of faith,” or “obedience to God’s faithfulness as attested in the gospel.”\textsuperscript{173}
2. As a subjective genitive: “obedience that faith brings about faith” or “obedience that is required by faith.”\textsuperscript{174}
3. As a genitive of source: “obedience that comes from faith” or “obedience that springs from faith.”\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{171} So, e.g., Chrysostom, Homilia XXXII ad Romanos, PG 60.398; J. Calvin, Romans, in Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, 8.17 (with Calvin understanding it as either “apostleship freely bestowed” or “the grace of apostleship”); Bruce, Romans, 17; Dunn, Romans, 1.17; Fitzmyer, Romans, 237; and Moo, Romans, 51.

\textsuperscript{172} Cf. Rom 1:8, “your faith is reported all over the world,” vis-à-vis Rom 16:19, “everyone has heard about your obedience”; see also the paralleling of “unbelief” in 11:23 and of “disobedience” in 11:30-31 in the same context.

\textsuperscript{173} Cf., e.g., the following translations: “obedience to the faith” (KJV, Moffatt), “to forward obedience to the faith” (Phillips), “obedience to the message of faith” (BV). See also such commentators as Kuss, Römerbrief, vol. 1, who suggested that πίστεως refers to “a body of doctrine that is to be obeyed,” and G. Friedrich, “Muss ὑπακοὴν πίστεως,” who argued that it should be translated “for the preaching of faith.”

\textsuperscript{174} Cf., e.g., JB, which translates the phrase literally in the text, but says in a footnote that the genitive is a “subjective genitive” and therefore should be understood as “the obedience implicit in the virtue of faith.”

\textsuperscript{175} Cf., e.g., the following: “obedience that comes from faith” (NIV), “obedience inspired by faith” (Williams), “obedience which springs from faith” (Lightfoot, Notes on Epistles of St. Paul, 246). See also Lagrange, Aux Romains, 10; Robertson, “Epistle to the Romans,” 324, though he calls it a “subjective genitive,” which he translates as “the obedience which springs from faith (the act of assent or surrender)”; Taylor, Romans, 21; Bruce, Romans, 70.
4. As an adjectival genitive: “believing obedience” or “faithful obedience.”

5. As a genitive of apposition or definition (an epexegetical genitive): “faith that consists of obedience” or “faith that manifests itself in obedience.”

Understanding πίστεως as an objective genitive has failed to carry conviction with most commentators today, simply because in the present context — as well as throughout the rest of Romans — “faith” is presented as “the lively act or impulse of adhesion to Christ” and not “a body of formulated doctrine.” In fact, as Adolf Schlatter has rightly observed: “A gap between faith and obedience occurs . . . when the message of God is replaced with a doctrine about God” — that is, when the righteousness “of one who works” is not countered by God’s unmerited favor, which is responded to by faith and obedience, but is replaced by the righteousness “of one who knows, one ‘who believes all the articles of the faith.’” Further, understanding πίστεως as either a subjective genitive or an adjectival genitive tends to put the emphasis on “obedience” as a human virtue and to view “faith” as simply a means for accomplishing that virtue — which is hardly in accord with Paul’s central theological convictions, whether Christian or Jewish.

Most likely, therefore, πίστεως here should be understood as a genitive of source, with the phrase read as “obedience that comes [or ‘springs’] from faith” — though, possibly, as a genitive of apposition or definition, with the phrase understood as “faith that consists of [or ‘manifests itself in’] obedience.” Either is linguistically possible and theologically defensible. Yet Paul’s emphasis in Romans, as well as throughout his other letters, is on a lively faith that results in a life of obedience, and not particularly on obedience as the content of faith. As Glenn Davies has pointed out, even when Paul in Romans speaks of obedience without any explicit reference to faith, “there is an underlying assumption that it is faith which is the seedbed of all obedience which is acceptable to God.” Thus a genitive of source seems most probable here, understanding that Paul has received God’s special grace of apostleship in order to bring about “obedience that comes [or ‘springs’] from faith.”

The expression εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως is also difficult to interpret because of uncertainties regarding Paul’s purpose in using it in his letter to Christians at Rome — and, indeed, using it only in this letter among all of his NT letters. The question regarding his usage here is this: Did Paul use the phrase here (1) to counter a lurking legalistic understanding of “obedience” among his addressees, in opposition to certain Jews and Jewish Christians who were influencing

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180. Ibid., 22.
them?182 (2) to redefine the nature of “covenant fidelity” in opposition to ideas that were then current among Jews and certain Jewish Christians regarding the identity of God’s chosen people and their required boundary markers?183 (3) to set out in programmatic fashion “the main purpose of the Epistle to the Romans”?184 or (4) to conform his language and contextualize his message to the understanding and appreciation of his addressees, who because of their familiarity with the OT quite properly wanted to connect the subjects of “faith” and “obedience” and who may have had somewhat differing understandings among them of that relationship2185

A case could be made for all four of these proposals — or perhaps for some combination of them. Yet if Paul was attempting to counter some type of lurking legalism by the use of this expression (proposal 1), the question can legitimately be asked: Why, then, didn’t he use ὑπακοὴ πίστεως when countering the Judaizers in Galatians? And if ὑπακοὴ πίστεως was only used to set out in programmatic fashion the main purpose of his letter to Christians at Rome (proposal 3), why did he not characterize his message by that same phrase elsewhere in his NT letters? It seems, therefore, that Paul’s use of ὑπακοὴ πίστεως here, as well as later in 16:26, should be viewed along the lines of some combination of (1) a polemical rationale, wherein Paul is seen as attempting to redefine in some manner the nature of covenant theology (as in proposal 2, though without accepting all that is argued by advocates of that position), and (2) a contextualization rationale, wherein Paul was conforming his language and contextualizing his message to the understanding and appreciation of his addressees (as in proposal 4).

A polemical purpose in the use of ὑπακοὴ πίστεως in both 1:5 and 16:26 — that is, at both the beginning and the end of the letter — seems highly probable, for this particular phrase does not appear anywhere else in his other letters. Indeed, as Don Garlington has observed, “against the backdrop of faith’s obedience in Jewish literature, these words assume a decidedly polemical thrust: the covenant fidelity of God’s ancient people (Israel) is now a possibility apart from assuming the identity of that people.”186 Or as expressed by James Dunn (Garlington’s “Doktorvater” at Durham) regarding Paul’s polemical purpose in the use of this phrase:

The faith which Paul’s apostleship seeks to bring about is not something different from obedience, from the response God expected from his covenant people, but is rather the way in which that obedience must be expressed [i.e., understanding πίστεως as a genitive of apposition] or the (only) ef-

182. So, e.g., Michel, An die Römer, 76, passim.
183. So Dunn, Romans, 1.18, 24, passim; Garlington, “Obedience of Faith” (1990), 201, passim; see also idem, “The Obedience of Faith” (1991); idem, Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance.
184. So Black, Romans, 175; also N. T. Wright, “The Messiah and the People of God,” iii.
185. As suggested by my theses regarding Paul’s addressees and his purposes in writing them.
fective source of that obedience [i.e., understanding πίστεως as a genitive of source].

Further, I propose that by his use of ὑπακοή πίστεως in the salutation and the final doxology of the letter Paul is not only setting up a rhetorical inclusio for all that he presents in the letter, but also conforming his language to the appreciation and understanding of his addressees at Rome, who because of their familiarity with the OT were always interested in the relationship of “faith” and “obedience.” In so doing, Paul may, here and in 16:26 as well as at a number of other places in Romans, be seen as both (1) contextualizing his proclamation of the Christian gospel in a way that would speak to the particular interests of his addressees and in phraseology they would understand and appreciate, and (2) seeking to begin where his addressees were in their thinking in order to lead them into a better understanding of what they professed.

The phrase ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (“among all the Gentiles”) specifies the arena of Paul’s apostolic endeavors. The expression has sometimes here been understood in its more inclusive sense to mean “among all the nations,” believing that such a more comprehensive term is better suited to the opening of the letter. But ἕθνη in Paul’s usage in Romans, as well as throughout his other letters, refers to non-Jews, that is, to Gentiles, with Paul viewing himself as having been called by God to be “an apostle to the Gentiles.” And that meant, as Douglas Moo has rightly pointed out, “not so much to minister to many different nations as it was to minister to Gentiles in distinction from Jews.”

Paul certainly felt free to preach also to Jews. And there were early Christian outreaches to Gentiles that were not at all part of his mission. But Paul’s statement here, as well as his elaborations of this statement in 1:13-15 (the letter’s body-opening) and 15:14-32 (the letter’s body-closing), leave no doubt that Paul felt that his specific mandate in the context of God’s overall plan of salvation history was to bring the “good news” regarding the person and work of “Jesus Christ our Lord” to Gentiles.

The expression ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ (“for the sake of his name”) reflects Paul’s ultimate motivation for his preaching of the gospel to Gentiles—that is, not for his own benefit or aggrandizement, nor even for the benefit of his converts, but primarily for the glory of God’s Son (cf. 15:7, where a Christian’s welcoming of another is also εἰς δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ, “in order to bring glory to God”). A person’s name in the ancient world connoted his or her true character and significance. In all likelihood, therefore, when Paul refers to Jesus’ name he

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187. Dunn, Romans, 1.24.
188. Cf., e.g., Zahn, An die Römer, 48; Michel, An die Römer, 42.
190. Moo, Romans, 53; cf. also Cranfield, Romans, 67; Fitzmyer, Romans, 238.
has in mind what the early Christians confessed in the latter half of the Christ-hymn of Phil 2:6-11: the name “Lord,” which became rightfully his when “God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is ‘Lord’, to the glory of God the Father” (as in vv. 9-11).

1:6 The statement ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“among whom you also are those called by God to belong to Jesus Christ”) relates grammatically to the phrase ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (“among all the Gentiles”) of 1:5. But this statement has seemed somewhat parenthetical to some interpreters because it characterizes the Christians at Rome by the substantival noun κλητοί (“those called [by God]”) before actually addressing them, whereas in 1:7 they are identified again by the substantival nouns ἀγαπητοί (“those loved”) and κλητοὶ ἅγιοι (“those called holy ones”) — and thus, it has been argued, this characterization of the addressees as “those called by God” is best associated with the later two characterizations in v. 7.193 But to understand these three substantival nouns as merely three characterizations of the Christians at Rome, which for the sake of the passage’s flow of thought might better be grouped together, misses Paul’s point here in 1:6. For in this verse the apostle seems to be taking pains to associate his addressees’ “call . . . to belong to Jesus Christ” with his own “call . . . as an apostle to the Gentiles” — thereby, in effect, signaling that they were, as predominantly Gentile believers in Jesus, within the sphere of his apostolic mandate to Gentiles194 — and so he has the right to be in contact with them and write to them in the manner that he does in this letter.

The verb καλεῖν (“to call”), which may mean simply “to call someone,” “name someone or something,” “address,” “designate,” “invite,” or “summon,” is used by Paul as a technical term for God’s call of someone for a particular goal or purpose.195 The genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is a possessive genitive with predicate force (i.e., a “predicate genitive” that signals possession), and so to be translated as “Jesus Christ’s possession” or “belonging to Jesus Christ.”196 It is not a subjective genitive, that is, “called by Jesus Christ,”197 for in Paul’s theology God the Father is always the agent of a divine call.198

Paul’s primary emphases in 1:6, therefore, are (1) that the Christians at Rome should consider themselves as being within the sphere of his God-given,
apostolic mandate to Gentiles, and (2) that they should understand that they have been called by God “to belong to Jesus Christ” just as he was called by God “as an apostle” to the Gentiles. Implied as well in Paul’s identification of his addressees in this verse are (1) the dependence of their relationship to God through Christ not on their own desires or actions, but on God’s will and call, and (2) the fact that as recipients of God’s call they have experienced what Israel long ago experienced and so have been brought into association with God’s people of old.

1:7 The words πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ (“to all those at Rome”) constitute the “recipient unit” of Paul’s salutation. They also initiate a series of relative clauses that “go off at a word” from the word πᾶς (“all”) by way of elaborating on several theologically significant matters that had previously appeared in the “sender unit.” One might see in the apostle’s use of πᾶς “an allusion perhaps to the extensive and straggling character of the Church of the metropolis; or an endeavour to bind together the two sections of that Church.” But that seems to be an overly suspicious reading of a single word, which, on the face of it, has every appearance of having been included simply to greet in an inclusive fashion all of the letter’s addressees.

The designation “at Rome” (ἐν Ῥώμῃ) is well supported by the manuscript tradition, with the phrase omitted only in the ninth-century bilingual Codex Boernerianus (G 012, both Greek and Latin) and the eleventh-century minuscules 1739 (Category I) and 1908 (Category III) — with its omission being explicitly noted in the margins of these two later minuscule MSS. It is also omitted in itg, which is a ninth-century recension of the Old Latin. More important, however, is the fact that “at Rome” is not referred to at all by some of the early commentary writers when dealing with 1:7 and 1:15 — particularly not by Origen (per Rufinus’s Latin translation), nor by Ambrosiaster or Pelagius. So it may be inferred that “at Rome” was not included in the texts used by these commentators. But given its extensive support in the manuscript tradition, the omission of “at Rome” here in 1:7 (as well as in 1:15) likely occurred either (1) as the result of an accident in transcription, or, more probably, (2) as a deliberate excision to give the letter a more general application.

The descriptive phrases ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ and κλητοῖς ἁγίοις (“to those loved by God” and “called his holy ones”) are attributive in nature, not restrictive — that is, they characterize all the Christians at Rome, not just some smaller group of more spiritual believers within the Roman congregations nor just the leaders or people greeted in 16:3-16. Neither do these two phrases refer to two
separate groups of Christians at Rome: Gentile believers, who are identified as being “loved by God,” and Jewish believers, who are identified as “God’s holy ones” or “saints.”205 The position of the dative substantival adjective πᾶσιν (“to all”) at the beginning of this verse marks “all” as emphatic, with no suggestion that Paul then went on to divide Christians at Rome “into two different categories.”206 And that inclusive emphasis is repeated in 1:8 by the phrase πάντων ὑμῶν (“all of you”; cf. also 15:33).

The substantival noun ἀγαπητοῖς (“to those loved”) is probably drawn from the Hebrew noun חסד (“steadfast love,” “loving kindness”), which is an attribute of God in the OT.207 In Paul’s letters the present, active, adjectival participle ἀγαπητός (“loved”) and perfect, passive, substantival participle ἠγαπημένος (“those loved”) appear repeatedly with respect to (1) the people of faith who are loved by God,208 (2) unbelieving Jews, whom God loves “because of the patriarchs,”209 and (3) those whom Paul himself loves as believers in Christ and his coworkers.210 So common are these expressions for those loved by God that Christians are addressed in many of Paul’s letters simply by the vocative plural ἀγαπητοί (“loved ones” or “dearly beloved”).211 It is also noteworthy that here in 1:7 “Paul mentions not their love for God but that which is fundamental — God’s love for them, God’s choice of them.”212

The attributive phrase κλητοῖς ἁγίοις (“called holy ones” or “holy people”) seems to have been drawn from a combination of two Hebrew expressions: (1) מִּקְרוֹן קדֶשׁ (“solemn [or ‘holy’] assembly”), which the LXX translated κλητὴ ἁγία,213 and (2) עם קדושׁ (“people of holiness”), which the LXX translated λαὸς ἅγιος.214

The term ἅγιοι (“holy ones”) appears frequently in the OT with reference to celestial beings215 and sometimes to God’s people in the eschatological future216 — though it is not very often used with reference to God’s redeemed people in the present.217 In the post-biblical Greek writings of the Jewish world, ἅγιοι

205. Contra Witherington, Romans, 37 n. 26, building on the thesis of F. Watson that there were two groups of Christians at Rome, a dominant group of Gentile Christians and a minority group of Jewish Christians, who were not meeting together (cf. Watson, Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles), and so needed to be addressed separately.

206. As Witherington argues “is very possible,” idem, Romans, 37.


208. E.g., Rom 9:25; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13.


210. E.g., Rom 16:5, 8, 9, 12.

211. Cf., e.g., Rom 12:19; 1 Cor 15:58; 2 Cor 7:1; 12:19.

212. Cranfield, Romans, 1.69.


215. Cf., Deut 33:2; Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps 89:5, 7; Dan 4:13, 17, 23; 8:13 (twice); Zech 14:5.

216. Cf. Dan 7:27: “Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to ‘the holy ones,’ the people of the Most High.”

217. One particularly significant occurrence appears in Ps 34:9: “Fear [God], you his ‘holy ones’; for those who fear him lack nothing.”
continues to be used most often with respect to celestial beings218—though, at times, also of redeemed humans.219 Philo and Josephus, however, seem not to have used the designation at all, either for angels or for humans. Rabbinic writers appear to have used שדי ("holy") or עם קדש ("people of holiness") with respect to God’s people only three times.220 On the other hand, ἅγιοι ("holy ones") is found sixty-one times in the NT and is always employed—or, at least, almost always used (the only possible exceptions being 1 Thess 3:13 and 2 Thess 1:10)—with respect to God’s holy people, whether translated as “saints,” “his holy ones,” or “God’s holy people.” And this change of usage serves to highlight, as Stephen Woodward has pointed out, the facts that “in Christ” people “have been thrust into the final kingdom, ushered into the room of the Holiest, and graced with the unprecedented privilege of the companionship of the Celestial.”221

Paul’s emphasis in his use of κλητοῖς ἁγίοις here in 1:7 is on both (1) his addressees as being “holy people” in the sight of God222 and (2) their having been “called” by God to this status as believers in Jesus.223 Further, in that his use of the verb καλεῖν ("to call") always includes the concept of God as the agent in “calling” people to some purpose or responsibility (see our comments above on 1:1 and 1:6), there is an implied parallel with the emphasis in the OT on God’s will and action as being the basis for the lives of God’s people.224 Thus those “called holy ones” in Paul’s letters are those who have been called by God to respond in faith to the person and work of Christ, and so have been given “in Christ” the status of God’s “holy people.”

Paul concludes his salutation of 1:1-7 to the Christians at Rome with the words χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ("grace to you and peace"). The prescripts of Greek letters normally included the greeting χαίρειν, which is the present, active, infinitive of the verb χαίρω ("rejoice," "be glad"). As a colloquial greeting χαίρειν meant “welcome,” “hello,” or “good day”; at the beginning of a letter it meant “greetings.” At times Greek letters also included in their prescripts a health wish, such as the infinitive υγιαίνειν (literally “to be in good health”; colloquial and epistolary uses: “good health”), and so would read χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν ("greetings and good health"). Jewish letters usually included in their prescripts some form of the noun "peace," either שלום in a letter written in Hebrew or εἰρήνη in a letter written in Greek,225 coupled with the noun “mercy” (or “cov-

218. Cf., e.g., Tob 8:15; Sir 42:17; 45:2; Wis 5:5; 10:10; Jub 17:11; 31:14; 33:12; Pss Sol 17:49; 1 En 1:9; 9:3; 12:2; 14:23, 25; 3 Macc 2:2.
219. Cf., e.g., Tob 12:15 (B); Jub 2:24; Wis 18:9; 1 Macc 1:46; 1 En 93:6; 99:16; 100:5; 3 Macc 6:9 (A).
221. Woodward, “Provenance of the Term ‘Saints,’ ” 115-16.
222. Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:1.
223. Cf. 1:6 above; also 1 Cor 1:24; Eph 1:18.
224. Cf., e.g., Isa 49:1; 50:2; 65:12; 66:4; Jer 7:13.
225. Cf., e.g., Dan 4:1 (MT 3:31; LXX [Th] 3:98) and 4:34 (LXX [OG]): εἰρήνη ὑμῖν πληθυνθείη; “Peace to you be multiplied”; see also 2 Macc 1:1 and 2 Bar 78:2.
enant faithfulness,” “loving kindness”), either רחמ מים (or, less frequently, "compassion") in a letter written in Hebrew or ἔλεος in a letter written in Greek — and so would begin with the traditional Jewish greeting “mercy and peace.”

Some letters in the NT have in their salutations the normal Greek greeting χαίρειν, “greetings”;226 others have the prayer wish χάρις υμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη, “grace to you and peace be multiplied”;227 and one has ἔλεος υμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη πληθυνθείη, “mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied.”228 In Paul’s letters, however, the greeting is expressed in terms of χάρις (“grace”) and εἰρήνη (“peace”).229 Thus the typical Pauline greeting is, in reality, a prayer wish: “May you have grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” — though in wishes expressed in the secular Greek of Paul’s day the optative εἴη (“may you,” a second person singular, present, optative of the verb εἴμι, “I am”) seems to have been omitted often.

Exactly why Paul departed from the usual Greek χαίρειν (“greetings”) and substituted in its place the prayer wish χάρις υμῖν (“grace to you”) — and, further, why he omitted the term ἔλεος (“mercy,” a Greek translation of חסד) from the traditional Jewish greeting but retained εἰρήνη (“peace,” a Greek translation of שלום) — are questions that have been frequently asked. Tertullian in 208, for example, observed that Paul’s letters do not include the usual “health wish” of a normal Greek letter, but, rather, that he speaks in every prescript (titulo) of “grace and peace” — but as to why the apostle departed from normal Greek epistolary practice, Tertullian simply says “I cannot say.”230 Nevertheless, Tertullian goes on to mount an argument against Marcion on the basis of Paul’s inclusion of the word “peace” in all of his salutations. And he does so by first noting that Paul uses the Jewish greeting “peace” in all his salutations:

What had he, the destroyer of Judaism, to do with Jewish custom? For even today the Jews address each other in the name of peace, and earlier, in the Scriptures, they used to use that greeting.231

Then he makes the point that by the inclusion of this Jewish greeting in all of his letters, Paul “spoke plainly enough to make the Creator known”:

But [contrary to his statement “I cannot say” as to why Paul departed from normal Greek epistolary practice] I do understand that by his service (oficio) he [Paul] spoke plainly enough to make the Creator known: “How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news, who preach the

227. 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2.
228. Jude 2.
229. Not only here, but also 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phlm 3; with the addition of ἔλεος, “mercy,” in 1 Tim 1:2 and 2 Tim 1:2.
230. Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem 5.5.
231. Ibid.
...gospel of peace” [Isa 52:7]. For he who proclaimed the good news, that is the grace of God, was well aware that along with it peace was also to be proclaimed.232

It may be that the expression “grace to you and peace” became common in early Jewish Christian liturgical usage and that its use as an epistolary greeting was derived from that practice.233 It may also have been that early Jewish believers in Jesus were echoing in their liturgy, whether consciously or unconsciously, the blessing that God told Moses to tell Aaron and his sons to pronounce over the Israelites, as given in Num 6:24-26: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”234 Further, it may have been Paul who was the one who turned that early Christian liturgical blessing “grace to you and peace” into an epistolary greeting, for that wording seems not to have been used in the salutations of other early Christian letters.235

But however the wording of this epistolary greeting came about, Paul in all his letters constantly turns the traditional greetings of both Greek and Jewish letters into a profound theological statement that highlights the two major themes of the Christian gospel: “grace,” which signals God’s undeserved love and favor as revealed in Christ Jesus, and “peace,” which speaks of what God has effected through the work of Christ in reconciling people to himself and to one another and reclaiming his creation. And these two themes come to expression most explicitly in his letter to Rome, where Paul (1) begins by greeting his addressees with the prayer wish “grace to you and peace,”236 (2) uses the word “grace” some twenty-one times throughout the body of the letter,237 (3) speaks of “peace” at least seven times elsewhere in the body of the letter,238 and (4) closes with first a “peace benediction” in 15:33, then a peace statement in 16:20a, and finally (excluding the textually dubious second “grace benediction” that would have comprised 16:24) a “grace benediction” in 16:20b. In effect, the term χάρις (that is, God’s “grace” as manifested in the work of Christ on behalf of all people) expresses for Paul the basis for all that those “in Christ” have experienced, while the term εἰρήνη (that is, “peace,” with its cognate term “reconciliation”) represents the sum of all the blessings of the gospel — as Paul will highlight later in 5:1-21.

232. Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem 5:5.
234. So Fitzmyer, Romans, 228.
235. At least not as represented by Acts 15:23; 23:26; Jas 1:1; and Jude 2; though 1 Pet 1:2 and 2 Pet 1:2 have a close parallel.
236. I.e., here in 1:7.
237. I.e., in 2:4; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15 (twice), 17, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15, 17; 7:25; 11:5, 6 (three times); 12:3, 6; 15:15.
238. E.g., 2:10; 3:17; 5:1; 8:6; 14:17, 19; 15:13; cf. also the synonym “reconciliation” in 5:10-11 and 11:15.
The genitive clause ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”) identifies the source of “grace” and “peace,” which here in 1:7, as well as elsewhere in Romans (cf. esp. 5:1-21), are highlighted as the two main blessings of the Christian gospel. No distinction is made here between God the Father as the source and the Lord Jesus Christ as the means or agent of the blessings of the gospel, though these ideas have been suggested earlier throughout the salutation.\(^{239}\) The juxtaposition of “God our Father” and “the Lord Jesus Christ” is clearly of great significance for any consideration of early Christian attitudes toward Jewish monotheism and regarding the Christian veneration of Jesus. It is not, by itself, proof of the divinity of Jesus. But it certainly sets out in a functional manner the close relationship between the two, the Father and the Son — not only with regard to the Father being the source and the Son being the agent, but here as both being the source of all Christian blessings. The expression θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν (“God our Father”) anticipates Paul’s teaching in 8:15 (see the comments there). On the title κύριος as ascribed to Jesus, see the comments above on 1:4 and those below on 10:9.

A number of highly significant matters immediately strike every reader of the salutation in Rom 1:1-7. The first is how Paul has taken the usual conventions of an epistolary prescript of his day and turned them into a prospectus for what he wants to say in the body of the letter that follows. His additions to the usual Greek epistolary prescript constitute, in fact, no mere literary embellishments, but have every appearance of deliberate forecasts of the major points that he wants to present later in his letter.

A second impression one gets when reading the salutation of Romans is what Sanday and Headlam have aptly called “the definiteness and maturity of the theological teaching” contained in these verses:\(^{240}\)

It is remarkable enough, and characteristic of this primitive Christian literature, especially of the Epistle of St. Paul, that a mere salutation should contain so much weighty teaching of any kind; but it is still more remarkable when we think what that teaching is and the early date at which it was penned.\(^{241}\)

And a third feature that stands out in reading this salutation is how Paul has contextualized his message when writing to the Christians at Rome —

\(^{239}\) Cf., e.g., the implied “by God” in the divine “call” of 1:1 and 6; also the expression δι’ οὗ, “through whom” (i.e., “Jesus Christ our Lord”) in 1:5.

\(^{240}\) Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 17.

\(^{241}\) Ibid.
even at the very beginning of his letter — in (1) speaking to their interests and concerns, (2) using early Christian confessional material that was presumably known and appreciated by them, and (3) couching his presentation in terms and language that would have resonated with them. There are many other places in his letter to Rome where it may be observed that Paul has taken pains to contextualize his proclamation vis-à-vis the interests and concerns of his addressees, as will be noted in our comments on those portions that follow. But it still remains rather striking that such contextualizations should occur in the letter as early as its salutation.

The fact that Paul begins this salutation with three self-identifications that go far beyond any of those in his other NT letters — particularly with respect to his prophetic consciousness, his apostolic ministry, and his relationship to Christ Jesus, God the Father, and the Christian gospel — suggests that these statements were meant not just as positive affirmations, but should be seen as carrying with them a polemical thrust as well. Jewish Christian opponents had, it seems, often disputed the legitimacy of Paul’s apostolic claims and the validity of his Gentile mission — probably on the basis of such well-known facts as (1) that he had not been one of the original disciples who had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry but a persecutor of early believers in Jesus, 242 (2) that his conversion and commission had been mediated to him through Ananias at Damascus, 243 (3) that his early Christian ministries were in Tarsus of Cilicia and Antioch of Syria, 244 (4) that the base for his Christian outreach to Gentiles was not the church at Jerusalem but the church at Antioch of Syria, which had sent him out with Barnabas as a missionary and which he represented, together with Barnabas, as a delegate at the Jerusalem Council, 245 and (5) that his missionary activities among Gentiles in the eastern part of the Roman Empire had caused a great deal of opposition from both Jews and the Greco-Roman Gentile population. 246 And it seems highly likely that both Gentile and Jewish believers in Jesus at Rome also thought of Paul, when compared to the apostles at Jerusalem, as something of a second-class apostle — perhaps an apostle authorized only “by men,” whether by Ananias of Damascus and/or by the “pillar” apostles of the Jerusalem church, Peter, James, and John. Further, it seems probable that the Christians at Rome thought of Paul as one who preached “the gospel” as taught in the church at Antioch of Syria rather than “the true Christian gospel” as proclaimed by the original apostles in the “mother church” at Jerusalem, and therefore as one whose preaching must be scrutinized, complemented, and perhaps even corrected so as to conform to the one authoritative gospel message of Jewish Christianity at Jerusalem. 247

246. Cf., e.g., Acts 28:22, “people everywhere are talking against this sect.”
247. On this matter, see Stuhlmacher, Das paulinische Evangelium, 67; idem, Romans, 21-22; also Holmberg, Paul and Power, 52-54.
More important for our purposes here, however, are the theological themes that are set out in introductory fashion in the salutation of Romans and that then resonate throughout the rest of the letter. “In the course of this formal epistolary introduction,” as Joseph Fitzmyer has noted, “Paul enunciates some of the fundamental teachings which he will develop in the course of the epistle.”248 In fact, as A. T. Robertson long ago observed, “Paul’s theology is clearly seen in the terms used in verses 1 to 7.”249

Of primary importance in any list of biblical theology themes in the salutation of Romans, as well as throughout the rest of the letter, is what Paul calls τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, that is, “the gospel” or “good news” to which he has been “set apart,” which is “from God,” which God “promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, and whose content is focused on “his [God’s] Son.”250 Earlier in his letter to Gentile Christians in the Roman province of Galatia, Paul spoke of (1) his converts as turning to “a different gospel (εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον), which was not the same gospel (ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο)” as they had originally received,251 (2) that gospel that they originally received as having as its content the person and work of Christ, and so being “the gospel of Christ” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ),252 (3) the Judaizers who had infiltrated the Galatian churches as “trying to pervert the gospel of Christ” (θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ),253 (4) his distinctive form of the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ, “the gospel that was proclaimed by me”) as having been received “by a revelation of which Jesus Christ was the agent”; cf. also Gal 2:2. 254 (5) the gospel message that he received as being specifically “the gospel for the uncircumcised [i.e., ‘the Gentiles’]” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας),255 and (6) his desire and efforts, contra those of the Judaizers, to defend “the truth of the gospel” (ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου).256

Likewise at a number of places in his correspondence with his converts at Corinth, which letters were written prior to his letter to Christians at Rome, Paul highlights “the gospel” and its central themes as being foremost in his ministry.257 And he will do so throughout the rest of his letter to the Christians at Rome.258

249. Robertson, “Epistle to the Romans,” 325.
252. Gal 1:7b, understanding τοῦ Χριστοῦ here as an objective genitive.
254. Gal 1:11-12, understanding Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ here as a subjective genitive: “through a revelation of which Jesus Christ was the agent”; cf. also Gal 2:2.
Characterizing Paul’s thought in this regard, Joseph Fitzmyer has aptly formulated the following definition of the term “gospel” in Paul’s usage:

“Gospel” is Paul’s one-word summary of the Christ-event, the significance and meaning that the person and lordship of Jesus have for our existence and that of all human beings. It is the concrete formulation of God’s will for the disposition of human life.  

Directly associated with “the gospel,” as we have noted above, is a further important emphasis in Paul’s theology as set out in the salutation of Romans, namely, that this gospel is “from God” — that is, that its source is the will of God and its message based on the actions of God (1:1). Likewise, Paul emphasizes that this gospel is that “which he [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (1:2). In no way did Paul anticipate or lay a foundation for the perverse misunderstanding of the second-century Christian teacher Marcion of Pontus. Rather, as Joseph Fitzmyer has written: “Paul sees the prophetic utterances of Israel’s prophets as a praeparatio evangelica, a mode of preparing Israel and all humanity for the gospel, the good news of Christ Jesus.” So throughout the Pauline letters there are repeated emphases on (1) the one true God, whose redemptive will and actions are depicted in the OT, as the One who preeminently expressed his redemptive will and actions in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, as portrayed in the NT, and (2) the gospel proclamation of the NT as based on and the fulfillment of the promises of God as given in the OT through God’s prophets. Indeed, as A. T. Robertson has concisely stated matters: “Paul definitely finds God’s gospel in the Holy Scriptures.”

A further feature that appears prominently among the theological themes in the salutation of Romans is what may be called the focus of the Christian gospel, namely, that “the gospel” has at its heart a salvific message about “his [God’s] Son” who is “Jesus Christ our Lord.” While the gospel in its entirety was what was of major importance in Paul’s thought as a Christian and his outreach to Gentiles as a missionary, the focus of that message of “good news” — and therefore the most important and pivotal feature in his Christian proclamation — is what Christ effected through his ministry, passion, death, resurrection, and exaltation. Paul highlights this revolutionary new development in God’s plan of salvation by quoting an early Christian confessional portion in 1:3b–4, which was presumably known and appreciated by his Roman addressees. Then later in 5:1–8:39, which is where we believe the major theological thrust of his argument in the letter appears, he develops more fully this christological component of his Christian proclamation. It is a message that builds on the story of Jesus that was remembered and accepted by all early believers in Jesus and that the four

259. Fitzmyer, Spiritual Exercises, 19.
260. Ibid.
261. Robertson, “Epistle to the Romans,” 323.
canonical Evangelists would later reproduce with their own distinctive “spins” for their own respective audiences. And it is this basic, constitutive narrative of the Christian religion that Paul spells out theologically and contextualizes pastorally for his Roman addressees.

Vv. 5 and 6 of this letter’s salutation also contain a number of statements concerning Paul’s consciousness of himself, his understanding of his ministry, and his recognition of his addressees’ situation — and when these statements are connected with the three self-identifications in v. 1, they provide us with revealing insights into the man himself, his understanding of his Gentile mission, and his rationale for writing to the Christians at Rome. For not only does Paul declare in 1:1 that he is “a servant of Christ Jesus, called by God as an apostle, and set apart for the gospel that is from God,” he also asserts in 1:5 (1) that he is the recipient of “God’s special grace of apostleship,” (2) that his mandate is “to bring about obedience that comes from faith among all the Gentiles,” and (3) that his ultimate purpose in carrying out his mission is “for the sake of his name” — that is, for the sake of the exalted Jesus, God’s Son and humanity’s Lord, through whom God the Father is praised (cf. Rom 15:7) and glorified (cf. Phil 2:11). And in 1:6 he identifies his addressees as being within his God-given mandate to evangelize Gentiles, since they are predominantly Gentiles ethnically and “those called by God to belong to Jesus Christ.”

After having considerably expanded the usual sender unit of a Greek letter in 1:1–6 — not only by the addition of a number of statements about himself and his mission, but also by the inclusion of certain highly significant theological affirmations about the Christian gospel, its source, its relation to the OT Scriptures, and its focus in “Jesus Christ our Lord” — Paul then goes on to expand, as well, the usual recipient unit of 1:7a and the greeting unit of 1:7b with theologically relevant comments that are also of great significance. For in 1:7a he not only identifies his addressees, but speaks of them as “loved by God” and “called [by God] his holy people.” Both of these attributions carry OT connotations that highlight the close relationship of God’s people to himself, and so lay the basis for a new self-understanding on the part of believers in Jesus. And in 1:7b he reconstitutes the usual Greek and Jewish epistolary greetings to highlight the basis for such a new relationship of Christians with God: “the grace of God,” as expressed in the person and work of Christ Jesus, which has brought about “peace with God” and “reconciliation with God and with others” — with such “grace” and “peace” being brought about by “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

All the theological themes introduced in the seven verses of the salutation are highly significant. In fact, these themes constitute the very essence of Christian theology and Christian living, and Paul will unpack them and contextualize them in what follows in the rest of the letter — particularly in the central section of 5:1–8:39. Even the language used to express these themes is highly significant. For as Sanday and Headlam have pointed out in a highly perceptive paragraph regarding “The Theological Terminology of Rom. 1:1–7”:

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When we come to examine particular expressions we find that a large proportion of them are drawn from the O.T. In some cases an idea which has been hitherto fluid is sharply formulated (κλητός, ἀφωρισμένος); in other cases an old phrase has been adopted with comparatively little modification (ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, and perhaps εἰρήνη); in others the transference involves a larger modification (δοῦλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, χάρις, κλητοὶ ἅγιοι, Κύριος, θεὸς πατήρ); in others again we have a term which has acquired a significance since the close of the O.T. which Christianity appropriates (ἐπαγγελία [προεπηγγείλατο], γραφαὶ ἅγιαι, ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν, ἅγιοι); in yet others we have a new coinage (ἀπόστολος, εὐαγγέλιον), which however in these instances is due, not to St. Paul or the other Apostles, but to Christ Himself.\(^{262}\)

**CONTEXTUALIZATION FOR TODAY**

Paul’s salutation in Romans is so chock-full of foundational Christian teaching that it provides the reader with a veritable précis or summary of early Christian theology and thus an almost unlimited body of material for contextualizing the Christian message today. But while as Christians we are committed to the Christian message as set out in the salutation, we cannot just repeat that message in the exact forms of that day — whether in the forms used by the Christians at Rome, which seem to have been inherited from Jewish Christianity at Jerusalem, or those forms into which Paul cast the Christian message in his ministry to Gentiles, which, as we will propose, he sets out specifically in the second section of the body middle of his letter, that is, in 5:1–8:39. For just as Paul contextualized the Christian gospel for his addressees at Rome, so we as Christians today are called to contextualize that same message for people today in their different localities, diverse cultural situations, and somewhat differing perspectives and modes of thought.

There are a number of matters in the salutation of Romans that have important theological significance, and so could be developed in any contemporary Christian contextualization. The following six themes, however, seem to be set out in bold relief and therefore call for comment here:

**The Basis of the Christian Message.** Running throughout the Romans salutation is Paul’s lively realization that the Christian message of “good news” is based not only on the ministry and work of “Jesus Christ our Lord” but also, both ultimately and effectively, on the will and salvific concerns of “God our Father.” In 1:1 Paul speaks of himself as “a servant of Christ Jesus,” but also recognizes that he has been “called an apostle” and “set apart for the gospel” by God. In 1:5 he speaks of having received “God’s special grace of apostleship”

\(^{262}\) Sanday and Headlam, Romans, 18.
through “Jesus Christ our Lord,” thereby highlighting both the source of his apostleship, that is, God the Father, and the agent through whom he received that apostleship, that is, Jesus Christ his Son. In 1:6-7a he refers to Christians as having been “called by God to belong to Jesus Christ,” “loved by God,” and “called by God his holy people.” And in the reconstituted greetings unit of 1:7b, he brings the salutation to a climax by proclaiming that this new message of “grace and peace” is “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In our modern emphases on results and consequences, we must never forget matters having to do with source and agency. So in any contemporary contextualization of the Christian gospel, we must always keep to the forefront of our consciousness and proclamation the fact that all of our blessings as Christians stem from both (1) God’s will and redemptive concerns for all humanity and the world and (2) Jesus’ ministry and work in effecting God’s will and salvific plans.

**Apostleship and Ministry.** Paul had a deep and lasting conviction of having been called by God to proclaim the good news of the Christian message to Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world. And like the prophet Jeremiah of old, whose prophetic mandate Paul seems to have understood as having been repeated in his own experience,263 he could affirm: “His [God’s] word is in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.”264

No Christian today, however, has the precise apostolic role in God’s salvific plan that Paul had. Nonetheless, all Christians are called by God not only into relationship with him through the work and person of Christ Jesus, but also to minister on his behalf to people “for the sake of his name” — that is, for the sake of Jesus’ exalted name “Lord.”265 Thus as Joseph Fitzmyer rightly points out: “As Paul was aware that his apostolic commission was a ‘grace,’ so he invites his readers to realize the ‘grace’ involved in the call that each of them has received from God.”266 Further, just as Paul’s motivation for ministry was not his own benefit or aggrandizement, nor even the benefit of his converts, but the glorification of God’s Son — and, through that honoring of his Son, the praise and glory of God the Father — so, as Charles Cranfield has stated, “the true end of the preaching of the gospel and of winning of men [and women] to faith is not just the good of those to whom the preaching is directed, but also — and above all — the glorification of Christ, of God.”267

**The Centrality of the Gospel.** Of great importance to Paul was the centrality of the gospel message in all of Christian proclamation and Christian living. For the gospel is “from God” (v. 1) and is what was “promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (v. 2). It is a message that is revela-
tory in nature, for it was first revealed to Paul in highly dramatic fashion on his way to Damascus, being then confirmed and spelled out more fully at various times in just as significant ways throughout his Christian life and missionary activities. It is a message that is proclamatory in nature, for Paul was “set apart” by God to proclaim it to Gentiles. But it is also a message that is normative for all Christian thought and living, and so Paul felt compelled to stoutly defend it whenever necessary — though, it needs also to be noted, without allowing his own circumstances or his own prestige to take precedence over “the advance of the gospel” or its proclamation by others.

In days when many of the cultural, societal, psychological, and ecological ramifications and benefits of the gospel have taken center stage in Christian preaching and counseling, it is well to remind ourselves of the centrality of the gospel message itself. For though the Christian gospel has implications for all of life — and though as God’s people we are called by God to work out these implications in our own lives, in the lives of people individually, and in society corporately — it yet remains true, as Paul says only a few verses later in this same letter to Rome, that it is “the gospel” that is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (1:16). All-too-often contemporary Christian preaching and counseling have turned the gospel into some form of “religious humanism,” which only uses Christian imagery and Christian jargon in a humanistic fashion for motivational purposes. But it is the gospel message of what God has done “in Christ” in “reconciling the world to himself” (cf. 2 Cor 5:19), as illumined and applied by God’s Spirit, that changes our sinful human condition and that alters our confused human circumstances.

**The Focus of the Gospel.** Further, when highlighting the centrality of the gospel in the salutation of Romans, it is important to note that when Paul speaks about “the gospel that is from God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (vv. 1b-2), he immediately defines the content of that gospel as “concerning his [God’s] Son” (v. 3a).

Earlier in writing to his converts at Corinth, who evidently had become confused as to what was really at the heart of their new Christian commitment — whether Greek wisdom, Jewish ritualism, or some type of Christian charismatic experience — Paul says such things as the following:

Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (1 Cor 1:17)

We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:23-24)

268. Cf. Gal 2:5, 14: “the truth of the gospel.”
I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Cor 2:2)

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. (1 Cor 2:13)

It was not that Paul was against human wisdom or human rituals per se, or even against God’s grace being expressed in a person’s life in particular or dramatic ways. Rather, what he wanted his converts to realize was that central to his preaching and their response was “the gospel,” and that the focus of that gospel had to do with the person and work of Christ. And in the salutation of Romans he telescopes that same sentiment by saying that the gospel is “concerning his Son” (1:3a) and then sets out an early christological confessional portion that serves to define what the early church meant by “his Son” (1:3b–4).

Such a focus in the Christian message has been seen by many people today, just as in Paul’s day, as a “stumbling block” and “foolishness” — even by some Christian leaders. But as Paul insisted: (1) it is the gospel that is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16), and (2) it is Christ who is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24). It is, in fact, these two features — the centrality of the gospel and the focus of the gospel in the person and work of Jesus Christ — that epitomized the proclamation of the apostles and the early church. And these are the emphases that need to be reclaimed today as the “evangel” in our contemporary contextualizations of the Christian proclamation.

**Faith and Obedience.** Also of great importance for Paul are the themes of “faith” and “obedience.” The expression ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, “the obedience that comes from faith,” in 1:5 (understanding πίστεως as a genitive of source), may have been somewhat conditioned by certain concerns among the Christians at Rome (as we have suggested above). But certainly the relationship between faith and obedience, as well as what is to be understood by each of these terms, were issues of immense significance for both Paul and his churches.270 These issues, of course, have been matters of intense debate at various times in the history of the Christian church (as witness, for example, Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation). And they continue to be highly important for every Christian today.

Understanding πίστεως in 1:5 as a genitive of source, with the phrase translated as “obedience that comes from [or ‘springs from’] faith,” means that we are not talking about “a faith that consists of obedience” (a genitive of apposition interpretation) or “obedience to a body of formulated doctrine” (an

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270. As witness, e.g., Paul’s discussions in Rom 2–4 and 9–11 (as discussed later in this commentary), his polemical and hortatory expositions throughout Galatians, and such biographical comments as appear in Phil 3:1–11; see also Jas 2:14–26.
objective genitive interpretation) — and certainly not “obedience as a human virtue, with faith being the means for accomplishing that virtue” (an adjectival genitive interpretation, as well as some forms of a subjective genitive interpretation). Nor are we defining either obedience or faith as human virtues that God graciously allows us — or, perhaps, empowers us — to accomplish. Rather, accepting a genitive of source interpretation, we understand Paul to be speaking about an intellectual and volitional positive response to Christ, that is, a response to Christ’s person and work as portrayed in the writings of the NT, which stems from the very depths of one’s being and involves the engagement of one’s whole person — with that positive response and total engagement resulting in attitudes and actions of obedience to God and his will. In so doing, as Paul frequently says in his letters, we are not “doing” certain prescriptions set out in God’s law in order to gain a right standing before God, but “fulfilling” all that God’s righteous law requires by our being people of faith, who are guided by the Spirit and act in love (cf. Rom 9:30–10:4; see also Gal 5:13–26).

**Intimate Relationship with God.** In the recipient unit of his Romans salutation, Paul characterizes all the Christians at Rome as those “loved by God and called his holy people” (1:7a). The people of Israel are frequently characterized in the OT as “loved by God”271 and sometimes as God’s “holy people”272 — though more commonly the substantive “holy ones” appears in the OT with reference to celestial beings, not redeemed humans.273 And these attributions and the patterns of their distribution are generally carried on in the post-biblical writings of Second Temple Judaism.

Paul, however, in concert with other NT writers, repeatedly uses the present, active, adjectival participle ἀγαπητός (“loved,” “beloved”) and perfect, passive, substantival participle ἠγαπημένος (“those loved,” “beloved”) with respect to believers in Jesus.274 And he uses the substantival noun ἅγιοι (“holy ones”) some forty times in his letters, with almost all the occurrences having Christians as the referent.275 Thus these usual OT characterizations of God’s people Israel as “those loved by God” and of angels as “his holy ones” have been shifted to apply now to the newly constituted people of God who believe in Jesus, the Christian church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

Such a shift signals a new self-consciousness among Paul and the early Christians: that because they have been “called by God to belong to Jesus Christ,” believers in Jesus experience an intimate relationship with God — one in which they are “loved by God and called his holy people.” And it is this consciousness that needs to be highlighted in any contextualization of the Christian gospel for God’s people today.

271. Cf., e.g., Deut 4:37; 7:8, 13; 33:3; 1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 2:11; 9:8; Isa 43:4; Jer 31:3.
273. Cf., e.g., Deut 33:2; Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps 89:5, 7; Dan 4:13, 17, 23; 8:13; Zech 14:5.
274. In addition to Rom 1:7, see, e.g., Rom 9:25; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13.
275. In addition to Rom 1:7, see, e.g., Rom 8:27; 12:13; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1, 2; 14:33; 16:1, 15 (the only possible exceptions being 1 Thess 3:13 and 2 Thess 1:10).