

Session 1 Outline – Mike Bird Clearing the Deck on Romans

1. Situation Behind the Letter

Paul

- In Corinth 56-58 AD
- Finished tumultuous period in eastern Med (Antioch, Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth)
- Preparing to deliver collection to the Jerusalem church.
- Planning to visit Rome then onto Spain

Romans

- Christianity arrived in Rome with Jews, either pilgrims to Jerusalem, commerce, or travellers.
- Unrest in Synagogues in early 40s
- Claudius's expulsion of Jews on account of 'Chrestus' in 49 AD (see Acts 18.2)
 - Three major expulsions of Jews from Rome (139 BC, 19 AD, 49 AD)
- Return of Jewish Christians in 54 AD when Claudius died.
- History of anti-Judaism in Rome, esp. among elites. Tiberius/Sejanus very anti-Jewish.
- Christianity not separate from Judaism in mid-50s, but distinguishable during Neronian pogrom in mid-60s.
- Issues
 - Connection of church to Jewish communities
 - Competition for Gentile converts
 - Growth in Gentile churches when Jewish Christians expelled
 - Difficulties in Gentile and Jewish relationships within churches

Paul's Purpose (1.9-15 and 15.15-33)

- Return to Jerusalem with all the Gentile churches behind him.
- Lays out apostolic credentials, gospel, and theology to get support of Roman churches
- Apology for his views as anti-Torah and anti-Israel to Jews
- Preventative pastoral care in Roman assemblies to inhibit fracturing.

2. The Elephant in the Room: NPP (Ugh!)

NPP

- Judaism was not legalistic (E.P. Sanders)
- Then problem was ethnocentric
- Works of the law = boundary markers
- Justification as ecclesial not initiatory, dismiss imputation, and role of works at judgment.

Mike's Maxim: NPP is generally correct in what it affirms about variety within Judaism, the social texture of Paul's thought, and the ethnic dimensions to Paul's theology – but the NPP is often wrong in what it denies (Marshall, Vanhoozer).

Where NPP is Wrong

- Judaism
 - Not all Judaism was legalistic (see 1QH, m.Sanh 10.1), but Judaism could be legalistic (2 Enoch, Josephus, Apion).
 - Sanders's definition conveys a tacit legalism (Peter Enns)
 - Judaism was diverse, whether we think of 'variegated nomism' (Carson) or various 'perfections of grace' (Barclay).
 - Different views on divine agency in salvation (Josephus)
 - See Philo on grace/gifts as deserved/unmerited
 - Legalism arises when you have debates about
 - Eschatology, entering the future age if you belong, believe, behave!
 - Sectarianism, whose view of the law is correct?
 - Rites of entry, how outsiders become insiders?
- Works of the law
 - Not boundary markers
 - 4QMMT – works which are holy, righteous, and good.
 - Works which the law requires
 - But
 - Does have halakhic connotations
 - Jewish separation from other communities (Aristeas, Greco-Roman authors, Galatians 2, and Justin Martyr)
 - Not legalistic religion.
 - Jewish way of life codified in the Torah
 - Dunn and Wright has conceded this to some degree.

- Justification
 - Wright: WSPRS vs. PFG
 - Justification and Adoption/Election
 - Role of works always problematic
 - Imputation is implied by union with Christ

Where NPP is Right!

- Paul is not arguing against religion or medieval Catholics.
- Paul's main argument is that Gentiles don't have to become Jews in order to become Christians.
- By opposing works of the law, Paul says we are right with God on the basis of faith/trust/allegiance, and not on the basis of a mixture of ethnicity and effort.
- Paul rejects two classes of insiders – proselytes and God-fearers – Gentiles trusting in the Messiah are part of the Israel of God.
- Paul deals with *how* to be saved, but also *who are God's people?*
- Romans is about the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (Augustine, Pelagius, John Locke)
- NPP is good against hyper-individualized accounts of salvation
 - First thing imputed in Romans (2.26)
 - What is the logical opposite of being justified by faith apart from works of the law? (3.29)
 - Why was Christ cursed on the cross (Gal. 3.14-15)
 - What is the sequel to Eph 2.8-10 (Eph 2.11ff about unity of Jew and Gentile)

See my SROG and AAJ

Garwood Anders, *Paul's New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey*

Stephen Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives*