

# An Intertextual Analysis of Romans 2:1-16

Paul White

## Abstract

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We contend that Paul consciously alludes to Deut. 9-10; 29-30 and to Jer. 31:30-34 in Rom. 2:1-16. These allusions shape and inform Paul's discourse and, therefore, provide a new approach to old exegetical questions, such as, the rhetorical nature of vv. 6-11 and whether vv. 13-16 refer to 'Gentile Christians'. On the basis of our intertextual approach we assert that: (1) Romans 2 is essentially covenantal in concern, (2) vv. 6-11 are not hypothetical, and (3) vv. 13-16 refer to 'Gentile Christians'.

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## I Methodological Considerations

### I.1 Who Wrote Romans?

The academic corpus on Romans is nearly unanimous that authorship may be ascribed to the apostle Paul.<sup>1</sup> If we are to properly understand Pauline discourse we must understand something of his heritage, and his self-perception.

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<sup>1</sup> Moo comments, 'Romans claims to be written by Paul (1:1), and there has been no serious challenge to this claim.' Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 1.

Three things are significant:

i) Paul was a Jew. This was his religious community and heritage until his conversion. He was not only a Jew but a 'Hebrew of Hebrews'<sup>2</sup>, zealous for the faith, trained in rabbinic Judaism<sup>3</sup> and rooted in the Scriptures.

ii) Paul was a prophet. Paul perceived his commissioning and vocation after his conversion in prophetic terms. Litwak notes that Paul, in Acts 13:46-47, describes his ministry citing Isa. 49:6: 'Paul himself thus characterises his ministry in the words spoken by Isaiah of the Servant of the Lord.'<sup>4 5</sup>

iii) Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles. Chae has argued that 'Paul's consciousness of his apostleship to the gentiles' is the theme that provides thematic unity to the letter to the Romans.<sup>6</sup> This may be overstatement, but Paul was surely conscious of his calling to show how the OT prefigured the incorporation of the Gentiles into God's eschatological community.<sup>7</sup>

These three facets of Paul shape the nature and the content of his discourse, and, as exegetes of Paul, we ought to recognise that fact and be suspicious of any interpretation predicated on the view that

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<sup>2</sup> Philippians 3:5. All English translations in this article are taken from the ESV.

<sup>3</sup> 'Paul was trained under Gamaliel I (see Acts 26:3), a Pharisee of the school of Hillel.' D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Apollos, 1992), 218.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth D. Litwak, 'Israel's Prophets meets Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17:22-31', *Biblica* 85 (2004): 200. David Moessner also suggests this self-perception: 'Luke has linked Paul to Jesus the prophet like Moses through the common calling and fate of the rejected Deuteronomistic prophet' (David P. Moessner, 'Paul and the Pattern of the Prophet like Moses in Acts', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1983 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards [California: Scholars Press, 1983], 211).

<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Hays comments, 'He [Paul] saw himself as a Prophetic figure, carrying forward the proclamation of God's word as Israel's prophets and sages had always done, in a way that reactivated past revelation under new conditions' (Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [London: Yale University Press, 1989], 14).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel J-S Chae, *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles*, Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>7</sup> See Chae, *Paul as Apostle*, 289-301.

Paul was 'a unique and self-contained phenomenon.'<sup>8</sup>

## I.2 Paul's Hermeneutic

Paul's conversion introduced a discontinuity with his previous life. However, it did not precipitate a complete break with his religious heritage. The Christ Paul met was the *Jewish Messiah*, who came to fulfil the OT Scriptures, not to abrogate them. Thus, we find in Paul's writings both discontinuity and continuity with Judaism.

The presupposition of his upbringing that the OT was the *word of the LORD*, authoritative and normative for God's people, remained. Paul's meeting with the Christ was a meeting with the incarnation of the prophesied hope of Israel. It was, therefore, not only a soteriological event, but also a *hermeneutical* one.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the words and work of Christ do not supersede the OT adumbration, but, rather, provide the key to its full understanding. Indeed as both stand as 'words of the LORD', they enter into a dialogical relationship, mutually informing each other, as they maintain each other's integrity.

How, then, does Paul read the OT in the light of Christ? Since, for Paul, Christ is the one in whom the OT is fulfilled, the OT becomes radically *Christocentric*. Hays comments: 'the Torah is neither superseded nor nullified but transformed into a witness of the gospel.'<sup>10</sup>

Hays further notes that, 'Paul reads Scripture *narratively*. It is not for him merely a repository of isolated proof texts; rather, it is the saga of God's election, judgment, and redemption of a people through time.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Watson comments: 'The Christ Paul proclaims is attested by the law and the prophets; Christ and Scripture reciprocally interpret one another. In all its concreteness and historical particularity, the Christ-event can therefore be described as a hermeneutical event' (*Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 529).

<sup>10</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 157.

<sup>11</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), xvi. This conclusion is supported by the work of Stockhausen who comments: 'Paul takes as the basis for his interpretive task the Torah; that is to

### I.3 Intertextuality and Understanding Pauline Discourse

The above suggests a potentially very fruitful approach to Pauline exegesis, namely, to listen attentively for allusions and echoes to the narrative of the OT.<sup>12</sup> For, as Hays comments: ‘We will have great difficulty understanding Paul, the pious first-century Jew, unless we seek to situate his discourse appropriately within what Hollander calls the “cave of resonant signification” that enveloped him: Scripture.’<sup>13</sup> This is the presupposition behind the exegetical technique of ‘intertextuality’, as pioneered by Richard Hays. Hays defines intertextuality as ‘the embedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one.’<sup>14</sup> Yet an author does not need explicit scriptural citations to reactivate a precursor narrative. One may do so by allusion. Allusion is possible if the participants in communication have a shared heritage, or text, to which allusion is made. For Paul and his audience, that shared text was Israel’s scripture.

Hays’ contention is that Pauline discourse may well be underpinned, even guided, by an OT narrative that testifies, in the light of Christ, to the gospel.<sup>15</sup> That is, we should expect to see the dialogical nature of the OT and NT at work in Pauline discourse.<sup>16</sup>

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say, narrative texts from the Pentateuch...it is Paul’s usual procedure to apply prophetic ... texts to bring the Torah into the proper contemporary focus’ (Carol K. Stockhausen, ‘2 Corinthians 3 and the Principles of Pauline Exegesis’, in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSup 83, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 144).

<sup>12</sup> Hays sees no qualitative difference between allusion and echo. An echo is simply a ‘quiet’ allusion (see, Hays, *Echoes*, 29). Schaefer is more typical of those working in this discipline when he defines an allusion as arising from a conscious thought of the author, while an echo defines an unconscious reactivation of a precursor text (Konrad R. Schaefer, ‘Zechariah 14: A Study in Allusion’, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57 [1995]: 66-91, at 68).

<sup>13</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Hays asserts, ‘the Scriptural texts keep imposing at least part of their original sense on Paul’s argument...’ (Richard B. Hays, ‘On the Rebound’, in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSup 83, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 80).

<sup>16</sup> This supposition is supported by Watson: ‘scripture is not overwhelmed by the light of an autonomous Christ-event needing no scriptural mediation... Pauline theology is thus intertextual theology: explicit scriptural citations are simply the

Hays adopts a diachronic and minimalist approach to intertextuality, accepting only perceived references to the OT and not to other texts and traditions shared by author and reader<sup>17</sup>, since 'Paul repeatedly situates his discourse within the symbolic field created by a single great textual precursor: Israel's Scripture.'<sup>18</sup>

This attention to allusions offers a powerful tool in Pauline exegesis since the OT, as a full dialogue partner, retains its own voice, even as it is appropriated by Paul, and reactivated in the light of Christ.<sup>19</sup> In practice this results in two vital consequences for Pauline exegesis; first, a precursor text alluded to retains its contextual integrity,<sup>20</sup> and, secondly, a precursor narrative *may shape Paul's discourse*.<sup>21</sup>

#### I.4 Intertextuality and Romans

We believe that an 'intertextual' approach to Romans may prove particularly fruitful. Sommer notes that 'some authors call attention to their own allusivity.'<sup>22</sup> We believe that Paul does this explicitly in Romans in the following two texts: 'But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, *although the Law and the*

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visible manifestations of an intertextuality that is ubiquitous and fundamental to Pauline discourse' (*Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 17).

<sup>17</sup> See Hays, *Echoes*, 15-16. Thus, as Sommer notes, Hays is not using the term intertextuality as linguists use it: 'In brief, intertextuality is concerned with the reader or with the text as a thing independent of its author, while influence and allusion are concerned with the author as well as the text and reader.

Intertextuality is synchronic in its approach, influence or allusion diachronic or even historicist' (Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet reads Scripture* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998], 8).

<sup>18</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> 'Paul's allusive manner of using Scripture leaves enough silence for the voice of Scripture to answer back' (Hays, *Echoes*, 177).

<sup>20</sup> Otherwise it would cease to carry any meaning into a dialogue, since meaning and context are organically united.

<sup>21</sup> Hays notes that 'because Paul's allusions conjure up such narratively ordered patterns of connotation, ... intertextual echoes often anticipate the subsequent unfoldings of his dialectic, unifying the argument subliminally' (Hays, *Echoes*, 158).

<sup>22</sup> Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 9.

*Prophets bear witness to it...* Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, *we uphold the law.*' (Rom. 3:21, 31)<sup>23</sup>

It is therefore no surprise to find Romans the most densely packed letter in the NT with OT citations.<sup>24</sup>

### I.5 Criteria for Intertextual References

In order to identify allusions in this study, we shall use the broad categories defined by Berkley, listed below with our explanations.<sup>25</sup> We do so while acknowledging, with Hays<sup>26</sup> and Sommer,<sup>27</sup> that this exegetical methodology is not an exact science.<sup>28</sup> In our study, as with Berkley,<sup>29</sup> we shall only accept an intertextual reference that shows signs of stemming from authorial intent. Thus, we shall be adopting a more 'minimalist' position than Hays.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> My italics.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New* (London: Continuum, 2001), 75.

<sup>25</sup> We shall be using the seven tests proposed by Berkley, although we shall be modifying their use slightly. His tests owe much to Hays, as he acknowledges. See Timothy W. Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to a Circumcision of the Heart*, SBL Dissertation Series 175 (Atlanta, GA.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 60-64.

<sup>26</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Sommer, *A Prophet reads Scripture*, 35.

<sup>28</sup> There will always be a subjective element to what we 'hear' in a text; though we may attune our hearing by adopting reasonable criteria and erring on the side of caution before accepting an allusion.

<sup>29</sup> Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Hays' use of intertextual theory is itself 'minimalist' in comparison to literary theorists who posit synchronic, almost exclusively reader orientated, criteria for intertextual references and the construction of meaning. Hays comments, 'Without denying the value or intrinsic interest of such investigations, I propose instead to discuss the phenomenon on intertextuality in Paul's letters in a more limited sense, focusing on his actual citations of and allusions to specific texts' (*Echoes*, 15). Nevertheless Hays suggests five sources for an intertextual 'event'; (1) in Paul's mind, (2) in the original readers' mind, (3) in the text itself, (4) in my act of reading and (5) in the interpretive community. See Hays, *Echoes*, 26. We intend to accept allusions only when we are confident they stem from category (1).

### 1. *Vocabulary.*

The first criterion for an allusion is that it must show some linguistic similarity to the supposed precursor text. The work of Smith has demonstrated that Paul's *Vorlage* appears to be similar to our LXX.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in our study we shall compare words in Rom. 2 with the LXX.

The case for allusion is strengthened if rare or technical language is repeated,<sup>32</sup> and also, by the presence of similar grammatical constructions.<sup>33</sup>

### 2. *Vocabulary clusters.*

The probability that a repeated word signals a conscious allusion is increased 'when several significant vocabulary correspondences can be drawn between the Pauline text and an OT context. The vocabulary correspondences need not be found in one verse, or paragraph, since Paul is contextually cognizant.'<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *Links with other texts.*

Stockhausen has shown that Paul builds his theological narratives on texts in the Pentateuch 'reconfigured' by the prophets.<sup>35</sup> The links between the Pentateuch and prophetic texts are usually signalled in Paul's mind by the presence of 'hook-words' that lead to 'the formation of a complex of mutually interpreting texts.'<sup>36</sup>

Thus, if we find potential allusions to the Pentateuch and a

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<sup>31</sup> 'In Paul's quotations of the OT there are remarkable affinities with the LXX' (D. Moody Smith, "The Pauline Literature," in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, eds. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 272).

<sup>32</sup> Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 61.

<sup>33</sup> Sommer's warning is important here: 'All students of allusion must distinguish between two types of textual similarity: cases in which one writer relies on another and cases in which two writers use similar language coincidentally' (Sommer, *A Prophet reads Scripture*, 32).

<sup>34</sup> Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 61.

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 11.

<sup>36</sup> Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 62.

prophetic text in Paul and those two possible precursor texts are linguistically and thematically tied in the OT then that strengthens the case that Paul is indeed alluding to those two texts.

#### **4. *Explication.***

If a possible allusion serves to explain Paul's argument or 'the presuppositions underlying his argument',<sup>37</sup> then this constitutes strong evidence for a conscious allusion.<sup>38</sup>

#### **5. *Recurrence.***

That is, does Paul appear to refer to the same possible precursor text elsewhere in his letter? Hays comments: 'When we find repeated Pauline quotations of a particular OT passage, additional possible allusions to the same passage become more compelling.'<sup>39</sup>

#### **6. *Common themes.***

If there exists common vocabulary and it can be shown that the possible precursor text has similar themes running through it as the alluding text then this strengthens the case for allusion.

#### **7. *Common Linear Development.***

Do themes appear in the order of the OT precursor text? Berkley suggests that this is the least important criterion as Paul seldom

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<sup>37</sup> Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 63.

<sup>38</sup> This criterion has its methodological foundations in our previous discussion on Paul's dialectical hermeneutic. Paul respects the authority, and the narrative 'voice' of the OT, and allows it to inform his own understanding of the Christ-event. Thus we should expect to see Paul's discourse occasionally shaped by a precursor text. Therefore, if word associations, or substantial movements of thought, in Paul are explicated by a precursor text we should take that as good evidence of conscious allusion.

<sup>39</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 37.

alludes in the order found in precursor texts.<sup>40</sup> However, we note that the fact that it is rare does not make it an insignificant witness if present.

Sommer makes the important point that the case for an allusion is a *cumulative one*.<sup>41</sup> However, not every criterion is as significant as another. Berkley suggests that tests 1-2 are primary, test 2-3 secondary, and tests 4-7 merely confirmatory.<sup>42</sup> However, while we are broadly in agreement, the work of Schaefer convinces that thematic and structural parallels should be afforded greater significance than allowed by Berkley.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, we shall accept tests 1-4 *and* 7 as primary indicators of conscious allusion.

## II The Deuteronomic Narrative

Scott argues that 'Deuteronomy is crucial to Paul's thinking.'<sup>44</sup> A cursory glance at the vocabulary and themes of Romans 2 reveals striking parallels with the Moabic narratives of Deut. 9-11; 29-30.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 64.

<sup>41</sup> 'The argument that an author alludes, then, is a cumulative one: assertions that allusions occur in certain passages become stronger as patterns emerge from those allusions. In any one passage that may rely on an older text, the critic must weigh evidence including the number of shared terms and their distinctiveness, the presence of stylistic or thematic patterns that typify the author's allusions, and the likelihood that the author would allude to the alleged source' (Benjamin D.Sommer, 'Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger', *Vetus Testamentum* 46 [1996]: 479-89, at 485).

<sup>42</sup> See Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> 'Of these three types of parallel – structural, thematic, and verbal – the weakest, as evidence of a connection between texts, is the verbal, because it could be ascribed to factors of circumstance or chance. The value of the verbal parallel in establishing textual relations increases as the parallel word count between texts and the extent to which the word order matches increase. The structural parallel normally constitutes the strongest evidence for a direct allusion to a specific tradition or text, since it provides supporting evidence for the parallels of word and theme' (Schaefer, 'Zechariah 14', 71).

<sup>44</sup> James M.Scott, 'Paul's Use of Deuteronomic Tradition', *JBL* 112 (1993): 645-65, at 647.

<sup>45</sup> These links shall be demonstrated in the next section.

We shall outline the significant themes of the Moabic narrative before proving the intertextual link with Romans 2 in the next chapter.

## II.1 The Moabic Narrative

There are four principle themes that we find in this narrative:

### 1. *Sin*

The background to the Moabic narrative is Israel's sin and failure. Deuteronomy is fundamentally pessimistic about Israel's ability, in and of herself, to keep God's laws and be faithful to YHWH.<sup>46</sup>

Moses portrays Israel's history as one of persistent apostasy. He highlights the 'golden calf' incident at Horeb (Deut. 9:7-21) and, by conflating his hearers with the generation who perpetrated the apostasy,<sup>47</sup> he makes it archetypal and paradigmatic of Israel's history.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, not only is Israel's history one of persistent failure, so also will be her future (Deut. 29:16-29).

This is because Israel is 'stubborn' (Deut. 9:6, 13; 10:16; 29:19). This is a key motif. Israel has a stubborn, 'uncircumcised', heart and, therefore, every generation is alike, unable to sustain obedience to YHWH. Stubbornness is evidenced by:

- (i) A self-confident pride and misplaced security in covenant

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<sup>46</sup> 'Deuteronomy itself is not naively optimistic about the capacities of Israel to succeed' (J. Gordon McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomiac Theology*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology [Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1993], 133).

<sup>47</sup> 'Moab is the place of recapitulation, bringing together the earlier opportunities and mistakes of Israel, ...Moab is the place which subsumes all previous places in Israel's past, and controls every dimension of Israel's future' (J.G. McConville and J.G. Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, JSOTSup 179 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 68-9).

<sup>48</sup> Merrill commenting on Deut. 9, 'Its [Horeb's] importance as a paradigm of provocation is clear from the fact that Moses devoted fourteen verses to recounting it (vv. 8-21)' (Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], 191).

membership (9:1-8; 29:19).<sup>49</sup>

(ii) The propensity to 'turn aside' from YHWH towards idols (9:12; 11:28, 29:18).

(iii) Spiritual blindness: 'Despite Israel experiencing, seeing and hearing the acts and commands of God, it has failed to apply this properly and to take the extra step of acknowledgement, faith and obedience.'<sup>50</sup> (Deut. 29:3)

## 2. Exile

Israel as a religious entity is bound to apostasy and failure. This apostasy leads to God's wrath against her and His threat to 'blot out their name from under heaven' (Deut. 9:14). Moses' intercession stayed God's hand at Horeb and in the wilderness, but it would not always avail; God's patience would run out and Israel would be sent into exile (Deut. 29:19-28), under God's wrath and fury (Deut. 29:28).

## 3. Restoration and Repentance

However, exile is not the end. In the fullness of exile God promised to restore His people, so that they might become faithfully obedient (Deut. 30:1-14). He would do this by dealing with the twofold barrier to keeping the law.

First, God would circumcise Israel's heart (Deut. 30:6). A stubborn heart was Israel's 'ontological' barrier to faithfulness and obedience. In exile, God would provide the solution by circumcising her heart. God's grace would provide where man's innate efforts were destined to fail.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, God would internalise *torah* (30:11-14). The relationship

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<sup>49</sup> Merrill commenting on Deut. 29:19: 'They might go so far, Moses said, as to invoke the blessings of the covenant upon themselves when they should be prepared for its curses' (*Deuteronomy*, 382).

<sup>50</sup> Paul Barker, *The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), 129.

<sup>51</sup> Moses had called her to circumcise her own heart (10:16) that she might keep the law, but this would prove impossible. Israel's history would testify to the fact that the law would be powerless to change Israel's heart and make her faithful and obedient.

between the proximity of *torah* and man's obedience is a prominent thread in the Moabic narrative. In Deut. 11:18 Israel is called to memorise *torah*. However, her hard-heartedness would make this ineffective. Crucially, in Deut. 30:11-14, God becomes responsible for its internalisation.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4. Faith and Obedience

We note that God's requirement of Israel after her restoration remains as it was before, namely, faithful obedience (Deut. 30:1-14). God judges men according to their deeds (Deut. 30:15-20), not their religious heritage, because He is impartial. This important motif is established in Deut. 10:12-18. Yet the call to covenant faithfulness is not a call to 'works-righteousness'. Rather it is a call to repentance and faith (Deut. 30). God's people must 'turn aside' from their apostasy and love YHWH (Deut. 30:19-20).

This repentance will be met by grace. However, God's grace does not serve to eradicate the necessity of Israel's obedience, but rather to make it possible. As Merrill notes, 'Moses did not command or even exhort his audience to obedience. He promised it as a natural by-product of the renewal of the heart.'<sup>53</sup>

### II.2 The Moabic Narrative and Jeremiah

Our concern here is to demonstrate that Jeremiah 31 consciously picks up the Moabic narrative in order to advance it.

Jeremiah finds Judah physically in the land but spiritually still dwelling at Moab. She is stubborn and uncircumcised (Jer. 4:1-4), it is not *torah*, but sin, that she has internalised (Jer. 17:1), and she refuses to repent (Jer. 2-4), assuming safety in covenant promises (Jer. 7:8-11). Exile is almost upon her.

The context of Jer. 30-33 is exile. Jeremiah writes these words to a generation in Babylonian captivity (c.f. Jer. 29).

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<sup>52</sup> Barker has shown that 30:11-14 belongs to vv.1-10, that is, God's movement to circumcise the heart will also be a move to inscribe *torah* (see Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 198).

<sup>53</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 389.

Many commentators note the thematic links between the great new covenant proclamation of Jer. 31:31-34 and the promise of restoration in Deut. 30:1-14.<sup>54</sup> We shall briefly demonstrate how these verses in Jeremiah cohere with, and advance, the Moab narrative.

First, we note, with Fretheim, that the context of Jer. 31:33-34 is repentance.<sup>55</sup>

Secondly, we note that the new covenant will be inaugurated after the exile: 'this new covenant with Israel will be made by God "after those days" (v.33), that is, after Israel's return from exile.'<sup>56</sup> This covenant is future and 'is grounded in a newly constitutive salvific event.'<sup>57</sup>

Thirdly, it is predicated on a fundamentally new disposition of God towards His people. Human history had been characterised by a cycle of sin, rebellion and judgment. However, at this new time God would intervene and break the cycle (Jer. 31:28-30). No longer will one generation be bound to the previous one as they had been at Moab.<sup>58</sup>

How will this be accomplished? God will make a new covenant. This new covenant will not be breakable because God will write His *torah* on His people's hearts.<sup>59</sup>

The result would be the ability for the repentant to become God's

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<sup>54</sup> E.g., Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, The Anchor Bible 21B ( New York: Doubleday, 2004), 468. Barker comments: 'Deuteronomy 30 shares much the same theological position as the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31. Though the terminology is different, there is theological harmony between the two passages' (*Triumph of Grace*, 181).

<sup>55</sup>See Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 435. The word's usage mirrors precisely its use in Deut. 30.1-10.

<sup>56</sup> Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 442.

<sup>57</sup> Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 450.

<sup>58</sup> Jones comments: 'in the new age there will no longer be a dead weight of the entail of the past' (Douglas R. Jones, *Jeremiah*, The New Century Bible Commentary (London: Marshall Pickering, 1992), 375.

<sup>59</sup> Jeremiah 31:33-34: 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

people and truly to 'know the LORD' (c.f. Deut. 29:4). Jones comments that there would come a 'time when the people of God would not be divided between teachers who know God and others who did not, but all would have the knowledge of God.'<sup>60</sup>

### II.3 Historical Postscript

This portrait of Israel coheres substantially with the 'Deuteronomic View of Israel's History'<sup>61</sup> (*dtrGB*) that came to be codified in the intertestamental period.<sup>62</sup> Importantly, according to *dtrGB*, Israel in the intertestamental period *was still in exile*. Scott notes, 'the condition of exile lasted all through the Second Temple period and even beyond, because the sin of the people ... did not abate.'<sup>63</sup>

## III Establishing Intertextual Allusions in Romans 2:1-16

### Verses 1-5

These verses show significant linguistic and thematic parallels with the Moabic narrative.

The language of Rom. 2:5 shows clear linguistic parallels with the Moabic narrative. The verdict that the interlocutor has a hard heart (τὴν σκληρότητα ... καρδίαν) parallels the verdict of Moses on Israel (ὅτι λαὸς σκληροτράχηλος (Deut. 9:6 LXX)). Indeed, the pairing of hard and unrepentant is itself suggested by the Moabic narrative in which their roots are both key lexemes. The Moabic narrative antithesises a hard heart with a repentant one (c.f. Deut. 30:1-20).

Further, we note that Paul's verdict on the future of his interlocutor is wrath (θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργήν), which precisely parallels the verdict delivered by Moses to his listeners (ἢ τότε ἐκκαυθήσεται ὀργή κυρίου (Deut. 29:19 LXX)).

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<sup>60</sup> Jones, *Jeremiah*, 401.

<sup>61</sup> This is Scott's phrase ('Paul's Use of Deuteronomic Tradition', 647).

<sup>62</sup> Scott notes that the *dtrGB* came to incorporate six elements; (1) Israel is rebellious, (2) she refuses to repent, (3) she rejects the prophets and their critiques, (4) she, therefore, experienced God's wrath in the exile, where she still languishes, (5) she still has the chance to repent and (6) if she repented she would be fully restored ('Paul's Use of Deuteronomic Tradition', 647-650).

<sup>63</sup> Scott, 'Paul's Use of Deuteronomic Tradition', 648.

Thus, we assert that v.5 alludes back to the narrative of Moab. It fulfils the linguistic category of Berkley's tests, including three key lexemes that appear clustered in the narrative. More importantly, the flow of the verse follows the thought of Moses, namely, hardness and unrepentance leading to wrath. Finally, the text alluded to explicates Paul's pairing of hardness and unrepentance. This constitutes strong evidence for allusion.

If Paul is alluding back to the Moabic narrative we would expect his discourse to display significant thematic parallels to it. These parallels are in evidence. We shall work backwards from v.5.

The portrait of the interlocutor in vv. 3-4 is strikingly reminiscent of Israel (particularly Deut. 9:4-8 and Deut. 29:19: ὅσιά μοι γένοιτο ὅτι ἐν τῇ ἀποπλανήσει τῆς καρδίας μου πορεύσομαι (Deut. 29:18 LXX)). Here is a category of covenant member who rests secure in his covenant membership, though he continues to walk in the stubbornness of his heart. He has despised the grace and patience of God, not realising that this should lead to repentance not a licence to sin (c.f. Deut. 30).

We note too the context of his disobedient praxis: the sight of idolatry in the surrounding nations, through whom he passes in the wake of the Exodus event (Deut. 29:16-17), and the knowledge of his own history of apostasy (Horeb). Such a man's succumbing to similar idolatry is evidence of a stubborn heart, a heart that has not been given understanding (οὐκ ἔδωκεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν καρδίαν εἰδέναι (Deut. 29:3 LXX)). This will lead to wrath and exile.

Similarly, Paul's interlocutor assumes his covenant membership makes him safe from God's wrath (v.3: λογίζη δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἄνθρωπε ὁ κρίνων τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας καὶ ποιῶν αὐτά, ὅτι σὺ ἐκφεύξῃ τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ) even though it rightly falls on the surrounding nations (Rom. 1:18ff.).<sup>64</sup> Yet rather than learn from God's judgment on them, he engages in their folly, just as Israel has always done (we note

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<sup>64</sup> The commentaries are in broad agreement that the interlocutor portrayed in these verses is resting in a perceived state of safety as resulting from being a covenant member. Dunn summarises the attitude of vv. 3-4 thus: 'Do you think that because you are marked off from the 'lawless' and protected by the covenant that you can still do such things and yet escape God's judgment' (James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC 38A [Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1988], 90).

the allusion to Horeb in Rom. 1:23).<sup>65</sup> He presumes on God's kindness to him, not knowing that God's kindness should lead to repentance (ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιάν σε ἔγει) (Rom. 2:4).<sup>66</sup>

Though there are no explicit linguistic links, the thematic and explicatory parallels are clear.<sup>67</sup> The conclusion that his interlocutor is 'stubborn' is predicated on the same evidence as Moses had. Paul's interlocutor is the presumptuous covenant member of Deut. 29:19 redivivus.

Finally, we turn to vv. 1-2. Israel's attitude is described by Moses in Deut. 9:4-8 as self-righteous. Moses says she is as stubborn as the nations, doing exactly the same things, and only God's promises, and Moses' intercessions, keep God's wrath from her (Deut. 9:24-29).

The thematic parallel with Rom. 2:1-2 is clear. Paul's interlocutor passes a similarly self-righteous judgement on the nations that are experiencing God's wrath. He too fails to recognise that in passing judgment on them he condemns himself because he does the same things as them.

Therefore, we conclude that Rom. 2:1-5 fulfils the criteria necessary to establish a conscious allusion back to the narrative of Moab. Further evidence will be adduced at the end of this section.

### Verses 6-11

The Moabic narrative moves from the indictment of Israel's sin to the necessity for obedience and faith if they are to avoid God's wrath (n.b., Deut. 9 to Deut. 10; 11 and Deut. 29 to Deut. 30). If Paul is consciously alluding to this narrative we would expect him to make the same move. This is exactly what we find.

Moo has shown that these verses are grammatically linked to those

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<sup>65</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 61.

<sup>66</sup> Moo comments on the construction here, 'The participial clause in the last part of the verse – "being ignorant that the goodness of God is leading you to repentance" – shows that God's purpose in his kindness is not to excuse sin but to stimulate repentance' (*Romans*, 133).

<sup>67</sup> We note too that the language of 'not knowing' in Rom. 2:4 is suggestive, in this context, of Deut. 29:4, and the fact that Paul cites Deut. 29:4 later in Rom. 11:8 strengthens the notion of an echo here.

preceding<sup>68</sup> and explain why Paul's interlocutor is facing God's wrath.

Fitzmyer *et al.* have noted that these verses form a chiasm:

- 'a. God will repay everyone according to his deeds (v 6)
- b. eternal life for those who do good (v 7)
- c. wrath and fury for those who disobey (v 8)
- c'. distress and anguish for those who do evil (v 9)
- b'. glory, honor, peace for those who do good (v 10)
- a'. no impartiality in God (v11)<sup>69</sup>

The outer ring (a, a') gives the principle by which God makes his eschatological judgements. The next ring (b, b') states that God will give life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον) to those that seek the good. The innermost ring (c, c') states that wrath and fury (ὀργὴ καὶ θυμός), tribulation and distress (θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία) await evildoers.

Paul states that his interlocutor faces wrath because God judges according to deeds. This is so because He is impartial (προσωποληψία).

This train of thought finds its origin in Deut. 10:16-17: 'Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart (lit. 'hard heart' σκληροκαρδίαν), and be no longer stubborn (lit. 'hard' σκληρυνεῖτε). For the LORD your God ... is not partial (οὐ θαυμάζει πρόσωπον) and takes no bribe.' Dunn rightly notes that 'the movement of thought from 2:5-11 is in effect Paul's elaboration of Deut. 10:16-17.'<sup>70</sup>

The word 'impartial' is a rare and important one in both narratives.<sup>71</sup> Both narratives contextualise the word in a discussion about the need to be obedient (Rom. 2:7-10 paralleling Deut. 10:12-14), and, therefore, the need of a circumcised heart.

Thus, we find a close linguistic, thematic and contextual fit with

<sup>68</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 136.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible (London: G. Chapman, 1993), 303.

<sup>70</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 89.

<sup>71</sup> The lemma appears just three other times in the NT: Eph. 6:9, Col. 3:25 and Ja. 2:1. The form οὐ ... προσωποληψία (lit. 'not receive to the face') accords well with the LXX οὐ θαυμάζει πρόσωπον, and perfectly with the MT פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים in Deut. 10:17.

the Moabic narrative. The use here of the word 'impartiality' suggests the intertextual link, and the contextual parallels confirm it. The principle of judgment according to works, not covenant possession, lies at the heart of the Moabic narrative and is here alluded to by Paul.

On the basis of this principle Moses calls his audience to covenant faithfulness and obedience. As Ito notes, the similarities between Rom. 2:7-10 and the 'list of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27-30'<sup>72</sup> are clear. Indeed, the structural parallel with Deuteronomy 30:15-20 is suggestive. We note that the death that awaits the disobedient in Deuteronomy is exile (Deut. 30:18) which is described as an experience of wrath and fury (ἐν θυμῷ καὶ ὀργῇ (Deut. 29:28 LXX)|). The language of 'tribulation and distress' (Rom. 2:9: θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία), notes Ito, 'reminds us of the phrase "in the siege and in the distress" (ἐν τῇ στενοχωρίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν τῇ θλίψει σου), which recurs in Deut. 28:53, 55, 57....'<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the linguistic, thematic and structural parallels of Rom. 2:7-10 with the Moabic 'blessings and curses' narrative are very strong.

### Verses 12-16

We shall begin with vv. 14-15. Paul speaks of a category of Gentiles (ἔθνη) who 'do the things of the law' (τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν) and thus show that 'the work of the law is written on their hearts'. This assertion that doing the law is evidence of an internalised law is explicated perfectly by Deut. 30:11-15.

Yet there is even greater linguistic coherence with another text; Jer. 31:33:

Jer. 31:33: δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτούς (Deut. 38:33 LXX)

Rom. 2:15a: οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν

At first sight the linguistic similarity is striking. As Gathercole notes, four key lexemes of Jeremiah are repeated in Rom. 2:15.<sup>74</sup> This

<sup>72</sup> Akia Ito, 'Romans 2: A Deuteronomistic Reading', *JSNT* 59 (1995): 21.

<sup>73</sup> Ito, 'Romans 2', 26.

<sup>74</sup> S. J. Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves: The Gentiles in Romans 2:14-15 Revisited', *JSNT* 85 (2002): 27-49, at 41.

fulfils the vocabulary test of Berkley. It should also be granted that this allusion would be 'loud' in the ears of Paul's readers. That is to say, Jer. 31:33 is not an obscure text, thus it does not take much to call it to mind.<sup>75</sup> Paul has surely done that.

Furthermore, having established Paul's allusion to the Moabic narrative in this section we can see that an allusion to Jeremiah belongs here. Jeremiah consciously casts his oracle as the means by which the covenant faithfulness of Deuteronomy might be fulfilled. Paul can be seen to follow this thought. The requirement of covenant faithfulness (Rom. 2:7-10, 13) moves to the means of covenant faithfulness. Gentiles 'doing the things of the law' must be recipients of the Jeremiah oracle. Paul has recognised the O.T. linking of Jer. 31 with Deut. 30 and appropriated it.

We close by demonstrating that his discourse shares the same common linear development as the Deuteronomic narrative:

Theme	Deuteronomic Narrative	Romans
Looking at the nations under wrath and judging	9:4-6; 29:16, 17	2:1
Covenant presumption though doing same things	9:4-8; 29:19	2:3-4
Hard-hearted and facing wrath	9:13-27; 29:18-28	2:5
For God's people must be faithful since God is impartial.	10:10-17; 30:15-20	2:6-11
God will internalise the law so that His repentant people might be obedient.	30:1-14; Jer. 31:33	2:12-16

In conclusion, we assert that Paul's discourse in Rom. 2:1-16

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<sup>75</sup> This concept of 'loudness' is from Hays who uses it as a criterion for establishing allusions (Hays, *Echoes*, 30).

consciously alludes to the Deuteronomic narrative of Israel.

#### IV Intertextual Exegesis of Romans 2:1-16

##### Verses 1-5

One of the more exegetically important, and debated questions posed by Rom. 2:1-5 surrounds the nature of Paul's interlocutor.<sup>76</sup> Our intertextual reading offers support and modification to the consensus that the interlocutor is a Jew.

We proved in the previous section that Moses' audience at Moab fitted the profile of vv. 1-5. This substantiates the 'Jew' referent of the interlocutor. Yet our reading also offers a modification.

Paul's portrait of his interlocutor is not so much a critique of Israel *qua* judgmental moralist, but rather, Israel *qua* old covenant people. This is Paul *qua* prophet not Paul *qua* sociologist. Paul has covenantal, rather than existential, concerns in mind as he writes Romans 2.

Israel is being criticised, through the interlocutor, because she is still taking God's patience for granted. She feels safe and righteous in her covenant status (v.3). She continues in her ignorance of what the LORD is doing in salvation-history (v.4), failing to understand the person and work of the Messiah, Jesus. Therefore, she fails to repent and put her faith in Jesus. This is evidence that she still has a hard, unregenerate, heart. Thus, she has not received the fulfilment of Jeremiah, and is still the *old* covenant people, not the *new*. God has not opened her eyes; she is still in exile (n.b., Rom. 2:24), and faces a worse exile to come.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> In the history of interpretation several categories of people have been proposed who might fit the description Paul offers here. Many have supposed that Paul portrays a pagan moralist, who similarly 'wags his finger' at the immorality of his peers. For a list of such exegetes, see C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 1, I-VIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1975), 138 n.1. Yet more recently, scholarly opinion seems to be that the interlocutor is a Jew (e.g., Moo, *Romans*, 126).

<sup>77</sup> Schreiner puts it well: 'What Paul suggests here is that Jews who do not believe in Jesus as Messiah have not yet been the beneficiaries of the new covenant work of the Spirit by which the law is written on the heart. Their disobedience shows that they have not yet received the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 30.6) that the

The interlocutor *qua* covenant member allows vv. 1-5 to bear a secondary rhetorical audience, namely, the church. It thus acts as a warning to those who may similarly believe that church membership negates the need for personal holiness.<sup>78</sup>

### Verses 6-11

These verses have similarly provoked much discussion in the commentaries. Can a text that seems to posit the necessity of ‘works’ for salvation be squared with Rom. 3:20?

Most commentators answer that it cannot. Thus, Schreiner comments, ‘the dominant interpretation is that these verses are hypothetical.’<sup>79</sup> Moo adopts a species of this argument.<sup>80</sup> However our intertextual analysis will not allow such a ‘hypothetical’ reading.

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Jews were to receive after exile’ (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998], 108). Our intertextual reading has a further exegetical benefit: Many commentators are agreed that the opening word of the chapter (Δὶὸ, v.1) presents something of a puzzle. For, as Schreiner comments, ‘it is not immediately clear how δὶὸ (*dio* therefore) relates to what has just been said’ (Schreiner, *Romans*, 106). Many suggestions have been advanced to solve this perceived difficulty, ranging from the possibility that δὶὸ here has lost its usual inferential sense to Bultmann’s ‘counsel of despair’ that v.1 is a gloss. (For a list of some of the solutions that have been advanced, see, Cranfield, *Romans I-VIII*, 140-141.) Yet none of these solutions have proved satisfying.

However, reference to the Deuteronomistic narrative underpinning this discourse resolves the problem. Moses reminds Israel that they are no more righteous than the unrighteous pagans, as their fathers’ apostasy at Horeb testifies. They are still that same ‘stubborn’ humanity, guilty of sin and in need of repentance. Therefore, their covenantal status does not excuse them, and persistent sin will result in wrath. This precisely parallels Paul’s point in 1:18 – 2.5. Having indicted the unrighteousness of the pagans, and included Israel in that indictment (note the allusion to Horeb in Rom. 1:23), he turns to present day Israel reminding them that their sin demonstrates that they are just as ‘stubborn’ and *therefore* (Δὶὸ) without excuse.

<sup>78</sup> This suggestion that the church may also be invited to compare themselves with the interlocutor is supported by Neil Elliot, *The Rhetoric of Romans*, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 126. It should be noted that he reaches this conclusion on grounds different to my own.

<sup>79</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 114.

<sup>80</sup> See Moo, *Romans*, 142.

God's impartiality demanded that His people be obedient (Deut. 10:12-17; 30:15-20). As McConville notes about this thought in Deuteronomy, 'blessing and righteousness are proper complements.'<sup>81</sup> Covenant obedience was supposed to be characteristic of covenant people.

If Paul is alluding to Deuteronomy then these verses must function the same way rhetorically. That is, these verses must set out the true and persistently normative account of 'God's eschatological retribution.'<sup>82</sup> This is because God is no less impartial now (Rom. 2:11) than He was then (Deut. 10:17).

There are two principal objections to this reading. First, isn't this a 'works-righteousness' soteriology which Paul excludes in 3:20? Second, does a non-hypothetical reading require perfectionism?<sup>83</sup> We shall deal with these in turn.

First, Moo urges a 'hypothetical' reading here since 'the stress in v.6 on man's works as *the* criterion in the determination of a person's salvation or condemnation makes it difficult to fit grace into the situation at all.'<sup>84</sup>

However, Moo has failed to locate Paul's discourse in the Moabic narrative. The Deuteronomic context for successful law-keeping is faith and an eschatological *work of grace* (Deut. 30:6, 11-14). God's people must be obedient, but as McConville notes, 'Deuteronomy 30:11-14 affirms Israel's capacity to respond adequately to God's demand, because it knows that in the end God will "circumcise [their] hearts" (30:6).'<sup>85</sup> Paul's gospel is in perfect agreement with the Law (Rom. 3:21). It is 'gospel' not because God has changed his mind about the necessity of works, but because, as Paul will say next, God has kept His promise and changed the natures of His people.

Second, these verses do not require perfectionism. We can show that in three ways. First, the verses themselves do not require that reading. Snodgrass and Cranfield both note that the language of

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<sup>81</sup> McConville, *Grace in the End*, 133.

<sup>82</sup> To use Fitzmyer's phrase (*Romans*, 302).

<sup>83</sup> Both these objections are noted by Klyne R. Snodgrass, 'Justification by Grace – To The Doers: An Analysis of the place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul', *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 72-93, at 82-83.

<sup>84</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 142.

<sup>85</sup> McConville, *Grace in the End*, 156.

‘patience in well-doing’ (v.7) does not demand a perfectionist reading.<sup>86</sup> It could equally mean a whole-hearted commitment to do what pleases the LORD. Secondly, Deuteronomy does not demand perfectionism. Yinger asserts: ‘the requisite obedience (righteousness) was never viewed as *flawless perfection*, but might be better described by such terms as *consistency*, *integrity*, and *authenticity* of action.’<sup>87</sup> Thirdly, Paul speaks about the necessity of works elsewhere in his writings (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:10) without ever countenancing perfectionism.

God required covenant obedience from His people. He still does. Perfect obedience is only required within a ‘works-righteousness’ soteriology.<sup>88</sup> Neither Moses, nor Paul, viewed the law that way.<sup>89</sup> Obedience and faith are united organically in Deuteronomy, as they are here. This coheres precisely with Paul’s calling to encourage ‘the obedience of faith’ (Rom. 1:5). Moo comments: ‘we understand the words “obedience” and “faith” to be mutually interpreting: obedience always involves faith, and faith always involves obedience.’<sup>90</sup> This is the message of Deut. 30:1-15.

### Verses 12-16

It is well established that Rom. 2:14-15 is something of a *crux interpretum* in the exegesis of Romans 2.<sup>91</sup> There has been significant debate as to whether Paul is here adopting the rhetorical categories of

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<sup>86</sup> So Snodgrass, ‘there is nothing in Romans 2 to suggest that perfection is required for salvation. 2.7 refers only to seeking glory, honour, and immortality according to a good work’ (‘Justification by Grace – To The Doers’, 83). Cranfield agrees (see, Cranfield, *Romans I-VIII*, 147).

<sup>87</sup> Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism and Judgment According to Deeds* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 105; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 62. This is supported by Barker, who commenting on Deut. 30:15-20, says, ‘the real character of obedience is a confession of trust and faith in Yahweh. Obedience does not seek to earn life in as much as it seeks to express reliance on Yahweh, the source of life’ (*Triumph of grace*, 209). We note that the law made provision for sin, even for the ‘righteous’, in the sacrificial system.

<sup>88</sup> As Snodgrass well notes (‘Justification by Grace – To The Doers’, 83).

<sup>89</sup> See McConville’s helpful discussion (*Grace in the End*, 152-157).

<sup>90</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 52.

<sup>91</sup> Gathercole, ‘A Law unto Themselves,’ 41 n.72.

Stoicism<sup>92</sup> or a Hellenised Judaism<sup>93</sup> by speaking of pagans who have a 'natural law' inscribed on their hearts. Others have contended that Paul is speaking here of Gentile Christians, who, by the Spirit of God, are able to do the things of the law.<sup>94</sup>

Proponents of the 'Gentile Christian' view assert that the language here displays great similarity to the promise in Jer. 31:33. They claim that these Gentiles who (lit. 'do the things of the law' v.14) have received the fulfilment of the Jeremiah promise, they are 'new covenant' people, having the law written on their hearts. Opponents counter, claiming that the differences in wording are significant,<sup>95</sup> and that such an allusion to Jeremiah does not fit the context of Romans 2, nor the immediate context.<sup>96</sup>

Our intertextual analysis has situated Paul's discourse in the Deuteronomic narrative and shown that an allusion to Jeremiah 31 is not only probable on linguistic grounds, but indeed, demanded on thematic and structural grounds. Thus, agreeing with Cranfield,<sup>97</sup> we advance a 'Gentile Christian' reading of these verses. We shall now turn to tackle objections to this reading before outlining further exegetical consequences of our position.

### Objections

The first objection is that of 'natural law': Pagan Gentiles have a shadow of the *torah* on their hearts enabling to keep some aspects of God's law, but not enough to save them.<sup>98</sup> We advance four reasons why our reading is preferable to the 'natural law' reading.

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<sup>92</sup> So Fitzmyer commenting on his understanding of the language and thought in these verses concludes, 'it would seem that he [Paul] is tributary to Greek philosophical thinking' (*Romans*, 306).

<sup>93</sup> See Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 106 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 158.

<sup>94</sup> For example, Cranfield, *Romans I-VIII*, 154-157. More recently this position has been defended by Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 27-49.

<sup>95</sup> E.g., Moo, *Romans*, 152.

<sup>96</sup> See Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 153.

<sup>97</sup> Cranfield, *Romans I-VIII*, 155-159. *Contra* Moo, Dunn, Fitzmyer, Schreiner, Bell.

<sup>98</sup> E.g., Moo, 'These Gentiles, while not possessing *the* law of Moses, nevertheless have access to knowledge of God's will for them' (*Romans*, 151).

First, 'Natural law' would cause Paul to draw too much from the wells of Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism. Bell has shown that it is unlikely that Paul has 'baptised' a Stoic thought here.<sup>99</sup> Gathercole has shown that the parallels with Hellenistic Judaism also fail to fit the context of the discourse.<sup>100</sup> We have shown that such a reading would be inconsistent with the Deuteronomic context to Paul's discourse here. Our reading coheres far better with the canonical presentation of Paul *as a prophet*. As such, we would expect him to use O.T. categories and narratives. This supposition is supported by Ito.<sup>101</sup>

Second, Paul's use of 'law' here must be a reference to the Mosaic law.<sup>102</sup> Thus, 'natural law' readings posit a residual 'shadow' of the Mosaic law imprinted on the pagan heart.<sup>103</sup> However, this is difficult to reconcile with Deut. 4 where Israel thanks God that they, *and they alone*, have been given *torah*. What advantage would there have been for the Jews if, in fact, the Gentiles had a copy of *torah*, and already written on their hearts?<sup>104</sup>

Third, Gathercole has shown that 'natural law' is difficult to square with 1:18-32.<sup>105</sup> After all that Paul has said about the degeneracy of the Gentiles, it is awkward here to suppose that Paul accepts that they do many good things, that will in fact, offer some kind of defence on Judgement Day. Yet Dunn is forced, on a 'natural law' reading, to understand the verses that way.<sup>106</sup> Bassler has to understand these verses as hypothetical,<sup>107</sup> while Dabourne accuses

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<sup>99</sup> '... when we look at Paul's own use of φύσις, it is clear that the word has no specific philosophical content ... and the likelihood that Paul derived his view of law in Rom. 2.14-15 directly from Stoicism is slim' (Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 156).

<sup>100</sup> Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 39.

<sup>101</sup> Ito, 'Romans 2', 31, n.31.

<sup>102</sup> As Dunn comments on v. 14, 'the whole point of what Paul is saying here would be lost if νόμος was understood other than as a reference to *the law*, the law given to Israel' (*Romans 1-8*, 99).

<sup>103</sup> E.g., Moo, *Romans*, 150.

<sup>104</sup> This point was made to me in a private conversation with Dr James Robson.

<sup>105</sup> Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 43.

<sup>106</sup> Dunn asserts that there is an 'openness here to the reality, not just hypothetical possibility ... of gentile goodness...' (*Romans 1-8*, 99).

<sup>107</sup> Jouette M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* SBL Dissertation Series 59 (California: Scholars Press, 1982), 145.

Paul of inconsistency.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, Wright has shown that these verses parallel Paul's discourse in vv. 25-29.<sup>109</sup> In vv. 25-29 Paul speaks of Gentiles who have received the true circumcision of the heart, unlike 'old covenant' Jews. Dunn and Moo are typical of those who accept that these Gentiles must be Christians while rejecting such a reading of vv.14-15.<sup>110</sup> Yet the linguistic and thematic parallels between the two texts suggest a theological parallel also.

A second objection is that the Jeremiah prophecy speaks of Israel, not Gentiles, receiving *torah* on their hearts.

Yet Paul often inverts expected referents when he alludes back to an OT text. Moyise notes that Paul in Rom. 3:10-18 will take texts that generally refer to the enemies of Israel and incorporate Israel as their referent.<sup>111</sup> He further notes that Paul is not thereby guilty of destroying the integrity of the precursor text but rather that by incorporating it into a gospel discourse it receives a new eschatological meaning consonant with, but not identical to, its original.

Indeed Paul's inversion does not destroy the integrity of Jeremiah since one of the principal motifs of Jeremiah is the removing of the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. Shead concludes, 'the stress on inclusiveness in Jeremiah 31:33-34 becomes, in Paul's treatment, the vehicle for carrying the Sinai covenant into the age of the Gentiles. As the apostle to the nations, Paul did no violence to his Jewishness.'<sup>112</sup>

This inversion of referent is designed to pack a rhetorical punch. Here, the replacement of the Jews by Gentiles in God's eschatological

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<sup>108</sup> Wendy Dabourne, *Purpose and Cause in Pauline Exegesis*, SNTS Monograph Series 104 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 134.

<sup>109</sup> N.T. Wright, 'The Law in Romans 2', in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, WUNT 89, ed. James D.G. Dunn (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 146-148.

<sup>110</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 125. We note Moo's comment, 'For the first time, then, in Rom. 2, Paul alludes to Christians' (Moo, *Romans*, 175).

<sup>111</sup> See, Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSNTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 140-1.

<sup>112</sup> Andrew G. Shead, 'The new covenant and Pauline hermeneutics,' in Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, eds, *The Gospel to the Nations* (Leicester: Apollos, 2000): 33-50, at 46.

plan is designed to make the Jews jealous. This design is rooted in Deut. 32:21. It is only foreshadowed here, but will become explicit in chapters 9-11.

Bell states the third objection well: 'the idea that Gentile Christians fulfil the law φύσει does not sound at all Pauline.'<sup>113</sup> However, this is simply to pre-judge the issue. The promise of Jeremiah is that God will precisely deal with man's nature (circumcising the heart to internalize His law), in order that we might keep the law (Deut. 30:11-14). Therefore, that Paul might describe Christians who have received this change of heart as fulfilling the law φύσει fits the context perfectly.<sup>114</sup>

A fourth objection is stated by Gathercole, 'How can these Gentiles be justified on the basis of such piecemeal obedience as τὰ τοῦ νόμου?'<sup>115</sup> Yet, as Gathercole proves, the construction 'τὰ τοῦ X' usually indicates the sense of whole-hearted orientation towards 'X'.<sup>116</sup> Thus the verses are less about legal 'arithmetic', i.e. how many rules are being kept, and more about the direction of one's life. Gathercole concludes, 'the reference is to the fundamental knowledge of God and orientation to his will that is lacking in the Jewish contemporaries...'.<sup>117</sup> This covenant obedience is precisely what we saw outlined in Rom. 2:6-11 and adumbrated in Deuteronomy.

Thus, we understand vv. 14-15 as referring to Gentiles who have repented and put their faith in Jesus. They are the beneficiaries of the fulfilment of God's eschatological promise to internalise the *torah* in the hearts of His people. This internalisation means that these Gentiles now have saving knowledge of God, and are able, by the spirit, to 'do the things of the law'.

Having established the 'Gentile Christian' reading we shall now work backwards and note the consequences for understanding verse 13.

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<sup>113</sup> Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 152.

<sup>114</sup> It is possible, as Wright argues, that φύσει modifies what precedes rather than what follows as is commonly assumed (see 'The Law in Romans 2', 145). This would make our reading even more secure. Nevertheless, we agree with Bell *et al* that φύσει modifies what follows (*No one seeks for God*, 152 n.97).

<sup>115</sup> Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 34.

<sup>116</sup> See Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 34.

<sup>117</sup> Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 35.

The 'doers of the law' who will be justified are *Spirit-filled Christians*. As Gathercole notes, the γὰρ that begins verse 14 is best taken as explaining verse 13.<sup>118</sup>

This fits with the Deuteronomic narrative exactly. Doing the law is proof that it has been internalised.<sup>119</sup>

### V Function of Romans 2:1-16 and Epistolary Context

Moo is typical of many commentators who view Rom. 2:1-16 as simply 'preparation for the gospel.'<sup>120</sup> That is, Paul here is relativising all distinctions between Jew and Gentile, showing that both are guilty, and neither can seek refuge in the possession (v. 13) or non-possession (v. 15) of the law. Therefore, they both need a Saviour (c.f. Rom. 3:21-31).<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Gathercole, 'A Law unto Themselves', 33.

<sup>119</sup> Our intertextual reading also yields a very different meaning of v. 12 than commonly understood. This verse is taken by Moo et al as a distinction removing verse used negatively by Paul to adumbrate his point in 3:20 that all – Jew and Gentile – regardless of *torah* possession will sin and be rightly judged (See, e.g., Moo, *Romans*, 146.). Yet this seems only to reiterate a point that Paul has already made, namely, that Jews and Gentiles are alike, caught up in apostasy and facing wrath (1:18-2.5). Our intertextual reading leads us to posit that v.12 echoes Jer. 31.30a ('But everyone shall die for his own sin.'). That is, v.12 does indeed remove the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, but for a positive reason. This verse is not teaching that *all* will sin and die, rather, that there is now a possibility to escape the inevitability of sin and death. The eschatological moment of Jer. 31 has come, the exile has ended and God is restoring His people (1:1-17). Therefore, mankind is no longer trapped in the old salvation-historical moment, in hard-heartedness and sin, unable to do God's law. Now there is a new movement in history; the sin-exile nexus of human history has been broken by the Christ. There is now freedom from the power of sin, and power to keep God's law for those who repent (2:13-15). No longer is the fate of the children necessarily that of their fathers (1:18-2:5); only those who sin will die, those who repent will live.

<sup>120</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 148.

<sup>121</sup> Moo argues that Paul's discourse is designed to 'validate the inclusion of Jews along with the Gentiles under sentence of God's wrath by showing that Jews stand on the same basic ground as Gentiles when it comes to God's judgment. For, in the first place, God's impartiality demands that he treat all people the same... (vv.6-11). ... Paul shows that possession of the Mosaic law will make no difference in this judgment (v.12) – for (1) it is not the possession but the doing of

However, Moo *et al.* have failed to ‘hear’ Paul’s allusion to the Deuteronomic narrative running through these verses. Our reading has shown that there is far more here than ‘preparation’.

By locating his discourse in the Deuteronomic narrative Paul roots it in *covenantal* concerns. The issue here is not proving that all are guilty (he has done that already in Rom. 1:18-32), but, rather, what is the state of Israel, and who are God’s true covenant people?

For Paul, the Messiah has come and the exile is over (Rom. 1:1-4). Yet Israel are still ‘stubborn’, refusing to repent and trust the Christ (Rom. 2:1-5). They still face God’s wrath because they are disobedient (Rom. 2:6-11). With the coming of the Christ, Paul expects the fulfilment of Jer. 31:30-34 amongst God’s people. Israel’s disobedience and unrepentance show that she has not been the recipient.

However, some Gentiles (ἔθνη), to whom Paul has received a ‘calling’, have repented and turned to Jesus. They are now being obedient, which shows that they have received the fulfilment of the Jeremiah oracle (Rom. 2:12-16). They are showing themselves to be the *new* covenant people.

Such a reading fits the epistolary context perfectly. We have shown that an indictment of Gentile, and Jewish, apostasy, such as the one offered in Rom. 1:18-32, is the expected context of Paul’s intertextual discourse.

Romans 2:17-29 parallels our reading exactly. Paul proves that Jewish disobedience demonstrates that they are still in exile (vv. 17-24). He then turns to a category of Gentile who demonstrate, by their obedience, true circumcision (vv. 25-29).<sup>122</sup>

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the law that matters (v.13); and (2) the Gentiles also have “law” in some sense (vv.14-16).’ (*Romans*, 127).

<sup>122</sup> Berkley has shown that Paul continues to allude to Deut. 29-30, as well as from Jeremiah, in Rom. 2:17-29 (*From a Broken Covenant*, 81-105). Further, we note that Israel’s problem is that she still does not know God (Rom. 2:21). She still requires teaching. This motif would be in Paul’s mind if he had just alluded to the Jeremiah oracle since it promises that for God’s new covenant people, ‘no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.’ (Jer. 31:34)

Finally, we note that Paul's discussion here foreshadows the thought of ch. 9-11. Paul is in anguish at the state of Israel (Rom. 9:1-4). Israel has 'stumbled' because they sought salvation in 'works-righteousness', but the Gentiles have rightly sought it in the 'obedience of faith' (Rom. 9:30 – 10.13). Paul quotes Deut. 30:11-14 to show that the reception of Christ is the internalisation of *torah*. Further, Gentiles are receiving God's eschatological salvation in order to make the Jews jealous (Rom. 10:19, quoting Deut. 32:21). Israel is being hardened for a time (Rom. 11:8, quoting Deut. 29:4) until the fullness of the Gentiles have come in (Rom. 11:1-25).

## VI Conclusion

We have shown that Paul's discourse in Romans 2:1-16 consciously alludes to the Moabic narrative of Deuteronomy 9-10; 29-30. He follows the OT in uniting that narrative with Jeremiah 31:30-34. This intertextual analysis yielded three substantial exegetical findings:

- (a) The concerns of Romans 2 are fundamentally covenantal.
- (b) Verses 7-10 are not hypothetical. They articulate the requisite 'obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5).
- (c) The Gentiles who 'do the things of the law' are Gentile Christians.

REV. PAUL WHITE  
Southborough Team Ministry  
ppwhites@hotmail.com