

# **Controversy on the Damascus Road:** What Happened to Saul that made him Paul?

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Charles St-Onge  
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## **Introduction**

Engineers are by nature bothered by unexamined alternatives. If three options exist and only two are argued, one must ask the question, “What of the third?” This is the case with the controversy surrounding Paul’s experience on the Damascus road and its impact on his theology and mission. The classically held perspective is that Paul had an encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ, commissioning him to preach to the Gentiles, which led him either immediately or very shortly thereafter to formulate his doctrine of justification through faith in that risen Lord. The New Perspective on Paul sees his conversion as primarily a revelation that Christ is Lord of the Gentiles, and that the cultic law of the Old Testament no longer need be followed for them to participate in the covenant between God and Israel. Paul’s theology of justification only developed later as he worked out his mission of bringing his Gospel to the non-Jewish nations. This view has been advanced in recent decades by such scholars as E.P. Sanders and James Dunn. The third option is this: that Paul expected a Messiah who would reveal a universal salvation through a New Covenant, and that the Jewish nation could hasten the Messiah’s coming by fulfilling the provisions of the Old Covenant. On the Damascus road Christ revealed to Paul that his death had completely fulfilled the Old Covenant, and that his resurrection was the sign that the New Covenant promised to Israel had been made by God in him. This third alternative is proposed, necessarily very briefly, as one that might address the concerns of both positions.

## **The New and Old Perspectives on Paul**

The chief thesis of the New Perspective, from which their other interpretations flow, is that “[The] doctrine of justification was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the rights of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promises of God to Israel.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the concern for the reconciliation of the Jews and the Gentiles was prior to Paul’s development of a doctrine of justification by grace through faith. The chief assumption made by the New Perspectivists is that Paul’s Damascus road experience was nothing more than a call to preach Christ to the Gentiles. Christ was the means through which the Gentiles, apart from the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, could partake of the blessings of God’s covenant with Israel.<sup>2</sup> Stendahl writes, “Paul’s call brings him to a new understanding of his mission...His ministry is based on the specific conviction that the Gentiles will become part of the people of God without having to pass through the law.”<sup>3</sup> This minimalist approach to what occurred to Paul on the Damascus road may be driven by a desire to provide a more rationalistic explanation for the conversion of ‘Saul’ to ‘Paul’.

Seyoon Kim, in his book *Paul and the New Perspective*, explored several avenues down which New Perspectivists have wandered, guided by their main thesis. For example, the New Perspectivists seem to work under the assumption that Paul persecuted the Christian church only for its gentile mission. This view interprets the Pharisaic version of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish faith to be primarily concerned with “defend(ing) the distinctive national identity given them by their ancestral religion.”<sup>4</sup> Admission of the Gentiles into the church/synagogue without strict adherence to Jewish ritual was therefore an abomination that Paul sought to arrest. The actual preaching of Jesus as Messiah did not trouble Paul as much as the rejection of Jewish ceremonial rites by Hellenistic Jewish Christians. Kim, as part of the Old Perspective, does not critique the view that Paul persecuted the church for its gentile mission. He does, however, reject the view that ceremonial rites were the only thing at stake for Paul and the Pharisees. Kim asks a rhetorical question that illustrates his chief objection: “Why would [Paul] have been concerned about the

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<sup>1</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 2.

<sup>2</sup> Krister Stendahl, along with E.P. Sanders, is credited with laying the foundations for the New Perspective on Paul. T.L. Donaldson and J. Dunn have built on their initial work. (Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 93)

<sup>3</sup> Stendahl, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002) 24.

heretics feeding the gentiles with their heretical doctrine about which he was not at all concerned?"<sup>5</sup> In other words, why would Paul go through all the trouble to stop the conversion of gentiles to a sect he no longer considered truly Jewish?

The New Perspectivists also hold that Paul's positive view of the law in many of his letters demonstrates that he did not reject Jewish customs, at least as far as the Jewish community was concerned. How could he have thoroughly rejected the law at one point, salvation, and then say that he continues to uphold it? (Romans 3). The thesis of the new view is that "The Judaism of Paul's day did not require perfect obedience of the law, but it rather understood the law to include provisions for repentance and sacrifices of atonement for transgressions committed," a view known as 'covenantal nomism.'<sup>6</sup> Kim does not dispute that Paul's view of the law "is indeed complex."<sup>7</sup> But he does take the traditional explanation of Paul's use of the law, which is to say that the moral code of the Old Testament law remains, though the ceremonial aspects of the law have been fulfilled in Christ. Kim cites Dunn himself in defense of his argument: "Dunn does acknowledge that there was 'some reassessment of Paul's relation to the law' at his conversion."<sup>8</sup> In other words, Paul clearly views the law differently after the Damascus road experience. Kim continues to critique this thesis later in his book, asking how it is that Paul can say that everyone under the law is under a curse, if the New Perspective is correct.<sup>9</sup>

The main thesis of the new view depends on the belief in a late development of Paul's doctrine of justification by grace through faith. According to this view, Paul's earliest correspondence should then contain little if any reference to this belief that became so prominent in Galatians and Romans. 1 Thessalonians, Dunn and others argue, does indeed seem to contain little reference to justification through faith alone apart from works. Kim, however, argues quite the opposite. He demonstrates in the second chapter of his book that 1 Thessalonians does indeed contain many implicit references to justification. For one example, Kim considers the references to the will of God connected with Jesus' teachings, rather than with the Torah. If the law remains the best expression of God's covenant relationship with his people, why does Paul refer not to the Torah but to the teachings of Jesus Christ?<sup>10</sup>

Kim also indirectly critiques the New Perspective in the remaining chapters of his book by restating some of the main points of his more classical thesis regarding the relationship between Paul's doctrine of justification and the Damascus road experience. For example, Kim gives a summary of his thesis that Paul's "eikwn-Christology and wisdom-Christology" flow directly out of his conversion experience, and were not later developments.<sup>11</sup> Paul interpreted his Damascus road experience in light of the theophanies of the Old Testament, notably to Isaiah, as well as in light of apocalyptic currents in Jewish thought, for example the vision of the Son of Man in Daniel 7.<sup>12</sup> His disagreement with the New Perspective can best be summarized in his own words:

How odd Paul's 'gospel' to the gentiles would have been if it only announced that through the crucifixion and resurrection of Israel's Messiah the God of Israel had shown his favor to the gentiles and welcomes them into his covenant relationship without requirements such as circumcision and the food laws.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kim, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Kim, 130.

<sup>7</sup> Kim, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Kim, 141.

<sup>10</sup> Kim, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Kim, 165.

<sup>12</sup> Kim compares Paul's language regarding his call with the language of Isaiah 42 in his third chapter, with the Ezekiel call narrative in chapter 5, and with the Isaiah call narrative in chapter 7. (Kim, 101, 165 and 242).

<sup>13</sup> Kim, 49.

### **A Critique of Both Positions**

Both positions depend heavily on certain key assumptions regarding Paul's background in particular and the position of mid-1<sup>st</sup> century Pharisees in general. The main assumption is that the Pharisees, including Paul, were awaiting a kingly-nationalistic Messiah who would restore Israel's independence and establish a temporal reign. Neither the New Perspective nor the classical view question this assumption. Both perspectives would also agree, perhaps with caveats added by both sides, that the Pharisees saw the Jewish rituals and temple rites as the means by which God forgave sins, reconciled the Jewish people to himself, and maintained the covenant relationship with them. The classical view, then, seeks to show how Paul's Damascus vision led him to a radically new view of Jesus, and therefore also of the Jewish faith, the temple, the church and the synagogue. The Messiah would not be a "nationalistic leader" like Moses, but a Redeemer who would reconcile the world, both Jew and Gentile, to God. The New Perspective, not wanting to pin so much on a historically uninterpretable encounter, sees Paul as maintaining his Pharisaic views of the Jewish ritual, but now seeing Jesus as the means for the gentiles to enter into the Mosaic covenant God has made with Israel. The Old Covenant remains in play, but Jesus has grafted the gentile nations into Israel's tree. What is lacking in both views is the possibility that the Pharisees of Jesus' time, Paul included, saw the Jewish faith in a different light. What if the Pharisees were attempting to close out on the debt of the Old Covenant, because *they fully anticipated a Messiah who would deliver a new covenant on a radically different order than the old?*<sup>14</sup>

It is true that, in the words of one author, "We have hardly any direct evidence about Jewish Pharisaic thought from the first half of the first century of our era."<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, current research tends to show the unlikelihood that the Pharisees in general, or at least Paul in particular, were not impacted by the apocalyptic thought that played such an important role in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism. First of all, the Pharisaic school was most certainly not monolithic in its theological stance. Many authors see in Gamaliel, for example, a teacher of moderate Pharisaism standing apart from the more strict forms of other Pharisaic schools.<sup>16</sup> There was certainly room, then, for a variety of positions within the camp of the Pharisees. Furthermore, it is believed that some of the post-Christian apocalyptic texts, such as *The Assumption of Moses*, were written by a splinter group of Pharisees.<sup>17</sup> Belief in angels and demons, characteristic of the Pharisees of Second Temple Judaism (Matthew 22:23-34, Acts 23:6-8), was consistent with pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic literature.

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<sup>14</sup> "It is customary to distinguish two main types of expectation [in early Judaism]: rabbinic and apocalyptic, though these two have many variants and are linked by many different cross-connections. For the rabbinic tradition, God is always Lord and Ruler of this world, yet there is an expectation that he will step forth some day from his hiddenness and show his power openly. This provides the basis for a distinction between two ages or aeons. The time of the Messiah belongs to the present aeon, but his rule mediates the transition to the aeon to come...[The Zealot program] politicizes Israel's eschatology by interpreting the hope of Israel as a fundamentally political program. Another way of translating hope into practice is exemplified by those rabbis who held that redemption, the days of the Messiah, could be brought nearer through repentance, keeping the commandments, and good works...By contrast, the apocalyptic brand of expectation stressed...the radical difference between the two aeons." (Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*. Michael Waldstein, trans. (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1988) 27-28). It is the author's contention that Paul fit into the latter group rather than the former.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Hengel. *The Pre-Christian Paul*. John Bowden, trans. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991) 19.

<sup>16</sup> Hengel writes the following regarding Gamaliel, the teacher of the law mentioned in Acts 5: "Gamaliel was possibly a man of compromise, who attempted to stand above the schools...Presumably there is so little information about [him]...because he did not fit so well into the traditions of later times as they became rigid." (Hengel, 28-29)

<sup>17</sup> Hengel, 131.

Another feature of Pharisaic thought that reflects the themes of Second Temple apocalyptic is a strong eschatological dualism, a belief in a final determinative conflict between good and evil.<sup>18</sup> If this is true, some Pharisees most certainly had to have held to the core worldview of apocalyptic Judaism, that “the world had changed and that traditional perspectives were threatening to lose their evocative power...They no longer believed in the ongoing existence of this world...this world had to perish.”<sup>19</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the main assumption of both the classical and the New Perspective understandings of Paul’s Pharisaism, that “Like his contemporary Jewish colleagues, he, as a zealous Pharisee, had expected a nationalistic Messiah like David or Moses.”<sup>20</sup> A return of the nation of Israel to independence, and international vindication, would not have been the primary expectation of strongly apocalyptic Pharisees. They would instead be looking for a Messiah who would bring this world to an end, and make all things new (Isaiah 43:19).

Paul himself reflects apocalyptic literature in many of his epistles. In the Corinthian writings, notably 2 Cor. 12:1ff and 1 Cor. 13:1, there are “numerous and sometimes astonishing parallels to apocalyptic texts, primarily to IV Ezra and Syrian Baruch, which come from the Pharisaic sphere.”<sup>21</sup> Some authors have gone so far as to state, “There is no doubt about it: Paul was an apocalypticist before he received the vision on the way to Damascus, and after that he remained an apocalypticist.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, “Albert Schweitzer [w]as the first scholar to argue that Jewish apocalypticism was the matrix for Paul’s thought...Ernst Kasemann, among others, also considered apocalyptic to be the ‘mother’ of early Christian theology.”<sup>23</sup> It would be irresponsible to ignore the possibility that Paul, and perhaps other Pharisees, held to a dualistic eschatology that expected a Messiah who would bring about a cataclysmic end to the current world.

Neither could the Pharisees have been completely ignorant of the promises of a New Covenant present in the Old Testament writings, nor how that New Covenant would in some way impact God’s, and therefore Israel’s, relationship with the gentile nations. It has long been supposed that the several passages of the Old Testament that prophecy the New Covenant promised by God were ignored or at least sidelined by the Pharisees. Those who hold to the New Perspective and the classical view both seem to presume that, for the Pharisees, the New Covenant could be summed up in a fulfillment of the promises made under the Old Covenant. In other words, God would restore the throne to a successor of David, and Israel would reign supreme among the nations. Given Paul’s knowledgeable quoting of the Old Testament passages speaking of a New Covenant, this seems unlikely. Kim writes, “Apparently the overwhelming experience of the Spirit at his conversion and call led Paul to see the promises of God in Ezekiel 36-37 and Jeremiah 31 as fulfilled, for the prophetic passages are alluded to in 2 Corinthians 3...”<sup>24</sup> These verses, by Kim’s own admission, must then have been known to him even before his conversion. The themes of both Ezekiel’s and Jeremiah’s prophecies would call for a covenant that would result in more than mere independence for Israel and a restored Davidic kingship.

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<sup>18</sup> “Paul is linked to the Qumran writings by his basic eschatological-dualistic attitude, his sense of an imminent end to this aeon and of the presence of salvation, concealed from non-believers...Taking into account its considerably plurality, [Pharisaism before 70 CE] presumably had an essentially stronger eschatological...and dualistic stamp than is suggested by its later development in the rabbinic texts.” (Hengel, 50-51)  
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<sup>19</sup> Den Heyer, C.J. *Paul: A Man of Two Worlds*. John Bowden, trans. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998) 62.

<sup>20</sup> Kim, 234.

<sup>21</sup> Hengel, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Den Heyer, 66.

<sup>23</sup> I. Howard Marshall, “A New Understanding of the Present and the Future: Paul and Eschatology” in *The Road from Damascus*, Richard N. Longnecker, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997) 48.

<sup>24</sup> Kim, 158.

Paul, when describing himself as a “Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” in Acts 23, attempts to make common cause with his brother Pharisees against the Sadducees. He states that it is with respect to “the hope and the resurrection of the dead” (περὶ ἐλπίδος καὶ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) that he is on trial (Acts 23:6). While the verse is often translated along the lines “hope in the resurrection of the dead,” the better translation distinguishes the two. “Hope” is a separate category. What may very well be in view here is the hope of the coming of the Messiah to usher in the New Covenant, and make all things new. Kittel, in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, defines ἐλπίς as the

Expectation of the fulfillment of Jewish hopes and negatively it is expectation of judgment on the wicked...The basis [of hope] is that the future belongs to God, but for participation in the promises there must be observance of the law as well as trust in God. The law reveals God’s will, but as a way of life, not a theoretical system. This will does not change with the future aeon. The difference is that the Messiah, who keeps and teaches the law, will extend it to the Gentiles. But the messianic age will come only when Israel itself keeps the law.<sup>25</sup>

This in turn leads to a third aspect of the Pharisees religious worldview within late Second Temple Judaism. The Pharisees, of whatever camp, all believed that Israel or at least a portion of Israel must close out the Old Covenant before the Messiah could usher in the New Covenant. Until Israel itself fulfilled its duties fully toward God, the end could not come. Paul himself seemed to be optimistic about the ability of zealous Jews to perfectly fulfill the obligations and bring about the end of the Old Covenant (Philippians 3:4-6). “The evidence for Paul’s ‘robust confidence’...does not suggest a mind schooled to doubt humanity’s capacity to please God.”<sup>26</sup>

At this point, we can propose a possible worldview for the pre-conversion Paul. First of all, Paul and at least some other Pharisees held to views not dissimilar to those of other Second Temple apocalypticists. They expected a final, decisive judgment of God that would end the Old Covenant and usher in a new, permanent one that would be marked by a radical discontinuity between the previous world and the next. Second, a Messiah would come who would be the one to inaugurate this New Covenant. With this Messiah would come the signs of the end of the old world: the lamb lying down with the wolf, the child playing over the adder’s nest, the law being written on people’s hearts, the Gentiles paying homage to and at Zion (Isaiah 11:6-8, Jeremiah 31:33, Isaiah 18:7). An important part of this New Covenant would be a change in arrangement between the Jews and the gentile nations. Third, all of this will only come to pass once Israel has fulfilled its covenantal obligations. It must be ritually pure before God prior to the new promises being fulfilled.

The chief reason, then, that Paul rejected Jesus’ and the church’s claim to his Messiahship is that the final, decisive judgment did not happen. Where was the “new thing” God had promised? “Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” (1 Peter 3:4). Despite the Pharisees’ constant urging for Jesus to show the signs of a end to this world, and the beginning of the new, he responded only with passages from the writings of the Old Covenant (Matthew 12:38-45). Far from things being different, the Messiah himself met with an ignominious end on a Roman cross. As one author puts it, “Paul did not find the expectation of the coming of the Messiah strange, but it was impossible for him to imagine that someone who had died on the cross could be the Messiah.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. 1985; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed.) . William B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Westerholm, “Sinai as Viewed from Damascus: Paul’s Reevaluation of the Mosaic Law,” in *The Road from Damascus*, Richard N. Longnecker, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997) 156.

<sup>27</sup> Den Heyer, 69.

Furthermore, the relationship between Jew and Gentile had not been changed. Where were the people streaming to Zion to pay homage to the Jews and their Lord? The New Perspective holds strongly to the view that Paul persecuted the church for its “welcoming gentiles into the fold of the people of God without circumcision and the food laws.”<sup>28</sup> Kim himself, a holder of a more classical view, does not seem to deny at least the fact that Paul persecuted the church for its lax attitude toward gentiles. Yet the Scriptures give no indication that Paul persecuted the church specifically for its attitude toward gentiles. According to the argument of the preceding paragraph, Paul would in principle have had no objection to the gentiles becoming part of the people of God. This, indeed, was God’s ultimate purpose. Paul’s problem would have been with the church’s conviction that Jesus, as Messiah, had established the New Covenant. In other words, Paul and the other Pharisees did not recognize in Jesus the fulfillment of the promises of passages such as Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36-37, and Isaiah 11. Therefore the church had “jumped the gun” in saying the New Covenant was here. Even worse, the church’s disregard for the cultic elements of the Mosaic law was putting at risk Israel’s fulfillment of the Old Covenant and therefore the advent of the *true* Messiah, who in their minds was yet to come. “This is precisely why Saul wanted to go to Damascus, in order to create order there, so that the followers of this ‘tendency’ could no longer confuse the Jewish synagogues there and lead their members astray.”<sup>29</sup>

What then happened to Paul on the Damascus road? For the New Perspectivists, Paul’s Damascus vision led him to see how the gentiles would be brought into the Old Covenantal relationship between Israel and the Lord through Jesus, apart from the Mosaic cultus. For those who hold to the classical view, Paul’s vision led him to see the New Covenant promises for the first time, and radically reinterpret his understanding of the Messiah’s person and work. If, however, Saul the Pharisee already expected the Messiah to deliver a New Covenant that would be for Jew and Gentile, the Damascus road experience was on a slightly different order. What Christ revealed to Paul was two-fold. First of all, that Israel could not fulfill the Old Covenant through her works and ritual observances. This was the first mistake of the Pharisees. The Scriptures in fact revealed that it was precisely the *Messiah* who would foreclose the Old Covenant. No amount of ritual purification of Israel and obedience to the law would be able to fulfill the requirements of the law. Paul then understood that Christ’s obedience unto death did not invalidate his Messiahship, but rather was the complete fulfillment of the Old Covenant demands.

Secondly, by the revelation of his resurrection, Paul realized that the eschatological judgment, the radical shift he had been awaiting, had indeed occurred. One who had been dead was now alive: not merely resuscitated, but in a new mode of existence in which all could share. This was the inauguration of the New Covenant (Romans 4:25). The Old had now indeed passed away, and the new had come (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ’s resurrection was the sign that Paul’s apocalyptic hopes had indeed been fulfilled, despite outward appearances to the contrary. This was the key that unlocked Paul’s theological views. Mears suggests that “Paul originally shared the belief that the exaltation of Jesus in his resurrection was the fulfillment of the predictions about the future.”<sup>30</sup> More than that: Paul saw in Christ the end of the world and the beginning of the new he had been awaiting. The birthpangs had begun, (Romans 8:22), the firstfruits of the new life had been revealed (1 Corinthians 15:20), although now partly hidden in the remnants of the old life (1 Corinthians 13:12, Colossians 3:3).

This then explains Paul’s call to the Gentiles. His role in the bringing in of the new world would be the reconciling of Jew and Gentile to the Lord in the New Covenant, as had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament. He will be “especially responsible for bringing in the full number of the gentiles.”<sup>31</sup> This is not to say, as the classic view has sometimes stated, that the Damascus road experience led Paul to see

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<sup>28</sup> Kim, 33.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer. *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch*. John Bowden, trans. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) 82.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Kim, 113.

Jesus as for both Jew and Gentile. Paul expected a Messiah that would in some way reconcile the two. What Paul was shown on the Damascus road was that Jesus *was* the Messiah Paul had been expecting. The commission to preach to the Gentiles, then, would not have been at all strange or unusual for Paul.

It also explains the strong and radical stance Paul took against James, Peter and other Judaizers in their instance on circumcision for the gentile converts. Why use the sacraments of the Old Covenant when the New Covenant is now in effect? Why insist on purity rituals when the Lord has clean water to sprinkle that will remove all uncleanness (Ezekiel 36:25)? Clearly the leadership of the early church had not yet grasped the significance of the Lord's words at the Last Supper.<sup>32</sup> It would take Paul, with his clear understanding of the implication of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the New Covenant, to wean the church off the Mosaic covenant. Until Paul's conversion, there is little conflict over gentile conversion. Only after Paul's conversion and mission do the controversies over circumcision and table fellowship arise.<sup>33</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A leading opponent of the New Perspective on Paul, Seyoon Kim, writes, "It appears that further work is needed to clarify the relationship between the covenantal and forensic dimensions of justification."<sup>34</sup> In other words, there is a need for a position that recognizes a certain covenantal nomism in Second Temple Judaism, while also recognizing the early development of Paul's doctrine of justification and the its universal application to both Jew and Gentile. The position delineated in this paper has sought to accomplish this. Along with the New Perspective, this alternative takes seriously the view that the Pharisees saw the law as both a command to be righteous in works but also to receive forgiveness in the cultus. With the classical view, it agrees that after his conversion Paul no longer saw any benefit to the Mosaic covenant, but only a curse and knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). It differs from both in the belief that Paul, and other Pharisees as well, had Messianic expectations shaped more by apocalyptic thinking and prophecies concerning the New Covenant than by a narrow belief in a temporal and worldly ruler/king who would restore Israelite independence. Once Israel, or a remnant thereof, had fulfilled Israel's covenant obligations, the Messiah would come and inaugurate the New Covenant. Paul's persecution of the church, then, was due to his conviction that Jesus was not the expected Messiah. This conviction was shaped chiefly by the lack of the signs that apocalypticists expected to accompany the Messiah, including establishment of a new world order, and in particular the vindication of the Jews in the sight of the gentiles which in turn would lead to a new relationship between God's covenant people and the other nations of the earth. On the Damascus road Christ revealed to Paul that he in his crucifixion had fulfilled Israel's obligations, and that his resurrection was the eschatological sign of the New Covenant he had awaited. Now Paul would be the one to bear the message of reconciliation between God and humanity to all the nations of the earth, and especially to the Gentiles.

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<sup>32</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Luke 22:20) See also Paul's account of the institution of the Supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." (1 Corinthians 11:25).

<sup>33</sup> Kim points this out when arguing against the New Perspective understanding of the late development of Paul's doctrine of justification. He asks, "Why [did] the problems of circumcision of gentiles converts and table-fellowship with them [arise] so late?" The answer is clearly that the church had not yet broken with the Old Covenant. (Kim, 27)

<sup>34</sup> Kim, 83.

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