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Scriptural Reasoning – the Dynamic that Informed Paul's Theologizing

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Paul's theologizing is entrenched with Scriptural language and quotations. It is the argument of this article that this obviously close relation of Paul's writings and Israel's Scriptures has to be seen as being on a deeper level than a mere use of Scriptures as proof texts for his gospel. Paul's theologizing is entirely rooted in the symbolic universe of Israel's Scriptures. This implies that his form of arguing is basically shaped and informed by Scriptures rather than primarily by forms of Western logic and rationality. It is a form of Scriptural reasoning which negotiates meaning in a communal and dialogic process being in interaction with fellow Christ believers as well as non Christ believing fellow Jews. Paul is thus perceived not as a more or less coherent thinker of Western logic and its dualisms but as one who is creatively playing with the multiple rhythms of Scriptures related to life in the light of the Christ-event. This could contribute to an understanding of Christian identity beyond the restrictions of dualistic thinking as well as to the recognition of the close link between theological thinking and the practice of faith in everyday life.

1 Introduction – Paul and Scripture

That there is an inherent relation between Paul's writings and the Scriptures of Israel is a recent scholarly recognition following on from earlier insights. [1] Most of these recent studies concentrate on Paul's 'use' of the Old Testament/the Scriptures and its relevance for explaining and defending his 'doctrine' of faith. The Scriptures for Paul are perceived merely as a 'witness to the gospel' or theological proof texts for his doctrine.[2] Significantly, along with such an

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[1] Already in earlier centuries this has been an issue of scholarly research as e.g. Emil Kautzsch, *De Veteris Testamenti loci a Paulo Apostolo allegatis.* Leipzig: Metzger und Wittig 1869; Hans Vollmer, *Die alttestamentlichen Zitate bei Paulus.*Freiburg: Mohr 1895; Otto Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel.* Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann 1929; E.Earl Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* .Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd 1957.

[2] Cf. Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus.*Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr 1986.

emphasis on Paul's 'use' of the Scriptures goes a denial of any significance of the Scriptures for Paul's guidance of his communities in matters of practical life and ethical conduct.[3] Such an approach implies a certain duplicity, in fact a split mentality in Paul's 'use' and appreciation of Scripture – there are the more spiritual parts which refer to the prophetic promises, whereas other parts deal merely with the material aspects of life, and ethical conduct. [4]

Whilst some of the more recent studies concentrate predominantly on the explicit citations of Scripture by Paul, such as Christopher Stanley in his *Paul and the Language of Scripture*[5] , others find *Echoes of Scripture* (R. B. Hays)[6], or structures of specific parts of Scriptures as the underlying pattern of one particular letter or sections of it. [7] Despite the divergence of these studies, they seem to share to some extent a perception of the relation of Paul and the Scriptures which stresses the *and* in this phrase in a way that puts some distance between the two entities, Paul and the Scriptures, rather than combining them. Though emphasizing the importance of the Scriptures for Paul, the relationship is described as one between two separate entities – there is Paul and the gospel he is proclaiming on the one side and there are the Scriptures of Israel on the other. The Scriptures are seen as providing the language, providing support, providing proof texts for Paul's 'Christian' arguments in his letters. Paul is seen as 'using' the Scriptures as a sort of quarry to serve his own purpose.

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[3] On this see Brian Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7*.Leiden: Brill 1994, pp.3-13.

[4] Cf. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics,* p.5

[5] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992.

[6] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1989.

[7] E.g. Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 2002

Though emphases such as those on the thorough analysis of the citation technique, and those on the echoes of Scriptures in the Pauline letters are invaluable, this is not what is meant by 'Scriptural Reasoning'. 'Scriptural Reasoning' does not seek to investigate exactly how Paul cites the Scriptures nor whether or not echoes can be heard in his ways of thinking but rather presupposes such references and relations to the Scriptures. It also does not perceive Paul's 'use' of Scripture as serving him to support or prove an argument which has its roots elsewhere. It can rather be seen as an approach which has similarities with Rosner's approach who concentrates in his study not on the 'use' of Scripture in a technical sense but '….in its wider sense to include not only explicit use of Scripture but also what might be called implicit or instinctive use of Scripture.'[8]

Scriptural Reasoning also does not depict the Scriptures and Paul's gospel which he is proclaiming as two separate entities that might punctialliarly be related to each other in Paul's 'use' but, apart from this 'use', basically have nothing to do with each other.

Rather, as Campbell, Nanos, et al, have emphasized, the Scriptures are seen as the symbolic universe within which Paul lives, within which he is rooted in his thought and life before as well as after his call. [9] Thus he is perceived as living, thinking and acting from within this symbolic universe whilst working out the implications of life in Christ for his gentile communities. The authority of the Scriptures as that which shapes his perception of the world is thus presupposed in this perception of Paul's way of reasoning.

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[8] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics,* p.17.

[9] As W.S. Campbell emphasizes "It is the peculiarity of Paul's cultural inheritance that contributed largely to his thought world." 'The Contribution of Traditions to Paul's Theology' in David M. Hay ed. *Pauline Theology Vol II,* Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1993, p. 253. And M.D. Nanos states that " Paul's…….message and framework of thinking are those of one who considers himself working within the historical expectations of Israel…." *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996, p. 26.

Having indicated what 'scriptural reasoning' is not, before we go on to describe how we perceive 'scriptural reasoning' as that which informs the dynamics of Paul's theologising, we want to give a brief description of 'Scriptural Reasoning' as a discourse which is emerging in the wake of postmodernity, more precisely in the wake of postcritical theology.

2 What is 'Scriptural Reasoning'?

The term 'Scriptural Reasoning' has come to prominence in postcritical theologies as expressed in the series *Radical Traditions: Theology in a Postcritical Key* edited by Peter Ochs and Stanley Hauweras.[10] What is being proposed is a return to scriptural traditions, 'with the hope of retrieving resources long ignored, depreciated, and in many cases ideologically suppressed by modern habits of thought.'[11] It is in the first instance a movement that began as an offshoot of the study of Judaism but parallel to this movement of Jewish thinkers there has now developed a movement that invites Jewish, Christian and Islamic theologians back to the texts of their respective traditions, recovering and rearticulating modes of 'scriptural reasoning'. The movement is driven by questions concerning the place of theology and, more specifically, of scriptural faith in contemporary life. Significantly, the participants of this discourse locate themselves at home both within their respective faith communities as well as in Western universities.

The move towards Scriptures does not imply a naïve return to some 'original' pure text or original truth, but neither is it an uncritical application of so-called 'rational' forms of thinking and reasoning in the Western philosophical tradition. The movement finds significant

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[10] Cf. e.g. Steven Kepnes, Peter Ochs and Robert Gibbs, *Reasoning after Revelation: Dialogues in Postmodern Jewish Philosophy.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1998, Tikva Frymer-Kensky et.al eds. *Christianity in Jewish Terms,* Boulder, CO: Westview Pres 2000, Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene eds., *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century.* Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans 2003.

[11] 'Radical Traditions', Series description, in *Textual Reasoning.*

affinities between Jewish forms of reading and reasoning and postmodern thought. It challenges the notion of there being just one single discourse of reasoning and rationality, that is, that of Western science and logic, as the valid model for the 'right' way of thinking. As Peter Ochs describes this '....they (scriptural reasoners) criticize the efforts to adopt certain academic disciplines as universal standards of rationality, as if rabbinic (or Christian, or Muslim, or Sanskrit) texts were to be deemed 'rational' only in so far as their claims were reducible to the terms of the latest academic science.' Such efforts are perceived as expressions or tendencies of Western imperialism. Ochs continues 'They presume, instead, that indigenous practices of text-reading represent indigenous practices of reasoning, and that one task of contemporary Jewish thought is to find terms, categories and logics through which such indigenous modes of rationality can be identified and discussed across the borders of different text traditions.'[12] This does not exclude in any way the openness of such scriptural traditions to contemporary practices of reasoning. Scriptural reasoners do not see themselves as foundationalist, they tend to affirm and reform the practices of scriptural traditions as well as modern rationality. It is significant that participants in this discourse describe their activities as a movement. They thereby emphasize the relational and social dimension of what is described here. It is a thinking in relation with others rather than being performed by isolated scholars in their ivory towers. It is a thinking with and around texts in dialogue with other thinkers – what Rosenzweig has called 'speech-thinking' or 'thinking with an 'and', and which for Buber was labelled dialogic thinking. It is a thinking of a community, a communal act, in relation to the Scriptures, to God and to each other. 'Scriptural reasoning' is a social enterprise. The autonomous modern self is decentred in this enterprise. It is integrated into a specific community and tradition through this dialogic process. As such, rather than being a mere intellectual theory, scriptural reasoning is a form of practising philosophy and theology which, as a communal enterprise, generates new ways of reading and new ways of reasoning. Or more precisely, new-old ways of reading and reasoning since it is a reading of sacred

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[12] 'Introduction' in *Textual Reasoning,* p. 5.

texts in and for ever-new contexts, responding to specific contemporary needs and challenges.

Moreover, the particularity in and of this discourse is stressed by several of its 'activists'. As this form of reasoning is related to the particular Scriptures of a particular community at a particular moment in history it is obvious that claims of universal or eternal truths cannot be raised. Scriptural reasoning is a dialogic process between particular people in relation to particular traditions, it implies and allows independent entities to stand in relation with each other without combining or merging them into some third entity.[13] Dialogue thus does not imply identity or sameness. It presupposes and maintains relationships that persist despite differences, differences being rather honoured than negated.

To emphasize the particularity of the dialogical process called scriptural reasoning does not mean to retreat to an island, or into sectarianism or a ghetto. The return to one's own traditions does not mean to isolate oneself from other traditions. This return is embedded in the context of cultural and religious pluralism. A positive relation to and respect for other worldviews and faiths is part of this dialogical process, not least the scriptures of Judaism.

Scriptural reasoning as described above is inspired and nurtured by classic rabbinic forms of conversation - as conversations around texts in relation to community life before God - and relates such conversations to contemporary academic conversations around texts and questions of philosophy, theology and methods. As conversations around texts, this form of interpretation opened up ways for innovation in preserving continuity with the tradition. In disagreeing with another interlocutor one could still be listening to, and learning from, one another, since all are related to the same text. Differences are not accommodated, the many voices are not assimilated into one and the same, the rabbis were masters of polysemic reading.[14]

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[13] Cf. Gibbs in *Reasoning after Revelation*, p. 23.

[14] Cf. *Reasoning after Revelation* "...the rabbinic texts are dialogic. They ask us to take parts, and then they destabilize those parts by jumping from one

David Ford in his 'Response to textual reasoning' emphasizes that there are analogies in Christianity to the rabbinic tradition of conversation. Since these were marginalized in Christian traditions a re-awareness of Jewish textual reasoning encourages a comparable approach to Christian Scripture and tradition, a rediscovery of 'Scriptural Reasoning' in Christian ways of re-engaging with Jewish ways of handling Scripture and tradition as the tradition to which they are so closely related as to share common roots. This might counteract and support the repairing of the damage done by authoritarian, universalizing traditions of Christian interpretation across the centuries. [15]

As Ford further emphasizes, the passion for teaching and learning is an aspect of scriptural reasoning that might prove inspiring for a Christian approach since it alerts us to the necessarily open process of interpretation as dialogue. With Ford's comments in mind I want to sketch out what 'scriptural reasoning',[16] as the dynamic which informed Paul's theologising, might involve.

3 Paul's Scriptural Reasoning

a) The Jewish Context of Paul's Reasoning

Paul's reasoning is not only rooted in the Scriptures but is developed in association with, and in the context of, contemporary Jewish

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context to another, changing the interlocutors. Even if every opinion is discarded, each one solicits the effort to justify it. You cannot read these texts alone; and when you read them with another person, they encourage you to improvise, to append your own thoughts, and to keep changing perspectives." p. 59,also p. 36.

[15] Ford, "Responding to textual reasoning: What might Christians learn ?" in *Textual Reasoning*, p. 263ff.

[16] This is done with the precaution Peter Ochs emphasizes when he writes 'But textual reasoners remain as yet in the early stages of their efforts to discover and explain what kind of reasoning this is, what its premises are, its modes of inference, and its instruments of articulating and testing these inferences.' *Textual Reasoning*, p. 8.

thinking and exegesis. Paul moves within the biblical thought world and uses its idiom and language but he did not receive his Bible in a vacuum. Paul encountered the challenge of Scripture through a Jewish filter. His thinking was directly influenced by the Scriptures but it was also influenced by his familiarity with contemporary Jewish reasoning. As B.Rosner notes 'The significance of many portions of the Pauline paraenesis can only be appreciated by taking full account of Old Testament background *as well as* the conceptual development of Old Testament ideas in early Jewish paraenesis.'[17]   This is in fact to state that Paul shares common ground with fellow Jewish exegetes, despite other differences from them. Gone then is the image of Paul, the isolated exegete using the Old Testament for his own gospel purposes in a manner which, whilst emphasizing his rootedness in Scriptures, simultaneously suggests that his gospel hermeneutic radically distances him from all contemporary Judaisms. To acknowledge Paul's relation to contemporary Jewish thinking is merely to put Paul in his social context, to recognize the sociality of his reading and reasoning.[18] (Unlike modern Christians Paul could not carry his entire Bible with him on his travels. It was in the synagogue that the full text of Scriptures would be available, read and

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[17] *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*, p. 181.

[18] Cf. David Ford, "Responding to textual reasoning: What might Christians learn?" in *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century.* Ed. Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2002, pp.259-268, p. 265f.. Cf   J.H. Charlesworth on the diversity of Judaism,   *Anchor Dictionary of the Bible, Vol 5* , 'Article 'Pseudepigrapha' pp.537-40, " The contradicting ideas should not be explained away or forced into an artificial system. Such ideas in the Pseudepigrapha witness to the fact that early Judaism was not a speculative philosophical movement or theological system, even though the Jews demonstrated impressive speculative fecundity. The Pseudepigrapha mirror a living religion in which the attempt was made to come to terms with the dynamic phenomena of history and experience." p. 538.

discussed.[19]) He shared and lived in the symbolic universe, the 'cultural-linguistic system' of first century Judaism.[20]

In making this emphasis I am directly opposing the argument that Paul based his teaching and ethics on the gospel as opposed to the Scriptures. Rosner has shown from his study of 1 Corinthians 5-7 that the Scriptures are for Paul more than a witness to the gospel but also guide for ethical conduct.[21]

b) The Authority of Scripture for Gentiles in Christ

How Paul relates his mainly Gentile communities to the Scriptures is illuminating. It is not only in Romans and Galatians that Paul grounds his arguments in Scripture, but in his other letters, especially the Corinthian correspondence, his dependence whether explicit or implicit, is easily demonstrable. Surprisingly then, even his Gentile congregations are expected to be rooted in Scripture. He expected them to be familiar with Scripture (e.g. 'do you not know...' Rom 6-7). More significantly Paul takes it for granted that the authority of Scripture extends to his gentile Christ communities and that it should be formative for their identity in Christ. As Stanley perceives it, it is beyond doubt that 'Paul regarded the words of Scripture as having absolute authority for his predominantly Gentile congregations.'[22]

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[19] This also applies to the congregations as Nanos has demonstrated '...outside the synagogue the early Christians would have had little opportunity to learn the 'Scriptures'; gentiles in particular would have had no previous exposure to the religious life of the people of God and the ways of righteousness associated with Judaism's monotheistic practices.' *Mystery of Romans* ,p.73. On the institutional context of reading and reasoning, see David Ford 'Responding', in *Textual Reasoning,* pp. 266-7.

[20] I am aware that this paradigm is only partly adequate to describe a religious tradition. It presupposes a static view of culture and religion, taking rules, terms, symbols and narratives as set. It does not account sufficiently for the fact that traditions are living networks which are constantly negotiated in continuous conversations. Cf. *Reasoning after Revelation,*p.26f.

[21] *Paul, Scripture and Ethics,*p.194.

[22] *Paul and the Language of Scripture* ,p. 338.

Paul expects gentiles who live in Christ to enter the symbolic universe of the Scriptures.

More to the point however, and even when he differed from his Jewish contemporaries, Paul's reliance on the authority of Scripture is something he shares with, and that is wholly in line with, contemporary Jewish practice.[23] Sameness or uniformity are not ideals of early Jewish interpretation nor of later rabbinic interpretation.[24] That Paul and contemporary Jews disagreed over certain issues is not yet reason enough for a parting of the ways but part of their common tradition of Scriptural reasoning.

This implies that in relating the ethical conduct of his Gentile communities to the Scriptures Paul may have come into conflict with Jews who disagreed with this. Since these 'opponents' also defined themselves and their way of life within the horizon of the Scriptures Paul could not avoid dialogue and interaction with them and their perspective on the Scriptures. Thus Paul is not only in dialogue with Peter and Apollos but he cannot operate in isolation from contemporary Jewish exegesis. Essentially what this means is that 'Scriptural Reasoning' for Paul is necessarily a social and communal activity rather than being purely individual and personal. It relates him to other Christ believers, Jews and Gentiles, as well as non-Christ believing Jews as a community which despite its divergence nevertheless centres around the text of the Scriptures.

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[23] Cf. Nanos, who sees Paul's discussions about the status and conduct of his gentile congregations as part of the Jewish debates about the relationship of gentiles with Jews. *Mystery*, pp.42ff.

[24] Cf. Daniel Patte, 'In other words what is essential is not a correct (orthodox) theological doctrine but an openness to Scripture, a 'listening to Scripture' in the context of actual life. This in fact results in "a multiplicity of theological conceptions" not necessarily fitting with each other...', *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*. SBL Dissertation Series 22, Missoula, Mon: Scholars Press 1975, p.75.

c) The three Dimensions of Paul's Scriptural Reasoning

Most scholars would agree that a central emphasis in Paul is the Christ event, as interpreted in the earliest 'Christian' tradition, which should clearly be our starting point in seeking to formulate the apostle's pattern of thinking. This does not imply regarding the Scriptures and the Christ-event as two separate entities more or less closely related, nor seeing the one as overcome or abrogated by the other. The early Christ tradition sought to understand this climactic event from the Scriptures in the light of their current understanding. Apart from the Scriptures the Christ-event would certainly not have been self-explanatory nor would it have served as a launching point for what was eventually to emerge as a radical new movement.

For Paul and his contemporaries in the Christ movement, the Christ-event was not just perceived as a significant event in the past but viewed rather as a past event with ongoing effects as demonstrated in the proclamation of the gospel. The gospel as the Christ-event at work in the world was again understood and interpreted through the perceived interaction between Scripture and contemporary events, these being considered as mutually illuminating each other.

Thus the Christ-event, the Scriptures and the interaction between these two and the ongoing life of the Christ believing communities in their social and political context are the three main dimensions that determine Paul's *process* of scriptural reasoning. It is in the dynamic interplay between these that Paul is able to work out the will of God for his gentile communities in the differing exigencies of daily life.

Such an understanding of the dynamic that informed Paul's thought maintains for him and his communities the ongoing significance of the Christ-event not as something perceived in its pastness but rather as a present power at work in the world. It is the Scriptures that provide the framework with which to explain and evaluate what is happening in the process of proclaiming the gospel in the world. The Christ communities view themselves as created and called by God through Christ in accordance with the Scriptures. These in turn guide the communities in the face of adverse political and social events to an adequate self-understanding, thus establishing both their confidence and identity as God's people. Neither the Christ-event nor the

Scriptures themselves are perceived as completed entities in the past but as living realities in the present. It is in this sense that these communities might be said to live in Scripture and that correspondingly Scripture lives within them. (Likewise the communities live in Christ and Christ also lives in them.)

d) The Scriptures as Formative of Identity

This in fact implies that both Paul as well his communities live in the particularity of the biblical symbolic universe. Of course it may be legitimately argued that Hellenistic Judaism was itself strongly influenced by Hellenistic culture and thinking. Doubtless Paul inherited much mediated to him from this source. However, this does not mean that Paul was simply 'a Hellenistic confluence of ideas' as Engberg-Pedersen recently suggested.[25] Hellenistic influence on Paul and his reasoning needs to be acknowledged but this does not mean either that it dominated his thought or that it meant for Paul a confused identity.[26] As Niebuhr has demonstrated, early Hellenistic Jewish paraenesis was shaped largely by the Torah despite the influence of Greek thinking. [27] This implies taking seriously the fact that the symbolic universe of Paul was Jewish, that is, the God who had called him was the God of the prophets, not of the *'actus purus'* or the *'ousia'* of Greek philosophy. Paul was embedded in one particular tradition, but to be embedded does not mean to be enclosed.

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[25] Cf. *Paul in his Hellenistic Context,* Edinburgh: T&TClark 1994, p. xviii.Cf also *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide.* Troels Engberg-Pedersen ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 2001.

[26] Cf. My Review Article "Dual Identity – a Real Possibility" in *Journal of Beliefs and Values, 21/1* April 2000, pp. 121-25.

[27] Cf. *Gesetz und Paraenese: Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur.* Tübingen: Mohr 1987, pp.45f. On this see also my book: *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies,* London, New York: T&T Clark International 2004, pp.57-9.

This Jewish tradition was part of the Hellenistic world but it had its own distinct perception of the world, its own beliefs and its own way of thinking strengthened by strong oral as well as written traditions. In his deconstruction of Western logocentrism and its claim to universal truth, Derrida challenges the notion of there being only one way of thinking as has been held to be the case throughout centuries. This tradition of thinking has also dominated biblical interpretation. In fact, it still does since it is the discourse we have learnt to think in from childhood. We cannot escape it completely but must seek to become aware of another reading from a different angle. In Caputo's reading of Derrida, what is necessary is a 'dehellenizing of biblical faith' – given that 'the prophets never heard of the science that investigates ' *to on he on.*'[28]

What we are maintaining here is that whatever Hellenistic influences operated in Paul's education and upbringing in this milieu, it was the Torah and its tradition of interpretation that dominated his thought and provided him with a particular and distinct identity embedded in the biblical world though not totally enclosed against other influences.[29]

Part of Paul's goal for his mainly gentile communities was to ground them in the heritage of Abraham not as Jews but as legitimate gentile heirs of the promises. This in fact means to ground them in the biblical symbolic universe as those called by God from among the nations. For gentiles in Christ the Scriptures therefore become a new 'identity marker', signifying their entry into a new symbolic universe. [30]

At this point I will draw together the various aspects of Paul's scriptural reasoning before turning briefly to two specific examples. Paul does not cite Scripture merely as proof texts in support of

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[28] *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion.* Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press 1997, p.5.

[29] Cf. *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged*, chapter 4, pp.142-54.

[30] This is the reason why scholars claim that gentiles in Christ are Israel, but this is to overlook the fact that they still remain *gentiles* in Christ. Cf. *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged*, p. 151f.

arguments arrived at from elsewhere. Nor does he cite Scripture in a wooden manner merely repeating its original content in a new context.[31] To speak of his 'use of the Old Testament in the New' also is not entirely satisfactory. Paul does more than simply 'use' Scripture. As we have argued, he lives in the world of Scripture, in a biblical symbolic universe which emerges in his writings in a thinking that is more responsive and associative than originative and discursive.

e) Romans 9:24 f

The first example we will consider is Rom 9:24ff. This demonstrates with a string of scriptural citations the mercy of God on those whom he has called not from the Jews only but also from the gentiles. Paul begins by citing Hosea 2:25 'Καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου καὶ τὴν οὐκ ἠγαπημένην ἠγαπημένην·' Because this citation seems designed to support an argument for the inclusion of gentiles as well as Jews, scholars have claimed that Paul now applies Scriptures that originally referred to Israel to believing gentiles. The 'not my people' are seen as the gentiles and Paul thus seems to adjust scriptural meanings to suit his own purposes. Dodd voices the sentiments of many commentators when he states 'It is rather strange that Paul has not observed that this prophecy referred to Israel, rejected for its sins, but destined to be restored – strange because it would have fitted so admirably the doctrine of the restoration of Israel which he is to expound in ch.11.'[32] However, this citation is not what it might seem to be. It can be shown that the primary concern in this chapter (Rom 9) is with the historic people of God and their apparent lack of faith in Christ (rather than the inclusion of gentiles which at this point is brought in more as an aside). The inclusion of Gentiles has already been established in Rom 3-4 (and of course in Paul's earlier letter to the Galatians).

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[31] Cf. Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans*. Tübingen: Mohr 2002, p. 259.

[32] *Romans*, 1932, p.160.

When we consider the context more carefully we note that this citation is followed by two others which clearly can refer only to Israel. It seems strange that Paul would include a rather arbitrary reference to gentiles in such a grouping. A better explanation of Paul's pattern of citation is that all three citations retain their primary reference to Israel and that the first citation referring to the 'not my people', whilst retaining its reference to Israel, can also by analogy be extended to include gentiles who in a more distinct sense are 'not my people'. Such an emphasis is much more in keeping with the original Hosea context where the mercy of God is a dominant theme. It would seem strange if in fact in a passage where the prophet refers to God's merciful dealings with Israel but then in Paul's version of the same passage Israel is simply left under judgment and the 'not people' – the gentiles – take her place. This is all the more surprising since Paul's theme at this point in Rom 9 is demonstrated to be divine compassion. In Rom 9:15 Paul sets up a scriptural text to serve as it were as a major heading for the next section of his argument Ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω. This is followed by other scriptural citations but the pattern of scriptural reasoning Paul uses here is one in which major scriptural citations dominate later scriptural citations which are subsidiary to the main heading. Thus subsidiary citations do not nullify the major thesis previously stated but stand under and serve to clarify the primary purpose of emphasizing divine mercy.

The reading we are following here follows partly from a proposal by Karl Barth who asks "To whom did these words originally apply? To the Israel of the kings of Samaria, which had been rejected by God and which had yet been granted such a promise. And because these words have now been fulfilled in the calling of the gentiles to the church of Jesus Christ, they obviously also speak with renewed force in their original sense; they also speak of the rejected, disobedient Israel. Now that he has fulfilled it superabundantly among the rejected without, how could God's promise not apply also to the rejected within, to whom he had once addressed it?"[33] Interestingly, Barth sees this text as referring to both Israel under judgement and also to gentile

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[33] A Shorter Commentary on Romans, (London: SCM 1959) 122-3.

believers.

Most likely therefore Paul does not primarily use the Hosea citation to refer to gentiles. The primary reference is still to Israel. What Paul is claiming is that rejected Israel like the northern tribes in Hosea will be restored, and along with them another 'non people', the gentiles will also be blessed. In this reading Paul does apply the Hosea citation in a secondary sense typologically to gentiles also but only after it has served his primary purpose to argue for the restoration of Israel.[34]

In this passage we have seen Paul at work in his scriptural world. He moves within innumerable citations to illuminate and develop his argument step by step with major and minor scriptural premises; but he uses these creatively not in opposition to their original content and context but primarily to refer to Israel and only then by extension to gentiles. At this point in particular, because he dialogues so intensely with Scripture, a comparison could be drawn between Paul's nuanced use of his Jewish scriptural heritage and the activity of jazz musicians. As Brown describes this, multiple rhythms are played simultaneously and in dialogue with each other – each member of the group has to listen to the other so as to respond and at the same time concentrate on his/her own improvisation. [35]   In parallel to this we might maintain that Paul plays with the multiple rhythms of Scripture with some improvisation and ingenuity. [36]

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[34] Cf. W.S. Campbell, 'Divergent Images of Paul and his Mission' , in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations* .Ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 2000, pp. 187- 211, pp. 198ff.

[35] Elsa B. Brown, 'What Has Happened Here', in Linda Nicholson ed., *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* New York, London: Routledge 1997. p.275.

[36] Cf. Also Ford, 'Responding' in *Textual Reasoning*, p. 259.

f) Galatians 3:28

The question in debate concerning this piece of early Christ tradition in Galatians has two aspects which are discussed most prominently – is it an indication that the order of creation is overcome in Christ – and if so does Paul manipulate such a supposed 'original' meaning of this Christ tradition to suit his purpose ?[37]

The perception of Gal 3: 28 as the description of a new order in Christ which overcomes and replaces differences in creation as told in the creation narratives of the Scriptures actually sets 'to be in Christ' and the Scriptures in opposition to each other. It shapes the relation of scriptural tradition and Christ tradition as a dichotomy, as mutually exclusive.

Given that Gal 3:28 is, as Schüssler Fiorenza and other scholars perceive, a baptismal formula, and as such a sort of charter of the early Christ movement as an egalitarian movement of equals where all differences have become obsolete, some credit has to be given to such an interpretation.[38] We then actually would need to ask whether Paul re-introduced hierarchies and differences into this early egalitarian movement.[39]

But the interpretation of Gal 3:28 as a fixed early Christ tradition expressing the generally egalitarian character of the early Christ movement is debatable. There is not room here to discuss this in detail in this paper, but this interpretation seems to reconstruct 'Christian' origins with too many presuppositions from outside the letter. Troy W. Martin has recently argued for a situational interpretation of Gal 3:28. He perceives the baptismal-formula explanation not as entirely satisfactory since it does not leave room for the flexibility we find in

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[37] Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* pp. 208-11, also pp.235ff.

[38] J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* New York: Doubleday 1997.

[39] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1999, p. 166f.

other contexts where similar pairs are mentioned, especially when compared with 1 Cor 12:13.[40] Moreover, it does not explain adequately the mentioning of the second two pairs of slave-free and male-female since in most interpretations these are not seen to be related to the situation in Galatia as the Jew-Greek pair obviously is. Since Paul adapted the formula in 1 Cor 12: 13 to fit the situation of the Corinthian community, Troy concludes that there must be reasons for mentioning the three pairs in Galatians.

Rather than taking the word pair male-female as resonating with Gen 1:27 Martin 'hears' this pair as well as the slave-free pair as resonating with Gen 17: 9-14, the covenant of circumcision. From this, he concludes, Paul is referring not to an abolition of the created order - creation is not the scope of his argumentation - but rather the distinction between the Christ believing communities and the 'covenant of circumcision'. [41] Whilst the distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female are relevant for membership in the covenant of circumcision, they are not entry requirements for being 'in Christ'.[42] This, however, does not imply that these distinctions are abolished or obsolete in Christ. To be one in

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[40] Cf. his article 'The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antithesis in Galatians 3:28' in *JBL 122/1 (2003)*, pp.111-125, pp.114f.

[41] As Martin stresses,. "..Paul's concern is in not overturning the original order of creation but contextualizing the covenant of circumcision. In his argument, Gal 3:28c announces not an abolition of the male/female antithesis but its irrelevance for determining the candidates for Christian baptism and membership in the Christian community." 'The Covenant of Circumcision' p.119

[42] I find Martin's argument quite convincing but do not agree with him in his perception of circumcision as the reason for the inferior status of women in Judaism. Such an inferior status cannot be generally presupposed (cf. e.g. Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple Judaism* Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson 2001; Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue,* Chico: California 1982). That it existed is beyond doubt but this has to be seen in the context of the patriarchal structures of Mediterranean societies in Antiquity generally not due to any Jewish commandment.

Christ does not presuppose sameness. But such distinctions should not serve as a legitimation for inequality and domination.[43] That diversity is presupposed by Paul, is indicated by his image of the one body of Christ as composed of many members (1Cor 12:12-14 and Rom 12:4ff). Significantly Martin's reading does not create an opposition between the 'covenant of circumcision' and being 'in Christ' nor does it separate them, it just distinguishes the two entities.

Paul, in addressing the specific situation in the communities in Galatia in his response, relates early Christ tradition, the Scriptures and the actual context in a creative and associative way which we have found to be typical of 'scriptural reasoning'. I cannot elaborate on this here in any more detail, but what is indicated by this is that there is some consistency and coherence in Paul's form of reasoning and also that we should hesitate to be unduly critical of Paul's use of scripture before we have considered all the options available to him.

4 Conclusion

In contextualizing Paul in the symbolic universe of the Scriptures and of contemporary Jewish exegesis we propose to perceive him as living, thinking and acting from within this 'cultural-linguistic' system with its own specific forms of reasoning. These forms are perceived as comparable to 'Scriptural Reasoning', a practice of dialogic thinking around a text which is not opposed to, but distinguished from, Western philosophical logic.

We have found that Paul's scriptural reasoning is a vivid process of dialogic interaction between the Scriptures, the Christ-event and the actual life of the communities in and through which Paul in his letters is working out what the gospel implies in the particular situations of his mainly gentile communities. The analysis of Rom 9: 24ff has demonstrated that in taking the scriptural context of Paul's reasoning seriously into account we find him creatively associating scriptural premises with the contemporary issue of Israel's apparent unbelief. Considering this, the whole section is seen in the light of the theme

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[43] Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethics,* p.158f.

mentioned in v. 15, that is, the mercy of God. Paul then is seen as not suddenly changing subject and turning to the gentiles after having dealt with Israel at the beginning of the chapter, but as coherently working out the unforeseeable mercy of God for his people as well as for the nations. Also in the Galatians passage, we have found that in following Paul's scriptural reasoning, we did not find him reversing the created order nor simply opposing circumcision, but as Martin has shown, he is coherently working out the distinction between the covenant of circumcision, that is Israel, and the communities of those in Christ, without creating binary oppositions or a breach between creation and new creation or Israel and those in Christ. To perceive Paul not as a more or less coherent thinker of Western logic and its dualisms but as one who is creatively playing with the multiple rhythms of Scripture related to life in the light of the Christ-event could prove significant for an understanding of Christian identity beyond the restrictions of dualistic thinking.

5 Appendix – Some Further Thoughts on the Future of Scriptural Reasoning

The rediscovery of " reason as inescapably tradition constituted" offers exciting new options for genuine dialogue between scriptural interpreters and contemporary intellectual thinkers/practitioners of any faith or none. By 'a return to the text', to scriptural traditions, there is now the hope of retrieving resources long ignored, deprecated, and in many cases ideologically suppressed by modern habits of thought. The new emphasis upon traditions also offers fresh opportunity to stress how these traditions are embedded in the practices of believing communities, offering also a new understanding of the close relation between belief and practice, an insight crucial to understanding Paul's theologising. Thus Paul's ethical statements are of fundamental importance and it is in these that we get significant insights into his pattern of 'scriptural reasoning'.

This new, confident emphasis upon scriptures and the search for new paradigms of reason in a type of reasoning that is more responsive than originative means also a new relationship between the disciplines of academic studies and scriptural interpreters in which there is genuine partnership and dialogue. The interpretation of Paul should benefit enormously from this. Very frequently, the application to his

letters of a Western conceptualized logic has led to him being regarded as hopelessly contradictory or as not making any proper sense. This oppositional type of thinking challenged Paul's inclusive statements such as " to the Jew first and also to the gentile", preferring an either /or choice which inevitably dismissed or denigrated emphases which were seen as specifically of Jewish (and therefore of tribal) origin. Again the universalising of Paul's statements in particular letters, led to similar criticisms of his thinking.

A real possibility of listening afresh to Paul's scriptural reasoning is now feasible, using philosophical and other academic disciplines as genuine servants and tools of understanding, rather than as dominant ideologies that hinder Paul's thinking being properly heard or understood. But this also means a broader conception of biblical scholarship in which biblical interpreters genuinely engage with contemporary thinkers and patterns of thought wherever these may impinge upon the process of scriptural understanding. If we are to demand that academics in other disciplines take proper account of our scriptural traditions, we must likewise be open also to taking account of their intellectual traditions and modes of thought. Only in such a dialogue can scriptural interpreters be freed from the tendency to arrogance based on an unexplained biblical authority, and 'non-theological' academics be freed from the arrogance of ignoring or devaluing those traditions that gave rise to their academic foundations of knowledge. What is most exciting both for the understanding of Paul's scriptural reasoning and for the contemporary application of it in a postcritical world is that now there is at last some genuine recognition of the link between theological thinking and the practice of faith in everyday life.

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