

BEN C. DUNSON

Individual and  
Community in Paul's  
Letter to the Romans

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

332

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Individual and Community  
in Paul's Letter to the Romans

Mohr Siebeck

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*For Martha,*

*without whom this would never have happened*

*And In Memory of*

*Grace (G. G.) Clark Fender (1920-2011)*

*A truly remarkable woman and loving grandmother*



## Preface

This monograph is a slightly revised version of a PhD thesis submitted to the Department of Theology and Religion in the University of Durham on the 28th of November 2011. I would like to express my thanks to Prof Dr. Jörg Frey for accepting this thesis into the WUNT 2 series, and to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and his editorial staff (especially Matthias Spitzner) for their expert and efficient work in bringing this book to publication. Thanks are also due to my PhD examiners, Prof John M. G. Barclay and Dr. Grant Macaskill, for their incisive critiques of my original thesis.

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Of course I would be most ungrateful if I did not end with a small token of thanks to the God who created me, saved me and who sustains me in all of life.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Ben C. Dunson  
Hamilton, Ontario  
28 July 2012

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Much of the history of modern thought and culture is a story of the ways people have found to call... claims for individual independence into question, to transcend mere selves by fusing them with communities, nations, classes, or cultures, or to humble them by trumpeting their radical dependency on historical processes, cosmic forces, biological drives, fundamental ontologies, discursive regimes, or semiotic systems. More than any other world culture, the modern West has made the debate about individuality and selfhood a central question – perhaps the central question – of its collective attempts at self-definition.

Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*<sup>1</sup>

#### A. Exit the Individual: Recent Trends in Scholarship on the Individual and the Community in Paul's Letters

A seismic shift has occurred in the interpretation of the Apostle Paul's letters over the last century. Classically Paul's letters have been read as directed, if not exclusively, at least primarily at the individual and the individual's salvation and moral life. A new consensus, however, has been developing among Pauline scholars that understands the apostle as a communal thinker who has little concern for the fate of individuals, who by and large does not even have a conception of the individual at all. The following study is a diagnosis of the dichotomy between the individual and the community as it has developed in Pauline scholarship, as well as a proposal for a way beyond this impasse. My thesis is simple: *the individual and the community belong together in Paul's theology; there is no Pauline individual outside of community, just as there is no community without individuals at the heart of its ongoing life.* The simplicity of this thesis, however, masks an enormous amount of disagreement and contention among scholars.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.

The roots of this debate in biblical scholarship lie in many places.<sup>2</sup> Two scholars in particular, however, William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer, represent the most important early precursors of the turn from the individual in recent Pauline theology. Both scholars, in their own ways, strongly disputed that the individual was at the center of Pauline thought, primarily by arguing for the marginalization of justification by faith in reconstructions of the major emphases of Paul's thought.<sup>3</sup> This protest against the individual initially did not carry the day, however, and was largely eclipsed by the work of scholars operating with traditional assumptions about the importance of the individual, even as many of these scholars were otherwise highly critical of traditional interpretations of the New Testament. Rudolf Bultmann, of course, towers over the rest of his contemporaries in his single-minded insistence that the individual and the individual's act of decision are at the heart of Pauline thought. Bultmann's existentialist approach to New Testament interpretation, although representing the mainstream of biblical scholarship at the time, finally came under sustained attack from one of his own former students, Ernst Käsemann.

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<sup>2</sup> For a survey and analysis of the origins of this development in New Testament studies see Stephen Barton, "The Communal Dimension of Earliest Christianity: A Critical Survey of the Field," *JTS* 43 (1992): 399–427; cf. James G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles* (LNTS 320; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 28–32; Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual* (BIS; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1–6. On related trends in the human sciences more generally see Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (ed. Colin Gunton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158–85. Dale B. Martin, "Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: 'Toward a Social History of the Question'," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 52, captures these changes in biblical scholarship well: "Whereas [identifying individualism with Hellenism] was a saving aspect for nineteenth-century Germans, for whom individualism was a valued commodity of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, it was a problem by the middle of the twentieth century, when it could be made to symbolize the fractured, atomized, anonymous state of modernity with its loss of communities. And whereas individualism in conjunction with universalism represented truth to Kantian and Hegelian liberals, the same combination represented for American scholars, nurtured in pietism and evangelicalism, the loss of revelation or Christianity's claim to special access to truth."

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., William Wrede, *Paulus* (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907), 77: "Paulus hat den Einzelnen gar nicht im Sinn; die Frage der persönlichen Heilsgewißheit spielt deshalb bei ihm keine Rolle. Er fragt, wie wir sahen, teils ganz allgemein nach der Bedingung für den Eintritt in die Kirche und findet sie im Glauben; teils ebenso allgemein nach dem Wege, auf dem die Menschheit überhaupt zum Heil gelangt, und hier weist er auf die Gnade, die in der Erlösung offenbar geworden ist." Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1930), 215, concludes that – in contrast to a model centered on righteousness by faith (which is "individualistisch und unkosmisch") – at the heart of Paul's view of redemption is "ein kollektives, kosmisch bedingtes Erlebnis." Cf. Otto Merk, "Die Persönlichkeit des Paulus in der Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus* (eds. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 37.

Bultmann and Käsemann, because they engaged in a long-standing debate on the individual and community that sets out the major issues to be looked at in this book, will be examined in detail in the next chapter. In this introductory chapter we will examine the trajectories that have developed subsequent to the debate between Bultmann and Käsemann.<sup>4</sup>

Three distinct strands of New Testament scholarship stand out in particular with regard to the wall of hostility that has been built up between individually- and communally-focused readings of Paul. These three can be labeled the social-scientific approach, readings of the apostle in the wake of the New Perspective on Paul, and apocalyptic approaches. Taken together with the earlier work of Käsemann they represent a forceful and integrated challenge to classic readings of Paul's letters that are focused on themes such as individual salvation, individual ethics, and the like.

The purpose of this survey of more recent scholarly approaches is to highlight the development of the dichotomy between individual and communal approaches to Paul that has largely come to dominate Pauline scholarship in the present. It must be stated emphatically from the outset that my purpose is only to bring attention to the dichotomy in recent scholarship, not to perpetuate it. *A broad-brush antithesis between the individual and the community in Paul is manifestly false.* When Paul writes of the individual, the community is never far from his mind, and the same is true the other way round.<sup>5</sup>

### *1. Social-Scientific Anti-Individualism*

The social-scientific approach to Paul is represented by a diverse group of scholars such as Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, and the "Context Group" of New Testament researchers. It is closely related in approach to a renewed interest in biblical scholarship on the social dynamics of the ancient world, and Paul's churches in particular, an interest that has roots in the earlier work of scholars such as Wayne Meeks, Abraham Malherbe, and Gerd Theissen.<sup>6</sup> With

<sup>4</sup> For an extended treatment of the scholarly trajectories surveyed below see Ben C. Dunson, "The Individual and Community in Twentieth and Twenty-first-Century Pauline Scholarship," *CBR* 9 (2010): 68–88.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that I am using the word individual to refer to a singular person and am not here engaging in the wider modern debate about what constitutes human identity and selfhood.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the most important works that explore the New Testament from a social-scientific and/or "social dynamics" perspective are: Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.), *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008); Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006); Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004); idem, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); idem, *Social Reality and the Early Christians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2d ed.; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (2d ed.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University



regard to the individual and the community Bruce Malina is representative when he says:

Instead of individualism, what we find in the first-century Mediterranean world is what might be called collectivism. Persons always considered themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experienced themselves as inextricably embedded. . . . Such a group-embedded, collectivist personality is one who simply needs another continually in order to know who he or she really is.<sup>7</sup>

Philip Esler concurs:

Nowhere [are the dangers of anachronistic readings of the New Testament] more evident than in the predilection of European and US critics to discuss first-century texts in terms of individualism when that is a feature of modern Western culture largely absent from the period under discussion.<sup>8</sup>

This approach to the New Testament argues that notions of individuality or individual concern in Paul are illegitimate and anachronistic projections of twentieth- or twenty-first-century individualism onto communally-focused texts.<sup>9</sup>

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Press, 2003); B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994); John H. Elliott, *Social Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 1993); John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (LEC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1986). See Burnett, *Salvation*, 3–6, for a more extensive discussion of this perspective in recent scholarship, including numerous additional bibliographical resources. See also David G. Horrell, “Social Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (ed. David G. Horrell; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 3–28; Theissen, *Social Reality*, 15, nn. 18–19; D. J. Harrington, “Second Testament Exegesis and the Social Sciences: A Bibliography,” *BTB* 18 (1988): 77–85.

<sup>7</sup> Malina, *Insights*, 62; cf. B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey, “First Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individualistic,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 67–96; see also John L. Meech, *Paul in Israel’s Story: Self and Community at the Cross* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 40 (cf. 18, 39–44, 55–56), who, while adopting Malina’s basic model of dyadic personality, qualifies it in a way that takes more account of the importance of the individual in Paul: “the self and community are correlates, which is to say that the self and community are each mutually the condition of the other.”

<sup>8</sup> Esler, *Approaches*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> For a dissenting opinion regarding the claim that the modern reader of the New Testament is simply an isolated, individualistic, and abstract “self” (who can be easily contrasted with the ancient “dyadic” self) see F. Gerald Downing, “Persons in Relation,” in *Making Sense in (and of) the First Christian Century* (JSNTSup 197; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 44–47; cf. 52: “Such social production of adults as we have evidenced from the east Mediterranean of late antiquity is as interested in producing socially performed and socially reinforced individuality as is (for good or ill) the social production of adults in North Atlantic countries today.” Downing describes a set of interlocking attitudes found across a wide range of ancient

The ancient world of the writers of the New Testament, in contrast, is comprised of collectivist societies, societies in which the interests of one's community are all-controlling, and where self-concern is almost wholly absent. It is not surprising, then, that issues like individual sin, justification and even ethics, would be of little interest to interpreters operating under the influence of social-scientific models. While the use of these models does not mean that an interpreter *must* dismiss the individual from Pauline theology, this has been true for most scholars operating in this realm of academic endeavor. Esler is more nuanced than many others in his recognition that these models "are merely heuristic tools used in what is essentially a comparative process"<sup>10</sup> and that "Mediterranean anthropology cannot hope to provide a set of models which perfectly match the New Testament social world. ..."<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, claims such as his that individualism is "largely absent" from the New Testament period remain firmly entrenched in much recent Pauline scholarship, both on the academic and on the popular level.

## 2. *Anti-Individualism in the Wake of the New Perspective on Paul*

In the twentieth-century, an approach to Paul's relationship with Judaism developed that by-and-large began to emphasize the continuities rather than conflicts between the apostle and the theology of his fellow Jews. This approach is associated with G. F. Moore, C. G. Montefiore, W. D. Davies, Krister Stendahl and E. P. Sanders, among others.<sup>12</sup>

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sources that could best be described as inculcating a "socially performed and socially reinforced individuality," and which are in fact quite similar to modern attitudes and constructions of "the self": parental desire to see children develop in their emotional capabilities, development of individual expression in children's school exercises, and the asserting of one's own desires in romantic relationships.

<sup>10</sup> Esler, *Approaches*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (3d ed.; London: SPCK, 1970); G. F. Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *HTR* 1 (1921): 197–254; C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul: Two Essays* (London: Max Goschen, 1914). On the history of twentieth-century scholarship emphasizing Paul's Jewish context see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The 'Lutheran' Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 117–33; Timo Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology* (WUNT 2.100; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 15–18; Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 313-59.

For example, on the question of individuals and community, W. D. Davies argues that:

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith was not solely and not primarily orientated toward the individual but to the interpretation of the people of God. The justified man was 'in Christ,' which is a communal concept. And necessarily because it was eschatological, the doctrine moved towards the salvation of the world, a new creation."<sup>13</sup>

In other words, Paul's focus lies elsewhere than on individuals and their private relationship with God. Even justification by faith is primarily a matter of defining the boundaries of God's true people. In this regard, we see a polarization developing between the individual and the community, although Davies does not express himself in quite as strongly antithetical terms as many who would come after him.

As is widely recognized, Krister Stendahl's 1963 article "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" had an immediate and substantial impact on the shape of subsequent Pauline scholarship, despite its brevity.<sup>14</sup> Douglas Harink echoes the sentiment of many over the last half century:

Stendahl managed in one short essay to distinguish the apostle's concerns from centuries of individualizing, psychologising, and spiritualizing interpretations, with the audacious claim that a great deal of Paul's theology was about Gentiles and Jews rather than about guilt-ridden individuals seeking to escape the punishment of an angry God.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> W. D. Davies, "Paul: From the Jewish Point of View," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume 3: The Early Roman Period* (eds. W. D. Davies, John Sturdy and William Horbury; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 716.

<sup>14</sup> Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963): 199–215; repr. in idem, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78–96. On the reception of Stendahl's article, see e.g., Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (NSBT 9; Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2001), 14: "Although various studies of early Judaism challenged [the idea that in 'coming to faith in Christ Paul found relief for his guilty conscience'], it was a provocative article on Paul which especially caught the attention of more recent scholarship, and marked the changing perspective which was to emerge in years to come." Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), 6: "The work of many scholars, beginning with the pioneering essay by Krister Stendahl on Paul and the West's introspective conscience, suggests the need for a persistent questioning of the traditional readings of Paul's letters on a . . . fundamental level." Bruce J. Malina, "The Individual and the Community – Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity," *BTB* 9 (1979): 126: "Nearly two decades ago, Krister Stendahl competently argued against the existence of any sort of 'introspective conscience' in Paul and his writings . . ." Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (JSNTSup 274; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 14, insists that Stendahl's article set the "critical agenda of the New Perspective" on Paul by shifting it away from a focus on "Paul's ostensible introspective conscience" toward analysis of the place of Gentiles within the covenant people of God.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 14.

Stendahl's essay, Harink continues, "[effectively shifted] attention from the typically 'Lutheran' or Protestant themes of individual justification, sin, guilt, grace, and faith to the more concrete, historical issues of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Paul's mission and churches."<sup>16</sup> As Richard Hays puts it, Stendahl "rendered increasingly doubtful" the idea that "Romans is a treatise on the problem of how a person may 'find' justification . . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Stendahl's main problem with the "traditional Western way of reading Pauline letters" is that it looks at them as "documents of human consciousness" rather than contingent expressions of local concerns in the individual churches addressed in Paul's letters.<sup>18</sup> This in turn has wrongly led to justification by faith being regarded as the center of Pauline (and biblical) thought, since it has "been hailed as the answer to the problem which faces the ruthlessly honest man in his practice of introspection."<sup>19</sup> As a result, almost every aspect of Pauline theology has been illegitimately psychologized and distorted in an individualistic direction. Rather than focusing on the issue of Jew-Gentile relations "Pauline thought about the Law and Justification was applied [in the Western Christian tradition] in a consistent and grand style to a more general and timeless human problem."<sup>20</sup> Stendahl sees Rudolf Bultmann as something of a capstone to this past history of exegesis.<sup>21</sup>

With this essay Stendahl sought to re-orient the exegetical and theological program of Pauline scholarship away from a focus on the individual toward exclusively communal and salvation-historical issues. While (as we will see in the next chapter) Ernst Käsemann provided a much more detailed and sophisticated program of anti-individual Pauline interpretation, Stendahl's essay, by memorably capturing the changing mood of biblical scholarship, served as something of a flashpoint in dramatically redirecting Pauline scholarship away from questions of individual concern.

On the issue of individuals and their relationship to community it is noteworthy that E. P. Sanders, despite his criticism of traditional Christian readings of Paul, emphasizes that "Rabbinic religion, while personal and individual, was also corporate and collective," that in the Judaism of Paul's day and the centuries after it, "the pattern of religion which we have been discussing demonstrates how individual and collective religion were combined."<sup>22</sup> What is more,

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>17</sup> Richard B. Hays, "Abraham as Father of Jews and Gentiles," in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 63, and n. 10; cf. *idem*, "Psalm 143 as Testimony to the Righteousness of God," in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 57, and n. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Stendahl, "Introspective Conscience," 79

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*, 87–88.

<sup>22</sup> Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism*, 237.

especially after the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, “the group did not mediate between God and individual Israelites: a man’s piety was personal, his prayers were directly to God, his forgiveness was directly from God.”<sup>23</sup> Sanders even points to Bultmann in support of his claim that “Christianity adopted a very similar mix of group membership and individual and personal religion.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, few of the scholars who have followed Sanders’ lead in comparing Paul and Judaism have been so balanced in their presentation of how either Paul or Judaism relate the individual and community.

Although certainly not a monolithic unity, the New Perspective on Paul has taken the insights of scholars such as Davies, Stendahl and Sanders even further in anti-individualist directions.<sup>25</sup> Richard Hays, for example, absolutizes the approach of scholars like Davies when he argues that: “The fundamental problem with which Paul is wrestling in Romans is not how a person may find acceptance with God; the problem is to work out an understanding of the relationship in Christ between Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>26</sup> The place of the people of God in the plan of God, not individual experience, is central to Paul’s theology. As with many scholars, Hays does not see middle ground as an option: either Paul is concerned to speak of individuals and their personal salvation, or he means in his letters to work out a program of Jew-Gentile unity in the historical outworking of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 238 (although see also idem, *Paul* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 49); cf. ibid., 547 (emphasis original): “Both Judaism and Paul take full account of the individual and the group.” On ibid., 238, Sanders cites Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; Waco, TX, 2007), 93. Here Bultmann says that in salvation “the individual is incorporated” (*der Einzelne eingegliedert ist*) into “the fellowship of God’s people” (*die Gemeinschaft des Volkes Gottes*) and that “in Christianity, the individual believer stands within the Congregation [*der einzelne Gläubige innerhalb der Gemeinde*], and the individual congregations are joined together into one Congregation – the Church” (Bultmann, *Theology*, 93; idem, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1953], 92–93).

<sup>25</sup> I am here using Dunn’s phrase “New Perspective on Paul” to refer to any approach to Paul that is based on the reinterpretations of his theology that came in the wake of the wide-ranging reevaluation of Second Temple Judaism carried out during the twentieth-century and culminating in E. P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. For a survey of the key elements and primary emphases of the New Perspective on Paul see James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–98, and Stephen Westerholm, “The New Perspective at Twenty-Five,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (eds. P. T. O’Brien, D. A. Carson and M. A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 1–38; Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 117–49, 178–200. The anti-individualism of the New Perspective on Paul was anticipated in numerous works in the 1960s and 1970s; see e.g., Nils A. Dahl, “The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications,” in *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 95–120; Stendahl, “Introspective Conscience,” 78–96; Markus Barth, “The Social Character of Justification,” *JES* 5 (1968): 241–61.

<sup>26</sup> Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 69. See also the survey of recent scholarly positions that emphasize the centrality of the issue of Jew-Gentile relations in Romans over against “individualistic” concerns in Burnett, *Salvation*, 96–104.

divine plan, especially as it has come to its climax in the person of Jesus Christ. Writing at a more popular level N. T. Wright agrees: “The gospel creates, not a bunch of individual Christians, but a community. If you take the old route of putting justification, in its traditional meaning, at the centre of your theology, you will always be in danger of sustaining some sort of individualism.”<sup>27</sup>

Douglas Campbell, another consistently anti-individual post-New Perspective interpreter of Paul, contends that the modern failure to rightly understand the apostle owes much to Rudolf Bultmann, who “stresses humans’ will, their individuality, and their ethical nature, although not their inherent relationality or sociality.”<sup>28</sup> This necessarily (and unfortunately) has led the Pauline scholarship that followed Bultmann’s lead to focus its exegetical and theological attention almost exclusively on the individual and individual soteriology.<sup>29</sup> While Campbell shares the desire of Davies, Hays and many others to elevate the issue of the definition of covenant boundaries to prominence in Pauline theology, he also believes that it is a serious mistake to set the individual on a pedestal of Paul’s central themes because this ignores Paul’s explication of the foundationally relational nature of human existence. Like Hays, Campbell places individual and communal approaches to Paul in sharp antithesis: “It just does not seem possible to combine the individual and the corporate, the historical and the atemporal, the canonically antithetical with the canonically progressive, and so on.”<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, even Troels Engberg-Pedersen, who is perceived by many to have revived elements of Bultmann’s individualistic interpretation, emphasizes that the goal of Paul’s exhortation is community formation, and does so in such a way that the individual drops almost completely out of the picture:

I have mentioned already here that [community formation] is where we shall eventually end. Otherwise readers might draw the completely erroneous conclusion from our discussion... that Paul’s Christ faith is only a relationship between an individual and ‘his’ or ‘her’ God. Nothing could be more false.<sup>31</sup>

While Engberg-Pedersen allows for certain elements of individual concern in Paul, he is thoroughly in line with New Perspective influenced readings in arguing that “experience of Christ... as seen in the Christ event lifts the individual... out of his or her individuality, leaves it behind and carries him or her over to

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<sup>27</sup> N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Oxford: Lion, 1997), 157. Cf. Wright, *Saint Paul*, 158: “There is no such thing as an ‘individual’ Christian. Paul’s gospel created a community; his doctrine of justification sustained it.” Cf. idem, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005), 120.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 292.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 293–95.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, *Quest*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 140.

a state of communality ... shared with all those who have undergone the same process.”<sup>32</sup> Engberg-Pedersen sees a vital role for rational self-deliberation in the event of conversion, but when it comes to the nature of the ongoing life of faith, the individual disappears.<sup>33</sup> While Engberg-Pedersen admits that his own focus on self-understanding in Paul “clearly recalls Bultmann,” he insists that “the way this was construed in the ancient ethical tradition and in Paul” (thus also in Engberg-Pedersen’s reconstructions of both) “has very little to do with modern ‘individualism’ as reflected in Bultmann’s own existentialism.”<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *Apocalyptic Anti-Individualism*

The third thread woven into the anti-individualist tapestry of modern Pauline studies is the “apocalyptic” (i.e., theological/cosmological/eschatological/etc.) approach which was presented to the world of New Testament scholarship, first by Albert Schweitzer, but later much more systematically by Ernst Käsemann.<sup>35</sup> After Käsemann, an apocalyptic approach was further developed in different ways in the works of scholars such as J. Louis Martyn and J. Christiaan Beker, among others.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 128, 137, 147, 152, 154–55.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 7. For an analysis of Käsemann’s reception among scholars influenced by the New Perspective on Paul see Paul F. M. Zahl, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre Ernst Käsemanns* (CThM; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1996), 188–98.

<sup>35</sup> See Schweitzer, *Mystik*, and e.g., Ernst Käsemann, “Zum Thema urchristlicher Apokalyp-tik,” in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964). On Schweitzer, Käsemann and apocalyptic see R. Barry Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul’s Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* (JSNTSup 127; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 23–71 and 186–246. Regarding Matlock’s charge that Schweitzer “is often now little more than a name attached to the notion of an ‘apocalyptic’ approach to Paul” (Matlock, *Unveiling*, 26), I too must plead guilty. In my defence I can only say that my interests lie simply in the way interpreters of the so-called apocalyptic Paul have appealed to apocalyptic in order to marginalize and dismiss the individual in the apostle’s thought.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g., J. Louis Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies,” in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 111–24; *idem*, *Galatians: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 97–105; Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (eds. J. Marcus and M. L. Soards; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 169–90; J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Leander E. Keck, “Paul and Apocalyptic Theology,” *Int* 38 (1984): 229–41. For an analysis of twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature on the “apocalyptic Paul” see Matlock, *Unveiling: on Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic* (as theological type, and as genre) in biblical (and extra-biblical) material more broadly than just Paul see Adela Yarbro Collins, “Apocalypse Now: The State of Apocalyptic Studies Near the End of the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century,” *HTR* 104 (2011): 447–57; *idem*, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Early Christian,” *ABD* 1.288–92; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); *idem*, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Early Jewish Apocalypticism,”