

## Rethinking Paul

In this book, Edwin van Driel analyzes contemporary Pauline exegesis and its implications for Protestant theology. Over the last several decades, scholars have offered fresh interpretations of the apostle, including the New Perspective on and the apocalyptic reading of Paul. Van Driel juxtaposes these proposals with traditional Protestant understandings of Paul and argues that the crucial difference between these two readings lies not in how one understands isolated Pauline notions but in different assumed narrative substructures of the apostle's writings. He explores how these new exegetical proposals deepen, broaden, enrich, and challenge traditional Protestant theological paradigms, as well as how they are situated alongside current contextual conversations on theological anthropology, social imagination, and the church's mission. Van Driel's volume opens up new avenues for interdisciplinary exploration and cooperation between biblical scholarship and theology.

EDWIN CHR. VAN DRIEL is the Directors' Bicentennial Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* (2008) and edited *What Is Jesus Doing? God's Activity in the Life and Work of the Church* (2020).

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## Protestant Theology and Pauline Exegesis



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For my family:  
Kimberly, Christiaan, and Claudia.

Mitten im Corona sind wir vom Leben umgeben!  
Free after Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Mensch zwischen  
Gott und Teufel*

## Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<b>1 The Narrative Substructure of Paul's Thought</b>	<b>1</b>
Narrative Substructures	3
The Gospel Concerning the Son	6
The Power of God for Salvation	13
The Story of Contemporary Pauline Exegesis	22
The Road Ahead	34
<b>2 Justifying Faith</b>	<b>38</b>
Traditional Protestant Interpretations	39
Contemporary Exegetical Observations	46
The Narrative	59
Conclusion	67
<b>3 Jesus' Faith</b>	<b>69</b>
Pistis Iesou Christou	73
Theological Characterization	81
Conclusion	98
<b>4 The Return of the Faithful One</b>	<b>100</b>
The Faithfulness of the Risen and Ascended Christ	101
The Return of Israel's God	111
LORD and Servant	118
Conclusion	128
	ix

## CONTENTS

<b>5</b>	<b>Atoning Faithfulness</b>	131
	The Reformers	132
	Scripture	137
	Theological Extrapolations	154
	Conclusion	159
<b>6</b>	<b>Resurrection and Justification</b>	161
	Three Rival Conceptions of Justification	164
	Justification and Resurrection	182
	Theological Extrapolations	185
	Conclusion	188
<b>7</b>	<b>The Pauline <i>Ordo Salutis</i></b>	189
	Being in Christ	190
	Baptized in Christ	204
	Believing in Christ	217
	Theological Extrapolations	219
	Conclusion	223
<b>8</b>	<b>Church and Salvation</b>	225
	N. T. Wright	226
	The Reformed Tradition	236
	Theological Extrapolations	247
	Conclusion	253
<b>9</b>	<b>Christ and History</b>	254
	Christ and History: Three Contemporary Readings	257
	Christ and History: A Supralapsarian Proposal	276
	Conclusion	282
<b>10</b>	<b>History and Israel</b>	285
	The Election of Israel	288
	The Future of Israel	297
	Theological Extrapolations	310
	Conclusion	317



## CONTENTS

<b>11 The Narrative of Paul's Gospel</b>	319
The Narrative Substructure of Paul's Gospel: A Fresh Proposal	320
The Narrative Substructure of Paul's Gospel: A Test Case	337
Conclusion	350
<b>12 Doing Pauline Theology</b>	352
Justification and Theological Anthropology	353
Race and Social Imagination	365
Mission and Neighborhoods	375
Conclusion	385
<b>Epilogue</b>	387
<i>Scriptural Index</i>	390
<i>Subject Index</i>	393

## Preface

This book is what happens when a theologian reads the works of Bible scholars theologically. During these last ten years I have been drawn into the world of Pauline scholarship. Originally I ventured into the field while doing preparatory research for books I wanted to write on ecclesiology and Christology. The more I read, the more fascinated I became. Pauline scholarship has seen significant shifts in these last decades and produced numerous fresh readings of the apostle that make his writings come alive again and that are, to my mind, full of potential to enrich our theological conversations. In the end, I decided to shelve my ecclesiological and Christological projects and first to tease out in more detail the theological implications of contemporary Pauline scholarship. The result is this book.

I wrote this book for both exegetes and theologians. I hope exegetes will find it helpful to have a theologian come alongside to draw out the theological implications of their work. In exchange, I hope they indulge me when I cheerfully venture into a territory not my own and at points freely add my own exegetical suggestions. To theologians I hope this book offers an introduction to a fascinating exegetical landscape and an invitation – maybe even an inspiration – to further theological exploration. To both, I hope this book will be a contribution to the wider interdisciplinary conversation that many of us, in both fields, know that we so sorely need. If nothing else, researching and writing this book was a personal joy. And now it is time for those postponed projects in ecclesiology and Christology.

## P R E F A C E

As this project comes to an end, I would like to thank some who accompanied me on the way. I thank the administration and board of directors of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PTS) for two sabbaticals to research and write this book. I thank my students in the spring 2012, fall 2014, and spring 2019 PTS seminars on “Pauline Exegesis and Protestant Theology” for stimulating conversation. I thank audiences at Princeton Theological Seminary (USA), the University of St. Andrews (Scotland), the University of Zurich (Switzerland), Fuller Theological Seminary (USA), Durham University (England), the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), and Cambridge University (England), who all heard part of my argument and whose questions and comments helped to deepen and improve it. I thank Iain Torrance and the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of Cambridge University Press for accepting this book in a series that has also published studies by two of my beloved teachers, Marilyn McCord Adams and David H. Kelsey. And finally I thank my family for patiently accompanying me in working on this book even in the time of a global pandemic, and especially my wife, Kimberly Miller van Driel, who, as always, worked hard on turning my Dutchisms into proper English. I accepted *almost* all her corrections. If any blemishes remain, don’t blame her; blame it on Dutch stubbornness.

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