

**Do the following texts imply a conscious faith  
in the person and work of Christ  
on the part of Old Testament saints?**

**Genesis 15:6; John 8:56; Romans 4:3;  
Galatians 3:6; Hebrews 11:10**

**James R Oakley**

**Dissertation submitted towards the award of BA  
(Hons) in Theological and Pastoral Studies  
at Oak Hill Theological College, London.**

**May 2005**

# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Hebrew Transliteration Scheme</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Inclusivism</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Introducing Inclusivism	2
2.2 Basic Arguments of Inclusivism	3
2.3 The place of the Old Testament saints in the Inclusivist Argument	5
2.4 Inclusivist Exegesis of Biblical Texts under Consideration	7
2.5 Summary	9
<b>3. The Conscious Faith Position</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Introducing the Conscious Faith Position	10
3.2 Proponents of the Conscious Faith Position	12
3.3 CFP Exegesis of Biblical Texts under Consideration	14
3.3.1 John 8:56	14
3.3.2 Galatians 3:6	16
3.3.3 Hebrews 11:10	16
3.3.4 Romans 4:3	17
3.3.5 Genesis 15:6	18
3.3.6 Summary	19
<b>4. Exegesis of Texts and Systematic Conclusions</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 <i>Hebrews 11:10</i>	21
4.1.1 Structure and Flow	21
4.1.2 Context	22

4.1.3 Exegesis and Meaning	24
4.1.4 Systematic Conclusions	25
4.2 <i>John 8:56</i>	26
4.2.1 Structure and Flow	26
4.2.2 Context	26
4.2.3 Exegesis and Meaning	27
4.2.4 Systematic Conclusions	30
4.3 <i>Romans 4:3</i>	31
4.3.1 Structure and Flow	31
4.3.2 Context	32
4.3.3 Exegesis and Meaning	33
4.3.4 Systematic Conclusions	35
4.4 <i>Galatians 3:6</i>	37
4.4.1 Structure and Flow	37
4.4.2 Context	37
4.4.3 Exegesis and Meaning	38
4.4.4 Systematic Conclusions	40
4.5 <i>Genesis 15:6</i>	43
4.5.1 Structure and Flow	43
4.5.2 Context	44
4.5.3 Exegesis and Meaning	47
4.5.4 Systematic Conclusions	49
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>51</b>
5.1 What did Abraham Consciously Believe?	51
5.2 Abraham's Faith Compared to Inclusivist Exegesis	52
5.3 Abraham's Faith Compared to CFP Exegesis	53
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>55</b>
Appendix 1: Interview with Dr Paul Blackham	55
Appendix 2: List of Translations of $\bar{d}$ in the LXX	59
Appendix 3: Conversation with Dr Paul Blackham, 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2005	61
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>62</b>

# Preface

I would like to acknowledge my thanks to three individuals who have particularly helped me with this Dissertation. I started with only general ideas as to what areas I wanted to study; Dr Garry Williams helped me move from these generalities to a specific field, rationale and title. Revd Dr James Robson has offered invaluable help as my supervisor. I could not have written this without his bibliographic pointers, clear grasp of the issues, and guidance on how to write something that is much longer than a regular essay.

I am also extremely grateful to Revd Dr Paul Blackham of All Soul's Church in London. He has devoted considerable time to thinking through the issue of how the OT saints are saved. I am grateful to him for giving me his time in the run-up to Christmas, so that I could talk to him personally about his published material. It was helpful to have the chance to ask questions of clarification from one of the authors with whose ideas I am engaging. It was also valuable to have a subsequent conversation; see Appendix 3 (page 61).

# Introduction

The doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ alone is central to a reformed systematic theology. Yet a number of people have raised the question as to how the OT saints could be justified before God, given they have no knowledge of Christ. The two main recent suggestions appear to have been:

- (a) people can be justified today without knowledge of Christ, and
- (b) the Old Testament saints shared the knowledge of God we enjoy today.

I have a number of friends who hold to one or other of these suggestions, yet my suspicion was that neither suggestion offered a satisfactory explanation of the biblical data. This dissertation explores this area. The title is deliberately exegetical rather than systematic. The concern is to see what a few specific biblical texts, studied in their proper contexts, have to say about the cognitive content of the OT saints' faith. The contemporary relevance of this issue comes from the challenge it raises to the

traditional doctrine of justification, and from the need to develop an OT hermeneutic that is itself biblical.

## Abbreviations

CFP	Conscious Faith Position, as defined on page 10.
CJT	Canadian Journal of Theology.
ESV	The English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.
LXX	The Septuagint translation of the OT in Greek. That is to say, the Septuagint proper (a translation of the Pentateuch) and the “Old Greek” translation of the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.
MT	The Masoretic Text: The text of the Hebrew Scriptures according to the <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> .
OT	Old Testament.
NIDNTT	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , edited by C Brown, (Exeter, Paternoster, 1978), 3 volumes.
NIDOTTE	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , edited by Willem A VanGemeren, (1996; UK edition Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1997), 5 volumes.
NT	New Testament.
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , translated by G W Bromiley, edited by G Kittel and G Friedrich, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1974), 10 volumes.
WThJ	Westminster Theological Journal.

# Hebrew Transliteration Scheme

## Consonants

א א	ה h	כ k	פ p
ב b	ו w	ל l	ק q
בּ b	ז z	מ m	ר r
ג ġ	ח ḥ	נ n	ש ś
גּ g	ט ṭ	ס s	שׁ š
ד d	י y	ע ʿ	ת t̄
דּ d	כּ k̄	פּ p̄	תּ t

## Vowels

א a	א̄ ā	אה̄ â	א e
א e	א̄ ē	אׁי ê	א׃ ä
א i	א̄ ō	אׁי î	א׃ ě
א o		אׁי ô	א׃ ö
א u		אׁי û	

Silent sheva is not rendered in transliteration.

Dagesh lene is rendered as shown in the table of consonants. Dagesh forte is rendered by doubling the consonant concerned in the transliterated form.

Furtive patach is signified with a superscript <sup>a</sup>.

# 1. Introduction

The biblical texts that are the subject of this dissertation are used to support two quite different theological positions. One of the arguments for inclusivism is based on an interpretation of these texts; one argument for claiming the OT saints exercised conscious faith in the person and work of Christ is also based on these texts.

It is not this dissertation's purpose to establish or to refute either of these positions. A full defence of either is outside its scope, because neither position can be sufficiently defended from these five texts alone. A full refutation of either is also outside its scope, because the claimed biblical basis of both positions is wider than just these five texts.

What this dissertation will do is briefly outline each of these positions, and examine how the five texts are used by their proponents. This will be followed by exegesis of each text, to establish what systematic implications may legitimately be drawn from them. Whilst this approach neither establishes nor refutes inclusivism or the CFP, it does assess the extent to which a defence of either, *based upon these five texts*, is valid. Finally, the conclusion will consider what can be said about the cognitive content of Abraham's faith that is consistent with these biblical texts. In summary, Abraham's lifelong trust in God's promises, which Christ ultimately fulfils, is saving faith.

# 2. Inclusivism

As was explained in the introduction, it is not our task to outline and critique inclusivism as a whole.<sup>1</sup> However, in order to appreciate the significance of inclusivist exegesis of our texts, an overall grasp of inclusivism is necessary.

Accordingly, this chapter will first outline inclusivism and its basic arguments; it will then consider how the OT saints function in that argument, finally examining how these five texts are employed.

## 2.1 Introducing Inclusivism

Inclusivism is a doctrinal position regarding who will be saved. As such, it falls on a spectrum that has pluralism at one end and “particularism”<sup>2</sup> at the other. Pluralism understands all religions as being valid means of salvation. Sincere adherents of any faith will be saved, which is not the same thing as saying that every human being will be saved. The key recent Christian proponent of pluralism is John Hick.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Others have done this capably. See, for example, Strange, D, *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology*, (Carlisle, Paternoster, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Other terms used are exclusivism and restrictivism. Particularism is preferable to these other two as, in the current climate, exclusivism and restrictivism *sound* unacceptable before the theological content of the term has even been heard. See D L Okholm and T R Phillips, ‘Introduction’, in *More than one way?*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), pages 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> See Hick, J, ‘A Pluralist View’, in *More than one way?*, edited by D L Okholm and T R Phillips, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), pages 27-59, where he outlines his view. In summary, God is “The Real”, an essentially unknowable being. Nevertheless, religions are human constructions that provide genuine access to “The Real”.



At the other end of the scale lies particularism. Particularism understands salvation as coming from no one other than Jesus Christ, by means of faith in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. Therefore, only those with faith in Jesus Christ will be saved.

Inclusivism comes in between. With particularism, inclusivism asserts that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. With pluralism, inclusivism asserts that explicit faith in Christ is not necessary to benefit from his work. The key recent proponents here are Clark Pinnock and John Sanders. They, in turn, rely heavily on the arguments of Norman Anderson, CS Lewis, Karl Rahner and the theology of Vatican II.<sup>4</sup>

At this point, it may appear that a pluralist reading of our texts should be considered, rather than an inclusivist reading. After all, pluralism, not inclusivism, is at the end of the spectrum. However, this refers to the spectrum of views regarding who will be saved. We are interested in views concerning the faith of Abraham according to certain biblical texts. On that issue, inclusivism is at one end of the spectrum, while pluralists do not even ask the question. The reason they do not is that they, unlike inclusivists, are not committed to the “finality of Jesus Christ”.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.2 Basic Arguments of Inclusivism

As was said above, in order to understand correctly the inclusivist exegesis of our texts, we need to appreciate their basic argument. In essence, inclusivist soteriology depends on holding two pairs of ideas together in tension and drawing two distinctions.

The first tension is what Pinnock consistently refers to as two axioms. These are “the universality axiom: the global reach of God’s salvation”<sup>6</sup> and “the particularity

---

<sup>4</sup> See Strange, *op. cit.*, page 100, citing Pinnock, ‘An Inclusivist View’ in *More than one way?*, edited by D L Okholm and T R Phillips, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), page 97.

<sup>5</sup> Pinnock’s first book (as opposed to article) on this subject was subtitled ‘The finality of Jesus Christ in a world of religions’.

<sup>6</sup> Pinnock, ‘Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions’, *JETS* 33 (1990), page 360.

axiom: salvation only through Jesus”.<sup>7</sup> Pinnock’s argument is that the Bible teaches both axioms throughout. Whereas particularism denies the first axiom, and pluralism denies the second axiom, inclusivism holds both together.<sup>8</sup> Sanders also uses this argument from axioms.<sup>9</sup>

Pinnock later developed a second tension, that between the Son’s and the Spirit’s work. He speaks of the Son and the Spirit as God’s “two hands in the work of redemption”.<sup>10</sup> We need to recognise “the twin, interdependent missions of Son and Spirit”.<sup>11</sup> This is really a Trinitarian way of stating the first tension, for “Christ... sustains particularity, while Spirit... safeguards universality”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the Spirit provides *universal* access to the *particular* grace available through Christ.

To hold these tensions requires carefully drawing the distinction between epistemology and ontology. Drawing on Vatican II, Pinnock says we must “distinguish the ontological necessity of Christ’s work of redemption from the epistemological situation of sinners. There is no salvation except through Christ but it is not necessary for everybody to possess a conscious knowledge of Christ in order to benefit from redemption through him”.<sup>13</sup>

The other distinction to draw is between objective and subjective religion. Pinnock follows Hick’s trajectory<sup>14</sup> in saying that someone may adhere to a non-Christian religious structure (their objective religion) whilst inwardly exhibiting “piety, faith, worship and the fear of God”<sup>15</sup> (their subjective religion). Objective religious works

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, page 362.

<sup>8</sup> See Pinnock, ‘Inclusivism: Conclusion’ in *More than one way?*, edited by D L Okholm and T R Phillips, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), page 141.

<sup>9</sup> See Sanders, *No Other Name*, pages 25-30.

<sup>10</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, page 92.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, page 192.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, page 192.

<sup>13</sup> Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*, page 75.

<sup>14</sup> See Hick, J, *God has Many Names*, page 5.

<sup>15</sup> Pinnock, *op. cit.*, page 111.

do not earn salvation, but people may avail themselves of Christ's gracious salvation by subjective faith, regardless of their objective religion. Sanders articulates this as a distinction between believers and Christians. "All Christians are believers but not all believers are Christians".<sup>16</sup> Both Pinnock and Sanders appeal to CS Lewis here. He wrote of people who focus on the most upright aspects of their religion, and so belong "to Christ without knowing it".<sup>17</sup> Also cited is the scene in *The Last Battle* where Aslan attributes to himself all honourable worship offered to the false god Tash.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.3 The place of the Old Testament saints in the Inclusivist Argument

So, where do our texts fit into the basic inclusivist argument? Whilst inclusivists argue from the example of the OT saints, they usually proceed by general argument rather than by exegesis of particular texts (ours or others). Such arguments are not irrelevant, for we need to assess their *implicit* exegesis as well as their *explicit* exegesis. That is, we need to assess how these general arguments square with our texts. We therefore examine their general arguments from the OT saints in this section, and the particular use they make of our texts in the next section.

At this point, we need to distinguish between the OT pagan (like Jethro and Melchizedek),<sup>19</sup> and the OT saint (like Abraham). The OT pagans are used as adherents of non Judaeo-Christian religions whose worship is considered acceptable to Yahweh. The OT saints are used as examples of ignorant Judaeo-Christian believers. Our inquiry concerns Abraham, so our interest is with this second line of argument.

---

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *op. cit.*, page 225.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, C S, *Mere Christianity*, page 174.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, C S, *The Last Battle*, pages 152-155.

<sup>19</sup> That is, Jethro and Melchizedek are regarded by Pinnock as pagans who appear in the OT narrative. Whether the designation "pagan" is appropriate is a question that can't be answered here. See Pinnock, *Wideness*, pages 92, 161-163.

The OT saints serve as counter-examples to the particularist claim that conscious faith in the person and work of Christ is necessary for salvation. “Their knowledge was deficient... but their forgiven status [was] identical with ours”.<sup>20</sup> Abraham “was saved in spite of severe conceptual shortcomings”.<sup>21</sup> “Without actually confessing Jesus Christ, they were saved by his work of redemption”.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, amongst OT Jews, Abraham had unusually “vivid spiritual perception”.<sup>23</sup> Assuming others were saved, it was with even less conceptual grasp than he had.

It needs to be noted that the inclusivist argument does not rely solely on the OT saints. Inclusivists raise other counter-examples, not least those who die in infancy.<sup>24</sup> However, the charge is made that particularists are inconsistent, and that they have a case to answer vis-à-vis the OT saints.<sup>25</sup>

So far, inclusivists have only used the OT saints to dispute particularism. The step which argues for inclusivism is to describe the unevangelised today as “informationally premessianic”<sup>26</sup> and other religions as “premessianic”<sup>27</sup> religions. Sanders uses the same language, speaking of those living “informationally B.C.”.<sup>28</sup> The argument is that B.C. is an epistemological category, not a temporal one. Pinnock asks the rhetorical question: “Why would it make any difference if Job were born in A.D. 1900 in outer Mongolia?”<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, N, *Christianity and World Religions*, page 145.

<sup>21</sup> Pinnock, *op. cit.*, page 159.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, page 163.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, page 144.

<sup>24</sup> Pinnock lists several categories of counter-example on pages 161-168 of *Wideness*.

<sup>25</sup> See Sanders, *op. cit.*, page 42.

<sup>26</sup> Pinnock, *op. cit.*, page 161.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 83-84.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders, ‘Inclusivism’, in *What about those who have never heard?*, edited by John Sanders, (Downers Grove, IVP, 1995), page 40.

<sup>29</sup> Pinnock, *op. cit.*, page 161.

Before considering inclusivist exegesis of our specific texts, their implicit exegesis can be summarised as follows: Abraham was declared right with God because of his faith in God; however, that faith did not amount to a confession of Jesus Christ. He therefore serves as an example for today; there will be people today who do not know of Jesus Christ, but who will be shown mercy because of their faith in God.

## 2.4 Inclusivist Exegesis of Biblical Texts under Consideration

As well as arguing in general from the OT saints, inclusivists also refer explicitly to the texts we are considering.

Hebrews 11 is cited because it “documents the salvation of a whole variety of people who were saved by faith in God but who never heard or invoked the name of Jesus”.<sup>30</sup> These figures had “different information about God, so that what they believed varied. But... they all trusted in the same God”.<sup>31</sup> Indeed the chapter contains “such persons as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Daniel. These were men of faith who lived before Abram’s time”,<sup>32</sup> and who therefore knew even less than Abram did.

Within Hebrews 11, the most frequently cited verse is verse 6, which is quoted in order to define saving faith. The rest of the chapter is then read with verse 6 defining the term “faith”. Thus, verse 6 establishes that “faith in God is what saves, not possessing certain minimum information”.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, “according to EH Plumptre, being saved through the sort of faith described in Hebrews 11:6 ‘is compatible with ignorance of any historical revelation through Moses or through Christ’”.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Pinnock, ‘Inclusivism: Conclusion’, page 144.

<sup>31</sup> Sanders, ‘Inclusivism’, page 38.

<sup>32</sup> Pinnock, *Wideness*, page 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, page 158.

<sup>34</sup> Sanders, *No Other Name*, page 228, citing Plumptre, E H, *The Spirits in Prison*, (London, Isbister, 1898), page 163.

Sanders refers to Galatians 3:6. He observes from verse 8 that what Abraham believed in verse 6 is described as “the gospel”. Yet “it seems doubtful that Abraham could have understood the historical incarnation and the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection”.<sup>35</sup> In other words, one can believe the gospel without understanding the fact or significance of the historical events.

As for Genesis 15, both Sanders<sup>36</sup> and Pinnock insist that this chapter be interpreted in the context of the whole of Genesis, and specifically in the context of the covenant with Noah. That covenant is with “all peoples sharing a common ancestry in Noah”,<sup>37</sup> and is not to be understood in “a minimalist way... only of preservation and not of redemption”.<sup>38</sup> “The promise to Noah prepares the way for the blessing of all nations through Abram a few chapters later. The call of Abram implements the promise to Noah. Both covenants are universal in scope”.<sup>39</sup> It is a mistake, albeit a common one, to say that with Abram God is “changing his mind about the other nations, wanting now to save only some and rejecting others”.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the covenant with Noah shows that salvation is universally available; Genesis 15 must not be understood to deny this.<sup>41</sup>

Verse 6 is specifically understood as teaching that Abraham “was justified because he believed that God would fulfil his promise to grant him a son”.<sup>42</sup> Pinnock quotes verse 6 to make the point that Abraham was saved by faith, yet “without professing Christ”.<sup>43</sup> This raises the question as to why, if he did not profess Christ, Abraham’s faith was saving. Pinnock answers this by linking Genesis 15:6 with Hebrews 11:6;

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, page 226.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, pages 132-133. The rest of this paragraph outlines Pinnock’s articulation of this point.

<sup>37</sup> Pinnock, *op. cit.*, page 21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, page 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, page 21.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, page 23.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*, page 105.

<sup>42</sup> Sanders, *op. cit.*, page 227; see also Pinnock, *Wideness*, page 160; Sanders, ‘Inclusivism’, page 38.

<sup>43</sup> Pinnock, *Wideness*, page 163.

Genesis shows that “God rewards those who seek him”.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Hebrews 11:6 does not only define faith in Hebrews 11; it defines faith in Genesis 15 as well.

Finally, Romans 4 is understood by Sanders as teaching that Abraham was “justified by faith and so [is] saved”,<sup>45</sup> where the content of that faith is “that he and Sarah would have a son in their old age”.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the fact that David and Abraham believed different things, yet both feature in Romans 4, illustrates the point that the content of faith is not what matters.<sup>47</sup> Pinnock observes that Abraham is set up as “a model believer for us all”,<sup>48</sup> “the father of all believers”.<sup>49</sup> This is so in spite of the fact that “he never heard the gospel”,<sup>50</sup> and that “he did not know Christ”.<sup>51</sup>

## 2.5 Summary

Inclusivism holds onto both the universal accessibility of salvation, and the particularity of salvation through Christ. One argument used is that people living today who have never heard of Christ are living B.C. epistemologically. The OT saints illustrate the fact that believing “the gospel” does not require cognitive knowledge of Christ; faith in God, as defined in Hebrews 11:6, is all that is needed.

---

<sup>44</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, page 157.

<sup>45</sup> Sanders, ‘Inclusivism’, page 38.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, page 104.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, page 104.

<sup>48</sup> Pinnock, ‘An Inclusivist View’, page 110.

<sup>49</sup> Pinnock, ‘Inclusivism: Conclusion’, page 148.

<sup>50</sup> Pinnock, ‘An Inclusivist View’, page 110.

<sup>51</sup> Pinnock, ‘Inclusivism: Conclusion’, page 148.

# 3. The Conscious Faith Position

This dissertation coins the term “Conscious Faith Position” (CFP) to denote a particular view, regarding the faith of the OT saints, which also employs our texts in its defence. This chapter will define the CFP, and then explore how our five texts are used to defend CFP.

## 3.1 Introducing the Conscious Faith Position

The CFP asserts that the OT saints exercised *conscious* faith in the person and work of Christ for their salvation. That is, they trusted in Christ, and *knew* that they did so.

Vischer stressed that the whole OT is “a testimony to Jesus the Messiah”,<sup>1</sup> such that the faith of the OT saints “is directed to Him”.<sup>2</sup> In saying this, Vischer does not specify how *conscious* the OT saints were that Christ was the object of their faith. Certainly, “Vischer does not claim that Jesus Christ was present in Old Testament times”,<sup>3</sup> rather that he is at “the vanishing point of Old Testament perspective”.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, CFP goes further than Vischer’s explicit statements. Putting one’s faith in

---

<sup>1</sup> Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ, Volume I: The Pentateuch*, page 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, page 19.

<sup>3</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, second edition, page 102.

<sup>4</sup> Vischer, *op. cit.*, page 28.



the “shadows and types”<sup>5</sup> of the OT era, as “deemed to be... faith in the Christ of the NT”,<sup>6</sup> is inadequate.<sup>7</sup> The OT saints *knew* that those signs foreshadowed Christ, and so *consciously* put their faith in Christ.

Comparing CFP to the doctrines of progressive revelation, inclusivism and dispensationalism will make clearer what CFP entails.<sup>8</sup>

First, CFP is *not* opposed to progressive revelation,<sup>9</sup> once the core of revelation is distinguished from its details. The detail of revelation can unfold; for example, CFP does not imply every OT saint knew Pilate’s name. However, “as we read through the Bible we may find... different levels of understanding – but we never find any other object of faith than Christ”.<sup>10</sup> That core must include the doctrine of the Trinity; otherwise, Abraham would be “a theological amoeba”.<sup>11</sup>

Second, CFP is set against dispensationalism, because it insists that OT saints were saved in the same way as NT Christians.<sup>12</sup> Third, CFP is set against inclusivism, because the idea that salvation is found outside of Christ, “a basis for inter-faith dialogue”,<sup>13</sup> is unbiblical over against the idea that there is “no knowledge of God outside of Jesus Christ”.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Goldsworthy, in ‘The Blackham-Goldsworthy Debate: Question Time’, [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_theologian/content/bible/questions.html](http://www.geocities.com/the_theologian/content/bible/questions.html).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> See Blackham, ‘Christ the Object of our Faith’, [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Christ the Object of Faith.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Christ%20the%20Object%20of%20Faith.PDF), page 3.

<sup>8</sup> It needs to be noted that, whilst CFP offers *one* way of avoiding subscription to the ideas of dispensationalism and inclusivism, it is not the *opposite* of either position. That is to say, it is *only one way* of avoiding them. That there are other ways of avoiding either position can be seen by observing that dispensationalists have avoided subscribing to inclusivism, and that inclusivists have avoided subscribing to dispensationalism.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1, ‘Interview with Paul Blackham’, *Answer 9*, page 59.

<sup>10</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Genesis 15.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Genesis%2015.PDF), page 8.

<sup>11</sup> Blackham, ‘Christ the Object of our Faith’, page 4.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1, ‘Interview with Paul Blackham’, *Book Recommendations*, page 55.

<sup>13</sup> Blackham, ‘Faith in Christ in the Old Testament’, [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_theologian/content/bible/blackham.html](http://www.geocities.com/the_theologian/content/bible/blackham.html).

A central concern of CFP is to handle the OT with integrity. It matters both that “Jesus, the One Moses and the prophets wrote about”<sup>15</sup> guides our OT exegesis, and that the “author’s originally intended”<sup>16</sup> meaning is heard. Indeed, if the NT writers “are not mishandling the OT at all”,<sup>17</sup> these exegetical concerns will be in mutual harmony.

## 3.2 Proponents of the Conscious Faith Position

Much of what follows has been articulated by Paul Blackham, in writing and in a personal conversation with me.<sup>18</sup> Elements of the CFP are also found in the writings of James Borland and AT Hanson.

Borland’s contribution is to argue that “all Old Testament Theophanies that involved the manifestation of God in human form were appearances of the second person of the Trinity”.<sup>19</sup>

His argument has two stages. First, these appearances were appearances of God. Augustine, reacting to Arian suggestions that the invisible Father was ontologically superior to the visible Son, affirmed that God was essentially invisible. It follows that these theophanies were appearances of a created angel, sent to *represent* God.<sup>20</sup> Borland replies that no angel would accept worship, so these are appearances of God

---

<sup>14</sup> Blackham, ‘Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT?’, [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Do%20the%20NT%20writers%20misunderstand%20the%20OT.PDF), page 5.

<sup>15</sup> Blackham, ‘The Doctrine of God and the Exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures’, [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/The Doctrine of God the the Exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/The%20Doctrine%20of%20God%20the%20the%20Exegesis%20of%20the%20Hebrew%20Scriptures.PDF), page 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, page 1.

<sup>17</sup> Blackham, ‘Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT?’, page 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 1, ‘Interview with Paul Blackham’, pages 55ff. See also Appendix 3, ‘Conversation with Paul Blackham 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005’, page 61.

<sup>19</sup> Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, page 11.

<sup>20</sup> See Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, pages 57-58.

himself.<sup>21</sup> Second, the NT doctrine of the Trinity offers hindsight that shows that the Angel of the LORD exercised a parallel ministry to that of *the Son*. Further, God's "sent one" is His Son.<sup>22</sup>

Borland qualifies what he says carefully. The uniqueness of the incarnation is not threatened<sup>23</sup> because this is Christ appearing "in what *looked like*, yet was not truly, a human body."<sup>24</sup> The human form was how he chose to appear, not his actual form; "the Christophanies were not temporary unions between God and complete manhood".<sup>25</sup> The implication for CFP is that Abraham (amongst others) met Christ.

Hanson shares the aforementioned concern that the NT exegesis of the OT be authentic. He argues that the NT writers used the category of typology less frequently than modern exegetes do, and that seeing "the real presence"<sup>26</sup> of Jesus in the OT is a better approach. Indeed, "we cannot have both Christ and a type of Christ at the same place and time".<sup>27</sup>

In saying this, Hanson is not saying the same thing as Borland, although he may have held the same view.<sup>28</sup> He says that there are hints in the NT that "Christ spoke in OT times",<sup>29</sup> but that he spoke through a *human* agent.<sup>30</sup> Hanson's emphasis is,

---

<sup>21</sup> Borland, *op. cit.*, pages 49, 64.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 61-63.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 106-107.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, page 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, page 19.

<sup>26</sup> Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, page 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, page 8.

<sup>28</sup> See Baker, *op. cit.*, page 102.

<sup>29</sup> Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, page 17; see also Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, page 53.

<sup>30</sup> See Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, pages 59-60, where Hebrews' view on the authorship of Psalm 95 is discussed. The conclusion is that the pre-existent Christ spoke the Psalm through its original author, David. He is thus arguing for a form of the doctrine of inspiration that allows Christ to be the divine, inspiring author, rather than for all human-form theophanies to be personal appearances of Christ.

rather, on how much the OT saints knew. “In Paul’s view Moses must have known all about Christ”.<sup>31</sup> Christ was personally present in the OT in the sense that the participants of the OT narratives *knew* that their blessings came through Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Blackham combines Borland’s and Hanson’s contributions.<sup>33</sup> With Borland, Christ was the one who appeared to the OT saints, so that they met and heard Christ.<sup>34</sup> With Hanson, the OT saints knew that their blessings came from Christ. Thus, he summarises by saying that in Genesis “Christ preaches Christ”<sup>35</sup> to Abraham.

### 3.3 CFP Exegesis of Biblical Texts under Consideration

When considering inclusivism, it was necessary to examine how the OT saints featured in the inclusivist argument; only in that context could inclusivist exegesis of our texts be understood. This was because inclusivism is a soteriological position; however, the CFP is a position on the OT saints themselves. Having defined the CFP, we can therefore proceed straight to their exegesis of our texts.

#### 3.3.1 John 8:56

John 8:56 establishes that Abraham met Jesus.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, page 39.

<sup>32</sup> See also, Boice, *Genesis 12:1-36:43*, page 109.

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix 1, ‘Interview with Paul Blackham’, *Answer 1*, page 55.

<sup>34</sup> It needs to be noted that Blackham goes further than Borland, describing Christ as having a permanent “humanoid form”, which was seen in the theophanies. However, Borland’s view that the OT divine messenger encountered is Christ is sufficient to establish CFP, therefore Blackham’s stronger assertion does not concern this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> Blackham, ‘Christ the Object of our Faith’, page 4.

The preceding context is a discussion between Jesus and some Jews. In verse 42, Jesus says that because the Jews do not love him, they cannot know the Father. The implication “if Abraham did know God the Father”<sup>36</sup> is that Abraham loved Jesus.

In verse 56, Jesus “does not say that Abraham simply rejoiced at the thought of seeing the time of the Messiah... Jesus is saying something much more about Abraham”.<sup>37</sup> Jesus is saying that “He had personally met Abraham”.<sup>38</sup> As to *when* they met, there is some debate.<sup>39</sup> *How* Jesus can say they met is explained in verse 58; the “I am” claim shows that “Jesus is the Yahweh-Person who met Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”.<sup>40</sup> That is, whenever God revealed himself as *yhwh*, the divine person revealing himself was Jesus.

The following context dispels any idea that Abraham merely looked forward to meeting Jesus one day; the crowd’s reaction<sup>41</sup> in verse 59 shows that they interpret Jesus’ remarks as a blasphemous reference to the burning bush.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the crowd would know that Abraham’s faith was in none other than the LORD God.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, John 8:56 can be paraphrased: “Abraham was really looking forward to meeting me, then when he did meet me he was over-the-moon”.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Blackham, ‘The Doctrine of God and the Exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures’, page 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, page 6.

<sup>38</sup> Blackham, ‘Romans 4:1-25’, [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Romans\\_4.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Romans_4.PDF), page 2.

<sup>39</sup> See the discussion in Hanson, *op. cit.*, pages 123-125, as to when in Genesis the Johannine features of “gladness” and “the Lord” coincide. He concludes that there is no need to choose. Blackham settles for Genesis 18. (See Blackham, ‘Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT?’, page 1.)

<sup>40</sup> Blackham, ‘The Doctrine of God and the Exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures’, page 7.

<sup>41</sup> See Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 6.

<sup>42</sup> Blackham, ‘John 8:48-59’, [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/John\\_8\\_48\\_to\\_59.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/John_8_48_to_59.PDF), page 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, page 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, page 2.

### 3.3.2 Galatians 3:6

Galatians 3:6 establishes that the promises made to Abraham in Genesis are promises about Christ, and that Abraham knew that this was so.

Galatians 3:16 establishes that the promises in Genesis 12 concern Christ; it follows the same can be said of those in Genesis 15. Specifically, what is made known to Abraham is termed “the gospel”<sup>45</sup> in Galatians 3:8.

In context, Paul is showing that Abraham is “the true father of the believers”.<sup>46</sup> For this to be so, what Abraham believed *in* matters greatly. “Some argue that Abraham hoped for simply some land and lots of children... This is very serious. If Abraham was not a Christian believer, that is a saint with Christ as the object of his faith, then we must say that Abraham did not know God at all.”<sup>47</sup>

In other words, both the thrust of Paul’s argument in Galatians, and the particular language used in Galatians 3:8 and 3:16, shows that Abraham trusted the gospel of Christ.

### 3.3.3 Hebrews 11:10

Hebrews 11:10 establishes that Abraham knew he was being promised more than material blessings.

Why was Abraham willing, in Genesis 13, to allow Lot to take the best land, whilst continuing to live nomadically?<sup>48</sup> “Well, according to Hebrews 11 [he] did this because [he was] looking forward to a spot in the New Creation after the final resurrec-

---

<sup>45</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, page 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, page 7.

<sup>48</sup> See Blackham, *Book by Book: Genesis*, page 28.

tion.”<sup>49</sup> Where does Hebrews 11 speak of this? “Abram had his eyes fixed on the New Creation, *the city with foundations*”.<sup>50</sup>

What follows from this is that to speak of the patriarchs “at some low level of revelation where the gospel is understood in purely earthly terms”<sup>51</sup> is inappropriate.

### 3.3.4 Romans 4:3

Romans 4:3 establishes that Abraham was saved in exactly the same way as the contemporary Christian believer.

The context in Romans 4 is Paul answering an interlocutor’s charge that he is guilty of novelty; that is, the OT does not teach what Paul teaches.<sup>52</sup> The OT counterexample suggested to Paul is Abraham. Paul replies that “there is only one occasion in the Old Testament where Abraham is described as being righteous”<sup>53</sup> and that is Genesis 15:6. There it is explained that Abraham was not justified “because of his obedience, but because he believed the gospel of Jesus Christ”.<sup>54</sup>

Although Paul speaks of Abraham’s faith as being “in God”, this must not be taken to mean Abraham only trusted the Father, or that “Abraham was a kind of unitarian”.<sup>55</sup> This is so for two reasons. First, Paul is showing that Abraham is saved the same way as the contemporary believer. “Romans 3:22 tells us clearly that righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. If this wasn’t true for Abraham, then how can it be true for us?”<sup>56</sup> Second, Paul’s point is that Abraham’s

---

<sup>49</sup> Blackham, ‘Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT?’, page 4.

<sup>50</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 3 (emphasis added).

<sup>51</sup> Blackham, ‘Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT?’, page 4.

<sup>52</sup> Blackham, ‘Romans 4:1-25’, page 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, page 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, page 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, page 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 1-2.

faith was in God as opposed to humanity, not in Father as opposed to Son.<sup>57</sup> Hanson suggests that Jesus is the speaker in Romans 4:3.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, rather than being a counterexample to refute Paul's teaching, Abraham is "the prototype Christian for Jew and Gentile".<sup>59</sup>

### 3.3.5 Genesis 15:6

Whilst the above NT texts are important for CFP arguments, the *OT* texts are centrally important. This is necessarily so: The claim is being made that the *OT* saints *knew* the Christological significance of the *OT* signs; if this is true, their own writings ought to say so.<sup>60</sup> Whilst Genesis is central to the argument, there is nothing especially central about the *fifteenth chapter* of Genesis. It is often referred to in CFP arguments, but that is because the NT refers to it often. In fact, any occasion on which the LORD appeared to Abraham is an encounter with Jesus; Genesis 15 is only one such incident.<sup>61</sup> By Genesis 15:1, "Abram has had at least three specific divine promises pertaining to the Messiah".<sup>62</sup>

Genesis 15:6 establishes that the "word of God" is a person, and that person is Christ.

The first stage is to say that "the Word of the LORD is a *He!*"<sup>63</sup> This is seen in observing that Abram has two encounters with the word of God in Genesis 15. In 15:1,

---

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, page 2.

<sup>58</sup> See Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, page 53.

<sup>59</sup> Blackham, *op. cit.*, page 4.

<sup>60</sup> Goldsworthy criticises Blackham on precisely this point: "Why does Paul Blackham need to use the NT to arrive at his position if it is explicit?" ([http://www.geocities.com/the\\_theologian/content/bible/goldsworthy.html](http://www.geocities.com/the_theologian/content/bible/goldsworthy.html)). In fairness, Blackham's arguments from NT texts tend to refer the reader back to Genesis to explain them. See, for example, Blackham, 'Romans 4:1-25', page 2.

<sup>61</sup> See Appendix 1, 'Interview with Paul Blackham', *Answer 1*, page 55.

<sup>62</sup> Blackham, 'Genesis 15' page 3.

<sup>63</sup> Blackham, *Book by Book: Genesis*, page 29.



“Abram has a vision of the Word of Yahweh”.<sup>64</sup> Abram’s faith leads him to ask more questions, “so, rather than another vision... the Word of Yahweh comes to visit Abram personally – verse 4... Furthermore, this Person known as the Word of the LORD takes Abraham outside and shows Him the stars in the night sky”.<sup>65</sup> “He even takes Abraham for a walk.”<sup>66</sup>

The second stage is to say that this personal Word of the LORD is Christ. Who else could “a Divine Person who is the Word of another Divine Person”<sup>67</sup> be? This conclusion is reinforced by considering the language of John 1.<sup>68</sup> If such a conclusion is speculative, “then the apostle John seems guilty”<sup>69</sup> of speculation too. Further, as “no-one has ever seen God at any time”,<sup>70</sup> when he is revealed in this way it must be by the one who is at the Father’s side.

Genesis 15:6 also establishes that the promises spoken in Genesis concern Christ. Words of the root [zrf] occur repeatedly, including in the promises of 15:3, 5. These references echo the Messianic promise made to Eve in 3:15.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.3.6 Summary

John 8:56 shows that Abraham met Christ. Galatians 3:6 shows that the promises made to Abraham concern Christ, and Hebrews 11:10 shows that Abraham knew

---

<sup>64</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, page 4.

<sup>66</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology Volume I*, page 79.

<sup>67</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 4.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Blackham in *Book by Book: Genesis*, video recording, ‘Study 5’.

<sup>69</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, page 7.

<sup>71</sup> See Blackham, *Book by Book: Genesis*, page 27.

this to be true. Romans 4 shows that Abraham was saved in the same way as Christians are: by faith in Christ. Thus: “Christ preaches Christ”.<sup>72</sup>

The same conclusion can be reached from Genesis 15 alone. Abraham encounters a personal “Word of the LORD”, who must be Jesus. The promises he hears concern the long-promised “seed”, the Messiah who would come. Again, “Abraham trusted Christ, as both the Promised One and the Promiser”.<sup>73</sup>

This conclusion must not be misunderstood. Abraham did trust in Christ, but in “the Christ who was to be manifested”.<sup>74</sup> In addition, whilst Abraham encountered Jesus personally, this was no more necessary for every OT saint than it is for every NT believer;<sup>75</sup> such an encounter was not *necessary* for justification.

---

<sup>72</sup> Blackham, ‘Christ the Object of our Faith’, page 4.

<sup>73</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 5.

<sup>74</sup> Martin Luther, quoted with approval in Blackham, *op. cit.*, page 7. (See Luther, *Galatians*, page 137.)

<sup>75</sup> Blackham, ‘Genesis 15’, page 5.

# 4. Exegesis of Texts and Systematic Conclusions

We have outlined the way inclusivism and CFP is built upon the five texts we are studying. This chapter will consider what systematic conclusions may be drawn from careful exegesis of each text in turn.

## 4.1 Hebrews 11:10

### 4.1.1 Structure and Flow

Hebrews 10:39 expects the readers of Hebrews to be those who have faith; chapter 11 develops this by expounding “faith”.<sup>1</sup> The rhythm of the chapter comes from the sentences beginning with the instrumental dative *πιστει*, which describe what the ancients did “by faith”. For example, verses 5, 7, 9 and 11 all start with *πιστει*; by implication, verses 5-6 form one small unit, as do verses 9-10.

At the head of this list of examples is a description of what faith is (11:1-2).

Whether this is a formal definition or not, its place in the chapter means that it describes faith in a definitive way.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the list is 11:39-40, which is the writer’s assessment of all these examples (*οὗτοι παντες*). The list is interrupted by

---

<sup>1</sup> See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, pages 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> The main arguments of the debate can be seen in Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, page 328; Attridge, *Hebrews*, pages 307-308; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pages 564-566; Lenski, *The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James*, pages 372-373. The arguments discuss both the form of a classical definition and the semantics of the terms.

11:13-16; this summary is best seen as referring to the patriarchs, both because of the specific themes addressed and where it comes in the chapter.<sup>3</sup>

## 4.1.2 Context

The widest context is the whole epistle.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the ethnic makeup of the recipients, Hebrews was written to solidify their faith in Christ in the face of impending persecution. The precise polemic suggests they were being tempted towards non-Christian Judaism.<sup>5</sup> Chapter 11 serves this wider aim: The “qualities of faithfulness and steadfast endurance”<sup>6</sup> exhibited are what the congregation needs “to sustain its Christian confession in the world”.<sup>7</sup>

Hebrews encourages such perseverance by establishing “the finality of the gospel by contrast with all that went before it”.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in completing his work, Christ fulfilled all the OT expected. The OT saint heard the same gospel (4:2) and belonged to the same church (3:6) as the NT believer. Yet continuity is not the whole story; the writer selected his texts to show that “the Old Testament is not only an incomplete book but an avowedly incomplete book”.<sup>9</sup>

The way chapter 11 is read needs to be shaped by the opening and closing verses.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Lane, *op. cit.*, page 356; Vanhoye, *op. cit.*, page 101.

<sup>4</sup> The term “epistle” is used, not to disagree with the assessment of commentators who regard Hebrews as a “word of exhortation” (13:22) to be delivered *in absentia*, but for ease of reference. See Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, pages lxix-lxxv.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ellingworth, *op. cit.*, page 80; Hagner, *Hebrews*, pages 11-12; Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, page 10.

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, page 312.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, page 312.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, page 29.

<sup>9</sup> Caird, G B, ‘The exegetical method of the epistle to the Hebrews’, *CJT* 5 (1959), page 49.

First, 11:1 defines the key term “faith”. It needs to be noted that this definition is “not exhaustive in scope”.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the parenetic purpose of the epistle and other uses of *πιστις* in Hebrews<sup>11</sup> show that faith is directed towards Christ. 11:1 is not defining “‘Christian faith’... but ‘faith’ in general”.<sup>12</sup> Structurally, 11:6 is not a controlling definition of “faith”; 11:6 applies 11:1 syllogistically to Enoch (11:5-6) to show that he, too, lived “by faith”.<sup>13</sup>

Second, 11:39-40 summarises the author’s assessment of the characters that have been described. 11:39 says *that* the ancients did not receive the promise; contrasted with the plural “promises” of 11:33, this is best understood as “the ultimate promise realized in Christ”.<sup>14</sup> 11:40 then explains *why* they did not. Reading *ὅτι* epexegetically,<sup>15</sup> God had something better for us, *namely* that they should only be perfected with us.

“Something better” (*κρείττον τι*) could be understood in two ways. The first option is that *all generations* of believers are perfected together, so that we, *like* them, *have not* yet received “the promise”.<sup>16</sup> The second option is that *OT believers* can only be perfected once Christ has come, so that we, *unlike* them, *have* received “the promise”.<sup>17</sup>

The second option is to be preferred for two reasons. First, in what sense is God’s plan better *for us* (*περι ἡμῶν*)? It is not self-evident how each generation benefits from previous ones waiting, whereas *κρείττον* is a programmatic word for the new

---

<sup>10</sup> Lane, *op. cit.*, page 328.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, (a) 10:22 in the context of 10:19 and 12:2; (b) 13:7 in the context of 13:8.

<sup>12</sup> deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, page 381; see also Lenski, *op. cit.*, page 375.

<sup>13</sup> See Lane, *op. cit.*, page 315; Attridge, *op. cit.*, page 318.

<sup>14</sup> Attridge, *op. cit.*, page 352.

<sup>15</sup> Lane, *op. cit.*, page 392-393, and Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, pages 156-157.

<sup>16</sup> See Lenski, *op. cit.*, pages 420-421. deSilva, *op. cit.*, pages 423-425 reaches this conclusion, but also helpfully points out the significance of “better” in Hebrews.

<sup>17</sup> See Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 330; Ellingworth, *op. cit.*, page 636 (the OT as an age of “non-fulfilment”); Hughes, *op. cit.*, pages 516-517. Of course, this view does not preclude OT believers serving as an example in 12:1, as we too live by a faith that waits. It simply says that NT believers are not being *likened* to the OT believers in 11:39-40.

covenant.<sup>18</sup> Second, in the rest of the epistle<sup>19</sup> the old covenant did not bring perfection (7:11), but anticipated the new covenant which would (8:7). Believers enjoy perfection now (10:14) yet await its eschatological fulfilment (10:36). Consistently, 11:40 says that OT believers did not enjoy “perfection” during their lifetime, but will enjoy it with us at the eschaton.<sup>20</sup>

### 4.1.3 Exegesis and Meaning

As was observed above, 11:10 belongs structurally with 11:9. Abraham’s nomadic lifestyle “by faith” is explained in 11:10: He lived in tents because he was looking forward to the city. This city had “foundations”, in contrast to a tent, which was temporary and had no such foundations.<sup>21</sup>

The language of “city” picks up on the OT theme of Zion, the chosen city for God’s name.<sup>22</sup> Hebrews speaks of the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανιος) Jerusalem God has prepared for the patriarchs (11:16) and for those who trust Jesus as mediator (12:22). The question is: How much was Abraham conscious that this heavenly city was the goal of his hope?

It is clear that Abraham was conscious he awaited *a* city. This follows from the fact that his hope motivated him to live nomadically; hope only motivates lifestyle when it is conscious.<sup>23</sup> It also follows from the verb, ἐκδεχομαι, translated intensively by Lane as “looking forward with certainty”.<sup>24</sup> However, that still leaves the question as to *which* city he looked for *consciously*.

---

<sup>18</sup> See deSilva, *op. cit.*, pages 423-424; Ellingworth, *op. cit.*, page 636; Attridge, *op. cit.*, page 352.

<sup>19</sup> Summarising Peterson, *op. cit.*, page 157.

<sup>20</sup> This is particularly clearly expressed by Stibbs, *So Great Salvation*, page 98.

<sup>21</sup> See Ellingworth, *op. cit.*, page 584; Lane, *op. cit.*, pages 351-352.

<sup>22</sup> Lane, *op. cit.*, page 352.

<sup>23</sup> See deSilva, *op. cit.*, page 396.

<sup>24</sup> See Lane, *op. cit.*, page 343, and page 344 note f.

The promises made to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis, do not mention a city in the sense of a collection of buildings; what *is* mentioned is an expansive community of descendants. Stibbs argues from the meaning of *δημιουργος* that it is the *population* that Abraham looked for.<sup>25</sup> However, as was argued above, 11:10 is interpreted by 11:13-16 and 11:16 describes Abraham “longing for”<sup>26</sup> a heavenly country, which suggests Abraham was aware of the eschatological ingredient.

## 4.1.4 Systematic Conclusions

Hebrews 11 does not endorse the view that abstract faith in a deity is sufficient for salvation. Chapter 11 was written to encourage persevering faith *in Christ*, such that even non-Christian Judaism was insufficient. Specifically, 11:6 is not a controlling definition of “faith” for chapter 11; that role falls to 11:1, and even 11:1 does not say everything about faith.

It may be true that the characters in Hebrews 11 knew little about Christ. However, God made promises to them whose fulfilment was in “the promise” of perfection through Christ. Whereas they did not receive this in their lifetime, they will receive it eschatologically with us.

11:10, taken with 11:16, does suggest that Abraham knew that the promises God made were expansive and eschatological. However, whereas the Christian enjoys inceptive perfection in the present, 11:39-40 is clear that the patriarchs did not. The chapter as a whole precludes saying that Abraham enjoyed the same blessings as the contemporary Christian.

---

<sup>25</sup> Stibbs, *op. cit.*, page 91.

<sup>26</sup> Lane’s translation of *ὀρεγομαι*, *op. cit.*, page 343.

## 4.2 John 8:56

### 4.2.1 Structure and Flow

Taking the widespread view that 7:53-8:11 “was originally no part of the Fourth Gospel”,<sup>1</sup> it makes most sense to regard John 7-8 as narrating a single event,<sup>2</sup> which occurred at the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>3</sup> In 8:31, Jesus begins to address those who believed him (οἱ πεπιστευκοτες αὐτῷ). Jesus’ teaching, that only those who hold to his word are true disciples, is borne out by the narrative; these are “those who believe, and yet do not believe”.<sup>4</sup>

8:48-59 takes the form of three questions put to, and answered by, Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Jesus, offering deliverance from death, is accused of making himself greater than Abraham; 8:56 is part of his reply to this second question.<sup>6</sup>

### 4.2.2 Context

The issue of fatherhood runs through 8:31-59. Who can legitimately claim to be descended from whom?<sup>7</sup> The Jews repeatedly claim to be Abraham’s descendants. Jesus explains that this claim is moral rather than biological: “If you were Abraham’s chil-

---

<sup>1</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, page 189; this view is explained at some length on pages 187-189 of Metzger’s *Commentary*.

<sup>2</sup> Argued for by Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pages 346-348; see also Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, page 333.

<sup>3</sup> See Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, page 435.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, page 454. See also Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, page 347. Other explanations are offered by (among others) Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, page 197-8, and Calvin, *The Gospel According to St John 1-10*, page 222. However, the view of Carson and Morris fits best with what Jesus says in 8:31.

<sup>5</sup> See Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, page 333.

<sup>6</sup> See Michaels, *John*, pages 152-153.

<sup>7</sup> See Barrett, *op. cit.*, page 134; Brodie, *op. cit.*, page 305.



dren, you would be doing what Abraham did.”<sup>8</sup> It is in this context that the Jews accuse Jesus of being greater than “*our* father Abraham”.<sup>9</sup> In 8:56, Jesus again highlights the “gulf between Abraham and these descendants of his”;<sup>10</sup> Abraham “ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν” rejoiced to see him, whereas they want to kill him.<sup>11</sup>

In 8:57, the Jews misunderstand Jesus by hearing him too literally,<sup>12</sup> as is done throughout John’s Gospel.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, given Jesus’ exact words, they should have asked not how he saw Abraham, but how Abraham saw him.<sup>14</sup> Jesus’ answers their question in 8:58 by saying that he is the eternal God of the burning bush and Isaiah 40-55.<sup>15</sup> Given the Jews’ misunderstanding, 8:58 must be regarded as a reply to 8:57, not necessarily as an exposition of 8:56.

### 4.2.3 Exegesis and Meaning

Jesus uses two different verbs for rejoice in 8:56, ἀγαλλιαω and χαιρω. Although these words can be distinguished as operating in cultic and secular spheres respectively,<sup>16</sup> it is best to see them as synonymous here. They *can* be synonymous,<sup>17</sup> and John often uses synonyms stylistically rather than for the subtle distinctions between them.<sup>18</sup> It follows that a distinction such as expectant joy against realized joy<sup>19</sup> needs

---

<sup>8</sup> John 8:39b, ESV.

<sup>9</sup> John 8:53, ESV, emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, page 138.

<sup>11</sup> See Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Volume Two*, page 354; Morris, *op. cit.*, pages 470-471; Westcott, *The Gospel According to St John*, pages 139-140.

<sup>12</sup> They think he is claiming to be a man who is over 1,000 years old. See Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 205; Lightfoot, *St John’s Gospel: A Commentary*, page 195.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, John 2:20; 3:4; 4:11, 33; 6:52; 8:19; 9:40; 10:6; 11:12, 24; 13:9; 14:4.

<sup>14</sup> Brodie, *op. cit.*, page 336.

<sup>15</sup> Carson, *op. cit.*, page 358.

<sup>16</sup> See TDNT, Volume IX, page 366.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, page 366, giving the helpful example of Revelation 19:7.

<sup>18</sup> Carson, *op. cit.*, page 677.

to be argued from the rest of the verse, rather than from lexical semantics alone. In considering the force of *ἵνα* below, it will become clear that this distinction does not stand up here.

There are three issues to consider. First, when was “my day” (*τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμὴν*)? One option is that it happened during Abraham’s life on earth, so that Abraham “saw” it in the sense of “witnessed it happening”. The other option is that it is the whole of Jesus’ incarnate life and ministry, so that Abraham “saw” it in the sense of “foresaw”. (This second option is preferable to a possible third option of identifying a specific point in Jesus’ life. Light entered the world at the incarnation; Jesus’ hour is when he returns to the Father; “the day of Christ” in Philippians is when he returns to judge. However, none of these occasions commend themselves transparently as the right referent, and the OT perspective is to see the messianic day as a whole.)<sup>20</sup>

It could be argued that the day must be during Abraham’s life, otherwise he cannot be truly said to “see” it. However, *ὄραω* has a range of meanings including foresight,<sup>21</sup> and, as Calvin put it, “faith has its degrees of seeing Christ”.<sup>22</sup> The meaning of *ὄραω* does not settle this either way.

More fruitful is to consider why Jesus specifically says that Abraham saw his *day*. The most likely background is the OT theme of “the day of the LORD”, *yôm yhw̄h*. The references to *yôm yhw̄h* in the OT always occur during the divided monarchy or

---

<sup>19</sup> As articulated by TDNT Volume IX, page 370, with respect to John 8:56, and also by Godet, *op. cit.*, page 355.

<sup>20</sup> So Westcott, *op. cit.*, page 140: “This is probably the historic manifestation of the Christ without any special reference to any particular point in it”. See also Barrett, *op. cit.*, page 352; Brodie, *op. cit.*, page 335; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 471.

<sup>21</sup> See TDNT, Volume V, pages 315-367. In summary: *ὄραω* has a wide range of meaning in secular use, including metaphorical use speaking of discernment or insight (page 316). In the LXX, *ὄραω* usually does not *just* mean sense perception, and often is used with no sensory element to its meaning (page 324); instead it is “often used for spiritual perception” (page 325). In the NT, *ὄραω* has a “similarly broad range of meaning” (page 341). The same conclusion is reached by NIDNTT, Volume 3, page 513.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 234.

exile, and have an exclusively future referent.<sup>23</sup> Whether *yôm yhw* refers to a single event or spans a period of time, it had not begun during Abraham's lifetime. Therefore, Abraham *foresaw* the day of the LORD;<sup>24</sup> what offended these Jews was Jesus calling that day "*my day*".<sup>25</sup>

The second issue is how *ίνα* functions in the sentence. It could be used in a *purposive* sense: Abraham rejoiced *so that* he would see. In this case, Abraham's rejoicing "*ήγαλλιασατο*" was in hope, joy at what he would see, and his rejoicing "*έχαρη*" was grounded in sight. Alternatively, *ίνα* could be used in a *complementary* sense: Abraham rejoiced *that* he saw.

In favour of the latter option is John's stylistic tendency to use *ότι* and *ίνα* epexegetically.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Abraham rejoiced specifically to see *Jesus' day* (not Jesus); it was argued above that Jesus' day happened after Abraham died. It makes little sense to say that Abraham *both* anticipated *and* saw Jesus' day; it makes more sense to say that both occurrences of *όραω* refer to foresight. It follows that *ίνα* is complementary<sup>27</sup> and both halves of the verse say that Abraham rejoiced to foresee Jesus' day.

That leaves the third issue: When did Abraham receive this long-sighted view? Various events in Abraham's life are suggested;<sup>28</sup> the most appealing are that Abraham

---

<sup>23</sup> In the order and verse numbering of the English OT, the references are: Isaiah 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Malachi 4:5.

<sup>24</sup> This is also the view taken by most commentators. See: Barrett, *op. cit.*, page 352; Beasley-Murray, *op. cit.*, page 138; Brodie, *op. cit.*, pages 334-335; Bruce, *op. cit.*, pages 205-206; Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 234; Godet, *op. cit.*, page 354; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 471; Motyer, *Your Father the Devil?*, page 206 (Abraham saw "beyond the grave"); Westcott, *op. cit.*, page 140.

<sup>25</sup> The Jews were offended that "he, rather than Isaac or Israel" was the object of Abraham's joy, Motyer, *op. cit.*, page 207. See also Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 205.

<sup>26</sup> See Barrett, *op. cit.*, page 8.

<sup>27</sup> This is the view taken by Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, page 664, and Morris, *op. cit.*, page 471 note 107. Westcott also adopts this view, modifying it slightly so that Abraham's joy comes in the quest for even clearer sight, *op. cit.*, page 140.

<sup>28</sup> See Barrett, *op. cit.*, pages 351-352; Beasley-Murray, *op. cit.*, page 137; Carson, *op. cit.*, pages 356-357; Morris, *op. cit.*, pages 471-472.

saw the long-term significance of Isaac's birth<sup>29</sup> or Isaac's binding<sup>30</sup> in the light of the promise of blessing through his "seed". Alternatively, we may settle to say that there was no single event; rather "Abraham's general attitude to this day was one of exultation".<sup>31</sup> Certainly, this is sufficient to establish the contrast between 8:56 and 8:59.

## 4.2.4 Systematic Conclusions

John 8:56 says clearly that Abraham foresaw the day of the LORD and rejoiced at what he saw. Jesus offends the Jews of his day by claiming that the day of the LORD is his own day. Abraham therefore rejoiced at Jesus' day, in complete contrast to his alleged descendants.

Did Abraham know that the one who would fulfil the day of the LORD would be Jesus? The logic of Jesus' reply in 8:56 does not require that this be so. The case that Abraham understood the significance of the "seed" element of God's promise is not supported from John 8 and would need to be made from elsewhere in Scripture.

---

<sup>29</sup> Brodie, *op. cit.*, page 335.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 205; Westcott, *op. cit.*, page 140.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, page 472.

# 4.3 Romans 4:3

## 4.3.1 Structure and Flow

In 1:18-3:20, Paul has expounded the universal sinfulness of humanity. 3:21 opens a new section of Romans with the famous (*νυνὶ δέ*) “but now”, explaining how God’s saving righteousness is revealed apart from works of the law.<sup>1</sup>

4:1-25 applies the arguments of 3:21ff to Abraham for two mutually enforcing reasons. First, there is the need to substantiate the claim that the OT bears witness to this saving righteousness *χωρὶς νομοῦ*.<sup>2</sup> Second, Abraham was the head of the Jewish race,<sup>3</sup> and as such a model believer.<sup>4</sup> Further, by many contemporary Jews, he was considered morally upright;<sup>5</sup> “Abraham would have a better chance than most”<sup>6</sup> of being justified by works. Barth comments that if Jesus *is* the “crimson thread” running throughout the OT, Abraham must be no exception.<sup>7</sup> All this implies that 4:1-25 is essential to Romans, not an out-of-date parenthesis.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Most commentators agree on this macro-structure. As a representative see Cranfield, *Romans Volume 1*, page 199. For this reading of *χωρὶς νομοῦ*, see *ibid.*, page 201.

<sup>2</sup> The claim was made in 1:2 and 3:21. For this being the significance of chapter 4 see Bruce, *Romans*, page 110; Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans*, page 32; Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25*, page 155; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 193; Stott, *The Message of Romans*, page 122.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*, page 82; Godet, *Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, page 282.

<sup>4</sup> See Brunner, *op. cit.*, page 33.

<sup>5</sup> Barnett, *Romans*, page 91, Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 110, Cranfield, *op. cit.*, page 224; Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, page 90; Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.*, page 158; Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 92; Stott, *op. cit.*, page 122.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 110.

<sup>7</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 117.

<sup>8</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, page 122; *contra* Dodd, *op. cit.*, page 92.

As is often the case in Romans,<sup>9</sup> rhetorical questions (4:1, 9) reveal the structure of 4:1-25. Even though there is no change of paragraph at 4:17, a thematic shift warrants a further subdivision.<sup>10</sup> This means the chapter falls into three sections: 4:1-8, 4:9-17a, 4:17b-25, with the third section constituting an exposition of the character of Abraham's faith.

## 4.3.2 Context

The verses preceding 4:1-8, 3:27-31, develop the implications of 3:21-26, especially the idea that salvation is "by faith".<sup>11</sup> Justification by faith alone excludes all human boasting (3:27-28);<sup>12</sup> Jew and Gentile are saved in the same way (3:29-30); the law is established not nullified (3:31).<sup>13</sup> These themes are both developed and expounded in chapter 4,<sup>14</sup> which shows that boasting is precluded and salvation is for all without distinction.

4:17b-23 follow 4:1-8 and, as remarked above, portray the character of Abraham's faith. As such, these verses expound the assertion in 4:3 that Abraham *believed* God. Specifically, he believed God regarding the promise to have many descendants (4:17).<sup>15</sup> Abraham's promise has many facets; 4:18 quotes Genesis 15:5,<sup>16</sup> which deals particularly with how *numerous* the descendants will be. Given Abraham and

---

<sup>9</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 259.

<sup>10</sup> So Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 95; Cranfield, *op. cit.*, page 225; Schreiner, *Romans*, page 210-211 and stated with careful nuance on page 225. However, this is *contra* Moo, *op. cit.*, page 272 who prefers the paragraph structure to dominate.

<sup>11</sup> See Moo, *op. cit.*, page 243.

<sup>12</sup> *Contra* Dunn, *op. cit.*, pages 192-193.

<sup>13</sup> To devote space to assess the various suggestions regarding 3:31 would take this chapter too far from its objectives. See the larger commentaries for discussions of the alternatives.

<sup>14</sup> See Schreiner, *op. cit.*, pages 176-177 for a particularly helpful chart and explanation, placing in parallel the material in 3:27-31 and 4:1-25.

<sup>15</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, page 134.

<sup>16</sup> Schreiner, *op. cit.*, page 234 (who mistakenly ascribes the quotation in 4:18c to Genesis 15 verse 6).

Sarah's ages (4:19-21), this belief amounted to a belief that God gives life to the dead (4:17). It is quite in accord with the purpose of 4:1-25 that this is the same God the Christian believer must trust (4:24).

### 4.3.3 Exegesis and Meaning

Verse 1 asks what Abraham discovered,<sup>17</sup> the relevance of which enquiry is defended in 2a-b.<sup>18</sup> 2c then begins to answer Paul's rhetorical question with "not before God"<sup>19</sup> (ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν). There are two main options as to how 2c functions as an answer. It could be an axiomatic statement ("no-one can legitimately boast before God"), so that 2c itself shows syllogistically that Abraham was not justified by works. In that case, verse 3 is a second argument.<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, 2c could merely be an assertion, which requires verse 3 to substantiate it:<sup>21</sup> "but, as I will show, he could not boast before God". It is hard to decide,<sup>22</sup> and does not affect how verse 3 functions: Verse 3 seeks to establish from Scripture whether Abraham was justified by works.

Verse 3 turns to Genesis 15:6, with a virtually verbatim LXX citation,<sup>23</sup> which is then explained in verses 4-5: All works are excluded. This explanation rules out any idea

---

<sup>17</sup> This reading ("Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered") is preferred to "Abraham, our forefather, discovered according to the flesh". Godet's arguments to the contrary (Godet, *op. cit.*, pages 283-284) amount to preferring the Byzantine manuscript tradition for reasons of sense, even though it lacks sufficient external support. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, page 450.

<sup>18</sup> See Cranfield, *op. cit.*, page 227 and Schreiner, *op. cit.*, page 214, both drawing attention to γὰρ.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 4:2c, ESV.

<sup>20</sup> Calvin, *op. cit.*, pages 82-83; Cranfield, *op. cit.*, page 228; Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.*, page 162; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 195; Schreiner, *op. cit.*, page 212; Stott, *op. cit.*, pages 124-125.

<sup>21</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.*, page 201; Godet, *op. cit.*, pages 286-287.

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note a third option from the patristic period, that assumes Abraham *did* have grounds to boast before God. Justification by works would not give such grounds, so is ruled out. Therefore, Abraham must have been justified by grace. See Bray (editor), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI, Romans*, pages 109-110. This view is, however, hard to square with the universal exclusion of boasting in 3:27.

<sup>23</sup> The differences don't appear significant. See Morris, *op. cit.*, page 196 note 12, for a list of the differences.

that faith is *meritoriously* applied to Abraham's account in Genesis 15:6.<sup>24</sup> Verse 3 appeals to Scripture as the final authority to settle the debate.<sup>25</sup> This means that verses 4-5 are not Paul's reading of an ambiguous text but an exposition of what is there.<sup>26</sup> Dunn correctly notes that Paul attributes these words to "Scripture" rather than to "Christ";<sup>27</sup> all the authority Genesis needs comes from the fact it is "Scripture".

Verses 4 and 5 apply from secular life<sup>28</sup> the distinction<sup>29</sup> between crediting because something is owed,<sup>30</sup> and crediting as a gift. Human sin means that it is impossible for God to credit righteousness as an earned wage; even Abraham is called ungodly (*ἀσεβη*), a label that is quite appropriate given 1:18-3:20.<sup>31</sup> Rather, God must initiate the transaction, otherwise it is fraudulent.<sup>32</sup>

However, because "credit" could have these two meanings, the word "credit" will not settle whether Genesis 15:6 speaks of justification by faith or works. Instead, verse 5 settles this by the word "believe"; Genesis does not speak of Abraham's works but his trust.<sup>33</sup> Abraham's righteousness is therefore unearned.

---

<sup>24</sup> See Calvin, *op. cit.*, pages 83, 85; Cranfield, *op. cit.*, pages 229-230; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 196; Schreiner, *op. cit.*, pages 214-215. *Contra* Pelagius: See Bray, *op. cit.*, page 111.

<sup>25</sup> See Stott, *op. cit.*, page 125.

<sup>26</sup> This observation suggests that the line of argument through verses 3-5 is not that suggested by Moo. He posits an axiom that God is never in debt to his creatures, which means Genesis 15:6 cannot be read in support of works righteousness (Moo, *op. cit.*, pages 263-264). However, as Genesis 15:6 itself settles the issue, the text must *itself* rule out works righteousness.

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.*, page 202; *contra* Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique*, pages 53ff.

<sup>28</sup> See Morris, *op. cit.*, page 198.

<sup>29</sup> See Stott, *op. cit.*, page 126.

<sup>30</sup> *Contra* Barnett, *op. cit.*, page 93, who reads *κατα οφειλημα* as saying that attempted works righteousness leads to *us* being in debt to God. Whilst this is true, Paul is talking of the way wages are paid in secular life; accordingly, it makes more sense to say that Paul is developing the analogy in verse 4, and only starts applying it to justification in verse 5. The point in verse 4 is that *if* justification were by works, God would owe us "wages".

<sup>31</sup> So Cranfield, *op. cit.*, page 232; *contra* Bruce, *op. cit.*, pages 114-115.

<sup>32</sup> Barth, *op. cit.*, page 121.

<sup>33</sup> See Cranfield, *op. cit.*, page 231. Dunn objects to Cranfield's argument, that *πιστις* not *λογιζομαι* is the key term in verses 4 and 5, by noting that *λογιζομαι* continues to be used. However, whilst Paul



## 4.3.4 Systematic Conclusions

Both inclusivism and CFP observe that Paul likens Abraham's faith to ours. The former applies Abraham's ignorance to today; the latter applies the Christian's knowledge to Abraham. The above exegesis of Romans 4:3 allows us accurately to delineate the comparison Paul draws between Abraham's faith and ours.

It is true that Paul likens Abraham's faith to that of the contemporary believer. However, faith carries *specific* connotations in Paul's argument. In articulating what Paul means by "faith" in connection with Abraham, it is only legitimate to include aspects of "faith" that he explicitly mentions, or aspects of "faith" that are required for his argument to work. These aspects were described above: Abraham believed in a God who would keep his promises, raising the dead if needs be.

Against inclusivist exegesis,<sup>34</sup> "faith" in Romans 4 is trust in God's promises, "holding the divine promise for the reality itself".<sup>35</sup> The unevangelised today differ from Abraham in that they have not received God's promises. Further, the specific God Abraham believed in was the one who raises the dead, and who justifies by grace not works; such soteriology is unique,<sup>36</sup> so that someone today with objective faith in a *different* religious system has a *different faith* from Abraham's. Romans 4:3 does not offer assurance of salvation to such a person.

Assessing CFP exegesis,<sup>37</sup> the explicit object of Abraham's faith is "God". It is true that this is "God" as opposed to "humanity", not "Father" as opposed to "Son".<sup>38</sup>

---

uses λογίζομαι to explain *that* there are two types of crediting, it is the use of πιστις that is decisive in settling which is meant in Genesis 15.

<sup>34</sup> See page 9 above.

<sup>35</sup> Godet, *op. cit.*, page 287. Note that Godet does say that it doesn't matter what the object of one's faith is. However this does not make his reading an inclusivist one; on the contrary, what he is saying (in context) is that it matters little *which promise* one trusts, as to trust God's promises is to trust God himself. *Contra* Sanders, *No Other Name*, page 227, who cites Godet at this point.

<sup>36</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, page 118.

<sup>37</sup> See page 17 above.

<sup>38</sup> Blackham, 'Romans 4:1-25', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Romans\\_4.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Romans_4.PDF), page 2.

However, this means that Paul's argument in 4:3 does not require "faith" to involve belief in the Son specifically, only in God. Indeed, if the Father is an acceptable object of faith for a contemporary believer (4:24),<sup>39</sup> he must be so for Abraham as well.

Finally, once the extent of the likeness between a Christian's faith and Abraham's is seen, it is clear that a dispensationalist reading of Abraham's faith is not sustained by Romans 4.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> In 4:24 the Father is specifically given as the object of a contemporary believer's faith ("him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord", ESV) in the context (4:22-23) of likening Abraham's faith to the faith of such a believer.

<sup>40</sup> See Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.*, page 157.

## 4.4 Galatians 3:6

### 4.4.1 Structure and Flow

The situation Paul addressed in Galatians is widely debated, but it seems some form of nomism was being advocated.<sup>1</sup> The key presenting issue is the need for circumcision.

In Galatians 1-2, Paul primarily establishes his authority as an apostle to preach the gospel; the Antioch event can be seen as coming under this general theme. Then, in 3:1-18, 3:1-5 argues from the Galatians' experience with six rhetorical questions, whilst 3:6-18 quotes and interprets a series of OT Scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

### 4.4.2 Context

The argument in 3:1-5 essentially asks the Galatians how they began as Christians; if that beginning was effective, why would they continue differently? 3:5 then links into 3:6 with *καθως*, which will be discussed below.

Following 3:6-9 comes 3:10-14, which explains how, according to the law, reliance on the law leads to a curse from which Christ has redeemed us. 3:15-18 then explains that the law did not overthrow the promises God had already committed himself to. Verse 16 is relevant to an interpretation of 3:6-9, so it is necessary to consider 3:15-18 in some more detail.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Longenecker, *Galatians*, pages lxxxviii-c. Nomism is his conclusion of the presenting teaching, after outlining the various suggestions that have been made regarding Paul's opponents in Galatians.

<sup>2</sup> For this division into argument from experience and Scripture, see Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 98; Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, page 49; Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, page 21; Hendriksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, page 110; Morris, *Galatians*, page 30; Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, page 72.

Longenecker argues from the “verb of saying” constructions in verses 15 and 17 that the implications of 15-16 are developed in 17-18.<sup>3</sup> This means that verse 16 continues the line of argument from verse 15, and that 17-18 pick up on both verses. It follows that verse 16 is integral to the paragraph, not a parenthesis.<sup>4</sup>

Paul argues that, because “seed” in God’s promises to Abraham in Genesis is singular, the promise was made to Abraham and Christ, rather than to all Abraham’s biological descendants. Rabbis also regarded the promise of “seed” as focussed on the single Messiah.<sup>5</sup> Paul was aware that both *zera*<sup>6</sup> and *σπέρμα* are collective nouns; he uses *σπέρμα* this way in 3:29.<sup>6</sup> In spite of this, he thinks the precise word used is exegetically significant; presumably, Genesis uses *σπέρμα* rather than *τέκνα* or *υἱοί* deliberately.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the promises deliberately focus on the individual.<sup>8</sup> The law came later, *but before the promised seed*. It follows that the law does not affect the validity of the promise made *to the seed*.

Finally, 3:29 is clear that, by belonging to Christ, others can be regarded as Abraham’s seed.<sup>9</sup>

### 4.4.3 Exegesis and Meaning

3:6 begins “*καθως*”. Because 3:6-18 quotes and comments on a string of OT quotations, it is best to see this as shorthand for *καθως γεγραπται* (“just as it is written”),

---

<sup>3</sup> Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 130. See also Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, page 143.

<sup>4</sup> Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 132.

<sup>5</sup> Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 143.

<sup>6</sup> Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 132.

<sup>7</sup> These alternative words *would* use a plural form to indicate more than one. Using a collective noun has the effect that a singular form is used. See Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 142.

<sup>8</sup> See Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, page 135; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 140; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 110.

<sup>9</sup> See Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 111.

rather than calling on Abraham as an example (“just as Abraham”).<sup>10</sup> However, the fact Paul omits *γεγραπται* signals the similarity between Abraham and the Galatian Christians that Paul draws on in verse 9.<sup>11</sup>

Genesis 15:6 is quoted almost verbatim from the LXX, just missing off the (grammatically redundant in Galatians) *Ἀβραμ*.<sup>12</sup> Paul and his opponents would agree that blessing comes *through* Abraham; Paul seeks to settle *how* it does.<sup>13</sup> To this end, Paul explains Genesis 15:6 in verse 7, before making a second point in verses 8a-b which he derives from Genesis 12:3, cited in 8c.<sup>14</sup> Some have argued that 8c cites a conflation of Genesis 12:3 and 18:18;<sup>15</sup> the argument that Paul cites Genesis 12:3, modifying *φυλαι* to *ἔθνα* to address the presenting issue of “Gentiles”,<sup>16</sup> is more persuasive, because 18:18 comes after the introduction of circumcision.

Accordingly, verses 6-9 make two points. First, Abraham was justified by faith (verse 6), so that (*ἀρα*)<sup>17</sup> his sons will also have faith.<sup>18</sup> This is true whether<sup>19</sup> verse 7 is indicative<sup>20</sup> or imperative.<sup>21</sup> Lightfoot helpfully paraphrases *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* as those

---

<sup>10</sup> This is the approach taken by Longenecker, *op. cit.*, pages 107, 108 note a, 111; Dunn, *op. cit.*, page 160; Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, his translation on page 119; Martyn, *Galatians*, page 29. *Contra* Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 152.

<sup>11</sup> See Morris, *op. cit.*, page 99 note 14.

<sup>12</sup> See Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 111.

<sup>13</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.*, page 165.

<sup>14</sup> These structural observations are found in Martyn, *op. cit.*, page 300.

<sup>15</sup> So Bruce, *op. cit.*, page 156 and Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 137. The conflation comes in that *ἐν σοι* comes from 12:3 (where 18:18 has *ἐν αὐτῷ*) and *παντα τα ἔθνη* comes from 18:18 (where 12:3 has *πασαι αἱ φυλαι*)

<sup>16</sup> So Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 115.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, page 114; see also Martyn, *op. cit.*, page 299.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.*, pages 162-3, points to the semitic understanding of sonship whereby likeness to one's father is an indispensable component of sonship.

<sup>19</sup> Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 52, points out that it doesn't matter which way the verse is read.

<sup>20</sup> Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 114.

<sup>21</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.* page 162; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 137; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 100.

“whose starting point, whose fundamental principle, is faith”.<sup>22</sup> Second, God planned from the beginning to justify Gentiles.<sup>23</sup> The same word, ἔθνα, is used in 8a and 8c,<sup>24</sup> so that the blessing God promised the Gentiles is justification.<sup>25</sup> Verse 9 then synthesises (ὥστε)<sup>26</sup> these points: God’s plan has always been to justify the Gentiles by faith.

Verse 8, by using the verb προεναγγελιζομαι, terms the announcement of Genesis 12:3 “the gospel”. This is not anachronistic, because the προ- prefix signals that this is an announcement of the gospel *ahead of time*.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.4.4 Systematic Conclusions

To conclude, God announced the gospel to Abraham before its time. The content of that “gospel” is given (ὅτι) in 8c: The Gentiles will be justified “in you”. Verse 9 adds that God purposed that this justification would be by faith. This comes in a letter that cares passionately that nothing is called “gospel” except the true gospel (1:8-9).

To assess inclusivist exegesis,<sup>28</sup> the gospel preview cited does not mention Christ explicitly. However, the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed, so ontologically the promises concern Christ. Further, the recipients are Abraham, Christ and those who belong to Christ (3:29),<sup>29</sup> so epistemologically the promises are received

---

<sup>22</sup> Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 137.

<sup>23</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.*, page 163.

<sup>24</sup> *Contra* ESV. It was argued above that Paul probably deliberately modified the LXX of Genesis 12:3 to make exactly this point.

<sup>25</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, page 73, points out that “justification” and “blessing” are held in parallel in verse 8.

<sup>26</sup> Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 115.

<sup>27</sup> See Longenecker, *op. cit.*, page 115; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 137; Morris, *op. cit.*, page 101. See also TDNT, Volume II, page 737.

<sup>28</sup> See page 8 above.

<sup>29</sup> Paul doesn’t spell this out in 3:29, but presumably the biological descendants of Abraham who shared in Abraham’s faith during OT times are not precluded from being Abraham’s offspring by 3:7. See also Romans 4:12.

by faith in Christ. Galatians 3:6 offers no grounds for thinking the gospel can be received today, apart from by faith in Christ.

Moving to consider CFP exegesis,<sup>30</sup> this does not mean that Abraham needed to know about Christ. Whilst caution is needed not to overstate arguments from silence, it would help Paul's polemical case if he mentioned such knowledge; the fact he does not suggests this was not open to him.<sup>31</sup> The term προευγαλιζομαι does not imply Abraham knew about Christ. An announcement today of a *future* plan to justify the Gentiles by faith *would* constitute another gospel. Coming before the incarnation, it announced the one true gospel whether or not Christ was mentioned in the announcement.

It is true that this gospel promise was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. (Strictly, the promise was made not "about" but "to" Abraham and his seed, 3:16.) It may be that Abraham knew of Genesis 3:15,<sup>32</sup> or it may not. Either way, saying *that* the promise is fulfilled in Christ is not the same as saying Abraham knew *how* it would be fulfilled.<sup>33</sup> How "darkly"<sup>34</sup> Abraham perceived these things Paul does not say.

Abraham is the father of all true believers. Primarily, this is because he fathered, rather than believed in, the seed. It does also mean that his "offspring" must have faith like his. However, as in Romans 4,<sup>35</sup> it does not follow that this likeness is in *every* respect. Specifically, the way Paul develops the likeness does not include likeness in the conscious object of faith.

---

<sup>30</sup> See page 16 above.

<sup>31</sup> See Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 164.

<sup>32</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, page 136.

<sup>33</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, page 122; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 164. Interestingly, Luther does say that the understanding of the OT saints is like ours, except that they hoped in the Messiah who would come. See Luther, *op. cit.*, pages 137-138. However, he doesn't explain how such a claim arises out of Galatians 3:6-9.

<sup>34</sup> Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 164.

<sup>35</sup> See arguments on page 35f above.

Finally, it is worth noting that the continuity between OT and NT is so marked in 3:6-9 that Marcion expunged the verses from his version.<sup>36</sup> God has one plan and purpose throughout history.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, *op. cit.* page 154; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, page 136.

<sup>37</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, page 125.



# 4.5 Genesis 15:6

## 4.5.1 Structure and Flow

It is widely agreed that Genesis divides into two main sections (1-11, 12-50), and that the *tôlêḏōt* refrain further subdivides into family histories.<sup>1</sup>

There are a couple of contentious areas in Pentateuchal studies in which this work will necessarily take an assumed view.<sup>2</sup> First, it will be assumed that discussion of “the Pentateuch” is appropriate; that is to say, the Pentateuch *is* a literary unit.<sup>3</sup> Second, it will be assumed that study of the final form of the Pentateuch takes precedence over the study of any prior textual sources.<sup>4</sup> In any case, Genesis 15 is notoriously difficult<sup>5</sup> to analyse using the “Documentary Hypothesis”.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the sequential narrative of events will be treated as a coherent narrative.

Chapter 15 is widely observed as falling into two halves. Although some have rightly warned against taking this division too woodenly,<sup>7</sup> 15:1-6 concerns the promise of a son whilst 15:7-21 concerns the promise of land.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, pages 101-103.

<sup>2</sup> That is to say, a full exploration of the options and arguments in these areas would take us further from our main subject than space allows.

<sup>3</sup> See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, page xxii. This is notwithstanding, for example, the arguments of von Rad, *Genesis*, for a literary Hexateuch.

<sup>4</sup> See Wenham, *op. cit.*, pages xxxvi, 259; Dillard and Longman, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, page 48.

<sup>5</sup> See von Rad, *op. cit.*, page 182; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, page 214 (significantly, quoting Wellhausen to this effect); Clements, *Abraham and David*, pages 16-17; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, page 52.

<sup>6</sup> The common term for Wellhausen’s theory regarding source criticism of the Pentateuch: See Dillard and Longman, *op. cit.*, pages 40-48.

<sup>7</sup> So, Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 262, cautions that the whole of Genesis 15ff revolves around the promise of offspring. Clements, *op. cit.*, page 19, points out that the precise issue in 15:1-6 is that of an *heir*, which, as the idea of a son who can *inherit*, presupposes land to inherit.

<sup>8</sup> See (representatively) Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, pages 41-42, and Alexander, *op. cit.*, page 146.

## 4.5.2 Context

Genesis 3:15 introduces the theme of promised seed (*zera*<sup>c</sup>).<sup>9</sup> It has been observed that the same verb “strike” (*šūp*) is used twice with iterative force,<sup>10</sup> and that *zera*<sup>c</sup> either refers to an immediate descendant or has a collective referent.<sup>11</sup> Together, these observations mean that this verse predicts ongoing struggle between serpent and human species,<sup>12</sup> rather than a specific human seed who will deal a decisive blow.<sup>13</sup> That humanity will triumph, not the serpent, comes from the fact this is a curse on the serpent,<sup>14</sup> and from the contrast between head and heel.<sup>15</sup>

The flood narrative concludes with God establishing a covenant with Noah (9:1-17). Dumbrell has cogently argued that this is a universal covenant, made with Noah representatively;<sup>16</sup> that all the covenants in Scripture are one;<sup>17</sup> and that the Noahic covenant has redemptive significance.<sup>18</sup> The Abrahamic covenant is thus the continuation of God’s purposes from Genesis 9.

Accordingly, in Genesis 12:1-7 blessing is promised to all nations; with Wenham,<sup>19</sup> the middle reading of *nibr<sup>e</sup>kû* is preferred, meaning the nations will “find blessing”.

---

<sup>9</sup> It is true that the noun *zera*<sup>c</sup> has already occurred in 1:11, 12, 29. However these references concern plants with seed in, as opposed to the promise of future seed.

<sup>10</sup> Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 80.

<sup>11</sup> Calvin, *Genesis*, page 170; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, pages 198-199; von Rad, *op. cit.*, page 93; Alexander, *op. cit.*, pages 103-104. That is, an individual descendant several generations away is not one of the options.

<sup>12</sup> See von Rad, *op. cit.*, page 92; Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 79.

<sup>13</sup> *Contra* Kidner, *Genesis*, page 70 note 3.

<sup>14</sup> Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 80.

<sup>15</sup> Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 168; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pages 197-198; Kidner, *op. cit.*, page 70 note 3.

<sup>16</sup> Dumbrell, *op. cit.*, page 27; see also Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, pages 121-122.

<sup>17</sup> See pages 27-33 of Dumbrell, *op. cit.* for the material concerning the Noahic covenant in this regard.

<sup>18</sup> Dumbrell, *op. cit.*, pages 39-41, but *contra* Robertson, *op. cit.*, page 114.

<sup>19</sup> Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 277. The passive meaning (adopted by the LXX) is excluded because the available qal passive was not used; so Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis Volume I*, page 379. The reflexive meaning is similarly excluded because the hitpaal (used elsewhere) is not used here; so

This blessing goes to “every major group in the world”,<sup>20</sup> as opposed to every individual,<sup>21</sup> and includes deliverance from the fall.<sup>22</sup> Thus the universal redemptive covenant with Noah is carried forwards, but those promised blessings now come “in Abram” (b<sup>ē</sup>kā).

The immediate background to 15:1-6 is Genesis 13-14,<sup>23</sup> where Abram has taken the less fertile land, turned down reward in battle<sup>24</sup> and upset four powerful kings.<sup>25</sup> In this setting God promises Abram both reward and shelter. In response, Abram raises the issue of childlessness, either as an expression of faith<sup>26</sup> or unbelief.<sup>27</sup> God speaks again, not to add anything, but to repeat and expand on<sup>28</sup> his promise. This time, Abram explicitly believes.

In 15:4-5 (“the word of the LORD came to him,... he brought him outside”),<sup>29</sup> the subject of “brought” is not specified explicitly. It could be the subject of the previous verb, “the word of the LORD”. Alternatively, it could be the LORD, either from the

---

Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pages 374-376, but *contra* Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 152. This leaves the middle form as the remaining option. This is another issue for which a full examination of the arguments is prohibited by constraints of space.

<sup>20</sup> Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 278.

<sup>21</sup> Note that the blessing is promised to **kōl mišp<sup>ē</sup>hōt**, rather than **kōl hāʾādām**.

<sup>22</sup> This is by virtue of the context, following on from Genesis 3-11. This is *contra* Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 158, although he is right to note that the elements of rescue do not *formally* come into the promises until the Exodus.

<sup>23</sup> In line with the assumption that the narrative sequence is coherent, Kidner comments that chapters 13-14 are convincing as background for chapter 15 (*op. cit.*, page 122). Neither chapters 14 nor 15 need be regarded as anachronistic.

<sup>24</sup> See Chrysostom recorded in Sheridan (editor), *Ancient Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament Volume II*, page 30.

<sup>25</sup> See Boice, *Genesis Volume 2*, pages 87-88 and Dumbrell, *op. cit.*, page 52.

<sup>26</sup> So Kidner, *op. cit.*, page 123.

<sup>27</sup> So Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 222.

<sup>28</sup> See Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 221.

<sup>29</sup> Part of Genesis 15:4-5, ESV.

most recent absolute noun<sup>30</sup> or by metonymy<sup>31</sup> (such that the LORD took Abram outside by his word).<sup>32</sup>

The LORD is to be preferred as subject for four reasons. First, the context of 15:1 is a vision; we are not told *how* the word of the LORD came in 15:4, so it may be inferred this was still a vision;<sup>33</sup> 15:5 should be read in this light. Second,<sup>34</sup> **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhwh ʿel** is a standard prophetic formula<sup>35</sup> introducing direct speech. Therefore, normal usage is for the LORD’s speech in 15:4-5 to *be* “the word of the LORD”.<sup>36</sup> Third, only the Johannine literature explicitly hypostatizes the word of the LORD.<sup>37</sup> Yet John, who used the LXX OT<sup>38</sup> and favours synonyms,<sup>39</sup> *consistently* uses **λογος**, a translation nowhere found for **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhwh** in the Pentateuch.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, John’s **λογος** Christology is not

---

<sup>30</sup> James Robson referred me to Ezekiel 11:5; 37:1. In these verses, **rû<sup>a</sup>h yhwh** and **yaq-yhwh** are the respective implied subjects of active verbs. Both are feminine nouns, yet both are followed by active verbs with a third person, *masculine*, singular subject. In these cases, it seems the absolute noun, **yhwh**, is functioning as the subject of the verb.

<sup>31</sup> It could be argued that this is synecdoche rather than metonymy. It makes little difference. Synecdoche would be if the word of the LORD is considered to be a *part of* the LORD, and metonymy if the word of the LORD is considered to be *associated with* the LORD. Either way, “the word of the LORD” is used as a way of referring to the LORD himself.

<sup>32</sup> That is, he told Abram to go outside. Interestingly, this is the option assumed by a number of commentators as they discuss other details in these verses. So: Boice, *op. cit.*, pages 95-96; Brueggemann, *op. cit.*, page 143; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, page 423; Kidner, *op. cit.*, page 124.

<sup>33</sup> This is the reading assumed by Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 404; Kidner, *op. cit.*, page 123; von Rad, *op. cit.*, page 183.

<sup>34</sup> This argument could be criticised for treating **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhwh** synchronically. If a diachronic treatment is preferred, the third argument works with such.

<sup>35</sup> Noted by von Rad, *op. cit.*, page 183 and Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 217. Although, *contra* Westermann, this need not imply that this phrase was anachronistically inserted into the narrative at a later date.

<sup>36</sup> Note also that in a vision from the LORD, **mah<sup>a</sup>zeh**, the words God speaks in the vision are more significant than anything that may be seen: NIDOTTE Volume 2, pages 56, 60.

<sup>37</sup> John 1:1-18.

<sup>38</sup> Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, page 154.

<sup>39</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, page 677.

<sup>40</sup> Examination of the LXX translation of **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhwh** or **dibrê yhwh** was evoked by Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 213, who highlights the unusual nature of **φωνη** as the translation. See Appendix 2 (page 59) for

an allusion to this text.<sup>41</sup> Fourth, 1 Samuel 15:23b provides a precedent for this reading. As in Genesis 15, the word of the LORD is the implied subject of the rejection of Saul. Here, the identity of the implied subject is *explicitly stated* as “the LORD” in 15:26b.<sup>42</sup> This gives a precedent for the LORD, not his word, being the subject of Genesis 15:5a.

### 4.5.3 Exegesis and Meaning

The three key words to understand in 15:6 are “he believed” (**he<sup>ʔ</sup>min**), “he counted it” (**yaḥš<sup>e</sup>behā**) and “righteousness”<sup>43</sup> (**š<sup>e</sup>dāqâ**).

**he<sup>ʔ</sup>min** is in the weqatal form, not the usual wayyiqtol of historical narrative. This offline form indicates iterative nuance,<sup>44</sup> such that this act of faith is typical of

---

my breakdown of how the LXX translates **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhw̄h** and **dibrê yhw̄h**. As a generalisation, ῥημα is the preferred translation in Genesis-2 Samuel whilst λογος is the preferred translation in the latter prophets. The only Pentateuchal instance of λογος is in Exodus 4:28, where the form is the plural **dibrê yhw̄h**.

<sup>41</sup> Where he did derive the idea that the word of the LORD is the *person* of the Second Person of the Trinity is the subject of much debate. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John Volume I*, pages 519-524 for a full discussion.

<sup>42</sup> To demonstrate this, it needs to be shown that 26b *says the same thing* as 23b, rather than being a similar but different sentence on Saul. This is clearly seen in context. Saul asks Samuel to lift the sentence that has been passed on him; Saul refuses, but instead *restates* the sentence in 26b. (See Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, page 140; Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, page 140.) The restatement amplifies the sentence (so Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, page 128), providing two extra details. The enigmatic rejection of Saul “from king” (**mimmelek**) is rejection of him “being king over Israel” (**mihyôṭ meleḵ ‘al-yiśrā’ēl**); “he has rejected” is specified as “the LORD has rejected”.

<sup>43</sup> All three phrases are from the ESV translation.

<sup>44</sup> See Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 324 note 6a and page 329; Moberly, ‘Abraham’s righteousness’ in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, edited by J A Emerton, page 105. Both point to Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, §112ss page 339.

Abram's life of faith.<sup>45</sup> **he<sup>e</sup>min** is followed by preposition **b<sup>e</sup>** (not **l<sup>e</sup>**), indicating that this is Abram's trust in God's promise, going beyond intellectual assent.<sup>46</sup>

The subject of the verb **yaḥš<sup>e</sup>behā**, being unspecified, looks like Abram. However, Ha has brilliantly argued that God is grammatically admissible as the subject, and is to be preferred given the parallel passages.<sup>47</sup> The precise meaning of **ḥāšab** here is correlative to the meaning of **š<sup>e</sup>dāqâ**; for now, it belongs to the "count" family, rather than the "ponder" family, of meanings.<sup>48</sup> The pronominal suffix tells the reader *what* was credited to Abram; it is best to see the feminine here as having neuter force,<sup>49</sup> so that the act of faith just described is in view.

**š<sup>e</sup>dāqâ** can mean right behaviour, or right legal standing.<sup>50</sup> This gives two options for "credited to him as righteousness": Either Abram's right behaviour is recognised as such, or righteousness alien to him is being charged to his account. An a priori assumption that Pauline treatment is not allowed to arbitrate is unwarranted given the theological unity of the canon.<sup>51</sup> However, even with such an assumption, the context shows that the attribution of alien righteousness is in view. The parallel texts are declarative rather than describing merit.<sup>52</sup> The narrative thrust is that Abram trusts

---

<sup>45</sup> So Boice, *op. cit.*, page 104; Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 406; Ha, *op. cit.*, page 23, but *contra* Brueggemann, *op. cit.*, page 145 who speaks of this incident as the "new reality of faith" (emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> See Butterworth, 'Justification in the Old Testament' in *Here We Stand* edited by David H Field, page 17; Moberly, *op. cit.*, page 105; NIDOTTE Volume 1, page 431.

<sup>47</sup> Ha, *op. cit.*, page 24.

<sup>48</sup> See Hamilton, *op. cit.*, page 425; NIDOTTE Volume 2, page 306.

<sup>49</sup> See Wenham, *op. cit.*, page 325 note c. Also see Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, page 305; Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, §122q page 393; Joüon, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* Volume II, §152b page 558.

<sup>50</sup> See NIDOTTE Volume 3, pages 746-750.

<sup>51</sup> See Robertson, 'New Covenant Exposition of an Old Covenant Text', *WThJ* 32 (1969), page 289, and Calvin, *op. cit.*, pages 404-405. This is *contra* the assumptions allowed by Moberly, *op. cit.*, pages 108-109.

<sup>52</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 262 note 35, points to a number of parallels. These include Genesis 31:15, where Rachel and Leah are regarded by their father as foreigners (when they are, in fact, close blood relations), and 2 Samuel 19:20, where David asks for *his* sin not to be reckoned to him. Moo makes the case for reading the other parallels he cites in the same manner.

God, and not himself, here.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, Moberly argues from God making a covenant with Abram for all generations following this incident that Abram's faithfulness is being recognised as right behaviour.<sup>54</sup> However, his valid observation about a generational covenant does *not* require the crediting of righteousness to be meritorious.

## 4.5.4 Systematic Conclusions

God's purpose in making his covenant with Abram is to bless all the families of earth.<sup>55</sup> This is not unwarranted privilege to one family; it is "the very means of extending those benefits to all the nations."<sup>56</sup> How this extension will occur is developed later in Scripture.

Genesis 15 tells us that Abram was justified for his trust in God's promises; the specific incident is representative of his whole lifestyle of trust in God's word. The particular promise he trusts is one concerning the numerousness of his offspring,<sup>57</sup> as opposed to the promise of a particular offspring. The timing of this declaration of Abram's justification by faith is significant.<sup>58</sup> Had it come earlier, at the start of his life of faith, justification by faith could be seen only as the start of life. Had it come later, after circumcision, it could be argued justification is grounded in faith *and* circumcision.

---

<sup>53</sup> See Robertson, *op. cit.*, pages 265-266. Genesis 15 is in deliberate contrast to Genesis 16.

<sup>54</sup> See Moberly, *op. cit.*, pages 114-120. His argument turns on reading Genesis 15:6 in the light of Psalm 106:31, rather than vice versa. As a developed view, contrary to that taken in this paragraph, his argument needs to be taken seriously. However, space does not allow his argument to be reproduced in anything other than the barest summary.

<sup>55</sup> See Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, page 378.

<sup>56</sup> Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, page 47.

<sup>57</sup> See Calvin, *op. cit.*, page 403 and Robertson, *op. cit.*, page 261.

<sup>58</sup> See Calvin, *op. cit.*, pages 408-410 and Robertson, *op. cit.* page 267, who develops the same line of argument.

Who made these promises to Abram? Genesis 15's answer is that God did; tautologically, he did so through his word. Elsewhere,<sup>59</sup> Abram met with human-form theophanies of God; here there is no evidence for God's word referring to anything other than his speech.

---

<sup>59</sup> Most notably in Genesis 18.



# 5. Conclusion

Systematic conclusions were drawn as each biblical text was examined;<sup>1</sup> this conclusion should be read in conjunction with those because they will not be repeated here. This chapter seeks to draw some overall conclusions about the conscious content of Abraham's faith.

## 5.1 What did Abraham Consciously Believe?

In summary, Abraham was justified by belief in God's promises (which would one day be fulfilled in Christ) throughout his life, knowing they would be fulfilled eschatologically.

That summary can be unpacked: Romans 4 defined Abraham's faith as belief in God's promises.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, he trusted the God who raises the dead,<sup>3</sup> as opposed to relying upon himself.<sup>4</sup> Those promises were to be fulfilled in Christ,<sup>5</sup> an announce-

---

<sup>1</sup> See pages 25, 30, 35-36, 40-42 and 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> See page 35 above.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 4:17.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 15, Romans 4 and Galatians 3.

<sup>5</sup> This is consistent with Turretin. In saying that it is idolatrous to seek God outside of Christ, he explains how the OT saints do not contradict this principle. They "were accustomed to approach him relying on his most sure promises in Christ" (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, volume 1 page 11). His point is that the OT saints did not rely explicitly on Christ; instead they relied on God's promises, *promises* which are in Christ.

ment of the gospel ahead of time;<sup>6</sup> Abraham *will* enjoy perfection, but only with us.<sup>7</sup> The specific act of faith, believing that his descendants would be numerous, was representative of his whole life of faith.<sup>8</sup> Abraham knew that material blessings in his generation did not exhaust these promises: he foresaw the day of the LORD,<sup>9</sup> and was motivated by his hope in the heavenly city.<sup>10</sup>

## 5.2 Abraham's Faith Compared to Inclusionist Exegesis

How does this account of Abraham's faith compare to that espoused by inclusionists?

It is true that the OT saints were saved without confessing Christ;<sup>11</sup> however, the reason they did not confess Christ was that they lived at the wrong time. They were saved because they trusted in explicit promises from the one true God. It is therefore unwarranted to draw a parallel to those living today who have not heard of Christ.

Is B.C. an epistemological category?<sup>12</sup> The OT saints trusted in promises that have been fulfilled in Christ. They therefore trusted, albeit before the event, God's revelation concerning the person and work of Christ. It follows that B.C. is a chronological category, and (see diagram below) it would make a *considerable* difference "if Job were born in A.D. 1900 in outer Mongolia".<sup>13</sup> It also follows that Abraham's subjective and objective religions were in line.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 3:8; see page 40 above.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 11:39-40; see page 25 above.

<sup>8</sup> The iterative verb in Genesis 15:6; see page 47 above.

<sup>9</sup> John 8:56.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 11:10.

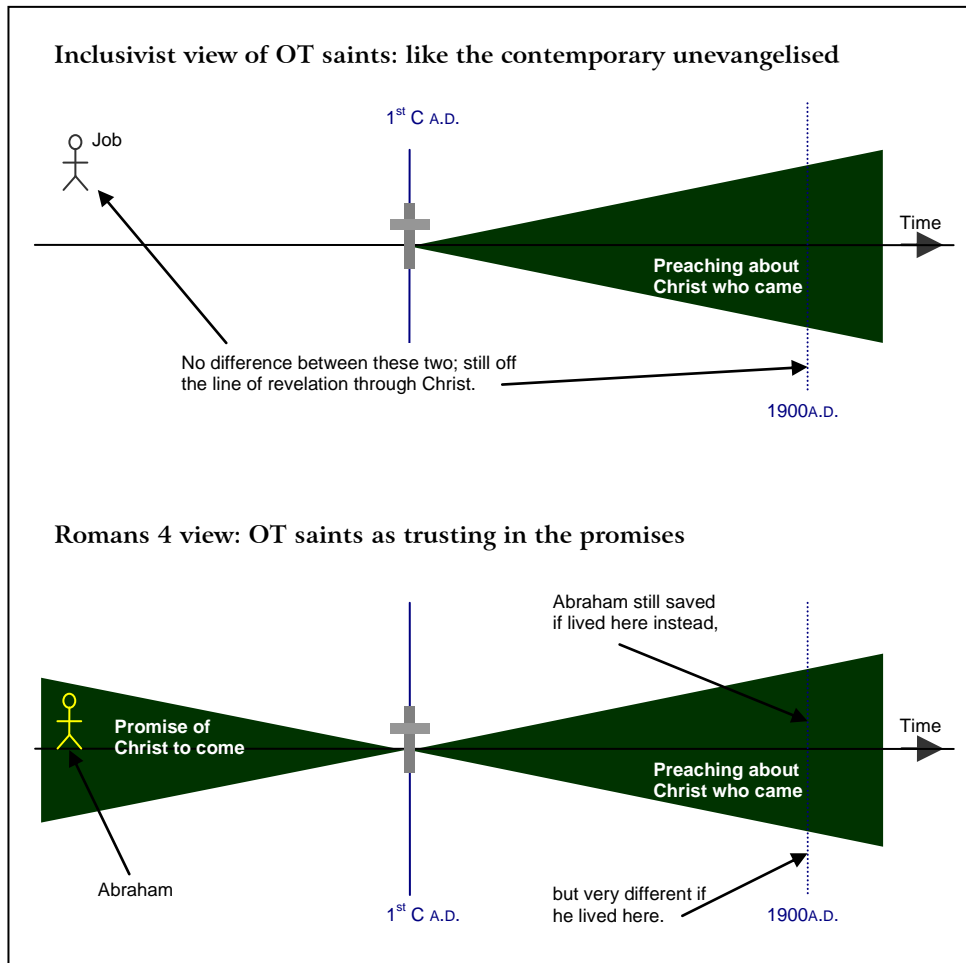
<sup>11</sup> See page 8 above.

<sup>12</sup> See page 6 above.

<sup>13</sup> Pinnock, *Wideness*, page 161.

<sup>14</sup> Compare the discussion on page 4 above.

Fin



nally, it was argued above that God's promises to Abraham must not be set against his universal covenant with Noah.<sup>15</sup> Yet blessing comes to all nations *through Abraham* (Genesis 12:3), as people belong *to Christ* (Galatians 3:29).

## 5.3 Abraham's Faith Compared to CFP Exegesis

How does this account of Abraham's faith compare to that espoused by CFP?

The claim that Abraham met Christ is unsupported by our texts: we *can* say he heard God speaking<sup>16</sup> and foresaw the messianic day.<sup>17</sup> In connection with the claim that

---

<sup>15</sup> See pages 44, 49 above.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 15:1-6; see the discussion relating to the "word of the LORD" on page 46 above.

<sup>17</sup> John 8:56.

Abraham saw the full significance of the “seed” references, it was noted that Genesis 3:15 is not explicitly messianic.<sup>18</sup>

Romans 4 and Galatians 3 both assert that Abraham was saved in the same way as the modern-day Christian. This is so *in particular respects*: Abraham was justified by faith not works, trusting God not man, by the same gospel. However, none of the texts examined say that Abraham’s faith was *consciously* in Jesus.

Finally, Abraham saw the eschatological implications of God’s promises. Specifically, he saw that this life would not exhaust their fulfilment and that the day of the LORD would come (in some sense). To infer that Abraham knew explicitly of the person and work of Christ is to go beyond the texts studied.

---

<sup>18</sup> See page 44 above.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview with Dr Paul Blackham

The interview took place at 1pm on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2004 in London. Dr Blackham felt that to tape the interview would distract him; therefore, full notes were taken and promptly written up. What follows is a summary, according to those notes, of the conversation we had. The discussion was not as structured as the headings below might suggest; the headings have been created for the reader's benefit.

### Book Recommendations

I was recommended to consult two works that clarify the difference between Dr Blackham's thinking and dispensationalism. These are Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, chapter 14, and House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*. The former outlines how the object of faith has always been a saviour who suffers and then enters glory; the latter charts the differences between dispensationalism and covenant theology.

### Question 1

From what you have written, it seems that Genesis 15 is central: the Word of the LORD (personified) appeared to Abraham. In understanding NT texts, such as John 8, Galatians 3 and Hebrews 11, you refer the reader to Genesis 15 to understand what is described. Is that fair?

### Answer 1

Any text where the LORD appeared to Abraham is important; Genesis 15 is just one such text. It all began in Genesis 12. There are two issues. The first is: Who is it Abraham meets with? The second is: What is the content of the message that was preached? Is it Christological or not? The doctrine of the whole of Genesis is important when it comes to interpreting Genesis 15.

## Question 2

So is it fair to say that the issue is the paradigm through which a book of the Bible is read? If the way you read a whole book is wrong, verses within it will seem out of place.

## Answer 2

The paradigm point is important, because the real question is: Who is God?

Two examples: The open theists criticise classical theism quite perceptively, but I don't agree with their positive statements. Moltmann has a good critique of the Trinity in rejecting an Aristotelian approach that starts with "essence", but I do not agree with his egalitarian view of the Trinity.

For me, exegetical issues made me start to ask the questions. The criticism that I read my systematic theology into the text is unfair; it happened the other way around.

## Question 3

When you say the LORD appeared to Abram, in what form did he appear?

## Answer 3

Let us start at the paradigm point. God is three persons so all our analysis must be Trinitarian. Augustine began with essence, making the issue of "form" irrelevant because, by definition, essence is behind any form. However, when you start with persons, the question of "form" is the right one.

Whenever the Father is referred to, he is enthroned in heaven, surrounded by thousands of Cherubim. There are at least two physical descriptions of him, excepting his face. There is metaphor in this language, but the Bible describes the Father as geographically located in heaven. It is the same with the Son. Daniel 7 and Psalm 2 describe the Son in similar terms. The *prima fasciae* language of Scripture is clear that the Father and the Son have humanoid form and are located in geographical locations. The Spirit is different. He is in lots of places at once, and *appears as* (rather than *is*) a dove. People who say God has no form read the idea that God "is an essence" into the biblical texts.

This does not mean that God's body is just like ours. We are not told how large God is, for example. However, people cannot say Christ only *pretends* to have a form when he appears in the OT, because Genesis simply says that he appeared.

#### **Question 4**

What happened at the incarnation? Did the Son lose his form and acquire a new form?

#### **Answer 4**

We tend to speak of the incarnation as him becoming human. Scripture does not use this language; Paul speaks of the "man from heaven" in 1 Corinthians 15. We need to be cautious about using different language. Irenaeus' idea of Jesus as the original man is important.

The incarnation is primarily redemptive not revelatory. People in the OT, such as Isaiah, knew in their day what God was like; it was *redemption* that they needed. There is a revelatory aspect, but the point of it is to redeem. He could not do this without becoming one of us. "The unassumed is the unhealed."

#### **Question 5**

So what happened to his *form* at the incarnation? Did his form change into a fully human form? Did he lose his pre-incarnate form to take on human nature? Alternatively, was his fully human form only a temporary appearance?

#### **Answer 5**

It is not easy to say what happened to him at the level of "person" at the incarnation. The questions of form are difficult for the same reason. I think that, from his conception, his form was that of human flesh. As he grew up, he looked increasingly like his pre-incarnate form.

#### **Question 6**

If the Father and the Son both have material forms, does that mean the Eastern idea of perichoresis needs to be rejected?

## **Answer 6**

The Eastern theologians coined the idea of perichoresis to combat polytheism, which is not the major threat in the West today. It is quite hard to pin down what perichoresis means; like their views of God as essentially unknowable, this is an idea I'd happily abandon.

## **Question 7**

If this is so, where does the unity within the Trinity consist? How do we avoid tritheism?

## **Answer 7**

The persons cannot exist without each other, act separately or even be thought of separately.

## **Question 8**

We have spoken about whom Abraham met with. May we now move onto the second issue you highlighted? To what extent was the content of the message Abraham heard what we would call the gospel? Did he really understand about Jesus' atoning death for sins, his resurrection from the dead and so on?

## **Answer 8**

I have tried to imagine what it is like to be the church in 2000 B.C.. The gospel is that the Seed of the woman will destroy Satan and his work, but will suffer in the process then triumph. Paul's exegesis of this is that it is an individual, not a people, who triumphs. That is the basic gospel. Then, as history moves on, more details are added such as the nature of the suffering.

Everything from then on is against this starting point. The most exciting thing for Abraham would be the promise of "seed"; he was not just looking forward to having many children. He then takes Isaac to the spot where the crucifixion will happen; the sacrifice of Isaac is not barbaric but the closest thing to the crucifixion that ever happened.



## Question 9

Therefore, it sounds as if you would be happy with the idea of progressive revelation, that details are added as time passes. Is that correct?

## Answer 9

Yes. The revelation gets larger but with the same core. I am accused of not believing in progressive revelation, but that is unfair. The core, the one gospel, never changes. The sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow have always been the object of people's faith. However, the nature of the sufferings becomes steadily clearer.

Isaiah is a good example. By the end of Isaiah, he could have written a small biography of Jesus. It would read differently from the gospels, because he had not seen the events themselves unfold. However, the core would be the same.

I would say that there is progression of information, but not of core content.

## Thanks

Thank you very much for your time.

## Appendix 2: List of Translations of **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhwh** in the LXX

This appendix gives the statistics regarding how the Hebrew phrases **d<sup>e</sup>bar yhwh** (“the word of the LORD”) and **dibrê yhwh** (“the words of the LORD”) are translated by the LXX. These two phrases occur 251 times in the MT of the OT (234 and 17 times respectively for the singular and plural forms). The majority of these occurrences (223) are translated by a Greek noun meaning “word” followed by either **κύριος** or **θεός** in the genitive; such occurrences are detailed in the table below. The remaining 28 occurrences either: (i) translate the phrase with a close paraphrase (12 instances); or (ii) occur in a clause, verse or chapter of the MT that is not rendered by the LXX (16 instances).

In the lists that follow, verse numbers in square brackets indicate numbering in the LXX that differs from that used in the MT. For example, 1 Kings 21:28 [20:28] denotes the verse numbered 21:28 in the MT and 20:28 in the LXX. Occasionally, the

MT and the LXX agree, against English translations, in their verse numbering. In these cases, the MT and LXX numbering is the one used.

	yhwh as κυριου:	yhwh as θεου:
λογος:	Exodus 4:28; 2 Samuel 12:9, 24:11; 1 Kings 12:24, 13:1, 13:2, 13:5, 13:20, 13:32, 16:1, 20:35; 2 Kings 7:1, 9:36, 15:12, 20:16, 20:19, 24:2; 1 Chronicles 10:13, 11:3, 11:10, 22:8; 2 Chronicles 11:2, 11:4, 12:7, 18:18, 19:11, 30:12, 34:21, 35:6, 36:21; Ezra 1:1; Psalms 33:4 [32:4], 33:6 [32:6]; Isaiah 1:10, 2:3, 28:14, 38:4, 39:5, 39:8; Jeremiah 1:4, 1:11, 1:13, 2:4, 2:31, 7:2, 8:9, 13:2, 13:3, 13:8, 14:1, 17:15, 17:20, 18:5, 19:3, 20:8, 21:11, 22:2, 22:29, 24:4, 27:18 [34:18], 28:12 [35:12], 29:30 [36:30], 31:10 [38:10], 32:6 [39:6], 32:8 [39:8], <sup>1</sup> 32:26 [39:26], 33:1 [40:1], 34:4 [41:4], 34:12 [41:12], 35:12 [42:12], 36:4 [43:4], 36:8 [43:8], 36:11 [43:11], 36:27 [43:27], 37:2 [44:2], 37:6 [44:6], 39:15 [46:15], 42:7 [49:7], 42:15 [49:15], 43:1 [50:1], 43:8 [50:8], 44:24 [51:24], 44:26 [51:26]; Ezekiel 1:3, 3:16, 6:1, 7:1, 11:14, 11:25, 12:1, 12:8, 12:17, 12:21, 12:26, 13:1, 13:2, 14:2, 14:12, 15:1, 16:1, 16:35, 17:1, 17:11, 18:1, 20:2, 21:1, 21:3, 21:6, 21:13, 21:23, 22:1, 22:17, 22:23, 23:1, 24:1, 24:15, 24:20, 25:1, 26:1, 27:1, 28:1, 28:11, 28:20, 29:1, 29:17, 30:1, 30:20, 31:1, 32:1, 32:17, 33:1, 33:23, 34:1, 34:7, 35:1, 36:1, 36:16, 37:4, 37:15, 38:1; Hosea 1:1, 4:1; Joel 1:1, Amos 7:16, 8:11, 8:12; Jonah 1:1, 3:1; Micah 1:1, 4:2; Zephaniah 1:1, 2:5; Haggai 1:1, 1:3, 2:10, 2:20; Zechariah 1:1, 1:7, 4:6, 4:8, 6:9, 7:1, 7:4, 7:8, 8:1, 8:18, 9:1, 11:11, 12:1; Malachi 1:1.  (170)	1 Chronicles 15:15; Jeremiah 1:2, 9:19.  (3)
ῥημα:	Genesis 15:1; Exodus 9:20, 9:21, 24:4; Numbers 11:24, 15:31; Deuteronomy 5:5; Joshua 3:9; 1 Samuel 3:1, 3:7, 8:10, 15:10, 15:23, 15:26; 2 Samuel 7:4; 1 Kings 2:27, 12:24, 13:18, 13:26, 15:29, 16:34, 17:2, 17:5, 17:8, 17:16, 17:24, 18:1, 19:9, 21:28 [20:28], 22:19, 22:38; 2 Kings 1:17, 3:12, 4:44, 7:16, 9:26, 10:10, 10:17, 14:25, 20:4, 23:16; 2 Chronicles 36:22; Isaiah 66:5; Jeremiah 6:10.  (44)	Exodus 24:3.  (1)
φωνη:	Genesis 15:4; 1 Samuel 15:1.  (2)	(0)
προταγμα:	Joshua 8:27; 2 Chronicles 29:15.  (2)	(0)
λογιον:	Isaiah 28:13.  (1)	(0)

<sup>1</sup> The second of the two occurrences in this verse belongs in this list.

## Paraphrased (12)

Joshua 8:8; 1 Samuel 15:13; 1 Kings 13:9, 13:17, 16:7, 16:12, 18:31, 21:17 [20:17], 22:5; 2 Chronicles 18:4; Jonah 3:3; Haggai 2:1.

## Untranslated (16)

1 Samuel 3:21; 1 Kings 6:11, 14:18; Jeremiah 2:1, 16:1, 25:3, 29:20, 32:8 [39:8],<sup>2</sup> 33:19, 33:23, 36:6 [43:6], 46:1, 47:1 [29:1], 49:34 [25:14]; Ezekiel 34:9; Daniel 9:2.

# Appendix 3: Conversation with Dr Paul Blackham, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005

On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005, I was fortunate to have another brief conversation with Dr Blackham. He told me that he had been rethinking some of the ideas he expressed to me in December 2004, such that he would want to express his views differently. Specifically, he would want to give greater heed to the analogical nature of biblical language about God. In particular, statements describing God anatomically should not be understood as denying God's incorporeality.

Dr Blackham hopes to publish a new paper on [www.soluschristus.org.uk](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk) imminently to articulate, with greater precision than previously, what he currently thinks.

This Dissertation engages with the doctrinal position termed the Conscious Faith Position, rather than with Dr Blackham as a person. Dr Blackham articulated CFP with helpful clarity in my December 2004 conversation with him, and in the written material referenced in the Bibliography. It remains the case that the faith of the OT saints is clarified by engaging with the CFP. However, to be fair to Dr Blackham it needs to be noted that, at the time of writing, he is re-evaluating the precise way in which he would express his own views.

---

<sup>2</sup> The first of the two occurrences in this verse belongs in this list.

# Bibliography

- Ackroyd, P R, *The First Book of Samuel*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971)
- Alexander, T D, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: Second Edition*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 2002)
- Anderson, N, *Christianity and World Religions*, (Leicester, IVP, 1984)
- Aquinas, T, *Summa Theologica*, (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948) [Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province]
- Attridge, H W, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1989)
- Baker, D L, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, second edition (Leicester, Apollos, 1991)
- Barnett, P, *Romans*, (Fearn, Christian Focus Publications, 2003)
- Barrett, C K, *The Gospel According to St John*, second edition (London, SPCK, 1978)
- Barth, K, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated by E C Hoskyns (1918, translation London, Oxford University Press, 1933)
- Beasley-Murray, G R, *John*, (Waco, Word Books, 1987)
- Blackham, P, *Book by Book: Exodus*, (Carlisle, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003)
- Blackham, P, *Book by Book: Galatians*, (Carlisle, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003)
- Blackham, P, *Book by Book: Genesis*, (Carlisle, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003)
- Blackham, P, *Book by Book: John*, (Milton Keynes, Authentic Lifestyle, 2004)
- Blackham, P with Richard Bewes and Anne Graham-Lotz, *Book by Book: Genesis* (Carlisle, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003), video recording.
- Blackham, P, 'Christ the Object of our Faith',  
[http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Christ the Object of Faith.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Christ%20the%20Object%20of%20Faith.PDF),  
(16th Nov 2004)

Blackham, P, 'Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT?', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Do the NT writers misunderstand the OT.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Do%20the%20NT%20writers%20misunderstand%20the%20OT.PDF), (16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004)

Blackham, P, 'Faith in Christ in the Old Testament', [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_theologian/content/bible/blackham.html](http://www.geocities.com/the_theologian/content/bible/blackham.html), (25<sup>th</sup> January 2005)

Blackham, P, 'Genesis 15', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Genesis 15.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Genesis%2015.PDF), (16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004)

Blackham, P, 'God's Body', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Fascinating study on Gods Body.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Fascinating%20study%20on%20Gods%20Body.PDF), (13<sup>th</sup> Dec 2004)

Blackham, P, 'John 8:48-59', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/John 8 48 to 59.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/John%208%2048%20to%2059.PDF), (16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004)

Blackham, P, 'Romans 4:1-25', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Romans 4.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/Romans%204.PDF), (16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004)

Blackham, P, 'The Doctrine of God and the Exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/The Doctrine of God the the Exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/The%20Doctrine%20of%20God%20the%20the%20Exegesis%20of%20the%20Hebrew%20Scriptures.PDF), (16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004)

Blackham, P, 'The Unfolding Gospel of the Whole Bible', [http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/The Unfolding Gospel of the Whole Bible.PDF](http://www.soluschristus.org.uk/The%20Unfolding%20Gospel%20of%20the%20Whole%20Bible.PDF), (9<sup>th</sup> Feb 2005)

Boice, J M, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary Volume 2, Genesis 12:1-36:43*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1985)

Borland, J A. 'A Theologian Looks at the Gospel and World Religions', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990): pages 3-11

Borland, J A, *Christ in the Old Testament* Revised Edition (Fearn, Christian Focus Publications, 1999)

Bray, G B (editor), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI, Romans*, (Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity Press, 1998)

Brodie, T L, *The Gospel According to John*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993)

Brown, R E, *The Gospel According to John Volume I (I-XII)*, (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1966)

Bruce, F F, *Romans*, (London, Tyndale Press, 1963)

- Bruce, F F, *Commentary on Galatians*, (Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1982)
- Bruce, F F, *The Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1983)
- Bruce, F F, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* Revised Edition, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990)
- Brueggemann, W, *Genesis*, (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1982)
- Brunner, E, *The Letter to the Romans*, translated by H A Kennedy, (1938; translation: London, Lutterworth Press, 1959)
- Butterworth, M, 'Justification in the Old Testament' in *Here We Stand*, edited by David H Field, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), pages 11-32
- Caird, G B, 'The exegetical method of the epistle to the Hebrews', *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5 (1959): pages 44-51
- Calvin, J, *Genesis*, (1554; translation London, Banner of Truth Trust, 1965)
- Calvin, J, *The Gospel According to St John 1-10*, translated by T H L Parker, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995)
- Calvin, J, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*, translated by R Mackenzie, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995)
- Calvin, J, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, translated by T H L Parker, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996)
- Carson, D A, *The Gospel According to John*, (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1991)
- Clements, R E, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, (London, SCM Press, 1967)
- Clowney, E P, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*, (Leicester, IVP, 1988)
- Cranfield, C E B, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans Volume I*, (1975; 5<sup>th</sup> impression Edinburgh, T & T Clark Ltd, 1985)
- Davidson, R, *Genesis 12-50*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979)
- Delitzsch, F, *A New Commentary on Genesis Volume I*, translated by Sophia Taylor (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1888)
- deSilva D A, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000)

- Dillard, R B and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Leicester, Apollos, 1995)
- Dodd, C H, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, (1932; reprint London, Fontana Books, 1959)
- Dodd, C H, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953)
- Dowsett, D, “*God, That’s Not Fair!*”, (Sevenoaks, Overseas Missionary Fellowship Books, 1982)
- Driver, S R, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913)
- Dumbrell, W J, *Covenant and Creation*, (1984; reprint Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1997)
- Dunn, J D G, *Romans 1-8*, (Dallas, Word Books, 1988)
- Dunn, J D G, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1993)
- Ellingworth, P, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1993)
- Fanning, B M, ‘Word’ in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* edited by T D Alexander and B S Rosner, (Leicester, IVP, 2000)
- Filson, F V, *Yesterday: A Study of Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13*, (London, SCM Press, 1967)
- Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, edited and enlarged by E Kautzsch, translated by A E Cowley, (1813; translated edition London, Oxford University Press, 1910)
- Godet, F, *Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, translated by A Cusin, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1880)
- Godet, F, *Commentary on the Gospel of St John Volume Second*, Third Edition, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1890)
- Goldsworthy, G, ‘A Response to Paul Blackham’, [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_theologian/content/bible/goldsworthy.html](http://www.geocities.com/the_theologian/content/bible/goldsworthy.html), (25<sup>th</sup> January 2005)
- Ha, J, *Genesis 15: A Theological Compendium of Pentateuchal History*, (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1989)
- Hagner, D A, *Hebrews*, (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1983)

- Hamilton, V P, *Genesis 1-17*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990)
- Hanson, A T, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, (London, SPCK, 1965)
- Hanson, A T, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, (London, SPCK, 1974)
- Hendriksen, W, *Galatians and Ephesians*, (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1968)
- Hick, J, *God has Many Names*, (London, Macmillan Press, 1980)
- House, H W, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1992)
- Hughes, P E, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977)
- Jenson, R W, *Systematic Theology Volume 1: The Triune God*, (Oxford, OUP, 1997)
- Jouön, P, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2 volumes), translated and revised by T Muraoka, (1923; translated edition Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991)
- Kaiser, W C, Jr, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995)
- Kidner, D, *Genesis*, (London, The Tyndale Press, 1967)
- Koester, C R, *Hebrews*, (New York, Doubleday, 2001)
- Lane, W L, *Hebrews 1-8*, (Dallas, Word Books, 1991)
- Lane, W L, *Hebrews 9-13*, (Dallas, Word Books, 1991)
- Lenski, R C H, *The Interpretation of the Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1966)
- Letham, *The Work of Christ*, (Downers Grove, IVP, 1993)
- Lewis, C S, *Mere Christianity*, (1952; reprint London, Fount Paperbacks, 1977)
- Lewis, C S, *The Last Battle*, (1956; reprint London, Diamond Books, 1998)
- Liddon, H P, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Eight Lectures Preached Before the University of Oxford in the Year 1866*, 16<sup>th</sup> Edition (London, Longmans Green and Co, 1892)
- Lightfoot, J B, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, (London, Macmillan, 1902)
- Lightfoot, R H, *St John's Gospel: A Commentary*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1956)



- Lloyd-Jones, D M, *Romans: Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25, Atonement and Justification*, (London, Banner of Truth, 1970)
- Longenecker, R N, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975)
- Longenecker, R N, *Galatians*, (Dallas, Word Books, 1990)
- Luther, M, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, translated by J Theodore Mueller (1552; translation: Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1954)
- Luther, M, *Galatians*, (Nottingham, Crossway, 1998)
- Martyn, J L, *Galatians*, (New York, Doubleday, 1997)
- Metzger, B M, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition (Stuttgart, German Bible Society, 1994)
- Michaels, J R, *John*, (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1984)
- Mitchell, J J, 'Abram's Understanding of the Lord's Covenant', *Westminster Theological Journal* 32 (1969): pages 24-48
- Moberly, R W, 'Abraham's Righteousness (Genesis XV 6)' in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, edited by J A Emerton, (Leiden, E J Brill, 1990), pages 103-130
- Moo, D J, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996)
- Morris, L, *The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1971)
- Morris, L, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988)
- Morris, L, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom*, (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1996)
- Motyer, S, *Your Father the Devil?*, (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1997)
- Moule, H C G, *The Epistle to the Romans*, edited by Philip Hillyer (Fort Washington, CLC Publications, 1958)
- Okholm, D L and T R Phillips (editors), *More than One Way? Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995)
- Packer, J I, 'Good Pagans and God's Kingdom', *Christianity Today* 30/1 (17 Jan 1986), pages 22-25
- Peterson, D, *Hebrews and Perfection*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982)

- Pinnock, CH, 'Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990): pages 359-368
- Pinnock, CH, *A wideness in God's mercy: The finality of Jesus Christ in a world of religions*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan. 1992)
- Pinnock, CH, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, (Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity Press, 1996)
- von Rad, G, *Genesis Revised Edition*, (London, SCM Press, 1972)
- Richard, R P, *The Population of Heaven*, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1994)
- Robertson, O P, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980)
- Robertson, O P, 'Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Exposition of an Old Covenant Text,' *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1980): pages 259-289
- Sanders, J, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992)
- Sanders, John (editor), *What about those who have never heard?*, (Downers Grove, IVP, 1995)
- Schreiner, T R, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1998)
- Sheridan, M (editor), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament II, Genesis 12-50*, (Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity Press, 2002)
- Smith, H P, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1899)
- Stibbs, A M, *So Great Salvation*, (Exeter, Paternoster, 1970)
- Stott, J R W, *The Message of Galatians*, (1968; reprint Leicester, IVP, 1987)
- Stott, J R W, *The Message of Romans*, (Leicester, IVP, 1994)
- Strange, D, *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology*, (Carlisle, Paternoster, 2001)
- Strong, A H, *Systematic Theology*, (London, Pickering & Inglis, 1907)
- Tenney, M C, 'The Gospel of John' in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 9: John and Acts*, edited by F E Gæbelein, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1981)

Turretin, F, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Volume I*, translated by G M Giger, edited by J T Dennison Jr, (1679; Philipsburg, P&R Publishing, 1992)

Vanhoye, A, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Rome, Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989)

Vischer, W, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ, Volume I: The Pentateuch*, translated by A B Crabtree, (London, Lutterworth Press, 1949)

Vos, A, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought*, (Grand Rapids, Christian University Press, 1985)

Wallace, D B, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996)

Waltke, B K and M O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1990)

Warfield, B B, 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity', *The Works of Benjamin B Warfield Volume II*, (1929; reprint Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1981) pages 133-172

Warfield, B B, 'The Spirit of God in the Old Testament', *The Works of Benjamin B Warfield Volume II* (1929; reprint Grant Rapids, Baker Book House, 1981), pages 101-129

Wenham, G J, *Genesis 1-15*, (Waco, Word Books, 1987)

Westcott, B F, *The Gospel According to St John*, (1880; reprint London, James Clarke and Company, 1958)

Westermann, C, *Genesis 12-36*, translated by John J Scullion (London, SPCK, 1986)

'The Blackham-Goldsworthy Debate: Question Time', [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_theologian/content/bible/questions.html](http://www.geocities.com/the_theologian/content/bible/questions.html), (25<sup>th</sup> January 2005)

'The Westminster Confession of Faith', 1646, [http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster\\_conf\\_of\\_faith.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html), (4<sup>th</sup> October 2004)