

**“The Faith of Christ”  
Engaging the Writings of Richard B. Hays**

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When Richard Hays published *The Faith of Jesus Christ* in 1983 it sent a ripple through the New Testament community that still may be felt today.<sup>1</sup> Its re-publication in a more accessible form for Eerdmans in 2002 signaled that his book had real staying power.<sup>2</sup> This new volume is not a rewrite of his original work but its presentation again, accompanied by a winning foreword by Luke Timothy Johnson and a reflective introduction by the author himself about the theological implications of his thesis. It also includes two appendixes, one by James D. G. Dunn and Hays’s response to Dunn that represent part of the debate in the Society of Biblical Literature of the Pauline Theology Group from 1991 over the question of “the faith of Jesus Christ.”

For many here, Richard B. Hays may not be a familiar name nor his book *The Faith of Jesus Christ*. Some may be wondering why we devoted over half of our symposium to engaging his writings. As you will come to see, Richard Hays has much to say to our Lutheran context and to the larger Christian community of which we are a part.

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<sup>1</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*. SBLDS 56. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

My first experience with Richard Hays was at Yale Divinity School. By the luck of the draw, Dr. Hays became my adviser. Although I never took a course with him, he was the one who guided me to a Galatians course with J. Louis Martyn and a Luke course by Abraham Malherbe that forever changed my life. The year was 1982, and although his book was not to appear for another year, there was a buzz on campus about Hays's provocative thesis. He was part of a movement intent on recovering the Bible for the church that centered in a more christological and ecclesial reading of the New Testament. Dr. Hays, who is at home in both the Gospels and the letters of Paul, has been a leading voice in restoring the Bible to its proper place as a liturgical book that creates and sustains faith within the worshipping assembly.

My doctoral father, John McHugh, always lamented that there was too much secondary literature written today. He wondered how many of these works would be read 100 years from now. (He suggested, by way of example, that J. Jeremias' *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* would still be a significant book a century after it was written.) I know that he would agree with me that Richard Hays's *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* will still be a standard in the late twenty-first century.

There is much more to say about Dr. Hays, but I will leave it for my introduction of him later this afternoon. My approach in this paper is quite simple. I will begin by drawing out the major thesis of his book for those not familiar with his work. I will then spend the remainder of the paper discussing

the theological implications of his thesis for an interpretation of Paul and it's impact on Lutheran theology.

### **The Faith of Jesus Christ in Galatians: What's at Stake?**

Hays's thesis is quite simple: "*A story about Jesus Christ is presupposed by Paul's argument in Galatians, and his theological reflection attempts to articulate the meaning of that story.*"<sup>3</sup> As he himself notes, his study is not simply a matter of the subjective vs. objective genitive, but has more to do with the narrative substructure of Galatians and Paul's epistles. However, we must deal briefly with the grammar. My starting point will Galatians 2:15-16. The Galatians 2 passage is the "easier" passage, placing before us in stark reality the issue at stake.

#### ***Galatians 2:16 – The Hub of the Debate***

The significance of Galatians 2:16 cannot be overstated. In his commentary on Galatians for *The New Interpreter's Bible* Richard Hays calls it "a *précis* of the argument of the entire letter."<sup>4</sup> "Works of the law" occurs five times in eleven verses, and they are contrasted with faith. Everything depends on the interpretation of **dia; pistew**" **ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ** in this verse, perhaps the most

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<sup>3</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* 2002, xxiv (emphasis Hays).

<sup>4</sup> R. B. Hays, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. XI. "The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) 236. See also G. Stanton, "The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ" in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, J. D. G. Dunn editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) 103 who describes this as "the nerve center of Galatians."

theologically dense passage in the Pauline corpus.<sup>5</sup> The following diagram shows not only its chiastic structure,<sup>6</sup> but provides a schema to present the major theological issues. The translation here is from the *ESV* which take the genitive as a subjective one – faith in Christ.

2.15 hmei" fusei jloudaioi kai; ouk eƒ eƒgnwn amartwloiw  
 2.16 eidoite" »de% ofti  
 a ouj dikaioutai aƒqrwpo" **eƒ eƒgnwn nomou**  
 b eƒan mh; **dia; pistew"** jhsou Cristou,  
 c kai; hmei" **eij' Criston jhsoun episteusamen,**  
 b' iƒa dikaiwqwmen **eƒ pistew"** Cristou kai; ouk **eƒ eƒgnwn nomou,**  
 a' ofti **eƒ eƒgnwn nomou** ouj dikaiwqhsetai pa'sa sarx.

2.15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners,  
 2.16 yet we know that  
 a a person is not justified **by works of the law**  
 b but **through faith in Jesus Christ,**  
 c so **we also have believed in Christ Jesus,**  
 b' in order to be justified **by faith in Christ,** and not **by works of the law**  
 a' because **by works of the law** no one will be justified.

The main clause of the sentence, and the center of the chiasm, is “so we also have believed in Christ Jesus” (kai; hmei" eij" Criston jhsoun **episteusamen**), a clear reference to our faith in (eij") Christ. Grammatically and structurally, faith in Christ is at the center of Paul’s programmatic statement.

But is faith in Christ at the *theological* center of his argument? Clearly the clauses surrounding “faith in Christ” deal with justification (dikaiow), for Paul is stating in no uncertain terms that justification is not by “works of the law” (a and a` -- **eƒ eƒgnwn nomou**) but through/by faith (b -- **dia; pistew"** and b` -- **eƒ**

<sup>5</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York:

*πιστεω*"). Although these clauses are very familiar to us, let us look at these words with fresh eyes.

To begin, let's entertain for a moment a translation of the Greek verb *dikaiōw*, which we normally translate as "justify" or "declare righteous," with the following translation from J. Louis Martyn in his commentary on Galatians for the Anchor Bible: "God's *making right what has gone wrong*."<sup>7</sup> Richard Hays agrees with Martyn's translation: "Thus the verb 'justify' points not merely to a forensic declaration of acquittal from guilt but also to God's ultimate action of powerfully setting right all that has gone wrong."<sup>8</sup> What has gone wrong is very clear to Paul as he writes the Galatians. Humanity is enslaved in "the present evil age" to the forces of sin (1:4), the flesh (5:13), and the elemental spirits of the universe (5:25; 6:16). Luther's triad of sin, death, and the devil captures Paul's view of what has gone wrong in the cosmos. Hays sees the apocalyptic/eschatological ramifications of this perspective on *dikaiōw*: "'Justification', ' however, is the eschatological act of God. Thus, when he refers in v. 16 to being 'justified,' Paul is speaking of God's world-transforming eschatological verdict as it pertains to individual human beings."<sup>9</sup>

The question facing Paul, the Galatians, and his opponents is this: "How does God make things right?" Does God make things right through works of the

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Doubleday, 1998) 263.

<sup>6</sup> This chiasmic structure is adapted from J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 250.

<sup>7</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 250.

<sup>8</sup> R. B. Hays, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 237.

law? No! Does he make things right through our personal faith in Christ? Yes!  
 Does he make things right through Christ's faithful death in our behalf? Yes!!!  
 Paul's opponents are suggesting the first solution to our human plight – God is making things right by our observance of God's law, particularly the observance of Jewish customs like circumcision and the dietary laws. Paul writes to the Galatians to reject this notion of justification. But the next two alternatives are at the center of this debate, for exploring the difference between them may help us affirm what we believe, teach, and confess about the relationship between grace and faith.

The issue is how to understand the prepositional phrases *dia; pistew*" *ihsou Cristou* and *ek pistew*" *Cristou*. If we take them as objective genitives they would be translated as "faith in Jesus Christ" and "faith in Christ," referring to *our belief* that Jesus is the one who gave himself in behalf of our sins. The accent here is on *our faith* that grasps the objective realities of Christ's atoning death and vindicating resurrection. This is the traditional understanding of this prepositional phrase, and Luther's understanding as well, and it contrasts nicely with works of the law, a contrast between human observance of the law or human faith, even though human faith has a divine origin.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> R. B. Hays, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 237. See his "Excursus: The Language of Righteousness" 238.

<sup>10</sup> See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 271.

If we take the genitives as subjective genitives,<sup>11</sup> however, they refer to Christ's faith, that is, Christ's faithful death in our behalf where "he died faithfully for human beings while looking faithfully to God" as J. Louis Martyn suggests.<sup>12</sup> We are declared righteous by God, then, either by our observance of the law or *by Christ's faithful death in our behalf*. Here human action is clearly contrasted with divine initiative. Our human observance of the law is set against Christ's action where he "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age" (Gal 1:4). Here Paul's apocalyptic Gospel is placed at the center of how God is making things right in a world where things have gone very wrong.

Now please note that this interpretation of the genitives in 2:16 does not suggest anything as radical as, for example, that we are justified by works or by our experience or whatever. In fact, even if you understand this as Christ's faithful death in our behalf, our faith in Christ still stands at the center of the chiasm in the main clause of 2:16: "so we also have believed in Christ Jesus."<sup>13</sup> To interpret this genitive as Christ's faithful death in our behalf allows the

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<sup>11</sup> See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 251 n. 127 who prefers calling this an "authorial" genitive.

<sup>12</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 271.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. Silva, *Explorations*, 174 who understands the genitives as objective, i.e. faith in Christ, but makes a point of accenting objective justification: "To recognize the apocalyptic overtones of this clause is not to undermine the traditional application of the verse, since in this very passage Paul is stressing the significance of faith for his own personal – yes, present – justification and that of his Jewish-Christian contemporaries. My point, however, is that this truth is set within the context of cosmic, eschatological realities. In other words, the 'subjective' experience of justification is not divorced from the 'objective' judgment at the end of the age. On the contrary, it is grounded in that final judgment, so that our sense of assurance (cf. Gal. 4:6-7) is not a psychological strategy that by-passes reality, but rather a proleptic manifestation of God's righteous verdict."

atonement for sin, God's apocalyptic invasion and rescue,<sup>14</sup> to be that which is contrasted to the observance of the law as the means through which God is making things right. The accent, then, is on God's objective act in Christ on the cross and in his resurrection for the life of the world. We might translate the Greek in this way:

- A human being is not declared righteous
- (a) by works of the Law, but rather
  - (b) **by Jesus Christ's faithful death in our behalf**
  - (c) even we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we are declared righteous
    - (b') **by Christ's faithful death in our behalf**
    - (a') not by works of the Law.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Galatians 2:20***

Another passage in Galatians, occurring immediately after 2:16, helps illustrate this understanding of "the faith of Jesus Christ." Translating the genitive in 2:20 as a subjective genitive, the passage may be rendered as follows:

2:20 **zw** de; ouk eti i egw  
**zh**/de; eñ ejmoi; **Cristo**':  
 o)de; nun zw eñ sarki  
**eñ pistei zw th/tou uibu' tou qeou'**  
**tou agaphsanto" me kai;**  
**paradonto" eauton ufer ejnou.**

2:20 It is no longer **I who live**,  
 but **Christ who lives** in me.  
 And the life I now live in the flesh  
**I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God,**  
**who loved me**  
**and gave himself for me.**

<sup>14</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 97ff.

<sup>15</sup> This section is a revision from a previous symposium paper entitled "Christ and the Law in the Life of the Church at Galatia: 'A Map of the World in Which They Actually Live.'"

This verse is a climax to Paul's argument that he died to the law through the law, having been crucified with Christ. He is speaking here of his participation in Christ's death where he leaves behind his life of law observance because of the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. What is important to Paul here is not his faith in Christ, but Christ's faithfulness in giving up his life on the cross (here the genitive *tou uibu' tou qeou* (of the Son of God) is dependent on *epi pistei* (by the faithfulness)). Thus the life he now lives is Christ's life because Christ lives in him. And what is it that marks this life? Christ's faithfulness unto death. As Hays puts it: "Paul is not claiming that he lives now by 'believing in' the Son of God; he has, in fact, just (rhetorically) denied any continuing personal agency at all. Instead, it is now the *pistis* of the Son of God, Jesus Christ's own self-giving faithfulness, that moves in and through him." Hays cites Martyn's felicitous summary: "Christ's faith constitutes the space in which the one crucified with Christ can live and does live."<sup>16</sup>

This entire phrase "by the faithfulness of the Son of God" is modified both grammatically and theologically by two participial phrases that stand in apposition to *tou uibu' tou qeou* (of the Son of God), namely, *tou agaphsanto" me kai; paradonto" eauton upe'r ejnou* (who loved me and gave himself for me). The grammatical thrust here is on "faith" that must be considered with the genitive "of the Son of God." Is it not more plausible, in light of Paul's running argument about Christ's death on the cross in our behalf and our participation in

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<sup>16</sup> R. B. Hays, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 244. He cites J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 259.

that cross, that the participles “who *loved* me and *gave* himself for me” modify the whole phrase? If so, it would make little sense for this to refer to *our faith in Christ*, but would bring a definitive climax to Paul’s argument concerning what the cross entails. Hays’s summary of its meaning is incisive: “The whole context portrays Christ as the active agent and Paul as the instrument through which and/or for whom Christ’s activity comes to expression. Indeed, this unrelenting emphasis on the priority of Christ’s (or God’s) willing and doing over any human will or action is the theological keynote of the whole letter.”<sup>17</sup>

Both Martyn and Hays compare this passage from Galatians with Romans 5:15 to demonstrate how Paul is using “faith” here in Galatians as the equivalent to his use of “grace” in Romans. The following diagram from Hays illustrates this perfectly:

**Rom 5:15**

. . . the free *gift*  
in grace,  
namely the grace  
of the one man

Jesus Christ

en cariti  
th/tou eho' anqrwpou ihsou Cristou

**Gal 2:20**

. . . I live  
in faith,  
namely the faith  
of the Son of God

en pistei  
th/tou uibu' tou qeou

As Martyn observes: “Just as in Rom 5:15 the life-giving grace is specified as the grace ‘of Jesus Christ,’ so here the life-giving faith of which Paul speaks is specified as the faith *of* the Son of God.”<sup>18</sup> And as Hays points out, since Paul

<sup>17</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, 155.

<sup>18</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 259.

immediately follows Galatians 2:20 with a reference to grace, it is fair to conclude that “Grace is embodied in Christ’s faithful death for our sake.”<sup>19</sup>

### **The Faith of Jesus Christ in Interpreting Paul**

The genius of Hays’s book on *The Faith of Jesus Christ* is that he chooses to establish the subjective reading from Galatians 3:1-4:11, or what Luke Johnson calls “the hardest passage.”<sup>20</sup> For the sake of time, I will not rehearse his arguments, but rather, encourage you to test for yourselves through Hays’s book the interpretation of the genitive as Christ’s faithfulness rather than our faith in Christ in the other passages in Galatians where it pertains. Instead, we will consider the impact of “the faith of Jesus Christ” on an interpretation of Paul and on our Lutheran theology. It is to this that we now turn.

Needless to say, this understanding of “the faith of Jesus Christ” is not without controversy. People have lined up on both sides of the genitive, with the rhetoric often passionate. Both sides are persuasive, but it appears as if the tide is turning toward the subjective genitive, and the grammatical and theological arguments for “the faith of Jesus Christ” are difficult to dispute. There is even a growing body of literature that demonstrates that the “consensual exegesis” of tradition supports the notion of “the faith of Jesus Christ.”<sup>21</sup> Richard Hays has thoroughly addressed every possible objection to his thesis over these last twenty

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<sup>19</sup> R. B. Hays, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 244.

<sup>20</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xiii.

years. To include as an appendix to his book an essay by James D. G. Dunn that is a spirited defense of the traditional understanding of “faith in Christ” shows his confidence in his own interpretation.

*The Question of the Narrative Structure*

From the beginning, Hays has insisted that what he wants people to see as the core of his argument is the subtitle of his book, “The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11.” Let me return now to his thesis statement that I cited earlier: “*A story about Jesus Christ is presupposed by Paul’s argument in Galatians, and his theological reflection attempts to articulate the meaning of that story.*” It is refreshing for someone of Hays’s stature to suggest that the story of Jesus is foundational to Paul’s theological stance in Galatia. Paul is not to be seen as some loose cannon within first century Judaism, but rather, a faithful disciple of Jesus who was shaped and formed by the teachings of Jesus. Luke Johnson summarizes this significant aspect of Hays’s thesis:

Hays’s study suggests a closer link between Paul and the Gospels than has often been seen. Simply to state that Paul’s thought has a narrative substructure is to make stronger the connection between his letters and the Gospel genre. But Hays also sees in the narrative fragments of Galatians an implicit link between the proclamation of the cross, the incarnation, and even pre-existence.<sup>22</sup>

The implications for this thesis on interpreting Paul are enormous. What is first and foremost for Paul is not our faith in Christ, but Christ’s incarnation,

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<sup>21</sup> For example, see I. G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Tradition* (SNTSMS 84; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and for an opposing point of view, Roy A. Harrisville III, “PISTIS CRISTOU: Witness of the Fathers,” *NovT* 36 (1994) 233-241.

<sup>22</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xiv.

atonement, resurrection, and *our participation in his life through baptism and eucharist*. As Hays puts it: “The thing that matters is the message of the text, the story that it tells and interprets.”<sup>23</sup> This is why it is so important to interpret the genitives as “faith of Christ” and not “faith in Christ.” This in no way suggests that our faith in Christ is not a significant issue for Paul, but it is not the overarching one. Paul’s theology is much more cosmic than even Lutherans are willing to grant, and Hays’s thesis about the narrative substructure of Galatians complements the apocalyptic perspective promoted by J. Louis Martyn.

### *The Apocalyptic Perspective*

To interpret Paul’s Galatian letter, we must read it through the apocalyptic events of Christ’s incarnation, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead that have forever changed the cosmos. For it is at the cross where the Messiah and the Law collide:<sup>24</sup> “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse . . . Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree.’” (Gal 3:10, 13).

J. Louis Martyn has suggested that “Paul is concerned in letter form to *repreach* the gospel in place of its counterfeit. Rhetorically, the body of the letter is a sermon centered on factual and thus indicative answers to two questions, ‘What time is it?’ and ‘In what cosmos do we actually live?’”<sup>25</sup> To answer these two questions Paul reveals his apocalyptic theology that is centered in Christ’s

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<sup>23</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xxvii.

incarnation and his death on a cross. The story of Jesus as narrated in the Gospels is now the story of the cosmos. The time we now live in is “eschatological time,” the eighth day,” and the world in which we dwell is the new creation. That’s why Paul needs to provide us with a map for this world *in which we now actually live*.<sup>26</sup>

This world is defined by Paul in his opening thesis statement to the Galatians that describes the greater reality that “Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age” (Gal 1:4-- tou donto" eauton uper tw'n amartiwn hmwn, o'pw" e'xel h'tai h'ma" ek tou aiwno" tou e'nestwto" ponhrou). Here is Christ’s substitutionary atonement and the language of the new creation -- Christ’s death liberates us from an evil age in which we were enslaved *to deliver* us into a new age where “the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Gal 6:14) The one who gave himself for our sins now says, in the words of Luke’s institution narrative, “This is my body which is being given on behalf of you” (Lk 22:19 – to u'per umwn u'per umwn didomen). The body Christ gave on the cross in our behalf is now given to the Galatians in a eucharistic feast of body broken and blood poured out where *grace* is given as gift and *peace* is experienced as health, wholeness, and salvation itself.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 318.

<sup>25</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 23 (emphasis mine).

<sup>26</sup> See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 482 n. 41.

<sup>27</sup> See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 88.

Hays admits when he first wrote his thesis, this apocalyptic perspective was not as prominent as he would now make it. Here is his assessment now of the significance of this apocalyptic perspective on his thesis:

Paul's theology in Galatians rests upon an apocalyptic narrative about the end of the old age and the beginning of a new one. Within that story, the death of Christ is the crucial turning point, the event in which he rescues humanity from slavery. Martyn, in his commentary on Galatians, has emphatically endorsed the interpretation of πίστις ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as "the faith of Jesus Christ," understanding it as a reference to the cross as Christ's act of giving himself up to rescue us from the present evil age. Once we see the death of Jesus as the decisive act in God's eschatological invasion of a world previously held in thrall to hostile powers, several elements of the letter become clearer when read within the framework of Paul's cosmic story of liberation.<sup>28</sup>

Hays continues with numerous examples of this apocalyptic accent in Galatians (e.g. 4:19; 4:26; 5:5; 5:17; 5:21; 6:5; 6:7-9; 6:16), all of which do not occur in Gal 3:1-4:11, the section isolated by him for his study. But two of the most apocalyptic passages in Galatians do occur within the limits of his study: Gal 3:13-14 and 4:3-6. He does deal with the similarities and differences between these passages, but in his original thesis and his later reflections on the apocalyptic in Galatians, these passages are not part of his analysis.

What could be more apocalyptic, than Christ's redeeming us from the curse of the law (3:13-14), or his invasion into the world and into us when the fullness of time had come (4:4-6)? In Martyn's comment on "Apocalyptic Theology in Galatians" in his Galatians commentary both of these passage figure

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<sup>28</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xxxix.

prominently in his analysis. In fact, he notes that the “‘fullness of time’ is a clear apocalyptic motif,”<sup>29</sup> and that “the motif of cosmic warfare is focused first of all on the cross . . . making the cross the foundation of Paul’s apocalyptic theology.”<sup>30</sup>

This combination of narrative substructure and apocalyptic theology provide *the hermeneutical key* to unlocking Paul’s theology in Galatians. Galatians must be read through the lens of the incarnation and death of Jesus as invasive events instead of our faith in Christ. This raises a number of issues for further consideration in New Testament studies:

1. If the Gospels are clearly underlying Paul’s theology, then the origins of the Gospels need to be re-visited, especially as they relate to Paul. Hays begins to explore this in the section of his introduction entitled “Paul’s Gospel Story within the Matrix of Early Christianity” where he notes that “in fact Paul was less theologically distinctive than is generally supposed – that is, that his Christology and soteriology are closely in sync with Hebrews, with the Deutero-Pauline letters, and with the writing usually thought to represent ‘early catholicism’ – and that, despite the near-total absence of synoptic Jesus tradition in Paul’s letters, his story-grounded preaching marks a point on a historical trajectory towards the composition of written narratives.”<sup>31</sup> He then makes what he calls this “fanciful” suggestion: “that Paul’s Gospel story

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<sup>29</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 99.

<sup>30</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 101.

presages the development of the gospel genre,” citing Joel Marcus’s article “Mark – Interpreter of Paul” as an example of an evangelist recording Paul’s theology, particularly because of their common interest in the theology of the cross.<sup>32</sup>

Here is an even more “fanciful” suggestion: Could the Gospels be circulating even earlier than scholars often suggest? It seems that the origins of the Gospels correspond to the periods of evangelization, placing Matthew’s Gospel during the Jewish (Petrine) mission, A.D. 30-46, the earliest period of the church’s life.

How, then, did the Galatians come to know the narrative substructure? Through Paul, or through Matthew, whose Gospel may have been read in the liturgical assemblies of Galatia? If the Galatians are essentially a Gentile congregation, would not Matthew’s “Jewish” Gospel seem strange to their ears, and would not Paul, an interpreter of Jesus, using the narrative of Jesus as his substructure, be an excellent catechist as he uses Matthew’s story of Jesus as a means of evangelizing these Gentiles in Galatia?

2. These questions raise for me the need to continue to explore the relationship between Paul and Luke. Galatians must always be read alongside of Acts, and there are some intriguing possibilities that develop when one tries to reconcile Acts and Galatians instead of pitting them against one another. Any

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<sup>31</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xlii-xliii.

<sup>32</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xliv.

reconstruction of a first century chronology is tenuous at best, but the dilemma posed between Galatians 2 and Acts 15 may not be as daunting as once supposed. Perhaps the unspoken issue in both Galatians 2 and Acts 15 was “the faith of Jesus Christ,” namely, that some had forgotten to see the world through this apocalyptic lens of Jesus’ incarnation and atonement, and were instead focused on issues of ethnicity that required keeping some aspects of the Jewish law. When both Luke and Paul refer to the Gospel, are they not referring to this apocalyptic Gospel that now redefines the world and the time in which we live?

3. Luke’s relationship with Paul raises other issues for interpreting the writings of both Paul and Luke. Did Paul’s catechesis of these Gentile Galatians through the story of Jesus, and his subsequent battle with his opponents over this apocalyptic Gospel, become programmatic for his entire Gentile mission?

What might Luke have learned from Paul’s experience when, if Bo Reicke is correct, Luke served the Philippian congregation between A.D. 51 and 58 (between the “we” sections in Acts 16:10-17 and Acts 20:5)?<sup>33</sup> And if he composed his Gospel after meeting with Paul and Mark in Caesarea Maritima between A.D. 58-60, as Bo Reicke has also suggested, how has Luke’s relationship with Paul influenced the way he wrote his Gospel?<sup>34</sup> How did the narrative substructure of Paul’s epistles influence the composition of the

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<sup>33</sup> B. Reicke, *Re-examining Paul’s Letters* (Trinity Press International, 2001) 92.

<sup>34</sup> B. Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 168-170.

Gospels of Luke and Mark? Eusebius claimed that “Paul was actually accustomed to quote the Gospel according to St. Luke. When writing about some Gospel as his own, he used to say, “’According to my Gospel.’”<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps there is more truth to Eusebius’ claim than we might expect. Luke is the Gentile Gospel precisely because he does what Matthew did not do, that is, provide the template for catechizing Gentiles by a still Jewish Christian church, which explains why Luke includes so many details about such things as temple and Passover.

### **The Faith of Jesus Christ and Lutheran Theology**

What, then, is the significance of Hays’s thesis, “the faith of Jesus Christ,” on Lutheran theology? “Justification by grace through faith” is the doctrine upon which the church stands and falls, as we hold from our confessional writings, even though justification figures prominently in only two New Testament documents, Galatians and Romans. Luke’s Gospel records Jesus using the language of justification, particularly in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, but it certainly is not a dominant way for him to speak of the Gospel. For Jesus, preaching the kingdom of God and the proclamation of a new creation are the ways he speaks of his apocalyptic invasion into our world as the Creator come to his creation to set it free from the bondage to sin, death, and the devil.

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<sup>35</sup> A. A. Just Jr. editor, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Vol III: Luke* (Downers Grove, IL:

For Paul there are other themes in his theology such as “union with Christ”<sup>36</sup> or “participation in Christ,” the very title of a section of Hays’s introduction: “Participation in Christ as the Key to Pauline Soteriology.” Here again is Luke Johnson’s assessment of the significance of this accent in Hays:

He proposes that his position helps solve the long-standing debate between Pauline scholars over the question whether “justification by faith” or “participation in Christ” is more central to the Apostle’s thinking. Hays says that it is a false opposition. If one grasps that the faith that makes righteous is Jesus’ own faith and that his story is one in which, by baptism, Christians have been incorporated, the two sides of the debate can best be seen as moments in the same narrative process.<sup>37</sup>

Hays encourages his readers to become “caught up into the story of Jesus Christ.

*In a mysterious way, Jesus has enacted our destiny, and those who are in Christ are shaped by the pattern of his self-giving death. He is the prototype of redeemed humanity. .*

. . . Jesus is not merely a good moral example; rather, his story transforms and absorbs the world. The old world has been crucified and new creation has broken in through Jesus’ death and resurrection (Gal 6:14-15).”<sup>38</sup>

For Lutherans, there is much to reflect on here, challenging not only the way we think of Paul, but how we ourselves do theology. For both justification by grace through faith and participation in Christ are keys to our theology.

Perhaps we have accented justification to the expense of participation in Christ, which may explain why our sacramental theology has, until recently, seemed a

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Intervarsity Press, 2002) 2, cited from Ecclesiastical History 3.4, *Fathers of the Church* 19:42-43.

<sup>36</sup> See for example C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson, *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xiv.

secondary construct to our christology and ecclesiology. For Hays, “The greatest strength of the exegesis set forward in *Faith of Jesus Christ* – and in the work of others who have come to understand the expression *πίστις ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* as a short-hand reference to Christ’s action – is that it explains how Paul’s understanding of the *πίστις* of Jesus is integrally related to his understanding of *δικαιοσύνη*.”<sup>39</sup> To illustrate this, Hays shows how his thesis relates to “participation in Christ”:

1. *“The faithfulness of Jesus Christ” refers first of all to his gracious, self-sacrificial death on a cross. . . .*
2. *Jesus Christ embodies the new creation and embraces us in his life. . . .*
3. *The cross, as Christ’s saving action, is God’s action of *πίστις*”, God’s demonstration of fidelity to the promise made to Abraham.*<sup>40</sup>

Richard Hays has opened up for us a window into Paul’s theology through *The Faith of Jesus Christ* that places the atonement at the heart of Paul’s Gospel. The challenge for Lutherans is to develop a sacramental theology that embraces both the apocalyptic aspect of the narrative substructure of Paul and his participatory soteriology. Hays did not engage in any formal development of this in his book, but he lays the foundation upon which such a theology could be formed. Who better to do this than a Lutheran, for who better could demonstrate through Paul’s theology that the search for the historical Jesus ends at the eucharist.<sup>41</sup>

A. A. Just Jr.

Christmas 2003

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<sup>38</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xxix (emphasis Hays).

<sup>39</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xxix.

<sup>40</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ 2002*, xxx-xxxiii (emphasis Hays).

<sup>41</sup> From a conversation with Winthrop Brainerd.