The Individual and Community in Twentieth- and Twenty-first-Century Pauline Scholarship

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Abstract

Rudolf Bultmann's existential approach to New Testament theology found many supporters in the twentieth century. It also provoked a forceful response from his student Ernst Käsemann, who insisted that Bultmann's individualizing interpretation, especially of Paul, was defective on exegetical, theological and philosophical grounds, because it ignored Paul's cosmic and communal theology. The debate between these two scholars has been furthered quite vigorously in subsequent Pauline scholarship. Most scholars have followed Käsemann's lead (directly or not) in reading Paul in a comprehensively, and, often, exclusively communal fashion. However, recent voices have questioned whether the communal reaction against Bultmannian existentialism may be one-sided, and may obscure other, equally important facets of Paul's thought. This article surveys the debate between Bultmann and Käsemann, and the trajectories it has taken since, with special attention directed towards the most pressing interpretive issues related to the place of the individual and community in Pauline thought.

Keywords

apostle Paul, Bultmann, community, individual, Käsemann.

Introduction

The issue of the individual and the community in Paul is rarely treated as a discrete topic of scholarly inquiry. However, questions of individualism and community surface in many of the works written on Paul over the last century or so, especially in the wake of Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of the apostle and the reactions it provoked. The purpose of this article—besides orienting interested readers to the details of an important area of Pauline research—is to contribute towards making the question of the

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individual and the community in Paul into a distinct and separate focus of future scholarship. The time is right for such a move, as the individual–communal divide is increasingly gaining attention, with cracks appearing in the anti-individual consensus of the mid to late twentieth century.

For heuristic purposes I have chosen to group the various points related to the issue of the individual and the community topically. The various scholars discussed under each topic, however, do not fit neatly into airtight categories. The following categorizations are simply my way of bringing some organization to a topic that is constantly being addressed in scholarship, and which has much historical and theological significance, but which does not have a well-defined history of research. Since the books and articles included here for discussion are rarely devoted exclusively to the question of the individual and the community, the following survey must range across a very large body of twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship. For this reason the scholars included in this article are representative, and the treatment of topics is necessarily suggestive rather than comprehensive. This essay does, however, provide a sketch of the most pressing issues, as well as observations on how the debate over the individual and community might be clarified and move forward.

It is also important to keep in mind that the question of the individual and the community in Pauline scholarship is a question of emphasis, because many of the scholars surveyed do not maintain their individual or communal orientations with perfect consistency. Nonetheless, obvious tendencies emerge. Even scholars who downplay the significance of either individual or communal themes in Paul often still admit their presence, even though they may end up marginalizing one side of the equation or the other. It is these *tendencies* more than anything that have shaped the debate and which most strongly shape the respective historical and theological agendas of these scholars.

The Bultmann–Käsemann Debate

Bultmann and Käsemann were certainly not the first scholars to highlight important issues related to the individual and community in Paul. Previous scholars such as Baur (1873), Wrede (1907) and Schweitzer (1931) had already contributed in different ways towards the marginalization of the divine–individual relationship that had previously dominated much biblical interpretation, in favour of a type of historical study that focused on such issues as the role of the law in the early church, the place of Gentiles in the people of God, and a decentred role for justification in the apostle's letters. However, the debate which developed between Bultmann and Käsemann on this very issue is the most important place to begin our inquiry because it is here that one sees the most explicit construction of an individual–communal antithesis in Pauline scholarship, a divide that has been significantly furthered and elaborated upon in subsequent scholarship.

Rudolf Bultmann

Bultmann's individually-oriented interpretation certainly did not arise in a vacuum. His thought had precursors in nineteenth-century romantic biblical scholarship, and picks up on the importance of the individual in Reformational Lutheranism, to name just two of

the streams flowing into his writings. As Martin (2001: 52) notes, individualism was a 'saving aspect for nineteenth-century Germans' (a class into which Bultmann fits comfortably on this issue, despite his century) whereas 'it was a problem by the middle of the twentieth century, when it could be made to symbolize the fractured, atomized, anonymous state of modernity with its loss of communities'.

Whatever his influences, Bultmann's own understanding of the essence of human existence in Paul is famously divided into two major categories (2007: 190-345): (1) the individual prior to the revelation of faith and (2) the individual under faith. This division highlights the most important aspect of Bultmann's treatment of human identity in Paul, namely his focus on the *generic* individual. Bultmann is interested in statements about individuals irrespective of differences, whether cultural, religious, ethnic, etc. In this way, Bultmann is quite different from modern Western individualism with its preoccupation with particularity and difference. Bultmann largely develops his model for understanding the generic individual from Paul's statements about there being no difference between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, or male and female (Rom. 3.27-30; Gal. 3.28-29; 6.15), since in God's eyes every single person is placed *as an individual* into one category: that of the boastful and fleshly sinner.

Bultmann's extensive treatment of Pauline anthropological terms in his *Theology of the New Testament* (2007: 191-245) is used to bolster his existential approach to theology. Thus, despite being a generic sinner, being human also means being a rational agent who is confronted with the future and the decision to live rightly before God, and thus is not primarily about life with others (at least not in the first instance).

Yet Bultmann's understanding of human existence is not exhausted by an unqualified notion of generic human essence, untouched by the circumstances of life and the forces (both good and evil) at work on humanity. That is to say, while Bultmann's initial explication of Paul's anthropological terms is focused on certain fundamental structures of human existence without reference to a specific life orientation, he also recognizes that Paul never speaks of individuals as if they were immune to external powers and influences (2007: 227-28). For example, Bultmann spends a great deal of time unpacking the nature of flesh as a power in Paul (2007: 239-46, esp. 244-46) and sees boasting as an all-encompassing attitude that shapes and defines the existence of humanity in its rebellion against God (2007: 242-44). Nonetheless, while Bultmann recognizes that Paul describes humanity as 'the victim of a strange dichotomy which exposes him to the interference of powers outside himself', his own demythologizing interpretation subordinates this element of Paul's thought to the notion that each individual bears 'the sole responsibility for his own feeling, thinking, and willing' (1972: 6). Thus, in the end, we are brought back essentially to where Bultmann begins: the abstract individual before God *as an individual*, and an individual *alone*, even if Paul thought otherwise in his less theologically profound moments.

Several theological and hermeneutical convictions also facilitate Bultmann's existential approach to Paul. One of the most famous of these constraints is his claim that 'every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa' (2007: 190-91). Furthermore, Bultmann insists that all knowledge of God is mediated to every individual—as an individual—via the kerygma. Since the very purpose of the kerygma is to produce a true and proper understanding of God and self in the person who

is summoned by it, it makes no sense for anything other than the thinking and acting individual self to be at the centre of Paul's thought (see e.g. 2007: 320-22). Additionally, Bultmann's entire programme of demythologization is built upon the premise that generalized truths about individual existence can be gleaned from the thoroughly mythological texts of the New Testament. Demythologization finds relevant and contemporary meaning in events such as Christ's cross and resurrection only when 'we ask what God is trying to say to each one of us through them' (1972: 35).

Although throughout his writings Bultmann focuses on the generic individual, he does not ignore the social aspects of Pauline thought, contrary to many modern perceptions of his writings. In fact, the social and communal in Paul receives sustained treatment in his work, even if not to the satisfaction of post-Bultmannian, anti-individualist readings of the apostle. This comes out clearly in Bultmann's treatment of the church. For example, he contends that Paul draws a direct line of continuity back to Israel and places his churches into the role of a 'true Israel' (1961: 119). This community formed by love takes individuals outside of themselves and places them into a new social world with a new perspective on what is valuable and beneficial (1969: 275-76). Bultmann even insists that, although the gospel causes one to be indifferent towards all things worldly, 'this indifference nevertheless immediately disappears before the question of the individual's concrete responsibility' (1961: 145). Responsibility towards one's neighbour, therefore, is a non-negotiable aspect of the freedom one has in Christ. Individuality cannot entail *individualistic isolation* and self-serving complacency. Bultmann goes so far as to say that the New Testament ethical 'situation receives its stamp not alone from the demands that apply to the individual by himself…but especially from the obligations that arise from human fellowship' (2007: 342). This is hardly the thought of one devoted solely to questions of isolated, individualistic existence.

While the individual serves as the starting point and most prominent focus of Bultmann's concern, the extra-personal life of the community of faith is never ignored. Paul's kerygma does individualize, but it also transforms one's self-understanding towards care for the community. Recent scholarship has often superficially dismissed Bultmann's exegetical and theological work for its excessive individualism without recognizing his consistent, even if not dominant, focus on community. This is not to say that Bultmann provides a fully satisfactory account of community in Paul. Nonetheless, his theology is more nuanced on this point than standard caricatures would lead one to believe.

Ernst Käsemann

No matter what Bultmann may have to say about the relationship of the individual and community in Paul, he has been perceived by many as putting forth an extremely—and illegitimately—individualistic reading of the apostle. Bultmann's understanding of the place of the individual in Pauline theology has set the stage for the twentieth- and twenty-first-century Pauline scholarship that has come after it, even if the majority of scholars have rejected his perceived bias towards questions of individual existence. The originator of this rejection is E. Käsemann, who launched a vigorous and sustained assault on this element of his former teacher's interpretation of Paul.

In an autobiographical essay tracing his scholarly career, Käsemann (1982: 241) reflects on his dawning realization while studying with Bultmann that his teacher's argument for the primacy of the individual in Paul was built on a misguided abstraction about what constitutes human identity. For Käsemann, the very notion of an individual existing alone as an individual in the world was an intolerable imposition onto the Pauline writings.

Disputing Bultmann's emphasis on the primacy of the individual's 'decision' to live openly towards the future, Käsemann insists that human life is dominated by powers and influences in the world fighting to bring individuals under their sway, whether for good or evil. Among the most important of these is the idea of competing spheres of 'solidarity', spheres which define the very nature of human existence (1971c: 22-25). Building on passages such as Rom. 5.12-21 Käsemann argues that the competing lordships of Christ and Adam/sin are locked in an epic, apocalyptic struggle for control of the world and everyone in it (on this see esp. 1969a). Käsemann insists that these lordly powers are 'presented [by Paul] so universally and therefore with such mythological objectivity that individual existence threatens to be lost to view' (1980: 159). Thus, the individual is only a player ('a piece of the world') in a cosmic drama of competing forces. For Paul, 'man under the rule of sin could never be an "individual" but was, as representative of his world, a victim of its powers' (1971c: 31). Salvation in Christ for Käsemann cannot consist in the granting of a new self-understanding since it must include divine rescue from the evil powers controlling the world, and the ushering in of a new creation from which evil is banished forever (see 1971c: 26-27; 1980: 160). This cosmic perspective is central for Käsemann, unlike Bultmann, who interpreted ('demythologized') it as simply a window into the individual psyche.

What Käsemann says about justification provides an important example of the implications of his focus on powers in Paul. Both Bultmann and Käsemann agree that justification is central to Paul's thought. Nonetheless, Käsemann sharply criticizes Bultmann for isolating Paul's teaching on justification in soteriology and anthropology, arguing instead that justification 'is the actuality of God's right to his creation as this reveals itself as saving power' (1980: 93). That is to say, justification is the specific Pauline doctrine that most clearly displays God's universal reign over the world through Christ's lordship and is thus 'a truth which transcends the individual and is directed toward a new world' (1980: 93; see also 24).

The centrality of lordship and power can also be seen in Käsemann's discussion of the church, in which he contends that Paul's designation of the church as Christ's body exhaustively describes Christ's post-ascension existence. In other words, the only body Christ continues to have after the resurrection is the corporate people of God (see 1971d). The church is therefore the means of Christ's communication with, and lordship over, the world (see 1971c: 18-19) and thus expresses the cosmic, rather than individual, scope of Paul's theology.

Despite the dominantly anti-individual tone of Käsemann's rhetoric, he does not completely deny that Paul's thought touches on the life of individuals since it becomes necessary at some point in the development of the early church to explain how the sphere of power associated with Christ's lordship affects individuals in their concrete existence and demands a personal response (1969a: 129). For example, Käsemann argues that, for

Paul, faith 'remains primarily a decision of the individual person' and that 'its importance must not therefore be shifted away from anthropology to ecclesiology' (1971a: 83), although he elsewhere insists that even this fact must not be taken as proof 'that Paul's theology… [is] orientated towards the individual' (1969b: 176) since the apocalyptic context of Paul's letters remains central, no matter what relevance it has to the actual lives of individuals who are caught up in the great battle of the ages (1980: 52). Individuals are important in Paul, but only insofar as they contribute towards the establishment of the universal lordship of Christ in the world.

According to Käsemann, Bultmann's preoccupation with the individual and 'existential decision' led him to neglect dominant, communally-focused themes in Paul's letters. In this regard Bultmann's understanding of individuality is said to be a particularly abstract and nineteenth-century understanding of humanity that is not sensitive to external forces and pressures that act upon humanity such as have been uncovered by modern sociology, biology, etc. (1971c: 10-11, 15-18). Most importantly, however, Käsemann's primary criticism of Bultmann is built upon his perceived lack of attention to the 'power dynamics' at work in Paul's own letters. This facet of Käsemann's thought has proven to be particularly influential in subsequent scholarship.

The Individual and the Community in Subsequent Debate

The lines of the debate over the role of the individual and community in Paul were put firmly in place by the long-running dispute between Bultmann and Käsemann. Subsequent scholarship has branched out from this initial debate to bring a wide range of related issues into the discussion, which will now be surveyed.

The Individual and the Community in the 'Ancient Mediterranean World'

A recurrent charge in recent Pauline scholarship, particularly among those scholars who have been significantly shaped by the application of social-scientific approaches to the ancient world, is that even positing the existence of 'the individual' in Paul depends on an anachronistic projection of modern individualism onto the 'ancient Mediterranean world' and its texts. Malina argues that the world of the Mediterranean basin in Paul's day was 'collectivistic' where people 'always considered themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experienced themselves as inextricably embedded' (2001: 62). Instead of thinking in terms of individual identity, such people were 'dyadic', meaning that they depended on a complex web of social interactions to create their sense of identity, rather than on the individualistic quest for self-knowledge supposedly characteristic of modern (especially Western) thinking (see e.g. Malina 1979; Malina and Neyrey 1991). Esler, while recognizing the limitations of social-scientific models, nonetheless warns against reading 'first-century texts in terms of individualism when that is a feature of modern Western culture largely absent from the period under discussion' (Esler 1994: 24). However, in a more recent book, Esler, employing social-scientific models of group formation and identity, argues that while individual identity is largely derived from one's sense of 'belonging to the group', for Paul's converts, their 'status as individuals is not forgotten' (2003: 11). Thus it is critical to discover in Paul how social identity 'affects the hearts and

minds of individual Christ-followers in the cognitive, emotional, and evaluative dimensions of group belonging' (2003: 20). Esler's approach is more a model of communal identity *shaping* individual identity than the communal *displacing* the individual, as is the case with Malina. Thiselton's recent book on Paul (an example from outside the social-scientific approaches) comes to a similar conclusion as Esler's: he recognizes the importance of the individual in the apostles' letters, but qualifies this by stating that for Paul everything is viewed 'from within the framework of the nation, family, tribe, or wider community, rather than from the viewpoint of the individual alone' (2009: 101). For Thiselton, an interpretation of Paul that does not pay careful attention to the social forces at work in shaping one's sense of individual identity will be greatly deficient.

Coming at the issue from a different perspective, Jewett contends that paying careful attention to Paul's gospel in the context of the Roman imperial propaganda of the time prevents the modern reader from imposing the individualism of the dominant Western 'theological tradition' of reading Romans onto Paul's letters. Instead, we must understand that the 'primary scope' of Paul's language of salvation was 'the group…rather than the individual', although Jewett concedes that the individual was not wholly neglected (2007: 143). The 'social function' approach to the New Testament, exemplified in scholars such as Meeks, also offers a slightly different approach than those of the social-scientific theorists just mentioned, although with much the same aim, namely to apply studies in 'social history [as] an antidote to the abstractions of the history of ideas and to the subjective individualism of existentialist hermeneutics' (2003: 2). Looking for explanations of previous 'individualist' readings of Paul, Campbell maintains that a philosophical—and more specifically, political-philosophical—rationale (namely post-Cartesian philosophy and modern liberal political thought in the tradition of John Locke and John Stuart Mill) is responsible for shifting the focus in the modern period of Pauline interpretation onto the individual's salvation through individual acts of mere belief (2009: *passim*, but see esp. 295-309). Even Engberg-Pedersen, who is perceived by some to have revived elements of Bultmann's individualistic interpretation, emphatically maintains that the goal of Paul's ethical exhortation is community formation of such a type that the individual completely disappears from view (2000: *passim*). While Engberg-Pedersen allows for certain elements of individual concern in Paul, he is thoroughly in line with the other approaches described above (going even further, in fact) in arguing—based on parallels with Stoic thought—that for Paul 'experience of Christ as seen in the Christ event lifts the individual out of his or her individuality, leaves it behind and carries him or her over to a state of communality' (2000: 294). Arguments such as these have made their way into more popularly written works on Paul as well. Consider a recent undergraduate textbook which claims that in the Roman world of Paul's time, 'individualists…were social pariahs bent on destroying themselves and their communities' (Capes, Reeves and Richards 2007; see also Gorman 2004: 2-3). An often related contention among scholars who approach Paul this way is that the 'honour–shame' dynamics of the first-century Mediterranean world are wholly focused on inter-personal relations and entail a group-based, rather than individually-oriented, creation of personal identity (e.g. Malina 2001: *passim*).

Whatever the reasons, a large number of readers of Paul in both critical and confessional traditions are agreed that individually-oriented concerns by and large find little basis in Paul and are more of a late modern fabrication than themes arising organically

out of Paul's letters. Many of the scholars surveyed in this section will in fact admit that Paul is not wholly unconcerned with the individual in one sense or another. However, such admissions do little to mitigate the widespread scholarly dismissal of any important function for the individual in shaping Paul's understanding of human identity.

However, a minority dissenting opinion does exist among other scholars working in the field of Christian origins. For example, Downing believes that 'the east Mediterranean of late antiquity is as interested in producing socially performed and socially reinforced individuality as is (for good or ill) the social production of adults in North Atlantic countries today' (2000b: 52). Downing argues that literary constructions of 'the self' in ancient writings such as parental desire to see children develop in their emotional capabilities, the encouragement of children to express themselves in their school exercises, and the asserting of one's own desires in romantic relationships represent parallels with modern concerns for personal identity and expression (on the ancient pedigree of autobiographies and the concern of at least some authors [e.g. Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius] with personal identity and the 'inner life' see Momigliano 1985: esp. 89-91; cf. Misch 1998, although Misch believes Augustine is the first autobiographer to place such a strong focus on the inner life of the soul). The key point in Downing's description of earliest Christianity in its Mediterranean context is that individuality is not an alien concept, even though he states that such individuality must of course be understood in its social dimensions. Downing also questions ways in which honour–shame relations in Mediterranean antiquity have been used by an increasing number of scholars to interpret the New Testament in a completely communal fashion (2000a). Although painting in broad brushstrokes, Burnett (2001: 30-55) helpfully surveys a large amount of scholarship on Greco-Roman literature roughly contemporary with Paul noting that 'there is considerable unease amongst many classical scholars with the idea of the ancient self as possessing little individuality in any sense that we would recognize' (2001: 55; cf. Brakke, Satlow and Wietzman 2005: 4). Instead the 'literature of the period is seen as revealing self-conscious, self-reflecting individuals who were able to take control of their own desires, who demonstrated internal moral and ethical reflection, and, indeed, could often be said to be *individualistic*, by following their own personal interests, rather than that of the common good' (Burnett 2001: 55; emphasis original).

Burnett's review of recent classical scholarship on the question of individualism in the first century highlights an area of study that has been receiving renewed attention in Pauline scholarship over the last couple of decades: the desire to understand Paul in his Hellenistic context (on recent research in this field see e.g. Gill 2002; Lüdemann 2002: 61-81, 95-114). However, despite the increasing attention being paid to this area of research, on the question of individualism and community, New Testament scholars could benefit from taking into account the work of scholars outside of the fields of Christian origins and New Testament studies. While this kind of comparative work happens on a regular basis in New Testament scholarship in general, it appears that on the question of the individual and community, the conclusions of scholars not working primarily on early Christianity appear to be at odds with those of New Testament scholars.

As an example, the question of the individual and the community is treated in numerous works of recent scholarship on Stoicism. Prominent scholars of Hellenistic philosophy such as Long, for example, maintain that while Stoicism did have an important

social element, the ethical outlook of a Stoic philosopher of the calibre and importance of Epictetus 'looks as if it could be a policy for a wholly self-absorbed life, keeping clear of anything that might jeopardize one's individual tranquility' even arguing that in 'a certain respect that impression is correct' (2002: 114). Long does not argue that Epictetus' ethics is thus cut off from communal concern, but he does show how a strong desire to maintain one's individual well-being is a necessary presupposition for proper communal living in Stoic thought. Thus, Long does not see a tension between the primacy of the individual and the importance of the community, even though he does feel the need to defend Stoicism from the charge of being *wholly* individualistic. As was just noted, nuanced positions such as this, that recognize the importance of 'individualism' in Hellenistic philosophy, are more common in scholarship that is not primarily concerned to bring such philosophy into conversation with the New Testament (e.g. Nussbaum 1994; Reydams-Schils 2005 [esp. chapter 1]), although, again, some New Testament scholars have recently come to similar conclusions (e.g. Malherbe 1996: 138; Downing 2000b: 58-60; Chester 2003: 73 n. 82). It would seem that the results of the scholarship focused on ancient Hellenistic philosophy quite sharply contradict the exclusive 'communalism' of many recent social-scientific approaches to Paul. It at least seems possible that one's own predilection for individualism or communalism in *Paul* may be pushing Pauline scholars to skew the non-New Testament first-century evidence. Continuing debate over the existence of the individual in Paul's day will have to take into account more than simply modern anthropological and sociological studies, noting the diversity of ways of constructing individuality in the ancient world, especially in the extant philosophical, historical and autobiographical writings of antiquity.

Recent Pauline scholarship—largely in reaction to Bultmann—has placed the emphasis dramatically on external aspects of Paul's thought and world, and by and large dismissed anything that sounds like a 'psychological' analysis of the apostle. In this way it has again taken the focus off of the individual. For example, a very large number of recent interpreters of Romans 7 have opted for a decidedly non-autobiographical reading of the chapter in favour of approaches that see Paul giving an 'objective' or 'external' account of human life lived in the flesh, or alternatively, of Israel's existence under the law. In recent literature, an autobiographical approach is often ruled out of court as an anachronistic 'pyschologizing' and 'individualizing' of Paul's comprehensively communal theology and a denial of his 'robust conscience' in favour of a morbidly introspective one (e.g. Sanders 1991: 49; Wright 2002: 552-55; Jewett 2007: 441-42; D. Campbell 2009: 140-41; Kümmel 1974 largely laid the groundwork for such reevaluations of Romans 7; Stendahl 1976a did the same for Paul's theology as a whole). Recently, however, the question of Paul's psychology has been re-opened by some scholars who, while recognizing the potential for unwarranted psychologizing, have maintained much fruit can be borne by looking afresh at psychological aspects of Paul's thought (e.g. Theissen 1987; Segal 1990, esp. 285-300; Berger 2003). Similarly, the freedom with which Paul speaks autobiographically in his letters in order to urge his converts to imitate him in living out the gospel is the subject of a dissertation by Lyons (1985; cf. Fiore 1986; Sterling 2002: 324). According to Lyons, Pauline autobiography points to Paul's fairly extensively developed sense of self, and rules out the notion that Paul conceived of his identity in purely social terms. This comes out clearly in the numerous places where Paul talks

about himself and how God is at work in his life, for example when he holds himself up as a model for attaining glory through suffering (e.g. the hardship lists as in 2 Cor. 4.8-9 [on which see Segal 1990: 6; Sterling 2002: 327-28]). These approaches have in common the claim that Paul's sense of personal vocation and personal identity is not out of place in the first century CE.

We have seen that there are numerous disputes in modern scholarship on how to conceptualize 'the individual' in the Greco-Roman society of Paul's day, or whether that is even an appropriate task when examining the first century. What about community in 'Hellenism'? To begin with, Barton (1992), and more briefly Samra (2006: 28-32), survey recent scholarship on the question of community in early Christianity, touching on the relationship of the New Testament to Hellenistic socio-communal organizations and ideas. These histories of research are also relevant for studies of the New Testament in light of the communal dimension of the Old Testament and Early Judaism.

One of the most important places to turn in an examination of community in non-Jewish sources is the Hellenistic philosophical-ethical tradition (for an overview of the ways in which the 'paraenetic practices' of Hellenistic moral philosophy relate to the 'formation of individuals and communities' in the New Testament, see Sterling 2002: 321-37). Epicureanism is often mentioned in this regard, because out of the various philosophical schools, it was the only one that actually formed developed communities, although little is known about the actual shape these communities took (on this see Sterling 2002: 320). Alternatively, Stoicism, because it tended 'to remain at the abstract level' and to think 'more in terms of an international community than of real associations of people in specific places' (Banks 1980: 190), did not form into actual communities. Nonetheless, Engberg-Pedersen argues that Stoicism, because it built on an Aristotelian political foundation, was communal through and through (2000: 74-78), although even he admits that 'whereas Paul's work resulted in actual communities being set up, the thought of the various Stoics did not, at least not in the same way' (2000: 37). Similarly, Malherbe describes the Cynics as having 'a certain community of interests' but of failing to form into actual communities due to the strongly individualistic element inherent in Cynic teaching (1983: 14; see also Sterling 2002: 320). Because of the failure of the philosophical schools to form real communities, and because of Paul's own defining theological presuppositions it is just as likely that points of dissimilarity will be fruitful for Pauline interpreters as will be areas where there is some resemblance with the apostle's thought.

Ancient philosophical and political writings on the body offer another specific point of interest for inquiries into individuality and community in Paul. For example, Martin has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the 'body' in Hellenistic philosophical-ethical works as it relates to understanding Paul's use of body language in 1 Corinthians (1995; cf. Lee 2006). While his study is not devoted specifically to individual identity, it does attempt to shed light on the ways in which community was conceptualized at the time, as well as highlighting the importance of Paul's use of the body metaphor to describe 'individuality-within-plurality' in the church.

On the religious front, Davies, highlighting what he sees as the 'social aspect' of Paul's doctrine of participation in Christ and his body, contrasts this sharply with the mystery cults of antiquity which, because they imbibed of the 'individualism of the age' only 'offered to the solitary [individual] an experience of apparent deification but not of

real brotherhood' (1970: 90, citing Bevan 1923: 105-106; cf. Maccoby 1991: 54-89, esp. 79; on Hellensitic religions contemporary with early Christianity in general see Klauck 2003). While the mystery cults have received extensive scholarly treatment since the rise of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school, several scholars have more recently hinted at their significance for understanding whether the mindset behind various religious expressions contemporaneous with Paul was individually or communally oriented. Further work may yield interesting results in this area in comparison with Paul.

A final category worth mentioning is that of Roman associations and clubs. Ascough has recently provided a published version of his meticulously researched dissertation on associations in Macedonia to argue that such voluntary associations would have served as 'ready analogies' for Paul's own teaching on the church (2003: 3, and the literature cited throughout; see also 1998). Although Ascough sees strong parallels between Paul's churches and Greco-Roman clubs, further research could explore the ways in which individuals fit into such organizations, and how this compares with the place of the individual within the church in Paul's letters.

The Individual and Community in the Old Testament and Early Judaism

Burnett (2001: 68-85) again provides a helpful survey of research on the place of the individual and community in the Old Testament and Early Judaism, concluding that 'in the post-exilic period, there does seem to be an increased sense of the importance of the individual in Judaism, with personal piety, more interior forms of worship and an internalized Jewish Law important factors in the lives of ordinary Jewish people' (2001: 85). Whether or not Burnett is correct, he provides a bibliographic entry point into this discussion that should be consulted.

Given Paul's understanding of his gospel as the fulfilment of Old Testament hopes for the redemption of God's people (Rom. 1.1-2; 3.21; 4.23-24; 1 Cor. 15.3; etc.) the Old Testament is absolutely foundational for determining Paul's conception of individuality (or lack thereof). In this regard, the covenant concept (in both the Old Testament and formative Judaism) has come to dominate how many Pauline scholars see individuality and community in Paul. For example, Wright argues that the covenantal connotations of 'salvation' language in the Old Testament would have invariably led first-century Jews to understand Paul's own language of salvation in communal, rather than individual, terms (1992: 334). Interestingly, Wright (1992: 337) appeals to 1QS 11.1-15 as a representative Jewish text to validate his argument, which is a passage from the Dead Sea Scrolls that Bassler highlights for precisely the opposite reason, namely because of its individually-oriented view of salvation and election (2007: 54-55).

Although Sanders is seen by many to have paved the way for the complete rejection of the classically 'individualistic' Pauline interpretation of Western Christendom, he in fact recognizes (unlike some who have followed him) that although they conceived of salvation differently, '*both Judaism and Paul take full account of the individual and the group*' (1977: 547, emphasis original; cited in Horton 2007: 46). For Sanders it is illegitimate to pit communal and individual salvation against one another in the Jewish sources, even though elsewhere he reacts quite strongly against the 'individualistic' readings of Paul that he thinks can be traced back to the Reformation (see e.g. 1991: 49).

A recent work by Hagedorn on the place of the individual and society in Deuteronomy and ancient Greek law examines some recent critiques of social-scientific approaches that make 'essentialist' claims about peoples living in a region as large and diverse as 'the Mediterranean world', as well as concerns that have been voiced about imposing undifferentiated categories of honour and shame, dyadic personality, etc. onto the text of the Old Testament (2004: 39-52). Hagedorn nonetheless employs these categories (which he calls the 'core values of the Mediterranean') in an argument for the general subordination of the individual to the 'collectivist' mindset of the Old Testament (see 2004: 108-71, 280-81).

For Kee, 'one of the most striking features of religion in the Hellenistic period is that participation was a voluntary matter' and thus individualistic at its core (1980: 82). Partly for this reason, the New Testament and Pauline 'concept of the covenant community seems to have exercised a peculiar appeal in the first century of the church's existence' (1980: 92-93). Kee's argument is essentially the opposite of those scholars who see the atmosphere of the first century as one of communalism. In fact, if Kee is correct, then the most striking feature of Pauline communalism is precisely how awkwardly it fits into the pervasive individualism of the day.

Thiselton also points readers to the Old Testament for what he sees as the obvious background to Paul's communal thought (2009: 101). Although many of the scholars cited above have insisted on situating Paul in the wider context of the first-century Hellenistic and Roman worlds, Thiselton recognizes that Paul's upbringing, heritage and scriptural awareness make the Old Testament the most essential component of his thought in this regard. Particularly important are the ways in which Paul takes the language of Israel in the Old Testament and incorporates believing Gentiles into an expansive people of God. In a similar vein, Fee thinks that the 'focus on salvation in an individualistic way', that to his mind characterizes much Protestant Pauline exegesis and theology, 'is due to a presuppositional emphasis on discontinuity between the two covenants' that fails to grasp the profound sense Paul has of the one covenant people of God crossing the testamental boundary (2007: 484-85).

Using the Old Testament background differently, Bauckham notes the ways in which the Psalms (especially the lament Psalms) are often written from the perspective of an individual sufferer, but one who suffers as a representative of Israel taking her trials and pains upon himself (2008: 260-61). Similar motifs of representation are central to the message of both the Gospels and Paul, the latter of which can be seen in Romans 4–5, 1 Corinthians 15, etc. Perhaps a passage such as Rom. 5.12-21 is a perfect example of this type of 'corporate representation' (Adam and Christ), yet is one that still has expressly individual implications (the receiving of the 'gift of righteousness' in Rom. 5.17, etc.).

Related to the question of representation is that of 'corporate solidarity'. Robinson (1981) made it fashionable in biblical scholarship to speak of 'corporate personality' as the controlling category for understanding the way Israelites saw themselves and their place in the world. Structures such as family and nation were what gave shape to Israelite identity, rather than self-awareness or individual consciousness. Although this view has been largely abandoned in scholarship, the notion still is appealed to from time to time in scholarly works and commentaries. Recent works (recognizing problems in Robinson's approach) have nonetheless urged exegetes to give due heed to corporate

elements in the Old Testament such as covenant solidarity and corporate responsibility (e.g. Kaminsky 1995). Similarly, Thiselton, combining aspects of the apocalyptic Paul and postmodern insights into the interrelatedness of the powers and influences at work on various communities, believes that 'corporate solidarity' is a suitable and necessary category for interpreting Paul (2009: 79-81). Some older scholarship (e.g. Schweitzer 1931; Best 1955) also picked up on the ideas of covenantal representation and solidarity in the Old Testament, but without appeal to the anthropological theories that Robinson employed and that have received so much criticism. Best's approach insists that in Pauline teaching 'it is impossible to conceive of a Christian who is not a member of the Church' and that 'individual Christians consequently do not exist', although he then goes on to say that in the church 'true individuality is fully realized' (1955: 190). Best thus articulates one way to bring together the individual and community in Paul without diminishing the importance of either.

Numerous questions related to the place of the individual and community in the first century need further attention: What conceptions of the self exist in that world? Are these notions at all similar to modern constructions of the self? Does Hellenistic ethics and politics completely subsume individuality into community? How appropriate is it to lay an honour–shame grid over the entire New Testament? For that matter, is an honour–shame culture necessarily anti-individualist? Does the covenantal context of the Old Testament and Early Judaism mitigate a strong sense of individual identity? An extensive amount of work needs to be done to answer these and related questions in detail (Burnett's survey [2001: 23-90] of such issues is helpful, but necessarily lacking in detail). For example, there is a need for studies devoted to individual books of the Old and New Testaments, as well as individual figures, schools of thought and institutions from the first-century world (both Jewish and Hellenistic). Finally, exegetes would be remiss if they neglected the vitally important place that the Old Testament plays in shaping Paul's vision of individual and communal identity, whatever conclusions they may come to on this issue.

Salvation and Justification: Communal or Individual?

The conclusions reached by scholars about individuality and community in the ancient world are routinely employed to buttress exegetical conclusions about the function of the individual and community in Paul's teaching on salvation. In fact, this is the most obvious and important area where the debate over the individual and the community surfaces in Pauline scholarship. Justification is the primary issue examined here since this topic has received the most scholarly attention, but three other matters related to salvation in Paul will also be grouped under this heading (sin, faith and election).

Sin. Before getting into Paul's view of salvation, we must briefly glance at his understanding of humanity's plight, a topic like many others that has been taken in individual and communal directions recently. Many of those who elevate Paul's apocalyptic theology to the centre of his thought (see below for how this impacts Paul's teaching on justification) insist that the apostle primarily conceives of sin as an enslaving power, rather than as individual transgressions of God's will or law. For Martyn, Paul's teaching on salvation, then, is about freedom from slavery, rather than forgiveness of sins. Just as sin

is epochal and cosmic, rather than timeless and personal, so is God's way of dealing with sin communal, rather than individualistic (Martyn 2004: 97). In this way of thinking, individual wrongdoing either is not in view at all, or is so insignificant in light of the battle of the ages that Paul did not feel the need to elaborate upon it. Beker (1980: 213-24) is willing to grant that Paul does view sin in personal terms, although he, like Martyn, also believes that the primary thrust of Paul's talk of sin is communal and cosmic. Käsemann's argument for the centrality of cosmology over anthropology in Paul serves as an important precursor for this downplaying of the personal dimension of sin in later scholarship (see e.g. Käsemann 1971c: 26, 31; 1980: 159). Carter (2002) comes to similar conclusions as to the non-individual nature of sin by employing modern anthropological models to analyze Paul's letters.

Thiselton, employing elements of various postmodern philosophical thinkers, takes a similar, but slightly different, tack. He maintains that 'sin is not primarily a series of acts performed by an individual' but is 'concerned with the *corporate* or *communal* state of humanity, and its alienation from God and from one another caused by misdirected desire' (2009: 75, emphasis original). Thus, Thiselton brings out the systemic dynamics of sin, yet without denying that what he deems a less important strand of Pauline teaching does conceive of sin as missing the mark of moral perfection through individual transgressions (2009: 75).

Classic defences of sin as personal wrongdoing are so numerous as to hardly need citation (see e.g. Schreiner 2001: 103-10). The work of scholars such as Käsemann and Martyn on the cosmic dimensions of sin have made it such that most recent scholarship now freely admits this aspect of Pauline teaching, even if many scholars (e.g. Schreiner 2001: 127-40) do not feel the need to pit individual and communal facets of sin against each other.

If sin has come to be seen as communal by many, even more scholars have come to accept the idea that Paul's *solution* to this problem is corporate in nature. In the next three sections I will examine the three main ways in which the individual has been set against the community in scholarly reconstructions of Paul's teaching on justification, followed by a section detailing recent responses to this scholarly dichotomy.

Anthropology vs. Salvation-History. Stendahl's advocacy of the primacy of salvation-historical over anthropological concerns in Paul's understanding of justification is probably the most influential post-Käsemannian argument of this variety (1976a; cf. also in this regard a slightly earlier precursor in Munck 1959). In this article Stendahl laments that the 'traditional Western way of reading Pauline letters' that looks at them as 'documents of human consciousness', rather than narrowly contingent expressions aimed at local concerns, has greatly obscured the meaning of Paul's message, both in its ancient context, and in its modern significance (1976a: 79). For Stendahl, beginning with Augustine and moving forward into classical Protestant interpretations, 'Pauline thought about the Law and Justification was applied in a consistent and grand style to a more general and timeless human problem', namely that of the guilt-ridden individual before a holy God. Such readings do injustice to the most pressing concern of the apostle, namely that of showing how Christ's advent has made the old covenant obsolete as a means of forgiveness, thus making the law's function in separating Jews and Gentiles obsolete (1976a: 85). Thus, Paul's

salvation-historical concerns, if not completely doing away with a concern for the individual, at the very least greatly marginalize this element of Paul's thinking.

This type of salvation-historical denigration of the individual has influenced many. Two examples show how this trend has developed after Stendahl. First, Sanders's portrayal of Paul's theology picks up on the notion of his contrasting the 'dispensations' of law and grace (as historical epochs in God's plan), rather than seeing his theology centred on 'a general failing, self-righteousness' of which 'all living Jews' in Paul's day were guilty (1991: 120). For Sanders, Paul's law/grace dichotomy is 'about the Jews as a whole and God's promise to the people of Israel' rather than 'the self-righteousness of some individuals' (1991: 120). Second, Campbell insists (without wholly adopting Stendahl's model) that the salvation-historical approach is completely antithetical to a model of justification of individuals through faith (see 2005: 49). For him, an understanding of justification as being about freedom from punishment due to sin cannot in any way be reconciled with an approach that is sensitive to the purely historical—and thus unrepeatable—dynamics of the transition between law and grace.

However, not all scholars who have operated with a salvation-historical model have dismissed the individual in Paul out of hand. Schreiner, taking a more traditional position, argues against salvation history being used to denigrate anthropological concerns in Paul's doctrine of justification without denying that the issue of the salvation-historical transition between the old and new covenants is vitally important for Paul's theological outlook (Schreiner 2001: 118). Earlier in the twentieth century Ridderbos wrote a comprehensive treatment of Paul's theology that includes a strong emphasis on the progression of redemptive history and the corporate implications of Paul's theology without dismissing the importance of the individual or the anthropological dimensions of justification (1975). Ridderbos is able to hold these two aspects in harmony, for example, by arguing that the centre of Paul's theology should not be isolated in 'one particular soteriological aspect [such as] justification by faith or…victory over the flesh through the Spirit', but is to be found 'in the eschatological or redemptive-historical starting point of Paul's proclamation' (1975: 44), while at the same time recognizing that justification by faith importantly also has to do with the righteousness that individuals '[require] in order to go free in the divine judgment' (1975: 163).

The dichotomy between the individual and community has been strongly furthered by the acceptance by many scholars of a form of Stendahl's salvation-historical argument. The central question facing interpreters here is whether, as Campbell (2005: 49) contends, salvation history is incompatible with individual soteriology.

Anthropology vs. Ecclesiology. Closely related to the salvation-historical argument against anthropological priority in justification is the ecclesiological one. This way of thinking sees the primary issue at stake in Paul's justification language to be the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the one people of God, rather than the question of individual guilt before the bar of divine judgment. This line of thinking has become increasingly common in recent years, but has precedent in the work of scholars such as Davies, who urges with regard to Paul's emphasis on the new humanity in Christ that 'Paul knows nothing of solitary salvation; to be "in Christ" is not for him the mystic flight of the alone to the alone' (1970: 86). Stating things in stronger terms, Davies insists in a more recent article that

'Paul's doctrine of justification by faith was not solely and not primarily orientated toward the individual but to the interpretation of the people of God. The justified man was "in Christ", which is a communal concept' (1999: 716; cited in Bird 2007: 119).

Nonetheless, even in Davies's earlier book he moderates his insistence on the primacy of the ecclesiological, admitting that no matter how important the 'horizontal' concerns of Pauline teaching are, 'there was another problem with which Paul was even more painfully concerned, that of his personal relation to God, the vertical problem' and that this 'enables us to concentrate on the intensely personal or individual and inward implications of that acceptance of Christ by Paul which led to peace with God' (1970: 86).

Similarly, Dahl, who like Davies slightly precedes the increasing adoption of an essentially ecclesiocentric understanding of justification by those associated with the New Perspective on Paul, writes that justification is 'more than a dogmatic doctrine or an answer to the question of how the individual is to find a gracious God… [and] that this doctrine not only concerns the individual and his relation to God but is also of importance for the common life of Christians' (1977: 95-96). Dahl argues that justification's chief function is 'to remind all members of the congregation of what God has done for them and with them in Jesus Christ' and thus is communal at its core (1977: 104-105). These questions, rather than those of personal piety, or even Paul's polemics in relation to Jewish demands for law-observance, are what drive Pauline teaching on justification (see also Barth 1968; for a discussion of other important precursors to the New Perspective's emphasis on the social dimensions of justification over against the individual see Watson 2007: 4-6).

While neither Davies nor Dahl denies a place to individual dynamics in Paul's doctrine of justification, some who have followed in their footsteps have, or at least have pointed strongly in this direction. For example, Sanders states baldly that 'Luther's problems were not Paul's, and we misunderstand him if we see him through Luther's eyes' since Paul, rather than caring in the least about 'individualism and introspection', was passionately focused on the way in which the Torah prevented Gentiles from becoming Christians on equal terms with law-observant Jews (1991: 49). Hays, following in a similar trajectory, maintains that since justification is 'God's act of claiming and vindicating a covenant community…[it] precludes the individualistic error of treating justification as the believer's personal experience of forgiveness and deliverance from a subjective sense of guilt' (1992: 1132). The notes of moderation in Davies and Dahl are absent in Hays's argument that justification is simply God's declaration of who is included in the full membership of his people (1992: 1131). In a different article Hays contends that the 'fundamental problem with which Paul is wrestling in Romans is not how a person may find acceptance with God; the problem is to work out an understanding of the relationship in Christ between Jews and Gentiles' (2005a: 69). On this same question Wright states matters even more starkly than Hays: 'there is no such thing as an "individual" Christian. Paul's gospel created a community; his doctrine of justification sustained it' (1997: 158; cf. 2005: 120). Wright also believes that 'the old route of putting justification, in its traditional meaning, at the centre of your theology… [is] always…in danger of sustaining some sort of individualism' (1997: 157). Wright's own dissertation (as well as an article developing some of its main concerns) in many regards paved the way for the increasing stream of articles and books that followed, and which

took a more stridently anti-individual stance, seeing Paul's chief concern to lie instead on the boundaries of the people of God (1978; 1980; cf. Westerholm 2004: 182-83). A more moderating tone has been recently struck by Gorman, who, although he argues that Paul's 'good news was not a private message of personal salvation', also maintains that 'it included the salvation of individuals' (2008: 41; cf. 2004: 110, 126-27). Similarly, Dunn professes the desire to merely 'remind those interested that there is *also* a social and ethnic dimension to Paul's own understanding and expression of the gospel', without denying the importance of 'such intensely personal passages as Rom. 5.1-5 and Gal. 2.19-20' (2007: 30). Attempting to take a middle ground between classically Protestant and 'revisionist' readings of Paul, Bird recently framed his own approach similarly to Dunn's; for him the question of covenant membership is intrinsically bound up with the question of justification and forgiveness of sins. The salvation of sinners is critically important, yet the inclusion of Gentiles into God's people is not subordinate to this concern (Bird 2007: esp. 113-54). Nonetheless, there appears to be a widespread stalemate on this front between those committed to more traditional readings (on which, see more below), and those committed to post-New Perspective anti-individualism. While some (like Gorman) are more moderate in their assertions, the rhetoric of absolute antithesis between social (ecclesial) and individual dimensions of justification is dominant in large segments of Pauline scholarship.

The debate initiated by Stendahl (1976a; 1976b: 7-23) over whether Paul was called or converted also touches on the question of the primacy of ecclesiology versus anthropology. Stendahl's argument that Paul's Damascus road experience consists simply in a calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (thus being ecclesially centred) discounts the notion that Paul experienced an individual conversion, as has been understood traditionally. Again, Stendahl's denial of any significant function for individual conversion in Paul's life or theology has been widely accepted (e.g. recently by Campbell 2009: 137-66; cf. 172-76; Taylor 1995), although prior to his article many scholars saw no tension between conversion and call with regard to Paul's experience or teaching (see e.g. Bornkamm 1971). More recently, however, some scholars have begun to voice varying levels of dissent from, and criticism of, the dichotomy put forth in Stendahl's article. For example, Gaventa dismisses the notion that call is the only appropriate category for describing Paul's experience: 'The term "call" describes one aspect of Paul's change from persecutor to apostle', but 'does not do justice to the several motifs used by Paul' to explain the radical transformation that came about when he was confronted with the 'revelation of Jesus as the Messiah' (1986: 40; cf. Segal 1990; both cited by Matlock 2008: 3). Matlock, in a recent paper, captures the tone of these recent challenges to the post-Stendahl consensus well: 'After all, Paul experienced a radical reversal that is hardly captured by the term "call"—he did a complete about-face, a full one-hundred-and-eighty degrees, changing from persecutor to apostle, and in the process changing religious communities, if not religions… Talk of Paul's "conversion", suitably qualified, has thus been largely rehabilitated' (2008: 3). Chester's dissertation on the subject of conversion in Paul refuses to set call and conversion in antithesis, and sees important individual *and* communal dimensions in Paul's 'theology of conversion', as well as in 'conversion' (religious or otherwise) in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day more generally (2003: esp. 6-12).

Does a concern in Paul for the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church negate a concern for individuals and their status before God? Is there anything inherent in arguments for reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Christ that demands an antithesis between anthropology and ecclesiology? If pressed, even some of the most strenuously anti-individual voices surveyed above (Hays, Wright, etc.) might answer both of these questions in the negative, yet the volume and nature of their expressions of anti-individualism can hardly fail to create the strong impression of total antithesis.

Anthropology vs. Apocalyptic. Käsemann's influence in modern debates over the place of the individual or community in justification is seen most directly in the rise of the 'apocalyptic Paul' as a specific scholarly focus (deriving most obviously from Käsemann 1969a), although Schweitzer is an important precursor to Käsemann's 'retrieval' of the eschatological Paul and the resultant denigration of anthropology this has brought about. For Schweitzer, Paul's focus on mystical union with Christ made redemption 'a collective, cosmically-conditioned event' rather than the 'individualistic and uncosmic' view of Christ-redemption put forward in the traditional understanding of justification by faith (1931: 219; for a mediating position, contemporary with Schweitzer, on the eschatological shaping of individual *and* communal identity in Paul see Vos 1994). Schweitzer's participatory model of redemption in Christ has also been taken up by many in service against anthropology and personal soteriology. Sanders adapts it to argue that Paul was unconcerned with 'juristic' themes, and thus with individual forgiveness and salvation (1977; esp. 502-508; cf. 463-72; see also Powers 2001; Campbell 2005: esp. 56-68; Tannehill 2007; Campbell 2009: 935).

The recent literature on the subject of Paul and apocalyptic is vast (see the surveys in Hanson 1992; Collins 1992; Matlock 1996) but for my purposes what matters is the way in which this scholarly quest has treated the function of individuals and community in the apostle's letters. Most of those writing on Paul's apocalyptic theology bring to the fore the cosmic battle between the old and new ages that comes out most clearly in letters such as Galatians, where Paul 'is concerned to offer an interpretation of Jesus' death that is oriented not toward personal guilt and forgiveness, but rather toward corporate enslavement and liberation' (Martyn 2004: 101; see also 1997). Harinck adopts views like those of Käsemann and Martyn when he states that 'Paul's primary concerns, precisely in the language of justification, are cosmic and social more than inner and individual. The approach to justification through Paul's "cosmological apocalyptic eschatology"…demonstrates this' (2003: 59). Stubbs, in a recent article (2008), puts forward the thesis that although the apocalyptic reading of Paul has become dominant in biblical scholarship and has essentially displaced all anthropologically-directed readings, it has not been sufficiently incorporated more broadly into theological scholarship. Stubbs boldly argues that 'given a reading of Paul in which "the faithfulness of Christ" is linked with an apocalyptic invasion of Jesus Christ into the world in which we participate, traditional Protestant notions of justification, apocalypse, election, politics, ethics and the church's relationship to culture must be renegotiated' (2008: 157). Apocalyptic—on these readings—is about realms of power, not about individual turmoil or guilt, or really, the individual at all.

Some, however, working with similar convictions about Paul's apocalyptic thought have found warrant in both Jewish and Pauline apocalyptic for Käsemann's cosmological argument for the dominance of 'powers' in Paul *and* for Bultmann's emphasis on the individual (see e.g. De Boer 1989: 180-82). For example, De Boer (1989: 175-77) points specifically to the final scene of judgment as one of recompense for the evil works of individuals and for their rejection of God, although only with the caveat that even this anthropological element in Paul 'is cosmic in scope' and 'is theocentric not anthropocentric' (1989: 181).

An important subset of debates over Paul's apocalyptic theology has centred on what he means by the phrase 'the righteousness of God' (see Jewett 2007: 141-48, for a recent discussion of this vast subject, as well as bibliography). Like the apocalyptic readings of Paul in general, this debate receives its primary impetus from Käsemann (particularly 1969b), and has important ramifications for how one thinks about the individual and community in Paul. Käsemann's research into Paul's eschatological background lead him to postulate that the righteousness of God 'reveals itself as saving power, and this remains the basis, force, and truth of justification—a truth which transcends the individual and is directed toward a new world' (1980: 93). Bultmann responded to Käsemann's work with a neo-Reformational insistence that 'the gift of δικ. θεοῦ [*dik. Theou*; 'righteousness of God'] is naturally grounded in the action of God, but δικ. [*dik.* 'righteousness'] does not signify the action as such, but rather its result' (1964: 14, my translation), which is 'the righteousness from God which is conferred upon [the believer] as a gift by God's free grace alone' (Bultmann 2007: 285; cf. Conzelmann 1968).

Almost overwhelmingly, the same dichotomy pitting the individual versus the community that predominates in Pauline studies generally is alive and well with regard to the question of the meaning of the righteousness of God. The vast majority of Pauline scholars have sided with Käsemann on this issue, which has resulted in the communal dimension of Paul's thought becoming dominant in such scholarship. For example, Beker maintains that the righteousness of God 'transcends the category of acquittal and personal relationship because it points to that order of cosmic peace (*shalōm*) and salvation (*sōtēria*) that has been proleptically manifested in Christ' (1984: 264). Fitzmyer similarly denies the appropriateness of calling the righteousness of God a gift anywhere in Romans. Instead, agreeing with Käsemann, Fitzmyer believes that the phrase must be understood as 'stressing the power character' of God's redemptive act in Christ (1992: 262). 'I regard it as an increasingly firm conclusion' opines Wright in equally anti-individualist fashion 'that Paul's other uses of the phrase (all in Romans) treat θεοῦ [*theou*; 'of God'] as referring to a δικαιοσύνη [*dikaiosunē*; 'righteousness'] that is God's own, rather than a δικαιοσύνη [*dikaiosunē*; 'righteousness'] that he gives, reckons, imparts, or imputes to human beings' (1993: 200-201). Wright's 'covenantal' appropriation of Käsemann's basic insight leaves little—if any—room for a doctrine of justification focused on the individual *in any substantial way*. Campbell's comparably anti-individual claim that the righteousness of God is about the relationship 'between God and the gospel in the context of the cosmos, not that between the gospel and the individual' has recently been taken over and developed in a dissertation by Southall (2008). Jewett goes even further than most in maintaining that Paul's apocalyptic context demands a non-individualized reading of his letters

and that any reading of the righteousness of God in Paul that highlights a faith-based change in status or identity is the result of ill-founded 'partisan controversies' of the past that are insufficiently cognizant of 'the apocalyptic background of Paul's language or the missional setting of Romans' (2007: 141). Building on Käsemann's rhetoric of antithesis, Jewett states that the 'primary scope' of the righteousness of God in Paul 'is the group, that is, the nation and the world, rather than the individual' (2007: 143). Likewise, Hays understands interpretations of 'the righteousness of God' that are not centred *solely* on God's salvation power to entail a reversion to obsolete pietistic or fundamentalist questions of 'How can I be saved?' (2005b: 57; cf. Wright 2005: 123).

Despite the large-scale acceptance of Käsemann's position, there are those who disagree, for a variety of reasons. For example, Watson (2007: 238; emphasis original) contends (after detailed exegesis establishing Paul's connection of faith and justification) that an 'interpretation that severs the link between righteousness and faith will be plausible only to those who, on the basis of questionable dogmatic commitments *cannot* accept the faith/justification sequence that Paul's language so plainly entails' (as in Rom. 3; see also Watson 2004: 33-77). Moo (1996: 79-91, esp. 90-91), swimming against the tide of recent scholarship, treats the debate from a modern Reformational perspective, and offers an extended exegetical argument for the centrality of a soteriological (and thus individual) dimension to God's righteousness (cf. Cranfield 1975: 91-99). The conclusions one comes to on this debate have major implications for the way one sees the individual and community in Paul. While it may not be absolutely necessary to pit righteousness as gift against righteousness as divine attribute or activity, the way the debate has developed has definitely contributed to the hardening of the antithesis between the individual and the community. The furthering of this dichotomy is simply one specific outworking of the generally antithetical approach that obtains in the debates over Paul's apocalyptic theology on the whole.

A second, and related, dimension of the debate over the individual, the community and apocalyptic is that of new creation in Paul's letters. One strand of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship argued that new creation was completely focused on the new *world* that was brought into being through the redemptive work of Christ (on which see Hubbard 2002: 4). Hubbard, however, takes these older readings to task by arguing that new creation in Paul is pointedly focused on the new creature that is brought into existence with God's saving act in Christ. Other views from the past, such as that of Vos (1994: see esp. 46-50; cf. Ridderbos 1975: 45), were able to hold the individual and cosmic/communal dimensions of new creation in harmony since they felt that the new *creature* according to Paul is also born into a realm of new *creation*, although Vos, based on passages such as 2 Cor. 5.17, did assign a certain priority to new creation since Paul envisages not the mere changing of 'subjective conditions', but rather the creation of

> a totally new environment, or, more accurately speaking, a totally new world, in which the person spoken of is an inhabitant and participator. It is not in the first place the interiority of the subject that has undergone the change, although that, of course, is not to be excluded. The whole surrounding world has assumed a new aspect and complexion (1994: 47).

That is to say, a 'comprehensive range of renewal stands before' Paul's mind, as evidenced by his designation of the object of new creation renewal in 2 Cor. 1.18 as 'all things'

(1994: 47-48). More recently, Gaffin, developing the insights of Vos and Ridderbos, insists that 'the deliverance in view is certainly personal and individual but also plainly has corporate and comprehensive, even cosmic or "aeonic" dimensions' (2006: 27-28). While Hubbard willingly admits that the entire 'biblical story, from beginning to end, can rightly be described as an epic of *new creation*' (2002: 1, emphasis original; cf. Gorman 2004: 128-29)—even though he sees the actual meaning of the phrase καινὴ κτίσις (*kainē ktisis*; 'new creature/creation') as referring to the individual believer—he worries that the scholarly focus on apocalyptic and related backgrounds for Paul's thought is leading to a widespread dismissal of any sort of soteriological and individual dimension to new creation (cf. 2002: 4-5, 233-41). In light of the ability of many to place individual renewal within a context of cosmic re-creation, should the antithesis between individual and communal aspects of new creation continue? Or is this simply yet another place where the individual and community must remain at odds?

Finally, one last debate (derivative of apocalyptic readings in many ways) revolves around the increasing scholarly treatment of Paul's supposedly anti-imperial and/or political theology. This time an antithesis has been constructed pitting anthropology against politics. Anticipated by Käsemann, many 'political' interpreters have begun to read Paul as anti-individual precisely because they sense that his concern lies wholly elsewhere, namely in the realm of heavenly and satanic powers and principalities, and their earthly counterparts in imperial and monarchical regimes. Gorman, as he does with salvation language in Paul, attempts to mediate between views that pit politics and salvation against each other, while affirming the strongly extra-individual and political overtones of Paul's gospel rhetoric: 'For Paul, of course, the gospel is a personal word… But for Paul the gospel, though personal, is not private. It is the announcement of God's good news for all humanity, for all creation. A theopolitical announcement hardly lends itself to a merely private religious experience' (2004: 110; similarly see Wright 2000: 172-73). Others, however, such as Horsley (e.g. 2004: 1-6), see politics completely swallowing up any concern at all with 'individualistic' notions such as personal sin and salvation. Unsurprisingly by now, I believe it is worth asking whether deeply personal and individual Christian experience is in any way antithetical to the potential 'political' ramifications of Paul's gospel. Can these two dimensions be held in harmony, or must the antithesis remain?

The Return of Anthropology. Are there voices arguing against the dominant anti-individual strand of recent Pauline scholarship on the question of justification? Prior to Käsemann, Stendahl and Sanders, fewer scholars felt the need to place individual and communal dimensions of justification in *absolute* antithesis, even if there were already murmurings against what were perceived to be excessively individualistic readings in previous scholars (cf. Davies 1970: esp. 86-110). However, as we have seen, this scholarly triad (along with others, but less dramatically) unleashed a torrent of anti-individual interpretations of justification in Paul.

Nonetheless, many are attempting to swing the pendulum back in the other direction. Although there have always been scholarly voices echoing the Reformational priority of the justification of the individual through faith, the major difference with recent responses to anti-individual readings of Paul is their greater willingness to admit that there are important communal facets to Paul's theology. For example, Gathercole, in the midst of a defence of a broadly Reformational reading of justification in Paul, urges

careful attention to the 'covenantal context' of righteousness in Paul, although he—unlike many others—does not push this in an anti-individual direction (see 2006: 236-37; cf. Westerholm 2004: 443-45). Gathercole's treatment of justification is a good example of one committed both to classic Reformational readings of Paul, but also to careful exegesis in dialogue with recent scholarship, including that of the more anti-individual interpreters. Gathercole (and many like him) desires to reintroduce individual soteriology (atonement, forgiveness of sins, etc.) into discussions of Paul's theology, noting that such concerns have been too hastily dismissed in recent literature (2006: 232, 240; cf. Schreiner 2001: 193-94; Gathercole 2002; Moo 2004: 188, 216; Westerholm 2004: 440-45). However, Gathercole believes this must be done without neglecting the important 'ecclesial' dimensions of justification which for Paul facilitate 'the articulation of the truth that all come into the church having been accepted by God on the same basis, that of faith' (2006: 231, 239-40; cf. Schreiner 2001: 121; Moo 2004: 188; Hubbard 2002: 233; Horton 2007: 55-64). Similarly, Burnett views 'Paul's Roman gospel [as having] a primary application to the individual', although he seeks 'a balance of approach' that does full justice to the individual in the context of community (2001: 18-19). Attempting to provide a middle ground between 'revisionist' and 'Reformational' readings, Bird's recent books on Paul (2007; 2009) likewise seek to resist a dichotomy between individual and communal facets of justification. Interestingly, Maccoby—a Jewish scholar—eschews the nuance of the more individually-oriented interpreters just noted in his insistence that Paul's doctrine of salvation—unlike the Judaism he left—was *exclusively* individualistic (1991).

Ultimately, scholars like Gathercole, Horton, Moo, Schreiner, Westerholm and Burnett should not be dismissed lightly simply because their conclusions happen to sit harmoniously with more traditional readings of Paul, as if such scholars are in some way 'particularly hidebound to tradition' (Gathercole 2006: 223; Bird falls into this kind of rhetoric quite strongly at points; cf. 2007: 190-92). Their exegesis should be allowed to stand on its own merit, without being ruled out of court *a priori* because of its Reformational flavour. That being said, those who seek to reintroduce anthropology and personal soteriology into discussions of Paul—without neglecting communal dimensions—have work to do with regard to showing *how* such notions can be integrated into a compelling synthesis.

Faith: Communal or Personal? The classic Christian idea that faith—like sin and justification—has primary, if not exclusive, relevance for the individual has also come under scrutiny of late. A recent exegetical defence of the traditional position is Gathercole, who states that since 'justification is inextricably tied to faith, which is the act whereby the individual trusts in God's promise', 'the doctrine of justification in Paul is quite individualistic'. He believes that this 'is not something of which Pauline interpreters should be ashamed' (2006: 240).

However, many would disagree. Campbell's recent book on justification in Paul (2009: see esp. 927-29; but also 384-92), for example, attacks what he sees as traditional Protestant depictions of faith language in Paul where 'isolated individuals' struggling for salvation in a pre-conversion state are the primary concern. Instead he argues that faith 'is not separable from relationality' (2009: 927). By this he means that in Paul, knowledge

of Christ and the gospel 'is not relayed independently of [believers'] incorporation into a broader relationship', namely 'their incorporation *into* Christ by the Spirit' (2009: 927, emphasis original). Faith in Paul is about loyalty and faithfulness to both God and those within the 'faithful' community rather than about individual belief (2009: 929). Campbell's book is a massive attempt to deconstruct the entire Western Christian tradition of teaching on justification through the means of personal faith, something he sees as harmful in its individualistic and morbidly introspective tendencies. In fact, the idea that justification is through *individual belief in Christ* is the single unifying error that Campbell sees lurking behind a vast tangle of presently intractable (but only prior to the writing of Campbell's book; 2009: cf. 933-36) exegetical and theological problems in modern Pauline scholarship (2009: 3-8).

Jewett's Romans commentary approaches Paul from a similar angle as Campbell in seeing faith as being primarily the language of community formation and edification, rather than of individual salvation. Jewett's comment on Rom. 1.17 is representative:

> The individual believer in the modern sense was not in view by Paul, even though the formulation from Habakkuk encourages an individualistic construal for the modern hearer. Moreover, the question of life should be understood as a matter of living together in faith communities rather than in the traditional theological sense of gaining eternal life on an individualistic basis. The proper question to be posed on the basis of Paul's argument in Romans is not, 'Are you [sg.] saved?' but, 'Are you all living together righteously in faith communities?' (2007: 146)

Taking a synthesizing approach, Hay's recent article on faith in Paul contends that faith is 'the mode by which Christians participate in Christ' which has 'both individual and corporate dimensions' (2006: 46; cf. Gaffin 2006: 42-43). Hay seeks to do justice to what he sees as the intimately personal facets of faith, but only as these are set in the context of participation in Christ and his body, the church (cf. 2006: 52). In distinction from his own approach, Hay points to several important twentieth-century German works (Neugebauer 1961; Binder 1968; Von Dobbeler 1987) that (like Campbell and Jewett) argue strongly against 'individualist' interpretation of faith, noting that they are all written 'especially against Bultmann' (2006: 61 n. 47). In contrast, Hay believes that Paul's use of 'I' language in reference to faith (e.g. Gal. 2.20 and Phil. 3.7-16), as well as his use of figures such as Abraham (in Rom. 4) as models of personal trust in God, militates against neglecting faith's individual dimensions. However, Hay is also wary of Bultmannian 'decisionist' readings that subordinate the apocalyptic setting of Pauline literature to introspective questions of self-doubt or temptation (2006: 61-63).

Although the entire debate over the faith or faithfulness of Christ is beyond the scope of this essay (see Bird and Sprinkle 2010 for a very recent treatment of a wide range of issues in this debate, as well as the current state of the question), many of the exegetical and theological issues that surface in that debate have an important bearing on the question of individuals and community in Paul. Just two examples illustrate how this is so: Hay, who sees personal faith in Christ as an important part of the faith concept in Paul, believes that no matter what conclusions are reached in the 'faith of Christ' debate overall, 'it should be kept in mind that most of Paul's 161 uses of [faith] terms pertain to the faith or faithfulness of church members, to whom he quite often refers simply as οἱ πιστεύοντες

[*hoi pisteuontes*; 'those who believe']' (2006: 75). On the other hand, arguing strongly for the 'faith/faithfulness of Christ' reading, Campbell, following Hays (2001), believes that only such an interpretation can preserve the radically christocentric nature of Paul's theology where the gospel story of Christ's obedience to God must remain primary over against any human activity or initiative (see 2009: 612-13). The side one takes in the 'faith of Christ' debate does not require one to completely isolate either individual or communal dimensions of faith. As Hay's position shows, it is possible to understand faith in both its individual and communal facets. More work could be done to flesh out the ways in which this dynamic interplay might function in key Pauline texts.

Election: Individual or Corporate? Finally, the Pauline language of election has been analysed from both individual and communal vantage points. The Reformational view of divine election as pertaining to individuals has come under fire by many in the latter half of the twentieth century. Barth dismisses such a reading (of Rom. 9, to pick one important text as an example) for taking the focus off of God's 'free, regal, sovereign, unbounded and incomprehensible' nature and placing it instead on a 'quantitative limitation of God's action' (1933: 346-47); in other words, interpretations centred on the scope of divine election do not do justice to Paul because they focus on anthropology rather than theology. Similarly, Cranfield, in a critique of older Calvinist positions, sees Paul's language of election in Romans 9 as referring to the earthly destinies of the peoples descended from Jacob and Esau rather than the eternal fate of individuals (1979: 479). More recently, Dunn (1988: 567-68) sidesteps the issue of individual election entirely by arguing that Paul's concern lies elsewhere, namely with Israel's destiny in light of God's seeming covenant abandonment.

It is safe to say that current scholarly readings of election in Paul are decidedly slanted against understanding election anywhere in the apostle's letters as referring to the destiny of individuals (see Schreiner 2000: 98-99). However, Schreiner (2000; and see the response to Schreiner by Abasciano 2006), pointing especially to the notion of an elect remnant in Rom. 9.6-13, has written an article addressing these challenges to older Reformational readings of election. He argues in favour of individual election falling within the scope of Paul's discussion in Romans 9, although he also recognizes the presence and importance of corporate dimensions to election. Although this debate may be closed in the minds of many, a comprehensive treatment of the subject at the dissertation level—specifically limited to the question of individual and corporate election—would be very beneficial, at least for those willing to re-consider whether or not the individual and community must remain antithetical in Paul's theology.

Conclusion

By now it should have become clear how intertwined the issue of the individual and the community is within a wide range of other important topics in Pauline interpretation. As was noted in the introduction, the individual and community issue is often touched upon in scholarship, but rarely thought of as a subject worthy of extensive investigation in its own right. If this article has gone even a little way towards remedying that situation it will have achieved an important part of its purpose.

But more than that, many areas that need special attention have been delineated. An especially important, and wide-open area of research, is related to the first major section of this article, whether it is appropriate to speak of individuals in the various localities, writings, philosophies, etc. of the first-century world, and if so, what kind of individuals emerge. Questions have begun to emerge, for example, with regard to the ability of generalizing social-scientific models such as 'dyadic personality' to describe the extremely diverse (ethnically, geographically, politically, religiously, etc.) groups of people living in the Mediterranean basin in antiquity (e.g. Downing 2000b; on the diversity of conceptions of 'the self' in the religions of antiquity see Brakke, Satlow and Wietzman 2005: 3, and *passim*). It is particularly noteworthy that scholars in many disparate fields studying the Hellenistic world of antiquity are not nearly as dismissive of the idea of individuality in the Mediterranean world of Paul's day as are some of those within New Testament studies.

A type of modern, primarily Western, individualism is often blamed for the inability of older scholarship to do justice to the communal dynamics of Pauline theology (e.g. Esler 1994: 24; Malina 2001: 62; Thiselton 2009: 81, 149-52). Others place the blame further back (e.g. Stendahl 1976a, blaming Augustine and Luther; but see the important response to Stendahl's understanding of Luther in Chester 2006). Thus, historical scrutiny of the modern philosophical, cultural, political, etc., influences that have helped set up the dichotomy between the individual and community in biblical scholarship would definitely be valuable to Pauline interpreters (an important starting point for such a study is found in works such as Taylor 1989; see also Vanhoozer 1997, a very helpful essay that analyses similar trends from a theological perspective).

Work also needs to be done to articulate more carefully the meaning of the words individual and individualistic, since they are used repeatedly by Pauline specialists to argue for or against important aspects of Pauline teaching. If we speak of the individual in Paul must we mean the modern, Western individual (à la Putnam 2001)? What about the individual of ancient autobiography? The individual of Torah (cf. Lev. 18.5)? The individual of Hellenistic philosophy? Many writers actually seem to recognize that the individual and the community are both important in Paul, but in reaction to *contemporary* individualism often speak in more strongly antithetical terms than would otherwise be the case. Could it be that polemics against the presence of the modern individual in Paul's letters are misplaced when they are generalized into statements about the total lack of individuality anywhere in Paul or the ancient world?

Furthermore, if the individual is indeed an important category in the first century, is there any reason to continue speaking in antithetical terms about the individual and the community? Is it not possible to integrate both elements into one's understanding of Paul? In all of the issues surveyed above, the interpreter is faced with the question of whether the rhetoric of antithesis yields the most fruitful results in dealing adequately with the full range of Pauline thought.

The same methodological clarity is needed with regard to the words 'community' and 'communal' as well. As has been discussed above, anti-individual interpretations of Paul can be variously labelled salvation-historical, ecclesial, apocalyptic, cosmic, communal or political. These construals can read Paul in light of modern anthropology, sociology, linguistic constructivism, studies of power dynamics, and the like. Is the scholarly designation

'communal' meant simply to be a cipher for an other-directed focus, or does it mean something else entirely? I believe that concreteness is called for here: actually existing communities (whether OT Israel, Qumran, Epicurean enclaves, Pauline house-churches, etc.) with authoritative organizational structures and procedures for policing their boundaries should be the focus of enquiry. Vague appeals to the mere *presence* in Paul of a concern for community as if this constitutes an argument against individuality will not do. Since there are so many construals of Pauline theology that seek to elevate the community to the position of priority, we need to know what we are talking about when we say Paul is a communal rather than individualistic thinker. This is not self-evident in recent scholarship.

The caveat given in the introduction to this article is worth repeating: for the most part we are dealing with *trajectories* when looking at how scholars have treated the individual and the community in Paul. That is to say, even the most anti-individual of interpreters (sometimes grudgingly) admits the presence of individually-focused themes in Paul. Yet it is often the case that the force of the anti-individualist readings ends up making these admissions nearly irrelevant. On the other side, it is all too easy for those who are reacting against the perceived one-sidedness of communal interpretations of Paul to ignore this critically important dimension of the apostle's theology, or at least to leave it sitting awkwardly on the periphery of their readings of Paul.

If this article has seemed one-sided in focusing so much attention on interpreters who have read Paul primarily in communal terms, it is, and necessarily so, since that has been the dominant interpretive stance since Käsemann. However, my own view is that the antithetical construct pitting the individual and community against each other is extremely unhelpful and cannot hope to do justice to many important texts and issues in Paul's letters. So while I have had to write mostly about anti-individual interpretations, I have also attempted to provide some resources and avenues for future research for interested readers who are willing to reopen this question and to look at it with fresh eyes. In the end, I hope that scholars can begin to see the interplay and integration in Paul of the individual and community on such important topics as justification, new creation, election, sin, faith and other related topics.

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