THE RHETORIC OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH
IN ROMANS 4

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Contents

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Μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν
— Rom 16:27

Abbreviations

Primary Sources

1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Bar.	2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)
2 Macc	1 Maccabees
4 Macc	4 Maccabees
4QFlor	Florilegium
4QpGen	Pesher Genesis
Apoc. Ab.	Apocalypse of Abraham
Abr.	Philo, *De Abrahamo*
Add Esth	Additions to Esther
Ag. Ap.	Josephus, *Against Apion*
Alex.	Plutarch, *Alexander*
Amic.	Cicero, *De amicitia*
Ann.	Tacitus, *Annales*
Ant.	Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*
Ath. pol.	Aristotle, *Athēnaiōn politeia*
Bar	Baruch
Ben.	Seneca, *De beneficiis*
Bib. hist.	Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*
Cal.	Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula*
Cat.	Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document
Claud.	Suetonius, *Divus Claudius*
Clem.	Seneca, *De clementia*
Eloc.	Demetrius, *De elocutione*
Ep.	Libanius, *Epistulae*; Martial, *Epigrammata*; Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*; Seneca, *Epistulae morales*
Ex. con.	Seneca the Elder, *Excerpta controversiae*
Fam.	Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*

Frat. amor.	Plutarch, *De fraterno amore*
Gen. an.	Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*
Geogr.	Strabo, *Geographica*
Hist.	Herodotus, *Historiae*; Tacitus, *Historiae*
Hist. rom.	Dio Cassius, *Historia romana*
Inst.	Justinian, *Institutiones*
Inst. orat.	Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*
Inv.	Cicero, *De inventione rhetorica*
Jos. Asen.	Joseph and Asenath
Jub.	Jubilees
Jul.	Suetonius, *Divus Julius*
Jusj.	Hippocrates, *Jus jurandum* (Ὅρκος)
Legat.	Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*
Let. Aris.	Letter of Aristeas
LXX	Septuagint
Men.	Plautus, *Menaechmi*
Menex.	Plato, *Menexenus*
Mos.	Philo, *De vita Mosis*
MT	Masoretic Text
Nat.	Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*
Nat. d.	Cicero, *De natura deorum*
Off.	Cicero, *De officiis*
P.Col.	Westermann, W. L., et al., eds. *Columbia Papyri*. 11 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1929–1954; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979–1998
Pol.	Aristotle, *Politica*
Prog.	Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Rhet.	Aristotle, *Rhetorica*
Rhet. Her.	Rhetorica ad Herennium
Rhod.	Dio Chrysostom, *Rhodiaca* (*Or.* 31)
Sat.	Juvenal, *Satirae*
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
Sir	Sirach
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Reu.	Testament of Reuben
Tib.	Suetonius, *Tiberius*
Tob	Tobit
Top.	Cicero, *Topica*

Virt.	Philo, *De virtutibus*
War	Josephus, *Jewish War*
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

Secondary Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANRW	Temporini, Hildegard, and Wolfgang Haase, eds. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Part 2, *Principat*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–
APOT	Charles, R. H. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913
ASMA	Aarhus Studies in Mediterranean Antiquity
ASORDS	American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BDAG	Walter, Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, and Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Berytus	*Berytus: Archaeological Studies*
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie

BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BMI	The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CCT	Classics and Contemporary Thought
CKLR	*Chicago-Kent Law Review*
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
CovQ	*Covenant Quarterly*
CR	*Classical Review*
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
ERAW	Edinburgh Readings on the Ancient World
ERS	*Ethnic and Racial Studies*
ERSP	*European Review of Social Psychology*
ESV	English Standard Version
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
ExpTim	*The Expository Times*
FAB	Frankfurter Althistorische Beiträge
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
HThKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HvTSt	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*. Editio Minor. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1924–
IJPS	*International Journal of Philosophical Studies*
Int	*Interpretation*

JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNSAS	Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
MAAR	*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*
MT	Masoretic Text
MTZ	*Münchener theologische Zeitschrift*
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	NovT Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
Numen	Numen Book Series
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OCM	Oxford Classical Monographs
OTP	Charlesworth, James H., ed. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985
Paideia	Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament
PR	*Philosophy and Rhetoric*
QJS	*Quarterly Journal of Speech*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study

RIG	Michel, Charles. *Recueil des Inscriptions Grecques.* Brussels: Lamertin, 1900. Repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1976.
RRA	Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SCJR	*Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum.* Amsterdam: Gieben, 1923–
SIG	Dittenberger, Wilhelm. *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum.* 3rd ed. 4 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–1924
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SP	Sacra Pagina
SR	Social Research
SRI	Sociorhetorical Interpretation
StPatr	*Studia Patristisca*
StudNeot	Studia Neotestamentica
SymS	Symposium Series
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrif*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World

WSC	*Western Speech Communication*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

Romans 4 treats important themes such as righteousness by faith and the fatherhood of Abraham for Judean Christians and gentile Christians. Thus, interpreters and those interested in Christian theology have rightly engaged this passage when discussing important topics such as salvation history and the nature of the Christian faith.[1] This passage has also been fertile ground for discussing the so-called New Perspective that has become a "reigning paradigm that … controls contemporary discussion on Paul" and other related themes.[2] Moving the discussion forward, how-

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1. See, for example, the involved argument between Ulrich Wilckens and Günter Klein, in which Wilckens insists that Paul advocates the continuity of salvation history in Rom 4: Ulrich Wilckens, "Die Rechtfertigung Abrahams nach Römer 4," in *Studien zur Theologie der Alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen: Festschrift für Gerhard von Rad*, ed. Rolf Rendtorff and Klaus Koch (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 111–27; Günter Klein, "Römer 4 und die Idee der Heilsgeschichte," *EvT* 23 (1963): 424–47; Wilckens, "Zu Römer 3,21–4,25: Antwort an G. Klein," *EvT* 24 (1964): 586–610; Klein, "Exegetische Probleme in Römer 3,21–4,25: Antwort an Ulrich Wilckens," *EvT* 24 (1964): 676–83. Leonhard Goppelt interprets Rom 4 as supporting salvation history from the perspective of typology. See Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 137. Klaus Berger takes a mediating position. See Berger, "Abraham in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen," *MTZ* 17 (1966): 47–89. See also the discussion in Halvor Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans*, NovTSup 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 103–5 and the bibliographic references to scholars (including Ernst Käsemann, Rudolf Bultmann, E. P. Sanders, Peter Stuhlmacher, etc.) who have discussed Rom 4 for various theological interests.

2. Quote from D. A. Carson, introduction to *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1. For the New Perspective, see, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of*

ever, is difficult, as scholars have yet to come to an agreement on the intent of the passage, and without it, there is no common platform to discuss the significance of the details in this passage for theological issues.[3] Understanding the rhetoric of Rom 4 can help clarify the details and intent of this passage.

Romans 4 also deals extensively with the relationship between Judean and gentile Christians. The term *Judean* is used intentionally in this study. The Greek noun that Paul uses, Ἰουδαῖοι, has been traditionally translated "Jews," the adjective form being "Jewish." As I will explain in detail in chapter 3, Ἰουδαῖοι is primarily a geographical designation, not a religious one; consequently, I and many other scholars prefer the terms *Judeans* and *Judean* to *Jews* and *Jewish*.[4] Because Romans 4 addresses the relationship between Judean and gentile Christians, it has an important "social function" in mediating ethnic issues that are straining the relationship between these two groups.[5] Its social function is accentuated by the fact that it is the first chapter (apart from a brief section in 3:29–30) that addresses, in some length, Judean and gentile Christians as one people (under the father-

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Patterns of Religion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 489–91; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 227; Richard B. Hays, "'Have We Found Abraham to Be Our Forefather according to the Flesh?' A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1," *NovT* 27 (1985): 76–98.

3. For examples of how different construals of the intent of Rom 4 affect the interpretation of details pertaining to the New Perspective, see N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Romans*, vol. 3 of *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, SBLSymS 23 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 40–41; Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Rom 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 233–36.

4. While some scholars use *gentiles* with an uppercase G (e.g., Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 113, 117, passim), the group gentiles does not denote an ethnic entity, so it appears in this work with a lowercase g. Although Terence L. Donaldson uses an uppercase G with the word, his comments corroborate my point that gentiles are not an ethnic group: "Left to their own devices and self-definitions, Phrygians, Parthians or Bithynians would no more describe themselves as ἔθνη than they would as βάρβαροι. In each case the term is one imposed by others—Jews in one case, Greeks in the other." See Donaldson, "'Gentile Christianity' as a Category in the Study of Christian Origins," *HTR* 106 (2013): 451–52. Stanley K. Stowers also uses a lowercase g in *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 83, 84, passim.

5. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 139.

hood of Abraham). Paul seeks to alleviate the tension in the relationship between Judean and gentile Christians by way of the rhetoric of Rom 4.

Therefore, by investigating and better understanding the rhetoric of Abraham's faith in Rom 4, this book seeks to advance theological discussions and also to understand better how this chapter alleviates the dissension between Judean and gentile Christians in Romans. I shall now provide a literature review of the state of research with regard to the rhetoric of Rom 4 as well as social and cultural studies that shed light onto the meaning of this chapter.

2. Literature Review

Romans 4 is a piece of rhetoric written by Paul to persuade a specific audience, in this case, the Roman Christian audience. This act of communication is only recognizable when read in light of "specific, material and ideological contexts" that involve social and cultural contexts.[6] In other words, the social and cultural contexts that give rise to ideological and persuasive power in Romans need to be investigated. What follows below reviews the state of research on the purpose of persuasion—that is, the rhetorical goal—of Rom 4 and major social and cultural studies done on Rom 4.

2.1. Purpose of Persuasion

Traditionally, this text has been understood as a polemic against righteousness by deeds.[7] Since Abraham is regarded as the model par excellence of obedience to the law of Moses, Paul's interpretation, which shows that

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6. J. David Hester (Amador), *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament*, JSNTSup 174 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 19–20, following Mikhail Bakhtin. See Pam Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov* (London: Arnold, 1994), 26–37. Mikhail M. Bakhtin comments that language must be understood in "all its ideological spheres," as this involves the process of "sociopolitical and cultural centralization." See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 271.

7. E.g., C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–1979), 1:224–25; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 105; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 255.

Abraham was made righteous by faith, constitutes a strong polemic against righteousness by means of the Mosaic law.[8] This seems, prima facie, to be the intent, considering that the theme of righteousness by faith is a thread that runs through the chapter. Recently, however, this interpretation has been called into question by proponents of the New Perspective. They claim that Judaism, like Christianity, advocates salvation by grace. Hence, Paul's polemic is not leveled at some form of legalism. Paul's contention, rather, was with the Judeans' perceived privileged ethnic status. Thus, New Perspective scholars argue that Rom 4 revolves around Abraham as the father of Judean and gentile Christians.[9] What follows elaborates on the two views.

2.1.1. Romans 4 as Rhetoric to Establish Righteousness by Faith

The view that the rhetoric of Rom 4 attempts to establish righteousness by faith has several variations. Ernst Käsemann understands the primary purpose of Rom 4 as providing scriptural proof for the thesis in 3:21–26, which is elaborated in 3:27–31, that righteousness comes by faith. This thesis, as Paul explains in Rom 4, is supported by "God's direction of salvation history … as it is documented in the OT."[10] Käsemann further elaborates that Paul chooses Abraham because of "the Jewish tradition which closely connects

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8. Judeans contemporary with Paul often present Abraham as a model for the devout Judean. E.g., in Jub. 16:25–28, Abraham is said to have obeyed the law although it had yet to be written; see also Jub. 24:11: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thy father obeyed My voice, and kept My charge and My commandments, and My laws, and My ordinances, and My covenant; and now obey My voice and dwell in this land" (*APOT*). Similarly, see Bar 57:1–2; CD 3:2.

9. Thus, "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" (Hays, "Have We Found Abraham," 84). See also Michael Cranford, "Abraham in Romans 4: The Father of All Who Believe," *NTS* 41 (1995): 71–88; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 45–63. Thomas Schreiner subscribes to this view but does not support the New Perspective. See Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 209–11; more recently, see John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 481.

10. Käsemann interprets Abraham as "the prototype of faith" (*Commentary on Romans*, 91, cf. 127). See also Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM, 1971), 79–101. Similarly, Wilckens interprets Abraham as beginning "election history" ("Die Rechtfertigung Abrahams," 10). Käsemann, however, argues against Wilckens that Paul does not advocate an unbroken continuity in salvation history that "could fit into the theological formula of promise and fulfillment" (*Perspectives on Paul*, 87).

the covenants with Abraham and Moses."[11] Like Käsemann, Brendan Byrne also regards Abraham in Rom 4 as a scriptural proof of righteousness by faith and sees Abraham being depicted as part of salvation history in Rom 4.[12] He, however, sees Rom 4 as a response to a narrower preceding context, namely, 3:21–22. C. E. B. Cranfield thinks that Rom 4 substantiates the first part of 3:27—that no one has a right to boast. This is achieved by establishing that Abraham has "no right to glory."[13] Paul, as Cranfield understands him, selects Abraham primarily because he is regarded by the Judeans as a model of one who attained righteousness by deeds.[14] In the same vein, Joseph A. Fitzmyer interprets Rom 4 primarily as "an illustration of 3:27" but adds that Rom 4 also responds to 3:31.[15] Douglas J. Moo argues that Paul seeks in Rom 4 to elaborate the key theme of righteousness by faith, as found in 3:27–31, and to draw out its implications, especially that of the "full inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God."[16] Paul's choice of Abraham stems from several reasons: his pivotal role in the formation of the people of Israel, his position as an exemplar of torah obedience and faith, and his pivotal position in the history of salvation.[17]

Scholars who take the position that Paul in Rom 4 seeks to establish righteousness by faith generally provide first a minimal discussion of how

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11. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 105. Scholars who regard Abraham as part of salvation history include Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 257, n. 8; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 371.

12. Brendan Byrne does not use the term "salvation history." He implies it, however, when he says that Abraham's "ancestral role continues in a truly representative way … for his descendants," including "the glorious Israel of the messianic age," and is "a definition of God's eschatological people." See Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 141–42.

13. Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 1:224; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 369–71.

14. Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 1:227. See also, Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 256; Byrne, *Romans*, 142; Jewett, *Romans*, 308–9. Contra Hans Conzelmann, who thinks Abraham is chosen as a random example. See Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1969), 169, 190.

15. See also Thomas C. Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law*, SBLDS 55 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

16. Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 243, quote at 257; Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, ed. John Riches, trans. James C. G. Greig, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 118. Heinrich Schlier thinks that Rom 4 proves the thesis of 3:28. See Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, HThKNT 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 121.

17. Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 256–57.

Rom 4 continues the preceding argument before proceeding to demonstrate the logic of Rom 4 based on their preferred position. It is difficult, however, to decide on the correct view from their discussions, as they do not substantiate their positions with sufficient proof. Neither have they interacted sufficiently with the other major position that Rom 4 is a demonstration of Abraham's fatherhood of Judean and gentile Christians.

2.1.2. Romans 4 as Rhetoric to Show That Abraham Is Father of Judean and Gentile Christians

Richard B. Hays claims that Rom 4 attempts to demonstrate that Abraham is the father of Judean and gentile Christians alike. To do this, Hays takes Ἀβραάμ ("Abraham") as the direct object of εὑρηκέναι ("to have found") and its subject, the "we" of ἐροῦμεν ("we shall say"). He then translates 4:1 as follows: "What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham (to be) our forefather according to the flesh?"[18] Most scholars reject this reading, as it is not usual to leave the accusative subject of the infinitive unexpressed.[19] Hays, however, argues that this translation coheres with the preceding and following discussions.[20] James D. G. Dunn disagrees because it weakens the more immediate link between 4:1 and 4:2–8.[21] In response, Michael Cranford asserts that 4:1–3 emphasizes the basis by which righteousness is associated with Abraham and his descendants, and hence supports the theme of Abraham's fatherhood.[22] Similarly, Thomas Schreiner adds that Rom 4 defends the fatherhood of Abraham by confirming the double themes of 3:27–31—righteousness is by faith, and everyone receives it in the same manner.[23]

Hays represents a serious attempt to bolster the position that Rom 4 focuses on Abraham's fatherhood of Judean and gentile Christians. Scholars who subscribe to this position, however, have not explained adequately

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18. Hays, "Have We Found Abraham," 92, quote at 81.

19. See, e.g., Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 199; Thomas H. Tobin, "What Shall We Say Abraham Found? The Controversy behind Romans 4," *HTR* 88 (1995): 443; Byrne, *Romans*, 148; Schreiner, *Romans*, 213; Jewett, *Romans*, 307.

20. Hays, "Have We Found Abraham," 83–93.

21. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 199.

22. Cranford, "Abraham in Romans 4," 79. So also others, e.g., Byrne, *Romans*, 145; Schreiner, *Romans*, 213.

23. Schreiner, *Romans*, 209.

why Paul describes the content of Abraham's faith in detail and couches it in terms of death and life topoi.

2.2. Social and Cultural Studies on Romans 4

The New Testament is "comprehensible only within a larger constellation of social, economic, political, and cultural currents."[24] Most studies on the social and cultural background of Rom 4 have focused on the influence of Second Temple Judaism. Studies on how Mediterranean culture influences the rhetoric of Rom 4 are needed. The following is a survey of the state of research in this area.

2.2.1. Halvor Moxnes

Halvor Moxnes examines how honor, a value in the Mediterranean culture that "plays a crucial role in establishing a sense of worth," shapes the rhetoric of Romans.[25] Honor "is public esteem, rather than private and individualistic esteem; a culture of this type is public and group-oriented."[26] Moxnes equates righteousness with honor.[27] That honor and its counterpart, shame, play a crucial role in Romans is indicated by related vocabulary found throughout this section of Romans and by the fact that these terms "are more evenly distributed than terms for justification and righteousness."[28] In a setting constrained by this culture of honor and shame, the question arises, according to Moxnes, as to how a crucified Jesus preached by Paul could be powerful or bring honor. This causes a conflict between Judean and gentile Christians who had accepted Paul's gospel. Romans seeks to "bring believing Jews and non-Jews together in one community."[29] To do this, Paul employs "terms which had been used to emphasize the special status of the Jews."[30] At the same time, he also changes the meaning of these terms by sharing "concepts for values

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24. So John H. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 9.

25. Halvor Moxnes, "Honour and Righteousness in Romans," *JSNT* 32 (1988): 77.

26. Ibid., 62.

27. Ibid., 71.

28. Ibid., 63.

29. Ibid., 64.

30. Ibid.

with his cultural context" and changing, in many instances, the content of these concepts. Paul's objective is twofold: it alleviates the conflict with the synagogues, and hence the Judean Christians, and it includes "Jews and non-Jews … among those who are made righteous."[31] At the same time, this new community of Judean and gentile Christians can function within Greco-Roman society. In alleviating the conflict with the synagogue, Paul uses two constants. First, God is the "significant other" in whom honor must be sought. Second, Paul argues in Rom 2 that such honor is given by the significant other, God, to those who obey and not to those who merely possess the law.[32] These two points continue to be discussed in Rom 3–4. This discussion on honor is brought out by the boasting of the Judeans in 3:27 and 4:2. This boasting is "linked to the law and to 'works.'"[33] In Rom 4, Paul "retains the concept of the righteous man as the honourable man."[34] According to Moxnes, Paul, however, redefines righteousness in terms of honor as "*father* of a large offspring (4:11–12, 16–18) or *heir* of the world (4:13)."[35] This righteousness is obtained neither by doing good deeds (4:2–4) or observing the Mosaic law (3:27–28; 4:13) nor through circumcision (4:9–10). It is given as a gift and is unconditional (4:13–14).[36] It is given to both Judeans and gentiles so that "this honour is awarded by the one and only 'significant other,' and it is in his eyes, 'before him' [4:2, 17]."[37]

Moxnes has ably demonstrated his major thesis that Paul, in order to reduce conflict between Judean and gentile Christians within an "honour and shame" culture, uses terms that emphasize the special status of Judeans and at the same time reconfigures them so that both Judeans and gentiles can be included as people who are honorable, that is, righteous. How terms that describe a Judean are reconfigured to alleviate the dissension between Judean and gentile Christians can be further explored. Moxnes's argument has, however, several weaknesses. First, it is doubtful that the contention between Judean and gentile Christians in Romans centers on the crucified Jesus.[38] It may be an issue in 1 Corinthians (see 1:23), but this

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31. Ibid., 64, 71.
32. Ibid., 69.
33. Ibid., 71.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., emphasis original.
36. Ibid., 72.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 64.

issue is not explicitly mentioned in Romans. Instead, Paul's gospel and the righteousness it brings are often set in opposition to the law of Moses in Romans. In other words, the controversy in Romans is not about a gospel that preaches a crucified Jesus but about one that preaches a righteousness without the help of the law of Moses.

Second, Moxnes proposes that "the righteous man is the honourable man."[39] This, however, requires a more thorough investigation to prove the equation. He runs roughshod over the argument of Rom 4 when he equates righteousness to the special statuses of Abraham as "father of a large offspring" (4:11–12, 16–18) and "heir of the world" (4:13). These statuses are the results and not the equivalents of becoming a righteous or honorable man. Such an understanding is made more unlikely by the tight nexus between righteousness and holiness in Romans. How righteousness, holiness, and honor are integrated to resolve the dissension between the "weak" and the "strong," which I shall argue to be a major problem facing the Roman Christians, needs to be investigated.[40]

2.2.2. Francis Watson

In *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, Francis Watson utilizes two sociological models to discern Paul's rhetorical strategy. The first model concerns "the transformation of a reform-movement into a sect."[41] This reform movement, while incorporating the content of the old group, also opposes some of the content that defines the old group. If this reform movement, according to Watson, manages to overcome this initial conflict with the old group, it will become a sect. The second model states that to maintain "separation from the religious group from which it originated, it will require an ideology legitimizing its state of separation."[42] In the case of Romans, Watson detects this legitimation taking the form of "denuncia-

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39. Ibid., 71.

40. See below, chapter 2, §2.6, "Conclusion."

41. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 19. Cf. Philip F. Esler, who opines that a sect is created in the intensity of opposition with the old religion. See Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*, SNTSMS 57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 20.

42. Watson (*Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 19–20) follows the lead of Esler (*Community and Gospel*, 16–18), who modifies the conceptualization of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann: when the unity and shared history with the old group is broken, "legitimation," which takes the form of explanation and justification, is needed. See

tion" in Rom 2, "antithesis" in Rom 3, and "reinterpretation" in Rom 4.[43] In employing legitimation, Paul contrasts two different views of Abraham in 4:1–8 to stress the incompatibility of membership in the Judean community with "membership in a Pauline congregation."[44] This contrast that seeks to delegitimize the circumcised, in Watson's view, is furthered in 4:9–12, where Paul seeks to communicate that righteousness is not found among the circumcised. Similarly, Watson thinks that Paul is reiterating in 4:14b–15 that "membership of the Jewish community is neither necessary nor desirable."[45] Watson concludes that in all his argument, "Paul's aim was to persuade the Jewish Christians to recognize the legitimacy of the Gentile congregation and to join with it in worship, even though this would inevitably mean a final separation from the synagogue."[46]

Watson offers a plausible application of the use of the social device of legitimation. The Achilles heel of Watson's thesis, however, is brought into sharp focus by Philip F. Esler: "If Watson is correct here, it would mean that Paul was attempting the form of recategorization that social theorists suggest is doomed to failure, namely, one that advocates the abandonment of an existing ethnic identity."[47] Furthermore, as will be demonstrated in my analysis of the argument of Rom 4, Paul appears more to be taking a mediating stance in resolving the dissension between Judean and gentile Christians than to be asking Judean Christians to abandon their ethnic identity as defined by the law of Moses.

2.2.3. Philip F. Esler

Using social-identity theory, Esler argues that Abraham is a prototype of group identity and becomes a common "superordinate" identity that unites the Judean and gentile Christians.[48] As this recategorization does not require the two subgroups to abandon their ethnic identities, it

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Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1967), 110–16.

43. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 109–22 (on denunciation), 124–35 (on antithesis), 135–42 (on reinterpretation).

44. Ibid., 140.

45. Ibid., 141.

46. Ibid., 178.

47. Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 178.

48. Ibid., 29, 190.

facilitates unity.[49] According to Esler, Paul promotes this thesis by first explaining "the origin and nature of Abraham's righteousness" (4:1–8).[50] He then demonstrates that the blessing given to Abraham falls upon both the circumcised and the uncircumcised (4:9–12).[51] Paul then proceeds to explain what Abraham's prototypical role is not and the nature of Abraham's faith (4:13–22).[52] Finally, Paul concludes that the identity established above (4:1–22) applies to "those contemporary with Paul."[53] Overall, Esler's main thesis is convincing, and it clarifies Paul's strategy in trying to unite the Judean and gentile Christians. Notwithstanding, some parts of Esler's argument could be strengthened. For instance, Esler, without providing evidence, argues that it is only at 4:9 that Paul takes up the prototypical role of the patriarch and that 4:1–8 is only foundational in that it explains "the cause and character of his [Abraham's] righteousness."[54] Also, to view 4:13–16 as demonstrating from a negative perspective what is not prototypical is not convincing, as it could be argued that 4:9–12 also performs the same function. Neither is it clear that Paul's description of Abraham's faith in 4:17–22 has its main purpose in laying down common grounds for both Judean and non-Judean audiences. Prototypicality may be one of Paul's lines of argumentation, but this needs to be demonstrated from the text. Esler also makes an important observation that Abraham was chosen as a prototype because of the "centrality of kinship in Mediterranean culture."[55] Unfortunately, he only gives passing comments on this. Esler's thesis that Abraham is a "superordinate identity" that unites Judean and gentile Christians represents a convincing attempt at using social identity theory to clarify and reinforce Paul's strategy. Esler also mentions the role of kinship that results in the choice of Abraham as a prototype. These will be used to further explore Rom 4 in this research.

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49. Ibid., 29, 177–78.
50. Ibid., 184.
51. Ibid., 188.
52. Ibid., 191–93.
53. Ibid., 193–94.
54. Ibid., 184.
55. Ibid., 190.

2.2.4. Robert Jewett

Robert Jewett, in his mammoth commentary on Romans, attempts to incorporate into the study of the letter all methods of historical analysis, including "social scientific reconstruction of the audience situation" and "historical and cultural analysis of the honor, shame, and imperial systems in the Greco-Roman world."[56] He highlights the need to interpret Romans in light of its cultural context and not approach it as "an abstract theological document such as Paul's self-confession or the defense of some modern doctrinal stance."[57] Thus, he correctly reads Rom 4 within the broader scheme of honor and shame culture. For instance, in interpreting 4:6–7, Jewett comments that Paul maintains that God accepts those who are without honor. In dealing with the division between "competitive factions," Jewett interprets the God in whom Abraham believed to be the same as "the father of Jesus Christ who accepts and honors those who have no basis for honor."[58] Jewett regards this act of God "in an honor-shame society … [as] the ultimate honor one could receive."[59] He is also culturally sensitive in translating terms like χάρις as "favor" in place of the traditional term, "grace."[60] He has, however, only given passing comments without demonstrating how such a Greco-Roman cultural system drives Paul's rhetoric forward in Rom 4. Jewett also interacts extensively with ancient sources.[61] This helps to situate Paul's rhetoric in the ancient social and cultural context. He also utilizes social scientific analysis, namely, social identity theory. For instance, he mentions the contribution of Philip F. Esler and Maria Neubrand in identifying Abraham as a "prototype of group identity" and Abraham's role in sealing the new "in-group identity."[62] In this way, Jewett argues, "whether they are Jews or Gentiles…, they are now Abraham's children and recipients of the righteousness that comes through faith alone." Like his treatment of the honor and shame culture within Rom 4, here, Jewett does not show in substantial depth how social identity theory sheds light on Abraham's role as a prototype of group identity.

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56. Jewett, *Romans*, 1.
57. Ibid., 46.
58. Ibid., 314.
59. Ibid., 340.
60. Ibid., 313.
61. Ibid., 312, 332: see his comments on 4:4, 17.
62. Ibid., 308–9, 321.

3. Thesis Statement

This book will demonstrate that Paul seeks, by the rhetoric of Rom 4,[63] to ascribe honor to gentile Christians so that Judean Christians will not claim a superior honor status over them for the reason that gentile Christians do not possess the Mosaic law, Judeans' ethnic identity marker.

Honor is ascribed to a person when God, the significant other, regards that person as righteous, that is, when the relationship between God and that person is characterized by righteousness.[64] I shall argue that in Rom 4 Paul contends that gentile Christians are considered righteous by God for a twofold reason. The first has a social basis. Paul crafts a myth of origins for gentile Christians as part of their new Christian identity. In this way, they become descendants of Abraham and so inherit the righteousness that was ascribed to him by God.

The second reason has a religious basis. Death contains religious pollution.[65] Abraham's dead body passes religious pollution onto his descendants, who are present in him in form. This religious pollution results in dead descendants. The reason why Judean and, in particular, gentile Christians can now become Abraham's descendants is because Abraham had faith (πίστις) in—or, more precisely, trusted—his patron, God, to raise to life his dead body and his dead descendants.[66]

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63. Here, the term *rhetoric* is used in the sense meant by George A. Kennedy, that is, that "quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes." See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3. In this sense, every interpreter, including those who may not have specified his analytical model, is engaged in understanding the rhetoric of a biblical text.

64. Barclay comments that the "label 'righteous' is socially attributed (i.e., dependent on the opinion of others)" (*Paul and the Gift*, 376–77). It does not refer to someone who is saved but who is worthy of receiving gifts from God, in this case, the gift of salvation. Such a notion ties in with Roman patronage where the patron would only give gifts to those he considered worthy (see Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 39; see Cicero, *Fam.* 2.6.1–2; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10.51).

65. See below, chapter 4, §3.1, "Death and Pollution."

66. From this point onwards, where appropriate, I shall translate the cognates of πιστ- as "trust" in place of the traditional rendering, "faith," as it coheres better with the usage in the Mediterranean world. As I shall later elaborate (see below, chapter 3, §3.4, "Romans 4:4–5: Deeds and Trust Are Antithetical"), in the preindustrial first-century world of the New Testament, power, property, and wealth were concentrated in the hands of two percent of the people who were the elites of the society. To obtain

This raising to life is made possible by a broker, Jesus Christ, who accomplishes two things. First, he expiates religious pollution, that is, sin. Second, his resurrection life enables gentile Christians to live an ethically righteous life before God. More precisely, they can now satisfy the righteous demand of the Mosaic law and so receive honor that is bestowed by the significant other, namely, God.

I will make use of sociorhetorical interpretation (hereafter, SRI), pioneered by Vernon K. Robbins, to understand the rhetoric of Rom 4, that is, its persuasive goal and its power to persuade. Four textures—the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture—will be investigated. The rhetorolects (rhetorical dialects) will also be discussed. The above-mentioned elements will not be discussed in turn. Rather, in order to better grasp the rhetoric in its persuasiveness, I shall, generally, discuss these elements in the course of a close reading of the text of Rom 4. Hence, the analysis of Rom 4 and its various paragraphs will proceed verse by verse. Generally, difficulties in the syntax will first be discussed. Only then can SRI be performed.

Chapter 1 will briefly explain the different elements involved in SRI. In chapter 2 I will examine the contextual framework of Rom 4. To do that, I will first ascertain the implied rhetorical situation of Romans, then discuss the preceding argument that leads into Rom 4. This will provide some understanding of the rhetorical strategy of Paul, the implied speaker, when he wrote Rom 4. Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss the rhetoric of Rom 4. Chapter 5 will then summarize how Paul's rhetoric responds to the problem of dissension between Judean and gentile Christians.

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special goods, the vast majority of the world had to ask favors of these elites. When a patron granted a favor, a long-term patron-client relationship was formed. A patron would grant favors to the client. The appropriate response of the client to the patron was to trust the patron to provide. This trust also included loyalty to the patron. Such an understanding undergirded the relationship between Abraham and God in Rom 4. Similarly, Teresa Morgan comments that "*pistis* and *fides* lexica represent what one might call reifications of trust or of the grounds of trust." See Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 6.