



Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2014.03.01

Carlos A. Segovia. *Por una interpretación no cristiana de Pablo de Tarso: El redescubrimiento contemporáneo de un judío mesiánico.* Published by Carlos A. Segovia, 2013.

Isaac W. Oliver
Bradley University, USA

I spent the academic year of 2000–2001 studying at a prominent school of theology in Argentina. During one public presentation, I was shocked to hear the dean of the school of theology, a specialist in New Testament studies, claim that the Jews had undergone the Holocaust as divine punishment for their supposed crucifixion of Jesus Christ. As a Brazilian-American Jew, whose great-grandparents perished in Auschwitz, and whose grandparents had to flee Germany during the Nazi era, I was deeply disturbed by these comments. I thought I had misunderstood the dean's Spanish. Perhaps, my Portuguese did not allow me to capture the nuances of his presentation. But when I confronted him with what is perhaps the most troubling theological depiction of God one can possibly conjure, I realized to my dismay that the dean did indeed express this view. More troubling was his refusal to recant his position. All of this at the beginning of the third millennium! Of course, this dean represents an extreme position that many Christians from Latin America would firmly reject. Nevertheless, this incident has always haunted me. It impressed on me the importance of understanding Judaism properly, appreciating the Jewish roots of Christianity, and promoting Jewish-Christian dialogue.

It was a great delight, therefore, to read Carlos Segovia's sophisticated and provocative work on Paul, written with the intention of making available to the Spanish-speaking public the most recent research integrating Paul within Second Temple Judaism. Segovia is keenly aware that such an enterprise is indispensable after the horrors of Auschwitz. On the other hand, he denies that such moral considerations distort historical inquiry, forcing it to accommodate contemporary, ecumenical concerns. He is convinced that the best historical interpretation identifies Paul as a Jew who tried to neither supersede nor even reform Judaism. In making this perspective available to the Spanish-speaking community, Segovia has done it a great service. Indeed, the study is an important academic contribution in its own right, and it merits the full attention of the international scholarly world.

Segovia gave his work the provocative title, *A non-Christian Interpretation of the Apostle to the Gentiles: Rereading Paul as a Messianic Jew*, a name that recalls Pamela Eisenbaum's

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recent book, *Paul Was Not a Christian* (2009). Indeed, Segovia places himself within the so-called “radical new perspective,” which includes a growing number of scholars who argue, in different ways, that Paul never ceased to be a Torah observant Jew. Although he sought to incorporate Gentiles into Israel’s commonwealth, he was not alienated from his native religious community or its practices. Segovia includes the following chain of distinguished scholars who embrace this new paradigm, a minority voice that seems recently to be gaining some momentum: Stendahl, Gager, Gaston, Elliot, Campbell, Stowers, Nanos, Eisenbaum, and Rudolph (xxi). But Segovia warns that the “radical new perspective” is far from being uniform or dogmatic. It refers rather to a manner of assessing Paul with new coordinates that align him closer to his historical matrix (xxi).

In the first chapter, Segovia discusses the nature of Second Temple Judaism, or, as he puts it, following scholars such as Neusner, *Judaisms* in the plural, emphasizing the diversity of Jewish expression during this period. This is probably the most important chapter for New Testament scholars, as it provides the most-up-to-date and comprehensive survey of scholarship on Second Temple Judaism currently available. Segovia engages the full spectrum of works written by Second Temple scholars, rather than relying too much on the work of Sanders or Neusner. In fact, he is critical of essentialist approaches that tend to dilute all forms of Second Temple and post-70 Judaism into the category of “covenantal nomism” (37). Instead he highlights the sectarian divisions allegedly existing within Jewish society since the early stages of the Second Temple period (41). Following Boccaccini, Sacchi, and others, Segovia energetically argues for the existence of an Enochic (or apocalyptic) strand of Judaism that was opposed to its Zadokite counterpart (see especially p. 51). Whatever one makes of this historical reconstruction, it is refreshing to see the neglected Enochic literature and other apocalyptic Jewish works being taken into serious consideration for situating Paul within Second Temple Judaism.

In ch. 2, Segovia tackles the most central problem in any treatment on Paul and Judaism, namely, Paul’s attitude toward the Torah. Segovia first discusses the various Second Temple Jewish positions on the Torah. Many ancient Jews believed in the unconditional grace of God toward Israel: regardless of their shortcomings, in the end the Jewish people would find God always faithful to God’s covenantal promises. But unlike Sanders and his followers, Segovia is willing to accept that many (apocalyptic) Jews did at least tacitly question the efficacy of the Torah, given the overwhelming invasion of evil into the world. These Jews viewed the Torah as insufficient or even inoperative for realigning human history in the proper direction (60). *1 Enoch* and the Aramaic Levi Document, in Segovia’s eyes, represent the best examples of a Jewish critique mounted against the Mosaic Torah and its (Zadokite) defenders (70). Moreover, some Jews, especially those at Qumran (see e.g., 1QS XI, 9–15), emphasized that only the administration of God’s justice, in addition to human repentance, could free one from the sins of the flesh and provide justification. The parallels between 1QS XI, 9–15 and Rom 3:21–26, for example, are striking, since Paul also emphasizes God’s justice or righteousness on behalf of all those who believe. Surprisingly, Segovia takes this evidence in an unexpected direction. He denies that the evidence from Qumran serves as a precedent for the Pauline notion of salvation by grace. For Segovia, there is little in common between Paul and the Qumranites. The Jewish sect at Qumran considered itself as the only just constituency of Israel and believed that it possessed a new covenant that would guarantee it exclusive salvation. Paul, by contrast, was

concerned with the incorporation of Gentiles into Israel. Neither the motives nor the contexts coincide, though one can find analogies between Qumranic and post-Pauline sectarianism (80). If some Jews thought the Torah was insufficient on its own for solving their predicament, Paul believed it was inadequate for addressing the eschatological incorporation of the Gentiles.

Some, however, might argue that the various perspectives expressed in *1 Enoch*, the sectarian writings from Qumran, and other apocalyptic texts like *4 Ezra*, invite one to see Paul as another Jew who believed that the present evil age and inclinations of the heart prevented *all* humans beings, be they Jewish or Gentile, from living up to the righteous standards expected by God. Indeed, it might be helpful to ponder what Paul might have thought about the Jewish failure of Israel to live up to its own calling, even if he devoted himself to serve as God's apostle to the Gentiles. What about all the passages already expressed in Ezekiel (36:26) and Jeremiah (31:33), running through *1 Enoch* (5:8–9; 91:17) and Qumran, all the way to *4 Ezra* (6:26), that look forward to the day when *Jews* would receive a new heart and no longer be led astray into transgression? Should Paul's apocalypticism be reduced merely to the eschatological expectation of the inclusion of the Gentiles qua Gentiles as equals to Jews? Or did Paul, like some of the Second Temple evidence Segovia brings to the forefront suggests, believe that both Jew and Gentile stood in need of a redemption brought through the same mediator? Dan Olson's insights on the *Animal Apocalypse* and Paul might be worth considering here (his work has also been reviewed by RES). In his latest translation of the *Animal Apocalypse (A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch: "All Nations Shall Be Blessed"* [Brill, 2013]), Olson highlights the value of comparing Jewish-Gentile relations and the future of Israel in the *Animal Apocalypse* with Paul. In the *Animal Apocalypse*, humanity eventually undergoes an eschatological and moral transformation, symbolized by the change of all wild animals into white cattle. I disagree with Olson that *all* humans, Jew and Gentile, become white cattle, so that the *Animal Apocalypse* "suggests that God's ultimate purpose in human history is not to glorify the nation of Israel but to abolish all nationalities entirely" (242). Only the *wild animals* (i.e., Gentiles), in my judgment, become white cattle in this Enochic allegory. Nevertheless, some of the sheep (i.e., Jews) are described in the end of times as being white with thick and pure wool (*1 En.* 90:32). It seems that the *Animal Apocalypse* recognizes that Jews also stand in need of a moral purification, akin to yet different from Gentile transformation at the end of time. Many sheep, after all, are sinners like the Gentiles (*1 En.* 90:26). Jews, in general, might not be as sinful as Gentiles (cf. Gal 2:15), or, to put it in the idiom of the *Animal Apocalypse*, they are not "wild" like non-Jews. Yet many of them still stand in need of a (moral) purification, which can be brought about only through God's justice and mercy.

All of this to say that the Jewish evidence from the Second Temple period can be taken in a different direction than Segovia's analysis. One can maintain a thoroughly Jewish Paul who did believe Jews as well as Gentiles stood in need of some kind of remediation through Christ, precisely because, in view of the cosmic invasion of evil, the power of sin, and the wickedness of the heart, the Torah was not adequate enough to address Israel's plight. According to *4 Ezra*, only a few within Israel, it would seem, would be saved (6:25; 7:47, 60), and even *1 Enoch* occasionally employs language suggesting the existence of an "Israel within Israel" (e.g., *1 En.* 93:10). Paul's "sectarianism" might be closer to Qumran and other apocalyptic circles than first thought. Certainly, the "violent" language about God's imminent wrath (1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; 5:3, 9; 1 Cor 7:26, 29, 31, etc.) and vengeance (1 Thess 4:6) as well as the exclusive references to

“children of light” vs. “children of darkness” (1 Thess 5:4–5) suggest that Paul continued to be intolerant in a certain way even after joining the movement he previously persecuted. We can never forget the great cultural chasm that separates Paul from the contemporary worldviews of many citizens who belong to “western civilization.” Paul was not a “pluralist” nor a cultural critic but an apocalyptic Jew in the fullest sense of the term. He believed in angels (1 Cor 4:9), Satan (1 Thess 2:17), the end of times, the resurrection, and other “supernatural” phenomena.

The historian and the exegete can still wonder whether Paul critiqued or even sought to “reform” the Judaism of his day *even while continuing to view himself as a faithful Jew*. After all, a Jewish person *can* mount a critique against Judaism and still consider herself or himself Jewish, a position that many contemporary Reform Jews sympathize with. At the same time, the theologian and contemporary cultural critic can still apply certain aspects of Paul’s message today. However, there must always be the cautionary realization that Paul’s focus was primarily on the end of the present, evil age, the final judgment, the belief in resurrection of Jesus Christ, and other apocalyptic dilemmas rather than questions of assimilation, the perpetuation of cultural and ethnic difference, or ecumenism, which concern us moderns.

In ch. 3, Segovia deals specifically with the problem of Israel and the Gentiles. He notes, correctly, that Paul’s attempt to relate Gentiles to Jewish blessing does not entail a criticism of the Jewish law, since other Jews before and after him continued to ponder this question (85). Paul simply believed that the observance of the Jewish Torah was not necessary for Gentiles. Another path to salvation existed for them, one not limited to the observance of a series of commandments à la the Noahide Laws (85). The chapter is noteworthy, once again, for its intense and broad treatment of the question of Jewish-Gentile relations in various Second Temple Jewish writings. Segovia provides an insightful diachronic survey of the issue, highlighting how hostile and favorable attitudes toward Gentiles coexisted throughout the Second Temple period. He critiques the traditional and cherished opposition of “Christian universalism” vs. “Jewish particularism” (105), noting that several Jewish texts suggest that at the end of time the nations would join Israel and worship their God. Some Jewish passages even point to the need of reaching out to the Gentiles before the consummation of all things. According to Segovia, Paul adopted and amplified such ideas by extending the scope of God’s promises made to Abraham to the Gentiles (109).

The last major chapter discusses the nature of Christ and the soteriological meaning of his death. Segovia places these questions within the larger framework of Second Temple Judaism, discussing a variety of ancient Jewish texts that cover questions related to atonement and the nature and role of the messiah. He rejects the traditional belief in a substitutionary atonement, though he grants a soteriological meaning to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Following Stanley Stowers, Segovia claims that Paul believed Jesus was endowed with the power to bring an end to evil, judge the wicked, and reward the righteous. Nevertheless, Jesus humbly chose to revoke his messianic duties, for the time being, in order to provide more time for the Gentiles to repent and accept the God of Israel. Otherwise, many Gentiles (and even Jews) would be condemned to punishment (pp. 125–28).

Concerning christology, Segovia firmly argues against any Pauline conception of Jesus Christ as a divine being. Following James D. G. Dunn, he does not even think Paul believed in

the pre-existence of Christ as a heavenly being (129). Jesus is a human being who experienced an extraordinary exaltation upon his resurrection. Segovia tackles difficult passages such as 1 Cor 8:6. He concedes that Paul believed God used heavenly Wisdom to create all things and made her manifest in Christ, but nothing more. Christ is not the incarnation of Wisdom, and neither Christ nor Wisdom is equal to God (130). With respect to the key passage in Phil 2:6–11, Segovia underscores its literary context, pointing to the preceding verses, which call upon followers of Jesus to follow Christ's example. He also stresses the need to view this passage in light of Paul's contrast between Christ's obedience and Adam's disobedience (29–30).

Segovia also wonders why Paul does not explicitly refer to Jesus as the Son of Man. Following James Waddell (*The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and Pauline Kyrios* [T&T Clark: 2011], also reviewed by RES), he proposes that Paul avoids this language for theological reasons. The Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* suggests that Adam, having repented, could reconcile himself with God, an idea that Paul could not admit because of his christocentrism (131–32). Segovia insists that it is inadequate to interpret Paul's christology in light of Johannine christology as elaborated by the Council of Nicaea, in which Christ is preexistent and divine in nature (132). It should be pointed out, however, that Waddell in his own work argues that Paul did indeed believe Christ to be a preexistent figure (see Waddell's work on pp. 123–29), and that this understanding represents an inner-Jewish development of the messiah conceived of as a heavenly being (though not divine in the fullest sense as equal to God the Father).

In the concluding chapter, Segovia discusses a number of questions related to Paul's Jewishness. In it, he asks, Why has Paul been misunderstood for so long? Following in the footsteps of Stendahl and others, Segovia denies that Paul converted from one religion, Judaism, to another, Christianity, which, in any case, is an anachronism since the term did not exist at the time (136–37). Instead, he posits a strong continuity between Judaism, the early *ekklesia* in Jerusalem, and Paul himself (138). Only with the canonical gospels does Segovia detect the first hints of anti-Judaism (139). But the major turn in this direction did not occur until Marcion. He provided the catalyst that paradoxically forced the proto-orthodox Christians to reassert their Jewish heritage while simultaneously distancing themselves from Judaism. In this context, Judaism had to be superseded, and Christianity would henceforth read Paul through the lenses of replacement theology.

At this point Segovia provides a close reading of Romans 3:21–31 (146–54). Using literary and rhetorical analysis, he maintains a careful distinction between how Paul applies his message to Gentiles qua Gentiles and how he relates Jesus' death and resurrection to the Jews. The question then rises whether Paul believed in "two different paths to salvation," one for the Gentiles through Christ, the other already graciously made available to Jews through their covenantal system. In Segovia's opinion, Paul did think that Jesus was the messiah of Israel. However, the Jews did not have to believe in the messiah in order to be saved, since he would restore Israel regardless of its acceptance or identification of Jesus as the messiah. By postponing the fulfillment of his mission, Jesus gave Israel more time to repent from its sins. The Gentiles, for their part, had to renounce idolatry; Christ facilitated their salvation by allowing them full incorporation into Israel without having to adopt the Mosaic Torah. Segovia concludes that Paul

envisioned two different paths of salvation that are nevertheless interrelated: Jesus is the savior of the Gentiles but also the messiah of Israel (157).

Carlos A. Segovia has, in several ways, made an important contribution to the study of Paul and Second Temple Judaism. It is hoped that Spanish-speaking communities on both sides of the Atlantic will take notice of this important work. To my knowledge, it represents the best and most updated treatment of Paul within his Second Temple Jewish matrix written from the so-called radical new perspective. The strength of Segovia's arguments lies in his serious assessment of Paul in light of ancient Jewish sources. Unlike many of his predecessors, he does not neglect the Enochic literature and other apocalyptic works for understanding Paul's writings. In fact, sometimes Segovia provides his own interesting insights on issues strictly related to Second Temple Jewish studies (see for example, his excursus on the supposed existence of the Book of Noah on pp. 121–23). The book also contains a very useful glossary (clxvii–clxxviii) on ancient and modern terms. The quality and breadth of Segovia's work merits its translation into English. Pauline scholars across the globe should take notice.