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Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans

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Wagner examines Paul's reading and use of Isaiah and related scriptural texts in Romans. The focus is on how Paul himself read these texts and shaped them in his argument, especially as seen in Rom 9–11 and 15. A key aspect of Wagner's argument involves looking not just at citations and allusions from Isaiah but also intertextual echoes (explicitly showing a large debt to Richard Hays) and the contexts of these scriptural texts. He argues that, while this contextual information may have been unknown to Paul's original audience, Paul himself was influenced by these contexts and it is Paul's reading of Isaiah that is of most importance to Wagner. Wagner thus is not seeking principally to discuss how Paul used Scripture in his argument but to reveal how Paul understood Scripture, that is, his hermeneutical approach to it. Wagner argues that Isaiah's "story," as understood or constructed by Paul (and Wagner admits, his own reading of Paul), is critical in how Paul used Isaiah. Specifically, "Paul read large sections of Isaiah as a prophetic word concerning his own role in the eschatological restoration of Israel and the extension of that salvation to the Gentiles" (33).

The book is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction in chapter 1 with the review of research typical of dissertations, Wagner analyzes the use of scriptural texts in Rom 9:1–29 (ch. 2); Rom 9:30–10:21 (ch. 3); Rom 11 (ch. 4); and Rom 15 (ch. 5).

Chapter 6 provides a summary and additional observations. This includes an interesting discussion of Paul's use of composite citations, which occur almost exclusively in Rom 9–11.

In the introduction Wagner stresses that Paul drew scriptural texts from potentially multiple sources, including actual scrolls, notebooks containing citations of specific texts, and his own memory, since Paul likely committed large amounts of Scripture, including Isaiah, to memory. Wagner then states that because of this one must be careful in saying that Paul has deliberately changed a text he is citing. Wagner explains that all the available ancient testimony to the text will be examined as well to help determine which, if any, changes, are original with Paul. Nevertheless, Wagner seems to be inconsistent in this matter. For example, in treating Paul's citation of Hosea at the end of Rom 9, Wagner simply asserts that Paul has made some changes, while admitting that it is more difficult to say whether other differences originate with the apostle. Wagner says it is "highly probable" that Paul is the source of the alterations to Ho 1:10b in Rom 9:26 (84) but does not tell us why it is highly probable. Wagner notes phraseology that adds to Paul's argument and offers suggestions as to how some changes contribute to what Paul is seeking to say, but one must ask, Does the ability to propose a plausible hypothesis for why Paul may have changed his source for a scriptural text constitute actual *proof* that Paul has in fact done so? In all fairness, Wagner does address several ancient authorities when looking at some texts, such as the text behind Isa 11:10 in Rom 15:12. Still, since we lack a clearly first-century A.D. text of Isaiah, any judgments about what Paul changed should be made perhaps more cautiously. Wagner suggests that some texts, such as the composite quotation of Isa 28:16 and Isa 8:14a in Rom 9:33 represent a version of the LXX that has been revised to be more in line with the Hebrew text. Asserting, as many commentators do, that Isa 6:9–10 influenced the wording of the citation in Rom 11:8, Wagner suggests that Paul used an LXX text reflected in the citation of Isa 6:9 in John 12:40. In his final chapter Wagner concludes that there is no compelling reason, based on the evidence he has examined, to believe that Paul had recourse to any Hebrew or Aramaic texts for his citations. All the wording can be explained from Greek translations and Paul's own alterations of those texts.

A key aspect of Wagner's study is that he does not treat texts atomistically. Instead, he continually asks about the larger context of the scriptural reference, both its immediate context and the context of the whole of the biblical book of which it is a part. This enables Wagner to take a different view of Paul's use of specific texts than that of many commentators, whom he faults for too narrow a view. This can be seen, for example, in Wagner's treatment of Isa 10:22–23 in Rom 9:27–28. Isaiah 10:22–23, echoing the Abrahamic promise of descendants like the sand of the sea, contrasted with the remnant, and the similarity of this situation to Paul's own, has led commentators to argue that Paul

invoked Isaiah in this part of Rom 9 to announce condemnation on Israel. In fact, however, in the wider context of Isaiah these verses stand at the transition point between the pronouncement of condemnation and the promise of future restoration. In Paul's trope, the words of the prophet function as they do in their Isaianic context as a "message of *hope* in the midst of disaster, as a *promise* that Israel yet has a future" (107). Only a reading of Rom 9:24 that ignores Paul's interpretive statement there can understand Paul's use of Isaiah in Rom 9:27–28 as an announcement of condemnation.

Wagner argues that Paul calls Isaiah, Moses, and David to all speak *viva voce* as witnesses to the good news that Paul proclaims. Paul also finds in Isaiah testimony to God's faithfulness that goes to extreme lengths to save a remnant of his people, a message in harmony with his own preaching to Jews. Isaiah's oracles contain "a veiled prefiguration of his own mission to proclaim the good news to those among the Gentiles who have not yet heard news of the victory of God's people" (356). Wagner notes in this connection that, while many scholars assert the influence upon Paul's Christology of the Fourth Servant song, Paul's only use of that text, and its preface, Isa 52:7, is to speak of Paul's own ministry. It is Paul who brings good news but whose report is not believed by many of his own people.

All in all, this is a well-done study that makes a significant contribution to the growing literature on Paul's use of the Scriptures of Israel. Wagner does an excellent job of viewing Paul's scriptural references within their larger context and through this illuminating Paul's own reading and use of Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and other texts. He also shows how important it is to observe the links between various scriptural texts in Romans, especially Rom 9-11. In spite of the issues related to determining the source of the precise form of Paul's various citations noted above, this book should be considered in any future discussion of Paul's use of the Scriptures of Israel, especially but not only Isaiah.