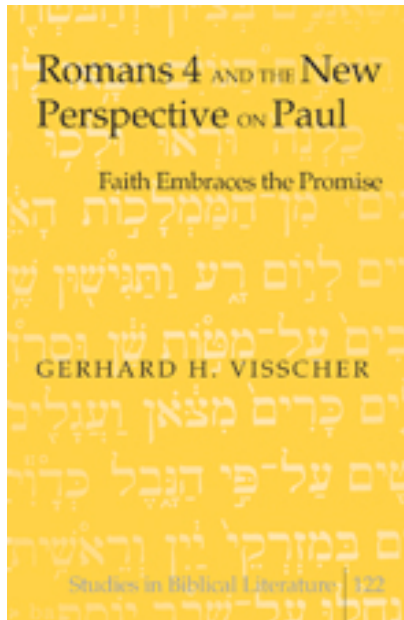


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Romans 4 and the New Perspective on Paul: Faith Embraces the Promise

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This book began life as a dissertation submitted to McMaster University in 2008. After a brief introduction, its first two chapters are devoted to the study of Rom 4 since 1977, encompassing scholars who favor and disfavor the New Perspective on Paul (NPP). These are, respectively, E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, Terence Donaldson, Heikki Räisänen; and Thomas R. Schreiner, Frank Thielman, Mark A. Seifrid, Simon J. Gathercole, Stephen Westerholm. Afterward, Visscher takes up the context of Rom 4, both historical and in the Roman letter. Then follow an exegesis of Rom 4 and two chapters entitled “Further Reflections” and “Concluding Observations.” There are two appendices: “‘Works of the Law’: Boundary Markers?” and “The Law, a Barrier for Gentiles?”

Approaching Rom 4 as one committed to the Reformed tradition, Visscher purposes to use that chapter as a test case for the NPP. In his own words, the study endeavors:

1. to examine the exegesis of Romans 4 held by several promoters of the New Perspective;
2. to examine the exegesis of Romans 4 held by those who oppose the New Perspective;
3. to consider Romans 4 carefully and determine which of the

exegetical approaches gives the best view of Paul's writing in Romans 4; 4. to evaluate to some degree the New Perspective on this basis. (3)

The goal of this work, accordingly, is to "listen carefully" to the voices of modern scholarship devoted to Rom 4 and to "test them fairly by listening just as carefully to Paul, that ancient voice so in the limelight today." Hence, "the conclusion of our study," writes Visscher, "is likely to be that there is a need for more nuanced positions on both sides" (5). The NPP, he acknowledges, has asked questions of Paul that have not been asked before, and some positions, taken for granted in the past, no longer appear to be entirely tenable. On the other hand, however, "just as the writings of earlier generations are accused of reading Paul through the lens of their own time, the question needs to be asked whether today's scholars are liable to a similar charge." This work thus attempts to determine: (1) the gains that have been made through the various interpretations presented; (2) the problems that remain; and (3) the conclusions that may be drawn concerning Rom 4, Romans and Paul in general, and the NPP.

In summary, the thesis that will be defended here is that *while the New Perspective scholars have made suggestions that are certainly noteworthy, and the dialogue between them and the non-New Perspectivists has contributed to a better understanding of Paul, difficulties with their interpretation of Romans 4 show that the New Perspective approach is generally in need of substantial revision.* (5, emphasis original)

Because a book like this raises so many detailed issues, historical, linguistic, and exegetical, it will be necessary to cut to the chase and address the leading constituents of Visscher's handling of Rom 4 vis-à-vis the NPP.

By way of commendation, aspects of the book are laudable. (1) The survey of scholarship is evenhanded. Although the number of such overviews is growing, this one serves a useful purpose, especially as the individual authors are allowed to speak in their own words as much as possible. To his credit, Visscher highlights the fact that even scholars who have taken exception to the NPP admit that it is a caricature to declare all ancient Jews "legalistic" and "self-righteous."

(2) The lengthy chapter on the context of Rom 4 contains quite a useful discussion of "Boasting Excluded by the Principle of Faith" (125–33). Visscher, rightly in my view, takes the νόμος of 3:27 to be the "principle" or "norm" of faith, versus that of works, not the Mosaic Torah as fulfilled by faith. Ironically (inconsistently), however, when Visscher turns to Rom 3:31 and how it is Paul can write νόμον ιστάνομεν, in response to the question νόμον οὐκ καταργούμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως? his explanation is: "Ultimately the law

will be fulfilled or upheld by the person who is in Christ and lives by the power of the Spirit” (133). Yet this is the very interpretation, espoused by Dunn and Wright, that Visscher earlier rejects (127).

(3) Constructive and relevant also are the comments on Paul’s assertion of 3:29 that God *δικαιώσει περιτομήν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως*. Visscher writes favorably of ἐκ in its “partisan” sense of participation and membership (130–31).

(4) There is the handling of the question with which Rom 4 commences: *Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα?* The problem revolves around translation. After a evaluation of the possibilities, especially that of Richard Hays (“What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?”), Visscher opts for his “Translation A”: “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found?” Two telling points support this translation over against that of Hays. (a) Paul’s answer to the question does not correspond to that posed by Hays’s translation. (b) Paul’s questions introduced by *Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν* (3:5; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14 [though not 9:30]) are usually followed up by *μὴ γένοιτο*, but not in this instance (139). Visscher acknowledges that Hays’s rendering, as essentially supported by Wright, does not necessarily promote a NPP approach (à la Dunn’s disinclination to follow Hays), but, he writes, “it can be taken as support for the direction in which New Perspective scholars are heading, namely, suggesting that Paul’s overriding concern in chapter four is the focus on Jew and Gentile receiving access to the grace of God by the same means, through faith” (138).

On the downside, the volume contains a number of features that may be criticized. (1) The survey of scholarship raises questions of selectivity. One wonders why these particular representatives, pro and con, were chosen when so many others might have made the list. More important, Visscher makes the common mistake of reckoning Sanders among the company of those who favor the NPP, whose presence under this rubric only serves to muddy the waters. According to James Dunn, who, of course, coined the phrase, the NPP “builds on Sanders’ *new perspective on Second Temple Judaism*, and Sanders’ reassertion of the basic graciousness expressed in Judaism’s understanding and practice of covenantal nomism.”¹ However, Dunn’s original complaint was that, whereas Sanders has provided a “new perspective on Second Temple Judaism,” he continued to work with an “old perspective” vision of Paul.² At the end of the day, a decided problem with all such attempts at classification is that there is no such monolithic entity as *the* NPP. What goes

1. James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 15 (emphases added).

2. James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 (1983): 97–103.

by the moniker of “the New Perspective on Paul” is actually more like theme and variations, and this generic label is flexible enough to allow for individual thought and refinement (nuance).

(2) A large portion of chapter 4, which treats the general context of Romans, is questionable as to its relevance. Visscher takes up matters that are of legitimate concern for the scholarly investigation of the Roman letter, but without relating their bearing on the thesis at hand. The discussion of these points is informative enough and supplies the sort of introduction that would be appropriate in a commentary. But apart from the general notation that Romans has as one of its concrete objectives dealing with those who opposed Paul’s version of the gospel (93), there is no clear linkage of these particular materials to book’s objective of using Rom 4 as a testing ground for the NPP.

(3) A, if not *the*, major drawback of the book is Visscher’s persistent restriction of “the works of the law” in NPP thinking to the “boundary markers.” It is true that early on he takes notice of Dunn’s objection to this all too common limitation of his intentions (14–15).³ Yet after this nod of the head, Dunn’s self-assessment is all but ignored, and the discussion proceeds as though Dunn had written nothing by way of balance. Uniformly for Visscher, “the works of the law” are “boundary markers” and nothing but “boundary markers” (appendix 1 is devoted to a detailed discussion, with the same result). But such a proposal is a decided *faux pas*, particularly given the vigor of Dunn’s protest:

In view of the repeated misunderstanding of my initial essay on this subject, I should perhaps underline that I do not (and never did!) claim that “works of the law” denote only circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath. A careful reading of my “New Perspective” should have made it clear that, as in Gal 2, these were particular focal or crisis points for (and demonstrations of) a generally nomistic attitude.⁴

In brief response, the following features may be singled out. (a) Given Dunn’s account of himself, the expenditure of so much effort to establish that “works of the law” are not merely boundary markers is “much ado about nothing” and amounts to an assault on a straw man. There is simply no responsible representative of the NPP who imposes such restrictions on the phrase. Visscher would have done well to give more heed to what he dubs Francis Watson’s “middle road”; that is, Paul’s avowal of Rom 3:20 that “by works of

3. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 358.

4. *Ibid.*, 358 n. 97. Years earlier, Dunn provided the same clarification: “In short ... the particular regulations of circumcision and food laws were important not in themselves, but because they *focused* Israel’s distinctiveness and made visible Israel’s claims to be a people set apart, were the clearest points which differentiated the Jews from the nations. The law was coterminous with Judaism” (“Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law [Galatians 3.10-14],” *NTS* 31 [1985]: 526).

the law no flesh shall be justified” means that “the practice of the law of Moses within the Jewish community is not the divinely ordained life-orientation that constitutes human ‘righteousness’ before God” (150; cf. 245). (b) The materials relating to Abraham in the predestruction period (150–57) are similarly beside the point. No NPP scholar of note limits the patriarch’s exemplary value to ethnicity apart from his obedience to Yahweh. Visscher presses the claim: “It is not always within the context of ethnocentrism that Abraham’s obedience is extolled; much more is at stake than obedience to those acts which testify to his Jewishness” (157). But as it turns out, this is a self-refuting argument, simply because the broader setting of every text cited by Visscher affirms that Abraham’s faithfulness/obedience was exercised as a member of a community, the chosen people of God, which distinguished itself from the surrounding nations and sought to preserve that distinctiveness.⁵ In short, Abraham’s obedience cannot be understood apart from the covenant with Israel. But in order to argue his thesis, Visscher engages the proof-texting method of dipping into documents here and there without accounting for what Sanders called the “pattern of religion.”

(4) Abraham’s inability to boast “before God” (4:2) is taken by Visscher to pertain to “things he did” (“general works”), as opposed to adherence to the boundary markers, à la, supposedly, the NPP (144). The “things he did” (ἐξ ἔργων), in this scenario, are effectively “legalism.” However, in addition to the persistent false dichotomy of the “identity” or “identification” markers (Dunn’s original phrases) and the law in toto, the abstraction of “works” from “the law” is strained at best. If 3:20, 28 have already forged the link of the one with the other, it is no stretch to see the ἔργα of 4:2, 6 as shorthand for the longer expression τὰ ἔργα τοῦ νόμου.⁶ After all, it is Visscher who wants to view Rom 4 as an elaboration of 3:21–31 (111–33; he should have included 3:20). That Paul would classify Abraham as one who could not boast because his justification (= vindication) was not ἐξ ἔργων (νόμου) is intelligible because he is not arguing in the abstract but in the concrete. Underlying the argument of Rom 4 is the tradition that Abraham kept the law before Sinai (Sir 44:20; CD 3:2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 57:2). Even if some (or all) of Paul’s readers were unaware of the connection, all they had to do was follow his train of thought in verses 9–15: circumcision had nothing to do with the declaration of Abraham’s righteousness (vv. 9–12) or the law generally (vv. 13–15). As it turns out, the fulcrum of Rom 4 is a

5. Visscher neglects that Second Temple literature almost uniformly reflects the period of apostasy from “the holy covenant” (1 Macc 1:15), during which the individual writers urge the faithful to maintain their distinctiveness as Jews. The author of 2 Maccabees (6:6) famously complains that, at this time, “A man could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the feasts of his fathers, nor so much as confess himself to be a Jew.”

6. Even in the case of the nations, Rom 2:14–15 has already established that they have the functional equivalent of the law on their hearts (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν), even though they are not in possession of Israel’s Torah as such (τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα).

“boundary marker”! In view of such data, Paul is denying what his Jewish peers would have affirmed, namely, that Abraham, as they, had a legitimate boast in God and the Torah (2:17–18). The ἀλλ’ οὐ πρὸς θεόν of 4:2 will always be difficult, but perhaps I could tentatively propose something like this: Israel’s former source of boasting is no longer valid before God, since the boasting in question is Torah-centered.

(5) Visscher’s handling of Gen 15:6 in Paul’s argument (158–67) calls for some comment. The gist of it is that Visscher is obliged to follow the lead of scholars who argue that Paul interprets Genesis in a “new way.” That is to say, the apostle understands faith not as “faithfulness” or “faithful obedience” but rather as an “act of faith” only, whereby Abraham trusted God and embraced his promises (164). Visscher endorses Watson to the effect that Paul’s use of Gen 15:6 overturns “a reading of the Genesis text which appears to be so entirely natural, straightforward and unproblematic.” Watson realizes that in other texts Abraham’s faithfulness and obedience that take center stage, but, he writes, “Paul consistently focuses on the promise motif whenever he speaks of Abraham” (quoted on 165). Before drawing this conclusion, a number of the “other texts” are surveyed, yielding the obvious result that for Jewish authors, two of whom are biblical, Abraham is extolled as the exemplar of “faithful obedience” in times of testing. It is just this “entirely natural, straightforward and unproblematic” reading of the Abraham narrative that Visscher must reject in favor of one that renders Paul an eccentric and quixotic figure who simply ignores the tenor of the Genesis story and offers up a version of Abraham that would have been unrecognizable to his Jewish contemporaries. Moreover, the Watson/Visscher line makes little of the fact that toward the end of Rom 4 (vv. 19–22) Paul begins to play up *the persevering quality Abraham’s faith*.⁷ According to 4:20–22, “No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. *For this reason* (διό) it was ‘reckoned to him as righteousness.’” This is the endurance of faith, the process of faith, not simply the initial act of believing, and it is *for such reason* that Abraham was vindicated (ἐδικαιώθη) as one faithful to Yahweh’s covenant. In short, Abraham is the great archetype of “the obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5), to be emulated by “all who believe” (1:16) and walk in his footsteps (4:11–12).

(6) Expectedly, Visscher presses the traditional doctrine of imputation by evoking the verb λογίζομαι. Because the subject matter is complicated, and because I have dealt with it

7 A text cited by Visscher, 1 Macc 2:51–52, is certainly eye-catching: “Remember the deeds of the fathers, which they did in their generations; and receive great honor and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?” Echoing Gen 15:6, the author commends faithful (πιστός) Abraham as the exemplar of τὰ ἔργα τῶν πατέρων.

at length elsewhere,⁸ the remarks here must be kept as brief as possible. Like many in the Reformed tradition, Visscher presses the commercial usage of λογίζομαι in the Greco-Roman setting without even considering that Paul quotes the LXX of Gen 15:6 (ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην), then uses λογίζομαι on its own, and afterward adapts the LXX to his purposes (λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην). In the two outer instances, the full expression λογίζομαι εἰς reflects the underlying Hebrew, וַיַּחְשַׁב לֹא צְדָקָה. It is the turn of phrase לַבְּשֵׁי that must be given its due. According to the Hebrew usage, Abraham was “considered to be” a faithful/righteous person because of his continued trust in God (the same expression is used of Phinehas in Ps 106:31).⁹ But the most telling factor of all is not a verb but *the story of Abraham* in Genesis. It is true that Paul employs λογίζομαι standing alone as the “calculation” of a wage, but even here the sense is not “impute” or “credit.”

There are issues arising from Paul’s choice of words. (a) It is to be acknowledged that “working” (τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ) and “not working” (τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ) in 4:4–5 represent an application, to both Jew and Gentile, of the principle that Abraham was not justified ἐξ ἔργων. However, the terms do not of themselves bespeak “legalism” or “earning salvation.” A case in point is the parable of Matt 20:1–16, which depicts “workers” who receive a “wage” in the end, the eschatological kingdom. As applied to Israel, in Paul’s own words, “working” is Israel’s “willing” and “running” to fulfill the covenant (Rom 9:16), which can easily be understood as “covenantal nomism” rather than “legalism.” In a nutshell, “working” versus “not working” hardly proves that the Judaism of Paul’s generation was “legalistic.” Even as regards non-Jews, “working” does not have to be pressed into a legalistic mold. It is sufficient that human beings adhere to certain norms of behavior and consider that these are adequate to suit their needs. “Working” can take many forms. The decisive hermeneutical consideration is the overriding concern of chapter 4 that Jew and Gentile alike walk in the footsteps of Abraham, who was reckoned righteous apart from circumcision and the law. In fact, a later comment of Visscher’s is equally applicable to 4:4–5: “Paul’s wording here [Rom 4:11–12] contains a message for Jewish believers who might be inclined to think that circumcision, or the law, or having Abraham as their father, is what defines them” (192). Precisely. As a corollary, Gentile believers must not succumb to pressure to define themselves by means of Torah and circumcision (which predated Sinai).

8. Don Garlington, *Studies in the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 137–237.

9. See *ibid.*, 197–205, with the extended endnotes to the chapter (218–21). Λογίζομαι is a “thinking” verb. Characteristically, it means to consider something to be true because it is true.

(b) Likewise, the contrast of “favor” and “debt” does not necessitate a broadside against a merit-procuring mindset. Since apparently Paul draws on a commercial metaphor in 4:4–5, the translation of BDAG (743) brings out the sense clearly enough: respecting a wage for work done, “it is considered not as a favor [κατὰ χάριν], but as a person’s due” [κατὰ ὀφείλημα]. The most obvious feature of this formulation is that Paul reminds his readers of what everyone already knew: no one would suppose that a day’s wages are the product of the “good graces” of an employer. In sharp contrast, righteousness is declared by the pure favor of God when faith is reckoned as righteousness (λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην). Why Paul felt compelled to press the point is not altogether clear. It may be that some of the Romans read the story of Abraham and concluded that God’s blessing of the patriarch was owed to him, or it may be that some of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries thought they were “due” God’s continued presence and protection because of their devotion to the covenant and the law. Whatever the underlying motivations were, it was Abraham’s sustained trust (from Gen 12–22) that was considered to be his righteousness (ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ θεῷ, κτλ) rather than the “work” of “willing” and “running” to maintain the righteousness of the law (10:3: τὴν ἰδίαν [δικαιοσύνην] ζητοῦντες στήσαι), which many of his descendants were so zealous to do (10:2). In the same manner, the believer who exercises faith (in Christ) is like father Abraham (4:11b–12). The principle has as much applicability to Gentile believers as Jewish, who might be tempted to think that real sonship to Abraham entails nothing less than a commitment to a Mosaic vision of the people of God. Therefore, the notion of ὀφείλημα is precluded, because it is God’s “favor” that is determinative in the formation of the latter-day Abrahamic community. Even with the necessity of hoping against hope and not wavering in faith (4:18–21), κατὰ χάριν remains the operative principle of the reckoning of righteousness: in the place of δικαιοσύνη God graciously accepts faith. It is frankly to be conceded that these two verses ought to give NPP commentators pause, yet their impact is scarcely devastating, as though the “Sanders/Dunn trajectory” (Moises Silva) is dashed upon the rock of two sentences in Romans.

(c) Notwithstanding Visscher’s resistance, “ungodly” (ἀσεβής), as predicated of Abraham, carries historical connotations.¹⁰ In a nutshell, Paul predicates “ungodly” of Abraham in the same sense that Jews of this period would have used the term: uncircumcised and non-Torah observant. The irony of the situation is this: the same Abraham who was confirmed as a righteous person in Gen 15:6 would have been deemed “ungodly” by many of his first-century descendants. Visscher and company fail to realize that the argumentation of Rom 4 is pointed and specific: the “ungodly” of Paul’s day, themselves

10. The writer of 1 Maccabees employs the term in his denunciation of Jews who apostatized to Hellenism (Don Garlington, *The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* [WUNT 2/38; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991], 91–102).

uncircumcised and non-Torah observant, can walk in the steps of Abraham without first becoming “honorary Jews.”¹¹ Verse 4:11b takes Paul’s readers to the heart of the matter: “The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe *without being circumcised* [δι’ ἀκροβυστίας] and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them.”

(d) The presence of David in 4:6–8 presents an ostensible, though hardly insurmountable, problem for a NPP reading. It is legitimate to call to attention to David’s ethical failure rather than the boundary-marking mechanisms of the covenant, but it is the very nature of that failure that rendered him as one outside the covenant. By his twofold offense of adultery and murder, David reduced himself to the level of the pagan world and ceased to be the representative of Yahweh on earth—he became *as one uncircumcised*. Such an understanding makes perfect sense of Paul’s argument, because Gentiles may be assured that they are acceptable to God in a sense qualitatively similar to David, who, at the time of his sin, was no better *covenantally speaking* than they. For Visscher, Paul’s evocation of David here is “positively fatal” (Stephen Westerholm), and the NPP simply “falls to the ground on that point” (Simon Gathercole) (both quoted on 184). I would submit otherwise. It is worthy of some notice that Paul employs a midrashic technique in the treatment of these passages from Tanak; that is, Gen 15:16 is the primary text elaborated, with Ps 32 introduced as a secondary passage. This consideration alone invalidates Visscher’s charge that NPP interpreters “jump over” or “gloss over” the section concerning David (187, 190). As I read them, these scholars devote the same proportionate attention to David that Paul assigns to him.

(7) In discussing “Promise, Law, and Gentiles” (194–204), Visscher is obliged to deny the obvious impact of the phrases οἱ ἐκ νόμου and τῶ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου (4:14, 16) as nomenclature for “ethnic Jews” (his phrase), as though Gentiles ever would have thought of themselves in such terms. Moreover, the assertion that these phrases have a “deliberate vagueness to them so that they can include anyone, whether Jewish or not” (203), is almost breathtaking. According to Visscher, Paul’s line of reasoning is that “Anyone, Jew and Gentile, who would base their standing on the law is urged to do otherwise.” And with the ever-present allegation that NPP interpretation reduces “works of the law” to “boundary markers only,” which “confuses” Paul’s message, we are informed that the real issue is “whether one’s religious life is built on faith and the promise or on works and the law” (203). This segment of Romans, writes Visscher, is thus a return to 4:1–12 and the theme of the inability of human works to attain to the righteousness of God and the need of God’s grace (199). But this is to waive exegesis. The turning point of the chapter is verse 9, where the argument focuses pointedly on circumcision and the law and Paul’s denial that either has a bearing on the inheritance of the promise to Abraham. To turn his

11. Even where ἀσεβής broadens, as in Rom 5:6, it still carries overtones of uncovenant-like behavior.

discourse into a generalized “message” regarding the “religious life” is a failure to follow the train of thought, including the first portion of chapter 4.

(8) There are a number of minor irritations pertaining to editorial matters. (a) In instances too numerous to recount, the footnotes often provide the names of authors before titles, but frequently do not. (b) On 7, note 2 replicates note 1. (c) Spacing after initialed names is inconsistent; for example, there are “E. P. Sanders,” “N. T. Wright,” and “C. E. B. Cranfield,” but “E.P. Sanders,” “C.E.B. Cranfield,” “J.D.G. Dunn” (though frequently enough “James D. G. Dunn”), and “George W.E. Nickelsburg.” (d) The footnotes on 20–21, 110, 171, 198–99 are of inconsistent size, as is the Greek of 142, second full paragraph, lines 9, 10. (e) On 153, the block quotation projects the word “found” beyond the indented margin. (f) On 195, a space is needed between the text and the first block quotation. (g) In numerous cases, there is a space between a period and a footnote number (e.g., 187 n. 162, 201 n. 198, 239 n. 25). (h) Wright’s “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” *Pauline Theology: Volume III* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 30–67, is cited from 22 note 68 onward but omitted from the bibliography. The book most certainly would have benefited from further secretarial and editorial attention.

In conclusion, Visscher’s stated thesis is that “the New Perspective approach is generally in need of substantial revision” (5). In point of fact, the argument is to the effect that the NPP is disproven and discredited by Rom 4. However, such a proposition is sustainable only if the actual data of the chapter fall into line with this claim. In the opinion of the present reviewer, such is not the case.