

*Paul and the Jews*. By A. Andrew Das. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003, pp. xvi + 238, n.p. paper.

Andrew Das, who has previously written an insightful work titled *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, tackles in this book Paul's view of the Jews. In the first chapter Das provides a survey of scholarship and sets the course for the remainder of the work. Chapter two considers the situation Paul addressed in Galatia. Das rightly criticizes Mark Nanos's suggestion that the opponents are Jews who do not believe in Christ, showing that the evidence in support of such a view is not compelling. He then proceeds to argue that Paul locates salvation only in the atonement of Christ, so that reliance upon the law for salvation is excluded.

In chapter three the situation of Jews in Rome is considered. Claudius's decree to expel Jews from Rome, says Das, should not be interpreted to say that no Jews were left in Rome since the Jewish community was too large for total expulsion to be practical. Still, Das maintains that the church increasingly lost contact with its synagogue roots with the conversion of Gentiles who were not God-fearers. Tensions arose, according to Das, between Gentile believers who were formerly God-fearers and attracted to Judaism and the newer Gentile believers who were unacquainted with and not disposed towards Jewish practices. Das argues here that Paul was familiar with the Roman situation, and that the church was almost exclusively Gentile, so that the tensions in Rome were not between Jewish and Gentile Christians, but Gentile believers nurtured in Judaism and the newer believers who shared the common cultural disdain for things Jewish. Space is lacking to interact in detail with Das here, but his argument for the almost exclusively Gentile character of the Roman community fails to convince. Further, one wonders why the newer Gentile converts would not also subscribe to the law if they came into the church under the influence of Gentiles who were sympathetic to and observant of some of the OT law. Typically converts subscribe to the customs and ethos of the majority when they convert. Das, on the other hand, shows that Nanos's view that the weak in Romans 14-15 are non-Christian Jews lacks cogency, demonstrating that the arguments supporting such a view are without foundation.

Chapter four tackles Romans 9-11 and in particular the two covenant theory which suggests that Jews are saved through the Torah covenant while Gentiles are saved through faith in Christ. Das demonstrates that the two covenant theory, though attractive because of modern pluralism, fails as exegesis of Paul. From Romans 9-11 and a number of other texts Das shows that Paul required Jews to believe in Christ in order to be saved. Das also rightly, in my judgment, maintains that Rom 11:26 speaks of a future salvation of Israel, showing that Israel here cannot refer to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, nor can the salvation spoken of here be confined to the salvation of a Jewish remnant throughout history. Das is less convincing in separating the future conversion of the Jews from the future coming of Jesus Christ. Seeing the salvation of the Jews as occurring at Christ's coming does not exclude the notion that they are saved through the proclaimed gospel. The future salvation of the Jews would be in some respects, if it occurs at Christ's coming, akin to Paul's own conversion on the road to Damascus.

In the fifth chapter the priority of Israel is examined. A number of texts in Paul indicate that the Jews were considered to be God's elect and special people. Das demonstrates quite convincingly and very helpfully that the first person plurals in

Galatians, however, should not be restricted to the Jews. Paul does not invariably use pronouns to segregate Jews from Gentiles, and thorough exegesis indicates that both Jews and Gentiles are in view in texts like Gal 3:13-14; 4:3-7, 26-31. Paul, suggests Das, shifts to the second person to address the readers in a rhetorically pointed way. Further, Paul's strong words against the Jews and the pronouncement of wrath upon them in 1 Thess 2:14-16 has engendered much discussion. Das rightly argues that the verses are authentic and cannot be dismissed as a later interpolation. The language is hyperbolic and should not be read as an indictment of all Jews. Neither does the text refer to the defeat at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70, but refers to God's wrath in the present. Das rightly argues that this text does not rule out Israel's priority in salvation, but his own view of the text needs further elaboration and defense. Wrath in Paul usually refers to God's eschatological wrath, and hence the notion that the wrath here is proleptic does not seem convincing.

Chapter six investigates Paul's understanding of the law. Das maintains that Paul thought the law was a burden because it was impossible to obey. The new perspective rightly discerns the ethnic dimensions of Paul's polemic but has over-reacted in failing to see that Paul also criticizes the law because human beings were unable to keep it. Das proceeds to argue that the term "law" (*nomos*) in Romans consistently refers to the Mosaic law, and should not be rendered "principle" or "rule" (see Rom 3:27; 7:23; 8:2). Resolving this issue is quite difficult, but Das argues well for his view.

Das, in chapter seven, reflects on the status of the Mosaic law in the life of Christians. Believers are no longer under the enslaving power of the law, but that does not mean that the law of Moses is irrelevant to them. They now observe the law of Christ (Gal 6:2), which refers to the law of Moses as it is adjusted and changed through the coming of Christ. The law of Christ focuses on love, which is paradigmatically explicated by Jesus' own way of life (though I think Das wrongly sees Romans 6 as a call to imitate Christ), and Christians observe God's commands by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Das concludes his book with a summary and reflections. The work is characterized by thoughtful and mainly convincing exegesis. We look forward to further contributions from Andrew Das in coming years.