

Article

Paradigms, Terminology, and Exegesis: Toward the Nonsupersessionist Reading of the New Testament

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Abstract

Interpretation of the New Testament (NT) in general and the Pauline corpus in particular still appears to be at a crossroads. Scholars continue to publish articles and monographs in binary opposition to one another. The terminology used to designate the overarching perspectives of these binary publications sharply contrasts a “traditional” perspective (Protestant in general, and Lutheran in particular) with a variously named “new” or “radical new” perspective. Most recently, beyond the imprecise “new” terminology, the non-traditional perspective is being referred to as the “post-supersessionist”, “nonsupersessionist”, or “within Judaism” perspective and is still strongly being contested. Historically speaking, these antithetical perspectives cannot both be completely correct. Arguably, then, the time has come to explore what the study of Kuhnian paradigms might reveal about this state of affairs in NT scholarship. Most important, in proffering a twofold hermeneutical way forward that is focused on better understanding the emic perspective of the texts that we interpret—to the extent humanly possible—it is hoped that we might become more keenly aware of the ethical implications of our paradigms, terminology, and exegesis for those who rely on our work for their understanding and appropriation of the Scriptures in their everyday living.

Keywords: paradigms; terminology; binary; exegesis; hermeneutical; new perspective(s); postsupersessionist; nonsupersessionist; within Judaism; ethical implications



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1. Introduction

Recently, two collections of essays were published that essentially celebrate the decades-long emergence of what they explicitly refer to as the postsupersessionist¹ or within Judaism² reading of the New Testament in general, and the Pauline corpus in particular, as a corrective paradigm shift (Nanos and Zetterholm 2015; Boccaccini and Segovia 2016). However, shortly thereafter, Hagner, a senior scholar of these very same texts, published a monograph in which he acknowledges the unquestionable Jewishness of the NT and its underlying continuity with the OT³ up front, but then emphatically argues against the within Judaism perspective throughout the rest of his monograph (Hagner 2018). Upon critiquing the a priori convictions of what he calls “the within-Judaism movement”, Hagner’s own starting presupposition is that “the preponderance of relatively clear texts favors the traditional understanding of Paul and indeed makes the Paul-within-Judaism reading of the NT far less than convincing” (Hagner 2018, p. 10).

Ironically, at the very end of his monograph, Hagner emphasizes that “an easy supersessionism is not an option” precisely because the very notion of supersessionism would have been considered as wholly inappropriate and unacceptable by the NT writers (Hagner

2018, p. 174). However, in his painstaking efforts to highlight the newness of the NT, he ultimately concludes that (1) there is “plenty in Romans that can raise the question of whether Israel still has a role in God’s purposes”; (2) Paul’s “indictment not only of the Gentiles but also of the Jews in the opening chapters of Romans has the effect of demolishing the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (2:25–29; cf. Gal. 3:28)”; (3) “the new wine of Christianity cannot ultimately be contained within the framework of Judaism”; and (4) “Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism” (Hagner 2018, pp. 20–21, 115, 174, 179). Hagner goes so far as to acknowledge that his conclusion will be taken negatively by most Jews as both insensitive and potentially anti-Semitic, but speaking in the first person emphasizes that “to my mind this is the most accurate and effective way to describe the issue before us” and “I mean it, however, in a highly positive sense” (Hagner 2018, p. 21).

Given his long-term commitment to the so-called traditional perspective, I would suggest that Hagner is paradigmatically incapable of seeing that his conclusion is not highly positive but highly negative and clearly supersessionist, no matter how much he punctuates his work with qualified positive statements about Jews and Judaism. Rather, in its essence, his conclusion is virtually identical to that of Goppelt: “Christianity is the abolishing fulfillment of Judaism” (Goppelt 1954, p. 315 as cited in Räsänen [1983] 2010, p. 2). In fact, Hagner’s aforementioned statement that the Jew–Gentile distinction is effectively demolished in the *ekklesia*⁴ contradicts the Scriptures’ own portrayal of how God has only ever and always worked in history through Israelite and later Jewish particularism with an international horizon involving an eschatological outcome of reciprocal dependence (i.e., interdependence) and mutual blessing between Israel *as* Israel and the nations *as* the nations.⁵ It must be emphasized here that I think Hagner’s downplaying or erasure of the Jew–Gentile distinction in Messiah is, among other things, a result of his misinterpretation of Gal. 3:28 as an instance of absolute negation: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. Thus, in my hermeneutical discussion of Gal. 3:28 at the end of this essay, I focus attention on dialectical negation as a hermeneutical key that not only provides a more profound understanding of Gal. 3:28 and select cognate passages but of Scripture in general and the NT in particular. All of this said, what I find most troubling in Hagner’s monograph is his claim that the “the so-called ‘historical’ readings of the Paul-within-Judaism scholars can often make sense of the Pauline texts only by means of a tortuous exegesis” (Hagner 2018, p. 9).

Surely, such binary opposition and conflictual assertions between scholars warrants a deeper look to determine whether the exegesis associated with this paradigm shift is truly tortuous (i.e., self-convoluting to force the texts into the nonsupersessionist, within Judaism perspective), or whether the attempt to determine the plausibility of the nonsupersessionist, within Judaism paradigm by scholars inured to the traditional paradigm is torturous (i.e., self-engendering of painful cognitive dissonance leading to the pertinacious defense of the traditional paradigm). Moreover, it also appears apposite to determine the extent to which our choices of terminology contribute to our antithetical perspectives. At stake here are the ethical implications of our exegesis, for our exegetical work is humanly appropriated and expressed in theologies, biblical interpretations, sermons, and the everyday thought, speech, behavior, actions, modes of existence, and living of followers of Jesus Messiah.⁶

That this binary opposition is a persistent problem is evidenced by the fact that in the late 20th century, Räsänen had already rightly asked what one was to make of the fact that even in a time when all the historical–critical apparatus was available, learned scholars like, for example, Cranfield and Käsemann could propose diametrically opposed views of Paul’s intentions. Räsänen was deeply disturbed by the fact that “each interpreter suggested that if you rejected *their way of seeing it* (emphasis mine), they were dangerously

misusing Paul's theology" (Räisänen [1983] 2010, p. 3). But, what if the problem actually is the inability to see "another perspective" precisely because of one's resolute commitment to an already long-established perspective?⁷ As it turns out, this is precisely what the study of paradigms in other fields has revealed.

In that the term "paradigm shift" is rightly and often employed now to describe this state of affairs in NT scholarship, in this article, I provide a concise but comprehensive overview of Kuhn's insightful work on paradigms (Kuhn [1962] 2012, 1977)⁸ with the aim that we might labor all the more assiduously in our exegesis "to enter and indwell the biblical author's optical space, learning to see" as they saw (Bockmuehl 2006, p. 21). This overview includes a concise but rather comprehensive definition and description of paradigms and paradigm shifts, an explanation of why we must understand and scrutinize our and others' paradigms, a discussion of our choices of terminology and how they might contribute to our competing perspectives, and a discussion of the priority of paradigms in theology and biblical studies. I then close out the article by proffering a twofold hermeneutical way forward toward the nonsupersessionist reading of the NT.⁹ To ensure that this is not viewed as an idealistic theorization, I then demonstrate the actual praxis of this twofold hermeneutical way forward utilizing Gal. 3:28 as my example. This closing section of the article specifically includes the proffering of two coined hermeneutical terms and concepts, "The Primary Heschelian Hermeneutic" and "The Primary Torrancean Hermeneutic", as well as a discussion of dialectical negation as a hermeneutical key to a fuller and thus better contextual understanding of Gal. 3:28.

2. Definition and Description of Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts

The concise summary of Kuhn's theses about paradigms by Hacking in the introduction to the 50th edition of *Structure* makes for easy learning. It is therefore coupled with information from the original monograph in this essay in order better to represent the holistic nature of Kuhn's contribution.¹⁰ It all begins with the notion of "normal science" being practiced by a community of scientists dedicated to "solving puzzles" according to an established (i.e., traditional) shared paradigm. Theologians and exegetes need simply replace the terms "normal science" and "community of scientists" with "normal theology/exegesis" and "community of theologians/exegetes" to appropriate this overview of Kuhnian paradigms and paradigm shifts. A shared paradigm might be simply understood as the entire constellation of conceptional, observational, and instrumental commitments of a group of scientists (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. 43, 181). To clarify this even further, Kuhn later explained that he meant the entire constellation of beliefs, values, practices, and concrete puzzle-solutions as examples or models shared by a group of scientists (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 174). Serious anomalies eventually arise when scientists recognize that something they are studying somehow violates the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 53).¹¹ This leads to a crisis in the field (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. xi). When a paradigm is threatened by a crisis, the community of practitioners enters a state of disarray (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. xxv). The crisis is resolved by the establishment of a new paradigm (i.e., a paradigm shift); but by ensuring that the traditional paradigm is not too easily surrendered, resistance guarantees that scientists will not be easily distracted, and that the profound anomalies that lead to paradigm change will penetrate existing knowledge down to the core (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. xi, 65).

It must be emphasized that "normal science" does not aim at novelty and tends to discover what it expects to discover. Practitioners have a tendency to see what they expect, even when it is not there. Conversely, they have a tendency not to see what does not fit their paradigm (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. xxvi, 24). In fact, in telling the detailed story about the history of the paradigm-shifting discovery of oxygen, Kuhn highlighted the

fact that Lavoisier was able to see in Priestley's experiments a gas that Priestley himself had been unable to see. Employing good root-cause analysis, Kuhn rightly observed that it was because a major paradigm revision was needed to see what Lavoisier saw. Sadly, Priestley died never having seen what Lavoisier saw (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 57).¹² This is precisely why the understanding and scrutiny of paradigms is so important. It is also precisely why Kuhn rightly emphasized Selye's critical point that the basic scientist "must lack prejudice to a degree where they can look at the most 'self-evident' facts or concepts without necessarily accepting them, and, conversely, allow their imagination to play with the most unlikely possibilities" (Kuhn 1977, p. 226). The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another, and this involves making a comparison of both paradigms with each other and with the phenomena scientists are studying or observing (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. xxvii). Moreover, while a theory must seem better than its competitors to be accepted as a paradigm, it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 18).

A paradigm shift is perceived as costly to those who were committed to the traditional paradigm because the gain is achieved only by replacing some previous elements of the constellation of conceptual, observational, and instrumental commitments of the group (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 66). It may cost some scientists the revision or replacement of textbooks, monographs, or articles that they wrote through the lens of the previous paradigm. In fact, when a paradigm is shifted, most of the books and articles in which the old paradigm had been embodied become a fit subject for professional scrutiny (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 166). As if to provide a balm to ease the pain of this situation, Kuhn wisely emphasized that the paradigm-shifting process is not a simple line leading to the truth. Rather, it is the real-life instance of progress away from less-adequate conceptions of and interactions with that which we are studying, as well as the world (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. xi, 205). Kuhn also wisely warned that "the transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced". He then graciously asserted that lifelong resistance, particularly from those whose productive careers have committed them to an older tradition of normal science, should not be viewed as a violation of scientific standards, but as an index of scientific research itself. Though some scientists, particularly the older and more experienced, may resist a new paradigm indefinitely, Kuhn held that most of them may be reached in one way or another (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. 150–51).

While Kuhn always thought that the metaphor of seeing as applied to paradigms was inadequate and should be replaced by some more literal mode of discourse (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 196), he nevertheless found it to be, and it remains, the metaphor of choice to explain paradigms and paradigm shifts (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 117).¹³ In the scientific revolution of a paradigm shift, scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have never looked before. It is as if the professional community has been "suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and joined by unfamiliar ones as well". They see the entire world of their research engagement differently (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 111). When a scientific revolution occurs, and the normative tradition changes, the scientist's perception of their environment must be re-educated, and in some familiar situations, they must allow for transformations of their perception in which they see anew (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 112).

These transformations in the way scientists see their world in a scientific revolution are precisely what led Kuhn to the analogy of a switch in visual gestalt (a conceptual or perceptual switch from seeing the world one way to another completely different way). They are also what led him to highlight the value of the pioneering inversion goggles experiment to illustrate the nature of the perceptual transformations associated with paradigms. A description of the inversion goggles experiment is instructive for us all.

A person who puts on the inversion goggles sees the entire world upside down. At first, the person's visual perceptual capability functions as it was trained to function without the goggles. "The result is extreme disorientation and an acute personal crisis". However, after the person has begun to deal with their new world in the intervening period of extreme disorientation, their entire visual field flips over and they see just like they saw before they put the goggles on. Thus, quite literally speaking, the person who puts on inversion goggles—and leaves them on long enough—undergoes a revolutionary transformation of vision. This is akin to how putting on a new paradigm works if one engages it long enough to receive the transformation of vision (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. 112–13).

3. Our Choices of Terminology and Their Contribution to Competing Paradigms

A final topic that must be addressed in this overview of paradigms is the terminology that we choose to use in our work, what it means to us and others, and the extent to which it may contribute to our competing perspectives.¹⁴ Since new paradigms are born from old ones, they typically incorporate much of the vocabulary and apparatus, both conceptual and systematically arranged, that the traditional paradigm had chosen to use. However, they rarely utilize the borrowed vocabulary and apparatus in the traditional manner. Within the new paradigm, old terms, concepts, and the like form new relationships with one another, or are associated with the topic of study differently. The inevitable result is a "misunderstanding" of sorts between the two competing perspectives that is directly due to the fact that communication across the paradigmatic divide is always partial and sometimes laborious (Kuhn [1962] 2012, pp. 148, 176). This, in turn, is because only those who have undergone, or failed to have undergone, the transformation of perspective together are able to ascertain what they concurred or did not concur about (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 148). Two people who perceive the thing they are studying very differently, but utilize the same terminology in their discussions, must by definition be using terms differently. Thus, their viewpoints become what Kuhn called "incommensurable" (i.e., incapable of strict comparison due to changes in the meaning of terms and concepts) (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 199). Kuhn contended that those who hold incommensurable viewpoints are akin to members of different language communities whose communication problems will only be resolved by translation (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 175). Demonstrating seasoned wisdom yet again, Kuhn asserted that if these members of different language communities can sufficiently refrain from explaining the "anomalies" that led to the paradigm change as "mere error or madness", they may in time learn to translate each other's paradigm (Kuhn [1962] 2012, p. 201).

When it comes to terminology in the field of biblical studies, I laud Runesson for asking what would happen to our overall perception if we translated "christianoï" in Acts 11:26 and 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16 with "messianics" and understood the term in the same sociocultural manner as we do "Pharisaioi" (Runesson 2015, p. 68). Given our emphasis on the importance of paradigms, I also laud him for asserting the following: "New discoveries, new understanding, are therefore, and must inescapably be, the result of our *conscious efforts to disentangle what we have encountered from the familiar that we know* (emphasis his). New insights are thus dependent on our willingness to de-familiarize ourselves with the phenomena we seek to understand" (Runesson 2015, pp. 56–57). I concur with Runesson regarding the abandonment of the terms "Christian", "Christianity", and "Church" (Runesson 2015, pp. 65–77), as I think it would truly lead to progress away from less adequate conceptions of and interactions with the very texts and sociohistorical realities that we are studying, as well as the world.

While Nanos and Runesson proffer “Apostolic Judaism” as “a descriptive term applicable to the early Jesus movement, including with respect to Paul and his communities” (Runesson 2015, p. 67), I find it preferable to follow the proposed translation of “christianoī” and employ the term “Messianic Judaism”.¹⁵ The term “Messianic” would then simply be understood as meaning “of or pertaining to Messiah Jesus”. If “Judaism” was then properly understood as a worldview and way of life (i.e., the way of the LORD as articulated in Gen. 18:19) that became “Messianic” when Jesus came (i.e., “I am the way [of the LORD]” as articulated in John 14:6a), then we could speak of Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles, one in Messiah, who have different responsibilities and callings from God as clearly shown in Acts 15:1–21 and 1 Cor. 7:17–24. As to the latter term, “Gentiles”, often denounced as anachronistic, I concur with Schwartz that “our modern western language is necessarily inadequate to describe the realities of a radically different culture. But our job is precisely to translate and explain, which necessarily requires that we make use of inherently misleading modern language to describe our subjects. There is simply no choice” (Schwartz 2011, p. 238). Moreover, I think that “Gentiles” is an acceptable anachronism in contemporary scholarship as a non-negative term that allows us to speak of God’s economy as involving “Israel and the nations” or “Jews and Gentiles” in what Soulen rightly refers to as a relationship of reciprocal dependence (i.e., interdependence) and mutual blessing (Soulen 1996, p. 134).

If such changes in our terminology were to be adopted, we would no longer speak of a “Christianity” against a “Judaism”, but of a Judaism that has become “Messianic” (of or pertaining to Messiah Jesus). This is a Judaism in which Israelite or Jewish particularism is not erased, but rather complemented by its intended eschatological and international horizon as the nations are turned to YHWH (see Levenson [1996] 2002, p. 164). Willitts demonstrates a correct understanding of this reality in the new creation when, in discussing Rev. 19:6–9, he observes that the bride is restored Israel and the invited wedding guests are the nations (Willitts 2013, p. 253).

Finally, in this regard, it is my contention that Thiessen’s astute attention to the weightiness of our choices in terminology in the opening chapter of his latest monograph on Paul is worthy of emulation (Thiessen 2023). First, he simply but profoundly asserts that “words matter”. He then immediately proceeds to explain that “sometimes the most common words matter the most because they carry with them hidden assumptions that bear serious ideological or, in the case of a figure like Paul, theological weight”. He then goes on to further explain how many less-than-common words and expressions he uses in the monograph in place of common words that were the result of his former “unthinking following of conventions from which [he] was too lazy or too ignorant to break away”. He goes so far as to “repent” of his previous use of these common words (e.g., “Christian”, “Christianity”, “church”, “Christ”, and “apostle”). He then proceeds to proffer terms that I agree are less anachronistic and more historically representative of Paul’s “Jewish messianism” (e.g., “Messiah loyalists”, “Jewish Jesus followers”, “gentile Jesus followers”, “assembly”, “gathering”, “meeting”, “community”, “herald”, “envoy”, and “ambassador”). His explicit and serious concern is that in all of our efforts to make Paul’s letters intelligible, we would avoid the danger of remaking Paul in our own image. He is rightly, with this essay, not interested in a “radically new reading” of Paul, but rather a “long lost reading” of Paul (Thiessen 2023, pp. 12–16, 76).

4. The Priority of Paradigms in the Fields of Theology and Biblical Studies

In the postscript to his classic monograph *Structure*, Kuhn acknowledged his surprise that many had read the main theses of his work and found them applicable to other fields.

While seeing no direct application of the paradigm concept beyond science in 1962, just seven years later Kuhn closed his postscript by drawing attention to the need for the comparative study of corresponding communities in other fields. It is my contention that Kuhn's important work on paradigms should be wholly integrated into the fields of theology and biblical studies. To a great extent it already has, as the following two examples show. May our commitment to lifelong learning—and the lifelong study and scrutiny of our and others' paradigms—truly lead to progress away from less adequate conceptions of and interactions with the very things we are studying, as well as the world.

4.1. *The Priority of Paradigms in the Field of Theology*

Arguably, primacy of place belongs to Green for establishing the priority of paradigms in the field of theology (Green 1989). His holistic treatment of the topic is a model for the field of biblical studies, as he focused his attention on Kuhn's description of the "shared paradigm" common to a community of scientists and recovered Kuhn's original meaning of the concept as referring to the constitutive pattern according to which something (as a puzzle) is organized as an irreducible whole-in-parts (Green 1989, p. 52). Green rightly emphasized that "the pattern, the peculiar way in which the components are organized into a coherent whole, is the essential point, the sine qua non for the consensus on which scientific research depends" (Green 1989, p. 52). He further noted that, in response to criticism, Kuhn later referred to what is shared by a community of scientists as a "disciplinary matrix". Green refined Kuhn's description of the "exemplar" in the disciplinary matrix, calling it the "ideal type that shows a pattern, a coherent nexus of relations" (Green 1989, p. 53). He then rightly emphasized that exemplars "signal the 'gestalt in which the situation is to be seen' and are therefore the means of bringing about 'a time-tested and group-licensed way of seeing (emphasis mine)'" (Green 1989, p. 48). Finally, Green rightly concluded that the term "paradigm", not "exemplar", should be preserved to communicate Kuhn's concept. He, in fact, reminded us that Kuhn himself acknowledged that he would have liked to have retained the term and only chose the term "exemplar" because he thought he had lost control of the word "paradigm" (Green 1989, p. 158).

4.2. *The Priority of Paradigms in Biblical Studies*

Arguably, primacy of place belongs to Zetterholm for establishing the priority of paradigms in the field of biblical studies, particularly when it comes to evaluating the competing perspectives for the interpretation of Paul (Zetterholm 2009).¹⁶ Explicitly describing the work of Kuhn and appropriating it to write his concise but thorough history of the interpretation of Paul, Zetterholm rightly showed that the traditional interpretation of Paul has been considered the normal scientific paradigm which has not only determined the boundaries of scholarship on Paul, but which scholars have painstakingly confirmed in their work (Zetterholm 2009, p. 234). In explicating this paradigm, he devoted thirty-two pages to the discussion of Paul and history, thirty-four pages to the emergence of the traditional paradigm (which is Protestant in general, and Lutheran in particular), and twenty-five pages to the formation of the standard view of Paul. He rightly emphasized how the normal theological paradigm of *Paul against Judaism* (emphasis mine) played a critical role in the rise of the traditional paradigm (Zetterholm 2009, p. 234).

Very importantly, Zetterholm then began to discuss the notion of the "framework of interpretation" (Zetterholm 2009, pp. 235–40). This is something which I address below in dialogue with Torrance ([1983] 1992) in my proffering of a hermeneutical way forward to the nonsupersessionist reading of the NT in general, and of Gal. 3:28 in particular. Zetterholm rightly emphasized that despite the fact that the world of ideas constituting the natural background for the original readers is only partially known to us, every attempt to

understand what Paul meant must also include a reconstruction of the symbolic world to which the texts refer (Zetterholm 2009, p. 236). After explaining the difficulties, limitations, and tentative nature of that reconstruction, Zetterholm rightly focused our attention on the plausibility of interpretations (Zetterholm 2009, pp. 236–37).

He emphasized the fact that when it comes to evaluating the plausibility of competing interpretations, the degree to which a particular interpretation recommends itself depends on three main factors. The first among equals, so to speak, is the overarching perspective to which the scholar adheres. That is the *paradigm* (emphasis Zetterholm's) that determines which questions are relevant to ask and what answers are scientifically and socially acceptable. Second among equals is the *interpretive framework*, which Zetterholm described as "the sum of all theories and presumptions (more or less valid) included in the interpretation and on which the interpretation is based". Again, I will address this topic at the end of the essay. Third among equals is the internal coherence of the interpretation itself. Zetterholm correctly observed that an interpretation may be critiqued at each one of these three levels (Zetterholm 2009, p. 238).

When it comes to evaluating the plausibility of the traditional perspective, Zetterholm rightly contended that the issues that have been seen as relevant and acceptable are bound up with rather specific interpretations of Christian theology in which the opposition of Paul to Judaism and between Christianity and Judaism are paramount (Zetterholm 2009, p. 238). Thus, Zetterholm remains right to have asserted that "*the real problem with the traditional paradigm is that it emerged as a theological solution to a theological problem*" (emphasis his) (Zetterholm 2009, p. 239). Moreover, he was right to conclude that it is highly implausible that the traditional paradigm on Paul qualifies as a valid point of departure for contemporary Pauline scholarship (Zetterholm 2009, p. 239). While I have avoided using the word "wrong" in this essay of any perspective, following Kuhn's cautions, perhaps given how concretized the traditional paradigm still is to this day, now might just be the time to ruminate on a very important principle from *Common Sense*: "A long habit of not thinking a thing WRONG, gives it a superficial appearance of being RIGHT" (emphasis Paine's) (Paine [1776] 1997, p. 1).

A careful reading of Zetterholm's entire monograph clearly reveals his awareness of the serious anomalies that have arisen which have violated the traditional paradigm-induced expectations that have governed the "normal exegesis" of the Pauline writings. In addition, he was not only aware of the crisis that it led to in the field, but concisely documented the early history of it on behalf of all exegetes. Most important, he seemed to have been intuitively clear at the time he wrote his monograph that the process would then proceed through the disarray of "various parallel and contradictory interpretations" to the resolution of the crisis by a paradigm shift to a new dominant paradigm (Zetterholm 2009, p. 240). In fact, anticipating that very paradigm shift, he then made what I think is one of his most important statements ever: "Such a perspective may prove highly interesting also for those interested in developing the theology of the Christian church, which in several ways seems to be in need of being rescued from itself" (Zetterholm 2009, p. 240). As the scrutiny of paradigms continues, one can only hope that the profound anomalies that have engendered the emerging nonsupersessionist, within Judaism paradigm will penetrate existing knowledge in the fields of biblical studies and theology down to the core.

Given that Zetterholm devoted an entire earlier monograph to explicating how highly implausible it is that the traditional paradigm on Paul qualifies as a valid point of departure for contemporary Pauline scholarship, it is striking that Hagner commended him for his "quite remarkable fair-minded comment" that "it is, of course, possible that the theological interpretation of Paul that has developed over the centuries represents an accurate reconstruction of the historical Paul's thought world" (Hagner 2018, p. 9). It is striking precisely

because Zetterholm's very next statement is the following: "However, if the fundamental assumption in this reconstruction—the vile character of ancient Judaism—would turn out to be mistaken, what would then happen to the reconstructions of Paul that were based on this assumption" (Zetterholm 2015, p. 42)? Hagner's only response was wholly ironically to state that "the traditional view of Paul, however, in no way requires such hostility toward Judaism" (Hagner 2018, p. 9).¹⁷

I would suggest that what we are seeing here in this binary opposition is exactly what Kuhn told us to expect, namely, two people with incommensurable viewpoints. One puts on the inversion goggles of the nonsupersessionist or within Judaism paradigm long enough to undergo the revolutionary transformation of their vision. The other puts on the inversion goggles of the nonsupersessionist or within Judaism paradigm, but while they were in the initial state of extreme disorientation and acute personal crisis from having their world turned upside down, they took the goggles off and did not undergo the revolutionary transformation of their vision. Thus, that scholar (i.e., Hagner) concluded that "the so-called "historical" readings of the Paul-within-Judaism scholars can often make sense of the Pauline texts only by means of a tortuous exegesis" (Hagner 2018, p. 9). This is why I made the following assertion in the Introduction: Surely, such binary opposition and conflictual assertions between scholars warrants a deeper look to determine whether the exegesis associated with this paradigm shift is truly tortuous (i.e., self-convoluting to force the texts into the nonsupersessionist, within Judaism perspective), or whether the attempt to determine the plausibility of the nonsupersessionist, within Judaism paradigm by scholars inured to the traditional paradigm is torturous (i.e., self-engendering of painful cognitive dissonance leading to the pertinacious defense of the traditional paradigm).

Zetterholm's commitment to the emerging nonsupersessionist paradigm is explicitly expressed starting in the earliest pages of his 2009 monograph. Having written an entire treatise on underlying assumptions, he was compelled to open his study with an account of his own underlying assumptions. First, he emphasized the fact that he is not affiliated with any religious community. Second, he emphasized that he generally lacks theological convictions and therefore has no theology to defend. He then rightly clarified that this does not guarantee scholarly objectivity or freedom from influencing biases, but that his biases would be of another kind. He then told readers to expect to find that he sides with those scholars who regard Paul as part of first-century Judaism, within, not against, it. While acknowledging a post-Holocaust perspective, he then emphasized that the most decisive reason for assuming a Jewish Paul was the history of Pauline scholarship itself. A comprehensive understanding of "the historical situation in which the Christian anti-Semitic discourse emerged and how this emergence led to a pattern of thought within western civilization that emphasized the opposition between Judaism and Christianity" made it hard for him to accept the traditional paradigm as the fundamental point of departure for historical study of the Pauline writings (Zetterholm 2009, p. x).

I myself was raised in the Roman Catholic paradigm. As a teenager, I then underwent a revolutionary transformation of vision in a "conversion" to the traditional Protestant paradigm (recall from above that Kuhn contended that the transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a "conversion" experience). In my later graduate study of the Tanakh, Second Temple Jewish literature, and the New Covenant Writings, I underwent yet an even more revolutionary transformation of vision to the nonsupersessionist or within Judaism paradigm.¹⁸ Thus, I now wholly concur with Zetterholm that the dogmatically motivated dichotomy between Judaism and Christianity is not the interpretive key to understanding the NT in general, or the Pauline writings in particular. We must adopt the inherently Israelite or later Jewish perspective of Paul and therefore of the rest of the Scriptures as the interpretive key (Zetterholm 2009, pp. x–xi). It is, in fact, the

major hermeneutical way forward to another real-life instance of progress away from less adequate conceptions of and interactions with the texts that we exegete, as well as the world.

5. A Twofold Hermeneutical Way Forward

As stated in the Introduction, I bring this essay to a close by proffering a twofold hermeneutical way forward toward the nonsupersessionist reading of the NT. To ensure that this is not viewed as an idealistic theorization, I then concisely demonstrate the actual praxis of this twofold hermeneutical way forward utilizing Gal. 3:28 as my example. To be clear, I do not exegete Gal. 3:28 per se, but rather point to a hermeneutical way forward that leads to a radically different understanding of this passage than that of Hagner. This closing section of the essay specifically includes the proffering of two coined hermeneutical terms and concepts: “The Primary Heschelian Hermeneutic” and “The Primary Torrancean Hermeneutic”. This then issues forth in a discussion of dialectical negation as a hermeneutical key to a fuller contextual understanding of Gal. 3:28. Prior to doing this, I am compelled to provide a fresh composite definition of the term (and concept) “supersessionism” synthesized from the most recent work of Soulen (2022) with one additional major point from his much earlier monograph (Soulen 1996). It is my paraphrased and amplified non-linear composite definition. After all, Soulen opens chapter one of his latest monograph by asserting that “*supersessionism* is not an attractive word, but it can be a useful one if it is clearly defined” (Soulen 2022, p. 5).

5.1. A Fresh, Composite Definition of the Term (and Concept) “Supersessionism”

Supersessionism is any reading or understanding of the Scriptures, or overarching summational narrative thereof, such as the second-century “creation, fall, redemption, and consummation” narrative of Irenaeus, that (1) jumps directly from Genesis 1–3 to Jesus Messiah and the NT, thereby fracturing the canon of Scripture and rupturing the reciprocal relationship between the Tanakh and the New Covenant Writings, leading to “Israel-forgetfulness” and “YHWH-amnesia”; (2) contradicts the fact of Rom. 11:28b–29 that from the standpoint of God’s election, Israel is beloved for the sake of the ancestors, and the gifts and the calling of YHWH to Israel are irrevocable; (3) views God’s covenant with Israel after the coming of Messiah Jesus as a thing of the past, holding to “promise, fulfillment, and cancelation” instead of “promise, fulfillment, and confirmation”; (4) reduces Israel from God’s unsubstitutable elect people, upon whom God set his love as explicitly stated in Deut 7:6–7, to an instrument of God akin to a utility company that God closes down after Jesus comes; or (5) contradicts the unerasable God-created and God-gifted distinction between Jews and Gentiles in a shalomic relationship of reciprocal dependence (i.e., interdependence) and mutual blessing, even into the new creation (Soulen 1996, p. 134; 2022, pp. 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 19, 64, 66).

5.2. The First Hermeneutical Way Forward: The Primary Heschelian Hermeneutic

Having provided this fresh composite definition of the term (and concept) “supersessionism”, we may now proceed with the discussion of the twofold hermeneutical way forward beginning with Heschel and then moving on to Torrance. Heschel explicitly stated that his sole quest in his exegetical work on the prophets was to gain interpretive insight (Heschel [1962] 1969, p. xi). In light of our focus on the critical importance of paradigms to exegetical insight, I now proffer Heschel’s articulation of his overall approach to gaining such insight as a first hermeneutical way forward. I have coined this first hermeneutical concept “The Primary Heschelian Hermeneutic”. I find it advantageous to use Heschel’s own words, albeit I have rearranged the order of the sentences for maximal impact. It is

self-explanatory and should be practiced to the extent humanly possible. However, it must be emphasized here that by “seeing the phenomenon from within”, Heschel was referring to the emic perspective (Heschel [1962] 1969, p. xii).¹⁹

The procedure employed in an inquiry for gaining such insight is the method of pure reflection. Observation, inspection, tackling, and probing, the sheer seeing of what we face, serve to introduce us to the realness of the phenomenon and sharpen our ability to formulate questions conducive to the discovery of what is unique about it. Indeed, it requires much effort to learn which questions should not be asked and which claims must not be entertained.

Insight is the beginning of perceptions to come rather than the extension of perceptions gone by. Conventional seeing, operating as it does with patterns and coherences, is a way of seeing the present in the past tense. Insight is an attempt to think in the present. Insight is a breakthrough, requiring much intellectual dismantling and dislocation. It begins with a mental interim, with the cultivation of a feeling for the unfamiliar, unparalleled, incredible. It is in being involved with a phenomenon, being intimately engaged to it, courting it, as it were, that after much perplexity and embarrassment we come upon insight—upon a way of seeing the phenomenon from within. Insight is accompanied by a sense of surprise. What has been closed is suddenly disclosed. It entails genuine perception, seeing anew. What impairs our sight are habits of seeing as well as the mental concomitants of seeing. Our sight is suffused with knowing, instead of feeling painfully the lack of knowing what we see. Rather than blame things for being obscure, we should blame ourselves for being biased and prisoners of self-induced repetitiveness. *The principle to be kept in mind is to know what we see rather than to see what we know* (emphasis mine) (Heschel [1962] 1969, pp. xi–xii).

I think it is imperative that we allow Heschel’s profound words to challenge our paradigms and exegetical praxis afresh. When we distill his words down to their essence, it is the principle to be kept in mind that I am proffering as “The Primary Heschelian Hermeneutic”: to know what we see rather than to see what we know. Had I not slowed down and relooked at Gal. 3:28 and cognate passages, I would have missed seeing the beauty and importance of dialectical negation as evidenced in the Tanakh, the NT in general, and Gal. 3:28 and its cognates in particular.²⁰ Let us now proceed to discuss the second hermeneutical way forward that should be understood as a corollary to the first.

5.3. *The Second Hermeneutical Way Forward: The Primary Torrancean Hermeneutic*

As observed earlier, the concept of a paradigm may also be described as the overall “interpretive framework” to which a scholar adheres when exegeting the biblical texts. Recall that Zetterholm described a paradigm in this sense as “the sum of all theories and presumptions (more or less valid) included in the interpretation and on which the interpretation is based” (Zetterholm 2009, p. 238). Thus, I now proffer Torrance’s decisively deeper, dynamic, relational, and holistic articulation of the overall epistemological approach that should be taken in our exegetical work as a second hermeneutical way forward (Torrance [1983] 1992, pp. 1–2).

Torrance, working from a similar scientific and philosophical perspective as Kuhn, emphasized that in the analytical tradition of thought, a detachment and abstraction of Jesus and the revelation mediated through him from the matrix of the natural or inherent Israelite relations in which he is found occurred. Thus, he proffered a far more holistic overall epistemological approach that is “more in accordance with the modes of connection and behaviour actually found in nature”, to which he contended that we had been “directed to by the epoch-making work of James Clerk Maxwell and Albert Einstein above all” (Torrance [1983] 1992, p. 2). He rightly emphasized that this approach involves finding the inherent interpretive framework that is revealed to us by the very texts or sociohistorical realities

that we are studying. He further observed that this approach affords us a way to overcome the damage that has been done by dichotomous ways of thinking when it comes to our understanding of God, Jesus Messiah, and the patterns of thought embodied in Israel in both the Tanakh and NT (Torrance [1983] 1992, pp. 1, 14–15, 19).²¹

Torrance rightly advised exegetes that in order to practice this approach “we must go to school with Israel” (Torrance [1983] 1992, p. 12). Having taken his own advice, his work clearly shows that he came to see the overall interpretive framework of the Scriptures as an inherently Israelite or Jewish framework. Runesson, also having gone to school with Israel, most recently rightly concludes that reading the NT “within Judaism” involves a hermeneutic that simultaneously “makes its content foreign *and* finds its authors’ Jewish voices” (Runesson 2023, pp. 301, 311). Moreover, when it comes to Romans 11, Runesson rightly concludes that Paul’s “invitation to non-Jews to share in the nourishment that comes from the olive tree whose roots extend back to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, privileges Judaism as the hermeneutical frame within which everything else is fitted” (Runesson 2023, p. 309).

I have coined this second hermeneutical concept that involves finding the inherent interpretive framework of the texts and sociohistorical realities that we study “The Primary Torrancean Hermeneutic”. As with Heschel, I find it advantageous to use Torrance’s own words and, again, have rearranged the order of the sentences for maximal impact. It is equally self-explanatory and should be practiced to the extent humanly possible.

I sometimes liken the procedure that this involves to the sort of thing we do when we have solved a jig-saw puzzle. In the first instance we have to find out how to fit the scattered pieces together, when the picture which they conjointly make comes to view. But after that, when the picture is broken up and the various pieces have been thrown back into disarray, it is quite impossible for us to fit them all together again as though we did not know the picture that they made. Something like that happens in the process of scientific inquiry. Once we have got hold of the basic clue or gained some anticipatory insight into the pattern of things, we set about re-examining and reinterpreting all the data, putting them together under the guidance of the basic insight we have discovered until the full coherent pattern comes clearly to view. Now of course in a scientific inquiry the fundamental insight with which we work may have to be revised as all the pieces of evidence come together and throw light upon each other, but nevertheless it is under the direction of that insight that the discovery is made.

When we adopt this kind of approach, whether in natural science or in theology, we develop a form of inquiry in which we allow some field of reality to disclose itself to us in the complex of its internal relations or its latent structure, and thus seek to understand it in the light of its own intrinsic intelligibility or logos. As we do that, we come up with a significant clue in the light of which all evidence is then re-examined and reinterpreted and found to fall into a coherent pattern of order. *Thus, we seek to understand something, not by schematising it to an external or alien framework of thought, but by operating with a framework of thought appropriate to it, one which it suggests to us out of its own inherent constitutive relations and which we are rationally constrained to adopt in faithful understanding and interpretation of it* (emphasis mine). (Torrance [1983] 1992, pp. 3–4)

I think it is imperative that we allow Torrance’s profound words to challenge our paradigms and exegetical praxis afresh. When we distill his words down to their essence, it is the principle to be kept in mind that I am proffering as “The Primary Torrancean Hermeneutic”: to understand the Scriptures from their own inherent framework. After “going to school with Israel”, I now see that the overall inherent interpretive framework of

the Scriptures is an Israelite, later Jewish, and even later Messianic Jewish framework.²² In asserting this, I am in no way arguing against Harrill's approach to the non-dichotomous integration of Jewish, Greek, and Roman materials into our exegesis of the NT (Harrill 2006, p. 2) as the discussion of dialectical negation as a hermeneutical key to the interpretation of Gal. 3:28 below shows. Had I not slowed down and relooked at Gal. 3:28 and cognate passages from this nonsupersessionist Messianic Jewish coign of vantage, I would have mistakenly continued to see Gal. 3:28 as a case of absolute negation of the three dyads like Hagner.²³

6. Toward a Nonsupersessionist Reading of Gal. 3:28

As stated earlier, it is my contention that Hagner's downplaying of the Jew–Gentile distinction in Messiah, in the direction of erasure theology, is at the very least a result of his misinterpretation of Gal. 3:28 and cognate passages.²⁴ In his concise discussion of Romans, Hagner contends that “the indictment not only of the Gentiles but also of the Jews in the opening chapters of Romans has the effect of demolishing the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (2:25–29; cf. Gal. 3:28)” (Hagner 2018, p. 115).²⁵ Absent in Hagner's work is an understanding of the idiom of dialectical negation and the fact that unity or oneness in the new creation is dependent on differences, albeit a transformation in those differences is indeed a part of the new creation in Messiah. Thus, immediately following, I provide a concise overview of dialectical negation as a hermeneutical key that helps us to better know what we see when it comes to Gal. 3:28 and select cognate passages. I then provide a concise summary of what I consider to be a model of the exegesis of Gal. 3:28 by Gundry-Volf (2003), as a full-blown exegesis of this passage is beyond the scope of this article. This summary serves as an example of the actual praxis of the proffered twofold hermeneutical way forward.

6.1. Dialectical Negation as a Hermeneutical Key to Gal. 3:28

Arguably, primacy of place belongs to Kruse (1954) and Bartelt (2002) for bringing a clear understanding of dialectical negation to the field of biblical studies.²⁶ Bartelt, in dialogue with Kruse's essay, shows it to be a biblical motif that is “an idiomatic translational key” that is helpful for the exegesis of select texts. He also rightly shows it to be “a theological concept that is capable of providing a more profound understanding of all Scripture” (Bartelt 2002, p. 57).

Succinctly stated, dialectical negation “holds a negative and positive statement in a dialectical, but not essentially contradictory, tension” (Bartelt 2002, p. 59). The negative statement “is often striking and even contrary to what should be expected” (Bartelt 2002, p. 58). Most important, the negated side of the dialectical statement is not absolutely negated, but somehow “subordinated to or qualified by the positive statement” (Bartelt 2002, p. 59). In fact, misunderstanding dialectical negation as absolute negation is only possible if one understands the negative statement without its proper relationship to the positive statement (Bartelt 2002, p. 64). It is not a choice of one statement over the other, but an exegetical “both/and” idiom that is characterized and defined by the positive statement (Bartelt 2002, pp. 60, 65). In some instances, it might be translated as “not just A but especially B” or “not so much A but more importantly B” (Bartelt 2002, pp. 59–60). As Bartelt helpfully emphasizes, Kruse's “parade example” was Jer. 7:22, which may be understood in light of Jer. 7:23 as follows: “It was not just about offerings and sacrifices that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of Egypt, but much more about this, that they should listen to my voice, and I would be their God and they my people” (Bartelt 2002, pp. 58–59). Another classic example is Hos. 6:6, which is often translated something like, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice; the knowledge of God, not whole burnt

offerings". However, the NET translation, for example, understands this passage as an instance of dialectical negation and adds "not simply" in front of "sacrifice" and "whole burnt offerings".

When it comes to the interpretation of "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua" in Gal. 3:28 as an instance of dialectical negation, the most instructive parallel elsewhere in the Pauline corpus is 1 Cor 3:7 (NASB), "So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." Clearly, "the one who plants" and "the one who waters" are not absolutely negated. They are essential! Thus, 1 Cor. 3:7 may be rightly understood as saying that it is not so much about the one who plants or the one who waters, but especially or more importantly about God who causes the growth.

Likewise, the "circumcision" and "uncircumcision" of Gal 5:6 and 6:15 cannot absolutely be negated, as Paul explicitly emphasized that both of these terms denote a divinely assigned, privileged, social gift, call, position in life, and responsibility before God in 1 Cor. 7:17–20. Hence, this bifurcation of humanity in Galatians is simply subordinated or qualified by the more important new covenant reality of keeping the commandments of God in the new creation. It follows then that the three social pairs of Gal. 3:28 are not absolutely negated, but subordinated to or qualified by the positive statement about the oneness of the new creation in Messiah Jesus. In this particular instance, I contend that the formulation of the idiom of dialectical negation that works best is "not A unless understood in light of B" (Bartelt 2002, p. 60). This formulation makes it very clear that anything in the three pairs that is not in step with the oneness of the inaugurated new creation (Gal. 6:15) must be transformed in the sense of being reprioritized or revalorized. Thus, Gal. 3:28 might best be understood as saying something like this: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, unless you understand these social distinctions or differences in their transformed, reprioritized, or revalorized sense in the unity or oneness of the new creation.

This understanding of Gal. 3:28 and cognate passages such as Gal. 5:6 and 6:15, as well as 1 Cor. 7:19, has been cogently explicated by Rudolph (2011, especially pp. 23–53), but my engagement with the work of Bartelt is intended to further clarify how the rhetorical device of dialectical negation as a form of hyperbole works in general, and then in regard to Gal. 3:28 in particular. Also insightful is the explanation of Paul's "theologizing"²⁷ of the transformation of social categories when it comes to in-Messiah identity by Campbell (2008, especially pp. 159–75). However, given the emphasis on the implications of our choices of terminology in this essay, I contend that Rudolph's use of "revalorization" is far more accurate than Campbell's choice of "relativization" when it comes to the transformation of social identities in the new creation. While Gundry-Volf uses the term "revalorization" of the dyads in Gal. 3:28, she concludes that the key to Paul's non-erasure language is adiaphorization (i.e., indifference to the differences). However, in citing 1 Cor. 11:11 to make her point regarding male and female in the new creation (in the Lord neither is woman independent of man nor man independent of woman), she actually makes the case for interdependence between the members of the dyads, not indifference (Gundry-Volf 2003, pp. 27–29). That said, Gundry-Volf's holistic approach to Gal. 3:28 is exemplary as shown below.

6.2. A Model of Detailed Exegesis of Gal. 3:28 as Dialectical Negation

Overall, I have found the approach of Gundry-Volf (2003) to be a model for the detailed exegesis of Gal. 3:28, though I find the case for Paul's use of dialectical negation more convincing than her case about Paul's adiaphorization of differences. Her sound hermeneutical approach seeks to understand Paul's theologizing not as a "free-floating

tradition”, but within the context of Galatians itself. Moreover, she rightly asserts that the exegete must start with the meaning of the negation of the distinction between “Jew” and “Greek” and then extrapolate the meaning of the negation of the distinction between the other two dyads (Gundry-Volf 2003, pp. 17–18). Here, it must be noted that she treats the dyad of “Jew” and “Greek” as the equivalent of “Jew” and “Gentile”. However, Wu’s nuanced analysis of the dyad convincingly shows that Paul’s deliberate choice of “Greek” was related to it being a stereotypical term of honor in the Roman Empire that represented wisdom and the epitome of civilized culture (Wu 2013, pp. 771–73). Hence, Wu rightly concludes that Paul’s negation of the dyad was focused on overcoming any sense of boasting related to preconceived notions about cultural superiority as also seen in 1 Cor. 1:22–24 (Wu 2013, pp. 774–75). This is also the conclusion of Barclay who emphasizes that it is the superiority of one’s social status, and the arrogance and competition associated with that status in the system of honor, that Paul desired his addressees to overcome (Barclay 2015, p. 435).

Gundry-Volf’s exegesis is developed in dialogue with two scholars who strongly argue for absolute negation of differences in Gal. 3:28 (Wire 1990; Boyarin 1994). She shows how the approach of these two scholars falls in line with a comparative methodological trend first substantially developed by Meeks (1974), then followed by others, which locates Gal. 3:28 in the Hellenistic tradition of “unification” by the eradication of differences (Gundry-Volf 2003, pp. 9–22). While it is apposite to think that the cultural context provides a hermeneutical key to the interpretation of this passage, Gundry-Volf rightly questions whether the Hellenistic tradition of “reunification” through the erasure of differences is a plausible methodological starting point (Gundry-Volf 2003, p. 17). In answering this question, she examines Gal. 3:28 within the larger argumentative context of Gal. 3:6–29 in which it appears as the culmination, and in the broader framework of Paul’s thought on similar issues elsewhere. She goes so far as to explore whether key terms and concepts that Paul utilized such as “being in Messiah”, “belonging to Messiah”, “being baptized into Messiah”, “putting on Messiah”, or “being one in Messiah” in any way entail the erasure of differences, and if so, in what sense.

Upon the completion of her analyses, Gundry-Volf astutely emphasizes that the immediate context of Gal 3:28 suggests that we conclude that “there is neither Jew nor Greek” is not about the erasure of differences but the revalorization of those differences in the new unity and equality of the new creation community (Gundry-Volf 2003, p. 21). She then shows how that conclusion analogically applies to the other two dyads of Gal. 3:28 in the remainder of her essay. Lopez, in an insightful discussion of the politics of the new creation, concurs that Paul was aiming at the overcoming of social stereotypes, especially involving domination, in the non-hegemonic new creation marked by solidarity and mutuality (Lopez 2010, p. 147).

Moreover, Lopez connects the dots between this conclusion and all of the following in the context of Galatians: (1) the contrast in Gal. 5:19–23 between the “works of the flesh” (related to divisions and sects, to which I add hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, and envying) and the “fruit of the spirit”; (2) the directive in Gal. 5:13 to “serve one another as slaves”; (3) the summational law of Lev. 19:18b cited in Gal. 5:14 “to love your neighbor as yourself”; (4) the directive in Gal. 5:25 not to provoke or envy one another; and (5) the exhortation in Gal. 5:15 not to bite and devour one another lest they be consumed by one another—because as Gal. 5:21 states, those who do not live according to the politics of the new creation will not inherit the kingdom of God (Lopez 2010, p. 152). Strikingly, Lopez emphasizes that Paul’s goal was the “transformative exodus position of bringing forth a new creation where all the nations will enjoy the *shalom*. . . the one God of Israel provides” (Lopez 2010, p. 144). Her italicization of “shalom” should invoke not

just “peace”, but the entire semantic range of the term and concept as delineated in the HALOT lexicon: wholeness, completeness, intactness, integrality, soundness, sufficiency, satisfaction, harmony, peace, or, in summation, holistic, communal wellbeing.

7. Conclusions

In this essay, I have labored to counteract the supersessionist reading of the New Testament in general, and Gal. 3:28 in particular. My intention has been especially to respond to Hagner’s claims, cited above, that (1) “the so-called ‘historical’ readings of the Paul-within-Judaism scholars can often make sense of the Pauline texts only by means of a tortuous exegesis” and (2) Paul’s “indictment not only of the Gentiles but also of the Jews in the opening chapters of Romans has the effect of demolishing the distinction between Jews and Gentiles.” I have specifically attempted to show that the binary opposition between the “traditional” perspective and the “nonsupersessionist” or “within-Judaism” perspective is a result of paradigms. After providing a concise but comprehensive overview of Kuhn’s insightful work on paradigms, and explaining why we must understand and scrutinize ours and others’ paradigms, I discussed the importance of our choices of terminology and how they might contribute to our competing perspectives. I then closed the essay by proffering a twofold hermeneutical way forward toward the nonsupersessionist reading of the NT. To ensure that this would not be viewed as an idealistic theorization, I then demonstrated the actual praxis of this twofold hermeneutical way forward utilizing Gal. 3:28 as my example. This included the proffering of two coined hermeneutical terms and concepts, “The Primary Heschelian Hermeneutic” and “The Primary Torrancean Hermeneutic”, as well as a discussion of dialectical negation as a hermeneutical key to a fuller and thus better contextual understanding of Gal. 3:28 in particular and the NT in general.

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Notes

- ¹ As Hesslein rightly contends, the term “nonsupersessionist” is generally preferable to Soulen’s earlier term “post-supersessionist” as the latter term leaves one with the impression that supersessionism is a thing of the past, whereas it continues to the present day (Hesslein [2015] 2018, p. 11). In fact, as of his 2022 work, Soulen himself now uses the dehyphenated form of ‘nonsupersessionist’. For a detailed definition of supersessionism, and thus post- or non-supersessionism, please see page 10 below.
- ² For an insightful, challenging, fresh discussion about reading the NT ‘within Judaism’, see Runesson (2023).
- ³ The Jewish term “Tanakh”, an acronym derived from the three divisions of the Hebrew & Aramaic Scriptures (i.e., the Torah, the Nevi’im or Prophets, and the Ketuvim or Writings) found in the masorah magna of the medieval period is preferred as a nonsupersessionist term in contrast to the second-century term “Old Testament” which may be readily understood as supersessionist in problematic ways.
- ⁴ Following the corrective work of Runesson (2015) and Korner (2017), I concur that the term ‘church’ should no longer be used to translate ‘ekklēsia’. This word should either remain untranslated, be transliterated, or be translated into English as “assembly”, “congregation”, or “community” and the like depending on the specific context. Moreover, Korner is correct to assert that “by adopting ekklēsia, with its linguistic roots both in the Jewish LXX and in Greek civic politics, as the collective designation for his Jewish/Gentile communities, Paul was able implicitly to affirm the continuation of the social and ethnic identities both of Jews and Gentiles (e.g., Scythian, Roman, Ionian)” without affirming “the continuation of socio-economic stratification. . . within the communal gatherings of his ekklēsiai (e.g., Gal. 3:28)” (Korner 2017, pp. 233–34).
- ⁵ For a holistic and rather comprehensive overview of how God works in history through Israelite and later Jewish particularism with an international horizon involving all nations, see especially Levenson ([1996] 2002); cf. Kinzer (2018). While Levenson is to be lauded for his rather comprehensive explication of the topic, arguably his handling of the Tanakh is superior to his handling of the NT. For the most recent and insightful discussion about how the unity of Israel and the nations, or Jews and Gentiles, in

Messiah is dependent on their distinctions or differences and thus characterized by interdependence and mutual blessing—even in the new creation—see Soulen (2022); cf. Soulen (1996); Lopez (2010); and Willitts (2013). For an understanding of non-nullified, reprioritized, and revalorized Jewish and Gentile identity in Messiah, see especially Rudolph (2010, 2011) and Tucker (2011). For a fresh, interdisciplinary, nonsupersessionist analysis of the unity of Jews as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles in Messiah based on two-natures Christology, see Hesslein ([2015] 2018).

6 Here, I am following Thiessen, who in his paradigm shifting work on the portrayal of ritual purity and impurity in the Gospels rightly expresses deep concerns about the impact of the centuries old almost universal misconstrual of the Jewish ritual purity system on “theology, biblical interpretation, sermons, and the everyday thinking and language” of many followers of Jesus Messiah (Thiessen 2020, p. 4).

7 The term “another perspective” was utilized here instead of “the other perspective” in an effort to inoculate us from what Tannen calls “the argument culture”, which is characterized among other things by viewing everything as a war or battle, reducing everything to two sides, and allowing debate to dominate over dialogue (Tannen 1998).

8 The 50th anniversary edition of Kuhn’s *Structure*, as it is commonly referred to in scientific literature, was intentionally utilized in order that readers might benefit from the introductory essay by Hacking which serves to introduce Kuhn’s work and orient people to his main theses. For an explanation of paradigms suitable for the general public, see Barker (1992).

9 I concur with Levine that “attempts to deny supersessionism in the New Testament must be based on hermeneutics” (Levine 2022, p. 1).

10 As Kuhn’s original articulation of his theses has held up for over half a century, very little is mentioned in this essay about the critiques of Kuhn’s work or his responses. For detailed information on that topic, see especially (Lakatos and Musgrave 1970) and (Richards and Daston 2016).

11 It cannot be overemphasized that Westerners will have to overcome their inherent tendency to see or hear the word ‘anomalies’ and immediately interpret it negatively. Here, they are what differs from the existing paradigm.

12 There are many such stories of scientific paradigm shifts in Kuhn’s *Structure* that provide valuable lessons for virtually any field of study as well as ordinary life.

13 This essay is intentionally punctuated with the language of ‘seeing’ or ‘looking’ to help make this point.

14 When it comes to responding to the resounding clarion call to re-think our terminology in the field of biblical studies, I strongly recommend the reading of Schwartz (2011) and Runesson (2015) as insightful and challenging starting places. See also now Thiessen (2023, pp. 12–16).

15 On the suitability of the term “Messianic Judaism” for the New Testament period, see Rudolph (2013).

16 This section features the past tense, as Zetterholm’s monograph was written more than a decade ago and many of the envisaged developments, including a major paradigm shift, are arguably well underway.

17 I say “ironically” here, because Hagner appears to somewhat understand just how hostile toward Judaism his entire thesis is when he says, “I am well aware that to speak of Christianity as ‘the fulfillment of Judaism’ will be taken negatively by most Jews as both insensitive and potentially anti-Semitic. I do so because, to my mind, this is the most accurate and effective way to describe the issue before us” (Hagner 2018, p. 21). From the perspective of this article, I take his words “to my mind” to mean “according to my paradigm”.

18 Recall that, with Hesslein, I think the term “nonsupersessionist” is generally preferable to Soulen’s term “post-supersessionist” as the latter term leaves one with the impression that supersessionism is a thing of the past, whereas it continues to the present day (Hesslein [2015] 2018, p. 11).

19 Succinctly stated for our purposes here, “emic” and “etic” are technical terms that linguist Kenneth Pike originally derived from the suffices of the words “phonemic” and “phonetic”. The “emic” referred to any unit of significant vocal sound in a specific language, and the “etic” referred to the system of cross-cultural notations that were found useful in representing these sounds. When applied to the exegesis of biblical texts, the emic perspective is the exegete’s attempt as an “outsider” to describe as faithfully as possible the “insider’s” own descriptions or productions of thought, language, behavior, etc. The etic perspective is the exegete’s subsequent attempt to take these descriptions and redescribe them in a system of their own making. It cannot be overemphasized that the exegete’s attempt to reproduce the insider’s own viewpoint is an acknowledgment that the exegete is a student of the phenomena under study and not to be confused with an actual “insider” (see, McCutcheon [1999] 2005, pp. 15, 17).

20 For an exemplary study of how hastily assuming that something is ‘immediately evident’, and how seeing what we know instead of knowing what we see is the exegete’s enemy, see Welton (2022).

21 I am convinced that the scholarly debates regarding continuity and discontinuity between the Tanakh and NT, and between a “Judaism” and a “Christianity” in the NT, reveal an entrenchment in dichotomous paradigms that prevent the exegete from seeing a far more holistic (i.e., shalomic) reality.

22 Again, on the suitability of the term “Messianic Judaism” for the New Testament period, see Rudolph (2013).

23 For a monograph length defense of Gal. 3:28 as a case of absolute negation, see Neutel ([2015] 2016).

- 24 For a concise but rather comprehensive history of the tendencies in the interpretation of Gal. 3:28 since 1990, which includes a discussion of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, see [Tolmie \(2014\)](#).
- 25 For a recent concise analysis of Rom. 1:18–32 as a description of the condition of the Gentiles and not the universal human condition that includes the Jewish people, see chapter 5 “The Gentile Problem” in [Thiessen \(2023\)](#). For the latest analysis of Rom. 1:18–32 as pertaining to Israel, see [Staples \(2024\)](#).
- 26 Bartelt expresses a debt of gratitude to Horace Hummel for having introduced him to the concept, and then throughout his essay credits Hummel and Kruse for all of their insights into the topic.
- 27 The term “theologizing” proffered by Campbell is far more accurate than “theology” when it comes to the writings of Paul. As Campbell rightly contends, while Paul’s writings are coherent and consistent, they are definitively occasional, unfinished products that are subject to an ever ongoing and dynamic process, and not theologies that are already a concretized set of systematic and static concepts or propositions of universal validity (see [Campbell 2008](#), p. 159).

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