

Per Jarle Bekken
The Word is Near You

Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die
neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

Herausgegeben von

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Band 144



Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

Per Jarle Bekken

The Word is Near You

A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul's Letter
to the Romans in a Jewish Context



Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

Printed with the support of Norges Forskningsrad

⊗ Printed on acid-free paper which falls within the guidelines of the ANSI to ensure permanence and durability.

ISBN 978-3-11-019341-1

ISSN 0171-6441

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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Printed in Germany

Data conversion and typesetting: Progressus Consultant KB in Karlstad, Schweden

Cover design: Christopher Schneider, Berlin

To Erlend, Ida and Vegard

Acknowledgements

This study arises out of the work I did for my thesis which I defended for the Ph.D. (Doctor Artium) degree at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science, Faculty of Arts, August 1998. There are many to whom I owe thanks and acknowledgements for their help to me. I am particularly grateful to my Doktorvater Professor Peder Borgen. Without his encouragement and help, far beyond what is expected from an advisor, this study would never have been completed. Professor Borgen kindled my interest in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and their relevance for the study of the New Testament. His various studies on this subject have been a stimulating guide and have inspired me for many years.

Professor Borgen has introduced me to several scholars in the field of both Philonic and New Testament research. Through the years 1989–1992 I was invited by Professor Borgen to join a Nordic research project on ‘The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism’ supported by the Joint Committee of the Nordic Research Councils for Humanities (NOS–H) together with Professor Lars Hartman, Uppsala, Professor Karl Gustav Sandelin, Åbo, and Professor Søren Giversen, Aarhus. I am indebted to them all for valuable comments on earlier drafts of the study. The flaws that remain in this thesis are all my own.

Parts of my investigation have also been discussed personally or in seminars in Norway or abroad with scholars such as the late Nils A. Dahl, Charles Kingsley Barrett, Vernon Robbins, David E. Aune, Klaus Berger, Nikolaus Walter, Jacob Jervell, and David Hellholm. I express my warmest thanks to them for sharing their expertise with me.

Thanks are also due to the members of the doctoral committee, Professors Karl Olav Sandnes and Jarl Ulrichsen, for their helpful comments.

Most of the research has been undertaken during the years 1988–1992. In 1988–1989 I received scholarships from the Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo and the Joint Committee of the Nordic Research Councils for Humanities. The main part of the work was done during a three year scholarship granted by the Norwegian Research Council. The Norwegian Research Council has also subsidized the printing and publishing of the book. My appreciation goes to these institutions for their interest in the project.

I will also express my gratitude to Rev. Dr. Brian McNeil who has seen through my English, and to Professor Bjørn Helge Sandvei for the correction of the Greek texts of the study. I am also indebted to **Engineer Christer Hellholm for his assistance** in order to prepare my manuscript in accordance with the standards required by the Publisher.

I should also like to thank the Publishers Walter de Gruyter, represented by Dr. Albrecht Döhnert and Editor Carsten Burfeind, for undertaking the publication of the book and including it in the series *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*.

Last but by no means least, my thanks are due to my family for their love and support over years and many friends for their encouragements during my work with this thesis. The book is dedicated to my children Erlend, Ida, and Vegard as an expression of my love to them.

Oslo, December 2006

Per Jarle Bekken

Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the rules recommended by the Society of Biblical Literature, according to *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson 1999. These rules include standard abbreviations for Biblical books, early Jewish and Christian literature and classical literature. The following abbreviations are not mentioned in *The SBL Handbook of Style*:

PCH	Philo, German translation, edited by L. Cohn et al.
PLCL	Philo, Loeb Classical Library

The Philonic works are abbreviated according to the guidelines set out in *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* (Vol. XVIII. Edited by D. T. Runia and G. E. Sterling; pp. 240–241. Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006) in the following way:

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Aet.</i>	<i>De Aeternitate Mundi</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De Agricultura</i>
<i>Anim.</i>	<i>De Animalibus</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>De Confusione Linguarum</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>De Vita Contemplativa</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De Decalogo</i>
<i>Deo</i>	<i>De Deo</i>
<i>Det.</i>	<i>Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Solet</i>
<i>Deus</i>	<i>Quod Deus Immutabilis Sit</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De Ebrietate</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De Fuga et Inventione</i>
<i>Gig.</i>	<i>De Gigantibus</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit</i>
<i>Hypoth.</i>	<i>Hypothetica (Apologia pro Iudaeis)</i>
<i>Ios.</i>	<i>De Iosepho</i>
<i>Leg. 1–3</i>	<i>Legum Allegoriae I, II, III</i>

<i>Legat.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>De Migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mos. 1–2</i>	<i>De Vita Mosis I, II</i>
<i>Mut.</i>	<i>De Mutatione Nominum</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	<i>De Opificio Mundi</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De Plantatione</i>
<i>Post.</i>	<i>De Posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Praem.</i>	<i>De Praemiis et Poenis, De Exsecrationibus</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De Providentia</i>
<i>QE</i>	<i>Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum I, II</i>
<i>QG 1–4</i>	<i>Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim I, II, III, IV</i>
<i>QGE</i>	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus</i>
<i>Sacr.</i>	<i>De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
<i>Somn. 1–2</i>	<i>De Somniis I, II</i>
<i>Spec. 1–4</i>	<i>De Specialibus Legibus I, II, III, IV</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De Virtutibus</i>

The biblical quotations are from RSV. Texts from Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are quoted from *OTP*, or if not found there, from *APOT*. Otherwise, the footnotes give the sources of the quotations.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1. The Focus of the Study

The following statement by P. Borgen on the relationship between Philo's writings and the New Testament can serve as a point of departure for the present study:

Philo's writings provide significant background material both for New Testament research and for studies in patristics. In New Testament research Philonic exegesis has especially been utilized to throw light upon the concept of Logos in John's Gospel and upon the platonizing exegesis and thoughts in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Philo's writings can illuminate other New Testament ideas as well, and his use of exegetical techniques and forms produces comparative material of interest.¹

In his Manson Memorial Lecture of 1965 on 'St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria,' H. Chadwick made a plea for the relevance of the literature of the Hellenistic synagogue to our understanding of early Christian theology.² In order to illustrate his main point he gave many examples from Paul's letters comparing elements of his theology with similar points in related passages in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. However, since Chadwick's study, there has been some progress in the field. This should be developed to see if fruitful insights might be gained. In an unpublished paper delivered at the SNTS Meeting at Madrid, July 1992, K. Haacker comments on this field of research:

Apparently the followers of Paul are not very fond of Philo. There are, of course, fundamental differences between the Christian apostle and the Jewish philosopher. But it cannot be ruled out that the history which Paul made and our image of Philo have heightened the differences to the detriment of historical justice and enlightened understanding. In both cases, with regard to Philo and Paul, recent scholarship has tended towards an upgrading of their Jewish heritage and identity. After all, the gap between these two Jewish writers may turn out less deep and

1 Borgen, 1984a., 106.

2 Chadwick, 1966, 286–307.

wide than it has been estimated, and further comparative reading of their works should be on our agenda.³

It is within this general current situation of research that the present work hopes to make a contribution to the task of comparing these two Jewish authors and contemporaries. In Paul's case, there are several good reasons for concentrating on Romans 9–11. These chapters have been subjected to intense study, especially in the context of attempts to clarify Christian attitudes towards the people of Israel, and the role of Israel as the people of God and its relation to the early church.⁴ The problem of unbelief and opposition to the gospel among the majority of the Jewish people was not only a challenge, but a problem that affected even the picture of God and his relation to his own people. The problem arises when the situation of the faith of the Gentiles, and the unbelief of the Jews, is confronted by the valid and binding records of God's words and promises in the holy Scripture of Israel. Paul is a representative of early Jewish Christianity who searched for a solution to the problem, not least in the Scriptures. As a biblical theologian Paul delivered a reciprocal interpretation of new events and scriptural traditions.⁵ Thus, in Romans 9–11 he develops a theology of history on the basis of Scripture as his answer to the conflict and coherence between sacred tradition and new experiences.⁶ In this case it is interesting to ask whether or not Paul's answers build on scriptural elements and language of some sort, which would have some coherence to a Jewish matrix and perhaps also be capable of winning some acceptance among his readership, at least among the many prospective readers in Rome—Jews, proselytes and Gentile sympathisers with a background in the synagogue, well acquainted with the Law of Moses from the expository readings in the synagogue. This study is meant as a contribution under this heading, especially focusing on Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 within the literary context of Rom 9:30–10:21. Chadwick drew attention to similarities between Paul's use of this Scripture in Romans 10:6–10 and Philo's interpretation of the same Scripture:

The exegesis of “the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Deut xxx.14) in Romans x. 7 f. evidently reproduces a common pattern of synagogue exposition since it occurs no less than four times in Philo. Philo even provides a parallel to the words “With the heart one believes to righteousness, with the

3 An expanded German version of this paper is published in *NTS*; cf. Haacker, 1997, 209–222; see most recently, idem, 2003, 105–108.

4 Romans 9–11 is regarded by Küng (1991, 610) ‘as the locus classicus for the relation of young Christianity to the people of Israel’. Cf. Räisänen (1995, 744), who comments on this description as ‘an accurate description of the focus of the chapters’.

5 Cf. Dahl, 1977, 121ff.

6 Cf. Räisänen (1995, 761), who comments: ‘Paul is wrestling with his sacred tradition in the light of his new experience (positively, the living together of different ethnic groups in his church; negatively, the rejection of his message by most Jews)’.

tongue confession is made unto salvation”, where Philo’s context is the admission of the penitent proselyte.⁷

Unfortunately Chadwick did not go into more details. In what follows we try to sharpen the focus of this investigation, and perhaps to explore what Chadwick was alluding to without claiming to give an exhaustive account.

1.2. Survey of the Current State of Research

Paul’s use of Deut 30:12–14 within the literary context of Rom 9:30–10:21 brings to light several exegetical questions. Some of the main questions on which scholars have focused should be mentioned at the outset of this study. This study is meant to be our suggestion towards seeking for new answers to these questions.

Before presenting the approach of our study and a survey of the current state of research, we will give a brief account of the content of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 in its own literary context.

1.2.1. Deuteronomy 30:11–14 in its Immediate Literary Context

Deut 30:11–14 is part of Moses’ last address to Israel before they enter the land.⁸ In both Deuteronomy and Leviticus, Moses describes the blessings that will come to Israel if they obey the Law (Deut 28:1–14) and the curses that will come for disobedience (Deut 28:15–68). Deuteronomy presupposes an exilic situation due to their dullness and deceptiveness of their hearts (cf. Deut 29:4, 10, 19, 28), which persist to “this day” (cf. Deut 29:4).⁹ The section Deut 30:1–10 explains that it is not enough to just ponder on the blessing and cursing: Israel must also make a conversion from an evil, disobedient way of life to an obedient one in accordance with the divine commandments of the Lord. When Israel turns and obeys ‘with all their heart’, God will gather them from the diaspora to the promised land (Deut 30:3–5). Deut 30:10 emphasizes the two conditions which are to be met if the promise of abundance shall be the result:

a) ‘... if you obey the voice of the Lord your God to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law...’

⁷ Chadwick, 1966, 295.

⁸ von Rad, 1966, 182–185.

⁹ The perspective of exile and blessing spoken of in Deuteronomy 30:1–14 are regarded as being actualized for the authors of 4QMMT and Baruch. In the letter of 4QMMT Deuteronomy 30:1–2 is quoted (C 12–16 = 4Q397 frgs. 14–21, lines 12–14) with a reference added that this text deals with ‘the end of days’: באחרית הימים (C 14); באחרית (C 16). Likewise the author of Baruch claims that Deut 30:1–2 has been realized (2:30–33; 3:7), and from the perspective of exile hears the words of Deut 30:1–6 as a promise for the people of Israel of his own day, and prays for the return from exile to the promised land (Bar 2:34–35; 3:1–8). Cf. Ross Wagner, 2002, 166 n. 143; Watson, 2004, 454–473.

b) The second condition is a thoroughgoing repentance, i.e. ‘if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.’

G. von Rad summarizes his understanding of Deut 30:1–10 in the following way:

The curses in Deuteronomy, which is here understood predominantly as law, have been fulfilled. From this standpoint the speaker looks to the future and announces a redemptive activity by which God himself creates for his people the prerequisites for complete obedience.¹⁰

In Deut 30:11–14 the elect people of God is adjured to obey the commandments of God. By so doing it will gain the rewards of life and future prosperity (Deut 30:9). Moses emphasises that the required commandments are not hidden, or obscure, but written plainly in a public document, ‘this book of the law’ (Deut 30:10). The existence of a fixed, accessible Law means that ‘the word is very near you’ (Deut 30:11, 14). The statements in Deut 30:12–13 establish this point by an argument for the availability and practicality of the Law, that Yahweh has done all that is necessary by placing the ‘word’ on Israel’s lips and in its heart. So the ‘word’ placed near by God never requires an effort on man’s part to fetch it from distant place. This argument provides the context for understanding the statements in Deut 30:15–20 of the consequences of disobedience: life or death.

1.2.2. Paul’s Rendering of Deut 30:12–14: Quotation or Not?

A fundamental issue regarding Paul’s rendering of Deut 30:12–14 is the question of whether the Pauline reference to Deuteronomy 30 is merely allusive or intended as an actual quotation. The fact that Paul interprets Deut 30:12–14 differently from the meaning in the original context, has led several scholars to the conclusion that Paul did not actually intend to interpret Scripture at all.¹¹ For example, W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam think that Paul intended neither to quote Deut 30:12–14 nor to deliver an exposition of the Scripture, but only that he was simply applying some of its language and imagery to make his point: ‘The Apostle does not intend to base any argument of the quotation from the O.T., but only selects the language as being familiar, suitable, and proverbial, in order to express what he wishes to say.’¹² Now most scholars have abandoned this standpoint for the following main reasons:¹³ The text is too close to that of the Deuteronomy passage, and the deviations of Paul’s rendering of Deut 30:12–14 from known textual versions are not significant enough to say that he only makes use of proverbial sayings. On closer examination one can observe that Paul uses

¹⁰ von Rad, 1966, 184.

¹¹ See e.g. Sanday and Headlam, 1945, 289; Barrett, 1975, 199. See further Badenas, 1985, 125–126, with bibliography.

¹² Sanday and Headlam, 1945, 289.

¹³ Cf. the survey of current research in Dunn, 1987, 216–228.

the middle part of Deut 30:12 in Rom 10:6 more or less verbatim—‘Who will go up ... to heaven?’ Also Rom 10:8 follows Deut 30:14 more or less exactly. Here the adverb ‘very’ and the final phrase ‘so that you can do it’ are omitted. However, Rom 10:7 is more problematic. There the primary change to the Old Testament text appears, in which Paul substitutes the phrase ‘... go down to the abyss?’ for ‘cross the sea for us?’ One proposed explanation for this deviation reads Rom 10:7 in the light of the targumic tradition preserved in *Tg. Neofiti*. Scholars such as M. McNamara, J. D. G. Dunn, and S. Lyonnet have claimed that like Paul, *Tg. Neofiti* interprets Deuteronomy’s ‘crossing the sea’ as a descent into the abyss/the depths, and thus provides a Jewish parallel to Paul.¹⁴ However, this claim has been refuted by other scholars as J. A. Fitzmyer and R. Le Déaut, who both emphasise that the word abyss does not appear in the text of *Tg. Neofiti*.¹⁵ Thus, it has been difficult to find a Jewish parallel, reference or exegetical tradition that can explain Paul’s alteration on this point. In general, D.–A. Koch has used Paul’s use of Deut 30:12–14 as illustrative material to emphasise the difference and the distance between Paul and contemporary Jewish exegesis.¹⁶ His conclusion is formulated in the following way:

Die formal analoge personale Interpretation führt also aufgrund ihrer inhaltlich entgegengesetzten Ausrichtung nicht nur zu einer völlig konträren Zitatauslegung, sondern auch zu einer Umgestaltung des Textes selbst, die inhaltlich und auch methodisch so in der jüdischen Exegese nicht möglich war.¹⁷

A weakness of this conclusion is that Koch has not taken into account available comparative material that can be made the basis for a different approach. According to Dunn, Paul’s rendering of Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–8 in a series of partial citations can be illuminated by the use of the very same Deuteronomy passage in other Jewish writings such as Bar 3:29–30, Philo: *Post.* 84–85, and *Tg.*

14 Cf. McNamara, 1978, 74–75; Dunn, 1988, 604–606; Lyonnet, 1989, 305–308. McNamara (1978, 74–75) translates *Tg. Neof.* Deut 30:12–13 as follows:

The Law is not in heaven that one should say:
Would that we had one like the prophet Moses
who would ascend to heaven and fetch it for us
and make us hear the commandments that we might do them.
Neither is the Law beyond the Great sea that one may say:
Would that we had one like the prophet Jonah
who would descend into the depths of the Great sea and bring it up for us
and make us hear the commandments that we might do them.

15 Fitzmyer, 1993, 591; Le Déaut, 1974, 254.

16 Cf. the remark by Koch (1986, 197): ‘Der Zusammenhang mit der zeitgenössischen jüdischen Exegese und der gleichzeitige Abstand von ihr wird exemplarisch in der Anführung von Dtn 30,12–14 in Röm 10,6–8 deutlich.’

17 Koch, 1986, 198.

Neof. Deut 30:12–14.¹⁸ In all these cases the context makes it clear that Deuteronomy is being cited, and that the partial quotations reflect the sequence and significance of Deuteronomy's imagery.¹⁹ Moreover, Philo's use of the text shows that it was freely handled, certainly as freely as in Paul's treatment. In this regard Dunn makes two observations:

a) Philo repeatedly makes use of LXX's addition of 'in your hands' to the MT (Deut 30:14), and b) like Paul, pays little attention to the final clause in Deut 30:12–14 ('so that you can do it'). Accordingly 'the freedom Paul demonstrates in handling the text would likewise occasion little surprise among his Jewish contemporaries.'²⁰

However, there is room for further investigation of these texts and comparison also with other relevant texts such as e.g. Philo, *Virt.* 183 and *Praem.* 80, to illuminate how Paul handles his Old Testament text, involving the way he can omit, select, alter, and add to it.²¹

1.2.3. Exegetical Method, Structure and Terminology

The problem of Paul's treatment of Deut 30:12–14 also raises the following questions: Is it meant to be an exegesis of the Scripture? If Paul's treatment of Deut 30:12–14 is to be seen as exegesis of Scripture, can we then also detect an use of exegetical methods of any kind and any kind of conventional structures and terminology?

The issue of exegetical method is underestimated in the study of Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14.²² On the one hand, according to Badenas, 'Paul's so-called pesher in Rom 10:6–8 is better understood in the light of Deut 30:11–14 and its context than in light of its Jewish parallels.'²³ A commentator on Romans, U. Wilckens, holds 'dass diese Exegese von Dtn 30 auch im Rahmen jener damals geläufigen

18 Dunn, 1987, 218.

19 Dunn, 1987, 218.

20 Dunn, 1988, 605.

21 In 1992 we read a paper on the topic "Paul's Use of Deut 30:12-14 in a Jewish Context" at a conference held at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Then we presented some of the observations which are worked out more fully in chapter three and six of this present study. The essay was published (Bekken, 1995, 183–203), and has been referred to and drawn on favourably by scholars, such as by Haacker (1999, 210), Ross Wagner (2002, 169), and most recently by Wehr (2006, 192–206).

22 Cf. the following general remark made by Koch, 1986, 199: 'In welcher Form und in welchen Umfang feste Auslegungsmethoden der zeitgenössischen jüdischen Exegese für Paulus vorgegeben waren, ist nur begrenzt aufzuhellen.'

23 Badenas, 1985, 143–144.

pescher-Methode höchst gewaltsam ist.²⁴ Moreover, H. Hübner has characterised Paul's exegetical treatment of Deut 30:12–14 in the following way:

Man kann darüber spekulieren, ob und inwiefern Paulus in Röm 10,5–13 in einer jüdischen Midrasch-Tradition steht ... Sollte dies der Fall sein, so ist er mit dieser Tradition genauso souverän umgegangen wie mit dem Schrifttext selbst.²⁵

On the other hand, the manner in which Paul interjects christological statements between the phrases of the Old Testament text, with his use of the connective τοῦτ' ἔστιν, has prompted a number of commentators to characterise his mode of exposition as an instance of pesher interpretation documented in Qumran manuscripts.²⁶ So e.g. E. Käsemann writes:

But the threefold interpretative τοῦτ' ἔστιν makes sense only in correct exegesis ... In this regard Paul follows the pesher form ... which is specially plain in 1QpHab 12:2ff.; CD 7:14ff., for which the often violent interpretation of Scripture in actualization of its hidden eschatological content is characteristic. Longer interpretative statements are inserted, interpretation is linked to single keywords or sentences, and it is introduced by a mere demonstrative²⁷

Although there is a certain kind of similarity in form between Rom 10:6–8 and the Qumran pesher, which consists of the insertion of interpretative comments between the pieces of OT text, there are also scholars who are cautious to transpose the pesher form to Romans 10:6–8.²⁸ Differences in form have caused these to distance Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 from the Qumran pesher. We can quote J.A. Fitzmyer as one representative of this position:

Pace McNamara (*Palestinian Targum*, 1972), this formula (τοῦτ' ἔστιν) is not the same as *pišrô 'al*, which means, lit., "the interpretation of it concerns..." That introductory formula has a different function, being normally used in *pesharim*.²⁹

On the other hand, Fitzmyer locates Paul's expository rendering of Deut 30:12–14 within a Jewish exegetical context illustrated by Baruch and Philo:

Having cited Lev 18:5 explicitly, he does not do the same for Deut 30:11–14. Rather, he quotes parts of it and alludes to the rest, commenting in midrashic fashion on clauses of it that he does not cite ...

... In his argument to establish *dikaïosynê ek pisteôs*, he merely borrows phrases from Deuteronomy and applies them to Christ ... He is instead using clauses

24 Wilckens, 1978–1982, VI/2, 225.

25 Hübner, 1984, 94 n. 320a.

26 So for instance Lietzmann, 1971, 96; Michel, 1978, 238f.; Koch, 1986, 130.

27 Käsemann, 1980, 284.

28 So e.g. Hanson, 1974, 208–209, and Lim, 1997, 124–139.

29 Fitzmyer, 1993, 590.

from the Deuteronomy passage as it is also used in Bar 3:29–30; Philo, *De post. Caini* 24 §§ 84–85.³⁰

A suggestion for further parallels to the exegesis of Scripture in Rom 10:6–10 is delivered by N. Elliot, who has made the following statement: ‘The specific homiletic technique in view here is discussed by Peder Borgen with relation to Jn 6.’³¹ However, Elliott’s suggestion is not followed by an investigation which draws upon Borgen’s investigation on John 6, and which compares the exegetical method, structure and terminology employed by Paul, John and other authors. Such a study would clarify whether Paul’s exposition of Deut 30:12–14 follows the conventions of early Jewish and Christian exegetical activity. Thus, there is further room for comparison with parallels that have been partly overlooked, particularly the texts of Philo, which can shed light on Paul’s manner of using this Old Testament text, both with regard to exegetical techniques and form.

1.2.4. Paul’s Interpretation and Application of Deut 30:12–14 in Jewish Context.

Is Paul’s exposition of Deut 30:12–14 idiosyncratic, or is it possible to find Jewish parallels that can shed light on Paul? Barrett asks: ‘Is Paul’s exegesis honest? Is it sensible?’³² Various answers have been delivered. Some scholars have characterized the interpretation of Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–10 as ‘purely fanciful’,³³ a ‘fanciful interpretation’,³⁴ ‘especially crass’,³⁵ ‘arbitrary’,³⁶ and even ‘baffling’.³⁷ A. J. Guerra finds Paul’s mode of interpretation in Rom 10:6–8 to be ‘capricious’.³⁸ According to R. D. Kaylor, the ‘modern reader is likely to be perplexed ... and ... aghast’ at what appears to be a wholly self-serving and wilful twisting of the text.³⁹ Moreover, according to R. Hays, there is a prevailing opinion that Paul’s exegesis of Deut 30:12–14 not only seems startling to a modern reader, but must even have startled Paul’s first audience.⁴⁰ In his critic of Hays’ book ‘Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul’, C. A. Evans makes the observation that Hays has not listened carefully enough for the echoes of interpreted and applied Scripture

30 Fitzmyer, 1993, 588.

31 Elliot, 1990, 268.

32 Barrett, 1982, 142.

33 Dodd, 1959, 166.

34 Ross Wagner, 2002, 167.

35 Gaugler, 1952, 124.

36 Hanson, 1974, 147; Byrne, 1979, 196.

37 Hays, 1989, 73.

38 Guerra, 1990, 232–233.

39 Kaylor, 1988, 167.

40 Hays, 1989, 87.

in the Pauline writings.⁴¹ At least this concerns Hays' reading of Rom 10:6–10 and Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14, which Evans takes as an example. To this critic, Hays replied: 'Evans calls us to attend to certain traditions of scriptural interpretation within Judaism that might thicken our perception of Paul's readings of Scripture. I say that is a laudable goal, where appropriate evidence exists.'⁴² It is the purpose of this study to present and provide such evidence.

An overarching question in the study of Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6ff. is why Paul chose this passage to support his argument and how this Old Testament reference fits in the immediate literary context. So Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 in the literary context of Rom 9:30–10:21 has brought to light several problems. We will focus on four main problems which have been posed and the solutions reached so far. The problems turn around four main issues: 1) the christological exposition of Deut 30:12–14; 2) the juxtaposition of Deut 30:12–14 and Lev 18:5; 3) the attribution of Deut 30:12–14 to the issue of righteousness by faith; 4) the eschatological use of Deut 30:12–14.

1.2.4.1. The Christological Exposition of Deut 30:12–14

Efforts have been made to find Jewish parallels which might shed light on Paul's christological exposition. It has been suggested by H. Windisch and M. J. Suggs and others that Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 has been influenced by and filtered through the two Jewish exegetical traditions identified in Bar 3:29–30 and *Tg. Neof.* Deut 30:11–14. Windisch's proposal that there is a literary relationship between Bar 3:29–30 and Rom 10:6–10 was followed up by Suggs and supported by a number of commentators on Romans.⁴³ Suggs tried to substantiate the hypothesis that Paul reflects conventions associated with the personified figure of 'Wisdom' in Sir 24:5 and Bar 3:29–30. For example, in Sir 24:5 'Wisdom' speaks:

Alone I compassed the circuit of heaven,
and in the depths of the abyss I walked.

This same tradition that associates wisdom with heaven appears in Bar 3:29–30, where Deut 30:12–13 is paraphrased onto the figure of 'Wisdom':

Who hath gone up into heaven, and taken her,
And brought her down from the clouds?
Who hath gone over the sea, and found her,
And will bring her for choice gold?

41 Evans, 1993, 47–51.

42 Hays, 1993, 73.

43 Windisch, 1914, 220–234; Suggs, 1967, 289–312; Lietzmann, 1971, 52–53; Käsemann, 1980, 289; Johnson, 1989, 151–159; Pate, 2000, 242–244.

According to Suggs, Paul's interpretation of Deut 30:12–14 has been filtered through this sapiential tradition, in which 'Wisdom' is identified with Israel's Torah (cf. Bar 4:1):

The tension between the Gospel and the Law is resolved by the identification of Christ with Wisdom-Torah. The apostle hopes in this way to rescue his Gospel from the stigma of absolute opposition to the law ... The righteousness based on faith does not annul the law but brings it to its true goal, for 'the word of faith which we preach' is Jesus Christ, incarnate wisdom, *telos nomou*.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Suggs' conclusion has been rejected by other scholars, for example most recently by Hays:

In fact, however, only a subtle reader would make the connections that Suggs makes and draw the appropriate theological conclusions. Paul does not explicitly argue that Christ is to be identified with Wisdom and therefore also with Torah. This fusion occurs in the cave of echo, not at the overt discursive level.⁴⁵

Other scholars have suggested that Paul's christological exegesis of Deut 30:12–14 draws on the interpretation in its rendering in *Tg. Neofiti*.⁴⁶ However, this position has been challenged by Fitzmyer on the basis of the problematic dating of the Palestinian Targums.⁴⁷

It is the hypothesis of this study that Paul's interpretive moves and christological exposition of Deut 30:12–14 are the logical inference from the assertion that Christ is the τέλος of the Law. This falls within the framework of the method of Jewish exegetical paraphrase, and thus justifies his fresh and idiosyncratic exposition. In order to substantiate this thesis we will also draw on the parallel provided by the exposition of Deut 30:12–13 about the personified 'Wisdom' identified with the Law in the writing of Baruch.

1.2.4.2. The Juxtaposition of Deut 30:12–14 and Lev 18:5. Why these Texts?

Dunn has focused on the problem of the Law in Rom 9:30–10:10, as it is especially reflected in the juxtaposition of Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:5–8. Here Paul sets two texts from the Torah, Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:12–14 in relation

⁴⁴ Suggs, 1967, 306. Cf. also Conzelmann, 1965/6, 231–244.

⁴⁵ Hays, 1989, 81.

⁴⁶ Cf. Goldberg, 1970, 127–131; Black, 1971/2, 9; Miller, 1971, 29–82; Hanson, 1974, 146–194; Le Déaut, 1974, 252–255; McNamara, 1978, 74–78; Käsemann, 1980, 160–161; Lyonnet, 1989, 305–308. The reference in *Tg. Neof.* Deut 30:12–14 to the figures of Moses and Jonah has led Lyonnet (1989, 305–308) to maintain that Paul's christological interpretation of the same passage reflects this exegetical tradition, since in the early church these figures were seen as types of Christ.

⁴⁷ Fitzmyer, 1993, 322–325. Cf. on the question of the dating of targumic literature, York, 1974, 49–62.

to each other, both of which emphasise the necessity of keeping and acting according to the Law; both use in the Greek translation the same verb (ποιέω).

1. Lev 18:5:

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing (ποιέω) which a man shall live: I am the Lord.

2. Deut 30:12–14:

It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do (ποιέω) it?'

Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do (ποιέω) it?'

But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do (ποιέω) it.

Paul takes Lev 18:5 as a description of 'the righteousness which is based on the law' and Deut 30:12–14 as a reference to 'the righteousness based on faith,' 'Christ' and 'the word of faith'. Is there an antithesis between the texts? Why should Paul choose two texts that in their original contexts could be placed together to characterise two different aspects of righteousness? As Fitzmyer recently expressed it: 'The problem is to understand his logic, if there is any.'⁴⁸

On the question 'Why did Paul choose just these texts to make his point?' Dunn gives the following answer:

The answer seems to be that they characterized two Jewish attitudes to the Torah—different attitudes, but both Jewish. Lev 18:5 could be regarded, quite legitimately and recognizably, as an expression of Jewish nomism, as maintained most vehemently within Palestine. Whereas Deut 30:11–14 was widely regarded as looking beyond the Torah to some transcendent category of more universal appeal, particularly in the diaspora. Paul's choice of these texts indicates a recognition of this potential dichotomy and an attempt to exploit it in the service of the gospel.⁴⁹

In particular, Dunn's assumption that Paul's use of these Scriptures was based on a recognition of two Jewish attitudes to the Torah and a potential dichotomy between them reflected in the Diaspora, is hardly valid, and needs to be tested. It is a weakness of Dunn's analysis that he has failed to take sufficient note of Jewish expositions such as those in Philo, that Deut 30:11–14 was applied within the context of Jewish 'nomism', in which the Law of Moses and actions in obedience to the law were seen as the characteristics of the Jewish people of God marking it out from Gentiles. Thus, Philo's application of Deut 30:11–14 in *Praem.*

⁴⁸ Fitzmyer, 1993, 588.

⁴⁹ Dunn, 1987, 220.

79–84 can illustrate a Jewish background to Paul's juxtaposition of Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:12–14 and the contrast he draws between them in Rom 10:5–6. Such a location of Paul's use of these Scriptural passages within a Jewish nomistic context provided by the Philonic data is also more appropriate according to Dunn's understanding of these texts within their literary contexts. Dunn takes the position that the juxtaposition of Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:12–14 must be set within the literary context of Rom 9:30–10:5, in which the Law as expressed by Lev 18:5 became a basic statement of Israel's distinctiveness as the people specially chosen by God to be his people as distinguished from the surrounding peoples. Accordingly, Paul's 'exposition of Deut 30:12–14 is at the centre of his attempt to expound the continuing and wider significance of the law in a way which retrieves the law from a too narrowly defined understanding of 'This do and live' ([Rom] 10:5–13).⁵⁰

1.2.4.3. The Attribution of Deut 30:12–14 to the Issue of Righteousness by Faith

Since there is no reference to faith or to righteousness in Deuteronomy 30, scholars have asked for an explanation of Paul's application of Deut 30:12–14 to the issue of righteousness by faith. Hays has formulated the problem in the following way:

In an apparently capricious act of interpretation, the reader will recall, Paul seizes Moses' admonition to Israel, warning them to obey the Law without rationalization or excuse (Deut. 30:11–14), and turns it into an utterance of The Righteousness from Faith, a character who contravenes the manifest sense of Moses' words by transmuting them into a cryptic prophecy of the Christian gospel as preached by Paul.

Such a reading looks on the face of it like a wild and disingenuous piece of exegesis, so much so that embarrassed Christian commentators have with surprising frequency—and perhaps not without a certain disingenuousness of their own—attempted to deny that Paul is actually interpreting Scripture at all.⁵¹

H.–J. Eckstein and F. Lang have expressed the same problem in the following way:

Während die Motive für die Verwendung und Zuordnung der beiden Belege aus Lev 18 5 und Dtn 8 14f./9 4–6 in Röm 10 5 und 6b bei Berücksichtigung des alttestamentlichen und des paulinischen Kontextes durchaus erkennbar werden, erweist sich die Fortsetzung des Schriftzitats in Röm 10 6c–8 als eine *crux interpretum*. ...Warum zitiert er einen Beleg, den er erst durch Verändern und Streichen modifizieren muss, damit nicht die Stimme der Sinai-Tora, sondern die der Glaubensgerechtigkeit in ihr vernommen wird?⁵²

⁵⁰ Dunn, 1991a., 303. Cf. idem, 1991b., 135–139.

⁵¹ Hays, 1989, 73–74.

⁵² Eckstein, 1988, 210–211.

... dann wird die häufig nicht gestellte Frage unausweichlich, warum Paulus gerade Dtn 30 als Schriftbeleg für die Glaubensgerechtigkeit heranzogen ...⁵³

Several suggestions have been delivered with a view to answering this problem. So e.g. Michel suggests that Paul's interpretation is an answer to Jewish polemic against Christian preaching: 'Verständlich wird uns dieser exegetische Prozess, wenn wir annehmen können, dass die Synagoge gerade diese Grundstelle Dt 30,11–14 vom Gesetz verstanden und gegen die christliche Verkündigung ausgespielt hat.'⁵⁴ On the other hand, Wilckens has suggested that Paul's exposition reflects a polemic against the Synagogue.⁵⁵ However, as scholars have pointed out, there are no indications in available data to substantiate these assumptions.⁵⁶ Suggs has suggested that Paul's attribution of Deut 30:12–14 to 'righteousness by faith' is a simple 'stylistic flourish.'⁵⁷ However, most scholars have sought to explain on theological grounds why Paul's use of the text is legitimate.

According to Badenas, 'a careful analysis of the context of Deut 30:12–14 shows that Paul's use of the OT is less arbitrary and irrelevant than has been assumed.'⁵⁸ So Badenas suggests that 'the fact that Paul sees a characteristic of the new dispensation the circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29), and that this is precisely stated in Deut 30:6–16, makes it easier to understand why he chose this chapter as anticipatory of righteousness by faith.'⁵⁹

D. O. Via suggests that the righteousness by faith speaking in the Deuteronomic text indicates that Paul saw righteousness by faith as a basic structure in the Old Testament. So, according to Via, when Paul attributes Deut 30:12–14 to righteousness by faith, Paul means that this motif is speaking in the Old Testament, and, therefore, Paul is expressing his understanding of the Old Testament.⁶⁰ A similar point of view has been set forth by J. Murray: 'It would be a complete misconstruction of Deuteronomy to interpret it legalistically. The whole trust

53 Lang, 1997, 594–595. Cf. also Burchard, 1997, 360 n. 89.

54 Michel, 1978, 328 n. 14.

55 Wilckens, 1978–1982, VI/2, 225.

56 Cf. e.g. Käsemann, 1980, 278; Eckstein, 1988, 210.

57 Suggs, 1967, 301.

58 Badenas, 1985, 129.

59 Badenas, 1985, 130.

60 Via (1975, 212) suggests that a term like 'righteousness' is given a new meaning within Paul's message, but that it always retains its basic significance. According to Via (1975, 212), 'The apostle was intuitively following the rule of compatibility: no proclamation will reach anyone if it cannot make some contact with the hearer's pre-understanding. The new meaning system cannot be so incompatible with the hearer's frame of reference.'

is the opposite ... The words in question, therefore, do not find their place in a legalistic framework but in that of grace which the covenant bespoke.⁶¹

According to Hays, Paul's application of Deut 30:12–14 to the righteousness of faith rests on sheer force of assertion. However, Hays proposes that 'the intertextual echoes created by Paul's evocation of Deut 9:4 and of the Wisdom tradition suggest hauntingly that Paul's reading is less arbitrary than it sounds. From Deuteronomy, Paul echoes the idea that the covenant depends on grace from start to finish rather than on Israel's own righteousness.'⁶²

According to E. P. Sanders, the issue of 'righteousness from faith, and not by the law' in Romans is to be seen as a question of membership in the people of God. Thus, in light of the textual context of Romans 9–10, Sanders refers Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 to the topic of 'admission to the body of those who will be saved', which also involves the argument for the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God.⁶³ S. R. Bechtler too holds that Paul's argument from the Law in Rom 10:5–10 deals with the issue of the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God:

Nevertheless, Paul certainly does present contrasts between doing and believing (in Romans 4 as well as in Rom 10:5–10) and between works and grace (in Rom 11:6). It is important to note, however, that these contrasts, like the antithesis ἐξ ἔργων/ἐκ πίστεως, occur in contexts where the inclusion of Gentiles *as Gentiles and not as converts to Judaism* within the purview of God's redemptive activity is at issue (Galatians 2–3; Rom 1:16–17; 3–4; 9–11).⁶⁴

Dunn has made an effort to find Jewish parallels which might shed light on Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 about the issue of righteousness by faith within a context dealing with the issue of inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God. Dunn proposes that

... in both Baruch and Philo Deut 30:11–14 was seen as expressing something which everyone of good will was open to and eager for—divine wisdom, the good. Of course Baruch and Philo both see that more universal ideal to be focused in the Law. But by developing such an apologetic line they opened Jewish thought to the recognition that what Deuteronomy spoke of was capable of more universal expression.⁶⁵

61 Murray, 1959, vol. 2, 52. Cf. Lang (1997, 594–595) for a similar argumentation on the relation between Deut 30:11–14 and its Old Testament context, especially Deut 30:1–9.

62 Hays, 1989, 82.

63 Sanders, 1983, 42–43.

64 Bechtler, 1994, 305 n. 63.

65 Dunn, 1987, 224.

Thus, according to Dunn, 'Deut 30:12–14 ... could more readily be given a wider, more universal perspective, and thus characterize the eschatological breadth of God's covenant purpose, where righteousness was to be seen in terms of faith, of obedience from the heart, and open to Gentile as Gentile as well as to Jew.'⁶⁶

While scholars such as Via, Badenas, Murray, and Lang understand Paul's attribution of Deut 30:12–14 to the righteousness of faith in the light of the Old Testament context, Dunn emphasises and draws more upon the Jewish parallels as explanations. However, the basic weakness of Dunn's approach is that he takes for granted that Deut 30:11–14 was regarded as looking beyond the Torah to some transcendent category of more universal appeal, particularly in the Diaspora.

Against this background, then, it becomes important to examine afresh Jewish texts, such as the Philonic text *Virt.* 183–184, asking whether this and other texts can throw new light upon Paul's attribution of Deut 30:12–14 to the issue of righteousness by faith in the context of Rom 9:30–10:21.

1.2.4.4. Eschatological Application and Perspective

The application of Deut 30:12–14 to the issue of righteousness by faith leads Eckstein to formulate another question which needs to be answered, viz. Paul's eschatological application of Deut 30:12–14:

Warum zitiert Paulus bei seiner Gegenüberstellung der beiden sich ausschliessenden Wege zum Heil einen Beleg als Ausspruch der Glaubensgerechtigkeit (Röm 10⁶), in dem weder der Begriff δικαιοσύνη noch der Begriff πίστις eine Rolle spielt? Wie kommt Paulus andererseits dazu, zur Begründung der Identifikation des Wortes aus Deut 30¹⁴ mit dem Evangelium in Röm 10^{9f.} die Begriffe σῶζειν/σωτηρία und δικαιοσύνη einzuführen? ... die Frage ist aber wodurch diese Assoziation bei Paulus ausgelöst wird und welches Motiv oder Stichwort ihn auf den Zusammenhang des Heils, d.h. der Gerechtigkeit, bringt.⁶⁷

Eckstein suggests that the association of the concepts of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and salvation (σωτηρία) in Deutero-Isaiah provides a possible background for the eschatological use of Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–10:

Kommen wir an dieser Stelle auf unsere Frage zurück, was Paulus im Zusammenhang von Röm 10^{1–21} zum Zitat von Dtn 30^{11–14} bewegt haben könnte und wie sich seine ungewöhnliche Interpretation eines Wortes aus der Sinai-Tora als Ausspruch der Glaubensgerechtigkeit erklären lässt, so ist vor allem festzuhalten,

⁶⁶ Dunn, 1987, 225.

⁶⁷ Eckstein, 1988, 216–217.

dass Paulus Dtn 30¹⁴ offensichtlich auf dem Hintergrund der dtjes. Verkündigung vom Nahen (ἐγγίξεν) des Heils und der Gerechtigkeit Gottes verstanden hat.⁶⁸

C. Burchard has pointed out that Paul's interpretation of Deut 30:12–14 is 'recht eigenwillig' ... aber weder gewaltsam noch willkürlich. ... Damit ist noch nicht erklärt, warum Paulus gerade Dtn 30,11-14 heranzog⁶⁹ He also notes that Paul's eschatological interpretation is not derived from the Old Testament text (i.e. Deut 30:12–14) itself, but rather from the prophetic words quoted in Rom 10:11–13:

Von Heilsfolgen, nämlich Glaube und ewiger Rettung, sagte der ausgelegte Text freilich nichts. Paulus holt das in V. 10 nach und begründet es in V. 11 mit Jes 28,16b, sicher nicht zufällig, weil in 9,33 schon einmal zitiert. Er setzt aber πᾶς zu ὁ πιστεύων dazu, deutet es in V. 12 auf Juden und Heiden ohne Unterschied, d.h. Heiden ohne Beschneidung, und begründet in V. 13 mit Joel 3,5. Der Vers passt nicht nur, weil er mit πᾶς anfängt und mit σωθήσεται aufhört, sondern weil er mit ὁ ἄν ἐπικαλέσεται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου für Paulus genau die nennt, die nach V. 9 „Kyrios Jesus“ bekennen. So wird V. 6-13 eine geschlossene Argumentation. ... Dass er die Auslegung durch Prophetenworte ergänzt, besagt nicht, dass die Tora in Dtn 30,11-14 mit ihrem eigenen Wort am Ende ist. Paulus nimmt die Propheten hier als das, was sie nach jüdischem Verständnis auch sind: als bevollmächtigte Ausleger der Tora.⁷⁰

Moreover, E. Kamlah remarks on Paul's eschatological application of Deut 30:12–14: 'In dem Ton der Dtn-Stelle hört er (Paulus) den Begriff der σωτηρία mitschwingen'⁷¹

Most recently, Wehr has welcomed our thesis published in a previous article (cf. Bekken, 1995, 183–203) that Paul's eschatological use of Deut 30:12–14 has points of connection to Hellenistic Judaism as illustrated by Philo's writings:

'Beide antiken Autoren verstehen die Stelle in einem endzeitlichen Rahmen.'
'Wir haben gesehen, dass es für einige Aspekte der paulinischen Schriftdeutung in Röm 10,5–10 Anknüpfungspunkte im hellenistischen Judentum seiner Zeit gibt.'⁷²

However, a survey of the vast literature on Paul's interpretation of Deut 30:12–14 creates the impression that the eschatological aspect has been underestimated.

It is the purpose of this study to provide a new explanation of the problem of Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 in an eschatological perspective. A careful analysis

68 Eckstein, 1988, 218.

69 Burchard, 1997, 361.

70 Idem, 1997, 361.

71 Kamlah, 1954, 281.

72 Wehr, 2006, 204.

of Paul's eschatological use of Deut 30:12–14 within a contemporary Jewish context will demonstrate that his exposition is less unnatural and arbitrary than it at first appears, and may be seen to have greater coherence than scholars have previously recognised.

In conclusion, this short survey of previous research has demonstrated that there is room for further investigation. Thus, the following questions and aspects involved in Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 within the context of Rom 9:30–10:21 will be discussed and answered in this study:

Is Paul's exegetical treatment of Deut 30:12–14 idiosyncratic, or is it possible to find Jewish parallels that can shed light on Paul?

Is Paul's reference to Deut 30:12–14 meant to be a quotation or not?

Is Paul's treatment of Deut 30:12–14 to be seen as exegesis, and can we detect a use of exegetical methods and any kind of exegetical structures and forms?

Why should Paul choose two texts, Deut 30:12–14 and Lev 18:5, which in their original contexts could be placed together, to make his point? Is there an antithesis between the texts?

Is there any explanation for Paul's attribution of Deut 30:12–14 to the issue of righteousness by faith?

Is there any explanation for Paul's eschatological application of Deut 30:12–14?

How does Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 support his argument, and how does this Old Testament reference fit in the immediate literary context of Rom 9:30–10:21?

A presupposition of this study, which justifies it, is that, in spite of the vastness of the secondary literature, the various aspects of Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14 need to be examined further, especially since Philo can provide us with parallels which have not been made the subject of a detailed analysis.⁷³ Even though none has made an extensive comparative analysis of Philo's and Paul's use of Deut 30:12–14, many scholars have commented on the relation between these

73 In an article on Romans 9–11, B. Chilton (1988, 27–37) has made a distinction between Paul's use of Scripture in Romans 9–11 and sources such as Midrash, the *pesher* commentary technique of Qumran, and Philo's writings. According to Chilton, making such comparisons, 'obscures more than it discloses' (1988, 31). In another article on the same topic, he makes a similar comment on the relation between Paul and e.g. Philo:

Both the *Pesherim* and the Philonic corpus represent different activities and settings from Paul's: his scriptural interpretation strictly serves the protreptic function of Romans. He shows no sustained interest in historicizing scripture (as in the *Pesherim*) or in philosophizing with it (as in Philo). Paul is driven by other motives, which is why Romans 9–11 is neither Midrash, *Pesher*, nor philosophical commentary (Chilton, 1994, 222).