

# **The Apocalyptic Reading of Paul in Galatians: A Critical Assessment**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There has been a debate on the issue of whether or not the Christ-Event—Jesus’s incarnation, teachings, death, resurrection, ascension and the implications of all those—is a continuation of Israel’s story. The apocalyptic scholars, specifically the Union School (US)—represented by J. Louis Martyn and Martinus C. de Boer—advocate that there is no continuity between Christ’s coming and Israel. Primarily from the Galatians’ viewpoint, this paper examines the US’s position to determine whether Paul construed the Christ-Event as a punctiliar event or as a continuation of Israel’s history. This study employs the method of Biblical Theology (BT) and concludes that this method affirms certain aspects of the US’s proposition—that is, the punctiliar nature of the Christ-Event. Besides, it extends the US’s reading by proposing that Paul might have understood the Christ-Event in relation to covenantal fulfilment and eschatological consummation.

**Keywords:** Apocalyptic, Biblical Theology (BT), Canonical, Covenant, Eschatology, Intertextual, objective genitive (OG), Punctiliar, subjective genitive (SG), and Union School (US).

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

When talking about Pauline studies, primarily there are four major trends: “Traditional Protestant Paul, New Perspective on Paul, Radical Paul/Paul within Judaism, and Apocalyptic

Paul.”<sup>1</sup> Though the last approach emerged years ago, initially, it did not gain much attention among scholars. However, in the recent past, it has been extensively discussed and it is likely that it may not go away at least for the next some more decades. Although scholars like Albert Schweitzer,<sup>2</sup> Ernst Käsemann,<sup>3</sup> Christiaan Beker,<sup>4</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa,<sup>5</sup> and Douglas A. Campbell<sup>6</sup> talk about an apocalyptic view of reading Paul, J. Louis Martyn and Martinus C. de Boer—presented as the Union School (US)<sup>7</sup>—are the notable ones in the apocalyptic reading of Paul in Galatians. Their central argument is that Jesus’s first coming was invasively punctiliar and so there is no continuity between Israel’s history and Christ in Galatians.<sup>8</sup>

Martyn construes Paul’s apocalyptic language in Galatians 1:12 and 16 as “God’s act of invasively revealing Christ” to Paul.<sup>9</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup> Advancing the Christian Tradition with Michael Bird, *Michael Bird’s Lanier Lecturer on The Apocalyptic Paul*, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fA8gFd6u9x8&t=331s>. Also, see Ben Witherington III and Jason A. Myers, *Voices and Views on Paul: Exploring Scholarly Trends* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt, 1931).

<sup>3</sup> Käsemann popularised the concept of “apocalyptic” as “the mother of all Christian theology.” Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 102.

<sup>4</sup> Beker contends that the apocalyptic lens serves as the “texture of Paul’s thought” as well as “the heart of Paul’s gospel.” J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul The Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 81–82.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 190.

<sup>7</sup> As N.T. Wright recounts, Martyn was a professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York (1960s–1980s) and de Boer was his student. Wright identifies them as “Union School” in N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 155–56.

<sup>8</sup> J. Louis Martyn, “The Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians,” *Interpretation* 54, no. 3 (July 2000): 253. Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul, Theologian of God’s Apocalypse,” *Interpretation* 56, no. 1 (January 2002): 21–33.

<sup>9</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 144.

de Boer, that incident caused Paul to abandon his former life.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the US construes the dualistic concepts—in Galatians—as apocalyptic features implying the notions of discontinuity; that is, breaking away from the old and a shift to the new age (1:4b, 6:15)<sup>11</sup> and from the fleshly life to the Spirit-centered life (5:16-17).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the US identifies *pistis*, *pisteōs Christou* (2:16, 3:22-25),<sup>13</sup> and *spermāti* (3:16, 19)<sup>14</sup> with the coming of Christ which is believed to have happened decisively in “the fullness of time” (4:4).<sup>15</sup> Overall, as de Boer writes, the Christ-Event is “a clean break with the past and ... an apocalyptic assertion ... and the beginning of the ‘new creation’ (6:15).”<sup>16</sup> This then, for Martyn, serves as Paul’s theological lens.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, Galatians 3 and 4 reveal an intense engagement with the foundational stories of Israel, especially the patriarchal narratives, the constitution of the people of God and their unique identity. Such a high degree of reference to Israel is too strong to be argued away. This raises the question of whether Paul understood the Christ-Event as a *punctiliar incident* or as a *continuation/culmination of Israel’s history*.

This study *aims* to critically assess the US’s reading of Galatians. Its *purpose* is to find out how God’s eschatological and decisive acts in the Messiah relate to the fulfilment of his promises in the Christ-Event. This research attempts to achieve its objective by raising three questions: (i) How valid is the US’s

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<sup>10</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 93.

<sup>11</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 98. de Boer, *Galatians*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 493–94. de Boer, *Galatians*, 352.

<sup>13</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul’s Use and Interpretation of a Justification Tradition in Galatians 2.15-21,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 2 (December 2005): 201–5. Martyn, *Galatians*, 263–75.

<sup>14</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 338–40. de Boer, *Galatians*, 222–25.

<sup>15</sup> de Boer, *Galatians*, 261, 264. Martyn, *Galatians*, 389.

<sup>16</sup> de Boer, *Galatians*, 262.

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 47 in Martyn, *Galatians*, 96.

apocalyptic reading of Galatians? (ii) Does it require a rejection of Israel's history? (iii) What is the importance of the above questions for contemporary and future readers? This research tackles these questions by employing a method called Biblical Theology (BT) which has five components: Canonical Model, Historical Model, Exegetical Tools, Theological Objective, and Ecclesial Objective. Through this method, this study extends the US's reading by asserting that the Christ-Event is not just apocalyptically punctiliar but is strongly driven by covenantal and eschatological aspects. Finally, the importance of this research is worked out in terms of theological-educational relevance and practical implications.

## **2. METHOD OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

This study defines Biblical Theology (BT) in terms of interpreting the Bible by (i) considering its canonical nature, (ii) studying the text in its historical context, (iii) reading the text/s intertextually and exegetically, and (iv) by formulating theological propositions (v) for ecclesial or societal relevance. The subsequent discussion elucidates five conceptual tools that uphold and support the proposed definition, thereby establishing a robust methodology for this paper.

### **2.1 Canonical Model**

Brevard S. Childs was the one who promoted canonical reading. This model aims at doing justice to the canonized text by not constructing any dogma outside of it.<sup>18</sup> For Childs, canon serves as the context<sup>19</sup> of BT and biblical exegesis begins and ends with the canonized text itself.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, in the exegesis of canonical reading, Childs differentiates the canonical objective

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<sup>18</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 73.

<sup>19</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 99.

<sup>20</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 48.

from the authorial objective. Greater emphasis is given to the former, which deals with sketching out the text's meaning from its initial to final shape, than to the latter, which looks at the historical human author.<sup>21</sup>

This research retains Childs' fundamental emphasis on the canonical nature of the Scripture. The reason is, it clearly substantiates what the Bible affirms; that is, the Bible as God's revealed Word (Isa. 40:8; Ps. 12:6; Matt. 24:35; Luke 11:28; John 5:39; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:25) which is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). But simultaneously, Childs' preference for canonical interest over authorial interest is cautioned because it can sometimes compromise important historical accounts. As Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett observe, although this approach considers "historical forces behind the text" still it "minimizes hidden historical references omitted by the biblical author."<sup>22</sup> The point is, BT should not be ignorant about the criticality of historical events while studying the text. The next section justifies this point.

## 2.2 Historical Model

It was James Barr who popularized the historical model.<sup>23</sup> He differentiates OT theology from NT theology, especially in terms of "synthetic" and "holistic shape."<sup>24</sup> Also, according to him, "the theology of the Bible is thus defined by a historical quantifier, expressed by the very rough formula of 'biblical times and cultures.'"<sup>25</sup> Likewise, for him, even non-canonical sources are crucial in doing BT. Moreover, Barr strongly argues for an objective approach—that is, "biblical authority has to

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<sup>21</sup> Childs, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 137.

<sup>23</sup> See the chapter on "Biblical Theology as Historical Description" in Klink III and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*.

<sup>24</sup> James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 186.

<sup>25</sup> Barr, 607.

begin by accepting what the Bible is really like, and not by forcing upon it a preconceived dogmatic scheme of thoughts about its nature.”<sup>26</sup>

Barr’s emphasis on the historical aspect of the Bible is retained in this study. After all, God’s revelation does not happen in a vacuum but in human history. As Krister Stendahl avers, the objective of BT “is to *describe*, to relive and relate in the terms and the presuppositions of the period of the texts what they meant to their authors and their contemporaries.”<sup>27</sup> This is where one can construct the historical Paul and his theology of Galatians in its original setting. However, at the same time, this study cautions against Barr’s extensive inclination towards historical—especially, non-canonical—sources. The point is, one’s theology should fundamentally emerge from the text<sup>28</sup> and not from what lies behind it. To compromise the same is to relativize the canonized text—biblical truth—with a human agenda. So, this study diligently employs the Historical Model by integrating it with the Canonical Model.

### 2.3 Exegetical Tools

Besides Canonical and Historical Models, this research considers exegetical finding/s as fundamental component/s of BT. Kennard puts it well, “Exegesis provides the building blocks of Biblical theology.”<sup>29</sup> For this study, borrowing Michael Lawrence’s format,<sup>30</sup> three exegetical tools are chosen.

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<sup>26</sup> James Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1984), 178.

<sup>27</sup> Krister Stendahl, “Implications of Form-Criticism and Tradition-Criticism for Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77, no. 1 (March 1958): 38.

<sup>28</sup> See subsection 2.1 Canonical Model.

<sup>29</sup> Douglas Welker Kennard, “The Reef of Biblical Theology: A Method for Doing Biblical Theology That Makes Sense for Wisdom Literature,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 55, no. 2 (2013): 237.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

### 2.3.1 Grammatical-Historical Method

Here, the emphasis is on the “grammar, syntax, and literary” nature of the text. Then, words are analyzed vis-à-vis their sentences, then sentences vis-à-vis their paragraph, and likewise, paragraphs vis-à-vis their larger context.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3.2 Grammatical

This step examines the “flow of argument” and identifies “an assertion, supported by subordinate clauses ... a contrast being drawn.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it looks at subjects, verbs, objects, and their relationships in a sentence.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.3.3 Biblical [or Intertextual]<sup>34</sup>

This is where one looks at the chosen passage/texts in relation to their immediate and broader biblical passages. Here, quotations, allusions, or other similarities are identified and examined carefully.<sup>35</sup> Scholars like James M. Hamilton Jr. and Graeme Goldsworthy do intertextual reading by establishing a single biblical theme that is believed to anchor the entire Bible. The former proposes “God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgement”<sup>36</sup> and the latter, Christology.<sup>37</sup> However, in the case of Hamilton’s proposition, as Köstenberger plausibly objects, “it appears to be artificially imposed onto individual writings (e.g. Esther, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Matthew, Philemon).” After all, every biblical book has its distinct theological emphasis.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lawrence, 41–42.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence, 43.

<sup>34</sup> Words in the square brackets are inserted to add clarity.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence, 43–44.

<sup>36</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 40.

<sup>38</sup> Köstenberger, “The Present and Future,” 454.

Also, in Goldsworthy's case, if one's BT inclines extensively towards the Christological reading, the Trinitarian aspect would be compromised. This then becomes a problem for a letter like Galatians which talks about not only Christ but also explicitly deals with the Spirit (3:2, 3, 5, 4:29, 5:22-23, 25).<sup>39</sup>

Here, the point is, if one's BT is limited to only one theme, it can end up compromising the text's diverse nature. Hence, the purpose of intertextual reading should be to acknowledge scriptural diversities and yet maintain its unified storyline. This step is crucial because if one reads Paul in Galatians devoid of other relevant OT and NT references, one cannot construct Paul's message in harmony with the larger biblical framework. Richard B. Hays compellingly shows how Paul's letters allude to Israel's story, likewise, how the OT and NT are interconnected.<sup>40</sup> G. K. Beale employs a similar method in his tome and depicts how the OT's storyline culminates in the NT.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.4 Theological Objective

This tool is used in formulating a theology that is exegetically driven. In Francis Watson's terms, it is one's "biblical interpretation" fulfilling its "theological responsibilities."<sup>42</sup>

## 2.5 Ecclesial Objective

This step is employed while specifying ecclesial responsibilities. As Watson states, this is how the text is applied to the church and then to society at large.<sup>43</sup> Employing the first, second, third,

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<sup>39</sup> See the theological proposition—in connection with the Spirit—in the second paragraph of subsection 3.3.

<sup>40</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 16.

<sup>42</sup> Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), vii.

<sup>43</sup> Watson, *Text, Church, and World*.

and fourth conceptual tools, the next section evaluates the US's apocalyptic reading of Paul in Galatians.

### 3. A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE UNION SCHOOL

#### 3.1 Paul's Apocalyptic Experience

In Galatians 1:12, by reinforcing 1:11, Paul averred that he neither received his message from humans nor was taught by anyone. He claimed that he got the message by means of *apokalypseōs*<sup>44</sup> (vv. 12, 16). That incident caused a dramatic shift in Paul's life. To this, the US calls it a punctiliar event.<sup>45</sup> De Boer asserts that Paul personified the prepositional phrase *en emoi* of verse 16a—that is, God's apocalypse of Christ to Paul led the apostle to abandon his former life.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, such postulation needs qualification because Paul did not jettison Judaism completely. Still, after his Damascus Road Christophany, Paul read the Scripture canonically and historically. Likewise, he crucially retained certain fundamental Jewish doctrines. For instance, he continued to uphold Jewish monotheism (4:9). Thus, his responses in 1 Corinthians 8, 9, and 10 are fundamentally grounded on his belief of Israel's God as above all deities. Besides, he retained certain aspects of the Mosaic law (Gal 4:21, 5:14). Wright, in his tome, compellingly explains how Paul preserved and reformulated his understanding of Jewish "monotheism," "election," and "eschatology" in light of the Christ-Event and the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup> So, even post-Damascus Road event, there is continuity—and of course, discontinuity—in Paul's belief. The next subsection

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<sup>44</sup> Albrecht Oepke recounts that generally, the term ἀποκάλυψις refers to "a manifestation of deity." Albrecht Oepke, "ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 564.

<sup>45</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 144. de Boer, *Galatians*, 93.

<sup>46</sup> de Boer, *Galatians*, 93.

<sup>47</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God (Book II)*, vol. 4, Christian Origins and the Question of God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

elaborates more on the concepts of continuity and discontinuity.

### 3.2 The Two Ages

Martyn posits that Paul's expressions of the "present evil age"—at the beginning of the letter (1:4b)—and the "new creation"—at the closing (6:15)—markedly implies that "the motif of apocalyptic discontinuity is central to Paul's ... gospel."<sup>48</sup> On the basis of this contrast, the US argues for a complete discontinuity between the evil/old age and the new age.<sup>49</sup>

Canonically and intertextually speaking, to some extent, such contention is consistent. The reason is, before becoming a follower of Christ, one's condition was considered evil (1:4, Col. 1:21). Consequent to Christ's arrival, after one has faith in Christ, one's status has become anew (Gal. 6:15, cf. 3:28). Thus, there is a discontinuity in some ways. But at the same time, it sounds inaccurate to say that the arrival of the new era has completely ruled out everything about the evil/old age. Despite the reality of the new age, the cosmic war between the flesh and the Spirit is still continuing. Thus, there is continuity at least in some ways. That said, as the next section explains, it is important to note that the fight between the flesh and the Spirit has taken a drastically different shape after the Christ-Event.

### 3.3 The Two Forces

When looking at Paul's choice of words, besides *Pneuma kata tēs sarkos*, the expression *tauta gar allēlois antikeitai* (5:17) shows the tension between the flesh and the Spirit.<sup>50</sup> Such tension serves as a crucial apocalyptic feature for the US.

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<sup>48</sup> Martyn, "The Apocalyptic Gospel," 253.

<sup>49</sup> See de Boer, "Paul," 27.

<sup>50</sup> Romans 8:5-9 talks about the same contrast—the flesh against the Spirit. Also, for a stark contrast between πνεῦμα and σὰρξ see Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (London: S.C.M., 1971), 25–27.

Martyn posits that the expression *sarx epithymeî kata* (plus genitive) *tou Pneumatou* (5:17) is a *hapax legomenon* to Paul's Greek in Galatians. It literally means "the Flesh *desires against* the Spirit"<sup>51</sup> and "... it is the apocalyptic battle of the end-time, the war that has been declared by the Spirit."<sup>52</sup>

The solution to the problem of the flesh versus the Spirit is given in verse 16a (cf. v. 18)—that is, the Spirit's work.<sup>53</sup> In de Boer's words, the imperative form *peripateite* "has a conditional quality: 'If you are walking by the Spirit ... you will *not* carry out ... the desire of the flesh.'"<sup>54</sup> Martyn reinforces it by identifying the double negatives in the phrase *ou mē telesēte* as indicating "an emphatic assurance that a certain thing will not happen"—that is, a surety that when one walks by the Spirit one will not fulfil one's fleshly wants.<sup>55</sup>

Such observation is canonically and intertextually consistent as it significantly valorizes Paul's emphasis on God's Spirit—*Pneumatî peripateite*—and the promise coupled with it—*kai epithymian sarkos ou mē telesēte* (5:16). Moreover, it underpins 3:1-5 where Paul stresses the cruciality of the received Spirit. This further reinforces Paul's assertion about the importance of the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). As John M. G. Barclay states, in Galatians 5:13–6:10 Paul primarily shows that "the Spirit provides sufficient moral direction and protection against 'the flesh.'" This fits well with Paul's argument in 5:13-16 and 18.<sup>56</sup> If that is the case, then the US's understanding of the Spirit—that is, the assured reality of believers' victory over fleshly

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<sup>51</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 493.

<sup>52</sup> Martyn, 494.

<sup>53</sup> In light of Galatians 5:13-6:10, Fee compellingly spells out the cruciality of Spirit's role in empowering believers. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 420–71.

<sup>54</sup> de Boer, *Galatians*, 352.

<sup>55</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 492.

<sup>56</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, ed. John Riches, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 115–16.

wants through the Spirit's power—is theologically consistent.<sup>57</sup> And the guaranteed victory over the fleshly desires is materialized through the *pistis Iēsou Christou*, which is discussed in the next subsection.

### 3.4 Pistis Iēsou Christou

Stressing on the punctiliar nature of the Christ-Event, the US<sup>58</sup> considers the phrase *pistis Iēsou Christou* (2:16) as subjective genitive (SG). Martyn writes that *pistis Christou* “is an expression by which Paul speaks of Christ’s atoning faithfulness as, on the cross, he died faithfully for human beings while looking faithfully to God.”<sup>59</sup> Contrary to the US, Ernest De Witt Burton,<sup>60</sup> F. F. Bruce,<sup>61</sup> and Craig S. Keener<sup>62</sup> interpret *pistis Iēsou Christou* as objective genitive (OG). English translations like NRSV, NIV, and NASB retain the OG reading.

The following reasons support the SG reading. Firstly, as de Boer argues, Paul uses the phrase *pisteōs Iēsou Christou* in Galatians 3:22 (cf. 2:16a), and then mentions *pistis* in 3:23-25 “in a personified way, as a virtual synonym for Christ.” Hence, “faith” came at a certain point of time (vv. 23, 25)—that is, at the coming of Christ (3:19).<sup>63</sup> Secondly, had Paul wanted to say “faith in Christ,” he would have used *eis Christon* as he did in Colossians 2:5—thus paralleling *eis episteusamen* (2:16b).<sup>64</sup> Thirdly, as Longenecker observes, it is ideal to identify the word *pistis* with the Hebrew term *ēmūnā* which implies “faith” and

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<sup>57</sup> See the last sentence of subsection 2.3.3’s first paragraph.

<sup>58</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 263–75, 249–53. Also see “Excursus 9” in de Boer, *Galatians*, 148–65.

<sup>59</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 271.

<sup>60</sup> Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), 121.

<sup>61</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 138–40.

<sup>62</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Galatians*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 103–6.

<sup>63</sup> de Boer, “Paul’s Use and Interpretation of a Justification Tradition,” 203.

<sup>64</sup> de Boer, 203.

“faithfulness.” Such comparison signifies that *pistis Iēsou Christou* is used in a similar sense as *pistin tou Theou*, “the faithfulness of God” (Rom. 3:3).<sup>65</sup> Fourthly, as Martyn avers, *pistis Christou* strongly indicates the notion of Christ’s faithful obedience to the Father even to the point of death.<sup>66</sup> Such postulation stands in harmony with Romans 5:19 and Philippians 2:8 that talks about Christ’s complete obedience to the divine agenda.

At the same time, the advantages of the OG reading are; firstly, as Barclay observes, the translation “faith in Christ” retains the focus laid on “Christ on whom this faith is founded (cf. the shortening in [Gal.] 2:17).”<sup>67</sup> Secondly, this then fits well with 2:16b, as Bruce writes, “when Paul expresses himself by the verb πιστεύω and not the noun *pistis*, Christ is the undoubted object of the faith, as in the clause immediately following ... ‘even we have believed in Christ Jesus’” (2:16b).<sup>68</sup> Thirdly, Keener states that Paul never presents “Christ as believing or calls Jesus’s obedience faithfulness. That is, Jesus is *nowhere* the subject of the cognate verb *pisteuō*.”<sup>69</sup> Instead, references such as Romans 10:11 and Philippians 1:29 markedly depict Jesus as the “specific *object*” of that verb.<sup>70</sup>

When the previous two paragraphs are compared, the former has more points; thus, it can be more compelling for some people. Nevertheless, relying solely on such proofs sounds theologically risky. The point is, if one overemphasizes the SG reading, one can compromise the aspect of one’s intentional effort to have faith in Christ (OG reading). This then will undermine Paul’s instructions about one’s responsibility to

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<sup>65</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 87.

<sup>66</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 271.

<sup>67</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2015), 379.

<sup>68</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 139.

<sup>69</sup> Keener, *Galatians*, 104–5.

<sup>70</sup> Keener, 105.

have faith (Rom. 1:5–6; 4:1–5; 1 Cor. 2:5). Theologically speaking, choosing the SG reading over the OG reading will not automatically transfer Christ’s faithfulness to a person. That is why Paul explicitly instructed his readers to deliberately walk in and be led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–26). Here, the argument is not to elevate the OG reading at the cost of the SG reading. After all, a person cannot function independently—when it comes to having faith in Christ—devoid of divine enablement. There is a total reality of us being divinely enabled—through the Spirit’s work<sup>71</sup>—to have faith. And Christ’s faithfulness is the one that causes this reality. Therefore, there appears to be an inseparable interplay between the SG and the OG readings. Here, Wright’s contention—mentioned in his recent work—is helpful:

It is not the case (as is sometimes thought) that reading ‘Messiah *pistis*’ in terms of Jesus’s own faithfulness rules out, or renders redundant, the human response, the answering belief and trust. The two go together, and indeed it is because the Messiah’s own *pistis* has created the new context that the answering human *pistis* can rightly (and not arbitrarily) serve as the appropriate badge of covenant membership.<sup>72</sup>

The point is, Christ’s faithfulness sets the premise for a person to have faith in Christ. In this, one’s intentional effort/participation through the enablement of the Spirit becomes crucial.

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<sup>71</sup> Paul, in Galatians, does not dichotomize Christ from the Spirit as he explicitly deals with the criticality of the latter’s role too (3:2, 3, 5, 4:29, 5:22–23, 25). de Boer sums up well, “Christ, his faith, his love, his Spirit—these, not the law, provide the basis for the hoped-for justification.” de Boer, *Galatians*, 319. Also, see Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 470–71.

<sup>72</sup> N. T. Wright, *Galatians*, Commentaries for Christian Formation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2021), 137.

### 3.5 Sperma

The US identifies *sperma* (3:16, 19) with the coming of Christ.<sup>73</sup> Here, de Boer's perception differs from Martyn's and the former appears more compelling than the latter. Unlike de Boer, Martyn seems to have overemphasized the literal meaning of the word "seed," that is, in the singular or individual sense.<sup>74</sup> In fact, as Wright observes, when looking at the term "seed" intertextually (3:16, 15-18, 29, cf. Rom. 4, Gen. 15, 16, 18), "the singularity of the 'seed' in [Gal. 3] v. 16 is not the singularity of an individual person contrasted with the plurality of many human beings, but the singularity of one *family* contrasted with the plurality of families which would result if the Torah were to be regarded the way Paul's opponents apparently regarded it."<sup>75</sup> Wright states further that Galatians 3:15-18 implies that the Abrahamic covenant precedes the reality of one family.<sup>76</sup>

Wright's perception is ideal as it stands in harmony with Galatians 3:28-29, which signifies that egalitarianism was instituted at the Christ-Event. This is not to equate with the proposition of Paul's opponents, who interpreted the term "seed" in a collective sense, but in reference to Jews exclusively.<sup>77</sup> The point is, the coming of Christ causes a corporate or faith community that is inclusive of everyone. Beker rightly writes that, unlike in Romans 4, the term "seed" in Galatians 3:16 (thrice), 19, 29, refers to Christ, "the singular seed ... in whom all" become one (3:16, 20).<sup>78</sup> Therefore, Paul seems to be using the term *sperma* in Galatians 3 in the sense of singularity—Christ (vv. 16, 19)—and simultaneously with a collective idea—that is, Christ's followers as one corporate body (vv. 7 and 29). Then, there is some sense of discontinuity—that

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<sup>73</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 338-40. de Boer, *Galatians*, 222-25.

<sup>74</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 347.

<sup>75</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 163.

<sup>76</sup> Wright, 163-64. Also, see Wright, *Galatians*, 223-227.

<sup>77</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 340.

<sup>78</sup> Beker, *Paul The Apostle*, 96.

is, the law-based community came to an end at the coming of the *sperma*.

## 4. SIGNIFICANCE/RELEVANCE

### 4.1 Theological-Educational Implication

The first four conceptual tools affirm that Paul, in Galatians, might have understood the Christ-Event as a punctiliar event, which simultaneously was a covenantal fulfilment, and pointed towards eschatological consummation.

#### 4.1.1 Punctiliar Event

As the US argues, the Christ-Event certainly has a radical sense of invasion. Paul's Damascus Road Christophany<sup>79</sup> and the arrival of a new creation strongly denote the idea of invasion over the old era.<sup>80</sup> Besides, the work of the Spirit distinctly marks the coming of an invasive power over the evil force.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Paul's theology of the *pistis Iēsou Christou* decisively overpowered the law-based theology (5:6, 11, 6:15, cf. 2:12) and instituted an inclusive community.<sup>82</sup> As discussed in the subsection 3.5 *Sperma*, the Christ-Event radically instituted a corporate body, a community of Jesus's followers. The focus on the invasive nature of the Christ-Event indicates how God works out his salvific plan devoid of human influence. Here, Wright's assertion is helpful: "For him [Paul], the death and resurrection of Jesus had shed a flood of new and unexpected light on everything, including the meaning of creation and the nature of its plight."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See subsection 3.1.

<sup>80</sup> See subsection 3.2.

<sup>81</sup> See subsection 3.3.

<sup>82</sup> See subsection 3.4.

<sup>83</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Paul Debate: Critical Questions for Understanding the Apostle* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 59.

#### 4.1.2 Covenantal Fulfilment

At the same time, besides being punctiliar, the Christ-Event has a sense of fulfilment because it is an actualization of God's covenantal or historical promise. Reading Galatians 4:4 and Mark 12:1–12 intertextually, James D. G. Dunn compares God's act—of sending his Son at the fulness of time—with the act of the vineyard's owner—sending his son at last (v. 6). Dunn calls this an “eschatological act”<sup>84</sup> which was to restore everyone into God's eschatological family.<sup>85</sup> Hays construes it as God fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:14, 4:28).<sup>86</sup> This is something the law could not accomplish it (Rom. 8:3–4).

Therefore, as Dunn asserts, since the initial stage, God's covenant to bless nations (Gal. 3:8; Gen. 12:3, 18:18) had an eschatological motive. When that covenant was materialized at the Christ-Event, it was extended beyond Israel; that is, “The covenant is not thereby abandoned. Rather it is broadened.”<sup>87</sup> Oscar Cullmann reads Galatians 3–4 in terms of reducing “from the many to the one, Christ, and then of the extension from the one to the many, to the Church and to humanity.”<sup>88</sup> In relation to this, contrary to the US, Wright holds that the phrase *to plērōma tou chronou* (4:4) does not imply a complete cessation from the past. He writes that the “divine action is not ‘dependent on’ human history” but “God's action is always dependent on God's promise and grace” and he understands the phrase “the fulness of time” in terms of reaching a goal and

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<sup>84</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry Into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 40.

<sup>85</sup> Dunn, 44.

<sup>86</sup> Richard B. Hays, “Crucified with Christ: A Synthesis of the Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians, and Galatians,” in *Pauline Theology, Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, ed. Jouette M. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 232.

<sup>87</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 197.

<sup>88</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 264.

not in the sense of terminating something.<sup>89</sup> Hence, within the framework of God's promise, "historical events" certainly have theological significance.<sup>90</sup>

From the canonical and intertextual viewpoints, the contention of Dunn, Hays, and Wright is consistent. Paul himself used typology from Israel's history to make a theological proposition (4:21–31). His allegory of the story of Sarah and Hagar implies that the covenantal God extends his covenantal family beyond one ethnic group (2:4, 16–17, 3:14, 17, 26, 28, 5:6). Besides, the apocalyptic writings strongly affirm God's covenantal nature. For instance, Revelation 15–18, 20:11–15, which is about judging the wicked ones and rewarding the faithful ones, clearly signifies that God faithfully maintains his established covenant. Additionally, Daniel 9 is basically about the unfailing covenant of God as opposed to Israel's unfaithfulness. In short, God, who acted at the Christ-Event, is covenantal God. Therefore, as much as the Christ-Event is invasively punctiliar, it is crucially covenantal; in other words, it is historical. Then, there is both discontinuity and continuity as argued particularly in subsections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

#### 4.1.3 Eschatological Consummation

For the US, God's ultimate apocalypse is the first coming of Christ. Martyn remarks that Paul's apocalyptic terminology used in reference to Jesus's death implies that the real victory of God is at the Christ-Event itself. Hence, the real divine triumph is no longer a future event.<sup>91</sup> De Boer stresses the future aspect but inclines more extensively towards the invasive

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<sup>89</sup> Wright, *Paul*, 182.

<sup>90</sup> Scott J. Hafemann, "Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 16.

<sup>91</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 101.

nature of Christ's first coming.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the Parousia is hardly emphasized.

Nevertheless, as far as Galatians is concerned, as much as the present reality—the inaugurated era—is critical,<sup>93</sup> the future aspect is crucial too. To specify four references which contain eschatological aspects: First, Galatians 5:5 “For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope” (NIV). Here, the expression “we eagerly wait ...” points toward beyond the present. Second, verse 21—of the same chapter—says “... I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (NIV). Again, the expression “will not inherit the kingdom of God” is distinctly futuristic. Third, Galatians 6:8 says, “Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (NIV). Here, two expressions—“will reap destruction” and “will reap eternal life”—are clearly eschatological. Fourth, Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (NIV). Here, the expression—“we will reap the harvest”—is evidently futuristic.

As discussed in subsection 3.3—The Two Forces—the fight between the flesh and the Spirit affirms that the eschatological era has already begun at the Christ-Event, but its full consummation still lies in the future. In the fight, one cannot simply cling on to the SG reading of *pistis Iēsou Christou*, rather on both the SG and the OG readings of *pistis Iēsou Christou*.<sup>94</sup> Thus, depending on Christ's faithfulness, one is required to give constant intentional effort<sup>95</sup> in the fight which will be real for a person until the final eschatological consummation. Strikingly,

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<sup>92</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, “Apocalyptic as God's Eschatological Activity in Paul's Theology,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 52.

<sup>93</sup> See subsection 4.1.1.

<sup>94</sup> This is argued out in the subsection 3.4.

<sup>95</sup> See particularly the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the subsection 3.4.

for those who believe in the Christ-Event, victory in the fight is already assured in and through the Spirit.<sup>96</sup>

To sustain the point further, canonically speaking, Jesus did emphasize his first coming, and this confirms one aspect of the US. Jesus explicitly declared that God's decisive rule is already here on earth (Luke 17:21). Miracles and exorcisms which he performed (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:39, 13:16) concretely affirmed the invasive nature of God's apocalypse. But unlike the US, Jesus expressly emphasized the eschatological aspect too. He taught that there will be a final destruction of the evil forces (Matt. 8: 29-32; 25:41) and a last judgement (Luke 12:41-48). Furthermore, the concept of eschatological judgement is evident in both the prophetic and Pauline writings (Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:14-16; Joel 2:2; Rom. 2:16, 3:6). Overall, canonically and intertextually speaking, one can infer that Paul's theology is apocalyptically invasive, covenantally driven, and eschatologically consummative.

## 4.2 Practical Implications

In light of the above discussions, employing the fourth and fifth conceptual tools,<sup>97</sup> three practical applications are drawn out.

### 4.2.1 Christ's Faith/Faithfulness cum Faith in Christ

The Christ-Event brings both privilege and responsibility. The privilege is that Christ's faithfulness—even at the cost of his life—has set the premise for believers to have faith in him. This is something that was unavailable prior to the Christ-Event. Simultaneously, the responsibility is that believers should make an intentional effort to value the faithfulness of Christ by giving complete loyalty to him. In grammatical terms, it is considering *pistis Iēsou Christou* both in terms of the SG and the OG readings.

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<sup>96</sup> See the second paragraph of the subsection 3.3.

<sup>97</sup> See subsections 2.4 Theological Objective and 2.5 Ecclesial Objective.

Focusing only on the first aspect can lead to an irresponsible lifestyle; that is, following fleshly desires (5:19-21).<sup>98</sup> But focusing only on the second aspect can lead to devaluing what Christ had accomplished on the cross which also resulted in the coming of the Spirit for the empowerment of every believer.<sup>99</sup> However, when one balances both the SG and the OG understandings well, one would certainly bear the fruit of the Spirit which Paul explicitly listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

#### 4.2.2 The Assured Victory through the Spirit's Work

As discussed in subsection 3.3, specifically the first paragraph, the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit is indeed real. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul elaborates on the various challenges individuals face, including “sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, ... drunkenness, [and] carousing” (NRSVue). To specify one area in relation to the Indian society, Sohini Mitter reports that as per its status in 2017, “India accounts for the world’s third-largest consumer base at Pornhub.”<sup>100</sup> Such a reality is a strong threat to the Indian individuals and families as pornography has the potential to ruin one’s emotional and mental well-being.

Nevertheless, amidst such an intimidating reality, specifically for those who believe in Christ, the invasive event of Christ has brought a radical shift in the battle between one’s fleshly desires and the Spirit. In this fight, believers are not left helpless. As discussed in subsection 3.3, particularly in the second paragraph, Paul assures his readers that victory over their fleshly desires is guaranteed when they walk in the Spirit and allow themselves to be led by the Spirit. Paul does not expect believers to attempt the impossible. However, the process and

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<sup>98</sup> See the subsection 3.3.

<sup>99</sup> See the subsection 4.2.2.

<sup>100</sup> Sohini Mitter, “India Attempts to Curb Porn—Is It Working and What It Means for Reliance Jio and Other Telcos,” YourStory.com, November 6, 2018, <https://yourstory.com/2018/11/india-bans-porn-working-means-reliance-jio-telcos>.

its outcome depend on the extent to which an individual is open and reliant on the work of the Spirit. This is why, as argued in the last paragraph of subsection 3.4, it is crucial to make a deliberate effort in wholeheartedly pledging loyalty to God (OG reading of *pistis Iēsou Christou*).

#### 4.2.3 Participation in Eschatological Activity

Since the church is not only a covenantal community, but also an apocalyptic and eschatological community, it should participate in the process of eschatological consummation—that is, establishing God’s reign in a fuller form.<sup>101</sup> This can be ideally shown in the form of fighting against societal evils. With specific reference to the Naga society, two ecclesial responsibilities are given below.

First, although Nagaland is a Christian-dominated Indian state, gender-based discrimination is still a grave concern. In a district like Wokha, women are discouraged from becoming “pastors or reverends.”<sup>102</sup> According to *The Shillong Times*, in rural areas, males generally have more privileges than females in the field of education. The majority of the “school dropouts” are girls. The literacy rate for women is 76.69 per cent, while

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<sup>101</sup> Note that one can neither expedite the process nor make the process go slower. One can only participate in the process where God controls everything.

<sup>102</sup> Meribeni Kikon, “Gender Discrimination In Church Governance – Video Volunteers,” May 2, 2011, <https://www.videovolunteers.org/gender-discrimination-in-church-governance/>. Of course, with much hindrance there has been some positive changes in some places. “After fighting over two decades for more rights and privileges, the Western Sümi Baptist Akukuhou Kukhakulu (WSBAK) ... has set a benchmark in conferring women with ministry license. 30 women church workers under the WSBAK are currently licensed ministers ... The license gives these women the right to conduct all religious ceremonies like marriage, funerals, the Lord’s Supper, christening and conducting baptism. Till a few years back, such privileges were accorded only to men.” Y Merina Chishi, “Nagaland: Towards Making Space for Women Leadership in Churches,” *MorungExpress*, August 30, 2020, <https://www.morungexpress.com/nagaland-towards-making-space-for-women-leadership-in-churches>.

men have a literacy rate of 83.29 per cent.<sup>103</sup> Easterine Iralu, in her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*, powerfully narrates how males are given the priority to study and to have the best part of the food at the family's dining table as opposed to their counterparts.<sup>104</sup> Related to this, Gaventa rightly asks, "Is Galatians just a 'guy thing'?" and comments that the Christ-Event has freed both genders from the old age.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, when there are equal rights for both genders, then comes the real existence of the new age (Gal. 6:15, cf. 5:1, 13). Therefore, Nagaland, particularly the church, cannot claim that it has truly become a part of the community which the Christ-Event has inaugurated because several women are still under subjugation simply because they are not males.

Second, the communal conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis in India's Manipur—Christian-dominated communities—has claimed several lives. The Nagas accuse the Kukis as refugees taking shelter in the Nagas' land.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, Kukis do not admit it and accuse Nagas (particularly the Tangkhul tribe) of "ethnic cleansing" of Kukis.<sup>107</sup> Even at present, the tension is intense<sup>108</sup> and people are anxious as to how and when it will take the form of barbaric violence again. This study does not look at the socio-political agenda/s of both

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<sup>103</sup> PUBLIC, "Gender Disparity in Nagaland," *The Shillong Times*, July 4, 2020, <https://theshillongtimes.com/2020/07/05/gender-disparity-in-nagaland/>.

<sup>104</sup> Easterine Iralu, *A Terrible Matriarchy* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2007).

<sup>105</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Is Galatians Just a 'Guy Thing'? A Theological Reflection," *Interpretation* 54, no. 3 (July 2000): 267–78.

<sup>106</sup> Jimmy Leivon, "Kukis Started 1992 Kuki-Naga Ethnic Conflict, Says NSCN-IM," *Indian Express*, September 15, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/manipur/kukis-started-1992-kuki-naga-ethnic-conflict-says-nscn-im-5358206/>.

<sup>107</sup> Bikash Kumar Bhattacharya, "INDIA: Black Day Marks 25 Years After a Still Controversial Massacre on the Burmese Border," *The News Lens International Edition*, September 21, 2018, <https://international.thenewslens.com/article/104485>.

<sup>108</sup> Nagalimvoice, "NSCN/GPRN Press Statement 18th February 2019," *Nagalimvoice* (blog), March 16, 2019, <http://www.nagalimvoice.com/press-release/nscn-gprn-press-statement-18th-february-2019/>.

parties wherein each group may have their own valid reason/s. But the point is, amidst such a crucial tension, sadly, churches from both parties seem to have been ignorant or perhaps fearful to boldly respond to the issue biblically. So far, there has not been any tangible voice of protest from the church. After all, if the Naga and the Kuki churches claim that they are part of the covenantal, apocalyptic, and eschatological community, they should actively and boldly work towards establishing a sensible solution by maintaining peace and valuing people's lives.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

To sum up, this study primarily looks at the questions of (i) how valid is the US's proposition on Paul's perception of the Christ-Event as radically punctiliar? (ii) Does it need a complete exclusion of God's doing in and through Israel? And (iii) do the above questions have any significance for the present readers? To answer the cited concerns, the paper employs the method of BT that has five components: (i) Canonical Authority: This research considers the biblical text as the ultimate authority—that is, the Scripture precedes BT or any form of presupposition/dogma. (ii) Historical Exploration: This component aims to explore the socio-cultural, religious, and philosophical backgrounds of the text. (iii) Exegetical Tools: Here the primary focus is on the complexity of the text vis-à-vis its immediate and broad contexts. Again, this section is comprised of four conceptual tools: Grammatical-Historical Method, Grammatical, Historical, and Biblical. (iv) Theological Objective: Here, the aim is to formulate a theology that is firmly grounded on the exegetical findings. (v) Ecclesial Objective: This approach is employed in order to apply the studied text and its findings to the contemporary audience; and perhaps, even to future readers too.

The method of BT affirms certain things about the US. Simultaneously, it adds certain aspects to the US's proposition. First, as the US argues, Galatians certainly talks about how God decisively revealed himself at the Christ-Event and

inaugurated a new era. This then brings a radical sense of discontinuity between the pre-and post-Christ-Event. Second, at the same time, Galatians has a strong allusion to Israel, in terms of the Abrahamic covenant, the law, and Jewish eschatology. This then indicates that God's apocalypse in Christ was covenantally actuated; thus, there is some sense of continuity between God's doings in and through Israel and at the Christ-Event. Third, Galatians talks about tensions between the forces of evil and good—the flesh and the Spirit—here at present but only the latter will reign in the end, that is, at the complete eschatological consummation. Hence, the Christ-Event points beyond the present, that is, towards God's constant act of consummating the fullness of his kingdom.

Moreover, other areas of the significance of this study include; first, one should value both Christ's faithfulness—his loyalty to the Father's will by dying on the cross so that the world would be saved—and one's faithful response to the same. In grammatical terms, it is about balancing the SG and the OG readings of *pistis Iēsou Christou*. Second, in the fight between the flesh and the Spirit—which is real for every person—particularly for those who believe in Christ, one's victory is assured in the work of the Holy Spirit. Third, the church—as a covenantal, apocalyptic, and eschatological community—must actively get involved in the process of eschatological consummation. Its participation can be evidently shown by dedicatedly responding to any social ... political issues that are threatening or costing people's lives.

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