

JERUSALEM, OUR MOTHER: METALEPSIS AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN GALATIANS 4:21-31

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*Be glad, O barren woman,
who bears no children;
break forth and cry aloud,
you who have no labor pains;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband. [Isa 54:1]*

IN Gal 4:21-31 the apostle Paul performs a hermeneutical *tour de force* unequaled in the NT. The Christians of Galatia were, unwittingly perhaps, in danger of rejecting the saving grace of Jesus Christ by embracing the covenant of Jewish law expressed in circumcision. In these eleven short verses Paul effects a turnabout with enormous theological implication by arguing that if the Galatians really understood God's law, they would throw out any idea of being circumcised along with those persons who advocated it, because that is what the law itself demands! In a radical historical and theological reversal, Paul claims that Christians, and not Jews, are the promised sons of Abraham and are the true heirs of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.

The Hagar-Sarah trope¹ of Gal 4:21-31 is the final argument of a section that begins in 3:1. Betz identifies this section as the *probatio* of Paul's discourse, using a term from classical rhetoric.² The *probatio* was that section of a first-century deliberative oration in which the heart of the matter was argued. Even if Galatians is not a formal oration, within this section Paul marshals his case against circumcision as proposed by the Judaizers. He both begins and ends the *probatio* with a reference to Abraham. Therefore Gal 4:21-31 is the *coup de grace* in Paul's argument against the Judaizers.

In the opening argument of the *probatio* (3:6-9), Paul compares the Galatians' personal experience of the Holy Spirit to Abraham's experience with God millennia before. As the final argument of the *probatio* (4:21-31), Paul refers to Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, as representing two antithetical states of being, the former characterized by slavery, the other by freedom. In Paul's argument the Jews who reject Christ are in bondage to the

¹ A trope is any literary device that uses words in other than their literal sense. I will refer to the Hagar-Sarah construction as a trope to avoid associations that burden the more frequently used terms allegory and typology.

² Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 239-40.

law and akin to Ishmael, but the Galatian Christians are among the true seed promised to Abraham, brothers of Isaac and free from Sinai's curse. Paul shows that the evidence used to argue for the circumcision of the Gentile Christians, taken by the Judaizers from the story of Abraham in Genesis, actually argues decisively against the circumcision of Gentile Christians.

Gal 4:21-31 is rife with interesting problems and has rightly received much scholarly scrutiny. The overarching hermeneutical issue in this passage is how Paul can use the story of Hagar and Sarah from Genesis 21 to effect an exegetical reversal that ends up identifying Jews as the children of Hagar and Christians as the children of Sarah. Paul seems to accomplish his end by making arbitrary assignments of the women to two covenants and to two Jerusalems, a method many call allegorizing.

This questionable use of the Genesis 21 material furthermore contradicts the traditional understanding of Israel's history that had stood for centuries. Historically understood, Genesis 21 taught that the circumcised Jews are indeed the children of promise descending from Abraham through Isaac. This historical understanding played into the hand of Paul's opponents in Galatia. These opponents were apparently arguing that if the Christians of Galatia claimed to be children of Abraham by faith and therefore heirs of God's promise to Abraham, then they should identify with Abraham's descendants by being circumcised, as Abraham himself had been after coming to faith in God.³

Because the story of Abraham was evidently a persuasive part of the Judaizers' argument, Paul's response also uses the Abraham story, but with a hermeneutic that leads to the startling conclusion that the Jews are not, in fact, the children of Abraham after all, but that the true children of Abraham are the Spirit-filled Christians (including of course those circumcised Jews, like Paul himself, who come to faith in Jesus Christ).

The notorious difficulty of comprehending the operative hermeneutical principle(s) through which Paul produces this conclusion is aggravated by textual and lexical problems within the text itself. The eleven different textual variants found here perhaps reflect how troubling scribes found the passage. Furthermore, two semantically important words in the passage, (ἀλληγοροῦμενα and συστοιχεῖ, are *hapax legomena* in the NT and the intended sense of a third important lexical item, διαθήκαι, is contested in this context. Then there is the notoriously perplexing statement of v. 25, "Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia."

³ The specific teaching of the Judaizers at Galatia is not extant and can be gleaned only by Paul's response to it in this epistle. Many scholars have attempted to articulate the precise nature of the problem. In addition to standard commentaries, see also J. M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Studies of the NT and Its World; ed. J. Riches; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 1-74; B. H. Brinsmead, *Galatians-Dialogical Response to Opponents* (SBLDS 65; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); C. H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988) 87-118; F. Pereira, "The Galatian Controversy in Light of the Targums," *Indian journal of Theology* 20 (1971) 13-29; M. Silva, "Galatians," *New Bible Commentary* (rev. ed.; Leicester: IVP, forthcoming).

Much scholarly effort has rightly been focused on these significant problems. Much less effort has been expended on identifying the contribution of the Isa 54:1 quotation in Gal 4:27 to the logical flow of Paul's argument. Understanding the logical function of this quotation should enlighten the discussion of the problems in the verses that surround it.

The apostle Paul quotes Isaiah's words in his epistle to the Galatians (4:27) immediately after the trope in which he constructs a contrasting, but uncompleted, parallel between Hagar, the slave woman, and Sarah, the free woman; between Hagar of the Mosaic covenant of Sinai and Sarah of the Abrahamic covenant of promise. Carefully note, however, that Paul specifies only the Hagar-side of the parallel construction and, without so much as referring to Sarah by name, leaves the Sarah-side of the construction unspecified. The significance of the unfinished character of the parallel is often overlooked as interpreters have not hesitated to fill in the Sarah-side of the construction using the force of logical parity.

Immediately following the quotation of Isa 54:1, Paul addresses his readers with a transition to application in v. 28: ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ ("And you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise"). In this verse Paul uses the second person plural pronoun, ὑμεῖς. He last explicitly addressed the Galatian readers in v. 21 by using the implied second person plural pronoun in the verbal form: λέγετέ μοι, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι, τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε; ("Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not understand the law?"). The verses between 21 and 28 comprise his explanation of what the law actually says about the situation in the Galatian church (v. 21). In v. 28 he begins to bring that exposition to bear on the contemporary situation in Galatia.

C. H. Cosgrove debates whether v. 28 (ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί . . .) functions as "a vocative of *applicatio*" or as marking the start of a new theme for further development.⁴ It seems to me to have elements of both functions and to mark a transition from the exposition of Genesis 21 to its application in Galatia. Paul wants the Galatians to be so persuaded by his argument from Abraham's life that they, like Abraham, will "cast out the slave woman and her son" (v. 30). In Paul's radically reversed economy this means that the Galatian Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, recognize the heirs of Abraham as a people not marked out by circumcision but as a people distinctively marked out, like Abraham, by faith in God's promise.⁵

Upon first reading, it is difficult to see how the quotation of Isa 54:1 advances or supports Paul's argument that Christians are the true children of Abraham to the exclusion of the Jews, or how it justifies Paul's application of the Hagar-Sarah trope to the contemporary situation in Galatia. In

⁴ Cosgrove, *Cross*, 80.

⁵ Dunn's point that circumcision and the food laws functioned as sociological distinctives that formed the corporate self-identity of God's covenant people in the first century is helpful for understanding how appealing the Judaizer's argument would have been and how unattractive Paul's counter-argument may have seemed. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1990) 215-236.

fact, if the quotation is to be taken as an integral part of Paul's argument, which the formula *γέγραπται γάρ* suggests, then it seems only to further confuse and obscure Paul's thought.

One thing that is clear is that Paul's argument depends upon the fact that both Hagar and Sarah did have a son by Abraham (and both were circumcised). Therefore it seems confusing to introduce the thought of barrenness by quoting Isa 54:1. Though Sarah had been barren for much of her life, Paul's reference here is specifically to her as the mother of Isaac. Who then is this barren woman and how does she contribute to such an exegetical reversal? How is the barren one related to Sarah and Hagar? How is the barren one relevant to the Galatian Christians? These connections are not stated and are left to the inference of the reader.

If, as many interpreters suggest, the barren one is Sarah, then it obviously must refer to her in that time of her life before she gave birth to Isaac. But this identification does not seem completely apt, for in the quotation the barren one is contrasted with the one "who has a husband." It was Sarah, not Hagar, who was the wife of Abraham.

Furthermore, in the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy, the children of the "barren one" was understood to refer to the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. Fishbane explains this traditional significance of Isaiah's use of the Abraham story. In Isaiah, Abraham "becomes a 'type' for the favourable response to a command to return to the promised land. . . . since Abraham was one and multiplied, Israel, his typological heir, could anticipate a great renewal if it would return—however small the nucleus—to the ancestral land."⁶ Later rabbinical interpretation continued to take Isa 54:1 as a promise of national restoration and renewal to the Jews who had suffered the national disasters of AD 70 and 135.⁷ Given this long-standing interpretation, how could Paul then possibly use this quotation to support his argument that the Jews are not the children of Sarah but of Hagar?

Besides, if Sarah is to be understood in some sense as the barren woman, and if she stands for the free Jerusalem above, in what sense can it be said that the Jerusalem above has been barren like Sarah? When did Jerusalem give birth? And how did she become "our" mother? Moreover, Jesus Christ is repeatedly mentioned in the verses immediately surrounding this passage (4:14, 19; 5:1, 2, 4, 6), but not once within it. How does Jesus Christ relate to the radical reversal of Paul's argument?

The syntax of v. 27 indicates that Paul expected the Isa 54:1 quote to support his argument. The quotation is introduced by the formula *γέγραπται γάρ* ("for it is written"). The *γάρ* indicates that Paul intends the quotation to somehow advance, explain, or ground his previous thought, which includes at least v. 26: *ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν, ἥτις*

⁶ M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 375.

⁷ Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT; Freiburg Herder, 1988) 327-28.

ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν ("But the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother"). Even if the frequency of Paul's use of γάρ suggests a less rigorously logical force for the conjunction, the position of this quotation indicates that Isa 54:1 held a logical place here in the flow of Paul's thoughts. The quotation must also somehow lead into Paul's next thought: ἡμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ ("Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise"). One would therefore expect the quotation of Isa 54:1, in some way, to justify, explain, or support Paul's claims that: (1) the Jerusalem above is free; (2) the Jerusalem above is our mother; (3) Christians are like Isaac, i.e., Sarah is our mother (and therefore Abraham is our father).

A surface reading of Isa 54:1 is disappointing because it seems to answer to none of these expectations. Something seems to be missing, and yet Paul clearly expects the quotation to speak to his readers. The introduction of Isa 54:1 into Paul's argument seems to raise more exegetical questions than it answers.

Given the nature of commentaries, most devote comparatively few words to explaining Paul's use of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27. H. D. Betz, P. Bonnard, E. Burton, H. N. Ridderbos, and H. Schlier recognize the "eschatological" or "Christological" significance of the Isaiah quotation but discuss it in only very general terms.⁸ Other commentators do expound the use of the quotation in Paul's argument. F F Bruce, R. Y. K. Fung, D. Guthrie, J. B. Lightfoot, and R. N. Longenecker attempt, with only minor differences among them, to relate the barren one to Sarah and to the Galatian Christians.⁹ Most of these treatments of the text are based not on exegeting Paul's use of Isa 54:1 in place, but by completing the implied parallels between Hagar and Sarah (although Paul himself leaves the parallel unspecified) and simply identifying the barren one with Sarah and the new covenant. The resulting connection between Sarah and the Christian church is understood from biblical theology, not from Paul's use of Isa 54:1. In fact, the function of the Isa 54:1 quote is so loosely connected to the exegesis of this passage that if the quotation were excised from the text, most modern interpretations of this passage would not be substantially altered.

⁸ Betz, *Galatians*, 248-49; P. Bonnard, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates* (CNT; Paris: Delachaux & Niestle, 1953) 99; E. De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1959) 264; H. N. Ridderbos, *Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 179; H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971) 225-26; cf. also G. W. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNT 29; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 150.

⁹ F. E. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 222; R. Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 211; J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 183; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990) 215-16; cf. also C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Kasemann* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976) 5.

J. Bligh discusses at length the specific question of how Paul understood Isa 54:1 and why he quotes it to the Galatians.¹⁰ According to Bligh, Paul saw that "Isaiah's words are being fulfilled in an ultra-literal sense. The old Jerusalem remains 'under a husband', that is, subject to the law. The new Jerusalem, being 'desolate', is not subject to the law of a husband, but is free."¹¹ To support the idea that Jerusalem who has a husband is Jerusalem under law, Bligh invokes Rom 7:2, "A married woman is subject to the law of her husband so long as he lives."

According to Bligh's exegesis, Paul, in quoting Isa 54:1, means to say that the numerical growth of the children of the new Jerusalem (i.e., the Christian church) depends upon its being free from a husband, i.e., free from law, (The NT itself, however, describes the church as a bride married to Christ in Rev 21:2, 9.) Bligh goes on to discuss that though Gentile Christians were relatively few compared to Jews in Paul's day, Christians will ultimately outnumber Jews. Prior to Bligh, Lagrange seems to be thinking along this same line when, in commenting on Gal 4:27, he writes that the fecundity of the Christian church proves that it is indeed the new Jerusalem predicted by the prophet Isaiah.¹²

Although Bligh's attempt to do exegetical justice to the citation of Isa 54:1 is admirable, I think his exegesis misses the point and is questionable on three counts. First, he presumes on the basis of Rom 7:2 that being married was an OT metaphor for being under law, and conversely, that barrenness was an OT metaphor for being free from law. The premise uses Rom 7:2 totally out of context. The converse is not at all self-evident, and Bligh presents no justification for it. Furthermore, the idea that having a husband refers to being under the law does not function well in Paul's construction because Sarah was bound to Abraham in marriage, yet she is associated with barren Jerusalem and is used to represent Jerusalem free from law. Third, Bligh's conclusion that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled "ultra-literally" and that Gentile Christians would, if not in the first century then eventually, outnumber the Jews does not fit the flow of Paul's argument in Galatians 4. Paul is not trying to persuade the Galatians that they are really in a majority position. Paul is somehow using Isa 54:1 to support his radical reversal of the status of Christians and Jews as the true heirs of Abraham.

Searching the larger context for clues as to how the idea of barrenness functions in Paul's thought does not yield satisfactory answers. Nowhere else in Galatians does Paul refer to or allude to barrenness or to a barren woman. Nor does Paul quote Isa 54:1 in any other epistle.

¹⁰ J. Bligh, *Galatians. A Discussion of St. Paul's Epistle* (London: St Paul Publications, 1969) 401-4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 403.

¹² M.J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul, Epitre aux Galates* (Paris: Gabalda, 1950) 129.

Perhaps the most thorough and satisfying treatment of the function of Isa 54:1 in Galatians is offered by R. B. Hays in his book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*.¹³ In this book Hays presents an exegetical approach to the Pauline epistles that recognizes that often when Paul quotes the OT the connection of the quotation to the topic at hand seems to be obscure or missing.

Hays approaches Paul's use of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 with a hermeneutic of intertextuality. When two texts are juxtaposed, as occurs when an OT text is quoted in the Pauline epistles, an intertextual space is defined that forms a new interpretive context. Concepts from each text mutually play upon and amplify one another within this intertextual space. Because a previously existing text is being evoked from a subsequently written text, Hays refers to instances of this intertextual play as echoes. These echoes cannot be understood either within the original context alone or within the new context alone, but must be viewed from within the context of the newly created intertextual space. Hays explains how this intertextual phenomenon, also called metalepsis, operates: "When a literary echo links the text in which it occurs to an earlier text, the figurative effect of the echo can lie in the unstated or suppressed (transumed) points of resonance between the two texts."¹⁴

Using a hermeneutic of intertextuality, Hays addresses the question of how the quotation of Isa 54:1 contributes to Paul's accomplishment of the "extraordinary hermeneutical inversion" found in Gal 4:21-31:

It is Isaiah's metaphorical linkage of Abraham and Sarah with an eschatologically restored Jerusalem that warrants Paul's use of Isa. 54:1. The effect of Paul's allusive use of the quotation, however, can be better described the other way around: the citation of Isa 54:1 metaleptically evokes the whole rippling pool of promise found in the latter chapters of that prophetic book.¹⁵

Hays' analysis suggests that the missing elements that link Gal 4:27 to the larger context of Paul's argument may be found as unstated "points of resonance" within the intertextual space created by juxtaposing Galatians with Isa 54:1. Taking its cue from Hays, this article is an attempt to understand more clearly how Paul uses Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 by identifying at least some of the unstated points of resonance echoing between Galatians and Isaiah. It examines these intertextual echoes to clarify how they function to support Paul's radical claim that (1) the Galatian Christians are heirs of the Abrahamic covenant without the covenant sign of circumcision,

¹³ R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 105-21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

and furthermore, (2) how the Jews are not the heirs of the Abrahamic covenant in spite of circumcision.

Paul's quotation of Isa 54:1 is verbatim from the extant text of the Greek version of Isaiah:16

Εὐφράνθητι, στείρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not;
ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον, ἢ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα Break forth and cry, thou that does not
 travail:
ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου for more are the children of the desolate
μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὴν ἄνδρα. than of her who has a husband.¹⁷

It is the Greek text of Isaiah, not the Hebrew text, that shapes the intertextual space under consideration. Furthermore, because the quotation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 follows immediately upon a trope of the narrative material of Genesis 15, 16, and 21, the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar also shapes the intertextual space that forms the interpretive context within which the exegesis of Gal 4:21-31 must occur.¹⁸

When Paul writes **Εὐφράνθητι** in Gal 4:27, he is suggesting that the theme of barrenness is somehow relevant, in ways that are not immediately obvious from the context, both to a city (**ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ**, v. 26) and to the Gentile Christians of Galatia (**ὁμῆεις δέ, ἀδελφοί**, v. 28). When Paul sounds the note of barrenness he is striking a chord that reverberates with Isaiah's use of the same theme. Isaiah develops the barren-woman theme by echoing the Genesis account of Sarah. Outside of Genesis, Sarah is mentioned by name in the OT only in Isaiah. It is the nexus of Sarah's story in Genesis, Isaiah's use of Sarah, and Paul's further use of Isaiah that forms the intertextual space in which the theme of barrenness is to be understood.

The theme of barrenness is first found in the OT in Gen 11:30 in the introduction to the story of Abraham: **καὶ ἦν Σαρα στείρα καὶ οὐκ**

¹⁶ Paul did not even change the negative **οὐ** commonly used with participles in classical Greek to **μή** as normally used with participles in NT Greek. See E. De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1982) 184.

¹⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations of Isaiah are taken from the LXX and its English translation by C. L. Brenton as published in *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (1851; repr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

¹⁸ First-century Jewish midrashim and targums of Genesis (and possibly Isaiah) probably also somewhat shape the intertextual context of Paul's argument in Galatians. It is difficult to identify the extent of intertextuality, if any, between Galatians and the midrashim or targums of Genesis and Isaiah because it is so uncertain which, if any, texts available to us were also known to Paul. Since Hays' methodology for identifying echoes depends on the lexical and syntactic details of two or more texts with a known chronological relationship, it cannot be straightforwardly applied to the targums. For a discussion of targumic and rabbinic influence on Galatians in general see M. G. Steinhauser, "Gal 4,25a: Evidence of Targumic Tradition," *Bib* 70 (1989) 234-40; Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 175-215; M. Wilcox, "The Promise of the 'Seed' in the New Testament and the Targumim," *JSNT* 5 (1979) 2-20; Pereira, "The Galatian Controversy," 13-29; R. Le Deaut, "Traditions targumiques dans 1e Corpus Paulinien?" *Bib* 42 (1961) 28-49.

ἔτεκνοποίει ("And Sarai was barren and she had no child"). Paul's union of the story of Abraham and Sarah from Genesis with the barren one of Isaiah in Gal 4:21-31 follows the trajectory defined by the development of this theme in the OT. Therefore the theme of barrenness as developed in the OT must play some role in the exegesis of Gal 4:21-31.

The issue of barrenness reappears in the narratives about Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 25:21) and about Jacob and Rachel (Gen 30:1), both of whom were covenant couples and direct descendants of the miraculous birth experienced by Abraham and Sarah. The theme of barrenness is also present in the story of Samuel's birth (1 Sam 1:2, 6) and is implied in the story of the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs 4:14). In all of these instances, barrenness is presented as a historical fact in the personal lives of the great people of Israel's past. In every biblical case barrenness was deliberately and purposefully overcome by God and the barren woman produced a son who became a hero in Israel's history (excepting the son of the Shunammite woman).

Isaiah, however, totally transforms the theme of barrenness. Isaiah's transformation of this theme prepares the way for its startling use by Paul in Galatians 4. Isaiah's transformation of the biblical theme of barrenness is examined in a published dissertation by M. Callaway. Isaiah used this theme as it had never previously been used and radically transformed it from "the story of a birth of a child to the story of a birth of a people."¹⁹

According to Callaway, Isaiah uses the theme of barrenness not to speak of God's past faithfulness to his people, as the Pentateuch does, but to proclaim a future manifestation of God's power. Isaiah's shift of focus from past to future is accomplished, according to Callaway, by (1) using the imperfect forms of Hebrew verbs instead of the perfect, (2) casting the theme of barrenness in Isa 54:1 in the form of poetry rather than prose (compare "And Sarah was barren" to "Rejoice, O barren one!"), and (3) setting the theme of barrenness in the prophetic genre of proclamation about the future instead of narrative about the past.²⁰

In his transformation from narrative to prophetic proclamation, Isaiah uses the story of Sarah from Genesis both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly, Isa 54:1 echoes Gen 11:30:

καὶ ἦν Σαρα στείρα καὶ οὐκ ἔτεκνοποίει [Gen 11:30]

Εὐφράνθητι, στείρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα [Isa 54:1]

Explicitly, Isaiah refers to Sarah, not as the mother of the great patriarch Isaac, but as the mother of οἱ διώκοντες τὸ δίκαιον καὶ ζητοῦντες τὸν κύριον ("those who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord," 51:2).

Isaiah's transformation associates Sarah's barrenness with the miraculous

¹⁹ Mary Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (SBLDS 91; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

birth of a people whose heart is after God, instead of with the birth of an individual son to an individual woman.

Isaiah provides a canonical text that develops the biblical theme of the barren woman in the direction of Paul's later use of it in Galatians. This development made it exegetically possible for Paul to dissociate the Isaiah proclamation from ethnic Israel exclusively (even though it previously had been understood to apply only to Israel) and to include among the children of Sarah all who "pursue righteousness and seek the Lord."

Isaiah's transformation also provides for Paul the association of Sarah's barrenness with a city, specifically, the city of Jerusalem. Within the historical setting of Isaiah's lifetime, it was a colloquial idiom to personify the capital city of an ethnic population as a female (often a goddess in pagan culture) whose husband was the local patron deity.²¹ The population represented by that city was referred to as the "children" (or often the "daughter") of the mother-city. During times of war when a nation was conquered, its capital overrun and its peoples exiled, the city was considered to be a barren woman rejected by her husband (or a barren widow). By reason of having no husband and no son, the barren woman herself was considered as good as dead.²² Thus the plight of the barren woman portrayed the worst situation a people could find itself in. To continue in exile under foreign subjugation did indeed mean death to a national and ethnic identity. This was precisely the historical situation of Jerusalem to which Isaiah spoke his proclamation of 54:1.²³

The idiom of female personification was used by Yahweh's prophets to describe the relationship between him and the nation of Israel. The prophet Hosea refers to the land of Israel, and by metonymy to its people, as the adulterous wife of Yahweh (Hos 2:1). Through the prophet Isaiah, Yahweh announces that he will reject Jerusalem because of her spiritual adultery and she will become barren.²⁴ Isaiah merges and transforms the two concepts of Sarah, the barren matriarch of Israel and the female personification of the city of her descendants, Jerusalem.

The plight of the barren and rejected Jerusalem is described in Isa 64:10: πόλις τοῦ ἁγίου σου ἐγενήθη ἔρημος, Σιών ὡς ἔρημος ἐγενήθη, Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς κατάραν ("The city of your holiness has become desolate, Zion has become as a wilderness, Jerusalem, a curse"). According to Isaiah,

²¹ Ibid., 65.

²² The association of childlessness with death is first made explicit in Rachel's poignant cry in Gen 30:1, translated by R. Alter as "Give me sons or I am dead!" (*The Art of Biblical Narrative* [New York: Basic Books, 1981] 187). Ironically, Rachel died giving birth to a son (Gen 35:18).

²³ Regardless of how one understands the authorship of Isaiah and its implications for the dating of the book(s), the implied audience of the proclamation are those Jews who are in exile away from Jerusalem.

²⁴ Isaiah also personifies the city of Babylon as a woman. In Revelation, John echoes Isaiah's imagery when he personifies Babylon as a harlot and Jerusalem as a bride.

Jerusalem is cursed because of the sins of the people which the city, by metonymy, represents. The nation of Israel had forsaken its covenant with the Lord.

However, unlike many ancient peoples who were conquered and exiled, never again to regain their national identity, Isaiah also brings good news to barren Jerusalem. Isa 54:1 is the climactic pronouncement of all of Isaiah's prophetic promise concerning Jerusalem's future. In Isaiah 54, the prophet proclaims the good news to the barren woman, Jerusalem, that though she be as good as dead, she will yet live with her many children. Isaiah secures the certainty of this promise that the Jews will not die out as a people, and that they will again inhabit Jerusalem, on the fact that what the God of Israel did in the past for Sarah (and Rebekah and Rachel), he will do in the future for barren Jerusalem (Isa 51:2). God's omnipotence is demonstrated to his people by the miraculous birth of a child to a barren woman. By identifying the barren woman with the city of Jerusalem and her miraculously giving birth with a life-giving reprieve from death, Isaiah's proclamation further provides for Paul's subsequent use of this theme.

Isaiah's transformation of the story of Israel's childless matriarchs, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, provides a canonical basis for at least three points with which Paul later resonates. Isaiah's proclamation (1) provides an interpretation of Sarah's motherhood that can be taken to have wider reference than to the nation of Israel; (2) merges the concepts of matriarchal barrenness and the feminine personification of capital cities to produce female images of two Jerusalems, a barren, cursed Jerusalem and a rejoicing Jerusalem; and (3) introduces the concept of a miraculous birth to a barren woman as a demonstration of God's power to deliver a nation of people from death.

If barrenness is the note that resounds in the intertextual space between Galatians and Isaiah, its major harmonic is the topic of inheritance. Of all the sorrows that the human experience of barrenness brings, the issue of primary relevance to the biblical writers was the issue of inheritance. In Genesis 15, the Lord announces to Abram a very great reward. A paraphrase of Abram's response is, "Why bother, Lord? I'm old and I have no child to enjoy it after me." Without a child, Abram's possessions were to go to Eliezer of Damascus. In the LXX (but not in the MT) Eliezer is identified as "the son of Masek my home-born female slave." Immediately the Lord answers Abraham that it shall not be the son of Abraham's slave but a son of Abraham's own body who shall inherit. In the LXX, the failure of Ishmael to inherit is proleptically suggested because although he was a son of Abraham's body he was at the same time a son of Abraham's slave, Hagar.

After Ishmael is born to Abraham and Hagar, the Lord establishes his covenant with Abraham, and with a son yet to be born to Abraham and Sarah and τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτόν ("to his seed after him," Gen 17:19). In Genesis 17 God promises that the seed of Abraham will

become a great nation and will inherit the land of Canaan. The promise is formalized as a covenant between God and, represented by Abraham, the nation that will come into existence through Abraham's descendants. Circumcision of the male descendants of Abraham is instituted as the sign of that covenant. However, not all sons who are circumcised are heirs of this covenantal promise to Abraham, for Ishmael, though he was a circumcised son of Abraham, remained outside of the covenant. Only Abraham's seed resulting from the promise of a miraculous birth to Sarah could inherit.²⁵

The identity of the "seed" of Abraham and of who receives the promised "inheritance" are of crucial importance in Paul's letter to the Galatians. The story of the "seed" and "inheritance" as found in Genesis 17 seems to support the argument of the Judaizers: if the Gentile Christians of Galatia truly want to identify themselves as children of Abraham and recipients of the promised inheritance, then they, too, like Abraham (not to mention the Lord Jesus himself), should be circumcised. Through circumcision, the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, they should identify themselves with God's covenant people. And yet Paul uses the same story of Abraham to argue just the opposite. How so? Paul's argument in Gal 4:21-31 resonates, not with the Genesis narrative, but with Isaiah's transformation of its themes of seed and inheritance. By using Isa 54:1 to sound the note of barrenness in Gal 4:27, Paul is metaleptically evoking echoes of Isaiah's proclamation concerning the seed and the inheritance.

Isaiah's interpretation of the identify of Abraham's seed and the inheritance as related to the Jews of his time must be understood in the negative light in which Isaiah introduces his prophecy: Isaiah prophesies against Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem are called *σπέρμα πονηρόν* ("an evil seed") in Isa 1:4 because they have "forsaken the Lord and provoked the Holy One of Israel." As Isaiah understands it, the unfaithfulness of the people has invoked the curses of the covenant. For them the covenant has become a covenant of death and the people who expect covenant blessing hope in a lie (Isa 28:14-15). Isaiah declares that "the faithful city of Jerusalem has become a harlot" (Isa 1:21).

But in the midst of such scorching condemnation, Isaiah announces to Jerusalem that though judged for her sin, in the future she shall be called *πόλις δικαιοσύνης, μητρόπολις πιστῆ Σιών* ("city of righteousness, the faithful mother-city Zion," Isa 1:26, emphasis mine). In the Greek text of Isa 1:26, but not in the Hebrew, a future Jerusalem is identified who is a *mother*. This Greek text echoes in Gal 4:26 when Paul refers to "Jerusalem, *our mother*."

Within Isaiah's proclamation there are two images of a personified female Jerusalem—one a barren and rejected woman, the other a faithful

²⁵ In the next generation Esau was excluded from the covenant even though he was a descendant of Abraham and Sarah. Paul uses this in Rom 9:6-13 to argue that from the beginning not all descendants of Israel's patriarchs were in fact heirs of the covenant.

mother. Isaiah reminds Israel that just as Yahweh intervened to transform Sarah from a barren woman as good as dead to a fruitful mother of many children, so he will transform a Jerusalem destroyed by sin into a city with a thriving population of righteous seed. Isaiah's proclamation draws a continuity between Jerusalem in exile and Jerusalem in glory. But by describing two Jerusalems, one barren, the other a mother, Isaiah provides a canonical basis for Paul to later further distinguish and separate the two. When Paul refers to $\nu\upsilon\nu$ Ἱερουσαλήμ (4:25) and ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ (4:26), he is echoing Isaiah's portrayal of two Jerusalems. In Galatians the two Jerusalems metonymically represent the two sides of Paul's antithesis between the spiritual states of being ἐκ νόμου and ἐκ πίστεως (cf. Gal 3:2, 5, 12, 23-25).

The analogy that Isaiah establishes between Sarah and Jerusalem extends to, and transforms the sense of, the covenant, the seed, and the inheritance.²⁶ These three elements are integral both to the Genesis patriarch narratives and to Paul's argument in Galatians. God established his covenant with Abraham after he promised that Sarah would bear a son and before that son was actually born. Analogously, through Isaiah, Yahweh establishes a covenant with the seed of the barren Jerusalem who at the time the promise was made did not yet exist: "And this shall be my covenant with them, said the Lord; My Spirit which is upon you [the deliverer of Zion], and the words which I have put in your mouth, shall never fail from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your seed, for the Lord has spoken it, from now and forever" (Isa 59:21, emphasis mine).

In transforming narrative history to prophetic proclamation, Isaiah introduces the Holy Spirit as defining the future seed of the faithful mother-city Jerusalem:²⁷ "But now hear, Jacob, my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the Lord God that made thee, and he that formed thee from the womb; Thou shalt yet be helped; fear not, my servant Jacob; and beloved Israel, whom I have chosen. For I will give water to the thirsty that walk in a dry land: *I will put my Spirit upon thy seed*, and my blessing upon thy children" (Isa 44:1-3, emphasis mine). In distinction, the seed of barren, rejected Jerusalem are banished to exile as those who have "framed counsel, not by me, and *covenants not by my Spirit*, to add sins to sins" (Isa 30:1, emphasis mine). Isaiah speaks of a seed of Abraham who are apart from God's Spirit and who suffer judgment. Just as Isaiah speaks of two Jerusalems, he speaks of two seeds, one who inherit covenant blessings, the other covenant curses.

Isaiah merges the concepts of seed, inheritance, and covenant with the operation of the Holy Spirit as he prophetically transforms the theme of barrenness. The seed of the patriarchs whose mother-city is the redeemed

²⁶ Covenant: Isa 24:5; 28:15, 18; 42:6; 49:6, 8; 54:10; 55:3; 56:4, 6; 59:21; 61:8. Seed: Isa 1:4, 9; 17:10; 31:9; 33:2; 37:31; 41:8; 43:5; 44:3; 45:26; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 59:21; 61:9; 65:9, 23; 66:22. Inheritance: Isa 34:17; 47:6; 49:8; 53:12; 54:3, 17; 57:13; 60:21; 61:7; 63:18; 65:9.

²⁷ Spirit: Isa 11:2, 10; 12:2, 4, 6; 26:17-19; 30:1; 34:16; 42:1; 44:3; 57:16; 59:21; 60:22; 63:10-14.

Jerusalem is transformed in Isaiah to be, without mention of circumcision, those who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord, those to whom the Holy Spirit is given. Isaiah provides a canonical development of this theme that is obviously well-suited to Paul's argument in Galatians. Echoes of seed ("sons," "children"), inheritance ("heir"), and the Spirit resound throughout Gal 3:1-4:31: "those who believe are *children* of Abraham" (3:7); "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his *seed*" (3:16); "For if the *inheritance* depends on the law" (3:18); "until the *Seed* to whom the promise referred had come" (3:19); "you are Abraham's *seed* and *heirs*" (3:29); "as long as the *heir* is a child" (4:1); "that we might *receive the full rights of sons*. Because you are *sons*, God sent the *Spirit* of his *Son* into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a *son*; and since you are a *son*, God has made you also an *heir*" (4:5-7); "Abraham had two *sons*" (4:22); "Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are *children* of promise" (4:28); "we are not *children* of the slave" (4:31).

Paul opens his argument in Gal 3:1ff. by appealing to the Galatian Christians to recall their experience with the Holy Spirit. The argument appears at first to be a weak one because it seems to be based upon subjective human experience. To the contrary, Paul is grounding his argument not in the subjective experience of the Galatian churches, but in the canonical prophecy given by Isaiah which identifies the seed who will inherit as those upon whom the Spirit rests. When the appeal to the experience of the Spirit is viewed within the intertextual space created with Isaiah's transformation of barrenness and the seed who will inherit the promise, echoes of Isaiah's proclamation resonate within Paul's argument.

This appeal to the Galatians' experience of the Holy Spirit is introduced with the question, "Did you receive the Spirit ἐξ ἔργων νόμου or ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως?" (Gal 3:2). Obviously, Paul expects them to agree that the Spirit was received ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. Paul's question resonates with the question asked in Isa 53:1: τίς ἐπίστευσε τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; ("who has believed our report?").²⁸ When these texts are juxtaposed, it becomes clear that the content of what immediately follows Isaiah's question in Isa 53:2-12 echoes in the Galatians text immediately preceding Paul's question in Gal 3:2:

Isa 53:1: τίς ἐπίστευσε τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν;

Isa 53:2-12: the suffering servant who "was led as a lamb to the slaughter," "wounded on account of our sins," and "bruised for our iniquities."

Isa 54:1: "Rejoice, O barren one!"

Gal 3:2: ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

Gal 3:1: "Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified."

Gal 4:27: "Rejoice, O barren one!"

²⁸ It is not clear that intertextual resonance can be used to make semantic decisions; if it can, this resonance between Isa 53:1 and Gal 3:2 argues in favor of Hays' understanding of ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως "from the message of faith" (R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* [SBLDS 56; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983] 143-46). For a discussion of other options see Hansen, *Abraham*, 110.

Notice that the verse immediately following Isa 53:2-12 is Isa 54:1. The suffering of the Lord's servant is followed immediately in Isaiah by the call for the barren one to rejoice. Paul's citation of Isa 54:1 sets up waves of resonance with Isaiah's proclamation of the suffering servant and Jerusalem's future that ripple through the entire *probatio* of Gal 3:1-4:31.

When Paul proceeds to develop his argument to show not only that the inheritance is received by faith but also that the consequence of living by the law is a curse, his argument again resonates with Isaiah's barren Jerusalem theme. Paul's statement in Gal 3:10, ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν ("for as many as are of the works of law are under a curse") resonates with Isaiah's image of barren Jerusalem, who is not only barren but cursed as well: πόλις τοῦ ἁγίου σου ἐγενήθη ἔρημος, Σιών ὡς ἔρημος ἐγενήθη, Ἱερουσαλήμ εἰς κατάραν ("The city of your holiness has become barren, Zion has become as a wilderness, Jerusalem, a curse," Isa 64:10, emphasis mine).

Barren Jerusalem is cursed because of sin, because of her inability to keep the law. According to Isaiah, her only reprieve from her barren and cursed state awaits that glorious day when her judgment is past, when she will be a mother-city, when she will rejoice over miraculously giving birth. In Paul's argument in Gal 3:10-14, any who rely on observing the law will fail and in that sense Jerusalem, the city of the law, remains barren and cursed. Paul's use of the quotation of Isa 54:1 is therefore quite apt when it is viewed within the nexus of Genesis 21 and Isaiah's transformation of the barrenness theme. Perriman has argued that the value of the quotation "lies in the fact that it provides a remarkably apposite expression for the merging of the Abrahamic and Zionist themes: it mediates rhetorically, if not logically, between v. 26 (the Jerusalem above is our mother) and v. 28 (like Isaac we are children of a promise)."²⁹ Without diminishing the rhetorical value of the quotation, I would want to argue further that the quotation does in fact contribute logically to Paul's argument if it can be shown that the barren one of Isa 54:1 has in fact given birth.

If the echoes of Isaiah sounded by Gal 4:27 are to have any weight against the Judaizers there must be more than a rhetorical link between "Jerusalem above, who is our mother" in v. 26 and the Galatian Christians in v. 28. The force of Paul's argument is based on the major premise that the barren one of Isa 54:1 has in fact given birth. For if the barren one has not yet given birth, then none of the promises of Isaiah echoed within Paul's argument (such as the experience of the Holy Spirit) have been realized and they can have no efficacy in the Galatian church. For Paul's argument to have force, all of the transformed promise of inheritance prophesied in Isaiah's proclamation must have been fulfilled. The time of Jerusalem's

²⁹ Andrew C. Perriman, "The Rhetorical Strategy of Galatians 4:21-5:1," *EvQ* 65 (1993) 40.

rejoicing has in fact come. I would argue that in Paul's thought the historical event which realized Isaiah's prophetic metaphor of a miraculous birth to the barren one is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul does not explicitly associate miraculous birth with resurrection in Galatians, though, as discussed below, he does in Romans and Colossians. However, the quotation from Isa 54:1 and all the echoes it metaleptically invokes would not function to support the radical reversal in Paul's argument in 4:21-31 unless he construed the resurrection of Jesus Christ to be the miraculous birth which would transform Jerusalem the barren one into Jerusalem the faithful mother-city in accordance with Isa 1:26.

The event which, according to Paul himself, radically altered his own reading of Scripture was his encounter on the Damascus road with the resurrected Jesus (Gal 1:1, 11-24; Acts 9). Because of his apostolic calling, Paul does not simply use Isaiah's proclamation in the same forward-looking way as did traditional, first-century Jewish exegesis. Paul authoritatively amplifies and reshapes Isaiah's proclamation in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The association of barrenness with death and of miraculous birth with resurrection was first made when Isaiah merged and transformed Israel's barren matriarch tradition with the female personification of Jerusalem. Isaiah portrays the coming salvation of barren Jerusalem with images of both childbirth and resurrection:

And as a woman in travail draws nigh to be delivered, and cries out in her pain; so we have been to thy beloved. We have conceived, O Lord, because of thy fear, and have been in pain, and have brought forth the breath [πνεῦμα] of thy salvation, which we have wrought upon the earth: we shall not fall, but all that dwell upon the land shall fall. The dead shall rise, and they that are in the tombs shall be raised, and they that are in the earth shall rejoice. [Isa 26:17-19, emphasis mine]

Note that in this passage Isaiah conjoins images of childbirth, the Spirit, resurrection, and rejoicing.

Because barrenness was associated with death throughout the OT, its antonym, miraculous birth from a barren woman, could aptly be associated with resurrection from death. The association of birth with resurrection, only suggested by Isaiah, is fully developed by Paul as expressed, for instance, in Rom 1:4 and Col 1:18.³⁰ According to Rom 1:4, Jesus was ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγίωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν ("declared Son of God . . . by resurrection"). For all others,

³⁰ Jesus' physical birth to a virgin also resonates with Isaiah's transformed theme of miraculous birth to a childless woman, which has implications for our understanding of Mary's role in redemptive history. M. Callaway recognizes that virginal conception "so richly brings together all the traditions developed around the barren matriarchs and Jerusalem as mother." She discusses Luke's infancy narrative from the perspective that it was inspired by Paul's use of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 (*Sing, O Barren One*, 100-107).

the father-son relationship is established by birth; according to Paul, Jesus attains sonship by resurrection.³¹

In Col 1:18, Paul refers to Jesus as *πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν* ("first-born from the dead"). In its historical context *πρωτότοκος* ("firstborn") was the title of the recognized heir under Roman law. All others attained the status of *πρωτότοκος* by birth (or sometimes by adoption), but according to Paul, Jesus attained it by virtue of being the first to be raised from the dead. The *πρωτότοκος* usually emerged from the womb by birth; Jesus emerged *ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν* ("from the dead") by resurrection.³² Therefore, there is a sense in which Paul is thinking of Jesus' resurrection as a birth.

The parity between barrenness/death and miraculous birth/resurrection is also expressed in Paul's use of the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac in Romans. Paul conjoins Sarah's barrenness with death and Isaac's birth with resurrection in Rom 4:17-25 where he describes Sarah's womb as dead (*νέκρωσις*). He describes Abraham's faith as a faith that believed that God had the power to do what he had promised and was able to give life to the dead (v. 17). Against all hope Abraham believed and so became a father (v. 18). Paul is here portraying Isaac's miraculous birth from Sarah's dead womb as a resurrection of sorts and Abraham's belief in God's life-giving promise as a proleptic faith in the resurrection of Christ (v. 24).³³ According to Paul in Galatians, the sign that Christians are united to Abraham as his heirs is not circumcision but this specific nature of their shared faith in God's power to raise the dead as demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

³¹ G. Vos's exegesis of Paul's use of the birth-resurrection parallel in Rom 1:3-4 is helpful here ("Paul's Eschatological Concept of the Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation* [ed. R. B. Gaffin, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980] 104-5). He asks, "How can resurrection from the dead be the counterpart of an issue from the seed of David? . . . The resurrection is to Paul the beginning of a new status of sonship: hence, as Jesus derived His sonship *κατὰ σάρκα* from the seed of David, He can be said to have derived His divine-sonship-in-power from the resurrection. The implication is that the one working in the resurrection is God; it is His seed that supernaturally begets the higher sonship.... He [Paul] wished to contrast the resurrection-process in a broad generic way with the processes of this natural life; the resurrection is characteristic of the beginning of a new order of things, as sarkic birth is characteristic of an older order of things."

³² I am aware that this phrase in Col 1:18 is usually understood to express the same thought as 1 Cor 15:20, that Jesus is the firstfruits among all who will be resurrected. (For a defense of this position see R. B. Gaffin, Jr., *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978] 36-39.) This understanding is based on the questionable premise that Paul uses *πρωτότοκος* and *ἀπαρχή* synonymously. Furthermore, a comparison of Paul's use of *πρωτότοκος*; in Col 1:18 and in Rom 8:29 (*πρωτότοκος ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς*) suggests that had Paul intended to say in Col 1:18 that Jesus was the firstborn from among the dead, he would have used *ἐν τοῖς νεκροῖς*.

³³ The writer of Hebrews states that Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and in a manner of speaking did receive Isaac back from death when he was prevented from sacrificing him (Heb 11:17-19).

Sarah and the barren one of Isa 54:1 should not be simply identified as one and the same because they meet only in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is, Sarah's identity as the barren woman to whom God promises a miraculous birth merges with that of the barren one of Isa 54:1 at only one point in history—when Jesus, the seed of Abraham (and hence the son of Sarah) arose from the grave to be the firstborn son of New Jerusalem. In Gal 3:16 Paul announces that Jesus is the son ("seed") promised to Abraham, and therefore Jesus is Sarah's son. I believe Paul is arguing that the nation which God promised to bring from Sarah's dead womb and the population of the new Jerusalem prophesied by Isaiah are those people who are born through the resurrection of Jesus, not those who are circumcised. Just as the birth of Isaac eventually issued in the population of earthly Jerusalem by his descendants, the resurrection of Jesus issues in the populating of the new Jerusalem. The faithful mother-city of Zion was desolate because of sin and had no inhabitants until the sinless Jesus rose from the dead. (Do I hear an echo of Gen 3:24?) When Paul cites Isa 54:1, he is metaleptically announcing to the Galatians that when Jesus arose from death, all of the elect seed of Abraham were also born. In this way Paul not only establishes Christians as rightful heirs of the Abrahamic covenant as it was fulfilled in Christ, but at the same time disinherits those who reject Christ's resurrection, though they may be circumcised. He has shown, as C. H. Cosgrove so eloquently puts it, that "The Law Has Given Sarah No Children."³⁴

"Rejoice, O barren one!" is the climactic statement of promise concerning the future of the city of Jerusalem in Isaiah's proclamation. Therefore, when the Galatian Christians were seeking to identify with that historical center of Judaism through circumcision, Paul must insist that they understand their relationship to Jerusalem not in light of Genesis 21 directly, but in light of Isaiah's transformation of it. Because Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, Isaiah's vision of a rejoicing Jerusalem and of a transformed seed of Abraham who inherits the promise has consequently been realized.

The relationship of the Abrahamic covenant, as represented by Sarah, to the new covenant established in Christ accounts for the imbalance in the parallel construction of Gal 4:22-25. For instance, Hagar is Mount Sinai (v. 25) but no corresponding parallel place is given for Sarah. The significance of this imbalance in the parallel construction is that because of its fulfillment in Christ, Paul cannot relate the Abrahamic covenant of promise to Sarah in the same way he relates the Mosaic covenant of law to Hagar.

In discussing the unfinished character of the parallelism in Gal 4:21-31 D. Koch explains:

This imbalance in the construction of the allegory is not to be understood merely as an abbreviated representation. The starting point is, admittedly, the joint allegorical interpretation of both women as $\delta\upsilon\omicron\ \delta\iota\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\alpha\iota$. But the fact that the

³⁴ Cosgrove, Cross, 80; see also id., "The Law Has Given Sarah No Children," *NovT* 29 (1987) 219-35.

Hagar-allegory stands opposite from no similarly parallel Sarah-allegory has meaningful grounds. The assignment of two διαθήκαι is not based on the contents of the written tradition of the fathers, but rather assumes the Last Supper tradition of 1 Cor 11:23-25 as a concept established prior to Paul of a Christologically grounded καινή διαθήκη. This new διαθήκη is for Paul evidently not locatable in the same way as the old; so that, therefore, there is no opposite corresponding place to Sinai at one's disposal with which Sarah could be allegorically identified.³⁵

As Koch points out, Paul intentionally and purposefully does not complete the Sarah-side of the parallel construction. This should caution interpreters not to impose a rigorous parity between Hagar and Sarah beyond what Paul specifies, namely, that the women represent two covenants (v. 24). Though Paul explicitly identifies Hagar with Sinai, slavery, and the earthly Jerusalem, he does not explicitly identify Sarah in the same way with the new covenant, freedom, and the heavenly Jerusalem. As Hays points out, Paul's allegorical polarities as represented by the two women should not be misconstrued as a contrast between the old covenant at Sinai and the new covenant in Christ. "Rather," he writes, "the contrast is drawn between the old covenant at Sinai and the older covenant with Abraham, that turns out in Paul's rereading to find its true meaning in Christ."³⁶ Therefore, there is not a straight line through history connecting the Galatian Christians (and indeed, all Christians!) with the Sinai covenant and the Sinai covenant with the Abrahamic. This is precisely what the Judaizers were implicitly arguing when they insisted on circumcision for Christians.

Since the only way to be a child of both mother Jerusalem and mother Sarah is found in Christ's resurrection, the Mosaic law from Sinai has in fact given Sarah no children neither has it caused the barren one of Isa 54:1 to rejoice. The Jews who reject Christ's resurrection are of the same standing as Ishmael, who was a circumcised son of Abraham, but not a son of Sarah, and who therefore gained no part in the inheritance. Ishmael's mother, Hagar, is therefore an apt representation of the relationship of the Mosaic covenant to the Abrahamic covenant, not an arbitrary allegorical assignment. Paul concludes that the Jews of the "now" Jerusalem who have rejected the resurrection of Jesus are indeed akin to Ishmael, and therefore can be rightly described as children of Ishmael's mother, Hagar (Gal 4:23).

Far from being an arbitrary allegorical assignment, the association of Hagar with the "now" Jerusalem and Sarah with the "above" Jerusalem follows logically from Paul's understanding of Isa 54:1 in light of Christ's resurrection. When Paul calls this trope ἀλληγορούμενα, he is not using the verb in the sense of the English literary term allegory. He is simply

³⁵ Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung and zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (BHT 69; Tübingen: Mohr, 1986) 205-6; translation from the German mine.

³⁶ Hays, *Echoes*, 114.

preparing his readers to understand that his exposition of Sarah and Hagar goes beyond the traditional historical understanding of these women. He is transforming the story of Sarah and Hagar from narrative history to (re-realized) prophetic proclamation just as Isaiah did.

By proclaiming Isa 54:1 in the light of Christ's resurrection, Paul has shown the Galatian Christians from Scripture (i.e., from the law) that by desiring circumcision they are seeking, yes, to be a child of Abraham, but to be a child of Abraham with Hagar, thus a brother of Ishmael and disqualified for the inheritance. The aversion to this thought sets the Galatians up for the transition to application in 4:28-31 and the punch line of Paul's argument: "But you, brothers, are like Isaac, children of promise," therefore, get rid of the idea of being circumcised!

Paul's grievance against the Judaizers is, at least in part, a grievance about their use of Scripture. Like many of our own generation who attempt to apply the OT directly to contemporary situations, the Judaizers had lifted Genesis 21 from its redemptive-historical location and had argued directly from there to circumcision of the Galatian Christians. Specifically, they had attempted to apply Genesis 21 to the Galatian church without considering the intervening revelation of Isaiah that had transformed the Genesis material and, most importantly, without reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul was therefore correcting an errant hermeneutic. The radical reversal effected in Gal 4:21-31 pivots on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and indicates that the resurrection has far-reaching hermeneutical implications. Beware of the one who attempts to apply Scripture apart from that great historical and hermeneutical fact!

This journey through the intertextual space defined by Galatians and Isaiah and Genesis (as transformed by Isaiah) has been arduous. One can only wonder how Paul could have expected the Galatian Christians to understand his argument, which can be fully comprehended only by hearing within it the echoes of the Greek text of Isaiah. Could Gentile Christians have been sufficiently familiar with Isaiah's transformation of the theme of barrenness to have understood Paul's metalepsis in Gal 4:27? I conjecture that what Paul invokes through metalepsis in his letter he had previously taught explicitly to the Galatian churches from Isaiah, perhaps with Isa 54:1 as his text. Therefore, when he quotes Isa 54:1 in his epistle to the Galatians, he is expecting to metaleptically invoke their memory of the salient points of his teaching. This would explain why there seems to be so much missing upon a *prima facie* reading of Gal 4:21-31, and yet why the unstated points of resonance between Galatians and Isaiah are so coherent within Paul's argument. To what extent the Galatian Christians appreciated Paul's metaleptic use of Isaiah is of course unknowable.

The mystery created by the use of metalepsis in Paul's closing argument may have been part of his rhetorical strategy. In discussing the effectiveness of such a closing argument, Betz quotes Pseudo-Demetrius: ". . . not all possible points should be punctiliously and tediously elaborated, but some

should be left to the comprehension and inference of the hearer . . . when he perceives what you have left unsaid [he] becomes not only your hearer but your witness, a very friendly witness too."³⁷ Hays' hermeneutical methodology of recognizing metalepsis as an important element of exegesis seems well-suited both to this type of rhetorical strategy and to the occasional nature of Paul's writings. Given the historical context of the epistles, it is not surprising that so much seems to be missing to the modern reader. It is almost like overhearing only one end of a telephone conversation. The logic behind Paul's use of Scripture becomes clearer when one listens to the Greek OT echoing within intertextual space.

But, one might question, are these echoes of Isaiah really there in Galatians? Hays has given seven criteria for determining the presence of intertextual echoes.³⁸ How well does this analysis of the intertextuality of Gal 3:1-4:31 with Isaiah meet those standards?

1. *Availability of the source text.* The Greek texts of both Genesis and Isaiah were incontestably available and known to Paul.

2. *Volume of the echo.* The "volume" of an echo is determined by "the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns." Although no one lexical or syntactical pattern from Isaiah is repeated again and again in Galatians, the presence of several coherent echoes within a unified pericope suggests they are really there: Gal 3:2 echoes Isa 53:1; Gal 3:10 echoes Isa 64:10; Gal 4:4-6 echoes Isa 44:1-3; 54:21; and Gal 4:25-26 echoes Isa 1:26; 54:1; 66:6-11.

3. *Recurrence.* Paul does not quote Isa 54:1 elsewhere, but he does use the theme of Sarah's barrenness in Rom 4:17ff. to associate childlessness with death, miraculous birth with resurrection, and Abraham's faith with faith in Christ's resurrection.

4. *Thematic coherence.* Isaiah is proclaiming the future of Jerusalem as it relates to Abraham's seed, the covenant, and the inheritance. These same themes are of crucial importance in Paul's argument to the Galatians.

5. *Historical plausibility.* As suggested, it is plausible that Paul previously taught the Galatians from the Greek text of Isaiah and that his citation of Isa 54:1 is intended to evoke memories of that previous teaching.

6. *History of interpretation.* Other interpreters have recognized the "eschatological" or "Christological" import of Paul's citation of Isa 54:1. Explicit identification of unstated points of resonance with the Greek text of Isaiah in Paul's logic simply provides details that specify more fully the exegetical effect of this citation. The conclusions reached by an analysis of the metalepsis of this passage are consistent with the history of interpretation of this passage.

7. *Satisfaction.* Perhaps the most subjective of Hays' tests, satisfaction is nevertheless an important aspect of any interpretation. It is dissatisfaction,

³⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, 240.

³⁸ Hays, *Echoes*, 29-32.

in some sense, with standing interpretations that motivates all biblical scholarship. This analysis of Paul's use of metalepsis in Gal 4:21-31 supplies missing elements of Paul's logic that led to his identification of Christians as the children of Sarah. Furthermore, it exegetically (in distinction from theologically) relates Paul's argument to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and provides the basis upon which Isaiah's eschatological promise of the Spirit can be applied to the Galatian churches. To this extent, this analysis of Paul's use of metalepsis provides a satisfying interpretation.

Paul's citation of Isa 54:1 metaleptically announces a life of spiritual freedom in Christ. It provides an apt transition from which Paul can proceed to exhort the Galatians to a life lived, not under the law, but in the Spirit. Having established that the resurrection of Jesus, and not circumcision, is constitutive of the Christian's relationship to God, Paul proceeds in the rest of the epistle to discuss moral living apart from Jewish law (5:1-6:18). By virtue of their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and their reception of the Holy Spirit, the Galatian Christians must learn to live in the new Jerusalem, where sin is not defined as failure to comply with Jewish law, but as failure to live as a Spirit-born son of Sarah.

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