

## **Peace and Mercy Upon the Israel of God: The Old Testament Background of Galatians 6,16b <sup>(1)</sup>**

Discussions of the Old Testament background of “new creation” in Gal 6,15 and its relation to v. 16 have heretofore been general and have not targeted any particular OT passage. This essay sets out to demonstrate that the phrase “peace and mercy” has its most probable background in the Old Testament promise of Israel’s restoration in Isaiah 54. In the light of this background the mention of the “marks” of Jesus on Paul’s body in v. 17 makes excellent sense.

### **I. Peace and Mercy in Galatians 6,16b and New Creation in Isaiah 54 and other OT texts**

Verse 16b explains the blessing upon those who line up their lives according to the elemental, ethical rule of the new creation: “peace and mercy be upon them and (or “even”) upon the Israel of God”. Though the dominant notion of this “peace and mercy” pertains to God’s blessing upon people, it probably has overtones of the effect of that blessing: the ethical demeanor of striving for unity among those who live in the new creation. This is a positive way of saying that they are not people who have become “boastful ones, ones challenging one another, envying one another” (5,26).

This last expression of v. 16 has undergone explosive debate. Some understand “the Israel of God” to be a further definition of the preceding “them”, so that the entire Galatian church, Jewish and Gentile believers together, are referred to as true Israel. Grammatically, this view is certainly possible, since the *καί* can be rendered as appositional or explicative: “even”, “that is”, or “namely” <sup>(2)</sup>, with the resulting translation: “peace and mercy be upon them, that is, upon the Israel of God” (so *RSV*, *New Living*

<sup>(1)</sup> I am grateful to my colleagues Moisés Silva and Royce Gruenler, as well as my students Jeffrey Herron and Kathy Stumcke, for their reading of this manuscript and for helpful suggestions.

<sup>(2)</sup> Cf. BAGD, 393, who sees the last two options as examples of an explicative use.

Translation, *JB*, Moffat [?])<sup>(3)</sup>. Others understand the preceding “them” to refer to Gentile Christians and “the Israel of God” to allude to Jewish Christians: “peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God”<sup>(4)</sup>.

Those who have identified “the Israel of God” with the entire Galatian church (Jewish and Gentile believers) have usually done so because of the epistle’s main theme of unity between believers of different ethnic groups, and especially because of the notion that the nationalistic traits distinguishing the people of God in the old age no longer hold true for the people of God in the new age<sup>(5)</sup>. Since the dominant message is one of doing away with national distinctions among God’s people (3,7-8.26-29; 4,26-31; 5,2-12), it would seem unlikely that Paul would conclude the epistle by referring to those in the church according to their ethnic distinctives. This idea is especially unlikely since 6,11-18, as the conclusion of the epistle, is intended by Paul to summarize its major themes<sup>(6)</sup>.

<sup>(3)</sup> *RSV*: “Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God”; the New Living Translation: “May God’s mercy and peace be upon all those who live by this principle. They are the new people of God” (a footnote equates “new people of God” with “the Israel of God”); *JB*: “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, who form the Israel of God”.

<sup>(4)</sup> The following translations conform to this basic rendering and appear to favor this alternative: *NASB*, *NRSV*, *KJV*, *NKJV*, *NEB*, Douay. The *NIV* and Moffat do not clearly favor either alternative. P. RICHARDSON, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge 1969) 85, who favors this view offers the following rendering: “May God give peace to all who will walk according to this criterion, and mercy also to his faithful people”. This is ambiguous, however, so that both groups could still be understood to be identical.

<sup>(5)</sup> E.g., see M. SILVA, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case* (Grand Rapids 1996) 184.

<sup>(6)</sup> That 6,11-17 sums up the major themes of the epistle has been argued most trenchantly by J.A.D. WEIMA, “Gal 6,11-18: a Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter”, *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993) 90-107, and likewise id., “The Pauline Letter Closings: Analysis and Hermeneutical Significance”, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995) 177-198. Because of the summarizing nature of 6,11-18, Weima also identifies “the Israel of God” with the entire church of Galatia, both Christian Jew and Gentiles; so also C.A. RAY, “The Identity of the ‘Israel of God’”, *The Theological Educator* 50 [1994] 105-114, makes the same identification). H.D. BETZ, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1979) 321, says “The whole argument in the letter leads up to the rule in v 15”. See also F.J. MATERA, “The Culmination of Paul’s Argument to the Galatians: Gal 5,1-6,17”, *JSNT* 32 (1988) 79-91, who argues that the last two chapters of Galatians summarize the earlier themes of the epistle and are the culmination of Paul’s overall argument.

It has been argued, however, that, since the common meaning for καί is “and” and since the word “Israel” elsewhere in the NT always refers to the ethnic nation, the burden of proof rests on one to show that καί is appositional and refers to both Gentile and Jewish Christians(?). In response, C.A. Ray has applied to Gal 6,16 the linguistic rule for καί formulated by K. Titrud: though καί occurs many times in the NT with various meanings (approx. 9,000), instead of assuming that the most common meaning applies (which is “generally connective”), one should opt for that meaning “which contributes the least new information to the total context” (a principle sometimes referred to as “the rule of maximal redundancy”). In particular, Titrud maintained that, in view of the rule of maximal redundancy, if apposition is a viable option for καί, then it should be seriously considered<sup>(8)</sup>. This means that the overall

(?) E.g., S.L. JOHNSON, “Paul and the ‘Israel of God’: a Case Study”, *Essays in Honour of J. D. Pentecost* (eds. S.D. TOUSSAINT – C.H. DYER (Chicago 1986) 181-196. For others following a position similar to Johnson’s, see his own discussion and that of R.N. LONGENECKER, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas 1990) 274. Johnson (188) even agrees with Ellicott’s contention that it is unlikely that Paul ever employs καί in “so marked an explicative sense”. A number of grammars, however, acknowledge the explicative or epexegetical sense of καί as an explicit category of usage in the NT and Paul: e.g., BAGD even prefix their entry of the “explicative” καί (expressed as “and so, that is, namely”) with “often” (393, including the subcategory of “ascensive” [“even”]), citing Rom 1,5; 1 Cor 3,5, and 15,38 as among the Pauline examples (cf. also *ibid.* 392, I.d). Intriguingly, M. ZERWICK, *Biblical Greek* (Rome 1963) 154, cites apposition (“that is”) as an explicit category for καί, and then cites Gal 6,16 as the lone Pauline example (though followed by a question mark). Likewise, N. TURNER, *Syntax*. Vol. 3 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by J. H. MOULTON (Edinburgh 1963) 334-335 (citing, among other examples, Rom 1,5 and 8,17); F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER – R.W. FUNK, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago 1961) 229 (citing, e.g., 1 Cor 12,15; 15,38); A. BUTTMANN, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover 1873) 401 (citing 1 Cor 3,5; 15,38). Cf. also Rom 5,14. Approximately eighty times in the NT καί has the appositional meaning in the construction of *article + substantive + καί + substantive*, which is known as the Granville Sharp Rule (see D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids 1996] 270-277). Even among the first descriptions of usage in LIDDELL-SCOTT (857) is the following: “to add a limiting or defining expression”. H.W. SMYTH, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA 1920) 650 (sect. 2869) says, “copulative καί often has an intensive or heightening force,” and “often = namely,” etc.

(8) See K. TITRUD, “The Function of *kai* in the Greek New Testament and an Application to 2 Peter”, *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation*. *Essays on Discourse Analysis* (ed. D.A. BLACK) (Nashville 1992) 240, 248,

context of Galatians must be considered in identifying "Israel". To identify "Israel" with only the ethnic nation would be introducing a new idea into the letter: whereas Paul has throughout underscored unity among redeemed Jews and Gentiles, it would seem, not only a new thought, but an odd notion to underscore at the end a blessing on Gentile and Jew separately<sup>(9)</sup>. Ultimately, immediate context must decide the meaning of the use of any word.

Some have proposed that the wording "peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God" is derived from an early Jewish benediction preserved in later Jewish tradition in the nineteenth benediction of the *Shemoneh 'Esreh* or one of the variant forms of that benediction: "Bring *peace*, goodness, and blessing, grace and favor and mercy over us and over all Israel, your people"<sup>(10)</sup>. The reference to "Peace be upon Israel" in the LXX of Pss 124,5 and 127,6 has also been proposed<sup>(11)</sup>. Likewise, close to Gal 6,16 is Ezra 3,11: "it is good that his mercy is upon Israel forever"<sup>(12)</sup>. These are possible

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255, who also shows throughout the essay numerous examples of the oppositional καί in the NT.

<sup>(9)</sup> So RAY, "Identity of the 'the Israel of God'", 106 ff., whose conceptual analysis is good, though it may not be precisely accurate to refer to this particular case as an example of "the rule of maximal redundancy" in the light of the way the phrase was originally formulated in linguistic discussion (on which see M. SILVA, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* [Grand Rapids 1983] 153-156); nevertheless, the principle of "the rule of maximal redundancy" appears to be generally applicable to Gal 6,16. See MATERA, *Galatians* 233, for a full range of the various possible identifications of "the Israel of God".

<sup>(10)</sup> So, e.g., BETZ, *Galatians* 321-322; RICHARDSON, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 79, who especially thinks that the order of "peace" and then "mercy," which is unique to Gal 6,16 and the *Shemoneh 'Esreh*, makes the latter a plausible source of dependence or "unconscious allusion". His conclusion that Paul interprets the Jewish benediction ironically, so that "the Israel of God" refers to ethnic Jews to be converted in the future is speculation, since such a notion has not been explicitly referred to anywhere else in Galatians. If Weima, along with others, is correct, that the Pauline conclusions, especially in Galatians 6, summarize the themes of the epistle (on which see above), then Richardson's futuristic notion should have been addressed explicitly earlier in the epistle.

<sup>(11)</sup> E.g., MATERA, *Galatians* 226; J.G.D. DUNN, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's NTC; Peabody 1993) 344, also cites the parallels of 11QPs\* 23,11 ("Peace be upon Israel"?), Psalms of Solomon 9,19 and 11,9 ("The mercy of the Lord be upon Israel [or the house of Israel]") and 17,51 ("May the Lord hasten his mercy upon Israel").

<sup>(12)</sup> So RICHARDSON, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 78, who also compares other similar OT texts such as Ezek 39,25; Amos 5,15, etc., as well as similar repeated expressions in the Psalms of Solomon.

backgrounds, but it would be hard to demonstrate the probability that the language in question in the Shemoneh 'Esreh existed in an earlier form as far back as the first century, since the Palestinian recension, which approximates the wording of the prayer around AD 70-100, omits about half of the wording of the later Babylonian recension's nineteenth benediction, including the crucial word "mercy"<sup>(13)</sup>! The Psalm references lack not only a reference to "mercy" but also do not have a double reference to the recipients, which the Shemoneh 'Esreh, at least, has. If the Shemoneh 'Esreh were in mind, then the καί in Gal 6,16 would most naturally be understood as appositional (*contra* to Richardson's above-mentioned analysis).

There may exist a better background than any of these preceding proposals which has closer similarities in both wording and contextual idea: a hitherto unnoticed OT background in Isaiah 54 appears to have more probability of standing behind the phrase "peace and mercy" than any other background previously proposed. If this is so, it would confirm the idea that the "Israel of God" is a reference to the entire church and not only the Jewish Christian segment of it (though the other proposed references would also have similar ramifications). The phrase "peace upon them and mercy" in Gal 6,16 is likely a further development of the use of Isa 54,1 in Gal 4,27. In Isa 54,10 God says to Israel "But my *lovingkindness* (חסד) will not be removed from you, and my covenant of *peace* (שלום) will not be shaken". The LXX renders the Hebrew חסד by ἔλεος ("mercy") and שלום by εἰρήνη, ("peace"). The only other times in which the two Hebrew words occur in such close connection (e.g., within an eight-word range)<sup>(14)</sup> are Jer 16,5 and Ps 84,10, the former referring to God's removing of "lovingkindness" and "peace" when the nation goes into captivity, and the latter alluding to the return of these two aspects of divine favor when God restores the nation

<sup>(13)</sup> For debate about the prayer's antiquity, see RICHARDSON, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 79, n. 1, and see especially B. SCHÜRER, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Christ*, II, (eds. G. VERMES – F. MILLAR – M. BLACK) (Edinburgh 1979) 455-463, who also has a convenient list of quotations of the Babylonian and Palestinian benedictions, along with relevant bibliography on the nature and date of the prayer. In particular, Schürer contends that the core of the nineteen parts of the prayer goes back before the first century A.D., and that it reached its final form around 70-100 A.D., though even that cannot be reconstructed in detail.

<sup>(14)</sup> Indeed, there are no other examples of the combination even within a twenty-five word range.

from exile: “*Lovingkindness* and truth have met together, and righteousness and *peace* have kissed each other” (Ps 84,10).

Outside of Isa 54,10 ἔλεος (“mercy”) and εἰρήνη, (“peace”) occur in close combination (within a seven-word range) in the LXX only in Ps 84,11 (= MT 85,11)<sup>(15)</sup> and Tobit 7,12 (the latter occurring in only one version of the LXX in an insignificant context which refers to a personal wish of blessing bestowed on one person to another)<sup>(16)</sup>. Outside of these passages, the combination does not occur elsewhere (in an eight-word range) until the use in Galatians and in subsequent early Christian literature of the early church fathers<sup>(17)</sup>. This evidence shows that the combination of “mercy and peace” was *not* a typical part of formulaic benedictions in early Judaism nor a part of typical conclusions in early Hellenistic epistolary literature.

The occurrence in the LXX of Ps 84,11 is a literal rendering of the Hebrew given above, yet the combination of ἔλεος and εἰρήνη also occurs only two verses earlier in vv. 8-9 in almost the same close proximity: “Show us your *mercy* (ἔλεος) and give to us your salvation. Hear what the Lord God will speak through me: he will speak *peace* (εἰρήνη) upon his people and upon his saints, and upon those who turn their heart toward him”. Interestingly, the promised condition of the peace and mercy of restoration is also referred to as an “enlivening” (“you will turn and *you will enliven* [ζωώσεις]

<sup>(15)</sup> After writing the rough draft of this article, I found that DUNN, *Galatians*, 344, merely lists Isa 54,10 and Ps 85,11 among a number of other texts which he believes would have highlighted the *Jewish tone* of the benediction in the ears of the Jewish Christian audience.

<sup>(16)</sup> The Tobit reference could be an echo of Isa 54,10 since Isa 54,11-12 is alluded to in 13,16-17. The combination also occurs within a wider twenty-five word range in Odes of Sol 9,78-79; Sirach 50,22-24; Isa 45,7-8, all in contexts of a promise of restoration from exile; other combinations within the same range occur in insignificant contexts of personal blessing in 1 Sam 20,7-8.13-14, and 1 Kgs 2,6-7. The Syriac of 2 Baruch 78,2 reads “to the brethren carried into captivity: ‘Mercy and peace’”. PHILCO, *On Dreams*, II.149, has the combination within a close word-range: “supplicate God that He ... charge His saving *mercy* to remain with us to the end, for it is a grievous thing that when we have tasted *peace* in its purity we should be hindered from taking our fill of it” (following the Loeb translation).

<sup>(17)</sup> The searches noted in this paragraph and the preceding one were made on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae Data Bank* computer concordance. Two other occurrences outside the LXX appear also to be found in the Hebrew of Qumran and the Latin of Jubilees, on which see below.

us,” v. 7). Furthermore, the attributes surrounding “mercy” and “peace” in Ps 84,11 (“faithfulness” and “righteousness”) are portrayed in the directly following verses as fruits of God’s eschatological creative work in combination with other fertility imagery: “Faithfulness springs from the earth ... and our land will yield its produce” (vv. 12-13).

The Psalm has some significant affinities with the Galatians context: (1) “mercy” and “peace” are pronounced “upon” Israel (cf. εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὸν λαόν in Ps 84,9 and εἰρήνη ἐπ’ αὐτοῦς in Gal 6,16); (2) the notion of new “life” is associated with the salvific state of God’s people (cf. Ps 84,7 [above] and Gal 5,25); (3) the pronouncement of “peace” in Ps 84,9 is made to three groups; however, these are, in fact, different ways of referring to one group, Israel (“peace upon [ἐπὶ] his people and upon [ἐπὶ] his saints and upon [ἐπὶ] the ones who turn their heart to him”); likewise in Gal 6,16 peace is pronounced on multiple groups (with two ἐπὶ clauses), and, if this is any reflection of the Psalm, the two groups there are probably the same; (4) in both contexts “peace” is listed among other attributes which are part of eschatological fertility imagery (cf. Gal 5,22-25).

It is possible that the uses in Jeremiah and, especially Psalm 84, together with the use in Isaiah 54 are alluded to collectively in Gal 6,16, since they all refer to the peace and mercy Israel would experience in the promised restoration (though Jeremiah says it negatively), and Paul has clearly had the fulfillment of Israel’s promised restoration in mind with the explicit Isa 54,1 quotation in Galatians 4. Since these are the only three times where the combined uses appear in the Hebrew OT and since they all have the same reference (the divine blessing of peace and mercy upon Israel in the coming restoration), it is understandable that they may have become a collective influence (especially the Greek uses in the LXX) on Paul.

If any one of these combined uses of “peace” and “mercy” are uppermost in mind in Gal, 6,16, it would have to be Isa 54,10 for the following reasons: (1) Isa 54,1 has already been referred to in Gal 4,27; thus, Paul already had the Isaiah 54 context explicitly in mind<sup>(18)</sup>; (2) συστοιχέω directly precedes the reference to Isaiah 54

<sup>(18)</sup> The Targum adds to the MT by identifying the barren woman of Isa 54,1 twice as “Jerusalem,” and then the next time it adds “Jerusalem” is in 54,10, where the name also identifies the “you” who is promised “peace” and “mercy”. Could this have been a subtle influence upon Paul in alluding to Isa

in Gal 4,25-27, and στοιχέω likewise directly precedes “peace and mercy” in Gal 6,15-16 (and the two words overlap semantically); (3) the “peace” and “mercy” of Isa 54,10 is seen in vv. 11-12 to have its concrete expression in the coming conditions of new creation at the time of Israel’s restoration: “I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones” (this is consistent with Isaiah 54 in that God is the one who is “making” Israel again [54,5] and who “has created” her in order that she be restored [54,16]<sup>(19)</sup>). In fact, Isa 54,9 compares the coming state of restoration to the conditions directly following Noah’s flood, which is associated with new creation motifs in Genesis<sup>(20)</sup> and which some sectors of Jewish tradition termed a new creation<sup>(21)</sup>. Then Isa 54,10a portrays the cosmic dissolution which must precede the coming new creation: “the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake”. All of this material in Isaiah 54 is part of a larger pattern of new creation prophecies in Isaiah 40–66 which refers to the restoration of Israel as a *new creation*<sup>(22)</sup>.

## II. Qumran, Jubilees and Revelation 21

In this connection, Qumran also uses a phrase strikingly close to Isa 54,10 to introduce a discussion about the coming new creation,

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54,10 in further development of the Isa 54,1 quotation in Galatians 4,27, which is introduced in 4,26 by the phrase “the Jerusalem above is free”?

<sup>(19)</sup> Cf. ποιέω and κτιζώ respectively. These references in Isaiah 54 anticipate Isa 65,17 which refers to “a new heaven and a new earth,” which is elaborated upon in 65,18 with “I am making *Jerusalem* a rejoicing”.

<sup>(20)</sup> For various aspects of the Noah narrative (Genesis 6–9) as recapitulations of the Adam narrative, see, e.g. W.A. GAGE, *The Gospel of Genesis. Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake 1984) 8-16.

<sup>(21)</sup> E.g., PHILO, *Life of Moses* II, 65, uses the word παλιγγενεσία (“regeneration, rebirth”) in referring to the renewal of the earth after the cataclysmic flood; likewise Jub 5,12 (immediately after the Noahic deluge, God “made for all his works a new and righteous nature so that they might not sin in their nature forever”) and 1 En 106,13 (“The Lord will surely make new things upon the earth”).

<sup>(22)</sup> On which see G.K. BEALE, “The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1”, *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 550-581; id., “The Old Testament Background of Rev 3.14”, *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996) 133-152.

a phrase which is based on the new creation prophecies of Isa 43,19 and 48,6-7: cf. “eternal *mercy* [חסד] unto all [brief lacuna] for *peace* [שלום]” (1QH 13,5 [=5,11])<sup>(23)</sup> with “[by bringing to an end the] former [things] and by creating things that are new, by setting aside the former covenants and by [set]ting up that which shall remain for ever” (1QH 13,11-12 [following the Dupont-Sommer edition in lines 11-12]; the discussion of new creation actually begins in 13,8)<sup>(24)</sup>. In addition, this example is the only place in Qumran where the two words occur in such close connection as two separate qualities to be bestowed upon saints<sup>(25)</sup>! Noticeably, the DSS passage has in common with Isaiah 54 and Gal 6,15-16 (cf. 4,24-27) the mention of a “covenant” (cf. 1QH 13,12), and both Galatians and 1QH have in mind the annulment of the old covenant and the establishment of a new covenant<sup>(26)</sup>.

<sup>(23)</sup> The full phrase in Hebrew reads, חסדי עולם לכול [ ] לשלום. This phrase is rendered differently by various DSS editions: “and eternal mercy to all [who walk] in peace” (M. WISE – M. ABEGG – E. COOK, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* [San Francisco 1996] 87); “and everlasting favor for all [the periods] of peace” (F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* [Leiden 1992] 319); “and eternal grace unto all the peace-[makers]” (A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* [Oxford 1961] 242). It is difficult to know what to supply in the lacuna: in addition to the above, other options could be such words as “[leading] to peace,” “[making] for peace,” etc.

<sup>(24)</sup> *Pirke de Rabbi Eli'ezer* XIX cites Isa 54,10 at the end of a discussion on God's creation of the world (which repeatedly cites Gen 1 and Isa 48,13) in order to underscore that without God's “mercy and lovingkindness we [Israel] are unable to exist, because the world rests upon Thy mercy and lovingkindness, as it is said ... [quotation of Isa 54,10 follows]”.

<sup>(25)</sup> As far as I have found, the only other place in DSS where the two words occur together is in 1QS 2,4, where the following blessing is pronounced upon Qumran saints: “May he lift up *his merciful* [חסדי] countenance toward you for eternal peace [לשלום]”. Here, only “peace” is pronounced on people, not “mercy,” the latter of which is described as an attribute possessed by God and not by the people. Furthermore, the context of 1QS 2 has nothing to do with new creation.

<sup>(26)</sup> Similar to Gal 5,22–6,16, 1QH 13 also has a contrast between “the spirit of flesh” (associated with the ungodly qualities of “ignominious shame,” “perverseness,” and “ungodliness”) and “the Spirit which you have put in me” (associated with “truth” and “righteousness;” cf. 1QH 13,13-19). Furthermore, both 1QH 13,5 and Isa 54,8 have the phrase “everlasting mercy” (חסד עולם), a similarity which shows further affinities between the two, though the phrase often occurs elsewhere, especially in the Psalms (e.g., 26 times in Psalm 136 alone).

The combination of “peace” and “mercy” also occurs in Jubilees 22,9 (extant Latin), where Abraham invokes God’s blessing on himself and his posterity: “may your mercy [*miser cordia*] and your peace [*pax*] <sup>(27)</sup> be upon your servant and upon the seed of his sons so that they may become an elect people for you and an inheritance from all the nations of the earth from henceforth and for all the days of the generations of the earth forever” (Charlesworth edition). This may be significant in comparison to the above uses in Qumran, Isaiah 54, and Galatians 6, since God is being addressed only in his role as creator who “created the heavens and the earth” (22,6), and the objects of God’s blessing especially are Abraham’s believing (elect) “seed”, who will dwell in a state of blessing on the earth forever (on which see further 22,24!). In particular, Jubilees 22, 1 QH 13,5, Isaiah 54, and Galatians 6 all have in common notions of: (1) new creation; (2) a new covenant (cf. “renew his covenant” in Jub 22,15 and 22,30; Isa 54,10; Gal 4,24), and (3) a promise of blessing on believing (elect) Israel. In addition, like Jubilees, the Isaiah and Galatians texts also are developing earlier references to the promises about the Abrahamic “seed” (cf. Isa 51,1-3 and 54,1-3; Gal 3,6-18.29). The notion of new creation in Jubilees 22 may well be a reflection on the similar Isaianic concept <sup>(28)</sup>. In the light

<sup>(27)</sup> I am grateful to my research student Jeffrey Herron for pointing out the combination of these two words in this passage. The Vulgate also renders εἰρήνη and ἔλεος of Gal 6,16 respectively as *pax* and *miser cordia*, and has the same two words in its translation of Isa 54,10b. It is difficult to be certain what precise words stood in the original Hebrew *Vorlage* and the subsequent Greek translation of the Jubilees’ text.

<sup>(28)</sup> In Jub 22,13 Abraham prays that his seed would have the same new creation blessings “with which he [God] blessed Noah and Adam”, so that the comparison of the blessing on Noah with the blessing on restored Israel in Isa 54,9 also is a striking similarity. Further, that the “seed” is to be blessed “for all the days of the generations of the earth forever” likely includes the blessings of the eternal, new creation, which develops the notion in earlier chapters: e.g., Jub 1,29 reads, “the new creation when the heaven and earth and all of their creatures shall be renewed ... and all of the lights will be renewed for ... blessing all of the elect of Israel ... *from that day and unto all the days of the earth*”; similarly, in Jub 19,25 the seed of Abraham and Jacob will be blessed so that “they will serve to establish heaven and to strengthen the earth and to renew all of the lights which are above the firmament”. Jub 1,29 is likely an allusion to Isa 65,17 and 66,22 (so cf. the margin of Charlesworth’s edition) and Jub 19,25 echoes the earlier use (the “new creation” of Jub 4,26 is also likely an echo of Isa 43,18-19 or Isaiah 65 and 66). Other texts from Isaiah hover in the nearby context of Jub 22,9: cf. 21,25, “may he bless your seed ... for eternal

of these observations, Jub 22,9 may be an echo of Isa 54,10, or it may have been part of the same orbit of unique ideas, which formed part of the background for Galatians 6.

It has become clear that the “peace” and “mercy” of Isa 54,10b stands in the middle of a depiction of the future new creation. That Isa 54,11-12 describes conditions of a new creation is apparent further from the fact that these verses are alluded to in Rev 21,18-19.21 to describe the bejewelled “foundation stones of the city wall”, part of the portrayal there of the “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21,1)<sup>(29)</sup>. Indeed, Revelation 21 and Galatians 4,25-31/6,15-16 have the following significant themes in common:

(1) The image of end-time Jerusalem as a woman who is associated with heaven;

(2) the precious stones of the city in Isaiah 54 are portrayed as part of an immovable fortress (in contrast to Israel formerly being “storm-tossed”) and primarily used as a metaphor for the permanent peace which the people inhabiting the latter-day Jerusalem will experience, since 54,11-12 is introduced in 54,10b by the idea of “peace” and concluded with it in 54,13 (“the peace of your sons will be great”). This theme is found in both Gal 6,16 and Revelation 21: in line with Isa 54,11-12, the precious stones, together with the foundation, wall, and gates of the city in Revelation 21 are best seen to symbolize the permanent safety and peace<sup>(30)</sup> of God’s people together with God’s glorious presence (e.g., 21,2-4.10-11.18-23).

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generations with all righteous blessing ... so that you might be a blessing in all the earth”, which appears to derive from Isa 65,16 (where also there is a multiple “blessing” by God focused on Israel “in the earth” of the eschatological age, the only passage in the OT where such a complex of words and ideas occurs); cf. Jub 22,16, probably based on Isa 52,11 (so cf. the margin of the Charlesworth edition). Intriguingly, in Isa 19,24-25 there is a threefold blessing pronounced on Israel, as well as redeemed Egypt and Assyria, in the end-time period of salvation, and all three are said to be “a blessing in the midst of the earth”. Both Isa 65,16 and Isa 19,24-25 are plausibly developments of the repeated Abrahamic promise in which dual blessings are pronounced on Abraham’s seed and the nations (Gen 12,2-3; 17,16; 22,17; 27,33; 48,20; cf. also 1 Chr 17,27 for a triple blessing on David’s seed, which is also a development of the Abrahamic promise).

<sup>(29)</sup> On which see G.K. BEALE, *Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids – Carlisle 1998) *ad loc.*

<sup>(30)</sup> Some traditions held that the light reflected by the gems in Isa 54,11-12 was figurative for peace (Pesiqta de Rab Kahana, Piska 18,6; Pesik. Rab., Piska 32,3/4).

(3) Both Galatians and Revelation 21 focus on the Gentiles' being included in the redemption experienced by eschatological Israel (note the "nations" streaming into the city of Revelation 21 [cf. vv. 24.26])<sup>(31)</sup>. This idea may even have roots in the Greek version of Isa 54,3 itself<sup>(32)</sup>, especially since Isa 54,1 develops reference to the Abrahamic promise in Isa 51,2, which in that context is used as a reason for God's restoring of Israel, i.e., Israel's restoration will be part of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise: "Look to Abraham our father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him"<sup>(33)</sup>. The LXX of Isaiah 54 makes such intimations explicit: "For it is the Lord who is making you; the Lord of hosts is his name; and the one redeeming you, he himself is the God of Israel, *and he will be called so by the whole earth*" (Isa 54,5); "behold proselytes will come to you through me, and they will sojourn with you, and they will run to you for refuge" (Isa 54,15)<sup>(34)</sup>. Even according to the LXX interpretative translation, however, the believing Gentiles enjoy eschatological blessings only as they confess and identify with the "God of *Israel*" and only as they

<sup>(31)</sup> Tob 13,16-18 specifically speaks of rebuilding the walls, towers, gates and streets, a description which is similar to the mention of foundations, battlements, gates and wall in Isa 54,11-12. Tobit is probably developing Isaiah 54 in the light of the broader Isaiah context: e.g., note Tob 13,10 (11) (AB), "that his tabernacle may be built" (= Isa 56,5.7; 60,7.13) and Tob 13,11 (Alex.), "*many nations will come from far ... with gifts in their hands*" (= Isa 49,23; 60,3.5.9-11.16-17). Both Tobit and Rev 21,18-21 have this common imagery and themes, including the ideas of *the nations bearing gifts* (21,24.26, based on the same Isaiah texts) and the future rebuilding of the tabernacle (21,3.22). In addition, both refer to "Jerusalem, the holy city" (Tob 13,9 [10]; Rev 21,2, 10; note further the phrase *λίθω ἐντίμω* which occurs with *χρυσίω καθαρῶ* in Tob 13,16 (17) (AB) and essentially the same phrases occur in Rev 21,18-19.21, as well as the common elements of walls and streets).

<sup>(32)</sup> "Your seed will possess [LXX has "inherit"] the nations" (cf. Amos 9,12 where the prophecy that Israel will "possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations" is understood by Acts 15,15-18 as fulfilled in the salvation of the Gentiles (though the textual problems in the Amos text are complex).

<sup>(33)</sup> In this light, the "seed" in Isa 54,3 is probably an allusion to the "seed" of the Abrahamic promise.

<sup>(34)</sup> Here God's promise in the MT to protect Israel from Gentile enemies and to give them victory over the enemies is apparently interpreted by the LXX as God's causing Gentiles to seek refuge in Israel and her faith! This interpretation is strikingly similar to the one of Amos 9,11-12 by the LXX and Acts 15,15-18 (mentioned directly above).

identify with his people Israel by converting and becoming “proselytes” to the faith of Israel. From the Septuagintal translator’s perspective, the Gentiles cannot enjoy these blessings separately from Israel but only by becoming a part of national, theocratic Israel. Paul also likely does not see that Gentiles can enjoy end-time blessings separately from Jews because the only way that either can participate in such blessing is by identifying with Christ, the true Israel, the true “seed of Abraham” (Gal 3,16,29). Gentiles no longer need to move to geographical Israel and find “refuge” there in order to convert to the faith of that theocratic nation and they no longer need to adopt the national signs of Israel (e.g., circumcision) to be considered true Israelites. Rather, now, in the new redemptive-historical epoch launched by Christ’s death and resurrection, Gentiles merely need to move spiritually to Christ, find “refuge” in him, and convert to faith in him in order to become true Israelites.

In view of the associations of new creation which have been “ringing around” Isa 54,10 and the way Revelation 21 understands Isaiah 54 as a new creation text, it should not be surprising that Paul would find it natural to allude to Isaiah’s “peace and mercy” in Gal 6,16 as a part of the “new creation” which he has just explicitly mentioned in v. 15.

A further affinity between Isaiah 54 and Gal 4,24-27/6,16 lies in the fact that both explicitly mention the *covenantal* nature of the salvific restoration (cf. Isa 54,10, “covenant of your peace,” and Gal 4,24,27, “these [women] are two covenants [v. 24] ... the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother”). That Paul would have a new creation context from Isaiah in mind in Gal 6,15-16 is not unexpected, since he clearly refers to the new creation prophecies of Isa 43,19 and Isa 65,17 in 2 Cor 5,17, where he also refers to κοινή κτίσις: “if anyone is in Christ, then there is a *new creation*; the old things have passed away, behold new things have come about”. Likewise, the similar expression of Christ as “the beginning of the [new] creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ) in Rev 3,14 is also heavily indebted to the same Isaiah 43 and 65 texts<sup>(35)</sup>.

<sup>(35)</sup> On the 2 Cor 5,17 and Rev 3,14 texts see BEALE, “Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7”, and id., “Old Testament Background of Rev 3,14”.

Isa 54,10 was a prophecy about the “peace” and “mercy” *Israel* would have in the coming new order after their restoration<sup>(36)</sup>. If Paul has this verse in mind in Gal 6,16, then he sees *all* believers in the Galatian church who experience “peace” and “mercy” to be composing end-time Israel in partial fulfillment of Isa 54,11. Such an Old Testament background makes it unlikely that he sees two separate ethnic groups (respectively Christian Gentile and Jew) as having “peace and mercy” pronounced upon them; at the least, in view of the OT and Galatians’ context, the burden of proof is on one to demonstrate that “the Israel of God” is a reference only to ethnic Jewish Christians.

This line of argumentation confirms further that the sense of Gal 6,16b is that of “peace and mercy be upon them, *that is*, upon the Israel of God” or some such similar rendering which equates the “them” with the “Israel of God”<sup>(37)</sup>. Redeemed Gentiles now form true Israel, “Abraham’s seed” (Gal 3,29) together with Jewish Christians because they are identified with and represented by the individual “seed of Abraham,” Christ, who sums up Israel in himself (Gal 3,16)<sup>(38)</sup>. Consequently, Paul did not consider it “twisting” the prophetic meaning of Isaiah 54 to apply it to Gentile believers, since they are now viewed as true Israelites and their return to God is part of the fulfillment of the restoration and new creation promise made to *Israel*. Even in the LXX interpretative paraphrase of Isaiah 54 noted above, the salvation of Gentiles could not occur separately from that of Jews but was to happen as Gentiles were to become identified with Israel’s God and Israel

<sup>(36)</sup> The reference to “*all Israel* like antimony” at the beginning of the Qumran peshet of Isa 54,11 underscores what is clear throughout Isaiah 54 but not said explicitly in v. 10 or v. 11: that this was a prophecy for *Israel*, with the implication, therefore, that it was not a prophecy for the redeemed nations *except* as they identify with Israel, convert to Israel’s faith, and take refuge under the umbrella of Israel and Israel’s God.

<sup>(37)</sup> The three appositional groups (equaling believing Israel) in Ps 84,9 upon which the peace is pronounced would further confirm this identification. The solution of R.Y.K. FUNG, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids 1988) 311, also fits with the view developed here: that, as far as I understand him, the first group (“them”) refers to Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Galatian church and the following “Israel of God” alludes to the church at large, also composed of Gentiles and Jews, who are the new Israel.

<sup>(38)</sup> See BEALE, *Book of Revelation*, *ad loc* at Rev 7,9, for the possible ways Gentiles could be understood to be part of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise from Genesis.

herself. Paul understands that this Isaiah prophecy began fulfillment in Christ: Gentiles and Jews participate in the blessings promised to Israel in the eschaton by identifying with Jesus, the true Israel and true seed of Abraham.

In summary, the probability of an Isaiah 54 background for Gal 6,16 is validated by the following criteria for recognizing allusions<sup>(39)</sup>: (1) the source text (the Greek or Hebrew OT) must be available to the writer; (2) there is close resemblance of wording; (3) there are references in the immediate context to the same OT context from which the purported allusion derives. In this respect, the following echoes from the context of Isaiah 54 are found elsewhere in Galatians: Isa 53,1 in Gal 3,2; Isa 64,10 in Gal 3,10; Isa 44,1-3 and 54,21 in Gal 4,4-6; Isa 54,1 and 66,6-11 in Gal 4,25-26; the Spirit's fruits of Isa 32,15-18 (as well as Isa 27,6; 37,31-32; 45,8; 51,3; 58,11; cf. 55,10-13 with 56,3; 60,21; 65,8.17-22) in Gal 5,22-25. In addition, Paul alludes to Isaiah 43 and 65 in his other well-known reference to the "new creation" in 2 Cor 5,17, contexts which are not far from Isaiah 54 in location and pertain to the same theme of Israel's restoration pictured as a new cosmos. John alludes to the same texts for the same idea of new creation in Rev 3,14, and specifically alludes repeatedly to Isaiah 54 in his depiction of the new creation in Revelation 21. (4) The alleged OT allusion is suitable in that it fits into Paul's argument. Isaiah 40-66 contains the same major themes which Paul develops in Galatians: the Abrahamic covenant, Abraham's seed, the inheritance<sup>(40)</sup>, the return of a sinful people to God, and the new creation. (5) There is plausibility that Paul could have intended such an allusion and that the audience could have understood it. Jobes has argued that it is plausible that Paul taught the Galatians from the Greek of Isaiah and that his citation of Isaiah 54 in Galatians 4 is intended to remind the audience of that prior teaching<sup>(41)</sup>. If so, the same could be said

<sup>(39)</sup> These criteria are taken partly from R.B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven 1989) 29-32, and G.K. BEALE, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham 1985) 43, 306-312.

<sup>(40)</sup> K. JOBES, "Jerusalem, our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4.21-31", *WTJ* 55 (1993) 319, mentions the first of these three themes in her discussion of Isaiah 54 in Galatians 3, as well as noting most of the parallels from Isaiah in Galatians in # (3) above.

<sup>(41)</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

about the proposed allusion to “peace and mercy” in Gal 6,16, but since it is an allusion and not an explicit citation as in Gal 4,27, it is more difficult to know if the readers would have understood it as such on a first reading or hearing<sup>(42)</sup>.

In proposing a Targumic background linked to the Isaiah 54 quotation in Galatians 4, M. McNamara says that it is unlikely Paul’s readers would have understood the reference there. He concludes, however, that this fact would not weaken the force of his proposal “since, at times, particularly in moments of heightened tension, Paul seems to have written from the abundance of his own mind rather than from what his readers would be expected to know”<sup>(43)</sup>. Longenecker adds that the Hagar-Sarah story may have been referred to by Paul as a polemic against the Judaizer’s understanding of the story with which the readers may have been familiar<sup>(44)</sup>. If so, his quotation of Isaiah 54 in Galatians 4 may have been sparked off because that OT verse and context had also been part of the Judaizer’s hermeneutical arsenal.

The cumulative effect of considering all five of the above criteria for validating allusions suggests the plausibility that the allusion to Isa 54,10 in Gal 6,16 may not have been understood by the Galatians on a first or second reading but that, at least, it may well have been in Paul’s mind.

### III. Peace Benedictions

Paul’s closing benedictions of peace elsewhere outside of Galatians follow a fairly standard form: “the God of peace be (or will be) with you (Rom 15,33; 2 Cor 13,11b; Phil 4,9b). 2 Thess 3,16 varies only slightly from this pattern, and Rom 16,20a and 1 Thess 5,23 vary even a bit more<sup>(45)</sup>. The benediction of Gal 6,16

<sup>(42)</sup> For further discussion of the issues involved in answering this question with respect to allusions, see G.K. BEALE, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSS 163; Sheffield 1999) 62-75.

<sup>(43)</sup> McNAMARA, “‘to de (Hagar) Sina oros estin en tē Arabia’ (Gal 4,25): Paul and Petra”, *Milltown Studies* 2 (1978) 24-41.

<sup>(44)</sup> LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, 212.

<sup>(45)</sup> Romans 16,20 places, after the clause “the God of peace”, the phrase “will trample Satan under your feet quickly”, and 1 Thess 5,23, after the same clause, puts the even more amplified phrase “sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

differs the most; its uniqueness among all the others can be observed by the following differences: (1) it has no introductory clause “and the God of peace”; (2) εἰρήνη, (“peace”) is expressed by the nominative instead of the genitive; (3) ἔλεος (“mercy”) is added to “peace”; (4) the divine source (God) of the peace is omitted; (5) the identification of the recipients is also different: instead of the usual “with you”, Gal 6,16 reads “as many as line up with this rule” and “upon them ... and upon the Israel of God”; (6) finally, it is a conditional benediction, whereas the others are in the indicative<sup>(46)</sup>.

What explains these differences between Galatians and the other benedictions? Weima contends that the differences in 1 Thessalonians and Galatians are due to Paul’s attempt to summarize the major themes of those two epistles, and that the other benedictions likely also betray the same purpose<sup>(47)</sup>. This explanation is plausible, especially in Galatians, as we have seen above. Such an intention is further evident from noticing that στοιχέω is a development of 4,25 and 5,25. Συστοιχέω in 4,25 occurs as an introduction to the longest formal Old Testament quotation found in the epistle - from Isaiah 54, which we have just contended above is also being alluded to in the benediction; στοιχέω in 5,25 appears in one of the most highly charged new-creation texts anywhere else in the letter outside of 6,15-16. Also, “Israel” occurs here only in the epistle and may well be a development of the “Jerusalem above” in 4,26, where it is the only reference to “Jerusalem” in a positive redemptive sense in the entire letter (the other occurrences are neutral geographical references [1,17-18; 2,1] or have negative spiritual overtones [4,25]). Such a positive reference to Jerusalem in Gal 4,26 may have helped pave the way for the unique positive reference to “Israel” in 6,16.

The combination of ἔλεος and εἰρήνη occurs only four other places in the NT, each time as part of the introduction to letters and each time as part of a threefold salutation: χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη (1

<sup>(46)</sup> For these differences see WEIMA, “The Pauline Letter Closings”, 194-195. With respect to the sixth point, though the future active indicative στοιχήσουσιν is used in Gal 6,16, it is still part of a sentence which has a conditional sense, since the distinction between the future indicative without ἄν and the aorist subjunctive with ἄν was sometimes obliterated (so F. BLASS, A. DEBRUNNER, and R.W. FUNK, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 192; interestingly, P<sup>46</sup> changed the future to an aorist subjunctive).

<sup>(47)</sup> WEIMA, “The Pauline Letter Closings”.

Tim 1,1; 2 Tim 1,1; 2 Jn 3; Jude 2; though Jude has ἔλεος ὑμῶν καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη). Not only is Gal 6,16 not part of a threefold series of words, but also εἰρήνη precedes ἔλεος, and the phrase ἐπ' αὐτοὺς is placed between the two words, a structure which is without analogy in the above four introductions. Another difference is that these others are standardized introductions, whereas Gal 6,16 is part of an epistolary conclusion which does not appear to be formulaic wording. There appears, at first glance, to be no particular OT allusion in these other passages. Whatever the bearing of these epistolary introductions is on Gal 6,17, it is clear that the Galatians' wording preceded all the others and is an earlier composition. If there is any relationship, then we could possibly conceive of the introductions having become standardized formulae based on that of Gal 6,16 together with Isaiah 54 and Psalm 84 and, possibly, other similar early Jewish combinations of "peace and mercy" (on which see above: e.g., Tobit 7, etc.).

Especially striking is the observation that not once does the combination "mercy and peace" appear in either the introductions or conclusions of Hellenistic epistolary literature of the earlier or contemporary period with the NT (e.g., in the body of extant papyrus letters [cf. the Hunt and Edgar volume of *Select Papyri I* in the Loeb edition]). This combination is unique to the OT, a very few early Jewish texts, and the NT<sup>(48)</sup>. This fact enhances the possibility that Galatians is dependent on the earlier OT uses (especially Isaiah 54) and that the subsequent uses in epistolary introductions in the NT after Galatians are also based on the OT, early Jewish, and Galatians' usage.

#### IV. Galatians 6,17 with relationship to the preceding context

Since "peace" should reign in the new creation (v. 16b), Paul asks that "no one [apparently no so-called brother] cause trouble for me". He explicitly says this *because* (γὰρ) he bears on his "body the brand-marks of Christ". Those who belong to the old age insist on "making a good showing in the flesh" by being identified with the mark of "circumcision" in which they "boast" (v. 13). Since Paul, on the other hand, wants to "boast" only "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"

<sup>(48)</sup> Even subsequently, the combination is found only in later patristic literature of the second and third century.

through which he has been “crucified to the world” and since circumcision means nothing anymore (v. 15), Paul wants to be identified with the only mark of the new creation that there is, which is Messiah Jesus himself. Therefore, Paul’s statement in v. 17 that he “bears on his body the brand-marks of Jesus” is another way of saying that he does not want to be identified by the badge of the old creation (circumcision) but wants to be identified with the only sign of the new creation: with Jesus, and his suffering at the cross<sup>(49)</sup>.

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This essay has contended that Paul’s reference to “new creation” and the pronouncement of “peace and mercy” on the readers in Gal 6,15-16 is best understood against the background of Isa 54,10 and the surrounding context of similar new creation themes elsewhere in Isaiah 32–66, which are echoed also earlier in Galatians, especially in 5,22-26. The analysis confirms those prior studies which have concluded that “the Israel of God” refers to all Christians in Galatia, whether Jewish or Christian. Lastly, the demonstration of an Isaianic background for the concept of new creation in Gal 6,15-16 falls in line with Paul’s other reference to “new creation” in 2 Cor 5,17 and John’s allusion to new creation in Rev 3,14, where Isaiah 43 and 65—66 stand behind both passages<sup>(50)</sup>. Isa 54,10 was likely not the sole influence on Gal 6,16, but such texts as Psalm 84 (LXX), the Qumran Hymn Scroll (1QH 13,5), and Jub 22,9 may have formed a collective impression on Paul, with the Isaiah text most in focus; alternatively, the texts in Qumran and Jubilees may

<sup>(49)</sup> This point is different from that made by many commentators, who usually appeal to the use of  $\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\gamma\mu\alpha$  as a brand or tattoo mark on slaves to show who their owner was (e.g., see LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, 299-300). If overtones of such a meaning are in mind, they have been shaped by the idea of identification with the new creation discussed here. DUNN, *Galatians*, 347, comes close to my own conclusion, but he does not relate his view of v. 17 to the old and new creation: “Paul ... sets in contrast an identity defined in terms of circumcision and one focused in the cross of Christ”. Likewise, D. GUTHRIE, *Galatians* (NCC; Camden, NJ 1969) 163; F.F. BRUCE, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids 1982) 275-276 (also citing 2 Cor 4,11 in support), and T. GEORGE, *Galatians* (NAC; Nashville 1994) 442; FUNG, *Galatians*, 314.

<sup>(50)</sup> As argued by BEALE, “The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7”, and id., “The Old Testament Background of Rev 3,14”.

be mere examples of a similar use of Isaiah 54 on a parallel trajectory with that of Paul's in Galatians 6.

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#### SUMMARY

This essay has contended that Paul's reference to "new creation" and the pronouncement of "peace and mercy" on the readers in Gal 6,15-16 is best understood against the background of Isa 54,10 and the surrounding context of similar new creation themes elsewhere in Isa 32-66, which are echoed also earlier in Galatians, especially in 5,22-26. The analysis confirms those prior studies which have concluded that "the Israel of God" refers to all Christians in Galatia, whether Jewish or Christian. Lastly, the demonstration of an Isaianic background for the concept of new creation in Gal 6,15-16 falls in line with Paul's other reference to "new creation" in 2 Cor 5,17 and John's allusion to new creation in Rev 3,14, where Isa 43 and 65-66 stand behind both passages. Isa 54,10 was likely not the sole influence on Gal 6,16, but such texts as Psalm 84 (LXX), the Qumran Hymn Scroll (1QH 13,5), and Jub 22,9 may have formed a collective impression on Paul, with the Isaiah text most in focus; alternatively, the texts in Qumran and Jubilees may be mere examples of a similar use of Isaiah 54 on a parallel trajectory with that of Paul's in Galatians 6.



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