

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.
An Introduction with a Brief Commentary on His Authentic Letters

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Introduction

In these pages we will discuss the figure and teachings of Paul of Tarsus, the “apostle to the Gentiles.” We will do so based on the evidence that we have in the New Testament, but the New Testament viewed according to modern methods of biblical study. This means that we cannot read these texts acritically, without sifting and weighing their evidentiary value, because the New Testament, like the rest of the Bible, is primarily a book of faith, written by persons of faith for the building up in the faith of their respective communities. This having been said by way of a word of caution, the fact is that it does not change things very much from what we might expect, except that two observations are in order. The first is that we will deal directly only with those letters which most contemporary scholars attribute to Paul himself as opposed to his disciples or members of the Pauline tradition. These “authentic” letters are, more or less in chronological order (as to when they were written): 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians and Romans. Philemon is authentic, but will not be discussed. The “inauthentic” letters, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, will be referred to but not discussed. To call them “inauthentic” does not mean they are not inspired or part of the Christian Bible; it just means that if we want to discuss the historical Paul, it is better not to draw in writings which are after his time (though much influenced by him) and develop his thought further. Secondly, we must be careful not to read Acts of the Apostles as if it were scientific history. It is Luke’s work, the second part of his story which begins with his gospel, and is very theological, advancing Luke’s cherished themes in his own way. It is a beautiful writing and inspired, but if we are to look for evidence of the historical Paul, it is better to begin with Paul’s own writings and only then rely on Acts. Interestingly, many scholars express wonder that Luke, a companion of Paul, was not more influenced by Paul’s theology and vocabulary. I think that he was so influenced more than many suspect, but the fact that it has proven so difficult to see this influence is another argument for

keeping Luke and Paul somewhat separate when we attempt to zero in on exactly what Paul was all about.

Paul set in his place and time

Ironically, after sounding the above note of skepticism, we must nevertheless enter into a somewhat speculative endeavor, which is to try to reconstruct and describe the thought- and religious-world in which Paul lived. The first thing to be said about this “world,” the Jewish-Hellenistic world of the Mediterranean areas under Roman rule in the first century of the Era Common to Jews and Christians (C.E.), is that it exhibited lots of variety. Let us begin with the Holy Land, Palestine. In Paul’s day (before 70 C.E.), there was much pluralism in Judaism. There were the Sadducees, the priestly aristocracy who exercised great influence if not total control over the enormous Temple rebuilt by Herod, one of the wonders of the ancient world. They probably derive their name from Zadok, the high priest under David and Solomon; in the Babylonian exile, the priesthood became restricted to descendants of Zadok, resulting in the demotion of the Levites. The Sadducees accepted only the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, as Scripture, and thus did not receive the prophets as revelation, and disbelieved in angels and resurrection. They seem very this-worldly, but their priestly kinsmen, the Essenes, the desert dwellers who have given us the Dead Sea Scrolls, were anything but this-worldly. These devout men and women apparently got into a bitter feud with the priests in charge of the Temple after the Maccabean victory in 164 B.C.E. They considered these priests as corrupt and wrong in important matters, and the Temple as thus polluted. They retired to the desert of Judah, in the area now known as Qumran, to await God’s final manifestation and salvation, which they, as pious Jews, hoped to speed on with good works of Torah study and self-sacrificing expiation for the sins of the Land. These holy men (and there were Essene women, too) lived at least partly celibate lives and sought to literally fulfill the first Psalm’s admonition to study the Law of the Lord day and night. The Qumranites (another name for the Essenes, which may come from the Aramaic word for hasidic, meaning very pious, on friendly terms with God) were apocalyptic. This is a type of religiosity which stresses divine revelation (the

word “apocalypse” in Greek means revelation) through visions or other means, and eagerly expects the end of the present world of evil as we know it. The Essenes traced their tradition to the Teacher of Righteousness, a mysterious personage who set them on their way and was executed. The Essenes believed that the end of the present evil age was dawning; there would be a terrible battle between the Sons of Light (themselves) and the Sons of darkness, led by the first century version of the devil Belial (mentioned in 2 Cor 6:15). The Holy Scriptures, in the Essene view, all referred to those last days; thus their particular interpretation of the Scriptures, called *peshet* by the scholars (it’s a word used by the Essenes, too), referred the Scriptures to themselves as the protagonists in the end time (“eschatological”) struggle. Paul, too, thought of the Scriptures (for him, the Tanak, that is, the Jewish Law, Prophets and Writings, the Christian “Old Testament”) as written for the End Time inaugurated by Christ; see 1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15:4.¹ The Essenes expected a renewed world in which they would rule or judge, and in which evil would be no more. This, indeed, is the constant hope of the late “Second Temple Period,” that is, the period from the rebuilding in 515 B.C.E. of Solomon’s Temple destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E, to the destruction of this Temple (grandiosely redone by Herod) by the Romans in 70 C.E. Some prophecies regarding this new world of peace and well-being and justice (shalom) are: Isa 2:1-4; 11:1-9; 25:6-9; 60:1-22; Zech 14:1-21.

We must note at this time that scholars have “linked” John the Baptist with the Essenes. I put “link” in quotation marks because it is not clear exactly what the link may be, but we can point to certain salient factors. John is associated with a priestly family in Luke 1 (the Essenes were priestly), though he did not function as a priest, but lived in the desert, like the Qumranites (I like to vary my name for them, since some still question whether they were Essenes). The Qumranites practised ceremonial washings; John was known for his baptism of repentance, probably a one-time thing and thus different from the Essenes’, but nevertheless there is something in common. Both are pious Jews who await the final visitation by God, in terrible terms; see Matt 3:1-12 and its parallel in Luke. The source of these verses is Q, one of the most ancient sources

¹ Such use of Scripture by modern-day apocalyptic sects and cults, who predict the end of the world despite Mark 13:32, is very misguided and based on extreme ignorance of the nature and history of biblical writing.

behind the gospels, and considered quite authentic. The same verse from Isa 40:3 is used by the Essenes and applied to John. This should be enough to show at least that both John and the Qumranites are operating in a religious world with many similarities. Jesus was baptized by John, and this should be considered as quite historical (no Christian evangelist would make it up, though he might try to find a way around it!), and according to many scholars, this went beyond a passing event; it signifies, rather, that Jesus began his religious quest in earnest under the guidance of John the Baptist (i.e., he was at first a disciple of John the Baptist).

Another very important group which we have all heard about (but perhaps misunderstand) are the Pharisees. They stem from the same Maccabean era as the Sadducees and Essenes, the second half of the second century B.C.E. Much more accommodating than the Essenes (but not nearly as much as the Sadducees), they suffered persecution to the point of mass crucifixions when it was a question of compromising their principles. Although many things seem to be up in the air as far as what can be accurately said about the Pharisees (in many cases, really splitting hairs and seeking to be super-skeptical), I think we can follow those scholars (Jewish and Christian) that refer to them as a party within Judaism that followed a particular understanding of the implications of the Torah (the Christian Pentateuch), called in Jewish terms *halakah*, literally way in which one should walk, i.e., conduct oneself. The Sadducees had their own *halakah*, as did the Essenes (who were much stricter than the Pharisees, say, regarding the sabbath), but a feature of Pharisaism (which probably comes from the word for “separated ones”) was that it sought to promote and really ultimately impose their understanding of *halakah* on all Jews. The Pharisees’ motives for this were well-intentioned: in the Maccabean era, there was a great danger of assimilation by Jews, of abandoning the observance of God’s Torah and becoming more like a Gentile. It has —it seems forever— been Israel’s task, burden, blessing and curse to be a unique witness to the true God in a pagan and hostile world. Holy Jews have endeavored, successfully, to keep their heritage alive, amidst suffering and attempts at their extermination from many sides. The events which led to the Maccabean uprising (167-164 B.C.E) were in fact what has been termed the first

pogrom, the attempt by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (“Epiphanes”= the manifestation of God!) to wipe out Judaism (= observant Jews). Out of this came the first hasidim, pious Jews who kept the Law at all costs, even to their life. Out of these circles came the final form of the Book of Daniel, the only Jewish Scripture to explicitly declare that there is a resurrection of the dead for the Final Judgment. The Pharisees, like the Essenes (who seem to have been their bitter rivals!), were hasidim. They sought to be that holy nation and kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6) for the Lord, meticulously observing not only what the Law clearly required (and only applicable to priests), but, as their probable spiritual descendants would put it, “building a fence (of protection) around the Torah,” so that they stretched rules and regulations beyond what less observant Jews (sometimes called *'am ha-arets*, literally, “the people of the land,” but roughly translated “ignoramuses, the rabble” by the rabbis, the successors of the Pharisees) would think of doing. Examples would be many different things (including what we would call good deeds) disallowed on the sabbath, and very exacting rules regarding tithing on harvests, sales and foods, which could create problems at the table. The Pharisees at the time of Jesus were on the rise in influence. They would have seen Jesus, who ate with “publicans and sinners” (two bad categories for the Pharisees), as someone opposed to their program for Israel, in this sense a rival for influence over the people, even though Jesus himself came from the same sort of hasidic tradition which was not-priestly (the Essenes here were somewhat exceptional), accepted God’s revelation beyond Torah (the Prophets and Writings), believed in angels and resurrection, and was somewhat accommodating (that is, not violently revolutionary) towards the Roman colonial power. We should here mention another group which was violently revolutionary, and those were the “Zealots,” who bitterly opposed Rome with assassinations, although this phenomenon is mostly after Jesus’ day and towards the time that Paul was executed (around 65 C.E.). The actual Zealot party was formed in 66 C.E., the start of the Jewish revolt against Rome which lasted until 70 and ended with the destruction of the Temple. It should be said that although moderating influences such as the Pharisees opposed the revolt at first, sooner or later all segments of Jewish society joined together against the occupying power, though unsuccessfully. This should serve to illustrate what a tumultuous century it was in which Paul lived and died.

But where exactly should we place Paul in all this? I believe that we can begin with accepting what he himself says about his life prior to his encounter with the risen Jesus (“on the road to Damascus”). He was a Pharisee, “completely Jewish,” and strictly followed the Law (according to the Pharisaic interpretation), and this led to his persecuting the Christian Church, which at that time was a Jewish sect (so for Jews this was like policing their own members). See Phil 3:5-6. In Gal 1:14, Paul states that he surpassed his peers in Judaism in his zeal for the “traditions of my fathers.” This seems to refer to the Pharisaic understanding of revelation, which included the written Torah given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai and also the oral Torah (not written down or contained in the Bible) given to Moses and handed down (which is the meaning of “tradition”) from generation to generation, as recounted in the Jewish document now part of the Mishnah (a legal code compiled from earlier traditions around 200 C.E.) called Pirque Avot, the Sayings of the Fathers.² So, whether Paul actually studied under the great Rabbi Gamaliel I (as “he,” or Luke, says in Acts 22:3) or not, he himself, in his authentic letters from his “own hand” (though he had a secretary, cf. Gal 6:11), states that he was a zealous Pharisee, and that this led to his persecution of the followers of Christ.

At this time we must add another context to Paul’s world, and then we will be ready to concentrate much more on the man himself. We have spoken about Jews who assimilated to the Hellenistic world. Let me explain this a bit. Alexander the Great, a Macedonian of Greek culture (his tutor was the great philosopher Aristotle) conquered most of the “known world” in 333 B.C.E. He spread Greek (“Hellenic” or “Hellenistic”) culture all over; this was the great culture of science, of art, of philosophy. Non-Greeks were called and thought of as barbarians. Even in the Holy Land, Palestine, Greek influence was felt, and would spread, so that in the time of Christ, it was to be found everywhere. Some even believe that Jesus was bilingual (spoke Aramaic and Greek), and needed to be; at least, he would have had to be able to communicate with a small vocabulary in order to carry on business dealings, etc. (speak to Pilate?). Galilee derived

² The process of handing-on (tradition) gives rise to Masorah (from *masar le*, “hand-on to), the traditional set of notes regarding the Hebrew text of the Tanak (the Christian Old Testament); hence, the standard Hebrew Bible text is called the Masoretic Text. The process of receiving this tradition (in Hebrew, *kibbel min*, “receive from”) gives rise to the term kabbalah.

its name from the Hebrew phrase for “circle (or region) of the *goyim* = Gentiles;” notice on a New Testament map how it was surrounded by Greek place names, like Decapolis = Ten Cities.³ One of the great cities founded by Alexander was Alexandria, in northern Egypt. It would become the new Athens, a place of great learning. Many Jews settled there, and of course adopted the Greek language, so that in time they needed to have their Bible (the Tanak, the Christian Old Testament)⁴ translated into Greek! This became known as the Septuagint, the “Seventy,” because of a legend regarding the seventy sages who miraculously translated it (usually abbreviated LXX, the Roman numeral for 70). This in fact became the Bible used and quoted for the most part by the early Christians, including Paul. Remember, the New Testament (including of course all of Paul’s letters), is written in Greek. Paul clearly is at home writing in Greek, and is quite familiar with Greek culture and is influenced by Greek literature and philosophy. This we can see from a study of his writings. But he himself says he was a very observant Pharisee, and this does not jibe well with the Hellenized world; at least, we have little information about the Pharisees outside of Palestine. This does not mean that they could not have flourished outside of the Holy Land, we just have little or no evidence of it. Perhaps that is why Luke saw fit to place Paul’s upbringing and education in Jerusalem, Acts 22:3. I think it is quite possible that this is true, and it is even possible that if it were not true (or based on real evidence), Paul could still have been a good Pharisee even though he came from Tarsus in Cilicia, Asia Minor (present day Turkey). But what I want to point out here is an interesting phenomenon which had taken place among the Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman world (we add “Roman” to “Hellenistic” as is commonly done to indicate that Rome ruled this world and carried forward in its own way the Hellenizing trends begun centuries before by the Greeks).

Greek philosophy exerted a powerful influence on many reflective Jews. We have several great examples of this. One is the great sage Philo of Alexandria, who was roughly contemporaneous with Paul, and who was a philosopher who interpreted the Scriptures following an allegorical method. Allegory (speaking or thinking of one

³ Notice how even Jerusalem had synagogues for Greek-speaking Jews; Acts 6:9. See also Acts 6:1; 9:29; 11:20.

⁴ The phrase “Old Covenant” is found in 2 Cor 3:14. We call it “Testament” because of Jerome’s translation of the Greek work, which can mean “covenant” or “testament.”

concrete thing in order to represent an abstract idea) was a dear concept to the great Greek philosopher Plato, Aristotle's teacher.⁵ He believed that the "real reality" was in the heavenly realm, and consisted of Ideas, whereas what we saw down here were mere shadows, pale reflections of reality that delude the unthinking. This type of thinking has found its way into the Catholic canon in the Book of Wisdom, a Jewish work from Alexandria written in Greek in the first century B.C.E.⁶ The Greek concept of soul is found often in this book, even to the point of conceiving of souls as being assigned bodies (Wis 8:19), a dichotomy between soul and body which is quite un-Hebrew. The four Greek virtues are listed in 8:7, and the word "conscience" (in the sense that we use this word) is found for the first time in the Greek Bible (Wisdom would become part of the LXX) in Wis 17:10.⁷ Rather than resurrection (of the body, which is not appealing to Greeks, who placed mind over body and thought of the body as of a lower realm; cf. Acts 17:32; 1 Cor 15:12),⁸ what is looked for is immortality.

Philo is an example of an observant Jew who nevertheless appropriated many Greek philosophical concepts. What is interesting to point out here is that Philo seems to equate the Torah, God's divine revelation of his will in Mount Sinai, with the universal law of the world discoverable in nature, the "law of nature" or "natural law;"⁹ salvation comes by striving to follow it. To use Paul's terminology, though paraphrasing, the Law which God wants us to follow has been either given at Sinai or is 'written in our hearts' (Rom 2:15). This indicates a possibility of salvation for non-Jews who 'follow their conscience'. Salvation in Philo has become individualistic, and not primarily applicable to a collective Israel. As such, it is also much less of an

⁵ Paul speaks of an allegory in Gal 4:24.

⁶ Catholics and Greek Orthodox churches have a broader Old Testament canon than Protestants, but contemporary Protestant scholars widely use these "deuterocanonical" or "apocryphal" books in order to obtain a more complete picture of the world and writings of the Old and New Testaments, and recognize that at the time of early Church, the "Old Testament" canon was not yet decided; see how books excluded by Jews, Catholics and Protestants are still cited in the New Testament (Jude 14, citing 1 Enoch), as if it were Scripture. This larger canon which many accepted is one reason I sometimes use the term "Old Testament" instead of the more neutral "Hebrew Scriptures."

⁷ ADDISON G. WRIGHT, "Wisdom," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (we will abbreviate it henceforth as *NJBC*) (Brown-Fitzmyer-Murphy, eds.) (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1990), 521.

⁸ For the Greeks, under the influence of their philosophers, the superior activity was thinking (contemplation), and physical activities (except sports), like domestic chores, etc., were typical tasks for slaves. Liberation from the body was therefore looked forward to, somewhat like in Hinduism.

⁹ See HELMUT KOESTER, *Introduction to the New Testament. volume one: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia 1982), 276. Paul makes use of this idea in Rom 2:14-16. More about this in our discussion of Rom. On acts *contra natura* (against Nature), see Rom 1:26-27.

eschatological event (such as the Last Judgment at the End of Days). But it is nevertheless hoped that all people will convert, and this will issue in the blessings of Deuteronomy (or the curses, for those who do not convert); to this extent, it is an eschatological hope.¹⁰ We shall see how this relates to Paul in due time, but we must now look at another aspect of Hellenistic Judaism which seems to provide additional background for Paul's thought.

There were more "radical" currents with respect to Torah among Jews in Paul's world, which is that of Diaspora Judaism (the Jews who lived outside of Palestine). These Jews had a "cosmopolitan" (= 'my city is the cosmos') view of their religion, and sought to show the pagans that Judaism was a rational religion which was in accordance with the laws of nature. The Torah was conceived of as having significance not only for the Chosen People, but for all humanity.¹¹ Seeking to break down the barriers between Israelites and the Gentile world (something which the Pharisees and Rabbinic Judaism would insist upon, to preserve the specific character of being Jewish), they relativized such essential features of Judaism as circumcision, the sabbath and the dietary laws.¹² Part of this effort took place in the Diaspora synagogues, where Gentiles (not necessarily proselytes, but "Godfearers," or sympathizers with Judaism who did not convert to that faith)¹³ were always welcome and could learn about the Jewish religion (see Acts 15:19-21). This prepared the way for the Christian preaching mission among Gentiles; to use an expression (translated into Latin) of the Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (who wrote in Greek), it was a *praeparatio evangelica* (a getting-ready for the Gospel). At least, this is the way *Christians* saw it.

¹⁰ See KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. one, 277. The view at the end of Deut is eschatological (see Deut 31:29); see also 4:30.

¹¹ See NIKOLAUS WALTER, "Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora," in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*, in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (P. Borgen – S. Giversen, eds.) (Aarhus, Denmark – Peabody, MA 1995), 41, 49.

¹² WALTER, "Hellenistic Jews," 53. Cf. MARTIN HENGEL, *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol. I (English Translation; London 1974), 174, 301-302; JOHN J. COLLINS, *Between Athens and Jerusalem. Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids, 2000), 160, 162, 164, 249, 251.

¹³ See Acts 13:16, 26.

Recapitulation

Let me summarize a bit before going on to a discussion of Paul himself.

1. Paul lived in a world of rich religious variety. Judaism flourished in various forms and “parties, sects or schools.” The Pharisees for the most part expected gradual change in the world, were legally observant, and had a program of national Jewish renewal which they felt was very important to enable Judaism to continue to survive and flourish in a world filled with Gentile temptation and hostility.

The Essenes or Qumranites combined “legalism,” strict concern for observance of the laws contained in the Torah as they interpreted them, with an apocalyptic-eschatological outlook. This refers to an expectation of an imminent end to this present evil age, with the coming of the Messiah. Actually, it seems that the Essenes expected two Messiahs along with the prophet to be sent in the End. “Eschatology” refers to the end of the world as we know it. “Apocalyptic” refers to revelation of signs and their meaning concerning the time of this End.¹⁴ John the Baptist, Jesus, the early Church and Paul would all be apocalyptics and eschatologists, expecting the End to be near and signs to signal its definitive coming. See e.g. Mark 9:1; 13: 1-37; 1 Thess 4:13-5:3. But unlike the Essenes, they are not concerned with minute observance of the prescriptions of the Torah. In this they differ also (and came into conflict with) the Pharisees. It is interesting to note that the Qumranites speak of themselves as being the community of the New Covenant.

2. Paul seems unusual from the beginning. He is from the Hellenistic world, from a very Greek city, but Jews were not absent from those regions (in fact, Jews lived everywhere, especially in large cities). He is quite knowledgeable about the Hebrew Scriptures, and exhibits forms of argumentation which can at least loosely be called rabbinic. He himself says he was a zealous Pharisee. So he has a good combination of

¹⁴ See Daniel’s visions in the night in Dan 7; angels like Gabriel explain the visions to him, 8:16; the time of the end is already determined, 8:19, but typically, all this must be kept secret (sealed) until the End Time, 12:4. Apocalyptic literature and ideas flourished in the time of Jesus, and he himself had at least one revelation of this type (Luke 10:18). It seems that the rabbis excluded much of this type of writing from the Jewish canon because it incited hotheads to revolt against Rome, an impossibly superior military force.

Jew and Greek to prepare him for his mission to the Gentiles, bringing a basically Jewish gospel, for Christianity at this early stage was a Jewish sect which could be categorized as such along with the Essenes and other groups in this pluralistically Jewish world. But we need to examine how this sect differed from other Jewish sects, and how elements were present in it which would lead to the “parting of the ways” between Jews and Christians.¹⁵

3. Another factor we must take into account is that many Jews in the Hellenistic world had developed a very “cosmopolitan” view of Judaism, stressing its “rational” and universal elements as opposed to those elements which distinguished (and separated) Jews from Gentiles. The Torah, exemplified by the Ten Commandments, reflected the will of God for all humankind. Judaism could boast of having the highest ethic, revealed by the Lord himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, but this ethic was fully rational and in accordance with what the philosophers had discovered in nature. Even Paul would come to the view that the Gentiles had this Law written on their hearts (Rom 2:14). To this way of thinking, typically Jewish prescriptions regarding the sabbath, food and circumcision (and which arose precisely to separate Jews from Gentiles in the Babylonian Exile, according to modern Bible scholars, and thus ensure Judaism’s survival in an encroaching pagan environment) were not important. It was more important for all people to get along without barriers to separate them. This was diametrically opposed to the Pharisaic program for Israel, and it would bring Paul, the former Pharisee, much grief and anguish, persecution and, ultimately, death.

Saul’s “conversion”

In Acts 9:1-19, Luke narrates one of his three versions of Paul’s change from a zealous, persecuting Pharisee to a follower of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus himself addresses Paul as “Saul,” the name of Israel’s first king from the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe Paul came from (Phil 3:5).¹⁶ It was common for Jews of the Hellenistic world to

¹⁵ There is actually a recent book called *Jews and Christians: the parting of the ways A.D. 70 to 135* (James D.G. Dunn, ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK, 1999). See also a beautiful book now out of print, HAYIM GOREN PERELMUTER, *Siblings. Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity at Their Beginning* (New York – Mahwah, 1989).

¹⁶ The name Saul is found only in Acts.

have both a Jewish name and a Gentile name, which was often chosen for sounding similar. Paul did not change names out of a “conversion.” I put conversion in quotes because we must be careful to understand what happened to Paul, though I understand that in the mind of many Jews and Christians, he did switch from being Jewish to being Christian. But things were not so simple in his day and at this early stage of Christianity. Paul experienced a revelation that God’s divine plan had come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He and many of his coreligionists would continue to consider themselves Jews, and he draws the distinction between Jew and Gentile in regards to believers in Christ. Paul never uses the word “Christian.”¹⁷ This having been said, however, we note that he does come to the view that once we are *in Christ* (an extremely important concept for Paul, as we shall see), such differences (even that of male and female!) mean nothing (Gal 3:26-28).

What happened to Paul? We think that two things occurred, one divine, the other human (although we believe God was behind this one, too). First, Paul had a revelation of Jesus Christ. This is what he himself says in Gal 1:15-16. Paul was a Pharisee. As such, he believed that all Jews should fulfill the Torah (= the Law) meticulously, and avoid mixing with Gentiles, at least such as to create problems in the keeping of this Law understood according to Pharisaic halakah. He believed in the resurrection and in the coming of the Messiah, but he probably thought —we are not sure— that a lot would have to happen before this occurred; he may, like many devout modern Jews, have expected more of a coming messianic age than a specific person. In any case, we can be sure that he thought that observance of the Law was a necessary condition for the coming of the Messiah or of the messianic age (in this we have a good parallel in the Hellenistic Philo, but the Essenes, too, believed that good works of Torah are a prerequisite for God’s visitation). Now Jesus, from what Paul could have heard, and as he witnessed among Jesus’ followers, could not be the Messiah, not even a good Jew, since he ate with “publicans and sinners,” Mark 2:15-17, and even had conflicts with the Pharisees because of this.¹⁸ Jesus, whatever historically he may have done or not

¹⁷ This term is found only in Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16.

¹⁸ We believe that this episode in Mark at least reflects a strong tradition regarding Jesus, if it is not exactly historical. Even the very Jewish Matthew (10:6; 15:25) indicates that Jesus saw his mission as one of the eschatological in-gathering (a prominent expectation in the Prophets, e.g. Ezek 36:24; 37:16-22), in

(Paul seems to show very little interest in the “historical Jesus,” see 2 Cor 5:16), was certainly at least a very bad influence on other Jews (see the accusation against Stephen in Acts 6:13-14; Luke has Saul approve of Stephen’s stoning, 8:1). No love would have been lost between Paul and Jesus.

But Jesus appeared to Paul (1 Cor 9:1; 15:3-8), and it became clear to Paul that Jesus had risen from the dead! This was extraordinary, because Judaism did not think in terms of anyone jumping the gun on the resurrection, which was to be a collective act at the end of the ages, according to Dan 12:1-13.¹⁹ But here was this risen man who “knocked Paul off his horse,” Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14 (though no horse is mentioned!). He had been made Lord and Messiah, as the apostles had been preaching (Acts 2:36), and as Paul himself would declare in Phil 2:5-11. Forget about what the Pharisees taught (Paul would call it rubbish in Phil 3:3-8): Paul has now experienced for himself what God has done in Christ, which is effect the End Time reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19), making believers in Jesus Christ righteous (Rom 3:21-26) without their having to observe the Torah (at least in the Pharisaic interpretation),²⁰ thus preparing us for the End Time terrible trial and judgment (1 Thess 1:10; 5:2-9; 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; Rom 2:5-11; 5:8-11),²¹ after which those who are “in Christ” will be saved (Rom 8:1; Phil 3:9-14; 1 Cor 15:22; see also 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:19-20; 3:14, 26, 28; Rom 6:3-11). At this time we hope for salvation and do not yet possess it except as a pledge, Rom 8:24; in fact, we work on it “with fear and trembling,” Phil 2:12.

So Paul became convinced that Jesus, whom he had thought to be a troublemaker for Jews, was actually the first-fruits of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23), the beginning of the End which was soon coming (Paul expected to be alive at the Parousia, the second coming of Christ, at least in his earliest letter, 1 Thess 4:15), and the Lord (another new category for Judaism —though probably many Jews would say, this new category is what turned Christianity from being a Jewish sect into another religion). The category “Lord” as applied to Jesus is the translation of the Greek title

which the “outcasts” (*‘am ha-arets*) figure prominently. The eschatological in-gathering of Israel is reflected in Jesus’ choosing 12 disciples or apostles, to represent the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

¹⁹ For Paul, the end of the ages has arrived, 1 Cor 10:11.

²⁰ In Rom 4:15, Paul even says that relying on the observance of the Law brings wrath!

²¹ Notice that in 1 Thess 5:5 Paul uses the expression “sons of light,” dear to the Qumranites. Jesus uses it in Luke 16:8; see John 12:36.

kýrios, used in the LXX in place of the unutterable YHWH, God's name. It is the usual title for the risen Jesus (Luke 24:34; cf. John 20:28), and used often by Paul, most significantly in Phil 2:11, a hymn which states that Jesus "was in the form of God," 2:6. It is related in the New Testament (and in Paul) to the title Son of God (Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20); Jesus is God's Son sent in the End Time, Gal 4:4,²² who makes those who believe in him children of God, Gal 4:6. "Son of God" is also related to the Messiah, the anointed descendant of David who was expected to come to rule in God's place and establish righteousness (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:2, 7; Jer 23:5; 30:9; 33:15; Ezek 34:23-25; 37:24-27).

The next and other thing that happened to Paul took place in conjunction with others. The great sign of being in Christ, of being a beneficiary of the End Time reconciliation and justification, of being destined for salvation at the consummation of history after the judgment, was the reception and experience of the Holy Spirit. This is what Luke in Acts 9:17-18 relates happened to Paul in the house of Ananias after his "conversion." For Luke, reception of the Holy Spirit (often accompanied and demonstrated by "portents," such as speaking in tongues, Acts 2:4) is decisive for the admission of Gentiles (non-Jews) into the new community which accepts Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 10:44-48; 15:7-12). For Paul, it is the Spirit which enables one to confess one's faith in Jesus as Christ (= Messiah), 1 Cor 12:3. It is the Spirit which is God's End Time pledge to the believer that he will be saved, 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5. It is through the Spirit that one knows he is a child of God in Christ Jesus, Rom 5:1-5; 8:16-17. The Spirit is God's or Christ's (Rom 8:9; Phil 1:19; cf. 2 Cor 3:18), and can be given by both (1 Thess 4:8; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:2). It is faith in the proclamation of the gospel concerning Jesus the Crucified One which confers the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:1-5).

Paul, then, experienced the reception of the Holy Spirit (an eschatological expectation found in Joel 3:1-5, quoted in the Pentecost event in Acts 2:14-21, with the addition "in the last days;" cf. Ezek 37:6, 10; Zech 12:10; the "living water" in Zech 14:8 is associated in John 7:37-39 with the Spirit) as part of his admission into the messianic age of reconciliation and justification while we await the coming of Christ and the consummation of the age at the end of the world (see his chronology in 1 Cor

²² See also Mark 12:6.

15:20-28; cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18). Having the Spirit is proof that one is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 4:6; 6:15), a child of God by adoption (Rom 8:16-17),²³ as opposed to one destined for wrath, who will not withstand the final judgment (1 Thess 5:4-9; cf. Rom 9:22). Whoever had the Spirit and confessed Christ would be saved (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). So this realization (which was also the Church's, as we saw from Acts 15:5-11) that in the End Time God's salvation would be offered to everyone (cf. Rom 10:11-13) who believed in Jesus Christ, God's Son and final emissary, was crucial for Paul, and essential for his mission to the *goyim*, the Gentiles (Rom 11:13). In fact, Paul saw his very reason for being in function of this mission; in Gal 1:15-16, he uses Jeremiah "called-from-the-womb" language to express the reason for God's revelation ("apocalypse") of his Son to him, in order to preach (literally, "evangelize" = announce as good news) him (Jesus) among the Gentiles (Jer 1:5 states that Jeremiah is to be prophet to or for the *goyim*, pagan nations or Gentiles). So the second thing that Paul realized was that God's eschatological act of salvation inaugurated with Christ consisted in reconciliation and justification by being *in Christ*, and this resulted in being a child of God, destined to inherit eternal glory (Rom 8:17), and this was manifested or proven by our having the Holy Spirit, such that if this was taking place in someone, it did not matter if he were a Jew or a Gentile (Rom 2:1-11), though the Jew was first in line. We must now examine some texts in the Old Testament where such inclusion of the Gentiles may be found, and then try to determine how Paul came to this inclusive view, for it is improbable that he came to it as suddenly or simultaneously to his apocalyptic experience (and as unaided!) as Gal 1:15-17 suggests.

The Hebrew Bible exhibits various positions regarding the *goyim*. Probably the earliest prophetic utterances were in fact "oracles against the nations" (Amos 1:3-2:3; Jer 46-51), for mostly the nations oppressed Israel or sided with Israel's oppressors (the classic example being Edom). The nations were also a temptation for Israel, a trap by which they were unfaithful (Deut 7:16). Even great and wise King Solomon had had his heart turned away from the Lord and towards idolatry by way of his many marriages to

²³ A present reality in Gal 4:5-7, but seemingly awaited in the future in Rom 8:23, though some question this reading.

foreign women. Ezek 44:7-9 envisions an eschatological time when foreigners will not pervert the holy people of God.

But there were other voices. Isa 56:3-8 declares that foreigners and eunuchs who cling to YHWH and keep his covenant will sacrifice at his altars, for YHWH's house is "a house of prayer for all peoples." This does not jibe with Deut 23:2-4, where also Ammonites and Moabites are forever excluded. However, the Book of Ruth is about a Moabitess who not only joins Israel (1:16-18), but becomes King David's ancestress!²⁴ The Book of Jonah is a critique against nationalistic narrow-mindedness; everyone in this Jewish literary gem is depicted nicely except the one Hebrew prophet!

Other texts move things along as far as the inclusion of Gentiles, in different ways. Without much attention to chronology, let us briefly go over various passages. Isa 2:1-4 predicts a world of peace "at the end of days," when all the *goyim* shall come to YHWH's House to be instructed in his ways, for the Torah issues forth from Zion. Swords will be turned into plowshares. The mysterious Servant in Isaiah has a worldwide mission (42:1-4); the remote islands await his Torah (in the sense of teaching). The Servant in 49:6 is told that the task of tending to the return of the tribes of Israel is too little for him; YHWH puts him as a "light to the *goyim*, so that my salvation can reach till the ends of the earth." But the nations' role in Isa 60 is subservient: they bring their wealth to Jerusalem and carry her children back home. It is the foreigners who will do all the heavy lifting, building Jerusalem's walls (60:10); they shall fall prostrate at her feet (60:14).

Zech 8:23 envisions a time when *goyim* from all nations shall grab Jews by the cloak and express the desire to be with them, for they have heard that God is with the Jews. The final tribulations in Zech 14 envision a purifying judgment which will decimate not only Israel, but the nations as well. In the end, YHWH will reign (= the kingship of God), and only YHWH (the *Shema* is fulfilled). Then the survivors from among the nations (*goyim*) will go up every year to Jerusalem to celebrate Succoth, the Feast of Booths.

²⁴ Mentioned in the genealogy in Matt 1:5-6. The apocryphal or deuterocanonical Book of Judith admits an Ammonite into Israel (14:10). Note that verse numbers may vary among the versions.

We can be sure that Paul knew these passages, since he demonstrates his ability to quote far and wide in Scripture. But he does not use them very much at all. In Rom 9:13-15, he quotes Gen 25:23, Mal 1:2-3 and Exod 33:19 to illustrate God's sovereignty in choosing whom he will. In Rom 9:25-26, he quotes Hosea 2:1 to illustrate his idea of the Remnant of Israel who will be saved. In Rom 10:19-21, he quotes Deut 32:21 and Isa 65:1-2 as texts which play off Israel against the Gentiles. And we could search for other passages, but Paul does not proceed along these lines. He will, in typical eschatological fashion, go back to the very beginning, to Genesis and Abraham in the period before there was a Torah/Law, to make his arguments about salvation in Christ for both Jew and Gentile. We shall leave discussion of this for our treatment of Galatians and Romans.

One other aspect of Paul's inclusivistic views must finally be discussed. We have said that his change of viewpoint was due to a divine intervention (God's revelation of his Son to him) and to his encounters with others. We now explore who these others likely were, to see how they might have influenced Paul. Some scholars point to what has been termed the "Stephen group." In Acts 6:1-5, we hear of quarrels between Jewish (Palestinian) Christians and Jewish Christians who had come from the Hellenistic world (this, at least, is the most plausible interpretation of "Hellenists and Hebrews" in 6:1). To attend to the Hellenists, a group of "deacons" is established, headed by Stephen, a vigorous debater. He debates with other Hellenists (6:8-14), who accuse him of speaking against the Temple and the Law.²⁵ In fact, Stephen is virulently anti-Temple, according to 7:44-51, where he diametrically opposes the Exodus/desert-time "Tent of Testimony" (called the Tent of Meeting in Exod 27:21) to the house of human fabrication built by Solomon, in a turn of phrase many scholars consider indicates a violation of God's will and David's intention, since "the Most High does not dwell in what is human-made" (Acts 7:48).²⁶ After this speech, Stephen is stoned to death (the first Christian martyr), and a "great persecution" broke out against the Jerusalem church, 8:1. The Christians spread out, and some come to Phoenicia, Cyprus

²⁵ Clearly Luke has his hand in the account, likening Stephen's "trial" to that of Jesus, as he has done elsewhere. But we think that the passage reflects a genuine Jewish grievance against Christians, if not against Jesus himself, one reflected in Mark 14:58.

²⁶ See Isa 6:1; 58:15; 66:1-2.

and Antioch, 11:19, still preaching only to Jews. But some Cypriots and Cyreneans, *who had come from Antioch*, began preaching to the Greeks (or “Hellenists,” the reading is uncertain), which can only mean non-Jews. This innovation will prove to be revolutionary, for it will open up the new Jewish sect to the Gentiles, so that it will be in (Syrian) Antioch where for the first time these believers will be called “Christians.”²⁷

Paul, of course, is closely associated with Antioch, Gal 2:11, where indeed his confrontation with Simon Peter (whom he calls by the Aramaic name Jesus gave him, Kepa, Rock or Cliff) took place. Paul accuses Peter of simulation: he had participated with the mixed Jewish/Gentile Christian community in common meals, not keeping kosher and the like, but when the observant party of James came to visit from Jerusalem (as Paul puts it, “to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus,” Gal 2:4), Peter timidly separated himself from the Gentile Christians, which for the fiery Paul is hypocrisy (the verbal form of this word and the word itself appear in 2:13). Acts 11:19-30 recounts how Paul arrived at Antioch: Barnabas brought him there from Tarsus. “Saul” is listed among the “prophets and teachers” of the church of Antioch in Acts 13:1. Paul and Barnabas are destined for the mission to the Gentiles, 13:2. Paul and Barnabas worked together, and Barnabas is depicted as a bold preacher in 13:46, the first of the “since-the-Jews-will-not-listen-to-the-Gospel-we-turn-to-the-Gentiles” passages in Acts (though despite this and 18:6, Paul continues to address the Jews!). It is Paul and Barnabas who lead the debate against the “Judeans” (probably the James Group of Gal 2:12) who seek to make the Gentile converts to Christianity adhere to the Mosaic Law, Acts 15:1-12. Paul and Barnabas preached together in Antioch, 15:35, and that is why Paul is all the more bewildered that his companion who fought along with him (see also 1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1, 9) should be led astray by the James Group. Acts 15:39 also records dissension between Paul and Barnabas, though the issue there is whether to take John Mark along or not.

So we see that Paul is associated with Antioch, an avant-garde city when it came to the admission of Gentiles to this new Jewish sect, and under what conditions. Antioch is associated with the radical Stephen Group, accused by Jews of being anti-Temple and anti-Law. This group, in fact, found its way after Stephen’s martyrdom to

²⁷ Acts 11:26. There is another Antioch in Pisidia (Asia Minor); see Acts 13:14.

Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19), where they hook up with some Cypriots and Cyreneans, who seem to be the first to preach the Gospel to non-Jews.²⁸ We do not know much about these persons or their specific beliefs, but it would seem that they were the vehicle for Paul's own thought regarding the Law and the End Time salvation of the Gentiles. Jesus' embrace of sinners and outcasts is probably in the background; Mark 7:1-23 presents Jesus as abolishing the laws of *kashrut* (anything may be eaten, all foods are made or declared to be clean), followed by his entering Phoenician (pagan) territory!²⁹ Paul is depicted in Acts 13:16-41 as giving a Stephen-like speech, proclaiming the "remission of sins and of everything from which you could not be declared righteous (justified) through the Law of Moses," through faith in Jesus.³⁰

Conclusion

Saul/Paul of Tarsus was a Jew of the Pharisaic party. He was religiously observant to the point of persecuting Christians, as he himself admits (Phil 3:6). He lived in a world of great religious variety and eventually, turmoil. There were many sects and parties in first century C.E. Judaism. There was a lot of apocalyptic and eschatological expectation in the air, quite related to what could often be the oppressive condition of being a colonized people in the Roman Empire. There was widespread poverty due to taxation and other economic hardships; messianism has been called the escape valve of the desperate. Other Jews were messianic out of deep religious conviction; some, like the Essenes/Qumranites, could combine extreme legal observance with full-fledged apocalypticism. The Pharisees, however, seem generally to have been much more moderate. It is hard to know what Paul the Pharisee expected in

²⁸ Cyrene and Cyprus were quite Hellenized cities with a sizeable Jewish population. They distinguished themselves for their messianic insurrectionist tendencies during the several Jewish revolts against Rome (66-73, 115, 132-135 C.E.), though perhaps socio-economic reasons played a large role in this. All the Cypriot Jews were exterminated.

²⁹ Luke prefers to make this a gradual process. In Acts 10, he presents the admission of a Gentile to Christianity as a very carefully taken step which takes place only after Peter (who claims to have always kept kosher, 10:14) has been thrice commanded by God to eat animals formerly impure but now purified by God. In the background is the eschatological notion that everything will be purified in the End Time; see Zech 13:1; 14:20-21; Ezek 36:24-29, etc. However, there seems to be a different understanding in Matt 23:1-3, where Jesus tells his disciples to do and keep all that the scribes and Pharisees say, but don't do as they do, for they do not what they say.

³⁰ Though Luke likes to duplicate events and speeches (applying them to various persons), scholars note the unusual Pauline tone of Acts 13:38-39; cf. Rom 3:21-26.

regards to the world to come, the messianic era, whether it would be gradual or abrupt and violent. We can only surmise that his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus completely turned him around in those things which he had deemed fundamental and self-defining. The resurrection which he like any Pharisee expected at the end of this age had already taken place in Jesus of Nazareth, its first fruits. The end of this age had come upon us. A powerful sign of this were the portentous manifestations of the Spirit (Gal 3:5; 1 Cor 2:4; 2 Cor 12:12), an End Time promise announced by the Prophets. Paul experienced this Holy Spirit, and saw the Spirit's effects not just on Jews who had come to faith in Christ, but on Gentiles, too. This meant that there was palpable proof of what God was working in the End Time: universal salvation for all who believe in Christ Jesus (Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 10:9-13; cf. 11:25-35). We do not have a complete picture of Paul's pre-"conversion" views on the bringing of the Torah to the ends of the earth and on passages reflecting the inclusion of Gentiles in End Time salvation (see, e.g., Isa 19:16-25). Perhaps these passages were too ambivalent: many maintain the Gentiles on a subservient or subjugated level, or indicate that their inclusion is conditioned upon adherence to Torah (e.g., the sabbath, in Isa 56:6). Certainly Paul was influenced by the Stephen Group-types in Antioch (even Damascus and "Arabia," Gal 1:17, are part of that general area; they are at least opposed to "the churches of Judea," Gal 1:22, much more devoted to the Law; see Acts 21:17-20). The experience that the eschatological gift of the Spirit was poured out on both Jews and Gentiles *in Christ* led Paul to draw distinctions between them no more; it is *in Christ* that we enter the End Time prelude to final salvation; it is in Christ that we become that seed of Abraham which is to inherit the divine Promise, Gal 3:23-29. So Paul, as we hope to see, will develop a unique, profound view of how this eschatological redemption is brought about. His basic scheme will basically follow the eschatological principle that the End corresponds to the Beginning: in the end, God's original intention will be realized. Paul will thus sidestep the Law and its requirements by positing a new creation in Christ (best expressed in Ephesians 2:14-18, a letter of the Pauline school; cf. Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17). This is the heart of Pauline theology, the key to understanding his thought. It should guide us in the more specific study of his "authentic" letters which is to follow.

Some Approximate Dates

It is not necessary to give more than some approximate dates as a time-frame in which to place Paul. Almost all dates are disputed, and little is gained by trying to be more exact. We don't know when Paul was born, but many scholars would place his "conversion" around 33 C.E., about three years after Jesus was crucified. The fourth-century Church historian Eusebius places his death (along with that of Peter, though the order seems confused) in Rome during Nero's persecution, which started in 64 C.E. Some assign the year 67 to Paul's death. Many agree that he founded the Corinthian church around 50-51, which is also the time in which 1 Thess is thought to have been written. The dates for Gal are up in the air, ranging from 49 to 58! 1 Cor would have been written 52-55, 2 Cor somewhat later. Phil is dated to the mid-fifties, as is Rom. Paul is said to have arrived in Rome in the early sixties.³¹

First Thessalonians

We begin our study of Paul's authentic letters with the earliest writing not only of Paul's, but of the whole New Testament, dated to about 50 C.E., some twenty years before Mark's gospel. It is a good example of Paul's (and earliest Christianity's) eager expectation of Jesus' Parousia = triumphant return as Judge in order to submit all things to God.³² Paul is trying to consolidate a new church he has founded in Thessalonica, in Macedonia (north of Greece). He begins with an extended greeting/thanksgiving, typical of his letters; he praises the Thessalonian Christians for "the work of their faith and the toil of their love and the endurance of their hope" (1:3). The terms are significant. The great "work" (singular, as opposed to the works of the Law, plural) is faith.³³ "Toil" (Greek *kópos*, similar to the Hebrew *'amal*, "toil and trouble") is one of Paul's favorite words, used to describe his preaching ministry and the fact that he

³¹ See HELMUT KOESTER, *Introduction to the New Testament. volume two: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia 1982), 144-145.

³² Note how the New Testament ends, Rev 22:20: "Yes, I [Jesus] come quickly. Come, Lord Jesus!"

³³ Cf. John 6:28-29.

supports himself with his own handiwork (2:9; 3:5);³⁴ here it is linked to *agápe*, the Christian term for divine and brotherly love. Finally (to round off a first instance of Paul’s use of the three “theological virtues”),³⁵ hope is linked to the important term for “patient endurance,” *hypomoné*, most often associated in the New Testament with remaining faithful until the very End so as to withstand the final tribulation and trial (two more eschatological terms) that will occur. These “virtues” refer to (literally, are of) “our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Thessalonians are “chosen” (1:4);³⁶ the Gospel event “happened” among them not only with words but “in power (*dýnamis*, also the word for “miracle”) and in Holy Spirit and in fullness of assurance.” They imitated Paul and his companions’ good example amidst many tribulations, and thus their faith has become a model for other believers in Macedonia, Greece and elsewhere. This formerly pagan congregation abandoned the worship of idols and *turned to* (the equivalent of the Hebrew *t’shuvah*, “conversion,” in the sense of abandoning evil ways) the living and true God.³⁷ They are now awaiting Jesus’ (the Son of God who rose from the dead) return from the heavens; he is the one who delivers us from the (eschatological) wrath that is approaching. This in a nutshell is primitive Christianity’s essential and earliest faith.

Paul shows his fatherly concern, as he defends himself from his ever-present detractors. He is not motivated by financial gain nor does he seek to please humans, but he has been entrusted by God with his mission, and thus exhorts his flock to lead holy lives. He refers to the sufferings of the “churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus,” 2:14, who suffer at the hands of their fellow Jews as the Thessalonians suffer at the hands of their compatriots. 1 Thess 2:15-16 are uncharacteristically (for Paul) virulently “anti-Semitic,” and many scholars question their authenticity (that is, whether it comes from Paul himself).

³⁴ Also the persecution it brings, see 2 Cor 11:23. See also 1 Cor 4:12; Acts 18:3; 20:33-35.

³⁵ See 1 Cor 13:13.

³⁶ Using a different term than the one used for Israel in the Old Testament. This term is also used in Rom 11:7 for the part of Israel who believed in the Gospel, but in 11:28 for Jews in general whether they believed the Gospel or not. Israel is God’s Chosen People; see Deut 14:2; 7:6; 1 Kgs 3:8; Isa 43:20; 65:22 (only in the Hebrew); Pss 33:12; 105:43. In the LXX, these passages use a Greek word for “chosen” which is also used in Rom 8:33; cf. applications of the term to Christians in Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:10; Tit 1:1.

³⁷ But *not* in the sense of *geshmat*, Yiddish for apostasy from the Jewish faith or forcible conversion out of Judaism (from the Hebrew verb for “to annihilate”).

In 2:19, Paul expresses his hope that at the Lord Jesus' Parousia (this Greek word, meaning "appearance" and referring originally to the grandiose visit of royalty in the ancient world, often refers in the New Testament to Christ's Second Coming, and occurs in this verse), he will be able to have pride (the opposite of being confounded, which is the fate of evildoers in the Tanak) in his ministry; this congregation will be the cause.³⁸ Meanwhile, he is habitually apprehensive about his wards (usually with good reason, for, as we shall see, he had many competitors). He cannot bear being away from his nascent church (in the sense of local assembly, which met in the houses of the members who were better-off), and must send his collaborator Timothy to check on things (3:1-5; cf. Phil 2:19-20). Paul seems to view his work as that of a careful gardener tending delicate shoots which could wither and die off if everything is not just right (see 1 Cor 3:6-8; 9:7); he does not want his work to be in peril. Prof. Koester describes the Pauline mission as "a well planned, large-scale organization";³⁹ Prof. Georgi has studied the highly competitive missionary activity that went on in the Mediterranean basin.⁴⁰ So Paul's ministry (and that of the early Church) was not as informal as one might think.

Paul pauses in his writing (or dictating) of this letter to announce in 3:6 that Timothy has just arrived with good news; again he is solicitous for the Thessalonians' confirmation in sanctity until the Parousia (used again!) of our Lord Jesus Christ "with all his saints," 3:13.⁴¹ In 1 Thess 4 Paul exhorts his congregation to make progress and avoid sins typical of Gentiles, such as sexual impurity. In 4:13-18, he addresses a particular worry of the Thessalonians, the fate of those who have died in Christ before the Parousia: they will rise from the dead, just like Christ, and Paul and those who are still alive "will be snatched up in clouds in order to meet the Lord in the air and thus be always with him." Note that Paul at this time expects to still be alive at the Parousia. However, he goes on to caution that the Day of the Lord comes unpredictably, like birth

³⁸ See what Paul says about the final putting to the test of each minister's work in 1 Cor 3:10-15.

³⁹ KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. two, 110.

⁴⁰ DIETER GEORGI, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Edinburgh 1987), 83-151.

⁴¹ See the similar language applied to YHWH in the eschatological passage Zech 14:5.

pangs (another apocalyptic/eschatological term, applied in Judaism to what must precede the coming of the Messiah), 5:1-3.⁴²

Paul ends his letter with further fatherly exhortations (he can be motherly, too, 1 Thess 2:7; Gal 4:19), making reference to what is probably his staff (1 Thess 5:12). Note his linking of the Spirit with prophecy in 5:19-20 and the further reference to the Parousia in 5:23. He prays for his flock and asks that they pray for him and his co-workers, and commands by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren, 5:27.

Galatians

We are proceeding in the chronological order of when these letters were written, but interestingly enough, we have covered firstly a letter which reflects Paul's eschatological outlook (the End Time promised in the Scriptures has arrived), and we now turn to a fundamental letter which reflects what this meant for Paul's theology of the Law. Granted, Galatians is set in a polemical context, but it will nevertheless be the occasion for a presentation of Paul's eschatological view of Scripture and God's plan, which will help us immensely to understand his theology of the Law and of salvation through faith in Jesus. Afterwards, we will turn to letters that treat a variety of other topics before ending with Romans, which will present in a more extensive and profound manner basic themes now to be discussed in Galatians, so that we can recapitulate Paul's ideas and put the finishing touches as it were on our presentation of his thought.

Paul addresses the churches of Galatia (various groups meeting in large houses), mostly Gentiles living in Asia Minor. The tone of the letter is acerbic; Paul is upset at a significant attack on his work. Other missionaries, competitors, are "bewitching" the Galatians into adopting various Jewish rituals and religious observances and, in Paul's view, seriously undermining his Gospel message that justification (being put right with God, which leads to definitive salvation) is only through faith and not works of the Mosaic Law. It is in this context that Paul writes his furious missive.

⁴² See Micah 5:1-3; Rev 12:1-6. Eschatological time-tables predicting the number of days until the End, as in Dan 8:14 (apparently revised in 12:11 and 12:12) are very rare in the New Testament, and corrected by texts such as Mark 13:32-37; cf. 2 Pet 3:3-10.

He begins by identifying himself as an apostle not of human origin or appointment, but out of a decision of Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead, Jesus who gave himself for our sins in order to rescue us out of this evil world. After the merest “greeting,” Paul launches his diatribe.⁴³ He is astonished that his congregation has so quickly abandoned the Gospel that he preached to them to go over to a different message which is not the Gospel. For his Gospel is, like his apostleship, not of human origin; in fact, Paul stresses, with some exaggeration, that he did not learn it through human means, but through an apocalypse, a revelation of Jesus Christ (1:12). He had been a zealous Jew, to the point of persecuting and destroying the Church of God, surpassing his peers in his zeal for the “traditions of my fathers,” 1:14, almost certainly referring to Pharisaic teaching (halakah) on how to live and apply the Torah.⁴⁴ But according to an eternal plan (Paul uses called-from-the-womb language reminiscent of the vocations of Jeremiah and the Servant in Isaiah), God separated and called Paul, revealing (again, the apocalypse word, 1:16) his Son to him, in order to preach Christ to the Gentiles. Paul then did not go to Jerusalem to consult with human beings, except that three years later he did spend fifteen days with “Kepa” (Peter). That is his only concession to human consultation here. After fourteen years, he returned to Jerusalem, again spurred by a revelation (2:2), taking with him a favorite collaborator, Titus, who was Greek and not circumcised. Paul went in private with the “notables” and laid out for them the Gospel he had been preaching among the Gentiles, lest this had been in vain. But nothing wrong had been found with it, and Paul’s proof is that Titus was not forced to be circumcised (2:3, 6). Paul does mention some, whom he calls “fifth column false brethren,”⁴⁵ who are spying on “the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us.” Paul sees his new opponents as of the same stock and trade as those

⁴³ “Diatribes” can have the more specific sense of a rhetorical-question/answer mode of discourse with an imaginary interlocutor which was typical of the Stoic and Cynic philosophers. Paul uses this often in Romans.

⁴⁴ A similar expression is that of the addition to the Mishnah called Pirke Avot, the “chapters (or sayings) of the fathers.”

⁴⁵ The meaning of *pareisáktous* in 2:4 is primarily “brought in secretly.” A “fifth column” (from the Spanish Civil War 1936-39) is defined by *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition* (Springfield, MA, 1997), 434, as “a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy that engage in espionage or sabotage within defense lines or national borders.” Rightly or wrongly, this is the sense in which Paul uses the term here. Cf. Acts 15:5, where those among the Christians who maintain that Gentile believers have to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses are identified as Pharisees.

whose position was rejected by the notables back then in Jerusalem (see also Acts 15:7-11, 22-29). Nothing was corrected about Paul's Gospel message; it was recognized that Paul had a mission to the Gentiles comparable (at least in Paul's view) to Peter's mission to the Jews (Gal 2:6-8),⁴⁶ and the "columns" (the leaders) James, Kepa-Peter and John shook hands with Paul and Barnabas as a sign of fellowship and in agreement regarding their respective fields of activity (Jews, Gentiles). The only "condition" (2:10) was that Paul, working in the more affluent Greek areas, would "remember" the Jerusalem (Jewish Christian) poor, something which he took to heart.⁴⁷

Then Paul recounts how he angrily confronted even Kepa-Peter when he came to Antioch. It seems that contrary to Acts 10:14, where Peter states that he has kept kosher all his life (or perhaps as a result of the divine command which follows), Paul in this eye-witness account states that Peter was eating with the Gentiles until people from James' Law-observant party came;⁴⁸ then Peter (dragging along other Jewish Christians and even Barnabas), pretended hypocritically that he was not "living like a Gentile," 2:11-14. Paul had no qualms about openly challenging Peter for not "walking rightly in

⁴⁶ The word "mission" comes from the Latin "to send," and corresponds to the words with the same meaning in Hebrew (typical of the designation given to God's commissioning of a prophet, e.g., Jer 7:25; 26:12) and in Greek (*apostéllō*, where the word "apostle" comes from).

⁴⁷ This concern (and agreement) will result in Paul's famous collection among the Greek churches, 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 9. Notice the particular use of the term "the saints" for these Jerusalem Jewish Christians. Although Paul calls "saints" other Christians who are neither Jewish nor Jerusalemites (e.g., Rom 8:27; 16:15; 1 Cor 6:1), it is apparent that the first Christians, who were Jewish and Palestinian if not Jerusalemites, are specially esteemed. KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. two, 87, 105, 137, attributes a special eschatological role to them. Certainly a prominent idea in the Old Testament is that God will be glorified in Zion by the Gentiles, who will bring their wealth to God's people in their Holy City (see Isa 60). Paul considers that the Gentile Christians should acknowledge their spiritual debt to the Jewish Christians with material offerings (Rom 15:25-27, where the combination "poor of the saints who are in Jerusalem" occurs; cf. 1 Cor 9:11). Ironically, this *koinonía* ("communion," complete sharing and fellowship; the word occurs in Rom 15:26; its verbal form 15:27), which takes an apprehensive Paul (Rom 15:30-31; Acts 20:22-23; 21:10-11) with the collection to Jerusalem, will result in his acceding to the request of Law-observant Jewish Christians (Acts 21:20-26) to go to the Temple to show that he is not against the Law, but will rather accompany four men who have made a Nazirite vow and pay for their expenses (which were quite costly, see Num 6:13-21). According to Acts 21:27-33, it was on this occasion that a riot broke out over the assumption that Paul had led (uncircumcised) Greeks into the area of the Temple prohibited to them, which led to Paul's arrest and subsequent execution by Rome.

⁴⁸ It is widely agreed that James, Jesus' "brother" and the leader of the Jerusalem church, was conservative regarding the observance of Jewish customs by Jewish Christians (see Acts 12:17; 21:17-20), but he is depicted in Acts 15:13-21 as seconding Peter's inclusion of the Gentiles and advocating a compromise solution which does not require them to be circumcised or keep kosher, but only a minimum of "necessary things" (such as avoiding meat sacrificed to idols and blood). The Letter of James is seen as containing correctives to Paul's "justification through faith and not works" (Rom 3:28; Jas 2:14-26). Luther didn't like this letter.

accordance with the honesty that the Gospel requires” (2:14). This took place in Antioch, where as we saw Christians fled after persecution broke out in Jerusalem, and where Gentiles were first preached to. It seems from this letter of Paul that Peter himself abandoned the Jewish observance of the Law (assuming he ever kept it).⁴⁹ From the end of 2:14 (“judaize”) comes the name scholars have given to Paul’s opponents in Gal, “Judaizers.”

Paul then expounds his “Gospel” in 2:17-21. He begins by distinguishing between Jews (who have known the true God, and his will) and “Gentile sinners,” who have not. Paul is a Jew by birth, but he (and his group, he speaks in the plural) have come to the belief that one is not justified before God by performing the works of the Mosaic Law, but by faith in Christ Jesus. If justification were by these works, then using Christ as a pretext for not doing them would be tantamount to Christ being at the service of sin, which for Paul is unthinkable. Paul’s apocalyptic experience and “conversion” (in the context of the Gentile mission, as we have seen), have led him to abandon the Mosaic Law, and he will not go back to it nor allow his flock to do so, either (actually, his congregation was Gentile and would not be going back to it, but are instead being led to it for the first time by the ‘Judaizers’); see 2:18-19. Paul now lives *in Christ* (is “crucified with Christ,” a concept he will develop in Rom 6:1-11), or, as he says here, Christ lives in him: Paul now has no independent existence outside of Christ (Gal 2:20), who is the Son of God who loved him and delivered himself for him.⁵⁰ For Paul, to re-attempt justification through legal observance would mean throwing away God’s grace offered in Christ, who would have died to no purpose, 2:21.

Paul then argues from the Galatians’ experience. Although they may now be under the spell (3:1) of those who advocate esoteric practices and special religious times (4:9-10), and circumcision (5:2, 11; 6:12, “to avoid persecution,” cf. 1:10 and 4:29), the great proof of having come into the sphere of justification and ultimate salvation is the receipt of the Spirit with its dynamic (powerful, miraculous) manifestations, and this was the result of faith in the proclamation of Christ, the crucified Lord (3:2-5; see 1 Cor

⁴⁹ That is, he may have been one of the *‘am ha-arets*, a disparaging term meaning roughly “ignoramus” used by the Mishnah (and presumably, their Pharisaic forebears) to refer to Jews who were not at all scrupulous about keeping the Law. Cf. John 7:49.

⁵⁰ Isa 53:10 is in the background. Notice the same idea in John 3:13-18; 15:13.

1:23; 2:8). The Galatians, former Gentile idolaters (4:8; cf. 2:15), have turned to the true God of Israel manifested in Christ in the End Time (4:3-5). Likewise Jews, who could not be justified by the Law (2:16), have also entered the realm of the Spirit given in these last days, who makes a new creation (see 5:5-6, 16-18; 6:15; 2 Cor 5:16-18).⁵¹ So it is foolish (as are the Galatians in Gal 3:1) to go back to the flesh after having entered the realm of the Spirit.⁵²

Now Paul enters into a fascinating theological argument which we must surmise is his own invention in the best sense. He is going to by-pass the period of the Mosaic Law and, in true eschatological fashion (where the End corresponds to the Beginning, when in the final divine action God's original intention is fulfilled),⁵³ will go back to the time of Abraham,⁵⁴ whose belief (trust) was reckoned by God as righteousness (i.e., Abraham was "justified," declared and considered by God to be righteous = in a good relationship with him, Gen 15:6), Gal 3:6. Paul interprets the blessing of Abraham in Gen 12:3 as a pre-announcement of the Gospel (Good News); Scripture had foreseen that God would justify the Gentiles through faith. It is through faith that one is blessed with Abraham the believer (as Paul understands Gen 12:3), Gal 3:9.

Paul continues with a type of argumentation which seems strange to us, but which closely resembles the rabbinic mode of using Scriptures.⁵⁵ He argues that the Law justifies no one, because it is through faith that the just (or righteous) person lives, Gal 3:11. The Law is opposed to Faith; it is one thing to believe and another to do works, 3:12; these are two separate paths of justification. But one is justified through works only if one is capable of doing them all (Gal 3:10, quoting Deut 27:26, a "covenant curse," and Gal 3:12, quoting Lev 18:5), and no one can do that, Gal 2:16,

⁵¹ Paul will develop his idea that both Jew and Gentile alike have come under God's judgment and need to be saved by faith in Christ in Romans (2:12; 3:23; 5:12; 1:16-17).

⁵² The contrast flesh-nature-letter-stone/Spirit in common in Paul, 1 Cor 15:45; Gal 5:16-26; 6:8; 2 Cor 3:3, 6-8. Cf. Ezek 36:26.

⁵³ Two examples would be Daniel's vision of the dominion given to "one like a son of man," 7:13-14 after a long period in which beasts ruled the world (7:1-8, 11-12), the inverse of what God intended in Gen 1:28, and Jesus' explanation in Mark 10:1-11 of Moses' allowing divorce as due to hardness of heart and violative of God's original intention expressed in Gen 2:24.

⁵⁴ 430 years before Moses, Gal 3:17.

⁵⁵ Rabbinic commentators used an amazing variety of imaginative devices to explain problematic Scriptural passages or even give them a meaning seemingly (or obviously, at times!) contrary to the plain meaning of the text.

based on Ps 143:2, as we know from Rom 3:9-20.⁵⁶ Paul in fact emphasizes as most operative about the Law the “covenant curses” contained at the end of the Torah, in Deut 28:15-68, which in fact are much more extensive than the blessings in 28:1-14. For him, the Law represents a curse from which Christ redeemed us, Gal 3:13, by becoming himself a curse for us when he assumed the curse on hanged men in Deut 21:23.⁵⁷ This took place “so that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that we would receive through faith the promise of the Spirit,” Gal 3:14.

How does Christ’s crucifixion bring the blessing of Abraham to the Gentiles (as well as to Jews, 3:27-29; Rom 9:24)? The answer is not clear in this letter; in Rom 11:11, Paul considers the rejection of the Gospel by Israel (qualified in some way in Rom 11:25) as the occasion for the Gentiles’ coming to the faith; see also 11:30-31. Acts depicts the going to the Gentiles as a sort of “Plan B” after rejection at the synagogue, 13:44-46; 18:5-6; 22:17-21; 28:23-29. So that we can interpret Gal 3:14 as suggesting that Christ was executed as a cursed man in the eyes of the orthodox Judaism of the time, and that this stigma was a major stumbling block for Jews (as it was folly for Greeks), 1 Cor 1:23.⁵⁸ The belief that righteousness was obtained through observance of the precepts of the Law was also an obstacle to belief in the Gospel, Rom 9:30-10:4, and in this Christ was associated (according to Acts, probably by Pharisees) with an attack on the Law, Acts 6:13-14; applied to Paul in 21:21, 28 (he defends himself in 25:8). So we can conclude that for Paul, in the divine plan Christ the cursed-and-crucified-one would cause the Jews largely to “stumble” = reject the Gospel, Rom 11:11, which would then be brought to the Gentiles, until the “fullness of the Gentiles” comes into Israel, which will then all be saved, Rom 11:25-26. This explains the first

⁵⁶ Interestingly, Paul describes himself in Phil 3:6 as “blameless according to the righteousness which takes place through the Law.” This must be interpreted as indicating that Paul meticulously followed all the precepts of the Law according to the strictest Pharisaic halakah, and, in the eyes of those who considered this righteousness, he was beyond reproach. Cf. Qoh 7:20.

⁵⁷ See also 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 8:3. JAMES D.G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK, 1998), 222, remarks that in the Israelite sacrificial system, a pure animal died (and was thus made impure) in order to purify the sinner on whose behalf the sacrifice was offered; the sacrificial animal’s death destroyed the sin which had been transferred to him from the sinner. “As the sin was transferred one way, bringing death to the sacrificial animal, so its purity and ongoing life were in effect transferred in reverse [to the sinner]. This certainly seems to be the way Paul thought of it.”

⁵⁸ John 19:7 has “the Jews” saying that according to the Law, Jesus must die as a blasphemer; see also 10:31-33.

part of Gal 3:13-14. But what does “the promise of the Spirit” that we receive by faith mean?

We have seen that an outpouring of God’s Spirit was an eschatological expectation of Second Temple Judaism (e.g., Joel 3:1-2, quoted in Acts 2:14-18 on Pentecost, with the addition “in the last days”) shared by the early Christian community, and that Paul places a great deal of emphasis on the Spirit as the great sign that the eschatological transformation of justification has taken place in the one who believes in Christ. The great text here is Rom 5:1-11. What we must discuss now is the relation between Promise and Spirit in Gal 3:14.

There is no Hebrew word for “promise” in the Bible, and the Greek word (which Paul uses in the texts we will discuss now) does not appear in the Torah (Pentateuch), and rarely in the whole Septuagint. But it is clear that what God announces to Abraham and to the Fathers (“Patriarchs”) —and what others propose to do in the Bible— is in the nature of what we call a promise, a commitment to accomplish something in the future. Actually, it is better to speak of “promises,” in the plural, for God promised many things for his people (thus Paul in Rom 9:4; 15:8; Gal 3:16, 21).⁵⁹ These “promises” are interpreted globally, as comprising every good thing human beings can desire (expressed as “inherit the world” in Rom 4:13-20). For Paul, all these promises are fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor 1:20); in Gal 3:22, he says that “Scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the Promise which proceeds from (i.e., is fulfilled when one has) faith in Jesus Christ would be given to those who believe.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ There is a strand in the Pentateuch, associated with the Priestly narrative, which emphasizes that God has always fulfilled his promises (Josh 21:45; 23:14, and various other texts). The “already” or “in-the-past” slant of these texts can be contrasted with a much more forward-looking, “not-yet” perspective of the more eschatological writings. Even the end of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, is an anticipation-document: Israel awaits entry into the Promised Land and listens to Moses’ sermons on the other side of the Jordan (1:5).

⁶⁰ In Luke, the Promise is first of all the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; cf. 11:13 and Matt 7:11; Acts 1:4-5; 2:33, 39; cf. 7:17). In Paul’s speeches, see Acts 13:23; in 13:32-33, Paul announces “the Good News that the Promise to the Fathers has taken place, because God has fulfilled this (Promise) in us children when he raised Jesus [the resurrection word].” Now the Promise becomes that of the resurrection (linked to the Spirit in any case, Rom 8:11). In Acts 24:14-15; 26:4-8, Paul says that the Twelve Tribes of Israel are eagerly hoping night and day to attain the fulfillment of the Promise made by God to the Fathers, which is the resurrection.

In speaking of the Promise, Paul wishes to emphasize the gratuitous character of the divine offer, as opposed to human merit (Rom 4:1-8; 11:6).⁶¹ Now he will take pains to explain that the Law (with all its requirements, see e.g. Deut 5:32; 28:13-15), coming 430 years after the Promise(s), could not render them null and void, Gal 3:15-18. In this passage, Paul, in addition to the Greek word for promise(s), uses the word for “testament or covenant,” *diathéke* (3:15, 17). He plays on its double meaning: on the one hand, it means a last will and testament, which cannot be altered once duly ratified; on the other, *diathéke* is the Septuagint word for the Hebrew *b^erith*, “covenant.” This word first appears in regards to God’s covenant with Noah in Gen 6:18, and then also with all living beings, 9:9-17, as an eternal covenant (a Priestly concept). It is then applied to God’s covenant with Abram, Gen 15:18; 17:2, and with Isaac, 17:19-21, and with Israel (though the Priestly strand of the Pentateuch, stressing the unconditional nature of the *b^erith*, will use a different word, *‘eduth*, for this last covenant; the Deuteronomic strand will use *b^erith*, which for this strand involves heavy obligations).⁶² Paul’s point is that the Law cannot come in later and impose obligations on a free gift promised by God.

Now, the Promises were addressed to “Abraham and his seed (posterity),” Gal 3:16; Paul interprets this singular word to mean Christ. He doesn’t explain or justify this.⁶³ It seems that he has a global or comprehensive concept of Christ in whom the whole universe destined for salvation is contained (see 2 Cor 5:19), though this idea is found more explicit in the later letters from the Pauline school, Eph 1:10, 22-23; 4:13, 15; cf. Col 1:15-20; 2:9-10). But certainly Paul himself has the notion that the believers exist “in Christ,” are in fact his body (1 Cor 12:12-13; Rom 12:4-5). It is thus that in Gal 3:26-29 Paul says that through faith, *in Christ* we are children of God (better than

⁶¹ Norbert Lohfink, S.J., the great German Bible scholar and expert on Deuteronomy, sees an adumbration of this in texts like Deut 8:17-18; 9:4-6.

⁶² Interestingly, the Septuagint in Deut 9:5 uses *diathéke* in place of the Hebrew *davar* (= “word, thing,” but at times meaning “promise,” as in Josh 21:45; 23:14), so as to indicate what God swore to the Fathers. The use of *diathéke* here, then, although meaning “covenant,” is similar to the Priestly usage, where the “covenant” is in the nature of an unconditional promise.

⁶³ Paul seems to take a footing from the fact that in Gen 12:7, the Septuagint uses the singular for “seed” when the Greek plural was available (only the singular is used for humans in Hebrew). See J.A. FITZMYER, “Galatians,” *NJBC*, 786. If the “seed” of Abraham is one, for Paul the obvious referent is Christ. In Rom 9:7-8, Paul will say that being “seed of Abraham” does not make all the Israelites children (of God), using “seed” in the plural sense (“descendants”).

“through faith in Christ”),⁶⁴ and that we have “put on” (as clothing) Christ by virtue of baptism (cf. Rom 6:5, baptism makes us one with Christ). And if we are Christ’s, then we are also Abraham’s seed, and heirs of the Promise, Gal 3:29.⁶⁵

Now Paul will deal with the reason the Law came into being (something he will grapple with more fully in Romans). It should be noted that some scholars posit that these views that he came to hold on the Law were the result of his conviction that outside of Christ there is now no pleasing God; as E.P. Sanders puts it, for Paul, “Man’s plight . . . is that he is *not in Christ*.”⁶⁶ In other words, Paul reasoned back from his experience that Jesus had been constituted Lord and savior to whom all must submit (Phil 2:9-11; 3:20). He saw everything in the light of this conviction, and sought a way to explain the significance of “being under the Law” after the coming of Christ (we are no longer bound by the Mosaic Law, but by the “Law of Christ,” 1 Cor 9:20-21; cf. Rom 10:4). Here in Gal he will expound on this in the context of his bitter polemics with those under the influence of the “Judaizers.” In Romans, he will further expound on this and on the significance of being Jewish for the benefit of another largely Gentile congregation which has ties to Judaism and questions about Paul’s position on these matters.

In Gal 3:19-4:11, Paul uses analogies to explain the function of the Law. Again, the arguments seem strange to us. The Law was “added on” (from this word we get “prosthesis”) so that there would be violations of the Law; this is the meaning of 3:19. Prior to there being a Law, there could be no law-breaking (Rom 4:15; 5:13; cf. Gal 3:10). Without law-breaking, sin cannot be seen fully for what it is (Rom 3:20; 7:7); in fact, Paul will say in Rom 5:20 that the Law “snuck in”⁶⁷ so as to increase sin! In 7:5, 8-13, he will describe the Law as inciting to sin, so that sin could manifest its full effects. Here in Gal 3:22-23, Paul, using a first analogy, says that the Law confined (or imprisoned) everything under sin, as we discussed above (p. 30; cf. Rom 7:6), until the time of faith came and it was revealed (the apocalypsis verb). Now he turns to another

⁶⁴ Punctuation in our Bibles is a matter of scholarly decision; it does not exist in the “original” texts. Chapter divisions come from the Middle Ages, verse division from the 1500’s.

⁶⁵ In Christ, all differences between human beings (being Jewish or Gentile, slave or free, male or female) are abrogated, Gal 3:28. All are one thing *in Christ*. Cf. Eph 2:11-18.

⁶⁶ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia 1977), 554.

⁶⁷ Same verb as in Gal 2:4 used for the spying false brethren.

analogy, that of the Law as pedagogue, the slave who took children to school. Once the time of faith arrives, we come of age (without need of a pedagogue) and become children of God through faith *in Christ* (here I think the meaning is again “*being in Christ*,” believing “in” someone in our sense requires a different word in Greek, e.g. Gal 2:16). And if one is Christ’s (as Paul’s brands indicate he is in 6:17), then in Christ one is also Abraham’s seed and heirs, according to the Promise.⁶⁸

Paul now describes the time before Christ as the time when the heirs (including Paul and the Galatians) were minors, under tutelage and not free, having been enslaved “under the elements of the world” (4:1-3). Paul may be using the plural “we” rhetorically (he distinguishes himself from “Gentile sinners” in 2:15); whatever the case, before Christ came both Jew and Gentile were under the dominion of sin (Rom 3:10). These “spirit-elements” seem to be mysterious cosmic forces which rule the world (the sphere unredeemed by God); they seem to be related to “the princes (or rulers) of this world” responsible for the crucifixion of Christ in 1 Cor 2:6; see Eph 2:1-2; 6:10-12. They also seem to be related to the “principalities and powers” which Christ overcame and disarmed in Col 2:15.

But now “the fullness of time” has arrived, Gal 4:4 (see Mark 1:15), and God has sent his Son (see Mark 12:6; Heb 1:1-2), born of a woman and under the Law (there are echoes here of the incarnation, as there are in Phil 2:6-7), in order to redeem (same verb as in Gal 3:13, which see) all those who were imprisoned by sin as imputed by the Law, so that we could receive adoption as God’s children. And because we are sons, God also sent (same verb as in 4:4) his Son’s Spirit into our hearts, who cries (like a child), “Abba, Father!” We are therefore no longer slaves, but children and heirs, 4:6-7.

Paul now contrasts the former period when the Galatians had no knowledge of God, but were enslaved to spirit-elements who were not divine, 4:8. Through God’s initiative, they have now come to a relationship with the true God; it would be absurd (and a waste of Paul’s work, 4:11) if they went back again to those “weak and poor elements.” This is what adopting those religious observances in 4:10, as well as circumcision, 6:12, would mean: relying on the ineffectual (the Law cannot give life or

⁶⁸ Cf. Gen 15:3-4. “To inherit” is biblical language for coming into possession of God’s promises; see e.g. Exod 32:13; Jos 1:6; Mark 10:17; Matt 25:34.

make righteous, 3:11, 21) instead of on the saving power of God through faith in the Gospel of Christ (Gal 3:5; Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:5).

Paul now appeals to the Galatians' emotions, 4:12-20, reminding them of the care and affection that has existed between them, and warning them against the motives of his opponents, 4:17. Notice the image of Christ "being formed" in them, 4:19 (cf. Eph 4:15 and the body of Christ passages). But then he returns to his argument, this time using an allegory (the verbal form of this word appears in 4:24). He discusses a passage from the Law, that is, the Torah, in the book of Genesis. Abraham had two sons, one from a slave-woman, the other from a free woman; one was born "according to the flesh" (in a merely human manner, nothing miraculous or divine about it), while the other was born due to the Promise (against all human hope and due to divine action, Rom 4:18-21). Paul says that the two women represent two covenants: one is from Sinai, engendering slaves and corresponding to the actual Jerusalem, which is herself enslaved, the other is the free Jerusalem above, "our mother."⁶⁹ Paul is trying to convince the Galatians to see themselves as Isaac, the son of the Promise, born according to the Spirit, who was persecuted by the one born according to the flesh.⁷⁰ Paul has suffered persecution from his fellow Jews over matters of religious observance (5:11; 6:17), and persecution has seemingly come close to the Galatians, too (6:12).⁷¹

Paul ends his letter with exhortations. The first is to be free, free of the slavery of the Law, of the constraining pedagogue; this is what Christ has come to do, 4:4-5; 5:1. If the Galatians give in to circumcision, they are recognizing the validity of the Law and are bound to keep it, seeking justification in it, and thus not in Christ (they are "removed from Christ," 5:4. Once one is *in Christ*, what is important is not circumcision, but awaiting through the Spirit the *hope* of righteousness by *faith*, which works through *love* (again, the three "theological virtues").

Having laid out his arguments, Paul sounds a cautionary note: freedom from the Law in Christ is no pretext for selfishness or disorder (the meaning of "flesh" in 5:13).⁷² We should rather serve one another through love, for the Law is fulfilled in one thing,

⁶⁹ The idea of and the expression "Old Covenant" is found in 2 Cor 3:14.

⁷⁰ See the flesh-Spirit contrast in Rom 8:5-9.

⁷¹ See Paul's list of trials and tribulations in 2 Cor 11:21-33.

⁷² Cf. Rom 6:15-23.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18).⁷³ Paul continues in 5:16-26 with a contrast between living according to the flesh, in a merely human way (whether with or without the Law), and living according to the Spirit (and not under the constraints of the Law).⁷⁴

Finally, Paul exhorts to gentle meekness (*praútes*), a word associated with lowliness (humility), like Jesus in Matt 11:29.⁷⁵ Carrying each other’s burdens is said to be the fulfillment of the “law of Christ,” Gal 6:2; cf. 1 Cor 9:21; Rom 8:2. One should do good to all, but especially to the “members of the household of faith,” 6:10 (cf. Eph 2:19). Paul ends this letter with his own handwriting and a warning that those who try to circumcise the Galatians have vainglorious motives and don’t really keep the Law. As for Paul, his only glory is in the mystery of the crucified Christ, 6:14 (see 1 Cor 2:1-2), which separates him from the evil world (1:4) and which results in a new creation (see 2 Cor 5:17). The referent of “the Israel of God” in 6:16 is disputed (is it the Jews, or the Church?); in Eph 2:17, peace is offered to those who are near (Jews) and to those who are far (Gentiles). However, it is conditional on accepting Paul’s “rule” that what counts is not circumcision but the new being (in Christ). We have already mentioned the *stigmata* of 6:17, which are the marks of Paul’s mistreatments which he takes as brands showing he belongs to Christ (in Phil 3:10 he expresses the desire to share in Christ’s sufferings).

First Corinthians

We have covered a lot of at times heavy theological ground which is fundamental to an understanding of Paul’s thought, and this will greatly simplify our treatment of Romans. We now turn to a series of letters to the Corinthians which are much more pastoral in nature (although Paul’s concerns are always for his flock).

⁷³ Hillel the Elder, a first century C.E. “central ancestor of rabbinic Judaism,” met a Gentile would-be convert’s challenge to be taught the whole Torah while standing on one foot with the admonition, “What is hateful to you, to your fellow don’t do.” *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (henceforth abbreviated “*Dictionary of Judaism*”) (J. Neusner, ed. in chief – W.S. Green, ed.) (New York 1996), 293-294. In Rom 10:4, Paul says that Christ is the end or the goal (*télos*) of the Law.

⁷⁴ But somehow the divine commandments must still be kept, 1 Cor 7:19, though obviously not the 613 commandments the later rabbis would find in the Torah. Note, e.g., that in Rom 14:14, 20 Paul disavows the laws of *kashrut* (dietary laws, keeping kosher).

⁷⁵ See also Zech 9:9, where *praús* translates the Hebrew *‘ani*, “bowed down, lowly.” Moses is described as such in Num 12:3.

Corinth was a large port city with a lively Greek population. Paul's congregation there has been described as an ambitious middle class whose social status "was shot through with ambiguity; they rate high in some areas but low in others."⁷⁶ Here the perennially embattled Paul will confront serious division in the community, fomented again by ambitious competitors who have a very willing market in the striving Corinthians, seeking to excel. This city often reminds me of my own hometown, Miami, Florida.

Paul begins his letter with an oratorical device called *captatio benevolentiae*: getting the audience on your side with a bit of flattery. He praises the Corinthians for being rich in eloquence and knowledge (two things which fascinate them); they are lacking nothing in Christ, who will sustain them until the End (the apocalypse of Christ, 1:7) so that they may be free from reproach in the Day of the Lord Jesus. And what God has called them to is *koinonía*, communion, complete unity as a body (12:12-13, 27) in Christ.⁷⁷ But then Paul goes to his concerns. He has been informed of serious discord in the community, of "schisms" (divisions, 1:10). The Corinthians have split into competing groups headed (wittingly or unwittingly) by famous persons such as Peter, Paul and Apollos; there is even a "Christ party." This represents an attempt to divide up Christ, 1:13.

It is clear that the Corinthians are choosing their "party-leaders" based on their eloquence and knowledge.⁷⁸ Paul, who did not have an impressive appearance and was not a good speaker (see 2 Cor 10:10), proceeds on a different level: he is fully at one with Christ, who was crucified on account of his human weakness, 2 Cor 13:4. This message of the crucified Messiah which Paul proclaims is moronic (*moría*) for those on the way to perdition, but it is dynamic (powerful) for us who are being saved, 1:18. Since the world seeking its own wisdom did not recognize the creator,⁷⁹ God decided to save the believers through the foolishness (*moría*) of the preaching of the Gospel, 1:21. Both Jews and Gentile Greeks largely reject this message; for Jews it is repulsive (a

⁷⁶ JEROME MURPHY-O'CONNOR, "The First Letters to the Corinthians," *NJBC*, 799.

⁷⁷ See Luke's idealized descriptions of the first Christian community in Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35.

⁷⁸ Apollos is depicted in Acts 18:24 as eloquent; he went to Corinth, 19:1. Paul mentions him favorably in 1 Cor 4:6; 16:12.

⁷⁹ Cf. what Paul says in Rom 1:18-23.

“scandal”), while for Gentiles it is stupid.⁸⁰ But for the ones who are called (from this verb comes the word “Church” –*ekklēsia*– in Greek), this foolishness and weakness of God is really divine power and wisdom, infinitely grander than what humans can imagine, 1:24-25.

Paul now gives the Corinthians a reality-check, 1:26-31. He tells them to look around at their congregation: not many are learned or powerful or high-born. God, acting as he did in Christ, has chosen the weak and foolish in order to put the strong to shame.⁸¹ Glory belongs only to God (cf. Jer 9:22-23). Thus, Paul came to the Corinthians to announce this “mystery of God” in weakness and much fear and trembling (a biblical cliché), without fancy rhetorical devices, but in a demonstration of Spirit and power (again, the miracle-word, *dýnamis*), so that their faith would be based not on human wisdom but on the power of God, 2:1-5.

1 Cor 2:10-16 shows how much Paul’s mind was changed by his apocalyptic experience of the risen Lord Jesus. It was God’s Spirit who revealed the “things of God,” even his depths, to Paul;⁸² he was not taught these things through human means (remember Gal 1:16). These are spiritual realities which cannot be known naturally (1 Cor 2:14); they seem foolish to the person who functions only at the human level. But the spiritual person can know and judge everything, because he has the mind of Christ (cf. 6:17; 7:40). Having said this, Paul can now gently reproach his flock and take them off their pedestal: they are not yet spiritual, but carnal (“fleshly”), infants not yet ready for solid food, since they have been conducting themselves at the merely human level, 3:1-4.⁸³ The ministers are merely God’s instruments tending God’s field. Paul’s task was to lay the foundation, which can only be Christ (Paul prided himself on going only to places where the Church had not yet been established; the only exception was Rome, Rom 15:20). Everyone’s work will be revealed and put to the test by fire on the last Day (a final world conflagration was an apocalyptic expectation also found in Stoicism; see 1 Pet 1:7; 2 Pet 3:7-10). The congregation is God’s Temple in which his Spirit dwells, 1

⁸⁰ See Acts 17:32.

⁸¹ Paul deeply appropriated the biblical theme that God wants to manifest his power without obstruction from competing factors; see 2 Cor 12:9-10. This is the theme of such narratives as that of Gideon, Judg 7:1-8, and of David and Goliath in 1 Sam 17.

⁸² Cf. Eph 3:1-5.

⁸³ Heb 5:11-14 also chides the congregation for not being as advanced as they should be.

Cor 3:16; dividing up this “building” (3:9) is tantamount to destroying God’s Temple.⁸⁴ Now Paul warns his community to abandon the worldly mind-set and way of proceeding which has divided them and to adopt the way of divine foolishness; all belongs to Christ now, who belongs to God (see the steps to complete divine sovereignty in 15:24-28). Do not judge beforehand; it is God who will judge in the End, 4:1-5.

In 1 Cor 4:6-13, Paul presents a picture of himself meant to draw a sharp contrast to what fascinates the Corinthians. They are acting as if they were already fulfilled, rich and reigning in the kingdom of God (cf. Rev 20:4-6; 22:5). But Paul and the apostles are certainly not reigning yet! They are persecuted for following Christ, and are like the condemned men at the end of the procession in the arena, about to be devoured by the beasts, a spectacle before the whole world. They are thus foolish and weak, whereas the Corinthians are wise and strong. Paul’s work is unrewarded by this congregation.⁸⁵ Then he changes his tone to admonish them as beloved children, 1 Cor 4:14-15. He is now away, but if he visits them, it will not be with mere words, like those who are “puffed-up,” but with the power of the kingdom of God.

Paul now turns his attention to various community problems which reflect the Corinthians’ fleshly, not-yet-spiritual state of progress. First, there is the report of an unprecedented case of sexual impropriety: a man is cohabiting with his stepmother, and the Corinthians seem to be proud of their tolerance or avant-gardism, 5:1-6. Paul, though absent, as apostle and founder of the community, has already judged this man as if he were present, and orders the congregation to gather together with the power of the Lord Jesus to hand-over this individual over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord.⁸⁶ It seems to be a sort of anathema or curse which will result in the offender’s death, with the possibility of salvation on Judgment Day, but many interpret it as “excommunication;” indeed, it may indicate being “anathema away from Christ” (cf. Rom 9:3; 1 Tim 1:18-20), i.e, out of the sphere

⁸⁴ “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” Mark 3:25.

⁸⁵ In 2 Cor, Paul will continue with and develop the same themes, beginning with a great tribulation in Asia (1:8) which may have involved the beasts mentioned in 1 Cor 15:32. We will see a vivid picture of Paul’s trials with the Corinthian community when we look at 2 Cor.

⁸⁶ According to Rom 16:20, this may be sooner rather than later.

of justification-salvation, not-in-Christ.⁸⁷ The following verses are in fact consistent with the exclusion of the impure (likened to putrid leaven) from the community.

In 6:1-11, Paul complains that members of the congregation, called to be saints (1:2), are taking their disputes to outsiders (who are the un-just, outside the sphere of righteousness in Christ). He had noted in 2:15 that the spiritual person can judge everything, but cannot be judged by the merely natural person. Not only is the presence of legal disputes among them an “utter defeat” (6:7): instead of being willing to suffer injustice, as they should be (in imitation of Christ, 1 Pet 2:19-23), they actually commit injustices themselves and defraud their own brethren!⁸⁸ Paul then gives a list of types of “unrighteous” people who will not inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. Gal 5:19-21): the morality reflected here is that of the Old Testament, with a particular emphasis on vices to which Greeks were prone. But the Corinthians are no longer such, they have been “washed (by baptism), made holy and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Spirit of our God,” 6:11. Note the Trinitarian elements here.

“Everything is allowed” is commonly taken to be one of the slogans bandied by the “liberated” Corinthians, 6:12. This would be a misinterpretation of Paul’s teaching of freedom from the strictures of the Law (cf. Gal 5:13-15). Our bodies are members of the body of Christ, 1 Cor 6:15. The sex act unites the persons in one flesh (Gen 2:24); one cannot be united to both Christ and a prostitute, for it is an abomination (Deut 23:19). We have been bought at a price (the blood of Christ the spotless lamb, Rev 5:9, 1 Cor 5:7; 7:23) and transferred from the realm of darkness to that of the Kingdom (cf. Col 1:13-14; 2 Cor 6:14). We now belong to God, whom we should worship in (or with) our body, 1 Cor 6:19-20 (cf. Rom 12:1-2).

Paul next turns to a discussion of sexual abstinence, perhaps quoting another community slogan, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman,” 7:1. However, he recommends marriage, to avoid fornication (or sexual impurity, *porneia*). And if married, the parties should abstain from sex only by agreement and for a limited time, lest Satan tempt them. It is not clear what his “permission” in 7:6 refers to; the

⁸⁷ Righteousness in the Hebrew Bible, *ts^edaqah*, and its verbal form to “justify or declare to be in the right, absolve (whence “justification”), is conceived of as a sphere of divine protection, synonymous with “salvation,” as illustrated by such passages as Isa 54:17; 56:1.

⁸⁸ The verb here is used in Jas 5:4 in the sense of withholding wages, same sense in which it is used in Mark 10:19.

following verses indicate that Paul favors the celibate state (his own) as best, but he recognizes that it is a divine gift (“charism”) which, if lacking, can lead to being aflame with passion, 7:9. But we are still puzzled over what his concession was: was it allowing marriage itself, or abstinence for a time within marriage? The latter seems more likely; the Corinthians would be aspiring to complete sexual abstinence, which Paul feels is beyond their reach, so he allows temporary periods of sexual abstinence to meet them half-way.⁸⁹

Next, in 7:10-11 Paul repeats a teaching of the Lord found in Mark 10:2-12; it is clear that he has been instructed on certain sayings of Jesus. In the End Time, humans cannot divide what God originally intended to be one flesh. But Paul knows that if an unbeliever wants to leave, the Christian cannot stop him or her; God has called us (to be or live) in peace, 7:15.⁹⁰ Once the spouse dies, then a new marriage is allowed (though not recommended, 7:40), but “only in the Lord,” 7:39 (probably meaning only with another Christian). The whole context is that of the End Time; Paul still believes that the final eschatological trumpet blast is within his lifetime, 15:51-52. Thus one’s state has little importance: whether one is circumcised or not, free or slave, remain the way you were when called by God, 7:17-24, 29-31.⁹¹ Paul therefore recommends celibacy, though there is no command from the Lord regarding it, 7:25-28, 35-38.⁹² Marriage brings the “trials the flesh brings,” 7:28, and makes one worry about worldly things (see the very similar expression in Mark 4:19; cf. Luke 10:41-42; Matt 6:25-34), instead of being “in constant attendance (or service)” to the Lord, without distraction, 7:35.⁹³

In 1 Cor 8, Paul deals with a sensitive issue. Many new Christians had just stepped out of paganism. The meat sold in the marketplace had been sacrificially slaughtered in honor of the gods (idols). “Weak” Christians had qualms about eating meat, as they had shortly abandoned idolatry (Gal 4:8-9; 1 Thess 1:9). The more advanced Corinthians prided themselves on their knowledge (from the Greek word for knowledge comes Gnosticism) that there were no other gods, and flaunted their meat-

⁸⁹ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (henceforth “*BDAG*,” third edition revised and edited by Frederick W. Danker) (Chicago – London 2000), 950. Cf. 1 Tim 4:1-3.

⁹⁰ The believer came to the faith after marrying a person who remained an unbeliever.

⁹¹ Cf. Gal 3:28.

⁹² Cf. Matt 19:10-12.

⁹³ *BDAG*, 410.

eating as a sign of their carefree sophistication. Here again Paul opposes this kind of knowledge with Christian wisdom (cf. Jas 3:13-18), which cares for the delicate conscience of the weaker brethren. Indeed, for the sake of the brother for whom Christ died, Paul will never again eat meat!

A Pauline teaching is that of giving up one's rights. 1 Cor 9 develops this theme to support his exhortation to the "strong" Corinthians. Paul is an apostle who has seen the Lord, he considers himself to be of equal rank to any other. He has the right to maintenance for his work and to have a wife (Peter is mentioned as an example). But he makes no use of these rights, 9:12, but puts up with everything in order not to hinder in any way the Gospel of Christ, even to the point of foregoing a command from the Lord on this point, 9:14 (Matt 10:10). For Paul, preaching the Gospel freely is its own reward; it is an inherent need (*anánke*, associated with the End Time in 7:26).⁹⁴ He will allow no ulterior motive to be imputed to him, 9:18; 2 Cor 11:7. He is totally devoted to the Gospel, nothing can stand in its way, neither his freedom, nor his Jewishness, nor the Law: he has become everything to everyone in order to save some, 9:22; 10:33, and share in the Gospel (see the similar idea and expression in Phil 3:10).⁹⁵ No one can be self-assured in this time before the eschatological trial (1 Cor 10:11-13). Paul disciplines himself like an athlete (the famous Isthmian Games were celebrated in Corinth), 9:24-27.

Paul continues with his exhortations, telling the Corinthians to heed the lessons of Israel. "Our Fathers" participated in the Exodus, being under the cloud of divine protection and crossing the Reed Sea and drinking from the rock, which for Paul are "types" (models) of Christian realities ("antitypes"). But most of them did not enter the Promised Land, because God was not pleased with them. These things took place as paradigms (*týpoi*) for us; we should avoid all the bad things "Our Fathers" did. "For these things happened to them as models (lit. "typically"), but were written as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has arrived," 10:11. From 10:14-22, it seems that the Corinthian community was actually participating in pagan banquets as a show of

⁹⁴ *BDAG*, 61.

⁹⁵ This Pauline adaptation to circumstances for the sake of the spread of the Gospel is to be distinguished from seeking to please human beings by compromising Gospel principles and displeasing God, as in Gal 1:10. Note that Paul states that he is not under the Law, 1 Cor 9:20; cf. Rom 14:14.

their sophisticated freedom. Hence Paul's warnings about idolatry: sitting at the table of pagan worship is a sign of communion not with idols (who do not exist), but with

demons, 10:19-20; Deut 32:17. Just as one who is in (the body of) Christ cannot join himself with a prostitute, 6:15, one cannot have communion with (*koinonía*, 10:16) or be a partner of (*koinonós*) both Christ and demons (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-17).

Paul goes back to the Corinthian slogan "everything is permissible," 10:23. One is free to eat meat at home, but only with sensitivity to the conscience of those who balk at eating sacrificed meat; note that the concern is not for your own conscience, but for the other's conscience.⁹⁶ The point is to do everything in a way that God is glorified (similar to "hallowed be thy name"), not giving cause for offense to Jew nor Greek nor to the Church of God, 10:32. Paul puts himself as an example of this.

From 11:2, 23; 12:3, it is clear that Paul was a beneficiary, transmitter and enforcer of Tradition, teachings and customs handed down in the early Christian community, despite his polemical claim of self-sufficient autarchy in Gal 1:1, 11-12; 2:17-20. In 1 Cor 11:2, Paul praises the Corinthians for adhering firmly to the traditions which he transmitted.⁹⁷ But the Corinthians apparently have been flaunting the usage in the Pauline communities and churches of God (11:16) that women keep their heads covered in the assembly while the men keep their heads uncovered. The reason given is a sort of hierarchy, 11:3, 7-10, as well as "the angels," the significance of which is unclear. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza may be right in saying that "Women prophets and pneumatics [persons under the enthusiasm of the Spirit] are admonished to wear their hair bound up like a crown rather than unbound, since this was a sign of frenzy in Greco-Roman understanding."⁹⁸ Paul then emphasizes equality between male and female in the Lord, 11:11-12 (cf. Gal 3:28; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Pet 3:7). Note that it is assumed that women are prophesying in the assembly. Paul realizes that his arguments

⁹⁶ A point stressed by Prof. Koester in class at Harvard Divinity School.

⁹⁷ *BDAG*, 533.

⁹⁸ "1 Corinthians," in *The Harper Collins Bible Commentary* (henceforth "HCBDB") (James L. Mays, gen. ed.) (The Society of Biblical Literature 1988, 2000 revised edition), 1087.

may not be convincing, so he ends by simply stating that what the Corinthians are doing is not the custom of the Church.

This passage is one of the earliest witnesses of what Church pastors saw as disorder and the beginnings of heresy in the Church. Heresy is the advocacy of beliefs and practices which are considered to seriously deviate from the established norm, or orthodoxy. Women were thought to be especially susceptible to this (2 Tim 3:1-9; 4:3-4. This is reflected in 1 Tim 2:11-12, where women are not allowed to speak in the Church; arguments from nature and Genesis are brought in, as in 1 Cor 11:8-9.⁹⁹ This later situation is probably responsible for the interpolation (later insertion not from Paul) in 1 Cor 14:34-35, which is inconsistent with 11:5 (where women prophesy) and possibly with their praying in the assembly in 11:5, 13. Cf. Titus 2:3-5, where female “elders” have the function of teaching the young women.¹⁰⁰

Continuing with his concern for order in this community, Paul next addresses the eucharistic assemblies, which are likewise marked by division.¹⁰¹ The Corinthians show an “every man for himself” attitude, each one eating and drinking as much as he likes while the “have-nots” (11:22), who come in late to the “Lord’s Supper,” go hungry and are embarrassed. This shows scorn for the Church of God, the Body of Christ, 11:22. Now Paul, to emphasize the holiness of the celebration, states what he received “from the Lord” (clearly, through the disciples who knew Jesus, especially Peter, Gal 1:18), and in turn transmits, in the earliest account of Jesus’ last meal with his disciples. “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word for “thanksgiving” (found in verbal form in

⁹⁹ Christianity attracted many women, including those with wealth, and they achieved leadership positions. See Luke 8:1-3; Acts 16:13-15; 17:4, 12; cf. 13:50. Luke constantly pairs men and women in diptychs. Women were prominent in many of the heretical groups of the second century, such as the Gnostic groups. Cf. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (John McManners, ed.) (Oxford 1990), 28.

¹⁰⁰ It is not clear if this designation, “older woman,” is an official title. A woman deacon named Phoebe is mentioned in Rom 16:1. Andronicus and Junia are a married couple who are apostles, 16:7. Regarding Rom 16, KOESTER, *Introduction, vol. two*. 139, states that “The fact that such a large number of women appears in this list is clear and undeniable evidence for the unrestricted participation of women in the offices of the church in the Pauline congregations.”

¹⁰¹ In 1 Cor 11:18, 19, Paul uses the Greek words “schisms” and “heresies,” often translated “divisions” and “factions.” In 11:19, the necessity of their being divided groups “so that the proven ones may be made manifest among you” has a certain eschatological flavor; cf. 1 Pet 1:7; Jas 1:12; Luke 12:51-53.

11:24), the Jewish *berakah*, blessing.¹⁰² Jesus instituted it solemnly, before he died, saying “do this in memory of me.”¹⁰³ The eucharistic meal broadly publicizes the Lord’s death until he returns, 11:26,¹⁰⁴ so that whoever defiles it is trampling on the body and blood of the Lord (cf. Heb 6:6; 10:29). It is defiled when it is eaten “without discerning the Body,” 1 Cor 11:29, that is, oblivious of the fact that it is the community, the holy Body of Christ, that is present, in Christ; this is tantamount to destroying the Body, which is God’s Temple, 3:16-17, which is severely punishable.¹⁰⁵

In 1 Cor 12:1-3, Paul begins to speak of the spiritual gifts (“charisms”) by contrasting the frenzied utterances of the Gentile (pagan) cult of idols (ironically called “mute,” cf. 2 Pet 2:15-16; with a different Greek word, Mark 9:17, 25) with the order which should prevail in the Christian community. The one God, expressed in Triune fashion, works everything in everyone for the (common) good, 12:4-7 (cf. Rom 8:28). Various gifts of the one Spirit are listed (12:8-10), distributed by the Spirit as it wills. It is the same Spirit by which we were baptized into the one Body of Christ, 12:13 (cf. Rom 6:5; Eph 4:4-6). We are all individual members of the Body of Christ, 12:27; each has different functions, but all should be esteemed as a necessary part of the body, with special care for the weaker members, 12:14-26. In 12:28, Paul lists three main offices in order: apostles, prophets and teachers.¹⁰⁶ Then come other gifts. Paul wants his flock to desire the best gifts, but there is yet a more excellent way to proceed: the way of *agápe*, Christian love. No matter what one does or knows (including divine revelations), or even how much faith he has, without this love it is worth nothing, 13:1-3. *Agápe* is patient and kind, not envious or conceited, and does not behave indecently, nor does it seek itself, nor is it irritable or take injury into account; it does not rejoice over what’s

¹⁰² Mark 14:22 and Matt 26:26 use the more Jewish “bless” instead of “giving thanks” as in Luke 22:19. In Judaism, the blessing over meals is called Birkat haZan, “blessing of the provider.” *Dictionary of Judaism*, 96.

¹⁰³ Some would literally translate “unto my remembrance,” i.e., as a memorial sacrifice, *BDAG*, 68, citing Num 10:10 in support (the Israelites’ sacrifices are a memorial before God, who remembers, a favorite Priestly idea). Cf. Luke 23:42.

¹⁰⁴ *BDAG*, 515.

¹⁰⁵ JOHN BARCLAY, “I Corinthians,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (henceforth, *Oxford Bible Commentary*) (John Barton – John Mudiman, eds.) (Oxford 2001), 1127.

¹⁰⁶ The office of prophet disappeared in the second century, probably due to abuse, giving rise to “false prophets.” “In place of the prophet one finds the teacher, specifically the catechist and apologist,” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (J.D. Douglas, gen. ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI 1978, rev. ed.), 807. Cf. Matt 23:34; Luke 11:49; Acts 13:1; Eph 4:11; *Didache* 10:7; 11:1-12.

wrong, but rather is glad about the truth, 13:4-6. It puts up with everything (cf. 9:12), believes everything, hopes for everything and perseveres through everything, 13:7.¹⁰⁷ It is only *agápe* which remains, the essence of God according to 1 John 4:8; cf. 3:2. When we see God face to face, our knowledge, including our self-knowledge, will be perfect, 1 Cor 13:12. For now, we have the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love, but love is the greatest one.

In 1 Cor 14, Paul discusses the gift of prophecy, related to speaking in strange tongues (“of angels,” 13:1). Prophecy is better, since it edifies the community, 14:3, 5, while speaking in tongues requires an interpreter to be more than just personal prayer, 14:2, 4, 5. It is clear that the Corinthian assemblies exhibited quite a show of “speaking in tongues” —even Paul boasts that he surpasses the others in this!, 14:18— but there is a risk that outsiders will consider them crazy, 14:23. Prophecy (communicating a revelation, 14:6, 30, or secret knowledge, 14:25),¹⁰⁸ on the other hand, can convince an outsider to come to the faith, 14:24-25. But maintaining good order is essential, 14:40; one must wait one’s turn, 14:27, 30. It was in this context of exuberance and disorder, and consequent need to discern true from false prophecy (14:32-33), that 14:34-35, requiring women to be silent, was interpolated (see discussion above).

In 1 Cor 15, Paul discusses the resurrection of the dead, which some Corinthians deny will take place (perhaps because it was an unattractive concept to Greeks, or because the “spiritually-avant-garde” Corinthians believed that there was no need for it, as they were already living in the sphere of fulfilled salvation, cf. 4:8).¹⁰⁹ Paul must again proceed by setting forth the tradition he has received and has handed-on to the Corinthians.¹¹⁰ He conveys the oldest account of the risen Christ’s resurrection appearances, beginning with a credal formula which states that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, was buried and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,” 15:3-4. “In accordance with the Scriptures” does not

¹⁰⁷ Cf. what was said above about 1 Thess 1:3.

¹⁰⁸ Paul mentions several revelations which he had; sometimes he uses the word “mystery” in this regard: Gal 1:16; 2:2; 2 Cor 12:1-4, 7; Rom 11:25-26; 1 Cor 15:51; cf. 2:7.

¹⁰⁹ The Gnostics a few decades later would stress salvation as a present-attainment arising out of their enlightened knowledge (*gnosis*); their radical dualism opposing spirit to matter would denigrate the notion of a bodily resurrection. Note the Corinthians’ fascination with a sophisticated, “liberating” knowledge; cf. 3:18; 8:10-11. Cf. Eph 2:4-8; Col 2:12-13; 3:1-4.

¹¹⁰ Cf. the different emphasis in a different polemical context in Gal 1:16, 19-20.

refer to one particular prophecy; it is based on a global, Christian understanding of the Tanak, our Old Testament, as referring to Christ coming, and to his vicarious suffering and death for us, and to his ultimate God-given victory. This view is found in a more developed form in Lukan passages such as Luke 24:25-27; Acts 3:13-18, along with numerous other texts, such as 2:22-36. A principal prophetic text would be Isa 52:13-53:12, the so-called “Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant,” who was despised by others as cursed of God, but actually suffered for their sins, bringing them healing and salvation (the meaning of *shalom* in 53:5). It was YHWH’s will to so crush him, but as a result of his sin-offering (*asham*, 53:10), he will justify many and be very highly exalted. This text is applied to Jesus often in the New Testament; one example of Jesus applying it to himself is Mark 10:45.

The witnesses of the resurrection listed in 1 Cor 15:5-8 do not include women such as Mary Magdalene, since they were not considered reliable (cf. Luke 24:22-24).¹¹¹ Named first is Kepa=Peter, then the Twelve, then “over” five hundred brethren at one time,¹¹² many of whom were still alive to corroborate this, then Jacob (James, probably the “brother of the Lord,” Gal 1:19), and all the apostles. Lastly, also Paul, as “one untimely born,” i.e., “a birth that violates the normal period of gestation;”¹¹³ Paul might mean that the appearance to him took place quite separate in time from the other, “normal” appearances during the initial period after Jesus’ resurrection (cf. Acts 1:3; 10:40-41). But Paul’s “last place” is not just chronological; he bears the name apostle unworthily, because unlike the others he persecuted the Church of God, 1 Cor 15:9. But he is an apostle nevertheless.

Paul now goes back to the problem presented by the Corinthians who deny that there is resurrection. If there is not, then Christ did not rise from the dead, and the whole basis of the Christian faith is annulled, 15:13-14. Paul’s whole apocalyptic experience was a sham, and there is no new age of forgiveness of sins in Christ, 15:17, and if the Corinthians are right that we have only this life to enjoy (cf. 4:8), then “we” (especially Paul and the apostles, 4:9-13) are the most pitiable human beings, though we might

¹¹¹ The first century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus states that they could not be judicial witnesses, *Antiquities* 4.8.15 §219.

¹¹² Some interpret the Greek word for “over” according to its other meaning, “above:” Christ would then have appeared to the 500 “from above.”

¹¹³ *BDAG*, 311.

have placed our hope in Christ, 15:19. But in fact Christ did rise from the dead as first-fruits of those who sleep in death (cf. Dan 12:2). Just as death came from one man, Adam, so resurrection comes from one man, Christ, who will make all live again, only in order: Christ already the first, then those who belong to Christ (when he returns) in his Parousia, 15:23. Paul continues with a description of the various eschatological events which will take place until God is all in all, 15:24-28.

The meaning of “what are they doing, those who are baptized on behalf of the dead” (plural, 15:29) is disputed. It appears that there existed the practice of having oneself be baptized on behalf of another who died without baptism.¹¹⁴ Paul adduces this as support for his position that there is an afterlife, and then recalls his own exposure to danger and death on a daily basis as not proceeding from merely human reasons, 15:30-32. If there is no afterlife, “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die!” (Isa 22:13).

Now Paul must tackle questions about the mode of the resurrection and the kind of body the risen will have.¹¹⁵ Paul uses the metaphor of the seed, which is transformed into something quite different (cf. John 12:24; Mark 4:30-32). There are different kinds of flesh and different kinds of bodies, including the heavenly bodies. In the resurrection, weak, perishable flesh (the merely human without divine support, the merely natural) is “supernaturally” transformed into a spiritual body, 15:42-44.

We now have a natural body, as is found in nature. God created Adam, the first man, and breathed life into him (Gen 2:7); the eschatological man is Christ, 1 Cor 15:45, who has become a life-giving Spirit (2 Cor 3:17-18; cf. Phil 1:19; Rom 8:2, 11). First came the natural and earthly, then comes the spiritual and heavenly, which we will become (in Christ), 1 Cor 15:46-49. For the merely human (“flesh and blood,” cf. Matt 16:17; Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14) cannot attain to God’s Kingdom (cf. Matt 19:28; Luke 22:28-30, both considered as coming from Q). All those who will inherit the Kingdom must be transformed, whether alive or dead at Christ’s Parousia (Paul expected to be alive, 15:52).¹¹⁶ When this occurs, then the Scripture (Isa 25:8; Hos 13:4) will be fulfilled which says that death and its goad (what spurs it on) are defeated, 15:54-55.

¹¹⁴ Cf. 2 Macc 12:39-46, where Judas arranges for sacrifices on behalf of the soldiers who died carrying prohibited idols, that their sins may be forgiven.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Mark 12:18-27.

¹¹⁶ This is another of Paul’s revelations, i.e., a “mystery,” 15:51. See 2 Cor 5:1-5 regarding Paul’s idea that we need and will receive a new body after death in order to enter into eternal life. Cf. Phil 3:21.

The goad of death is sin, which brings it on (cf. Rom 6:23), and what empowers sin is the Law (there is no sin without the Law, Rom 5:12-13, which made sin multiply, 5:20; 7:7-13). But through Christ, God gives us the victory, 1 Cor 15:57 (cf. Rom 8:37; Gal 3:13-14).¹¹⁷

In 1 Cor 16:1-4, Paul gives instructions concerning the collection for “the saints” (the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem); each Sunday something should be set aside in each home according to how one prospered during the week. When he arrives in Corinth, he will send two individuals trusted by the Corinthians to take the gift to Jerusalem; if it is worth it, he will go, too (note that the two will then go with him, not the other way around!). Paul wants to visit the Corinthians and stay for some time, but for now will remain in Ephesus, where there is opportunity and enemies, 16:6-9. Paul ends this letter mentioning several collaborators in the ministry, including Apollos. The final greetings include the Aramaic phrase desiring the Parousia, “marana tha” = “the Lord is coming,” or “maran atha” = “Lord, come.”¹¹⁸

Second Corinthians

2 Cor is commonly taken to be a composite of two or more letters. Although a two part division (chapters 1-9 and 10-13) would be simpler, here we adopt a five part division as a better way to understand this writing.¹¹⁹ Below, we first indicate in bold type the section of 2 Cor we are dealing with, followed by the discussion.

2 Cor 2:14-7:4. Paul here again uses the triumphal procession metaphor for his ministry, this time in a more positive tone than in 1 Cor 4:9. Christ has triumphed like a Roman general or emperor (Col 2:15), and as he leads around his cortege, including Paul, the fragrance of personal acquaintance with him spreads everywhere, odor of death for those perishing through unbelief, odor of life for those being saved, 2:14-16. Paul contrasts his purity of motive in preaching the Word with those who hawk it; 2 Cor

¹¹⁷ The Greek word for “victory” is *nike*, like the brand-name.

¹¹⁸ It is used in the eucharistic liturgy in *Didache* 10:6, a Christian document from about the turn of the first century; cf. Rev 22:20.

¹¹⁹ See MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “The Second Letter to the Corinthians,” *NJBC*, 816.

is all about a bitter controversy with Paul's adversaries.¹²⁰ Conscious of his defensiveness, he refers to the letters of recommendation which his opponents have brought to Corinth in order to outshine Paul, 3:1; 10:12. He says that this community itself is his letter of recommendation, written by the Spirit in their hearts of flesh, not with ink or on stone tablets. Prof. Koester has opined that Paul's adversaries in 2 Cor

were Jewish-Christian missionaries who proudly boasted that they were 'Hebrews, seed of Abraham, (2 Cor 11:22) . . . the Jewish tradition and a theology of the new covenant played a significant role for them (2 Corinthians 3). Their message seemed to be that the Christian proclamation is the renewal of the true Jewish religion.¹²¹

Besides the letters of recommendation about their ethnic and religious credentials, which for Paul has to do with external things (5:12), and which he can also boast of (11:18, 22), these missionaries may also have boasted about their miracle-working powers, as Koester states. What is more clear is that for Paul these individuals are relying on factors other than the weakness of the cross of Christ in which the power of God was manifested; they preach themselves rather than this Christ (cf. 4:5). We have seen the background to this in the discussion of 1 Cor 1-2, and this will become clearer as we proceed with 2 Cor.

Paul contrasts reliance on one's credentials to confidence before God through Christ, 3:4-5; it is parallel to the contrast between the Old Covenant (a term apparently coined by Paul in 3:14), written with letters, which results in death,¹²² and the New Covenant which is of the Spirit, which gives life, 3:6. In the background to this language of a covenant written on hearts of flesh as opposed to stone tablets are such texts as Jer 31:31-33 (more apparent in the Septuagint) and Ezek 36:26; cf. 37:6, 10 (the dead bones are spiritually enlivened). Now Paul dualistically contrasts the glorious nature of the "ministry of death engraved with letters on stone tablets" (that his opponents are apparently upholding) with the greater glory of the "ministry of the Spirit." The Sinai covenant was glorious, but it brought condemnation, 3:9 (the covenant curses in Deut 28, which were realized when Israel broke the covenant [Deut

¹²⁰ See GEORGI, *The Opponents of Paul*, *passim*.

¹²¹ *Introduction*, vol. two, 127.

¹²² Remember the discussion of the Law, pp. 28-29 above, which no one can be justified by and which therefore can only bring the covenant curse.

31:16-18], and it was abolished, 2 Cor 3:11. The New Covenant brings justification, 3:9, and it abides.¹²³

Paul has placed his hope in this, and speaks with full assurance, unlike Moses at Sinai, who covered his face with a veil.¹²⁴ Paul takes this veil as symbolizing Israel's inability to read the "Old Testament" "apocalyptically," that is, with the veil removed (= with an understanding heart), "until today" (a favorite Deuteronomistic term, Deut 9:7; 29:3), for only when one *turns* to the Lord is the veil pulled down, 2 Cor 3:14-16.¹²⁵ The "turn" verb means "conversion" in Luke 1:16; 22:32; Acts 3:19; 9:35 etc.

Paul states in 3:17 that the Lord is the Spirit, and where there is Spirit there is freedom (Gal 5:5, 18), and we have our faces unveiled and reflect the glory of the Lord as we are transformed by the Lord who is Spirit "from glory to glory," 3:18 (cf. Phil 3:21; Rom 8:20-23). In 4:1-5, he contrasts his preaching, which spreads the knowledge of the glory of God which is in Christ's face, and which is only veiled for the unbelievers who are perishing, with the hidden agenda and trickery of those who preach themselves and distort the Word of God. For the creator God has shed his light in "our hearts" (4:6; cf. Rom 5:5), but this treasure is held in a clay container, so that it be clear that this extraordinary power comes from God and is not of ourselves. Therefore the apostles suffer constant tribulation (cf. 1 Cor 4:9-13) and carry about in their bodies the death of Christ,¹²⁶ so that Christ's life in them may also be manifest (cf. Rom 6:4-5), and the beneficiaries of their ministry may have life, 2 Cor 4:10-15. Although the

¹²³ Jer 31:31's New Covenant, a Deuteronomistic idea, which brought hope to a repentant Israel in Exile, has its counterpart in the Eternal Covenant of Ezekiel (16:59-63; 37:26-28) and the Priestly school (Gen 9:16; 17:7-8). Also in Jer 32:37-40 and elsewhere. Thus Paul will declare that God's election of Israel and love for the Fathers (the Hebrew Patriarchs) are irrevocable, Rom 11:29. Cf. Lev 26:41-45. Deut 28:69-29:3 suggests a separate (or "new") covenant (different from the one at Sinai/Horeb) accompanied by a new God-given capacity of the heart to fulfill it (verse numbers may be a bit off in the different versions). This is at times expressed by the term "circumcision of the heart," Deut 30:6; cf. 10:16; Jer 4:4. Paul will also speak of the circumcision of the heart, contrasting it to that of the foreskin, Rom 2:25-29; cf. Jer 9:24-25.

¹²⁴ Exod 34:29-35. The glory of God made Moses' face shine, frightening the Israelites. Jerome, in his Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, mistranslated the Hebrew verb *qaran* (in Qal, a form of the verb) as if it were in Hiphil (a different form) as "had horns," and Moses is thus depicted in Michelangelo's famous statute.

¹²⁵ Paul plays on the fact that it was only when Moses went in to consult with God (and thus, presumably turned from facing the people in order to enter God's presence in the sanctuary) that he pulled down his veil. This is not found in the LXX, but the Hebrew text of Exod 34:34 has "turned aside (*yasir*) the veil."

¹²⁶ Paul is crucified with Christ, Gal 2:19. The Greek word translated "death" here is *nékrosis*, "deadness."

“external person” is wasting away, the “internal person” is being renewed daily, 4:16, just as the visible passes away, while the invisible is forever, 4:18. The present sufferings are of little weight compared with the eternal glory that they produce in us, 4:17 (cf. Rom 8:18).

In 2 Cor 5:1-5, Paul refers to our earthly bodily existence as dwelling in a tent, a common biblical image (used also in 2 Pet 1:13-14). This tent is going to be dismantled (cf. Job 4:19-21), but we have an eternal dwelling in heaven made by God (cf. John 14:2), which Paul says will be put over our present “clothing.” And we sigh while we await this (Rom 8:22), assuming, as does Paul, that we will have our present clothing (= be alive) when it happens, and not be naked (= dead). God’s pledge (down payment) that this will take place is the Spirit (also in 1:22; Eph 1:13-14). Meanwhile, we proceed in faith, not sight (cf. Heb 11:1), with courage, preferring to leave this body to live with the Lord, 2 Cor 5:6-8; Phil 1:21-24. But everyone will appear before the judgment throne of Christ to be rewarded or punished, 5:10 (cf. Matt 25:31).

Thus having the fear of the Lord, and knowing that everything is apparent to God, Paul tries to persuade others, hoping that the Corinthians will recognize his frankness (2:17; 6:11) and be able to refute his detractors, who rely on externals, 5:11-12. If Paul seems to be “out of it” (cf. 1 Cor 4:10), it is for God, and if he “keeps his head” it is for them, 5:13.¹²⁷ For he is “pressed in” (with little room to move) by Christ’s love,¹²⁸ considering that he died for all and therefore all have died in him and should not live for themselves, but for him who died for them, 5:14-15; Rom 6:8-11; Gal 2:20. And so we no longer live or judge according to the flesh (in the merely human mode), but are a new creation in Christ, 5:16-17. Paul then recites some of his theology in the interest of reconciling the Corinthians to God (and to himself!). Christ came “in the likeness of flesh of sin as a sin-offering, in order to condemn sin by (this) flesh,” as Rom 8:3 (my translation) states more clearly than 2 Cor 5:21. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to not let God’s grace be a nullity in them, 6:1, and recommends himself in everything as a minister (*diákonos*) of God, through many trials and tribulations, expressed in dualistic terms: Paul is thought to be deceitful, though he is truthful, and

¹²⁷ *BDAG*, 986.

¹²⁸ *BDAG*, 971.

seems poor and destitute, though he possesses everything and enriches many, 6:8, 10. He begs the Corinthians to open their hearts to him as he has done to them.

6:14-7:1 is considered by some as a post-Pauline interpolation. Its dualism is reminiscent of Qumran (the Dead Sea Scrolls), as is the use of Beliar (the chief of the evil spirits). In 7:2, Paul continues with his plea that the Corinthians open themselves to him, defending himself by stating that he has never taken advantage of them. It seems that his refusal to accept sustenance from them was viewed with suspicion, perhaps fomented by his detractors (cf. 11:7-9; 10:3; 12:13-18); Koester thinks his initiative in the collection was also an issue.¹²⁹

2 Cor 10-13. This is considered by some scholars to be the “sorrowful letter” mentioned in 2:1-4.¹³⁰ Paul is up in arms about disobedience in his Corinthian congregation, more so since he is away, and it is being said that although his letters from afar are heavy and strong, he himself in person is weak and does not amount to much (10:1, 9-10). He begs the Corinthians to not force him to use his divine authority (*exousía*, 10:8) against his detractors, who accuse him of acting out of merely human motives, 10:3. No, he is empowered by God to reduce to obedience to Christ everything which is opposed to God, 10:4-5 (cf. Rom 15:18-19), just as timid Jeremiah was, whom he styles himself after and quotes in 10:8 (Jer 1:10; Gal 1:15-16; Jer 1:5). See also 2 Cor 13:2-4, 9-10.

In 10:12-18, Paul criticizes those who have invaded his turf recommending themselves exceedingly, taking advantage of Paul’s prior work in order to boast. His divine assignment is to take the Gospel where it has not yet reached,¹³¹ and he was acting within these limits when he brought the Good News of Christ to Corinth; he believes that in breaching Paul’s assigned lot, his adversaries are acting wrongly. But worse, he fears that his congregation is being preached a different Jesus than he preached and a different Gospel than they have received (cf. Gal 1:8-9), and this would be tantamount to spoiling the virginal sincerity they owe to their one spouse Christ, and Paul is jealous! 11:2-4. But Paul does not think of himself as lacking in comparison to

¹²⁹ *Introduction, vol. two*, 129.

¹³⁰ See MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “Second Letter,” *NJBC*, 816.

¹³¹ In Mark 13:10 we find the idea that the very End will not arrive until the Gospel is proclaimed to all the nations. Cf. Rom 15:20-21, quoting from the “Fourth Servant Song.”

these “superapostles;” though he may be unskilled (“idiotic”) in speech, he is not in knowledge, 11:5-6; cf. 1 Cor 2. Did he do wrong in lowering himself in order to lift the Corinthians up, by preaching the Gospel for free?¹³² Even when he was in need, he only accepted help from his beloved Philippians (Macedonians), 2 Cor 11:7-9 (see Phil 4:15). This is his own boast, 2 Cor 11:10; cf. 1 Cor 9:3-18, and his way to remove from those who wish to compare themselves to him any occasion to do so, 2 Cor 11:12. It is they who enslave and exploit the Corinthians, 11:20 (the typical deeds of the false shepherds, 11:13; cf. Ezek 34; Mark 12:38-40; Matt 7:15; Acts 20:29). And if they boast, Paul—in a fit of foolishness—will boast, too, 2 Cor 11:21.

His opponents’ credentials: that they are Hebrews, Israelites and seed of Abraham are matched by Paul; as to their being ministers (“deacons”) of Christ, Paul, speaking as if he were beside himself (cf. 5:13), claims to be so much more, due to what he has suffered for the Gospel, 11:23-33 (as Christ’s slave, Gal 6:17). Prof. Koester comments that “This section of the letter (11:16-12:10), carefully formulated in every detail, is a mockery of all the religious achievements of which his opponents boasted, a satire of aretology [Hellenistic biographies which listed their heroes’ miraculous acts].”¹³³ Instead of listing his successes, Paul provides a “catalogue of crises and disasters . . . The catalogue concludes with an ironic account of his undignified flight from Damascus.”¹³⁴ Even his prayer went unanswered, 12:8-9! Paul boasts instead of his weakness, 12:5, unwilling to expand on his apocalyptic vision 14 years before. Human weakness characterized the cross of Christ, 2 Cor 13:4, and Paul had it rubbed in his face so that he would not be too elated over his superior revelations, but rather would rely only on God’s grace and not on his own strength. For God’s power (*dýnamis*) accomplishes its goal in human weakness, 12:9. In his weakness and what he suffers for Christ, Paul is strong in Christ, 12:9-10; cf. 1 Cor 1:28-29; 2:3-5.

Paul feels he has played the fool in thus “recommending” himself to the Corinthians, when they should be standing up for him, 12:11. But he is worried about how each will react to the other when he visits, if he finds them divided and unrepentant

¹³² Cf. Christ in 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6-8. Paul worked hard day and night with his hands, 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8; in Acts 18:1-3, Paul is depicted as a tentmaker.

¹³³ *Introduction, vol. two*, 129.

¹³⁴ KOESTER, *Introduction, vol. two*, 130.

of their licentiousness, 12:19-21. In fact, they should examine themselves to determine if they remain in the faith, 13:5, for there is a danger that Paul will “dissolve” their church, as Koester opines.¹³⁵ But what Paul desires is that they “mend their ways,” 13:9, 11 (*NRSV*).

2 Cor 1:1-2:13 + 7:5-16. This third letter is called by some the “letter of reconciliation.”¹³⁶ Paul begins the letter with a great blessing (thanksgiving) to God who comforts in tribulation, two words often repeated in this section.¹³⁷ Christ’s sufferings are abundantly shared by Paul (it is actually his desire in Phil 3:10), but so is his consolation, 2 Cor 1:5. And all is for the good of the congregation, who also must suffer and will be consoled. Paul then relates a tribulation suffered in Asia (Ephesus? cf. 1 Cor 15:32; Acts 19:23-40; Paul’s imprisonment indicated by Phil?) such that he despaired of making it, 2 Cor 1:8. But this happens so that we do not place our trust in ourselves, but on God who raises the dead, 1:9; cf. Rom 4:17-20; Heb 11:17-19.

Paul’s boast here is the testimony of his conscience that he has conducted himself with sincerity and not with fleshly wisdom; he has been straightforward with the Corinthians, and he is their reason to be proud, just as they will be his on the Day of the Lord Jesus, 2 Cor 1:12-14.

Paul explains his failure to visit them as planned: he did not want a sad visit, but sent instead a severe letter (7:8) which produced good results. At issue was a certain individual who apparently offended Paul and whom the community punished; Paul urges forgiveness;¹³⁸ 1:15-18, 23-2:1-10. Of interest is Paul’s support of his constancy towards the Corinthians by declaring that all of God’s promises have their Yes in Christ, and in him we say Amen to God, 1:19-20. That is to say, all of God’s promises are fulfilled in Christ, and we proclaim the fidelity of God when we say Amen to him.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ *Introduction, vol. two*, 130. See 13:2-3, 10.

¹³⁶ MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “Second Letter,” *NJBC*, 816.

¹³⁷ From the Greek word for “comfort, console or exhort” comes the word “Paraclete,” said of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26 and of Jesus in 1 John 2:1.

¹³⁸ Cf. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “Second Letter,” *NJBC*, 818-819.

¹³⁹ The Hebrew word *amen* (= “certainly, truly, so be it!”) comes from the verbal root meaning “to be firm,” in Niphal (a form of the verb) “to be faithful,” in Hiphil “to believe firmly, to trust, to stand still.” KARL FEYERABEND, *Langenscheidt’s Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament* (Germany, no date), 20. From this verb come most of the instances in the Bible translated “believe,” “trust,” “faith,” “fidelity,” “truth,” e.g. Gen 15:6; Exod 34:6; Deut 1:32; Isa 7:9; Hab 2:4.

This letter continues in 7:5-16. Paul in Macedonia is afflicted with struggles on the outside and fears within, worried about the situation in Corinth, until Titus returned with news of the Corinthians' concern for Paul: they were sorry and missed him! His letter (2:3-4) had had its effect, and he was consoled, 7:8-13. He is also glad that his boasting about them to Titus has not been confounded; Paul can be confident about them in every way, 7:13-16.¹⁴⁰

2 Cor 8. This document begins praising the churches of Macedonia for their sincere concern towards the collection for the “saints” in Jerusalem,¹⁴¹ despite their “deep poverty,” 8:1-4.¹⁴² This serves as an incentive to the Corinthians to do likewise, 8:6. With a bit of *captatio benevolentiae* (see discussion on 1 Cor 1:4-7, p. 36 above), Paul asks the Corinthians to add this “favor” (*châris* = “grace”), 8:7. Paul will not give them an order, but out of concern for others (the Jerusalem saints) seeks proof of the genuineness of their love, and gives the example of the generosity (“grace”) of Christ, who being rich, became (extremely) poor for our sake,¹⁴³ that by his poverty we might be enriched, 8:8-9. Paul wants the Corinthians to complete what they have begun, based on the principle of equality and mutual sharing: at present the Corinthians will give material help to the needy Jerusalem saints, who spiritually enrich the Corinthians, 8:13-14 (as happens in foreign missions today).¹⁴⁴ Titus will be going to Corinth along with a highly praised brother elected by the churches to accompany Paul to Jerusalem with the collection, in order to avoid suspicion, 8:18-23; cf. 1 Cor 16:3-4.

2 Cor 9. In this final communiqué to the Corinthians regarding the collection, Paul shows concern that nothing be left to the last minute (cf. 1 Cor 16:1-2), so that their “blessing” (instead of “grace” here) may appear to be so, and not a grudging

¹⁴⁰ On Paul's well-staffed organization, see KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. two, 110. On Timothy, see Phil 2:19-22.

¹⁴¹ *BDAG*, 104, suggests translating *haplôtes* here as “sincere concern,” “simple goodness,” rather than the disputed “generosity,” liberality.”

¹⁴² Cf. Acts 16:9.

¹⁴³ *BDAG*, 896. Cf. Phil 2:6-7. Cf. Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:11.

¹⁴⁴ According to MOSHE WEINFELD, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem – Minneapolis, 1995), 20, 25, the Hebrew word for “equity,” *meisharim*, such as in Ps 99:4 (which is synonymous with *mishpat w^ets^edaqah*, “social justice and righteousness” = all the ethical behavior which God requires), is related to the Jubilee year “liberation” of Lev 25:10. The Greek word (*isôtes*) Paul uses was used to justify a proposed distribution of land by the democratic leader Hippon in 386 B.C.E. Syracuse, *ibid.*, 15.

exaction given in a hurry, 9:1-5.¹⁴⁵ “God loves a cheerful giver,” 9:7; Prov 22:8 LXX; cf. Deut 15:10. Paul then waxes eloquent in extolling the benefits of almsgiving, calling the Corinthians’ offering literally a “liturgical service,” *diakonía tes leitourgías*, 9:12.¹⁴⁶

Philippians

Although scholars often consider Phil to be a composite like 2 Cor, the more recent tendency is to view it as a unity (as is more and more the case in regards to the Bible in general). Phil is a wonderful letter written by Paul to his favorite community.¹⁴⁷ Somewhat ironically, the letter was written during one of his imprisonments (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23), but exudes joy.¹⁴⁸

Paul and Timothy greet “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with bishops and deacons,” though the functions signified by these terms differ from present usage. Paul is filled with joy when he remembers the Philippians and their *koinonía* (communion, fellowship, partnership) for the sake of the Gospel from the very first days until now, 1:3-5. He overflows with affection for them and prays that they will continue to perfect themselves in order to be pure and innocent in the Day of Christ, 1:6-11.

Paul sees his imprisonment as furthering the cause of the Gospel by his witness of persecution for Christ and example to other Christians.¹⁴⁹ And even though his rivals preach Christ out of envy, 1:15 (cf. 2 Cor 11:12), Paul looks on the bright side: Christ is being preached, 1:18, and Christ will be glorified in Paul’s body, whether dead or alive. Paul is torn between dying and going to Christ (which is better) and remaining alive to minister to the Philippians, which is what he will do, 1:20-26. He is concerned, as always, about their spiritual welfare while he is away, especially amidst persecutions,

¹⁴⁵ *BDAG*, 824.

¹⁴⁶ Paul uses the “liturgy” word (in Greek meaning a “public service,” but in the New Testament having religious [cultic] connotations, *BDAG*, 591) in Rom 15:27, again considering the exchange between the Christian Greeks and the Christian Jews of Jerusalem as one of material (“carnal”) goods being given for spiritual goods. Paul also uses “liturgy” in Phil 2:17 (“liturgy of your faith”); 2:25, 30, regarding Epaphroditus’ life-risking help to Paul. In Rom 15:16, Paul considers himself to be Jesus Christ’s “liturgist” (official minister) for the Gentiles, rendering the holy service of the Gospel; for a profane (non-cultic) use of “liturgist,” see Rom 13:6 (“public official”).

¹⁴⁷ Some posit a formal partnership between Paul and this congregation, pointing to the commercial language used in 4:15, 17-18; see BRENDAN BYRNE, “Philippians,” *NJBC*, 797.

¹⁴⁸ Koester opts for an Ephesian imprisonment, *Introduction*, vol. two, 130-131. Cf. the “*praitóron*” in 1:13 and “Caesar’s house” in 4:22; this could be in Rome or refer to imperial houses throughout the empire, including Ephesus.

¹⁴⁹ In Acts, persecution and dispersal enable the Gospel to spread over wider areas.

which are, through the grace of God, an opportunity not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for him, 1:28-29.¹⁵⁰

In 2:1-4, Paul urges the Philippians to be in communion (*koinonía*) in the same Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 1:10), each one considering the others as better, and seeking their interest rather than one's own (cf. Phil 2:21). In support of this (having the same mind as Christ, 1 Cor 2:16), he cites a pre-existing hymn describing the descent and ascent of Christ, who "being in the form of God did not consider being equal to God something to snatch."¹⁵¹ In the background is Adam, who was created in God's image, but who fell in to the temptation to be like God and disobeyed him, Gen 1:27; 3:4-6. Christ did the opposite: he emptied himself and took the form of a slave (or servant), becoming (or being born) an ordinary man.¹⁵² And further still, Christ humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, and death on a cross (this last clause is Paul's own touch).¹⁵³ This reverses Adam's trespass of the divine order;¹⁵⁴ the Servant of Isaiah also does YHWH's will, 53:4-6, 10. Therefore God raised Jesus to the highest place (corresponding to the Servant's triple exaltation in Isa 52:13), and gave him a Name above every other name,¹⁵⁵ "so that in (or at) the Name of Jesus every knee (must) bend in every sphere, heavenly, earthly and subterranean, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord unto the glory of God the Father." In the background is Isa 45:20-25, a passage declaring that there is only one God, mocking idols and calling upon all the

¹⁵⁰ Cf. 1 Pet 1:6-9; Jas 1:2-4; Heb 12:5-13.

¹⁵¹ "*Morphē* ["form" here] denotes the mode of being or appearance from which the essential character or status of something can be known; BYRNE, "Philippians," *NJBC*, 794. Cf. Heb 1:3; Col 1:15.

¹⁵² The verb translated "emptied" (like pouring out a liquid from a container) corresponds quite closely to the Hebrew verb used of the Suffering Servant in Isa 53:12 (though the Hebrew is translated "delivered" in the LXX). In Greek as in Hebrew, one same word means both slave and servant. However, the LXX does not use the Greek work Paul uses here, but another with similar meanings.

¹⁵³ The word translated "humbled" is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew verb for "being afflicted, bowed down, poor." From this we get the *'anawim*, the "poor of YHWH." Its singular form is applied to the Servant in Isa 53:4, 7 (the Greek word is used in 53:8), and to the sufferer in Ps 22:25. It is also applied to the Messiah in Zech 9:9.

¹⁵⁴ Note that Christ, the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45), represents the eschatological counterpart of the first human being, and Christ's self-abasement is the eschatological reversal of the primal sin — aspiring to be like God— of this first man. It is thus an important instance of the eschatological principle of restoring things to what God originally intended at the time of creation, in Latin *restitutio principii* ("the restoration or reinstatement of the beginning").

¹⁵⁵ "Name" is used in Deut in place of God, e.g., Deut 12:11; cf. the Lord's Prayer, "hallowed be thy Name."

survivors (of the divine judgment, cf. Ezek 6:8-10; with a different word, Zech 14:16) of the Gentiles to turn to the one God and be saved.¹⁵⁶

Paul can exhort the Philippians to spiritual proficiency; they have always been obedient, even when he is away, but should bring about their own salvation in “fear and trembling,” since it is God who is working in (“energizing”) them to will and to work what is pleasing to him, Phil 2:12-13.¹⁵⁷ They shine like stars in the world (cf. Dan 12:3; Matt 5:14-16), presenting¹⁵⁸ the Word of Life so that Paul can be proud on the Day of Christ, not having run in vain (cf. 2 Tim 4:6-8). Paul rejoices even if he is poured as a libation (as in Gen 35:14; Exod 29:38-40) on the altar and “liturgy” (sacrificial service) of their faith, and wants them to rejoice with him, Phil 2:17-18.

After some personal remarks regarding his collaborators Timothy and Epaphroditus, in 3:1 Paul repeats the call to rejoice of 2:18, but then there is an abrupt change of tone that has led some scholars to believe that a new and different writing begins. Paul is back at polemics against the usual adversaries, called in 3:2 the “circumcision.”¹⁵⁹ For Paul, the believer in Christ, who worships in (or by) the Spirit of God (cf. John 4:23-24), is the one (truly) circumcised (cf. Jer 4:4; Deut 10:16; 30:6), as opposed to those who put their confidence in the flesh (the merely human, but here also with an ethnic connotation, i.e., being a biological descendant of Abraham; cf. Matt 3:8-9; John 1:11-13). As in 2 Cor 11:22, Paul can claim even better credentials: not only is he a Hebrew from Hebrews, he was from a Pharisaic tradition (see Acts 23:6) and, in his zeal, persecuted the Church. He observed the Law without fault, Phil 3:4-6.

But because of Christ, Paul has reversed the normal profit and loss columns of his soteriological ledger; this is the meaning of 3:7.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Although the word translated “turn” here is not the one typically used for conversion, it is used in Isa 53:6 (and elsewhere) in the negative sense of straying away from God, going one’s own way. Cf. Rom 14:11.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Rom 8:24. Salvation is a future hope.

¹⁵⁸ *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, founded upon the seventh edition of Lidell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1899), 285.

¹⁵⁹ Actually, here Paul switches the Greek prefix in the word “circumcision” from *perí* (= [cut] around) to *katá* (= [cut] down), to imply destruction; see ROBERT MURRAY, S.J., “Philippians,” in *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 1188.

¹⁶⁰ The terms (profit, loss) used are accounting terms; MURRAY, “Philippians,” 1188. The normal order is reversed in eschatology, Mark 10:31. Soteriology is the doctrine about how salvation is attained, from the Greek word for savior, *sotér*.

Moreover, I even consider everything to be loss on account of the superiority of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, on account of whom I lost everything, and consider rubbish,¹⁶¹ in order to gain Christ and be found in him—not with my own righteousness arising from the Law but the one that comes from faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God based on faith— and to know him and the power of his resurrection and communion with his sufferings, taking the form of his death, that I may somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have it yet, or that I have already been perfected, but I pursue it that I may overtake, seeing that I have also been overtaken by Christ [Jesus]. Brethren, I myself do not think that I have overtaken, but (do this) one thing, forgetting what lies behind I reach out to what lies ahead, I pursue the goal unto the prize of the call upward of God in Christ Jesus, 3:8-14.

Paul continues to exhort the Philippians to press on: those who are “perfect” understand,¹⁶² while God will reveal it eventually to the others; the important thing is to continue making progress, 3:15-16. The concern in 3:17-21 is that they cave in to “enemies of the cross of Christ” who are doomed to perdition (cf. 1:28; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 4:3). Most likely, the reference is to “the circumcision” people of Phil 3:2-3;¹⁶³ if this is so, Paul would be saying that they confuse God with requirements pertaining to their stomach (though cf. Rom 16:18), and boast about a sign they have on their genitals, thinking only about these earthly-carnal things (cf. Rom 8:1-9; Gal 3:1-5; 6:12-16). But we have our citizenship in heaven, from where we await as savior the Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁶⁴ who will transform our lowly body into a likeness of his glorious body, according to the ability that he also has to subject everything to himself (cf. 1 Cor 15:27-28).

Paul ends his letter with effusive expressions of affection for the Philippians, 4:1 and calls to persevere in worry-free joy, prayer and thanksgiving, for the Lord is near, and “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus,” 4:4-7. Again, Paul reminds his congregation of his example, 4:9 (cf. 3:17).¹⁶⁵ Some see the beginning of a new writing in 4:10.¹⁶⁶ Paul is grateful for

¹⁶¹ See same Greek word in Sir 27:4(5); “something that is disposed of irrevocably,” BYRNE, “Philippians, *NJBC*, 796.

¹⁶² Cf. Dan 12:10; Matt 5:48; 1 Co 14:20; Col 4:12; Jas 1:4.

¹⁶³ See footnote 159 above.

¹⁶⁴ This is the only place where Paul uses the word savior, and it refers to a future event.

¹⁶⁵ See also 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Gal 4:12; 1 Thess 1:6.

¹⁶⁶ “This segment of Phil contains the initial response of Paul to the community,” BYRNE, “Philippians, *NJBC*, 797.

the Philippians' help in his need, although he has learned to be self-sufficient,¹⁶⁷ to be "humiliated" (economically hard up) and to abound.¹⁶⁸ "I can do all things through him who empowers me," 4:13, "and my God will fulfill all your needs in accordance with his richness in glory (or magnificence) in Christ Jesus," 4:19.

Romans

We now come at last to Paul's most important writing, the Epistle to the Romans. Paul had not founded this church (no one knows who founded it, but its preeminence is due to the presence, activity and martyrdom in this imperial capital city of the two greatest apostles, Peter and Paul). Paul here makes an exception to his established practice of never going where others had preached the gospel before, Rom 15:20-21. His pioneering work in the regions where he has been active is finished, and he desires to visit the Roman congregation on his way to Spain, 15:23-24. He is after all "the apostle of the Gentiles," 11:13, and cultic minister (*leitourgós*) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles; he sees his ministry as making acceptable to God the sacrificial offering of the Gentiles, made holy by the Holy Spirit, 15:16. Christ himself became a minister (*diáconos*) of the Jews (literally, the "Circumcision")¹⁶⁹ on behalf of (or for the sake of) God's faithfulness (in Hebrew, *emet*), in order to confirm the Promises made to the Fathers, that the Gentiles (also) might praise God for his mercy, 15:8-9.¹⁷⁰

Paul sees the collection taken up among the Gentiles for the poor Christian Jews of Jerusalem as a symbol of this offering of the Gentiles, and as a material recognition of the spiritual blessings that the Gentiles have received from the Jews; see 15:25-27.¹⁷¹ According to Koester, "Both Romans as well as the collection are part of an effort to establish a new relationship between gentile and Jewish Christianity, and thus also

¹⁶⁷ *autárkes*, "one who supports himself without aid from others," "a favorite virtue of the Cynics and Stoics," *BDAG*, 152.

¹⁶⁸ "To be humiliated" is our translation of *tapeinoústhai*, 4:12, the same verb as in 2 Cor 11:7 (Paul "degraded" himself by working with his hands, *BDAG*, 990; also in Phil 2:8); see footnote 153 above.

¹⁶⁹ Jesus ministered only to Jews, according to Matt 15:24; cf. 10:5-6.

¹⁷⁰ Note that the parts of Scripture which Paul quotes in 15:9-10 envision Gentiles joining Israel in praising God. Recall that in 2 Cor 1:18-22, Paul spoke of God's faithfulness to his Promises, which find their fulfillment ("yes") in Christ, and that the pledge that this salvific plan will be brought to completion is the Holy Spirit, who purified the hearts of the Gentiles through faith, Acts 15:8-9. This is paralleled by passages such as Rom 2:29; Phil 3:3; Gal 5:5-6; cf. Eph 2:11-22; Col 2:11; Gal 6:15; Acts 7:51.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Acts 24:17; 2 Cor 9:12-14.

between gentile Christianity and Judaism.”¹⁷² It is clear that Paul is most interested in this letter in discussing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Many scholars think that his position on the Law, as reflected in a polemical treatise such as Galatians, would have to be more fully explained to a congregation with deep ties to Judaism, although made up mostly of Gentiles. Ambrosiaster, a Church Father who lived and wrote in Rome around 375, “reports that the Romans ‘received the faith, although with a Jewish bent’.”¹⁷³ Paul has been apprehensive about how the collection from the Gentiles which he is taking to Jerusalem will be received by the Jews there, Christians and otherwise, 15:30-31; cf. Acts 20:22-23; 21:10-14. He thus writes to the Romans this letter of recommendation “on his own behalf,”¹⁷⁴ perhaps as a formulation of his Gospel “such as he would present [it] to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem still suspicious of him.”¹⁷⁵

I hope that what we have covered heretofore will enable me to be briefer in this short commentary on Romans, for example, dwelling less on the question of the Law and more on, say, justification and the issue of the situation of Jew and Gentile.

Paul begins by humbly identifying himself as a slave/servant of Christ Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 4:5) and “called [as an, to be an] apostle, set aside for the Gospel of God, which he promised from beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, which are about his Son who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh [but] who was defined to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness once he

¹⁷² *Introduction, vol. two, 139.*

¹⁷³ RAYMOND E. BROWN – JOHN P. MEIER, *Antioch and Rome. New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London 1983), 110-111.

¹⁷⁴ KOESTER, *Introduction, vol. two, 140.*

¹⁷⁵ JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 831. See Acts 21:17-21. BROWN, *Antioch and Rome*, 110, states that “Paul appealed for Rome’s help because *the dominant Christianity at Rome had been shaped by the Jerusalem Christianity associated with James and Peter, and hence was a Christianity appreciative of Judaism and loyal to its customs.*” We should note that Paul’s accession to the Jerusalem Jewish Christian suggestion that he show his observance of the Law in order to dispel the nasty rumors about him ended in the fiasco of the riot which led to Paul’s imprisonment and eventual execution, Acts 21:21 to the end of the book, in which Luke—in his typical idyllic fashion—depicts Paul as living under house arrest in Rome and preaching unhindered, omitting the account of his death, which Luke surely knew of when he wrote Acts. Ironically, Paul’s effort to strengthen the bonds between Judaism and Christianity with this gesture in the Temple (on the occasion of his taking the collection, itself a symbol of communion and fellowship, *koinonía*, Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Gal 2:9-10), failed miserably.

rose from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁷⁶ It is through this Lord Jesus that Paul received his commission (“apostolic sending,” cf. Gal 1:15-16) to obtain the obedience which is faith (submission to the one God and his Son Jesus, cf. Phil 2:10-11) of all the Gentiles, including the Romans, Rom 1:5-6. Paul continues with a bit of *captatio benevolentiae* (seeking the goodwill of his readers), expressing his interest in this famous congregation and his desire to “gather some fruit” among them as he has also done with other Gentiles, 1:8-15; Paul owes his apostolic service to everyone (though his jurisdiction as here expressed seems to exclude Jews; cf. 1 Cor 9:19-22).

After this “introduction” (or, as rhetoricians would call it, *exordium*), Paul now makes a general *propositio*:¹⁷⁷ the Gospel is God’s powerful way of saving everyone who believes, first the Jew and also the Greek (Gentile), for it reveals (the apocalypsis verb) the righteousness of God “from one faith to another, as it is written, The righteous one will live on account of faith,” 1:16-17.¹⁷⁸

Rom 1:16-32 would be the *narratio* (setting forth the facts), if we followed certain rhetorical analyses of Romans. Here Paul lambasts the culpability of the Gentiles in “hindering” the truth through impiety and lawlessness.¹⁷⁹ Paul maintains that the Gentiles recognized the true God behind the wonders of nature, but did not glorify him, so that in their false wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:20-21) they became stupid and began worshipping idols, giving up the truth of God in exchange for falsehood, so that the created order was inverted (Paul cites homosexual acts as an example of this violation of what is according to nature).¹⁸⁰ Their culpable failure to obey God led to his handing

¹⁷⁶ On my translation “defined as” (*horizo*, where “horizon” comes from), see *BDAG*, 723. “Once he rose from the dead” gives a temporal aspect to *ek*, which here can mean “from, on account of.” Note the demarcation of the respective spheres of the “flesh” and the Spirit.

¹⁷⁷ The subject of the discourse.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Acts 3:26; 1 Cor 1:18, 24. “From faith to faith” may indicate the passage from the “Old Testament” (the quote is from Hab 2:4) to the New.

¹⁷⁹ The verb in 1:18 which we translate “hinder” is found in 7:6 in reference to the sinful passions; some would translate “imprison.”

¹⁸⁰ This example has a particularly Greek practice in mind. Note that Paul has a concept of the “law according to nature (or reason)” akin to that of the Jewish philosopher Philo; see KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. one, 276 (the law of nature is “the universal law of the world;” “The decalogue is the central formulation of the law, issuing from God himself.”); “The legislation of Moses was identified with the Stoic concept of a rational order in the universe (*lógos fýseos*) and thus became the divinely authorized law of nature. From this, Philo could derive the design for a universal legislation, as well as the notion of human morality that could be described with internalized and psychological categories” (280); “Paul, however, begins with the argument that both Jews and gentiles possess full knowledge of both God and the law. The law of nature which is given to the gentiles (Rom 2:12-16) is thus entirely equivalent to the

them over to all sorts of sins and vices: this multiplication of sin will correspond to that which takes place among Jews, as we shall see.¹⁸¹ Thus Gentiles are under God's wrath, which has (now) been revealed, 1:18.

From 2:1 to 15:13, rhetoricians might say Paul now gives his *confirmatio*, or "proof" of his thesis. In his argument, he will frequently use a rhetorical device common among the Cynic and Stoic philosophers, the diatribe, in which an imaginary interlocutor is asked "rhetorical questions," all to further Paul's argument. He now turns to the Jews: they tend to judge those who commit the above-mentioned sins and vices, but are also liable to God's judgment because they are guilty of them themselves. God has been patient in order for repentance to take place, 2:4.¹⁸² All will be judged according to their deeds, the Jew first and also the Greek: there is no "lifting of the face" (flattery, or rather, unfair discrimination between persons) with God, 2:5-11.¹⁸³ The Jews, who possess the (Mosaic) Law, will be judged according to it; the Gentiles, as it were, have the Law written in their hearts and observe it "by nature,"¹⁸⁴ guided by their conscience, and will be judged accordingly also, 2:12-15; this, according to Paul's Gospel.

Paul continues with a critique of those (his fellow Jews) who feel superior to others because of their possession of the Law but do not keep it, so that God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles, 2:17-24. We should here recall that it seems that Paul has reasoned back from his experience that Christ had become Lord of all and that those who are not "in Christ" are outside the sphere of righteousness and cannot please God (see p. 32 above).¹⁸⁵ At the same time, Paul places Jew and Gentile on an equal footing: what is determinative is the keeping of God's Law, not the outward sign (circumcision) that you are bound to it, for true circumcision is a matter of the heart (the Hebrew seat of decision-making).¹⁸⁶ Here Paul again contrasts the opposed realms of the letter and

law of the Bible. Of course, this is not intended to extol the law, but to show the universal predicament: just as the law makes it possible to boast of one's accomplishments, it also makes it clear that all have fallen under the power of sin," *id.*, *vol. two*, 140.

¹⁸¹ Note that Paul's statements regarding the Gentiles echo Ps 106:19-21 (regarding the Golden Calf episode of Exod 32).

¹⁸² Cf. 2 Pet 3:9.

¹⁸³ Cf. Deut 10:17.

¹⁸⁴ In 1 Cor 11:14, Paul gives a not-too convincing example of what "nature" teaches.

¹⁸⁵ And SANDERS, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 554.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:24-25; Acts 7:51.

the Spirit, 2:25-29. In the background are such passages as Jer 31:31-34 (the New Covenant written in the heart)¹⁸⁷ and Ezek 36:24-28 (eschatological in-gathering of Israel and purification of the people by God, who will give them a new heart and spirit so that they may keep all his precepts and be his people, and he their God, in the Promised Land).¹⁸⁸

Now Paul must deal with the question of what, then, is special about being Jewish; his initial answer is “a lot, in every way,” firstly because God entrusted his words to them, 3:1-2.¹⁸⁹ Even if some did not believe, this faithlessness cannot annul the faithfulness of God; rather, what God has decreed is that everyone be shown to be untruthful, so that God’s truth (akin to his faithfulness) be manifested: our unrighteousness paradoxically demonstrates God’s righteousness, 3:3-5. Paul then protests against accusations that his manifestation of human falsehood and sinfulness (in order to bolster God’s truth and righteousness) can lead to wrongdoing: this is to wrongly interpret him, 3:7-8.¹⁹⁰ Now he can drive in his main point: no one is better than another before God, because both Jew and Gentile are unrighteous and under the power of sin. The fact that this is written in the “Law” (here meaning the whole Hebrew Bible) means that Jews should place themselves alongside sinful Gentiles in acknowledging their guilt before God, for (merely) having the Law does not give righteousness: it only gives knowledge (and imputation) of sin, 3:9-20.¹⁹¹

Rom 3:21-26 is among the richest Pauline passages, and his great manifesto on justification (= what puts us in a right relationship with God). *Now* (considered the first eschatological “now” in Rom),¹⁹² leaving to one side the prescriptions of the Law, the righteousness of God witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets (i.e., all the Scriptures)

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Deut 28:69, 3 (other numeration 29:1, 4), referring to a covenant separate from the one made in Sinai/Horeb, which God had not given the Israelites a heart to understand until “this day;” cf. 30:6, 10, 14. Deut 30 is all about the “turning” to God with all one’s heart which will take place after all the Covenant Curses have taken place (historically, at the time of the Babylonian Exile). This “conversion” (repentance) will take place “at the end of the days,” 4:29-31.

¹⁸⁸ We note that the Jer 31 passage really begins in Jer 30 with the divine promise to make the exiles “return” (a verb with repentance-notations) to the Land promised to their Fathers.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. 9:4-5.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. 5:20. The letter of James (2:14-26) is a corrective to abusive misinterpretations of such Pauline dictums as Gal 2:16; cf. Rom 2:13.

¹⁹¹ This will be elaborated on shortly. The text and meaning of 3:9 is problematic. It seems to say that, after all, there is no real advantage in the End Time to being Jewish (cf. 3:1-2; Gal 2:15), since all are sinners (Rom 3:23; 5:12); this interpretation is supported by 3:10.

¹⁹² FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 839.

has been made known: it is divine righteousness through faith in Christ (literally, “the faith of Christ”) for all who believe. There is no difference between people, all have sinned and have come up short of what God requires, but we are “justified *gratis* (without cost to us) by his grace through the redemption (or ransoming, as of a captive)¹⁹³ which takes place in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth (as) *hilastérion*,¹⁹⁴ through faith (on our part) in his blood. This is how God —so unimaginably!— showed his righteousness: God overlooked those sins previously committed during the time of his patience in order to show his righteousness in the “Now Time,” manifesting himself as Righteous (by) making righteous the person who believes in Jesus.¹⁹⁵ There is thus no grounds for boasting; one is justified *gratis* by faith, not by performing the works of the Law (and meriting a reward).¹⁹⁶ Both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith, not by the Law, 3:27-31.¹⁹⁷ But does this mean that Paul “casts the Law into oblivion”? “No way!” he answers— rather, he makes it stand.¹⁹⁸

Paul now turns in 4:1-12 to “Abraham, our father according to the flesh,” using this expression probably to make the point that he is a Jew.¹⁹⁹ Abraham, says Paul, was reckoned as righteous because of his faith/trust, and not because of any meritorious work that he did.²⁰⁰ He was justified through faith in Gen 15:6 before his circumcision in Gen 17, and Paul takes this circumcision as a sign of Abraham’s righteousness

¹⁹³ See Exod 21:8; LXX Zeph 3:1 (the Greek “translation” is the opposite of the Hebrew!).

¹⁹⁴ This Greek word was used by the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the lid (cover) of the Ark of the Covenant (Lev 16:2), which was sprinkled with blood on Yom Kippur in order to wipe away sins, 16:14-16. It was from this “cover” (from the Hebrew word comes Kippur or Kippurim, “expiation, rubbing away of sins”) that God spoke to Moses, Num 7:89. The word also appears in Heb 9:5; similar expressions are found in Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:1-2.

¹⁹⁵ As an illustration: someone can show she is rich by contrasting her wealth to another’s poverty (cf. 3:5); alternatively, she can show how rich she is by imparting her wealth to others and making them all rich. This is the course God followed in Jesus, according to Paul.

¹⁹⁶ See Deut 9:4-6, which Norbert Lohfink considers to be an anticipation of the Pauline doctrine of freely-granted justification.

¹⁹⁷ Remember that the original sense of “justification” in the Hebrew Bible is that of acquittal or vindication in a lawsuit. It came to mean being on good terms with God, being in the sphere of salvation, completely “winning” in the end; see Isa 54:17; 56:1 (much clearer in the Hebrew text).

¹⁹⁸ We will see how he will (try to) explain this.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Gal 2:15-21; Phil 3:4-9.

²⁰⁰ See Gen 15:6. Recall Gal 3:6-12 and our discussion above. Cf. Jas 2:21-24. Jewish tradition often emphasized the works and trials of Abraham. See JAMES L. KUGEL, *The Bible as it was* (Cambridge, MA – London, 1997), 163-178. What we translate as “reckoned” is a bookkeeping term that can be translated “credited;” CRAIG C. HILL, “Romans,” *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 1093 (who gives as an example the action of Pinchas in Num 25:11-13 as related in Ps 106:30-31).

obtained before this “work” (or “trial,” as in the Jewish tradition).²⁰¹ In this way, Abraham became the father of all the uncircumcised believers, who are thus likewise justified through faith, and also (!) of those Jews who are not just circumcised, but who follow the path of the “faith during incircumcision of our father Abraham.”

The Promise made to Abraham (or to his descendants, Gen 15:18), that he would “inherit the world,”²⁰² was the result not of the Law, but on account of the righteousness of his faith. This is Paul’s view; he is on firm ground insofar as this Promise to Abraham, the Priestly version of the covenant, is originally unconditional.²⁰³ There were other views that spoke of Abraham’s works, even in the New Testament (Jas 2:21). In Rom 4:13-14, Paul prefers to go back to Gen 12:1-3 and 15:1-7, which are prior to texts that speak of his works or that refer to the Law (cf. Gal 3:15-18). There is no Promise if it is conditional, Rom 4:16, and the Promise is good not only for the Jews (those “of the Law,” 4:14, 16), but for those who have faith like Abraham, “the father of us all.”²⁰⁴

Now Paul in 4:17-22 turns to the main subject of the Promise to Abraham, that he would have a son through Sarah (the miraculous beginning of Abraham’s being the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 15:1-5; 17:1-5). That such an old couple could bear a child was tantamount to God’s act of creating out of nothing and giving life to the dead,²⁰⁵ but Abraham’s faith did not falter at these considerations: rather, he

²⁰¹ In Gen 17, circumcision is in fact the sign of the unconditional promise (this is the sense of *b^erith* = normally translated “covenant,” in the Priestly writer of this passage) made to Abraham and his descendants, parallel to the unconditional promise made with “all living beings” after the flood in Gen 9 (and whose sign is the rainbow, 9:12).

²⁰² The text closest to this idea is Sirach 44:19-21 (other numerations 22-23), but see also Gen 18:18-19; 22:17-18, but note that these three texts speak of Abraham’s obedience, though Sir also speaks of his faithfulness when tried.

²⁰³ Gen 18:18-19 and 22:18 are later additions bringing the Promise in line with the Deuteronomic understanding of covenant as conditional on keeping the Law. “It is very likely that Paul wrote Rom 4 with a view to popular Jewish treatments of the Abraham story that focused on the patriarch’s obedient example, which in some cases even argued for his attainment of merit (e.g. 4 Ezra 9:7; 13:23),” HILL, “Romans,” 1093.

²⁰⁴ See also 4:23-25. Recall that according to Gal 3:16, the Promises were made to Abraham and his seed (singular), that is, Christ, and all who are in Christ are beneficiaries of the Promises (3:27-29). Cf. Acts 2:39.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Heb 11:17-19, which calls Abraham’s getting Isaac back a “parable” (here a “type or figure” of something which will occur later), *BDAG*, 759. This is known as typology, a view of the Old Testament not in favor among contemporary biblical scholars, because it tends to distort the Hebrew Scriptures and divest them of their autonomy vis-a-vis the New Testament, but it has been employed from the time of the New Testament and throughout much of the history of the Church’s commentary on the Scriptures. It

believed (or trusted) and hoped despite the hopelessness of the situation. This was why he was reckoned as just. And Scripture does not just refer to the past (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 9:9-10; 10:6, 11; 1 Pet 1:10-12),²⁰⁶ it speaks to us, Rom 4:23-25, so that similarly to Abraham, we who believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, might also be reckoned as righteous.²⁰⁷

Paul will now relate (5:1-11) what this justification (bestowal of the state of righteousness before God, and consequent entry into the sphere of salvation) entails. It is being at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,²⁰⁸ through whom we also have the “ability to draw near (to God),”²⁰⁹ in order to “stand” (or be firm)²¹⁰ in “this grace” (or “gift”) and we boast in the hope of (i.e., that we will share in) the glory of God.²¹¹ And we even “boast” (in the sense of “rejoice,” Ps 32:10-11) in our tribulations, since they make us “endure” (a term linked to perseverance unto final salvation)²¹² and thus strengthen our (eschatological) hope, about which we will not be confounded,²¹³ because God has poured out into our hearts his love through the Holy Spirit that he has given to us.²¹⁴ Paul reinforces his argument (remember we are in the *confirmatio* or

was also used by Jewish writers, even in the Hebrew Scriptures: “The exodus tradition, for example, forms the type for Second Isaiah’s understanding of Israel’s final redemption (51:10-11; 52:7-12),” ELIZABETH ACHEMEIER, “Typology,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary Volume* (Keith Crim, gen. ed.) (Nashville, 1976), 926.

²⁰⁶ A view of Scripture shared by the Essenes, as we saw in the introduction.

²⁰⁷ Jesus, who was handed-over for our trespasses (the Targum, referring to the sanctuary, in 53:5 has this same expression) and raised for our justification; see Isa 53:6, 12, especially in the LXX.

²⁰⁸ This being at peace is the result of “expiation or propitiation” (both mean “to appease,” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 409, 935. Behind these English terms stand the Hebrew verb *kapar* (from which comes *kippur* and *kippurim*) and the Greek verb *hiláskomai* (from which comes *hilastérion*); see footnote 194 above. Both these verbs have the meaning “to appease.” Good examples are found in Gen 32:20; Prov 16:14.

²⁰⁹ The verb here is also found in Eph 2:18; 3:12. It is associated in the Old Testament with sacrificial offerings to God, e.g., in Lev 7:8, where the Hebrew verb *qarab* (= “to draw near, approach [God]”) is used (the word *qorban* in Mark 7:11 is the Aramaic noun form of this verb).

²¹⁰ This sense of the Greek verb thus translated here is found in 3:31; 11:20; 14:4; Eph 6:11, 13, 14; Col 4:12; 2 Tim 2:19. “To stand firm” is a primary meaning of the Hebrew verb we translate as “believe or trust,” said of Abraham in Gen 15:6; the word “amen” comes from this verb. Two forms of this verb are used in the pun in Isa 7:9, literally: “Unless you believe firmly, you will not be firm.”

²¹¹ Cf. 3:23. The glory (*kavod*) of God is his presence. We are being transformed into it (2 Cor 3:18), or will share in it in the consummation (Rom 8:21; 9:23; 1 Cor 2:7; 2 Cor 4:17; Phil 3:21; 1 Thess 2:12). Paul lists God’s glory among the attributes of the Jews in Rom 9:4.

²¹² See Mark 13:13.

²¹³ Being confounded or put to shame is associated with final disgrace or condemnation in the Hebrew Scriptures, though different words are used; the worst one is found in Isa 66:24 and Dan 12:2.

²¹⁴ Recall that the Holy Spirit is our “guarantee” of salvation, 2 Cor 1:22; 5:1-5; Eph 1:13-14. It is linked with love in Rom 15:30; Gal 5:22. It is the Spirit which makes us cry out in filial love, “Abba, Father,” Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:6.

“demonstration” section of this letter) by stressing the loving divine initiative: God sent his Son to die on our behalf while we had done nothing to deserve it and were still sinners; this proves God’s love for us.²¹⁵ And if this is so, and we have been justified and reconciled with God,²¹⁶ we can thus be assured that we will be safe (“saved”) when the eschatological wrath comes.²¹⁷

Paul will now discuss the ramifications of this, positing a three-fold liberation: from sin, death and the Law.²¹⁸ He also posits three stages in human history: from Adam to Moses, when all sinned and incurred the death sentence but sin was not imputed because there was no Law (3:20; 4:15; 5:13); the period from Moses to Christ, when the Law “slipped in”²¹⁹ so as to multiply trespasses (or legal violations) and sin; and the now-time of Christ, the eschatological Adam (5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45), who reverses Adam’s sin in which (or *in whom*) we all sinned and died (Rom 5:12, 15-19) and of whom the first man was a type (5:14).²²⁰ Paul states that the consequences of the first human’s sin are far outstripped by the result of God’s saving action in Christ (5:15-21),²²¹ though it is not clear how this is to be understood (Paul in fact stresses rather the symmetry or correspondence between Adam’s action and consequences and that of Christ). Perhaps the key is to be found in 5:16, which indicates that all human beings

²¹⁵ See Rom 3:25; 8:3; Gal 4:4-5. Cf. John 3:16-17.

²¹⁶ Cf. Eph 2:16; Col 1:20; 2 Cor 5:20-21.

²¹⁷ The “wrath of God” is an Old Testament image of final judgment, associated with the “Day of YHWH.” It is used in this sense in Matt-Luke 3:7; Rom 2:5; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9. It is de-eschatologized (made a present condition, an “existential quality”) in John 3:36. In other words, if we are not at peace with God = in the sphere of his righteousness and salvation, we are in the sphere of his wrath. Another sense of this type of imagery is that of the eschatological trial, a definitive testing of who we really are down deep: this idea is found in Mark 13:19-20, and is behind the petition in the Lord’s Prayer “do not permit us to go into the (eschatological) being-put-to-the-test,” traditionally “lead us not into temptation.” Note the concrete meaning of “being saved” here, which closely corresponds to its meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures, which primarily envision very “mundane” (earthly) situations.

²¹⁸ In Rom 5:12-7:25; *The Jerusalem Bible* (Alexander Jones, gen. ed.) (London, 1966), N.T. 275; cf. FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 844; see Gal 5:1.

²¹⁹ Recall the discussion in p. 32 above; cf. Gal 2:4.

²²⁰ Recall our discussion of Phil 2:6-8; Christ, unlike Adam (who sought to be like God), divested himself of his divine form and became an obedient servant.

²²¹ Rom 5:20 contrasts the increase of sin under the Law with the “super-increase” of grace under Christ. Many scholars view Paul’s references to sin as that of a personified cosmic force; there would then be no comparison between such an evil force and the infinitely superior power (here, “grace”) of God. Cf. STANLEY B. MARROW, *Paul. His letters and his Theology. An Introduction to Paul’s Epistles* (New York - Mahwah, 1986), 151-152. Paul was overwhelmed with the contrast between his religious experience while a Pharisee under the Law and his experience of the Lordship of the risen Christ (see Phil 3:7-8). The eschatological saving action of God had proven for him to be incomparable to anything that had gone before (it was indeed a new act of creation (2 Cor 5:17). Isa 65:17-19 expresses the same feeling.

(who were in Adam) committed many trespasses, but were freely justified (or acquitted).²²²

Having spoken of our free acquittal in Christ, Paul must now state that this is no basis for living in sin (as he had been accused of implying, 3:8; 6:1, 15).²²³ The believer has become one with Christ, 6:5; through baptism into Christ (6:3), he or she has been crucified with Christ and left behind the old human being with its body of sin (6:6),²²⁴ in order to live a new life, just as Christ rose from the dead, 6:4, 11. We are no longer helpless in regards to sin as we await our own resurrection, 6:5, 8, 14. We now belong to Christ, and are *in Christ*,²²⁵ and are at his service (like Paul was, Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10), or at God's service, Rom 6:13, 22,²²⁶ or at the service of righteousness, 6:18, no longer under the Law (which incites to sin, 7:5), but under grace, 6:14-15. Through faith, we have been rescued from the slavery of sin, 6:17,²²⁷ in order to live a new life for God.²²⁸

In 6:20-27, Paul contrasts the prior life with its shameful deeds when sin reigned, and which led to death, with the new life of holiness whose end is eternal life in Christ Jesus.²²⁹ Now he will try to tie-in the Law to all this. He begins by stating that once one is dead, one is not bound by the Law; we are dead in Christ, 7:1-4. The marriage imagery is important, since God's relationship with his people in the Bible is

²²² But cf. 5:14, which may be explained as taking Adam's sin to be unique (because he violated a unique precept, Gen 2:16-17). Not until the Law came were sins or trespasses imputed to other human beings. C.K. BARRETT, *Paul. An Introduction to His Thought* (Louisville, KY, 1994), 94, may provide us with a clue when he states that "According to Paul, God does precisely what in the Old Testament he declares that he will never do [Exod 23:7]; he is the one who justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5)." Rom 5:6-10 is like an emotional-reaction parallel to the statement in 5:20 (the concrete experience of reconciliation with God through the cursed and horrible death of Jesus put Paul in the realm of totally unexpected wonder; cf. 11:32-35; 1 Cor 2:6-9).

²²³ See also Gal 5:14-24.

²²⁴ Christ was sent by God in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin-offering, and thus condemned sin in his flesh, 8:3. "Sin-offering" translates *perí hamartías*, a technical term used in LXX Isa 53:10 to translate the Hebrew *asham*, "guilt- or trespass-offering," a type of sacrifice. Parallel to this is Christ's being born under the Law, Gal 4:4, which was incapable of freeing from sin, Rom 8:3, and assuming its curse (which hung over everyone, since no one was righteous under the Law), and becoming himself cursed for us, Gal 3:13. Another aspect of this is that once one is dead, there can be no legal violation or cause of action, Rom 6:7; 7:4. Yet another aspect is that one who has been crucified with Christ has mortified (= given death to) his sinful passions and appetites, Gal 5:24.

²²⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 6:15-17.

²²⁶ Literally, "slaves."

²²⁷ Cf. 1 Cor 7:23; the idea is that of the ransoming of a slave, 1 Pet 1:18-19.

²²⁸ Cf. 2 Cor 5:17.

²²⁹ Cf. Eph 5:8-14.

often portrayed as a marriage, and infidelity to God as adultery.²³⁰ Note that Paul even speaks of “being fruitful” for God, which he contrasts to bearing fruit unto death, 7:4-5,²³¹ which was our state when there was a Law, but the flesh bereft of the Spirit was helpless to keep it,²³² and thus the curses of the Law were in effect, bringing the death penalty.²³³ Paul goes even further: the Law actually “energized” sin in our members, 7:5, since without the Law, we would have neither known sin nor been attracted to it, 7:7-11. The reasoning is less than convincing, if we take everything at face value, but the gist of his argument is that sin has no bite, is not really sin, unless there is a Law to declare and punish it as such (cf. 1 Cor 15:56); sin did not exist, much less increase, when there was no Law; it was only when the Law came that sin was able to be clearly manifested for what it was, and bring forth death, Rom 7:13. Through this paradox (7:7, 12), namely, that a Law which was God-given and holy served to “increase sin,” Paul argues that the period of the Law, the time after the Promises to the Fathers but before the coming of Christ, was a time of “imprisonment,” 7:6, we were captives unable to be free of sin but nevertheless liable to its penalties.²³⁴ The twofold recognition that the Law is good in itself, but that human beings of flesh and blood cannot of themselves keep it, is reflected in the struggle depicted in 7:14-25. Sin —here, again, conceived of as some sort of personified force acting in us contrary to our “inner humanity,” 7:22 (cf. 2 Cor 4:16)— prevails against human weakness (“flesh”). Only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, can free us from this predicament, Rom 7:24-25, in which we —perhaps including Paul himself!— still find ourselves (cf. 8:22-25).²³⁵

²³⁰ This is the whole theme of Hosea, who chastises the idolatry of Israel. Hos 2:18 contrasts the time when Israel will call upon God as her husband instead of on the false Canaanite god Ba‘al (which means “lord” and “husband”). Cf. Isa 54:5; 62:4-5; cf. 50:1. The marriage theme, now applied to Christ, figures in John (3:28-29); Rev 21:9; Eph 5:21-32. Recall 2 Cor 11:2.

²³¹ In the background is Gen 1:28; 2:16-17.

²³² See 8:2-4, 10-13.

²³³ See also 7:9-13. Cf. Gal 3:10-14, 21. See the terrible Covenant Curses in Deut 28:15-68. Death is the common penalty for many offenses in the law codes of the Torah (e.g., Exod 31:14; Lev 20:13, 15; Deut 22:22; 24:7).

²³⁴ Cf. Gal 3:19-4:7.

²³⁵ Another interpretation is that the “I” in 7:25 is rhetorical, representing the person outside of Christ, or who has lapsed; see HILL, “Romans,” 1097; MEYER, “Romans,” 1057-1058. When he clearly speaks in regards to himself, Paul emphasizes the hardships and precariousness he suffers for Christ: these are his weaknesses, 2 Cor 12:7-10, in a letter in which he boasts of his sincerity (4:2). He puts himself as an example to imitate in 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1, since he imitates Christ. In Gal 5:24, he says that those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its desires; in 2:19, he states that he is crucified with Christ. In Phil 3:6, he says that as far as the Law’s requirements were concerned, he was faultless.

The redeemed believer, then, freed from sin, death and the Law, lives in the sphere of the Spirit (as opposed to the earthly realm of the flesh). Paul discusses this in one of his most beautiful passages, Rom 8. He begins by stating that there is *now* no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, since the “law” (here in the sense of “principle at work”) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from the (Mosaic) Law of sin and death.²³⁶ God’s sending of his own Son (as a sacrificial offering for sin)²³⁷ resulted in the destruction of (the power of) sin (often capitalized “Sin” to show its personified nature) so that the righteousness of the Law (which it was the Law’s intention to confer, 7:10-13) could be fulfilled in those who conduct themselves not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, 8:3-4. Paul stresses that freedom from the Law of sin and death, as he has described it, is not for the purpose of sinning or acting in the merely human manner of the “flesh,”²³⁸ which is opposed to the new life Christ brings in the Spirit. If one is in Christ, —or, conversely, if Christ is in one— although the *body* of flesh is dead because of sin—²³⁹ the (human) *spirit* (is) life because of (our state of) righteousness, 8:10.²⁴⁰ The Holy Spirit works in us to enable us to be righteous and thus to *live* (culminating in our transformation and/or resurrection),

²³⁶ “Law” as “principle” also in 3:27. In 2 Cor 3:9, Paul described the “Old Covenant” as one of condemnation and death, because of the Covenant Curses and human inability to escape them.

²³⁷ In Isa 53:10, the Servant offered himself as a sin-offering, *asham*, one of the sin-expiating sacrifices of the Israelite cult. The Servant in 53:12 is also said to “bear the transgressions of many” (the word “bear” is used in a cultic way here, meaning “to expiate,” Lev 10:17, or “to assume guilt,” 19:7). This passage may be in the background of Paul’s thought in Rom 8:3-4; it is more certainly behind Phil 2:7-8 (on which see our discussion above). Paul speaks of Christ as the sacrificed Passover lamb in 1 Cor 5:7.

²³⁸ Again, see 3:8; Gal 5:13; 6:7 contains the famous “God will not be mocked.”

²³⁹ This may refer to Adam’s sin and/or to the sins of each of us, 5:12. Death for Paul is closely associated with sin and the Law, see 1 Cor 15:54-56, and is in any case a reflection of the weakness and finitude of present human reality, which places us in the situation of “not-yet” being with the Lord, 2 Cor 5:1-7. Christ assumed and experienced this weakness of the flesh and its death, 13:4. According to Heb 5:7-9, Christ was only “perfected” with the sacrifice of his life.

²⁴⁰ The dichotomy here is between our body/flesh and our spirit (not the Holy Spirit). Paul conceived of the human person as made up of “body, soul and spirit” (see 1 Thess 5:23; JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology,” *NJBC*, 1406). In Rom 8:16, it is with this our human “spirit” that the Holy Spirit “co-testifies.” “Mind” seems for Paul to be more or less the equivalent of the Hebrew “heart,” the human seat of understanding and decision-making, though there are other aspects to this; cf. *ibid.*, 1407.

8:11-13.²⁴¹ But we must mortify (put to death) the “works of the flesh” (all that is opposed to our new life in the Spirit).²⁴²

However, the impetus comes from the Spirit, who boldly leads us in the freedom of the children of God, 8:14-16,²⁴³ though we are “a work in progress,” still suffering and groaning.²⁴⁴ United to Christ, we suffer with him in order to be glorified with him.²⁴⁵ Compared to the unimaginable glory which God will reveal, our present trials are of little account. But the whole of creation moans and eagerly awaits salvation, which is only a hope still. Even those of us who possess the “first fruits” of the Spirit (as a guarantee of final deliverance) moan and groan with patient endurance, waiting to be free of the corruption of our body and to enjoy the full, glorious freedom of the children of God, 8:18-25. But it is the Spirit who lays hold of us to help us in our weakness, making our mind conform to Christ’s (see 1 Cor 2:16; Phil 2:5) so that we pray and please God, 8:26-27 (cf. Phil 4:6-7). “Everything comes together for the good for those who love God, for those who are called according to (his) purpose,”²⁴⁶ which is that we reproduce the image of his Son, so that he be the first-born of many siblings.²⁴⁷ This is what God has “pre-destined” for us, calling and justifying us, in order to one day glorify us, 8:28-30. Given this fact that God is *for us*,²⁴⁸ nothing can stand in the way of our victory (salvation, the sphere of God’s righteousness) in Christ, nothing can separate us from Christ, no danger or trouble or scarcity, no accuser (typically, Satan), nor mysterious cosmic forces whether in the heights or the depths, not the present or the future (and the past is past, Phil 3:13): God has shown and given to us his gracious love in offering his Son; we can have no greater proof of God’s

²⁴¹ See the “fruit of the Spirit” in Gal 5:22-25. On our transformation by the Lord’s Spirit, see 2 Cor 3:17-18. Cf. 1 Cor 15:51-52. Note that here Paul attributes Jesus’ resurrection to the Spirit, Rom 8:11; in Gal 1:1, it is the Father who raised Jesus; cf. FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology,” *NJBC*, 1395-1396.

²⁴² See the contrasting ways of life in Gal 5:13-26. Note that the essence of the Law is love of neighbor, 5:14.

²⁴³ The Spirit in the Hebrew Bible is known for possibilitating audacious feats; see Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; cf. Heb 11:32-34.

²⁴⁴ And not yet reigning, like the Corinthians thought, 1 Cor 4:8.

²⁴⁵ Cf. 2 Tim 2:8-13. The Jewish notion that the Messiah came only with birth pangs (suffering; see Rev 12:1-5) may be behind Col 1:24.

²⁴⁶ God’s “purpose or design” (as something he has planned from the beginning) also occurs in Eph 1:11; 3:11.

²⁴⁷ Christ is the eschatological counterpart to Adam (who was made in the image and likeness of God), 1 Cor 15:45-49. Christ is the “icon” (representation, image) of the invisible God in Col 1:15, his “stamp or reproduction” (“character”), according to Heb 1:3. On Christ’s spiritual siblings, see Heb 2:12, 17.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Ps 124:1-3 (Israel); Isa 50:8-9 (the Servant).

commitment to our salvation ('everything we hope for is ours', Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 3:21-23).²⁴⁹

Paul now comes to the question of the "situation" of Israel in Rom 9-11,²⁵⁰ uncontestably the most important passages in the New Testament regarding the Jews who did not believe in the messiahship of Jesus.²⁵¹ He begins with the most solemn and overwrought expression of the grief in his heart, and desire to even be "anathema away from Christ" (the opposite of the blessing of being *in Christ*) for his brothers and kinsmen in the flesh, the Israelites. Paul does not formulate the reason for this "incessant pain," 9:2, but we can surmise it is due to the fact that most of Israel did not accept Christ. A list of Jewish prerogatives follows: adoption (as children of God, cf. Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1); the Glory (of God, who dwelt in Israel's midst); the various covenants God had entered into with Abraham, the Israelites, the priests, David; LXX Deut 9:5 uses the Greek word "covenant" for the Hebrew "word" (in the sense of oath or promise) given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the giving of the Law and the cult and the Promises. The Fathers ("Patriarchs") belong to the Jews as does the Christ according to the flesh, "who is above all, God (be) blessed forever, amen."²⁵²

Paul next addresses a problem quite similar to that facing Luke's Gentile community: it would seem that God's people, the Jews, to whom such wonderful promises had been made, had through their mostly negative reaction to the Gospel fallen out of favor with God; what prevented the same thing from happening to the Gentiles also at some future time?²⁵³ Paul then will try to explain how it is that "God's

²⁴⁹ See also Rom 5:8; John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:3-4.

²⁵⁰ See *La Biblia de Jerusalén* (Bilbao, 1977), 1622.

²⁵¹ See NORBERT LOHFINK, *The Covenant Never Revoked. Biblical Reflections on Christian-Jewish Dialogue* (New York – Mahwah, 1991), for a sympathetic view of the whole question. This great Bible scholar (an Old Testament specialist) believes that there is a two-fold path of salvation (83, 93), one for Jews, another for Christians. I should note here that in these pages I am trying to expound Paul's teaching as expressed in his extant letters; I am not trying to deal with the whole question of salvation, nor with Jewish-Christian relations in general, and I am trying to avoid making Paul fit into how I think these two issues should be resolved. Recall that there is at least one voice in the New Testament (the Letter of James) which would appear to take issue with some of Paul's statements; cf. 2 Pet 3:15-16. For a recent brief survey, see CHARLES H. TALBERT, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63 (January 2001), 1-21 (the presidential address of this Protestant member of the Catholic Biblical Association!).

²⁵² The second half of Rom 9:5 is difficult to punctuate and interpret; see FITZMYER, "Romans," *NJBC*, 856. Some have argued Paul here refers to Christ as God (cf. John 20:28); cf. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul*, 255-257.

²⁵³ See RICHARD J. DILLON, "Acts of the Apostles," *NJBC*, 723-724.

Word has not failed (“fallen away”), 9:6.²⁵⁴ We must take Paul’s words in this context, trying to discern what he means without any *a priori* (presumptive) interpretative schemes. He states that mere physical descent from Abraham does not make one an Israelite²⁵⁵ or a beneficiary of the divine Promise: Ishmael descended from Abraham, and Esau descended from Isaac, but God in his sovereign freedom chose one over the other in each case, merit or lack thereof on their part notwithstanding. Paul then reminds his congregation that God is in charge, and what is paramount is his “mercy” (Exod 33:19), not our efforts, 9:14-16. God in his sovereignty can harden Pharaoh’s heart as part of his plan to make his name known in all the earth (Exod 9:16).²⁵⁶ This being the case —Paul’s imaginary interlocutor may retort— how, then, can God have cause to blame anyone, if none can oppose his will? Paul’s response is that no one can call God to account: as the creator, he can use part of his creation for merciful purposes, even if this implies the dishonor of the former in function of the glory of the latter, which includes those called from among both Jews and Gentiles, 9:21-23.

Paul then cites passages from Hosea which speak of Israel passing from divine disfavor to divine favor, Rom 9:25-26; one can go from being not-God’s-people to being God’s people. The quotes from Isaiah in 9:27-29 stress the Remnant of Israel, the portion of the people who survive God’s judgments (for there are several!).²⁵⁷ Paul then states in 9:30-33 that the Gentiles, who had not pursued righteousness, found the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, while Israel, who pursued the righteousness of the Law, did not attain to the Law’s purpose (which, according to 10:4 is Christ). The stumbling block was Christ.²⁵⁸

Paul’s desire and prayer is for the salvation of his fellow Jews; they have zeal for God, but not “in accordance with (real) knowledge,”²⁵⁹ for they ignored (or disregarded)²⁶⁰ the righteousness of God by seeking to establish their own, and thus did

²⁵⁴ See the similar expressions in Jos 21:45; 23:14; cf. 1 Kgs 8:56.

²⁵⁵ The Qumranites also distinguished between the true Israel and the false from among their fellow Jews.

²⁵⁶ Some verses say God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, Exod 4:21; 7:3, while others make it Pharaoh’s own doing, 8:11(15); cf. 7:22; 8:15 (19).

²⁵⁷ Typically, these “judgments” historically were wars in which Israel feared for its very survival. The prophets developed the notion that the nation needed to be purified and that only a “remnant” would survive; see, e.g., Zeph 3:12-13; Isa 4:2-5; 7:3; 10:20-23 (which Paul quotes here); 37:31-32.

²⁵⁸ Cf. 1 Pet 2:4-8; 1 Cor 1:23.

²⁵⁹ *BDAG*, 369. Recall 2 Cor 3:14-16.

²⁶⁰ Cf. *BDAG*, 13.

not submit to God's righteousness, 10:1-3.²⁶¹ "For the end (or aim) of the Law is Christ, for the righteousness of all believers," 10:4.

In 10:5-13, Paul restates his contrast between the righteousness which comes from the Law given by Moses and the righteousness which comes from faith.²⁶² According to the former, one lives by doing it,²⁶³ according to the latter, one is saved by acknowledging Christ.²⁶⁴ It is interesting that Paul quotes from Deut 30:12, 14, which we have seen refers to the time when Israel will be able to keep the Law and love the Lord with its whole heart and soul, in order to live; this will happen only when the Lord circumcises Israel's heart, 30:6.²⁶⁵ We also linked this Deuteronomic passage with Jeremiah's new covenant written in the heart, when the Lord remembers Israel's sin no more, Jer 31:31-34. Paul in Rom 10:6-7 interprets Deut 30:12, 14 as referring to Christ,²⁶⁶ the "accomplishment" of the Law;²⁶⁷ for Paul, it is Christ who has come down from heaven (and risen from the depths); he is the Word which is near to you, in your mouth and in your heart.²⁶⁸ "Because if you confess Lord Jesus with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved," Rom 10:9. This belief results in justification, and the confession will result in salvation. Note that it is a two-stage process: we are now through faith put right with God, and will be saved when Christ returns as judge; cf. 5:9-10.²⁶⁹ There is no difference (*diastolé*)²⁷⁰ here

²⁶¹ Recall Paul's important exposition of his understanding of God's righteousness in Rom 3:21-26.

²⁶² See Gal 3 and the discussion above. In 3:11, Paul says, "But that through the Law no one is justified before God is clear, for the righteous one will live on account of (his) faith."

²⁶³ Recall also that according to Gal 3:15-18, the Law, which came 430 years after the Promise, cannot annul it.

²⁶⁴ This "acknowledgement" is usually a public confession; *BDAG*, 708. From the Greek verb here translated "to acknowledge" comes our word "homily."

²⁶⁵ Historically, as we have indicated, the time referred to is the end of the Babylonian exile, after all the Covenant Curses have been fulfilled, Deut 30:1; this will happen in the "end of the days," 31:29.

²⁶⁶ For Paul, as for Luke, the Tanak really speaks of Christ. See Rom 3:21; Luke 24:27; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43; 26:22-23; 28:23.

²⁶⁷ This is yet another possible translation of *télos* in 10:4; cf. *BDAG*, 998-999, with reference to Gal 3:24. "Accomplishment" here has the double sense of "bringing to completion, fulfilling" (see *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 7, and finishing a task. Note that Deut 30:11 refers to the feasibility of the commandment, which is not beyond Israel's ability to do.

²⁶⁸ Note that Deut 30:12-13 does not directly refer to the depths, though cf. *The Jerusalem Bible* note to Rom 10:7, NT 283. John 1:14, 17-18 draws a similar contrast between the Law and the Word made flesh.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Phil 2:12; 1 Pet 1:5. FITZMYER, "Romans," *NJBC*, 859, is of the opinion, however, that "The balance [of 10:10] stresses different aspects of the one basic act of personal adherence to Christ and its effect. One should not overstress the differences between justification and salvation." Cf. Eph 2:4-6; Col 2:12-13; 3:1-4. The relation between public acknowledgement and Christ's return is reflected in Mark 8:38. Some scholars interpret Matt 23:39 as a Jewish confession of Christ upon his return.

between Jew and Greek, since the one Lord of all is rich in mercy towards all who call upon him, 10:10-13.

In 10:14-21, Paul states that the Gospel has been preached to the Jews, but “not all obeyed the Gospel,” i.e., believed in Christ. Paul cites passages from Deutero-Isaiah, who announces the end of the Exile and a more glorious Exodus (Isa 52:7-12), a text followed by the “Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant” (52:13-53:12). Paul quotes 53:1, originally an expression of astonishment, as a text which predicted Israel’s unbelief (Rom 10:16). He then quotes from Moses’ last speech before dying (Deut 32:21): God will make Israel jealous with a non-people, a foolish nation (*goy naval*).²⁷¹ Paul finally quotes Isaiah’s “daring” saying (Isa 65:1-2), to the effect that God revealed himself to those who had not sought him (a *goy* or “nation,” implying Gentiles, although Israel can also be a *goy*)²⁷² and held out his hands to a people (Israel) who “are disobeying and contradicting.”²⁷³

But has God thrust away *his people*? No way!²⁷⁴ (Literally, let it be not! = God forbid!) Paul proudly states that he too is an Israelite, from Abraham’s seed, Benjamin’s tribe. God has not rejected his people, whom he has known (been on intimate terms with, or chosen) from long ago.²⁷⁵ But Paul says that in the “now time,” as in the days of Elijah, there is a remnant chosen by grace, not by works. What Israel sought it didn’t obtain, while the elect did obtain; the rest were hardened.²⁷⁶ Interestingly, Paul in Rom 11:8 seems to quote from Isa 6:9-10, the main text Christians cited to explain Israel’s

²⁷⁰ Same word as in 3:22 (and in blood pressure readings!). The last quote is from Joel 3:5, which, as we saw, appears in Acts 2:21 (Pentecost) in the context of the eschatological pouring forth of the Spirit as a sign of the last days.

²⁷¹ Cf. Hos 1:9. It is unclear who this verse refers to, but cf. Sir 50:25-26 (referring to the Samaritans). Israel is a “foolish people” (*am naval*) in Deut 32:6.

²⁷² E.g. Deut 4:34; Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 7:23; Isa 26:2. See *The Jerusalem Bible*, NT 285 (note to Rom 10:21).

²⁷³ Present participles, though often used as adjectives.

²⁷⁴ See 1 Sam 12:22.

²⁷⁵ The Greek word literally means “foreknew,” *BDAG*, 866; cf. Acts 26:5.

²⁷⁶ This is an example of eschatological reversal. See, e.g., Isa 65:11-14; Mark 10:11. “Were hardened” is a “theological passive,” indicating it is God’s doing. This is borne out by the following verses (Rom 11:8-10). But note that the same word translated here “elect” is applied to “unbelieving” Israel in 11:28, beloved because of the Fathers, since God’s gifts (9:4-5) and calling are irrevocable. For Paul, Israel’s divine election still stands. See footnote 36 above.

rejection of the Gospel, but adds “until today’s day,” apparently with Deut 29:3(4) in the background.²⁷⁷

But has Israel stumbled so as to fall? No way! Paul’s way of “theologically” explaining how the fact of Israel’s partial unbelief (11:25) fits into God’s sovereign plan is to say that Israel’s rejection of the Gospel (“transgression”) was salvation for the Gentiles, on the one hand, and the Gentiles’ acceptance of the Gospel is meant to make Israel jealous, 11:11, on the other.²⁷⁸ And if their transgression meant riches for the world and their “defeat”²⁷⁹ riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their “fullness” be!²⁸⁰ And Paul now states that he ministers to the Gentiles in order to provoke to jealousy those of his flesh, in order to save some of them,²⁸¹ and restates (11:15) that if their rejection (of the Gospel)²⁸² meant the reconciliation of the world, what will their reception (again, of the Gospel) not be except life from the dead?²⁸³

Paul now states that the Jews are the holy first-fruits and root which make the whole dough and branches holy, 11:16.²⁸⁴ To whom do these terms refer? For some, the dough and root are Christ, for others the “converted remnant,” for yet others, the “patriarchs.”²⁸⁵ This last interpretation is supported by the use of “branches” in 11:16-17 for Israelites who have not accepted the Gospel; these branches are holy because of the root, but have been “broken off,” while wild olives (Gentiles) have been engrafted so as to become sharers in the root.²⁸⁶ The root would then be the Hebrew Fathers, on

²⁷⁷ Again, this passage originally probably referred to Israel’s God-given ability “in the last days” to really follow the Law with a circumcised heart, after the Exile; the separate covenant at Moab (Deut 28:69/29:1) may be Jeremiah’s New Covenant.

²⁷⁸ The relationship between Jews and Christians is in a sense dialectic, each group plays off the other. I should say, however, that the Gentile Christians up to now have certainly failed to make Israel jealous: *anzi* (“on the contrary”), as the Italians say.

²⁷⁹ *Héttema* has this strong sense, but can also mean “discomfiture,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint. Part I. A-I* (J. Lust – E. Eynikel – K. Hauspie – G. Chamberlain) (Stuttgart, 1992), in reference to Isa 31:8 (the Hebrew says “forced labor”). See also *BDAG*, 441. It appears in 1 Cor 6:7.

²⁸⁰ The notion of “fullness” is eschatological, and applies also to the Gentiles, 11:25; the full number destined for salvation must be reached before the End comes (cf. Mark 13:10).

²⁸¹ Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-22. According to Jesus, only a few entered the narrow gate that leads to life, Matt 7:13-14.

²⁸² And not God’s rejection of Israel, emphatically denied in 11:1; see FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861.

²⁸³ The meaning of this is quite disputed. It seems to mean “passage from the status of death to life;” FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861. Note the similar idea in 4:16-22.

²⁸⁴ See FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861; a portion of the meal consecrated makes the whole meal pure.

²⁸⁵ See FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861.

²⁸⁶ “Paul does not deny that the defection of Israel has facilitated the conversion of the Gentiles, but Israel was not broken off in order that the Gentiles might be grafted onto the stock. Rather, its disbelief has

whose shoulders rests the whole tree.²⁸⁷ Thus Paul warns the Gentiles to acknowledge their spiritual benefactors and not to boast against these “broken off” branches, but to recognize that it is the root which supports them, and not the other way around.²⁸⁸ True, some natural branches were “broken off” due to their unbelief, but the Gentiles have not taken their place; rather, the Gentiles should soberly persevere in faith, in fear that they could be more easily “cut off”²⁸⁹ than Israel was “broken off.” Israel belongs more “naturally” in its own olive tree (of salvation, as it were) than do the Gentiles. It all depends on perseverance in faith and goodness. For Paul, what God began doing with the Fathers he has continued doing with Christians and Jews in his own day, now in a dialectical relation,²⁹⁰ mysteriously fulfilling his Promise made to the Fathers.

Paul now announces a “mystery,”²⁹¹ so that his Gentiles may not think they are so clever, 11:25: Israel’s partial hardening will last only until the fullness of the Gentiles has “come in.” Paul is explaining Israel’s rejection of the Gospel as something which God has orchestrated (11:32) in order to save the number of Gentiles destined for salvation.²⁹² “And in this way (better than “thus”) all Israel will be saved.” Paul does not say how Israel will be saved, if through acceptance of Jesus Christ or not, and scholars are divided.²⁹³ It is better not to insist on an answer to a question that Paul does

resulted in their being lopped off, but that has no intrinsic connection with the election of the Gentiles actually grafted on in its place;” FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861. Whatever being “broken off” may mean for Israel, it is not a final state, 11:23-26, nor does it mean that Israel is now not chosen or not loved, 11:28-29, but rather that their present rebellion, like the Gentile’s, will usher in God’s mercy, 11:30-32. Cf. the idea of a holy stump in Isa 6:13. “Supersessionism,” the notion that Christianity has replaced Judaism, that Israel is no longer the Chosen People, and that God’s covenant with Israel has been revoked, is discredited and repudiated by responsible Bible scholars. See footnote 36 above.

²⁸⁷ The Fathers are the reason that Israel is forever and irrevocably beloved of God, 11:28-29. In the final form of the Torah, Israel is assured its good standing with God (and its possession of the Promised Land) rests not on its own righteousness, but on God’s sworn love for the Fathers; Lev 26:41-45; Deut 9:4-6.

²⁸⁸ “Israel of old still occupies the privileged position of the carrier of salvation to the world;” FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861.

²⁸⁹ Rom 11:22, repeated in 11:24, using a stronger word than that used for Israel in 11:17, 19-20.

²⁹⁰ “Dialectic” refers to discussion and reasoning, usually with a view to resolving differences; see *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 319.

²⁹¹ This means he has had a revelation; see FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology,” *NJBC*, 1389.

²⁹² Though God has mercy on all, 11:32; cf. 1 Tim 2:4.

²⁹³ See FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 861-862. The verb “will be saved” is definitively a theological passive, obviously an action of God. Paul’s quotes of Isa 59:20-21 refer to YHWH’S Spirit; FITZMYER, *ibid.*, 862, notes that “Christ has not been mentioned in this entire section since [Rom] 10:17.” Rom 11:27 echoes Jer 31:33-34, which some commentators use in support of a Christological interpretation, preferred by Fitzmyer: Israel would accept Jesus at the Parousia, since “Paul is scarcely envisaging two different kinds of salvation — one achieved by God for Jews and one by Christ for Gentiles;” *ibid.* Cf. Rom 3:23.

not deal with. We can only say with certainty in regards to these passages that Paul sees the division (enmity, 11:28, though cf. Eph 2:14) between Jews and Christians as a dialectical process: the Jews' rejection of the Gospel brought it to the Gentiles, whose disobedience was reversed, and they obtained God's mercy. Conversely, Jews have now become disobedient, and this will in turn bring them within God's mercy; it is all part of God's mysterious plan, to shut everyone in disobedience in order to be merciful to all, 11:30-32. Paul can only end his little treatise on his people with a doxology (a prayerful expression of praise to God) full of amazement, 11:33-35.

What follows in Romans is hortatory in nature and can be covered more quickly. Paul begins winding down his letter by urging the Romans to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God; this he calls a "logical worship," i.e., according to reason, or to the Spirit.²⁹⁴ We must be transformed through the renewal of our mind, in order to discern the will of God, what is pleasing to him, the good, the perfect, 12:1-2. Paul exhorts to humility and unity, calling up his metaphor of one body in Christ made up of many members with different gifts. In 12:14-21, he presents a program for the spiritual life: to bless instead of cursing, empathizing with everyone, being attracted by the humble rather than the lofty, solicitous for what is good and noble for everyone, being at peace with all, overcoming evil with good.²⁹⁵

Rom 13:1-7 urges obedience to the civil authorities, "the powers that be," as the King James Version calls them. Early Christianity was concerned to appear non-revolutionary; after all, its founder had been crucified, a political penalty for insurrection.²⁹⁶ In 13:8-10, Paul exhorts to fraternal love as the fulfillment of the Law (cf. Gal 5:14).²⁹⁷ "The night is far spent, and the Day has drawn near;" salvation is closer than when we first came to the faith, so no more debauchery,²⁹⁸ but rather let us

²⁹⁴ See *BDAG*, 598; KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. one, 149, 276, 280; vol. two, 140-141; 1 Pet 2:2 (to *logikón ádolon gala*, "the spiritual (or rational) pure (unmixed) milk;" cf. John 4:21-24).

²⁹⁵ The meaning of Rom 12:20 is found in Prov 25:21-22: "heaping coals over one's head" spells repentance; see *Biblia de Jerusalén*, note to 12:20, 1627 (missing in the 1966 English *Jerusalem Bible*).

²⁹⁶ This concern played a not insignificant role in the Gospel portrayal of the ruthlessly cruel Pontius Pilate (see JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, "A History of Israel," *NJBC*, 1249) as a wimp seeking to please the Jewish leaders. Ironically, Paul himself would be executed by the Roman state (some doubt that he wrote Rom 13:1-7, considering it a piece of Hellenistic-Jewish *paraenesis*, or exhortation).

²⁹⁷ See footnote 73 above on Hillel.

²⁹⁸ This is the famous passage (Rom 13:13) which led to St. Augustine's "definitive" conversion (to continence) in the garden; *Confessions*, Book 8, chap. 12 (#29).

walk as in broad daylight, “putting on” the Lord Jesus, giving no thought to the flesh and its desires (see the parallel “putting on” of the holy armor in 13:12).

Rom 14 revisits the problem of what to eat in the presence of those “weak in the faith,” that is, who are squeamish about permissible and impermissible foods.²⁹⁹ This is related to the religious observance of certain days, 14:5, and so recalls the situation with the “Judaizers” in Gal 3:1-5; 4:10; 6:12-16; it is evidence of the attachment of the Roman congregation to Jewish practices,³⁰⁰ and the difficulties this caused for community life (recall Gal 2:1-14). Paul’s solution is to not judge or disdain one’s brother (Rom 14:3-4, 10, 13); let each one act as he or she is fully persuaded in his own mind, 14:5 (cf. 14:23). Assume that everyone is acting in good faith, for the Lord, 14:6-8. Though Paul no longer believes that anything is impure, he accepts that it *is* impure for him who thinks so, 14:14, and one’s brother or sister is infinitely more important than food or discussions thereof (14:1, 15). Paul is at pains that the community not be divided or destroyed over food issues, 14:16-21.³⁰¹ He is proposing a way that those in the congregation attached (for whatever reasons) to Jewish customs may live in peace with those who are not. The “strong” must be like Christ, who did not seek his own interests but those of the other, 15:1-3.³⁰² This gives place to a final exhortation (15:7-12) with an important Christological basis that has consequences for Jewish-Christian relations: that they accept one another as belonging to each other,³⁰³ as Christ accepted them (the Gentiles). Paul reminds them that Christ became a minister (“deacon”) to the Jews (the “circumcision”) on behalf of God’s faithfulness (“truth”) in order to confirm the Promises of the Fathers,³⁰⁴ (that) the Gentiles through God’s mercy might give glory

²⁹⁹ Recall 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:23-30. Paul himself gives up his right to eat meat if it causes scandal to his brother, though he himself considers everything *kosher*, Rom 14:14, 20, and is one of the “strong,” 15:1.

³⁰⁰ See our discussion in p. 60-61 above.

³⁰¹ Recall the division at Corinth over who excelled; cf. 1 Cor 8:8-9. Common table fellowship (between Jewish and Gentile Christians) was at peril in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

³⁰² This example of altruism and giving up of one’s own rights was given by Paul in 1 Cor 8:13-9:15, 19-23; cf. Phil 2:4.

³⁰³ This is a translation of a Greek word with various meanings, but as it is used in Rom 14:1, 3; 15:7 (here); Phlm 1:17, and Acts 28:2, it connotes a warm welcoming, including table fellowship.

³⁰⁴ I find this exact phrasing, “Promises *of the Fathers*,” as underlining on whom the Promises rest, on the Jewish Patriarchs, the root of 11:16-18. The Promise is elsewhere only *of God*, 4:20; 2 Cor 1:20; Acts 1:4, and was made or given *to Abraham*, Rom 4:13; Gal 3:18; Acts 7:17; *to the Fathers*, 13:32; 26:6, or *to Abraham and his offspring* (for Paul, Christ), Gal 3:16; the Promises belong to Israel, Rom 9:4, and we share in them, Gal 3:22; 2 Cor 7:1; Acts 2:39 (the Jews have precedence); cf. Eph 3:6.

to God. Paul then cites Tanak verses which include the Gentiles alongside the Jews (Deut 32:43) in the praise of God. The final call is to hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the epilogue, Rom 15, Paul winds down, expressing confidence that the Romans are capable of admonishing themselves, though he has been a bit daring in reminding them of certain things by virtue of his official ministry (he is a *leitourgós*) to the Gentiles, that their offering may be pleasing (to God), sanctified by the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁵ Paul looks back with satisfaction on his career, 15:17-21. In his ministry to the Gentiles, Christ has worked powerfully in him, miracles have occurred, the Gospel has been fulfilled (a term with eschatological connotations, cf. Mark 13:10: before the End comes, the Gospel must first be proclaimed to all the Gentiles).³⁰⁶ As biblical support for his policy of never going where others had trod before, in Rom 15:21 he cites Isa 52:15, using this verse in a totally different sense than he gave it in Rom 10:16.³⁰⁷

Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, taking with him the collection; he will then be off to Spain, passing through Rome on the way, 15:25-28. He is fearful of the “disobedient,” the Jerusalem Jews who violently disagreed with Paul’s attitude toward the Law,³⁰⁸ much the same way that Paul as a Pharisee had seen a great threat to Judaism in the beliefs and behavior of the new Jewish sect which would become

³⁰⁵ Paul is offering to God the obedience of the Gentiles (1:5; 15:18; 16:26), no mean eschatological task (and still “in process)! Cf. Eph 3:4-8. This recognition of God is symbolized by the offering of the collection from the Gentiles to the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, Rom 11:17; 15:25-27; Acts 24:17.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Matt 24:14. DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, “The Gospel according to Mark,” *NJBC*, 624, rightfully casts doubt that this idea comes directly from Jesus’ historical mouth, but Paul certainly saw in his mission to “all the Gentiles,” Rom 1:5, an important if not essential aspect of the End Time series of events. Rom 10:18 can be taken to mean he thought the task was basically accomplished; cf. 1 Thess 1:8; Rom 1:8; Col 1:6, 23. Rom 15:23 indicates that Paul thought his work was done in the eastern Mediterranean areas, though this may refer only to his laying foundations, with more work yet to be done by others; see FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 867. Calls to announce YHWH’s name or glory among the nations are frequent in the Tanak, e.g., Isa 12:4 (same as Ps 105:1; 1 Chr 16:8); Isa 66:19; Pss 96:3; 145:9-12; 1 Chr 16:24.

³⁰⁷ Paul’s flexibility in the use of Scripture shows that one must not be too rigid in Scriptural argumentation. FITZMYER, “Romans,” *NJBC*, 867, points to the use of the Hebrew text of Isa 52:15 in Rom 10:16 and the use of the LXX in 15:21.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Acts 20:22-23; 21:10-11. The “disobedient” might refer to Jewish Christians, see 21:20-21. But the riot is instigated by Jews from Asia, according to 21:27-36, though it includes “the whole city” (of Jerusalem). This term, sometimes translated “unbeliever” (which is best reserved for a different Greek word), is used in Rom 2:8, 11:30; specifically of Jews in 10:21, 11:31; cf. Acts 14:2; 19:9; Heb 3:18; 1 Pet 4:17.

Christianity. As Professor Georgi has remarked,³⁰⁹ it is ironic that Paul's visit to Jerusalem, meant to strengthen the bonds between two groups with different outlooks, as part of his ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18), would result in his imprisonment and eventual execution.

Rom 16, which Koester doubts is part of the main letter,³¹⁰ contains greetings which mention many of Paul's collaborators. Of interest is the mention in 16:1 of Phoebe, a deacon (not "deaconess"),³¹¹ and in 16:7 of "Andronicus and Junia,³¹² my relatives and fellow-prisoners,³¹³ who are outstanding among the apostles." Rufus is mentioned: some think he may be the son of Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the cross, Mark 15:21; Paul thinks of Rufus' mother as his own, Rom 16:13. Other relatives of Paul are mentioned in 16:11, 21.³¹⁴ His "scribe" makes his appearance in 16:22. The final doxology (hymn of praise) is beautiful but un-Pauline in its language.³¹⁵

Conclusion

Our relatively long and at times perhaps difficult voyage through the times and letters of Paul the apostle to the Gentiles has now come to its conclusion. In these final paragraphs, I would like to recapitulate and re-situate Saint Paul (as we Christians call him) in his time and ours. Paul was part of a feverishly fecund and often turbulent era. There was hardship and suffering that had accumulated for many years, there were bitter internecine disputes between passionate advocates and/or self-interested groups. There were groups with a this-worldly bent, attached to their power, and who used or abused it oppressively (see Mark 10:42). There were other groups who were religiously

³⁰⁹ During class at Harvard Divinity School.

³¹⁰ "It is a fragment of a letter that was likely written at that time," *Introduction*, vol. two, 138-139.

³¹¹ See footnote 100 above.

³¹² The Greek text reads "Junián," which "is a man's name, but *Iounian* could also be the acc. [accusative form, what a verb is directed to] of "Junia," a woman's name, which ancient commentators at times took as the name of Andronicus's wife. Moreover, ms. P⁴⁶ [an early manuscript] and some versions (Vg, bo, eth) read "Julia;" FITZMYER, "Romans," *NJBC*, 868. The interpretation of "Junián" as the accusative form of a woman's name is made easy by the fact that "Andronicus" is also in the accusative (*Andrónikon*).

³¹³ Cf. Phlm 23; Col 4:10.

³¹⁴ See Acts 23:16.

³¹⁵ "A number of manuscripts place this doxology at the end of chapters 14 or 15 of Romans, which proves that the letter once circulated in different versions;" KOESTER, *Introduction*, vol. two, 139.

devout, ready to sacrifice their economic and even physical well-being for their beliefs. Among the religious, there were often great expectations that God would finally intervene, necessarily in a grandiose manner, for the desperate situation of many Jews called for no less. In the midst of all this, several Jewish groups stand out. The Sadducees were this-worldly, but largely lost their priestly power and influence with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The Essenes were wholly-bent on God, from whom they awaited final liberation from all evil and injustice; they largely perished in the Jewish War of 66-73 C.E. The Zealots were a party formed in 66 C.E. that amalgamated various dissident and revolutionary Jewish groups that finally rose up in a war against the Roman colonial power that could have been won only with the sort of “miraculous” acts that have taken place in the history of Israel, even recently, but which were certainly insufficient or not forthcoming in that particular struggle (as the Jewish historian Josephus clearly saw). Then there were the Pharisees, a party of devout Jews with more level-headed ideas about how to reform Jewish society while living in a Gentile world that was often hostile, but needed to be reckoned with nonetheless. One of the ideas of the Pharisees later became codified in the Mishnah: “build a fence around the Torah,” that is, protect the observance of the Law of God given to Moses on Mount Sinai by avoiding any danger of its violation. This position was the result of a long line of development in Judaism which took particular shape in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, reformers who wanted the Jews to observe God’s commandments as mandated in the Law, and as conceived during the Babylonian Exile (597-538 B.C.E). Israel had then, under its leadership, reflected on its history and its disasters, and had devised a way —really, a compromise position, as many scholars believe, between priestly and Deuteronomic/lay theologies and programs— to be responsible to what God has separated Israel out to be in the first place.³¹⁶ This line of development was not uniformly accepted by all Jews, and there are unquestionable signs of discontent, criticism and even the suffering of persecution on account of these differences. As for the discontent, one need only read Nehemiah; the reform was largely unsuccessful, according to many scholars. Criticism of exclusivism and what was perceived as narrow-mindedness is represented by such works as Ruth and Jonah. Division in the

³¹⁶ “A holy people (set apart) for the Lord,” Deut 7:6; “a light to the nations,” Isa 42:6.; 49:3; 60:3.

community, excommunication and “hatred” and even assassinations are found in the second and third parts of Isaiah (Isa 49-66). And so we find various forms of Judaism in the first century C.E. John the Baptist and Jesus represent types of eschatologies in which the final visitation of God was expected imminently. While the Baptist emphasized the need for conversion in the face of the wrath to come, Jesus proclaimed the nearness of the Kingdom as Good News, using an Isaian term (Isa 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1). The present order would be overturned, the last would be first (see the “eschatological reversals” in Isa 65:13-14), the meek will inherit the earth (Matt 5:4; cf. Ps 37:10-11). Jesus saw his mission as being to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Matt 10:6; 15:24). It is in this light, with such texts as Ezek 34:16 in the background, that Jesus’ certainly-historical meals with “sinners” (probably unobservant Jews regarded as outcasts, specially by the Pharisees) must be viewed.³¹⁷ Jesus’ activities and preaching were interpreted messianically—at least in some sense—during his lifetime, and this is the only basis for his execution as a political criminal at the hands of the Romans (but certainly instigated by the high priesthood, who were closely allied to the Roman political order, and perhaps with the participation of other groups, including Pharisees, who saw a challenge to their influence).³¹⁸ Whatever people may have expected of Jesus during his lifetime, it was the core group that he had gathered around him (the “Twelve” and others) that after his death proclaimed his resurrection and

³¹⁷ These Jews were in effect “excommunicated,” probably the meaning of *hannidahat* (usually rendered “outcast, banished”) in Ezek 34:16, which the Lord will “make (re-)turn;” the same sense occurs in Isa 66:5. This verb becomes a technical term for excommunication in Mishnaic Hebrew, and also gives the title to the tractate on menstruating women, Niddah.

³¹⁸ It is not clear if the Pharisees had any involvement in Jesus’ arrest and subsequent execution. The evidence of the Gospel passion narratives points away from this, but see, e.g., Mark 3:6; 12:13-17. At least some of the “scribes” were Pharisees, and they are involved, 11:18, 27; 12:12. Mark certainly exaggerates when he has the whole Sanhedrin (which certainly had some Pharisee members) condemn Jesus, 14:53, 64; 15:1. On their power in general, see ANTHONY J. SALDARINI, *Pharisees, Scribes and Saducees in Palestinian Society. A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK, 2001), 277, 281-282, 296; JOHN P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Three, Companions and Competitors* (New York – London etc., 2001), 295-298; much more sanguine about the great influence of the Pharisees is MENAHEM STERN, “Part III. The History of the Second Temple,” 183-303, in *A History of the Jewish People* (H.H. Ben-Sasson, ed.) (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 236-238, 244; on 250, he explains the presence of scribes in the Sanhedrin “as meaning *hakhamim* or representatives of the Pharisees. These also formed a consolidated group, which became increasingly important and influential through the whole-hearted support that it received from the people. Their opinion usually carried the day. The chiefs of the priesthood, who were of Sadducean persuasion, rarely dared take decisions against the express wishes of the Pharisaic *hakhamim* in the Sanhedrin.”

exaltation to God's right hand as "Lord."³¹⁹ This Jewish sect was troublesome for the Pharisees, who are already portrayed in the Gospels—it is difficult to be precise about their level of historicity in this regard—as being in continuous conflict with Jesus. At some point, the issue of the "traditions of the Fathers" became crucial: Jesus is depicted in Mark 7:1-13 and Acts 6:14 as being against them and contrasting them to the true commandment of God. Without saying more about the position of the "historical Jesus" on this point, it is clear that developments in this Jewish sect, which was soon to be so estranged from Judaism as to require a new name ("Christians"), were not to the liking of the Pharisee Paul of Tarsus. He persecuted the Church, until his experience "on the road to Damascus" made him see the whole world in a different way. And yet, for him, this was a new world in the making to be spoken of and described in the vocabulary of Judaism, a Judaism which was in contact with Hellenism and other currents of thought, but which nevertheless was the world and the religion of the Jewish Scriptures, the only world which really mattered for Paul. For Paul, the Jesus he had heard about with displeasure, and whose followers he had seen as a threat to all that was good, became the all-encompassing reality into whom all must be subsumed, ultimately so that God himself can be "all in all," 1 Cor 15:24-28. For Paul, Jesus was God's eschatological savior, what the Law had pointed to (and promised) for the End Time.³²⁰ Paul would struggle tirelessly for this Gospel, suffering much hardship at the hands of both his fellow Jews and the Gentiles, including "false Christians," 2 Cor 11:26. We have expounded as best as we could his theology as expressed in his authentic letters, not seeking to make him fit into some predetermined mold, whether it be politically or religiously correct or not. But at the end of our journey, we should draw one important conclusion from this study. Paul is an example of an intolerant (though well-intentioned) person who repented, who stopped persecuting others for their religious beliefs. He then suffered persecution himself, sometimes from fellow Jews who shared the same notions Paul had had as a Pharisee, sometimes from false brethren who wanted to "spy on our freedom which we have in Christ in order to enslave us," Gal 2:4, sometimes from unidentified opponents whom Paul was convinced had unworthy

³¹⁹ Mark 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Acts 7:56.

³²⁰ See Rom 3:21-24; 10:4; Gal 4:4-5.

motives (the avoidance of persecution, boasting in the flesh, Gal 6:12-13; financial gain, 2 Cor 4:2). And despite this, he presented himself as one who gave in to others in matters which were not of essential importance (1 Cor 9:19-23; cf. Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4). He sought peace with all (Rom 2:10; 14:17; 1 Cor 7:15; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 5:22). His end began with a gesture of conciliation, much the same as in our day Gandhi died at the hands of a fellow Hindu who resented Gandhi's embrace of Muslims. Paul should be an example to us all of flexibility and giving up of personal demands for the sake of the building up of community (cf. 1 Cor 9:15). After the short period in which Christianity was a minority within Judaism, Christians began a long history of persecuting Jews, acting as badly or worse than Paul prior to his Damascus experience. Paul thought that the reception of the Gospel by the Gentiles would make his fellow Jews jealous, Rom 11:11-14. He struggled mightily in order that the Christ of peace whom he preached might be formed in his congregations, Gal 4:19. Let us take that thought, that we as Christians should, by our new life, make Israel jealous, as a challenge that we are very far from accepting, much less rising to. Let us learn from Paul how to really strive to build up community, and not cause divisions (1 Cor 1:10; 12:25).

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