

EMERGENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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The resurrection of Jesus and his appearances to the apostles became the foundation for a new community, a people committed to one another in love and the hope of Jesus's imminent return to rule in power. In many ways the story of the early Church is an experience of accommodation, both to the painful reality that the kingdom of God had not, and may not for a long while, come in glory and power and to the realization that Christians must coexist with empires and dominions that would wield power in the interim. Jesus's expansive acceptance of all classes of Jewish society was further enlarged in a remarkable missionary effort to the entire world. Today we may sense the struggle that came with opening the community of Jesus's followers to gentiles, but the struggle and pain of emerging from one religious community defined by its history and genetic relationship into another religious group defined only by love and faith in Jesus is often overlooked, for we judge the early Jewish-Christians who resisted the acceptance of Gentiles as simply spiritually and morally blind. Yet we have most to learn perhaps from those who struggled and could not, and those who

struggled and could, overcome their definition of religious community limited to a single people of chosen heritage. The limitations experienced by the early Christians of allegiance to culture, nation or their own chosen status were given up reluctantly and only after long struggles in the spirit of God. We are no different, and our own allegiances are no less subject to scrutiny and redefinition by the spirit of God.

The earliest Christian community revealed in the pages of Acts still clearly operated and lived within the confines of Judaism. We cannot lose sight of the well established view that the author of the gospel of Luke also wrote Acts as part of his narration of the Christian experience and testimony of Jesus to Theophilus, an otherwise unknown gentile of high rank. It was common to address works intended for the public to an influential individual who could disseminate the work widely. As in his gospel, Luke avoids the particulars of the Torah and aspects of Jewish life that would be unfamiliar to gentiles. Yet it is obvious that the apostles of Jesus continued to observe Jewish practices after the resurrection. Peter and John and the other apostles continued to attend the temple (Acts 3:1: 2:46), observed the dietary laws (Acts 10:9-15) and insisted on circumcision (Galations 2:11-13). It is therefore clear that Peter had not understood Jesus to abrogate the dietary laws, notwithstanding indications to the contrary in the gospels (Matt. 15:10-11: Mark 7:14-15).

Indeed, Luke's presentation of Acts continues the salvation history of his gospel, beginning with the resurrected

Lord who teaches his apostles for forty days, just as Moses had been taught by God for forty days on Sinai. This symbolism establishes Luke's view of salvation history that the Christian community was the restored Israel headed by the twelve apostles, the judges in the early community (Acts 5:4-3). The twelve were established as judges of the twelve tribes of the eschatological Israel by Jesus (Matt. 19:28; see especially, E.P. Sanders. Jesus and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 98-102). Hence, the first order of business after the infant community had been reconstituted after the resurrection was the election of Matthias to fill the vacated position of Judas Iscariot to the twelve (Acts 1:21-26). The significance of the number twelve is underscored by the fact that the resurrected Jesus appeared "to the twelve," even when it is clear that there were only eleven apostles (I Cor. 15:5). "The Twelve" were an institution that was perpetuated by continuing replacements upon the death of members of the twelve.

The process of accommodating the apostles' expectation of imminent power in the restored kingdom of Israel to the long period of waiting in the world began at the time of the resurrection. The apostles' continuing expectation of the imminent restoration of the kingdom of Israel is evident in the question they posed to the resurrected Christ: "Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" The reply was a commission not to glory and power, but to endurance in the world and to the world. "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own

authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria and indeed to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8). Jesus promised power, but not the political power the apostles still expected to accompany the Messiah. The power of the Holy Spirit would attend their missions to the world, and the long periods of time involved in disseminating the news of the resurrection and gospel of love must have occurred to them.

The earliest Christian community appears to have been a very closely knit group of disciples who had personally known Jesus in his lifetime. This group of followers appears to have abandoned the notion of ownership of property almost immediately after the resurrection. The community did not have ownership of property in common; rather, they sold their goods and shared the proceeds from the sale according to individual need. (Acts 2:43-45: but see 4:32-35, which indicates that "everything they owned was held in common."). Unlike the sharing of goods at the Qumran community, the sale of goods in the earliest Christian community appears to have been voluntary. However, those who agreed to sell their property were expected to strictly comply, as demonstrated by the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who sold their property but held back a part of the proceeds of the sale from Peter (Acts 5:1-6, pace LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972): 157-58). Peter is represented as condemning both to death for failure to deliver the entire proceeds from the sale to the

community. It should be noted that this method of providing for the needs of the poor is not identical to that practiced at Qumran. The Covenantors at Qumran did not sell their goods and share the proceeds; rather, they had their goods in common. The Manuel of Discipline explains, "and they shall listen, the small and the great, with respect to work and to wealth; and together they shall eat and together they shall bless and together they shall be counselled" (1QS 6:2-3). It may be that the earliest Christians simply felt that proceeds of sale were more easily distributed equitably than raw goods. More likely, however, the earliest Christians simply saw no reason to retain their earthly goods, for the kingdom of God was imminent and such goods were of no value in the coming kingdom. Their expectation of the imminent kingdom together with their commitment of love for each other appears to have required that those of means share with those who stood in need. The earliest Christians were in fact continuing the practice of Jesus, just as Judas carried the common purse of the disciples (John 12:6: 13:29), so the earliest Christians had no goods but a common purse held by the twelve disciples on behalf of the community.

The continuing expectation of the imminent return of the Christ is seen in the earliest letters of Paul. In Paul's earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, usually dated to A.D. 50-51, Paul attempted to console those Christians who were disquieted by the fact that so many of the first generation of Christians had died. They were troubled because they believed that those who died before the "Day of Lord" would not share in the glory of the

kingdom. Paul reassured them that those who died before the Christ returns will be as blessed as those Christians still alive at that time: "brothers, about those who have died....We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that any of us who are left alive until the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have died" (1 Thess. 4:13-16, emphasis added). It is clear from Paul's statement that he expected some of those to whom he wrote, and possibly himself, to still be alive at the time Christ returned on the "Day of the Lord." It is also clear that the earliest Christians understood Jesus to teach that the kingdom of God was near at hand; the generation then alive would not all pass away until Christ returned. Paul further adjured the saints at Thessalonica to be vigilant, since "the Day of Lord is going to come like a thief in the night...so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober" (1 Thess. 5:1-7; cf. Matt. 24:42-43: "So stay awake because you do not know the day when your master is coming. If the owner of the household had known at what time of night the thief would come, you can be sure he would have stayed awake.").

In 1 Corinthians, usually dated to about A.D. 57, Paul instructs the saints who are unmarried or widowed to remain single, and even those who have wives to be as if though they were single because "our time is growing short....I say this because the world as we know it is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:29,

31). In Romans, dated usually to about A.D. 68, Paul takes up again the theme of the vigilant Christian who does not sleep in the dark, but remain always awake: "the time has come: you must wake up now: our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted. The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon - let us give up all things we prefer to do under the cover of dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light" (Romans 13:11-14; Cf., Matt. 24:42-43). As Paul intimated in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, the expectation of the imminent kingdom of God derived from the words of Jesus, and the hope was not extinguished by the crucifixion.

The acceptance of gentiles into Christianity was not accomplished easily and inexorably. How could the Jewish apostles deny gentiles a place in their community when the Hellenists were endowed with the spirit of God and accepted Jesus as their master? The Spirit had overcome the differences of national origin by obliterating the distinction of languages for those who heard Peter preach the gospel (Acts 2:7-8). But centuries of religious devotion through the Law and ingrained religious attitudes were not easily erased despite the spiritual gifts manifested by the gentiles. The struggle is most evident in the controversy between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles, notably James and Peter, which is partially remembered in both Acts and Paul's letter to the Galatians.

It appears that certain factions at Jerusalem insisted that gentiles entering the Christian community should be circumcised and required to observe the Law of Moses (Acts

15:5-6). Paul apparently had an ongoing debate with Jewish Christian fundamentalists at Antioch. Paul claimed that James and Peter stood with him on the issue by agreeing not to require circumcision for Gentile converts (Gal. 2:9). It is clear that Paul understood his peculiar calling to be one to the gentiles, whereas Peter had a commission only to the circumcised, that is, the Jews. Paul had raised the issue of circumcision of gentiles as a block to conversion of gentiles. In Paul's view, the Law was not necessary for salvation, for it did not lead to Christ. Then why should the gentiles be required to conform to the Law which had been accomplished in Christ? After the dispute between Paul and the right-wing Christians failed to resolve itself, Paul appealed for decision to the Jerusalem apostles, and a meeting was called by "the apostles" to be held in Jerusalem (Acts 15:5-7). Peter and James appear to have been the dominant authorities in the Christian community at Jerusalem, taking the lead in the meeting. Peter stood to address the convocation, arguing that since God had given the Holy Ghost to the gentiles and accepted them just as He accepted the Jewish Christians, the gentiles should not be burdened with the very burdens that Israel herself could not support (Acts 15:8-10). "Remember," Peter concluded, "we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:11). Luke thus presents Peter as accepting both Paul's position on the Law and his theology of salvation by grace apart from works of the Law. However, the final decision seems to have been up to James, for he "ruled" that circumcision should not be required of

gentile converts, but they would be required to abstain from the meat of animals sacrificed to idols, from fornication, and from anything profaned by idols (Acts 15:19-21). A letter was sent to the gentile Christians at Antioch, Syria and Cicilia with Paul and Barnabas under the authority of the "apostles and elders" at Jerusalem (Acts 15:23-24). The ruling of the council provided:

The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of pagan birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We hear that some of our members have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds. They acted without any authority from us, and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with Barnabas and Paul, men we highly respect who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who will confirm by word of mouth what we have written in this letter. It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from fornication. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell. (Acts 15:23-29).

Several important points are evident from this action. The early community quickly established lines of authority. Not just anyone could decide to represent the Church. Initially, the twelve were the governing authority, and Peter and James were the recognized leaders of the Twelve. Moreover, James was the ultimate authority in Jerusalem. It is clear that James was a centrist and mediator despite the current view of many scholars that James was part of the conservative Jewish Christian faction. Even Paul recognized the Jerusalem Church as preeminent and the last arbiter of disputes (Acts 15:2), though

he denies such dependency in Galatians (Gal:2:2). Paul was likely not totally satisfied with James's decision to require abstinence from blood and meat of strangled animals - for such a requirement partially reinstated the Law of Moses. Further, it is clear from I Corinthians 10:23-30 that Paul did not insist on strict observance of the Apostolic Decree by the gentile Christians at Corinth. He instructed them to eat anything placed in front of them unless the host informed them explicitly that the food had been offered in sacrifice. However, he also insisted that the gentile Christians should not inquire whether the food had been strangled or offered to idols. Paul instructed the Corinthian Saints to eat anything that is sold in a butcher shop. Paul was hardly zealous in his observance of the Apostolic Decree. Neither the Jewish Christians nor Paul were satisfied with the Apostolic Decree, and neither group fully accepted it. Further, it is doubtful that Paul abided by the decision of the Jerusalem Council: "we to the Gentiles, they to the circumcised." (Gal. 2:9) In I Corinthians 9:20 Paul appears to deny that his mission was solely to the Gentiles: "I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could. I made myself a Jew to the Jews, to win the Jews; that is, I who am not subject to the Law made myself subject of the Law to those who are the subjects of the Law, to win those who are subject to the Law." It would seem that Paul was not pleased with the decision of the Jerusalem Conference and did not fully observe its edict.

The final point to be observed is that Paul was not

accorded Apostolic status in the Apostolic Decree. He is viewed as a delegate of the Jerusalem Church to the saints at Antioch. Paul's status was not clear in the community. However, there can be little doubt that he regarded himself as having apostolic status. He had been called directly by Christ - and Paul clearly viewed himself as equal or superior to the apostles as a result of his call. Nevertheless, that Paul did not have Apostolic authority seems indicated from the facts that he appealed to the Jerusalem Church for a decision and that he sent only as a delegate who had committed himself to Christ. In Galatians Paul refers to those who are "recognized as" apostles, implying that they were recognized as such, but he was not. Paul's Apostolic status in the community would be clarified only later. The controversy was far from settled, for the right wing Jewish Christians were unwilling to allow different rules of conduct for gentiles.

Paul appears to have been the target of disgruntled Jewish Christians, and he did not help his cause by writing a caustic letter to the Galatians, boasting that he had withstood the "so called pillars" on the controversy of the Law (Galatians 2:9). Peter had come to Antioch sometime after the Jerusalem meeting, but certain "friends of James," who insisted on circumcision despite the Jerusalem letter from the apostles, criticized him for eating with gentiles. Paul claims that as a result of this faction, Peter withdrew from eating with the Antiochan gentiles. Paul was especially upset that even his companion, Barnabas, knuckled under to the Jewish Christians and "felt

himself obliged to copy their behavior" (Gal. 2:11-13). It appears that Paul and Barnabas had a long-standing personality conflict. Acts reports that shortly after the Jerusalem convocation, Paul and Barnabas had a "violent quarrel." (Acts 15:39) Perhaps Barnabas's withdrawal from fellowship with gentiles precipitated the falling out between them. Paul took offense and confronted Peter "in front of everyone," contending that "in spite of being a Jew, you live like the pagans and not like the Jews, so you have no right to make the pagans copy Jewish ways" (Gal. 2:14). One gets the impression that Paul was headstrong and did not have much tact. In any case, Peter must have been stunned that Paul would attack him personally and that Paul would assume to do so as an apostle and as having a superior grasp of the demands of Christ's gospel.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul sarcastically states that the authority of the Jerusalem apostles made no difference to him and refers to them as "so called leaders" (Gal 2:6). Paul boasted that he did not get his authority from appointment by the Jerusalem apostles (as all new apostles after the resurrection did), but by appointment directly by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1-2). He stressed that he did not go to Jerusalem "to see those who were already apostles before me," underscoring his independence from the Jerusalem apostles, and he attacked the "friends of James" as "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4). Paul proudly asserted: "The question [of circumcision] came up only because some who do not really belong to the brotherhood have furtively crept in to spy on the liberty we enjoy in Christ Jesus, and want

to reduce us to slavery. I was so determined to safeguard for you the true meaning of the Good News, that I refused even out of deference to yield to such people for one moment. As a result, these people who are so called leaders - not that their importance matters to me, since God has no favorites - these leaders, as I say, had nothing to add to the Good News as I preach it." (Gal. 2:4-7). Paul had included James and Peter in the group of "false brethren" who were perverting the gospel, even though it is clear that his real opponents, the Jewish Christians fundamentalists, were to the right of James and Peter because they insisted on circumcision (Gal. 2:14; 5:2-3), whereas James and Peter clearly did not require circumcision. Paul thus challenged Peter's authority with respect to the dietary laws to his very face and charged that James and Peter were not teaching the true gospel. Whatever James and Peter might say, in Paul's vitriolic attack he asserted that they had nothing to contribute to what he had already taught.

The political fallout for Paul's callused disregard for the authority of James and Peter was inevitable. The Jewish Christian fundamentalists circulated the rumor that Paul was about teaching that Jewish converts were required to break with the Law of Moses and should not circumcise their children (Acts 21:21). The issue had before always centered on gentile observance of the Law. This time it was Paul who adopted the behavior of the Jewish Christians, placating them by participating in the purification rituals at the temple to demonstrate his faithfulness to the Law (Acts 21:23-26). When

Paul arrived in Jerusalem he was greeted by certain elders who warned him: "But you see, brother," they said, "how thousands of Jews have now become believers, all of them staunch upholders of the Law, and they have heard that you instruct all Jews living among the pagans to break away from Moses, authorizing them not to circumcise their children or to follow customary practices" (Acts 21:20-22). The elders knew that Paul was controversial among the believers who accepted the Law of Moses. They advised Paul to demonstrate that the rumor was in fact false by participating himself in the purification rights at the temple (Acts 25:24). "This will let them know there is no truth in the reports they have heard about you and that you regularly observe the Law" (Acts 25:25). It appears that four persons were about to undertake the Nazarite vow. Paul attended the rite and paid the expenses associated with shaving their heads. It is clear that Paul himself continued to observe certain aspects of the Law when in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Paul had urged Peter and Barnabas not to observe the Law when in Antioch [or] however by requesting them to dine with gentiles. Perhaps the rumor was true. Very likely, Paul was constrained to demonstrate his faithfulness to the Law because his status as an apostle was under attack. It appears from this episode that the decision to not require conformance to the Law of Moses by gentile converts did not mean that Jewish converts could also give up observance of the Law. This fact explains why the Jewish Christians expected Peter to continue to observe the Law, though gentiles were not required to do so. It also explains why the apostles

in Jerusalem continued to observe the Law and attend the Temple cult. Such a distinction in behavioral norms undoubtedly led to an unbearable division among Christian communities having large numbers of both Jewish and gentile converts. It also gave the Jewish Christian fundamentalists opportunity to charge Paul with misconduct. (Raymond E. Brown, Antioch and Rome (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982):112-113).

It also appears from Paul's agreement to attend the temple that he felt it necessary to demonstrate his own orthodoxy which was questioned by the Jewish Christian fundamentalists. Can it be doubted that the fundamentalists had seized the opportunity provided by Paul's letter to the Galatians to demonstrate to James and Peter by Paul's own words that he disregarded their authority and felt that they were perverting the gospel? Is it not clear that those very Jewish Christians who had disregarded the decision of the apostles and elders regarding circumcision, were claiming to be the "orthodox" brothers faithful to the authority of the Jerusalem apostles? Paul understandably felt that his own position as an apostle was under attack.

It is a wiser and more understanding Paul who wrote the letter to the Romans in about 58 A.D. Paul carefully distinguished the unfaithful Jews from the "saints" who included all members of the Church, inclusive of Jewish Christians (Rom. 15:26, 31). The Roman community itself consisted of saints whose reputation for faithfulness and righteousness was known throughout the world (Rom 1:7-8). Paul's description of his own role in Romans is far less pretentious, arrogant and contentious

than his letter to the Galatians, even in the face of the evident attack on his position as an apostle: "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle" (Rom 1:1). In contrast to his claim that James and Peter could add nothing to what he taught, Paul carefully explained that he avoided teaching the gospel where other apostles had already taught: "I have made it an unbroken rule never to preach where Christ's name has already been preached. The reason for that was that I had no wish to build on other men's foundations." (Rom. 15:20). Paul also attempted to explain his strong language in his written communications and emphasized that he is not questioning the faith or instruction of the Roman saints by others: "It is not because I have any doubts about you, my brothers; on the contrary I am quite certain that you are full of good intentions, perfectly well instructed and able to advise each other. The reason why I have written to you, and put some things rather strongly, is to refresh your memories, since God has given me my special position" (Rom. 15:14-16). Paul's diplomatic tone suggests an attempt to placate and heal rifts between him and Jewish Christians. (Brown, Antioch and Rome, 114-117).

Paul also responded to those Jewish Christians who claimed that his gospel of grace made the Law of no value. Paul asked: "Well then, is a Jew better off? Is there an advantage in being circumcised?" Surprisingly, Paul answers: "A great advantage in every way." Paul then surprisingly lauds the importance of the Jews' chosen status before God (Rom. 3:1-15). However, both Jews and gentiles "sinned and forfeited God's glory, and both are

justified through the free gift of his grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-24). Paul carefully explains that his gospel of faith appropriately understands the value of the Law: "Do we mean that faith makes the Law pointless? Not at all: we are giving the Law its true value." (Rom. 3:31). In Galatians Paul had labeled the Law a curse and a sin (Gal. 3:10, 13, 23-24), but in Romans Paul's attitude toward the Law is very different: "Does it follow that the Law itself is sin? Of course not. What I mean is that we should not have known what sin was except for the Law...The Law is sacred, and what it commands is sacred, just and good...The Law is spiritual...The Law is good." (Rom. 7:7, 12, 14, 16). Paul thus conceded that the Law had value to lead persons to Christ.

Paul also recognized that his gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and scrapping of the Law of Moses as applied to gentiles had led to misunderstanding among both Jews and gentiles and had, indeed, put his own orthodoxy in question. Romans was written to try to correct some of the misunderstandings and to reassure the Romans of his orthodoxy. Paul highlights the misunderstanding of his doctrine by proposing the very position others have imputed to him and rejecting the conclusions others have draw. Paul queried: "Does the fact that we are living by grace and not by law mean that we are free to sin? Of course not!" (Romans 6:20) Paul admits that "some slanderers have accused us of teaching" that persons should not be judged as sinners because their very lack of righteousness affords God an opportunity to show his righteousness to his

greater glory, "but they are justly condemned." (Rom. 3:7-8). In other words, Paul's opponents had charged that he taught that persons should sin to afford an opportunity for the grace of Christ to abound: "When law came, it was to multiply the opportunities of falling, but however great the number of sins committed, grace was even greater; and so, just as sin reigned wherever there was death, so grace will reign to bring eternal life thanks to the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. Does it follow that we should remain in sin so as to let grace have greater scope? Of course not!" (Rom. 5:19-6:1) Paul opposed the libertinism that some had construed him to promote.

It is not surprising that Paul had been construed to teach libertinism, for he refused to lay down any rule of conduct. Though the grace of Christ did not mean that any conduct would be justified, (persons, not conduct, are justified by Christ) Paul refused to say precisely what the Christian must not do and what must be observed. Perhaps Paul's desire to avoid a new Christian regime of conduct in place of the regime of the Law of Moses led to few problems among Jewish Christians who understood well that the Law of Moses was itself a grace which was to be replaced for another grace - the Lord Jesus Christ. Jewish Christians likely understood that one's entire life, might, mind and strength - including outward conduct - manifested devotion to God. They had little inclination toward condoning sexual perversions. However, there was no such history of devotion through outward conduct among most gentiles. When Paul argued

the God's grace had "nothing to do with good deeds" (Romans 11:6), gentiles concluded that God did not demand "good deeds." We can hardly be surprised that those who heard Paul concluded that he meant whatever they did was okay so long as they expressed belief in Christ--that God would grant grace regardless of outward conduct - for a good deal of Protestant Christianity, on a popular level at least, has understood Paul in the same way. Paul was at pains in Romans to correct such misunderstandings while still avoiding a new behavioral regime.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Paul did not adopt a standard that governed conduct. To this point we have dealt primarily with what Paul did not teach; with what others imputed to him. But these are distortions of Paul. It is true that Paul refused to posit a regime of conduct in place of the Law of Moses. That does not mean, however, that Paul rejected the necessity of conforming one's life to God's will. Quite the contrary, Paul insisted that one's entire life reflect Christ.

The foundation for Paul's understanding of the Christian message derived from his experience on the road to Damascus. In the blinding light that introduced the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul was confronted by the inexplicable grace of Christ's love. Saul became Paul - in a single moment Saul became a new person. Saul had persecuted the Christians; Paul was called to fellowship with them through love. Saul had rejected Christ; Paul was called to preach faith on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul was dead; Paul was alive in Christ. Certainly nothing that Saul had

done could justify God's call to Paul. Saul was the least likely person in the world to be called to preach faith in Christ. Yet it occurred. Paul had experienced the fact of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The appearance of the resurrected Lord demonstrated that Saul had been profoundly wrong. He had been devoted to the Law as a means of expressing devotion and love for God. But the fact of Christ required a change of allegiances, a radical transformation of masters. In a single moment Paul had been sold from a slave of the Law to a slave of Christ. The fact of Christ required rejecting everything that did not lead to Christ. Christ had initiated a relationship that called Paul to a new sphere of existence. The unrighteous Saul had been justified apart from anything he had done to merit it. Paul had been reconciled to God even when Saul did not know he needed reconciliation. "[Christ] appeared to me too; it was as though I was born when no one expected it." "I am the least of the apostles" Paul humbly stated in I Corinthians, "in fact, since I persecuted the Church of God I hardly deserve the name apostle; but by God's grace that is what I am, and the grace that he gave me has not been fruitless." (I Corinthians 15:9-10)

Preliminary to Paul

In assessing Paul's message, it is necessary to keep several cautions in mind. First, his writings are responses to particular problems that challenged the intended recipients of his letters. Even if we accept as Paul's those letters which many scholars believe did not originate with Paul (e.g., Colossians, Ephesians, I and II Timothy and 2 Thessalonians) and

those which almost certainly were not written by Paul (e.g., Hebrews), we have only a very small part of Paul's total thought. It should be remembered that passages which are crucial to understand Paul's thought might not have ever been written if specific problems had not presented themselves. It is unlikely that Paul's description of the Last Supper and sacrament of bread and wine would here been penned had Paul not found the Corinthian's behavior at the sacrament to have been outrageous. Paul's discussion of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15 likely would not have been written had the Corinthinas not misunderstood the nature of the resurrection. It is just as likely that Galatians would not have survived had not the fundamentalist Jewish Christians preserved it as evidence to be presented to James and Peter to prove Paul's disregard for their authority. We may never have known Paul's discussion of love in I Corinthians 13 if the Corinthians had lost or torn it up - like they may have done an earlier letter to the Corinthians to which Paul refers, written to the Corinthians earlier than I Corinthians, but which we clearly do not have.

It should also be remembered that Paul writes to those to whom he has already taught and explained the basic gospel. Except for Romans, which Paul wrote to a congregation already renowned for its devotion to the gospel, Paul's letters were written to congregations that had heard him preach. His letters tend to complete his instructions, to fill in the gaps rather than start from the beginning.

It must also be kept in mind that in Galatians, Romans,

and I Corinthians, Paul's thought is fashioned primarily to meet the arguments of opposition. Paul's thought is formulated as a response to charges against him and misunderstandings of what he taught. Paul does not set out to give us a systematic exposition of his thought--he was not a systematic theologian. Above all, it must be remembered that what appears inconsistent to us may not have appeared inconsistent to Paul--and vice versa. Indeed, our very notions of coherence and consistency would likely have been foreign to him. We will return to this theme when discussing salvation by grace and judgment by deeds in Paul's thought.

We should not feel a compulsion to harmonize what Paul said with what all other writers of scripture had to say. If Paul preached the same gospel as other Christians, then how come he so often expressly disagreed with them? Why does he claim that Peter and James have distorted the gospel if all writers of scripture at all times must agree on all points? Clearly the fundamentalist requirement of overall canonical harmony must be rejected because it is clearly rejected by the very scriptures they claim as the basis of their position. There are both vast divergences and sometimes overlooked similarities between the thought of Jesus and Paul. We must remember that Paul was a Jew who struggled to express his understanding of the relation of the Jewish Law to the gospel. Paul does not teach what Jesus taught; Paul preaches about Jesus Christ. The preacher became the preached.

We will severely misunderstand Paul if we forget that his

thought was time-conditioned. He fashioned his thought in terms current in his environment. For example, Paul avoids the term "Son of Man" which was current in Palestinian Christianity because gentiles did not have the cultural background to understand its meaning. The notion of the resurrection was difficult for Christians of Greek origin to understand; but the notion of a dying-rising God was all too easy for them to confuse with the myths of Mithra, Osiris etc. Paul therefore explains the meaning of the resurrection in bodily form. He explains how Christ died and was exalted.

Finally, we must always be cognizant that we bring cultural baggage to our attempt to understand Paul. Paul's writings became the basis of later theological systems for Augustine, Calvin and Luther. We must avoid the all too common tendency to read Paul through the eyeglasses of Calvin and Luther. First century Palestine is far removed in theological development from us. The Jewish Law is hardly understood even by most of the Christian scholars who have written in the past century, yet properly understanding the Law preoccupied Paul even after he was freed from its fetters. Further, it would be foolish for us to try to create a systematic theology of Paul's thought now which he didn't attempt to create in the first place. Indeed, the very act of canonizing Paul's letters distorted them. Paul's letters became the foundation for later theological systems which were promoted as valid and binding at all times and all periods. It would be absurd to require women to wear hats to church--a requirement of the Jewish synagogue

that women cover their heads--or to act as if we were not married to allow us more undivided time to prepare for the second coming. The very act of turning Paul's suggestions into rules binding on Christians would have been vehemently opposed by Paul.

Paul's Message

The turmoil experienced by Paul following his experience on the road to Damascus is evident from his own account. The experience required Paul to rethink everything he valued most. The Law to which he had devoted his life had condemned to death God's Messiah. The curse of the Law on all those crucified by hanging was upon the Messiah--the Christ. (See Gal. 3:14; Dt. 21:23).

This foundational paradox became the center of Paul's understanding of the Christian gospel. Beginning with Bultmann, most scholars understand Paul to begin with a plight and to move from the problem to his solution. The problem is usually identified as Man's universal sinfulness and inability to overcome his sinfulness to the delivering grace of Christ. However, E.P. Sanders appears to be correct that Paul should be understood as beginning with the solution which implied a human plight to be solved. Again, Paul's own experience is instructive as the starting point. Saul did not know that he needed Christ. The Law was sufficient. However, the revelation of the Christ to Paul presented him with an undeniable fact: the Christ had come to earth as Jesus. Paul immediately concluded that if the Law could save, then Christ died in vain (Ga. 2:21). There is no need for a Savior if persons are

capable of extricating themselves from their plight by the works of the Law.

In Galatians Paul spoke in terms of Law and grace. In I Corinthians, however, Paul spoke instead in terms of flesh, sin and Christ. Paul's point was not merely that Man is sinful and therefore needs Christ to deliver him. Paul spoke of being a slave to the law before he was freed to become a slave to Christ. In Romans Paul wrote of being a slave to sin:

You know that if you agree to serve and obey a master you become his slaves. You cannot be slaves of sin that leads to death and at the same time slaves of obedience that leads to righteousness. You were once slaves of sin, but thank God you submitted without reservation to the creed you were taught. You may have been freed from the slavery of sin, but only to become slaves of righteousness. Romans 7:15-18

Indeed, Paul begins his letter to the Romans by referring to himself as a "slave of Christ Jesus." In I Corinthians he speaks instead of being free from the Law: "I was free of the Law myself (thought not free from God's law, being under the law of Christ) to win those who have no law." I Cor. 9:21. Paul does not speak merely of a single human plight; rather, Paul denigrates all solutions to any human plight that do not lead to Christ. E.P. Sanders is entirely correct when he concludes that Paul's thought should be understood to reason from solution to problem:

Since salvation is only in Christ, therefore all other ways toward salvation are wrong, and attempting to follow them has results which are the reverse of what is desired. What is wrong with following the law is not the effort itself, but the fact that the observer of the law is not seeking

righteousness which is given by God by the coming of Christ (Rom. 10:2-4). Effort itself is not the sin; the sin is aiming towards any goal but being found "in Christ." (Phil. 3:9). (482).

Whatever the competing solution, whether Greek philosophy or Jewish Law, it is wrong if it does not lead to Christ. Whatever the plight, whether sin, cognitive incapacity or transgression of the Law, the only answer is Christ. The starting point for understanding Paul is thus the realization arising from the Damascus revelation that Jesus is Lord and the sole object of proper devotion.

Paul divides humanity into two lordships. There are those who exist under the Lordship of Christ. In Paul's terms, they are "in Christ." All others who do not belong to Christ are alienated from God and under a competing Lordship, described variously as under the Law, the flesh or human wisdom. If Paul's thought is coherent, the point of coherence is that everyone has a plight from which Christ can save him. (Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judasim, 509).

Paul introduced into Christian thought a notion of "justification by grace through faith in Christ." Every term of this slogan is essential to Paul's message. The term "justification" or the verb phrase "to justify" is the very center of Paul's thought. "To justify" () is extremely difficult to translate into English. It is a forensic term taken from the legal system of Paul's day which means to "acquit" or "declare not guilty" or "to declare just" or sometimes "to be declared righteous." In Paul's letters,

however, it takes on a nuance meaning. Paul does not speak of justification or grace in I Thessalonians, his earliest letter. He first speaks of justification in Galatians, lending credence to the view that Paul developed his notice of justification in response to the challenge of the Jewish Christians. In Galatians Paul states that "whether you are circumcised makes no difference if you are in Christ." (Gal 5:6) If Paul were consistent in Galatians, he would have argued that "circumcision is unnecessary, it won't add anything and is optional only." But Paul doesn't say that; instead he argues that "if you allow yourselves to be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all. With solemnity I repeat my warning: Everyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law. But if you look to the Law to make you justified, then you have separated yourselves from Christ, and have fallen from grace." (Gal. 5:2-5) Paul concludes not that circumcision is superfluous, but that it is fatal to faith in Christ. But there is an inner logic of justification which makes sense of Paul's position. "To be justified," in Paul's letters, always refers to a proper relationship with God the Father through the saving action of the Lord Jesus Christ. One cannot have such a proper relationship unless one looks to Christ--not to the Law, one's own wits or own deeds--for salvation. One could maintain the proper relationship of being "in Christ"--that is, be justified--only if one had faith that Christ alone could save him or her.

In Romans, Paul refers to the example of Abraham whose

faith justified him before God. (Romans 4:9) Paul refers to Abraham to show that he was justified by God before he was circumcised and before the Law had been given. Thus, Paul concludes: "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we are judged righteous (having been justified--) and at peace with God, since it's by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace ()." (Romans 5:1-2). Paul refers to the example of Abraham in Galatians 3 for the same purpose, and naturally concludes that one is justified by faith independent from the works of the Law of Moses.

The most distinctive aspect of Paul's notion of justification is that it is given by grace apart from the works of the Law: "Both Jew and pagan sinned and forfeited God's glory, and both are justified () through the free gift of his grace () by being redeemed in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24). A genuine relationship never depends on earning favor; but on unconditional love which is willing to sacrifice itself for the benefit of the loved. It follows that the proper relationship--being justified--is by grace and not by works of the Law or one's good deeds. Paul notes that God chose Israel as his elect only by grace. The Israelites did not earn their election; in fact, they did not deserve it. (Romans 11:1-6). Nevertheless, they were called to enter a covenant relationship with God. Paul contended that "today the same thing has happened: there is a remnant chosen by grace. By grace, you notice, nothing to do therefore with good deeds, or grace would not be grace at all!" (Romans 11:6). The Israelites had been

granted a relationship of covenant love. The Law itself was a gift to the Israelites and the Law was a grace which justified them before God. Thus, the initiates at Qumran would sing:

As for me,
I belong to wicked mankind,
to the company of the ungodly flesh...
For mankind has no way,
and man is unable to establish his steps
since justification is with God
and perfection of way is out of His hand...

As for me,
if I stumble, the mercies of God
shall be my eternal salvation.
If I stagger because the sin of flesh,
my justification shall be
by the righteousness of God which endures forever.
When my distress is unleashed
He will deliver my soul from the Pit
and will direct my steps in the way.
He will draw me near by His grace,
and by His mercy will he bring my justification
He will judge me in the righteousness of His truth
and in the greatness of His goodness
He will pardon all my sins.
Through His righteousness He will cleanse me
of the uncleanness of man.

1 QS 11.9f
(Geza Vermes. The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (Penguin 1968):93-94).

The Jews at the Qumran community were convinced that their sinfulness would be justified through God's grace and righteousness. Nevertheless, God required of them obedience to the Law. For the author of the Qumran hymn, God's grace is offered within the system of the Law of Moses. Though the relationship is offered as a grace, God demands obedience to the Law. Those who breached the covenant would be cut off from the covenant relationship. (1QS 2.2-8; 1QH). It is important to understand that the Qumran covenantors, and Jews in Paul's day in general, did not perceive grace as opposed to works of the Law.

Similarly, obedience to the Law was not perceived as somehow nullifying grace. They entered the divine-human relationship only through grace, but the relationship could be severed by disobedience. There is no notion that the love of God is earned or merited, for no one could do enough to merit God's election and freely offered covenant relationship, but one must be faithful to the demands of the divine relationship once it is entered.

Paul's view of grace and justification was nearly identical, except that Man is justified apart from the works of the Law. For the Jews the Law was a grace, a revelation of the divine will. For Paul Christ is grace and the sole source of justification. One entered into the proper relationship through faith and was "in Christ." As noted, Paul's notion of grace in no way implied that persons were free to do whatever they pleased--and it is unlikely that those who understood Paul to teach libertinism were Jewish Christians who understood the relation of grace to the obedience required by one's relationship to God. But what did God require? Paul was reluctant to even address such a question because he wanted to avoid a new regime of rules of conduct in place of the Law. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that Paul did not give any direction as to what God required. Indeed, Paul did not abandon all notion of law. Paul uses the term "law"- to refer not only to the Law of Moses, but also to the new life "in Christ." Thus, Paul can refer to "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" as the new standard: "The reason, therefore, why those who are in Christ

Jesus are not condemned, is that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has set you free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:1) Paul explains that he was freed from the Law of Moses (Romans 8:1-2; I Cor. 9:1, 21; Gal. 5:13), "though not free from God's law, being under the law of Christ." (I Cor.; 9:21). But what were the demands of this new law? Paul seems to have contrasted the law of Christ from a law that defines specific conduct: "What sort of law excludes them? The sort of law that tells us what do do? On the contrary, it is the law of faith, since as we see it, a man is justified by faith and not by doing something the Law tells him to do." (Romans 3:27-29). Only once does Paul define the demands of the law of Christ: "You should carry each other's troubles and fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:2). Paul thus contrasts the Law of Moses with the law of Christ and the works of the Law with works of love: "My brothers, you were called, as you know, to liberty, but be careful or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, rather, in works of love...." (Galatians 5:13). The law of Christ required works of love, but not any specific performances.

The demands laid on the Christian by virtue of entering the proper relationship with God--being justified, entering into the life of grace or living "in Christ"--were not defined by Paul, for such demands could be defined only by the Spirit. Love was the only requirement of the Law of Christ.

There has been a good deal of scholarly discussion of the meaning of "in Christ" in Paul's writings, ranging from mystical

identification with Christ urged by Schweitzer to an incipient ecclesiology by Bultmann. In our view, Paul's notion of living a life "in Christ" is pregnant with meaning at the center of Paul's thought. Paul says "when we are baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death...we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life. If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection." (Romans 6:4-6). What happens to Christ happens to us if we live in Christ. We are crucified with Christ so that we share his life. (Gal. 2:20). As Morner D. Hooker aptly pointed out:

Those who are 'in Christ' share in his resurrection life-and in order to do that they must first share in his death. But it is clear that there is in Paul's understanding a prior requirement; Christ must share our life and our death before we can share his...(A Preface to Paul New York: Oxford University Press, 1980):43

Hooker goes on to note that the best summary of Paul's idea that Christ shares in what we are that we might share in what he is can be found in an aphorism coined by second century theologian Irenaeus: "Christ became what we are, that we might become even what he is himself." (Adversus Haereses Book v, preface). In Philippians 2, Paul urged that "in your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5) Paul follows this observation with the beautiful Christological hymn explaining how God became man and shared in what we are:

His state was divine,
yet he did not cling
to his equality with God

but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as men are;
and being as all men are,
he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross (Phil 2:6-8)

Paul suggested what was unthinkable to the Hebrews--indeed what is sheer heresy in traditional Christianity--the divine was once a man. Paul targumizes Isaiah 45:23, replacing the divine name Yahweh with the name of Jesus Christ:

But God raised him high
and gave him the name
which is above all other names
so that all beings
in the heavens, on earth and in the
underworld,
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus
and that every tongue should acclaim
Jesus Christ as Lord,
to the glory of the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

It is indeed amazing that Christian theologians and scriptural exegetes, influenced by a medieval theology which imposed an unbridgeable ontological chasm between God and Man, have failed to learn from the fact of Jesus Christ that God shared in what we are that we might share in what He is. The very essence of salvation in Paul's thought is to share fully in Christ's life. Paul expresses the essence of the life in Christ in different ways. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul summarized how God reconciled Man to Himself: "For our sake God made the sinless one to enter sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God." Paul went on to explain that Christ "was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his proverty." (2 Cor. 8:10). In Romans, Paul asserted if one lives life in the Spirit, he shares the life of Christ. We are

dead in sin, so Christ too died. Christ was raised from the dead, so if we live in Christ we too will be raised from the dead. What happens to us happened to Christ so that what happened to Christ might also happen to us.

Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

Paul finally concludes that we share Jesus's status as sons of God and we will share fully in the glory that Jesus shares with the Father. To be justified is to share fully in Christ's glory: "Those he called he justified, and with those he justified he shared his glory." (Rom. 8:30). For Paul, to live in Christ meant that one lived the life Christ led, did the deeds Christ did, and shared the sufferings Christ suffered, and will share fully in Christ's inheritance from the Father.

Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received...is the spirit of sons, and makes us cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well; heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory. (Rom 8:14-17).

Thus, the intimate relationship enjoyed by Christ with the Father is also shared by those who live in Christ. We too can cry Abba, as small children trusting their daddy. If we live in Christ, we share in his life. But the foundation of Paul's thought is that Christ first shared in our life. He was rich but became poor. Christ was made sin and shared in our

condition of alienation of God. Christ suffered death. He submitted to the curse of the Law. Christ was born as a man, but only so that he might create us in his image.

It is also important to understand that Paul did not write from the perspective of twentieth century individualism. Paul understands mankind to have a corporate existence in Christ. Paul shared the Jewish notion that God had called and elected a community, and salvation came only to the individual through the community. Though Christ was one, he died for many. Paul asserts that sin entered the world through Adam, but Adam is Man, both in his individual and his corporate status. (Romans 5:12-21).

As Paul stated in Galatians, though one had been justified and entered into the life in Christ, one could nevertheless "fall from grace" if he failed to live a life consistent with existence in Christ. Put in another way more univocal and attuned to our modern language, grace and justification are the subjective manifestation of living in Christ while good deeds and works of love are the objective manifestation of faith in Christ. Grace does not exist apart from works of love. Nevertheless, there is an asymmetrical relation between faith and works. Anyone who has faith must also manifest works of love. It does not work the other way around, however, for not everyone who manifests works of love has faith in Christ. As we have seen, one is not justified by works of any kind. Justification is granted to all who have faith in Christ; however, one entering the relationship with Christ (being justified) means that one stops sinning, or is

acquitted of sin, and brings forth the fruit of the life lived fully in Christ, or works of love. However, one can fall from the status of grace--of being in Christ--if one sins after having attained such status. Good deeds are a condition of maintaining the status "in Christ." (Romans 11:22). As Paul expressly warned the Corinthians, "You know perfectly well that people who do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God." (I Cor. 6:9). Paul's entire concern in writing to the Galatians was that some who had accepted the gospel had fallen from faith in Christ. He expressly warned those who insisted on circumcision that they would fall from grace if they accepted circumcision--that is, if they apostatized from Christ by changing allegiances to another lordship, the Law of Moses (Gal. 5:1-7). Paul was also concerned with the immoral behavior of the Galatians, for such behavior would also forfeit their status as justified in Christ.

Don't delude yourself into thinking God can be cheated: whatever a man sows, that also he reaps: if he sows in the field of self indulgence he will get a harvest of corruption out of it; if he sows in the field of the Spirit he will get from it a harvest of eternal life. (Gal. 6:7-9)

Thus, Paul taught that one entered into a proper relationship with Christ through grace--the relationship with Christ is not offered only to those who merit it or who are righteous, but Christ offered himself to all out of love. If one entered into a life with Christ through faith, then one died to sin. In terms of conduct, one manifested faith in Christ by ceasing to sin and doing works of love. However, grace was not sufficient to maintain the relationship. If one lapsed into

lascivious, selfish or sinful conduct (Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 6:10), then the terms of the relationship were broken and one fell from grace. (Gal. 5:5). Paul thus made good deeds a condition of remaining "in Christ" or "in grace." Paul made this condition explicit in Romans 11:22: "God can be severe as well as kind: severe towards those who have fallen, but kind toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you will find yourself cut off too."

How did one who fell from grace regain the status of being in Christ? Paul identified repentance as the way to return to life in Christ. Confronted with the lapse into immorality at Corinth, Paul feared that on his next visit to Corinth "I may find you different from what I want you to be....my God may be ashamed on your account and I shall be grieving over all those who sinned before and still have not repented of the impurities, fornication and debauchery they committed." (2 Cor. 12:20-21). Paul was not naive enough to believe that once a person became committed to Christ that he or she thereafter never sinned. He constantly plead with the saints to remain faithful and steadfast in Christ (I Thess. 3:13; I Cor. 1:8; 7:34; 15:1f; Phil. 2:15f; 2 Cor. 4:16f) precisely because he realized that not everyone who began on the way to Christ would remain blameless in Christ. For those who fell from the state of grace, Paul suggested repentance as the mode to reestablish it.

It should also be noted that while Paul usually speaks of persons as "justified" in the past tense, Paul's use of the verb "to save" is almost always future or present, and only once in

the past (aorist) tense. The single use of the verb "to save" in the past tense () refers to the hope of being saved: "For we must be content to hope that we shall be saved--our salvation is not in sight, we should not have to be hoping for it if it were--but as I say, we must hope to be saved since we are not yet saved--it is something we must wait for with patience." (Romans 8:24-25). Paul would never claim to have already been saved. He usually speaks of a future hope of salvation (I Thess. 5:8; Rom. 5:9; I Cor. 9:22). Of course, Paul was well aware that if one were already actually saved, there could not conceivably be a danger of falling from grace. This realization followed immediately from the belief that although persons are saved by grace, they are judged by their works. Only those who endure in the status of grace, or in the Spirit, or in Christ (I Thess. 5:23; I Cor. 1:8; 7:34; 15:58; 16:13; 2 Cor. 4:16; 11:3; Phil 1:27; 2:15; Gal. 6:9), that is, only those who belong to the Lord on the Day of the Lord will be saved. Paul warned, "each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward." (I Cor. 3:#12-15). Paul clearly distinguished in this passage between being saved and being punished or awarded according to works. Though the relation between faith and works confused even those who heard Paul speak, Paul asserted clearly that Man is saved by grace, but also maintained that every person will be judged according to his deeds.

What is interesting is that Paul speaks of a universal judgment: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body." (2 Cor. 5:8-10; cf. I Cor. 11:29-32). Paul speaks of all persons being saved by Christ in one passage (Romans 5:19), but Paul clearly overstates the case here, for he also taught that many would be cast out and condemned on the Day of the Lord. (I Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 9:12). Judgment is universal; salvation by grace is limited to those who remain "in Christ" and conditioned on living a life consistent with such status. E.P. Sanders' study of the relation between Paul's thought and rabbinic and intertestamental Judaism shows that Paul's thought was typically Jewish with respect to grace and works. Sanders concluded:

[T]he distinction between being judged on the basis of deeds and punished and rewarded at the judgment (or in this life), on the one hand, and being saved by God's gracious election, on the other, was the general view of Rabbinic literature. It was a straight forward distinction, and it should occasion no surprise when it meets us in Paul. Salvation by grace is not incompatible with punishment and reward for deeds.

It agrees with this that in Paul, as in Jewish literature, good deeds are a condition of remaining 'in', but they do not earn salvation (517).

In sum, Paul did not believe that one could earn salvation by not sinning and by doing the proper deeds. No human deeds would ever be sufficient to accomplish salvation. However, he believed that one could forfeit salvation through self-indulgence

and failure to manifest works of Christ.

Why did some of those who heard Paul understand him to preach libertinism if he insisted so much on good deeds as a condition of remaining "in" Christ? The primary reason would appear to be that Paul spoke as if future salvation were presently guaranteed without respect to future conduct. "Remember it is God himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us his pledge (guarantee), the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1:22). "But as we have the same spirit of faith...knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn, and put us by his side and you with us." (2 Cor. 4:13). Elsewhere Paul speaks of the guarantee of salvation to all those who merely express their belief in Christ: "If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from your heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved." (Romans 10:9-10). If Paul truly meant that future salvation was presently guaranteed regardless of what might happen in the future, then we may have here a genuine contradiction. Yet Paul saw no contradiction because the belief expressed is "from the heart" and thus genuine.

Paul and James

Nevertheless, it is clear from Paul's statements that some of his contemporaries understood him to teach that it doesn't matter what one does so long as one believes. (Romans 3:8;

6:1,15; 7:7; Gal. 5:11). As we have seen, one of the primary purposes of the letter to the Romans was to correct that misunderstanding. The same misunderstanding is the subject of James's so called epistle,¹ which was written to respond to the slogan of justification by faith alone urged by those who misinterpreted Paul, and perhaps to offer a corrective to Paul's statements about mere confession as the basis of justification.

The epistle of James has been traditionally attributed to James the Just, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church. James was known to Origen, who died A.D. 253, and was accepted by Jerome, Augustine and the Council of Carthage as having been authored by James the Just.

The authorship of James has been disputed since Luther argued that it was written by another pious Christian named James not having apostolic authority. Luther termed James a "straw epistle" because he thought it contained no Christology. Luther's assessment of authorship was closely allied with rejection of James because, in his view, it did not adequately teach salvation by grace alone. Luther's arguments are motivated by theological axe grinding and not an honest assessment of the evidence.

Early in this century, Harnack, Jülicher and the Tübingen School dated the epistle of James to the late second century, well after the lifetime of James the Just. These scholars dated the epistle of James later than James because they viewed it as synthesizing Jewish Christian and Pauline concepts, and thus concluded that it must have been written at a time when

Paul's letters were readily available in the late first century. They pointed to the fine Greek usage and diatribe form of the letter as evidence that the letter was written in Greek, not in Aramaic, the native tongue of James the Just. Indeed, there are numerous word plays that are possible only in Greek: appears/vanishes (Greek: phainomene/aphanizomene) 4:14; "greeting/joy" (charein/charan), 1:1-2; "distinguished/became judges" (diekrithete/Kritai). There are also alliterations possible only in Greek: "you meet sundry challenges" (peirasmois/peripesete/poikilois) 1:2; "little member/great things" (mikron/melos/megala) 3:5. James also adopts the diatribe literary form a common Greek literary device, presenting arguments in the form of dialogue between the writer and a challenger (2:18-26; 5:13-15). The evidence that the epistle of James manifests polished Greek is overwhelming.

A second group of scholars, including F. Spitta, L. Massebieu and Arnold Meyer, views James as a Jewish homily which was reworked by a Christian. These scholars note that the epistle of James mentions Jesus explicitly only twice, at 1:1 and 2:1, and these references are easily explained as interpolations. Further, the term "belief" in James is not belief in Jesus, but the acceptance of monotheism (2:19). Further semitisms are also evident in James 1. Terms such as (2:13), (4:11) and (1:11) are clear semitisms, as are evidences of Semitisms

F.F. Bruce and R.V.G. Tasker hold, in contrast, that James was written by James the Just late in his life, about A.D.

60-62. These scholars point to the settled and widespread nature of the church and arguments against distorted Paulinism as indicators of a later date, at least later than Galatians and Romans. Obviously, the judgment that James is responding to Paul plays a major role in dating and determining the authorship of the epistle of James.

The arguments proposed to demonstrate that the epistle of James was not authored by James the Just are not compelling. There is extensive evidence that Jews throughout Palestine spoke and wrote Greek fluently, and there is no reason to believe that James the Just could not do so. (J.M. Sevenster. Do You Know Greek? (Lieden: Nov. T. Sup. 19, 1968). Indeed, the Greek literary form of diatribe found in the epistle of James is found in synagogue homily as well as Greek homily (W.W. Wessel, "An Inquiry into the Origin, Literary Character, Historical and Religious Significance of the Epistle of James," Phd. Diss. Edinburgh, 1953). Further, the evidence of semitisms requires a semitic author behind the fine Greek. (Id.) The Greek can be explained by the reworking of material from James the Just by a scribe having considerable ability in Greek.

The argument that the epistle of James is Jewish, though at first glance plausible, is made improbable by the implicit Christology of the work. References to the early Christian parnetic tradition, especially from the Sermon on the Mount, are numerous. (Mayor, Ixxxv-xc). The citations are not to the written gospels (which would suggest a late date) but to the pre-literary tradition of Jesus's sayings. (W.G. Kummel,

Introduction to the New Testament (London: 1966 290; Peter Davids. Commentary on James (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 16). The epistle of James still expects an imminent second coming of the Lord and urges patience (5:7-9). The Christology of the epistle is undeveloped, suggesting an early date. The epistle refers to Jesus as , asserts that he now lives in glory and expects him to return soon as judge (2:1; 4:12; 5:7-9). The community addressed by epistle is characterized by ridicule of the poor by the rich. The "Poor of Jerusalem" is a technical term in the New Testament, referring to the Jerusalem Christians about 50-60 A.D. (Gal. 2:10; 2 Cor. 8:9; Acts 11:29). We see in James not a Jewish homily, but the early Jerusalem community consisting of Aramaic and Greek speaking Jewish Christians. A date after 70 A.D. is thus impossible because the community addressed by the epistle of James did not exist in any significant sense after that date. It is true that the community addressed is in the diaspora (1:1) and suffers from internal corruption and external persecution (1:2) from rich persons, i.e., the Jews (2:6-8). Many scholars view references to the dispersion as convincing evidence that the epistle of James must be dated to the late first century or after. Yet Acts 2:9-11 assumes a broad ethnical diversity of the earliest members and Acts 8:1-4 refers to an early scattering of Christians due to Jewish persecution. The reference to the "elders" in James 5:14 assumes an ecclesiastical development prior to the bishopric, probably about A.D. 50-60. (See e.g., Titus 1:5, 7-11; I Tim. 3:1-7; 4:12; 5:17; Acts 20:28). Thus, a

date of A.D. 50-60, or contemporaneous with Galatians and Romans, is strongly indicated by internal evidence.

James the Just appears to respond to the same Christians who Paul admits had misinterpreted him to separate faith and confession from conduct. The opponents addressed by the epistle of James appears to have derived their (mis)understanding from the writings of Paul, for they adopt Pauline technical terms and slogans, but they distort them in a way that Paul would have rejected. They argued: "You say you have good deeds, but we have faith" (2:18). They argue that a person is "justified by faith alone" (2:24,). James attacks the slogan of faith alone-sola fidae. James insists that faith "works together with works" and such works "perfect and fulfill faith" (2:22) ().

It appears that James the Just attempted to correct misunderstandings that arose from Paul's letters to the Galatians and possibly Romans. In contrast to the Pauline slogan that "man is justified by faith and not by works" (Romans 3:28; 9:32; Gal. 2:16) James states: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." (James 2:24). A more direct contradiction is hard to imagine; but James is not attacking Paul, but a slogan derived from Paul's writings. The "alone" () is absent from any statement in Paul's writings; it is condemned by James.

Indeed, it appears that James is responding directly to Paul's line of argument in Galatians 3 through 6 and Romans 3 through 4. At the end of Romans 3, Paul advances his argument

by reference to the accepted fact that the demons too acknowledged that "God is one" (Roman 3:30). In Galatians 4:8 Paul argues that those who live outside God's election ignorantly worship gods that are not really gods, but as Christians they "acknowledge God"-singular (Gal. 4:9). James uses a similar argument, but concludes against the Pauline argument that monotheistic faith is inadequate of itself: "You believe in one God-that is creditable enough, but the demons have the same belief, and they tremble with fear." (Jas. 2:19).

In Galatians 3 Paul cites Genesis 15:6 to support his argument that persons are justified by faith and not by works of the Law: "[Abraham] put his faith in God, and this faith was considered as justifying him." (Gal. 3:6-9). Paul employs the same argument in Romans 4:1-6, citing Genesis 15:6 again as support. James also cites Genesis 15:6 to support his argument that works combine together with faith to justify a man: 'You surely know that Abraham our father was justified by his deed, because he offered his son Isaac on the altr. There you see it: faith and deeds were working together; his faith became perfect by what he did. This is what the scripture really means () when it says: Abraham put his faith in God, and this was counted as making him justified....You see now that it is doing something good, and not by faith alone () that a man is justified." (James 2:21-24). James's language suggest that he is responding to what he considers to be a misunderstanding of Genesis 15:6. The misunderstanding which he attacks is that Abraham was justified by putting his trust in

God. James insisted that Abraham's trust must be placed in the context of the fact that Abraham's trust meant that he was willing to do something, i.e. sacrifice his only son. It was Abraham's trust together with his willingness to do what God asked that justified him. James thus sees Paul's isolation of Genesis 15:6 as incomplete.

In Galatians 3:10 Paul argues that those who rely on the Law of Moses are under a curse, and cites Deuteronomy 27:26 in support of his argument: "Cursed be everyone who does not persevere in observing everything prescribed in the book of the Law." (Gal 5:3-4) Paul concludes that no one can be justified by works of the Law. James makes the same argument in 2:10-11. "You see, if a man keeps the whole of the Law, except for one small point at which he fails, he is still guilty of breaking it all."

James then argues that Christians must "behave like people who are going to be judged by the law of freedom." (2:12). James refers elsewhere to the "perfect law of freedom" as the standard for Christian conduct. (1:25). The emphasis on freedom is of course typically Pauline. (Gal. 5:1, 13). Paul goes directly from the argument that Christ freed Christians from the Law of Moses and called them to liberty to the argument that Christians were called to liberty: "but be careful, or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, rather, in works of love, since the whole Law is summarized in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:13-15). Paul concludes that Christians are bound to

"carry each other's troubles and fulfill the law of Christ." (6:3). James also prefaces the argument that Christians are judged by the law of freedom with an identical argument: "the proper thing to do is to keep the supreme law of scripture: you must love your neighbor as yourself." (James 2:9).

The parallels are simply too striking, unique and extensive to avoid the conclusion that the position James is attacking is derived from Galatians and possibly also from Romans. Nevertheless, it is clear that James is not directly addressing Paul, for every key term attacked by James is different in meaning than its usage in Paul. Paul condemns reliance on works of the Law of Moses (Rom. 3:28). However, the "works" defended by James are not works of the Law of Moses, but works of brotherly love. Paul would agree with James that "works" in the sense of deeds of love are required by a life in Christ: "what matters is faith that makes its power felt through love." (Gal 5:6, 15, 22-23; 6:3, 9-10).

Both James and Paul approve of the law in the sense of the law of liberty, or the royal law, as used by James (2:9,13). Paul condemns the term Law when used in the sense of the Law of Moses, but approves law in the sense of the "law of Christ" or "law of grace" or "law of life in Christ Jesus."

James argued that God justifies () or declares one righteous in virtue of his works (). James does not use the term "justified" in the forensic sense of justification of sinners as Paul did. James refers to God's act in the final judgment of declaring a person righteous.

Whenever Paul speaks of judgment, he also speaks of judgment according to "works" or deeds. (Gal. 6:7-10; Rom. 14:11-12)

Finally, the notion of "faith alone" condemned by James is that of intellectual assent to proper doctrine. Confession of faith is approved by James only when it produces deeds of love. Faith alone will not do. James is emphatic that faith does not really exist without deeds of love. It is improper to say that if one has faith then works will naturally be manifest as a result; rather, faith and works are two aspects of the same act of accepting Jesus's law of love. Faith neither follows from nor precedes works, for James, faith apart from works is a false dichotomy-like a body without a spirit. Paul would agree totally with James that faith must be manifest in works. Paul would not argue that faith could exist apart from works in the sense of deeds of love; rather, he would ask if faith not manifest in deeds of love were faith in any genuine sense. (cf., Gal 5:6; 6:4; I Cor. 13:2; 2 Cor. 9:8). The polemic in James finds its closest parallel in the New Testament in Matthew: "Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of the Father." (Mt. 7:21). Finally, it must be noted that James does not deny that faith has a role in justification, it is simply that faith is consummated in brotherly love that justifies, not mere confession (James 2:14, 17-22, 26).

Paul and James both address a distortion of Paul's teachings and they both agree that justifying faith entails a life manifesting deeds of love; neither accepted the slogan that

man is justified by faith alone. It is important to note that James does not name Paul as the source of the confusion. Though Paul had viciously attacked the so-called "friends of James" in his letter to the Galatians, James does not write in defense of his friends.

In summary, whenever Paul refers to works in a sense that he condemns, he refers to ceremonial works of the Law of Moses; whereas James refers to works only in the sense of works of love. Whenever James refers to faith in a sense that he condemns, he refers to mere intellectual assent that is not manifest in works; whereas Paul refers to faith in the sense of faith manifest in love. Moreover, James does not deny faith a role in justification, for there is a synergy between faith and works which justifies a person (James 23:22). However, James uses "justified" in a sense that means "is finally judged righteous." Paul does not use "justification" in this sense. Nevertheless, Paul would agree that judgment is "according to works" (Rom. 2:6; 4:10; I Cor. 3:12-17; 9:23-27; 10:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 6:1; Phil. 2:12; 3:8, 14.) Yet Paul and James certainly understand the example of Abraham in Genesis 15:6 differently. James and Paul both accept Genesis 15:6 as establishing justification by faith, but James sees such an interpretation as a distortion unless it is put in the context of Abraham's deeds of obedience in the arrested sacrifice of Isaac.

It is worth pausing to consider the man James revealed in the epistle of James. James is identified as a brother of Jesus in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55. It appears that Jesus's family

did not accept his prophetic status early in his ministry. Jesus's "relatives," possibly including his family, regarded him as insane. Mark 3:20-21. Jesus refused to see his family when they arrived in Capernaum. Mark 3:20-21; Matt 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21. Mark clearly states that Jesus's family, explicitly naming James, would not accept Jesus, causing Jesus to respond: "A prophet is despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house." (Mark 6:4-5; Matt 13: 53-58). Despite the apparent misunderstanding, James the Just, the "brother of the Lord," was accepted as the leader of the Jerusalem church.

James' dramatic reversal of attitudes was likely the result of the special vision of the risen Christ vouchsafed him after Jesus appeared to the twelve (I Cor. 15:8). James clearly had a concern, as leader of the Jerusalem church, to provide for the poor. He charged Paul with raising funds from the gentile churches to help to support the Jerusalem Church. James' principal concern was the pronounced class distinction among Christians. James found his place squarely in the line of the Old Testament prophets who denounced the mistreatment of the poor by the powerful and rich (Hab. 1:4; Amos 4:1; 8:4; Zech 7:10; Jeremiah 5:26-27; 7:6; 22:3; Isa. 59:9). Class distinctions were an implicit judgment of the very kind Jesus had forbidden. James warned his fellow Christians:

My brothers, do not combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinctions between classes of people. Now suppose a man comes into your synagogue, beautifully dressed and with a gold ring on, and at the same time a poor man comes in, in

shabby clothes, and you take notice of the well dressed man, and say, "Come this way to the best seat"; then you tell the well-dressed man, "stand over there" or "You can sit on the floor by my footrest." Can't you see that you have used two different standards in your mind, and turned yourselves into judges, and corrupt judges at that?

James 2:1-4

James is clear that such judgments are unworthy of Christians, for the poor as to the world are superior in faith to the rich. (2:5). The poor are "heirs to the kingdom" (2:5; cf. Matt. 5:3-5; Luke 6:20; 7:22). It is significant that James' teachings are largely derived from an early tradition of the sayings of Jesus. There are 25 parallel sayings between James and the Sermon on the Mount, 12 of which are common with Q. It is significant that there are also 3 other parallels from the Sermon on the Plain. James quotes neither Matthew nor Luke, but obtains his material from a common tradition of sayings. In James we find a direct attestation of the sayings tradition in the primitive church. We hear an echo of the peace-loving Q community still anxiously awaiting the second coming of Jesus. James is ignorant of the developed Christology of John or the theology of the cross found in Paul. James's primary concern is to faithfully observe what the earthly Jesus taught. In contrast, Paul's primary concern was to teach the resurrected Christ. Paul did not know the earthly Jesus, he knew only "the crucified Christ." Paul's theology was centered on the expiatory death and resurrection of the Christ encountered on the road to Damascus. James's theology is very different. James's

thought is oriented to Jesus of Nazareth; his thought is concerned not so much with cosmic suffering and atonement as with the great prophet who taught the kingdom of God, the prophet of the poor whose law condensed the entire Jewish law into a single command of love.

It is necessary to reject the view of James as an ultra zealous observer of the Law of Moses. This view of James derives primarily from Eusebius's report of the writings of Hegesippus, who characterized James as a legalist who was revered by Jews at Jerusalem for his faithfulness to the Law. (Eusebius. Church History II.23). Hegesippus's account is untrustworthy, however, and much too late to bear the weight it sometimes has in assessing James's relationship to the Law. James's role in the Jerusalem Council demonstrates that James was a centrist who attempted to mediate two conflicting factions of Christianity. The epistle of James shows that James interpreted the entire Law as done away by the new Christian law of love. Indeed, James's attitude toward the Law of Moses is very close to that of Jesus presented in the Gospel of Matthew. James sees the Law of Moses as subsumed and fulfilled in the love command. James cites the decalogue injunctions against adultery and murder, treating them as still authoritative for Christians (James 2:10-11). Nevertheless, these commands of the Law are subsumed under the "royal law" of neighbor love. (James 2:8-9). James clearly believed that Christians would be "judged by the law of freedom." (2:13). The Law is assumed by James to still be binding upon Christians, but there is "only one lawgiver" and

only one judge who can acquit or sentence under the Law (4:11-12). It is not unlikely that Christians refused to seek redress under the Law at all because Jesus had forbidden Christians to initiate actions to recover economic losses or redress assault to the person. James reflects such a refusal to look to the Law to provide a legal remedy in the early Christian community. Hence, the Law ceased to be the basis for regulating community affairs, for no person could enforce the Law. Christians were forbidden from judging compliance with the Law (4:12). The basis for disarming the Law was, once again, the love command. James demonstrates that Jesus's love command constituted a new law and the entire law binding upon Christians in the early Jerusalem community. Nevertheless, Paul treats the Law under a substantially identical argument in Romans! The Law was wholly encompassed in the new law of love given by Jesus:

The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfill the law. All these: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: You must love your neighbor as yourself. Love can cause no harm to your neighbor, and so love is the fulfillment of the Law. (Romans 13:8-10).

Paul and James had the same assessment of the role of the Law in the early Christian community. The sanctions of the Law are unnecessary in a community ruled by love.

It is also noteworthy that James has much in common with I Peter, written by James close associate. I Peter has a number of sayings demonstrating close contact with the tradition known

to James (e.g., I Pet. 1:6-7; Jas 1:2-4; Jas 4:6-10; I Pet. 5:5-9; Jas. 5:20; I Pet. 4:8; Jas 1:18; I Pet. 1:23; Jas. 4:1; I Pet. 2:11; Jas. 1:10; I Pet. 1:24-25). These contacts suggest that both James and I Peter arise out of a common life setting, as would be expected if both were written by the persons whose names they bear.

The new law, the law of love, was given more specific content in Christian paransis. The oral tradition expanded the command of enemy love:

Bless your persecutors; never curse them,
bless them.

Never pay back evil with evil

Never try to get revenge: leave that my dear friends to Retribution. As scripture says: Vengence is mine --I will pay them back, the Lord promises. And more: If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; if thirsty, something to drink. By this, you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head. (Prov. 25:22) Do not be mastered by evil, but master evil with good. (Romans 14,17-21).

The same tradition is reflected in I Peter where the command to love enemies is given concrete content:

Never repay one wrong with another, or one abusive word with another; instead, repay with a blessing. That is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing.
*** (I Peter 3:9-10_

The same tradition is found in I Thessalonians:

Make sure that people do not try to repay evil for evil. Always aim at what is best for each other and everyone.
(I Thessalonians 5:15).

It is essential to note that Jesus's command to resist evil with love has been given specific application within the

community. The enemies were those who persecuted the community, or those within the community who spoke evil. The command was adapted to the conditions and demands within the community. There is no indication that the command was interpreted to apply to national enemies at this early period.

Hence, Paul was totally right to refuse to lay down "new rules of behavior" in addition to the love command. James was totally right to make the love command the basis for expectations of conduct. The Christian reflects Christ in his life by relating to persons in the same way that Jesus did.

Paul and Jesus

Almost every scholar who has written on Paul's thought has stressed the discontinuity between Paul and Jesus. Paul did not know Jesus and was totally dependent on those who knew him or the early oral traditions for his knowledge of Jesus's teachings. However, Paul had little regard for what Peter and James taught unless it squared with his views of Christ. Paul does not teach what Jesus taught; Paul preaches Jesus.

Paul did not preach that repentance is a condition of entering the kingdom of God as Jesus did. Indeed, Paul has little concern for the "kingdom of God" in the sense which preoccupied Jesus. Jesus never used the term justification. Jesus never spoke of grace in the theological sense urged by Paul. Jesus did not reject the Law of Moses; he adopted it and fulfilled it. Indeed, Jesus did not urge merely that one should observe the true intent of the Mosaic Law; Jesus demanded a more strict observance even than was required by the Law. Jesus

taught that it is not enough to avoid adultery, one must also refrain from lust. It is not enough to love neighbors, one must also love enemies. Indeed, Moses had permitted divorce due to the wickedness of Israel, but Jesus taught that divorce is contrary to the new law binding on his disciples. Paul rejected the Law of Moses as an acceptable guide to religious observance. Paul denigrated the Law of Moses as evil, as sin. Paul felt free to contradict Jesus's teachings on divorce (I Cor. 7:10-12): "To the married I give this ruling, and this is not mine but the Lord's: a wife must not be separated from her husband...and a husband must not divorce his wife...these instructions are my own, not the Lord's. But if the unbeliever chooses to leave, then let the separation take place." Further, Paul's thought is not dependent on Jesus. Paul shows little interest in the earthly Jesus; his entire message is a theological interpretation of the resurrected Christ.

While it is undeniable that the Christianity taught by Paul is very different from the concerns and message of Jesus of Nazareth, there are also important and often overlooked points of similarity. There was a tension in Jesus's thought between the already present kingdom (realized eschatology) and the not-yet kingdom (future eschatology). There was a sense in which the kingdom had already come in the activity of Jesus and a sense in which the kingdom of God's rule clearly had not come. There is a similar tension in Paul's doctrine of justification. The declaration that a person is righteous is reserved finally for the Day of the Lord. For Paul, there was an important sense

however, in which persons were already declared righteous in Christ: God offers a relationship at all times without condition and Christians have already entered into the relationship by being in Christ. The concepts of the kingdom on the one hand and justification, on the other, are clearly not identical. However, both point to a sense in which God's action for us is present and a sense in which God's action for us is yet to be fully realized. While Jesus focuses on the action of his Father, Paul focuses on the action of the resurrected Christ.

A second similarity between the thought of Jesus and the theology of Paul is the emphasis on God as the ground for defining the standard of human conduct. Jesus made the way that God related to humans the standard for how humans must relate to one another. He expected that humans would be merciful as the Father is merciful and holy as the Father is holy. Paul made one's relationship with Christ the definer of what conduct is proper. The baptismal ritual in Paul's theology is an action in imitation of Christ. Christ was mortal in the same way that we are. He suffered and died; so must we. Christ was resurrected and exalted in conformity with the image of God. We too will be resurrected and made co-heirs with Christ in everything that Christ shares with the Father. Both taught that mankind bears an intimate kinship with God which must be manifest in deeds.

Ultimately, both Paul's theology of justification and Jesus's notion of the kingdom of God focus on the proper relationship between God and man. The kingdom of God is realized through the relationship of love offered freely by

God. Jesus's mission was to re-introduce his disciples to the intimate relationship which he enjoyed with the Father. Paul's notion of justification is a statement that God offers a relationship and there are no conditions to God's loving offer. Those who are justified enter into the same relationship with the Father that Christ has with the Father. Jesus demanded obedience to God's commandments, and all the commandments he subsumed in one command: love. Human obedience is a manifestation of love for God and toward all humans-neighbors and enemies. The Law is thus subsumed into the new law.

Moreover, even apparent differences between the teachings of Jesus and Paul turn out on closer inspection to be more semantic than substantive. It is undeniable that Jesus required repentance as condition to entering the way to the kingdom of God. Jesus demanded that a person leave behind everything of the world and devote his entire heart, might, mind and strength to the kingdom of God. This commitment made radical demands upon one's conduct in light of the dawning kingdom. Paul never requires repentance in name as a condition to entering the kingdom. Further, Paul does not condition entering into the relationship with God on repentance. One enters the relationship denoted by justification solely by having faith in Christ. For Paul, the saving relationship is offered without condition through grace.

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that while Paul may not use the word "repentance" () in connection with entering into Christ, he requires the pragmatic equivalent. If

a person enters into Christ, he must leave behind the "old man," abandon the person that was and be made into a new person. The person who believes is baptized into Christ to show that she has "died to sin." Repentance for Christ meant leaving behind one's old life and living a life totally devoted to the kingdom. Paul's notion of "dying to sin" and being born to a life in Christ is the behavioral equivalent to Jesus's notion of repentance:

[O]ur former self was crucified with him, so that the self which belonged to sin should be destroyed and we should be freed from the slavery of sin...But we believe that, if we died with Christ, then we shall live with him too. (Romans 6:7,9).