

Dr. John J. Pilch, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA

[pilchj@georgetown.edu](mailto:pilchj@georgetown.edu)

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/pilchj>

### **International Seminar on Saint Paul**

Casa Divin Maestro

Aricia (Rome), Italy, April, 2009

## **EVANGELIZATION IN THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AND IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL**

### **How Paul's World Works: My Working Assumptions.**

Much of what I will be sharing with you in these presentations has already been published by Alba House (Akron, Ohio, USA) as noted in my list of resources. That audio-tape presentation comes with a printed study guide. I have based these presentations on that study guide and on the commentary that I published subsequently with my boyhood friend and professional colleague, Dr. Bruce J. Malina (Creighton University) with Fortress Press (2006). Our friendship and collaboration spans more than sixty years. If you are familiar with the Alba House program, these presentations will be a pleasant review and expansion of those ideas.

Paul belonged to that generation of the Jesus movement which stood between the Jesus group and the Evangelists. His seven undisputed letters make it clear that Paul considered himself to be an Israelite prophet sent by the God of Israel to Israelites who were residing as minority groups among non-Israelites majorities. He had little to no interest in Gentiles, even those who believed in Jesus. Paul considered them to be like branches grafted "contrary to nature" on to Israel, the true root (Rom 11:24). These reflections on Paul as an Evangelizer in his missionary activity and his letters will present him in a fresh perspective. Participants are invited to explore Paul as a "change agent" commissioned by God to proclaim and prepare for the forthcoming theocracy soon to be inaugurated by the return of the Risen Jesus, appointed by God as Messiah and Cosmic Lord.

### **A. Terminology**

#### **1. No Christians** before Constantine (325 A.D., Nicaea).

-*Jesus Movement*: Jesus and the group of his immediate circle of followers.

-*Jesus-Groups*: those who followed after Jesus' death and resurrection.

-They called themselves: *Followers of the Way* (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

-Outsiders called them: Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16-17) with negative connotation.

-We might call them **“Messianists”** since the majority of them were “Judeans” who accepted Jesus as Messiah.

We can view this information thus:

First Generation	Jesus, Apostles, their families, various followers. Etc. The Jesus Movement
Second Generation	Paul and his associates: Timothy, Silas, Apollo, Lydia, Phoebe, et al. Jesus-groups.
Third Generation	Evangelists Mark and Matthew
Fourth Generation	Luke (and Acts).

## 2. **No Jews** before the Talmud (circa 500 A.D.)

-First Temple Judaism (950–587 B.C.): Israelites (literally “sons of Israel” Exod 1:1; Gen 35:10)

-Second Temple Judaism (520 BC to 70 AD): “Judeans” (Yehudim, Ioudaioi), all who lived in the Persian colony: Yehud. (See Neh 1:2; 2 Macc 6:1; and the NT). Hence the Jesus Group members are Judeans.

-After 70, Yohanan ben Zakkai founds the Academy at Yabneh (Jamnia) in which Rabbinic Judaism took root eventually culminating in the Talmuds: Babylonian and Palestinian. Modern day Judaism is rooted in Talmudic practices. (The English word, Jew, is a medieval English word and inappropriate to describe anything prior to 500 AD).

Thus, Jesus groups were: Israel awaiting the theocracy proclaimed by Jesus.”

Ben Zakkai groups who formed after 70 were: “Israel awaiting the restoration of the Temple.”

Paul, therefore, is a “Messianist” in ongoing conflict with fellow Judeans who refused to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

In his letters, Paul never call himself a Judean, although he claims Judean birth (Gal 2:15; self-definitions Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22). For Paul, the world consists of Israel and all other peoples (ta ethne, the out-group), while his Israel consists of Judeans and Hellenes (misleadingly translated as **“Jews and Greeks.”** Hellas did not exist in the first century! See Rom 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:24; Gal 3:28). Italian: Ebrei e Greci; Spanish: judío y non-judío).

Judeans were Israelites with ties to Judea and its customs. A Hellene was a person who was cultivated, who spoke a common Hellenic language, practiced some Macedonian or Athenian or, increasingly, Roman customs and behaved in what was considered to be a

cultivated or “civilized” life-style. A Hellene could be a Roman, an Egyptian, an Israelite, or whatever. In other words, “Judean and Greek” refer to status and not a country or a state.

## B. Letters

Five of Paul’s seven authentic letters (1 Thess, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil. deal with (interpersonal) problems faced by Jesus-groups founded by Paul. Romans deals with travel arrangements. Philemon serves as a runaway slave’s letter of recommendation that his master accept him back. To put all Paul and his letters into context, consider this chart:

As for Paul’s letters, they can be viewed in this perspective.

First generation pauline documents trace back to Paul and his interaction with persons in the small groups (“churches”) that he founded	Seven authentic letters: 1 Thess, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil, Phlm, Rom
Second generation pauline documents	Colossians and 2 Thess
Third generation pauline documents	Ephesians (a sort of letter to non-Israelite Jesus-group members), Hebrews (a sort of letter to practicing Judean Jesus groups), and the Pastoral letters (1-2 Tim, Titus)

Such chronological information is important in helping modern readers avoid the pitfall of **anachronism**. It also helps a modern reader to trace development in Paul’s thinking, etc. But there is another pitfall with equally potential devastating consequences: **ethnocentrism**. Modern readers interested in Paul’s “theology” are at particular risk of falling into this pit. Let us return to Paul’s life and letters from a social scientific perspective for a fresh understanding.

## C. Paul’s Life in Social Scientific Perspective: Who is Paul?

### 1. Paul is **NOT a Roman Citizen**.

Acts 21:39, he is a citizen of Tarsus; several other passages in Acts indicate that Paul was also a Roman citizen (16:37; 22:25; 23:27). However, a Roman Citizen could not be exposed to the abuse heaped upon Paul (2 Cor 11:24-25). Thus Paul’s testimony in his letters conflicts with Luke’s “spin” in Acts. The Stegemanns (p. 302) call the Acts portrayal a “literary fiction.”

2. Paul is of **LOWER social status**. Paul’s noteworthy (upper) social position in Acts has no basis in his own letters. He worked as an artisan and depended on others for financial

support (2 Cor 11:8-9; Phil 4:10ff). He may have been just above subsistence level. (See the Stegemanns).

3. Paul is an **Israelite, Benjaminite, of a family practicing Judean customs** (Phil 3:5-6). First century persons defined themselves, as a rule, in terms of gender, genealogy and geography. Here Paul implies gender and geography, but specifies genealogy, first in terms of kinship (Israelite, Benjaminite, of a family practicing Judean customs devotedly [that is what “Hebrew” meant], then in term of his associational or fictive kinship affiliation (Pharisee). See also 2 Cor 11:22.

4. **Persecutor of Messianists.** See Gal 1:12-14, 22-23, and Acts 7:58–8:3. Paul was an Israelite who persecuted Israelite Jesus groups in Judea.

5. **Called by God to be an Apostle.** See Gal 1:15-17. Paul didn’t “convert” to Christianity for two reasons. Christianity didn’t come into existence until after 325 AD, and conversion means moving from one group to another. Paul remained an Israelite to the end of his life. He cared nothing about non-Israelites.

6. **Apostle to Israelites living among non-Israelites (“Gentiles”).** See Galatians 1:15-17 with its allusions to Jer 1:5 and Isa 49:1. Compare Matt 10:5; 18:17; 28:19. Paul was an Apostle of God (I Cor 1:1) commissioned to preach the “gospel of God” (Rom 1:1) - something entirely new, hence Paul would be called a “change agent” today, someone who is to communicate and diffuse some innovation. We shall reflect at some length on the concept of a change agent.

7. **Paul’s field of Evangelization was the Western Diaspora.** From earliest times, there were two Diasporas (East - from Palestine to Babylonia; and West - from Palestine to Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, Rome etc.) with Palestine in the middle. This involved two languages (Aramaic and Greek) and two literatures (Oral Torah, the Talmuds; and the Septuagint). Palestine and the Eastern diaspora were observant; the Western diaspora was totally enculturated so much so that one could not distinguish an Israelite from the non-Israelites.

8. **Paul was a holy man in his culture (saddiq/hasid).** All cultures recognize such individuals (e.g., Shamans) who have immediate access to the world of the spirits, and who can broker gifts (especially healing but also information) from that world to this.

Given Paul’s approach, his presumptions -- that his audience knew Israel’s story and knew Israel’s scripture and that his essential task was to proclaim how the God of Israel was revealed in the resurrection of Jesus thus appointing Jesus Israel’s Messiah with a forthcoming Israelite theocracy -- makes it quite clear that Paul’s message was meant for Israelites. And given the range of Israelites in the first century, the perception both of the message and of approaches to the message would follow the patterns of the recipients of this innovation spread by Paul a change agent in Israel.

**In summary**, we (Malina and Pilch) offer the following chart comparing the prevailing modes of interpreting Paul's letters and the viewpoints adopted here:

### Received View

Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul is apostle with a ministry.

Paul is source of theology

Paul second founder of Christianity, after Jesus.

Paul is apostle to heterophilous groups, i.e. non Israelite Gentiles.

Paul's doctrine is eschatological, sometimes apocalyptic.

Paul writes to religious groups.

Paul is directly and immediately relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> century churches.

Paul is a monotheist.

Paul is a universalist.

### Social Science View

Paul is the apostle to Israelites living among Gentiles.

Paul is change agent with an innovation to communicate to Israel..

Paul is focused on interpersonal relations in Jesus group formation.

God is founder of Christianity

Paul is change agent to homophilous groups, i.e. Israelites living among Gentiles.

Paul's doctrine is political religion, proclaimed theocracy, for fictive kin groups.

Paul writes to fictive kin groups with a domestic religion, awaiting the kingdom of God (political religion in abeyance).

Paul was directly and immediately relevant to 1<sup>st</sup> century Jesus groups.

Paul is a henotheist.

Paul is ethnocentric particularist.

### D. Chronology of Paul's Life (Murphy-O'Connor)

What has been learnt from the letters can now be summarized as follows:

Birth	<i>c.6bc</i>
Commissioning	AD 33
Arabia	34
Damascus	34-37
Jerusalem (1st visit)	37
Syria and Cilicia	37-?
Jerusalem (2nd visit)	51

These conclusions, however, must be confronted with the evidence of Acts.

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The results of this analysis and calculations can be tabulated as follows:

	Antioch	Winter 45-46	
	Departure from	April 46	
Antioch	Journey to Galatia	April-September 46	
	Ministry in Galatia	September 46 - May 48	
	Journey to	Summer 48	
Macedonia	Ministry in	September 48 - April 50	
Macedonia	Journey to Corinth	April 50	
	Ministry in Corinth	April 50-September 51	51: 1 Thess
	Journey to Jerusalem	September 51	
	Conference in	October 51	
Jerusalem			

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We are now in a position to complete the above table.

	Jerusalem	October 51	
Conference	Antioch	Winter 51-52	
	Journey to Ephesus	April-July 52	
	Ephesus	August 52 - October 54	53: Gal, Phil, [Col], Phlm 54-55: 1 Cor, 2 Cor
	Macedonia	Winter 54-55	
	Illyricum	Summer 55	
	Corinth		
Winter 55-56			56: Romans
	Journey to Jerusalem	Summer 56	
	Jerusalem-Caesarea	57?-61?	
	Journey to Rome	September 61-Spring 62	
	Rome	Spring 62 - Spring 64	
	Spain	Early Summer 64	
	Around the Aegean	64-66?	
	Death in Rome	67	

Paul was born in Gischala in Upper Galilee. Family sold into slavery after 4 BC, likely bought by a Roman citizen in Tarsus.. He was an Aramaic speaking Israelite, though outside Palestine he spoke Greek. Knew the LXX well, quoted it about 90 times. Educated in Tarsus likely at the University there, so he became familiar with Stoicism (everything happens according to divine reason, so acquiesce!). About 15 AD (20 years old) after finishing his education, he was a relatively assimilated Diaspora Israelite. He went to Jerusalem (500 miles, six weeks of walking) where he became a Pharisee (two-thirds of their teaching concern diet, purity, agricultural produce). Paul was a Jerusalem Pharisee for about 20 years before accepting Messiah Jesus (about age 40). Though their lives overlapped, Jesus and Paul never met while Jesus was alive. Their critical encounter took place in an alternate state of consciousness (1 Cor 15:8).

Paul or his letter carriers could average 20 miles a day (including sickness, injury, bad weather, wait for caravan, etc). As noted above, the letters were written in one city to Jesus groups he founded living in other cities. He wrote at least six letters from Ephesus where he lived two years. To illustrate, Corinth is about 320 miles along the coast from Thessalonica. In Corinth Paul worried about the new believers in Thessalonica, so he sent Timothy to inquire. This would take 2-3 weeks. He'd stay a while, then 2-3 weeks for the return trip. Paul would wait two months to get news about them. Then he wrote his letters to them. Thus "Paul was out of touch with his converts most of the time, even when they were in greatest need of him."

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**Monday, April 20, 2009**

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**1. 9:00–10:30 am Evangelization in Paul's Letters: Paul, God's Change Agent**

Dr. John J. Pilch, Rome, April, 2009.

Paul the Apostle can be viewed as a change agent. He had something new and different to share, and was authorized by God to announce this change to fellow Israelites in the Western dispersion. Thus, in the case of Paul,

Change Agency = God

Change Agent = Paul

Clients = those who need the change.

Change agents invariably have the following seven tasks, occurring in no fixed order apart from the first and last steps.

**Step 1: Need for Change**

The book of Acts presents idealized scenarios of how Paul performed this initial function of the diffusion of innovation, how he made listeners realize they needed to adopt the change he was preaching. See Acts 17:1-9.

**Step 2: Information Exchange**

This is precisely the stage at which Paul's letter writing activity and emissary exchange fits in. All the letters but Romans were sent to groups who adopted the change Paul preached ("the gospel of God"). It is also with a view to information exchange that Paul sends emissaries such as Timothy (1 Thess 3:6; Phil 2:19, 22; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10), Apollo (1 Cor 16:12), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), and Silvanus (2 Cor 1:19) to the new Jesus-groups. The Jesus-groups in turn send emissaries to Paul with reports and/or questions. Chloe's group informed Paul about problems in Corinth while he was in Ephesus (1 Cor 1:11). The purpose behind such an information exchange relationship included the following sequence of three steps: diagnose problems, create intent to change, and prevent discontinuance. Let us consider these in order.

**Step 3: Problem Diagnosis**

Paul had to diagnose his clients' problems arising from the innovation proclaimed by him. E.g., among the Thessalonians he strove to restore order (1 Thess 4:9-12), to assuage their concerns about believers who died before the Parousia (1 Thess 4:13-18), and to tell them more about that event which he considered imminent (1 Thess 5:1-11).

**Step 4: Create Intent to Change**

Paul's information exchange relationship likewise encourages his clients to persevere in the decision they had made to join the Jesus-group. Such perseverance requires client-centered motivation. The phrase Paul repeats

most often to motivate the recipients of his letters to continue to change is “for us” or something equivalent. See 1 Thess 5:10; Gal 3:13-14.

### **Step 5: Translate Intent into Action**

Change agents always want their clients to translate their intent to change into action, into actual change. Intellectual agreement will not suffice. Paul’s urging at the close of all of his exhortations is to do what he suggests, to behave accordingly. He exhorts the Thessalonians no less than four times! (1 Thess 1:11-12; 4:1; 4:10; 5:14).

As a good change agent would do, so Paul presents himself as a model for imitation. In other words he offers concrete “how to” information. “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1; see also 4:16; Phil 3:15; 1 Thess 2:14).

“How to” knowledge is often accompanied by “the reason why” knowledge. His exhortation to the Philippian believers to imitate him is contrasted with those who live “as enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil 3:18). These would be fellow-Israelites who refused to recognize Jesus as Messiah, and Israelite Judaizers who insist on imposing the requirements of Torah righteousness as practiced in Judea upon assimilated Israelites living in the Diaspora (dispersion).

### **Step 6: Stability and Prevention of Discontinuance**

Clients often adopt innovations only to discontinue them. The change agent’s task is to stabilize adoption and prevent discontinuance. Galatians is a parade example urging clients not to discontinue in favor of an alternative version of the innovation. Paul omits the customary expression of personal indebtedness (the so-called “thanksgiving” section) in this letter and begins instead by saying: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in [the] grace [of Christ] and turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel...!” (Gal 1:6). So certain was he of his gospel that Paul leveled a two-fold curse against such activity.

The only reason Paul can think of to explain why the Galatians abandoned his innovation for another is that someone must have cast the evil eye upon them. “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Gal 3:1). See also 1 Thess 4:1

### **Step 7: Achieve a Terminal Relationship**

When a client group adopts an innovation in some stable way, the change agent’s goal is to achieve a terminal relationship, to end the ongoing relationship. First and second generation Jesus-group change agents are succeeded by local central personages, at times by a board of elders (“presbyters,” 1 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:5-6), at other time by a single central person (“episkopos” best translated as “supervisor,” 1 Tim 3:1; Titus 1:7).

### **Summary:**

These seven features mark Paul’s “apostolate to [Israelites living among] the Gentiles.” Homophilous and heterophilous communication seems to confirm that he had little interest and activity among non-Israelites. Homophilous = like minded people, common education, beliefs, social status, etc. Horizontal. Heterophilous = no common education, beliefs, social status, etc. Vertical, as conversion of a King, Prince, (Poland).

### **How the Innovation was Received.**

Both from the statistics cited and from the literature itself, that is, Paul's letters and Acts, it is evident that those who accepted the innovation that Paul preached were perhaps far fewer than those who rejected it.

### **Paul: Model for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Private revelations notwithstanding, the God of Israel has not commissioned a new change agent nor communicated a fresh innovation.

Perhaps, like Paul, contemporary followers of Jesus Messiah, "Abraham's seed according to the promise," ought to discern how faithfully and accurately the innovation that Paul preached has been accepted and is being implemented now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Pope Benedict XVI has led the way with such **clarifications** (e.g., limbo; Stephen not a deacon).

Already in the 1949, Fr. Edward Siegman, an eminent American biblical scholar noted that many scripture passages were correctly interpreted and applied to support dogma, but he identified three problems that characterized texts which were wrongly used. These problems are still worth addressing today. The first is mistranslation. The second error is tearing a verse from its context in the Bible. The third error is reading into a text something which the author could never have intended (eisegesis).

### **Conclusion**

In his book, Jesus of Nazareth (2007), Pope Benedict XVI wrote: "It goes without saying that this book is in no way an exercise of the Magisterium, but is solely an expression of my personal search 'for the face of the Lord' (Cf. Ps 27:8). Everyone is free, then, to contradict me. I would only ask my readers for that initial goodwill without which there can be no understanding" (Ratzinger xxiii-xxiv). I can think of no better way to conclude my reflections on Paul the Evangelizer best understood as a change agent, appropriate model for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Resources:**

Ascough, Richard. Lydia: Paul's Cosmopolitan Hostess. Paul's Social Network: Brothers and Sisters in Faith. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2009.

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**2. 11:00- 12:30: 1 Thessalonians: First Letter from Paul, God's Change Agent**

Dr. John J. Pilch, Rome, April, 2009

**I. 1 Thess 1:1 Letter Opening (Superscription).****II. 1 Thess 1:2-3:13 About the Relationship between the Change Agents and the Jesus Group That They Formed**

Section One: 1 Thess 1:2-2:16 Events since the formation of the Jesus Group at Thessalonika

Section Two: 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 After the formation of the Jesus Group at Thessalonika

**III. 1 Thess 4:1-5:24 Directives and Exhortations**

Section One: 1 Thess 4:1-12 Conduct Pleasing to God

Section Two: 1 Thess 4:13-5:11 Solutions to Problems about What is Next

Section Three: 1 Thess 5:12-24 About Group Support

**IV. 1 Thess 5:25-28 Letter Closing: Salutation and Blessing.**

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After communication the innovation and winning some clients in the Israelite community at Thessalonica, Paul's main task was to develop an information exchange relationship with those clients. The purpose was to help Paul to diagnose problems rising from the adoption of the innovation, to maintain the clients' intent to change, and to translate that intent into action. Lastly, Paul sought to stabilize the client group and prevent discontinuance of the change, if possible.

Of course, the result of this is conflict. Some in the Israelite community who do not accept the change apply pressure to maintain the status quo. Paul sent Timothy to investigate, and after hearing a positive report from him, Paul wrote this letter.

In general, Paul is pleased with the good news brought by Timothy and praises them for their progress. In a second section of this letter Paul gives exhortations about holiness and ingroup behavior. Then he addresses questions about Jesus-group members who have died and about the time of God's forthcoming intervention. Finally he exhorts the group about respecting their local opinion leaders and supporting one another. Notice the strong interpersonal dimensions of communication in this letter. His use of emphatic pronouns (in Greek) fills the letter with a certain interpersonal closeness matched only by his letter to the Philippians.

We will focus on Section Three (1 Thess 4:1–5:24 Directives and Exhortations) but skim through the earlier sections.

### **I. 1 Thess 1:1 Letter Opening (Superscription)**

Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy are co-authors of the letter and Jesus-group change agents. Church (ekklesia) is a gathering of the entitled residents of a city with the privilege of deciding matters of significance to the city with the obligation to support what was of significance to the city. This word was used in the LXX to describe God's chosen people, hence Paul uses it to describe God's new chosen people. The group with which they were in conflict was the synagogue (synagoge) an Israelite gathering.

Lord is one who has complete power. Jesus as Lord holds cosmic power. This would definitely be seen by Romans as a political challenge to the reigning Emperor, Claudius. The first adopters of Paul's Gospel were likely of higher social levels.

### **II. 1 Thess 1:2–3:13 About the Relationship between the Change Agents and the Jesus Group That They Formed**

Notice the language: "we/our" "you/your". This usage points to an insistence on mutual commitment and solidarity rather than any concern with power (authority) or influence (teaching). The teaching in this letter is about practical attachment to fellow members of the Thessalonian Jesus Group (4:9–5:11). Developing a distinctive group identity is crucial to the change agent's task to provide stability and prevent discontinuance of the innovation. ("God has chosen you").

1:10 "raised from the dead." Resurrection meant the transformation of a dead person into a life marked by a radically different way of being a living human. This belief derived from the Persians (Farsi), after whom the

Pharisees are named. Pharisees and Qumran believed in this; Sadducees denied it.

213-16. This section is about innovators and first adopters. Innovators control adequate material and personality resources to absorb the possible failure due to an unsuccessful innovation. They can understand and apply rather complex knowledge. They espouse the value of venturesomeness, that is, a desire for the daring, the chancy, and the risky. Finally, innovators are cosmopolites, that is, they have contact with outsiders and most often have social relationships with them.

First adopters are a more integrated part of the local social system than are innovators. They are locally focused people and frequently are opinion leaders. They are not far ahead of the average person and serve as role models for others in adopting the innovation. They are respected by peers and are the embodiment of successful and discreet use of the new idea. They know that they must continue to earn the esteem and reputation of their colleagues if their position as opinion leaders in the social system is to be maintained.

3:11-13 The theme of the first three chapters of this letter is Paul's attachment to the Thessalonians. "Love" is mutual attachment of all persons concerned in the innovation enterprise.

### **III. 1 Thess 4:1–5:24 Directives and Exhortations**

#### **Section One: 1 Thess 4:1-12 Conduct Pleasing to God**

4:1-2 "to walk and th please God" so outsiders can see and applaud.

4:3-8 "holiness" is not a moral concept. It refers to "exclusivity" to a person. They belong exclusively to God and should behave accordingly. They should avoid deviant sexual behavior (3-8) and persist in attachment to Jesus-Group members (9-12). The Greek word if 4:4 translated as "body" means male sexual organ. Thessalonian males should behave properly.

#### **Section Two: 1 Thess 4:13–5:11 Solutions to Problems about What is Next**

4:13-18 Group members who have died.

v. 15: "coming of the Lord" = parousia = coming, arrival, presence (never "return"). The point is to support his clients in their innovation decision, in the face of their grief at the death of their fellow group members. Where would the arrival be? In Jerusalem, of course, where the "hole in the sky is located." So continue one's allegiance to and abiding confidence in God and his Messiah, Jesus.

5:1-11 The time of God's forthcoming intervention

Forthcoming, very "soon." Be prepared like a Roman soldier for that time. Thanks to Jesus' death, God will not exercise wrath (taking vengeance for being shamed).

#### **Section Three: 1 Thess 5:12-24 About Group Support**

v. 12 "those who labor, have charge, and admonish" are opinion leaders. These are persons in the group capable of informally influencing the attitude and overt behavior of group members in a desired way with relative frequency. Such had sanctioning ability but were not THE authority. Peace means putting aside agonistic conduct

common among males in this society, and rather relate to each other with mutual care and concern.

#### **IV. 1 Thess 5:25-28 Letter Closing: Salutation and Blessing.**

Paul requests prayers for himself and his change agent colleagues. He closes his letter with a distinctive, conventional Jesus-group letter closing.

#### **Resources:**

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. Social Science Commentary on the Pauline Letters. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006. Pp. 27-56.

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### **3. 15:00-16:30: Paul Addresses Problems in Corinth Caused by the Change**

Dr. John J. Pilch, Rome, April, 2009

#### **I. 1 Cor 1:1-8 Letter Opening (Superscription)**

#### **II. 1 Cor 1:9-6:20 Reaction to a Report from Chloe's People**

Section One: 1 Cor 1:9 – 3:23 Reported Ingroup Conflict and Reminders to Facilitate the Restoration of Harmony.

Section Two: 1 Cor 5:1 – 6:20 Reported Complacency with a Case of Ingroup Incest and Directives for Dealing with It.

#### **III. 1 Cor 7:1-15:58 Response to Corinthian Questions**

Part One: 1 Cor 7:1-40: About Marriage Now.

Part Two: 1 Cor 8:1-11:1: About Foods and Dining.

Part Three: 1 Cor 9:1-27: About Jesus-Group Change Agents and Their Entitlements.

Part Four: 1 Cor 10:1-11:1: About Showing Respect for Images.

Part Five: 1 Cor 11:2-34: About Behavior at Jesus-Group Gatherings.

Part Six: 1 Cor 12:1-15:40: About Phenomena Induced by the Spirit.

Part Seven: 1 Cor 15:1-58: A Reminder about Paul's Gospel and the Resurrection of the Dead.

Part Eight: 1 Cor 16:1-4: Questions Concerning the Temple Tax.

#### **IV. 1 Cor 16:5-24: Letter Closing: Travel Plans, Salutations and Blessings**

In this letter, Paul was responding to all the information he had received through previous channels (reports from Chloe 1 Cor 1:11; from Timothy 1 Cor 4:17; and a letter from others 1 Cor 7:1). According to this information, it seems that the Corinthians are “reinventing” the gospel of God which Paul preached to them. All his letters indicate that his gospel of God did not remain unvaried during the process of its diffusion. Such context-based change is called “refraction.” The questions and reports put to Paul in this letter derive from the “reinventions” in Corinth.

In the first part of the letter, Paul responds to information brought by Chloe’s people. Cliques have fractured the group (1:11ff), a deviant conjugal union scandalizes them (5:1ff), ingroup lawsuits are taken outside the group (6:1ff). The second part responds to questions the Corinthians asked: about having children (7:1ff), arranging marriage (7:25ff), eating foods set before images (8:1ff), and gifts of the Spirit (12:1ff), about his own idea of a collection for Jerusalem (16:1ff), and about Apollos (16:12). Thus Paul seeks to diagnose and offer solutions to problems resulting from the innovation adoption. He also seems to maintain their intention to adhere to the innovation they have accepted, and to stabilize changes and prevent discontinuance.

### **I. Letter opening 1 Cor 1:1-8.**

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are part of one cosmopolite gathering with but one Lord Jesus Christ. Though they pattern themselves after the Greco-Roman household, they embrace Israelite political religion (Jesus returning to initiate theocracy). Thus the Jesus-group is in contrast with the political system of the Roman Empire which stands over against their hope and aspirations.

### **II. Reactions to the report from Chloe’s people. 1 Cor 1:9–6:10**

#### **Section One: 1 Cor 1:9–3:23**

##### **Ingroup Conflict and Restoring Harmony**

Baptism brings individuals from the “outside” into the Group. They are now insiders, and the point is not so much forgiveness of sin and repentance as with John the Baptist, but rather mutual fellowship with Christ. Chloe and Stephanas were opinion leaders in Corinth. Apollos was a traveling Jesus-group member, either a prophet or teacher. Paul almost always uses the Aramaic name, Cephas, indicating that he locates Peter in the “Judean” (uncivilized) category.

Wisdom (19 times between 1:17-2:9) derives from Hellenistic society. It means understanding how to live and be successful in life, as in Stoicism, Platonism, etc. Paul was not sent to baptize (v. 17) but to proclaim the gospel of God, that Jesus crucified by Judeans was raised by God from the dead soon to return to initiate theocracy in Jerusalem.

Paul’s argument is with Israelites of all stripes: barbarian, i.e., Judeans who seek signs, and civilized, i.e., Hellenists who seek philosophical reasons. The crucified Jesus, source of the life that human wisdom seeks, is wisdom for us. Corinthians’ trust in God did not derive from human wisdom but from the power of God demonstrated in Jesus’ resurrection and the Corinthians’ altered states of consciousness experiences (“demonstration of the Spirit and or power”, 2:4). “Rulers of this age” (2:8) are other-than-human beings (e.g., stars) who control human life. God’s Spirit helps us understand the gifts God bestows on us. “Unspiritual” people

who don't experience ASCs simply cannot understand. Jesus-group wisdom comes solely from God, through Christ crucified, by means of the Spirit of God. Cliquishness destroys God's temple, the community of believers. Still, Paul does not merely want to shame these ingroup members but to mend ingroup relations. As father (not guardian), Paul wants his children to imitate him and not reinvent the innovation he proclaimed to them. He wants to stabilize the Corinthians' intent to change while preventing discontinuance. The reinvention here is clique formation with a new focus on "wisdom." Paul diagnoses the root of the problem as arrogance (vv. 18-19; v. 6; exaggerating personal worth). This is a challenge to the honor of Paul, God's authorized change agent.

### Section Two: 1 Cor 5:1–6:20

Complacency about Ingroup Incest and Directives for Dealing with it.

A - 5:1-13, instance of porneia (deviant sexual behavior)

B - 6:2-13, lawsuits

A' - 6:14-20, porneia

**A 5:1-13.** A stepson/stepmother conjugal union (Lev 18:8; 20:11). Deut 22:21, 22, 24 and elsewhere implies death by community stoning. Here Paul "hexes" the party instead, "hand over the guilty party to Satan (tester of loyalty)." He will eventually be saved with the rest of the Corinthians. Meanwhile, Paul presents a purity rule: keep rigid boundaries, do not mix with those who commit porneia.

**B 6:1-11** The unrighteous are former Israelite acquaintances wise in the ways of Israelite law. They rejected the gospel of God when it was offered to them. Paul Advises: stick with insiders.

**A' 6:12-20** Resumption of reflection on porneia (see v. 13, 18). Believers are now one with Christ and should not enter such liaisons.

### III. Responses to Corinthian Questions 1 Cor 7:1–15:58

(see 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12)

#### Part One: 1 Cor 7:1-40 About Marriage Now

Two principles: time is short; remain in the status in which God called you. The innovation that Paul preached caused some problems.

7:1-6 Married Jesus-group members. Better translation: "It is well for a married couple not to have children."

7:7-8 Unmarried and widows. Unmarried could mean bachelor or widower. Paul was likely a widower. The status in which God calls a person is a gift, so remain in the gift.

7:9-11 Married group members thinking of divorce. No divorce; if separation occurs, remarriage is not permitted (Mark 10:2-9)

7:12-16 Group members married to an outsider.

7:17-24 General principle: stay in the state in which you were called. Don't bother about male genital mutilation.

Obey the commandments. Same with slave status.

7:25-35 Arranging marriages now. Paul speaks as prophetic change agent called by God. Time is short; don't bother.

7:36-38 About Levirate marriages. (Better translation/interpretation):

If anyone thinks of being shamed about the matter of his "virgin," in case she be close to menopause, and it must thus happen, let him do as he desires; he does not sin. Let them marry. But if he is firm in his heart, not being compelled, for he has power over what he desires, and he has judged this in his own heart to keep his "virgin" he does well. Therefore he does well to marry his own "virgin," but the one not marrying does better.

7:39-40 Widows and marriage. Stay in the state in which you were called.

### **Part Two: 1 Cor 8:1–13: About Foods and Dining**

Meals are always a social act. Who eats what, with whom, when, where, how, and why. Here Paul corrects Corinthians so that in their eating they would express the set of meaning proper to those in Christ.

It is not about idols, but images either of gods or ancestors, and eating sacrifices offered to them during periodic funerary celebrations. These images are like shadows, alter egos (Peter's shadow has healing power Acts 5:15). Thus, the issue is how one interprets images and their shadow power. Are they effective or not? Depends on one's belief. Many Israelite Jesus-group members still retained a belief in other gods, as Philo who calls the Israelite God "the Supreme father of the gods" (*Spec. Laws* 2, 165), acknowledging the existence of other deities. For Paul, lack of concern for the weak eradicated group integrity ("holiness") that was to be its hallmark. The weak seeing others eat these offerings might be tempted to resume their previous practices. To revive the habits, feelings, and beings of the weak dishonors them as well as Christ.

### **Part Three: 1 Cor 9:1-27: About Jesus-Group Change Agents and Their Entitlements**

Following up on his previous advice to the strong to waive privileges, Paul not spells out how he waived his privileges for the sake of the Corinthian Jesus-group. Change agents commissioned by God are entitled to sustenance. However, Paul and Barnabas have waived their entitlement so as not to put an obstacle in the way of fellow group members. Paul (v. 18) believes he was "hired" by God. And he becomes like every kind of Judean to gain as many as possible. He is a homophilous change agent.

### **Part Four: 1 Cor 10:1–11:1: About Showing Respect for Images**

Addressing fellow Israelites (“our ancestors” v. 1), Paul recalls the Exodus story to serve his theme – food and service of images. Paul distinctively identifies the life-sustaining rock (from which the Israelites got water) with Jesus the Messiah. The Golden Calf was an attempt to control God. It caused Moses to shatter the commandments he received. Then he went and got a second set, and these – according to Paul – were not obliging on Jesus Group members, since through Jesus, Israel’s wilderness sin of attempting to control God was taken away.

Paul applies this to what Corinthians are now experiencing. “Eat, drink and play” - play = porneia. Notice how Paul switches from Moses to Christ: “Must not put Christ to the test.” Paul’s Jesus-group members are on the verge of experiencing the end of ages with the advent of Jesus as Messiah with power. Paul assures that tests that God sends will not exceed the God-given means to withstand and pass the test.

Paul urges them to resist the desire for evil, service of images proper (eating, drinking, merrymaking), sexual promiscuity, putting Christ’s loyalty to the test, and constant complaining about what God has decided and provided. “Jealousy” (v. 22) is the feeling a person has toward persons and things exclusive to or set apart to them. Only a stronger person can interfere, but no one is stronger than God. In the end, don’t seek one’s own entitlements but seek to benefit the many so that the many can be saved.

#### **Part Five: 1 Cor 11:2-34: About Behavior at Jesus-Group Gatherings**

Are the Jesus-group gatherings domestic in nature? Or public? Jesus-groups are fictive domestic-kin, but even if held in a household setting, their gatherings are public. Behaviors will differ accordingly.

**1 Cor 11:2-16** Jesus-group gatherings are not domestic gatherings. How should wives and husbands behave at Jesus-group gatherings? Given Paul’s instructions, such gatherings are not private but rather public in nature, and husbands and wives must act accordingly. “Head” is the focus of honor: God, Jesus Messiah, Husband. In Israelite circles, a male who communicates with God or imparts God’s message must have his head uncovered to show respect for God (only later did it become a custom in Jewish religion). Similarly, in Israelite circles a female who communicates with God or imparts God’s message must have hair braided to honor God. “Because of the angels” refers to Gen 6:2, and unattached females.

For Paul and his contemporaries, the word “nature” (v. 14) when applied to people referred to what we call “culture” today. In the Israelite tradition, cultural arrangements derived directly from the God of Israel, the creator of all “nature.” Males with long hair in Paul’s society were male transsexuals (see Philo Spec Laws III.7.37-42), a role that in Israelite perspective degraded men. Women had long hair, as a covering for their heads. Thus, wives were expected at Jesus group gatherings to follow the customary behavior appropriate in public gatherings.

**1 Cor 11:17-34.** Proper dining behavior at Jesus-Group gatherings. Cliques in these gatherings make them a negative experience, because instead of unity, they take up adversarial positions. Yet this is important in order to ascertain genuine members. The Lord’s Supper is a prophetic symbolic action, a tradition Paul received. As the inaugurating ancestor of all who believe in what the God of Israel did in raising him, Jesus himself merits the ancestor reverence previously proper to Israel’s great ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this gathering they proclaim the significance of the Lord’s death: God waived satisfaction due to dishonor (“forgiveness of sin”), giving God’s spirit to the group, inaugurating a new covenant with God, and providing access to the forthcoming theocracy.

#### **Part Six: 1 Cor 12:1–15:40: About Phenomena Induced by the Spirit**

A 12:1-31a - Spirit induced phenomena

B 12:31b-13:13 - core central value: agape

A' 14:1-40 - Spirit induced phenomena at Jesus-group gatherings.

### **12:1-31a. Spirit induced phenomena (A)**

These are alternate state of consciousness experiences of the Spirit of God. Before joining the Jesus-group, Israelites did partake in other gatherings that experienced spirit induced ASCs. The question is: which spirit? V. 4, the issue is not "gifts" but rather "favor." God's favor is Christ himself, and it is Jesus-group members, each with his or her one charisma, who together are Christ in society. The charismata are to support and upbuild the Jesus-group. People must be of service or act on behalf of another. They are received in alternate states of consciousness experiences. Christ present is like a body consisting of many members and realized in the social body of Jesus-group members. The Spirit constitutes the body. In this assembly, there is a structure which is not fixed, but flexible, and members ought to endeavor to take on services that Paul lists as greater.

### **12:31b-13:13 The Central Value of Agape (Group Allegiance). (B)**

This insert disrupts the discussion of charismata to be continued in 14:1. If Agape does not characterize the exercise of Spirit-induced phenomena, then such phenomena are of little use to the individual Jesus-group member. Of course, they may be of great use to others. The beautiful poem has three parts:

1-3: a progressive comparison of charismata and agape

4-7: a description of agape

8:13: a series of antitheses underlining the excellence and staying power of agape.

### **14:1-40 More about Spirit-Induced Phenomena (A')**

Paul and his Corinthian Jesus-group members believe that when people speak in tongues, they utter a language that could be understood if someone who spoke that language was present (xenoglossia). Modern linguists say that speaking in tongues does not conform to a natural language. Speaking in tongues is not language but communication... between the Holy Spirit and the speaker, and between the speaker and the congregation.

Paul urges striving for prophecy which is directed to others, serving to upbuild, encourage, and console members of the Jesus-group gathering. Vv. 18-19 Paul observes that he too has the altered state of consciousness experiences of speaking in tongues, but he sees more value in a few communicable words than in speaking in tongues. Vv. 20-25. If unbeliever Israelites wandered in and the group were speaking in tongues, they would think the group mad. But if they were prophesying, the intruders would be touched, fall down, and reverence the God of Israel quoting Zech 8:23. Vv 33b-36 are an insert that disrupts the discussion of ASCs.

### **Part Seven: 1 Cor 15:1-58: A Reminder about Paul's Gospel and the Resurrection of the Dead**

This section deals with the greatest phenomenon effected by the Spirit of God: the raising of the dead. Paul's gospel was either reinvented or refracted (changed) in Corinth. According to Paul, those who believe in what the God of Israel did in the death and resurrection of Jesus will likewise be raised by the God of Israel. The Corinthian Jesus-group members reinvented or modified the significance of this forthcoming event and thus departed from Paul's message.

Paul argues that God has in fact raised Jesus from the dead; there are witnesses (1-11). Second, he describes how some Corinthian Jesus-group members have reinvented or modified this proclamation (12-19). Third he unpacks the implications of this proclamation filling in what the Corinthians have either not known or overlooked (20-28). After an aside about “if the dead are not raised...” (29-34), Paul concludes with a description of how the dead are to be raised (35-38).

1 Cor 15:1-11. The word “raised” (passive voice, 18x, God of Israel) also implies a transformation in one’s way of being human, a qualitative change in one’s humanity.

12-19. Corinthian Reinvention - no dead are raised, hence not even Jesus. If so, then preachers are shaming God by being false witnesses. Without God’s raising Jesus, faith in Christ is futile, salvation from God’s wrath is a chimera, and those who have died in Christ are simply dead. This merits pity rather than admiration.

20-28. What Paul’s Proclamation Implied. As death came through the first earthling, so resurrection comes through Christ, enabling all who belong to Christ to be raised eventually at his coming. At the end, theocratic rule will be given over by Christ to God the Patron. All hostile cosmic forces – including death – will be destroyed.

29-34 Why the dead must be raised. - If they are not raised, “baptism for the dead” is senseless. And why would change agents bother at all? Paul concludes by warning against deception and shaming the Corinthians who doubted his gospel.

35-58 How are the dead raised? After considering the stars, Paul contrasts Adam as living soul (animate life) with the last Adam as life-giving spirit (spiritual life force). The forthcoming Israelite theocracy, something imperishable, belongs to those who are transformed, not to ordinary human beings. Thus all will be transformed. Paul concludes with an exhortation to constancy and greater excellence, since as they know, in the Lord they do not labor for nothing.

#### **Part Eight: 1 Cor 16:1-4: Questions Concerning the Temple Tax**

The collection was to help those who had no land (priests and Levites, and the poor who lost land). Paul agreed with the Jerusalem pillars (Gal 2:10) that Jesus-group members living in non-Israelite territory should pay the Israelite tithe for the poor, collected in the third and sixth year of a seven year cycle, specifically their poor fellow Jesus-group members in Jerusalem.

#### **IV. 1 Cor 16:5-24: Letter Closing: Travel Plans, Salutations and Blessings**

Paul will spend the winter (rainy season), no doubt to deal with diagnosing their problems, and helping them translate their intent to action. As this letter has indicated, he has to continue working at stabilizing their ways of dealing with the innovation he communicated and preventing discontinuance. Timothy is key to the information exchange, so these few lines (vv. 8-9) are a sort of letter of recommendation for him.

If Apollos is unwilling to visit Corinth, it would seem he did not initiate the clique named after him. Paul hopes he does go to stabilize their commitment to the gospel of God and prevent discontinuance.

Some of the people mentioned have come to visit Paul in Ephesus, from where he writes this letter. Notice also the greetings from others to Corinth indicating the social attachment of Jesus-group members. Those in Corinth in turn learn of the diffusion of their group members. Paul concludes with a

curse, presumably forcing unattached person to leave the Jesus group, and adds a blessing affirming all the good things the Corinthians have experienced from God, and an affirmation that Paul remains attached to them all.

**Resources:**

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**4. 17:00-18:30: Paul's Letter to the Hellenistic-Israelite Jesus-group in Rome: Explaining his Gospel to a Group who only heard of him through the Gossip Network.**

Dr. John J. Pilch, Rome, April, 2009

## **ROMANS**

**I. Rom 1:1-7 - Letter opening (superscription)**

**II. Rom 1:8-10 - Letter Thanksgiving (indebtedness)**

**(A.) III. Rom 1:11-17 Introduction and Travel Plans.**

**(B.) IV. Rom 1:18-32 "They" and the Ten Commandments.**

**©. V. Rom 2:1-16 You Judeans and Judging Hellenists**

**(D) VI. Rom 2:17-3:20 Israelites who rejected the gospel of God.**

**(E) VII. Rom 3:21-8:39 The Present time: Now.**

**A. We (Inclusive: I and You) and Reconciliation 5:1-6:10.**

**B. You**

**Romans 6:11-7:25.**

**A' We (Inclusive: I and You) and the Spirit: 8:1-39.**

**(D') VIII. Rom 9:1-11:36 Recalcitrant Israel.**

**(C') IX. Rom 12:1-13:14 You (pl.): Jesus-Group Values.**

**(B') X. Rom 14:1-15:13 The (the Weak) and the Torah Commandments.**

**(A') XI. Rom 15:15-32 Conclusion and Travel Plans**

**XII. Rom 15:33 Letter Ending**

**XIII Rom 16:1-27: Appendix: Letter of Recommendation for Phoebe and Doxology**

**Introduction**

Paul didn't found any Jesus group in Rome. Other Jesus-group change agents did. Written from Corinth about 56-58, this lays out Paul's travel plans for Spain. Sections 1-VI took to a period from past to present. Section VI is about the present. Sections VIII-XI deal with forthcoming based on present. He sets forth his gospel and its implications lest Roman Jesus-group members believe any other views they might have heard about Paul.

### **I. Rom 1:1-7 - Letter opening (superscription)**

Sender, addressees, and greeting. Paul, "slave" (controlled by Messiah Jesus), and apostle (=change agent) called by the God of Israel (=change agency). Hymn in vv. 3-4 tell who Jesus is: of Israelite origin, Son of God by his being raised by God of Israel from the dead. Resurrection = a Persian idea adopted in Yehud after 537 BC. (Pharisees = Farsi = Persian). Sadducee traditionalists never left the land and did not share Persian beliefs.

For Paul it is always God who calls to Jesus-group membership, God is founder of Jesus-group gatherings (called "churches").

All God's beloved in Rome: Israelites and non-Israelites, each with two subsets: those who accepted God's raising of Jesus, and those who accepted it. Non Israelites were the few who joined the Jesus group, and the vast majority who stood in contrast with Israelites.

### **II. Rom 1:8-10 - Letter Thanksgiving (indebtedness)**

Acknowledgment of God's past and present favor (grace) with hope for more, especially the faith (loyalty, trust) of Roman believers. Hopes to see them at last.

### **(A.) III. Rom 1:11-17 Introduction and Travel Plans.**

(The corresponding element in the chiasm is A' - Rom 15:15-32). Paul is a total outsider to this group. He did not lay the foundation, had no say in how they organized, nor who might belong to the group. But "in Christ," he presumes to be an insider and request ingroup assistance. Greeks = civilized (cultured, spoke Greek) and Barbarians = uncivilized (kept their own cultural customs and language). Wise = how to succeed in life; foolish = lose social status and don't care about success.

Salvation = rescue from a threatening situation, the effects of God's wrath directed at those who shame him. It comes to those who have faith in God's having raised Jesus from the dead, both to uncivilized Israelites (Judeans) and to civilized Israelites (Greeks).

God's righteousness is God's acceptance, first of Jesus whom he raised from the dead, then of those who have faith in the God of Israel who raised Jesus.

### **(B.) IV Rom 1:18-32 "They" and the Ten Commandments.**

(The corresponding element in the chiasm is Rom 14:1-15:13). This section is concerned with Roman non-Israelites and the Ten Commandments which were spoken by God directly. All the population of the world was capable of hearing them. God is on the verge of demonstrating his wrath against "ungodliness and wickedness," which is giving precedence to other gods and making images of them (first two commandments of the Decalogue). The attitude underlying idolatry is the belief that a human can control God. Very shameful and dishonoring.

"Unnatural" is best viewed as culturally unacceptable. Artemidorous (*Oneirocritica* 1.78) says

any human sexual position apart from the frontal (which is the only one “taught them by nature”) is unnatural. Vv. 28-32 are another presentation of the Commandments in disguise.

© **V. Rom 2:1-16 You Judeans and Judging Hellenists**

(The parallel to this member of the chiasm is Rom 12:1–13:14). From “they” Paul turns to a generic “you” singular. The parallel passage suggests it is one or another Roman Jesus-group member. The problem seems to be that some Israelites behave no differently than non-Israelites. God gives them time to repent before unleashing wrath (compare 2 Macc 6:12-17). God will punish all people for their evil actions. Being a descendant of Abraham or a Jesus-group member will not obviate divine judgment.

**(D) VI. Rom 2:17–3:20 Israelites who rejected the gospel of God.**

(The parallel to this member of the chiasm is Rom 9:1–11:36). Israelites who boast in the Law but break it dishonor God (2:17-24). Judeans consider non-Israelites as blind, in darkness, foolish, etc. Perhaps they think the same of Hellenistic Jesus-group members. The quote from Isa 52:5 (LXX) implies that it is the behavior of Israelites living among non-Israelites causes the latter to dishonor the God of Israel. It is precisely these Israelites living among the non-Israelites who have been Paul’s target audience for the innovation.

Circumcision (165 BC) was just a nick, not complete removal of the foreskin (2:25-29). That made it easy to “undo” it to fit into Hellenistic society. First in 150 AD did the Pharisees require removal of the foreskin. It was quite likely limited to Pharisaic circles in Judea. Who is a true “Judean?” One marked on the heart, inwardly, who obeys God’s directives (Rom 2:15 and Paul’s allusion to Jer 31:33 - circumcised heart).

Advantages of Judaism (3:1-20): the Law. “Justice” means proper interpersonal relations. “Unjust deeds” are inappropriate, unacceptable, deserving rejection rather than approbation. Some in Rome might have said of Paul that he teaches “do evil so that good may come.” These slanderers are duly condemned. “Under the power of sin” means members of a culture of willingness to dishonor or shame God, to take on God’s honor. Paul then “strings pearls” to make his point, that the Law of Moses triggered awareness among Israelites of the culture of willingness to dishonor and shame God.

**(E) VII. Rom 3:21–8:39 The Present time: Now.**

As the chiasm indicates, this section is the **center of Romans**. It contains the sum and substance of Paul’s gospel of God that undergirds all of his authentic letters. This section itself forms an **A - B- A’ chiasm**:

- A. About us (reconciliation now available to Paul and Jesus-group members, 5:1–6:11)
- B. About you (new condition of Roman Jesus-group members, 6:11–7:25)
- A’. About us (life with the Spirit available to us, 8:1-39).

Here righteousness receives great emphasis (Rom 1:17). In Israelite tradition, righteousness is a privileged identity deriving from divine acceptance due to Israel’s ability to act appropriately toward God

and toward other humans. This, righteousness means acceptance by God. Paul says this never came from observing the Law of Moses, but rather from divine acceptance of persons who believed in God's activity on their behalf. The first such was the non-Israelite, Abraham, and all subsequent Israelites who believed as Abraham did. Given what God did in Jesus, Israelites who believe in God's activity in this event are accepted by God on the basis of their faith in God, just like Abraham.

### **Introduction to the new revelation. 3:21-30**

Since all believers – Judean Israelites and Greek Israelites – have previously shamed or dishonored God, now through their faith in God's raising Jesus they are accepted by God with his favor that restores their status before God (redemption). This takes place in Christ Jesus.

### **Proof of the new righteousness: Abraham. 3:31–4:25**

Law (Torah) is a fluid concept: whole OT, the section called Law and Prophets (from Gen to 2 Kings), Law of Moses, Ten Commandments. All written law. Pharisees added unwritten law, interpretations of written law. "Works of Law" = behaviors prescribed by the Law of Moses. Story of Abraham is in "the Law and the Prophets." Point: divine acceptance is not due to what Israelites do, but due to what God does, and to people's faith in what God does. Abraham became acceptable before he was circumcised, hence can be ancestor of all whether circumcised or not.

#### **A. We (Inclusive: I and You) and Reconciliation 5:1–6:10**

*We are reconciled with God 5:1-11.* Because we are approved by God, we have peace with God through Jesus (vv. 1 + 11). Recollecting the distress caused by accepting Paul's gospel (3-5) strengthens the group and loyalty. Thanks to the death of Jesus, God reconciled us to himself.

*Why and how of Reconciliation with God 5:12-21.* As death came through one human's act, so life comes through God's favor (vv. 12 + 21). Sin, death, grace, life are personified here. What Adam and Jesus have in common is that they were first in a long line of descendants. The consequences of Adam's disobedience was that all except Noah and his family died, and only one was taken up to God (Enoch). The consequences of Jesus' deed are that many who believe in God's raising Jesus from the dead are beneficiaries.

*Reconciliation means new living 6:1-10.* Here Paul contrasts the then and the now, the past and the present. We died to sin through baptism, a symbolic ritual marking a change of status, a status transformation ritual. This new culture is "a new life in Christ."

#### **B. You Romans 6:11-7:25**

The very center of this letter runs from 6:11 to 7:25, and is addressed to you (plural): Roman Jesus-group members.

*Freed from sin and slaves to God 6:11-23.* Slavery was a subset of kinship (domestic slaves) and politics (Temple slaves, etc). Slaves exist for the social utility of the enslaving agent. If enslaved to sin? Then death is the outcome! If you are enslaved to righteousness, divine approval and acceptance, then work to please God.

*Three Examples of Freedom from Legally Controlling Authorities 7:1-25.* Paul continues his exploration of before and after: before Jesus' death and resurrection, and after their faith in God who

raised Jesus from the dead. Previously, Paul spoke of sin-death/life; enslavement to sin/enslavement to God. Now Paul talks about being under the control of others who lose that control by dying.

*Example 1: Dead husband and his widow 7:1-4.* Just as a wife is free once her husband dies, so Jesus-group members are dead to the Law, freed from its legal entitlements over them through their being in the body of Christ. They belong to another, the one raised from the dead by the God of Israel. Jesus group members should bear fruit for God, as the freed wife bears fruit for her new husband.

*Example 2: The Freed Slave 7:5-14.* To be “in the flesh” means to be in Israel, while to be “in the Spirit” means to be in Christ. Life in Israel under the Law was like life under a slave master, a condition entailing loss of life, the social death that slavery was and is. While the Law comes from God’s spirit, the Israelites who received it were of the flesh, that is, enslaved in a culture of willingness to dishonor God.

*Example 3: The Successfully Exorcized 7:15-25.* Sin personified is the possessing spirit who controls the person, even if they want to do good. Jesus-group members recollected this. Who will exorcize? Successful exorcism occurs “through Jesus Christ our Lord” thanks to the God of Israel.

#### **A’ We (Inclusive: I and You) and the Spirit: 8:1-39**

Paul now includes himself as he compares “us” with “them.” We are in the Spirit, they are in the flesh.

*Living in the Spirit 8:1-15.* People living in the traditional Israelite way cannot please the God of Israel. Those in the spirit, in Jesus groups, have God’s spirit dwelling “in you [plural]” They belong to Christ because of this spirit. And through this self same Spirit, God will raise Jesus-group members from the dead as well. The analogy of adoption (vv. 12-15) is Hellenistic. Traditional Israel (and contemporary Islam) do not have the practice of adoption.

*Children of God 8:16-18.* God acting among human beings was considered like the wind (hence Spirit). Holy Spirit or God’s Spirit always refers to God’s activity. These verses describe an ASC experience, as group members cry out “Abba” (Oh Father!). If we suffer with him, we shall be raised with him

*Children of God: Creation awaits and we await 8:19-30.* The soon to be revealed glorification of Jesus-group members will include all of God’s creation, celestial as well as terrestrial entities. All creatures were created for the “freedom of the glory of the children of God,” thus all creation will share in some way in that faith that humans have in God with its favorable consequences. Israel has an after-the-fact predestination perspective. If one got married, one can be sure that God wanted one to be married. Etc. If a person was a Jesus-group member, one can be sure that God called that person to become a member. First-born opens the womb and lets the others out. Because they actually believe in God’s having raised Jesus, Jesus-group members have been foreknown by God and predestined to be called. With their call they have been approved and found acceptable by God (that is, justified), worthy of being honored with their own resurrection from the dead.

*Conclusion: God’s role 8:31-39.* These verses conclude the large central section of Paul’s letter (3:21–8:30). As the conclusion indicates, Paul and other early Jesus-group thinkers ascribed the origin of the Jesus movement and the Jesus groups that espoused it to the God of Israel. It was God and not Jesus, Paul, or anyone else who “founded Christianity.” No cosmic entities can keep us away from God as we

make our way through the cosmos.

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### **(D') VIII. Rom 9:1–11:36 Recalcitrant Israel.**

Paul returns to the topic previously dealt with in (D) Romans 2-3, the parallel member in this chiasm. There Paul spoke of the Law of Moses, Ten Commandments, circumcision, and advantages of Judaism. Now he takes a different perspective. He asks two questions: Why haven't all Israelites believed in their God raising Jesus from the dead? And in view of this refusal to believe, has God rejected the previously chosen people? In the process, Paul expresses his attitudes toward fellow Israelites and toward non-Israelites who have joined the Jesus-group. The fact that he deals separately with the non-Israelites suggests their presence is exceptional and anomalous so far as Paul is concerned.

*Question 1: Why haven't all Israelites believed in their God's raising Jesus from the dead? 9:1–10:4 (Rom 9:1-5 and 10:1-4 form an inclusio marking off this first section.*

Paul's assessment of his fellow Israelites. 9:1-5. That all Israelites did not believe that the God of Israel raised Jesus from the dead provoked a deep, ingroup problem for Paul as well as other New Testament authors (Collectivistic personalities). People as a group in antiquity set themselves off from others. Paul lists the characteristics of Israelite collective identity, "ethnicity" (vv. 4-5). Interesting Paul makes no mention of common language, circumcision, or homeland, but focuses rather on ancestorism. The reason for this is that he deals with Hellenist Israelites, uncircumcised with no desire to live in Palestine. Such was the Roman Jesus-group to which Paul writes.

True Israel. 9:6-13. Paul's social identity was in the house of Israel (Phil 3:5). Accepting God's innovation caused him severe cognitive dissonance. Why didn't fellow Israelites accept the innovation? His answer: "For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants" vv. 6-7, (similar view in the Synoptics, John, and Revelation). The opposite is true: those who accepted the innovation are true Israel. These are the children of promise.

God elects true Israel alone. 9:14-19. God makes the choice, and the objects of his choice or rejection have nothing to say about it. Again, Paul strings passages together here from Exod 33:19 (v. 15), Exod 9:16 (v. 17), Hosea (1:10, 2:23 - in v. 25), Isaiah 10:22-23 (v. 27), and Isaiah 1:9 (v. 29). Only Hellenist Israelites could appreciate such artistry.

But Israel is rooted in faith. 9:30–10:4. While observant Israelites are zealous for the things of God, they are ignorant of the fact that God's approval and acceptance cannot be acquired by their efforts, but only ascribed by God to those who submit to God's righteousness, through faith in God's revelation in Jesus' death and resurrection. This is how the unobservant Israelites, the Hellenists, have gained God's approval.

A Description of Law-Observant Israel's Unbelief 10:5-21.

Again Paul strings together scripture to demonstrate to Israelites that Israelite unbelief and rejection of the innovation of the gospel of the God of Israel is the fault of those Israelites, zealous though they may be, who strive for divine approval and acceptance on the basis of Law. This is their fault, not God's. The citations include Deut 30:12-14 (go up, descend - reference to Law, but Paul applies to Messiah), Isaiah 28:16 (no one put to shame), Isa 52:7 (feet).

Law Observant Israel's Disobedience. 10:16-21. In Paul's high context argument, it was of Torah-observant Israel that God said: "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (Isa 65:1).

*Question 2: Had God Rejected Law-Observant Israel? 11:1-36.* "Don't be silly!" For the third time, Paul sets forth credentials for his collectivistic group identity (9:1-5; 10:1-2). "Do you not know?" introducing another string of pearls is a challenge to the honor of Torah experts. He compares objection to himself with objection to Elijah. "Jealous" means "to provoke a passionate concern for what is rightfully one's own." Non Israelites in the Jesus group serve this purpose. They actually have no right to it, but God has let it happen "to make Israel jealous."

Non-Israelite Jesus-Group members in Rome. 11:13-24. This is the **first time** in this letter that Paul take explicit notice of non-Israelite Jesus-group members in the Roman community. The dough of the Israelites (Num 14:12) will make the whole Roman Jesus group holy. The grafting image is an insult. Non Israelites (a wild shoot) grafted to Israelites in Christ (the cultivated root) will produce inedible fruit. Like other New Testament writers, Paul, too, is ethnocentric. He has little good to say about the presence of non-Israelites in Jesus groups.

Conclusion 11:25-36. Paul concludes that a mystery/secret is afoot. God has hardened some Israelite hearts "until the full number of non-Israelites" accept the innovation. Then "all Israel" will be saved (Isa 59:20-21; 27:29). Since Jesus is returning soon, the number of non-Israelites cannot be very large. In the Israelite view, non-Israelites are all and always sinners, "Gentile sinners." In Paul's view, the gospel of God is solely for Israelites. He concludes with another tissue of texts to form a hymn.

### (C') IX. Rom 12:1-13:14 You (pl.): Jesus-Group Values.

The literary form of this unit is identified as a "catechesis," that is, a statement of the attitudes characteristic of the new way of Jesus-group living, a description of various social responsibilities, and a concluding reminder of the critical nature of the times, with emphasis on Jesus-group responsibility. The themes are:

- Jesus-group worship behaviors (12:1-8)
- Exhortations derived from Israel's scripture (12:9-21)
- Subordination to authority (13:1-6)
- Exhortation based on holiness of God (13:7-10)
- Deliberate disentanglement of Jesus-group members from values and life-style of society at large (13:12-14).

Sacrifice and One Body 12:1-8. Sacrifice has three parts: make food or drink unfit for human use; this is then directed to a deity; the purpose is to have a life-effect. The Roman Jesus-group is to be transformed to be pleasing to God. Thus, forego competing for honor over fellows, but to think within the boundaries of their positive shame and live according to the group task ascribed to them by God. This is called "charism," (see 1 Cor 12) which always works (or should work) for the well-being of the whole group. "One body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another."

Generic Admonitions 12:9-21 In-group mutual behavior. In general, if one imagines all these

attitudes as present in a single person, one will envision a typical character portrait, a Jesus-group character formed after the values Paul sets forth. This is the type of character a Jesus-group member should be and expect to see in other members.

Civil authorities 13:1-6. Be subordinate to “higher ranking, or superior” persons. Nothing to do with government. Those who have such authority exercise it from God, and in this case, the God of Israel. “Conscience” = opinion of fellow Jesus-group member, believers.

Conclusion: Final Admonition and Motivation 13:7-14 Be free of interpersonal indebtedness, except of course to God.

### **(B') X. Rom 14:1–15:13 The (the Weak) and the Torah Commandments.**

The chiasmic parallel (1:18-32) treats “them,” that is non-Israelites and the Ten Commandments. “Weak” refers to persons uneducated in the customs and amenities of the cultivated strata of society. The “weak” are driven by their dreads rather than by rational knowledge. Here the weak are Israelites held in the grip of taboo fears of alleged non-Israelite deities and alleged obligatory nature of Mosaic Torah requirements. They can’t understand that these were abrogated by Jesus’ death and resurrection. Those who can are the strong. Thus, the weak are Judeans and Judean hopefuls (“wannabes”), the strong are Hellenists, willing to await God’s inauguration of theocracy in Jerusalem. The word “Welcome” binds the unit (14:1; 15:7).

A. The Weak and Their Observances 14:1-6

B. Exhortation to the Strong 14:7-13

A' Again the Weak and Their Observances 14:14-23

B' The Strong and their Attitudes 15:1-7

C. Concluding Admonition 15:8-14

The Weak and Their Observances 14:1-6. Paul tells the strong in faith (the Hellenist Israelites) to show hospitality to the weak (Judean Israelites) who observe food rules, calendric taboos, and insist on circumcision (15:8). Paul’s clinching argument is that if they are in the Jesus group, “God has received them” (v. 3), that is, shown them hospitality as Patron.

Exhortation to the Strong 14:7-13. Paul reminds his fellow Jesus-group members of the collective and communal nature of their fictive kinship group. So stop blocking the morally motivated behavior of the weak. Let them alone in what they are doing.

Weak and their Observances 14:14-23. Strong should not vex the weak by their behavior. The forthcoming theocracy is about God’s approval and the presence of God’s Spirit providing peace and joy, not about food and drink. The strong are strong because they are flexible, accommodating, capable of giving in to others, compromising, and conciliatory. The weak have none of these qualities, so yield to the weak. The weak still have faith in the Mosaic Law, so if they were to deviate and act like the strong, they would be offending God in their view. Support them even in their weakness, for they are Jesus-group members, too.

The Strong and their Attitudes 15:1-7. The strong should be motivated by Jesus’ passion – not as in the Synoptics or John – but its meaning in Ps 69:9 “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” Scripture is for our instruction with a view to endurance and encouragement to maintain hope. The source for this endurance and encouragement is God (not the scriptures).



Concluding Admonition 15:8-14. Jesus came in service to the circumcised for two reasons: first, to support the truthfulness of God, since Jesus' coming to Israel realizes God's promises to Israel's ancestors, and second, to fulfill God's covenant debt to Israel, since non-Israelites who see what God has done for Israel will give honor to God. Through the covenants with Israel God contracts interpersonal obligation with her. Non-Israelites applaud what the God of Israel has done for his people – not for them, the non-Israelites. Paul concludes that he is confident in the goodness, knowledge, and abilities of the Roman Jesus-group members.

### **(A') XI. Rom 15:15-32 Conclusion and Travel Plans**

The chiasmic parallel is Rom 1:11-17 which spoke of travel plans. Paul offers three explanations to the letter recipients. (1) An explanation of why he wrote the way he did, what he included and excluded (vv. 15-22). (2) An explanation for why he did not visit Jesus-groups in Rome yet, given that he is God's apostle to Israelites living among non-Israelites (vv. 23-29). (3) An explanation for why he cannot proceed directly to Rome but must first go to Jerusalem (vv. 30-32).

Rom 15:15-22. He wrote by "way of reminder" of things they already know. He uses the image of a Temple priest offering to God those Israelites who accepted his innovation. This would make them exclusive to God by God's spirit. Moreover, he feels his task is finished. He has preached to Israelites resident among non-Israelites "from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum." Obviously, he did not reach all non-Israelites! And he would not "build on someone else's foundation (preaching)", hence he did not come to Jesus-groups in Rome earlier.

Rom 15:23-29. "Spain" marks this section (vv. 24, 28). There would be precious few Israelites there at this time, but they must hear the gospel preparation for the forthcoming theocracy. First, he must deliver the collection to Jerusalem (generalized reciprocity).

Rom 15:30-32. He asks for prayer because he expects conflict with Judeans in Jerusalem (because of his innovation). He also doesn't know whether they will accept the contributions.

### **XII. Rom 15:33 Letter Ending**

### **XIII Rom 16:1-27: Appendix: Letter of Recommendation for Phoebe and Doxology**

This chapter consists of a letter of recommendation (vv. 1-2), a series of greetings to some 26 persons (vv. 3-15), an exhortation (vv. 17-21), a formal letter closing (v. 20b), and a series of greetings from persons who were with Paul (vv. 21-24). Final doxology (vv. 25-27).

The letter was likely appended to Romans. It was written to Ephesus recommending Phoebe to the Ephesians as she is about to undertake a trip to that city. The people in vv. 3-25 would be residents of Ephesus, known to Paul from his lengthy stay there (1 Cor 15:32; 1 Cor 16:8). For Paul to direct a recommendation for another to a group of persons he did not know would be shameful and socially irresponsible.

An informal letter of recommendation has this pattern: an opening consisting of a request verb plus the name of the person commended; the credentials of the one recommended; and a statement of the desired action (for Paul's letters see: 1 Thess 5:12-13a; 1 Cor 16:15-16, 17-18; Phil 2:29-30; 4:2-3; Phlm

8-9).

16:1-2. Phoebe was a deacon, that is, an agent of a higher-ranking person, either as an intermediary in commercial transactions or as a messenger or diplomat. A deacon served a supervising manager. Thus, Phoebe could be a person serving the supervisor of the Jesus-group in Cenchræ (port of Corinth), or of the Jesus group in general. She was also a patron (not benefactor). Phoebe bestowed her patronage on Paul, so he owed her a debt of gratitude, which he dispenses here, as well as a grant of honor.

16:3-15. The pattern is a verb of greeting, the name of the greeted person(s), and the credentials of the person(s) greeting. They are commended for their work on behalf of other Jesus-group members. Slaves often joined with their masters. These may have been “innovators and first adopters.”

16:16 One kisses intimate group members as a greeting, especially those with whom one would eat.

16:17-20 These verses make no sense addressed to Roman Jesus-group members whom Paul did not know. Some, it seems, were argumentative and challenged others on the basis of some teaching. They were “Satan”, that is, testing loyalty to God. What motivates their behavior is that they “serve their belly.” Koilia, belly is the concrete label for the entire body cavity from throat to anus, symboling the hidden, innermost recesses of the human person, or what we call the heart. This means they serve their self-interest or self-centered ambition, which disturbs the peace of the Jesus-group.

16:21-23. Another list of names. Tertius wrote this letter, and may well have been responsible for its chiasmic arrangement. (V. 24 is not in the best manuscripts).

16:25-27. Doxology. This is not Paul’s customary way of ending a letter. Perhaps this signals use in worship. He asks the God of Israel, the only wise God, to strengthen the recipients of the letter (which one?) in terms of his proclamation of the gospel of God’s raising Jesus from the dead, here called the revelation of a mystery held in silence for long ages.

## Resources

Esler, Philip F. Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003.

Keith, Chris. “In My Own Hand”: Grapho-Literacy and the Apostle Paul,” Biblica 89 (2008) 39-58.  
<http://www.bsw.org/?l=71891&a=Comm03pdf.html>

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. Social Science Commentary on the Pauline Letters. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006.

Pilch, John J. “Romans.” The Collegeville Bible Commentary. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989. Pp. 1080-1099.

**Tuesday, April 21:**

**5. 9:00–10:00: Paul’s Letter to the Galatians (Israelite acculturated minorities victimized by Judaizers)**

Dr. John J. Pilch, March, 2009

**Murphy-O’Connor:** Galatians, probably Pessinus (modern Balahissar, Turkey), which was the capitol of Tolistobogii, westernmost of three Celtic tribes that made up ethnic Galatia. (Migrated from the Pyrenees, 3 cent BC.) Common view: Galatians were large, unpredictable simpletons, instinctively generous, ferocious and highly dangerous when angry, but without stamina and easy to trick. Never Hellenized, and Romans just imposed their system on tribal structures. Spoke Celtic, Greek would be 2<sup>nd</sup> language in cities.

**Malina and Pilch:** Paul writes to Greek (“civilized”) Israelites living in this region. They accepted Paul’s gospel of God, but were then attacked by “Judaizers” who believed Israelites should observe Israelite customs as practiced in Judea where the theocracy announced by Jesus would soon emerge. The Jesus group established by Paul, like all groups, cherished a distinctive social identity that had three dimensions: cognitive (“we” are different from “them”); evaluative (“our” way is better than “theirs”); and emotional (“we” support each other attached to the Lord Jesus and one another.”).

**I. Gal 1:1-5: Letter Opening**

God is “Father,” which means Patron. Jesus is the broker for believers, the clients. Patron’s provide favor (grace), and for Paul this favor is “salvation” (see v. 4).

**II. Gal 1:6-9: Introduction**

Lack of the customary blessing at this point is an attack on the collective honor of the Galatians. Instead, he levels a charge against them, of accepting a different gospel. The two competing gospels are Paul’s Torah-free version and the Judaizers’ Torah-rooted version. The latter want Israelite Hellenistic Jesus group members to live that barbarians, to adopt Judean practices so as to be “true Israelites.”

**III. Gal 1:10–2:21: Paul Defends his Honor (Form: Encomium, self-praise)**

A. Opening: 1:10-12. Paul cares nothing about the opinions of others. His gospel came through revelation (an ASC experience). He tells something unknown about the God of Israel and his Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

B. Paul’s Lifestyle: 1:13-17. Originally, he was thoroughly observant of the behavior and customs typical of the people of Judean (“Judaism”). That he changed would make everyone suspicious since such change was viewed negatively and was suspect. Cicero describes the Stoic view: “The Philosopher is surmises nothing, repents of nothing, is never wrong, and never changes his opinion.” (vv. 13-14).

The change: Paul describes his birth in terms of a prophetic calling (see Jer 1:5; Isa 49:1b, c; Isa 6; Ezek 1; Isa 49:6; Jer 1:6). Thus doe she claim a unique role and status in the house of Israel, thanks to the

God of Israel. But he did not behave thus in his early life. He accepted authorized violence on behalf of the status quo. Such behavior was a “change” from what God originally intended for him. Paul is not now deviant. He is finally on the track God intended, his divinely ascribed role.

Revelation is important since it comes directly from God. Apostles were commissioned by Jesus.

Education? He studied Pharisaism under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), but about Jesus he had no human teacher. He was taught by God (v. 16c; see 1 Thess 4:9 “theodidaktos”).

C. Paul’s Conduct: 1:18–2:10. In Jerusalem (vv. 18-20) with Cephas (Aramaic, ‘barbarian’ name), Paul does not study, but rather seeks to have his claim of having been “taught by God” acknowledged by Cephas and James, the brother of Jesus. In Syria and Cilicia (vv. 21-24), Paul fulfills God’s commission. As he did in Arabia and Damascus for three years, so in Syria and Cilicia for fourteen years preaching to Israelite minorities living among non-Israelite majorities. His returns to Jerusalem signal his loyalty to the God of Israel whose Temple is there. Again in Jerusalem (2:1-10), Paul travels because directed in an ASC. Titus is a Greek Israelite, thoroughly acculturated in Hellenism. Paul’s problems come from “false brothers.” V. 7 refers to circumcised (Judea and vicinity, since 150 BC) and uncircumcised (everywhere else). By appearing with famous people, Paul’s reputation and honor are enhanced.

Insult: Paul (v. 6); James, Cephas, John (v. 9).

D. Comparison of Paul and Others: 2:11-21. Paul and Cephas at Antioch (vv. 11-14). “To oppose someone to their face” is a losing posture. The earlier cessation of hostilities has now resumed; Paul was unsuccessful with Peter this time. Paul first put himself on par with Peter (2:1-10), now exalts self over Peter (2:11-14).

Comparison of Paul and Judean Jesus-Group Leaders: 2:15-20. The contrast is ‘Judeans by nature’ (an outsider term) and “sinners of non-Israelite origin” (that is, those hostile to the God of Israel). “Justified” is also a complex term, but here it was considered a characteristic of “Israelites by nature,” (an insider term). Best English equivalent: “divine acceptability, acceptable to the God of Israel.” Chosen by the God of Israel. How does it work? By being faithful to Torah. Paul argues that “acceptability comes through faith,” that is, by showing trust and loyalty to God, who raised Jesus from the dead. Torah observance along is good but insufficient to maintain divine acceptability.

Epilogue: 2:21

If Israelite acceptability to God derives from Torah, then Jesus’ death makes no sense.

#### **IV. Gal 3:1–6:10: Paul Defends his Gospel (Form: Public Argument) .**

The Ten Words (Commandments, Exod 20:1) were spoken directly by God to Moses. The rest of the Commandments of the Mosaic Law came from God through angelic intermediaries (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19-20) to Moses to Israel and included both written and unwritten commandments. Paul excluded the Ten from his reference to the Torah given through Moses. This part of the letter has two sections: 3:1–4:31 sets out proofs of the speaker’s point of view; 5:1–6:10 exhorts the listeners to comply with the truth of the gospel just demonstrated.

##### **Section One: Gal 3:1–4:31 Proofs**

3:1-5 “Hexing” caused the Galatians to lose “sight” of what God did in raising Jesus from the dead.

3:6-9 Abraham, a non-Israelite; (remember Jacob=Israel, see Gen 35:10) was acceptable to God by faith, trust, loyalty. No Torah yet existed. Vv. 6-7 acceptance by the God of Israel depends on faith in God’s raising Jesus from the dead and all this entails, just as Abraham, the non-Israelite, had faith in the God of Israel. What counts then is not blood-line or genealogy but faith which so many of Abraham’s descendants lack. This is Paul’s first point. V. 8 “all the *peoples* shall be blessed in you” has to mean Hellenistic Israelites and Judean Israelites, since that quote from Gen 18:18 was made before Israel existed. The seemingly random cluster of citations is known as *haruzin* in Hebrew, stringing pearls. Paul’s point: The God of Israel finds acceptable through their faith all Israelites who are blessed with the faith of their ancestor Abraham.

3:10-14 Jesus restored Israel’s honor. Paul notes that no one in Israel observes the whole Law (v. 10), hence they are cursed. Jesus’ crucifixion restores the honor of those accursed by the Law since the crucified Jesus was raised by the God of Israel. Notice how “us” refers to fellow Israelites.

3:15-16 Abraham’s true heirs. The promise was to Abraham’s seed (singular: *sperma*), not seeds (plural). That individual, single heir is Israel’s Messiah, revealed by God to be Jesus whom God raised from the dead.

3:17-22 Relationship of God’s promises to Abraham to God’s law through Moses. The promise to Abraham was made centuries before the law given to Moses. Why the Law? Idolatrous episode of the Golden Calf (Exod 32:1-35). Law runs from Moses to the Messiah (v. 19).

3:23–4:11 Further clarification. Israelites of whatever social rank, whether Judean or Hellenist, whether slave or free, and regardless of gender, are one in Christ Jesus. The bottom line is that by belonging to Christ, the sole heir of Abraham, the collectivistic persons making up Jesus groups become the true offspring of Abraham, hence heirs of God’s promise to Abraham. “To redeem those who were under the Law” means to restore the honor of Israelites. Adoption was not a Judean custom. It was, however, typical of Hellenism, hence this would make sense to Hellenistic Israelites, Paul’s audience in Galatia. Abba (Father, not Daddy) signals patronage, which “kinifies” relations between patron and client. Sky objects were living beings. To return to these is to insult God. As change agent, Paul fears his Galatians will discontinue the innovation he proclaimed among them. He will lose honor himself.

4:12-20 Exhortatory interlude. Evil eye, and hospitality. Paul’s anxiety for his Jesus Group.

4:21-31 Sarah and Hagar. Paul returns to his main argument that Jesus-group members exist in a post-Law situation. He offers an allegorical interpretation of Sarah and Hagar (midrash) with application to Jesus groups. He is arguing against those in Galatia who have rejected his gospel for the Judaizers’ version, the one supported by Cephas, John, and James. The high context of his reference presumes his audience knows the details, hence are Israelites. The midrash casts Hagar as Sinai covenant (mountain in Arabia, present Jerusalem and its customs and practices; Hagar (Jerusalem) is in slavery. Sarah stands for

the celestial covenant, celestial Jerusalem, bearing children for freedom. She is the true Israelite mother. Paul's Jesus group members are in fact children of the free woman, not of the slave, hence subject not to the enslaving covenant of Sinai but to the liberating covenant of the Jerusalem in the sky. The slave and her child – the Judaizers – must be turned away.

### **Section Two: Gal 5:1–6:10 Exhortations**

There are two sections here: One focuses on circumcision, the second on behaviors and their sources: the flesh and Spirit.

5:1-12 Circumcision (male genital mutilation). Paul's key idea here is freedom. Having gained freedom from Egypt, the Israelites surrendered it to the Golden Calf. Circumcision became the main marker of Israelite exclusivity around 150 BC, the Maccabean era. It was just a nick, but it required total obedience to the whole Law of Moses, a step back to slavery according to Paul. Divine acceptance comes from faith. This nick also "cuts one off" from Jesus-Messiah. All that counts is faith in God, who raised Jesus from the dead, along with behavior marked by love, that is, group attachment.

5:13-26 Flesh and Spirit. Freedom from means freedom for, or slave service is always present: if not to one, then to the other. The works of the flesh are the Ten Commandments in disguise. The works of the Spirit make Law beside the point. The main obstacles seem to be Mediterranean male qualities: arrogance, challenging others, and envy (v. 26). Reject these, and strive for group integrity.

6:1-10 General Exhortations. Final medley of exhortation to group integrity and group support. Deception is a key notion here.

### **V. Gal 6:11-18 Conclusion**

Impassioned plea to persuade listeners to accept Paul's point of view.

6:11 Paul was part of the 1-2 % of the population that was literate. Three forms of Paul's letters: hand-written by himself, dictated, or written by someone else from notes given by Paul.

6:12-17 Summary observations about honor. Vv 12-13 are a strong accusation against Cephas, John, James and their followers. They care mostly about increasing honor by bringing the Galatians into their Judean Jesus group life-style. Paul concludes by saying if anyone has problems with what he is saying and doing, they should take it up with his master and leave him alone.

6:18 "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Messiah be with your spirit, brothers. Amen."

### **Resources:**

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. Social Science Commentary on the Pauline Letters. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006. Pp. 177-218.

## Glossary:

**Jesus Movement:** Jesus and the group of his immediate circle of followers, their families and friends.

**Jesus-Group:** Those who followed after Jesus' death and resurrection. -They called themselves: *Followers of the Way* (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). "Christian" occurs only three times in the NT (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16-17), but it is used by outsiders with negative connotation.

**Generations** = chains of witnesses rather than a set number of years (e.g., 20-30).

**Change Agency:** The one who authorizes the change. In Israel, this is GOD

**Change Agent:** The one who promotes the change: In first century A.D. Israel, this is PAUL

**Clients:** In the context of change, these are the people who need the change, whether or not they know about it, or even whether or not they know that they need it.

**Innovators:** Those who accept and promote the change. Innovators control adequate material and personality resources to absorb the possible failure due to an unsuccessful innovation. They can understand and apply rather complex knowledge. They espouse the value of venturesomeness, that is a desire for the daring, the chancy, and the risky. Finally, innovators are cosmopolites, that is, they have contact with outsiders and most often have social relationships with them.

**First Adopters:** Those who are a more integrated part of the local social system than are innovators. They are locally focused people and frequently are opinion leaders. They are not far ahead of the average person and serve as role models for others in adopting the innovation. They are respected by peers and are the embodiment of successful and discreet use of the new idea. They know that they must continue to earn the esteem and reputation of their colleagues if their position as opinion leaders in the social system is to be maintained.

**Refraction** - Context-based change of the innovation is called "refraction"

**Reinvention** is the behavior resulting from the refraction of the innovation (e.g., clique formation in Corinth; denial of resurrection also in Corinth).

**Evangelization:** The process of communicating the innovation worked by God in the Israelite Tradition, namely, that the God of Israel raised Jesus from the dead and constituted him Messiah and cosmic Lord, soon to return to inaugurate theocracy in Palestine.

**Heterophilous:** Heterophily is the degree to which pairs of interacting individuals are *different* in certain attributes such as beliefs, education, social status and the like.

Heterophilous communication spreads *vertically* with a system, for example, through the conversion of a king, prince or governor.

**Homophilous.** Homophily is the degree to which pairs of interacting individuals *share* the same status and *same* beliefs, education, social status and background. Homophilous communication spreads *horizontally* within a system.

**Collectivistic culture** = a culture in which the individual is embedded in the group and willingly works on behalf of the benefit of the group rather than for personal benefit. That individual is defined by the group and draws identify from the group.

**Law (Torah)** is a fluid concept: can designate the entire OT, the sections called Law and Prophets (from Gen to 2 Kings), Law of Moses, Ten commandments. All written law.

**Justice** = proper interpersonal relations.

**Justification** = becoming acceptable to God by reason of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because of Jesus' redemptive death, God waives his right to avenge the dishonor done to him by those who sin, that is shame him.

**Redemption** = restoration of one's status before God. Accomplished by Jesus' death.

**Righteousness** = acceptance by God. Rooted in Abraham who believed in what God did, not in Torah observance.