

**ACTS OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION
OF NIGERIA**

VOL 2

**PAUL: EMBODIMENT OF THE OLD AND NEW
TESTAMENTS**

EDITED BY
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CABAN PUBLICATION 2013

Dedicated to

Callistus Mbanusi, OSA, first CABAN member to enter into the eternal joy of the Lord. He was very committed as Coordinator of the Local Organizing Committee of the 2009 CABAN Convention and was instrumental in securing the venue of the Convention. May he rest in perfect peace!

PREFACE

The current issue of the Acts of CABAN is dedicated to Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. The book contains the papers delivered at the 2nd Annual Convention of the Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria (CABAN) in Makurdi in 2009. The Convention reflected on the theme of “Paul: Embodiment of the Old and New Testaments.” The choice of Paul as the theme of the convention was inspired by the Church’s celebration of June 2008 to June 2009 as the Year of Saint Paul. The CABAN theme came as an apt response to these words of Pope Benedict XVI when he declared the Year of Paul in Rome on 28 June 2007: “Meetings for study will be promoted and there will be special publications on Pauline texts, to promote the immense richness of the teaching contained in them, true patrimony of humanity redeemed by Christ.” A good dose of these immense riches is presented in the present book which contains the researches and reflections of the Catholic biblical scholars of Nigeria on the life and thoughts of this great Apostle of the Gentiles. As the title of the volume suggests, Paul uniquely embodies the best traditions of the Old Testament and the best traditions of the New Testament such that the reading of Paul gives one a sense of the riches of the whole biblical tradition.

One also notes the difficulty in reading Paul as he is a very controversial figure and awakens different responses from diverse ideological groups. The extraordinary and often controversial circumstances of his conversion to Christianity and his daring apostolic courage to speak out on issues that others would rather sweep under the carpet all add to the enigmatic nature of his personality. This book assembles the rich array of Paul’s thought from diverse perspectives and in a way that makes him still very relevant to the life and mission of the Church in contemporary society.

In the first paper, **St. Paul and the New Aeropagi: A Nigerian Perspective**, John Cardinal Onaiyekan (the Archbishop of Abuja) gives an exposé of Paul's experience of conversion to Christianity and how this influenced his missionary apostolate. He draws a number of lessons from Paul's missionary life for the missionary apostolate in Nigeria today. Particularly significant are his suggestions for the material and moral support of Nigerian missionaries who are ever on the increase. The paper doubles as a Contribution to the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 2009 Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and to the CABAN 2009 Convention.

The Old Testament background of Pauline thought is addressed by Luke E. Ijezie in his **"The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament and its Influence on Pauline Thought"**. He argues that God's Fatherhood to Israel in the Old Testament is basically anchored on the idea of holiness such that to be holy is to be a child of God. According to him, Paul borrows this idea of holiness and universalizes it with the idea that all children of God are so because of the possession of the Spirit of holiness which sets them apart for God. This fact of God's Fatherhood is very central to the whole fabric of Pauline theology and can be seen as a formidable uniting force in the contemporary world marked by diverse forms of exclusivist, religious ideologies.

Another central Old Testament theme that informs Pauline thought is the theme of law or Torah. Writing on this theme, Teresa Okure, in **"'Christ, the End of the Law' (Rom 10:4): An Index to Paul's Conversion Experience"**, examines how Paul understands the believer's movement from the law (including every law) to Christ and its implications for life. She argues that Paul's primary concern in this text of Rom 10:4 is stereological, meaning that Paul is interested primarily on how the believer appropriates the

righteousness given by God in Christ as a free gift of salvation to all human beings without any form of discrimination. In her view, Paul's thought is an index of the radical nature of his personal conversion to Christ, and this, itself, is a challenge to all Christians to let their new life in Christ influence their thought patterns and their life choices.

The gratuitous nature of God's saving action in Christ is further seen in the mystery of divine call. The point is elaborated by Cosmas Uzowulu in **"The Choice of the Foolish: The Study of 1 Cor 1,26-31 and its Implication for the Contemporary Society"**. He explains Paul's teaching on the mystery of God's call, how God uses things the world considers foolish and worthless to manifest his wisdom and strength. According to him, Paul presents this as a contrast to the daunting situation he saw at Corinth where people were ever struggling to jump over others to achieve honour and prominence. In such a society marked by the pivotal values of honour and shame, boastfulness, arrogance and contempt for others were the order of the day as people measured their lives by what a delimited group of others thought about them.

Agnes Acha, in **"'Being All Things to All' (1 Cor 9:19-23): Its Implications for the Nigerian Christian"**, discusses Paul's idea of being all things to all people, and goes on to explain how such can become a programme for pastoral ministry and Christian witness. According to her, the expression summarizes Paul's vocation and his dexterity in adapting to all missionary situations and to all manner of people. The great challenge, she points out, is that of loving without discrimination, loving unconditionally and selflessly.

In **"'The Untimely Born' (1 Cor 15:8): A Portrait of Paul among the Corinthians"**, Emmanuel Nwaoru discusses Paul's self-description as one untimely born (*ektrōma*), a self-deprecating terminology which Paul employs to express his mysterious call to the apostolic ministry. Although this negative terminology was probably employed by Paul's opponents to disqualify him as a

genuine apostle, he instead appropriated it to express what God's mercy had achieved in and through him. In this way, Paul teaches that genuine apostolic ministry depends on God's grace, not on human merits.

Shifting the focus to Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, Mary Jerome Obiorah, in "**The Temple of the Living God': A Study of the Old Testament Explicit Quotations in 2 Corinthians 6,14-7,1**", argues that Paul exhibits his versatility with the Old Testament in his call on Corinthians to avoid mixing up with non believers. The fact is that Christians are the temple of God by the very reason of their vocation, and this demands a life of no compromise. According to her, by insisting on the uncompromising nature of the new life in Christ, Paul exhibits his links to the Old Testament which clearly excludes any middle way in serving God. One is either for righteousness or for lawlessness. In the same way, one is either for Christ or for Belial.

Another significant aspect of Pauline thought is its value for ecumenical dialogue. This is addressed by Cletus Gotan in "**St Paul and Ecumenism: A Guide to Christian Unity**". Here, he exposes the immense values of ecumenical dialogue, arguing that working for unity is a powerful way of witnessing to Christ. With copious references to Pauline texts, he points out that ecumenism does not conceive unity as uniformity by which all do the same things but a unity of spirit that recognizes the diversity of human beings and their cultures and thus encourages variety and creativity emanating from the same Spirit.

It needs to be mentioned that Pope Benedict XVI mentioned the promotion of ecumenism as one of the aims of the Year of St. Paul. According to the Pope, "The Apostle of the Gentiles, who dedicated himself to the spreading of the good news to all peoples, spent

himself for the unity and harmony of all Christians.” The Year of St Paul has come and gone, but its immense fruits remain there to be appropriated. One of such fruits is the present volume of Acts of CABAN. CABAN is grateful to the many Nigerian benefactors who helped to make this publication possible.

The Editors

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (ed. D. N. Freedman; 6 vols.; New York, 1992)
AD	Anno Domini
AnBib	Analecta Biblica (Rome)
Ber.	<i>Berakot</i>
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Stuttgart)
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i> (Rome)
<i>BZ</i>	Biblische Zeitschrift (Paderborn)
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> (Washington, DC)
Eng.	English
<i>et al</i>	<i>et alii</i> (= and others)
GK	Greek
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's NT Commentaries
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i> (Cincinnati, OH)
IBT	International Bible Translators
ID	Idem (= the same)
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> (Williston, VT)
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> (Sheffield)
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> (Sheffield)
LD	Lectio divina
LXX	Septuagint
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i> (ed. W. A. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids, 1997)
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version (US, 1984)

NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i> (Cambridge, MA)
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae (Freiburg im Breisgau)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)
TCGNT	A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (B. M. Metzger, 1971)
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (eds. G. Kittel – G. Friedrich; Grand Rapids, 1964-76)
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> (eds. G. J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren; Grand Rapids, 1974-)
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> (eds. L. Harris et al.; 2 vols.; Chicago, 1980)
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> (eds. L. Harris et al.; 2 vols.; Chicago, 1980)
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> (Leiden)
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas)

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St. Paul and the New Aeropagi: A Nigerian Perspective¹

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Introduction

I am most grateful for the honour done to me by His Eminence, Ivan Cardinal Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, who has invited me to make a short contribution to the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 2009 Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I have been asked to offer my reflections “on the basis of my pastoral and missionary experience in my country, emphasizing those aspects and particular insights which could be shared with other representatives of the missionary world.” I shall try to do this in two sections. First I shall highlight some relevant aspects of the life and mission of St. Paul. Then, I shall attempt to draw some lessons which I believe we should take note of in view of a Nigerian missionary enterprise.

Part One: St Paul, the Apostle and Missionary

The New Testament gives us copious information about St Paul, his life and his mission, both in the Acts of the Apostles as well as in the letters that go by his name. Also, lots of books and studies abound in libraries and bookshops on this great Apostle of the Gentiles. In this context and for the purposes of my assignment, I will only draw attention to some aspects of the life and mission of St Paul.

¹ This work started life as a Contribution to the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 2009 Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

1. “Hebrew of Hebrews”

“I was born of the race of Israel and of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents” (Phil. 3:5). This is how St Paul described himself, namely as an authentic Hebrew, no less Hebrew than even the most fanatical Jew. He was raised up in the best tradition of the Jewish faith and Jewish Theology. He prided himself with the fact that he studied at the feet of the great Gamaliel, the Jerusalem professor of Jewish doctrines and law. He was also a fanatical defender of the Jewish faith, especially of the destiny of the Jewish race as the chosen people of God. He was dedicated to the practice of the law and even described himself as being without reproach in this regard (Phil. 3-6).

2. The “Conversion” of St Paul

It is important to note in what precisely consisted the conversion of St Paul. His case is certainly not like that of St Augustine or of Mary Magdalene, public sinners who changed their way of life and began to live well. St Paul was never an immoral person. He was never a fornicator or an adulterer less still an idolater. He was an honest, very devout Jew. Precisely because of this, he could not tolerate the essence of the Christian faith, which, according to his understanding, hit at the root of his faith as a Jew. The basic of this faith is that God has chosen the Jewish race and that it is through Israel that the whole world is to get salvation. The preaching of Jesus and the continuation of that preaching in the *kerygma* of the early church, which declares that God has started something new, went against his most solemnly held position. That was why he was enthusiastically involved in the persecution of the early church. We already saw him at the martyrdom of St Stephen, approving the stoning of the proto-martyr, and kept the clothes of those who actually threw the stones (Acts 7:58).

His conversion was more a spiritual conversion from the spiritual arrogance of the Jew who had no room for the novelty of the Christian faith to a person ready to open himself to the grace of God. His conversion was not as a result of theological or rational argument. All the arguments even of St Stephen only went further to provoke him. Rather, his conversion came about by the direct intervention of God and of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who knocked him down on the way to Damascus, a journey he was undertaking in order to go and arrest all those who followed the Christian way (Acts 9). This event stamped the life of St Paul for the rest of his earthly existence. He realized that it was God himself who forced him to change his mind – ***Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*** (Acts 9:4) From there, it became clear to him that Jesus Christ was present in the church which he left behind. The event also indelibly drilled on his mind and heart the primacy of grace in the life of the Christian. Only the grace of God is able to give us the faith that we need in order to follow and accept Jesus.

It is no wonder then that the early church found it difficult at first to accept St Paul as a true convert. “*He who was a persecutor had now become a defender of the faith*” (Gal. 1:18). It took the prestige and authority of a man like Barnabas to be able to introduce him to the early church in a way that he was welcome.

Once he saw the light, St Paul did not look back any more. He continued with the same zeal with which he persecuted the church to spread the good news of Christ’s kingdom, first to Jews and later on to all and sundry.

3. St Paul, Well Equipped for His Task

He was well equipped as a Jew: Because of his indisputable authority as regards Jewish theology, he was able to present the Christian message in a language familiar to those of his fellow Jews who were ready to listen to his arguments. His sermons as recorded in the Acts

of the Apostles as well as in all the Epistles attributed to him are full of references both to the Jewish Scriptures as well as to the Jewish religious traditions. He gave very much thought to the meaning of Christ, as this relates to the promises made by God to Israel. The whole Epistle to the Hebrews addressed these thorny matters in great detail. The failure of the Jewish religious establishment to embrace and adopt Christianity wholesale was a cause of great anguish to him. However, he continued to insist that the promises of God can never be revoked and that even in the new dispensation, the Jewish race has its mission within the plan of God. He has no doubt that the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel will take the form of an eventual conversion of Israel to the Christian faith. When this will be and how, is left in the mind of God.

St Paul was well equipped as a Roman citizen: On more than one occasion, he invoked the prerogatives of Roman citizenship when it was appropriate (Cf Acts 16:37; 21:39; 22:25). St Paul lived at a time when the Roman Empire held sway in much of the Middle East and Europe. This can be seen as a providential preparation for the spread of the Christian message. The Roman Empire was by no means a Christian Empire. Indeed the Christian church suffered a chain of persecutions under different Roman Emperors. And yet, the first and the critical period of development and growth of the church took place within the context of the Roman Empire. The ***Pax Romana*** which ensured security of movement from one end of the Empire to the other created the environment for the gospel of the Lord Jesus to be preached by Paul and other missionaries "from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, Galilee and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:18). The word moved swiftly, from the modern day Turkey right across to Spain and from Cologne right down to Ethiopia. This indeed is the Lord's own doing and it is wonderful in our eyes.

St Paul was well equipped with Greek Culture: While the political power of the day was based in Rome, the cultural environment was Greek. St Paul wrote all his letters in the Greek language and as he

went from place to place preaching, he was able to speak freely not only in the Hebrew language to Jews but above all in the Greek spoken language of the day, to the widest audience. Again this is a providential arrangement which made it possible for the Gospel to be preached far and wide. St Paul was very familiar with the Greek literary culture and philosophy, as well as the religions of the Greco-Roman Empire. He was therefore able to present the Christian message using this culture as vehicles.

Thus, St. Paul moved freely in three worlds. We recall that when the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, his title, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*, was written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek (John 19:19-22). This represented the cultural complexity of the Holy Land at that time. St Paul was a living example of this complexity; a Jew, a Roman citizen, steeped in the Greek culture.

4. The Apostolate of St. Paul

The apostolate of St Paul was both by teaching and by witness. He spent a lot of time preaching “in season and out of season” (2Tim. 4:2). He wrote extensively letters and theological treatises. He was highly successful as he freely expounded the message of Christianity as a fulfillment of the Old Testament but also as a message addressed and meant for all men and women, Jew and Greek alike. For St Paul, preaching was a pre-eminent occupation: “***Woe to me if I do not preach***” (1Cor. 9:16). He could not see his life in any other way except as one who is always busy telling a story of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. “For me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

Jesus Christ carried out his mission both by words and by deeds. St Paul followed the same example. He not only preached but made his very life a witness to the gospel. His zeal was admirable, so much so that like Jesus, he hardly had time to rest. On one occasion, when he was provoked, he proudly demonstrated that he had worked harder than any of his opponents and detractors (I Cor. 15:11). He continued

to zealously carry out his missionary task even when he suffered all kinds of persecution. His personal life style was a great sermon to all those who cared to observe him. He had the courage and the moral authority to declare: “*Take me for your model as I take Christ*” (I Cor. 11:1). How many of us preachers can with a clear conscience say it so clearly? His lifestyle was very modest. He himself declared that he worked with his own hands to earn his living as well as to support his missionary work. It was not that he had no right to demand it. But he preferred to work for his own living (1 Cor. 9:1-18). We are told that his occupation was that of a tent maker and he continued working even when he was in captivity. He certainly did not preach for the sake of money. In fact he had serious warnings against the avarice and the love of money which often destroy both the credibility and the effectiveness of preachers of the word.

Part Two: Lessons for the Nigerian Mission

1. The Imperative of Mission

Everywhere in the world, it is now well known that the church is very vibrant in our country, Nigeria. Our churches are full on Sundays, our worship is vibrant, and our lay faithful are very active and generous in the support of the church. We are building big churches, constructing elaborate structures as well as being involved in many social development works. In particular the trend of vocations in Nigeria both to the priesthood and the religious life has gone beyond any natural explanation. We must indeed acknowledge that God is doing something special in our land and if it is so, it must be for a purpose. The purpose cannot be anything less than the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

But the growth of the church cannot end with big churches and bursting seminaries. No church can be considered as having reached maturity unless it is also a church that participates fully in the missionary mandate of the church. Therefore, the Nigerian mission

should be a natural development of the fast growth of our church. Like St. Paul, we too must say: “Woe to us if we do not evangelize!”

2. Our Conversion

We remarked above about the specific content of the conversion of St Paul. There is a parallel also with the conversion of our people to the faith. Before we received Christ’s gospel message, our people had a religion in which the central point was a belief in the one true God, creator of everything. Our people’s conversion to Christianity therefore was not a conversion from arrant paganism to Christianity or abandoning of false gods in order to embrace the true God. Unfortunately, in the history of the Christian missions in our lands, this mistaken attitude to conversion has very often been the main thrust of missionary enthusiasm. Many a missionary left Europe “to save souls” that were, in their conviction, ignorant of the true God and heading for eternal damnation by their millions. The intention was very holy and heroic, but still mistaken. Of course, they were men and women of their times, used by God to achieve his own divine purposes.

Now after many years and especially with the embrace of Christianity by the Nigerian peoples themselves, we understand better what God has done for us. My late father, God rest his soul, became a Christian at the age of almost 20, after full initiation into the religions of our ancestors. He often told me that his conversion to Christianity did not entail taking on a new God. In the Yoruba language: **God is one** and it is this same God **Olorun**, whose name we have adopted in our Christian faith. We did not have to look for another name for God, the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Conversion, therefore, consisted mainly in getting to know Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, who came, lived on this earth, died for our sins, buried and rose triumphant sitting now at the right hand of God the Father. This is the crux of our conversion to the faith.

This point has a significant missiological consequence. I am convinced that the fact that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is the same God that our ancestors worshipped is one of the reasons why the Christian faith has become very attractive and congenial to our people. By way of comparison, if we look at what has happened to Christian missions among the great oriental Asian religions with a radically different concept of the divinity, then we can appreciate the point being made here. For example, in Japan, 500 years after St. Francis Xavier preached the faith there, Christians are still under 1% of the population. In Nigeria, in less than 200 years, Christians are already about 50%. The same faith in the one God is also what is preached by Islam, with a similarly positive result as in Christianity. The importance of this basic faith in One God, which cuts across Christianity, Islam and our Traditional Religion cannot be over-emphasized. We should continue to see it as a major foundation for mutual understanding, dialogue and cooperation across our religious lines.

3. Mission “*Ad Gentes*”

The church has always emphasized the need for people who will go out beyond their own lands to spread the faith. Even after 2000 years, the need for those who will carry the faith into other parts of the world continues to be pressing. Even today, we have to continue to carry the Christian message away from our homeland to other lands. But Mission *Ad Gentes* today has its own very special challenges which the life of St Paul calls us to reflect upon.

3.1. The God ahead of us

The first point we should notice is that St Paul carried the Christian faith to people whom he acknowledged to have already an element of the truth. As far as the Jewish people all over the world was concerned, he simply went back to their scriptures to prove that everything said of Jesus was already in the Old Testament. Therefore

those who were listening to him were not supposed to be a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, knowing nothing about God until St Paul came to them. The same is true not only of the Jewish hearers of the gospel but also of the so called pagans of those days. In Athens, he spoke of “the unknown God” (Acts 17:23). Even in the pagan cities of Lystra and Derbe, he drew their attention to Him, “the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that they contain,”who “sends you rain from heaven, makes your crops grow when they should and gives you food and makes you happy” (Acts 14:15-17) This is the God who makes himself known to everyone who cares to listen to him. This theme is well developed also in the letter of St Paul to the Romans (Rom. 1:20-21).

We too ought to recognize in our missionary endeavour that God is already ahead of us wherever we may go. We will do well to make every effort to acknowledge and to discover the spirit of God acting already in the minds and hearts of people who may not have formally accepted and embraced the Christian faith.

3.2. Mission to the Poor

Our experience of missionary work in our nation was historically one of missionaries coming from relatively rich developed nations to preach to us in a relatively underdeveloped and poor environment. And so the missionaries to many parts of Africa came not only to bring the gospel message but also were very much involved in bringing to the people, human development often described as “civilization”. Some even talk of “Christian civilization”. Good health care, an increased awareness about personal dignity, freedom, democratic instincts; all these came along with the Christian faith. That was the classical scenario of missionary work from Europe to Africa. And if we add to this the fact that the white European missionary belonged to the race and “tribe” of the colonial masters, it was clear that the missionary was operating from a position of strength.

Our own mission indeed could entail a similar scenario as we try to go from Nigeria to other African countries that are poorer than ourselves. We could indeed carry the Christian faith along with a little bit of whatever human progress we can bring to the people who are suffering more than we are, not only in Africa but in other parts of the world that are in a similar situation, for example in the Pacific islands like Papua New Guinea.

3.3. Mission to the Rich

However, there is also the challenge today of mission from our land to the so called rich countries. Already Nigerian missionaries are in the United States of America and in Europe. Many people are not sure what to make of this movement. We need to discern motives and strategies very carefully in this regard.

In our globalized world, there is no more clear cut boundaries between Christian lands and non-Christian lands since human beings have now spread all over the world living side by side everywhere. It means, therefore, that mission land can be everywhere. It also means that any group of people can also engage in mission anywhere in the world. That people from a poor country should go and preach in rich lands may appear strange today. But when we look at the experience of St Paul, this seems to be indeed the normal aspect of his missionary apostolate. He left Antioch in Syria and Jerusalem in Palestine to carry the faith to the centres of Greek culture in cities like Corinth, Athens, Thessalonica, and right into the centre of the Roman Empire in the city of Rome itself. In all these great cities where St Paul preached, he was addressing a people who were far more advanced in culture and in economic level of life than those in the land from which the message emanated.

Therefore, if we from poor nations today find ourselves having to go to preach the gospel to people in the so called rich nations, we are in good company with St Paul. There is of course an added factor namely that often we find ourselves going to preach in nations which

were traditionally Christian before and are now no longer practicing it. This is all the more difficult than if one were preaching to pagans or those who have no faith whatsoever. But willingly or unwillingly, welcome or unwelcome, we must continue to preach the good news.

This means that we, on our part, will have to be clear in our minds about what is the name of game. We need to be careful not to restrict our missions to places where we have good financial returns. It is of course legitimate for people in richer lands to share their material resources with others who are in poorer lands. St Paul did this. However, if we go on mission mainly in order to raise funds and make money, even if for the most holy of projects, there is cause for grave concern. This is valid for all our missionaries, male and female, priests and sisters. The concern is perhaps more pressing for female religious from poor countries whose “missionary work” in rich lands consists largely in working for pay in places like schools, hospitals and homes.

In this connection we need to mention a very positive dimension, when missionaries from poor lands raise funds from rich nations in order to finance their missionary apostolate in poorer areas. For example, the Nigerian Missionaries of St. Paul are working in South Sudan in collaboration with the St. Patrick’s Missionaries, who are running the project from funds raised in more affluent Ireland. The international missionary institutes have been doing this all along. For example, Nigerian Spiritans are working in Papua New Guinea, with funding through the Spiritan Generalate. The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples might consider giving more support and encouragement to this kind of arrangement. The bottom line is this: where ever there are missionaries ready to work in poor lands, they should not be handicapped by lack of funds.

3.4. The Sending Community

Another lesson we learn from St Paul the missionary is that he was sent by a community. This is specifically mentioned on the very first missionary journey when he was sent out by the Church of Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). They prepared him and they gave him the resources to make the journey and he came back to report to that local community. Today, the situation is not as straight forward as that. Generally, we have missionaries leaving our country to go abroad either as *fidei donum* priests sent by their bishops or as members of a religious community going on mission sent by their religious superiors. Canonically, this arrangement of course must continue because anybody going on mission must be sent.

However, there is also a national dimension to this whole issue. We thank God that in the last few years, a National Missionary Council has been established in the country. The Nigerian Church, as a People of God, ought to be part and parcel of the sending out of missionaries to other lands. Therefore, we need to have structures which will facilitate our local church sending out missionaries to other local churches. Sending also entails supporting, both by prayer and when necessary by material resources. The missionaries we send to Europe and America may not need to be fed by us. But we cannot limit our missionaries only to places where they can be fed. We must now think seriously of how to support our missionaries who go to where there is no adequate material support to maintain them. So far, not much has been done in this regard. I believe the time has come for all those who are sending Nigerian missionaries abroad to compare notes, bring their heads together and coordinate their activities with the church at the national level. I am quite convinced that resources are available in our country to maintain our missionaries in poor nations if we do the right things. Considering how much money is raised in our local churches, to build new churches and other structures, a mere fraction of all this will go a long way towards a budget for maintaining our missionaries.

Conclusion

This year of St Paul gives us an opportunity to look more closely at the life and teachings of St Paul as well as to draw lessons from his life. We have tried to draw attention to a few elements both in the life of St Paul and the lessons for our land. My prayer is that during this year of St Paul, our faith and zeal for God's kingdom will be increased. Our hope too is that the Nigerian mission will move unto a fresh level of commitment and zeal.

The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament and Its Influence on Pauline Thought

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1. Introduction

The understanding of God as Father is at the very centre of Israel's religion as presented in the Old Testament. In periods of crisis, Israel would appeal to the divine paternity in her quest for deliverance. This idea is also at the centre of the presentation of the History of Salvation in the New Testament. Jesus, who is at the centre of that history, is identified as the Son of the Father, and he actually accomplishes his role because of that status as the Son of the Father (Luke 1:32; John 6:27,40; 8:36; Rom 1:3-4; 8:29; Gal 4:4-7; Heb 1:2,5; 5:5; 7:28). The influence of this idea of God as Father helps to understand the different contours of Pauline thought. In recent years, scholars have been on the quest for what could be considered as the theological centre of Pauline thought.¹ Significantly, the theme of the Fatherhood of God has not featured prominently in these discussions, as emphasis has been laid on other themes such as righteousness, faith, justification, reconciliation, participation, etc. The present study does not claim to answer the difficult question of the centre of Pauline theology, but it argues that the understanding of God as Father is one of the most influential ideas at the background of the whole fabric of Pauline thinking. This understanding of God ties together various threads of his theologizing apostolate and shows powerfully his Old Testament roots. The theme also helps to make Paul's teaching very relevant to the contemporary society.

¹ See Joseph Plevnik, "The Centre of Pauline Theology," *CBQ* 51 (1989) 461-478; ID, "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," *CBQ* 65 (2003) 554-567.

2. Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament

The term “father” is a terminology associated with human beings and it is usually applied to masculine persons. The identification of God as father in the biblical text must be seen on the level of anthropomorphic use of language. But this does not diminish the depth of the meaning communicated in the use of that terminology. There are some scholars who tend to see it today as an antiquated anthropomorphism and wish that it be dropped in response to new philosophical understandings of divine nature. However, one can hardly avoid anthropomorphic language as long as one gets on reading the biblical text. The important thing is to be aware that the text uses images to express deeper ideas.

2.1 Use of the Term “Father” in the Old Testament

The word “father”, in its Hebrew form *’āb*, occurs over 1,200 times in the Hebrew Bible,² and it is applied to different categories of persons. These applications reveal the basic understanding of the term in these texts. In these applications, father is used in the following senses: a. one who begets or gives life; b. one who occupies a position of authority, such as an older man (1 Sam 24:12), a teacher or prophetic master (2 Kgs 2:12; 6:21; 13:14), a priest (Judg 17:10; 18:19), protector (Ps 68:6; Job 29:16; Sir 4:10; Isa 22:21); c. ancestor or grandfather (Gen 28:13; 49:29); d. founder of a group, guild or occupation (Gen 4:20; Jer 35:6,8; cf. 1 Macc 2:549; e. a counsellor (Gen 45:8; see also 1 Macc 2:65; 11:32); f. creator.³

² E. Jenni, “*’āb* father,” *TLOT* 1, 1-2.

³ See H. Ringgren, “*’ābh*,” *TDOT* 1, 7-8.

2.2 The Attribution of Fatherhood to God in the Old Testament

The application of fatherhood to God in the Old Testament must be seen in the sense of the begetter of life. This basic idea ties together all the ideas associated with the divine paternity. From this basic idea, one can discuss the divine paternity from two perspectives: direct attribution of fatherhood to God and indirect attribution of fatherhood to God.

2.2.1 Direct Attribution of Fatherhood to God

There are three contexts in which the title father is applied to God. These include: the personal names, as father of the people or nation, and as father of the king.

a. God as Father in Personal Names: The first context in which God is referred to as father is in personal names. These names may have varying interpretations, but the more obvious ones are: *abiyahu* – YHWH is my father; *abner/abiner* – my (divine) father is a lamp, etc.⁴

b. God as Father of the People: The second context of the application of fatherhood to God is as father of the people or nation. Many texts come into view here. First, God is likened to a father who has compassion on his people (Ps 103:13), a father who reproves the child as a wisdom teacher (Prov 3:12). Secondly, YHWH is posited as the father of Israel who figures as his firstborn (Exod 4:22; see also Deut 32:6; Hos 11:1; Isa 1:2; 45:9-11; 63:16; Jer 31:9).

In many texts, the people of Israel are regarded as children of YHWH, either in the singular or in the plural (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; 32:5,6,19; Isa 1:2,4; 30:1,9; 43:6; 63:8; Jer 3:14,19; 4:22; 31:9,20; Hos 2:1; 11:1). In Deut 14:1-2, there is the parallel identification of Israel as *banim* (children) of YHWH (14:1) and as *'am qādōsh* (14:2). H. F.

⁴ For details, see Dana M. Pike, "Names, Theophoric," *ABD* 4,1018-1019.

Fuhs interprets this parallelism as implying that the Israelites are holy because they are YHWH's children and his family.⁵ This view would imply that Israelites were already YHWH's children before becoming holy, that is, the identity as children is logically prior to the identity as holy ones. But that raises the problem of explaining the basis for their identity as YHWH's children. A contrary position argued here is that the identity as holy ones is prior to the identity as children. In other words, Israelites are YHWH's children only because they constitute a *qōdesh* (holy) or *'am qādōsh* (holy people). That is actually the logic of Deut 14:1-2:

"You are children to YHWH your God. You must not gash your heads or shave your foreheads for the dead. For you are a holy people to YHWH your God and he chose you to become his *segullah* people from all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

The particle *ki* in 14:2 unites the ideas in the two verses, making v. 2 a subordinate clause to v. 1 which is the main clause. The identity as YHWH's children is because Israel is a holy people, which itself is a result of the election as YHWH's *s^egullāh* people (treasure people). Here Deuteronomy unifies the themes of sonship and holiness under the umbrella of election.⁶ Israel is referred to as YHWH's *'am nahalah*, meaning "a people of YHWH's inheritance" (Deut 4:20)⁷ and *'am s^egullāh* "a treasure people" (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). Both titles are semantically equivalent as expressions of Israel's special

⁵ According to Fuhs ("Heiliges Volk Gottes," 151.) "Die Israeliten sind YHWH's Kinder, seine Familie und insofern 'heilig'."

⁶ The word *segullah* is related to two Akkadian lexemes, *sikiltu*, meaning "private property", and *sukallu*, meaning "court official" or "minister of a king". Most scholars consider *s^egullāh* as the Hebrew cognate of the Akkadian *sikiltu* because of the sense of "private property". For this interpretation, see H. Wildberger, "*s^egullāh*," *TLOT* 2, 791-793; R. D. Patterson, "*sgl, s^egullāh*," *TWOT* 2 (1980) 617; E. Carpenter, "*s^egullāh*," *NIDOTTE* 3 224.

⁷ For more on this, see Luke E. Ijezie, *The Interpretation of the Hebrew Word 'am (People) in Samuel-Kings* (European University Studies, series XXIII Theology, 830; Bern: Peter Lang, 2007) 128-129.

relationship with YHWH.⁸ The main feature here is the idea of election, since a special part of the same kind of property is chosen.

The Deuteronomic theology of election finds its clearest expression in Deut 7:6-8 where the election is attributed to YHWH's love for Israel, a love theme that is also expressed in the election theology of the Prophets. Israel's history begins with YHWH's love and is guided by this love which is called *'ahabat 'ôlām* (everlasting love) as in these words: "With an everlasting love I have loved you; because of this I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jer 31:3; cf. Isa 54:8). This is in line with Hos 11:1: "While Israel was a child I loved him and from Egypt I called my son." The logic here is that love comes first, then election, the consequence of which is sonship.

The link between election and sonship is also seen in Isaiah where the Servant is frequently identified as the chosen one (Isa 41:8-9; 42:1; 43:10; 44:1-2; 45:4). There is an identity between YHWH's children (*banim*) in Isa 43:6 and his chosen Servant in 43:10. In Isaiah 65 where the plural is used, YHWH's chosen ones (65:9,15,22) are also called his Servants (65:8,9,14,15) and his people (65:10,19,22), and they are the designated dwellers on his holy mountain (65:9,25). In 65:23 these chosen servants of YHWH are called *zera' bekôrê YHWH*, a phrase which may be rendered as "a race of YHWH's firstlings". A similar idea is found in Hosea where YHWH's identity as Israel's maker (Hos 8:14) is linked to the fact that Israel's ancestors were found as first-fruits by YHWH in the desert (Hos 9:10; cf. Deut 32:10). By reason of the election, Israel becomes YHWH's first-born son, an idea that is expressed in Exod 4:22 and Jer 31:9,20.

⁸ There are 8 occurrences of *s^egullâh* in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17; Ps 135:4; Qoh 2:8; 1 Chr 29:3), and in these contexts, it expresses Israel's relationship with YHWH, except in Qoh 2:8 where the reference is to a royal treasure and in 1 Chr 29:3 where it identifies a special royal property of gold and silver dedicated by the king for use in the temple. In all these occurrences, *s^egullâh* is used in the sense of that part of one's property which is dedicated for special use. Cf. Wildberger, "*s^egullâh*," *TLOT* 2, 791-793; J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Waco, Texas 1987), 262.

In Jer 2:3 Israel is described as a *qōdesh* (a holy entity) for YHWH, being the first-fruits of his harvest.⁹ According to the law, the first-born is holy and belongs to YHWH, a law valid for both the first-born of humans (Exod 13:2,13,15; 22:28; Num 3:13) and of plants and animals (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Lev 23:10; Num 15:20,21; Deut 15:19; 26:2,10; Ezek 20:40; 44:30; 48:14). The holiness of the first-born entitles him to act as priest (Num 3,12-13), a fact that shows Israel's role as priest among the nations. Israel's expected mode of being in the world is aptly expressed by the term *qōdesh* (a holy entity). In a joint study, M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz point out that in Priestly works Israel's holiness comes as a result of God's presence in her midst, while in non-Priestly works holiness is a direct consequence of Israel's election.¹⁰ In either way, the attribute of *qādōsh* (holy) belongs to YHWH alone and is acquired only by being dedicated to him, a dedication which makes one to become a sacred thing or *qōdesh*. As B. J. Schwartz points out, the expression *anshê qōdesh* in Exod 22:30 is better understood as "people who constitute a *qōdesh*", meaning, a people who belong to YHWH as his special possession.¹¹

In the light of these facts, some clarifications become necessary: 1. Everyone who becomes a *qōdesh* (holy entity) for YHWH becomes his son or daughter, and thus a member of his family. From this perspective, YHWH's children are as many as his holy ones. 2. One can say that the community of YHWH's children is formed only around the sphere where YHWH manifests his presence, and this explains the central position of Zion. One of the central themes of Isaiah 40-66 is the repopulation of the destroyed city of Zion, and here the city is considered as Mother (49:14), while YHWH functions as

⁹ See H. F. Fuhs, "Heiliges Volk Gottes", in *Unterwegs zur Kirche. Alttestamentliche Konzeptionen* (ed. J. Schreiner) (QD 110; Freiburg 1987) 152.

¹⁰ M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (eds), *Purity and Holiness. The Heritage of Leviticus*, (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 2; Leiden 2000) 10.

¹¹ See B. J. Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness: The Torah Traditions," in *Purity and Holiness. The Heritage of Leviticus*, 47-59.

the Husband of Zion (Isa 54:5; 62:3-5).¹² All Zion inhabitants are consequently children of Lady-Zion and children of YHWH. However, the group will be joined by other "step children" who will be integrated into the fold, thus leading to the full restoration of Zion-Jerusalem in her motherly splendour (49:20-21; 51:17-23; 54:1-17). In this new state of affairs, all nations¹³ who gather to worship YHWH in Zion will be assigned to Zion as adopted children (see Ps 87:4-7), thus making Zion the Mother of the universal children of YHWH.

c. God as Father of the King: The third context of the direct application of fatherhood to God is in reference to the king who is considered as the son of God. The point is that the notion of filiation to YHWH is intrinsically connected with the phenomenon of holiness, such that, as one becomes a *qōdesh* one automatically becomes a son or daughter of the Deity. This explains why the king is considered a son of God, being a holy person (*qōdesh*) himself by the nature of his office.

It is said of the king in Ps 2:7: "You are my son, today I have begotten you". The begetting is localized in time as "today" which refers to the day of the king's enthronement as YHWH's own elected king on

¹² For discussion on this imagery of Zion-Jerusalem as wife, see K. P. Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Library Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville 1994) 165-204; U. Berges, "'Ich bin der Mann, der Elend sah' (Klgl 3,1). Zionstheologie als Weg aus der Krise", *BZ* 44 (200) 18-19. Cf. J. F. A. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison", *JSOT* 44 (1989) 88-107.

¹³ But according to D. E. Hollenberg ("Nationalism and 'the Nations' in Isaiah XL-LV", *VT* 19 [1969] 23-36), Deutero-Isaiah's use of foreign nations is a veiled reference to the foster children of Israel, whom the Servant would invite to return. According to him, these nations are designated variously as "the coastlands", "the peoples", "ends of the earth", "kings", and "queens". Hollenberg distinguishes three groups which Deutero-Isaiah associates with Israel: a. the Servant; b. the rest of Israel apart from the Servant; c. the lost Israelites living among the nations. The first group is the remnant constituting the righteous Israel and who, thus, would play the Servant role of restoring the rest of the population. The second group does not have the righteousness of the Servant, but they retain their Israelite identity and have been forgiven of their sins. The third group, described by Hollenberg as "crypto-Israelites", consists of those who have forsaken their Israelite identity by identifying with the nations and their gods, thereby losing their national purity. These are thus regarded as foster children. See Hollenberg, "Nationalism," 25-29, 35-36.

mount Zion, the holy mountain (Ps 2:6). This is called the adoption formula by which the Davidic king is adopted as a son of God upon his enthronement. See also Ps 89:27; 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chron 28:6. The king becomes God's son by the very act of being crowned king. This is part of the divine promise to David, through the prophet Nathan, that David's son would be adopted as God's son: "I will be his father and he shall be my son" (2 Sam 7:14; cf. Ps 89:26). This was seen as the covenant between YHWH and David. The Davidic king therefore becomes the begotten son of God on the day of his coronation. This ideology of divine sonship guarantees the stability of the Davidic dynasty as well as the divine assistance of the kingship. According to Gerhard von Rad, "unlike in Egypt where the king is physically begotten by the deity, Israel never understood the king's sonship to God mythologically; instead it took it in the sense of an historical legal act, in virtue of which the king was summoned into a quite special relationship *vis-à-vis* Jahweh."¹⁴ The relationship carries with it many legal rights. As von Rad points out, the Davidic king, in his status as son, sits at God's right hand (see Ps 110:1). Thus, he has the prerogative of power over all other kings. The status as son of God also gives him the right of inheritance, and this divine right entitles him to lord it over other nations.

One recurrent point in this discussion is the relationship between holiness and filiation to God. The filial status is achieved through holiness. To be holy is to be a child of God. This is the basic Old Testament idea of YHWH's children.

2.2.2 Indirect Attribution of Fatherhood to God in the Old Testament

The basic definition of father is one who begets or gives life. Included in this is also the role of caring and defending that life. From this perspective, one can theologically explain God's fatherhood from

¹⁴G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I (Original in German, Munich 1957; London 1975) 320

different parts of the Old Testament even when the title father is not is not directly used.

a. God as father of all created things – the fact of creating is an act of fathering. In this sense, the Creator of all things is by that fact the father of all things. The implication is that all things have the right to claim God as their father.

b. God as father of Adam – Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. In this way he is the son of God. This point is later mentioned in the genealogical table in Luke 3:23-38, where Adam is referred to as the son of God (3:38). In Genesis, Adam is presented as the father of all humans. This entitles all humans to call God Father wherever they live and in whatever religion or race. In this way, the book of Genesis directly or indirectly recognizes the universality of God's Fatherhood.

3. Influence of Divine Fatherhood on Pauline Thought

A very good way to understand Paul's understanding of the Fatherhood of God is to note the fact that he equates God as Father, and frequently uses Father and God interchangeably (Rom 1:7; 8:15; 15:6; 1 Cor 8:6; 15:24; 2 Cor 1:3; 6:18; Gal 1:4; 4:6; Eph 1:17; 4:6; 1 Thess 3:13). This is best expressed in 1 Cor 8:5-6 where he says "Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, as in fact there are many gods and many lords; yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." For Paul here, there is only one God and he is the Father of all things. Jesus Christ is presented as the one who mediates all things in creation.¹⁵ Jesus mediates to the world the presence of the Father. This he does because he possesses the Spirit of

¹⁵ Jan Lambrecht, *Collected Studies on Pauline Literature and on the Book of Revelation* (AnBib 147; Rome 2001) 65.

the Father. The Spirit plays a pivotal role in Paul. The Spirit is presented as the gift of the Father, which he gives to humans to make them share in the Son's experience of Abba. Romans and Galatians are based on this theme. According to Jürgen Moltmann, "The Spirit of God the Father becomes the Spirit of Christ, and Christ's history in the Spirit becomes *the history of the Spirit of Christ*."¹⁶ A brief discussion of a number of Pauline texts may clarify the Pauline perspective on the Fatherhood of God.

3.1 Rom 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Letter to the Romans is judged by many commentators as the most elaborate and most systematic exposition of Paul's theology. In it one finds a synthesis of many ideas presented in fragmentary forms in other letters. In the opening of the letter, Paul regards his apostolate as that of preaching the gospel of God (*euangelion theou*). By God, here, he means the Father. According to him, this "gospel" was already promised through the prophets in the Old Testament. By this Paul draws the continuity between this new gospel and the Old Testament. What Paul means by "gospel of God" here is actually God's intervention in Christ.¹⁷ This intervention is concretised in the raising of Jesus from the dead. This was the action of the Father. So Paul's preaching is about the action of the Father. This point is developed in all the letters. In fact, he sees his apostolate as that of

¹⁶ J. Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology. Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 311.

¹⁷ See Douglas Moo, *Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 42-43.

preaching “the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1). According to Paul, the Father shows his love for humanity by giving his Son (Rom 5:8-10; 8:32), and this gift is the only hope for salvation (Rom 5:8-10; 8:32-39; 1 Thess 5:9-10). All these go to show what is regarded as the theocentric nature of Pauline Christology.¹⁸

Another significant point of this opening section of the Letter to the Romans is the identification of the spirit of holiness as the principle that constitutes Jesus as Son of God with power (1:4). This spiritual transformation occurs through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This text is a difficult one for interpreters as it appears to give the impression that Jesus became the Son of God only through the resurrection. The text can, however, be understood in the sense that the resurrection revealed Jesus in his power as the Son of God.¹⁹ This status as Son is as a result of the Spirit of holiness which Jesus possesses. One notes here the close relationship between the two themes of holiness and Sonship. The Sonship of Christ is based on his possession of the Spirit of holiness from the Father. One recalls that in the Old Testament, the holiness of persons makes them God’s children, and the king’s identification as son of God is based on his holy status acquired through coronation. In the same way, Paul sees Christ’s Sonship as based on his possession of the Father’s Spirit which is the Spirit of holiness. This idea plays a central role in the elaboration of Paul’s thinking.

3.2 Rom 8:14-17

In Romans 8, Paul develops his theology of life in the Spirit. His basic argument is that the Spirit is the agent of renewal and recreation. The Spirit is the principle of holiness, and the concept of filiation is based on the possession of this Spirit (Rom 8:14-17). According to Paul, all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (8:14). This point

¹⁸ Plevnik, “The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology,” 562.

¹⁹ See Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988) 46-47.

is also elaborated in Gal 4:6. In saying this, Paul equates the status of Christians with the same status ascribed to the Israelites in the Old Testament, where they are frequently designated as children of YHWH (Exod 4:22-23; Deut 14:1; Isa 1:2-4; Jer 3:19; Hos 11:1). With the possession of the Spirit, the believer's relationship to God is not as a slave but as a child, having been set free from the status of slavery and fear (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:7). This relationship to God is not a natural one through physical begetting but is obtained by self-identification with the Christ through the Spirit. The great consequence of this new status is what Paul calls the Abba experience, which is the experience of God as a personal Father. It is an experience of a deep sense of intimate union and confidence. Only the Spirit can effect such a situation. Thus the possession of the Spirit is the experience of God as Father. It is also the experience of Christ as both Brother and Lord. It is an experience of membership of a great divine family, the confines of which are limitless. The Abba experience is a profound experience of being part of an immense universe of security and tranquility. It is a sense of being finally at home. In this way Pauline theology embodies the Old Testament in an extraordinary way.

Just as the Israelites were entitled to YHWH's own heritage as a result of their filial status, similarly the filial adoption to God endows Christians with legal rights as children in God's house. Thus, Christians have full rights as inheritors in God's house, being full members of God's family. They are co-heirs with Christ who is the Firstborn of many brothers. This idea is also developed in Gal 4:4-7: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God."

The Spirit of God, thus, marks believers out as the children of God. This spiritual separation is by definition a state of holiness. Here the Old Testament link between holiness and divine sonship is furthered. This is clearly expressed by Paul in 2 Cor 6:17-18: "Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

4. Contemporary Relevance of God's Fatherhood

The theme of God's Fatherhood meets with many challenges in the contemporary world. A number of such may be articulated.

1. There are some in the contemporary society who tend to deemphasize the idea of the Fatherhood of God, treating it as an anthropomorphism that has become outmoded. The fact that God is Spirit makes it difficult for such currents of thought to confidently limit him to the human category of father. The argument sounds too abstract as most human approaches to God remain cultural and anthropomorphic. The Fatherhood of God is central to concept of God in most world religions, including African Traditional Religion. The Hebrew religion is no exception to this. The understanding of God as Father remains a fundamental aspect of the biblical faith. It is a theme that helps one to understand the different contours of the biblical text, and the idea runs through the whole Bible. Without the understanding of the role of fatherhood in the biblical text, one can hardly understand the real import of the Christ event.

2. Many today regard the application of the term father to God as a reflection of a patriarchal society that is no longer in consonance with modern principles of gender equality. Sometimes, there is the tendency to emphasize the maternal qualities of God. In fact, some scholars today regard God as both Father and Mother.

3. On the social level, the crisis of family values has also affected the attitude to fatherhood. The prevalent trend in single parenting and the increasing practice of same sex unions have tended to deemphasize the idea of fatherhood. All the exalted notions of the role of the father are no longer considered tenable by such social currents.

4. Despite all these ideological approaches to the issue of fatherhood, the attribution of universal Fatherhood to God is a powerful weapon to unite people in a world marked by various forms of rancour and exclusivist ideologies. In a country like Nigeria, with challenges of religious pluralism and religious conflict, the idea of a common Fatherhood of God can become a powerful basis for reconciliation and unanimity. The basic Old Testament position is that holiness is the fundamental feature that makes one a child of God. In Pauline theology, this holiness is transmitted through the Spirit. Thus, as the Spirit blows wherever it wills, one can say that every human person moved by the Spirit is a child of God irrespective of belief system or ideology.

5. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted a very important nuance in the understanding of God as Father in the Old Testament and its influence on Pauline thought. One can hardly understand Paul today without paying good attention to his explicit and implicit ideas about the Fatherhood of God. Paul bases his teaching on the Old Testament understanding of holiness as the spiritual condition for divine sonship. While in the Old Testament such holiness is expressed by ritual separation from the world, in the Pauline text, the Fatherhood of God is experienced through the agency of the Spirit.

“Christ, the End of the Law” (Rom 10:4): An Index to Paul’s Conversion Experience

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Paul’s statement in Rom 10:4 that “Christ is the end [*telos*] of the law” has given rise to two major lines of interest. The first concerns what Paul actually meant by the statement. Did he mean that the Christ-event (incarnation, passion, death and resurrection) has rendered the Jewish law, and by extension all laws, obsolete or null and void? Those who take this line of approach would cite in support Paul’s famous statement in Gal 5:1-2: “When Christ freed us he really intended us to be free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery”.¹ Or did he envisage a particular (as opposed to a generalising) application because of the second part of the verse “towards or for righteousness for those who believe”? Even the scope of this second part of the verse is not without its own problems as will be seen later.

The second line of interest concerns the scope of the addressees: were they Jews or Gentiles? The near consensus among scholars is that, whatever its meaning, Paul is here concerned with the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s work of salvation. Christ being “the end of the law” is thus interpreted in the sense that God’s Gospel, which is Christ (Rom 1:1, 9, 16),² does not require circumcision from the Gentiles as a condition for their acceptance and salvation. Circumcision was the

¹ Galatians is undoubtedly very closely related to Romans, though scholars are at a loss as to the exact chronological and thematic relationship between the two letters. The study will move freely between the two letters for their mutual enlightenment, in a method of inter-textual approach.

² Paul has the highest references to the word gospel in the whole of the NT, most of them in Romans and Galatians (see in addition to the passages here cited, Rom 2:16; 10:16; 11:28; 15:16, 19; 16:25). Source: *Computer Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece* (Berlin. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985).

act by which the male Jew was initiated into the Jewish covenant and undertook the obligation of full observance of the law. The whole of Romans is a theological expose of this issue of the inclusion or salvation of the Gentiles outside the Mosaic Law and even outside the law of conscience of the Gentiles.³ In addition, structurally, Rom 10:4 falls within the section which scholars such as Aletti tag “Israel and the Gentiles; the future of Israel”.⁴ The view that the text is concerned with the inclusion of the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews is thus structurally as well as theologically established. The principle of inclusion is not observance of the law but God’s free gift of salvation given to Jew and Gentile alike out of God’s own righteousness (Romans 1-3).

While not denying the validity of these major approaches to the passage, this presentation wishes to take a different dimension which perhaps in the long run may shed more light on the other two approaches. The core argument of this study is that Rom 10:4 may best be viewed as Paul’s own summary or synthesis of his conversion experience from Judaism (rooted in the law and works) into Christ (rooted in grace and faith, through the energising empowerment of the Holy Spirit). That is, if Paul sees Christ as the end of the Jewish law, in whatever sense, it is not in a vague or theoretically construed theologizing, but a conviction which arises from his personal experience as one who was once “as to the law, a Pharisee . . . as to righteousness under the law blameless” (Phil 3:5-6; with all that went into that self designation) but is now “in Christ” (also with all that

³ Paul argues by way of introduction to his letter that though the Gentiles had the law of conscience (traditionally tagged the universal law), they did not keep it. Similarly the Jewish people had the law of Torah and did not keep it. So both stood equal before God, since both lay under the power of sin (Rom 3:9); or “have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory” (3:21). God’s righteousness (*dikaosunē*) in Christ was given as grace, a totally free and unmerited free gift, to both Jew and Gentile without distinction, discrimination or partiality (Rom 3:21).

⁴ Jean-Noël Aletti, “Romans”, in *The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century*; William R. Farmer et alii, eds. (Collegeville: the Liturgical Press, 1998) 1553-1600; here 1554. Douglas J. Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans* [NIBCNT, 1996]), also notes that Rom 9:30-33; 10:1-4; and 10:5-13 deal with the inclusion of the Gentiles.

goes into this new status). Once converted Paul counted his righteousness and zeal according to the law and everything else “as rubbish” in order to “gain Christ and be given a place in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ” (Phil 3:8-0). Paul’s personal experience, his passing from the law into Christ, holds the key for understanding what he meant in Rom 10:4 when he said, “Christ is the end of the law”. It is principally from this experience, incarnation-like, that he was able to proclaim the same to others as a theologically lived argument, be these others Jews or Gentiles who also are called to believe in Christ and be given a place in him.

The study explores this thesis using the narrative and inter-textual methods to examine select issues of how Christ meant “the end of the law” to Paul once he himself became permanently rooted “in Christ”. The phrase “in Christ” (*en Christō[i]*) registers his rootedness in Christ and serves as a mantra in all his writings. The study concludes with some considerations on the significance of Paul’s conversion experience for today. The study essentially is not interested in exploring the place of law and grace in God’s scheme of salvation as Paul does in the letter to the Romans. Rather it simply uses this verse as an entry point into what the movement from the law into Christ meant for Paul. It abstracts from the debate on this topic in the letter to the Romans and focuses rather on how Paul’s experience of conversion in Christ spelled the end of the law for him.

1. Rom 10:4 in Its Many Translations

The Greek of Rom 10:4 (*telos gar nomou Christos eis dikaiousunēn panti tō[i] pisteuonti*),⁵ has witnessed quite an array of translations. Interestingly, the text has no variant readings, but the translations differ widely and fall into four main categories classified in a) to d)

⁵ The text is from Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th.

below. At times, the problem is with the meaning to be assigned to the word *telos*; at others the preposition *eis* appears to be the issue.

**a) The statement as having a purposeful sense
(meaning “so that” or “in order that”)**

1. “For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (NRSV, 1989).
2. “For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified” (RSV).⁶
Here the word “so” is elliptic, but a purposeful meaning is implied.
3. “For Christ is the end of the law, to justify all that believe” (Tyndale, Yale, 1989). (Elliptic: “in order” to, implied)
4. “For the end of law is Christ, that all may attain righteousness who have faith in Him” (Con).⁷
This translation maintains the rhythm of the Greek, with *telos* (end) as the subject except that end has a qualifier “the” as in most other translations.
5. “Christ marks the termination of the law, so that now everyone who has faith may attain uprightness” (Gspd).
6. “Christ has brought the law to an end, so that righteousness may be obtained by everyone who believes in him” (TCNT).

b) Emphasis not on the law per se but on it as a means of righteousness

7. “For to every believer, Christ is an end of the law as a means of righteousness” (Centenary Translation: The New Testament in Modern English [Helen Barrett Montgomery, as the translator]).
8. “For Christ has put an end to law as a means of right standing for everyone who puts his trust in him” (Wms).

⁶ RSV, 2nd edition used in Nestle-Aland, *Greek-English New Testament*, Stuttgart, 1992.

⁷ The entries in nos. 4-12, 14 are from Curtis Vaughn gen., ed., *The New Testament in 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 694-695.

9. "For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness by the law for everyone who believes in him" (Phi).
10. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (KJ).

**c) *telos* interpreted as the completion/fulfillment
(as opposed to "end" meaning last stage) of the law**

11. "For Christ is to every believer the completion of the law that brings righteousness" (Ber).

What is the subject of "brings" here, Christ or the law?

12. "For the consummation of law is Christ, to bring righteousness to every believer" (Wey).

This translation retains the absolute form: "law" in the original.

13. "But the law has found its fulfillment in Christ so that all who have faith may be justified" (NJB).

This translation combines fulfillment with purpose, and makes the law, not Christ, the subject (contrary to the Greek, where *telos* and *Christos* are interchangeable as subject of the sentence). Moo's position that "Christ is the climax of the law", the goal to which the law tended, would fit in here.

d) The superiority of Christ to the law (implying that Christ has rendered the law null and void)

14. "Christ has superseded the law, bringing justification to everyone who will believe" (Knox).

The above array of translations highlights the difficulty in understanding the passage. The problem seems to hang on the nature of the Greek preposition *eis* (in relation to *telos*). The primary and dominant meaning of *eis* according to BAGD is "towards", "in", "into", though it can also indicate "the result of an action or condition".⁸ The editors of *La Bible* observe that "le terme grec

⁸ Bauer, Arnold and Gingrich (*Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*) give a wide range of usage of *eis*, but the purposeful one is not the most immediate or the most widely used in the

exprime à la fois le but, le terme et l'accomplissement".⁹ Equally, *telos* could mean "end" as in the final destination of a journey; or a limit beyond which there is nowhere else to go. John 13:1 states that Jesus loved his own to the end/utmost (*eis telos*). This was a limit beyond which it was impossible to go, a love to which nothing could possibly be added to prove just how much he loved them. Jesus explains this in John 15:13.

Given this line of argument, the preposition *eis* can be taken to express purpose, goal fulfillment and finality combined in the current context. The reason lies ultimately not in considering in the abstract what Paul said but in locating it in the life of Paul himself. The root of the difficulty, in my view, is that attempts to understand the passage have been theoretical or abstract, rather than take life as the basic starting point.¹⁰ This study posits that Paul's life-long conversion holds the key to the core meaning of Rom 10:4; his life was the basis of his conviction that Christ was the end of the law. For him God's righteousness in Christ given outside the law (Rom 3:21-22) has rendered the law unnecessary or irrelevant as a means of salvation. "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law then Christ died for nothing" (Gal 2:21). The study is not located in the letter to the Romans but in Paul's life of conversion to Christ as seen in many of his letters.

Romans 10:4 is thus best taken in its soteriological rather than in its Christological sense; that is, primarily from the viewpoint of what Christ signifies for the believer rather than of Christ. Paul's primary concern is not whether or not Christ is superior to, has superseded or brought the law to completion, but how the believer, Jew or Gentile,

NT literature. The Hebrew translation of the Trinitarian Bible Society, **spr hbyt hdsh** (London: Oxford University Press, nd), renders *eis* by the preposition *l*: *ki hāmāshiah sôph hattôrāh litsdāqāh lekôl-hama'amîn bô*.

⁹ *Traduction Oecumenique de la Bible* (Alliance Biblique Universelle, UBS: Le Cerf, 1980).

¹⁰ See further Teresa Okure, "First was the Life, not the Book" (in Teresa Okure, ed.; *To Cast Fire upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today's Multi-Cultural Global Context* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2000), 194-214.

relates his or her past and present to the righteousness which God has put forward in Christ as a free gift for the salvation of all human beings without discrimination; and recognizes the freedom of others to do the same from their own location. Unless a person receives in faith this divine gift on its own terms, such a person will not understand or appreciate the place of Christ in their lives and in relation to law, be it the Jewish law or the law of conscience both treated in Romans; or civil law or any type of law (cultural included). Paul learnt the truth about this significance of Christ vis-à-vis the law (or law) from his life experience; which he tags “the surpassing or supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8). His conversion to Christ signaled for him the end of the law as a means of salvation. What God offered in Christ as a means of salvation differed in nature and essence from what the law offered. Random examples elucidate this thesis, starting with a brief review of Paul’s life before his conversion.

2. Paul’s Life under the Law

In discussing the law (Torah) it is important to remember that the law for the Jew was not a set of propositions or a code to be applied in certain cases as in our civil or canon laws, or something to debate abstractly (though the rabbis engaged in such debates during the second Temple period, in the time of Paul and beyond). Rather the law, for the Jew, was a way of life in which one walked, something which directed, guided, ruled and governed one’s psyche, thinking and every aspect of one’s life from morning, through the night, to morning (cf. Ps 63:6, “on you I muse through the night”). Psalm 119 which celebrates the joy of being given the law as lamp for one’s feet, a light for one’s path and the abiding guide at every stage of life, clearly illustrates this; so, too, the code itself as encapsulated in a key passage from Deuteronomy:

You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about

them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth (Deut 11:18-21, NRSV).

The rabbis believed the whole law was summed up in love of God and love of neighbour (Deut 6:4); the rest was interpretation. Love of neighbour, for Paul, sums up the whole of the law (Gal 5:14). Every aspect of life and theological reflection in Israel had its origin and end (*terminus a quo* and *ad quem*) in the book of the covenant, the Torah; this includes the allegorical works of Philo, the history of Josephus and the exaggerations of a Sirach.¹¹ Sirach summarises his book on wisdom, by saying “All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob” (Sir 24:23); he then equates this law/covenant with creation by comparing it to the rivers that watered the earth in the second creation account and in the then known world (Sir 24:25-29).

A Pharisee (or “Pharisee of Pharisees” as he is popularly called), Paul was thorough and blameless (*amemptos*) in observing the law; far surpassing in zeal for the traditions of the ancestors his age grade (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:4-6). More than others he lived, walked and was governed by the law, in all of life. He reminds one of “the rich young man” in Mark (or “rich man” in some traditions) who all his life had observed the heart of the law, namely, love of God and neighbour, but was looking for something extra “in order to inherit eternal life” (Mark 10:19-16 and //s). Paul’s zeal in persecuting the church is proof of how his “righteousness that comes from the law” led him beyond what was required by the law.

¹¹ See, for instance, his tirades against women generally (ch. 9) and on the treatment of daughters (14:9-14).

The Acts of the Apostles seems to project Paul as a leader among the Diaspora Jews who could not stand Stephen because he allegedly criticized the Temple and the institutions of Judaism and their stiff-necked leaders, “uncircumcised in heart and ears” (Acts 7:51; 6:11-15; 7:47-53). Paul was not simply a staunch law observer but also a staunch respecter of authority.¹² Luke seems to imply this when he states that Paul sought letters from the leaders in Jerusalem to arrest in Damascus all followers of the Way and take them back to Jerusalem for trial, obviously not by himself but by the authorities. This is a familiar situation. Subordinates, even today, try to curry favour from the authorities by dealing ruthlessly with perceived erring members. As a Diaspora Jew, Paul would probably have sought to surpass his age grade even in this in order to win the approval of the authorities (something Stephen, most likely a Diaspora Jew, lacked and about which he cared less).¹³ Converted Paul himself would later receive the same treatment, though unlike Jesus (who challenged the one who slapped him to point out what was wrong in what he had said), he would apologise that he did not know it was the High Priest (Acts 23:2-5).¹⁴

In sum, before his conversion, Paul could have been the Pharisee in the Temple who thanked God that he was not like the rest of human beings or like the tax collector with him in the Temple. If the law required that he fast once a week, he would most likely have fasted twice, and so forth. One can imagine him keeping to the letter the 613 precepts or fence around the Torah, to ensure that he did not come anywhere near breaking the Torah itself.¹⁵

¹² He will carry this respect for authority, religious and civil, into his life in Christ (cf. Rom 13:1-7).

¹³ Example is the guard who gave Jesus a slap on the face for daring to answer the High Priest, though there was no wrong in what Jesus said (John 18:22-23).

¹⁴ Interestingly, the High Priests in both incidents have names that are almost similar: Annas (John 18:12), Ananias (Acts 23:2).

¹⁵ See Nehemiah 10 which Morton Smith (*Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. [London: SCM, 1987], 132) tags “covenant of extreme separatists”; Philip

The foregoing barely sketches Paul's life under the law. What happened when he moved from the law into Christ can shed further light on his Jewish background and upbringing.

3. Paul's Life in Christ, the End of the Law

Paul's conversion entailed a true pass over, a crossing of boundaries, the most important of which was from law-based righteousness to the righteousness of God in Christ received through faith. We recall that *tsedaqah*, (righteousness; Gk *dikaïosunē*) was a particularly cherished concept among the Pharisees. In that context, righteousness was the fruit of one's unrelenting efforts in observing the law beyond measure, what Paul calls, "righteousness by my own efforts, based on law" (Phil 3:9a). The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican again comes to mind: "I thank you, God, that I am not like the rest of human beings. . . . Or like this publican here" (Luke 18:9-14). In his new life in Christ, Paul sought "the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil 3:9b). Faith essentially moves the action from one's self or personal efforts to God to whom one looks for the fulfillment of God's freely made promises. In that divine plane all humans stand equal as recipients of God's favour; none can boast about anything since each one receives the blessing of salvation on equal terms, as a grace or purely free and unmerited gift from God.

Christ the End of Law Based Personal Achievements

The protracted debate on the relative merits of faith and works in Paul, especially since the time of Martin Luther, makes little progress because the discussion is not situated in how faith and works operated

Birnbaum, "Perûshîm" in his *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1995), 513-514; and "Pharisees" in introductions to the NT and theological dictionaries of the NT; Camillus Umoh ("Paul's Conversion and its Challenges for Today", a paper delivered on the "Day of St. Paul", Catholic Institute of West Africa, May 7th, 2009; 17) gives a brief entry on Paul as a Pharisee, pp. 4-5.

in Paul's own life. Paul is very clear that God's gift of faith in Christ impels him not to a life of "no works" but to one of even greater works. By his own testimony he worked and suffered for the sake of the gospel far more than any of those who were apostles or disciples before him (or "knew Christ according to the flesh" or "from a human point of view"; 2 Cor 5:16-17): "Are they servants of Christ? – I must be mad to say this – I am a better one, with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings and often near to death" (2 Cor 11:23-24).¹⁶ He carried his previous zeal for works of the law into works of faith in the service of the gospel. The basic difference now is that these works do not constitute the ground for salvation; rather they are evidence of the fruit which the believer bears in Christ, as a sign that he or she has received in faith and with joy and thanksgiving God's pure gift of salvation.

Paul thus makes a distinction between salvation as something one achieves by works of the law and salvation as pure grace from God which one receives in faith. His awareness of this truth was so deep that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" constituted a cherished formula of greeting in his letters. Today this greeting has passed into the liturgy at the beginning of Mass: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all". Faith in this context is one's openness to accept and believe in the gratuitous gift of salvation given in and through Christ. One is saved by grace, through faith, not by the works of the law one does, merits or deserves. Though this belief is a core message of the New Testament, Paul is its most vocal champion and flag bearer, because of his fight for the inclusion of the Gentiles. His dominant emphasis on salvation as a grace was in service to his gospel that Gentiles should not be subjected to circumcision and the consequent obligation to observe all the precepts of the law as a condition for being saved (Gal 5:3). Since God has freely made a new egalitarian provision for all in Christ, ("When Christ freed us, he really wanted us to be free")

¹⁶ See further Paul's list of works and endurance for the sake of the gospel in 1 Cor 4:11-13; 2 Cor 4:7-12; 11:16-12:10 (the last section, 12:1-10 concerns his vision or consolations).

it would be foolish to submit again to the yoke of slavery of the law (Gal 5:1-3) or impose the same on others. One cannot go far in Paul's letters without stumbling on his pre-occupation with grace as something for which to give thanks, this time "not unlike" but like the rest of human beings, be they the righteous or tax collectors (Deut 6:4), Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, male and female (Gal 3:28), Greeks, Schythians or Barbarians (Col 3:11).

Christ the End of Exclusive Love

Paul transferred his love and zeal for the Jewish law, to zeal for the law of love in Christ. This love literally drove him to cover a good part of the Gentile world in the service of the gospel, as its entrusted minister. Love constituted the livewire of his apostolic ministry: "the love of Christ overwhelms/impels us" (2 Cor 5:14); it led him to redefine life, creation and all human beings and the Jewish election theology/covenant. Unlike in the Torah, this love is no longer reserved for a fellow Pharisee in the first place (or a fellow Jew; this being the primary meaning of "neighbour" in the Torah). It transcends all barriers and social categories, especially the anthropological barriers of sex, race and class (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11). Paul was consumed by zeal to know, experience "the surpassing worth" and love "of Christ my Lord" (Phil 3:8); he counseled his converts to "owe nobody anything except the debt of love", love being the summary of the law, old and new, and the fulfillment of all the commandments (Rom 13:8-18). Whether Paul composed 1 Corinthians 13 or found it in tradition this hymn sums up his new understanding of the law of love. That we have the hymn today is thanks to Paul for recording it in his letter. Equally, Paul transferred his love and respect for authority to upholding the authority of his apostleship given to him by God as pure grace for the service of the gospel.¹⁷ Consequently, he was fearless in exercising this authority:

¹⁷ The opening of his letters mention as his credentials his apostleship from God who called him to be a servant of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel. This conviction made pay little attention to

“Being entrusted with [or as we have received] this ministry by the mercy of God, there is no weakening in our part” (2 Cor 4:1).

Not the Letter of the Law but the Spirit, God’s Gift

As a convert, Paul experienced the Holy Spirit as the divine energy that motivated, propelled and sustained his life in Christ and his missionary zeal. The letters of the law that embodied the law’s precepts were dead or unable to effect what the law counseled. The Holy Spirit on the contrary is the indwelling divine energy that empowers the believer, a child of God, to live as Jesus commanded. The Spirit teaches actively in a way which the “dead” letters of the law do not. In place of walking in/living by the law, Paul emphasizes walking/living in the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:16-26). The Spirit is God’s own life “poured into our hearts which causes us to cry ‘Abba, Daddy’” (cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:4-6); God’s seal or stamp of ownership on us, God’s pledge or down payment of what we will be when we see God face to face. The Spirit teaches us to pray; and when we lack words or do not know how to pray, the Spirit pleads for us with groans that cannot be put into words. In that case the Spirit’s prayer becomes a heart to heart talk with God (Rom 8:26-27).

The Spirit also actively builds community by distributing gifts to enable each member participate in the work of building up the community till all attain to maturity, Christ’s own maturity (Eph 4:13), even as parts of a human body each playing a unique function for the mutual building up of the entire body (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:4-30). These Spirit empowered activities are things the law inscribed in tablets of stone could not effect. The letters of the law remain external to the one who practices the law; God’s Spirit on the contrary indwells in the believer and causes the believer to live the God-life as at the beginning God had intended us to live it. Paul

those who rejected him as apostle. It gave him courage to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as he had received it from God, or as a revelation, not from human beings.

experienced the workings of God's Spirit in his life, as divine energy that energises us. The law by itself does not energise. Human beings give life to the letters of the law otherwise the law remains dead, powerless to operate. The Spirit causes to live (cf. John 6:63) and even to say "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3).

4. Other Consequences of Paul's Discovery of Jesus, God's Gospel

A major consequence of Paul's discovery of Jesus as God's gospel, a free gift of salvation offered to all without discrimination was his reinterpretation of his Jewish traditions (the covenant, circumcision and the election theology). The reinterpretation was occasioned by the imperative to make the truth of the gospel (Gal 2:1, 14; 4:16; 5:7) reach the Gentile believers. Its concrete fruit was Paul's relationship with the Gentiles and, especially, with gentile women whom he celebrated as collaborators in the work of spreading the gospel. The greatest consequence perhaps was his emphasis on resurrection as a way of life here and now.

Reinterpretation of Election Theology

The depth of Paul's conversion or pass over from the law to Christ is best discovered in the letter to the Galatians. Here he sees the law as a baby sitter/nurse, a tutor, a disciplinarian that was bringing us to Christ (Gal 3:23-29). Further he turns upside down Israel's election traditions, declaring that believers (Jews and Gentiles) are the true children of Sarah/Abraham, while the unbelieving Jews are those of Hagar/Abraham (an African woman, by no means a slave girl, though Paul following tradition calls her that; Gal 4:21-31). Its polemic nature notwithstanding, this letter, more than any other, shows how total Paul's transfer from the law into Christ was. Had someone dared to make this type of comparison before his conversion, Paul would have stoned such a person to death.

In Israel's religion, circumcision was the gateway to one's membership of the chosen people of God. Women and Gentiles were excluded (unless the latter, if they were men, were ready and willing to be circumcised and accept to keep the entire burden of the law). In place of circumcision, Paul and the early Christians put baptism by which every baptised man, woman and child, irrespective of race, becomes God's child with the full right and privilege to call God "Abba, daddy" (Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:14-17). Further, baptism for Paul was the true circumcision; those who held on tenaciously to circumcision proved they lacked true circumcision (Phil 2:3). The intimacy with God given at baptism is a far cry from the dominant Jewish practice whereby God's name was not even to be mentioned, or mentioned with utmost respect. The author of 1 John is amazed that we should not only be called God's children, "but that is what we really are" (1 John 3:1). In the old dispensation, Israel alone was God's special people, his heritage and portion. The status of children given to believers ruled out this theology of election. In the gospel righteousness freely bestowed on all by God, Jewish and Gentile believers are God's heritage and even inheritors of the very God: "heirs of God and coheirs with Christ" (Rom 8:15-17). Every baptised becomes "a new creation" (*kainē ktisis*; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), "a new human being" (*kainos anthrōpos*; Eph 2:15; 4:24) called to put on a new mind (*kainon noun*) and way of life (Rom 6:1-14).

Relationship with Gentiles

The separation between Jews and Gentiles was entrenched in the Torah. In his pass over to Christ, Paul had to transcend the religious, social and cultural and cultic barriers between him and the Gentiles that he had inherited as a Jew and a Pharisee and taken great pride in: "All these that stood so much to my advantage, I count as so much rubbish, by comparison to knowing Christ my Lord and him as crucified". Instead of viewing Gentiles as inferior, "unclean", "uncircumcised", "sinners" (Gal 2:15), thus a source of contamination to be shunned as the law commanded, Paul learned to love, embrace

and call them brothers and sisters; eat from the same natural table and cultic table of the Lord with them and drink from one and the same cup (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-26). The social aversion to eating with Gentiles cannot be overemphasized. Peter's "hypocrisy" in Antioch, copied by other Jews in the community, including even Barnabas (Gal 2:11-14), shows how deeply rooted was this aversion. The demands of fraternities (*ḥaburôth*) allowed table fellowship only with fellow Jews generally and, for Paul, with fellow Pharisees in particular. Paul had to overcome this aversion because of his faith in Christ. His statement in Galatians has become a household word: "As many of you as were baptised in Christ have put on [clothed yourself in] Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; all of you are one in Christ" (3:27-28). Paul came to this truth from the grace of his first encounter with Jesus on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). From that experience he understood that believers (irrespective of race, sex or class) were one with Jesus; since Jesus identified himself with them: "I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me" (9:5). Paul's view of believers as the body of Christ, irrespective of any human considerations, also derived from this initial encounter with Jesus. His outreach to Gentiles given to him as a direct mandate of his apostleship (Acts 9:15-16; Gal 3:7-10) was a practical consequence of this grace.

Ministry of reconciliation/Ambassadors for God

Paul's greatest pass over into Christ lies perhaps in his understanding of God's work of redemption as a ministry of reconciliation. As a Pharisee, Paul was by nature and socialisation schooled in the separatist, election theology mentioned above. But now he became deeply committed to the ministry of reconciliation in the awareness that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to the divine self, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor 5:18-19). Extensively he devotes Romans 5 to this topic. But he first experienced God's reconciliation of himself, in that though he was a persecutor of the church, God did not count that against him. Rather God reconciles

him and entrusted him with this ministry of reconciliation. Accordingly in his dealing with his converts, he employed the method of appealing, instead of arresting and imprisoning or even stoning and killing. His authority in this ministry to the young gentile churches, though firm, is hortatory, rather than mandatory/authoritative.¹⁸ He challenges them often to use their common sense: “Judge for yourselves, is it right?” Or “We appeal to your consciences”; “examine yourselves to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves” (2 Cor 13:5). For Paul reconciliation was a personal way of life as well as a ministry entrusted to him by God for the sake of the gospel. I have argued elsewhere that the ministry of reconciliation holds the key to Paul’s answer to the problem of “the other”, especially in Corinth.¹⁹

Partnership with women as collaborators

Paul’s outreach to Gentiles as brothers and sisters and as close collaborators is recorded in Acts and in Paul’s own letters. His relationship with women, especially Gentile women is quite remarkable. Paul’s closest and most cherished long distance collaborators in spreading the gospel were from Philippi, a Roman colony and the main city of the region of Macedonia (Acts 16). He seems to have entered into a special relationship or covenant with this community to form life-long partners in his missionary work (cf. 2 Cor 8:1-5). Women were the first converts of that community and the first converts of Europe (Acts 16:11-15). Lydia’s house became the mother church of the region of Macedonia.²⁰ From Paul’s letter to the

¹⁸ See, for instance, 2:1-11 where he uses Christ’s own example of humility in the famous hymn (vv 6-11) to persuade the saints at Philippi to cultivate Christ’s mind in their dealings with one another. His policy of “becoming all things to all peoples” is an integral part of this persuasive, hortatory approach, which he learned from God: “It is as if God were appealing through us”, as God had appealed in person in Christ.

¹⁹ Teresa Okure, “The Ministry of Reconciliation (2 Cor 5:14-21): Paul’s Key to the Problem of ‘the Other’ in Corinth”. *Power and the Other. Mission Studies*, 23/1 (2006) 105-121.

²⁰ On the significance of this see Roger W Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), esp. 121-122, 131-132, 289.

Philippians (a genuine letter of his), the named leaders in that community were women (Evodia, Syntyche). The same applies to Chloe in Corinth and the long list of women in co-workers of Paul in Romans 16.²¹ Today the impact of Paul's crossing the barrier in his attitude to and relationship with women may not strike one as revolutionary as it would have done in his time. That Paul could call women his co-workers and name them by name in writing, in a society where it was considered unseemly to speak to a woman in the street even if that woman were one's wife, shows the depth of his conversion in Christ. This is ironic especially since Paul is popularly regarded as a misogynist. Some women biblical scholars have argued that if the church through the ages had continued in the footsteps of Paul in his collaborating with women, the place of women in the church today would be very different.²²

The Resurrection as a Way of Life

Moving from a law oriented spirituality to a Christ centered one, Paul experienced a personal pass over with his crucified and risen Jesus. This is a recurrent theme in his letters. He considers himself "dead to the law" but "alive to God" (Gal 2:19); he is crucified with Jesus and the life he lives is no longer his own but Jesus living with him (Gal 2:19-20; 3:1) He carries in his body the marks of Christ (Gal 6:17). Here in this share in Christ's paschal mystery lies the crux of Paul's statement that Christ is the end of the law. Christ died to break the curse of the law and put an end to it. When anyone is in Christ, that person also dies to the law; the law no longer has the power and authority to enslave the person through sin (Rom 3:9; Gal 3:10-14).

²¹ For a précis on the women in Paul's ministry see appropriate commentaries in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *The Women's Bible Commentary* (London: SPCK; Westminster, John Knox, 1992).

²² See for instance, Carolyn Osiek, "Galatians", in *The Women's Bible Commentary*) previous note, 333-337; and Jane Schaberg who in her commentary on "Luke" (in this same book, 275-293, esp. 278-282) argues that unlike Paul, Luke introduced the marginalization and exclusion of women. Others like Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza have argued for a discipleship of equals based on Paul's theology of oneness in Christ in such passages as Gal 3:25-29).

His letters are replete with pleas to his converts to live as and in the risen Christ (cf. Rom 6:1-1), by putting to death the old self, life of the flesh; and put on the new self, alive in the Spirit, recreated in Christ Jesus. On the road to Damascus, Paul first encountered Christ as the risen one. The risen Christ was the core of Christian faith which he received from others (1 Cor 15:3-8). Festus' summary of the case against Paul has become proverbial: "A dead man Jesus whom Paul alleges to be alive" (Acts 25:19).

As a Pharisee, Paul already believed in the resurrection of the dead, unlike the Sadducees. This party belief was not required by the law. His encounter with the risen Christ brought a new dimension to this belief: belief in the resurrection was now something that affected life here and now, as a way of life. This new way of life requires all believers to reject their former ways of life (the law of the flesh which makes one obey one's evil passions), "put to death" the things of the flesh, break with sin and be filled with joy and thanksgiving to God in the Spirit (Rom 6:1-14). Comprehensively this new life entails loving believers and the entire human race as God loves them. Living Christ's type of life is proof that at baptism one truly rose with Christ to new life; a life that is possible because believers are under the law of grace, not under the law of sin (Rom 6:14). True, Paul still saw the resurrection as something that lay in the future ("resurrection from the dead" to which he gives a long expose (1 Cor 15:12-58). But this was the end of a life journey that is on-going even now.

Synthesis of Paul's Experience of Christ, the End of the Law

Above random examples support the thesis that Paul's declaration that Christ was the end of the law grew out of his personal experience of life in Christ. The belief was not theoretical; it was rooted in his concrete experience of God's grace, different from his previous efforts to attain justification or perfection through strict and zealous observance of the law. Though rooted in life, the belief had its origin from God; it was as a revelation (Gal 1:11-12) which came alive in the

course of proclaiming the gospel. Here he saw God giving the grace of justification in Christ to both Jews and Gentiles, that is, people outside the law without discrimination based on any of the restrictions the law imposed (race, sex, class). This was proof that salvation was not something one gives to himself or herself by doing the works of the law or a reward for faithfully observing the law. The law can only tell one what to do or not do and convicts one when its precepts are flouted, but it lacks the dynamic power to transform a person. God, on the contrary, gives believers his living and dynamic Spirit to enable them share in God's own life as God's children, "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:14-17).

Paul's insight that salvation is God's work of pure grace occurs so repeatedly in his letters that it is impossible not to hear him. Paying close attention to what life in Christ meant for him, in contrast to his previous life in the law (or life without Christ), helps one to understand and appreciate not only Paul's statement in Rom 10:4 but also all he says about the law/works, faith/grace and righteousness under each category; and the audacity to radically re-interpret his Jewish traditions of covenant and election as he does in Galatians 3 - 4. His staunch defence of God's gospel, "the truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:1, 14; 4:16; 5:7) which is both Jesus and his proclamation (Rom 1:2-3, 16) rested in this belief.

Paul personally struggled to internalize, assimilate and live the new life in Christ: "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I live now in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:19-20). He committed himself to a nonstop run "to capture the price for which God captured" him in Christ (Phil 3:12-14); entering into the race with those to whom he preached, "lest having preached to others", he should find himself "disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27). His pass over from the law to Christ assured him and believers of ultimately sharing in the life of the risen Christ after death

(Phil 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:43, 49, 53), “sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory” (Rom 8:17).

Though Paul dropped the belief in salvation as something won by oneself, he could not drop certain basics of his previous life. He could not, for instance, stop being a Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin; neither could he delete the marks of circumcision from his body. The basic difference was that these values, race, sex and creed, no longer had any discriminating significance for him; or any significance at all: “Circumcision means nothing and the want of it means nothing” (Gal 5:6; 6:15). Most importantly, Paul retained those aspects of his Jewish character which in Christ marked him out among the early disciples, namely, his loving zeal and commitment to the mission, his daylight honesty, courage and whole hearted service of the truth of the gospel. The fact that he was a Diaspora Jew (from Tarsus in Cilicia, a city of no mean standing, and a Roman citizen by birth (though scholars dispute this claim for him by Luke-Acts), most likely facilitated his openness to the Gentiles than would have been possible if he were a Jew from Palestine.

Thanksgiving was an enduring principle of religious piety in Judaism which Paul carried over into his life in Christ. It was embedded as a way of life in the Torah, the later aberrations of racial pride and personal achievements notwithstanding. Deut 7:7-8 reminds the people that God’s choice of them rested solely on God’s love, not on anything they themselves had done. The misplaced sense of gratitude (or pouring incense on oneself) such as the Pharisee displayed in the Temple does not nullify the value of thanksgiving in Jewish faith. This thanksgiving culminates in Christ, as Eucharist, his body and blood given for full and enduring life of the world.²³ Thanksgiving to God governed Paul’s thinking and permeated his letters: “In all things give thanks” (cf. 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17).

²³ On thanksgiving as a Jewish way of life, see, Brad H Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1995), 119-125.

Paul embodies the two testaments, as our conference theme indicates. God appointed him as apostle to the Gentiles. He teaches us by his Christ-rooted life and proclamation of God's gospel of grace and freedom. Paul's love for Christ, who first loved him and gave himself for him, gave him the courage to be free and to seek to liberate others from stipulations that though they have the appearance of piety actually camouflage or nullify the grace of God in Christ. So total was Paul's love for Christ that he was able let go his previous religious convictions and practices in order to gain Christ and be given a place in him. For him Christ was the treasure hidden in the field, God's field of grace. His one goal in life was "to know Christ Jesus and the power of his resurrection, to share his suffering so as to be and be given a place in him, in his resurrection". The eagerness to get his "place" in Christ gave him the incredible energy to do and to endure all things for Christ (cf. 1 Cor 4:8-13; 2 Cor 11:1-30) with perfect freedom, knowing that in Christ he could not be labouring in vain.

5. Towards a Conclusion: Challenges of Paul's Experience for Today

The study has highlighted how Paul's life in Christ gave expression to his belief that Christ was the end of the law. The abiding challenge of Paul's experience is how believers today can also make their life in Christ a living testimony that Christ is the end of law for them, as did Paul. How do one's life experiences become the privileged place for encountering God and discovering in that encounter the freedom which God gives in Christ? How does each believer make a personal life-long entry into the righteousness of God (Rom 3:21) as Paul did? To what extent do Christians believe that salvation is God's pure gift of grace to be received in faith with gratitude, not something that one earns by one's prowess and "working for God"? Do Christians believe that they live now, not they but Christ lives in them?

It is common place today to emphasize that life, or experience, is the first school of theology. Liberation and Third World theologians

largely brought this to the fore. The official church on its part has declared the split between the gospel and people's experiences and cultures to be an unfortunate and unacceptable approach in the work of evangelisation. Increasingly ventures in global Bible commentaries require of participating authors to situate their commentaries in their own distinctive contexts. At times this is carried to the point of ignoring the context of the biblical author.²⁴ The project of "reading with the ordinary reader" is an attempt to bring to consciousness how the situation of the ordinary reader can impact the meaning of scripture differently from that of experts.²⁵ Yet other scholars have conducted comparative studies on how interpretations of the same biblical texts differ significantly between Western and African readers.²⁶

The need to relate scripture to life is thus not in question. The question is whether in doing so readers have captured Paul's effort to internalize his conversion encounter with Christ and make that event the organizing principle or operative fundamental of their life and mission to proclaim the gospel. Unlike Paul's life-centered theological approach, contemporary life related scripture readings tend to remain largely academic, even when the reader begins by narrating or defining her or his context as the operating hermeneutic of the reading and ends by drawing conclusions from or for the given life context. In brief, it is possible to do a life oriented reading of scripture without that reading actually touching or impacting the reader's life.

²⁴ Cf. *Global Bible Commentary*, Daniel Patte, T. Okure et alii, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004) and the nascent series of *Texts @ Contexts* to be published by Fortress/Augsburg; with Daniel Patte, Teresa Okure and Nicole Durand as the NT editors.

²⁵ I have elaborated on this in other works and so will not delve into it here. See for instance, Teresa Okure, "First Was the Life, not the Book", in T. Okure, ed., *To Cast Fire upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today's Multi-Cultural Global Contexts* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2000) 194-214 and eadem, "'I will open my mouth in parables' (Matt 13:35): A Case for a Gospel-Based Biblical Hermeneutics" *NTS* 46 (2000) 445-463.

²⁶ An example is Grant LeMarquand, *An Issue of Relevance: A Comparative Study of the Story of the Bleeding Woman (Mk 5:25-34; Mt 9:20-22; Lk 8:43-48) in North Atlantic and Africa Contexts*, *Bible and Theology in Africa*, vol. 5 (New York, Washington DC/Baltimore, Bern Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004).

This approach is very different from that of Paul. For him “life [his life] meant Christ”. Paul started with life, his own life, not with life in the vague as hermeneutical principle. His writings bear witness to what Christ meant for him personally, incarnation-like; he shared with his converts his life-long struggle to “put on Christ”; “be in Christ”, knowing that he had not “already won” (Phil 3:12-14) . Whatever he said about Christ grew out of his ongoing and ever growing life of faith in Christ. He wrote his letters not as academic exercise but in a pastoral mode to promote in other converts the same life of faith in Christ that he himself had experienced. He compared this ministry to being “in the pain of childbirth till Christ be formed” in them (Gal 4:19). His life oriented approach was a carryover from his Jewish upbringing. That upbringing, as in African traditional settings, entertained no separation between life and religion, religion and politics, the sacred and the secular or between church and state.

This work may thus conclude as it started by re-emphasising that until we discover what Christ, God’s gospel, meant practically to Paul in his life, we will not fully understand or appreciate his statement in Rom 10:4, that Christ is the end of the law. Further, we will not understand what Christ means or should mean in our own lives either, unless like Paul Apostle of the Gentiles, we make similar sustained efforts to grow daily in Christ or better still to allow Christ to grow and live in us, “I live now not I but Christ lives in me”. For this to happen, we need to embrace or be open to God’s law of grace, of the Spirit and of love with constant thanksgiving. Thanksgiving flows from and promotes a heart that is open to receive God’s blessings as opposed to one that, like the elder brother of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25-29), thinks that he/she has to “slave” for God or win divine favour, even salvation, by sheer personal efforts. It guards against the temptation to “nullify the grace of God” (Gal 2:21) by acting as if our progress and successes in life and ministries depended on our personal efforts, the fruits of our achievements. It energises one to cooperate with God’s grace as a free gift.

A genuine appreciation of Paul's awareness that Christ is the end of the law challenges us to revisit our own traditions and belief systems: the traditions of our ancestors (including our ancestors in the faith), cultural, social and religious, to see if they enhance or impede our life in Christ and our gratitude for the grace God has given to us in Christ. We would include in this review our church traditions, theological traditions and traditions of biblical interpretation. We need christological courage and freedom rooted in love to be able to do this. Blessed John Paul II in his *Novo Millennio Ineunte* reminded us of the need to do this.²⁷ Over and above all as foundation, we need to commit ourselves to collaborate with God's grace in our lives and world as Paul did. When we do this, we too will experience even now the power of Christ's resurrection and be given a place in him. In this way we will with Paul continue to strive to capture the prize for which God has captured us in Christ.

The study had no intention to explore Paul's theological stance on the relationship between Christ and the law as a means of salvation. He treats this question systematically in the letter to the Romans. A further study might be to revisit Paul's theological treatise in Romans in using his personal experience as guide or mirror. Such a study might help to resolve or at least shed much light on some of the seemingly contradictory passages in the letter to the Romans.

²⁷ John Paul II (*Novo Millennio Ineunte: At the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001) counsels that we return to our roots in Christ and revisit all that we have done in the past two centuries to see where we deviated from the gospels and launch into the deep to act correctly this time under the guidance of Christ, *duc in altum*.

God's Choice of the Foolish: A Study of 1 Cor 1,26-31 and Its Implications for the Contemporary Society

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Introduction

The mention of “the called” in 1 Cor 1,24 provides a segue for Paul’s second illustration of God’s foolish wisdom: the makeup of the Corinthian community that responded to God’s call. The unit is marked off by an *inclusio* with an allusion to Jer 9,26 LXX in 1,26 and a citation of it in 1,31. Fee (1987: 79) captures the gist of Paul’s argument: God’s purpose “in choosing people like them is asserted to have the same design as the cross itself—to save them, but at the same time to ‘shame’ and ‘nullify’ the very values in which they are currently boasting.” In the context of his denunciations of their divisions, he makes his case: Since all of them were nothing before their conversion, how can any of them think that they have become more special than others when in Christ?

In this study we shall attempt to analyse how God uses what the world considers insignificant and foolish to bring out his plan. In the end we shall consider its implication for the modern society and especially in our pastoral engagements.

1.1 Exegesis of the Pericope

26Consider your calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you are wise according to the flesh, not many of you are powerful, not many of you are well-born. 27But God chose what the world regards as

foolish in order to shame the wise, and God chose what the world regards as weak in order to shame the strong. 28And God chose what the world regards as insignificant and what is despised, the things that are nothing, in order that he might nullify the things that are, 29so that no flesh might boast before God. 30From him [and by him] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 31in order that, just as it stands written, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

1.2 Verse 26

Paul offers empirical evidence of the foolishness of God from his audience's own experience: the founding of the Corinthian church (cf. Gal 3,1-4). The foolishness and weakness displayed in the cross and its preaching carry over to the kinds of persons who have responded to the preaching. Paul bids them to consider their calling.¹ That calling (cf. 1,1.2.9.24) alludes to the circumstances surrounding their coming to faith,² not simply their socioeconomic status.³ It is shorthand for God's act of calling them purely on the basis of grace (2 Tim 1,9)⁴; without regard to their moral worthiness or their status as gauged by human standards. In choosing them, God overlooked their lack of spiritual merit and flouted all worldly measures of human worth (cf. Deut 7,7). If they were to take stock of themselves and their fellow recruits, they would readily recognize that most, if not all, do not fall into the category of "the cream of

¹ The *gar* introduces a new topic, for instance, A. C. THISELTON, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2000) 179, and the verb *blepō* followed by the accusative means "consider", "contemplate" (see 1 Cor 10,18; 2 Cor 10,7; Phil 3,2; Col 4,17; mark 4,24).

² Cf. C. K. BARRETT, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 57; similarly G. D. FEE, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 79; likewise, THISELTON, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 180.

³ B. WITHERINGTON, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 113.

⁴ Cf. G. G. FINDLAY, "St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians", in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910) 771.

society". Becoming Christians also has done nothing to enhance their social estate, which is why the missing copula to be inserted in the *litotes* should be "are," not "were": "not many of you are wise according to the flesh".⁵ By addressing them as brothers and sisters (*adelphoi*), Paul allays any impression that he is holding their heritage in contempt. What he says of them applies also to himself as their brother.

The *sophoi* are the learned, clever, and experienced. The phrase *kata sarka* (according to the flesh) here means "according to unspiritual, worldly standards". It refers to evaluations made by unregenerate humans employing criteria that are revealed to be bogus in light of God's measures. These worldly norms only factor into the equation those things that can be shown off and admired. They foster boasting and self-reliance, which lead one to spurn God's truth which itself challenges all human illusions.

The *dynatoi* are the influential whose wealth gives them the social and political levers of power.⁶ The *eugeneis* are the well-born who have a proud pedigree and belong to the wealthy ruling class, "the blue bloods" (cf. Luke 19,12; Acts 17,11).⁷ Philo (*Cont. Life* 9 §69) uses "good birth," "high character," and "trained in philosophy" as synonymous qualities. Dio Chrysostom's (*Or.* 15.29-32) attempts to refute the assumption that "it is impossible for anyone to be 'noble'

⁵ Cf. A. LINDEMANN, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (HNT 9\1; Tübingen: Mohr, 2000) 49. W. WUELLNER, "The Sociological Implications of 1 Corinthians 1,26-28 Reconsidered", in *Studia Evangelica* 6 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973) contends that the *hoti* introduces a question: "Were not many of you wise. . . ?" expecting the answer yes (as an example of Pauline irony). R. F. COLLINS, *First Corinthians* (SP 7; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999) 110 counters that Paul does not use an interrogative *hoti* elsewhere which makes this reading unlikely.

⁶ D. SÄNGER, "Die *dynatoi* in 1 Kor 1,26" *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76, (1985); see also Acts 25,5; Rev 6,15.

⁷ In Homer's *Iliad* 6.123-231, Glaucus and Diomedes first exchange genealogies when they meet. Josephus stresses that biblical heroes were "well-born" even where it is not found in the Bible. Cf. L. H. FELDMAN, "Josephus' Portrait of Saul", *Hebrew College Annual* 53 (1982), 60.

without being 'well-born'" reveal that it was a common bias. Being "well-born" and "noble," he claims, originally applied to persons with respect to "virtue or excellence", not to their parentage (cf. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 4.3.16), but later what he calls the "common run ignorant men" used the term to refer to "the descendants of families of ancient wealth." Unless something quite exceptional happened to an individual, persons living in this era did not rise up the social ladder but remained within the confines of the social class in which they were born. Prestige belonged only to those of noble parentage. All the terms Paul employs here overlap and refer to the privileged elite as opposed to the plebeians. As Murphy-O'Connor⁸ frames it, "'They' run the economy, 'They' set the standards. 'They' determine who succeeds and who fails". When Paul proclaimed the word of the cross, it did not attract the wise and powerful. They are not excluded (Conzelmann 1975: 50) but tend to exclude themselves by rejecting the wisdom of the cross, which does not honor their achievements but pours contempt on their pride.⁹

O'Day (1990) shows how Paul not only cites but interweaves Jer 9,22-23 (cf. 1 Sam 2,10 LXX) into the fabric of his argument in 1,26-31. Jeremiah warns with three parallel statements:

Do not let the wise [*sophos*] boast in their wisdom.

Do not let the mighty [*ischyros*] boast in their might.

Do not let the wealthy [*plousios*] boast in their wealth.

These things distort an individual's self-identity and a society's character because they deter one from finding identity and security

⁸ J. MURPHY-O'CONNOR, *1 Corinthians* (DBC; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 10.

⁹ In Apuleius' novel (*Metam* 11.15), Lucius is told about the priest during his initiation into the sacred rites of Isis, "neither did thy noble lineage, thy dignity, nor neither thy excellent doctrine anything avail thee". This negative evaluation of such things would have struck a chord with many.

only in "God's steadfast love, justice and righteousness."¹⁰ For Christians, the categories "clever," "influential" and "high status" are replaced by "righteousness," "sanctification," and "redemption" in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).¹¹

MacMullen¹² identifies the love of status and honor as the motivating force of Greco-Roman culture. It resulted in the well-to-do donating benefactions-large banquets, a variety of public spectacles, temples, and great monuments - to enhance their public reputation. Paul's attention to questions of social identity and status reveals his concern that the values of the culture in which the Corinthians live have inched their way into the Church and are creating the divisions. They have become puffed up over against one another (4:6-7). Beacham¹³ observes "Rome was a highly stratified and therefore immensely self-conscious society characterized by complex systems for defining, signifying, and acknowledging status"¹⁴. Money (*Pecunia*) and Status (*Philotimia*) were worshiped as goddesses (Horace, *Ep.* 1.6.37; Juvenal, *Sat.* 1.113). When Corinth was reestablished as a Roman colony, it was settled by persons of lower social status, freedmen and slaves, but thoroughly imbued with Roman values, with the watchword "Whatever one's rank, it must be maintained".¹⁵ The Church was composed of a cross-section of urban society, excluding the extreme top and bottom. The upwardly mobile members were people of "high status inconsistency," that is, "Their achieved status is

¹⁰ O'DAY, 1990, 261-62.

¹¹ THISELTON, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 178.

¹² MacMULLEN, 1974, 125.

¹³ BEACHAM, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (London: Yale University Press, 1999) 34.

¹⁴ According to BEACHAM, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 34-35), status and power were in part a function of *dignitas*, "an elusive but pervasive concept whose practical substance. . . consisted of the expectation that an individual's honor and authority enables him to protect and reward his clients. friends. and dependents, from whom in turn he demanded deference, tangible forms of respect for his status, and the assurance that his sense of 'face' would not be slighted, or if it were. that any affront would attract swift and forceful retribution."

¹⁵ MacMULLEN, 1974, 106.

higher than their attributed status".¹⁶ This inconsistency may have exacerbated the yearning to bask in the glory of others, even if it was only in their reflected glory.¹⁷ Murphy-O'Connor observes, "The sense of insecurity of the successful freedman became a favourite topic in literature."¹⁸ He contends that this insecurity was rooted in "the bitter awareness that one was not recognized for what one had achieved." This was a dyadic society that sought self-definition from others. The pivotal values were honor and shame. People measured their lives by what a delimited group of others thought about them. If someone was an ex-slave, these others could still see that person only as an ex-slave. To compensate, many aspired to increase their social standing in a never-ending pursuit of social honor. Boastful Corinthian Christians are no different from their pagan fellow citizens obsessed with exalting themselves and trying to leapfrog over others to attain honor and prominence. Arrogance and contempt for others were at home in Corinthian society and seem to have a secure place in the church as well.

Murphy-O'Connor¹⁹ observes, however, that many were attracted to the Christian faith because it "introduced them into a society committed to looking at them primarily as people, all equally valuable and valued. It gave them a space in which they could flourish in freedom." The cross "embodied the paradox they lived" and "made sense of the ambiguity of their lives." Paul's command that they consider their calling suggests that some Corinthian believers may have forgotten their humble estate. Given the values of their culture, they may not have appreciated Paul for reminding them of it.

1.2 Verses 27-28

God's choice (*eklegesthai*) is reiterated three times for emphasis, and

¹⁶ Meeks 1983: 73.

¹⁷ See Poglouff (1992: 188).

¹⁸ Murphy-O'Connor (1996: 270).

¹⁹ Murphy-O'Connor (1996: 271).

the objects God has chosen are the antithesis of those persons described in 1,26. Godet (1886: 112; cf. Edwards 1885: 37; Thiselton 2000: 184) claims that this choice refers to God's "energetic action" that takes "from the midst of the world... those individuals whom no one judged worthy of attention and made them the bearers of His kingdom".

God did chose the weak not to make them strong, to help them move into the ranks of the upper crust, or to begin a new class struggle but to subvert, invert, and convert human values. God chose the foolish because the wise thought the cross was sheer folly as a means for saving the world, the weak because the strong thought they were powerful enough without God, and the low and despised because the high and mighty did not care to debase themselves by attaching themselves to a crucified God. The foolish, weak, and despised, however, respond more readily to the shame of the cross because they themselves are already shamed. Unlike the powerful, those who are deemed foolish and weak are amenable to receiving the paradox of divine weakness that conveys strength. They respond more readily to the shame of the cross because they themselves belong to the shamed.

The image of shaming or dishonoring would have been vivid in the Corinthian context. Witherington (1995: 8) correctly notes that the worst thing that could happen was "for one's reputation to be publicly tarnished". Shaming was a familiar "public phenomenon" (Thiselton 2000: 186) in spite of Aristotle's (*Rhet.* 2.2.3-6) condemnation of *hybris* as gratuitously doing or saying things to shame another solely for the pleasure of it, because one has the power to do it, or to make oneself feel superior.²⁰ But Paul does not have in mind a moral-psychological shaming as in 2 Cor. 9:4 (Lindemann 2000: 50-51). Instead, the verb "to shame" should be understood in its OT matrix to refer to "coming under God's judgment". God vindicates the faithful and brings the ungodly to shameful ruination (cf. Ps. 6:10; 31:17;

²⁰ See the discussion of hubristic behaviour in P. MARSHALL, 1987, 182-94.

35:4, 26-27; 40:15; 83,16-18; Isa 41,11; Jer 2,26). It has "eschatological" connotations: "In choosing the Corinthians God has already begun the final vindication over his enemies" (Fee 1987: 83; cf. Schrage 1990: 211).

The *agenê* (those of mean parentage) are the opposite of the *eugeneis* (the well-born, 1,26), but the former word is used more frequently to refer to the insignificant or base. It was assumed that the low-born were inherently boorish and morally weak because of their lowly origin. They are defined further as the "despised," "disdained" (*ta exouthênemena*, 6,4; 16,11). The verb appears in Acts 4,11 to refer to Christ as the stone disdained by the builders, which has now become the cornerstone (Ps118,22). They are also identified as *ta mê onta*, "the nothings," as opposed to *ta onta*, "the somethings". Godet (1886: 112) and Edwards (1885: 38, citing Winer 1877: 608) distinguish the *ta mê onta* ("things that are no better than if they were not") from *ta ouk onta* ("things that actually do not exist").²¹ It is not that they do not exist, but that they are regarded as if they do not exist.²² They are without standing in a social hierarchy that may be characterized as "binary": a person was either a one or a zero. The "nothings" were treated as zeroes. By choosing "the things that are nothing," however, God upends the hierarchy and reduces the "somethings" to nothing.²³ The verb *katargein* means "to nullify," "to render inoperative" (2 Cor. 3:7; 13), but it also has an eschatological nuance (Fee 1987: 83; cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 6:13; 13:8, 10; 15:24,26) and refers to final destruction.

Throughout the biblical narrative God consistently chooses the most unlikely figures, and Paul maintains that God has continued this pattern in choosing the believers in Corinth. Rays (1997: 32) thinks that

²¹ But cf. Lightfoot 1895: 166.

²² The phrase differs from its use in Rom 4,17-19. There Paul links God's calling "things into existence that do not exist" to God's power to raise the dead and to bring forth a child from Sarah's dead womb (Rom 4,17.19).

²³ Similar language appears in 2 Bar 70,3-5, but Baruch regards it as a sign of the end-time confusion that will befall humankind. Paul regards it as part of God's paradoxical means of overthrowing human pride (cf. SCHREAGE, 1991, 205).

Paul's statements parallel Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:1-10) and Mary's Song of praise (Luke 1 :46-55), which acclaim God, who "raises up the Poor from the dust" and "has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly." Conzelmann (1975: 51) draws a different conclusion: "Paul does not teach that 'the' lowly will be exalted, but that faith becomes the receiver of salvation regardless of worldly standing. He teaches not resentment, but freedom". God's choices disclose that the church's creation and success can be attributed only to God's power. P. Lampe (1990: 127) writes, "When the cross is proclaimed and through this act a community is founded, human wisdom and strength do not contribute anything to it. God rejects them as legitimate tools". When this principle is applied to the Corinthian situation, Paul's point is that no apostle, let alone any house-church leader, can receive credit for the creation of the group of redeemed saints in Corinth. All stand empty before God.

1.3 Verse 29

God's ultimate goal in choosing the foolish, weak, and despised was not simply to shame the wise and strong and to nullify the somethings, but to preclude all human boasting. "Flesh" (*sarx*) is a Hebraism for human beings, and the "all" (*pasa*) embraces Jew and Greek. Using the concrete term "flesh" serves notice more forcefully that human beings, as frail, mortal creatures, have no business boasting about themselves in the presence of the immortal God.

"Boasting" is not a common word in Greek literature, but the practice of praising oneself was quite familiar. The verb *kauchaomai* and the nouns *kauchêma* and *kauchêsis* appear predominantly in Paul's letters in the NT, and the majority of those occurrences are in the Corinthian correspondence.²⁴

²⁴ Thirty-five of thirty-seven occurrences of *kauchaomai* occur in Paul's letters and twenty-six of them are in the Corinthian correspondence. Ten of eleven occurrences of *kauchêsis* appear in

“Boasting” can be good or bad, depending on the object of the boast (cf. 9: 15-16) or the attitude behind the boasting. It is used in a negative sense of those who boast of their special relationship to God (Rom.2: 17); in the law (Rom. 2:23); in works that they assume earn salvation (Rom. 3:27; 4:2); in human birth or accomplishments according to human standards, which Paul characterizes as “foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:29; 4:7; 13:3; 2 Cor. 10:15-16; 11:12, 16-18; 12:1; Gal. 6:13; Eph. 2:9); in outward appearances (2 Cor. 5:12); and in human leaders (1 Cor. 3:21). It is used in a positive sense of Christians who boast in their future hope (Rom. 5:2); in God, who has saved them (Rom. 5:11; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor.10:17); in Christ (Phil. 3:3); in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14); in the working of God in oneself (Gal. 6:4; Rom. 15: 17) or in fellow Christians, which is closely related to joy (1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:12; 5:12; 7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2; Phil. 1:26; 1 Thess. 2:19); in sufferings (Rom. 5:3) and weakness (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5-6,9); in the salvation of other Christians on the day of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 1:14; 9:3; Phil. 2:16); and in authority given by God (2 Cor. 10:8, 13).²⁵ In the present context, God eliminates all human boasting by “conferring his salvation on those who are too foolish, weak, base, and contemptible, and hence too humble, to take any credit for their new exalted position in Christ” (Savage 1996: 58). They have nothing worth boasting about that they did not receive freely from God. Rather than praising themselves, they must humbly await praise from God (4:5). This lesson was difficult to drive home to a congregation enmeshed in a culture in which people were accustomed to tooting their own horns to gain and maintain status.

1.4 Verses 30-31

The phrase *ex autou* (of him) expresses both the source and cause of their being in Christ. Their existence in Christ Jesus is from God

Paul and six of them are in the Corinthian correspondence.

²⁵ On Paul’s boasting about preaching for free see 1 Cor 9,15-16.

(NRSV; cf. Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6), and it is also because of him (NIV) that they have this being.²⁶ This phrase explains what precedes: "If things that were not have now become something, it is due to God alone" (Godet 1886: 115). The emphasis falls on God's gracious act of "election" (Conzelmann 1975: 51), that is, God's pleasure to save them (1:21), call them (1:24, 26), and choose them (1:27-28). The theological meaning of this abbreviated phrase is amplified in Eph. 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from you that is, not of your own doing; [it is] the gift of God; not out of works lest anyone should boast". All that believers have comes from God, which explains why they can boast only in what God has done for them in Christ and not in themselves. Their identity and security are created by belonging to Christ and being marked by the sign of the cross (Furnish 1999: 43).

Christ became the "wisdom from God *for* us" (dative of advantage).²⁷ God does not overturn the world's wisdom and pride just for the fun of it but to bring salvation. The crucified Christ became the manifestation of God's wisdom, which here refers to God's long-established plan for the world's salvation (cf. 1:21; 2:7; Eph. 3:10).

The triad of *dikaïosynê te kai hágiasmos kai apolytrōsis* - *righteousness, holiness, redemption* - is a unit separate from wisdom (Godet 1886: 117; Edwards 1885: 40). Paul's syntax indicates that the four terms are not treated as coordinate (contra NIV, NKJV). They are the fruit of God's wisdom in Christ. It is not that Christ *is* these things but that believers *have* these things in Christ (Witherington 1995: 117). What did not exist before-righteousness, holiness, and redemption-now exists in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 17). These three are not bestowed on believers so that these things now belong to them; they share in these things by virtue of belonging to the

²⁶ *ek* is employed to express cause in Joh 6,66.

²⁷ Note that Paul switches from the second person plural to the first person plural.

crucified Christ (Schrage 1991: 215).

N. Watson (1983: 387-88) explains why the list of the four things shared by believers (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption) begins with wisdom rather than righteousness. Unlike the Judaizers, who rely on their works, the Corinthians are tempted to rely on their own wisdom. As in Romans, Paul begins his letter by demolishing false self-reliance. Humans cannot boast before God of their wisdom any more than of their works (Rom. 3:19). N. Watson continues, "In the same way as the cross is the condemnation of the righteousness of man, so it is the condemnation of the wisdom of the world. As it is through the renunciation of righteousness that man attains righteousness, so it is through the surrender of his own wisdom that he receives wisdom. Whoever wishes to be wise in this world must become a fool and thus find wisdom".

The metaphors have been assimilated from the OT but have undergone transformation when refracted through the lens of Paul's Christian faith. He does not discuss what they mean, because he must assume that the Corinthians are already familiar with the concepts. "Righteousness" refers to the state of having been acquitted and sharing Christ's righteous character. When they are arraigned in God's court, God will not judge them on the basis of what they are but as those who are guiltless in Christ Jesus. "Sanctification" refers to the state of holiness, which they have only in Christ Jesus and which allows them into the presence of God. "Redemption" refers to the state of being delivered from sin and its penalty (Rom. 3:24-25; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col.1:14).

2. Implications for the Modern Society

Our society is almost a replica of what the Apostle of the Gentiles encountered during his own apostolate in the land of Corinth. A situation where money, power, status, and perhaps birth define a

person's worth. The great Apostle challenged this pitiable and human situation by reminding the Corinthian Christians what they are and should be before God. When God calls, He does not employ those human ways of classifying people, rather He uses what the world thinks as nothing to achieve his great work. The history of our salvation is a great example. We were nothing before God called us and how then could we divide the community of believers by using such human way of thinking and create division in the community? Paul asks.

Such manner of thinking is a sign that the Word of God has not yet permeated the hearts of believers. For when the Word permeates the heart, something new happens, thanks to the force of the Holy Spirit! Something new and surprising such as we see in the life of Paul, that he could consider everything as rubbish for the sake of knowing Jesus Crucified, will take place in the life of a Christian.

God loves those who are humble in spirit. He shows his greatness by working with anyone on the street who is willing to be used by him. Spiritual greatness is not a matter of social class, monetary clout, or decreed background; it is solely a function of the heart. God's approach stands in contrast to the type of credentials our world looks for and honors, unfortunately in the Church too. Paul the Great Apostle warns against this. Externals count for little with God; other issues matter much more. God can do great things through those who entrust the journey with him to his care. That means that when God leads, the Christian soul must simply reply, "May it be according to your will", just as Mary did in the Infancy narrative of Luke.

Mary reflects the proper response of anyone who has been called by God with no important credentials other than availability and a responsive heart. Behind the availability to service is an attitude that

trusts God for direction and enablement. God has called all believers to minister to the body (Eph 4,7-16), and he does not call us to a task he will not prepare us to perform. With God's call comes the need to be responsive to his leading. Submitting to God's will mean realizing how that road is best travelled. It means allowing God to lead. It means being open to the voice of God that speaks to us. Any other human consideration or qualification is anti-Gospel. Only the ungodly and the foolish do such things.

Conclusion

To conclude this unit, Paul cites a major theme from the OT that he adapts as a general principle to address the Corinthian problem. The citation "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord" is loosely recited from Jer 9:23-24 (cf. 1 Sam. 2:10 LXX; 2 Cor. 10:17). The foolish and ungodly glory in themselves (cf. Ps. 52: 1; 49:5-6; 94:3; Judg. 7:2). The wise exult in God (1 Sam. 2:2-3; Ps. 5: 11; 34:3; 44:8; Sir. 17:6-8). The Corinthians can boast only in what God has accomplished among them. All other boasting based on comparing themselves favourably to others uses sham, mortal criteria.

“Being All Things to All” (1 Cor 9:19-23): Its Implications for the Nigerian Christian

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Apart from Jesus Christ, St. Paul is the next *dramatis personae* of the NT about whom we have most information. He is being pictured also as an enigmatic figure that remained a puzzle for his contemporaries. Even today, he is being viewed through different lenses; either as the Saint, theologian, Missionary, teacher, the arrogant Apostle claimant, the Heretic and the like. Anyway, he is all of these and even more. This passage provides us with the best way to describe Paul: “being all things to all”.

The backdrop of this passage is that Paul was accused in Corinth of being a slave, not free at all. His accusers held that he has no will of his own but deceitfully tailors his behavior to “win” and curry favor in order to profit from as many people as possible. He was accused of being inconsistent – a Jew to Jews, a Greek to Greeks, a fool to the foolish, and as such he should not be trusted. Paul was accused of being a flatterer who simply intends to please people (1 Cor 10,33) for his egoistic interest. He therefore defends himself in 1 Cor 9,19-23 clarifying his stand regarding the allegations. He tried to make his opponents understand. The literary thrust and exegesis of the passage clearly reveal his incentive. All his actions were purely motivated by the love of Christ and the gospel.

The theological relevance of this passage to the Christian vocation cannot be overemphasized. Jesus set the pace which Paul and all Christians are to follow. Paul really walked in the footsteps of the master. The passage has some important implications for the church in Nigeria. The question of “being all things to all people” is very crucial in order to succeed in facing the challenges of the 21st century in

evangelization. The Nigerian Christians, especially priests and religious have to concretize this principle in their various missions.

1. Exegetical Analysis

1.1 Text Translation

1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. **20** To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. **21** To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. **22** To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all that I might by all means save some. **23** I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

1.2 The Literary Thrust

The section starts with Paul's assertion of his self assumed slavery in v. 19. A close look at the structure of this passage shows that v.19 corresponds to v.22b. The two verses form an *inclusion* to the passage with the words "with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all" (v. 19) and "I have become all things to all, that I might by all means...." (v. 22). This shows the importance of the word all to the understanding of the passage. It makes explicit the fact that the apostle's mission was to "all" without exception. No one is excluded from it. He used a more neutral and inclusive word *pasin* "all" instead of *anthropos*. Again, the phrase "that I might win more of them" (v.19) corresponds with "that I might by all means save some" in v. 22b.

In v. 19, the apostle announces his main idea of missionary adaptation. Then he gives four qualifications which are also

elaborated as follows: Jews, “those under the Law”, those outside the Law, and the weak (vv. 20-22). The repetition of “those under the Law” after “Jews” is somehow surprising (these seem to be basically the same group!) But he added: “though I myself am not under the Law”. The apostle made a similar correction in the clause “though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law” (v. 21). The two phrases are parenthetical statements. The fourth specification: “the weak” shows that he has not lost sight of the topic of the whole section (cf. Chap.8).

There are seven purpose clauses¹: the first five have the missionary incentive, *kerdainō* “to gain, win”. The sixth has a more theological verb, *sōzō* “to save”. There is a sudden shift in the seventh clause and the missionary aim is made even more explicit in v. 23a “I do it all for the sake of the gospel”. In 23b he reflects on his own participation in the blessings of the gospel.

1.3 Detailed Exegesis

Paul qualifies himself as *eleutheros*, “free”. In what does this freedom lie? He worked for his livelihood. Apart from preaching the good news, he engaged in tent making. He did not depend on others for this. So Paul was “not subject to the constraints of the financially dependent”.² Paul is free also as an apostle. This is manifest in his behavior towards those outside the law. What does the apostle mean when he says, “I have made myself a slave”? When the apostle enslaves himself, he is not acting because he is compelled by anyone but it is a self-inflicted slavery. The enslavement is to no other than to Christ (cf. 1 Cor 7,22; Gal 1,10; Phil 1;1; Rom 1,1). Therefore rather than demonstrating weakness or subordination, he depicts strength and authority. Actually after the episode on the way to Damascus Paul became the slave of Christ. By accepting Christ and the gospel he also

¹ Cf. J. LAMBRECHT, “1 Corinthians”, in *The International Bible Commentary* (Minnesota 1998) 1618.

² MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “The First Letter to the Corinthians”, 807.

entered into the Logic of Christ. This is in line with the attitude of Christ who “emptied himself” (Phil 2,3-8) and “though he was rich he became poor in order to enrich us”. It also hinges on his freedom since Paul did not depend on people for his livelihood. He worked for his living.

He goes further to express the reasons for his actions. Why did he enslave himself? He was propelled by the desire to gain all for Christ and his gospel. It is the love for Christ that urges him (2 Cor 5,14). Therefore, his self-enslavement is not a sort of self-immolation. Rather, it is carefully circumscribed and qualified. Although he is not under the law he makes himself like one under the law. This implies that when he is among them he behaves as a Jew both socially and religiously.³ Thus he says in Gal 4:12 *become as I am for I have become as you are*. His aim is to save as many as possible for the gospel and not to increase his popularity or that of any faction in the church. In as much as his self-enslavement brings personal recompense, his reward is neither material nor financial but evangelical and eschatological.

What does he mean by saying that he is not under the law? He practiced Jewish culture as a Jew without teaching that the law is a way of salvation. His interest was not to prevent the Jews from their practice of the law but to educate their overconfidence in the law as a means of salvation (cf. Phil 3,2). The Jewish Christians can continue to keep the law provided they realize that the law will not save them, rather salvation is found in Christ. Why did he not say “to the Greeks”, but rather, “to those outside the law”? It makes a sharp contrast between the Jews who have the law and the Gentiles who do not. Those outside the law refer primarily to the Gentiles, but there could also be an allusion to the lawless, strong in Corinth who taught that *all things are lawful* (cf. 6,12; 10,23). However, the apostle

³ J. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “The First Letter to the Corinthians”, The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 807.

established that freedom from the law is not lawlessness. He is not *anomos Theou outside the law of God* but he is *ennomos Christou* “under the law of Christ”. With this note the apostle wants to express that the point of reference now is not in relation to the Mosaic Law but in relation to Christ. It means that he is in the law of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9,21b; Gal 6,2). At this point, therefore, Christ is the centre of attention, no longer the law. The law is not a basic criterion for becoming a Christian. Gentiles can become Christians without first becoming Jews and observing the Torah. But they can abstain from food sacrificed to idols in order to avoid scandalizing the Jews (1 Cor 8,13 cf. Acts 21,17-21). When the apostle claims to be *in the law of Christ*, he does not refer to a new code of precepts but to the law of love exemplified by Christ (Gal 6,2).

I became weak: In 1 Cor 8,13 Paul submits himself to the conscience of the weak, to win them (cf. 1 Cor 10,23-11; 8,9-12). When he talks about the “weak”, he refers to those who are weak in conscience, knowledge or faith.

2. Implications for the Nigerian Christian

2.1 Jesus as the Model

It is impossible to “be all things to all” without love which is the hinge around which the other Christian virtues rotate. St. Vincent the Paul described this virtue as “a noble lady that should be respected”. It means that it has the pride of place in the activities of a Christian. Jesus was the first to demonstrate this supernatural love to people, therefore, the first “to be all things to all”. There is no doubt that Paul learnt this from what he knew about the life and works of Jesus Christ his master. Paul was able to make this assertion in 1 Cor 9,22 because Christ first showed him the example. The life of Christ from birth to death was characterized by “being all things to all”. Even the incarnation itself is a very strong aspect of this. God decided to speak to human beings in a language that they can understand (cf. Heb 1,1). He accepted to become a human in order to teach that it is possible to

meet God in humanity. He took the human nature in everything but sin. His whole life from the cradle to the grave was characterized by “being all things to all people”.

Jesus identified with different categories of people. He associated so much with the poor, the lowly, the sick, the sinners, those at the fringe of the society; those rejected by the society, etc., and even ate with them. However, he also interacted with the rich, the learned, and the important people of his time. We can recall the episode when at the age of twelve he sat among the learned and the teachers of the law asking questions and responding to their questions. There are many instances where lawyers, the rich, the Pharisees and other important, high placed members of the society came and interrogated him. He is also seen with the top Roman and Jewish officials of the time, particularly during his trial, passion and death. Jesus the master set the pace in which Paul and all Christians should follow.

2.2 Paul an Imitator of Christ

Paul’s vocation was his commission from Christ to preach the gospel. He wrote, “woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!” (1 Cor 9,16). This vocation of Paul can rightly be interpreted in this context as “being all things to all”. It points to Paul’s missionary adaptation to specific situations. We recall that Paul’s missionary work took him throughout the Mediterranean world and brought him in contact with all kinds of people, nationalities, customs and characters. He met with Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, educated and uneducated. His ministry extended to people of diverse cultural practices, both good and bad. In all of this diversity, his strategy was to become like them so as to reach out to them.

When he came to Athens he went through the shrines in Areopagus. Seeing the one dedicated to an unknown god, Paul simply took advantage of such inscription and dedication and told the Athenians: “it is about the unknown god that I have come to speak. What you

worship as unknown this I proclaim to you...” (Acts 17,23-26). From talking about this unknown god, Paul went ahead to evangelize them. The apostle came to their level using images and ideas with which they were familiar – moving from the known to the unknown. Other examples of his positive attitude towards the Jewish laws and practices can be seen in Acts 16; 18 and 21. In 1 Cor 9, 19-23, Paul’s intention was not just to make a self defense, but he presents a paradigm that the Corinthians and by extension all Christians should imitate. The apostle had respect for other people’s culture.

2.3 Implications for the Church in Nigeria

Evangelization is an important prerequisite of Christianity. Thus all Christians have the obligation to preach the good news. It is not an issue that is solely reserved for the clergy, religious and catechists as some people erroneously think. Most Christians particularly Catholics have started to express their fears regarding the future of the church. If one observes what is happening to the Church in Europe and America, one cannot but express such fears regarding the African church in general and particularly the Church in Nigeria. In those continents, many churches are empty today even on Sundays and the few that are attended are filled only with the elderly. One of the adverse effects is lack of vocation to the priesthood and religious life. Most seminaries, convents and monasteries have become empty and are used for other purposes. Some reasons for this state of affairs include⁴: *inadequate appreciation of the signs of the times, out-dated methodology, clerical triumphalism, hypocrisy and Pharisaism and greater devotion to structures*. We can summarize the reasons enumerated above as “not being all things to all people”. There is an urgent call for *a change in methodology, Inculturation and contextualization, radical review of structures, humility on the part of leadership, and being authentic witnesses of the gospel*.⁵ These all revolve around “being all things to

⁴ G. Ehusani, *Challenges for the Church in the 21st Century: A Memorandum* (Lagos 2003) 7-9.

⁵ Ehusani, *Challenges for the Church*, 12-15.

all people”. In order “to be all things to all people, Christians should be authentic witnesses of the Gospel. It means applying love which is the axis on which the gospel principles rotate, in our dealings with people. To be able to adequately reach out to people with the good news of Christ there is an urgent need to understand and appreciate the signs of the times. This task requires us to realize where people are today and to work hard at presenting the Gospel in ways they can grasp.

This implies giving up one’s own cultural preferences for the cause of Christ. It entails bridging generation gap: the ability to adapt to the younger generation’s inclinations, for instance, to music, art, literature, entertainment, or communication, as a means of reaching out to them with the Gospel. For instance, some music, videos, magazines, and books speak of things that are somehow strange to the older generation. There is need to know what they are first before discarding them as being mundane or immoral. Certainly, it does not mean accepting all things as valid at first sight.

Different types of audience should be borne in mind in evangelization/mission. The teacher/preacher should be able to encounter different types of audience and be able to speak to them in the language they can understand. One should be able to encounter various types of audience. It is important for instance to come down to the level of children – they really do not need high theology. In this regard, *children’s mass* should be very much encouraged. It was so interesting watching Pope Benedict XVI in one of his encounters with Children. This great intellectual and theologian so much descended to their level in a very fascinating way. Certainly, his “language” changes when he addresses the Cardinals, Bishops, Priests or Religious. It may then become necessary to apply “high theology”. On the same note, it is counterproductive to use high grammar in addressing an illiterate community. It is quite commendable that apart from using the vernacular, some churches in Nigeria use the *pigeon* English in order to reach out to their non-elite communities. It has

been observed too that some Catholics (particularly the younger generation are drifting away) to Pentecostal churches. Is it possible that the church is not giving the right response to their questions? More attention should be paid to the youth and children since they are the future of the church.

To become all things to all people, all Christians particularly priests and religious should shun materialism. Some priests and religious do not like to work in rural and poor areas. The general belief is that the Bishop or the superior sends those he/she hates to difficult or poor areas. Some priests and religious who find themselves in very poor parishes do not identify with the people but go out of their way to ride very expensive cars and put on flamboyant wears and shoes – some live in affluence while more than 95 percent of their parishioners live in abject poverty. Some priests and religious neglect the poor members of their parish in pursuit of the rich and the affluent. They do this to the point of exchanging their “prophetic right” for money and affluence from the rich. They thus become their puppets and can no longer tell them the truth even when they go contrary to the authentic teachings of the church. The conscience of the rich should be trained so as to be sensitive to needs of the poor. There is also need to sensitize both rich individuals and churches to support the poorer ones.

Christians after the example of this great apostle should be committed to removing every unnecessary impediment to the gospel. It is necessary to break down all barriers: cultural, social, gender, class, etc. and open the way for all people to hear the good news. Those who have already heard it should be encouraged to become stronger. This implies becoming one like those among whom we are working in every legitimate way we can so that they could be converted to Christ or become better Christians. Even if one does not travel from one country to another to spread the Gospel, one may not totally escape working outside his/her immediate culture and geographical area. Therefore we are not entirely removed from the sort of challenges that

Paul faced. The changes brought on by the movement of time even in one location makes it necessary for us to become like others. It becomes crucial to identify with the people in a spirit of solidarity. This entails learning their language, accepting their food and drink (even when it is not the type we are used to), sometimes dressing like them (as far as it is modest), accepting the good aspects of their cultures and helping to Christianize the bad components. This certainly calls for a lot of sacrifices and self denial – being able to rise above personal preferences. Mission and evangelization become difficult and inefficient if there is a language barrier. Sometimes, interpreters are not accurate. At other times it is not their fault because certain concepts are better explained in the original language and any attempt to translate them water down the idea. It is as well important to enter into the world of the other. On the same note, it is important that the Nigerian Christians overcome the tribal bias and prejudices.

However, the preaching must not necessarily be oral. More than simply the oral preaching of the gospel, Christians are required to live a life of authentic witnessing. They should live in such a way that their very lives become an eloquent sermon to all around them. Pope John Paul II noted that rather than needing more teachers, the modern man and woman need authentic witnesses to the love of God in Christ. This implies that they need people who are readily available to “be all things to them”.

In some areas where there are clear evidence of conflicts and divisions, a good Christian, especially the leader, should try as much as possible to be neutral. This helps him/her to see things more objectively and thus be able to resolve conflicts. It is important to be conscious of the fact that “being all things to all people” is just as “to love unconditionally and selflessly”. Therefore it is not without its difficulties and hardships. Awareness of this fact right from the on-set will lessen the effect of the stress stemming from the negative reactions of people to one’s positive and well meaning gestures of love.

Relevance without Irreverence

Does becoming all things to all people also mean joining them in their sinful and unchristian acts in order to win them for Christ? For instance, are we supposed “to be proud with the proud”? Where should the demarcating line be drawn? What are the limits of our flexibility and adaptability? We have to draw a line at sin. Christ as well as the apostle makes this aspect clear. When Paul says in 1 Thess 5,21 “test everything but hold unto what is good”, it does not include testing sin. Most of the Gentile practices were not morally neutral. In fact, many of them were horribly evil. Drunkenness, immorality, infanticide, and perversions of all sorts were the order of the day in many Gentile communities Paul visited. Paul had to be careful; there were limits on how far he would go. Therefore, he could not become like the Gentiles in every way. The Gentiles were those "outside the law", and about himself he said "I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law."

Care should be taken not to be a source of scandal to people under the guise of being all things to them. When Pope John Paul II danced with the youth during the world youth day, it was purely with the intention to win them over for Christ. He danced in a modest, religious way. The moral guidance of the revelation of Scripture always sets limits on how far Paul would go in becoming like the people around him. That should be the guide of the Christians too in reaching out to people. He worked hard at breaking down unnecessary barriers, but he was not eager to compromise his commitment to Christ. His yardstick was "the law of Christ."

Jesus' interaction with sinners was with the intention of changing and converting them. That was exactly Paul's objective too. It was not written anywhere that Christ committed sin with people or allowed them to commit sin in order to win them. One should be very careful in undertaking certain sensitive 'apostolic services' so as not to be easily led astray. Even well-meaning attempts to reach others may

result in their reaching us! It is not a question of “if you cannot change them you join them”. St. Anselm vividly puts it that “the slightest sin can never be justified even if by committing it the whole world would be saved”. Accommodation must end where biblical precepts and principles begin.

Where then should we draw the line? Not where our personal comforts are violated, but where the revelation of Scripture is violated. We are not free from moral constraints as we reach out to the world; so we must be careful not to fall prey to temptation. We are not without the law of God, but under the law of God. The challenge of evangelizing a changing world means that we must examine how we reach out as individuals, groups, and churches. We must be relevant without becoming irreverent. Care should be taken not to expose ourselves to danger.

Some people have understood this passage as revealing Paul’s deceit. The passage in no way suggests hiding one’s own identity in order to trick others. “Being all things to all people” does not imply deception. Neither was he schizophrenic. Contrary to the detractors’ contention, Paul never said, “I told Jews I am Jewish and I told gentiles I am gentile and I would tell anybody anything if it would make them believe in Jesus”. Rather than practicing deceit, he simply utilized good teaching techniques.⁶ It means that Paul adapted his behavior and expressions. No matter the people that he encountered, whether they were Jews, gentiles, weak, strong or whatever, the purpose was that they would not be hindered by feelings of inferiority or superiority. He was able to meet and speak to all people no matter their position. He always actually was what he appeared to be—on the same level with the person to whom he spoke.

⁶ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Salem 1992) 336-341.

Conclusion

The Christian vocation which is love can be summarized as “being all things to all” in order to win them for Christ. It is the supernatural and unconditional love of God and neighbor that provides the Christian with the thrust to become all things to all people. Christ took the lead; Paul learnt from him and urges the Christian to follow. The relevance of “being all things to all”, particularly in the Nigerian context, cannot be overemphasized neither can it be exhausted in this essay. The Christian seeking to attain this ideal should be flexible and ready to adapt to situations. The Christian must be readily available and willing to attend to people who might need his/her attention. Since the Christian life is a life of sacrifice and renunciation, the Christian must be prepared to accept the difficulties and sufferings that come in the course of “being all things to all” just as Christ and Paul (2 Cor 11,23-28). It means that the Christian must die to self. It may apparently seem to be a sort of humiliation or stupidity on the part of the Christian who struggles “to be all things to all”. This, however, does not reduce one’s dignity before God. God’s logic is completely different from human logic.

“The Untimely Born” (1 Cor 15:8): A Portrait of Paul Among the Corinthians

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Introduction

Paul, more than any other New Testament figure, portrays himself in various images among which is his description or rather appraisal of himself in 1 Cor 15:8 as “the untimely born” (*to ektrōma*). Here Paul likens himself to *ektrōma* in relation to other apostles who saw the Risen Christ and in response to the disparaging attacks he was receiving in Corinth in the course of his mission. The designation is not only specifically Paul’s, its usage is indeed limited to him and to this text in the whole of the New Testament. However, the word *to ektrōma* is not altogether lacking elsewhere. It occurs in secular Greek literature as well as in the Septuagint. Paul’s application of the term to himself here has awakened much interest. Indeed the text has a long history of interpretation. This article ventures to examine some of the mainline issues involved in the interpretation of the imagery of the “untimely born”. It also seeks to understand why Paul appropriates this enigmatic term in addition to his other self-designations. It is hoped that this will enable Paul reader today to appreciate even more this Apostle of the Gentiles “who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matt 13:52). First, let us now examine the origin and meaning of the word, *ektrōma*.

Meaning and Origin of the Term

The Greek *ektrōma* is connected with the verb *enktirōskō* “to have a miscarriage”,¹ or “to cause/ suffer abortion” which ultimately originates from the root *trōō* “to wound, injure, damage,” etc. Hence the term *ektrōma* evokes several ideas — untimely birth, miscarriage, abortion, abnormally born, “one who was born at the wrong time,” etc. In secular Greek, its use is traced back to Aristotle, who first employed it as a medical language to particularly denote a premature or still birth. In *de Generatione Animalium*, Aristotle points out that in cases of superfoetation, when the womb closes in the period of gestation, “the mother cannot bring the second embryo to perfection, but it is cast out in a state like what are called abortions”.² Here *ektrōma* is seen as “premature birth.” But the verb is understandably more common in the works of the Greek physicians like Hippocrates, Dioscurides, etc.

The term *to ektrōma* occurs also in the following passages in the LXX - Num 12:12; Eccl 6:3 and Job 3:16 (cf. Ps 58:9 [Eng 8]) - for stillborn or miscarriage by accident, such as induced abortion that results from a blow given to a pregnant woman (cf. Exod 21:22). In the above given LXX texts we see different perspectives. Job, in his pains and sufferings, wished he had been an untimely born, which dies as soon as it begins to live; for it never sees the sun. According to Qohelet, a child that is born to die immediately is born in vain; it departs in darkness; little or no notice is taken of it; and being an abortive, it has no name, or, if it had, it would soon be forgotten and buried in oblivion.³ Philo insists, while alluding to Num 12:12, that

¹ Cf. Herodotus, III, 32.

² Cf. IV, 5, p. 773^b. Again, in *History of Animals* VII, 4 p. 585^a, Aristotle maintains that “an embryo conceived some considerable time after a previous conception does not come to perfection, but gives rise to pain and causes the destruction of the earlier embryo.”

³ Cf. Matthew Henry, “Commentary on Ecclesiastes,” in *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible. Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (LLC: Hendrickson, 1991).

whatever the soul of a worthless person produces by nature cannot survive; it is abortive and immature.⁴

Since the use of the term *ektrōma* is reserved to Paul in the NT, it is most likely that he was influenced by his knowledge of the Greek OT and familiarity with secular Greek literature. Evidently, no one of the meanings of *ektrōma* is pleasant and positive. A still-born child, for instance, has no life, even right from the womb. This is why the danger associated with such a birth is great because the process of delivery could equally claim the life of the mother. From antiquity the imagery of the stillborn evokes the idea of human tragedy, resulting not only from the loss of the child but also the danger in which it places the life of the mother. In the case of the untimely birth, its survival hangs in a balance so also is that of the abnormally born. What then is peculiarly important in the meaning of *ektrōma* is its decisive feature, which according to Schneider is “the abnormal time of birth and the unfinished form of the one thus born.”⁵

There is no doubt that Paul was fully aware of the meaning of the term that he exclusively used in the NT and the implications it has when he applies it to himself. He knows that it carries a derogatory sense when applied to a person and that as every other self-deprecating word it puts the object to ridicule (cf. Ps 35:21; Job 16:10). Paul is also aware that any individual so depicted becomes an object to be laughed at rather than be sympathised or empathised with in a given environment (Ps 44:14; 80:7; Jer 20:7), a figure before whom people take their distance and shake their heads (Lam 2:15; Job 16:4).

When a person unqualifiedly compares himself to an *ektrōma* it could imply that the person is decrying his loss of human dignity (cf. Ps 22:7 [Eng 6]; cf. also Job 25:6; Isa 41:14), and that he perceives himself as a nonentity rather than the once royal being whom God

⁴ Cf. Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation*, I, 76.

⁵ Cf. Johannes Schneider “Ekrōma,” *TDNT* II, 465.

crowned with glory and honour (Ps 8:6; 21:6).⁶ In fact, some scholars situate the use of the word or other similar ones in the context of a curse directed to the enemy. For instance, the community praying for vengeance against the aggressor says: “As the untimely birth they will not see the sun” (Ps 58:9[8]).⁷ The whole gamut of meanings of *ektrōma* raises the question as to why this deprecating word should be associated with Paul, irrespective of who uses it, Paul or his opponent. The attempt to answer the question will later engage our attention in this essay.

History of Interpretation of Text

From the foregoing it is evident that it is elusive to obtain a clear-cut meaning of *ektrōma*. This is also reflected in the variant interpretations of Paul’s self-description in 1 Cor 15:8, thus leaving scholars with little or no consensus.⁸ The earliest allusion to the text among early Christian writers is found in the letter of Ignatius of Antioch to the Romans. Ignatius borrows Paul’s expression in 1 Cor 15: 8-9 to portray his “unworthiness.” “For myself,” he says, “I am ashamed to be counted as one of her members. I certainly do not deserve to be one, being the least of them and one that came to birth unexpectedly.”⁹ In the Apocalypse of Peter 11, *ektrōma* is interpreted in the sense of “to cast,” while Irenaeus (I, 4.7) defines it as “formless”. It was Eusebius of Caesarea who employs it to depict figuratively the nature of the children that the Church begets. As a virgin mother the Church brings forth both living and dead children, with those born dead representing Christians who did not confess their faith in times of persecution.¹⁰

⁶ Cf. F.-L. Hossfeld, E. Zenger, *Die Psalmen. Psalm 1-50* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993).

⁷ Gianfranco Ravasi, *Il Libro del Salmi II* (51-100) (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1983) 170.

⁸ For full history of past exegesis of the text, see A. Fridrichsen, “Paulus abortivus. Zu 1 Kor 15:8,” in *Symbolae philologicae O.A. Danielsson octogenario dicatae* (Uppsala, 1932) 79-85.

⁹ Ign. Rom. 9, 2.

¹⁰ Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, V, 1.45.

Among modern commentators, J. Calvin and J. Weiss see the point of Paul's comparing himself to *ektrōma* in the suddenness or violence of Paul's conversion.¹¹ For H.O. Lange it is a reference to the comparative lateness of Paul's call or his adequate preparation compared with other apostles. Rather than communicating the idea of one who is born late, E. Schwartz maintains that *ektrōma* carries the sense of a birth that is too soon.¹² The bottom line for Shneider's interpreting *ektrōma* in the context of Paul's calling to the apostolic office is that it is something "forced as well as abnormal and extraordinary."¹³

One of the unresolved problems is to determine how Paul came to associate *ektrōma* with himself. Did he use it to himself provoked or unprovoked? Here, again, opinions differ. A. Harnack together with a good number of scholars¹⁴ surmises that Paul used a word of abuse, which was applied to him in a derogatory manner.¹⁵ In other words, Paul's adversaries called him an *ektrōma* in relation to the new birth,¹⁶ while according to J.J. Wettstein it was in reference to his diminutive nature.¹⁷

Similarly, some authors conjecture that *ektrōma* is not the feature of Paul's conversion to Christianity or his apostolate, but a feature that depicted what Paul was before his conversion, namely "a non-human monster with no true life."¹⁸ According to Windisch, *ektrōma* refers to

¹¹ H. Müller, "Ekrōma," Colin Brown, ed. et al., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)* I, (Exeter, Devon: Paternoster Press, 1975) 183.

¹² Cf. E. Schwartz, *Nachrichten von der Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (NGG) (1907) 276 n.1; also Johannes Schneider, "ektrōma", *TDNT* II, 466.

¹³ Cf. Johannes Schneider, "e;ktwma", 466. As Schneider ("Ekrōma," 466 n. 10) points out, some scholars are agreed that the issue at stake is the abnormality of the process leading to Paul's calling to the apostolic office, which took place when the Risen Lord had ceased to manifest himself to the disciples.

¹⁴ They include, E. Fridrichsen, O.A. Danielsson, J. Schneider, J. Munck, G. Björck, T. Boman, C.K. Barret, F.F. Bruce, etc. Cf. H. Müller, "Ekrōma," 183; J. Schneider, "Ekrōma," 466-467.

¹⁵ Cf. H. Müller, "Ekrōma," 183.

¹⁶ See J. Schneider ("Ekrōma," 466) maintaining the view of J.A. Bengel.

¹⁷ Cf. H. Müller, "Ekrōma," 183.

¹⁸ J. Schneider ("Ekrōma," 466) citing Harnack.

the pre-Christian attitude of Paul, “his judgment of himself in relation to his past.”¹⁹ However, Fee thinks that this view is unlikely.²⁰ For Henry, “Paul resembled such a birth, in the suddenness of his new birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolic function, as the others were who had personal converse with our Lord.” He was so to speak “out of time for it.”²¹ Since Paul’s self-description is not limited to the text of 1 Cor 15:8, we now examine in details this common feature in Pauline writings.

Paul and His Self-designation

Self-designation is a style of speech that goes far beyond the time of Paul in history. It is a genre found in both Biblical and secular literature. Often the metaphor is self-derogatory and deprecating, used to express a great sense of humility or unworthiness. In the Old Testament, for instance, Abraham calls himself “*dust and ashes*” while pleading with God against the judgement pronounced on Sodom (Gen 18:27; cf. Ezra 9:6). Bildad, in protest to Job’s claim of innocence, depicts a mortal person (here Job) as only “*a maggot*” and “*a worm*” before the righteous God (Job 25:6). Isaiah overwhelmed at the scene of his call exclaimed: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for *I am a man of unclean lips*” (Isa 6:5). The psalmist in his lament describes himself as “*a worm, and no man*,” scorned by men, and despised by the people (Ps 22:7[Eng 6]). In another instance he says: “I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit; I am a man who has no strength” (88:4). “*Dead dog*” is a derogatory designation (2 Sam 16:9; cf. Matt 15:26) which many will not like to be associated with (cf. 1 Sam 24:15(14); 2 Sam 3:8). Yet Mephibosheth calls himself “*a dead dog*” while appreciating David’s kindness to him (2 Sam 9:8).

¹⁹ H. Windisch, *Paulus und Christus* (1934) 144, n. 1; cf. Johannes Schneider, “Ekrōma,” 467.

²⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1987) 733 n. 101.

²¹ Matthew Henry, “Commentary on First Corinthians,” in *Matthew Henry’s Commentary, on the Whole Bible*, 1 Cor 15:8-9.

In reference to Paul, therefore, one would ordinarily say that Paul has no cause to adopt such a self-disparaging style of speech. He has all that it takes to hold his head high among his contemporaries. In Paul the three elements of the world's culture met —Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28), Greek culture, and Hebrew religion. As Saul, the Hebrew, he was of purest Hebrew blood (Phil. 3:5), a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," of the stock of Israel and of the tribe of Benjamin. Like every Jewish child too Saul was "circumcised the eighth day" in accordance to the law. He studied "at the feet of Gamaliel" who taught him "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" (Acts 22:3; cf. 23:6). There Saul came face to face with the reality of strict pharisaic legalism that produced in his ardent spirit persecuting zeal against the Church (cf. Phil. 3:6).

Moreover, Paul's birthplace was a great advantage. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, a "no mean city." He himself puts it thus: "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city" (Acts 21:39). Since he was from Tarsus, a city celebrated as a school of Greek literature,²² he acquired knowledge of Greek authors and philosophy that later became a great asset to his ministry (Acts 17:18-28). In addition to all this, Paul also learnt the Cilician trade of making tents (Acts 18:3); not because of a poor family background but in compliance to Jewish custom which "required each child, however wealthy the parents might be, to learn a trade."²³

His status and learning notwithstanding Paul adopts a new style of life after his conversion. In 2 Cor 12:5 we find a principle of life or rather code of conduct, which I suppose, forms the basis for Paul's numerous self-deprecating statements. It reads: "*I will not boast, except of my weaknesses.*" Hence Paul can afford to say of himself "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom 7:14); "I am the foremost of sinners" (1 Tim

²² Cf. Strabo, in C. Müller, ed., *Geographi Graeci Minores*, 1:14.

²³ See "Paul," in Fausset Dictionary. Electronic edition (trans. International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1998

1:15), and to exclaim in his bewilderment, “Wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:24).

Paul is sometimes so overtaken by the disparaging things said about him or his own sense of humility and unworthiness that he equivocates. The man who claims “I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles” (2 Cor 11:5; cf. 12:11) also says, “I am nothing” (2 Cor 12:11), “I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle” (1 Cor 15:9), “I am the very least of all the saints” (Eph 3:8). The polarization is even more prominent in 1 Cor 9:2 where Paul declares, “If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you.” In 11:1 he insists, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Sometimes Paul has an air of importance in such contrasting claims. He says: “Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge” (2 Cor 11:6). “Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one -- I am talking like a madman” (2 Cor 11:23). Paul does not only state why he uses self-disparaging style of speech for himself but also the reason for accepting such language even if directed to him by detractors. “*I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10).

It is likely that Paul first came to the knowledge of this style of speech through the Old Testament figures that used it. Nevertheless, he must have adopted it after he had been overwhelmed by the grace of conversion,²⁴ and realised the folly of his persecuting²⁵ those “who belonged to the Way” (Acts 9:2). In a way Paul employed *ektrōma* to express and appreciate in all humility his nothingness before God. In his own words: “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9-11; cf. 1 Tim 1:13).

²⁴ For the impact of the Damascus event on Paul’s choice of self-deprecating portraits see Acts 9:3-5, 17; cf. 18:9; 22:14, 18; 26:16.

²⁵ Cf. Acts 8:3; 9:1; 22:4; Gal 1:3, 23; Phil 3:6.

Historical Background to Use of *ektrōma*

Scholars have made several propositions to account for the use of *ektrōma* in 1 Cor 15:8. The major ones can be grouped in two —those that propose that the word originates from Paul himself, and those that believe that it was from his opponents. The first view which has been partly discussed above totally agrees with Paul’s maxim, “*I will not boast, except of my weaknesses*” (2 Cor 12:5). Even if there were anti-Pauline sentiments, particularly from critics of Jewish descent in Corinth, Paul could equally have chosen to remain silent,²⁶ or use a more favourable and self-uplifting image than a disparaging one used by his opponents to counter their views. It is likely that Paul from his Damascus experience compared himself, a mysterious latecomer into the apostolic membership, to an *ektrōma* in contradistinction to the apostles and other representatives of the Christian community in Jerusalem, who were seen as the authorised and authentic witnesses. Rather than use the self-deprecating word to respond to his detractors and opponents, Paul employs it to underscore the favour of his call and the abnormal way in which he was let into the apostolic office. As Windisch would say together with Fridrichsen, *ektrōma* “is Paul’s judgement of himself in relation to his past.”²⁷

However, strong issues are raised by those who trace the origin of the word back to Paul’s opponents. But there is no consensus among them concerning who the opponents are. Are they Palestinian Judaizers, or Hellenistic Christians of Stephen party who were driven out of Judea into the Diaspora?²⁸ This has consequently led to different opinions as to what constitutes the matter of opposition. Kim has skilfully summarised the views into two, namely, those revolving around Paul’s “qualification” or / and his “competency” to be an apostle.

²⁶ Cf. Mark 15:3-5; Matt 26:62-63; John 19:9; also Isa 53:7.

²⁷ H. Windisch, *Paulus und Christus* (1934) 144 n. 1; also J. Schneider, *TDNT* II, 467.

²⁸ For more details see Seyoon Kim, “The Origin of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation,” in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *The Road From Damascus* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1997) 114-115.

With regard to the first, Paul is looked upon in contempt as “a self-made apostle who engaged in self-commendation” (cf. 2 Cor 3:1, 5; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 10:12, 18; 12:11).²⁹ Moreover, the justification for his apostolic qualification is based only on his visionary experience on the road to Damascus. Paul’s visionary revelation again cannot be subjected to any external proof and, therefore, does not provide enough criterion for claiming apostleship.

The criticisms concerning Paul’s “competency” found him badly qualified to be called an apostle. Paul was looked upon as “timid” when face to face, but “bold” when away, “weak” in general, and unimpressive in use of rhetorical powers. He was said to lack spiritual visions and revelations and, above all, spiritual power to perform signs and wonders and miracles. Contrary to the privileges given by the Lord on the Church’s support to ministers, Paul made a living with his own hands rather than claiming this support.³⁰ These issues were for his opponents a clear indication of his “incompetence” and therefore an *ektrōma* as far as apostolic office was concerned. Kim puts it thus: “What really led Paul to this line of apologetic was his opponents’ insinuation that in his past as a persecutor of the Church he was an enemy of Jesus Christ and of God, as well as their rejection of his claim to apostleship on the basis of the Damascus revelation of Christ.”³¹ Although the issues that led to the use of *ektrōma* by Paul are unresolved, it is still evident that they are localised specifically in the Corinthian Christian community from where the deprecating word *ektrōma* emerged as hapax in the NT.

Interpreting 1 Cor 15:8 in Relation to Paul

Our text reads: *eschaton de pantōn hōsperei tō(i) ektrōmati ophthē kamoī* “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” As one can observe, the verse is short and graphic, but pregnant with

²⁹ Cf. Seyoon Kim, “The Origin,” 115.

³⁰ Cf. S. Kim, “The Origin,” 117.

³¹ S. Kim, “The Origin,” 117; also 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8-10.

meaning. It consists of four key elements —1) an adverbial phrase *eschaton de pantōn* (last of all),³² 2) a singular definite neuter noun in dative form *tō(i) ektrōmati* (to the abnormal birth, miscarriage, abortion, untimely birth), introduced by an emphatic comparative particle *hōsperei* (as, as though),³³ 3) an indicative aorist passive 3rd. pers. sing. verb, *ophthē* (to appear),³⁴ and 4) an adverbial phrase *kamoi*, (to me also), serving as indirect object to the verb *horaō*. Here Paul figuratively communicates much about himself in few words. There is no doubt that understanding the four key elements together will give a more comprehensive idea of what Paul wants to achieve with his self-derogation.

But the meaning of some of these phrases is highly contested by scholars. For instance, in what sense does Paul want his reader to understand the opening phrase *eschaton de pantōn* which literally means “last of all”?³⁵ The position of the phrase indicates its importance to the overall understanding of the verse. However, it must first and foremost be understood as referring to the subject matter of the immediate context of the text, namely, Christ’s resurrection and his appearances to witnesses. Here Paul does not only deal with the fact of Christ’s resurrection, but also provides a proof by enumerating the category of people to whom the Risen Christ appeared (1 Cor 15:5-7). The list of the witnesses runs from Cephas (v.5) through more than 500 other members (v.6) to James and then to all the apostles in

³² Cf. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 314.

³³ Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor suggest it should be read in a colloquial sense, “sort of”. Cf. *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981) 528.

³⁴ This verb is derived from the indicative *horaō*, to see, observe, notice, etc.

³⁵ It has to be noted that the adjective *eschatos* has a wide semantic field, covering the sense of “last, final; lowest, worst, most insignificant,” etc. Cf. W. Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 313-314.

v.7. Paul presents himself last in the list (v. 8) as “the least (?) of the apostles” (v. 9).³⁶

The question then is whether or not Paul uses the phrase in a temporal sense; in which case he will be dealing with the chronology of the appearances in vv. 5-8. In fact, it is not likely that Paul was just after arranging the appearances of the Risen Christ in the order of the time in which they occurred. As Schutz observed, the phrase is not used in temporal sense.³⁷ Kelly seems to have given an adjectival sense to the phrase when he interpreted it as meaning “least significant,”³⁸ Fee thinks that this sense will hardly obtain in the context of enumerations. Again while objecting to Jones’ interpreting the phrase as “last of all the apostles,”³⁹ Fee posits that the phrase “last of all” should be understood in an adverbial sense, meaning “finally”.⁴⁰

Taking the context of appearance as a key to the interpretation of the phrase it may be better understood in the sense of “eventually,” meaning not “finally” but “in the long run”. The phrase begins Paul’s portrayal of his unworthiness and deprecation, which he expressed both in the image of the “untimely born” (v. 8) and “the least of the apostles” of the following verse 9. Similarly, the self-disparaging word *ektrōma*, in its wide range of meanings, discussed above, portrays Paul as one humbled and overwhelmed by his experience on the road to Damascus. This experience because it came outside the “normal” time, that is, it “occurred after the time when such appearances were understood to have ceased,”⁴¹ can rightly be regarded as “untimely.” For this Paul’s detractors must have

³⁶ It is important to observe that the verb “to appear” occurs in all four verses to buttress the fact of the theme of the unit.

³⁷ Cf. Schutz, *Paul*, 104-106.

³⁸ G.B. Kelly, “He Appeared to Me,” in T.J. Ryan, ed., *Critical History and Biblical Faith* (Villanova: 1979) 108-135; 114; also G.D. Fee, *First Epistle*, 732 n. 98.

³⁹ P.R. Jones, “Last Apostle,” cited in G.D. Fee, *First Epistle*, 732 n. 98. Jones’ interpretation could imply Paul’s ranking or position; it has also a temporal / chronological sense.

⁴⁰ Cf. G.D. Fee, *First Epistle*, 732 n. 98.

⁴¹ G.D. Fee, *First Epistle*, 733.

scornfully referred to him as *to ektrōma*, “*the untimely born*”, in the sense of a latecomer among the eyewitnesses of the Risen Christ. As the definite article (*to*) presupposes, Paul must have been well-known among not only his detractors but also the Christian community in Corinth by such a disparaging nickname.

But Paul, contrary to the jest of his detractors, appropriated the deprecating word to express, though in a softened way,⁴² what the mercy of God could achieve in him. The echo of Paul’s undauntedness is heard in his last emphatic and contrasting phrase *ophthē kanoi* “he appeared also to me,” with air of pride and gratitude for his call. This then shows that when Paul uses *ektrōma* for himself he does so for reasons other than those of his opponents. It is for him a way to express the unique privilege God gave him to witness the appearance of the Risen Christ and to be reckoned as an apostle, even if he would only be called the least.

Significance of 1 Cor 15:8 in Our Context

The deprecating portrait of Paul in our text arises out of opposition and name-callings, partly, due to the misunderstanding between him and his opponents over the nature of his apostleship. Instead of Paul denying the obvious disparaging attacks of the detractors, he accepts their judgement, takes up their own language in a modified and reinterpreted sense and goes on to hold on to his claim on how he comes about to his apostleship. To be emphasised is that Paul takes serious the deprecating words of his opponents and adopts a new strategy for a response. He does not find irrational outburst of anger or accommodative silence the solution; instead he uses the best of his apologetics and polemics to confront his opponents, correct their misconceptions and define more clearly his own conception of apostleship.

⁴² That is the impact of the comparative particle *ōsperei* used in the sense of “sort of,” “as though.”

Paul takes occasion of the opposition to rethink the image he had of himself before his conversion, resulting in making a humble digression concerning himself. Paul acknowledges that his experience en route to Damascus was a great act of God's mercy and thus sees himself as being highly favoured by God in this singular act. Yet he always endeavours to keep up a humble opinion of himself, and to publicly express it without regrets. Paul would want his reader to learn from his own experience and join him to say in unison, "'By God's grace we are what we are.' We are nothing but what God makes us, nothing in religion but what his grace makes us."⁴³

Thus Paul deemphasizes the essentiality of the individual disciple in preaching the gospel, since the gospel is not human wisdom. Paul's sensibility to this and his keeping humble and thankful by this conviction challenge us in our apostolate today. His low profile in Corinth amidst all oppositions does not make him achieve any less than the other so-called "super apostles." Rather as he confesses in his self-assessment: "his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Cor 15:10). It is in this frame of mind that Paul urges his reader, "not to accept the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1). It is therefore evident that although Paul's self-deprecation in 1 Cor 15:8 lets itself to many interpretations, its one unforgettable lesson is that when pride is subdued, there is every reason to believe that the grace of God will triumph.⁴⁴

It is also pertinent to stress the need for the reader today to always keep in view the link Paul makes between apostolate and personal encounter with the Risen Lord in this text. For Paul that is what guarantees in the first instance the authority to preach the gospel and no human power or opposition can sever one from it.

⁴³ Matthew Henry, "Commentary on First Corinthians," 15:8.

⁴⁴ M. Henry, "Commentary on First Corinthians," 15:8.

Conclusion

This article has drawn attention to the fact that Paul, more than any other New Testament figure, portrays himself in disparaging images. His self-description in 1 Cor 15:8 as the untimely born (*ektrōma*) is only one of them. He used the image here in relation to other apostles to whom the Risen Christ appeared and in response to the disparaging attacks he was receiving in Corinth in the course of his mission. Ordinarily, one would say that Paul had no cause to adopt such a self-disparaging style, given his background and status. Nonetheless, he used it to respond to his detractors and opponents, who employed it to question his “qualification” and/or his “competency” to be an apostle. Above all, Paul used the image to underscore the favour of his call and the abnormal way in which he was let into the apostolic office. The way in which Paul deemphasised the essentiality of the human agent in Christian ministry reminds one of the self-emptying of Christ at the incarnation (Phil 2:5-8) and throughout his earthly ministry. Here lies the challenge of Paul’s self-deprecating portrait to the present-day minister and, indeed, Christian in his or her apostolate.

“The Temple of the Living God”: A Study of the Old Testament Explicit Quotations in 2 Corinthians 6,14-7,1

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Introduction

Paul was “the man of three cultures, bearing in mind his Jewish origins, his Greek language and his privilege of being ‘civis romanus’, as also evinced by his name of Latin origin. Another factor to bear in mind is the Stoic philosophy which was dominant in Paul’s day and which contains exalted values of humanity and wisdom that were naturally taken up by Christianity”.¹ He was a man of his time, of the Jewish culture and at the same time versed in the Hellenistic life. Paul’s double citizenship was of immense help in his apostleship. His Jewish background and knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures prepared him for the enormous task ahead of him. His acquired Hellenistic culture gave him the essential tool needed to communicate proficiently to the Gentiles the divine message he received.

Of great importance, indeed, is Paul’s knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Right from the time of the apostles, the Church has always acknowledged the continuity between the OT and the NT. The Evangelists, in their profuse use of the OT interpreted in the light of their experience of Jesus, see the event of Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT. Significant are the words of Jesus after his resurrection: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24,44). This refers to the tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible, which the NT writers

¹ BENEDICT XVI, “General Audience, July 2, 2008”, *Vatican News Service* July 2, 2008.

copiously cited in their work.² Paul was well acquainted with the contents of these three parts of the OT and made proficient use of them in his mission and letters.

In Phil 3,5-6; Gal 1,14; 2 Cor 11,22 Paul refers to his Pharisaic tradition known for its devotion to the study of Jewish Scriptures, particularly the Law.³ His vast knowledge of the OT is manifested in the many OT images he employs in his letters. Apart from 1 Thessalonians, Philippians and Philemon, all the other letters attributed to Paul in the NT contain explicit OT quotations, of which all together are about ninety.⁴ Paul cites the OT according to his Jewish contemporaries. He makes use of the LXX or takes from both the LXX and the Hebrew version. Sometimes he gives the OT texts new meaning in the context of his letter: Hab 2,4 in Rom 1,17; Gal 3,11; Gen 12,7 in Gal 3,16. Furthermore, he allegorizes some OT texts: Gen 16,15 and 17,16 in Gal 4,21-25. “His Jewish background makes him quote the OT to stress the unity of God’s action in both dispensations, and often as announcing the Christian gospel (Rom 1,2) or preparing for Christ (Gal3,24)”.⁵

2 Cor 6,14-7,1 studied in this paper is a good example of Paul’s use of the OT and his expertise in Greek rhetoric: “It is almost as though we can in this passage catch an echo of Paul the preacher; the series of rhetorical questions, the notable variety of vocabulary and

² Studies have shown that there are about 160 implicit quotations and allusions, 38 explicit quotations of the OT in the Gospel according to Matthew; 60 implicit and allusions, and 15 explicit quotations in Mark; 192 implicit and allusions, and 15 explicit quotations in Luke; 137 implicit and allusions, and 14 explicit quotations in John; 140 implicit and allusions, and 22 explicit quotations in Acts; 72 implicit and allusions, and 47 explicit quotations in Paul’s Letter to the Romans. These figures are according to THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Jewish People and the their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002) 17.

³ JEROME MURPHY-O’CONNOR, *Paul A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 59.

⁴ JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology”, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992) 1384.

⁵ FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology”, 1384.

construction, the quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures and the application of the biblical promises to those he is addressing (7,1) – all these conjure up to vivid picture of the power and the effect of the apostle’s preaching”.⁶ This paper studies 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 in the context of 2 Corinthians with particular interest in Paul’s use of the Jewish Scriptures, Greek persuasive literary technique, and the focal theme of “the temple of the living God” predicated of all Christians.

1. The Context of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

The Corinth that Paul visited about three times around 50-56 AD in his missionary journeys is situated on the Peloponnesian⁷ coast of Greece. It is on a plateau at the southern part of the isthmus (a narrow portion of land, enclosed on each part by water and connecting two larger bodies of land: a neck of land) with a mountain (575 m) called Acrocorinth behind it. Corinth has access through its two ports, Cenchreae and Lecaem, to the two main seas of the area, Aegean and Adriatic. This geographical position of Corinth made it a famous commercial centre and consequently the name “wealthy”. Lucius Mummius, a Roman General, destroyed the city in 146 BC but Julius Caesar rebuilt it in 44 BC when he recognized its strategic location. He made it a Roman colony filled initially with freed slaves. The merchants who settled in Corinth came from Greece, Syria, Egypt, and Judea. Some of these wealthy merchants sponsored Corinth’s biennial Isthmian games celebrated at the sanctuary of Poseidon (the god of earthquakes and of the seas in Greek mythology) at Isthmus (proper name of a place in Corinth) of Corinth.

From the contents of the Acts of the Apostles and 1-2 Corinthians, we learn that Paul visited Corinth about three times in his missionary

⁶ P.E. HUGHES, P. E., *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans, 1961) 246.

⁷ Peloponnese is a peninsula forming the southernmost part of the Greek mainland.

journeys. His first visit, according to Acts 18,1-3 between AD 50-52,⁸ was engendered by hostility and rejection in Philippi and Thessalonica. Aquila and Prisca, Jewish Christians expelled from Rome, were already at Corinth when Paul arrived. Hence, contrary to his claim in 1 Cor 3,6.10; 4,15, Paul may not have been the first Christian in the city. He preached in Jewish Synagogue and made many converts from both Jews and Gentiles, from the lower to middle strata of society, with artisans and ex-slaves far outnumbering the rich.

When Paul left Corinth in 52 AD with Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18,18), other missionaries, perhaps more vivacious like Apollos, arrived and set divisive spirit among the converts who relapsed into “idolatry and sexual immorality that were endemic in the community with Achaian capital”.⁹ Report of this reached Paul when he was at Ephesus and 1 Corinthians, composed about 56 AD, was his urgent response. Timothy confirmed this degenerated situation of Corinthian converts, caused by false apostles, when he visited the city in early 57 AD (Acts 19,21-22; 1 Cor 4,17-19; 16,10-11). Paul himself refers to these false apostles in 2 Cor 11,12-15. He made his second visit to put the situation aright but this was a failure (2 Cor 2,1) for “he was perceived as timid and ineffective when face to face with the Corinthians”.¹⁰ He was even insulted publicly by someone during this second visit (2 Cor 2,5-11; 7,12). He went back to Ephesus and sent to Corinth what he called a letter “with many tears” (2 Cor 2,3-4; 7,8-9). Though with many tears and painful to the addressees, the missive achieved its goal; the Corinthians repented, showed concern for what they did to him, and were anxious to prove their innocence. A greater part of Second Corinthians, written about 57 AD, was Paul’s response to the

⁸ RAYMOND E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004) 514.

⁹ PAUL BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997) 343.

¹⁰ BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 542.

situation. His third visit to Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 12,14; 13,1-2) was about late 57 and early 58 AD.

Apart from the opening formula (1,1-2) and thanksgiving (1,3-11), the corpus of 2 Corinthians can be broadly divided into three major parts according to their contents.¹¹ In part one (1,12-7,16), Paul recalls his painful visit, his letter “with many tears”, and the disciplinary measure the Corinthians employed to correct the hostile person that confronted him publicly during his second visit. He even urges them to have mercy and pardon the person. He refers at length to the crisis at Corinth (2,14-7,16), particularly the attack on him by the false or would-be apostles who unsettled the minds of the converts. Even though they entered with letter of recommendation, Paul does not need such letter because the Corinthians have already experienced him and the genuineness of his ministry among them. He opens his mind to them and urges them to do the same. The section 6,14-7,1 fall into this part and flows from what precedes it. Its dualistic contradictions insist on the need for separation from unbelievers. “Withdrawing from the Gentile cults will be their way of responding to his call to them, demonstrating that they are an apostolic church”.¹²

The second part of the letter (8,1-9,15) is on Paul’s zeal to help the Church in Jerusalem. His built-up confidence leads him to request collection for this purpose. Finally, part three (10,1-13,10) returns to the crisis among the Corinthians. Paul affirms that his ministry proceeds from God and cannot be undermined by those who purport to be super-apostles (11,5; 12,11). The exhortation at the end (13,11-13) ends with a triadic blessing that is found even today in Christian liturgy: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor 13,13).

¹¹ There are varying views on the structure of 2 Corinthians and these depend on whether one considers the letter as integral or a conglomeration of many missives from Paul.

¹² BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 341.

2. The Text of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

A close study of this text elicits Paul's use of the OT and elucidates the message he relates to the Corinthian converts.

2.1 Integrity of the Text

A predominant interest among some Biblical scholars¹³ in the study of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 is to determine the Pauline or non Pauline authorship of these six verses the greater part of which are some explicit quotations from the OT. Consensus on this issue is far from being a reality. Some of the arguments are based on the style, content and context of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1. A synthesis of the arguments for and against Pauline authenticity of this text is considered necessary here.

First in the lists of arguments against the Pauline authorship of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 is that the preceding statement in v.13 is a positive direct appeal or exhortation different from the negative pitch with which v. 14 begins. A close reading of the context, however, observes that direct address in the wider context of 6,14-7,1 is rare; therefore, our text cannot be taken as discontinuity but rather continuity in its context.

The second argument is based on the six hapax legomena (*heterozugei*, *metochē*, *sumphōnēsis*, *Beliar*, *sunktathesis*, and

¹³ Cf. H.D. BETZ, "2 Cor 6,14-7,1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?" *JBL* 92 (1973) 88-108; J. D. M. DERRET, "2 Cor 6,14ff: A Midrash on Dt 22,10", *Bib* 59 (1978) 231-250; G.D. FEE, "2 Cor 6,14-7,1 and Food Offered to Idols", *NTS* 23 (1976-77) 140-161; J.A. FITZMYER, "Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1", *CBQ* 23 (1961) 271-280; J.C. HURD, *The Origin of 1 Cor* (New York 1965) 235-239; J. LAMBRECHT, "The Fragment 2 Cor 6,14-7,1: A Plea for its Authenticity", *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* (ed. T. BAARDA, et al., NovTSup 48; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 2: 143-161; J. MURPHY-O'CONNOR, "Relating 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 to its Context", *NTS* 33 (1987) 272-275; M.E. THRALL, "The Problem of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 in some Recent Discussion", *NTS* 24 (1977-78) 132-148.

molusmos) found in 6,14-7,1 which make the text a non-Pauline. Contrary to this observation is that Paul tends to use rare words in his outstanding rhetorical passages like the one we are studying.¹⁴ Another example is 2 Cor 6,3-10 which has four hapaxes and two other words that are found only in Paul.

Furthermore, 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 makes use of dualistic contrasts or antithesis which are common in Qumran documents. The occurrence of the term Belial in the text seems to give credence to this because it is also found in Qumran literature (cf. 1QM 13,1-4; 1Qs 1,18,24; 2,19; 1QH 6,21).¹⁵ On account of this 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 is, according to some scholars,¹⁶ an interpolation in 2 Corinthians. The use of antithesis is common in Pauline Letters and many of the words employed in the antithetical phrases are typical of Paul.¹⁷

Finally, the text emphasizes so much exclusiveness by the use of “flesh” / “Spirit” dualism which is not common in Paul. To this claim, a counter argument explains that these antithetical words respectively means in the context “outwardly” and “inwardly”.¹⁸

In addition to the points for the Pauline authorship of the text, one observes that the style of triple OT citations found therein occurs also in Rom 3,10-18. In fact, “this passage does not stem from a sectarian backwater, but from mainstream Hellenistic –Jewish thought with a pattern of OT citations that is entirely Pauline”.¹⁹ In important ancient Manuscripts – Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus – of 2

¹⁴ Cf. R. P. MARTIN, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1986) 192.

¹⁵ The text is according to FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996.

¹⁶ BETZ, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?” 88-108; FITZMYER, “Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1”, 271-280

¹⁷ FEE, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1 and Food Offered to Idols”, 140-161.

¹⁸ FEE, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1 and Food Offered to Idols”, 161.

¹⁹ BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 340.

Corinthians, our text is well attested.²⁰ Actually, “there is no evidence that 2 Corinthian ever existed without this section”.²¹ Many recent commentaries on 2 Corinthians consider 6,14,-7,1 as Paul’s authentic composition that flows with his thought in both the wider and immediate contexts of the text.²²

The crisis caused by the advent of false prophets who disparaged Paul’s mission among the Corinthians led to deterioration in the moral life of the converts. Paul finds himself setting aright these two urgent situations – saving his image and helping the converts to preserve the faith. Both are interrelated. If the converts still recognize him as true apostle, they will live the true message of salvation he has communicated to them and remain worthy followers of Christ. He does this through some arguments that he draws from his life experiences (2,14-17; 6,3-10) and from the common belief of true Christians who are the heirs of the new covenant inaugurated by and in Jesus (3,1-18; 6,14-7,1). Each of these has an exhortation that will help the Corinthians solve their current crisis. Exhortation that flows from Paul’s argument based on his personal experiences is presented in 6,11-13; and exhortation from his argument on the salvation history is seen in the two synonymous exhortations in 6,14 and 7,1, which forms an inclusion in the section of 6,14-7,1. Because 6,14-7,1 belongs to his argument on redemptive history, he cites passages from the Scriptures to corroborate his points.

²⁰ KURT ALAND – BARBARA ALAND, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995) J.

²¹ SCOTT J. HAFEMANN, *2 Corinthians* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000) 278.

²² PAUL BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997) 337-358; SCOTT J. HAFEMANN, *2 Corinthians* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000) 277-304; CHARLES HODGE, *2 Corinthians* (The Crossway Classic Commentaries; Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1995) 132-137; JERRY W. MCCANT, *2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 62-68; FRANK J. MATERA, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (The New Testament Library; Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) 156-168; JAMES M. SCOTT, *2 Corinthians* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1998) 150-164;

2.2 Literary Style of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

Christians are by their vocation the new people of God with the new covenant in the blood of Jesus. They continue, with significant newness, the promise that God made to the people of the old covenant. The divine-human relation and the stipulations to be observed by humans still endure. Central to this is the worship of the true God. Paul presents this to the Corinthians with arguments derived from the Scriptures.

The intrinsic structure of this text can be easily recognized. There are exhortations at the two extremes of the text, marking an inclusion in the text. The first exhortation is articulated in a negative imperative mood of the second person plural, addressed to the Corinthians: *mē ginesthe heterozugountes apistoi* “do not be mismatched with unbelievers” (6,14a). In 7,1 the exhortation is cohortative: *katharisōmen heautous apo pantos molusmou sarkos kai pneumatos, epitelountes hagiōsunēn en phobō theou* “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God”.

There are five antithetical rhetorical questions in 6,14-16a. This is followed first by what has been recognized²³ as the basic assertion in the text: *hēmeis gar naos theou esmen sōntos*, “for we are the temple of the living God”. The antithetical rhetorical questions contain five pairs of antitheses that prepare for this affirmation. These opposing terms, each beginning with the positive one, are arranged thus:

Righteousness – lawlessness
Light – darkness
Christ – Beliar
Believer – unbeliever
Temple of God – (temple of) idols

²³ BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 343.

In the fifth pair he employs an ellipsis of repetition, whereby “the omitted word or words is, or are to be supplied out of the preceding or following clause, in order to complete the sense”.²⁴ The omitted word in our text is “temple”. The rhythmic feature of the five rhetorical questions formed from these pairs is as follows:

For what partnership is there between **righteousness** and *lawlessness*?

Or what fellowship is there between **light** and *darkness*?

What agreement does **Christ** have with *Beliar*?

Or what does a **believer** share with an *unbeliever*?

What agreement has the **temple of God** with *idols*?

Paul evokes the authority of Scripture by his use of OT quotations (v. 16) to support his message conveyed in the rhetorical questions.

Still making use of OT citations in vv. 17-18, he presents two direct commands supported by two promises. The two commands are:

come out from them, and be separate from them
and touch nothing unclean

Their corresponding promises taken from the OT and followed by “thus says the Lord” are presented thus:

then I will welcome you,
and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters.

The OT citations, therefore, are significant part of the argument in the text.

²⁴ E.W. BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2003) 70, 79.

2.3 Analyzing the Rhetorical Questions in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

The rhetorical questions in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 flow from the introductory negative command in v.14a: *mē ginesthe heterozugountes apistoi* “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers”. The verb, which is participle present active nominative masculine second person plural, is the first out of the six hapax legomena in this section. It means “to be unevenly yoked” or “mismatched”. Its underlying word is the substantive *zugos* “yoke” used figuratively in the NT (Matt 11,29-30; Acts 15,10; Gal 5,1; 1 Tim 6,1). Here the author construes it with imperative present middle or passive deponent second person plural from *ginomai*. Our text has been cited as an example of where *ginomai* in various tenses with a present or perfect participle is used in an analogous way to denote the beginning of a state or condition.²⁵ On this note, the author of our text would be presenting the command as if the addressees have not yet started lending themselves to unbelievers. In other words, the command respectfully eschews any tone of reprimand. The present tense in the command, in addition, indicates in our text an ongoing process. In 2 Cor 6,14 Paul is simply prohibiting the Corinthians from being yoked with unbelievers as a way of life, whether they have begun to do so or not.²⁶ He stresses this carefully constructed imperative by using five rhetorical questions.

Deuteronomy 22,10 may have been a matrix of this command: “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together”. Ox and donkey do not have the same strength. Again, this prohibition is probably made because of the law of clean and unclean animals in Deut 14,1-8; ox is “clean” and ass “unclean”.²⁷ Another OT text that could be a background to Paul’s command is Lev 19,19: “You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow

²⁵ F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1961) § 354.

²⁶ .SCOTT, *2 Corinthians*, 279.

²⁷ DUANE L. CHRISTENSEN, *Deuteronomy 21,10-34,12* (WBC 6B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002) 508.

your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials”.

In 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 the author colligates the five rhetorical questions with five pairs of antitheses, and each question beginning with what would have been the point of congruity of the opposing terms. In addition, each of the pairs begins with the positive term from the perspective of both the text and its author. A rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer. It is a persuasive *modus operandi* of stating a fact. In our text, the point is: Christian life is irreconcilable with immorality and idolatry. The questions highlight the different aspects of the identity of Christian life.

By way of definition, antithesis is a figure of speech by which two thoughts, ideas or phrases, are set over one against the other, in order to make the contrast more striking, and thus to emphasize it. The two parts so placed are hence called in Greek *antitheta*, and in Latin *opposita* and *contraposita*. When this contrast consists of words rather than sentences, it is called *epanodos* and *antimetabole*. When this contrast is made by affirmatives and negatives, it is called *enantiosis* (cf. Isa 1,21; 59,9; 65,13,14; Lam 1,1; Rom 5,18,19; 6,7.8; 8,5.13; 15,12; 2 Cor 4, 17,18; etc.).²⁸

Second Corinthians contains many examples of this literary device. In 2 Cor 6 alone one observes some striking examples. In vv. 7c-8b there are three antitheses to elucidate Paul's conduct in his ministry: “with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left / in honor and dishonor / in ill repute and good repute”. In 8c-10 Paul, employing seven antitheses presents the reality of his life against how some perceive him: “We are treated as impostors, and yet are true / as unknown, and yet are well known / as dying, and see-- we are alive / as punished, and yet not killed / as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing / as

²⁸ BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, 715.

poor, yet making many rich / as having nothing, and yet possessing everything”.

The antitheses in 2 Cor 6,14-16 continue the use of this literary technique in its immediate context. The first question reads: *tis gar metochē dikaiosunē kai anomia*. It reinforced the introductory command. Its post positive particle *gar* subordinates this first question and the subsequent ones to the preceding imperative. Righteousness and lawlessness have nothing in common because they are two mutually exclusive spheres. Paul contracts these two words again in his exhortation in Rom 6,19. The first term, *dikaosunē*, belonging to the sphere of life in Christ, has these variegated meanings: justice, righteousness, uprightness: this occurs 91x in the NT and 57x in Paul (33x in Romans), having a ratio of 62% of its total occurrences in the NT. Its ethical meaning in our text is determined by its antithesis, *anomia* “lawlessness”, “wickedness”, sin as a frame of mind. Therefore, the contrast in our text is similar to the message of Psalms 1; 11; 34. There are two ways in human life as *homo religiosus*: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked.

In the second question, the author adds another reason why the Corinthians should have nothing to do with the life of unbelievers: *tis koinōnia phōti pros skotos*. Since they are in the light, they need not move to the sphere of darkness. Light and darkness as two polar opposites form a word pair that is recurrent in Paul’s letters ((Rom 2,19; 13,12; 1 Cor 4,5; Eph 5,11-14; 1 Thess 5,4-5) and in the NT in general (Matt 4,16; Luke 1,79; John 1,5; 3,19; Acts 26,18; John 1,5; 2,8). In our text, “light is not a mystical concept, but a moral designation that refers to the new life of obedience to God, engendered by trusting in Christ by the power of the Spirit”.²⁹

In the third question the author contrasts Christ with Beliar (or the variant Belial). “Beliar” is another hapax in this text. In the Qumran

²⁹ HAFEMANN, 2 *Corinthians*, 281.

text (1 QM 13,1-4; 1 QS 1,18,24; 1 QH 14,21) and apocalyptic Judaism it is a proper noun for Satan. It occurs about twenty-seven times as *bālīyya'al* (derived from two words *bālī* “not”, “without” and *ya'al* “worth”, “use”, “profit”) “wordlessness”, “wickedness” in the Hebrew Bible and often in compound expressions like ‘*š habbālīyya'al* (1 Sam 25,25; 2 Sam 16,7; 20,1; 1 Kgs 21,15; Prov 16,27), *ben-bālīyya'al* (Deut 13,14; Judg 19,22; 20,13; 1 Sam 25,17), *dəḇar-bālīyya'al* (Ps 41,9).³⁰ Belial occurs often in the Pseudepigraphic Literature of the Jews like *Jubilees*, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Lives of the Prophets*, etc; in all these Belial is personified.³¹ In the Qumran texts, “Belial is the most frequently used title for the leader of the forces of darkness”.³² 1QM 13,4, for instance reads: “Accursed be Belial in his malicious plan, may he be damned for his wicked rule. Accursed be all the spirits of his lot in his wicked ... plan”.³³ It is significant that the author of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 contrasts Christ and Belial immediately after the antithesis “light and darkness”. Christ, the light belongs to a realm quite different from darkness of Belial.

In the fourth question *tis meris pistō meta apistou* “what does a believer share with unbeliever?” The author becomes more concrete for he has been speaking until now in metaphors. The Corinthian converts have nothing to do with the unbelievers for Christians belong to Christ, the light and his sphere of action is quite different from that of darkness represented by Belial.

The fifth and final question prepares for the affirmation at the end of all the five rhetorical questions. “Paul establishes the contrast that will function as a thematic statement for the scriptural quotation that he will soon introduce”.³⁴ *Tis de sunkatathesis naō theou meta eidōlōn*

³⁰ THEODORE J. LEWIS, “Belial”, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* I (London: Doubleday, 1992) 654-656.

³¹ See THEODORE J. LEWIS, “Belial”, 655, for examples of these occurrences.

³² THEODORE J. LEWIS, “Belial”, 655.

³³ FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 107.

³⁴ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 163-164.

“what agreement has the temple of God with idols?”. We have noted above that there is an ellipsis of repetition in this question, which should read “what agreement has the temple of God with temple of idols?”. If this observation construes what the author had in mind, then the contrast is between the temple of God and the temple of idols. Another observation is Paul’s choice of the word for temple, *naos*. Its meaning here could be related to the corresponding verb *naō* “to inhabit”. In the LXX *naos* translates *hēkāl* “the innermost part of the temple”, “the shrine”. It is also one of the Hebrew terms for the Jerusalem Temple. *Naos* refers to the sacred worship space itself (Mark 14,58; 15,29; John 2,19-20). The synonym *hieron* refers more to the entire temple precinct (Matt 12,6; 21,12; Mark 13,3; Luke 22,52; John 10,23; Acts 19,27). From the meaning of *naos* the contrast is on the dwelling place of God and the dwelling place of idols; the two have nothing in common. An idol cannot dwell in God’s temple.

This fifth rhetorical question is the climax of the five and it is closely linked to the assertion that ensues: *hēmeis gar naos theou esmen*. “For we are the temple of the living God”. Just as the *gar* links the first question to the introductory command in v.14, the *gar* in this affirmation links it to the entire rhetorical question and in particular, to the climactic fifth question. There are some ancient texts³⁵ that read *humeis* instead of *hemeis* on the basis, perhaps, of similar expression in 1 Cor 3,16 as well as from the context. In the context, Paul is addressing the Corinthians, using the second person plural, particularly in vv.14 and 17. The difficult reading is preferred here because “*lectio difficilior praestat facili*”. The affirmation: “for we are the temple of God” does not refer only to the Corinthians. Paul reminds them of the universal feature of all Christians: a place where God dwells. He “draws an important conclusion that affects him as well as the Corinthians”.³⁶ It is newness of NT to call human beings

³⁵ These texts include both the Alexandrian and Western witnesses P⁴⁶ C D^e G Y 614 etc. the plural *naoi* is seen in Clement and Augustine (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994) 512.

³⁶ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 164.

temple of God for “nowhere in the Old Testament is Israel ever identified with the temple”.³⁷

In the OT the Jerusalem Temple is a place where God’s presence is experienced. The faithful long to be in God’s temple because of their ardent belief in God’s presence therein. It is God’s house, hence the common appellation, *bēt YHWH* and the variant *bēt Elohim* or with some pronominal suffixes.³⁸ Besides this meaning in the NT, Christ’s body is called a temple for in him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead (John 2,19).³⁹ The Church as the Body of Christ is also called God’s temple because of the presence of the Spirit. In the same way, each believer is the temple of God (1 Cor 3,16; 6,19). A chain of OT quotations that follows substantiate Paul’s assertion on Christians being God’s temple.

3. The Old Testament Explicit Quotations in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

Like a fully trained scribe Paul “brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matt 13,52). He aptly chooses appropriate OT texts that confirm his argument. These citations are divided into three parts, segmented by some introductory formulae. The first formula introduces the first conflated quotation: “as God said” (v.16). In the second quotation, the formula comes at the end: “the Lord says” (v.17). The third formula is at the end of the third citation: “says the Lord Almighty” (v.18).

3.1 God’s Promise to dwell with his People

The first OT citation reads: *enoikēsō en autois kai emperipatēsō kai esomai autōn theos kai autoi esontai mou laos* “I will be with them

³⁷ HAFEMANN, 2 *Corinthians*, 282.

³⁸ MARY JEROME OBIORAH, *How lovely is your Dwelling Place: The Desire for God’s House in Psalm 84* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag Erzabtei, 2004) 137.

³⁹ HODGE, 2 *Corinthians*, 135.

and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (v.16). This is taken from Lev 26,11-12; Jer 32,38 and Ezek 37,27.

Lev 26,11-12

BHS	LXX	NRSV
wənāṭatī miškānī bəṭōkəkem wəlō’ tīg’al naphšī ’etkē. wəhīṭhallaktī bəṭōkəkem wəhāyītī lāhem lē’lohīm wə’attem tihyū lī lə’ām	kai thēsō tēn diathēkēn mou en humin kai ou bdeluksetai hē psuchē mou humas kai emperipatēsō en humōn theos kai humeis esesthe mou laos.	I will place my dwelling in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

Jer 32,38

BHS	LXX	NRSV
wəhāyū lī lə’ām ’ānī ’ehye-lāhem lē’lohīm	kai esontai moi eis laon kai egō esomai autois eis theon	They shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezek 37,27

BHS	LXX	NRSV
wəhāyāh miškānī ’ālēhem wəhāyītī lāhem lē’lohīm wəhēmmāh yihyū lī lə’ām	kai estai hē kataskēnōsis mou en autois kai esomai autois theos kai autoi mou esontai laos.	My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The exact words of the first part of Paul's quotation, *enoikēsō en autois*, are not found in any of these. Closest to what he has is the initial phrase in the text of Ezek 37,27 *kai estai hē kataskēnōsis mou en autois*. In Paul's version, the key word is the verb *enoikein* "to dwell" which in the LXX translates the Hebrew *yšb*. *Enoikein* occurs again in Paul in Rom 8,11 for the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in the Christians. In 2 Tim 1,14 Paul exhorts Timothy to guard the good treasure entrusted to him with the help of the Holy Spirit living in all Christians. In Colossians 3,16 it is the word of Christ that dwells in the Christians. In 2 Timothy 1,5, faith dwells or lives in the Christians. Finally, in Rom 7,17 sin also lives in human beings. These are the only occurrences of this verb in the NT and impressively all are found in Paul. It is only in 2 Cor 6,16 that it is predicated of God. In the OT the corresponding Hebrew verb *yšb* occurs often to express God's dwelling in the temple, holy place, and in heaven.⁴⁰

The context of Ezek 37,27 is God's promise of the new covenant after the old has been violated and punishment due to it has been duly paid in the event of the exile.⁴¹ Leviticus 26,12 is often used in Jewish tradition to relate the restoration of the broken covenant after the exile.⁴² God promises to be with his people, to set his dwelling place among them. The promise that God will set his dwelling among his people is a periphrastic way of saying that God will dwell with his people. Paul is more direct in his use of the verb *enoikein* "to dwell in", "to inhabit". Christians are God's dwelling place, his temple. The concept of the covenant expressed by the text of Ezek 37,27 is more explicit in the LXX version of Lev 26,11-12, *kai thēsō tēn diathēkēn mou en humin*. The Hebrew version reads *wənāṭatī miškānī bəṭōkəkem* "I will place my dwelling in your midst". Paul's version is certainly from this Hebrew text, and with the background of the

⁴⁰ M. GÖRG, "yāšab", *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament VI* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990) 420-438.

⁴¹ LESLIE C. ALLEN, *Ezekiel 20-48* (WBC 29; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990) 194.

⁴² JAMES M. SCOTT, "The Use of Scripture in 2 Corinthians 6,16c-18 and Paul's Restoration Theology", *JSNT* 56 (1994) 82.

covenant underlying the text. God promises to set his dwelling among his people; there he will meet with them and his presence will be immanent.⁴³

The next phrase in Paul's first OT quotation is *kai emperipatēsō*. This has its equivalent in the LXX of Lev 26,12 and the corresponding Hebrew *wəhithallakṯî bəṯôkəkem*. The *hitpael* of *hlk* means "to walk back and forth, up and down".⁴⁴ It denotes God's active presence among his people. A literary figure has been recognized in the use of this word as predicated of God. This is the literary device of *anthropopatheia* – the ascription of human passions, actions or attributes to God. It is also called syncatabasis or condescension.⁴⁵ God condescends to the ignorance and infirmity of human beings.

The last part of the first OT quotation reads: *kai esomai autōn Theos kai autoi esontai mou laos* "and I will be their God and they will be my people". It is found in the three passages he has conflated in his text; moreover, it is a common concept in the OT covenant. This text echoes the promise of the perpetuity of Davidic dynasty in 2 Sam 7,14. Speaking of the would-be heir of David's throne the Lord made this promise: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me". Later this promise was interpreted to include the entire people who are the sons and daughters of the Lord (Isa 43,6). In the New Covenant, according to Paul, all who believe in Christ, and in the context, the Corinthians, are sons and daughters of God. God's promise of old also applies to them. He lives in them through his Spirit whom Christians have all received.

3.2 Two Commands and a Divine Promise (v.17abc)

The second set of OT citations in v.17 reads:

⁴³ JOHN E. HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas, Texas: Word Books) 463.

⁴⁴ HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 463.

⁴⁵ BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, 871,888.

1 Cor 6,17	NSRV
dio ekselthate ek mesou autōn kai aphoristhēte legei kurios, kai akathaptou mē haptesthe, kagō eisdeksomai humas	Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you,

This is a modified form of Isa 52,11

BHS	LXX	NRSV
sûrû sûrû šə'û miššām tāma' 'al-tigā'û habbārû šə'û mitôkāh nōšə'i kəlī YHWH	apostēte apostēte ekselthate ekeithen kai akathaptou mē haptesthe ekselthate ek mesou autēs aphoristhēte hoi pherontes ta skeuē kupiou	Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord

Paul separates these two commands with the formula “the Lord says”. Apart from Isaiah 52,11, which is the basic text, Paul’s version, specifically the last part on the divine promise is a reflection of Ezek 20,34, occurring also in Rev 18,4. In Isaiah, these words are exhortations addressed to the exiles to move out from Babylon, the land of their captivity, and to return to the Holy Land with the vessels of the Lord. “They are urged to protect their ritual cleanliness because their journey is a pilgrimage. They are going to present themselves before God”.⁴⁶

In appropriating this text, Paul has to modify it in order to match his argument. He excludes first the “immediate repetition” in Isaiah and changes *ekeithen* “from there” to *ek mesou autōn* “out from them”,

⁴⁶ JOHN D.W. WATTS, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC 25; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987) 217.

which refers to the unbelievers from whom he wants the Corinthians to extricate themselves. He takes the verb *aphoristhēte* “be separated”, from the LXX instead of the Hebrew *habbārû*, *niphal* imperative from the verbal root *brr* “to purify”. The commands “to come out” and “to be separated” are joined in Paul’s version for they are synonyms, and using two of them together he heightens the imperative. In the next imperative, *kai akathaptou mē haptesthe*, “and touch nothing unclean”, Paul’s version agrees with the LXX and the Hebrew version. The last phrase in the Isaiah’s is not pertinent in Paul’s context and this explains why he does not include it.

In his exhortation to the Corinthians to have nothing to do with the way of life of the unbelievers among whom they live, Paul takes a text from Isaiah, which was addressed to the exiles about to leave the land of their captivity. Paul finds similarity between the condition of the exile and that of his Corinthian converts. In fact, the text fulfils its purpose. Just as the exiles had to leave their slavery, the Corinthians also have to separate themselves from idolatry and immoral behaviour because they are the temple of God. The exiles had to separate themselves from unclean things and persons because they had to encounter the Holy God.

The last part of the quotation in 1 Cor 6,17, “then I will welcome you”, is a promise that ensues from observing the two commands in this verse. It calls to mind Ezek 20,34: “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out”. The context is still the exile from where God promises to bring his people. The word *eisdechomai* occurs only here in the NT and it means “to receive”, “to welcome”, “take in”; it occurs too in the LXX version of Ezek 20,34. The OT texts refer to the restoration of the exiles and for Paul this restoration is already present through the merit of the death and resurrection of the Lord. The only condition as he exhorts the Corinthians is to be separated from all forms of ungodliness prevalent among the unbelievers. “For Paul this

restoration is already occurring through his new covenant ministry, whereby God is gathering Gentile converts, such as the Corinthians, into the sanctified community of the church”.⁴⁷

3.3 A Divine Promise (v. 18)

The third quotation is taken from 2 Sam 7,14 and Isa 43,6. In 2 Cor 6,18 the text reads:

2 Cor 6,18	NRSV
kai esomai humin eis patera kai humeis esesthe moi eis huiou kai thugateras legei kurios pantokratōp	and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

Second Samuel 7,14 is the promise of the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty, made to one person according to its OT context:

2 Sam 7,14 BHS	2 Sam 7,14 LXX	2 Sam 7,14 NRSV
’ānī ’ehye-lō lā’āb wəhū’ yihye-lī ləbēn	egō esomai autō eis patera kai autos estai moi eis huion	I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

In Isaiah 43,6, the promise made to David includes all God’s sons and daughters: “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up’, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth”. Paul takes or combines both texts in order to show that the promise of the old covenant applies too to the people of the new covenant; they the sons and daughters of God, and God is their Father.

⁴⁷ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 167.

The importance of all the texts Paul has taken from the OT is summarized in his final exhortation in 2 Cor 7,1, which contains practical implication of this extended quotation.⁴⁸ The promises of the OT, particularly that God will have his dwelling among his people and that he will be a father and the Christians his sons and daughters, should spur the Corinthians to make holiness perfect in the fear of God. “Fear of God” here refers to the introductory command in v. 14 and at the same time elucidates it.

4. The Temple of the Living God: Setting Modern Syncretism aright

The fundamental point in Paul’s argument is that “people are either on the side of God or the side of Satan”.⁴⁹ There is no room for lukewarmness in Christianity. We have seen above that the central point in both the five rhetorical questions and the three sets of the OT quotations employed in the text is the affirmation, “for we are the temple of the living God”. The variant “you are the temple of the living God”, would limit this quality only to the Corinthians. Though this first option appears out of place in its context, it is the preferred reading. In the OT temple is God’s house. The people believe that their God has a house, a physical edifice here on earth. He is not, however, limited to this sacred precinct. God is experienced in a special way in his house and it is his presence that makes the house holy, the holy dwelling of the Holy God.

The new covenant Paul teaches is continuity of the old one but with significant newness. God’s temple is no longer a physical edifice made of bricks; it is human beings. In the first, it is the community of the believers in Jesus in whom the Spirit of God dwells. Second, each individual person is God’s house in a special way, because God dwells in them. This affirmation has ethical dimension. If Christians

⁴⁸ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 167.

⁴⁹ KEVIN QUAST, *Reading the Corinthian Correspondence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994) 133.

are God's temple, the temple of the living God, according to Paul, then they should be aware of this singular privilege and comport accordingly.

The adjective "living" is significant and should be understood in its OT background where this is a divine appellation. *'ēl-hay* "Living God" is not a frequent divine title in the Hebrew Bible. Actually, it occurs in the entire Psalter only in Pss 42,3 and 84,3 and interestingly in the context of an intense longing for God's presence.⁵⁰ Apart from these two texts of the Psalter, *'ēl-hay* is found in Deut 5,26; Josh 3,10; 1Sam 17,26,36; 2Kgs 19,4,16 // Isa 37,4,17; Jer 10,10; 23,36; Hos 2,1, as well as in the Aramaic, *elāhā' ḥayyā'*, of Dan 6,21,27.⁵¹

Besides the two passages of the Psalter (Pss 42,3 and 84,3) that are directed to Yahweh, most of the texts in which *'ēl-hay* occurs have to do with some polemic against foreign opponents.⁵² The living God, in the words of Joshua, would drive out from before the Israelites all the nations who were obstacles to their entrance into the Promised Land (Josh 3,10). David in speaking about the haughtiness and insolence of the Philistine leader, Goliath, depicts him as one who defies the armies of the living God (1Sam 26,36). The envoy of the king of Assyria mocked the living God (2Kgs 19,4 // Isa 37,4), and in the prayers of Hezekiah, the monarch earnestly entreats Yahweh to hear

⁵⁰ For a study of this divine title in Pss 42-43 and other passages in the OT cf. G. STROLA, *Il Desiderio di Dio*: Studio dei Sal 42-43. Estratto della Tesi di Dottorato della Facoltà Biblica del PIB; Roma: PIB, 2002) 48-65. Its occurrence in Ps 42,9 in some Syriac MSS is likely a harmonization with v.3.

⁵¹ Besides the Hebrew Texts translated in the LXX, the OT passages that are found solely in the Greek text also records the same title. Thus, the phrase "the Living God" occurs in the LXX of Dan 4,22; 5,23; Tob 12,2; Esth 6,13; 3Macc 6,28.

⁵² Cf. T.N.D. METTINGER, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 86; A.M. BESNARD, *Le mystère du nom*: quiconque invoquera le nom du Seigneur sera sauvé. Joël 3, 5 (LD 35; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1962) 70-74.

the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the “living God” (2Kgs 19,16 // Isa 37,17). Yahweh is not like other gods who are “the work of the artisan and of the hands of the goldsmith” (Jer 10,9); “but the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King” (Jer 10,10). The living God delivered his servant Daniel from the lions and from the threat of the foreign nation (Dan 6,21,27). It is possible that polemical statements against foreign nations and foreign gods prefer to mention the ‘living God’.⁵³

If God who has his home in the Christians is the living God, then their actions should not be dead actions. This is the point that the five rhetorical questions in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 underscores. All these questions make the same point. The living and the dead belong to two different realms. Righteousness has nothing in common with lawlessness, etc. The OT explicit quotations, carefully chosen and conflated in the periscope, stress the same point. The Scriptures confirm what Paul has said; there are divine promises attached to its compliance.

One of the reasons for the Jubilee Year of Saint Paul is to bring his message anew to modern society; Paul still speaks to us in his letters. In 2 Cor 6,14-7,1, he addresses the perverting illness that threatens and challenges authentic Christian life; it is syncretism. Corinthians at Paul’s time tended towards this and he was not indifferent to their crisis. He did not mince words in his commands and exhortations. Syncretism, according to the pericope we have studied, is to allow oneself to be yoked to the opposite pole of where one should be. Hence, the introductory command with which the text begins reads: “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6,14). It is a warning against attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices.

⁵³ G. GERLEMAN, “hyh” leben”, *THAT* I, 554. However, F.M. CROSS, “El”, *TWAT* I, 276, thinks that it was originally a Baal epithet, a god who dies and rises.

Although Paul composed this text about two thousand years ago, he still speaks to our contemporary society that is not free from similar tendency. There should be some incompatible features endemic in a society where many overtly profess Christ and at the same time are notorious for high degree of corruption.⁵⁴ The text teaches all Christians of every age to be aware of their privilege of being the temple of the Living God.

Conclusion

Paul's knowledge of the OT prepared him for the mission he unexpectedly received from God. He makes the best use of this knowledge and his Hellenistic culture. His proclamation of the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection has their firm support in the Jewish Scriptures which he relates to his addresses. Every situation in the life of his converts that needs his attention is fully addressed by employing arguments from the authority of the Scriptures and from practical life.

Paul addresses the crisis among his Corinthian converts by allowing his cultural backgrounds come into play. First is the use of antitheses in five antithetical sentences that practically stress the same point, though from different perspectives. Their point is that there is no middle way in serving God, a teaching that is already seen in the OT. It is either one is righteous or lawless; either one is for Christ or for Belial. The reason is that Christians by virtue of their vocation are the temple of the living God.

Paul draws from his Jewish background to underline this point. His quotation of the OT is quite different from how we would today cite the Scriptures. Our study of his OT sources has revealed that he conflates different Scriptural passages in order to arrive at an

⁵⁴ M. J. OBIORAH, "This People honours me with their Lips (Matt 15,8): Scriptural Hermeneutics, Critical or Literal", *Focus*, December 2007-2008, pages 18-21.

appropriate version that fits his argument. These OT texts are principally from the LXX. His point is that Christians are the temple of the living God. If his Corinthian converts understand this message, then they will not identify with the pervading and perverting practice in the society in which they find themselves. Paul's teaching, written many years ago, is not only for his immediate addresses but also for all Christians who, though in the world, should not of the world.

St Paul And Ecumenism: A Guide To Christian Unity

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Introduction

The New Testament records several instances in which our Lord Jesus Christ prayed either alone or in the company of his disciples. It does not always tell us what Jesus prayed for. But one of the rare occasions when we are told what Jesus prayed for, we learn that he prayed for unity among his followers in the following words, among others:

May they all be one, Father, may they all be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. (John 17:21 – 23).

That was the prayer of Jesus. But no sooner did he leave than his disciples started fighting one another. When Jesus uttered the words “may they all be one”, they by no means represented a vision or a dream. Jesus said these words on the eve of his death. This was not the time for triumphal utopias. The Galilean spring, when the enthusiastic crowds overwhelmed him, was over. They no longer cried “Hosanna!” but “Crucify him!”. Jesus was well aware of this, and predicted also that his disciples would not be one, and that they would be dispersed. What else could he do in this situation than to leave the future of his work in the hands of his Father? Thus, the words “may they all be one” are a prayer, a prayer in a humanly perceived hopeless situation (Kasper, 2003).

Just a few years after his prayer, divisions had already set in: first, between Jews and Greeks, and latter between Greeks and Latins. Then in the 16th Century AD, the climax of divisions was reached with the Protestant Reformation, when, first the Germans with Martin Luther, then, the English with Henry VIII, the Scots with John Knox and the Swiss with Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin parted ways with Rome. In a very real sense, the demon of division was let loose, so that other groups protesting against the original Protestants were formed (Methodist, Baptists, Evangelicals, and the so called Reform Church). It would seem from these developments that the followers of Jesus were hell bent on frustrating his prayer. It was as if they were saying to him "Lord, you prayed for unity but we won't let it happen". Trust Nigerians to increase the complication of an already confused situation. Here in Nigeria, we have not only divided Christianity; we have literally fragmented it; and are still doing so. According to the *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, at the last count, somewhere around 1980, there were 960 groups claiming to be autonomous Christians in Nigeria .

However, in the midst of all the division and fragmentation, one fact remains eternally true, mere men cannot permanently frustrate God's designs. After all is said and done, men are only men while God alone is God. It is impossible that God should propose and men dispose. Rather, what happens, and is bound to happen, is that "Man proposes while God disposes".

The divisions among Christian peoples in our day have become an open prey to the enemies of Christ. They capitalize on dissensions among Christians to weaken the impact of Christ's teaching on human culture and have become one of the principal tools of the anti-Christian forces that are so active in this era.

What other occasion than the celebration of the Year of St Paul, which Bartholomew I (2008) recalls is perhaps "the first theologian of Church unity," a fundamental characteristic since its foundation, as

expressed by Jesus Christ in the prayer pronounced shortly before his passion (John 17:20-23) is more apt to address the problem of ecumenism in the Church? It was precisely Paul, who was the first to develop the concept of Church unity, fighting more than any of the other apostles in order that it be realized. His zeal in spreading the message of Christ was strong, but just as strong was his "personal agony" at falling short of his goal: "Nothing else," the patriarch continued, "made Paul as sad as the lack of unity among Christians (Galatians 5:15). For Paul, the schism in the Church was a terrible and repugnant fact, because it meant dividing the Body of Christ," seeing that it was precisely the apostle of the Gentiles who reminds us how the "Church is the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Some scholars opined that Paul's missionary work itself caused divisions in the church right from the start and that he was instrumental in the church's spread into areas where the prevailing pagan culture was very different from that of its origins in Jerusalem, and problems then arose. This is to say that Paul is an accomplice in the proclamation of the gospel to all the world, leaving the church vulnerable to divisions over points of doctrine, church governance, liturgical practice and way of life. In fact the Acts of the Apostles tells how Paul proclaimed the gospel across the Roman Empire, stirring up opposition from Jews, pagans and perhaps other Christians. He had to organize a famine relief collection from his Gentile churches to demonstrate his support for the largely Jewish church in Jerusalem. He intended to go to Spain but was hindered by his imprisonment in Rome. His motives for going to Spain are uncertain: Acts portrays it as a missionary initiative but there are suggestions that he might have been attempting to get away from opposition by Christians he had offended.

Paul's message is that Jesus, through his death, resurrection and ascension, has opened the way for all people - not just Jews - to be blessed by God. Influenced by him, people say that God has made known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the mystery of

Christ in us, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27). Christians have proclaimed this message for two thousand years and the church has spread across the world and followed Paul's example of developing Christian doctrine by formulating creeds, codifying practice, encouraging theological study and the preaching the faith. Tensions have arisen with different understandings about doctrines - questions of authority in the church and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit split the Church in Rome and the Orthodox Church; the Protestant Churches split from the Roman Catholic Church over justification by grace through faith and divided within themselves over issues like predestination; the Church in England split from Rome over the authority of the pope; Anabaptists refused to recognize infant baptism; Congregationalists refused the authority of bishops; the failure of the Church of England to provide bishops in America precipitated the separation of the Methodist Church, openness to the Holy Spirit's gifts led to various Pentecostal churches which themselves divided into various branches. The prosecution does not claim that Paul is responsible for these particular divisions, but his pushing of the gospel into new areas and new cultures, and his exploration of new theology, opened the way for them. He is implicated in both the spread of the church but also its divisions.

Strictly speaking, Paul did nothing more than proclaim the good news that is inherent in the Hebrew Bible, that God's intention is to bless the whole world, not just the people of Israel. He did nothing other than acting out of an insight into God's purpose from the beginning of creation to bless the world, that the promise to Abraham is fulfilled not by keeping the law but in Christ, the saviour of the world. Paul grasped the fact that the incarnation of Jesus Christ made possible the promise in Isaiah, 'Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.' (Isaiah 56:8). In other words, if I can dare to put it like this, the responsibility lies with God. Paul merely grasped the vision and gave his life to proclaiming it.

Those are far-reaching consequences of God's salvation which Paul picked up and interpreted in his day. If the church could hear them afresh today, some of the divisions might disappear. The people of Isaiah's time couldn't grasp the breadth of God's mercy for the whole world and, like so many small groups who feel threatened, focused in on themselves and missed yet again the implications of God's generosity to them as a nation. Paul's message is that in the incarnation - the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to a human mother - we see God's ultimate new beginning that fulfils rather all that has gone before. The law, which came centuries after the promise to Abraham and was needed to deal with human sin, had not saved the people because they failed to keep it whereas Jesus lived the life of a faithful Jew and fulfilled all the law and the prophets. Paul's defence is the insight, which he argued in the letter to the Galatians, that all the promises to Abraham find their fulfillment in Christ, and in him we are all children of God through faith.

Efforts to Restore Christian Unity

Christ's words, handed down by the Apostles leave no doubts as to his will, which is in conformity with the Father's plan: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us..." (Jn 17:20-21). The unity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit is the supreme basis of the Church's unity. The perfection of that transcendent unity must be imitated, "that they may become perfectly one" (Jn 17:23). This divine unity is therefore the founding principle of the union of believers: "that they may all be one ... in us" (Jn 17:21).

In the Gospels and in the other New Testament writings, it is also clearly stated that the unity of the Church was achieved by the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. We read, for example, in John's Gospel that: "Jesus should die ... and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Jn 11:51-52). If

their dispersion was the fruit of sin—this is the lesson that emerges from the Tower of Babel episode—the reunification of God's dispersed children was the work of Redemption. With his sacrifice Jesus created "one new man" and reconciled human beings with one another, breaking down the hostility that divided them (cf. Eph 2:14-16).

In order to resolve the problems facing the emerging Church, Paul participated in the first Synod of the Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts of the Apostles, 15). Although he knew his ideas were correct, St. Paul understood that "the more correct way was synodal - collegial - handling of Church affairs." This value is still relevant today, as Bartholomew recalled, denouncing the attempts "of small groups or individuals to impose their ideas," without respecting the criterion of "collegiality" as foreseen by the "Pauline paradigm" that is at the basis of the Church, because this does not exist "for itself, but for all creation." (Bartholomew I)

In accordance with Christ's word, St. Paul taught that the diversity of the body's members does not hinder their unity: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). This unity in the Church derives first of all from Baptism and the Eucharist, through which the Holy Spirit is communicated and acts: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor 12:12, 13). "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17).

St. Paul, Apostle and doctor of unity, described its dimension in the life of the Church: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6).

One body: the image expresses an organic whole, indissolubly united through a spiritual unity: one Spirit. This is a real unity, which Christians are called to live ever more deeply, fulfilling its demands and "with perfect humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another lovingly" (Eph 4:2).

The Church's unity thus expresses a twofold aspect: it is a property whose indestructible foundations are the divine unity of the Trinity itself, but it also demands of believers the responsibility of accepting it and concretely putting it into practice in their life (cf. *Ut unum sint*, n. 6).

It is first of all a question of preserving the *una fides*, the profession of the one faith of which the Apostle Paul speaks. This faith involves common adherence to Christ and to the whole truth revealed by him to humanity, attested in Scripture and preserved in the Church's living Tradition. Precisely in order to maintain and foster unity in the faith, Jesus wanted to establish a specific authority in the Apostolic College, linking its Magisterium to himself: "He who hears you hears me" (Lk 10:16; cf. Mt 28:18-20).

As a function of the *koinonia* of believers, the authority of the Apostles and their successors is a service that is expressed sacramentally, doctrinally and pastorally as a function of a unity not only of doctrine but also of direction and governance. St. Paul confirms this: "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers ... for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Eph 4:11-13).

In this perspective the specific ministry assigned to Peter and his successors is easily understood. It was founded on Christ's very words, as they have been passed down in the Gospel tradition (cf. *Ut unum sint*, n. 96). It is a mystery of grace which the eternal Pastor of our souls has desired for his Church, so that, by growing and working

in charity and truth, she might remain in every age visibly united with the glory of God the Father.

We ask him for the gift of an ever deeper understanding between the faithful and their pastors, and, as regards the Petrine ministry, we implore the necessary light in order to identify the best ways it can achieve a service of communion recognized by all (*Ut unum sint*, n. 96).

The Implication of the Ecumenical Movement

This effort of those who call themselves disciples of Christ to redouble their commitment to achieving the full unity of all Christians is not meant to amalgamate the Churches or make our communities conformist institutions in which everyone thinks the same thoughts, says the same words, does the same deeds and in the same ways. The effort seeks rather for areas of dialogue, joint action among the Christian groups in carrying out the great commission or mandate of the Lord to speak the Gospel to every creature (Mt 28.28) so as to embrace all peoples in his Church.

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, (2008) observed that the unity Christ desired does not, in fact, involve any external, stifling uniformity. He pointed out in his Encyclical that "legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission" (ibid., n. 50). Many local or particular Churches preserve their own way of living the Christian commitment, in accordance with institutions of apostolic origin, very ancient traditions or practices established in various periods on the basis of experiences that have proved apt for the inculturation of the Gospel. Therefore variety is a good that should remain. The Church's unity will have nothing to suffer from it especially if Christians, aware of its divine origin, implore it constantly in their prayers.

However, unity needs also to be distinguished from uniformity. The Spirit dispenses his gifts in great variety and richness (cf. 1 Cor 12, 4 ff), and human beings, human cultures are so different that any imposed uniformity will not only not satisfy human hearts but will diminish the richness and the very catholicity of the Church. It is only when the Church will have entered in all cultures and when she will have made her own the richness of all peoples and nations that she will have reached her full catholicity. The Spirit will guide us in to the whole truth (John 16, 12) through encounter with new cultures, new situations, new challenges, new experiences and new needs, as well as through ecumenical encounter and dialogue. In this way the Spirit maintains the once and for all tradition perennially young and fresh. It is the Spirit of permanent renewal of the truth revealed once and for all time.

III. This concept of pluriformity within unity has consequences for our ecumenical vision. Firstly, it has consequences on our understanding of unity in faith. To confess the same faith does not necessarily mean to confess the same credal formula. One of the most significant progresses of the ecumenical dialogue in the last decades was made with the old Oriental churches, which separated as far back as the 5th century because they could not accept the dogma of the 4th Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), namely, Jesus Christ being two natures in one person (hypostasis). With Saint Cyril of Alexandria they confess the one nature (one physis) of the Logos made flesh. Hence, through the centuries they were known as monophysists. It has only been in recent times that we have discovered that the crucial aspect is not a question of confessing a different faith, but the use of a different philosophical terminology in order to express the faith which in substance is the same as ours. They have a different understanding of the terms nature and person (hypostasis). So we did not impose our formulas on them, and in formal agreements between the Pope and the respective Patriarchs, we acknowledged our unity in faith, a unity in a pluriformity of expressions.

A similar decision was made in the Joint Declaration on Justification between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, signed officially in 1999 in Augsburg. Here too only a so-called differentiated consensus was reached, that is a consensus in fundamental questions. In essence it was stated that while unresolved problems remain at issue, no clear dividing difference any longer exists with regard to the question of justification. Hence, prior existing divisive contradictions were transformed and reconciled in complementary assertions, expressions, concerns and approaches.

Nor is uniformity required in the sacramental dimension of the Church either. It is well known that sacramental life can be expressed through different rites, and that in East and West these rites are indeed quite different. But the difference can go even deeper. The Assyrian Church, which separated in the 4th century after the third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (381) and which for a long time was accused of being Nestorian, uses as anaphora (eucharistic prayer), the anaphora of Adai and Mari, without the words of institution in a narrative form. It is probably the oldest anaphora we know, going back to the second century and composed in the Aramaic language, the language of Jesus himself. This Church, which possesses an undoubtedly valid episcopate, confesses the same eucharistic faith we confess. It is unimaginable and unthinkable that she has celebrated throughout the centuries a Eucharist that is invalid. Thus two years ago the validity of this anaphora was officially acknowledged by the Catholic Church.

More recently, in our own time, the efforts to restore unity have assumed the magnitude of a global movement, with the name of "Ecumenism". Christian leaders at Vatican II, for instance, have declared the disunity among Christians a "scandal", a veritable stumbling block in the way of proclaiming "the Good News to all creation" (Mark 16:15), and making "disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). They have, therefore, set themselves the task of healing the wound of division and disunity.

The teaching of the Lord and the exposition of the Apostles should provide us with incentive to work for and intensify this unity in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and our common possession of the word of God - as contained in the Old and New Testament of the Holy Bible. Christians must do all within their power to improve relations between fellow Christians. Books and pamphlets published in the by-gone days of animosity and belligerence should find no place in our bookstores and bookstalls.

How Do We Go About It?

There cannot be Church unity as long as there remain anathemas of one Church against another, be it that one church says that the other sins by defect because she denies articles of faith founded in Scripture and tradition or that she sins by excess, because she avows credal formulas which are additional to the once for all revelation.

Church unity is impossible with contradictions, and churches cannot or should not enter into conflicting agreements with different partners. Comprehensiveness is a good thing, but it should not be exaggerated, and pluralism should not become a new beatitude added to the Sermon on the Mount. The identity and inner coherence of the Church must be clear ad intra and ad extra. "Every kingdom that is divided against itself will fall apart" and "cannot last" (Mt 12,25).

To achieve this, a change of heart which will involve a number of things is necessary:

1. Catholics and Protestants must be prepared to accept one another as being fully and authentically Christian, who happen to be different not necessarily false or counterfeit, heretic or schismatic
2. Catholics and Protestants must learn to respect each other's right to be different. We should not demand that people first convert to our own way of thinking, believing and worshipping before we can talk to

them or relate to them on a serious level. I recall here the story several years ago of a Greek choir director who refused to use English in the Divine Liturgy. When it was pointed out to him that the Church's tradition was to use the language of the people, and that an entirely Greek liturgy would likely be alienating and spiritually unfulfilling for converts as well as cradle Orthodox who were not fluent in Greek. He replied, "If they want an English liturgy, they can go to the Episcopal Church."

3. Love is the only basis that is sufficient to found Christian unity upon. If we seek to base it on anything else, like doctrine, laws, worship, tradition, it will not succeed.

4. Much as it is attractive, especially to us Catholics, that all Christians should be re-united in one monolithic Church, with one visible head (the Pope), one priesthood (our own), one liturgy (the mass), one doctrine (our dogma), one law (canon law), seven sacraments (our own), such unity is not realistic or likely to come at the present time or in the near future. One can hardly expect people to simply shed centuries of their tradition and warmly embrace one's tradition. I even doubt if that is desirable.

It seems more realistic, right now, to look for and work for a unity in diversity, i.e., a "mosaic" Church, so to say, instead of a monolithic one – a Church in which there would be differences of liturgy, modes of administration, legal systems, but still with "*one Lord, One faith, One baptism, and One God who is Father of all, through all within all*" [Ephesians 4:50].

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