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A STUDY OF PAUL

AS A BIBLICAL MODEL OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

THROUGH A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

BY

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(DEPARTMENT OF MISSIOLOGY)

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HO YOUNG JI

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. PIETER VERSTER

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted by me for the M. Th. Degree at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university/faculty. I further more cede copyright of dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

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For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich,
yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.
(2 Corinthians 8:9)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As Paul G. Hiebert points out, today, in churches, there are renewed visions of their responsibility to bring to people everywhere the gospel, and to minister to their needs. This can be seen not only in the revival of interest in missions, but also in the rapid growth of missionary outreach of churches in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. But the modern missionary movement was started together with the expansion of western colonial and technological civilization, and often western missionaries equated the gospel with western civilization. As a result, the failure to differentiate between the gospel and human cultures has been one of the great weaknesses of modern Christian missions (1985: 53). David J. Bosch also indicated that "What is new about our era, seems to me, is that the Christian mission - at least as it has traditionally been interpreted and performed - is under attack not only from without but also from within its own ranks" (1991: 2). As a result, these critical situations cotributed to "profound uncertainties in Western churches, and even about the validity of the Christian mission as such" (Bosch 1991: 4).

1.2 Problem statement

The argument about contextualization has been carried on mainly among those engaged in

cross-cultural mission. When we endeavour to communicate the Christian message into the language and culture of a people who lived outside the range of Christian influence, the problem has to be faced (Newbigin 1989:142). I think that realizations about contextualization have been fully discussed in respect of two positions in connection with missiology.

The first position has come to be focused on by the World Council of Churches (WCC) as the ecumenical position. In their approach regarding the Bible and mission, the starting point is not the Bible, but rather particular contextual agendas (Van Engen 1996: 38). They have underscored knowledge of contemporary human settings, but downplay the importance of solid theological foundations based on biblical truth.

The other position is that of the Evangelical theologians. This position emphasizes seeing the Bible as the source of command for mission and knowledge of the Bible, but rarely stops to examine the contexts in which people live. They have tended to regard the recognition and efforts concerning contextualization as religious syncretism, and to think exclusively of them. The biblical foundations, then, have taken precedence for them over the need for contextualization in their views of a cross-cultural ministry.

We need both approaches. Missions, a totally supernatural endeavour operates exclusively in the environment of human societies. Charles Van Engen says that missionary action always occurs in the context of existing culture (1996: 25). Charles H. Kraft also emphasizes that the communication of messages without recognition of context and effort for contextualization, is either impossible or becomes weak (1996: 2, 9). As Lesslie

Newbigin noted, it is always required of us that "we listen sensitively to both the desires and the needs of people and that we try to understand their situation" (1989: 153).

If we are to fulfill our missionary vocation as light of the world (Matt. 5:14), we must be faithful and clear in proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. An essential aspect of mission is to proclaim the true knowledge of God for salvation. This is our starting point for Christian mission.

We have to know and understand the biblical message and also know and understand the contemporary scene. Only then can we build bridges that will make the biblical message relevant to today's world and its people everywhere. Such missionary understanding calls for "a rereading of Scripture that flows forth into new missionary insights and actions" (Van Engen 1996: 25). Then we must raise the question as to whom to make a biblical model of contextualization. As a model, I will take the apostle Paul, who was called by the Holy Spirit as a crosscultural missionary, together with Barnabas, to the church in Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). Paul is a model of contextual mission to modern evangelists regarding cross-cultural communication in a pluralist society.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to indicate how Paul preached the gospel of Christ in the contexts of various mission fields by mean of a hermeneutic approach to the Acts and Paul's epistles.

1.4 Hypothesis

It is true that the critics of the past – Baur, Dibelius, Conzelmann and Haenchen, etc. - had little or no confidence in Luke's historical reliability. They believed that Luke pursued his theological concerns at the expense of his historical reliability, but, as Marshall (1970: 85) points out, "the validity of theology of Luke stands or falls with the reliability of the history on which it is based."

Firstly, the theological centre of Acts lies in salvation through Jesus Christ, the task of proclaiming it, and the nature of the new people of God empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, Luke sets his story of the early church into the broadest possible theological context: that of the plan of God. As he narrates the events that take place in Acts, Luke explicitly interprets them as being in accord with the divine plan, which has an inherent necessity about it. Jesus is the centrality of the plan. Luke's claim involves a promise-fulfilment perspective.

Thirdly, communication between people in different cultures does not take place in a vacuum, but always occurs within the context of social relationships.

Lastly, God in his mercy decides consistently to adapt his approach to human beings in their cultural contexts.

1.6 Research methodology

This thesis will propose to examine how Paul contextualized and delivered the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles from the context of Jewish culture, in order to learn from his methods how the biblical models and principles apply to an appropriate contextualization for modern missions. This study is also an investigation of the essential elements and the core messages of the gospel delivered to the Gentiles by Paul, and how they were contextualized in the Gentile cultures. The focus of this study is on the dynamic relationship between the original meaning of the gospel in a general sense and its contextualization to specific situations.

1.7 Procedure and scheduling

The second chapter will examine the backgrounds of contextualization in Paul's mission.

The third chapter will observe contextualization in relation to the problem of rituals that appeared within Paul's missionary work.

The fourth chapter will deal with the problems concerning contextualization which appear in Paul's messages.

The fifth chapter will consider the problems concerning contextualization as a Biblical response to pastoral issues of the church.

1.8 Value of the study

Contextualization is the effort to understand and take seriously the specific context of each human group and person on their own terms and in all their dimensions - cultural, religious, social, political, economic - and to discern what the Gospel says to people within this context (Parshall 1980: 32). I recognize a need which is built on the foundations of a biblical and evangelical approach to contextualization for preaching Christ's gospel in various contexts of transforming missionary fields. In particular, Paul's mission work is a prime example of proper and successful contextualization of the gospel. Therefore, to study Paul as a biblical model of contextual mission is invaluable.

1.9 Limitations of the study

In exploring the questions of Paul as a Biblical Model for Contextualization, this dissertation will be limited to consideration of a desirable direction of contextualization from a biblical point of view, and to presenting missionary models and methodologies for the twenty-first century, rather than certain theological arguments or proofs from facts about Paul's ministry of Christian mission.

CHAPTER 2

THE BACKGROUND OF PAUL

AS A MODEL OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

2.1 Introduction

Paul, a vehement persecutor of Christianity, experienced the transforming grace of God and became the most significant person in early Christianity. Especially, he served God as a commissioned apostle, pioneer missionary and an energetic church planter. As F. F. Bruce states, the spread of Christianity cannot be imagined apart from Paul's missionary work (1954: 196-197).

If we are to understand Paul, we must take note of the society, culture, religious traditions, and his education in which he stood. Bosch (1991:124) points out: "Paul's understanding of mission is not an abstract construct dangling from a universal principle, but an analysis of reality triggered by an initial experience that gave Paul a new world-view". Hengel (1991: xiii) mentions: "knowledge of Saul the Jew is a precondition of understanding Paul the Christian and an apostle to the gentiles. The better we know the former, the more clearly we shall understand the latter."

If it is so, how does Paul's understanding of his mission relate to his former life in Tarsus and to his Jewish background? I will examine Paul's historical backgrounds - Hebraic,

Hellenistic and Roman – as well as the theological background expressed in his work as an apostle to the gentiles. As such the backgrounds may reveal the relation with contextualization that appeared within Paul's missionary work. This work is intended to become a foundation to understand contextualization which appears within his missionary work.

There is little general data other than the Biblical data about Paul's birth and his family. Based on Acts 21:39; 22:3, we know that Paul was a citizen of Tarsus, a university city located in Cilicia.

Acts 21:39

Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."

Acts 22:3

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

And through Acts 22:25; 28, we can know that he received his citizenship of Rome by birth.

Acts 22:25

As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

Acts 22:28

Then the commander said, "I had to pay a big price for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

And in Phil. 3:5; 2 Cor. 11:22 and Rom. 11:1; Acts 23:6, we learn that Paul was a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee; and he was zealously persecuting the church.

Philippians 3:5

... I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

2 Corinthians 11:22

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I.

Romans 11:1

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

Acts 23:6

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.

2.2 Hellenistic background of Paul

According to Paul's confession, he was born to Jewish parents living in Tarsus, which is

Cilicia's capital (Acts 21:39). Paul claimed to be "a citizen of no ordinary city" in front of the commander of the Roman cohort. Why would he describe Tarsus as an extraordinary city? Bruce states the cause as follows: "If his words mean that his name appeared on the roll of citizens of Tarsus, this would indicate that he was born into a family which possessed the citizenship" (1977c: 35). It also implied that there was "pride in a possession that ensured distinction and rank and general respect in Tarsus" (Ramsey 1982: 31).

Several factors suggest its exceptional nature. According to Bruce, Tarsus was a large an ancient city. This city is mentioned in Hittite records in the second millennium B.C. The Assyrians conquered Tarsus in the ninth century B.C. And Persians, Greeks, and Romans all ruled the city. Antiochus settled a colony of Jews in Tarsus around 170 B.C. (1977c: 32-33).

Because of the fertile plain around Tarsus, many crops were grown in abundance. The city stood on the river Cydnus (Murphy-O'Connor 2004: 3), and it was a fortified city and important trade entrepot before 2000 B.C. (Roetzel 1999: 12; Barclay 1983: 19). The location of Tarsus on a great trade route contributed to the city's commerce and wealth.

In the words of Luke, Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). Therefore we may understand that "he was engaged in the manufacture of wares from the local cilicium, but he appears to have belonged to a well-to-do family" (Bruce 1977c: 36; cf. Hengel 1991: 17). He learned his trade from his father. The practice of fathers teaching their sons the family trade was also typical not only of Jewish, but also of Greco-Roman society

as a whole (Hock 1980c: 23).

Tarsus was a great educational centre. Strabo, Greek geographer and contemporary of Paul wrote about the city as follows:

> The people at Tarsus have devoted themselves so eagerly, not only to philosophy, but also the whole round of education in general, that they have surpassed Athens, Alexandria ... Further the city of Tarsus has all kinds of schools of rhetoric (The geography 14.5.13)

Tarsus, in short, was what we might call a university city (Roetzel 1999: 13-14; Bornkamm 1971: 3), and the city was famous for philosophers of the Stoic school (Bruce 1977c: 34; Barclay 1983: 20). Paul would undoubtedly have been educated there if he had spent his childhood in Tarsus, and he could learn about the world - view of Greece-Rome (Roetzel 1999: 12).

On the basis of Acts 22:3, there are two different outlooks concerning Tarsus where Paul was born. The first is that Paul was born in Tarsus but he actually grew up in Jerusalem. Bruce (1971: 224-225) says that, according to this punctuation of the Nestle Greek text and of the 1958 edition of the Greek New Testament published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, "Paul was brought up in Jerusalem, presumably for some years before he entered Gamaliel's academy." Kim (1982: 38-39) emphasizes that sometimes the pupils of Rabbis were also instructed in Greek culture. Van Unnik (1962: 259-320) mentions that Paul actually grew up in Jerusalem though he was born in Tarsus.

The second outlook is that he was born in Tarsus and spent his childhood there. In

contrast to Bruce and Van Unnik, some scholars (Roetzel, Ziesler, Bornkamm) have attributed to this Tarsus background of Paul, the Hellenistic elements in Paul's letters: not only his good knowledge of Greek and preference for the Septuagint over the Hebrew Bible, but also his use of the Hellenistic rhetoric (cf. Mack 1990; Kennedy 1984) and some popular Stoic concepts like conscience, freedom, duty, etc (Roetzel 1999: 11-14; Ziesler 1983: 13; Bornkamm 1971: 8-9, 131-132).

Of course there are several debates regarding the time when Paul went from Tarsus to Jerusalem, but there is no certain evidence on which to draw a conclusion (Ramsay 1982: 30). Although Paul's first language was Aramaic (Bruce 1977: 43) he used Greek perfectly, like a mother-tongue. He wrote fluently and naturally in Greek. His language often reflected the Septuagint in quotation and allusion, but on the whole it fitted well into the common Greek of the time. He utilized rhetoric and Greek literary styles freely (cf. Kim 1982: 37). Martin Hengel says: "If Greek was the dominant language in the family, we might also conjecture that the family had to spend at least a generation in the Diaspora, and perhaps even longer" (1992: 38). Usually the regular law study of the Jews is begun from the age of 15 years (Pirke Aboth 5.24. 1974: 144; cf. Hengel 1991: 38-39; Longenecker 1971: 22). Paul claimed to be a Tarsian citizen in describing himself to the commander of the Roman troops (Acts 21:39; 9:11). All this considered, we can say that Paul grew up in Tarsus during his childhood. It seems more likely that Paul may have received a Greek elementary education and secondary education to the extent that he could use enough Greek in Tarsus until he was 14 years old, and "he would have been taken regularly to the synagogue there by his parents. In the synagogue, which acted also as a school, he may have learned, besides the Septuagint, the Hellenistic cultural elements,

although his parents were careful in bringing him up strictly in line with Judaism (cf. Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6)" (Kim 1981: 33). In fact, in Athens Paul quoted from Aratus (Acts 17:28).

Proceeding from this fact, one could logically assume that Paul learned Greek, received his education, and was influenced by Hellenistic rhetoric and stoic philosophy in Tarsus before going to Jerusalem. I think that this cultural heritage that joined Hellenistic and Jewish influences equipped Paul to translate the gospel in the Hellenistic world (Roetzel 1999: 14).

2.3 Roman background of Paul

As Paul speaks in Acts 21:39; 22:27, he was a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia and had Roman citizenship. In Bruce's view, Roman citizenship was originally confined to freeborn natives of the city of Rome (1977c: 37). Paul's having been born a Roman citizen meant his parents were citizens. But how did a Jewish family of Tarsus attain it? We can only venture hypotheses with relative degrees of probability about how Paul's father (or his ancestors) acquired Roman citizenship.

Several scholars say Paul's ancestors had been slaves of the Romans and were granted freedom and citizenship by a Roman citizen (Hengel 1991: 14; Murphy-O'Connor 2004: 41). Others suggest Paul's forebears received citizenship in return for some service rendered to the Roman cause (Bruce 1977c: 37; Ramsay, 1982: 32). More likely is the conjecture that Tarsus residents were granted full citizenship in the empire en

masse. Josephus wrote that Nicator, a Seleucid king, gave citizenship to Jews in certain cities (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 12.3.1.119). On several occasions a number of Tarsian Jews became Roman citizens (Barclay 1983: 24-25).

Ramsay (1982: 31) states: "In this century, when citizenship was still jealously guarded, the citizenship may be taken as a proof that his family was one of distinction and at least of moderate wealth" (cf. Hengel 1991:17). Paul's status as *civis Romanus* repeatedly played an important role in his life (Bornkamm 1971: 5). It also suggests that Paul's Roman citizenship was a tool that ensured privilege, rank and general respect to him when evangelizing as an apostle to the gentiles (Acts 16:37; 22:25-29). Paul preached to people of various classes throughout the Roman world (Rom. 1:14). Especially when he met many nobles and people of the Greek upper classes (Acts 13:1; 17:4, 12), his citizenship might act as one of several points of contact.

According to Michael Green (1970: 13), Rome in the first century A.D., had initiated the *pax Romana*. "The whole world was for the first time under the effective control of one power - Rome." After the Third Punic War, the Roman Empire had imposed on a large area of the world such a massive unity as it had never known before (1970: 14). This created invaluable pathways for the spread of the gospel. Green speaks about a divine providence which had prepared the world for the advent of Christianity at this time as follows:

> ... the first century did provide invaluable pathways for the spread of gospel it is idle to deny. ... Augustus maintained this peace by means of the army. This was, broadly speaking, stationed around the boundaries of the Empire so that, with the frontiers firmly garrisoned, citizens could sleep in peace. All within that area was pacified and Romanized.

There was no fear of civil strife arising again because, by an astute division of territory between himself and the Senate, Augustus ensured that he would keep control of all those provinces which needed a military presence. ... The development of the road system went on apace. ...This road system had other great advantages, notably the encouragement of trade and the fostering of travel and social intercourse between different nationalities of the Empire, thus forging an increasing homogeneous civilization in the Mediterranean world. ... Greece, too, made signal contributions to the spread of Christianity. Perhaps the most important was the Greek language itself. This was now so widely disseminated through the Mediterranean basin that it acted as an almost universal common tongue (1970: 13-16).

Paul's birth in Tarsus and his Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37; 22:25-28), as has been noted above, may have given him an awareness of the Empire, the larger world outside Judaism. Paul did not stay in hidebound Judaism through this Roman world, and had a vision about world mission as well as a visual sensation of cosmopolitanism. So it is to be concluded that these environmental factors of Paul greatly influenced his theological view, mission method and practice. Rome offered the geographical stage to Paul for Christianity's extension, and the Greek language and Hellenism equipped with him intellectual preparation.

2.4 Hebraic background of Paul

As Hengel states, "Knowledge of Saul the Jew is a precondition for understanding Paul the Christian" (1991: xiii). As has been noted earlier, we know that Paul was Abraham's descendant, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee, and was born in a Jewish home of the Diaspora (Phil. 3:5; 2 Cor. 11:22; Rom. 11:1; Acts 23:6). These passages are important materials to attest to his Jewish inheritance.

First, according to Paul himself, he belonged to the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:4-6).

Philippians 3:4-6

... I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

This emphasizes that his family descended from Saul who was the first king of Israel. This, as Hengel mentions, also means that "his forebears belonged to the tribe of Benjamin which had remained faithful to the Temple on Zion and to Judah" (1991: 26; cf. 1 Kgs. 12:20). This conveys his people's unique religious standing in the world (Bornkamm 1971: 4).

Second, he described himself as "a Hebrew of' Hebrews" (Εβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων). This explains that he was of pure Hebrew descent (Barclay 1983: 11). In fact, "Hebrew" is probably a more specialized term than "Israelite" or "Jew". "Hebrew" was used to comparison with "Hellenist", although both Hebrews and Hellenists were Jews (Acts 6: 1). Bruce mentions that such distinction was probably linguistic and cultural (Bruce 1977c: 42). According to Kim (1981: 34-35), the 'Hellenists' of Acts 6:1 were "the Jews in Palestine who spoke Greek as their mother-tongue" and the 'Hebrews' were "the Jews in Palestine who spoke Aramaic (or Hebrew) as their mother-tongue". "Many of the 'Hellenists' were the Greek-speaking *Diaspora* Jews who moved to live in Palestine, and the 'Hebrews' were native to Palestine or at least closely bound to it in a special

way." Against this background, Paul had a Hebraic religious background, speaking Aramaic (Acts 21:40; 22:2) in his childhood (Bruce 1976: 285). Actually, when Paul addressed a speech to the Jews in Jerusalem, he spoke in the Hebrew dialect (Aramaic) that is their mother-tongue (Acts 22:2), and when the risen Christ appeared to Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:4-6), Jesus spoke to Paul in Aramaic (Stott 1990: 170). All this considered, although Paul was born in Tarsus and spent his childhood there. He would have been taken regularly to the synagogue there by his parents, and he may have learned the Septuagint, the law and the Mishnah there.

Third, by his own confession, Paul was 'as to the law a Pharisee' (Phil. 3:5). This confession coincides with his statement reported in Acts 22:3 that he was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and with his declaration before the younger Agrippa: "according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5). Kim (1981: 41) explains the pre-Christian Paul as follows:

> For Paul the Pharisee, the Torah was the decisive factor in his life, being the only and assured means of obtaining righteousness. So he was exceedingly zealous in learning and observing both the written and oral Torah and advanced in this far beyond his colleagues (Gal. 1:14f).

Paul learned the techniques of discussion and argumentation, of satirical criticism under Gamaliel. Packer, Tenney and White (1980: 557) state: "Paul's clear logical manner of explaining the great doctrines of the Christian faith was no doubt the result, at least in part, of his schooling 'at the feet of Gamaliel.'"

Paul's Hebraic background was another native soil of the apostle (Green 1970: 28). Above

all, Paul shared in the depth of his being the faith and the piety of his people. Paul's mission and his theology are deeply rooted in Jewish piety and in Jewish theology and cannot be understood without taking this root into consideration. Paul's Hebraic background and tradition influenced him to preach the gospel and to interpret the Old Testament in the many synagogues which were based in his missionary journeys (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14: 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 1:4, 19, 26; 19:8; cf. Fitzmyer 1967: 6).

Proceeding from what has been said above, it should be concluded that the influence of the Hellenistic, Roman and Hebraic backgrounds on Paul affected not only his life and thought, but also his mission work.

2.5 Paul's conversion and call

To understand how such backgrounds affected Paul in the contextualization of his mission, we need to deal with Paul's conversion and call, because the Damascus experience was a turning point in Paul's life and made him reverse his former values. "What is it that changed a Pharisee of the Pharisees into Christ's apostle to the Gentiles; a person who perceived Jesus as an impostor and a threat to Judaism into one who embraced Him as the centre of his life, indeed of the universe?" (Bosch 1991: 125).

With regard to Paul's conversion, we are provided with the historical evidence of the Damascus event in Acts 9:1-19, 22:3-16, 26:9-17, Galatians 1:15-16, 1Corinthians 9:1, 16 and 1Corinthians 15:8-11. Before Paul was saved, he lived out his zeal for God by

persecuting the church, and he was "faultless" regarding legalistic righteousness (Phi. 3:6). He even exceeded other Jews in their devotion: "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14). According to Kim (1981: 51), "Paul's persecution of the church presupposes that before his conversion he knew at least part of the Hellenist Jewish Christian kerygma: that Jesus is the Messiah; that he was crucified, but was raised by God from the dead and exalted to be the 'Lord'." Thus Paul, the 'zealot' for the Mosaic Law and the ancestral tradition (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5; cf. Acts 22:3f), must have judged the Hellenist Jewish Christian proclamation of the crucified Jesus as the Messiah (Bruce 1977: 228), because "any one who is hung on a tree is under God's curse." (Deut. 21:23). In fact, this kerygma was "a stumbling block to the Jews" (1 Cor. 1:23). So Paul, a 'zealot' for God's honour, was compelled to persecute the Christians.

But one objective and external event had a soul-stirring effect on the very centre of Paul's being (2 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:16). It was his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:9-19). Jeremias, Bornkamm and Beker emphasize that the Damascus experience was a turning point in Paul's life and made him reverse his former values. Bosch (1991: 127) clearly states: "the encounter with Jesus radically altered Paul's understanding of the course of history." "Paul's encounter with Christ compelled him to rethink everything from the ground up" (Keck 1979: 117). The former persecutor turned to Christ. "The law as way of salvation is superseded by the crucified and risen Messiah" (Bosch 1991:126). It was the moment when Paul was transferred from his false judgement of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:16; Gal. 3:13) to the true knowledge of him as God's exalted Messiah, as God's Son, and as the Lord (2Cor.

5:16; Gal. 1:16; Phil. 3:8). To Paul his conversion and his call to be an apostle of Christ were part of a single revolutionary experience. In the words of Bruce (1971: 228-229):

> Revolutionary indeed, for it meant not only a sudden and total change of attitude towards Jesus and his followers, but the occupation by Jesus of the central place which hitherto the Law had held in Paul's life and thought. ... Hitherto all his thinking had been organized around the Law as its central and directive principle. When that principle was displaced, the component parts of his thinking fell apart, only to begin immediately to be reorganized in a new pattern around the risen Christ, the new central and directive principle. Henceforth, for Paul, life was - Christ (Phil. 1:21).

What had previously been a stumbling block came to occupy the centre of his new life, and his Pharisaic theology became the theology of the cross. His former enemies became his lovely brethren and sisters.

In connection with Paul's Damascus road experience, there have, recently, been two arguments. Some scholars take exception to the word 'conversion' on the grounds that Paul's faith in the God of Israel did not change on that occasion (Bosch 1991: 125; cf. Stendahl 1976: 7). Therefore, they claim that we should understand his experience from the viewpoint of 'call' rather than from 'conversion'.

However, Gaventa insists that it is preferable to use the term 'conversion' for what happened to Paul (Bosch 1991: 126). Green discusses the idea of conversion as follows:

> We normally use the word, in a religious context, in one of two ways, either to indicate that a man has left one religious position (or, indeed, none) for exclusive attachment to another; alternatively, we speak of conversion in a man who up till a certain period had been a merely nominal adherent of his faith, but had then awoken to its significance and importance with enthusiasm and insight (1970: 144).

In that encounter, Paul, who until then did not believe in Jesus as the Christ and in fact persecuted those who did believe, came to know and accept him as the Christ, God's Son. This event therefore was a turning point and conversion to him. In addition, what the apostle inherited from his Hellenistic, Roman and Hebraic backgrounds were all uniquely transformed by his knowledge of Christ which he received at Damascus. Dunn (1998: 179) mentions:

Certainly Paul's conversion must be seen as a fulcrum point or hinge on which his whole life turned round. And certainly it was the encounter with the risen Christ which formed that fulcrum and hinge.

In the Christophany, Paul was entrusted with his gospel 'through a revelation of Jesus Christ' for preaching Jesus among the Gentiles (Gal.1:12, 16). Paul states it clearly in Acts 26:16, 17:

Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles.

In sum, Paul's life as a Christian and his apostolic ministry began at his encounter with Jesus at Damascus. The encounter transformed Paul's whole faith, life, and worldview. Paul's mission was influenced most of all by his experience on the road to Damascus and by faith in the Risen Christ as the Son of God. He later spoke of that experience as one in which a necessity had been laid on him to preach the gospel: "Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). Paul had, together, the continuity and discontinuity about his own past in relation with his own Jewish heritage and past through this event (Bosch 1991: 139-141; cf. Dunn 1998: 716-723). The Hebraic, Hellenistic and Roman factors that

formed the background of Paul's life were integrated anew with Christ as the central figure through the event. His life was arranged and systematized anew through Christ. "Christ became the key to understanding God's purpose for humankind, and indeed God himself. Christ was the light which expelled his darkness and illuminated the scriptures" (Dunn 1998: 181). The focus and pivotal point of Paul's life was Jesus Christ. This centrality of Jesus Christ had become the first principle of the contextualization in Paul's mission. Paul was "under obligation both to Greeks and barbarians" (Rom. 1:14).

2.6 Paul's central theological understanding and conviction

As we have seen, the Damascus event was a turning point in Paul's life (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:15-16). Joseph A. Fitzmyer (1967: 8) points out, "Paul's theology was influenced most of all by his Damascus experience and by faith in the risen Christ as the son of God, which developed from his experience". Thus, there is an inner unity of mission and theology in Paul explained only by his Damascus Experience. As Don N. Howell (1999: 115) says, "Pauline theology is therefore the generative spring of the Pauline mission." What then was the central theological understanding and confidence which Paul had as Christ's apostle to the gentiles after the Damascus road Christophany?

2.6.1 Conviction about God the Father

Foundational to effective mission is the evangelist's relationship to God. According to

Dunn, "God[1] is the fundamental presupposition of Paul's theology, the starting point of his theologizing and the primary subtext of all his writing (1998: 28). Barclay (1983: 33) says: "To Paul, the whole initiative of the process of salvation lies with God." Paul's belief in God is "the belief in God as Creator, as sovereign, and as final judge, and on God as the God of Israel" (Dunn 1998: 31). God, being one, is not only the God of the Jews but also the God of the Gentiles. "Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God" (Rom. 3:29-30). Paul's belief about God is based on the Old Testament.

Paul demonstrates the absolute necessity for a God-given righteousness by painting in dark colours the spiritual condition of humankind (Rom. 1:18-3:20). It was the Creator God of Genesis who had also enlightened him (2Cor. 4:6). He saw God, not only in the great lines of world creation and world history but also in his own life. He confesses of God "who separated me from my mother's womb" (Gal. 1:15-KJV). He says: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (2 Cor. 1:1) and "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). Paul believed that the call of God was a call to share the kingdom and the glory of his Son (Gal. 1:6), and that God's call came by the preaching of the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14).

Paul was confident that God's calling was not originated by any human ideas. Mission was originated in the mind of God the Father before eternity (Rom. 16:25-27; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 1:3-14; 3:1-11; 2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Peters 1972: 51-52). Mission is the work of God in

[1] Don N. Howell says: "Of 1314 explicit references to God (θεός) in the New Testament, 548 (or 40 percent) are by Paul" (1999: 93).

recalling sinful humankind to Himself (Peters 1972: 81).

Romans 16:25-27

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him--to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Ephesians 1:4-6

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Calvin (1986: 530) puts it as follows:

How did God begin to embrace with his favour those whom he had loved before the creation of the world? Only in that he revealed his love when he was reconciled to us by Christ's blood. God is the fountainhead of all righteousness.

Abraham's and David's God is still the justifying God of today, declaring Jew and Gentile righteous on the basis of faith. The manner of justification is God's grace, irrespective of meritorious deeds (Rom. 3:24).

"Paul possesses a profound conviction that God has commissioned him to proclaim to all people a message of deliverance from the inescapable outpouring of God's righteous judgment of their sin" (Howell 1998: 92). These theological convictions both created and energized the Pauline mission.

2.6.2 Conviction about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Dunn (1998: 208) states: "There can be no doubt as to where the centre of gravity of Paul's theology is to be found. It lies in the death and resurrection of Jesus" (cf. Green 1970: 54). This is the core content of the Pauline proclamation. For Paul and for us the death and resurrection of Jesus is of fundamental importance for faith and an essential part of the gospel.

Before his conversion, Paul saw a contradiction between the law, which curses everyone who hangs on a tree (Gal.3:13), and the crucified Messiah, because the law apparently declared not only that Jesus was not a Messiah, but also that he was accursed by God (Deut. 21:23). To Paul the Christian proclamation of the crucified Jesus as the Messiah was a contradiction in terms.

However, at Damascus Paul realized that God in fact had raised Jesus from the dead. In that encounter he came to know Jesus as 'the Son of God' and as 'Lord', affirmed through the resurrection (Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:9-11). He understood for the first time that the crucifixion of Jesus was not a sign of God's displeasure toward the crucified one, but rather the unfathomable act of God's saving love in giving up his Son, as well as the self-giving love of Jesus. Then Paul said to the Corinthians: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 cor. 2:2). Christ's death on the cross was a death to sin (Rom. 8:3-4; cf. Barclay 1958: 79). Accordingly, the death of Christ broke the hold of the old dominion on the human race (Tannehill 1967: 21-43). The believer, by being united with the crucified Christ, is liberated from the oppression of sin.

Through his resurrection Christ became Lord, endowed with power (Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:9-11). The resurrection of Christ is a basis of hope (1 Cor. 15:23). What happened to Christ will happen also to those who belong to him.

Galatians. 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Paul realized that this is a new order of salvation open to all and a new aeon (Gal. 4:4), replacing the old aeon and its law. Here is the beginning of Paul's faith and love for Christ. Here is also the basis of his gospel concerning God's Son and of his unique emphasis on Christ's death, resurrection and lordship. He realized that a new access has been opened to God through Christ. Christ has thus become the supreme value for Paul.

2.6.3 Conviction concerning the Holy Spirit as the Initiator of mission

The one who came upon the disciples at Pentecost and changed them to be courageous was the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, 31). Despite the fact that at that time Paul was not there with them, he was also changed amazingly by the Holy Spirit. In the mission of Paul, the Holy Spirit was the chief controller (Berkhof 1946: 23). Though He chose and hurried Paul at His will to be a missionary to the Gentiles, sometimes He obstructed his way and directed him to the area which He planned (Acts 13:1-4). The Holy Spirit was the dynamic in Paul's ministry (Peters 1972: 144).

The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor. 3:3), "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom. 8:11), "the Spirit of his Son" (Gal. 4:6), "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9), "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19), "the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13), "the Spirit of sonship" (Rom. 8:15), "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"(Eph. 1:17), "the eternal Spirit"(Heb. 9:14), "the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29).

According to Paul, the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners (Tit. 3:5), builds the church (Eph. 2:22), induces believers to their perception of Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 12:3), sanctifies them (1 Cor. 6:11; Rom.15:16; Gal. 5:16-18) and produces holy fruit in them (Gal. 5:22-23), gives them various gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11), and raises them to glory from the dead (Rom. 8:11).

Above all, it is the Holy Spirit who makes the mission of Paul possible (Glasser and Van Engen 2003c: 263). He is the Strategist, who maps out strategies for the mission and decides where to go first and who should go in accordance with circumstances, as He knows who is compatible for the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 16:6-10; Bosch 1991: 114). The Holy Spirit is the Motivator for the mission. The Spirit of the Lord picked Paul to be a missionary and anointed him that he might perform the "power-encounter" and the healing ministry of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of this, the gospel spread all around the world (Acts 1:8; Bosch 1991: 114). The Holy Spirit is the Initiator, who prepares missionaries in God's Providence and controls their way. Occasionally, He blocks their way coercively and decides where they should go first for the mission at His will (Bosch 1991: 114). The Holy Spirit takes the initiative for mission as the Strategist, the Motivator

and the Initiator. Green (1970:149) says:

Every initiative in evangelism recorded in Acts is the initiative of the Spirit of God. From Acts 1:8, where the world mission is inaugurated, up to the Roman imprisonment of Paul at the end of the book, which enables the gospel to be heard freely in the capital, each new advance is inaugurated by the Spirit.

"The Spirit is the life of the Christian, that is, the life of God in the Christian. The renewed spiritual life of the Christian is the immediate effect of the life-giving Spirit, now also the indwelling Spirit" (Dunn 1998: 423). Howell states:

... the fact remains that Paul's dependence on and confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit at every level of his mission work was the essential factor that gave the work its dynamic staying power (1998: 78).

In short, the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of mission, is inseparably related to mission. The mission in Christianity is God's mission. In the Bible, we find that God sent Jesus Christ to us for His purpose of salvation – a mission. The purpose of the incarnation is the salvation of human beings (John 3:16-17), in other words, for mission. The Holy Spirit, who came upon the disciples at Pentecost, changed them and enabled the churches to undertake mission and widely extended the world mission.

As Howell (1999: 84) points out, "Paul's post-Damascus life was dedicated to building the new community of God's people, who would by the leading of the spirit declare God's salvation to the nations still in darkness." Therefore, the centrality of the work of the Spirit in Paul's mission was one of the fundamental principles of Paul's work as evangelist. This became a very important principle of contextualization that appeared within Paul's mission. The Spirit of the Lord who empowered Paul to undertake world mission successfully, takes the initiative for present and future missions.

2.6.4 Conviction concerning Jesus Christ's gospel

The gospel for Paul was the gospel of God and Christ (Dunn 1998: 183). Thus, Paul speaks of "the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thes. 2:2, 8, 9) and "the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; Thes. 3:2). The gospel was his "truth" and "power."

He accentuates that the gospel of grace he received was by direct revelation from Jesus Christ, not through human mediation.

Galatians 1:11b-12

...the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

The mission to which Paul was set apart was to proclaim the gospel of God's Son to the gentiles (Rom.1:5). And the gospel which he preached is indeed "the power of God for salvation, to everyone who has faith" (Rom.1:16). The redemptive self-revelation of God in Christ is no abstract truth to be pondered, but God's good news of saving power to be believed and obeyed (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). According to Howell (1999: 69), the gospel he proclaims is given a fourfold qualification:

Firstly, it is the gospel of God (Rom. 1:1b), that is, God sovereignly purposed it from eternity and is now commanding its open proclamation through the apostles... Secondly, the gospel is the historical culmination of the promises of salvation recorded throughout prophetic scripture (R0m. 1:2). Paul's mission is played out on the stage of salvation history, which began with Abraham and now comes to realization in Christ... Thirdly, the gospel is a message about God's Son (Rom.1:3-4)... Fourthly, the gospel is universal in scope, that is, it is a message of salvation to be proclaimed to

all peoples everywhere.

The gospel is "the proclamation of a new state of affairs that God has initiated in Christ, one that concerns the nations and all of creation and that climaxes in the celebration of God's final glory" (Bosch 1991: 148). As one "set apart" to proclaim the gospel (Rom. 1:1), Paul viewed himself as an instrument to bring the Gentiles into a right relationship with God through faith in his Son.

2.7 Conclusion

As we have seen, Paul was a person of great intelligence and with ideal educational and cultural preparation for the role he played in the development of Christianity as a world view. It is unlikely that Paul would have become the great Christian missionary if his home had not been in this wider (Hellenistic) Judaism, if he had not been able to read and write Greek and possessed the Septuagint as his Bible, if he had not been used to accommodating himself to foreign customs, if he had not had his knowledge of the Hebrew scripture, his religious passion, and his training as a Pharisee, and if he had not had an eye for the wider world of land and sea, for the great cities of the Mediterranean world.

God orchestrated several factors in Paul's background that enabled him to become one of most significant missionaries in the history of the church. These elements included his family background, birthplace, citizenship, education, and his theological conviction. All

of these contributed to his becoming an evangelist, whose Jewish-Roman background and cosmopolitan outlook fitted him for a unique ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul qualified remarkably well for the multicultural, multinational ministry to which God had set him apart. He was also a man deeply committed to God and genuinely interested in others.

CHAPTER 3

PAUL'S CONTEXTUALIZATION CONCERING RITUAL

3.1. Introduction

The gospel, as Lesslie Newbigin (1989:144) states, always comes as the testimony of faithful witnesses who are trying to live out the meaning of the gospel in a certain style of life. As Bosch (1991: 417) notes, "authentic evangelism is always contextual. An evangelism which separates people from their context views the world not as a challenge but as a hindrance, devalues history, and has eyes only for 'the spiritual' or 'nonmaterial aspects of life', is spurious." For this reason, "All theologies are the result of contextualization" (Nissen 2004: 158). God has revealed himself not in an abstract idea, but in a specific context (John 1:14). Then we must be taken into consideration this context.

Paul, in terms of his calling, had a purpose in his mission. It was to proclaim a gospel of "no distinction" (Rom. 3:22) between Jews and Gentiles and to lead people to salvation in Christ. It was always his primary concern. Then, how far was Paul allowed to contextualize the gospel as the power of God for the salvation in the cultural settings of the Gentiles? Paul's efforts on the contextualization and the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 were an instance of such a process (Hiebert 1994: 95). I here wish to present the foundations of the Biblical contextualization through a hermeneutical approach to the

issue of circumcision as a ritual which appeared in Paul's missionary work and the Council.

3.2 The Council at Jerusalem

The Council at Jerusalem, as Bruce (1954: 298) states, is an epoch-making event in the early church, as is the conversion of Paul or the preaching of the gospel to Cornelius and his household, for the Council fulfilled a key role in liberating the gospel from its Jewish vestment and opening the kingdom of God to the Gentiles. Accordingly, as Raymond E. Brown (1997: 306) maintains, the Council was "the most important meeting in the history of Christianity."[2] It was also "a decisive turning point in the history of primitive Christianity" (Goppelt 1970: 77).

3.2.1 The background of the Council at Jerusalem

Luke describes the progress of the gospel across formidable cultic, relational and geographical boundaries from the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem, to Gentiles (Acts 1:8). I. H. Marshall (1980: 26) states the obvious: "the main storyline of acts is concerned with the spread of the message."

[2] In Acts Luke devoted much space and detail to this meeting. Apparently he regarded this meeting as extremely significant to the progress of Paul's law-free gospel (cf. Brown 1997: 306).

After Pentecost the number of believers kept increasing daily (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4), no doubt largely through the witness of the apostles (Acts 2:14-41; 3:11-26; 5:12-16; 5:42) but also through the joyful testimony of believers (Acts 2:42-47; 8:4:8). Bosch (1991: 119-120) describes the situation at that time as follows:

Luke's church may be said to have a bipolar orientation, "inward" and "outward." First, it is a community which devotes itself "to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers" (Acts2:42) ... Secondly, the community also had an outward orientation. It refuses to understand itself as a sectarian group. It is actively engaged in a mission to those still outside the pale of the gospel.

The early Christians declared that Jesus is indeed the Christ of promise, proclaiming his resurrection and salvation in his name (Acts 2:32-36; 8:12).

However, the plane of an extensive witness to Jesus met with frequent outside opposition, particularly from Jews (Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18), and created dissension and controversy among Christian (Acts 6:1-11).[3] Especially Stephen's martyrdom brought great persecution of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1a). The persecution led to a great dispersion: "And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1b). The Hellenists - the diasporic Jewish believers – were the principal target in this persecution, and as a result this segment of the congregation was scattered to other areas (cf. Green 1970: 113; Goppelt 1980: 53; Bruce. 1977: 67-68; Kim 1981:35-37; Bosch 1991: 127-128; Hengel 1991: 63-86). They may have had to flee

[3] In Acts 6:1-11 the conflict between the Hellenists - the Grecian Jews - and the Hebrews – the Hebraic Jews - over the distribution of food highlights social, cultural and linguistic diversity in the church (cf. Goppelt 1980: 55; Dunn 1996: 84; Bevans and Scroeder 2004: 18-19).

Jerusalem under persecution, but that did not stop them from preaching the word. Instead of taking cover, they became active in spreading the message of the gospel: "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). John R. W. Stott (1994: 145) states that "this was the beginning of the Dispersion of the New Israel, which led to the dissemination of the gospel."

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:19-21).

Philip, Stephen's colleague, ministered first to the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-13) and then to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), so the circle of witness begins to widen. Furthermore, the conversion of Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-19) and the conversion of Cornelius the centurion, who was a Gentile in Caesarea (Acts10:1-40), shows how God moved the gospel step by step from Jewish particularism to universalism (Rosner 1998: 225-226) . Merrill C. Tenney declares:

The Cypriote and Cyrenian believers who preached at Antioch departed from the general exclusive procedure of their fellows by preaching to Greek Gentiles. Luke's comment here indicates that his presentation of this period emphasized the exceptions rather than the usual procedure of preaching. Antioch, which was evangelized in this period, was so exceptional that it became the fountainhead of an entirely new missionary enterprise (1961: 251-252).

Moreover, the gospel of Jesus was carried "on not only to Antioch but also to various parts of the double province of Syria and Cilicia" (Bruce 1969: 257). Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Spirit through the church of Antioch for this purpose (Acts 13:1-3). As Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder (2004: 21) have

argued, "God is moving the community beyond ethnic, geographical and cultural borders." John Stott mentions that "geographically, the mission spread north beyond 'Judea and Samaria' as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syrian Antioch. Culturally, the mission spread beyond Jews to Gentiles" (1994: 201). Leonhard Goppelt puts it well:

> Christianity's path from Jerusalem to Antioch was not only its first historical transfer from one cultural environment to another, but it was a decisive new departure in redemptive history, a departure out of the confining sphere of the Old Testament law (1964: 111).

Above all, in the church of Syrian Antioch there was great joy. For after an eventful and perilous journey, Paul and Barnabas, who had been ordained for missionary work by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-4), had returned with a wonderful story to tell. Their mission report to the church was significantly worded: "*they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*" (Acts 14:27).

But all of them did not rejoice about the report. To some who heard the news in Jerusalem it caused an entirely different reaction. As Bruce (1977c: 173-183) observes, they were Jewish legalists (Acts 15:5). They emphasized that Gentiles must be circumcised and assume the obligation to keep the Mosaic law and Jewish rituals (Bruce 1954: 301; Green 1970: 102). J. Christiaan Beker (1980c: 45) states: "The opponents claim to represent the Ur-gospel of the Jerusalem church, and they charge Paul with preaching a 'mini-gospel' that distorts the Jerusalem gospel." Bruce (1954: 301) argues:

> But it seems clear that these conditions had not been insisted upon outside Jerusalem. Even Cornelius and his household do not appear to have had the duty of circumcision

pressed upon them; and certainly the Gentile converts had been admitted to church fellowship by baptism without being circumcised.

They were becoming Christians without also becoming Jews through Jewish rituals. This immediately brought about a serious problem in the church of Syrian Antioch. This became a reason for the intense debate that arose between the Judaizers[4] and Paul and Barnabas. The Antioch church decided to send Paul and Barnabas up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders there and officially to settle this matter (Acts 15:2). The stage was thus set for the events of the Council at Jerusalem.

3.2.2. The issue at the Council at Jerusalem

As far as the Acts record is concerned, no one before Paul had preached so explicitly that men could be justified before God solely on the ground of their faith in Christ. Other preachers in Acts, true enough, had proclaimed that forgiveness of sins is available through Jesus (Acts 2:38; 10:43). But Paul included in his preaching of the gospel not only the blessing of forgiveness, but also his teaching of divine acquittal as justification.

Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Everyone who believes in him is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38-39).

The Judaizers, however, had brought 'a different gospel' which was not the gospel of Christ

[4] According to Paul, they were 'false brothers' (Gal. 2:4), 'Pharisees' (Acts 15:5) and 'zealous for the law' (Acts 21:20). From Acts 11 opposition to Peter's mission in Caesarea came from the circumcision party (11:2).

(Gal. 1:6). This gospel was connected with observance of the Jewish Torah and with the ritual of circumcision (Betz 1979: 7). They denied that the Gentile Christians are saved by God's grace (Betz 1979: 90). They emphasized that Gentile converts must add circumcision to faith, and to circumcision observance of the law (Acts 15:5; cf. Hendrikson 1974: 81). In other words, they had insisted that the law and Jewish rituals supplement the gospel. They had confused the churches, and tried to pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7).

That circumcision, of course, had a biblical base is plain enough. It was the God-given sign of the covenant (Stott 1994: 242; cf. Gen. 17). God's righteousness was imputed to Abraham 'by faith', fourteen years before his circumcision. It was an outward sign given to Abraham as a seal of the righteousness which he had received fourteen years before.

But Moses did not teach that conformity with circumcision and the Jewish rituals was essential to salvation. In other words, circumcision was related to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:10-14), and it was the sign and seal of 'the righteousness that Abraham had by faith while he was still uncircumcised' (Rom. 4:11; cf. Ziesler 1989: 92). Moses understood this (cf. Rom. 10:5-8); the Judaizers did not (cf. Goppelt 1964: 148-149). Stott (1994: 242) says: "They were going further and making it a condition of salvation." In connection with this problem, David Seccombe (1998: 365) comments:

The issue therefore, becomes whether salvation is to be found only within Israel, defined by its covenant of circumcision, or whether the nations which are promised blessing through Abraham (Gen.12:3) may find it within their own people. In modern terms this amounts to whether Gentile Christians were to be required to adopt Jewish culture as part of their obedience to Christ and as a condition of salvation.

Above all, with regard to the issue and importance of the Council, Dunn (1990: 115-116) writes:

It was this effectiveness of his gospel which Paul was concerned for. Presumably he had been preaching that acceptance of the good news of Jesus Christ without circumcision brought Gentiles into the people of God, made them heirs of God's promise to Abraham together with believing Jews ... But Jerusalem's refusal to acknowledge the validity of this proclamation would render it ineffective, because as a result, whether Paul liked it or not, the churches he had already founded would be distinct from believing Israel: and adverse decision by the Jerusalem apostles would make it impossible for Gentile churches to be seen in their true continuity with the religion of Israel, of the prophets, of Jesus' first disciples. In short, in laying his gospel before the Jerusalem apostles what he sought was not so much their approval as their recognition of his gospel's validity.

R. H. Stein (1993: 468), also, mentions:

What Paul feared was the splitting of the church. For Paul would, of course, continue to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16), but the church would be irreconcilably divided. In fact, since out of Jerusalem there would be coming forth a different gospel, which in fact was no gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-7), they might not even be able to be considered a true church. The mother church would itself have become apostate! Finally, Paul no doubt feared that the divine purpose of uniting Jew and Gentile and the destruction of the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile through the death of Christ might be thwarted by actions of the Council.

Would they acknowledge Paul's law-free gospel as the true gospel and as their own gospel? Would they accept his apostolic calling as being as authentic as their own?

3.2.3. The Proceeding of the Council at Jerusalem

Arriving in Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas "*were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them*" (Acts 15:4)[5].

[5] In Gal. 2:2, above all, Paul discusses with the Jerusalem leaders his law-free gospel, for after making it clear that he had gone up 'by revelation' he states: "... and set before them the gospel that I

Immediately the Judaizers raised their objection to Paul's missiology (Acts 15:5). After long debate Peter stood up and addressed the Council (Acts 15:7). He described the soteric significance of his mission to Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)[6] in these words:

Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are (Acts 15:7-11).

This statement of Peter weighed heavily with the Council (Harrison 1985c: 60). It is especially significant in the light which it throws on the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in mission. Peter realized that a power greater than his own had broken down the fence which protected devout Jews from the uncleanness of the heathen world. As H. E. Dollar (1993: 185) describes, with Peter being forced to go to Cornelius, "Centrifugalism is supplanting centripetalism."

Barnabas and Paul, then, told the assembly about the miraculous signs and wonders God effected among the Gentiles through them (15:12; cf. Stott 1994: 246). James began to speak, declaring that the words of the prophets "*are in agreement with*" the missionary activities conducted by Peter, Paul, and Barnabas among the Gentiles (Acts 15:15). To substantiate his claim, James cited Amos 9:11-12. The implication drawn

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preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain."

[6] Dunn (1996: 134-135) significantly entitles this whole section (Acts 10:1-29) "The Conversion of Peter," for while it is the conversion of Cornelius that is being narrated, at a whole other level Peter, and with him the whole community, is being transformed.

from this scripture is that they may seek the Lord as Gentiles from within their own culture, and not by becoming Jews. Stott (1994: 248) mentions:

The inclusion of the Gentiles was not a divine afterthought, but foretold by the prophets. Scripture itself confirmed the facts of the missionaries' experience. There was an agreement between what God had done through his apostles and what he had said through his prophets. This correspondence between Scripture and experience, between the witness of prophets and apostles, was for James conclusive.

James concluded by issuing the judgment that "*we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God*", requesting only that Gentiles be told, not for their salvation's sake but for the sake of church unity, that they should abstain from "*food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood*" (Acts 15:19-21).

3.2.4 The result of the Council at Jerusalem

At the Council the divine initiative was reviewed historically, in recent missionary advances, and scripturally. The Jerusalem leaders recognized not only Paul's gospel as the authentic gospel, but also his vocation as an apostle for Christ. Simply put, it was a sign of mutual agreement and acknowledgment (Hendrickson 1974: 85). In Galatians 2:9a, the result was an agreement among the apostles. In the words of Leonhard Goppelt (1980: 76), "it did not mean a division of the work according to geography or personnel but basically a mutual recognition of each other's missionary work."

Everett F. Harrison (1985c: 61) summarizes the decision of the Council as follows:

It called for the preservation of the purity of the gospel message, in line with Paul's trenchant presentation in his letter to the Galatians. It also ensured the continuing unity of the church universal, preventing a schism that could have resulted in two churches, one for Jews and the other for Gentiles, in contradiction of Jesus' vision and prophecy of one church (Matt. 16:18).

The Council had acknowledged the Gentile Christians as brothers. Goppelt (1980: 77) also says:

Paul and Barnabas continued to stand in the tradition of Jesus' earthly ministry which came from Jerusalem as well as in the confession of the earliest Church. Conversely, Jerusalem acknowledged the gospel free from the law as an expression of the one true gospel. In this manner the two branches of Christianity current at that time were brought together into an ecclesiological fellowship in spite of all the differences in their way of life.

Richard Longenecker (1971: 56) notes:

When one considers the situation of the Jerusalem church in A.D. 49, the decision reached by the Jerusalem Christians must be considered one of the boldest and most magnanimous in the annals of church history. While still attempting to minister exclusively to the nation, they refused to impede the progress of that other branch of the Christian mission whose every success meant further oppression for them.

The Council sent to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia the Council's letter[7] (Acts 15:23-29) via the two Jerusalem church leaders, Judas and Silas:

The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul-- men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled

[7] 'The letters' (Acts 15:23-29) described as 'the decisions' (NIV; RSV) or 'the decrees' (KJV) in Acts 16:4.

animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell (Acts 15:23-29).

The letter did not add a requirement for Gentiles who are seeking salvation (Franzmann 1961: 52). Rather the letter was "directions given by the Spirit (Acts 15:28) which seek to promote sensitivity on the part of Gentile Christians with respect to issues that were especially offensive to Jews" (Stein 1993: 471). The Council at Jerusalem set the standards for Gentile participation in the Christian community through the decisions.

3.2.5 The limitation of the Council at Jerusalem

As has been noted above, cultic regulations and other barriers to fellowship between Jews and Gentiles were being removed by God Himself, so people from all nations could be united in his service. Goppelt (1964: 120-121) mentions:

The decision of the Council had far-reaching consequences... Believing Jews and believing Gentiles confessed themselves to be the redemptive community of the last days, transcending both Jews and Gentiles. The whole church broke through the shell of Judaism and set about even externally to become what Christ had intended it to be, the church of God made up of all peoples.

Paul's letters, however, bear witness to the continual flare-up of the inner struggle to separate from Judaism (cf. Goppelt 1980: 79-80). Harrison (1985c: 68) explains the problem in the following way:

Not all Jewish-Christian believers endorsed Paul's law-free gospel. The Judaizing propaganda insisting that one had to become a Jew in order to become a Christian, even though it was rejected by the Jerusalem Council, continued for a time to gain access to Pauline congregations (Phil. 3:2).

Hans Dieter Betz (1979c: 101) adds: "Paul's opposition, the false brothers, did not approve of the agreement." Michael Green (1970: 103) declares:

Though this issue was largely settled, in principle at any rate, by the Council in A.D. 48, we can imagine that the Judaizers were not satisfied.

Especially as we may learn even from Peter's hypocrisy in regard to the table-fellowship at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14), the tension reappeared between the 'weak' and the 'strong' in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 8 -10; Rom. 14:1-15, 13) and Paul's purification ritual in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-26; cf. Bruce 1977: 269-273; Goppelt 1964: 127-129). Although this process within early Christianity disturbed the Jerusalem and Gentile congregation, it could not stop the plan of God regarding all nations.

3.2.6 The significance of the Council at Jerusalem

In the Judaizers' view, if Gentile Christians were to be required to adopt Jewish culture and religious rituals as a condition of salvation, an enormous stumbling block would have been placed in the way of the Gentile mission. Seccombe (1998: 366) states:

The leadership of the early church at this point appears to have clarified its mind fully on the nature of the new people of God, and no obstacle remained to the spread of Christianity to the ends of the earth. One of the great strengths of Christianity is an every age has been its adaptability to any culture, the basis of which was hammered out at the Jerusalem Council.

This council's occurrence increased our understanding of God's desires to work in various cultural contexts. As Bruce J. Nicholls (1979: 21) mentions,

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"contextualization is the capacity to respond meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one's own situation." Therefore, I believe that this Council's decision was a contextualization which broke the shell of Judaism on the gospel for the Gentile mission.

3.3 Principles for contextualization in Paul's mission

As George W. Peters (1972: 27) defines, "Mission is the historic effectuation of God's salvation procured on behalf of all mankind in Christ Jesus because of His incarnation, death and resurrection." For these purposes of mission, we must endeavour for the expanse of the gospel in a transforming context.

As I dealt with the problem of the ritual which appeared in Paul's missionary practice, I came to believe that Paul has some important principles on the contextualization of his mission. I will here attempt to trace these. Of course Paul's missionary methods are not the absolute standard for missions. But I think they provide us with good examples of missionary models.

3.3.1 Principle 1 - the priority of the gospel

Paul's mission as an apostle to the Gentiles was to proclaim the gospel of God's Son to

the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5). Paul defended the gospel against the Judaizers who had come to Galatia, denied his apostolic authority, and proclaimed 'a different gospel' to his converts. What then was the ultimate origin of the gospel he proclaimed?

In support of the validity of the gospel he proclaimed, Paul states that it "is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12: RSV). Bosch (1991: 128) states: "He did not invent the gospel about Jesus as the Christ. He inherited it (cf. Beker 1980c: 341)."

S. J. Joseph Plevnik (1986: 13) points out that, "The revelation concerns Jesus as God's Son, who is the content of the gospel." As 1 Cor. 15:3-5 indicates, it is the gospel focused on Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Dunn 1998: 318). Jesus was the content of Paul's proclamation (Green 1970: 93). In Acts 20:24 Paul sums up his passion for the gospel of Jesus:

I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

And in Romans 15:15-16:

...because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Self-preservation was not a motive highly esteemed by Paul (2 Cor. 4:7-9; 6:4-5; 12:10; Phil. 1:20; 2:17; 3:8; Col. 1:24); his main concern was to fulfil the course which Christ had marked out for him, bearing witness to the gospel of God's free grace in Christ (Acts

20:23-24). His top priority was "the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:5, 14), and "effective preaching of the gospel was always his primary concern" (Dunn 1998: 165; 1 Cor. 9:12-18).

Paul, in keeping with his missionary practice, was anxious to maintain Jewish-Gentile solidarity (Rom. 15:25-27; 2 Cor. 8:14) in the one body of Christ (cf. Beker 1980: 331-332; Bosch 1991: 172-174). So he was tolerant at times in allowing diversity of interpretations for the sake of the unity of the church (Rom. 14: 1-15: 2; 1 Cor. 8-10; Beker 1980: 125). However, it was one thing to secure the gospel from corruption; it was another to preserve the church from fragmentation. As Beker (1980: 125-126) says, although Paul permitted an amazing variety in the forms of life and teaching within the church, he never conceded to this when the truth of the gospel was at stake (Gal. 2:11-14; cf. Gal. 1:6-9). He was resolutely unwilling to compromise 'the truth of the gospel.' So he resisted the Judaizers (Acts 15:1-2) and rebuked Peter publicly (Gal. 2:11-14; cf. Gosppelt 1970: 165-166). In this connection Bosch (1991: 128) says:

> Paul is however, not interested in unity for its own sake, or in unity at all costs. He does not hesitate to "oppose Peter to his face" (Gal. 2:11-14) or to pronounce a curse on Judaizers in Galatia (Gal. 1:7-9) and on the "different gospel" in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:4), even if such action may, in the eyes of some, jeopardize the unity of the church (cf. Beker 1980: 306).

The gospel was the gospel of Christ (Dunn 1998: 182). Therefore Paul had the conviction that the unity of the church could be grounded only in the truth of the gospel (Beker 1980c: 306). Paul sometimes was very positive about the law (Rom. 3:21, 31; 7:21, 14; 8:3-4; 9:4; 11:29; 13:8; cf. Dunn 1998: 130). On the other hand,

when the Judaizers demanded that the Gentile converts be circumcised at Antioch and in his churches in Galatia, Paul attacked them vehemently, because the demand of the Judaizers that the Gentile converts practice 'the works of the law' to adhere to the outward rituals rather than to the law's essence. Paul thought that this would pervert the essence of the gospel of salvation in Christ (Bosch 1991: 157). As J. Christiaan Beker says, the contingency of the gospel situation does not mean a different gospel for different occasions (1980c: 256).

Therefore the truth of the gospel preoccupied Paul's missionary thought and methods. The basis of the gospel by revelation of Christ was his new starting point in the new context (Goppelt 1980: 67). Therefore, I believe that the gospel displays effective power in the various contexts, because the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16).

3.3.2 Principle 2 - the incontestable centrality of Christ

What is the fundamental reason for Paul's critical viewpoint regarding the Jewish ritual? John Ziesler (1983: 23) states: "He was a happy and zealous Jew whose new belief that Jesus was the answer to human dilemmas made him find inadequacies in the Judaism that had hitherto satisfied him." In Rom. 7:13-24 Paul describes the moral impotence he experienced when he tried to keep to the law and Jewish rituals. Ziesler (1983: 23) adds: "Only when Christ came to him did he find escape from this impotence and enter new life" (cf. Rom. 8:1-2).

The incontestable centrality of Jesus Christ is clear through expressions like "in Christ", "with Christ", "into Christ", "through Christ", "in the Lord" and "in him."[8] Dunn (1998: 396) states that these phrases influenced Paul's Christology as well as his soteriology. Some scholars emphasize that these phrases are the essence of Paul's theology. However, above all I think that these phrases on the centrality of Christ influenced Paul's missions in connection with contextualization:

Romans 3:22-24
This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:4-8
We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that ... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Romans 6:10-11
The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:23
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1-2
Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

[8] According to Dunn (1998: 396-397), the phrase "in Christ" occurs 83 times in the Pauline corpus. Also "in the Lord" occurs 47 times.

Romans 8:17
Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:38-39
For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:2
To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy,...

1 Corinthians 1:4
I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 4:15
Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:22
For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 13:4
For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

Galatians 2:20
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 3:14
He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:26-28

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Ephesians 1:4-12

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace .... And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment -- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 2:4-7

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:11

... according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Colossians 2:11-12

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having

been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

2 Timothy 1:9f
This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ...

2 Timothy 2:10
Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Dunn (1998: 400) notes, "He experienced Christ as the context of all his being and doing." Christocentricity is an important principle of Paul's missionary practices as well as his bible interpretation (Peters 1972: 30-31). Salvation is Christ, and to experience salvation is to experience Christ. Jesus Christ Himself is the content of the salvation. As Alister E. McGrath (1996: 53) mentions, the recognition of the identity of Jesus Christ leads directly to the proclamation of Christ to the world. William Barclay (1983: 42-43) says that Paul was ever discovering new greatness and new adequacies in Christ:

Paul was for ever faced with the ever moving and changing stream of human experience. He was for ever involved in changing situations. ... And to meet each changing situation and problem he had to draw new truth and new treasure out of what he himself called the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Bosch (1991: 172) states: "Paul realized that the members of the new community find their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in their race, culture, religion ritual, social class, or sex (Eph.2:13)". Ziesler (1983: 24-26) mentions that Paul first accepted Jesus Christ as the centre and solution in his theological thought and mission work, and then saw with new eyes what the problem was (cf. Bosch 1991: 158). From this fundamental cognition Paul drew a conclusion which constitutes a stupendous claim:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (Gal. 5:6).

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free (Gal.3:28). All Christians are one body in Christ (Rom. 12:5). They may differ in language, in methods, in ritual; those differences do not, and cannot, matter, if men and women are in Christ.

Paul believed that Jesus Christ was his new hermeneutical key to Scripture and mission. The centrality of Christ was a framework of Paul's missiology. The datum point that Paul needed to solve several problems appearing in new surroundings and circumstances was Jesus Christ. Therefore the centrality of Jesus Christ was a starting-point for and framework of the biblical contextualization in Paul's mission. Christocentricity is an important principle of the contextualization. Our mission is biblical mission only when it is centred in Jesus Christ. I therefore believe that the realization of this centrality of Christ is a significant element of the process of biblical contextualization. It will save us from the erroneous contextualization, cultural and theological syncretism.

3.3.3 Principle 3 - the Old Testament roots

As has been noted above, in the Council Paul and Barnabas recounted the evidences of God's work through them among the Gentiles, and James summarized and supported the general conclusion from Scripture (Acts 15:16-18). James quoted from Amos 9:11-12 for "the successive steps in the ongoing development of God's redemptive purpose" (Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford 2003c: 273).

Here we need to note that the apostles sought scriptural justification from the Old

Testament for the adaptation that they made. The early Christians were not unconcerned with truth or with the scriptural bases for their actions. As Darrell Bock (1998: 62) says, the use of Scripture in the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:11-12) supports the "new community's claim to the heritage of God revealed in Moses and the prophets." Stott (1994:247) states:

This quotation from Amos is a powerful statement of two related truths. God promises first to restore David's fallen tent and rebuild its ruins so that, secondly, a Gentile remnant will seek the Lord. In other words, through the Davidic Christ Gentiles will be included in his new community.

The apostles were convinced that all that had happened was in perfect harmony with the prediction of the Old Testament prophecy. Paul furthermore cited many Old Testament references, to the death and resurrection of Christ in his sermons and letters (Reymond 2002: 378).[9] Particularly, with regard to the circumcision in Galatians, Paul did not contradict or destroy but enriched, expanded, and in many ways transformed and glorified the Old Testament (cf. Ridderbos 1957: 59-62). In Galatians 3:13-14, Paul based "the legitimacy of his law-free Gentile churches on the covenant of the Old Testament in a way that the Judaizers could not controvert this law-free gospel" (Reymond 2002: 378).

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit (Galatians 3:13-14).

Bruce (1977c: 19) explains Paul's cognition of the Old Testament in the following way:

Paul did not jettison the Old Testament: for him its writings constituted the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2), the only holy scriptures he knew. He called them "the law and the

[9] Reymond (2000: 310) observes that Paul cited the Old Testament Scriptures 141 times in his letters (cf. Zuck 1998: 261-265).

prophets" (Rom. 3:21) and described them as "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2).

In the words of Roy B. Zuck (1998: 263-264):

The most frequent reason he cited Old Testament Scriptures was to validate truths he was presenting.... In a number of verses in which Paul's citations support his principles, he modified the quotation from its original setting to relate it to a new situation.

Walter C. Kaiser (2000: 75) says:

The apostle Paul stated in the clearest terms possible how he related personally to the Old Testament. In his trial before Felix (Acts 24:14), he announced, "I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets." The apostle never viewed his mission to be something that was brand new and unattached to what God had been doing in the past or what he wanted to continue to do in the present. The Old Testament was Paul's authoritative source for the mission on which God was sending him.

In light of this, Paul's labours as a missionary to the Gentile world grounded squarely on the Old Testament vision of the salvation of the nations (cf. Blauw 1962: 98; Bosch 1991: 159).

Proceeding from what has been said above, it should be concluded that Paul based the contextualization of the gospel on the Scripture. As The Lausanne Covenant and The Willowbank Report have pointed out that, "evangelicals have always held the Bible to be normative and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct" (Nicholls 1979: 38). I also agree with their opinions. Across the ages, in the midst of a plurality of contemporary human contexts, I believe that the important basic of the contextualization is the Bible.

3.3.4 Principle 4 - the intercultural approach of Paul

No two situations are identical in every respect. Hence, customs, practices and principles that may be relevant in one situation may not be applied to another in the same way. One of the biggest problems in our missions is that we often insist that others think and judge in the same way we do (Lingenfelter and Mayers 2003; 64). Unfortunately, this kind of theological and cultural ethnocentrism characterized the Judaizers of the early Church (Kraft 2005: 27-28). They believed that the cultural context in which they received the gospel was to be normative for all others. In other words, if one is to come to Jesus, he or she must also convert to Jewish culture and religious rituals (Kraft 1996: 93).

But Paul, though Jewish himself, learned otherwise. He chose to live like a Gentile when working with Gentiles, lest they get the impression that the gospel was simply about cultural change. He sought to be all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:19-22). According to Ebbie Smith (1998: 271), Paul relaxed the Jewish ways of expressing the gospel and Jewish cultural factors - circumcision, dietary rules, holidays, and instituted the ways more compatible with the Gentiles.

As mentioned above, in the Council at Jerusalem Paul argued fiercely against the Judaizers for the right of Gentiles to follow Jesus within their own socicultural contexts. Ultimately the apostles accepted the approach of Paul and Barnabas to the realities of the new situation (Acts 15:19-29; Kraft 2005: 30). God Himself already had shown Peter, Paul and Barnabas that this was the right way by giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles who had not converted to the Jewish culture (Acts 10; 13-14; cf. Kraft 1996: 196). In other words, this means a changing of their understanding of the way God has always brought about human salvation, not an alteration of God's way. Paul G.

Hiebert (1985: 55) says:

This does not mean that the gospel is fully understood in any one culture, but that all people can learn enough to be saved and to grow in faith within the context of their own culture.

Essentially, Paul wrestled with various issues to take the customs of whatever people he was among, in order to use those customs as vehicles for communicating the gospel. Furthermore, he approached each situation in terms of its own special cultural circumstances. In Galatians 2:11-14, for example, Paul rebuked Peter strongly for compromising in a Gentile context under pressure from the Judaizers. According to Acts 16:3, Paul circumcised Timothy, who had a Greek father but a Jewish mother, in other to make him acceptable to the Jews, yet he did not compel Titus, whose parentage allowed him no such acceptance among the Jews, to go the same route (Gal. 2:3). In Acts 21:20-26, Paul himself, when in a wholly Jewish context, went through Jewish rites of purification to demonstrate to them that he had not abandoned Judaism. As such, Paul's attitude may appear to be inconsistent, but it is not (Kraft 1996: 81). As Eugene A. Nida (1954: 52) states, Paul's approach is another way of expressing "a realistic recognition of the different cultural factors which influence standards and actions." Nida (1954: 52) continues: "The Christian position is not one of static conformance to dead rules but of dynamic obedience to a living God."

Charles H. Kraft (1996: 80) also explains God's approach to people in the relative context of human culture (cf. Lev. 24:20; 25:39-46; Matt. 5:38, 39) as follows:

That is, God does not absolutize one way of life and require everyone to convert to it. Rather, He respects and works within each of the several varieties of culture represented in the Bible. He is not, of course, uncritical of people's cultural behaviour.

Peters (1972: 149) mentions:

There were no national or cultural bounds in the missionary thinking of Paul because he found no such bounds in the purpose of God and in the sufficiency of Calvary.

As Peters (1972: 150-151) has observed, Paul did not allow for a division between Jew and Gentile. He emphasized a new dividing line. He divided all mankind into two classes: those "in Christ" and those "not in Christ." This was his partition (cf. Rom. 6: 11; 8:1; 1 Col. 1:2; Eph. 1: 4, 13; 2: 12-13; 3:6). The mentality of Paul is laid open before the world. No one need be a stranger to his ambition, goal, motive and purpose.

In light of the above, there can be no doubt that Paul's approach to different cultures is the intercultural approach. In addition, it is clear that Paul's intercultural approach is based on the approach of God.

3.4 Conclusion

In the progress of the gospel, which began from Jerusalem and Judea, Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles was incessantly involved in changing situations. He defended the law-free gospel within the framework of the plan of God. Paul's mission, to use Beker's (1980: 11) words, was based on the constant interaction between the consistent centre of the gospel and the context. Above all, he founded the scriptural bases for all his missionary activities on the power of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast to Paul's approach, the Judaizers strictly adhered to the forms of their orthodox doctrines, rituals, and behaviour. They had ignored the fact that these forms had ceased to mean what they were intended to mean. There was a significant disparity between Paul and the Judaizers.

Faith in Christ, however, could not and should not be made dependent on the observance of certain rituals and traditions. Therefore, if inherited traditions hindered the liberty of Christ and the worship of God, they should be abandoned. This was Paul's consistent belief in contextual evangelization with regard to the ritual issue. This is not to deny the value of the rituals or inherited traditions. As Hiebert (1994: 167) has pointed out, religious rituals are important in the expression of religious feelings. But they are important only as means, never as ends in themselves.

I am not propagating the irrelevance or the negative attitudes to the rituals. My intention is to comprehend Paul's biblical contextualization principles of the central point and goal of the rituals which appeared his missionary. Therefore, today when we deal with rituals, the centre must be shown as Jesus Christ. In the church and mission, the rituals not relative to Christ must be reformed. As Paul stressed, the ritual is a copy and shadow of the reality (Col. 2: 16-17; cf. Heb. 8:5; 9:23-24; 10:1). In Christ the ritual shadows of the Old Testament have found their substance and fulfilment. A copy and shadow, therefore, have to signify the reality.

All of thes considered, we are not simply to preserve the past as the Judaizers attempted to

do, for God is alive and we are to be alive in and with him. Life in Christ Jesus demands growth and dynamic change. A balanced contextual mission can be defined as presenting the uncompromised gospel of Jesus Christ in a particular context to the hearers so they may respond and be discipled into a church (Terry 1998: 453). The gospel must remain both uncompromised and undiluted. At the same time, the gospel must be presented with clarity in the context of the hearer (Terry 1998: 454). This is the responsibility of contextual mission.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF PAUL'S MESSAGE

4.1 Introduction

The existence of Christianity, as Bosch (1991: 9) has aptly observed, is "to be characterized as missionary existence." Bevans and Schroeder also mentions: "it seems always to be linked to its existence of to expand beyond itself, across generational and cultural boundaries" (2004: 31). Our concern is to communicate Jesus Christ across cultural barriers to the various peoples of the world. David J. Hesselgrave (1991: 149) mentions: "The Christian message is universal. It is for all people irrespective of race, language, culture, or circumstance." God, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, intended his revelation to reach all of humankind: "... God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2: 3-4). The gospel of Jesus Christ, therefore, must be presented into the context of all nations. It involves conveying God's message in such a way that people understand the original intent and are drawn into God's kingdom. Bevans (1992: 47) asks as follows: "How does one really communicate the gospel within the various worldviews that exist in our world?"

The apostles began to address this issue for a meaningful and persuasive communication of it in the contexts of pagan and unbelieving cultures through the Council at Jerusalem

(cf. Acts 15: 30-35). Especially Paul, as apostle to the Gentiles, contextualized the gospel by freeing it from the cultural and religious bonds of Judaism. It was not that he contaminated the gospel but rather that he infused the leaven of the gospel into the world. He struggled to find a relevant way to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the multiple cultural contexts. He proclaimed that Christ was good news for all people.

As communicators who desire to declare God's Word in the midst of such rapid change and an increasing pluralist world (Newbigin 1989: 153), we are confronted with the new challenge as to how to communicate it in current contexts. Paul's contextualization strategies in his messages for expanding the gospel, therefore, remain viable and continue to be the focus of studies in missions.

In regard to the character of the message, Paul's approach in Acts is not pastoral preaching in the churches, but a missionary message in the mission field of each particular context.[10] This character connects with his calling as apostle to the Gentiles (2 Tim. 4:7, 17).

We can ask as follows: How did he adapt his message to a variety of locations and contexts? How did he adapt his message and style to various audiences? How did he use his knowledge of contemporary cultures? How did he exhibit qualities necessary for effective communication? What were the principles of contextualization for Paul?

[10] G. W. Hansen (1998: 296-297) divides the speeches of Paul in Acts into four types: a mission speech to Jews (13:6-41, 46-47), a mission speech to Gentiles (14:15-17; 17:22-31), a farewell speech to elders of a church (20:18-35), defence speeches to Jews and Romans (22:1-21; 23:1-6; 24:10-21; 25:2-11; 26:2-29; 28:17-28).

So my focus in this chapter is to determine the biblical principles and method of contextualization regarding the missiological message communicated by Paul in Acts.

4.2 The sermons of Paul in Acts

The Word of God is "eternal, unchanging truth applicable to everyone, based on a relationship with all that God created" (Shaw and Van Engen 2003: 15). Robert Simmons (1998: 130) states, the Word is "a record of theology in mission – God in action in behalf of the salvation of mankind." The gospel is not "the word of men but ... the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13; RSV). According to Green (1970: 61), "the gospel is God's summons, through the act of preaching, to the listener to make the decision which will usher him into a new dimension of existence."

Paul G. Hiebert (1985: 227) says: "communication between people in different cultures does not take place in a vacuum, but always occurs within the context of social relationships" (Long 1989c: 29). The gospel, therefore, must be proclaimed in changing contexts, particularly in time and space. And the gospel speaks through the preaching (Pieterse 1987c: 9) because preaching is a form of communicating God's Word in human words (Shaw and Van Engen 2003:41).

Paul believed that the power of God was in the proclaimed word.

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a

demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (1 Cor. 2: 4-5).

Preaching was for Paul an 'obligation' (Rom. 1:14), and it was the joy and purpose of his life.

4.2.1 The reliability of Paul's sermons

Acts is the sole sermon source for Paul's preaching (Adams 1976: 3). Scholars, of course, have disputed the historical accuracy of Acts. Dibelius and those who have adopted his fundamental hypothesis emphasise that Luke composed the speeches not merely in a stylistic tradition, but for an apologetic purpose. They insist that the theology of the Areopagus speech is absolutely foreign to Paul's own theology (Adams 1976: 100). Victor P. Furnish (1968: 112) mentions: "the Pauline speeches of Acts are certainly not verbatim reports of that preaching, but creations of the Third Evangelist. They serve as a source for Lukan, not Pauline, themes and perspective." Zeisler states: "Paul's speeches in Acts may well reflect Lukan rather Pauline theology" (1990: 129).

What may be said of the Pauline sermons as they are reported by Luke? Are they invented? How close are they to Paul's actual sermons? Above all, Luke travelled with Paul over a long period of time. Stott (1994: 23-24) states:

It is well known that several times in the Acts narrative Luke changes from the third person plural ('they') to the first person plural ('we'), and that by these 'we-sections' he unobtrusively draws attention to his presence, in each case in the company of Paul. The first took them from Troas to Philippi, where the gospel was planted in European soil (16:10-17); the second from Philippi to Jerusalem after the conclusion of the last

missionary journey (20:5-15 and 21:1-18); and the third from Jerusalem to Rome by sea (27:1-28:16). During these periods Luke will have had ample opportunity to hear and absorb Paul's teaching and to write a personal travelogue of his experiences from which he could later draw.

According to Philip Schaff (1950: 728), Luke was the company of Paul without interruption for at least twelve years. Then, during that time, Luke clearly heard Paul's sermons. Paul's sermons were his recorded speeches not reports of the actual speech given on the occasion. Therefore there is good reason to believe that we have summaries of Paul's actual sermons.

With regard to the sermons, Acts as the church's canon is sufficient to study for our purpose. The Epistles of Paul also offer much valuable information about his preaching.

4.2.2 Paul's sermons

There are nine sermons attributed to Paul in Acts. Here I will deal with Paul's four sermons with three different purposes delivered to three distinct audiences. They are:

1. The preaching in the Synagogue of Antioch: Acts 13:16-43
2. The preaching to the Townspeople of Lystra: Acts 14:6-16
3. The preaching to the Greek Philosophers of Athens: Acts 17: 16-34
4. The Farewell preaching to the Christian Elders at Miletus: Acts 20:16-38

The sermons were delivered before Jews (Acts 13:16-43), Christians (Acts 20:16-38) and Gentiles (Acts 14:6-16; 17:16-34). Paul spoke to high officials and ordinary citizens, rich

and poor, educated and ignorant. Some of the sermons were delivered in synagogues, others in public forums, and others in trial contexts before government officials. These sermons present variations on a theme. Paul's message was essentially the same, but the forms of the messages were adapted to particular listeners. The gospel of Jesus Christ is presented in different forms to different audiences (Adams 1976: vii).

4.3 The preaching in the Synagogue of Antioch: Acts 13:16-43

Paul and Barnabas, who were called specifically by the Holy Spirit to undertake the work of Gentile mission, started their missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). When they entered Galatia, they visited Pisidian Anthioch, the first city (Bruce 1956: 267; cf. Acts 13:4-14a).

In accordance with their practice in cities where there were Jewish communities, Barnabas and Paul visited the synagogue on the first Sabbath (cf. Acts 14: 1; 17:1-3, 10; 18: 7-8, 19; 19:8). After the reading from the Law and Prophets of the Old Testament, the synagogue rulers invited Barnabas and Paul to address a "message of encouragement" to the worshippers (13:15). This occasion was not unusual (cf. Luke 4:16 ff). Paul responded to their invitation and addressed the congregation (13:16). According to Ben Witherington (1998: 408), "since this speech is carefully crafted to be persuasive to a Diaspora Jewish audience, it not only has the form of deliberative rhetoric but it reflects the patterns of early Jewish argumentation."

4.3.1 Analysis of geopolitical context

From Perga Paul and his companions went on to Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14), more than 100 miles away. Pisidian Antioch was on a plateau some 3,600 feet high (Witherington 1998: 405). According to William M. Ramsay (1982: 25), Pisidian Antioch was the governing and military centre of the southern half of the vast province of Galatia. Although politically it belonged to Galatia, in language and geography it belonged to Phrygia, because it was located in the area of Phrygia, over the border from Pisidia (Bruce 1977c: 163). It was made a Roman colony, with the title of Colonia Caesarea by the Emperor Augustus in 6 B.C. As Bruce (1977c: 164) points out, "the name Pisidian Antioch reflected the role marked out for the city by Roman imperial policy." There was a Jewish community in the city (Bruce 164; Acts 13:14b).

4.3.2 Analysis of audience

Adams (1976: 11) says: "The factor principally responsible for the variation in speaking situations is the audience. Of primary concern, therefore, is a descriptive analysis of each audience to which he spoke." The audience of Paul, then, was a mixed group. They were "men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God" (13:16). They were Jews, proselytes, and Gentile God-fearers (Green 1972: 25). As Adams mentions, "they had retained the principal tenets of their faith even though they had become somewhat Hellenized" (1976: 12).

4.3.3 Analysis of the content of the sermon

According to Stott (1994: 222), although some Gentiles who worshipped God were present, Paul's sermon was essentially an address to a Jewish audience. The points of the sermon are as follows:

- God who chose our fathers prepared for the coming of Christ (13:17-22)
- God fulfilled his promise in Christ (13:23-37)
- God called us to faith in Christ (13:38-41)

4.3.3.1 God who chose our fathers prepared for the coming of Christ (13:17-22)

First Paul summarized the history of Israel from the patriarchs to the monarchy. The historical retrospect outlines the course of God's dealings with His people Israel (13:17-22a). This exhortation of Paul followed "a Jewish line and structure" as well as "the form of a historical retrospect" (Bruce 1954: 271). Paul emphasized God's initiative of grace. These were a proud heritage and a confessional summary to them (cf. Wright 1952: 76).

John Calvin (1977: 364) expresses the Paul's intention regarding the historical retrospect as follows:

For his intention is to lead the Jews to the faith of Christ, and that that may be done, they must be shown that they themselves surpass other nations in this one respect, that to them was promised a Saviour, whose rule is to their greatest and only happiness.

4.3.3.2 God fulfilled his promise in Christ (13:23-37)

The second point was that Jesus was the promised Saviour. Paul jumped straight to the promised Saviour Jesus, who was descended from David (13:23), and mentioned John the Baptist (13:24-25). He used John's testimony to support his insistence (Stott 1990: 223). He focused on Jesus' death (13:28-29) and resurrection (13:30-35), and he stressed that both were fulfilments of what God had foretold in Scripture (13:29-30): "God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised" (13:23), "God raised him from the dead."(13:30). He stressed God's sovereign hand in this entire process. God was the primary actor in all these events (Witherington 1998: 410).

In order to prove this claim, he quoted three Old Testament texts (from the LXX): Psalm 2:7 (υἱός μου εἶ σύ ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε) about God's son (Acts 13:33: Υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε); Isaiah 55:3 (διαθήσομαι ὑμῖν διαθήκην αἰώνιον τὰ ὅσια Δαυιδ τὰ πιστα) about the holy and sure blessings promised to David (Acts 13:34: Δώσω ὑμῖν τὰ ὅσια Δαυὶδ τὰ πιστα); and Psalm 16:10 (οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν) about God's holy one not being allowed to decay (Acts 13:35: Οὐ δώσεις τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν). David "fell asleep; he was buried with the fathers and his body decayed" (13:36). But the son of David "whom God raised from the dead did not see decay" (13:37). Calvin (1977: 379) explains: "seeing that Christ rose for us rather than for Himself, the perpetuity of life which the Father conferred on Him is extended to all of us, and is ours." As G. Walter Hansen (1998: 306) observes, Paul emphasized "Jesus' resurrection is not merely an event in the past, but a permanent deed, which, though

already fulfilled, still extends into the future as a hope."

4.3.3.3 God called us to faith in Christ (13:38-41)

Paul referring to the mighty acts of God in the history of Israel and Jesus' death and resurrection as fulfilment of what God had foretold in Scripture, declared as follows:

Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses (13:39-40).

As Calvin (1977: 382) points out, here the main point is "what blessings the coming of Christ has brought to us, and what one must expect from Him." It is the forgiveness of sins and justification through Christ. Forgiveness of sins and justification are the grace of God for the salvation of everyone who believes in him through his death and resurrection. Through the law of Moses there is no justification for anybody.

On the other hand, Paul remembered a solemn warning to those who reject it. In particular, he quoted Habakkuk (Hab. 1:5: Ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί, καὶ θαυμάσατε καὶ ἀφανίσθητε, ὅτι ἔργον ἐργάζομαι ἐγὼ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑμῶν, ἔργον ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε ἐάν τις ἐκδιηγῆται ὑμῖν), who predicted the rise of the Babylonians as instruments of divine judgment upon Israel (Acts 13:41: Ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί, καὶ θαυμάσατε καὶ ἀφανίσθητε, ὅτι ἔργον ἐργάζομαι ἐγὼ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑμῶν, ἔργον ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε ἐάν τις ἐκδιηγῆται ὑμῖν).

4.3.4 Reaction to the sermon (13:42-52)

The reaction of the audience to Paul and his sermon was very favourable. They must learn more of this new message, and so they asked Paul to continue speaking on the same subject on the next Sabbath (13:42). After the address was over many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism talked with Paul and Barnabas (13:43a). Paul and Barnabas "*urged them to continue in the grace of God*" (13:43b). Many of the Gentiles accepted salvation through faith in Christ which the missionaries proclaimed: "*When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region* (13:48-49). But "*when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying*" (13:45), "*stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region*" (13:50).

4.3.5 The contextual adaptation of elements of the message

According to H. J. C. Pieterse (1987: 14), "preaching functions within the limited horizons of human understanding in a specific situation." As Shaw and Van Engen (2003: 158) point out, "this means that the communication context will vary from situation to situation and demand analysis and understanding that is unique to that set of circumstances." These opinions stress the understanding of the message and the particular context for effective communication of a message.

As has been noted above, the audience comprised men of Israel and Gentiles who worshipped God. The day was the Sabbath, the place was the synagogue. The lessons were the Law and the Prophets, the theme was how the God of the people of Israel had brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised. The whole atmosphere of message was Jewish. What, then, are Paul's contextual adaptation elements in his preaching?

4.3.5.1 The theological principles

Where amid the multiform audience is the theological principle of the Pauline the message to be found?

4.3.5.1.1 Jesus Christ, the key to the contextualization

Paul's message consisted largely of a review of God's dealings with Israel from the patriarchs to David. As Bock (1998: 50) says, it was "the appropriate extension and expression of Israel's promise" regarding the new community. Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford (2003c: 278) states:

> Paul moved directly from David to Christ. Indeed, Paul saw in Christ not only the fulfillment of the redemptive history of the Old Testament – God's promises to Israel as a whole – but also the fulfillment of God's promises to David.

The resurrection was a main point of his message. Paul presented the resurrection as the fulfilment of scriptural promises and the basis of forgiveness and justification. Paul's theological axiom on contextualization as appearing in his message, therefore, is grounded in God's design in history and the centrality of Jesus Christ to the plan (Green

1970: 195). Beker (1980: 7) clearly states:

The centre of the gospel is not constituted by mystical introspection or private individualism. Paul is not preoccupied with his own religious experience, because the righteousness of God that has dawned with the death and resurrection of Christ must be conveyed to all people as God's liberating act for his creation.

4.3.5.1.2 The centrality of the Word of God

With regard to "the word of God" referred to in his message, five references (13:26, 44, 46, 48, 49) rivet our attention to the core content in Paul's message. The message of Paul was clearly based on "the word of God" (cf. Fitzmyer 1981: 1. 157). Paul's preaching base was the revelation which he personally experienced (Ridderbos 1957: 43).

4.3.5.1.3 The using of the Old Testament and its model

Paul was building his argument almost entirely upon commonly accepted authorities: the Bible (LXX) and John the Baptist. He was careful to show that his teaching was not a new departure, but rather the fulfilment of "the promise God made to our fathers." Paul also followed "the Old Testament model" (Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford 2003c: 278), for his audience was acquainted with the history of Israel. He then went on to relate that their reverence for God was rooted in their ethnic experience of God's covenant with them. Herman Ridderbos (1957: 59) mentions:

In general the essential character of Paul's preaching of Christ can be seen clearly from the manner in which he brings the revelation of God in Christ and the Old Testament constantly in relation to each other.

4.3.5.2 The contextual adaptation elements

Beker (1980: 24) says: "the coherent center of the gospel is never an abstraction removed from its address and audience." This means the communication situation focused on the hearer, the receptor (Conn 1984: 229). As Shaw and Van Engen (2003: 213) have aptly observed, "communicators must follow through on the process and ensure that a message is perceived as relevant and encourages people to match their understanding with the author's (and ultimately God's) expectations."

4.3.5.2.1 The understanding of the audience

Paul knew his audience. They were "men of Israel" (Jews by birth or by proselytization) and "Gentiles who worship God" living in a Roman colony. The Gentiles, as Bruce (1977: 251) states, were "attracted by the Jewish monotheistic worship and way of life and attached themselves loosely to the synagogue without actually becoming proselytes." Moreover, "by attending the synagogue and listening to the reading and exposition of the sacred scriptures, these Gentiles, already worshippers of the 'living and true God', were familiar with the messianic hope in some form" (Bruce 1977: 261). He captured their attention by his understanding of the audience.

4.3.5.2.2 Identification with the audience

Paul identified with them by citing common heritage and demonstrating that he was knowledgeable about their history. He built on a common field of experience and accepted the authority of God's Word. Paul moved from the agreed upon concepts to a new idea which he argued was consistent with what was already believed. He then turned to its meaning for his hearers. Paul identified himself with his audience as well as their historical heritage (Adams 1976: 15). The words "our fathers" (13:17), "brothers, children of Abraham" (13:26), "my brothers" (13:38) are obvious verifications of this, and he stressed identification as he shifted from "you" (13:26, 32, 40) to "we" or "us" (Acts 13:26, 32; cf. Witherington 1998: 407).

4.3.5.2.3 The appropriate adaptation of the custom

Luke portrays a dramatic moment as Paul raised his hand for silence and began a familiar recitation of the history of Israel (13:16). Smith (1984: 92) mentions that Paul "adopted the manner of a Geek orator and stood while he spoke instead of sitting like a Jewish teacher." This means that Paul was aware of the Greeks in his audience (Adams 1976: 16). Though the Jews of Antioch held the religious belief, they were Hellenized with the Hellenic feeling and custom (Witherington 1998: 405). Paul approached the gospel from their standpoint. He engaged his audience's attention by his attitude and gestures.

4.3.5.2.4 The using of Greek rhetoric

According to Raymond Bailey (1991c: 22), by Paul's time, Greek rhetoric was divided into five elements: invention (subject matter), arrangement (disposition), style (elocution), delivery and memory. In particular, arrangement "has to do with the ordering of material in such a way as to conform to and stimulate natural thought processes." Ordering "has the purpose of leading hearers in the process of thinking in such a way that they will arrive at the desired conclusion" (Bailey 1991c: 26). Witherington (1998: 407) analyses Paul's sermon as follows: *(1) exordium or* proem – v. 16; (2) *narrtio* (narration, story) – vv. 17-25; (3) *propositio* (subject)– *v.* 26; (4) the setting forth of the *probatio* (demonstration, attestation), including using inartificial proofs (Scripture) of the *propositio* - *w.* 27-37; (5) a *peroratio* or final exhortation - vv. 38-41.

We can see that Paul's sermon followed Jewish structure and the form of a historical retrospect (Bruce 1954: 272). He summarized "the kerygma of the Old Testament as a prelude of the kerygma of the New Testament" (Bruce 1954: 272), and in order to substantiate this claim, he quoted three Old Testament Scriptures (13:33, 34, 35). According to Bailey, this was the technique and methods of classical Greek rhetoric (1991c: 22-28).

4.3.5.2.5 The urgent appeal

Paul's concern was winning people to Christ Jesus through the gospel. We can read Paul's love and concern for others in his message (13: 26, 38). Paul had a longing to bring the

unsaved to Christ (13:32, 38, 40). These included not only Gentiles but also his own people, the Jews, whose spiritual lostness gave him "great sorrow and unceasing anguish" of heart (13:47; cf. Rom. 9:2; Zuck 1998: 83). Paul, then, resorted to pathetic appeal, the special status of his audiences (13:16-17, 32). Paul's emotional appeal was contained in their identity as children of Abraham (13:17, 26a, 32) and their devotion to God (13:16, 26b).

4.4 The preaching to the Townspeople of Lystra: Acts 14:6-16

From the time of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.), Greek culture and its religious notions and practices had continued to have the most pervasive influence on the Mediterranean world (Harrison 1985: 1-2). No official Greek religion appeared such as was known in Babylonia, in Egypt, in Rome or among the Jews (Harrison 1985: 12). Many local cults were transported to new sites by missionary efforts or were copied by other communities (Goppelt 1980: 84). New cults were practised alongside older cults, sometimes being fused with one another in the course of time (Green 1970: 22). Polytheism is essentially tolerant of all faiths (Harrison 1985: 13-14). Thus, throughout the Roman Empire, religion was essentially the result of the fusion of local traditions and elements common to the wider world of Greek thought and practice (Harrison 1985c: 15). Paul's encounter with paganism in Lystra is presented in Acts 14: 11-18. Here the local Lycaonian cult appears to have identified its gods with Zeus and Hermes. Such religious acts of pagans are understandable to the classical world (Green 1970: 122).

4.4.1 Analysis of geopolitical context

According to Bruce (1977: 169), Lystra was a city of the mound of Zordula, near Hatunsarai, about 18 miles south-by-south-west from Iconium. The city was made a Roman colony by Augustus in A.D. 6. Lystra and Derbe, then, were ruled directly by the Romans whereas Iconium was governed by Antiochus (Longenecker 1971: 45). The city was a small city of a backward agricultural area. The Lystra scene was primitive (Green 1970: 125). Ramsay (1982: 408) describes Lystra as a "quiet backwater." There were various local touches which suited the vicinity of Lystra, for instance the temple of Zeus Propolis and the joint cult of Zeus and Hermes (Green 1970: 126). There were some Jewish residents in Lystra (Bruce 1977c: 169).

4.4.2 Analysis of audience

Lystra, as has been noted above, was a small city or backward agricultural town. For that reason, "the local Lycaonians were largely uneducated, even illiterate"(Stott 1994: 230). They were filled with religious superstition. Lycaonian-speaking local inhabitants thought their gods were Zeus and Hermes. According to the classical Greek traditions, Hermes was depicted as the messenger of his father, Zeus, 'the leader in speaking', 'the bringer of good news' (Martin 1995: 155). Undoubtedly polytheism still dominated their lives (Adams 1976: 20).

When Paul and Barnabas were preaching, he saw a certain man, a cripple from birth

(14:8). Paul realized that he "had faith to be made whole" (14:9). Paul healed the man (14:10). When the people saw what he had done, they concluded that the gods had come down to them in the likeness of man, Hermes as Paul and Zeus as Barnabas. For local Lycaonians believed the legend of Zeus and Hermes (cf. Bruce 1954: 291-292; Longenecker 1971: 45-46; Witherington 1998: 42). Efforts were made to sacrifice to them (14:13). But Barnabas and Paul tore their clothes, to express their horror at the people's blasphemy, and ran into the middle of the crowd (14:14), protesting against their intent, and insisting that they too were only men, human like them (14:15a).

4.4.3 Analysis of the content of the sermon

Stott (1994: 231) stresses its value as follows: this is only "a very brief abstract of Paul's sermon, it is of great importance as his only recorded address to illiterate pagans." Bruce (1977c: 170) explains that to show "more summary form, a sample of the approach to untutored pagans."

- Reproof: 14:14-15a
- Invitation to salvation: 14:16
- Introduction of God, the Creator : 14:16-18

4.4.3.1 The rebuke for their act (14:15a)

Paul and Barnabas began by a reproof, as the situation demanded: "Men, why are you

doing this? We too are only men, human like you"(14:15a). They condemned the men of Lystra for their preposterous act in worshipping mortal men instead of God. They, then, preached about the one God and pointed out that He was unknown to the world. "The idols were literally 'nothing' or 'futilities', both in Greek and Hebrew" (Green 1970: 126).

4.4.3.2 The invitation to salvation (14:15b)

Together with Barnabas, Paul announced to the local Lycaonians the gospel(14:15b). To Jews the gospel proclaims 'Jesus is the Christ'; to Gentiles it begins by saying, 'God is one, and that He is the living and true God.' Paul called them to return from these worthless things to the living God, the Creator.

4.4.3.3 The presentation of God, the Creator (14:15b-18)

Paul focused on the natural world around the incolae, which they did know and could see (Stott 1994: 232). He spoke of "the living God as the Creator of heaven, earth and sea, and of everything in them." Moreover, God who made all things has not been inactive since. Although "in the past he let all nations go their own way" (14:16), "yet he has not left himself without testimony" (14:17a). God has given them "rain from heaven and crops" on the earth "in their seasons", thus providing them "with plenty of food" for their bodies and filling their "hearts with joy" (14:17b).

4.4.4 Reaction to the sermon (14:19-20)

Apart from those who believed the gospel they brought, the people who had tried to offer them sacrifice must have been offended, because their worship was refused. Afterwards[11], some Jews who had stirred up trouble for the missionaries in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium came forward and won the crowd over (14:19). In the ensuing riot Paul in particular was badly knocked about by them (cf. 2 Cor. 11:25). He must have been knocked unconscious, for those who stoned him "dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead" (Acts 14: 19). But as the new converts gathered round to see what could be done for him, consciousness returned and he went back into the city with them. Longenecker (1971: 45) explains that one of the new converts at Lystra was Timothy.

4.4.5 The contextual adaptation elements of the message

We as messengers must present the gospel to them in order "to make a connection with an unknown environment through the cognitive environment of audience" (Shaw and Van Engen 2003:113). As Dean S. Gilliland (1989c: 53) states:

the central truths are abslute, while communication and application fit local needs and questions. This does not mean that we make Jesus over to fit every situation or need as it arises. It does mean, however, that while firmly anchored to the Christ of apostolic witness, there must be an immediacy about the gospel.

[11] According to Bruce (1956: 294), the western text expands Acts 14:19: "And as they spent some time there and taught, there came certain Jews from Iconium and Antioch, and while they (the apostles) were discoursing with boldness they persuaded the crowds to revolt against them, 'Nothing that they say is true; it is all lies.' And having stirred up the crowds and having stoned Paul, they dragged him out of the city ..."

4.4.5.1 Theological principles

Paul's message confirms and expands major theological themes. This theological focus point is secured by features as follows.

4.4.5.1.1 God's character as basis of preaching

Paul begged the superstitious crowds to turn from the vanity of idolatrous worship to the living and true God. Particularly Paul's message was based on the character of God: God is the transcendent Creator of all things (14:15), the benevolent administrator of all nations (14:16), and the generous 'witness' to his own goodness through the gifts of rains, abundant harvests, and joy (14:17). God is one, and He is the living and true God. To Jews who already know God the gospel proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, but "pagans must first be taught what Jews already confess regarding the unity and character of God" (Bruce 1954: 293).

4.4.5.1.2 The appeal to general revelation

God's works of creation and providence show Him to be the living God who supplies the needs of men (Bruce 1954: 293). The context within which Paul preached to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch was Old Testamental. But the Lycaonians did not have the Scriptures. They were uneducated Gentiles. Consequently Paul turned to the natural or the general

revelation, and reasoned from creation and providence to the existence of a good God. The use of the natural revelation as the starting point of his message "is an instance of what seems to be a pattern of Pauline adaptation" (Adams 1976: 23).

4.4.5.1.3 Using the form of the Old Testament

Paul appealed to the natural revelation of God the Creator in his message. Although the Old Testament was not directly quoted, the message's background and contents was full of "Old Testament echoes" (Bruce 1954: 293). The living God who "made the heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them" was practically a quotation from Exodus 20:11. God's providential kindness in sending rainfall and harvest was based on Genesis 8:22 (Bruce 1954: 293).

In connection with using the Old Testament, Zuck (1998: 264) mentions: "In a number of verses in which Paul's citations support his principles, he modified the quotation from its original setting to relate it to a new situation." The Old Testament, as Fitzmyer (1967c: 6-7) states, was still "for him a means through which God speaks to men."

4.4.5.2 The contextual adaptation elements

4.4.5.2.1 The flexibility of the evangelistic approach

In the case of Antioch of Pisidia Paul entered the synagogue and proclaimed the gospel to

the Jews (Acts 13:16-41). Paul pointed to the history of Israel, and his basic argument was that Jesus is the Messiah. But in Lystra he addressed the pagans about God, the Creator: God sends rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He focused on the natural world which his audience did know (Stott 1994: 232). If Paul had spoken about the history of Israel in Lystra, it would have been meaningless to the audience. It would also have been a mistake to preach about fertility and natural growth in Antioch. Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford (2003c: 298) say: "He communicated this message of Christ in ways that were as culturally appropriate as possible." He communicated the unfamiliar truth via the familiar image to his audience. In particular, Paul's illustrations were drawn from life experiences, nature, athletics and the military. "By such his approach to the gospel would come as good news to one and all, clothed in the cultural forms that were most meaningful and appropriate" (Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford 2003c: 297).

4.5 The preaching to the Greek Philosophers of Athens: Acts 17: 16-34

The gospel must be conveyed through particular cultural means in specific contexts to a particular people. For that reason, Paul's sermon preached to the educated, sophisticated and philosophically minded Athenians is one of the most famous missionary texts and the outstanding example of cross-cultural missionary preaching in the New Testament (Witherington 1998: 511; Flemming 2002: 200).

4.5.1 Analysis of geopolitical context

Athens had been the foremost Greek city-state since the fifth century B.C. Even after its incorporation into the Roman Empire, it retained a proud intellectual independence and also became a free city (Reymond 2002: 159). Bruce says: "No city in the Hellenic world could match Athens for those qualities which Greeks counted most glorious" (1977: 236-237). Reymond (2002: 160) mentions: "Being the native city of Socrates and Plato and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno, Athens occupied the chief place among the cities of the ancient world for great philosophers" (Bruce 1954: 348). It was also the birthplace of the three famous universities of antiquity (Alexandria, Tarsus, and Athens), of which Athens was the most distinguished. John Stott (1990: 276) states: "It boasted of its rich philosophical tradition inherited from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, of its literature and art, and of its notable achievements in the cause of human liberty." There were innumerable temples, shrines, statues and altars. One ancient writer said there were more statues in Athens than in the rest of the Greek cities together (cf. Conybeare and Howson 1971: 280). Stott (1994: 276) continues: "Even if in Paul's day it 'lived on its great past', and was a comparatively small town by modern criteria, it still had an unrivalled reputation as the empire's intellectual metropolis" (cf. Bruce 1954: 348; Witherington 1998: 513).

4.5.2 Analysis of audience

He found Athens in decline and decay. Philosophy had degenerated into sophistry. There

were innumerable temples, statues and altars (Stott 1994: 277). The altars were everywhere. Athens was a city "full of idols" (17:16). The city was swamped by them (Stott 1994: 277). None of their philosophies fully satisfied "the restless Athenians, who *spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas*" (Glasser and Van Engen 2003c: 280; Acts 17:21). The city might be "aesthetically magnificent and culturally sophisticated", but morally it was "decadent and spiritually deceived" (Stott 1994: 276). When Paul faced the totality of Athenian religiosity, he was "deeply distressed" (17:16; NRSV). He saw human beings so depraved as to be giving to idols the honour and glory which due to the one, living and true God alone. By every criterion they were "very religious" people (17:22). Bruce (1954: 349) states what Paul felt as follows:

> ... in any case the spectacle of a city so entirely dedicated to false worship stirred him to the conviction that here, if anywhere, were men and women who sorely needed the gospel that he knew. Athens afforded him ample confirmation of what he had already learned, that "in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21).

Following his usual practice, Paul went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and reasoned there with both Jews and God-fearers (17:17). A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him (17:18a). The major views of the two schools of philosophy are well-known. These were contemporary but rival systems. Epicureans viewed pleasure as life's supreme good, while the Stoics postulated a kind of emotionlessness as the *summum bonum* of life (Dunn 1996: 233). Beyond this, the two schools held other diverse theological positions. Epicureans were atheistic materialists, who denied creation and attributed the happenings of life to change or a deterministic fate. The Stoics, who seem to have been somewhat more popular at this time were pantheistic (Bruce 1956: 350), believing there was a divine rational ordering principle that was in all

things and beings (Witherington 1998: 514). They believed in the eternity of matter, and denied any future judgment or life after death (Shepard 1977: 153).

A controversy arose when some Epicureans and Stoics heard Paul talking about "Jesus and the resurrection" (17:18b). Some of them insulted him. They looked upon him as a babbler who unscrupulously plagiarized from others, picking up scraps of knowledge from here and there (Bruce 1954: 351; Stott 1994: 282). The conclusion of other listeners was that Paul "seems to be advocating foreign gods" (17:18b). The philosophers, therefore, brought Paul to the Areopagus[12] (17:19) and demanded that he explain his new teaching.

4.5.3 Analysis of the content of the sermon

Everything about this discourse is calm, grave, cool and argumentative. Paul understood the character of his audiences, and did not commence his discourse by denouncing them, or suppose that they would be convinced by mere dogmatic assertion. This sermon comprises three subjects:

- The point of contact (17:22-23)
- The proclamation of God (17:24-28)
- The emphasis on repentance (17:30-31)

[12] The Areopagus means literally 'the Hill (pagos) of Ares (the Greek equivalent of Mars)', so 'Mars' Hill. It was formerly the place where the most venerable judicial court of ancient Greece met. In Paul's time, the court had become more of a council, with its legal powers diminished (cf. Bruce 1956: 351-352; Stott 1990: 283; Witherington 1998: 515-516).

4.5.3.1 The point of contact (17:22-23)

Paul's message began with an acknowledgment for them: "*Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious*" (17:22b). They, to use Stott's words, had lived in "a veritable forest of idols" (1994: 277). Paul's intention, of course, was not to compliment them, it is more than this: it was an expression of the radical polytheism of their religious tradition (Nissen 2004: 63). As Paul walked through the city and looked at the places where they worshipped, he saw an altar with the inscription "*TO AN UNKNOWN GOD*" (17:23; cf. Green 1970: 127; Witherington 1998: 519-523). Paul interpreted the words in a different way (Nissen 2004: 63). He recognized that behind this polytheistic representation was a secret longing for God. He then began his message through recognizing his audience's religious desire (Nissen 2004: 63). Paul found a point of contact in the concept of God (Hansen 1998: 315). But there was a great difference between the "unknown god" and the God whom Paul proclaimed (Bruce 1954: 356). Paul, then, compared God with the "unknown god", and declared: "Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you" (17:23b).

4.5.3.2 Paul's proclamation of God (17:24-28)

When the text of the following verses is closely examined, it is clear that he puts forward a number of Old Testament perspectives about the character and purpose of God, the foolishness of idolatry, and human responsibility in relation to God, without actually

quoting Scripture. Paul proclaimed the personal, living and true God in two ways.

4.5.3.2.1 The statements about the character of God (17:24-25, 29)

The unknown God of the Athenians was "the God who made the world and everything in it" (17:24a). God is not made by humans; he is mankind's Creator. God is the transcendent Creator and Lord of the universe. He rules the world (Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford 2003c: 283). Therefore God "does not live in temples built by hands" (17:24b). He needs nothing from His creatures. He, on the contrary, supplies in their needs and gives life to His creatures (17:25). God is the Sustainer of life (17:25b; Stott 1994: 285). God is our Father from whom we derive our being (17:26). He is not in images made by humans (17:29b). God is the personal Creator of everything. We, then, depend on God. Paul's statements reflect criticism about locating God in shrines made by human beings.

4.5.3.2.2 God's dealings with humanity (17:26-28)

God, having made the whole human race, has given them the whole earth to dwell (17:26b), and God is near to every man (17:27). For the argument of his message Paul established his point via two quotations from Greek poets. Quoting from the verses, "*We are his offspring*" and "*in him we live and move and have our being*" from the Greek poets[13], Paul speaks of himself and his audience as children of the one God. Undoubtedly,

[13] According to Bruce (1977c: 242; 1956: 359-360), the first quotation comes from Epimenides the Cretan. And the second is based the *Phainomena* of Paul's fellow-Cilician Aratus, Stoicism poet (cf. Witherington 1998: 529-530).

Paul's reference two quotations was not in support of their pantheistic view, but reflected the awareness of the Biblical doctrine of man as a being created by God in His image (Gen. 1:27; Bruce 1954: 360). As Nissen (2004: 64) points out, Paul believed that the correct human response to God, mankind's Creator, is "to seek to know him, while recognizing that God is the one in whom all human beings exist".

4.5.3.3 The emphasis on repentance (17:30-31)

Here Paul returned to the point of contact of his address. It was their ignorance of God. Now he declared such ignorance to be healing. For, "God has given proof of this to all men." And the proof was that "God raised him – Jesus Christ - from the dead" (17:31b). "In the past God overlooked such ignorance" (17:30a). Now Paul pressed the Athenians to repent their ignorance about God (17:30b). For God planned to judge the world through Jesus Christ, the man (17:31a). Whole focus of the sermon of Paul has been aimed toward this announcement: God has furnished firm proof that this is the man by whom He is going to judge the world, because this is the man whom He has raised from the dead. But God gives time to repent in Jesus (Hansen 1998: 317).

4.5.4 Reaction to the sermon (17:32-34)

Paul's message on Christ's bodily resurrection was the great stumbling block for the Greeks, for the bodily resurrection was alien to the Greeks (Flemming 2002: 206). The audience, then, reacted differently. When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some

of them mocked Paul's statement. Others wanted "to hear Paul again on this subject" (17:32). But some listeners "became followers of Paul and believed" (17:34). Particularly Paul's message regarding Christ's bodily resurrection was a great stumbling block for the Greeks.

In connection with Paul's sermon without "the word of the cross" and the 'poor results' of his Areopagitica, some scholars emphasize that Paul's sermon as a gospel presentation in Athens was unwise.[14] However, these assertions are not congruous. As Stonehouse (1957: 34) mentions, "it is most precarious to engage in rationalizing from the number of converts to the correctness of the message." In addition, Stott (1994: 289) points out:

> I believe Paul did preach the cross in Athens. Luke provides only a short extract from his speech, which takes less than two minutes to read. Paul must have filled out this outline considerably, and his conclusion (30-31) must have included Christ crucified. For how could he proclaim the resurrection without mentioning the death which preceded it? And how could he call for repentance without mentioning the faith in Christ which always accompanies it?

Therefore Paul's message was "a masterful theological summary presented with evangelistic and apologetic sensitivity" (Reymond 2002: 162).

4.5.5 The contextual adaptations of the message

As Nicholls[15] indicates, contextualization is "the translation of the unchanging content of the gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate

[14] See Ramsay 1982: 252 and Longenecker 1971: 66.
[15] Nicholls 1975: 647 quoted from Hesselgrave 1991: 136.

cultures and within their particular existential situation." Paul regarded the gospel's core as a nonvariable. But he explained the gospel in suitable form to meet the varied needs of the audience (Glasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford 2003c: 284).

4.5.5.1 The theological principles

Paul presents us with a brilliant arrangement of theological themes in his message. It contains four distinct elements.

4.5.5.1.1 The centrality of God the Creator of all

It was the "unknown" true God that Paul was identifying. Paul told them in effect that they instinctively reached out for this God, but could not name Him and did not know how to relate to Him. The Stoics believed the world was controlled by rational necessity (Dunn 1996: 233; Witherington 1998: 514), and the Epicureans thought history was purposeless, governed by accidents (Stott 1994: 280). Because of the Athenians' ignorance about God, Paul carefully contextualized the great truths of revelation concerning the self-sufficient Creator, man created in his image, and man's need to come to God through the judge he had appointed and raised from the dead to that end. Bruce (1977c: 239) narrates: "Like the biblical revelation itself, his speech begins with God the Creator of all, continues with God the sustainer of all, and concludes with God the judge of all" (cf. 1954: 355).

4.5.5.1.2 The centrality of Jesus Christ

Paul focused on Jesus' death and resurrection, his present power and the significance of his message (17:18, 31, 32). This means that the risen Christ was unambiguously central in Paul's message (Green 1970: 150; Dunn 1998: 235). In other words this proves that Paul's message was essentially Christocentric (Calvin 1973: 125). As George Eldon Ladd (1987: 317) says, the resurrection of Jesus "stands as the heart of the early Christian message." And Paul's truth is to emphasize, along with the truth of Jesus' resurrection, the companion truth that he shares our humanity. Of course the main point and climax of this sermon is the same as at Antioch of Pisidia, but Paul arrived at his proclamation of the resurrection via a quite different route. A comparison of these two events demonstrates how Paul adapted his message to suit the audience and cultural context.

4.5.5.1.3 The basis of natural revelation

Paul began where his audience was intellectually and culturally. He strove to take them from the known to the unknown and to lead them to the next stage of revelation (Calvin 1973: 112). He seems to have assured them that through general or natural revelation they had some intuitive awareness of the true God. He did present the message of the Bible and was true to the revelation to which the Scriptures bear witness. He communicated the Christian message in common, familiar, understandable terms to another person within the audience's context, using ideas they understood and found meaningful (Hughes 1998: 280).

4.5.5.1.4 The Old Testament basis

According to Paul's statement, God is the Creator of the universe (17:24); He is the Sustainer of life (17:25) and the Ruler of all nations (17:26), and He is the Father of human beings (17:28b) and the Judge of the world (17:30). In other words, God is the ruler who providentially oversees history and persons. These statements of Paul about God were based on the Old Testament (Bruce 1954: 361-363). These statements were the core theme of the Old Testament. Bruce (1954: 363) states: "it is in such OT categories that this speech, and the thought behind it, moves, even if the OT is not formally quoted." Bock (1998: 45) adds: "When Paul makes the same points to a strictly pagan audience (Acts 17:30-31), the Scripture is less explicitly present, but he still uses the plan and a biblical theology with reference to idolatry and the creation."

4.5.5.2 The contextual adaptation elements

The main point and climax of this sermon was the same as at Antioch of Pisidia, but Paul's approach was different, because the cultural context of his audiences was different. The strategy of this address is remarkable (cf. Kee 1990: 65). How did Paul adapt to audience and cultural context?

4.5.5.2.1 Consideration for the audience point of view

Paul pointed out that they were "very religious" or "too superstitious" (KJV). He found a point of contact in their polytheistic concept. They were people who wanted to know the truth and to understand the supernatural. Paul saw this as an opening through which he could carry the gospel. John Mark Terry (1998: 38) insists:

> In order to communicate the gospel adequately in cross-cultural situations, it is necessary to understand the worldview of the target culture. What do people understand and believe about God and their relationship to him? What is their concept of sin and the afterlife? What are the meanings of their rituals and symbols in society, religious practices, and their concept of the spirit world?

Paul focused on common interests and goals. He began where his audience was intellectually and culturally. He strove to take them from the known to the unknown and to lead them to the next stage of revelation.

4.5.5.2.2 The usage of Greek thought and literature as a means of communication

Paul used heathen poets to preach biblical doctrine (Green 1970: 128). Paul appealed to the Greek philosophers in their own language. He quoted from their tradition and literature as he had appealed to the different traditions and literature of the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia. Nissen (2004: 64) explains: "in this part of his message Paul was pictured as establishing as broad a common ground as possible with his audience, regardless of their religious background." He adopted a new method for his non-Jewish

audience. He told them in effect that they instinctively reached out for this God, but could not name Him and did not know how to relate to Him. Flemming (2002: 207) refers to this issue as follows:

Using this knowledge to engage their worldview, he (Paul) draws upon indigenous language, images, and ideas to communicate the gospel in culturally relevant ways. His means of persuasion are likewise appropriate to the context... and then through a series of contact points, he builds conceptual bridges that they can cross.

4.5.5.2.3 The using of the classical Rhetorical tradition

Paul used a classical syllogism in his discussion of God (17:24-25): God made the world. He needs nothing. Therefore service to idols is useless. This form of argument was common in philosophical debate and the point would have been easily grasped by Paul's audience. If audiences agree with the basic premise, they can be led to the desired conclusion. We cannot know whether Paul had been taught professional Rhetoric. But Paul accomplished his task through the use of the most effective means of persuasion. He drew on the tried and proven methods of the classical rhetorical tradition as well as his personal willingness to be whatever the mission required (cf. Betz 1979: 14-25; Fitzmyer 1967c: 7; Roetzel 1998: 17).

4.6 The farewell preaching to the Christian elders at Miletus: Acts 20:16-38

This is the only sermon in the Acts which is addressed to a Christian audience, which

Luke has recorded (Bruce 1954: 412). This sermon has special significance because it is directed to the Christian community and it is the last public speech before Paul's imprisonment.

4.6.1 Analysis of geopolitical context

Miletus was an ancient Ionian Greek city on the western coast of Anatolia, in the Aydin Province of Turkey, near the mouth of the Maeander River (20:15a). In the 6th century B.C., Miletus had become a maritime empire, having founded several colonies. It was under Persian rule until 479 B.C., when the Greeks became victorious over the Persians. During this time several other cities were founded by Milesian settlers, spanning across what is now Turkey and stretching as far as Crimea. Miletus was an important centre of philosophy and science, producing men such as Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes. In 334 BC, the city was conquered by Alexander the Great.[16] Miletus was only thirty miles south of Ephesus (Bruce 1954: 412).

4.6.2 Analysis of audience

This is the only example of a sermon delivered to a Christian audience in the New Testament. The audience was a homogeneous group. It consisted of elders in the church of Ephesus. These elders addressed are called "overseers" (20:28a) and "shepherds" (20:19b). These terms denote the same people (Stott 1994: 323). These men were converts

[16] This quoted from *www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Cities/AncientMiletus.html*

of Paul. They were close friends who had laboured side by side with him for three years (Acts 20:31; cf. 19:8, 10). They owed their spiritual life and growth to him (19:1-7). As leaders they had faced problems and made crucial decisions together. They had endured persecution side-by-side (19:9). A warmer, friendlier audience could hardly be imagined. Calvin (1973: 172) expounds:

On the other hand their coming together when invited, is a sign not only of harmony, but also of modesty. For although there were many of them, yet they were not annoyed at obeying one apostle of Christ, whom they knew to be distinguished by remarkable gifts. Moreover it will be quite clear from the context that those who are called elders (*seniors*) were not men who were of advanced years, but men who ruled over the Church.

4.6.3 Analysis of the content of the sermon

This speech is a highly personal speech with strong ethos and pathos (cf. Witherington 1998: 613-614). Philip H. Towner (1998: 433) summarizes the content of the speech as follows:

In it Paul explicitly affirms the inclusive gospel and people of God which embrace both Jew and Greek without distinction. It signals a coming together of mission practice and theology.

- The past: Paul's ministry in Ephesus (20:18-21)
- The future: Paul's future suffering (20:22-27)
- The present: Paul's exhortation to the elders (20:28-35)

4.6.3.1 The past: Paul's ministry in Ephesus (20:18-21)

Paul began his message: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia" (20:18). As Paul observes, the Ephesian elders

were witnesses of Paul's ministry, for they knew how he had lived during the whole time he was with them from the first day to the last (cf. v. 18: "you know"; v. 20: "you know"). Paul reminded them of his service and suffering among them and on their behalf. They were aware of his humility, his tears, his ordeals on account of the machinations of the Jews (20:19), and his faithful preaching-teaching ministry, in public and in private (20:20), in which he concentrated on the need for both Jews and Gentiles to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus (20:21; Stott 1994: 325). He preached and taught them to be helpful and useful in every place. Why did Paul do so? Calvin (1973: 172-173) explains: "Certainly not to gain the applause of his listeners, but so that his holy exhortation might be more sharp and penetrating, and be thoroughly imprinted on, and stick to, their minds." What Paul wishes to remind the Ephesian elders about was not only his message but also his manner of life (Witherington 1998: 616).

4.6.3.2 The future: Paul's future suffering (20:22-27)

Paul told them that the Spirit had revealed that the journey upon which he was embarking would bring him great suffering (20:23). "I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me" (20:23). But he did not esteem his self-preservation as a motive highly. His concern was to finish the race and complete the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace (20:24). He saw himself as similar to the watchman in Ezekiel 33:1-6[17] (Witherington 1998: 622) and declared to them that he was innocent of everybody's blood (20:26). For he had not hesitated to proclaim to them the whole will of God (20:27).

[17] Cf. Ezek. 3: 17-19; 33: 79.

4.6.3.3 The present: Paul's exhortation to the elders (20:28-35)

Paul gave the Ephesian elders his final the charge. The core of charge was: "Keep watch!" (20:28), "Be on your guard!" (20:31), and "Remember!" (20:31). He said that the Ephesian elders must first keep watch over themselves, and only then over the flock for which the Holy Spirit had made them responsible (20:28). He urged them to be diligent in the practise of their role because all the flock was "the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (20:28). And he exhorted them to be watchful both over the sheep and against the wolves. For he knew that after he left, the wolves and the false teachers would enter and devastate Christ's flock (20:29-30; cf. Rev. 2:1). Paul committed them to God and to the same word of grace that had been the driving force of his ministry and which could both edify and provide an inheritance (20:32). He blessed them and commended them to God (20:33).

4.6.4 Reaction to the sermon (20:36-38)

When Paul had finished speaking to them, and had knelt in prayer with them, they bade him an affectionate but sorrowful farewell. In particular, what he had said about their not seeing him again filled their hearts with grief and their eyes with tears.

4.6.5 The contextual adaptations of the sermon

Pieterse (1987c: 11) indicates: "The aim of preaching is concerned with the evoking of faith, but also with building up and strengthening and instructing in the implications of faith for one's whole life. Preaching aims to inform and convince and change certain views." Not every preaching situation requires some new idea or assignment. Encouragement and confirmation are important elements in deepening faith and keeping people involved in mission.

Paul's audience radically differed from those previously encountered. They were Christian audience as the elders of the church. Therefore the situation and type of message that it required, was unique. What are the contextual adaptation elements of his message?

4.6.5.1 The theological principles

Roland Allen (1962: 69) states that Paul's farewell preaching contains elements of the gospel. For example, the facts of the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, his death, the resurrection: their meaning and their power to supply the spiritual needs of men; the way of salvation: repentance and faith; the doctrine of the kingdom; the nearness of judgment. In addition, Paul's theology is closely bound up with his own mission experience (Towner 1998: 426).

4.6.5.1.1 The centrality of Jesus Christ

Paul had a strong sense of divine call to his mission (20:24). He believed that he had been set apart to preach the gospel and commissioned to proclaim it to the Gentiles (20:21). The gospel conveyed by Paul was the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus, as has been noted above, was the Lord of his life (20:24). Paul's message contained a strong confessional element about his Lord Jesus (20:19, 21, 24a).

4.6.5.1.2 The conviction of the power of the Word

Paul committed them to the Word of grace (20:32). This means that Paul had a very high opinion of the power of the proclaimed gospel. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom. 1:16). Paul believed that God worked through the preaching event to effect salvation.

4.6.5.2 The contextual adaptation elements

We must look not only at the content of the message but also at the context of the audience (Hughes 1998: 300). Paul used examples that were common to his audience, and he put the message into those terms.

4.6.5.2.1 The emotional appeal

In contrast to the sermon at Athens, this sermon was strongly emotional. Paul recollected his ministry during the time he spent in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:20; Bruce 1956: 389). Such recollection is itself an emotional appeal. He lovingly recalled their efforts on his behalf and affirmed their roles of leadership. He presented no new doctrine and called for no behavioural change. He confirmed their belief and encouraged the faith they already possessed. The emotional appeal was strong as he related personal sacrifice (20:19) and the blood of Christ to the mission. He did not hesitate to share his feelings about familial relationships in the spiritual community. "They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him" (20:37). These were powerful emotional acts. An audience will respond favourably to speakers who convince them that they share their struggles and feel with them. Paul was a master of this.

4.6.5.2.2 Identification with the audience by personal persuasion

Paul strategized with both the message and audience in mind. He presented himself in such a way to establish credibility (20:18). He demonstrated knowledge, integrity, and genuine care for whatever group he was addressing (20:19-21). He preached out of his experience of living through the work of the Holy Spirit (20:24). He demonstrated the Christian life in his work and interpersonal relationships (20:31). He lived with the people in order to identify with them for three years (20:31a). Integrity emerges from the being of the messenger. A message cannot be separated from the personality of the

messenger. The messenger's credibility is rooted in what is perceived as personal spirituality. Paul not only had integrity but also made it known in such a way as to try to affect the perception of his character. The authority of preachers on a given occasion is directly proportionate to the degree of identification they achieve with the audience.

4.6.5.2.3 The use of metaphor

Paul employed the powerful metaphor of a wolf attacking the flock (20:28-29). He described the elders as shepherds of the church of God, false teachers as wolves and the church members as the flock of sheep (Stott 1994: 328). The main thought of this metaphor was that the elders had been entrusted with the work.

In regard to his mode of expression of the gospel, Paul's sermon and teaching incorporated many metaphors, figures and similes from the Greek milieu. These made his message more interesting, more easily retained (Zuck 1998: 199). Paul's analogies and figures were based on Greek athletic competition, military life, the body, and experiences common to living in an urban, pluralistic society (Roetzel 1998: 15). He moved from the known to the unknown, the familiar to the unfamiliar. He also used Hellenistic conceptions like 'conscience' (συνείδησις) and 'freedom' (ἐλευθερία) (cf. Roetzel 1998: 13, 29). Calvin J. Roetzel (1998: 29) adds: "Paul uses the Stoic idiom, he always subordinates it to his gospel and in the process transforms it."

4.7 Conclusion

Paul demands our attention for three reasons: his role in the development of Christian faith and practice, as an instrument of truth, and as a model for mission. Unquestionably he was first and foremost a communicator of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Acts and the Pauline Epistles reveal a number of Paul's qualities. With regard to his message and medium, Paul was a man deeply committed to God and genuinely interested in others. Paul's task was to call the Gentiles "*to the obedience that comes from faith*" (Rom. 1:5). His gospel was for all, Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom. 1:14-16).

"Christian preaching has its origin in the base and content of faith, Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christian message and theology are, or should be, indissoluble" (Pieterse 1987c: 5). The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was the why and what of the preaching of Paul as it should be for every preacher. Paul's message emerged from his experience and understanding of God (Dunn 1998: 48). The theocentric, salvation-historical, Christological, and universal character of his message was based on theological truths communicated to him in his initial encounter with the risen Jesus. The content of the gospel is Christ Jesus. If we do not have this conviction, our mission will be deprived of content, purpose and impulse (Stott 1994: 48). As Calvin (1959: 15) points out, "to move even a step from Christ means to withdraw oneself from the gospel." Jesus Christ was the beginning and the end of Paul's message. Paul delivered his message before the Areopagus, doing it in terms that could be understood by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers gathered there, but without any compromise or dilution of his message to accommodate what they were prepared to believe (Terry 1998: 454). Paul's message

consisted of the coherent center of the gospel (Beker 1980c: 11, 35). The unchanging centre of Paul's work is total preoccupation with Jesus Christ.

As we have seen, the four sermons of Paul were each distinct. The differences arose out of the audience, the occasion and its effect upon the audience. Paul always responded to each situation differently. He did not use one stereotyped approach. He attempted to adapt himself appropriately to each audience. The communicators of the gospel must "learn to listen to biblical texts as well as pay attention to the people around them" (Shaw and Van Engen 2003: 213). In order to communicate the gospel adequately in cross-cultural situations, it is necessary to understand the worldview of the target culture" (Terry 1998: 38). Paul's audiences represent distinctive groups in distinctive settings and at different levels in their understanding of God. One was Jewish who shard a common belief regarding God (Acts 13:16-43), one was pagan (Acts 14:6-16; 17: 16-34), and the third was Christian (Acts 20:16-38). Paul certainly did this, skilfully adapting the way he spoke to various audiences. How he spoke to Jews in Antioch of Pisidia differed from the way he addressed worshippers of Roman gods in Lystra. The presentation he made before a group of philosophically-minded Athenians was not the way he talked to the Christian elders at Miletus. To Jewish audiences the Scriptures were regularly quoted, and references to the history of Israel were frequent. When Paul spoke to a Gentile audience, this changed drastically. Gone were the Old Testament references and quotations. Now the argument presumed a different worldview as its starting point. Different audiences in different cultural contexts make for important differences in the message of Paul. Although the core content of the kerygma remained stable, the manner of presentation changed. Paul demonstrated the ability to fit the approach of his

preaching to his listener's style of listening (Hughes 1998: 279). He began his message where they were rather than where he was. Paul accomplished his task through the use of the most effective means of persuasion. The manner in which Paul communicated the message in the various cultural contexts gives evidence of the fact that he contextualized the proclamation of the gospel. Paul, therefore, models for modern communicators effective missions for cross-cultural communication in a pluralistic society.

We need a clear understanding of ourselves and the people we serve in diverse cultural contexts. "Without this, we are in danger of proclaiming a meaningless and irrelevant message" (Hiebert 1985: 14). We as communicators of the gospel must understand in order to identify with them and to appeal to those things about which they feel deeply. P. Verster (2000: 53) clearly states, "It is an incarnational approach." We wish that all nations may come to know God through understanding the gospel in their own contexts. This is true contextualization of the gospel of which Paul was such an excellent practitioner.

CHAPTER 5

PAUL'S CONTEXTUALIZATION REGARDING THE ISSUES OF THE CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

We discover two imperatives that give direction to the Great Commission. In Matthew and Mark in the words "*make disciples*" (Matt. 28:19) and "*preach the good news*" (Mark 16:15) are found. The Great Commission gives identity to the believers, and it is to accomplish "the divine purpose as unfolded in the missionary thrust of the Old Testament and incarnation in the Lord" (Peters 1972: 178).

"A disciple of Christ is a believing person living in conscious and constant identification with the Lord in life, death and resurrection through words, behaviour, attitudes, motives and purpose, fully realizing Christ's absolute ownership of his life, joyfully embracing the saviourhood of Christ, delighting in the lordship of Christ, and living by the abiding, indwelling resources of Christ according to the imprinted pattern and purpose of Christ for the chief end of glorifying his Lord and Saviour" (Peters 1972: 187). Peter describes the church which is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ as follows:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9).

This explains the missionary nature and character of the church. Indirectly the church's missionary involvement consists in its own sanctification (Ridderbos 1975: 433-434). As Van Engen points out, "the holiness of the church is directly related to the life of the new self in the world" (1996: 110). Particularly in connection with the negative issues of the Corinthians, Paul speaks of himself as a follower of Christ and calls upon the Corinthians to follow him (1 Cor. 11:1). To follow Christ means to identify ourselves daily in the totality of our life with the totality of the life of Christ.

5.2 Background of the issues

Paul started his second missionary journey with Silas (Acts 15:22, 32a) Timothy and Luke (Acts 18:1-18a). Especially Paul's eighteen-month ministry at Corinth became the focal point of his second journey (Acts 18:11; cf. Reymond 2002: 164). His missionary work was combined with pastoral care for the congregations here (Acts 20:20a, 31; cf. Dahl 1977: 73). He had founded the Christian community in Corinth through his preaching and teaching (Acts 18:1-11). He describes himself as having planted the community (1 Cor. 3:6), or having laid its foundation (3:10), or even as having "fathered" it (4:15). Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish Christians who had themselves "*recently come from Italy ... because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome*" (Acts 18:2). They become intimate partners with Paul. He stayed at the house of Titius Justus, the owner of a house next door to the synagogue. According to Bruce (1977c: 252), this house was not only "Paul's mission headquarters" but also "the first meeting-place of the Corinthian church." Even in the face of mounting Jewish opposition (Acts 18:6, 12-16) he continued to

proclaim that Jesus was the Christ, and the number of his converts grew rapidly (Acts 18:8). The members of the community included not only Jews and God-fearing Gentiles but an increasing proportion of pagans (Bruce 1977c: 252).

When Paul felt his ministry was sufficiently discharged. He left the church to return to Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18a). After Paul left Corinth he often heard news of the church at Corinth during his missionary labours at Ephesus (Hodge 1978: x; cf. Reymond 2002: 191). He preserved contact with the congregation which he had founded by means of his Epistles, and gave fundamental instruction about questions which were vital for the life of the church at that time (Goppelt 1980: 92). Two convergent factors precipitated Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians (cf. Bruce 1977c: 264-273). Richard B. Hays (1997: 5) states the occasion as follows:

> First, he had received a report from "Chloe's household" that there was serious division within the Corinthian church (1:11). Their report presumably also included alarming information about other problems within the church: sexual immorality (5:1-8; 6:12-20); legal disputes (6:1-11); abuses of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34), and controversies about the resurrection of the dead (15:1-58). Second, the Corinthians themselves had written to Paul (7:1a) asking for his advice about several things. Their letter had certainly posed questions about sex within marriage (7:1b-40) and eating meat that had been offered to idols (8:1-11:1). The convergence of the secondary report with the Corinthians' own letter provoked Paul to compose an extended epistle taking up all these issues and reframing them in light of his gospel proclamation.

Can 1 Corinthians then serve as a suitable principle of contextualization for the church's issues today? I believe that it will be found to be a principle of contextualization because Paul dealt with the internal issues aiming to establish a church as a community of dynamic life. The church's issues are closely connected with the historical problem. The focus of this chapter is to identify how Paul dealt with several problems within the church,

and what Paul's contextual basis is on the issues of the church.

5.3 The faction of the Corinthian church (1:10-4:21)

Paul had left the church in a relatively harmonious condition; now he has learned that quarrels are splitting the church. According to the report of Chloe's people, the Corinthian Christians are rallying around the names of various leaders. "*One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ'*" (1:12). The Corinthian church was divided into at least four factions, each having its own emphasis, following its own leader, and acting in antagonism to the other three. Hays (1997: 22) says: "Paul's remarks here suggest that the factions may be created more by personal allegiance to particular leaders than by clearly defined theological differences" (Grosheide 1954: 37; Reymond 2002: 193). However, four identifiable factions were vying for ascendancy in the church.

5.3.1 Factions in the church

5.3.1.1 The Paul-party

This party claimed to be special adherents of Paul. The Corinthian church was founded by Paul. He says that "*In Christ Jesus, I became your father through the gospel*" (4:15b). He had brought them to faith and they were for ever in his debt. They were grateful for Paul's

labours on their behalf. Obviously there were many in the church who, for this fundamental reason, were very strongly attached to Paul (Prior 1985c: 30).

5.3.1.2 The Apollos-party

These followed Apollos. According to Acts 18:24-28, Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria in Egypt, was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, and in Ephesus taught accurately the things concerning Jesus with great passion and eloquence. After he had been taught about baptism in the name of Jesus by Paul's co-workers Priscilla and Aquila (18:26), he came to Corinth and greatly helped those who through grace had come to believe there (18:27). Apollos, as Bruce (1977c: 257) states, proved to be a tower of strength to the Christian cause in Corinth, and many members of the Corinthian church were greatly impressed by his gift. So it is no wonder that he began to attract a personal following (Barrett 1971: 43).

5.3.1.3 The Cephas-party

Cephas is the Aramaic name of Peter (1Cor. 15:5; Gal. 2:9-14; cf. Morris 1983: 40). Charles K. Barrett supposes that the followers of Cephas were impressed by this apostle's emphasis on the Jews (1971: 44). Bruce says that Peter may have visited Corinth himself, which would explain the emergence of such a clique (1977c: 258-259). Reymond, however, mentions that the leaders of this faction had probably come to Corinth from some eastern churches which Peter had evangelized (2002: 192). Therefore it is unclear

whether he had actually visited Corinth or whether he was merely a widely recognized leader in the early church whose reputation and personal influence had spread to Corinth (Bruce 1977c: 258).

5.3.1.4 The Christ-party

David Prior (1985c: 34) presumes that "the very presence of three cliques at Corinth, each paying excessive attention to an individual leader, would have been likely to produce a fourth group to whom all this 'hero-worship' would have been anathema." Whether these people were simply tired of the other three, and so said 'We belong to Christ, not to any teacher', or whether they had some distinctive tenets we have no means of knowing. What is clear is that there was such a group (Barrett 1971: 44-45).

5.3.2 The cause of factions

Because our only source of information about the Corinthian church is 1 Corinthians, the pertinent information must be acquired from the text. Accordingly, we can find three causes in 1 Corinthians which are relevant to our study.

5.3.2.1 The distortion of God's gift

Paul specifically emphasises that the Corinthian church has been enriched in all speaking and in all knowledge (1:5), stressing that the gifts of God's grace have been given to the

community in Christ Jesus (1:4). According to Prior, "all speaking" includes prophecy, teaching, preaching, evangelism, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues, and any use of the gift of speech which contributes to the building up of the church, and "all knowledge" means that the church as a body has access to all the wisdom, insight, discernment and truth which it needs (1985c: 24-25). The gifts of grace are a valuable, and indeed indispensable, accompaniment of Christian life. Paul clearly admitted the effectiveness of these gifts (Prior 1985c: 41). Regrettably, the gifts had become the instruments of factions within the church (Hays 1997: 18). Barrett (1971: 59) mentions:

> It is not the world's false boasting in its wisdom and ability that causes him to write 1 Corinthians but the same false boasting within the church, and at Corinth, where Christians were glorying in men, and wrongly evaluating their gifts. They can only do this because they have forgotten that their Christian existence depends not on their merit but on God's call, and the fact that the gospel is the message of the cross.

They were caught up in rivalries because they gloried in the superficially impressive human wisdom of this age. They were boasting about their own possession of wisdom and rhetorical eloquence: "*Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age?*" (1 Cor. 1:20a).

5.3.2.2 The wrong view of Christian leadership

The cause of factions, as has been noted above, was personal allegiance to particular leaders, rather than matters of theology (Bruce 1977c: 257; Goppelt 1980: 166). In particular, as Paul's expression, this relates to allegiance to their baptizers (1:13-16). Such external concern fractured the community. They were far too ready to put the spotlight on individuals, to play one off against another, to compare this person with that person. They

needed straight teaching on the nature and the function of Christian leadership (Hays 1997c: 22; Prior 1985c: 28-29).

5.3.2.3 The socio-economic variety of the members of the church

The phenomenon of status diversity in the Corinthian church may come as a surprise to those who are used to thinking of early Christianity as a movement of the lower classes (Harrison 1985c: 79-80)[18]. This impression has been encouraged by a certain reading of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 1:26: "*Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.*" Clearly the Corinthian church was not made up primarily of members of the privileged classes. But in this passage Paul suggests to us that some of the Corinthian believers were in fact wealthy and wellborn. The members of the Corinthian church were among the lower classes of Mediterranean society, but a few members of the community enjoyed relative affluence (Barrett 1978: 57; Bruce 1977c: 252; Harrison 1985c: 80).

Such social stratification carried over into their life and came into conflict with the Christian ideal of fundamental equality before God (Osiek 1984: 59; cf. Green 1970: 117-119). Hays mentions:

They represented a spectrum of differing social and economic classes, ranging from prosperous household heads to slaves. ... This socioeconomic variety may have created

[18] Celsus charged the Christians with being "the uninstructed, the servile and the ignorant", who "repel every wise man from the doctrine of their faith, and invite only the ignorant and vulgar." Origen, Contra Celsum, 6.14; 3.18 quoted from Green 1970: 44.

some tensions and difficulties within the church. This is most evident in the case of the problems surrounding the Lord's Supper, where the "haves" were disregarding and shaming the "have-nots" (1997c: 12).

5.3.3 Paul's teaching on the factions

The condition of the Corinthian church was far from what it should have been. The community was richly endowed with spiritual gifts, yet was in a way still unspiritual. It measured spiritual matters by worldly standards, above all by wisdom and power. Throughout the letter, he recalled the Corinthians' attention again and again to the future-directed character of the gospel (1:6-7) and highlighted the motif of the church's ultimate accountability to God's judgment (1:8). Paul went back to beginnings. He started to teach that God had called the Corinthian Christians "*into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*" (1:9). He declared that they were a community specially summoned by God for service (1:2). So he addressed the members of his church as 'brothers and sisters' (cf. 1:10, 11).

Paul appealed for unity, writing the letter to the church split by factions. Paul therefore emphasised harmony. "*You may be perfectly united in mind and thought*" (1:10). The word translated "united" (κατηρτισμένοι) here means restoration to a prior rightful condition and harmony of the church members (Morris 1983: 39; cf. Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19). The fact of Christian brotherhood was the ground for his appeal for unity. Prior (1985c: 36) states:

Paul's arguments against disunity all focused on Jesus Christ and it needed to be said

uncompromisingly that division and disunity in the church arose because the eyes of Christians were elsewhere rather than on Jesus Christ.

5.3.4 The elements of the contextual adaptation on Paul's teaching

The factions of the Corinthian church, as has been noted above, were not by clearly defined theological differences. But Paul presented the answer and principle on the issue in theological terms. As Hays has aptly observed, Paul's brilliance was the ability of contextualization to diagnose the situation in theological terms and to raise the inchoate theological issues into the light of conscious reflection in light of the gospel (1997c: 8). We find important contextual elements in Paul's arguments on the factions in the church.

5.3.4.1 The centrality of Jesus Christ

In Banks' view, at this time, greater numbers of people found their desires fulfilled in a variety of voluntary associations that multiplied in the cities all over the world, especially in Greek centres. The majority were established around a particular interest, vocation, or commitment. These were extremely varied: political, military and sporting concerns; professional and commercial guilds; artisans and craftsmen; philosophical schools, and religious brotherhoods. Most of these tended to draw together people who were socially homogeneous (Banks 1980: 16-17; Osiek 1984: 50-51).

The church also split into various groups by their concerns. Osiek (1984: 59) states:

The Corinthian Christians, like Christians of any age, did not cease being affected by social and cultural factors of their world all the while that they could proclaim the

abolition of differences between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female in Christ (Gal. 3:28; 1Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11).

Paul's arguments focused on Jesus Christ. Paul did not appeal to the Corinthians to stop bickering in the name of expediency or humanitarian tolerance. Instead, he pointed to Jesus Christ as the one ground of unity, because their identity was defined by one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:5). He reminded the Corinthians that they had been called into Christ's *koinonia*: "*God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful*" (1 Cor. 1:9). Hays (1997c: 27) mentions: "Paul has taken the central event at the heart of the Christian story - the death of Jesus - and used it as the lens through which all human experience must be projected and thereby seen afresh."

Furthermore, Paul injected into his treatment of the problem a discussion of wisdom, contrasting the wisdom of the world with wisdom of God (1:18-2:16). He set revealed truth, centring on Christ and his crucifixion, over against knowledge arrived at simply by human wisdom (1:18-2:16). "The wisdom of the world could not find God, nor had it power over evil" (Morris 1983: 47). The wisdom of the world never satisfies the hungry soul with forgiveness from and peace with God (Prior 1985c: 42). In contrast to human wisdom, God's wisdom picked out the scum of the earth and made them kings and priests in his kingdom (Prior 1985c: 46). Paul redefined true wisdom through Christ's death and resurrection (1:30). Therefore, the key word of Paul's argument on the factions was Jesus Christ.

5.3.4.2 The quotation of Scripture for verification

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, Paul quoted from the Old Testament to support his own assertions, to illustrate a point. Sometimes he modified the quotation from its original setting to relate it to a new context. With regard to the issue of the factions of the church, Paul had prominently spotlighted six Scriptural texts in the three chapters of 1 Corinthians (1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19, 20). In 1 Corinthians 1:19 and 1:31, he quoted from Isaiah 24:14 and Jeremiah 9:24, with a slight variation from the LXX. He presented God as one who acts to judge and save his people in ways that defy human expectation through these texts (Hays 1997c: 26). He excluded all glorying in human achievement. Instead, he proved his point from Scripture (Morris 1983: 50). Moreover, the two texts (Isa. 64:4; 40:13) in chapter 2 (2:9, 16), though they were not explicit admonitions against boasting, reinforced the same theme by juxtaposing God's gracious ways to all human understanding. Paul used the text to indicate the meaning of wisdom, the hidden, divine wisdom, not the wisdom of this age, in the sense of 'plan of salvation' (Barrett 1971: 73). 1 Corinthians 3:21f links the two texts in chapter 3 back to the texts in chapter 1. Paul once again appealed to Scripture in verses 19-20 to demonstrate the futility of human wisdom. These evidences mean that Paul moved from Scripture to the contextual reflection on the issues of the Corinthian church.

5.3.4.3 The using of metaphor

Paul wanted to correct the Corinthians' false concepts and thoughts, but did so lovingly. Paul's argument may suggest that in interacting with his church members, he sought to correct misunderstandings of their factions.

For that reason, Paul used many metaphors for them. Paul's metaphors reinforced the church's concepts in their minds, enabled them to recall important points: babies and adults (3:1-4), planting and watering (3:5-8), foundations and buildings (3:9-17), servants and stewards (4:1-7). The Corinthians themselves considered that they were wise and mature Christians. But Paul called them *babes in Christ* (3:1) because they were living in rivalry and disunity within the church (3:3). Paul used three metaphors for the church: the church as *God's field* (3:5-9), the church as *God's building* (3:10-15), and the church as *God's temple* (3:17-17). In particular, he corrected their wrong view of Christian leadership by means of the metaphor of planter and waterer. Paul and Apollos worked in Corinth as God's fellow workers, not as rivals. Paul and Apollo were servants and stewards (4:1) who did the bidding of their master, Jesus Christ (Barrett 1971: 85). Paul also stressed that the community is not just any building but in fact the temple of God, the place where God's Spirit dwells (3:16; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22).

Paul's metaphors were a means of reinforcing the church members' concepts in their minds, enabling them to recall important points.

5.3.4.4 The use of rhetorical questions

In Ramsay's opinion (1982: 252), Paul attempted to marry the gospel to Greek philosophy in his Areopagus speech (Acts 17:22-31), which was received with indifferent success. Therefore he determined to change his tactics and speech to encompass nothing but the cross (2:2). But Ramsay's assertion is not congruous (Barrett 1971: 63; Stott 1994: 289).

As shown from his epistles, Paul did not change his tactics in Corinth. He continued to teach, argue and persuade using rhetorical devices (Stott 1994: 289).

According to Zuck's research, Paul used rhetorical questions 102 times in 1Corinthians (1998: 171). Especially, he asked nineteen questions regarding the church's faction (1:13, 20; 2:11; 3:3, 4, 5, 16; 4:7, 21). As Zuck observes, Paul used questions for various purposes: to recall facts (1:13; 3:16); to pull persons up short (4:7, 21); to procure assent or agreement (1:20; 3:3, 4, 16); to promote thinking or reflection (1:13, 20; 2:11; 3:3, 4, 5, 16; 4:7, 21); to prod for an opinion (4:21); to point out something contrary to fact (1:13). Paul used questions to prod his listener and reader to think, and expressed concepts of the church and Christian leadership in strikingly picturesque ways. Many questions were asked by Paul to get the Corinthians to realize their false thinking and attitude. Zuck (1991: 171) says:

> Paul, the apostle-evangelist-teacher, was certainly a great question maker. He masterfully used questions in his ministry and his writings to stimulate his hearers' and readers' interest and to deepen their learning. His questions aroused interest, stimulated thought, envisioned implications, and encouraged decisions.

Paul began his questions in a variety of ways, all were contextual questions designed to stimulate the leaders to respond in thought and action.

5.4 The issue about food sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1)

Paul took up another issue from the Corinthians' letter to him: the problem of food

sacrificed to idols (Morris 1983: 124). This issue was one of the few fundamental restrictions imposed upon Gentile converts by the decree of the apostolic council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:28-29). There was some controversy among the Corinthian Christians whether it was permissible to eat the meat of animals used in pagan sacrifices. The eighth, ninth and tenth chapters of this epistle are principally devoted to the discussion of the problem. How did Paul deal with this issue? To answer that question we must look at the context in which the issue occurred.

5.4.1 The cause and situation of the issue

The attitude of Christians to idols was obvious. But it was not so easy for a new convert at Corinth in the first century, because sacrifice to the gods was an integral part of ancient life (Barclay 1971: 79). Many religions were practised in Corinth (Bruce 1980: 18-19; 1977c: 249; Reymond 2000: 166). Paul doubtless had Corinth's many gods and many lords in mind when he penned these words in 1 Corinthians 8:5.

The situation of Corinth was complicated by two facts (Prior 1985c: 144). First, most of the meat sold in the shops had first been offered in sacrifice (Barrett 1971: 188). Part of the animal was always offered on the altar to the god, a part went to the priests, and usually a part to the worshippers. The priests customarily sold what they could not use (Barclay 1971: 80). It would often be very difficult to know for sure whether meat in a given shop had been part of a sacrifice or not. Second, it was an accepted social practice to have meals in a temple, or in some place associated with an idol (Hays 1997c: 137). The kind of occasion, public or private, when people were likely to come together socially

was the kind of occasion when a sacrifice was appropriate. To have nothing to do with such gatherings was to cut oneself off from most social intercourse with one's fellows (Barclay 1971: 80). Some of the Corinthians were attending meals and festivities in the temples of pagan gods, just as they had done before becoming Christians.

The issue had arisen particularly because some Corinthian Christians were attending feasts held in the pagan temples, where meat was served to all present (8:10). As enlightened Christians, they possessed "knowledge" (γνῶσις) that there was only one god and that pagan idols were nothing other than lifeless statues, having no power to help or harm anyone (8:4; cf. Ps. 115:4-7). The strong Christian, armed with the appropriate knowledge, could go without compunction to the pagan temple and eat whatever was offered there. As Barrett (1971: 196) states, they had given up belief in the gods and in the efficacy of sacrifice, but continued to take part in rites in which they now saw no meaning for social reasons. Hays (1997c: 159) mentions:

In their view, this is merely a normal aspect of social life in their culture. Such activities entail no spiritual danger, they argue, because they have knowledge: knowledge that there is only one God, knowledge that sets them free from the petty rules and restrictions of ordinary religious life.

However, not every Christian, had this knowledge. There were some weaker brethren who had not risen to this knowledge in the church (8:9-11). The weaker brethren were hypersensitive regarding such matters (Prior 1985c: 147). As Prior emphasizes, they were "the over-legalistic, rigorist Christias who tends to cut anything and everything doubtful, just in case it might harm their relationship with God" (1985c: 147). They thought it sinful to eat of such sacrifices under any circumstances (Hodge 1978: 137). Their problem

therefore was: should they take part in such feasts? Should they eat meat bought in the shops but with dubious origins, yes or no? To the Christians in Corinth, this was a problem which pervaded their lives, and which had to be settled in one way or another.

5.4.2 Paul's interpretation of the issue

This issue which threatened the church had its origin in the conflicting prepossessions and prejudices of the Jewish and Gentile converts; or at least, of the more and less enlightened of the Christian converts. In discussing the issue, Paul affirmed its theological premises and expanded upon them in a way that would serve the purposes of his counter argument.

5.4.2.1 Theological premise

Paul's teaching was based on two truths. Firstly, there is one God (8:4). This conviction is already to be found in the Old Testament (cf. Deut. 6:4; 10:17; Isa. 44:8; 45:5). Paul contrasted the *many gods* and *lords* to the *one God* and *one Lord* whom Christians worship (8:5-6). He established firm common ground with the Corinthians, who would enthusiastically share in the uniqueness of God (Hays 1997c:140). As Barrett (1971: 192) says, his argument took place on the basis not of speculation, but of the acts of this God in history, through his Son (8:6). Secondly, food has no religious value (8:8). Paul admitted that an idol is nothing, that a sacrifice is nothing (8:4a). Consequently, the eating of sacrifices offered to idols was a matter of indifference, it made a man neither better nor worse. He was convinced, therefore, that eating sacrifices offered to idols was not in itself

wrong.

5.4.2.2 Paul's contextual interpretation

5.4.2.2.1 Eating of sacrifices offered to idols (8:1-13; 10:23-30)

After Paul established the theological basis on the discussion of meat offered to idols, he proceeded to deal with this issue in a contextual manner. He thought that eating sacrifices offered to idols was not in itself wrong (8:4-7). Therefore, he concurred with the Corinthians that the meat offered to idols was none the worse for that, and that Christians might say grace over it and eat it with a good conscience (10:25-27, 30; Bruce 1977c: 261).

Additionally, he presented the point that such knowledge was not universal among every Corinthian (8:7a). The important matter was the impact on the weak of what the strong might do in this sensitive situation. As Morris (1983: 127) states, "From their pre-Christian day the weaker brethren were so accustomed to thinking of the idol as real that they could not completely shake off such thoughts." They felt that they were doing wrong when they ate what had been offered to it.

Therefore Paul addressed the behaviour of the strong towards the weak. Above all he urged the strong to take care lest their liberty became a stumbling block to the weak (8:9). He continued:

For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ (8:10-12).

Paul stressed that "knowledge of the strong is defective if it fails to build up the community in love" (Hays 1997c: 137). Paul's arguments were very powerful. Paul, therefore, avowed his own determination never to eat meat at all, if by so doing he should cause his brother fall into sin (8:13). Consequently, he was always prepared voluntarily to restrict his liberty for other brothers (Bruce 1977c: 261). He admonished those Corinthians who regarded themselves as strong and wise to stop asserting their right and start thinking of the interests of others in the community. This was the guiding principle that has governed Paul's whole discussion of idol food.

In 10:27-28, with regard to an invitation to a meal of an unbeliever, Paul applied the same principle (Morris 1983: 149). He referred to the general principle of Christian liberty stated with the same limitations as in chapter 8: The meat of sacrifices sold in the market (10:25) or found on private tables (10:27), may be eaten without any hesitation (cf. Barclay 1971: 104). The reason, as given in Psalms 24:1, was that everything belonged to "the Lord" (10:26). It was not an issue of "conscience" at all. Hays (1997c: 176) comments on Paul's argument as follows:

Here is dramatic evidence of Paul's break with his past understanding of Judaism. He has become to the Gentiles "as one outside the Law" (9:21). As a Zealous Jew, Paul would never have eaten marketplace meat unless he was certain it had been ritually slaughtered in accordance with kosher laws. Now, however, in his role as apostle to the Gentiles, Paul can write "I know and am persuaded in the Lord that nothing is unclean in itself" (Rom. 14:14). Therefore, he tells the Corinthians they are free to eat market meat without

bothering to ask any questions about where it came from. To Jewish sensibilities, as well as to the weak at Corinth, such an attitude would have been shocking. This stance is, however, completely consistent with what we know of Paul's attitude towards the other identity-marking features of the Law, such as circumcision: They no longer mean anything (cf. 7:19).

But the situation was different if someone expressly said, "*this has been offered in sacrifice*" (10:28a). Under such circumstances, Paul said, the Christian should not eat the meat for the sake of the other person's conscience (10:28b-29). He did not want the Corinthians to forget about his concern for the weak in the community.

5.4.2.2.2 Attendance of sacrificial feasts in a heathen temple (10:1-22)

This whole discussion arose out of the question whether it was lawful to eat the sacrifices offered to idols. The danger was the greater, because those who participated in the sacrificial feasts of the pagans joined in the worship of idols. Paul asked his fellow Christians to avoid dining in the presence of idols: the Corinthians who attended these temple meals were not only endangering the weak but also putting themselves in spiritual peril.

Paul applied the history of Israel in the wilderness under Moses to the situation of the Corinthians (10:1-11). Firstly, by quoting Exodus 32:6, Paul aptly identified the eating of the temple food with the act of idolatry that brought God's wrath upon Israel (10:7). Secondly, he emphasised the warning precedent of Numbers 25:1-9 linked with fornication and idolatry. This was an act (10:8). Thirdly, in 10:9, Paul applied the story of Numbers. 21:4-9. Once again, food is the issue, though here there is no direct reference to

idolatry. It spoke of the people putting God to the test by their desire for food. The Corinthians were putting Christ to the test by attending pagan temples and participating in the idolatrous meals. The sacrificial feasts of the pagans were idolatrous, whatever they thought of them. Paul, then, came to the ultimate conclusion of his argument: "*Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry*" (10:14).

Paul continued his argument using the theological base of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (10:16-17). Particularly, he based the meaning of the Lord's Supper on the meaning of the word 'unity' (Barrett 1971: 234) and 'κοινωνία' (Bruce 1980: 94; Morris 1983: 146). In other words, participation of the Lord's Supper involved unity and communion with Christ, participation in pagan ordinances involved unity and communion and fellowship with demons (10:20-21). The so-called, 'strong' men of knowledge, the Corinthians, sought some sort of an anthropocentric compromise on this matter (Prior 1985c: 175), but Paul did not compromise on the pluralistic religiosity of their culture for the glory of God (10: 31).

5.4.3 The relation of the food sacrificed to idols with the decree of the council at Jerusalem

Before we close this section, let us pause to note the relation on two issues. The apostolic council at Jerusalem, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, decided on the freedom from Jewish law to Gentile converts. In addition, James requested a cultural accommodation when he urged the Gentiles not to eat food offered to idols and to abstain

from whatever was strangled and from blood (Acts 15:28-29). The issue of the Council concluded with a beautiful, harmonious spirit. However, Paul, in 1Corinthians 10:25-27, told the Corinthians that food exposed for sale in the market, or found on private tables, might be eaten without scruple. Do these facts prove any discrepancy between the decree of the council and Paul's assertion (cf. Goppelt 1980: 79)? It would be absurd to argue the discrepancy between them (Bruce 1977: 272-273). As Hodge (1978: 135) points out, "they only serve to explain the true intent and meaning of those decisions." Hodge continues about the relation of the food sacrificed to idols with the decree of the council at Jerusalem:

> They show, 1. That there was no permanent moral ground for the prohibition of meat offered to idols. 2. That the ground of the prohibition being expediency, it was of necessity temporary and limited (1978: 135).

Therefore, this issue is a good example of contextualization in which Paul's approach gives us a clear indication of how to deal with contextual behaviour rather than with a matter of inconsistency (Ericson 1978: 76). Paul adopted obvious contextual principles "*to win as many as possible*" (9:19).

5.4.3 The elements of the contextual adaptation of Paul's teaching

Paul began his argument with the declaration that "love builds up" (8:1), and he concluded this issue by declaring his own resolution. "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for glory of God. ... even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved*" (10:31, 33). What are Paul's contextual elements regarding the food sacrificed to idols?

From what we have seen of the description, we might search for some of these elements.

5.4.3.1 The theological premise - the fundamental truth about God

Paul's answer to the Corinthians was based on God, Creator (8:6). His argument went back to the event of creation, and he pointed out that idols have no real existence (8:4a). He stressed that God's good gifts were not sullied by being offered to a figment of man's imagination. "*There is no God but one*" (8:4b). Later on Paul once more referred to the creation, in 1 Corinthians 10:26: "*for, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it*". Therefore, there are fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the God, who is Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the deities worshipped in all other religions, however many peripheral similarities may be adduced.

Paul categorically talked about God the Father and Jesus Christ as equal in status and authority. "*For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live*" (8:6). God is the source and origin; he is also the goal and the purpose of our existence. Jesus Christ is the agent and mediator, namely, the one through whom everything and everyone comes into existence. This is the fundamental truth from which Paul would not be shifted. If the meaning is intrinsically contrary to Christian truth, no Christian may participate.

5.4.3.2 The overriding principle - love

Paul neither sided totally with the strong nor with the weak. Above all, he requested those who possess 'knowledge' to attend respectfully to the concerns of the weak, because love was more important than knowledge. "*Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up*" (8:1b). He insisted that the strong to surrender what they understand as their legitimate prerogatives for the sake of the weak (8:13-9:14). Hays (1997: 145) mentions: "He called for a shift from *gnosis* to *agape* as the ordering principle for Christian discernment and conduct." Prior (1985c:142) also states: "He is concerned that true agape-love should control and characterize their *gnosis* (knowledge)". Nissen (2004: 116) says: "Christian love is other centred, not self-centred, because the love is rooted in the Christ event." The meaning of love is exemplified in Christ Jesus. Love, then, is the guiding principle of the church as the community in the Holy Spirit (Ziesler 1983: 118). Paul's claim of the primacy of love was grounded in the story of Jesus. It was different from the other philosophical and religious options that exercised such powerful fascination for the Corinthians. So Paul's life responded to and recapitulated the life-pattern of Christ who gave his life for the weak (11:1).

5.4.3.3 The supreme consideration - the brother for whom Christ died

According to Paul, all foods are good, because "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (10:26; cf. Ps. 24:1). But Paul did not go on to say that a Christian may eat what foods he likes (Nissen 2004: 116). He appealed to the strong to limit their freedom for the sake of the weak. "*Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat*

meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall" (8:13). In so doing, they will be following the example of Christ, who died for the weak. Nissen (2004: 116) points out: "His knowledge has to be tested, and the test is: will it help or hurt a brother for whom Christ died? Even though all things and foods are good, it is people that matter." Thus Paul's continuing identification with the weak aimed not only to gain converts but also to strengthen their adherence to the community and to help them along the path of salvation (9:19). As such, Paul's effort shows his willingness to adapt his action in the interest of gospel.

5.4.3.4 The aim - the glory of God

This issue, as has been mentioned in the relation with the food sacrificed to idols and the decree of the council at Jerusalem, was complicated on the boundaries between the church and pagan culture. Sometime, it may appear to be an internally uncertain problem to us. But Paul, as has been noted above, expanded on his argument about this issue through elaborate theological premises. From Paul's argument we find out a very important contextual principle. His principle was clear: "so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (10:31). Paul highlighted that the Christian is not concerned with the assertion of his rights, but with the glory of God. Therefore, this means that eating, or drinking, or anything else, must be subordinated to this major consideration (Morris 1983: 150).

5.5 Conclusion

In his epistles, Paul dealt with the internal issues aiming to establish a church as a community with dynamic life. In particular, 1 Corinthians provides us with precise insight into how Paul struggled with the congregation of specific people in specific situations. As we observed above, Corinthians were made up of a spectrum of differing social and economic classes, ranging from prosperous household heads to slaves. Such multiplicity created some tensions and difficulties within the church. Moreover, their error was that they were uncritically perpetuating the norms and values of the pagan culture around them. In the pluralistic religiosity of their culture, Paul diagnosed the situation in theological terms, and reviewed the church's issues in light of the gospel.

Paul's arguments on the contextualization focused especially on Jesus Christ crucified and risen, and Paul repeatedly appealed to Israel's Scripture as a basis for the contextualization of his counsel to the community. Paul's contextual rule of mission, also, was to act with regard to the glory of God. He approached all things in such a way that God may be glorified.

Paul was both a man of flexibility and a man of freedom. The basis of flexibility was under Christ's law, and its goal was indicated by the insistence on "winning" people (1 Cor. 9: 19-23). "The law of Christ" is the "law of love" which becomes the authority for Paul's missionary efforts. For him, love is a dynamic concept. Paul wanted to accommodate himself to any condition of men if this would assist their reception of the gospel. Because of this fact, I believe that this missionary approach was a motive to

maintain the balance and coherency of his missions between the context and the gospel.

As the world becomes increasingly secular and pluralistic, we find ourselves in a situation resembling that of the first-century Christians. Priorities for the life and ministry of the Church in any given place and time constantly change. As Van Engen (1991: 125) points out, "The Church itself must become fully and completely contextualized as prophet, priest, and king for the sake of, in dynamic interaction with, and in the midst of its culture."

Understanding the context of the presenter and the hearer assists clear communication of an uncompromised gospel. And these contextual principles should be biblically based so they will apply in multiple cultural settings.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It is not overstating the case to assert that the apostle Paul was the most influential Christian who ever lived. As Goppelt points out, "Paul did not create and influence, as the head of a theological school, a universalist Christianity; nor did he stand above the popular Gentile Christianity as a great, prominent theologian. He was, at least according to his own picture of himself (Rom. 11:13; Gal.2:8; cf. Acts 22:21), the apostle to the Gentile Church" (1980: 66-67). Above all, on the basis of the revelation of Christ (Acts 9:4-6, 11-16; 22:17-21; 26:14-18; 1 Cor. 12:1-4), he had given the Gospel, for both the Jew and Greek its fundamental character (Rom. 11:1-32). He had built the Church of Christ Jesus totally on the basis of this Gospel.

Paul believed that the gospel of Jesus was applicable to all men throughout all nations. He longed to see the gospel take deep root in the soil of every culture. To accomplish the goal he became "all things to all men." In his passion to preach Jesus, he struggled with serious and complex contextual issues as he crossed the great divide which separated the Jewish and Gentile world. Paul's hermeneutical axioms on the contextual issues were grounded in God's design in history and the centrality of Jesus to the plan. With regard to the Gentile mission, all his missionary acts were clearly based on the word of God. The basis of evangelist integrity is a commitment to the gospel: "*I do it all for the sake of the gospel*" (1 Cor. 9:23). The unchanging centre of Paul's work was total preoccupation with Jesus Christ. This was the core of his contextual missions. The Spirit of the Lord who

empowered Paul to do the world mission successfully takes the initiative for today and future mission. Paul's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit is seen in his passion for Christ and the gospel.

However Paul was by no means a stubborn, inflexible individual. On the contrary, he was ready to accommodate himself and his message to any situation, becoming a Jew to the Jews, a Gentile to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 9:19-23). He was not willing to put any obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:12). In fact, rightly viewed, it was his inflexibility with respect to doing everything in his power to promote the simple gospel of God's grace in all its immaculate purity that made him so flexible in all relatively minor matters. He was so free that, unless a theological issue was at stake, he could willingly surrender his freedom in order to facilitate the spread of the gospel. This is seen most clearly in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Although free, Paul voluntarily became a slave to the weaknesses of others.

Paul seems to be quite sensitive to movements and currents of his time. This attempt of Paul to express his Christian experience in a language that would awaken echoes in a non-Christian world around him should always remain an inspiration and model for us to pursue the same contextual process in our own times. Paul adapted to the style and needs of his day as evangelists must do in every historical period and cultural context. Despite all the different situations in which he preached the gospel, calling forth different articulations in response to their assessment of the varied needs of those whom they addressed, they regarded its core as a nonvariable. Of course, his gospel did not change; however, the way he presented it differed significantly. He demonstrated the ability to adapt the

approach of his preaching to his listener's style of listening.

In connection with Paul's contextual mission, we must guard against the idea that "Paul regarded himself as free to adapt to Jews and Gentiles merely because he was convinced that the only valid missionary stance was to be fiercely pragmatic" (Grasser, Van Engen, Gilliland and Redford 2003c: 298). Such a misconception can read to Paul at this point being charged with unprincipled opportunism: a Judaizer among Jews and a paganizer among Gentiles. However, as his contextual adaptationist strategy arose almost solely out of his theology and was not a methodological expedient, an explanation is in order. Hence, we must guard against focusing attention on Paul's methods and rather search out the principles upon which they were based.

Missiology, over the years, has experienced its share of paradigm shifts. The change of focus from indigenization to contextualization is one of the most significant in contemporary missiology. Tippett considers this change to be the greatest methodological issue facing the Christian mission today (Tippett 1975: 116). Contextualization is also the most necessary and the most dangerous reality in modern mission settings. The danger in contextualization is the possibility of bending the truth of the gospel to the culture. This is known as syncretism. In an effort to make the biblical truths relevant, Christian meanings may be sacrificed through the blending of the Christian message with non-Christian teachings.

Effective communication of the gospel requires careful theological reflection. I believe that the evangelist can find a way to present a changeless gospel in a changing world by

carefully walking the line between relevance and syncretism through such theological reflection. For the most important task of biblical contextualization, we must be deeply rooted in biblical truth. God's word provides the ultimate assumptions that underlie our beliefs and norms. David Bosch (1993: 177) said, "Our point of departure should not be the contemporary enterprise we seek to justify, but the biblical sense of what being sent into the world signifies." At the same time we must recognize that the gospel of Jesus must be proclaimed in ever-changing, context-specific circumstances. We must learn from the culture what people think they need, and demonstrate to them in their own terms how Jesus Christ can meet those needs. The biblical healthy contextualization should strike a balance between the need to communicate effectively and relevantly within a given culture, and the need to maintain the integrity of the gospel itself so that the message received is both meaningful and convicting.

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ABSTRACT

1. The aim of this study

The aim of this thesis is to indicate how Paul preached the gospel of Christ in the contexts of various mission fields through a hermeneutic approach to the Acts and Paul's epistles. To study Paul as a biblical model of contextual mission is invaluable.

2. The background of Paul as a model of contextualization

Paul's Hebraic, Hellenistic and Roman backgrounds and the theological background relate to his missions. God orchestrated several factors in Paul's background that enabled him to become one of the most significant evangelists in the history of the church. Paul's Jewish-Roman background and cosmopolitan outlook fitted him for a unique ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was the ideal person to bridge the cultural and religious chasm.

3. The contextualization of Paul regarding ritual

By its decree, the Council at Jerusalem, setting the standards for Gentile participation in the Christian community, manifestly upheld God's demand for truth and for love of the brotherhood. Faith in Christ could not and must not be made dependent on the observance of certain rituals and traditions. If inherited traditions hindered the liberty of

Christ and the worship of God, they should be abandoned. This was Paul's consistent belief on contextual evangelization with regard to the ritual issue.

4. Contextualization of Paul's message

As an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul struggled to find a relevant way to translate the supracultural gospel of Jesus Christ in the multiple cultural contexts. He proclaimed that Christ was good news for all people. The strategies employed by the evangelist were borrowed from the secular gentile realm because he preached to secularists.

5. Paul's contextualization of the issues of the church

Paul dealt with the internal issues aiming to establish the church as a community of dynamic life. In the pluralistic religiosity of their cultures, Paul diagnosed the situation in theological terms, and reviewed the church's issues in light of the gospel.

6. Final statement

Above all, on the basis of the revelation of Christ, he had given the Gospel, for both the Jew and Greek its fundamental character. He had built the Church of Christ Jesus totally on the basis of this Gospel. With regard to the Gentile mission, all his missionary acts were clearly based on the word of God. The unchanging centre of Paul's work was total preoccupation with Jesus Christ. Paul adapted to the style and

needs of his day as evangelists must in every historical period and cultural context. He is a model of contextual mission to modern evangelists regarding cross-cultural communication in a pluralistic.

OPSOMMING

1. Die doel van hierdie studie

Die doel van hierdie tesis is om, vanuit 'n hermeneutiese benadering tot die boek Handelinge en die briewe van Paulus, aan te toon hoe Paulus die evangelie van Jesus Christus in die konteks van verskeie sendingvelde verkondig het. Om Paulus as 'n Bybelse model van kontekstuele sending te bestudeer is van onskatbare waarde.

2. Die agtergrond van Paulus as 'n kontekstuele model

Paulus se Joodse, Hellenistiese en Romeinse agtergrond, sowel as sy teologiese agtergrond, hou met sy sendingoptrede verband. God het verskeie faktore in Paulus se agtergrond georkestreer. Dit het hom in staat gestel het om een van die mees uitstaande evangeliste in die geskiedenis van die kerk te word. Paulus se Joods-Romeinse agtergrond en sy kosmopolitiese uitkyk het hom gevorm vir 'n unieke bediening as apostel onder die heidene. Paulus was die ideale persoon om die kulturele en godsdienstige geloof te oorbrug.

3. Die kontekstualisering van Paulus rakende rituele

Die raad in Jerusalem, wat die beginsels vasgestel het vir heidense deelname aan die Christelike gemeentskap, het veral klem gelê op God se vir waarheid en liefde jeens die

naaste. Geloof in Christus kon nie en mag nie afhanklik gemaak word van die nakoming van sekere rituele en tradisies nie. As daar oorgelewerde tradisies is wat 'n struikelblok vir die vryheid van Christus en die diens aan God is, dan moet dit verwyder word. Dit was juis deurgaans Paulus se siening oor die rituele aspek van kontekstuele evangelisasie.

4. Die kontekstualisering van Paulus se boodskap

As 'n apostel onder die heidene het Paulus geworstel met 'n relevante metode om die bo-kulturele evangelie van Jesus Christus in multikulturele kontekste te vertaal. Hy het verkondig dat Christus vir alle mense goeie nuus is. Die strategieë wat hy gebruik het, het hy van die sekulêre wêreld geleen omdat hy vir sekulêre mense gepreek het.

5. Paulus se kontekstualisering van sake in verband met die kerk

Paulus het hom besig gehou met interne sake met die doel om die kerk as 'n gemeenskap met 'n dinamiese lewe te vestig. In die pluralistiese godsdienstigheid van hulle kulture het Paulus op teologiese wyse 'n diagnose van die situasie gemaak en kerklike sake in die lig van die evangelie bekyk.

6. Konklusie

Wat uitstaan is die feit dat Paulus op grondslag van die openbaring van Christus aan die evangelie 'n grondliggende karakter gegee het-vir Jood sowel as Griek. Hy het die kerk

van Christus totaal en al op die evangelie gebou. Wat die heidensending betref, was al sy sendingwerk duidelik op die Woord van God gebaseer. Die onveranderlike sentrum van Paulus se werk was sy sterk klem op Jesus Christus. Paulus het by die vorm en behoeftes van die dag aangesluit, net soos evangeliste dit in elke tyd en kulturele konteks moet doen. Hy is 'n voorbeeld van kontekstuele sending vir hedendaagse evangeliste wat betref multikulturele kommunikasie in 'n plurale samelewing.

KEY WORDS

New Testament studies

Pauline Theology

Christianity Culture

Gentile Mission

Contextualization

Hermeneutical Approach

The Principles of contextualization

Communication

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