Naming Heroes, Parting Ways
A Social History of the Early Development of Christian Identity in Asia Minor

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Summary

This study explores the link connecting a growing social division between Christians and Jews in the second century and the development of Christian literary traditions involving the origins of their communities and associated founding fathers. Ephesus is a test case, chosen for its diverse population and its connection to both Paul and John the Apostle. After first examining the historical framework for the beginnings of an Ephesian Christian community, an investigation of social factors after 70 CE will illuminate various texts regarding Ephesus and contextualize the recognition of John as the primary founder of Ephesian Christianity.

Introduction

If the Jesus movement can be considered as one of several competing ideologies in first century Judaism, then in many ways one can safely argue that it lost the contest. For although the teachings of Jesus' early followers developed into a full-scale religion in the Roman Empire, somewhere along the way the adherents to this new religion were no longer considered Jews. This is the problem of the so-called "parting of the ways," explaining how a relatively small group of Jews proclaiming the Jewish messiah gradually created an identity separate from Judaism. It was not only a matter of Jews at large rejecting a minority sect. The situation was complicated by the fact that Jesus-followers generally did not deny their Jewish roots, but rather

came to see themselves as the true people of Israel[1]. Justification was no longer from upholding

the Jewish Law, and the original nation of Israel had "failed to obtain what it was seeking"

(Rom. 11:7). So, the exclusion was mutual: Jews and Jesus-followers both accused each other of

misunderstanding the religion. It was the Jesus-followers who took on a new name.

The historical parting, of course, was neither simple nor immediate. In a fourth century

homily against the Jews, John Chrysostom declares, "I shall choose to risk my life rather than let

[a brother] enter the doors of the synagogue" and he sharply disapproves of those Christians

"who think of the synagogue as a holy place" (Halsall, IV.6, V.2). Chrysostom's comments

certainly articulate a strong disassociation between Christians and Jews, but the fact that he must

address the issue at all implies that some Christians see attending the synagogue as an acceptable

practice. While Chrysostom denounces Jewish practices and claims a full ideological separation

between Christians and Jews, it appears that as late as the fourth century the parting of the ways

may not have been complete—that is, not a fully realized social separation. Yet even with social

intermingling, Chrysostom's homily presupposes that his listeners understood themselves as

belonging to a separate category from the synagogue goers, and it is reasonable to think they did.

By this time, Christians had their own well-formed identity. In order to explore the early

development of a Christian identity out of Judaism, this study focuses on Ephesus.

Tracing a history of Christian origins in Ephesus is rather complicated. A prominent

Roman city with a substantial Jewish population, Ephesus was a hub of ideas and trade in Asia

Minor; the first and second centuries were the "height of its prosperity" (Achtemeier 296ff).

During this time, Ephesus was also an important center for Christian activity, largely beginning

with Paul's first arrival in the city. Murphy-O'Connor calls Ephesus the place in which Paul did

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[1] Although Marcion tried to eliminate all Old Testament and Jewish connections from Christianity, his view did not
have wide Christian support (see Ehrman 1999:96).

his "most creative theological work" (2008:245). Ephesus is the provenance of 1 Corinthians,

and possibly the origin of a few more of Paul's letters[2]. Curiously, however, Paul is largely

absent from second-century Christian texts concerning the origins of the Ephesian community, or

at least his role is downplayed. Instead, Ephesus is primarily associated with John the Apostle.

Is the community that Paul founded that same one that later venerated John? If so, then why?

This Paul-John tension also exists in the region surrounding Ephesus, as is apparent with

Polycarp of Smyrna. Early church fathers held that John the Apostle was Polycarp's mentor,

before Polycarp became a bishop. In his letter to Florinus, Irenaeus describes Polycarp as one

who "would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen

the Lord" (Kirby "Polycarp"). Polycarp's own writing, however, appears to depend on Paul,

thus creating some confusion. Berding summarizes the problem quite nicely, asking, "Should

Polycarp be viewed as standing in the tradition of the Apostle John, as he has been viewed

throughout church history, or should he be viewed as standing in the tradition of the Apostle

Paul, as one might suppose simply by reading the letter Polycarp himself wrote?" (137).

One must ask, how similar were these two traditions? How does Polycarp, demonstrating

Pauline influence, come to be regarded as a disciple of John? Of course, it is entirely possible

that Polycarp did have a mentor named John[3]. Irenaeus recognizes Paul as the founder of the

Ephesian community[4], so why does he not praise Polycarp as belonging to the tradition of Paul?

Perhaps the intuitive answer would be that Polycarp's association with "eye-witnesses of the

Word of life" is a more powerful credential than simply being in the Pauline tradition (Kirby

"Polycarp"). The problem, however, is hardly so straightforward.

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[2] See Koester, H. 120. Murphy-O'Connor theorizes that Paul also composed Galatians, sections of Philippians, Colossians and Philemon in Ephesus, although this lacks a scholarly consensus (212-222; cf. Koester, H. 122, Ehrman 352-4).
[3] Whether or not this could have been John the Apostle is debated; see Berding 138-9, for instance.
[4] *Against the Heresies*, book 3 (Kirby "Polycarp"); also quoted in Eusebius 3.23 (Williamson)

As a complicating counter-example, consider Ignatius. Unlike traditions about Polycarp, Ignatius went to great effort to connect himself to the Paul. Ignatius compares his own journey to Rome with Paul's martyrdom, and he praises the Ephesians for being "initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found" (Brent 14-5; *Eph.* 12). Ignatius certainly is aware of Paul's connection to Ephesus, but he fails to mention John. Did Ignatius know about a tradition of John the Apostle in Ephesus? How prominent was such a tradition, if it even existed at all? Ignatius references Paul between exhortations to the Ephesians, presuming that his audience will respond favorably to the mention of their community's founder. For Ignatius, Paul is linked to Ephesus.

With this in mind, now return to Polycarp in Smyrna. Irenaeus sees Polycarp as primarily associated with John, and Polycarp's own letter to the Philippians does contain some Johannine influences (Berding 139). Polycarp's letter, however, also has obvious Pauline influences, and a careful analysis shows that Polycarp does not belong to a single "stream" of Christian thinking (Berding 143). Pauline and Johannine traditions may have been thoroughly mixed by Polycarp's time. Even so, why would a second-century Christian community in Asia Minor not seize every opportunity to claim its heritage from the great missionary who brought the good news to the Gentiles? How did John become the exemplary authoritative apostle?

This Paul-John tension demonstrates the complexity of the development of Ephesian Christian identity. Paul has historical precedence in Ephesus, but by the end of the second century, John appears to be favored. The apocryphal *Acts of John* present the Ephesians turning to Christianity with shouts of "There is only one God, that of John" (42, Ehrman 1999:12). In late second-century traditions, Paul has only a supporting role, if any, in the building of an Ephesian Christian community. In order to discover why, one must dig deeply into the origins of

Christianity in Asia Minor, and what changes occurred after the first generation of believers.

Examining early Christian and Roman sources, this study argues that the social development of a

uniquely Christian identity, one separate from Judaism, catalyzed the second-century recognition

of John, not Paul, as the primary founding church father in Ephesus.

All Things to All People
Paul's Call to Mission

In many ways, one can argue that Christianity begins at the resurrection. Before entering

into the question of what kinds of social distinctions existed between *Christians* and *Jews* during

the decades immediately following the resurrection, it is important to first examine the

movement of the Gospel. The Gospel itself was a distinguishing factor; strong conviction that

the risen Jesus was the Messiah set his followers apart from other Jews. Wedderburn calls the

disciples' belief in this matter "undeniable" (17). Avis concludes that it is "most improbable" to

think of the Gospel as a deception (116-117). News of the resurrection sparked a genuine

change in believers. The great miracle of the resurrection was the starting point for a new

movement, one that would change the world (cf. Corner 127). These Jesus-followers were filled

with eagerness and hope, and they had a clear mission: tell others about the Christ.

Indeed, the rapid expansion of the Gospel message is a common theme in first-century

writings from the Jesus-followers. This sudden, even miraculous increase in believers was

central to their proclamation. Acts 2:47 declares that "the Lord added to their number day by

day those who were being saved." Before Acts, in Paul's account of Jesus' post-resurrection

appearances, the rapid expansion theme appears. Paul narrates, "[Jesus] appeared to Cephas,

then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of

whom are still alive…Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Paul preaches with the fervor of one who has actually seen the risen lord, he being one of many witnesses within his generation. If the Christ is thought to be at the center, one can imagine concentric circles expanding outward, like ripples from a stone thrown into a pond. Paul is in the outmost circle, and he invites his audience to share in the grace he has received. Of this grace he says, "so we preach and so you believed" (1 Cor. 15:11). The Corinthians are part of a rapidly expanding network of followers.

This expansion, especially in the centuries following, has been the subject of study for many scholars. Stark suggests a growth rate of approximately 40% per decade (Stark 6-11). Commonly cited historical factors in the expansion include the ease of travel in the Roman Empire and the *Pax Romana*, the Greek language allowing for a cultural and linguistic unity across regions, the appeals to contemporary philosophical and religious ideas, and the general hospitality given to all members of the community regardless of their social status[5]. In addition, Stark considers how Christian morals may have prompted better-than-average nursing practices during epidemics, thus increasing survival rates (88-89). Hinson ponders the attractiveness of baptism, as a ritual comparable to other religious traditions (219-221). The complex intersection of all these factors undoubtedly played a role in the widespread expansion of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

Yet in the decades shortly after the resurrection, two elements appear to have been most critical in the expansion of the Gospel: individual charisma and a strong connection between Jerusalem and Greek-speaking Diaspora communities. Paul exhibited both. These two components were integral in the founding of Pauline communities such as the one at Ephesus,

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[5] On this subject, see Green 13-20, Mullen 13-17, Malherbe 62-67, Stark 135-137, and Harnack 19-24, 181-185

and, as this study will demonstrate, were crucial in setting the stage for the parting of the ways

between Christians and Jews. Paul's own writings offer excellent examples of these factors.

First, Paul was a leader with charisma[6]. Before there were groups of Christ-followers in

cities throughout the empire, before there were authoritative Christian texts and standardized

rituals, before there was any structured hierarchy in church leadership, the spread of the Gospel

needed *charisma*. Communities outside of Jerusalem needed an inspiring leader who could teach

them by tailoring his preaching to their needs. In order to expand the movement, believers need

a leader to challenge them, and motivate them to action. Such a leader needed credibility; he

needed to rely on a raw, inner authority that compelled his audience to listen even when he held

no official title. He needed to merit enough respect in order to maintain a voice in his

communities while he was away traveling—as it happens, Paul was quite itinerant.

Furthermore, charisma had spiritual connotations. *Charisma* (χάρισμα), in this sense,

refers to something divinely bestowed. These spiritual gifts are essential in Pauline theology.

Paul writes, "Now there are varieties of gifts (χαρισμάτων), but the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:4).

The many gifts lead to many roles in the body of believers. Paul goes on to explain, "God has

appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of

healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues" (12:28). For Paul, it is acceptable

that he instructs the congregation because he has received a gift to do so from God, just as all

believers have their own unique gifts. Interestingly, Paul puts apostle—his own position[7]—first.

Of course, this does not automatically make him more important than other members of

the body of believers. He affirms, "the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are

indispensable" (12:22). The ordering does suggest a kind of rank, but it is a natural one. There

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[6] The avoidance of the term *charismatic* is intended to prevent confusion with modern Charismatic Christianity.
[7] Paul refers to himself as an apostle in several of his epistles, including earlier in 1 Corinthians (1:1, 9:1, for example). See also Rom. 1:1, 11:13; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; etc.

are "higher gifts," to be desired, and Paul's authority is built on his possession of these gifts

(12:31). Paul's encouragement in the pursuit of these "higher gifts" shows his willingness for

others to take on a status similar to his own. Part of Paul's charisma was to inspire others to

serve as leaders in the body of believers, and his ministry was dependent on self-sufficient

outreach "cells" for spreading the Gospel (Gehring 180-1). Paul's work as an apostle was to

preach the good news and inspire his audience to become a functioning body of believers.

In addition to his charisma, the second factor in Paul's expansion of the Gospel was his

connections to both Jerusalem and the Greek-speaking world. According to Acts, Paul was "born

in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city [Jerusalem], educated at the feet of Gamaliel"

(22:3). On one hand, Paul describes himself prior to his encounter with Christ as being an

exemplary first-century Jew: "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe

of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the

church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:5-6). While this passage

emphasizes Paul's assurance in his Jewish identity, other details of his life show a significant

amount of contact with the Gentile world.

Paul certainly had an eagerness to preach to the Gentiles, recognizing this as his purpose

in Christ (Gal. 1:16). Some of his earliest co-laborers, such as Titus, were Gentiles (Gal. 2:3).

Wedderburn points out that Paul's connection to his hometown of Tarsus may explain his early

missionary work in Cilicia (81; cf. Gal. 1:21). Then there is the issue of Paul's Roman

citizenship. Acts dramatically unveils this detail, with Paul announcing to the tribune, "I am a

citizen by birth" (22:28). That Paul held this status comes across as unlikely, but certainly it was

not impossible; it may have resulted from his family being slaves of a Roman citizen and then set

free (Wedderburn 83). Paul's citizenship would have been another component of his life that set

him apart from the majority of his fellow Jews in Jerusalem. These circumstances show that,

even prior to Christ sending him on a mission to the Gentiles, Paul was at home both in Jewish

Jerusalem and outside in the Hellenized world.

In fact, Paul's ability to function as a sort of cultural ambassador between Jews and

Gentiles goes a long way to explain the workings of Paul's mission the Greek-speaking world.

According to Acts, Paul can switch easily between Aramaic (22:2) and Greek (21:37). Paul's

own ministry also attests to his language skills. As Wedderburn observes, Paul's use of the Old

Testament relies on a Greek version, and strong Greek communicative ability was needed for his

preaching (80-81). Even Paul's use of the term *Greek* (Ἕλλην) is complex; sometimes he

employs it in the sense of "as opposed to a barbarian" and sometimes in the sense of "as opposed

to a Jew" (e.g. Romans 1:14-16, cf. Wallace 4). He is familiar with both distinctions, from both

a Gentile-centered and a Jew-centered viewpoint. Paul reports, "when James and Cephas and

John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right

hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:9). It is likely

that, given Paul's hometown in the Greek-speaking world, he did feel an affinity toward both

Gentiles and Jews in the Diaspora. He apparently had the skills to converse with both groups,

and it is not surprising that the "pillars" in Jerusalem endorsed him for the job.

It is at this point necessary to ask where between the Greek and Jewish worlds Paul puts

his identity as a believer in Christ. After his experience with Christ does Paul actually consider

himself to have left Judaism? Notice the avoidance of the phrase 'Paul's conversion,' as it

appears that Paul never thought of himself as having changed religions[8]. Gentile god-fearers

already a place in Jewish culture, so the difference was not that Paul included Gentiles for the

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[8] On one level there is the change from a life in which Paul "persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it" to a life in which he shared the good news of Jesus Christ, but it is rather anachronistic to say that Paul switched from Judaism to Christianity, as we will see (Gal. 1:13). Paul did not use such terminology.

first time (e.g., Acts 10:2). The difference was the way in which he included Gentiles—as equals

with the Jews in Christ. Paul merges the Jewish and Greek worlds to create a new category of

Jesus-followers. As evidenced in Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek…for you are all

one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). This however, is not something entirely separate from Judaism.

Some of Paul's fellow believers still wished to follow aspects of the Jewish Law, leading Paul to

write persuasively against this idea in his letter to the Galatians (Ehrman 2008:339). While

previously Jews and Gentiles were divided for reasons of ritual purity, Paul removes this

distinction yet maintains believers are children of Israel. How, then, does his system work?

To begin, Paul describes this new category as the "church of God." In Galatians, Paul

persecutes the "church of God" (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ) as a group separate from his own zeal

in Judaism. In this context, *ekklesia tou theou* refers to the assembly of believers in Jesus, that is,

those putting glory in Christ and not in the flesh. The phrase appears elsewhere in the Pauline

corpus. In 1 Corinthians, the church of God is all of those in Corinth who are "sanctified in

Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of

our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2). Anyone who calls upon Jesus as the Christ is sanctified, and there

are no limitations on who can do this or where. The church of God is open to Jews and Greeks.

Moreover, Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. For this reason, Paul must explain how Jewish

redemption belongs to the Greeks. Here Paul relies his Jewish origins and he challenges his own

former position as a Pharisee. Paul takes themes from the Jewish scriptures and reworks them in

light of Christ. Believers are "children of promise," metaphorically born of Sarah (Gal. 4:28).

Just as through Adam's one trespass sin entered the world, through Jesus' one act of obedience

all are made righteous (Rom. 5:19). Most controversial is Paul's interpretation of the Jewish

Law. Abraham was not justified by his good works, but by his faith—this coming before his

circumcision (Rom. 4). Paul builds his argument on evidence from the Jewish scriptures, as if

his primary audience is Jewish. As Segal puts it, Paul "uses his midrashic technique to drive a

wedge between faith and Torah, a distinction which would never have occurred to a Pharisee"

(166).   Righteousness does not come from the law, but according to Paul, this has been the

underlying idea of the Torah all along. Paul fully recognizes Jesus as the fulfillment of the

Jewish scriptures, and he also acknowledges that Gentiles can receive righteousness apart from

the law. Both Jew and Greek have equal access to Christ Jesus, and thus to the "church of God."

Paul declares, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but

only faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Keeping the Jewish Law is irrelevant for

justification before God.

At least, in theory this was true. Others were not so quick to follow Paul's departure

from the Jewish Law. Paul rebukes Peter for withdrawing from the Gentiles in Antioch (Gal.

2:11). Paul's letter to the Galatians is occasioned by confusion from those who "want to distort

the gospel of Christ" and encourage Gentiles to undergo the rite of circumcision (1:7; Ehrman

2008:339). Acts has the fascinating account of Paul's arrest in the Jewish temple[9], during which

the church elders in Jerusalem encourage Paul to prove his observance of the law in order to

dispel rumors about him among Jewish believers (21:20-4). Paul, not quite as bold here as he is

in his letter to the Galatians, submits to their wishes. Such a practice was not unfamiliar to Paul.

Speaking generally, he describes his methods as such:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one
under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To
those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but
under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that
I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save
some. – 1 Cor. 9:20-22

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[9] Incidentally, also featuring Trophimus the Ephesian. The specifics of this episode and what it can say about Paul's
work in Ephesus are to be discussed later in this study.

Although in principle he did not see the Jewish Law as necessary for salvation, in practice he knew to keep a delicate balance. Apparently Paul was more or less a Jew depending on the circumstances, once again being able to move easily between Jewish and Greek spheres. This passage implies a regular pattern of interactions with people who have differing viewpoints on the function of the Jewish Law, to which Paul saw it more important to focus on the primary issue of salvation through Christ. Unfortunately, he still found his share of opponents.

While Paul is in the temple in Jerusalem, a group of Jews from Asia recognize him. They incite a riot, shouting, "This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place" (21:24). This representation of hostility is likely right on the mark. With political and nationalistic tensions on the rise, Jerusalem in the years prior to the outbreak of revolt was not a safe place for a Gentile-loving Jew (Wedderburn 154; Alexander 22). Paul might as well have been a Roman soldier spitting on the temple floor. Was this reaction typical for Paul? How did it compare to Paul's prior encounters with Jews during his missionary journeys outside of Judea? That is, how was Paul generally received in Diaspora synagogues?

Sources indicate that whenever he came to a new city, Paul went to the synagogues first. Throughout Acts, Paul goes to the synagogue upon arriving in a new place. Examples include Damascus, Salamis, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and, of course, Ephesus (Acts 13-18). Paul's ministry was clearly not exclusive to non-Jews. Quite the opposite, Jews were very often his first point of contact (cf. Haacker 27-28).

Although an equally common theme in Acts is Paul's expulsion from the synagogue, or the instigation of an uproar. Some of Paul's most vocal opponents were his fellow Jews, "who viewed him as an apostate" with "'lawless' behaviour, especially his table fellowship with 'unclean' Gentiles" (Barton 42). He is driven out of Pisidian Antioch, stoned at Lystra, and

hunted by a mob in Thessalonica (Acts 13, 14, 17). Paul recounts, "Five times I received at the

hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one" (2 Cor. 11:24). It is not surprising, then, that Paul's

ministry efforts typically resulted in the establishment of a house church, outside of the

synagogue (cf. Gehring 119-30). He appears to have preached as long as he could in the

synagogue, gathering new believers, and then transitioning to a focus on "evangelism and

nurture in individual households" (Barton 45). Even in the Greek-speaking world, Paul's

relations with the Jewish people were often strained at best. His "church of God" model did not

have universal appeal. Many Jews were horrified at Paul's Gospel of freedom from the Jewish

Law, and even many Jesus-followers were hesitant to get on board (cf. Gal. 5).

Even still, Paul put himself at great physical risk to maintain a connection to the Jewish

population in the synagogue while also reaching the Gentiles (Barton 42). He attempted to

merge the Jewish and Greek worlds to invite all people into the church of God. He would

become all things to all people in order to share the Gospel of salvation. This likely was Paul's

mindset when he began his ministry in Ephesus.

Artemis of the Ephesians
Historical Background of the City of Ephesus

Before examining the specifics of Paul's ministry, it is essential to first understand what

kind of city was Ephesus. During the first and second centuries of the Common Era, Ephesus

was in a golden age. The city was at the height of its prominence within the Roman Empire,

with a population perhaps as high as 200,000 (cf. Murphy-O'Connor 131). Ephesus was known

for its bustling harbor and, most importantly for this study, its enormous cult of the goddess

Artemis. The cult of Artemis was in many ways unique among the various Roman religious

systems. The worship of a mother goddess at site of Ephesus predates Greek colonization, and,

unlike in other cities[10] in the empire, no other cult competed with her following (cf. Achtemeier

296). Although the Ephesus was a "vibrant, multilingual, multicultural city," Artemis was a

single unifying factor (Strelan 34). Worshiping Artemis was part of being Ephesian—unless, of

course, one happened to be an Ephesian Jew. While it is an oversimplification to divide the

populace simply into Jews and Gentiles, it was likely with these broad categories in mind that

Paul approached Ephesus. Differences between these groups effectively center on Artemis.

Artemis and the Ephesian Gentiles

As for the Gentiles, one cannot overstate the importance of Artemis in Ephesian culture.

Strelan calls Artemis "inseparable" from Ephesus (46). As Rowe observes, Artemis of the

Ephesians was well known throughout the entire Mediterranean world (45). Perhaps the best

example of her fame is that ancient writers considered the Temple of Artemis to be one of the

great Seven Wonders of the World ("Seven Ancient Wonders"). The emperors Gaius and

Tiberius both considered building temples for themselves in Ephesus, but they chose not to in

order to avoid competing with the Artemis cult (Strelan 80). Even the Roman Emperor did not

dare to challenge the popularity of Artemis! Her presence in Ephesus was dominant.

Murphy-O'Connor describes the history of Artemis in this way:

She had been born there before the Greeks arrived, and her prestige was intertwined with the
development of the city throughout all its history…Artemis was part of the fabric of Ephesus,
and the city was unthinkable without her (200).

The riot of the silversmiths in Acts 19—to be discussed later in this study—does represent an

accurate socio-economic consideration of the Artemis cult. Annual festivals such as the

Artemision and the *Thargelion* had tremendous social and economic impacts, bringing in

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[10] Murphy-O'Conner gives the example of Corinth, especially as a contrast relevant to Paul's missionary work
(200).

travelers and trade to the city[11] (Strelan 57-59). Artemis was more than a symbol of Ephesus.

The cult of the goddess provided a social framework with well-established traditions and rituals,

as well as stable economic opportunities. Ephesian identity was built around Artemis.

Artemis and the Ephesian Jews

In that case, an Ephesian Jew refusing to worship Artemis must have been akin to an

American refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance on the Fourth of July. Nevertheless, Jews

living in Diaspora were nothing new. The Hebrew Scriptures were widely available in

translation as the Greek Septuagint—as already noted, Paul quotes the Old Testament from the

Greek—and Jewish communities were scattered across the empire. One can imagine how the

strong influence of Greek culture made it easy for some Jews to stray from their own religious

practices. If the biblical prophets are any indication, the Jews had somewhat of a history with

apostate behavior[12] (cf. Strelan 177ff).   Yet evidence suggests that Jewish cultural identity

remained strong in the Diaspora. There existed several key features that distinguished the Jews

from their Greek neighbors. For a Gentile, the following were perhaps the most bothersome.

First, Jews sent money to the temple in Jerusalem. Adult Jewish males were expected to

send a flat-rate annual tax to Jerusalem, the *didrachma*, to the aid in the costs of temple sacrifices

(Wallace 118). This money left the local city economy and, as far as a non-Jew was concerned,

did not come back. Apparently there were many who disapproved of this outpouring of financial

resources, because the government had to intervene in order to protect the practice. Josephus, for

example, records a letter from the emperor Augustus' viceroy Agrippa to the people of Ephesus.

Agrippa warns the Ephesians as follows:

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[11] Realizing that the population of ancient Ephesus was roughly comparable to that of modern Ann Arbor, MI, as a University of Michigan student, I cannot help but wonder how the festivals at the Temple of Artemis compared to a football Saturday at Michigan Stadium. Both events sustain their city socially and economically, and both are cultic.
[12] E.g., Jeremiah 5:7-8. The children of Jerusalem have "committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores."

"If any men steal the sacred monies of the Jews and take refuge in places of asylum, it is my will that they be dragged away from them and turned over to the Jews under the same law by which temple-robbers are dragged away from asylum" (*Ant.* 16:167-8, see Murphy-O'Connor 81-2).

That is to say, anyone who took money that the Jews were preparing to send to Jerusalem was considered a criminal. He would have no protection from the law, even while he was in a sacred place such as the Temple of Artemis, where asylum was usually granted (cf. Thomas 98). The Jews could abide by the their own practices and manage any related conflicts.

The main culprits, however, do not appear to be Gentiles. As Murphy-O'Connor points out, Agrippa's decree that the thieves be given over to the Jews suggests that he suspected the robberies were usually internal affairs. While some Jewish residents may have been motivated by personal greed or corruption, it is also possible that this kind of situation involved a particularly assimilated Ephesian Jew wishing to give his/her money to Artemis. As already discussed, the Ephesians were especially loyal to Artemis, and this extended to supporting her cult. It was standard procedure in the Greek world for immigrants to support the local cults in whichever city they resided; in fact, it was "a matter of courtesy" (Wallace 121). Practicing Jews would have dissuaded their peers from participating in this "courtesy," and Roman law supported Jews physically dragging each other out of the Temple of Artemis. For the majority of Gentiles who did participate in the Artemis cult, this Jewish practice must have been unsettling.

Second, any pious Jew would not have eaten with the ritually unclean Gentiles. This issue is a familiar one from the New Testament, in which many of the writings persuade their readers that, in Christ, "nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" (Rom. 14:14)[13]. Observant Jews would have refused all invitations to eat a meal in a Gentile home, on the grounds that the meal was unlikely to be kosher and that there was a chance that the meat would have been sacrificed to idols (Wallace 120). In a bustling urban center like

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[13] Two other key passages on this subject are Gal. 2:11-14 and Acts 10:9-33, both involving Peter.

Ephesus, this restriction must have created some social awkwardness. With Gentiles being the

majority population, Jews would inevitably do business with them and interact with them in

public places. Yet a strictly practicing Jew would have rejected any offers of hospitality from his

Gentile neighbors. To the Gentile, the Jews were cold and aloof, a strange sort of neighbor.

Yet despite the tense social divide between Jews and Gentiles, the Roman government

generally allowed the Jews to maintain their own way of life (Wallace 122). Diaspora

communities flourished throughout the Roman Empire (cf. Wallace 118-9). As the next section

argues, it was the Jews who Paul first encountered when he came to Ephesus. The question,

then, is whether or not Paul was able to bridge this aforementioned social divide. What

happened when Paul set foot in the great city of Artemis? Under what circumstances did he

form a community of believers in Christ, and under what circumstances was this community

called Christian?

Great Opportunity
The Building of the Church at Ephesus

Paul writes to the Corinthians:

"I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until
Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries"
(1 Cor. 16:7-9).

This epistle is dated circa 54, after Paul had already completed some missionary work elsewhere

(cf. Murphy-O'Connor 202, Koester, H. 120, cf. Ehrman 2008:329). Paul writes of both great

opportunity and great opposition in Ephesus; he is eager to undertake what he hopes will be

"effective work." A more complete understanding of the meaning of Paul's comment requires

background information about the community of Ephesian believers.

To start, if Paul arrived in Ephesus approximately two decades after the resurrection, it is not automatic to assume that he was the first to preach the Gospel. According to Acts, he was not. Luke's account puts Apollos in Ephesus before Paul, although Priscilla and Aquila need to teach him "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). When Paul does arrive, he finds some disciples who know only John's baptism and do not have the Holy Spirit (19:1-7). Following this is the episode of the "itinerant Jewish exorcists" who do not share Paul's power in invoking the name of Jesus (19:13-15). The common theme is that Paul's relationship to Jesus is the true one, and Paul's version of the Gospel is the one with actual power and the one used to correct other disciples. Paul is portrayed as the prevailing teacher, but competition does exist. As Strelan notes, "Luke is fully aware that Ephesus, at least, was not founded by Paul but by various other Christian preachers and teachers who maintained their influence" (232). Historically there was influence from some Jesus-followers in Ephesus prior to Paul's arrival. So how did Paul establish his authority, and to what extent was it questioned?

One method Paul used to prepare the way for his message was to send delegates before him. In Ephesus, this first landing party included Prisca and Aquila. The couple knew Paul from Corinth, and they went ahead of him to Ephesus in order to "face the daunting challenge of finding work, a place to live, and building a community in a strange city" (Murphy-O'Connor 187). They likely became believers in Jesus Christ before ever meeting Paul, and they welcomed him in Corinth because they already shared the same faith (Murphy-O'Connor 1992:para. 17). While they were spending time with Paul in Corinth, they caught the spark for his mission to preach the Gospel. Their move to Ephesus was characteristically Pauline.

To recall, Paul's practical objective was to establish networks of house churches in outreach "cells" (Gehring 180-1). Its location made Ephesus a strategic starting point for Paul to

communicate with his churches and to expand his mission in Asia. Indeed, Prisca and Aquila's

house church was not the only one in the province (1 Cor. 16:19, Gehring 143-4). Paul's idea of

a cohesive group of the "churches of Asia" is part of his vision to see a structured network of

communities. Paul often addresses one epistle to several groups of believers in an immediate

area, showing a sense of unity—or at least representing unity (Malherbe 70). Prisca and Aquila

were on board with this mission. Paul had established communities as far as Galatia to Corinth,

and now Ephesus was in the center (cf. Murphy-O'Connor 1992:para. 29). Prisca and Aquila

were to lay the foundation, and then Paul could hit the ground running.

Upon arriving in a new city such as Ephesus, Paul went first to the synagogue. Since

Paul was originally from a Diaspora Jewish family in Tarsus, a Diaspora synagogue would have

been a comfortable starting point whenever he came to a new city. In addition, the synagogue

was an ideal location to find those most apt to hear his Gospel. Ephesian Jews who were already

somewhat non-practicing or drawn to the majority Gentile culture likely would have been

intrigued to hear Paul's message that strict adherence to the Jewish Law was not required for

salvation (cf. Strelan 182). Many of Paul's arguments involve the Jewish scriptures and

presuppose a Jewish audience, or at least an audience with significant Jewish background

knowledge[14]. Acts presents Paul's *modus operandi* to preach the good news in the local

synagogue until the Jews there kicked him out, at which point he would move to a public hall or

a private home (Barton 44). It is reasonable to think that Paul began this way in Ephesus.

After a few months of work, an Ephesian community of believers came together. As for

structure, Paul—and his fellow missionaries—worked during the day to support themselves

(Barton 41; see Acts 18:2-4, cf. 1 Cor. 9:18). Murphy-O'Connor proposes that Paul "worked at

his trade from dawn to noon and then turned to pastoral work while others rested. His disciples,

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[14] The many New Testament examples include references to Adam (Rom. 5:12) and Abraham (Gal. 3:16ff).

of course, would also have had to give up their rest period" (208). The new believers and those

interested in the message would then gather together, often in a private residence. Paul

specifically mentions a church meeting in Prisca and Aquila's house (1 Cor. 16:19). Paul's

mission was extremely outreached focused, and he expected there to be a frequent stream of

incoming nonbelievers (Gehring 178; cf. 1 Cor. 14:23). At its beginning, it is unlikely that any

service held in a house church would have been highly ritualized. Paul admonishes the

Corinthians for eating the Lord's supper in an "unworthy manner," implying that their current

practices were disorganized and reprehensible (1 Cor. 11:27). Yet proper conduct in

remembering the Lord Jesus was not Paul's first order of business. Instead, the gathering

centered on Paul's preaching the Gospel.

As for Paul's Gospel, in essence it was quite simple. The death and resurrection of Jesus

happened for the salvation of all people, so that humanity might not face God's wrath, but rather

would be with Christ (cf. Stanton 177-8). This idea is already present in 1 Thessalonians[15]: "For

God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who

died for us" (5:9-10). This is the standard for righteousness; men and women are justified

through faith in Christ, not by following the Jewish Law (Stanton 183). In Romans, Paul writes,

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him

from the dead, you will be saved" (8:9). This describes a personal, intimate experience.

Salvation comes to each person through his or her individual faith, although it is offered to all

through Jesus' death on the cross. In this way, it was probably preferable to share the Gospel in

a private home where Paul could challenge individuals to accept his message, as opposed to

addressing a large crowd in a public place.

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[15] The New Testament epistle considered by most scholars to be Paul's earliest. See Stanton 183, Ehrman 309.

The house church system was advantageous to Paul for another reason. Barton suggests that Paul was not a particularly skilled orator, an idea supported by Paul's own recollection to the Corinthians that his preaching was "not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (Barton 44, 1 Cor. 2:4). Recall that Paul's authority to speak came from his *charisma*. This did not necessarily involve an ability to preach a fiery sermon to a large crowd. Paul needed to be inspiring, authentic, and credible. His goal was not to win new believers with a sound philosophical argument, but rather with his own experience with the divine power of the Holy Spirit. As his critics pointed out, Paul's claim to spiritual authority and his strong words were inconsistent with his weaker physical presence (2 Cor. 10:10). The house church, therefore, was ideal not only as an intimate setting to share the Gospel personally, but also was small enough that Paul's charismatic authority trumped his limitations as a public orator. If Paul was not authoritative in a crowded synagogue, he was in a private home.

Once a house church was established in Ephesus, Paul's next goal was to expand. Paul looked for believers who had frequent dealings in other nearby cities. As already mentioned, Ephesus was a hub for merchants throughout the province, ideal to be at the center of an outreach network. A believer in Ephesus with frequent contact with another city was an ideal candidate for Paul to appoint as a missionary. All one had to do was proclaim the Gospel, love others, and find a house large enough for a community of believers to assemble—"Paul made the apostolate look simple and easy" (Murphy-O'Connor 212). The plural "churches of Asia" in 1 Cor. 16:19 indicates that Paul's mission was successful. Perhaps this success was what Paul meant by "a wide door for effective work" (1 Cor. 16:9). Ephesus was a crossroads of a people and ideas, the center of a network, and there was great opportunity to establish new house churches throughout

the province. So what was the catch? Paul also mentions "many adversaries," those who oppose

his work (16:9). As it turns out, Paul had troubles from all sides.

Cracks in the Foundation
Paul's Conflicts, and Problems in Ephesus

As stated above, Paul was not the first to bring the Gospel to Ephesus. Acts argues that

Paul's version of the Gospel is the complete one, with the backing of the Holy Spirit. Paul was

not the only one who had something to say about the Messiah. In order to build up a house

church in Ephesus, he had to contend with rival preachers. As far as Paul was concerned,

competition with a "different gospel" (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον) was nothing new. The issue arose

just about everywhere he went; the Galatians and the Corinthians are two examples (Gal. 1:6, 2

Cor. 11:4). So what kind of opponents existed for Paul at Ephesus? In what ways was the

Pauline community faced with a "different gospel," and how did Paul react?

First of all, these opponents were from a variety of backgrounds, some more threatening

to Paul's ministry than others. Acts 19 introduces a diverse group of characters, ranging from

disciples who only know John the Baptist and do not yet have the Holy Spirit, to Jewish exorcists

attempting to work in the name of Jesus, to practitioners of magic arts. It is difficult to say to

what extent such groups actually affected Paul's efforts, largely because Paul gives so few

specifics in his letters. A few broad categorizations are likely, in addition to information Paul

does give about one man in particular—this being Apollos. Paul's opponents can be divided into

three main groupings: those also claiming to follow Jesus, the Gentiles, and, of course, the Jews.

Conflicts with the Jesus-Followers

Apollos is a fine example of one belonging to this first category. From what information

Paul gives, Apollos had a following in Corinth that threatened to divide the community of

believers (1 Cor. 3:4). In response, Paul claims that he and Apollos are "God's fellow workers,"

although Paul states his original preaching has precedence: "like a skilled master builder I laid a

foundation…[and] no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus

Christ" (1 Cor. 3:9-11). Acts adds the detail that Prisca and Aquila needed to explain "the way

of God more accurately" to Apollos, after seeing his eagerness to speak in the synagogue.

Murphy-O'Connor proposes that Apollos was a philosophical orator influenced by Philo. Paul's

time as a Pharisee had taught him "the pleasures of endless debate and discussion," and now Paul

was concerned that Apollos' intellectual pondering of God would supplant a commitment to

action and a lifestyle of following Christ (Murphy-O'Connor 205). Even so, despite initial

possible differences in theology and in style, Apollos is someone who Paul can term a "fellow

worker." It is doubtless that there were others like Apollos, willing to serve in Paul's

community, but being different enough to draw some division. There may have been some

believers in Ephesus who claimed to follow Prisca and Aquila, to whom Paul would have also

stressed that the believer follows Christ, not a person (Murphy-O'Connor 223; cf. 1 Cor. 3:23).

      In addition to division within the Pauline community, there is also the possibility of an

entirely separate group of Jesus-followers in Ephesus. Here enters the question of the so-called

Johannine community. Is there evidence for such a community contemporary with Paul?

Certainly it is anachronistic to already place the fourth gospel in Ephesus while Paul was there

(cf. Wedderburn 178ff). Burge suggests that the Gospel of John originates in "a community of

Christians whose cultural framework is principally Jewish, whose lives were shaped by the

cultural world of Hellenistic Judaism before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 C.E.), and who

were living in conversation with other churches in the Mediterranean" (42). It is within the

realm of possibility that a group of people with this background were living in Ephesus during

Paul's time, but it is unlikely that they were a well-defined social group in competition with Paul.

As this study will argue, the salient elements of Johannine Christianity become relevant toward

the end of the first century, after the destruction of the Jewish Temple. The Johannine identity

would raise a challenge to the later Pauline tradition, but not to Paul himself.

Conflicts with the Gentiles

Gentiles, on the other hand, did present an issue requiring immediate attention. The riot

of the silversmiths in Acts 19 is representative of a very real concern. Demetrius, who earns his

living by crafting silver shrines of Artemis, declares, "there is danger not only that this trade of

ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be

counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia

and the world worship" (Acts 19:27). Paul's Gospel threatened to devalue the Temple of

Artemis, the very core of Ephesian identity. Rowe comments, "Despite our initial suspicion of

hyperbole, Demetrius exaggerates only a little: Artemis of the Ephesians did in fact enjoy great

renown throughout the Mediterranean world" (45). On a large scale, if the majority of the

Ephesians stopped worshiping Artemis, there would be upheaval to the city's economy and

culture. Yet was the Gospel movement actually large enough to threaten a cultural collapse?

Paul's closing words in 1 Corinthians disclose a considerable team of co-laborers in

Ephesus (Koester, H. 121). Timothy is coming from Ephesus to Corinth; Apollos may return to

Corinth soon; Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come to Ephesus, of course along with

Prisca and Aquila, who came before them (1 Cor. 16:10-19). The Corinthian church was

invested in the mission to spread the Gospel in Ephesus, and the travel investment of Paul's

associates implies that they were dedicated to the mission. This dedication combined with the

long duration of Paul's stay in Ephesus support the assumption that Paul and his companions had

contact with more than a few native Ephesians. Given the local pride for the Artemis cult, the

probability that at least one of these Ephesians disapproved of Paul's preaching is high.

Evidence for a negative reaction to Paul is found in his own account. Paul writes of such

trouble in Asia that he feared for his life:

"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For
we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt
that we had received the sentence of death" (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

The word for "affliction" here is θλῖψις, translated elsewhere as "tribulation" (Rom. 8:35),

"trouble" (1 Cor. 7:28), and "suffering" (Rom. 5:3), often in leading to, or in contrast to, the love

of the Lord. In this case, the affliction led Paul to rely on God (2 Cor. 1:9). This affliction is a

painful circumstance, caused by a worldly agent. This passage likely refers to an Ephesian

imprisonment (Koester, H. 122). Paul had been arrested.

The exact charges that would have been brought against Paul are unclear. Murphy-

O'Connor explains:

"In the Roman system individuals were held in prison only when under investigation or awaiting
execution. If the authorities wanted to keep someone out of circulation they banished him to an
island, of which the most notorious was Gyara…Since Paul had not been condemned to death, he
must have been held for investigation" (220).

This investigation was not on the scale of the Jerusalem arrest that eventually sent Paul to Rome.

Even so, apparently Paul had become a person of interest. Ephesus was the capital of the

province, and perhaps the provincial government had received enough reports about Paul that

authorities felt precautions were necessary. Murphy-O'Connor concludes, "Paul was a victim of

his own success" (220). "Success" is probably better understood not as large numbers of new

believers, but rather as a well-known public presence. Even Paul's house church welcoming

interested Gentiles may have been enough to set off the neighbors. It is not hard to imagine that

Paul suffered ridicule and even threats. When he speaks of the "beasts" he fought in Ephesus,

perhaps he is referring to those Gentiles who lobbied for his arrest (1 Cor. 15:32).

All in all, the cult of Artemis was hard soil for Paul to sow his seeds. Ephesian Gentiles

saw Paul as a threat to their entire way of life. Paul had enough followers and a long enough to

stay to create waves, although there never was a real danger of the sudden cultural collapse that

Demetrius fears in Acts 19. Artemis was not going anywhere. There is no evidence for a mass

conversion of Gentile worshippers, and there certainly was social pressure against it. Strelan

supposes, "Those who did abandon Artemis for Christ would not have done so without

maintaining some syncretism in their thought if not also in their practice" (130). If Paul had

expected new Gentile believers to renounce their ties to Artemis, he was likely disappointed.

Conflict with the Jews

Clashes with the Ephesian Jews, however, were likely even sharper than those with the

Gentiles. For one thing, Paul himself appears to acknowledge the Jews as the more problematic

population. That is, those with a Jewish bent are more his opponents than the Gentiles are.

Paul's harshest attacks are often reserved for those still holding that salvation is found in the

Jewish Law. About those teaching that circumcision is necessary for followers of Jesus, Paul

sarcastically wishes they would go all the way and "emasculate themselves" (Gal. 5:12).

Compare the intensity of this remark to Paul's caution that no one be a "stumbling block" to

those with weak consciences from "former association with idols" (1 Cor. 8:7-9). Paul appears

to be more frustrated with those leading believers toward Jewish ways than with those leading

believers toward Gentile ways. Indeed, "backsliding" in Pauline communities is almost always

backsliding into Jewish ways (Strelan 164).

Once again, Paul's conflict is addressed in Acts. Uproar from certain "Jews from Asia" precipitates Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27). Luke provides the explanation that "they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple" (21:29). "From Asia" likely means from Ephesus; this is supported by the Jews' ability to recognize an Ephesian (Strelan 272). What is interesting is that this account works on a tradition of Ephesian Jews hostile to Paul's cause. Perhaps the charge of defiling the holy rites of Judaism was a familiar one against Paul in Ephesus. Paul is accused of associating with a Gentile and daring to bring him into the Jewish Temple. If Ephesian Jewish-Gentile relations were already tense, especially with regard to the Artemis cult, these Jews may have strongly criticized Paul's vision to reach the Gentile majority. If any Jew would have been able to identify Trophimus, that would suggest that Paul did maintain a close enough contact with the synagogue that he and his companions would be recognizable (cf. Strelan 272). If this is the case, maybe Paul's expulsion from the synagogue was not a sudden event. He still had ties with the Jewish community even after they had rejected his teaching.

In conclusion, Paul faced opposition from all angles in Ephesus. Great opportunity became great hardship, even with some internal threats of division. For as much time as Paul spent in Ephesus, he is short on praises for the city. As Strelan notes, "Paul never holds up the Ephesians as a model to be emulated by Christians elsewhere—whatever he does say about Ephesus is nearly always negative" (295). When Paul did move on from Ephesus, what kind of legacy did he leave behind? In the following decades, what would become of his community?

The Roman Emperor Strikes Back
Jews and 'Christians' After the Destruction of the Jewish Temple

A little more than ten years after Paul left Ephesus, in the year 66, the Jews revolted. Of all the different people groups encompassed in the Roman Empire, the Jews had been the most resistant to Roman rule (cf. Wallace 39). The Jewish religion was not compatible with the Roman state religion—or any other religion for that matter—and, especially in Judea, the Jews had a social and linguistic identity in the Hebrew Scriptures that separated them from Roman rulers. When the war culminated with the Roman destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, the very foundation of Jewish character was shattered. This event had tremendous impacts on the Jews, the Jesus-Followers, and the rise of a Christian identity.

Reactions from the Jews

After the destruction of the temple, Judaism was effectively reborn. From the ruins of the Jewish Temple cult arose the rabbinic schools, putting newfound emphasis on the Torah (cf. Martin 111-4). The Pharisees and their strict observance of the Jewish Law became the new standard for religious definition. As Martin puts it, "Jewish pluralism had expired in the flames of the Catastrophe. The Pharisees won by default" (112). The Jews in Judea were undergoing an identity crisis to say the least, and as the early forms of Rabbinic Judaism distilled outside of Jerusalem, some elements of the Second Temple period simply went of out of style. Of particular relevance for this study is Jewish messianism.

Messianic claims were central in the Jesus movement from the very beginning. Jesus was identified as the anointed one, the Christ. First-century Jewish expectations for the Messiah were varied, ranging from a warrior-king to conquer the enemies of the Jews to a cosmic judge over the earth (Ehrman 2008:77). For a Jew, however, it was probably difficult to imagine how the Messiah could have already come, and yet the Jewish people were still suffering at the hands

of the Romans while unrighteous deeds went unpunished. If Jesus was the Messiah, he was not

the kind the Jews had been hoping for. A failed revolt did not feel like a messianic movement

sanctioned by God.

Additionally, the Romans did their part to quash messianic ideas, especially those that

involved an attempted overthrow of the imperial government. A key figure in this Roman

propaganda is Josephus, who depicts Jewish revolutionaries as foolishly unable to bring down

the Roman Empire. He describes "four so-called 'messiah pretenders': Simon, Anthronges,

Menahem and Simon bar Giora" as actually being "opponents of the Jewish case" (Oegema

135). For Josephus, these people are certainly not Messianic, as evidenced by their actions.

Moreover, he "portrays the rebelling groups and their leaders as murderers and betrayers in order

to show that the Jews had caused the destruction of the Temple and of their land themselves"

(Oegema 139, cf. Jos. *War* 2:441-53). Messianic expectations are the problem, not the solution.

The Jews are implicated in their own misfortune. While it is difficult to determine how much of

this propaganda was taken to heart, the close of the first century did see a general decline in

Jewish messianic feeling.

<div align="center">*Reactions from the Jesus-Followers*</div>

Meanwhile, those who called Jesus the Messiah had some problems of their own. While

the Jesus-followers did not have a temple in Jerusalem, the city was still the focal point of the

movement. It was the church in Jerusalem that had authorized Paul's mission to the Gentiles

(Gal. 2). After Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jesus-followers entered into what Martin calls "a

period of extreme decentralization" (116). Gone were the days of the "pillars" in Jerusalem as a

strong, central authority (Gal. 2:9). The Pauline network was also without its figurehead, as by

this time Paul had already died in Rome (Haacker 32). The first generation of leaders was

largely gone, leaving the door open for some changes.

First, just as the Jews were disappointed with the non-arrival of their Messiah, Jesus-

followers were disappointed with the non-return of theirs. Paul had urged his communities to

"keep awake and be sober" in waiting for the Parousia, but after several decades, Christ still had

not returned (1 Thess. 5:6). The absence of the second coming was troubling for believers

(Martin 115; cf. Wagner 138). If nothing else, it presented a practical problem. Communities of

believers were now more established than simply centers for sharing the Gospel. Surely they had

developed their own traditions and norms, and a second generation of believers needed a

framework to follow.

Without organization, the Jesus movement was on the brink of chaos. Recall that Paul

relied on his *charisma* to establish authority. But what happened when multiple people tried to

fill his shoes, using their own charismas to pull the church in different directions or for personal

gain? There was no way settle disputes. When the church was small and nascent, the

charismatic model had not been a problem, but now that churches were larger and more

established, they needed an organized structure (Brent 28). As one way to standardize church

practices in Syria, the *Didache* was written. As Brent remarks:

"The *Didache* reveals a church in considerable disorder, with a charismatic ministry in which
the charismatic flame appears either to be dying or to be ignored due to uncertainty and
confusion about who is truly exercising it" (27).

The *Didache* lays out rituals and a leadership structure in order to address this confusion. A

formalized leadership structure, with offices such as bishop and deacon, was the solution to

reestablish a system of authority. This solution, however, was not met with immediate universal

approval. The following chapter will discuss pushback to this hierarchical leadership structure,

but for now it is enough to say the charismatic system known to Paul was in disarray.

Reactions from the Romans

The final group to see changes after the destruction of the Jewish Temple was the

Romans. From a Jewish perspective, almost nothing the Romans did was positive. As Jesus-

followers felt their ties to Judaism slowly breaking away, it was Roman policies that helped drive

in the wedge to facilitate the parting of the ways. To this end, the most important of these

policies was a new poll tax imposed on all Jews, the *Fiscus Iudaicus* (Goodman 31).

The new tax was intended as a consequence of the Jewish rebellion, but the Romans

soon found that there was some confusion as to who belonged to the guilty party. The Roman

government operated on the assumption that the Jews were a single ethnic group, "all of whom

subscribed to a particular religious cult" (Goodman 31). This, of course, was not the case. The

issue was especially relevant for Jewish believers in Jesus. If a person of a Jewish origin

worshiped God in a house church and not a synagogue, did not follow the Jewish Law, and

called Jesus Christ his lord and savior, was that person still a Jew?

With the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, it suddenly mattered if one was a Jew or not. While Jewish

Jesus-followers may have still felt nationalistic ties to the people of Israel, it was becoming

increasingly difficult for Gentile Christians to be a part of a Jewish identity when they did not

live as Jews (Alexander 22-3). The difference was also more apparent than ever to the Roman

government; Jews believing in Jesus no longer had "certain points of dispute…about their own

religion" (Acts 25:19). If the Jesus-follower did not pay the tax, then they were not Jews.

As an alternative label, the name *Christian* was already in circulation. Although the term

is rare in the New Testament, Acts reports, "in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians"

(11:26). Wallace and Williams call the name (Χριστιανός) "a curious Greek word with a Latin

adjectival ending, perhaps indicating the mixture of cultures in [Antioch]" (171). Later in Acts,

when Agrippa asks Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian," the word

appears to be mocking (Acts 26:28; Trebilco 2002: 243). The name's linguistic etymology and

early usage suggest that it was originally an outsider term[16] later adopted by the group (Trebilco

2002:242). As the name caught on as a self-identification, Christians needed to ask themselves,

what did it mean to be a Christian? Where was the line between someone who was a Christian

and someone who was not? Once again, the Romans helped force the issue.

The flipside of issuing sanctions against the Jews was increased imperial cult activity. In

Ephesus, where previously the Roman emperor had not dared to compete with the goddess

Artemis, the emperors after the destruction the Jewish Temple decided to boldly leave their

mark. Even though the province of Asia already had two provincial cults—more than usually

found in a province—it added a third for the Flavian emperors. The Temple of the *Sebastoi* went

up in Ephesus during the 80s, approved by the provincial council in Asia and the Roman Senate,

and largely funded by wealthy families throughout the province (Friesen para. 37). Although

Christians as this time were probably not systematically forced to follow the Empire cult, its

heightened prevalence would once again be a social pressure on the non-imperial-worshipping

minority, just as the cult of Artemis created social pressure (Strelan 105). These various social

pressures shaped Christian identity, practices, and conception of heroes.

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[16] Notable outsider uses of the term in the early second century are found in the writings of Pliny the Younger and
Tacitus, although the name had likely already been in existence for some time (Trebilco 2002:242).

Follow the Bishop
Ignatius and the Decline of Charismatic Authority

Two examples offer insight to the developing Christian identity in Ephesus, one from

outside the Ephesian community and another familiar with it. The former is Ignatius of Antioch;

the latter is John, author of Revelation. First, consider Ignatius.

Before understanding Ignatius' relation to Ephesus, one must briefly recall his

background. Ignatius was arrested in Antioch and marched to Rome under guard, possibly

because he "had caused instability within Antioch" (Brent 22). Brent theorizes that this

instability was centered on a conflict regarding ecclesial authority (32). That is, in response to a

charismatic system, Ignatius lobbied for a single bishop as the authoritative figure over the

church. In his case, this model meant more power for himself. Apparently the dispute within the

church was vocal enough that the Romans feared a wider disturbance. So, they decided to arrest

the source of the problem: the bishop himself (Brent 22).

Along the way to Rome, Ignatius writes several letters, including one to Ephesus. As an

introduction, he praises the Ephesians. He claims that their great reputation has been "acquired

by the habit of righteousness" and that they have "perfectly accomplished the work which was

beseeming" to them (Eph. 1; see Kirby[17]). Ignatius also refers to the church's fame, as the

Ephesian community is "renowned throughout the world" (Eph. 8). From the sound of it, the

church is as famous as the Temple of Artemis. While it is a clear embellishment, the excessive

commendation serves a purpose. Ignatius' flattery sets the stage for what is perhaps the primary

occasion of his letter: support for the bishop.

For Ignatius, the role of the bishop is indispensable. He praises the Ephesian bishop,

Onesimus, several times. According to Ignatius, Onesimus is a "man of inexpressible love," and

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[17] Here I quote from the Roberts-Donaldson English translation of the shorter recension. See also Brent 143.

the Ephesians "should look upon the bishop even as [they] would upon the Lord Himself" (Eph. 1, 6). Ignatius implores the church not to be "in opposition to the bishop," and he hopes that they "obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind" (Eph. 5, 20). Ignatius well remembers the disputes in Antioch, and now he wants to strongly make his case to the Ephesians. Interestingly, he writes as if they are already in full agreement.

This supposed agreement is evident in Ignatius' idealization of the Ephesian community. He relays to the church, "Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that [you] all live according to the truth, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you" (Eph. 6). Apparently there is no present division among the Ephesians, at least as far as Ignatius is concerned. Given the conflict at Antioch, however, one must be suspect of Ignatius' depiction here. In reference to the above passage, Brent remarks, "Good order is now equivalent to Ignatius' order centered on a single bishop, like Onesimus, and the presence of heresy is equivalent to the absence of that order" (58). In fact, it is quite likely that Ignatius had not actually been to Ephesus—he only spoke to a delegation (cf. Brent 49). Ignatius praises the Ephesians and their bishop, thus demonstrating how natural it would be for them to support his cause too. Ignatius uses one more source of credibility, and this one may be the most controversial. Ignatius appeals to the Ephesians by making reference to Paul.

The most blatant mention of Paul occurs when Ignatius says to the Ephesians, "[You] are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found…who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 12). Ignatius humbles himself with respect to the great Paul. Paul is imagined as a true example of holiness, who held the Ephesians in high regard. He is a hero for Christ.

Ignatius assumes that he builds his own case by mentioning Paul, but is he correct in this

assumption? He implies that Paul often boasted about the Ephesians, even though this was

hardly the case (cf. Strelan 295). Ignatius appears to have a glamorized view of Paul's

relationship to the Ephesians, although it would be odd for Ignatius to describe Paul in this way

if he thought nobody else would hold him in such high esteem. From this text alone, it is

difficult to say if anyone in Ephesus considered Paul to be the kind of hero that Ignatius

describes. As it happens, other sources show another side to the story. Ignatius was not the only

one who used Paul to address issues of church leadership. The Pastoral Epistles offer another

example, although their depiction of Paul is much different than that found in Ignatius.

Before the Pastorals can be admitted as evidence, a few words must be said about their

date[18]. In this study, I follow Hultgren's conclusion that the Pastorals were likely written "at the

end of the first century or at the onset of the second by a writer who was devoted Paul and sought

to represent him in a time and situation that called for an authoritative, apostolic voice" (144).

While the Pastorals' discussion of a hierarchical church order is often used as an argument to

push back the date of composition, this topic is highly relevant to the decades following the

destruction of the Jewish Temple (cf. Hultgren 143). Paul did have some categories of church

offices, although their details were not specifically laid out—although possibly this is because

the occasion did not call for it (Phil. 1:1). The intimate personal details in the Pastorals are

problematic to explain if the epistles are taken to be purely pseudepigraphic (Porter 119). In fact,

the personal details present a plausible historic reality. In short, if the Pastorals were composed

after Paul's career, then it was likely within a generation, with the author being familiar with

Paul's actual missionary work. In this case, the Pastorals shed light on the Ephesian situation.

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[18] The dating of the Pastoral Epistles is a frequent topic of scholarly debate, with dates having been proposed from
the 60s to the late second century. For a good overview of the primary issues in the debate, see Porter.

First, one difference between Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians and the Pastorals is the

angle from which church offices are discussed. While Ignatius primarily argues that the church

should live in "accordance with the will of [their] bishop," the Pastorals focus on the process by

which a bishop is selected (Eph. 4). 1 Timothy 3 gives qualifications for an overseer

(ἐπίσκοπος[19]), perhaps in response to a debate about how someone was to be chosen for this

"noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1). The points about not being a "recent convert" and needing to be "well

thought of by outsiders" appear to guard against a newcomer suddenly overturning the

community norms; someone must first be well-established and trusted before the community has

him as a leader (1 Tim. 3:6-7). Such a provision would theoretically lessen internal conflict. 1

Timothy desires unity then the selection of a bishop; Ignatius desires unity around an already

selected bishop. 1 Timothy looks at the process for church order; Ignatius looks at the product.

To be fair, the different circumstances for the two epistles are enough to explain the

different approaches, but that is point. Ignatius addresses an idealized community while 1

Timothy represents an actual community that needed some kind of standard by which to operate.

Whether or not the audience of 1 Timothy accepted these standards is unclear. What is clear,

however, is that once again the person of Paul is employed to establish credibility.

The person of Paul in 1 Timothy is multi-faceted. On one hand, 1 Timothy gives Paul's

credentials: preacher, apostle, teacher of the Gentiles (2:7). In this sense he is someone to be

emulated, or at least be respected. But there is also a personal side to Paul's character. At the

close of the letter, Paul urges Timothy, "guard the deposit entrusted to you" (6:20). This

comment does not reflect an Ephesus (the city to which it is addressed) that is strong and unified.

Instead, there is the notion that there is confusion and fragmentation among Jesus-followers, so

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[19] The same word translated 'bishop.' The ESV uses 'overseer.' While the two letters (Ignatius and 1 Timothy)
refer to the same church office, they may have disagreed on its precise function.

that "some have swerved from the faith" (6:21). Paul feels a pull away from what he has taught, and Timothy must guard against it in his own life.

This tension is more blatant in 2 Timothy. Paul tells Timothy, "You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). Paul is depicted as isolated and weary, "already being poured out as a drink offering" (2 Tim. 4:6). Those in Ephesus have abandoned what he taught them, and now he is making an appeal through Timothy to get them back on track. The community where he worked for several years has turned its back on him.

If the Pastorals are being used to address church structure near the end of the first century, then this depiction of Paul is most helpful with two historical social situations in mind. Paul must have still been an important enough figure to have authority, but at the same time it must have been conceivable to a general audience of Ephesians that they have "turned away" from him. A second generation of Ephesian believers would doubtlessly have had stories handed down about what the Pauline community was like during its early years. Even if the church structure in the Pastorals is more regulated than Paul's house churches were during his time in Ephesus, the Pastorals' argument is presented as something Paul supports but the Ephesian community does not. Somehow the Ephesian community has abandoned what it was at first. As it happened, this sentiment was not unique to the Pastorals, or even to what is considered the Pauline corpus. A similar idea is found in Revelation.

A First Love Forsaken
Revelation, and the Pitfalls of Being a "Christian"

Remember that there were competing groups of Jesus-followers in Ephesus, even during Paul's time. Many scholars put the audience of Revelation in a separate group than the Pauline community. Koester gives the following explanation:

"[The author of Revelation] uses a rather clumsy Greek that is heavily dependent upon Aramaic and often reflects the text of the Hebrew scriptures; his thought and theology are deeply steeped in the apocalypticism of postexilic Judaism. It is difficult to imagine that he was addressing the same Greek-speaking, gentile, Christian church of Ephesos *(sic)* that Apollos and Paul had founded" (Koester, H. 133)

Bearing in mind that the Pauline community was made up of Diaspora Jews before adding

Gentiles, Koester's point is well taken (cf. Strelan 165ff). At first glance, the text of Revelation

implies a different audience than the community in which Paul worked. Given the situation

described in Revelation, however, it appears that these two communities did know of each other.

What is the situation? Once again, a community at Ephesus is not what it was at first.

        The complaint surfaces in the letter to the church in Ephesus, one of the "seven

lampstands" John[20] sees in his vision (Rev. 1:20). The message is as follows:

        I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with
        those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found
        them to be false…But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.
        Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not,
        I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Rev. 2:2-5)

Immediately a conflict between different sects of Jesus-followers is apparent. John praises the

Ephesians for challenging false apostles. In the verse following he goes on to say, "You hate the

practices of the Nicolatitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). Trebilco attests that the Nicolatitans

were "John's main opposition in the seven churches" (2006:34). John in Revelation has a

version of Christianity that he holds to be true, as Acts also argues, and it is admirable for the

Ephesians to resist anyone preaching or practicing otherwise.

        What draws attention, however, is the charge that the Ephesians have "abandoned the

love [they] had at first." One can reasonably deduce that this "first love" does not refer to a

theological doctrine—as already mentioned, John approves of the Ephesians' ability to test the

sayings of false apostles, presumably doing so by holding them against their own theological

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[20] John the author of Revelation, that is. For confusion with John Jesus' disciple, see Koester, H. 132.

standards. DeSilva adds:

No evidence is offered for the premise as, for example, a list of specific acts or behaviors revealing a failure of love. The audience is expected to accept the diagnosis on the basis of the authority of the speaker…together with, perhaps, that 'intuitive response to the message' that here perceives and acknowledges the truth of the accusation in their own experience (131).

John's comment is related to a social issue, something that he hopes the members of his community will be able to sense themselves. There is an intangible element to the complaint in that no specific fault is listed; rather, the community has generally been misguided from a path on which they started. This gradual misdirection offers insight to the development of a Christian identity in Ephesus.

As previously discussed, Paul made his best effort to bridge the Jewish and Gentile worlds. After the destruction of the Jewish Temple, however, the social framework for new a category of *Christians* came about, with the Jesus-followers taking an outsider term upon themselves. Ignatius embraces the label, speaking of "Christians of Ephesus" (Eph. 11). These Christians were not quite Jews and were not quite Gentiles. But some believers were not quite ready to become a third category. Revelation offers one of the best examples of the parting of the ways gone wrong. John wrote the apocalypse about twenty years before Ignatius' letters describe the Christian community and its bishop (cf. Trebilco 2006:23, Trevett 118). Unlike Ignatius, John was not so eager for Christianity to become its own structured religious identity.

First, keep in mind that, during Paul's own time, his Ephesian community likely had Jewish members as the majority (Strelan 167). Over the course of the decades after Paul, as house churches grew, they became increasingly "Gentile" in nature. Already Paul had encouraged eating with the Gentiles, and as the Christian community grew it would inevitably have more interactions with the Gentile populace in Ephesus (cf. Gal. 2:12). Remember Paul's advice that although he is "persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is

unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" (Rom. 14:14). Paul's stance on this topic appeases

those Jewish believers who still felt convicted to follow cleanliness practices. After the

destruction of the Jewish Temple, as the parting of the ways was underway, Paul's community

appears to have become more and more removed from Jewish rites, especially in the area of

ritual cleanliness. John was one Diaspora Jew who thought things were getting out of hand.

Along this line, one of the goals of John's Revelation is to put his audience back on track.

Trebilco comments, "The fundamental problem for John is that his readers (or many of them)

have adopted a worldview to which John is fundamentally opposed" (2003:70). John's visions

of Christ represent a Jewish "hyperpurity," contrary to unwholesome worldly practices

(Frankfurter 412). John wants to redefine what it means to be holy in his community, and to be a

servant before the throne of God. Just as the four creatures endlessly repeat, "Holy, holy, holy, is

the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come," Jesus-followers ought to be in awe of

God's holiness (Rev. 4:8). For John, it appears that this was not the present situation.

So if the strict ritual purity put forward in Revelation is in opposition to the reality of

John's own community, then what impure practices have disturbed him? There are several

options. Perhaps it is the increased imperial activity that, in his mind, negatively affects the

community—after all, the text of Revelation is "vehemently anti-Roman" (Friesen para. 9, cf.

Pagels 494). Or, maybe in an ethnically Jewish community still reeling from the destruction of

Jerusalem, John wants to refocus on Jewish traditions. Revelation does present "a suffering

Jewish prophet, and an angel/priest of the heavenly cult, while also laying out a perspective fixed

on Jerusalem" (Frankfurter 410). Yet another source of frustration are the author's fellow Jewish

Christians themselves. For the Ephesians especially, this final option is an intriguing fit.

On this point, take a closer look at the implications of the Ephesians abandoning the love

they had at first. John's charge is reminiscent of a passage in Jeremiah:

Thus says the Lord, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you
followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of
his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the Lord." (Jer.
2:2-3).

The people of Israel used to be holy and devoted to the Lord. Then, as the passage goes on to

say, they gave themselves over to worthless idols, forsaking the great relationship with God. So,

if John's community has abandoned their first love of the Lord, then they have lost some of their

special devotion that makes them set apart and protected. Maybe the members of John's

community have not turned to worthless idols, but they may have been involved with something

close to it: a heavily Gentile Christianity. A Pauline community may be the culprit.

This possibility allows a reader to consider the false apostles as ones of Pauline

persuasion in the extreme. Pagels explains:

The specific accommodations condoned by those [John] denounces as "false apostles" and "false
prophets" look very much like the practices Paul allows to his converts in 1 Corinthians 7-10:
eating meat sacrificed to idols, and allowing sexual practices that rigorously observant Jews
often prohibited, such as marriage to outsiders (496).

Had Ephesian Christians taken the idea that "all things are lawful" too far, at least too far for a

Jewish Christian like John (1 Cor. 10:23)? If John is concerned that those adhering to Pauline

practices will influence his community, this suggests that the two communities had contact.

More than contact, perhaps there was mixing between the groups, and, in practice, many Jewish

believers were non-observant of strict purity standards (cf. Strelan 181). Revelation gives insight

that Christians were creating an identity as an entirely new kind of Jew, although still with a

claim on Jewish heritage. Despite John's desire for Jewish believers to go back to their first

love, the Christian community was already moving in another direction, and heading there fast.

Jesus, Light of the World
John the Apostle and the Fourth Gospel

Another John, the fourth evangelist, was involved in the Ephesian scene[21]. When exactly John and his followers came to Ephesus is unclear[22], but the Johannine tradition is associated with Ephesus as early as Papias of Hierapolis (Wedderburn 178). John's Gospel clearly proclaims Jesus as the "unique and only Son of God" (Neyrey 18). Thematic similarities between the so-called Johannine writings and Paul's letters suggest common source knowledge, although legal and eschatological references from Paul are generally replaced in John with the revelation of divine truth and emphasis on the present world. Perspectives on the source of freedom in Christ are characteristic of these different approaches. An overview comparison of the two corpora will demonstrate the various perspectives available in Ephesus.

The Role of Christ

First, for Paul, the Jewish law is central to understanding the role of Christ. He says in his letter to the Romans, "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my member" (7:22-23). The law itself is not evil. In fact, were it not for the law, Paul states that he would "not have known sin" (7:7). The law is necessary to give a standard of righteous living, and, in principle, it is desirable to follow. Yet there is a catch: nobody can uphold the law. Since every person fails to reach to the high standard of the law, then no one can be justified before God without an alternative means of doing so—this is the role of Christ.

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[21] The fact of two Johns in Ephesus was confusing even in Antiquity. See Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 3.39.
[22] That is, provided that the historical John actually went to Ephesus, and not just his followers. Irenaeus claims that Papias had met John, and there nothing precludes the tradition that John spent time in Ephesus (Wedderburn 178-9).

Earlier in Romans, Paul explains the purpose of justification through Christ. He says, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus… so that [God] might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (3:23-26). Jesus has come as a fulfillment of the law, the necessary component for anyone to be made righteous before God. Faith in Jesus upholds the law, not only for Jews but also for Gentiles (cf. Rom. 3:29-31). By definition, those who failed to keep the law were confined to sin. With Christ, however, those who were formally "slaves of sin" have now become "slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). In this Pauline Christology, Jesus is the gracious redeemer. His death and resurrection give freedom from the trappings of sin under the Jewish law, so that believers are no longer slaves to sin, but adopted as sons (cf. Peppard 96).

In the Gospel of John, on the other hand, freedom is described differently. Jesus states his purpose, but it is not to fulfill the Jewish law. He says to Pilate, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth" (Jn. 18:37). The idea of truth (ἀλήθεια) is not unfamiliar to Paul—the truth of the Gospel as opposed to the hypocrisy in Galatians 2:14, for example. Yet truth in the Gospel of John appears to represent something beyond factual correctness and proper conduct. This is a revelatory truth, a communion with God. Jerome Neyrey observes that when Jesus speaks, information is "selectively disclosed," and that "there is no information that Jesus does not know" (10). Jesus knows all things from the Father, and throughout the gospel he is the gatekeeper controlling the disclosure of words from God. There is a spiritual component to this truth, being in opposition to the devil, who is "a liar and the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44).

Truth, then, is exclusively from God, and anyone who is "of God" has access to it (8:47). John uses the same analogy as Romans, stating, "Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin,"

but emphasis on the Jewish law is missing (8:34). In its place, Jesus says, "the truth will set you

free" (8:32). This is a philosophical argument, not a legal one. Freedom comes from

enlightenment in God's revelation. The perspective of John's Christology is that Jesus shares the

divine knowledge to overcome lies from the devil and enslavement under sin.

The Lamb of God

In discussions of Christ, one cannot ignore that both authors describe the Christ as a

lamb. For Paul, this is the sacrificial Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Just as death passed over the

Jews in Egypt, now in Christ all can be alive (1 Cor. 15:22). Following that Jesus' death and

resurrection occurred during Passover, he now embodies the true meaning of a Passover

sacrifice. All the sin of the world has come upon Christ, and sin no longer has power.

Furthermore, in John, the lamb imagery takes on new dimensions. Jesus is "the Lamb of

God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). This is a more triumphant perspective.

The focus is not on Jesus as a sacrifice, but rather as the true King of Israel, a humble servant of

God who will prove victorious over "the ruler of this world" (Jn. 14:30; Neyrey 52). While Paul

focuses on Jesus as a sacrifice who graciously frees men from their sin, John emphasizes Jesus as

an active conqueror who defeats the enslaving sin of the world. The lamb is more than a

sacrifice; he is the unassuming warrior who brings victory for God and his people.

Children of Abraham

In addition to these different perspectives on how Christ gives freedom to those who

believe in him, Paul and John both address the issue of how one who does not follow the Jewish

law may still be considered a part of Abraham's offspring. It is noteworthy that in both the

Pauline corpus and the Gospel of John the author values a claim to the lineage of the great

Jewish patriarch. Neither author truly divorces his theology from Jewish thought; rather, each

argues that in Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. They employ similar

arguments in different contexts.

First, Paul describes in Galatians, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's

offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:29). Using the example of Hagar and Sarah, Paul

contrasts being born through the flesh or through God's promise (cf. 4:23). Freedom is

associated with the promise, and those who are in Christ are free (cf. 4:28). That is, whoever is

not enslaved to follow the Jewish law is truly among the children God promised to Abraham.

Paul affirms his audience as belonging to the true Israel because they share freedom in Christ,

not because they uphold the law.

In John's Gospel, however, is not so affirming. While Paul writes, "brothers, we are not

children of the slave but of the free woman," including himself with his audience in God's

promise, John depicts Jesus challenging believing Jews' claim to Abraham's lineage (Gal. 4:31).

Jesus corrects their misunderstanding:

They [the Jews who had believed him] answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to
them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now
you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what
Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did." (Jn. 8:39-41)

The idea of being a figurative child of Abraham is reminiscent of Galatians, although here the

situation is not concerning the Jewish law. Paul shows Abraham as justified through his faith,

and John shows Abraham as obedient to the true words from God (cf. Gal. 3:6-7). For Paul, the

contrast is between righteousness through obeying the law and righteousness through faith; for

John the contrast is between listening to the truth of God and listening to the lies of the devil.

Whoever knows God as father, loves Jesus (cf. Jn. 8:42). True children of Abraham, then, are

not defined as free from the law, but as free from lies. The gospel emphasizes Jesus as the only

truth (cf. Jn. 14:6).

Work for What is Eternal

Besides freedom from the law, another common Pauline theme is holy living apart from the earthly passionate desires of the flesh. A typical example comes in 1 Corinthians, where Paul makes an analogy to an athletic contest. He observes, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (1 Cor. 9:25). Paul disciplines himself to keep from idolatry and temptation (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14). The analogy is that if one commits to holy living on Earth, he will receive an eternal prize in Heaven. Therefore, while the benefit of doing "all to the glory of God" may not be readily available on Earth, it will surely come when the present life is over (1 Cor. 10:31). An athlete does not claim his prize during the contest; he must wait until the ceremony at the end.

John also offers an analogy to pit the temporal versus the eternal. When the crowd seeks Jesus after he feeds the five thousand, he says to them, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal" (Jn. 6:27). This message is about discipleship. Jesus is the Son of Man, and he alone has the words of truth. He challenges his audience, knowing that their primary concern is meet their physical hunger, not their hunger for spiritual truth. Neyrey points out, "As long as Jesus feeds them loaves of bread, they are loyal, but when he speaks of the Bread of Life (6:30-59), they prove to be pseudo-believers" (121-122). Unlike in Paul's analogy of the athlete's crown, one can immediately partake of food that "endures to eternal life." John is not looking ahead to an eschatological end as directly as Paul. While Paul emphasizes preparing for the coming of the eternal, John emphasizes the opportunity to hear eternal truth now.

The Holy Spirit

Yet even as Paul highlights the expectation of the Parousia, he preaches that believers in Jesus are not apart from God. The Holy Spirit belongs to anyone who is in Christ. In Romans, Paul asserts, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (5:5). He goes on to add to his audience, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (8:9). Anyone with the Holy Spirit can share in the attributes of God, such as his love. The Spirit of Christ is equated with the Spirit of God, "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (8:11). The battle here is with the flesh. The Spirit is in opposition to the flesh, the former giving life and the latter giving death. Paul proclaims, "If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (8:13). The Spirit is the primary weapon in conquering the desires of the flesh.

This same concept of a personal Holy Spirit exists in John. Jesus promises his disciples, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you" (Jn. 14:16-17). This Spirit is identified to be from the Father and in Jesus' name (cf. 14:26). Yet here the opposition is with the world, not with the flesh. John emphasizes the truth of the Spirit living inside each believer, and the primary battle is not with one's self, but rather with others living outside of truth. The world "cannot receive" the Spirit because the world has neither seen nor known the truth from Jesus. Truth leads to the Spirit.

Light in the Darkness

Finally, both Paul and John use light as a prominent symbol. Perhaps more than

anything, light demonstrates the differing eschatological perspectives. Consider Paul's letter to

the Thessalonians:

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all
children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us
not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. (1 Thess. 5:4-6)

In this passage, Paul addresses questions concerning the Parousia. The thief-in-the-night

metaphor for the second coming of Jesus is familiar (cf. Matt. 24:42-44). Light, in this case,

signifies readiness. Those in the light are vigilant; they have clear expectations of Jesus' return,

and they will be prepared. Those in darkness are unaware that "the present form of this world is

passing away," a typical Pauline theme (1 Cor. 7:31).

The Gospel of John, in contrast, uses the symbol of light differently. Most notably, Jesus

declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will

have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12). The light is not an expectation of Jesus; the light is Jesus. Jesus

later adds, "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light"

(12:36). The light is something in which someone must first believe in order to become a child

of the light. Koester recognizes the light as being closely linked to approaching conflict,

claiming, "According to John's Gospel, those who reject the light are not destroyed by God but

are allowed to remain in the darkness, and…they bring about their own demise" (Koester, C.

149). Certainly the Gospel of John alludes to impending conflict. Jesus tells of a coming hour in

which "whoever kills [the disciples] will think he is offering service to God" and "[the disciples]

will be scattered, each to his own home" (Jn. 16:2,32). Once again, this is not an internal

personal struggle, but a struggle with the world. The threat of darkness is in this present world,

and followers of Jesus must cling to his light. Jesus warns his disciples, "In the world you will

have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (16:33). While Paul stresses that

the present world will soon pass away, John focuses on the ongoing conflicts in the present

world. For John, the light is truth in the confusing darkness. Emphasis is not on awaiting Jesus'

return because he has already overcome the world.

There's a New Hero in Town
The Acts of John, and Representations of Ephesus

As seen above, both Paul and John present freedom and power through Christ, although

from different perspectives. It is not the case that one replaced the other in Ephesus. More

accurately, the Johannine tradition absorbed the Pauline. Of course, by the mid-second century,

the two traditions had fused to belong to the same Christian canon, as opposed to texts of

competing communities (cf. Ehrman 1999:309ff). But in Ephesus, later second century authors

downplay Paul's role in founding the community. He certainly is not rejected, but his

prominence gives way to the apostle John. As an example, take the *Acts of John*.

The *Acts of John*, dating from the late second century, present John as the leading

missionary to Ephesus. He performs miracles and wins huge crowds to Christ. A particularly

entertaining episode is destruction of the great Temple of Artemis. John prays to God to destroy

the idols that lead the Ephesians into error. The result is spectacular:

"With these words of John the altar of Artemis suddenly split into many parts, and the oblations
put up in the temple suddenly fell to the ground…And the people of the Ephesians cried, 'There
is only one God, that of John…now we have become converted, since we saw your miraculous
deeds'" (42, Ehrman 1999:12).

This scene is to be contrasted with the riot of the silversmiths in Acts 19—"Great is Artemis of

the Ephesians!" Historically, Paul and his co-missionaries likely had great difficultly drawing

someone away from the Artemis cult to Christ (cf. Strelan 130). Yet here John is able to destroy

the entire cult at a word, leading a large audience of Ephesians to worship the one true God.

Consistent with the Gospel of John, here God brings truth and a glorious victory, already

witnessed—as opposed to one that will soon come. The character of John is associated with a

worldly battle, in which Christ overcomes the mistaken ways of the world. It is noteworthy

John's main opponent is the pagan cult, whereas for Paul the issue was often with Jews holding

that the Jewish Law was necessary for justification. The subtext in the *Acts of John* may

represent well the social situation of Christians at the end of the second century.

First, perhaps there is no debate about justification through the Jewish Law because there

was already enough social distance between Christians and Jews to prevent the issue from

coming up. By this time, a second Jewish revolt against the Romans had already occurred—and

failed. Werline points out, "the disaster of the Bar Kochba revolt in 132-135 CE and Hadrian's

subsequent ban of the Jews from Jerusalem further distinguish Christians from Jews" (93).

Justin Martyr, for example, aims to exclude the Jews from God's promises in Scripture, although

Paul had given Jews and Gentiles equal access to God's promises (Werline 92-3). Meanwhile,

urban Christian populations were growing, even just by considering general Christian fertility

(see Stark 115-28). The further expansion into a Gentile world created a Christian population

likely to have conflicts with Gentile culture, and it stands to reason that the *Acts of John* argues

for the superiority of Christianity over a Gentile false goddess.

Second, the *Acts of John* largely presents a dichotomy between one man—the apostle—

and the multitude. The crowd of Ephesians often acts as a single unit. They say in unison, "Help

us, John, help us who die in vain" (44, Ehrman 1999:12). John does not have a team of co-

workers as Paul historically did when he came to Ephesus. Instead, John is a superhero with

miraculous powers and unquestioned authority. Implicit in this text is a hierarchical system.

John is on a higher level than the new Ephesian converts, thus plainly implying that such levels

exist. For a community with an organized church structure under the authority of a bishop, this

is a welcome idea. Ignatius, in his argument for the bishop's authority, venerated Paul. The *Acts*

of John reflects a community in which a hierarchical church structure was acceptable.

Third, as a character in apocryphal literature, Paul can be found as the "consummate

celibate" (Roetzel 239). This tradition likely arose from Paul's own status as unmarried (1 Cor.

7:6). Compare the quotation in Matthew that "in the resurrection [people] neither marry nor are

given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mt. 22:30). In effect, however, this tradition

associates Paul with a holy purity linked to the expectation of the resurrection. Indeed, in the

Acts of Paul, Paul is presented as having the position that resurrection is the goal of a "chaste

life" (Aageson 241). This does not coincide with a historical Paul who did allow marriage, with

the appropriate precautions (1 Cor. 7:37-38). Paul, who historically preached freedom from the

religious law, is now imagined as a kind of ascetic. While the author of Revelation thought of

the Pauline community as corruption of Jewish rituals, in the later literary tradition Paul is a

champion of purity. Traditions about Paul appear to have shifted.

Perhaps there was genuine confusion about the person of Paul. He had moved between

Jew and Gentile worlds with ease unfamiliar to late second century Christians. His historical

charismatic leadership in small house churches differed from the structured church order that

developed after he left. His work in Ephesus had encountered conflicts and challenges, and his

group of Jesus-followers had not been the only community in the city. John's Gospel, on the

other hand, was a representation of the truth and power in Christ, a solid foundation for a

developing Christian identity. As the character of Paul changed in the literary tradition, John

became the representative apostle to Ephesus. The character of John took on the present

problems facing the Ephesian community, while Paul was slowly pushed out of the spotlight.

Ephesus as a True Witness
John and Paul in Later Tradition

Irenaeus claims, "The church at Ephesus was founded by Paul, and John remained there

till Trajan's time; so she is a true witness of what the apostles taught" (see Williamson, Eusebius

3.23). Does textual evidence support such a claim? Paul struggled to build a community, facing

pressures from all sides and hardly making a dent on the armor of Artemis. The Pauline

community grew and transformed, breaking away from Jewish law and ritual, and adopting a

more formalized church structure. This community later adopted John as its supposed founding

father. Perhaps in a wider sense, Ephesus can be called a "true witness" of the various social

factors involved in the development of a Christian identity as something separate from Judaism.

As for Paul, the man who tried to bridge Jews and Gentiles was ripped apart in the

parting of the ways. In many respects, the church that Paul founded with Prisca and Aquila was

not the church that lasted. His charismatic leadership, reaching out primarily to Diaspora Jews,

preaching about justification apart from the Jewish Law, and a faith in Jesus Christ who would

soon come again was not a workable model by the turn of the second century. As Christian

identity developed, so did the literary representation and usage of Paul, and gradually the more

suiting character of John replaced him. In the late second century, the Ephesian bishop

Polycrates imagines himself in the tradition of John, not Paul (Strelan 297). In some ways, it

makes sense for Paul to say "all who are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15).

Still, the parting of the ways did not happen overnight. Social factors both involving

external relations with the Jews and Romans, and internal disputes about leadership structure and

purity in observance of the Jewish Law gave way to a Christian identity. The specifics of Paul's

tradition were mutable; they expanded and changed with the community. Strelan observes:

"There is neither a smooth transition from Paul to John, nor is there necessarily a conflict
between the two, but rather a dynamic, variable confusion of the two traditions, which only in
later years was sorted out and one claimed to win out over the other" (302).

Ultimately, John became the figure to embody Ephesian Christian identity. In fact, the ruins of

an enormous Basilica of St. John, built in the sixth century, still rest in Ephesus today,

supposedly built over the gravesite of John the Apostle, the great Ephesian hero.

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