'Romans: Paul's Final Answer'

Barnett, Paul

https://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au:443/handle/10248/10065

Downloaded from Myrrh, the Moore College Institutional Repository
FORM OF NOTICE FOR PARAGRAPH 49(7A)(c) OF THE COPYRIGHT ACT 1968

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

This material has been provided to you pursuant to section 49 of the Copyright Act 1968 (the Act) for the purposes of research or study. The contents of the material may be subject to copyright protection under the Act.

Further dealings by you with this material may be a copyright infringement. To determine whether such a communication would be an infringement, it is necessary to have regard to the criteria set out in Part 3, Division 3 of the Act.
PAUL
Missionary of Jesus

Paul Barnett

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.
otherwise it would not have survived in the Pauline corpus. Perhaps Paul’s three-month sojourn there in the house of Gaius helped heal the wounds and bring reconciliation (Acts 20:2-3; Rom 16:23).

By any reckoning 2 Corinthians is a remarkable text. It is a unique window into Paul’s mind revealing his intense identification with Christ his Lord and his passionate concern to replicate Christ’s ministry (“the meekness and gentleness of Christ”), Christ’s death (in missionary “afflictions”), and Christ’s resurrection (in “deliverance” from afflictions).

Paul argued his case for legitimacy with the Corinthians on the grounds that he was identifiable with Christ himself, and with the core elements of the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord. Paul’s legitimacy was not based in the materialistic power plays of the newcomer triumphalists but in his evident replication of Christ himself in Paul’s life and ministry. Unlike them, Paul was a true missionary of Jesus. Thereby, from this unique letter, Paul establishes from that time a pattern for pastoral ministry that is truly “Christian.”

Paul wrote his letter to the Romans during a three-month period in about 57 from the house of Gaius in Corinth, by means of the amanuensis Tertius (Rom 16:22-23; Acts 20:2-3). He was writing for the sake of the twenty-six named persons of whom he speaks in warm tones, and those many more unnamed ones connected with them who gathered in the various house churches in the imperial capital (Rom 16:3-16). Paul dispatched the letter with the trusted sister Phoebe, whom he expected the readers generously to welcome (16:1-2):

Phoebe the envoy and the letter she carried were (so to speak) Paul’s “advance party,” since he planned personally to go to Rome after delivering the collection1 to Jerusalem, to “pass through” on his way to Spain (15:22-29). Paul was not to know that his writing of this letter would be the climax of his apostolate and, in effect, its end. The book of Acts draws the curtain on Paul under house arrest in Rome circa 62, after which we hear no more about him from his friend Luke. His literary output after Romans is slight, consisting only of Philippians and his pastoral tracts to Timothy and Ti-

1. See chapter 9.
Paul's Mission Friends and Their Associates in Rome

Paul addresses this group warmly, acknowledging with approval their worldwide reputation for the "faith" (1:8) into which they had been instructed and baptized (6:3, 17; cf. 16:17), their "goodness" (15:14), and their "obedience" to the gospel, which is "known to all" (16:19; cf. 1:5 — "the obedience of faith").

At the same time, he diplomatically writes this letter for their "strengthening" (11:1; 16:25) and their "wise" discernment of what is "good" (16:19), which likely is against the negative influence of group 2.

As well, hints of external "secular" pressure are implied by the sequential admonitions "bless those who persecute you," "never avenge yourselves," and "let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (12:14, 19; 13:1). Possibly Suetonius, Nero 16.2 ("Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a sect devoted to a new and mischievous superstition").

2. See appendix D for argument that Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were written from Asia (Ephesus).

The Situation in Rome

Two groups of people are in Paul's mind as he writes this letter: (1) the readers who belong to his mission and their associates in the house churches (Rom 16:3-16; cf. 6:1-4, 17), and (2) the hostile interlocutors (21, 17-11, 317; 9:19) who likely are also those Paul accuses of creating dissension and obstacles for the faith in which the first group has been instructed and baptized (16:17-19; cf. 6:3, 17).

Paul's major purpose in writing is to "strengthen" the faith of group 1 against the destructive influence of group 2. Accordingly, the letter is implicitly polemical against group 2, while also being necessarily apologetic for Paul and his credentials in view of the influence he seeks to bring for the benefit of his mission supporters.

The Countermission Network in Rome

Paul's major concern, however, which is identifiable throughout the length and breadth of the letter, is his polemic against the Jewish Christians, who have been influenced by the Jerusalem-based countermission that seeks to impose circumcision on the male members of the Pauline churches. As argued earlier, this countermission arose at the beginning of Paul's westward missionary journeys (from ca. 47) and continued throughout Paul's ministry to Gentiles in Anatolia and Greece.

While these critics and objectors are in the shadows of the audience in Rome, they likely had overlapping associations with the Jews of the synagogues, with whom they would have had strong sympathies (against Paul). At many points the objections of the Jewish Christians were probably indistinguishable from those of the Jews of the synagogues.

Once more we note the decadelong importance of the circumcision issue that dominates Romans 2:23-3:12 and culminates in the case study of Abraham, forefather of the Jews, who "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (4:3) apart from and prior to his own circumcision (4:10).


4. See chapter 10. This argument depends to a degree, on P. Stublmecher, Paul's Letter to the Romans (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 5-6, who, in turn acknowledges the influence of F. C. Baur and C. Weizsäcker.

5. See chapter 9.

Purpose of the Letter

Paul’s primary reason for writing is to expound his “gospel” (“my gospel” — 2:15; 16:25) for his Roman supporters in the knowledge that he was about to come to them (by a roundabout route) for a temporary visit, and in the understanding that his declared enemies in the Jewish-Christian countermission were wielding their influence in the Eternal City. In Romans, then, Paul sets out his comprehensive statement of the “gospel” (as he calls it; see below) to buttress his sympathizers and to answer his enemies.

Closely connected is Paul’s own apologetic for himself as apostle and bearer of the word of God to the nations, which he argues in two ways. First, he immediately sets out a major statement of the gospel of God:

The gospel of God
which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,
the gospel concerning his Son,
who was descended from David
according to the flesh, and
designated Son of God in power
according to the Spirit of holiness
by his resurrection from the dead,
Jesus Christ our Lord. (1:1-3)

Various elements suggest that Paul is adapting a preformed confession, one that may have predated Paul’s own conversion and that the Roman believers may have known. This short passage has many elements in common with the earliest “teaching of the apostles” (Acts 2:42; cf. 5:28) in Jerusalem, into which some Roman Jews present had been baptized. As well, there are other passages in Romans that were likely preformed and pre-Pauline in origin (e.g., Rom 4:25; 11:33-36) that Paul likely cites (among other reasons) to validate his credentials and authority.

Secondly, Paul makes significant claims about his apostolic authority over them in Rome, notably at the head of the letter.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. (1:1)

Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. (1:5-6)

For God is my witness . . . that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. (1:9-11)

I have often intended to come to you . . . in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. (1:13)

So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (1:15)

We note with interest Paul’s “I . . . you” statements at the beginning of the letter that clearly assert his apostolic authority in respect of them.

Likewise assertive is his doxology at the end of the letter, which completes a kind of inclusio, picking up references to “gospel,” “preaching,” “strengthening,” “prophetic writings,” “nations” (= “Gentiles”), and “obedience” that appear in the opening passage (1:1-15).

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according
to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (16:25-27)

Paul's apostolic assertiveness in relationship to those in Rome is seen in his words "strengthen you according to my gospel," where his "my ... you" reference corresponds with his "I ... you" relationship noted above.

In fact, the tone of Romans throughout is authoritative; Paul expects his apostolicity to be acknowledged and his various admonitions heeded (11:13). This is true, even though he will not come to Rome for direct ministry (apart from a brief period in transit to Rome) because he follows the settled policy of limiting his sustained ministry to virgin territory (15:20-24). The apostolic letter, however, bears the same authority as the apostolic presence.

Yet, as noted above, Paul seeks to identify with the theological understanding of his Roman readers. He refers to their "obedience" to the "standard of teaching" (typos didachēs) to which they were "committed" (paredotheitē — 6:17), which must be read alongside the later reference to "the doctrine which you have been taught" (tēn didachēn ... humeis emathēte — 16:17). This "rabbinc" language ("standard of teaching," "handed over," "learned," "obeys") points to the instruction at the time of baptism that was as likely true for Paul as it had been for his readers ("all of us who have been baptized" — 6:3).

Paul's close identification with the twenty-six named persons he urges his readers to "greet" (that is, who are approved by Paul as part of or sympathetic to his mission — 16:3-16) also serves to isolate those whom he said the "brothers" should "take note of" (16:17). These unnamed ones raise obstacles against the very doctrines that Paul and his readers share. In all likelihood these are the same people (or represent the same viewpoint) that Paul is answering throughout the letter, as noted above (2:1, 17-19; 3:7; 9:19).

In short, Paul's purposes in writing to the Romans are threefold and overlapping. The letter is pastoral to "strengthen" his mission supporters in the true gospel, apologetic for Paul's defense of his apostolic authority, and polemical against those "fringe" insiders who oppose the doctrines that Paul and his supporters share.

Paul's Gospel

Our contention, then, is that Romans is an "occasional" letter. True, it is his most systematic and closely argued text, but Paul did not plan it as his "last will and testament" (so Bornkamm) but as a comprehensive response to the particular crisis facing the believers in Rome created by the countermovement against Paul. Ironically, though, Romans proved to be Paul's unintended "last will and testament," since the writing of it coincided with the practical end of his missionary and letter-writing apostolate. After Romans Paul wrote only shorter works.

The argument of the letter is well known, but nonetheless worth stating in brief.

Chapters

1-4 The "one" God has justified both Gentiles and Jews the same way, by faith in Christ, who was made a propitiation for sins in his death.

5 Adam, who plunged humanity into sin and death, was the "type" of the one who is to come, Christ.

6-8 God delivers Gentiles and Jews by faith in Christ from the power of sin, and he empowers them by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the just requirement of the law.

9-11 Although a "hardening" has come to Israel, God will ultimately save (the elect of) Israel in keeping with the promise to the patriarchs.

12-14 How believers in Rome are to conduct themselves in their life together and with the governing authorities.

15 How the Romans are to pray for Christ's apostle Paul in Jerusalem, and how upon his arrival in Rome they are to "send" him on to Spain.

16 The Roman readers are to greet twenty-six named persons but are warned about those who intend to divide the community of faith.

Other analyses of the letter are possible, yet the above gives the reader a reasonable overview.

Some have said that chapters 1-8 are Paul's "purest gospel" (Luther), since here we find the great doctrines of grace, that sinners are justified
only by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. Here the tendency is to regard the remainder of the letter as a kind of appendage. Others have argued for the prior significance of chapters 9–15, where God’s plan to gather in Gentiles and grafted them to “olive tree” Israel is dominant. Here the tendency is to regard the earlier chapters as “introductory” (Munck).

There are disadvantages in regarding one half, or the other, as the “real” message of Romans. If our exclusive focus is on chapters 1–8, we have the impression that the gospel is only about what happened back then in God’s justifying work for sinners in the death and resurrection of his Son. We would not understand from those chapters that God’s task through his servants is continuing (through his “workers” like Prisca and Aquila [16:3] and “apostles” like Andronicus and Junia [16:7]). Alternatively, if our interest centers on chapters 9–15, we would not understand that in the death and resurrection of his Son God has superseded the dispensation of law (symbolized by the call for the circumcision of Gentiles) and inaugurated the dispensation of the Spirit. Both parts, that is, all of Romans, must be read to discover Paul’s gospel.

The Universal Character of Romans

In asserting that Romans is a “responsive” letter, it may be readily acknowledged that it is not narrowly occasional. We can understand why Melanchthon declared Romans to be a “compendium of Christian doctrine.” The global and comprehensive character of the letter justifies that conclusion even if he did not recognize that the letter was one side of a fierce debate.

Six elements give the letter its universal and cosmic appearance.

Its Teaching about God

Here some statistics must be noted. Apart from everyday words (like “and”), the word most frequently appearing in Romans is “God,” which appears more times in Romans than in any other book in the New Testa-


188
13:11 "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand."
14:10 "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God."

Paul Teaches about Jesus as the Unique and Universal Lord

Throughout Romans Paul argues for the highest view of Christ.

1:3 The gospel concerning [God’s] Son, who came of the seed of David who is marked out as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.
5:11 We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.
8:3 God sent his own Son (cf. 4:19) in the likeness of sinful flesh.
8:32 He did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.
9:5 Christ, who is God over all . . .
10:6 "Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down)."
10:12 "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him."
14:8 Whether we live or whether we die, we live and die to the Lord.

Paul Insists on the Universality of Justification

Only through the Gospel

God has judged his Son now (3:24-25), so that those who take refuge in him now will be spared the wrath of the last day. This God declares through his word, the gospel.

1:16 The gospel is the power of God for salvation for all who believe.

In Consequence, Paul Exhorts the Body of Believers

Composed of Jews and Gentiles to Be "One"

The ethical section of the letter is dominated by Paul’s appeal (12:1) to believers—Jew and Gentile—as in “one body” (12:3) to serve one another (12:10), “love one another” (12:10—unhypocritically), and “welcome one another” (15:7).

These six observations point to the global character of the letter and might well justify the verdict “compendium.” This is Paul’s considered view looking back on an apostleship extending over a quarter of a century throughout a vast geographic arc from Jerusalem to Illyricum, preaching in Syria, Arabia, Judea, Syria-Cilicia, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia.

Paul’s preaching of Christ had attracted strong opposition from both Gentiles and Jews, as witnessed by the lists of suffering (called peristaseis) set out in 1 Corinthians (4:8-13) and 2 Corinthians (1:3-11; 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:21b-12:13), and also in Romans (8:35-39), so that his gospel was tempered in the fires of affliction.

A significant source of Paul’s missionary sufferings was the countermission of the Jerusalem-based Jewish Christians who sought to impose circumcision on Gentile believers. As a measure of the danger these countermissionaries posed, Paul calls them “false apostles” (pseudapostoloi — 2 Cor 11:3) and “false brothers” (pseudadelphoi — Gal 2:4; 2 Cor 11:26), even though they are “ministers of Christ” (diakonoi Christou — 2 Cor 11:23).

This also explains why Paul on occasion speaks in such muted tones even about the apostles Peter (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-14) and James, despite their undoubted status as apostles and leaders in the Jewish mission and their proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ (1 Cor 15:11). The problem was that the unnamed countermissionaries on occasion seemed able to impose such pressure on Peter and James that they appeared to vacillate over the circumcision issue (Gal 2:1-21). It may be recalled that from the
mid-40s Judea was sliding toward war with the occupying Romans. In that emotion-charged situation it would not have been easy to defend Paul’s mission to Gentiles that offered such easy, pain-free (i.e., circumcision-free) access to the messianic covenant.

In short, then, we recognize the universal and comprehensive nature of Romans. Yet this is not due to a situation in Rome that was either unknown or unproblematic; Romans is not merely Paul’s inspired essay setting out his version of the gospel theoretically, as it were. In minor part, the comprehensive character of Romans is due to the stage Paul had reached as he completed his gospel work in the eastern provinces as he prepared to go to the western extremity (Spain) through the world capital. More to the point is the recognition that Paul had been struggling with the countermissionaries’ skewed gospel for a decade, and he had reason to believe that its influence in Rome was significant.

“Righteousness” in Romans

Our argument is that Romans is Paul’s comprehensive response to the Jewish Christian countertheology that required Gentiles to submit to the Mosaic law, in particular for (males) to be circumcised. Paul countered this by his appeal to the “righteousness of God” that both Gentiles and Jews lacked (through Adam’s sin) but that was theirs through the propitiatory death of Christ (see Rom 3:21-26). There are six Greek words belonging to the “righteousness” group, and these appear more than one hundred times in Paul’s letters and more than fifty times in Romans. It appears that the “righteousness of God” was the theological battleground contested by Paul and the countermission.

“Righteousness of God” for Paul meant being acquitted by God of wrongdoing (negatively) but being declared to be “in the right” with God (positively). This “righteousness” is God’s gift to the unworthy made possible by Christ’s death and “revealed” in the message of the gospel (1:16-17). Critical to Paul’s argument was the case of Abraham, the forefather of Israel (4:1-3), whose “faith” was “reckoned to [him] as righteousness . . . before he was circumcised” (4:9-10). “Righteousness of God,” then, is possessed only by those who “believe” God’s promises, not by those who attempt to fulfill the law (including by circumcision). To be “righteoused” by faith is possible only through faith in Christ the faithful One, who is the God-given means of “access” to a “right” standing with God and to “peace with God” (5:1-2).

It is our understanding that Paul’s viewpoint on “righteousness” is historically evident ten years earlier than expressed in Romans (i.e., ca. 47), as revealed in Paul’s opposition to the circumcision of Gentile believers in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Galatia (Gal 2:1-21; 5:2-12). Paul the Jew believed that he was “righteoused by faith” at the time of the Damascus event (Gal 3:24). In short, from the beginning of his life “in Christ,” Paul believed that the “righteousness of God” was his possession and that he fought for that “truth of the gospel” for Gentiles throughout the entire period of his mission, from Damascus to Corinth (where he wrote Romans).

“Righteousness of God” and the “Kingdom of God”

This, however, raises a major question: Was this doctrine so passionately held by Paul the “sent one” also the doctrine of Christ the Sender? Put another way: Had Christ been in Paul’s shoes, would he have preached that men and women are “righteoused by faith” and not by works of the law? It is, of course, an outrageous and illegitimate question because the mission of the historical Jesus was mainly to Jews whereas the mission of Paul was to Jews but increasingly to Gentiles. Jesus and Paul were located in distinctly different cultures. Nonetheless, several reasons for Paul’s pas-
sionate advocacy that the “righteousness of God” was accessed by faith and not by works of the law was consistent with and a valid extension of Jesus’ actions and teaching.

Here the principal point of continuity between Jesus and Paul is their common use of the term “kingdom of God,” which occurs many times on Jesus’ lips in the Gospels and eight times in Paul’s undisputed letters.17

The one “kingdom of God” reference in Romans is relevant to this question. “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men” (14:17-18). Paul had just obliquely referred to a saying of the Lord Jesus that “nothing is unclean (koinon) of itself” (14:14; cf. Mark 7:15 — “there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile [koinosai] him”). This “good” truth, however, was capable of being used helplessly by the “strong” in the Roman house churches, to the injury of those “weak in faith” (Rom 14:1). It was a “good” that was being “spoken of as evil” because it strained relationships between them; the “strong” wanted freedom to eat and drink what they chose although this was breaking fellowship with the “weak” who did not feel the same freedom (14:16). To overcome this pastoral obstacle to unity Paul calls on the “strong” to refrain from such eating and drinking that would offend the weak (presumably when they met together). Accordingly he enjoins, “Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean (kathara; cf. Mark 7:19 — ‘thus he declared all foods clean [katharizō]’), but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats; it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble” (Rom 14:20-21).

It appears that the “strong” were relying on a teaching of Jesus to justify their freedom in eating and drinking whatever they chose (in the company of the “weak”), regardless of the social impact of that freedom. Paul, however, defines the “kingdom of God” (Jesus’ key referent for his gospel — e.g., Mark 1:14) as “not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Paul’s key referent for his gospel — Rom 1:16-17). It is not difficult to demonstrate that “peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” are adjunct blessings to the “righteousness of God” as declared in Paul’s gospel.19

Furthermore, it can hardly be a coincidence that Jesus used both terms together, as in “seek first [God’s] kingdom and [God’s] righteousness” (Matt 6:33); both his kingdom and his righteousness are his “gifts.”20

In short, Paul displays awareness of the centrality of Jesus’ preaching of “the kingdom of God” (a term rarely used in Second Temple Judaism), which he expounded in his own terms as the “righteousness of God.”

This, however, prompts two further questions. For Paul the “righteousness of God” was entirely dependent on the mercy of God; it was decidedly independent of “works of the law,” in particular circumcision. So, can it be demonstrated, first, that Jesus’ “kingdom of God” message was based on mercy (alone), and secondly, that Paul knew it was? The answer to the first question is straightforward. The Gospels demonstrate the mercy-based nature of the “kingdom of God” in Jesus’ table fellowship with “sinners” independent of the ritual demands of the Pharisees (Sabbath keeping, fasting, washings). We must regard as indisputable the texts that articulate the Pharisees’ attitude to Jesus when they said, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2), and that he was reputed to be “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt 11:19).

B. F. Meyer’s observation is apposite: “Jesus’ central proclamation [of] the reign of God was God’s supreme and climactic gift to Israel and the world, not just goodness but boundless goodness.”21 Commenting on Jesus’ table fellowship with sinners, Meyer observed that “the Pauline account of God as the one who ‘justifies (dikaiounta = acquits, makes righteous) the ungodly’ (Rom 4:5) . . . has its concrete presupposition in Jesus’ revolutionary contact and communion with sinners.”22

The connected question as to whether Paul displays knowledge of Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees over the grace-based nature of the “kingdom of God” is less straightforward. The answer is likely found in the Corinthians’ slogan “All things are lawful” (exestin — 1 Cor 6:12; 12:23). This appears to reflect the Corinthians’ knowledge of the Pharisees’ repeated objection “it is not lawful” (ouk exestin) to Jesus’ refusal to observe various

18. The koinos, koino language dominates the pericope about the dispute over “defiled” hands (Mark 7:15, 18, 20, 23).
19. See, e.g., “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).
ritual and ethical requirements (Mark 2:24, 26; 3:4; 10:2; cf. 12:14). If, as it appears, the Corinthians knew of Jesus' free attitude to ritual matters, we must assume that Paul himself was their source, even though the Corinthians twisted freedom into license. Paul's employment of the "lawful" language suggests that he knew about the currency of that word in the disputes between Jesus and the Pharisees.

We conclude from the above discussion (i) that Jesus' proclamation of the "kingdom of God" was mercy-based toward sinners, and (ii) that Paul's use of the word "lawful" likely means that he was aware of the strife between Jesus and the Pharisees over the mercy of God for sinners, independent of ritual requirements.

It must not pass unnoticed that the opponents of Paul in the Jerusalem-based Jewish Christian countermission were "believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5) and that when Paul visited Jerusalem in the late 50s the elders of the church informed him of "how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed . . . all zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20). Believing Jews who are "zealous for the law" can mean only one thing: believers who are Pharisees or who are sympathetic with Pharisaism. In other words, the ritual requirements of the Pharisees toward sinners (that Jesus opposed) were replicated in the ritual demands of Pharisaic believers toward Gentiles (that Paul opposed). We conclude, therefore, that Paul's employment of his key concept "righteousness of God" was consistent with and in genuine extension of Jesus' key concept "kingdom of God" and that both were grace-based and ritual-free.

Conclusion

Despite its global character, Paul's letter to the Romans is not so much a compendium of doctrine (in the abstract) as it is a comprehensive response to the alternative theology of the Jewish-Christian countermission.

Was Paul's insistence that the "righteousness of God" is grace-based in line with Jesus' insistence that his proclamation of the "kingdom of God" was likewise mercy-based?

It is likely significant that the Jewish Christian mission opposing Paul was composed of Pharisees (or Pharisee sympathizers). It appears that the Pharisees' insistence on ritual observance for sinners (Sabbath keeping, fasting, washings) continued in principle in the countermission's insistence on ritual observance of Gentiles (in circumcision). In opposing the Pharisee mind-set in his mission, Paul followed his Master in opposing the Pharisee mind-set in his.