

The Project of Comparison: Pauline and Post-Pauline Traditions  
Research Thesis

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## INTRODUCTION

Pauline and Post-Pauline traditions in early Christianity have both similarities and differences in theology. Comparing texts individually against each other and considering apocryphal sources rather than harmonizing all Pauline letters in the New Testament offers insight into the theology of each individual author. This essay seeks to establish the diversity in soteriology of Pauline and Post-Pauline traditions by analyzing each author's perspective in his unique context. Galatians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians are the primary sources used to represent the authentic Pauline writings. Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles, 2 Thessalonians, and the Acts of Paul and Thecla are used for the Post-Pauline traditions. These sources were not written with the intention of giving the solution to this problem, complicating the soteriological project of comparison.

In his book *Drudgery Divine*, J. Z. Smith's research methodology<sup>1</sup> is comparison by words, then stories, and lastly settings. He uses this process to compare mystery cults and early Christianity. Smith demonstrates the shortcomings of the first two modes of comparison to argue that comparing settings is the best method of comparison. His settings are utopian – a demonizing of the present world and necessity to rebel against it and transcend away from it – and locative – a sacralizing of the present location and a need to create stability. He finds in his analysis of mystery cults and early Christianity a singular shift in setting. Using the same method, this essay seeks to establish the soteriology in the Pauline and Post-Pauline traditions.

Elements of Paul's gospel and contradictory concepts thread themselves throughout these texts. Paul, previously a Pharisee and persecutor of followers of Jesus Christ, became a follower of Jesus and preached the gospel of Christ to Gentiles. The term

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<sup>1</sup> J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990)

gospel will be used as Paul uses it to mean a “proclamation of the ‘good news’ (from the Greek word *euaggelion*) of Christ’s salvation.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s gospel is rooted in Jewish covenant. A covenant is a promise, or treaty, made with a solemn oath. The first covenant with Israel is the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>3</sup> The terms of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis include circumcision of all of Abraham’s offspring (Gen 17:9-14). The second is the Mosaic Law given to Israel by God through Moses. The Jewish people are righteous before God because they are God’s chosen people. For these reasons, they gladly kept the Law because it showed them how to please God.<sup>4</sup> Paul’s position on Jews keeping the Law is highly debated,<sup>5</sup> but it is clear that he opposes Gentile followers of Jesus converting to Judaism (i.e. being circumcised and keeping the Law). Through including the Gentiles in a covenantal relationship with God, Paul denationalizes Jewish apocalypticism. Bart Ehrman explains apocalypticism as “an ancient Jewish and Christian worldview that maintained that there are two fundamental components of reality, good and evil, and that everything in the world aligned on one side or the other.”<sup>6</sup> In the Post-Pauline traditions of Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles, the new focus on institutionalization of the Church, loss of Jewish context, and creation of stability and hierarchy oppose these elements of Paul’s gospel.

Comparing words offers a starting point for understanding the soteriological

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<sup>2</sup> Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 513.

<sup>3</sup> God said to Abraham, “I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you” (Gen 17:7).

<sup>4</sup> Ehrman 52.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd Gaston was among the first scholars to evaluate Paul’s negative statements about keeping the Law as only relevant to the Gentile converts. Gaston asserts that Paul would have no problem with Jewish Christians continuing to keep the Law (*Paul and the Torah*, 1987), John Gager furthers this argument and proposes two paths to salvation – for the Jew through the Law and for the Gentile through Christ (*Reinventing Paul*, 2000), Paula Fredrickson analyzes both of these arguments among others and disagrees. Her thesis is that Paul rejects any way to salvation apart from Christ using Paul’s rebuke of Peter (Gal 2:11-14) as evidence against the two-paths model. She argues that Paul acknowledges benefits of the Law except in regard to salvation (*From Jesus to Christ*, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Ehrman 494.

vocabulary of the authors, but causes confusion when the same terms are used with different meanings between authors. Comparing stories brings understanding of the shifts in vocabulary and demonstrates changes in teaching, but gives no insight as to why such differences are prevalent. Perspective on the “why” question comes from comparing settings. Significant events, such as the delay of the Parousia, do not always cause a shift from one setting to another in religion. The Post-Pauline traditions demonstrate a split into conflicting trajectories of soteriology: one being the setting of the authentic Pauline letters and the other a separate trajectory that shifts settings.

## **I. COMPARING WORDS**

Comparing the use of key terms initially seems to be an effective approach to understanding what the authors intended to teach. However, comparing words outside of context does not allow one to draw defensible conclusions because words only have meaning in context. Examining the use of each term in this section, I seek to compare and contrast the use of the terms justification, faith, works, and salvation as used by each of the four authors. Paul’s epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans will be used to exemplify Paul’s use of these terms. Deutero-Pauline uses of the same terms will be analyzed in Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles. A key finding in my analysis is that, although all authors use the same words, the Jewish undertones of Paul’s writing are no longer present in the Deutero-Pauline epistles. Thus, as Smith observes, a benefit to a philological method appears to be the strict focus on the text, but at the end of the comparison of words many shortcomings appear due to lack of context.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 55.

## Dikaiosynē

Justification is a crucial term for Paul that describes the current state of being for believers. In English, justification is used synonymously with righteousness; however, these are the same term in Greek. For Paul, those who are justified are righteous in the eyes of God because the relationship with God has been redeemed (Rom 3:22-26). The originally perfect relationship between God and humanity was ruined when Sin entered the world through Adam's trespass (Rom 5:12),<sup>8</sup> but the sacrifice of Jesus allows all who were separated from God because of Sin including Gentiles to stand righteous before God (Rom 5:19).<sup>9</sup>

Colossians and Ephesians seem analogous in the emphasis on the reconciliation of humanity to God rather than using Paul's terms justification or righteousness. The author of Colossians writes, "[Jesus] has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him" (Col 1:22). This declaration closely resembles the reconciliation of which Paul labeled justification.<sup>10</sup> In Ephesians, rather than justification, there is redemption. Believers are redeemed, or bought back, into what is still by definition Paul's concept of justification: "to be holy and blameless before [God] in love" (Eph 1:4). Redemption is a state of justification in which one is forgiven of sins (trespasses), whereas Paul's justification was a state of

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<sup>8</sup> Harrill argues a shortcoming to a philological approach to interpreting texts with this verse and the doctrine of Original Sin. The original Greek manuscripts read, "death spread to all *because* all have sinned" (emphasis added). However, when this text was translated into Latin the word choice (*in quo*) became ambiguous either meaning "because" as the original Greek or "in whom" so as to say, "in Adam all have sinned." The latter interpretation, as Harrill argues, is the basis for the doctrine of Original Sin illustrating the effects of a false sense of security in interpretation of words. (*Paul the Apostle*, 144)

<sup>9</sup> In Rom 5:15-21 Paul argues that the power of Sin causes death, but, through the sacrifice of Jesus, God brought the power of Grace into the world, which "abounded all the more" wherever Sin was and brings justification for sinners.

<sup>10</sup> For Paul, it is always God who reconciles humanity to Himself through Jesus. In Colossians both God and Jesus do the reconciling (Col 1:20, 22). This raises an interesting question of the authors' understandings of the unity of Jesus and God.

freedom from the cosmic power of Sin. The vocabulary has shifted in these letters, using different words where Paul would likely have used justification.<sup>11</sup>

In the Pastoral Epistles, the term justification appears to resemble Paul's use. The Pastor's teaching of justification by grace (Titus 3:7) seems analogous to Paul's justification by faith because, grace, the fulfillment of God's promise, brings justification. Also as in Paul's authentic letters, justification is a precursor to salvation. Ehrman observes, "some of the words that Paul does use in his own letters take on different meanings in the Pastorals. ... Paul's word for 'having a right to stand before God' (literally, 'righteousness') now means 'being a moral individual' (i.e. 'upright'; Titus 1:8).<sup>12</sup> Despite Paul's own term being used in these letters in a way that seems similar to Paul, the Pastor's definition of justification is furthest from Paul in the epistles analyzed.

### **Pistis**

Paul says to the Galatians, "yet we know that a person is justified not by works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law" (Gal 2:16).<sup>13</sup> According to Jouette Bassler, trust or confidence is the main nuance of the term *pistis* in Greek that is not clear in the English word faith.<sup>14</sup> Paul's use of the terms faith and works makes the two models of justification – by faith and by works (of the Law) – mutually exclusive.

Paul uses the phrase *pistis Iesou Christou* in opposition to faithfulness in keeping Jewish

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<sup>11</sup> The term *righteous* does appear in Ephesians 4:24 and 6:14; however, I do not find these verses give enough context clues to deduce the author's definition of the term.

<sup>12</sup> Ehrman 415.

<sup>13</sup> Translation adapted based on the translation footnotes of Richard B. Hays "It is debated whether the slogan *pistis Iesou Christou* (Greek, 'faith of/in Jesus Christ'...) refers to Jesus' faithful death or to the community's subsequent trust in him ... the former sense is more probable."

<sup>14</sup> Jouette Bassler, *Navigating Paul*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989) 24. Bassler acknowledges that scholars debate which nuance of *pistis* is most central for Paul among others such as belief in a truth, obedience, and trust.

Law;<sup>15</sup> however, *pistis* is important to Jews as well.<sup>16</sup>

Paul uses the Allegory of Sarah and Hagar,<sup>17</sup> a Jewish story, to further his point to his Gentile audience that they are included in the Abrahamic Covenant. They are justified because of God's faithfulness to the promise He made to Abraham: "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you" (Gal 3:8).<sup>18</sup> Paul writes that the justification offered by God through Jesus is "effective through faith" (Rom 3:25) and "to the one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Therefore, Paul's definition of faith is trust that Jesus' sacrifice allows Gentiles to be justified apart from upholding the Jewish Law. Ehrman goes so far as to say Paul would have considered that a Gentile adopting the Jewish Law to be "an affront to God and a rejection of the justification by faith he has provided through Christ."<sup>19</sup>

In Colossians and Ephesians, the authors have two distinct uses of the term faith. One is the Pauline use – trust. For Colossians: "you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God" (Col 2:12). The author of Ephesians praises the community for their trust in Jesus and God (Eph 1:15; 2:8; 3:12). The second use in Colossians is distinguished in English as "the faith," which is likely a set of theological propositions and/or the Christian lifestyle that believers were taught (Col 1:6-7; Eph 4:5,13).

In the Pastoral Epistles, the latter of the aforementioned definitions of faith is now the only use. Ehrman writes, "the term 'faith,' which for Paul refers to a trusting acceptance

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<sup>15</sup> Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 23. Bassler discusses that this view is contrary to Philo who has trust in God and obedience to the Law both included in the virtue of *pistis* (25).

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* Bassler presents her argument for the textual support of the importance of *pistis* to the Jews.

<sup>17</sup> The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar explains two paths to justification. One path leads to God whereas the other leads to slavery. Hagar represents justification by works, the path of slavery, because the son of Abraham and Hagar was born "according to the flesh" (Gal 4:23). Sarah represents justification by faith, the path to God, because Sarah's son was born according to Abraham's trust in God to be faithful to His promise.

<sup>18</sup> Paul's paraphrase of either Gen 12:3, which reads: "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," or Gen 22:18, which actually reads: "and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice"

<sup>19</sup> Ehrman 354



of the death of Christ for salvation, now refers to the body of teaching that makes up the Christian religions (e.g., Titus 1:13).”<sup>20</sup> “The faith” as a religion or set of theological propositions is not completely absent from Paul though. When Paul is explaining his conversion, he quotes as a rumor about him: “The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy” (Gal 1:23). Still, rather than “the faith” as dogma, it is Paul’s label for the community of believers he persecuted.

### **Erga**

Paul primarily uses the term works to refer to works of the Jewish Law. In Galatians, Paul argues against Gentile converts being circumcised. God commanded circumcision as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant,<sup>21</sup> and then gave it as part of the Mosaic Law.<sup>22</sup> Hans Dieter Betz finds Paul’s understanding of the Law more complicated than justification by faith versus justification by works. In Galatians 5:14, Paul writes, “For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Betz proposes, “The important difference is that this concept of the Torah does not require the specifically Jewish Torah observance, but it can in principle be fulfilled by every human being. If the love command is ‘fulfilled,’ the ‘whole Torah’ is fulfilled, and thus righteousness is assured. This concept, therefore, permits gentiles to access salvation without their having to pass through the religion of Judaism.”<sup>23</sup> Paul calls the Mosaic Law a paidagagos (Greek, disciplinarian). Therefore, works of the Law are no longer necessary because only Jesus is needed; He is the Christ in whom the Law is fulfilled.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ehrman 415.

<sup>21</sup> Find the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen 17:9-14

<sup>22</sup> Find circumcision in the Jewish Law in Lev 12:3

<sup>23</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, “Paul” 195.

<sup>24</sup> Paula Fredricksen 160-163. Fredricksen argues that Paul rejects the double covenant model (described in the Allegory of Sarah and Hagar that there are two paths to justification and accordingly salvation) and, because of his rebuke of Peter in Antioch (Gal 2:11ff), Paul believes that Christ is the sole way to salvation for all

The term works is also used in the phrase “works of the flesh,” which is the opposite of “fruits of the Spirit.” Paul instructs the community to stay away from “works of the flesh” and names them as “fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (Gal 5:19-21). He continues, “those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21). Good works, however, Paul calls “fruit of the Spirit” and instructs the people to grow in “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22).

The Deutero-Pauline letters have shifted the meaning of works away from Paul’s focus on works of the Law instead to good deeds (Col 1:10, Eph 2:10). It is clear in Colossians and Ephesians that good deeds are the main use of the term works, and these are positive works the communities are encouraged to do rather than Paul’s preaching against works of the Law. The Pastoral Epistles continue the discussion of the law. By mere analysis of words, it seems to be the same point as for Paul: “Now we know that the law is good” (1 Tim 1:8). As Paul calls the Law a disciplinarian, so the Pastor writes that the law is for the disobedient (1 Tim 1:9). The Pastor’s law is general laws of conduct in a Greco-Roman community not the Jewish Law. There is no discussion of circumcision, food restrictions, or any other specifics of the Torah. The trouble with comparing words is that Paul and the Pastor are writing analogous things but not about the same law.

### **Soteria**

Salvation depends on faith, as Paul used the term, and good deeds, or avoiding “works of the flesh.” Paul states “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9).

It is not just faith: “For [God] will repay according to each one’s deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rom 2:6-8). Salvation will happen in the future on a prescribed judgment day when people will be judged on all aspects of their lives including their personal thoughts (Rom 2:16). Salvation depends on trust in the faithfulness of God and living in the “fruits of the Spirit” rather than under the power of Sin.

In Colossians, the resurrection of the dead – an event Paul places at the return of Christ – is an event at baptism. Paul’s justification and salvation are no longer distinct, but merged into one idea and one event. Baptism, for Paul, is a sharing in Jesus’ crucifixion, which brings newness of life (Rom 6:3-4). The word raised is used in place of Paul’s “new life in the Spirit” following baptism. The author says, “when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith and the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12). If raised is equivalent to salvation, then the timetable has shifted, and salvation occurs at baptism rather than at the final judgment.

In Ephesians, believers are already saved by grace and raised up with God in heaven as citizens of the household of God (Eph 2:5-6;19). Despite the similar terms to Colossians, this preaching seems more similar to Paul’s concept of justification. For the author of Ephesians, there is still some sort of judgment day, “the day of redemption” (4:30), like the final judgment in Paul’s letters when salvation will be determined.

The Pastoral Epistles are ambiguous in regards to the time of salvation. In certain verses there is a future judgment day: “May the Lord grant mercy to the household ...

may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day!” (2 Tim 16, 18). In other cases, *saved* is used in the past tense in a way that Paul would have used *justified*. For example, “God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace” (2 Tim 1:9), which suggests a difference in word choice from Paul — *saved* in place of *justified* — rather than a changed teaching.<sup>25</sup> This author implies that only God knows who will be saved: “The Lord knows those who are his” (2 Tim 2:19).<sup>26</sup> The author of Titus says that he is a “servant of God ... in the hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:1-2) insinuating salvation is not guaranteed or known in the present. The Pastor has merged Paul’s concepts of justification and salvation, which causes confusion if the reader has Paul’s definitions in mind.

The comparison of words is relatively inconclusive as a method because words are given meaning based on context. Smith says it is decidedly “inadequate.”<sup>27</sup> Ehrman says, “the argument from vocabulary can never be decisive in itself. Everybody uses different words on different occasions, and the Christian vocabulary of Paul himself must have developed over time”<sup>28</sup> Understanding the differences in word choice and accepting that definitions and connotations can change from author to author leads to the conclusion that context is necessary for comparison.

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<sup>25</sup> Jouette Bassler’s footnote to 2 Tim 1:9.

<sup>26</sup> This verse calls into question the proposition that believers are already *saved* (by Paul’s definition). In 2 Timothy, the author is writing from the perspective of Paul at the end of his life. Therefore, the author’s statement that he knows “there is reserved for [him] the crown of righteousness” for him from the Lord (2 Tim 4:8) does not necessarily assert that salvation is sometime a man can know he has earned in his lifetime.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 74.

<sup>28</sup> Ehrman 415.

## II. COMPARING STORIES

Comparing the stories each author is telling about salvation offers a better perspective of what they are teaching, but shortcomings remain. Michael Winger observes, for Paul “the meaning of a term is (for the community which uses it) implicit in the term, while the reference is supplied by the context in which the term is used. ... It would not be quite correct, however, to say that a word’s meaning is independent of any particular context; if a word has multiple meanings, the meaning in any particular context is that which is indicated by the context”<sup>29</sup> Smith acknowledges that even from the perspective of stories, elements of context are still missing.<sup>30</sup> In this section, I will examine salvation on the level of story – first Paul, then a selection of Deutero-Pauline letters separated by author. I add 2 Thessalonians to the collection of Deutero-Pauline letters because it is distinct within the Deutero-Pauline traditions from this perspective of comparison. Comparing stories advances the methodology over comparing words, but is still problematic especially in that Paul does not have one, unified story.

### Paul

Paul preaches a denationalized Jewish apocalyptic story of Gentile inclusion in the eschatological hope of Israel. His story of salvation preaches the power of God to save both Jew and Greek who have faith (Rom 1:16). Paul’s story seems to develop over time from the earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, which focuses on the imminence of the end times, to the most well explained account of his gospel in Romans.<sup>31</sup> In this section, I

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Winger, *By What Law? The Meaning of Νόμος in the Letters of Paul* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1992) 8.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 107.

<sup>31</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, “Paul,” 193.

explore how he denationalizes the Jewish themes of apocalypticism, atonement, and covenant in Paul's stories using 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans.

### *A Community Facing the Apocalypse*

Paul first writes about the end times in 1 Thessalonians and then in 1 Corinthians he adds to it. Paul's perspective on end of the world in the context of a covenantal relationship with God distinguishes his story of salvation as Jewish; however, salvation he denationalizes the story by including Gentiles as well through Christ.

Paul's Jewish apocalyptic worldview centers on a cosmic war between light and dark, which will end in a battle where light will triumph. A violent time is coming soon, according to Paul in 1 Thessalonians, which is the end of the world, but Jesus will save His followers from the wrath (1Thess 1:10). Paul acknowledges that he and the community suffer at the present time, but their hope is in the return of Christ (1 Thess 3:7-13). J. Albert Harrill notes the persecutions mentioned in 1 Thessalonians and writes:

Paul in 1 Thessalonians urged his congregation to see their local 'afflictions' (Greek *thlipsis*) as a necessary part of God's apocalyptic war. The language constructed a dichotomy of forces – "light" and "dark" – in a conflict of cosmic dimensions, which defined the proper identity and role of Paul's Gentile congregations over against outsiders. Paul wrote that God's Final Judgment would bring 'wrath' and 'sudden destruction' upon outsiders, from which 'there will be no escape' (1 Thess 5:2-10).<sup>32</sup>

This conflict of cosmic powers is significant to Paul's apocalyptic worldview. Ehrman explains that apocalypses are meant to "provide hope for those who suffer" because "God will prevail." He continues: "The present suffering is intense, but ultimately God will triumph over evil and vindicate his people"<sup>33</sup> as He always did for Israel.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Harrill 90.

<sup>33</sup> Ehrman 497.

<sup>34</sup> Fredricksen 171.

The return of Christ marks the climax of the apocalyptic war. On the Day of the Lord, believers in Christ who have already died will be the first to rise with Christ, then those “who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air” to live eternally with Christ (1 Thess 4:16-17) before war begins. As Jouette Bassler notes, “His focus is on one single point: that all believers – the still living and the newly resurrected – will experience these events together.”<sup>35</sup> Harrill observes the importance of community in this verse as well, highlighting the denationalized sense of Jewish apocalypticism.<sup>36</sup>

Transformation at the resurrection of the dead at the end time is expanded in 1 Corinthians. The end of the world is the final defeat of all other powers in the cosmos including a complete victory over Death (1 Cor 15:24-26). Bassler describes the transformation metaphor at the time of the resurrection of the dead concisely: “The physical, perishable, earthly body will be transformed into a suitable heavenly entity: a body that is spiritual, imperishable, clothed in glory, different in substance from its earthly counterpart but nevertheless continuous with it.”<sup>37</sup> But when a metaphor is insufficient, Paul proclaims, “We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor 15:51-52), calling it a “mystery.” Bassler notes the difference between Paul’s focus of the end of the world from 1 Thessalonians to 1 Corinthians: “In 1 Thessalonians the emphasis was on a change of location – all will be snatched up together to meet the Lord. Here the emphasis

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<sup>35</sup> Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 90.

<sup>36</sup> Harrill 90.

<sup>37</sup> Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 90.

is on a change in the nature of the body – the perishable body puts on imperishability.”<sup>38</sup>

Yet, the key to this element of the story is that transformation and apocalyptic war denationalize Jewish redemptive theology of the final judgment for Paul.

### *War of Cosmic Powers*

Paul discusses community and the power of Sin within a Jewish understanding of atonement in the context of the Temple. The power of Sin and the atonement of Jesus’ death and resurrection are most fully described in Romans. This atonement sacrifice equipped the community to face the final judgment at the end of the world. Paul preaches the virtues that should distinguish his communities to prepare them for the Day of the Lord and ensure salvation especially in Galatians and 1 Corinthians.

Jesus conquered Sin clearly according to Paul, but the question of what exactly sin is still remains. Paul holds two distinct views of sin. First, sin as a crime or trespass against a person or power, and second, Sin as a cosmic power of darkness and death.<sup>39</sup> Using the letter to the Romans, Ehrman cites seven verses which lead him to the claim that sin “is not simply something that a person does, a disobedient action against God, a transgression of his laws” but rather a “cosmic power, an evil force that compels people to live in alienation from God.”<sup>40</sup> He summarizes: “sin is in the world (5:13), sin rules people (5:21, 6:12), people can serve sin (6:6), people can be enslaved to sin (6:17) people can die to sin (6:11), and people can be freed from sin (6:18).” Jesus’ death was a sacrifice to free all from the powers of Sin and Death.<sup>41</sup> In the Jewish tradition, once a year there is the Day of Atonement, otherwise known as Yom Kippur. On this day the

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<sup>38</sup> Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 91. However, Sanders argues that Paul’s inconsistency in describing the end times does not mean Paul does not have a clear idea himself of what it is. (E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 448).

<sup>39</sup> Ehrman 381.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid* 256.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid* 379.



high priest makes a sacrifice that atones for all the sins of the Jewish people.<sup>42</sup> Paul's new story of Yom Kippur is Christ, the redemption "whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement" (Rom 3:25). Paul writes:

We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin ... So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6:6-7,11)

Jesus conquered Sin, and believers participate in His victory by dying to Sin with Him; therefore, Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice of atonement that redeemed all people from all Sin permanently.

Paul teaches obligations to the community as part of his gospel. It is part of accepting the Jesus' act of atonement. When a community accepted Paul's gospel, they received the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:2). Having the Holy Spirit is the power of God to bestow spiritual gifts and sanctification.<sup>43</sup> Examples of spiritual gifts are prophesy, teaching, healing, speaking in tongues. While the gifts of the Spirit are different, they are distributed as necessary and beneficial for the community because salvation will come to the community as one unified entity, one body of Christ (1 Cor 12). These are the "Fruits of the Spirit" as previously discussed. Sanders summarizes another example of community responsibility: "Paul urges them to remain *pure* and *blameless* until the Day of the Lord"<sup>44</sup> (1 Cor 6:9-11).

### *Old and New Covenants*

God made covenants with the Jews previously, but now establishes a new covenant including the Gentiles through Jesus. In Paul's Jewish story of salvation, he

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<sup>42</sup> Ehrman 54.

<sup>43</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: SCM Press Ltd, 1977) 450-451.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid* 451.

retells the stories of covenant and explains how this new covenant builds upon the old to include the Gentiles in the promise, without forsaking the Israel. The idea of the new covenant stems from Jewish tradition in the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

From his Jewish background, Paul's mention of Abraham calls to mind the Aqedah (binding of Isaac). Robert Martin-Achard observes Paul's parallel: Isaac was a type of the Christ and both were perfect sacrifices.<sup>45</sup> Paul also alludes to the Old Testament with the phrase "new covenant" from the prophet Jeremiah:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:31, 33-34)

Robert R. Wilson highlights the literal translation that God will "cut" a new covenant (Jer 31:33). He says, "'cutting a covenant' involves the sacrifice of animals."<sup>46</sup> Paul may have chosen to allude to this prophecy to further his message that the sacrifice on the cross "cut" a new covenant –this particular covenant promised by God through the prophet.

Baptism is the replacement for circumcision, the new sign of the Abrahamic Covenant through Jesus.<sup>47</sup> Paul explains that all creation can be free from the powers of Sin and Death (Rom 8:21) through baptism. In what Ehrman calls the "participationist model of salvation," believers share in Jesus' victory over Sin through baptism.<sup>48</sup>

Baptism is a rite performed with new converts that unites the believer to Christ's victory. Ehrman qualifies this assertion by saying that Paul did not mean believers were fully free from Sin because participating in the resurrection of Christ will not happen until Christ

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Martin-Achard, "Isaac," 470.

<sup>46</sup> Robert R. Wilson's translation footnote on Jer 31:31-34

<sup>47</sup> Ehrman 379.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* 381.

returns at the end of time.<sup>49</sup> Sanders writes that although eternal life is not yet attained, the Spirit “is the present possession of the Christians and their guarantee of salvation.”<sup>50</sup>

In Paul’s story of Gentile salvation, the Jews are still God’s people. The new covenant denationalizes the salvation of Israel, but it does not forsake the Jews. God remains faithful to the covenant with Israel, and Paul declares that Israel will accept Christ as the means of salvation when the “full number of Gentiles” has entered Israel. Then, “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:25-26). Scholars still debate how the same God will save both the Jews and Gentiles.<sup>51</sup> Fredricksen proposes that Paul would say for all: “The Law indeed has many advantages (Rom 3:9), but not with respect to salvation. The Law cannot save because only Christ saves.”<sup>52</sup> Considering her evidence, I concur that God saves both Jew and Gentile through Christ in the new covenant.

In summary, Paul’s story of salvation is distinguished by denationalized Jewish apocalypticism. He preaches Gentile inclusion in the salvation of Israel. Jesus’ death and resurrection is the final and ultimate sacrifice of atonement, which conquered the powers of Sin and Death. Gentiles enter the new covenant with God through baptism and are given the Spirit as a promise of salvation. At the end of the world, believers fully

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<sup>49</sup> Ehrman 379.

<sup>50</sup> Sanders 450.

<sup>51</sup> Lloyd Gaston holds the position that there are two paths to salvation: Gentiles are saved through Christ and Jews through the Torah. His claim stems from an understanding that Paul addresses Gentiles in his letters and then seems to have “no quarrel with the Jewish understanding of the Torah as it applies to Israel” (Gaston 14). Bassler agrees that Paul rejects Gentile adoption of the law, not Jewish adherence to the law. It is just that “[Jews] fail to accept that Christ is the goal of the law *for Gentiles*” (Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 16). Paula Fredriksen makes one of the most recent developments in this debate. She acknowledges and disputes the argument of two paths to salvation saying that it makes “Paul’s moral reasoning incoherent” and that there is no evidence to support the view that Jews at the time believed they could earn their salvation through the Law. Fredricksen also argues that Paul’s account of confrontation with Peter over keeping the Law is clear evidence against any support one could assume on Paul for the two-covenant model. (Fredriksen 160-162).

<sup>52</sup> Fredriksen 164.

participate in Jesus' resurrection and have eternal life while the rest perish in the apocalyptic war.

### **Deutero-Paul**

The Deutero-Pauline stories of salvation revise Paul's gospel by taking it out of the Jewish context. Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles, and 2 Thessalonians will be discussed separately because each has a different author. Each of these stories takes certain aspects of Paul's story of salvation in its own direction.

#### *Colossians*

The story of salvation for the author of Colossians loses the major Jewish themes of Paul, but still continues Paul's story of Jesus' sacrifice defeating sin. Richard Pervo calls it a "development of Pauline thought."<sup>53</sup> This story of salvation is one of a community already enjoying new life in the resurrection apart from the Jewish Law.

In Colossians, Jesus conquered a different kind of sin. Jesus has victory over the power of Sin, for Paul – the participationist model. This author's Jesus defeated trespasses – the judicial model. Jesus erased the record of trespasses by nailing it to the cross with Him (Col 2:14). Trespasses like Sin cause death, and Jesus still brought new life through victory over sin, but Colossians is a story of salvation through forgiveness.

As established in Section I, the community is already raised at baptism. Pervo observes, "This preserves, on a new basis, the Pauline ethical paradigm of indicative and imperative, in which the fact of salvation ('you have been redeemed') makes possible the ethical demand ('so act like it')."<sup>54</sup> Because Christ conquered Sin (the power preventing

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<sup>53</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010) 65.

<sup>54</sup> Pervo 68.

virtue), Paul exhorts communities to be virtuous; because Christ forgave trespasses, this author encourages virtuous behaviors such as love and gratitude (Col 3:14-16) as well as expectations of behavior like household codes and devotion to prayer (Col 3:18-25; 4:2).

Lastly, the author maintains that Jewish Law need not be observed, but there are other expectations of the Christian life. An unidentified group has attempted to convince the Colossians to observe food restrictions and festival days of the Jewish Law as well as ascetic practices such as fasting (Col 2:16-23). This part of the story is much different than it is for Paul. It is not a matter of trusting in God's faithfulness enough to not think the Law is also necessary for salvation, it is actually that the Law just is not important. These practices of the Law like fasting are intended to bring a person closer to God, but this author is teaching that they are already united to Christ in the resurrection. Ascetic discipline, the author argues, is not the proper type of discipline. The communities should instead be disciplined in the patriarchal family values of the time. A focus on the family is very different from Paul, especially because Paul tells the Corinthians it is best to be unmarried if they are able (1 Cor 7:1-9). Responsibilities of the Christian life to this author are good deeds and family values.

### *Ephesians*

Ephesians continues this trajectory of Post-Pauline tradition. The author uses Colossians as a source evidently. According to Pervo, "it is arguable that the author of Ephesians wanted his text to replace Colossians"<sup>55</sup> This story of salvation continues redemption and forgiveness, sin as trespasses and a cosmic power, new life in Christ, and household themes from Colossians. It differs in a greater focus on grace and good works.

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<sup>55</sup> Pervo 71.

To the author of Ephesians, the story of salvation is of grace, or a gift, that Jesus Christ brought, which is redemption through forgiveness of trespasses as a resulting of His death (1:7). The word trespass is used many times in this letter showing sin is essential to this story: “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived” (2:1-2) and again “dead through our trespasses” (2:5). Sin as a cosmic power is still a present theme as well: “the cosmic powers of this present darkness ... the spiritual forces of evil” (6:12). Trust in the faithfulness of God is still important to this story as in Paul. It is grace that saves, and grace is enabled through faith (Eph 2:8).

Ephesians is a story of virtue and good deeds. In agreement with Paul, salvation is not earned through good works: “it is a gift of God – not the result of works” (2:8-9). This author has a new emphasis on good deeds. There are obligations to good works because “we are ... created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (2:10). New life in Christ is to “labor and work honestly” (4:27), to “find out what is pleasing to the Lord” (5:10), and to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness” (5:11). This is very similar to Paul’s story of responsibilities in the community, usually discussed vaguely as virtues and vices. Ephesians contains into specifics of household commands to “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (5:21), which applies wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters as in Colossians. Again, Paul differs in opinion on the value of family life.

### *Pastoral Epistles*

The Pastoral Epistles continue this trajectory of detailed codes and expectations of how to live. These letters are a story of proper living written to individual people rather

than communities. The author instructs Church leaders on how to develop and head a Church. These letters are a story of “keeping the faith.” As Paul himself would agree, salvation comes through the grace of God not by any merit of a person (2 Tim 1:9); however, the specificity of good deeds and household codes are a clear point of distinction from Paul’s own writing. The Pastoral Epistles seem to be a handbook of Paul’s teaching including specifics of how to live in good deeds, remembering that the law is good, and to not lead others to sin or doubt – similar to Paul in 1 Corinthians.

The Pastor may have been aware of Paul’s letters and even Luke-Acts.<sup>56</sup> It seems that in the Pastor’s address of law, he attempts to echo Paul. The Pastor says, “we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately... the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient” (1 Tim 1:8-9). Similarly, in Romans Paul says, “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12), and also that Gentile sinners who are blameless through Christ “do instinctively what the law requires” because the law is “written on their hearts” (Rom 2:13, 15). The Pastor, however, is talking about a different law; he is talking about good deeds and proper behavior as opposed to Paul’s discussion of Jewish Law. The reiteration of the same word though suggests the Pastor may have intended to maintain the integrity of Paul’s gospel by mentioning what he felt were the necessary themes.

Specific structure and codes support Pervo’s proposition that “[t]he object of the texts is the protect the communities from corruption.”<sup>57</sup> He continues, “The purpose of these texts is to create an image of Paul that will serve to direct and shape communities along particular lines. Because the object of this material is protection and maintenance,

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<sup>56</sup> Pervo 83. Additionally, the author quotes the Gospel of Luke as “Scripture” in 1 Tim 5:18.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid* 83-84.

the Pastor has no need to speak about theological development.”<sup>58</sup> In a deapocalypticized story with a lack of necessity for discussion of Christology, the Pastor seems to adapt Paul’s message into the context of a community that must be stable and sustainable – a proposition supported by Pervo as well, he says: “The theology of the Pastoral Epistles reflects Pauline roots channeled in fresh directions.”<sup>59</sup> The Pastoral Epistles tell a story of “keeping the faith” and maintaining an orderly and proper community. For this reason, there is a focus on detailed codes. For example, “a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, no a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money” (1 Tim 3:2-3). Firmness in conviction for the faith and proper behavior is the primary emphasis in this story of salvation.

Christian living also included proper gender roles for the time. There is an apparent problem with women labeled widows in the community who sought too much independence, which the Pastor addresses. Pervo notes the term widow in this context “is best understood as an unmarried woman, since the body evidently included those who had never married, divorcees, and actual widows.”<sup>60</sup> The Pastoral Epistles reveal that the Church had a list of these women and aided them financially, but there were too many widows for the Church to support (1 Tim 5:3-16). Bassler discusses this theme of women fighting gender norms in her essay “The Widows’ Tale”<sup>61</sup> through the lens of emerging egalitarianism in society in which more and more women wanted to choose to not be married. Additional evidence of this movement is the non-canonical *Acts of Paul and*

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<sup>58</sup> Pervo 88.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid* 92.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid* 91.

<sup>61</sup> Jouette M. Bassler, “The Widows’ Tale.” 634-643.



*Thecla* in which Thecla, the central figure of the story, rejects marriage to be an ascetic apostle to Paul and is praised in the end for her piety.<sup>62</sup> Pervo concludes that within the context of emphasizing proper gender roles in the community “[t]he Pastor comes perilously close to saying that women are saved by child-bearing (1 Tim 2:9-15),” but faith, love, holiness, and modesty are still virtues which lead to salvation for women.<sup>63</sup> Pervo calls the Pastor’s intent with this statement and “overdetermined stricture on women” in response to the financial problem widows were creating for the Church.<sup>64</sup> Most importantly, gender-specific salvation is evidence of individual salvation apart from the Parousia, which opposes Paul’s story of communal salvation at the final judgment.

## *2 Thessalonians*

2 Thessalonians is different from the other Deutero-Pauline letters in that it maintains the eschatological element of Paul’s own letters, but introduces a delay in the timeframe creating yet another new story. The occasion of this letter is on this very topic – addressing a misunderstanding of the end times. This letter also contains preaching similar to the Colossians and Ephesians such as the significance of suffering at the present time and maintaining a dignified work ethic in day-to-day labor.

The author writes to correct what he perceives to be a misunderstanding of the original teaching of Paul on the end times. As previously discussed, for Paul the end of the world is coming at an unexpected but soon time. Since then, the people of Thessalonica have come to believe instead that the Day of the Lord has already come (2 Thess 2:2). It could be said that the following verse: “Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed,

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<sup>62</sup> “Acts of Paul and Thecla.” 48-52.

<sup>63</sup> Pervo 91.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid* 92.

the one destined for destruction” (1 Thess 2:3) is a direct contradiction to Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians: “For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (5:2). The wording of the statement in 2 Thessalonians is not quite strong enough though to call for such a radical conclusion that the teaching has changed in a way such that it completely contradicts the preaching of Paul; however, for Paul the time of the Parousia will be clearly announced by a trumpet. Immediately following the statement about the suddenness of the end times, 1 Thessalonians makes mention of “sudden destruction” (5:3), which will indicate the commencement of the Day of the Lord. The author of 2 Thessalonians endeavors to make his point that the Day of the Lord is not yet here; therefore, his preaching of the indicators of the Day of the Lord are illustrating that the end times will be dramatic – just as Paul himself would have agreed – and it will be clear when it begins. Most importantly, the author of 2 Thessalonians maintains the apocalyptic war as part of his soteriological story.

2 Thessalonians presents an apocalyptic story of salvation in contrast to themes in other Deutero-Pauline letters. Preaching on the end times is mainly focused on rejecting the belief that the Day of the Lord has already come. The story of salvation is a story of remaining vigilant and honest in one’s work to be prepared for when the Day of the Lord does in fact come.

Comparing stories reveals what is important to each author and insight into their perspective on Christ, although Paul does not just have one story. Differences between letters are clearer at this point, but the stories are not the full context. Smith critiques this method because it is missing “the recognition and role of historical development and

change.”<sup>65</sup> Comparing stories gives the evidence that there are differences, but it does not uncover why. Smith argues for the next step in comparison to understand the “historical past and the social present” to grasp how a group would interpret and relate to the story.<sup>66</sup>

### III. COMPARING SETTINGS

The “why” question requires analysis that moves beyond comparing stories to comparing the settings or worldviews in which those stories were created. According to J. Z. Smith’s approach to comparison, there are two settings: utopian and locative.<sup>67</sup> In the utopian setting, the world can and must be escaped (or transcended) by humanity in order to dwell where they truly belong. In the locative setting, cosmic powers are in control and humanity must sacralize the present location bringing stability and order because the present location is where the people belong. First, Paul’s authentic letters will be evaluated for conformity to the utopian setting and Christ’s role this worldview. Next, the Deutero-Pauline letters will be examined for evidence of a locative setting and possible reasons for the change in setting will be explored. The Pauline tradition is not as simple as one clear, linear shift from Paul’s utopian worldview to a Post-Pauline locative setting because 2 Thessalonians continues the utopian setting in a Post-Pauline tradition.

#### Paul

Paul’s authentic letters fit the utopian worldview because the world, where the communities presently are, is demonized and these communities are meant to transcend from it. The setting is most apparent in the Jewish apocalypticism of Paul’s story of

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<sup>65</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 106.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid* 107.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid* 121.

salvation, but apocalypticism is not, by default, utopian.<sup>68</sup> Rebellion, transcendence, and denationalized redemption distinguish Paul's Jewish apocalypticism as utopian.<sup>69</sup>

The rebellion has already begun and transcendence is soon to come in Paul's gospel. For Paul, Jesus commenced the rebellion of humanity when He defeated the power of Sin allowing escape from this world. In fact, Paul himself shares an experience of transcendence in which he went to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1-4).<sup>70</sup> Jesus is, from Smith's Hellenistic myth perspective, the "hero-that-succeeded, succeeded in escaping a tyrannical order,"<sup>71</sup> which is the cosmic power of Sin that rules in the world. Fredricksen proposes that Paul has taken Jewish restoration theology and denationalized it as well as shifted it to the utopian setting.<sup>72</sup> Believers participate in Christ's victory through baptism giving them the ability to escape from this world and Sin as well. The apocalyptic war at the Parousia is the culmination of the rebellion to overthrow the dominion of the power of Sin. Jesus will save believers from the coming wrath (1 Thess 1:9) and believers will then transcend from the physical world with Christ (1 Thess 4:13-17).

The delay of the Parousia troubles Paul's utopian worldview. The Deutero-Pauline letters respond to this problem in two distinct ways. The majority will shift the setting from utopian to locative, but 2 Thessalonians remains in the utopian setting.

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<sup>68</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine* 137.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid* 133.

<sup>70</sup> Paul does not tell this story as his own, but John T. Fitzgerald argues in his footnotes in 2 Cor Paul is writing about himself. (1969)

<sup>71</sup> Smith, *Map Not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 162.

<sup>72</sup> Fredricksen 172. Fredricksen explains that as God redeemed Israel repeatedly throughout history, Paul's Jesus has come to redeem the entire world from the final enemy. In this situation, the foe is cosmic powers rather than nations (771-172).

## Deutero-Paul

The Deutero-Pauline letters are deapocalypticized and locative with the exception of 2 Thessalonians. The locative setting “is concerned primarily with the cosmic and social issues of keeping one’s place and reinforcing boundaries.”<sup>73</sup> Smith calls locative traditions “religions of sanctification,” meaning sanctifying the present location.<sup>74</sup> The focus is stability within the community by upholding proper order and structure through conscious effort.<sup>75</sup> In the following section, I argue that most Post-Pauline theology redirects the eschatological language of Paul toward a new emphasis on good works and household codes in a locative setting due to the delay of the Parousia, but 2 Thessalonians responds to the delay differently maintaining the apocalyptic, utopian setting.

The delay of the Parousia and consequential need to institutionalize the Church present a dilemma for Pauline Christian communities after Paul’s death. Fredricksen notes: “This confidence in the nearness of the Kingdom, which Paul shared with the first apostles and with Jesus himself, lends itself badly to institutionalization.”<sup>76</sup> Time passed and the Parousia did not come. In response, the Deutero-Pauline trajectory of Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles are locative traditions of sanctification, as Smith describes. He says,

The soteriology of such a view is two-fold: emplacement is the norm, rectification, cleaning or healing, is undertaken if the norm (expressed primarily, although not exclusively, in the language of ‘boundaries’) is breached. While the governing language of such locative/sanctification traditions is often imperial, suggestive, among other things, of a rigid social stratification, there is an ideological insistence on a democracy of responsibility for maintaining the proper *loci*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 121.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid*

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*

<sup>76</sup> Fredricksen 171.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 121.

The stories of salvation in the Deutero-Pauline traditions establish these characteristics, especially in the Pastoral Epistles. “In the view of many scholars, the *delay of the Parousia* was the single most important factor for the transformation of early Christian eschatology from an emphasis on the *imminent* expectation of the end to a gauge expectation set in the most distant future.”<sup>78</sup> D. E. Aune notes that as Christianity became institutionalized and spread over time, the eschatological message that was crucial to Paul fades.<sup>79</sup> Even the process of establishing the Church as an institution is locative in essence because its goal is to create structure and stability in the present so as to be longstanding. Aune calls this a “theological adjustment” demanded by the delay of the Parousia.<sup>80</sup> The locative setting brings salvation into the present location.

2 Thessalonians maintains the utopian setting despite the delay of the Parousia. Smith argues for a single trajectory from utopian to locative setting in the development of early Christianity,<sup>81</sup> but 2 Thessalonians is evidence that the Deutero-Pauline traditions are not so simplified. 2 Thessalonians preserves the characteristics of the utopian setting – rebellion and transcendence. In fact, the author argues directly against the belief that the Kingdom of God has already come:

As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. (2 Thess 2:2-3)

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<sup>78</sup> D. E. Aune “Eschatology (Early Christian),” 606.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid* 607.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 143.

The author demonstrates Paul's utopian characteristics of a rebellion and an apocalyptic war. 2 Thessalonians affirms the Pauline teaching that the Parousia is coming, with no insecurity about its delay.

The Deutero-Pauline traditions respond to the delay of the Parousia in two ways: by eliminating it as a point of discussion or by reassuring communities that the delay should not cause doubt. Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles shift to the locative setting to institutionalize the Church emphasizing good works and household codes to create stability within the communities. 2 Thessalonians continues with Paul's utopian worldview maintaining the message of a rebellion and the coming of an apocalyptic war. Because of the separate trajectory of 2 Thessalonians in the Post-Pauline traditions, there is not a unified shift from utopian to locative due to the delay of the Parousia.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the Post-Pauline traditions do not shift together to the locative setting. Comparing settings has shortcomings as well. Smith found a single shift from utopian Christianity to locative. The utopian setting of 2 Thessalonians leaves in question the causes of setting shifts if it is not broad historical and societal context as Smith argued.

The implications of this research speak to the theological questions raised, but also support Smith in his methodology of comparison that can be applied to many fields of study especially in the academic setting. The compare-and-contrast essay is one of the most typical student essays, and the principles of this approach to comparison are applicable. However, the question of soteriology in the Pauline and Post-Pauline

traditions can hardly be harmonized into one conclusion based on this research. Each author tells the story of salvation his own way, and in each letter he only reveals part of his story. What this research does offer by way of concise conclusion is the effectiveness of Smith's methodology. Successful comparison must explore context on multiple levels.

In future research, many topics within this question could be explored in greater depth. The Post-Pauline traditions, with so many different authors, warrant further research for a better understanding of how they differ from Paul. The household codes of the Pastoral Epistles raise an interesting question of the conformity of the Pastor's teaching to Patriarchal Greco-Roman culture at the time. More research on Jewish apocalyptic theology would offer a better understanding of Paul's gospel, which is especially intriguing in regards to his teaching on salvation for all of Israel. Lastly, the conclusion that all Post-Pauline settings did not shift begs the question of what other factors influenced the change or preservation of Paul's utopian setting. The thesis of this paper incorporates many highly debated questions such as these that each have an expansive breadth of research of their own, and all could be studied further for an improved conclusion to this question.



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