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THE NATURE OF IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL

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A THESIS

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THE NATURE OF IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the problem

Effective communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is recognized by many today to be a very complicated phenomena. Does it consist simply of repeating the Biblical message in Biblical words, trusting the Holy Spirit to make it meaningful to people of various backgrounds? Or does it require a restatement of the Biblical message in terms that make it understandable and relevant to people who have a non-Christian or post-Christian world view? If the latter is the case, how does the Christian decide what terms will accomplish this?

In addition, it would appear that, even with the "right" message, communication involves more than speaking. People perceive meaning in many ways, and respond to stimuli as whole beings on the basis of all their past experience. In the light of this, how can a Christian understand and communicate with someone who is different from himself?

It has been suggested in recent years that one aspect of the answer to these problems lies in the

Christian's "identification" with the person outside faith. This concept has grown out of psychological investigations, and has been discussed for some time in relation to "foreign missions." It is the author's hope, however, to discover the ways in which identification is a vital factor in communication between people of the same culture too.

It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate the nature of the Christian's identification with a person outside faith, as he seeks to communicate the Gospel to him. The identification process, as it is thought of today and as it was practised by the Apostle Paul, will be examined in the light of cultural and religious influences in relation to the nature of the Gospel and some principles of religious communication and inter-personal relationships. It is hoped that some implications for contemporary Christian witness will emerge from this study.

B. Justification of the problem

Identification as a vital element in communication of the Gospel is important today for many reasons. Martin E. Marty points out that while Christianity has greatly influenced the forms and values of Western culture, it no longer speaks with authority

and meaning to large numbers of people. The Gospel has been confused with American democratic ideals and with materialistic middle class ethics, so that, as a result, its communication has been warped in a changing culture.[1] Many Christians seem to have identified themselves so much with their culture that they have lost the distinctive and transforming elements of their faith without realizing it.[2] A true understanding both of the Gospel and of the nature and purpose of identification for its communication is needed.

On the other hand, some groups of Christians have continued their efforts to communicate the Gospel in Biblical language, with little attention paid to the values goals or thought-forms of the person outside faith. It is not so much that this hearer rejects Christianity, as that he fails to understand it, and therefore ignores it.

It is hoped that this discussion of the nature of identification will help Christians both to understand the process and to enter into it experientially in their own situation, recognizing its relevance for their communication of the Gospel.

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[1]Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 67-89.

[2]Martin E. Marty, Second Chance for American Protestants (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 1-24.

C. Delimitation of the problem

For purposes of this study, the concept of identification will be defined as follows:

> Identification is a mental and moral act, involving understanding and will, relating two or more personal subjects, numerically different, in such a way that they are regarded and treated as in all possible respects the same.[1]

Foreman clarifies one aspect of the latter part of this definition in his later example of a bride's identification with her husband. He says:

> . . . she is entering a life where <u>without ceasing to be herself</u> she becomes a more complete self through being continually and progressively identified with the other.[2]

Nida would agree with this as he states, "Identification means, not being someone else, but being more than oneself."[3] He goes on to differentiate carefully between outer identification, or imitation, and inner identification in which the identifier comes to a real understanding of, ". . . the drives, goals, objectives, and purpose of the people." He learns as much as possible to, ". . . think like them:" which makes for ". . . real communication."[4] Nida concludes:

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[1]K.J. Foreman, <u>Identification: Human and Divine</u> (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1963), pp. 36-38.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 134.

[3]Eugene A. Nida, <u>Message and Mission</u> (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 162.

[4]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 164.

> Inner identification does not mean it is necessary to adopt the value system of those one seeks to communicate with: rather, that it must be taken seriously. The one who achieves inner identification must be aware of people's ideas, understand their viewpoints, and be genuinely sympathetic with their struggle for self-expression even though he may not agree with its forms.[1]

In addition, it must be recognized that this study cannot be an exhaustive one, for all its complexity. Some of the principles of psychology and cybernetics will be discussed as they have been applied in the religious field. The concept of identification will not be considered with reference to such psychological phenomena as the basic identifications of personality development, but rather, from the perspective of interpersonal relationships between adults.

In the area of theology,"faith" will be taken to mean a person's knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, His Incarnate Son, his acceptance and confession of this Person as his Savior and Lord, and his commitment to Him which involves a growing conformity to Christ in every area of his life. As one author has stated: "Faith as commitment is a personal identification with the Incarnate Word. In all these aspects, faith is the expression of a right relationship between

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[1] Ibid.

man and God."[1] This relationship, based on the nature and results of God's revelation and interaction with men, will be discussed in relation to the Christian's identification with the outsider, but it is not the writer's purpose to become involved in the Trinitarian controversies, or to explore the various views on the Incarnation or the Atonement. However, Christ's identification with man and God sheds much light on the problem and will be discussed.

The principles of identification will be examined in relation to Paul's life and work, particularly among the Thessalonians and Corinthians. Emphasis will be placed on the Apostle's cultural and religious background and on the character of his own identification with Christ. Paul's resulting identification with both Jews and Gentiles in their cultural context will be examined in terms of his message and personal relationships.

D. Method of procedure

This research will begin with a study of the nature of identification in communication of the Gospel as presented in contemporary writings. Theological and psychological factors will be discussed in re-

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[1]John Yun-Han Kao, "The Nurture of Faith in Christian Education in Light of the Gospel by John" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Dep't. of Religious Education, The Biblical Seminary in New York), pp. 26-27.

lation to the principles of religious communication, set in the context of contemporary Western culture.

The identification process will then be examined in relation to the life of the Apostle Paul in his cultural context. Inductive study of selected New Testament passages will provide most of the material for discussion.

In the third chapter, the findings from contemporary writings and Biblical study will be drawn together, with discussion of the implications for Christian witness today.

E. Sources of study

For the first part of this study, the contemporary writings will include material from the fields of theology, psychology of religion and communication as applied in the religious field.

The primary source material for the second chapter will be found in Scripture, particularly in the Book of Acts, First Thessalonians, and First and Second Corinthians. All Scriptural references will be taken from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL AS SET FORTH IN CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL AS SET FORTH IN CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS

A. Introduction

In a study of the essential elements in identification for communication of the Gospel, one must recognize the intricate relationship between the source and character of the message, the people involved in its communication, and the cultural setting in which this takes place. The nature of the identification process must be seen in terms of its purpose, its character, and the attitudes and resources a person needs to enter into it effectively. These, in turn, involve an understanding of the nature of God's relationship with men and of the principles of good communication and interpersonal relationships. To be realistic, however, one must consider these facts in relation to the cultural factors that tend to make identification difficult today.

Thus, the cultural, theological and psychological factors which influence identification will be examined, following an introductory discussion of the relationship between identification and communication.

B. The Relationship between Identification and Communication

1. Types of communication

Communication is a process that occurs between persons on different levels and in many different ways. Some have called this "an age of communication," pointing to the large scale use of newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, television, radio and movies which, ". . . carry entertainment, information, education, and propaganda to great masses of human beings."[1] However, Sherrill indicates that in spite of this,

> . . . great numbers of people are in danger of perishing for want of communication. This . . . grows out of the separateness of many human beings from their kind, with the result that they live in isolation, loneliness, and emptiness. Not the least of the perils of this separateness exists in the very places where the greatest numbers of people are herded together, as in the cities.[2]

He goes on to show that there are at least two types of communication. The first is "one-way" communication which flows in one direction only.

> It is communication by pressure; for it is an effort to do something to people, such as to get them to buy, or to persuade them to do this or to believe that. It is . . . aptly called "putting it across."[3]

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[1] Lewis Joseph Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 119-120.

[2] Ibid., p. 120.

[3] Ibid.

If people are to maintain their sense of identity and integrity in the face of this powerful manipulating force, they must resist this invasion of themselves. However, the more they close themselves off from it, the greater is their isolation.[1]

"Two-way" communication, on the other hand, occurs between persons with the willing consent of both. Pressure and manipulation of one by the other are conspicuously absent. Sherrill states:

> In this, communication flows in both directions, back and forth between two or more persons. It has mutuality in it, for each gives forth something of himself. It is communication by participation; for each takes part in the life of the other, especially in the interior life of the other;
> . . . . . .
> In such communication separateness is overcome. Hearing becomes understanding. Seeing becomes perceiving. Compassion arises because if one suffers, the other suffers also.[2]

It will be seen below that the very nature of the Gospel demands that it be shared by communication of this "two-way"type. Indeed, one could almost say that "one-way" communication, offered in the spirit described by Sherrill, is diametrically opposed to the character of the Gospel, and is therefore useless as a means of communicating it. This is said of the motivations and goals of "one-way" communication, and

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 121.

does not refer to particular techniques.

Nida, also, emphasizes the importance of interaction between participants in communication. He speaks of the mutual adjustments made by a speaker and his audience to increase understanding, and concludes: "Communication thus becomes a two-way affair, even though one person is doing all the talking."[1]

This two-way interaction involves many things. In addition to the actual words spoken, the listener or receptor of the message learns from and responds to the tone of voice, facial expression and gestures of the speaker or source, to name just a few factors. Nida states that,

> we receive communication by means of all our senses: hearing (language, music, barking of dogs), seeing (words, pictures, signs), touching (kissing, stroking), tasting (the gourmet's language of good and rare foods), and smelling (pleasure in the rare symbolism of perfumes, the painful response to foul odors).[2]

Thus, communication is both verbal and non-verbal and the deeper the level on which the sharing occurs, the more complex is the process. A person communicates something by all that he is and says and does.

In view of the necessity for mutual personal relationship for meaningful communication, and in view

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[1]Nida, p. 72.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 4.

of the large numbers of factors through which communication occurs within this relationship, the need for the Christian to understand and to identify with the receptor of his message becomes obvious. But what more should he understand about the communication process in order to appreciate the relationship between his communication of the Gospel and his identification with the receptor of his message? Some further factors will now be considered.

2. Degrees of identification needed at different levels of communication

The three "essential factors" in communication are the source, the message, (which Nida calls, "the actual form of what is communicated"), and the receptor.[1] Without all three there is no communication. The message may take many forms including pictures, music, drama, dance etc., as well as speech and writing, but for meaningful communication, the source must have a purpose and the receptor must make a response.[2]

With this background, it must yet be realized that the identification of one person with another can never be fully complete. Indeed, for effective communication, complete identification is often neither desired

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

or necessary. The examination of four levels of communication in terms of the result expected and the degree of identification required for each will provide perspective for the necessity of identification in communication of the Gospel.

Nida states:

> The first, and lowest, level of communication is one in which the message has no significant effect on behavior and the substance of the message is essentially self-validating.[1]

An example of this would be the news that there is a coffee shop around the corner. The truth of this statement can easily be verified and the receptor of such a message is not concerned about the type of person who communicates it.

Nida continues:

> In the second stage of communication, there is a message which, though it has no permanent effect on a man's total value system, does affect significantly his immediate behavior. . . . unless the source identifies himself with the message, the effect upon the receptor is largely nullified.[2]

If a person announced that the building was on fire, but casually continued working at his desk, no one would take him very seriously.

On the next level of communication, ". . . the message not only concerns a large segment of a person's

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[1]Nida, pp. 164-65.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 165.

behavior, but also his whole value system."[1] At this level it is not enough for the source to identify with his message; he must also identify with his listener. As Nida states:

> . . . the receptor must be convinced that the source understands his, the receptor's, particular background and has respect for his views, even though he may not agree with them. To give weight to the message, the source should in some way have something of the same background as the receptor.[2]

On the fourth and deepest level, the communication has been so effective, ". . . that the receptor feels the same type of communicative urge as that experienced by the source. The receptor then becomes a source of further communication of the message."[3] When this happens the receptor has identified with the source. Communication of the Christian Gospel occurs ideally and effectively on the last two levels.

3. Language in communication

When language is used in communicating a message, many things influence its perception. Grammar, style, syntax all convey meaning in a cultural context, and this meaning is important to both source and receptor. It must be noted that definition and use of these two terms varies with the scholar. However, for purposes

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 166.

of this discussion, a sign will be understood to indicate, " . . . the existence of a particular thing, event, or condition within a context . . . ." This context may be natural or cultural.[1] A symbol, on the other hand, " . . . can be used quite apart from its immediate context or stimuli."[2] As Sherrill states:

> A symbol . . . represents that to which it points, not because it has been arbitrarily chosen for that purpose, but because it is intrinsically related to it in some way, such as by association with it, or participation in it.[3]

Nida speaks of "discursive" symbols that can be translated into language. He states that they are "arbitrary," since they vary from culture to culture, but that, " . . . they must also have a certain amount of conventional acceptance by the community that uses them, . . ."[4] They have a wide range of meaning, too, though this is not always recognized. For example, the word "God" represents many different concepts of Deity.[5]

In addition, verbal symbols have both a referent-function and a conception-function. The former means that, " . . . symbols become a label for some object, event, state of being, or abstraction, . . . while a conception-function . . . is, a label for, or a stimu-

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[1]*Ibid*., p. 65. [2]*Ibid*. [3]Sherrill, p. 123.
[4]Nida, p. 67. [5]*Ibid*., p. 68.

lus to, a corresponding mental conception."[1] It is the latter function that influences behavior most, since a person's response to the word is governed largely by his emotional reactions to the conception thus labeled.[2]

4. Encoding and decoding the message

The value of these concepts for the Christian seeking to identify with the outsider in order to communicate the Gospel to him can readily be seen. However, the form and perception of the message is influenced by other factors as well. Nida discusses the principle of "encoding" and "decoding" the message, done almost automatically by the source and the receptor respectively. He states:

> . . . the way in which we encode our thoughts into sentences depends on a great many factors other than the nature of the object we wish to speak about. For example, as we speak we inevitably reflect the attitude we have toward the receptor, our feelings with regard to the object we are discussing, our general emotional state at the time of speaking, and the purposes of the communication, i.e., do we wish merely to describe something, or to evaluate it, or to prescribe it for someone else?
>
> The encoder is of necessity limited to his particular background of experience in terms of what he has done and the words with which he has become familiar, though, of course, this background comprises his total experience and the ways in which he has mentally organized and evaluated it. If he is to communicate, he can draw only upon these two sources.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[2] Ibid., p. 78. For a more detailed and very helpful discussion on the meaning and perception of symbols, the reader is referred to pp. 79-84 of Nida's work as well.

[3] Ibid., p. 70.

The encoder's awareness of these factors will help him recognize his own limitations, and his need to understand something of the receptor's background. Even people with the same cultural heritage who have had similar educational and religious experiences have different conceptions about the same objects or symbols. This is amply bourne out by the many "schools of thought" and the "lack of communication" apparent within a single Protestant denomination or even within one local congregation. As Nida states:

> Men differ, . . . not so much in their reasoning powers as in their starting points.
> . . . . . .
> It is because of these differing basic assumptions that discussions often leave people further apart rather than closer together.[1]

He summaries the technical cause for some of these difficulties in clear communication:

> Our conceptions must . . . pass through two grids before they can be communicated to others: (1) the grid or "screen" of our own accumulated perceptions (including the ways in which our minds have organized them) and (2) the grid or "screen" of our language." . . . We assume the complete validity of our own perceptions and we take for granted the "logical" nature of our linguistic grid, never realizing the extent to which our conceptions are distorted by our own observations and further "skewed" by the arbitrary character of the language in which we must encode them.[2]

The decoder, too, must, " . . . adjust his grid so as to . . . assign proper meaning to . . . not only

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[1]Nida, p. 91. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 70-71

the words used but also the supplementary features of the communication. . . ."[1] To do this, he must know something about the source. It will be seen below that identification involves both knowing the receptor and being known by him.

The effectiveness of this "encoding-decoding" of the message must be tested by two-way flow in the communication. As Nida states with reference to Christian communication:

> Both in the ministry and in missionary work it is usual for the religious professional to do most of the talking. Too often the minister or missionary regards himself solely as intermediary of a superior message from God, and hence not aware of or dependent upon the feedback which should come from the congregation. . . . If this attitude is pushed to an extreme, the message inevitably will become irrelevant. Even though it may be true, it does not reach its receptor, for the "master of the household" does not know the conditions under which the servants live and work. And even if he does know, his communication will be immeasurably strengthened provided those to whom he speaks are convinced of the fact that he knows and understands.[2]

5. <u>Information theory in communication</u>

The effective transmission of a message requires more than understandable form or content; "impact" must also be considered. The amount of "impact" or "information" carried in any message is governed by several factors, one of which is the predictability of content. If the message consists only of familiar, "predictable"

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u> [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 99.

words and patterns, the amount of information (in this special sense) conveyed is relatively low. However, if the message contains too many unpredictable and unfamiliar words, the listener is distracted and meaning is lost. This may occur in a highly technical discussion when many specialized words are used, with which the listeners are not familiar. It is all too prevalent in religious communication also. People unfamiliar with the Gospel are confused and bored by the use of such phrases as "saved by the blood," and "sanctified by grace," which, ". . . may carry too much 'information' and too little meaning . . . to them."[1] Speaking on this point, Nida warns:

> The preacher must face the implications of information theory from two points of view. First, he must make sure that he is not using a host of strange words in unusual combinations. Otherwise, people unfamiliar with the gospel message will be completely confused. . . . The preacher also runs the opposite risk of producing nothing but a series of trite, warmed-over expressions which may flow out with incredible monotony and sound exceedingly pious.[2]

In addition, information theory suggests that, "the greater the specificity of detail the greater is the information."[3] A message that uses, " . . . concrete words and specific illustrations is more unpredictable and carries a far greater impact than, "ab-

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[1]Nida, pp. 72-74. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 74-75.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 75.

stract, generic discourse."[1]

It can easily be seen that the Christian who has identified with the receptor of his message is in a position to choose words and illustrations that both convey meaning and carry an impact. He knows how various "religious" terms are understood, and he can choose relevant, "real-life" examples because he shares in the life-experiences of his listeners.

In conclusion, the need for identification in communication of the Christian faith has been demonstrated by a brief study of the communication process. An understanding of the degrees of identification as related to the types and levels of communication and an awareness of the principles involved in the use of symbols, encoding-decoding, and information theory can help to motivate and equip the Christian for effective identification with the receptor of his message.

C. Cultural Factors which Influence Identification

Communication never occurs in a vacuum. Rather, it occurs in and is even made possible by a cultural setting that gives a frame of reference for all that is perceived. Charles Kean defines culture as:

. . . the variegated fabric of traditions, values

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[1] Ibid.

> and understandings that people take for granted, and which give function and purpose to the political, economic, and social institutions that frame their lives. Our culture gives us the tools with which we think. Indeed we cannot even dream except by the use of categories which we inherited rather than invented.[1]

Culture is a dynamic factor, however, and on every hand today, one hears that Western culture is in a state of confused upheaval and rapid change. Since culture plays such a vital role in shaping the life and thought of persons and groups, an attempt will now be made to examine some of the characteristics of Western culture in relation to identification for communication of the Gospel.

1. Some characteristics of western culture

In the present situation of rapid cultural change, Richardson suggests that there is no uniformity of outlook underlying modern values. He says:

> The lack of a common faith and outlook in Western civilization in the twentieth century and the decay of the traditional system of beliefs and values have been noted by many thoughtful people, both Christian and non-Christian alike; and they have usually viewed our present situation and future prospects with considerable misgiving. Although it is true that, . . . there is to-day no widely accepted philosophical outlook amongst our contemporaries, . . . this does not mean that there are in our times no general assumptions about the world and life embedded in the modern mind. On the contrary, such assumptions exist and are none the less

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[1]Charles D. Kean, That Hearing They Shall Perceive (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), pp. 12-13.

> potent because the majority of men are unaware of them. These assumptions become doctrines which gain widespread acceptance, not because people have made any conscious and determined effort to articulate and understand them, but because the general pressure of social development predisposes men to accept them uncritically as though they were self-evident truths.[1]

Recognizing this, several of the main trends of thought and value in Western culture will now be discussed. The first of these is the tendency to measure the value of all things by material standards. As Kean states, ". . . the western world assumes that a man is worth what he owns, what he can earn, or what he can produce."[2] Coming into prominence after the Renaissance, this presupposition has been largely responsible for the growth of "modern civilization."[3] However, it has been largely responsible for the "depersonalizing" of human relationships as well. It has encouraged people to treat others like things in order to gain material ends. An example of this is the high pressure, "one-way communication" techniques used in much modern advertising and salesmanship.

In addition, however, Kean indicates that, "our culture has a most ambivalent view of personality. It sets a very high store on individuality and at the

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[1]Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 65.

[2]Kean, p. 14. [3]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

same time depreciates the social value of personhood."[1] Individuals are lost in the interests of "the corporation," and conformity is required rather than personal expression. Kean notes the, " . . . very real split between freedom and responsibility", and adds:

> Within the culture itself, freedom tends to be thought of as disengagement, freedom from obligation and involvement, while responsibility tends to be understood as a limitation upon liberty.[2]

This concept is supported in Nida's discussion of the "other-directed" society, drawn from David Reisman's book, The Lonely Crowd. In contrast with the "tradition-directed" society which looks to the past for its norms, and the "inner-directed" society which looks to its conscience, the other-directed group looks to its contemporaries for direction and approval. Values and morals become relative and what is right becomes equated with what "everyone" is doing. The other-directed person "goes along with the crowd," fearing ostracism, and thinks in terms of psychiatric counselling as the answer to his problems.[3] He lacks purpose and a sense of direction since he has no objective standard against which to measure things. He and his contemporaries are lost together, depending on each other.[4] Nida suggests that this is happening

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[1] Ibid., p. 16. [2] Ibid. [3] Nida, pp. 123-29.
[4] Ibid., p. 128

in much of American life today. The frontier is no more. Peaks of accomplishment have been reached and society is resting on its laurels, content with the current emphasis on "getting along together."[1]

Sellers agrees with Robert E. Fitch that the trends toward purposelessness, relativism, impressionism, and skepticism, so prevalent in the West today were also characteristic of the late period of classical culture. He concludes:

> Men have decided that they no longer want either to know the truth or to be free. "They want what the Roman world wanted in its decline - ataraxia, apathia - tranquility, indifference, the peace that by-passeth understanding."[2]

In addition to materialism, apathy and relativism, "scientism" is another trend in Western culture. For "several decades," as a result of the great emphasis on human reason that grew out of the Renaissance, "scientism", " . . . has been pervasive . . . in educational circles and very influential in the forming of public policy."[3] As Kean explains it:

> By oversimplification, scientism can be summarized by saying that only that which can be measured is real, with the implication that if value is to have substance, it must be determined in this manner. There is the further implication that that which cannot be measured is unreal.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 124. [2] Sellers, pp. 88-89.
[3] Kean, pp. 16-17. [4] Ibid., p. 17.

When these presuppositions that work so well are applied to social and historical interpretation, as Kean indicates, " . . . the dynamic factors instead of being explained will be filtered out. When this happens, people are unable to appreciate the real nature of their problems."[1] In this way, scientism encourages men to accept a false standard by which to judge what is real, and presupposes that a method which is sound in the physical sciences is therefore valid and authoritative when applied to all the categories of life.

Richardson agrees that for many in the modern world which lacks a widely accepted philosophy, all of life must be brought to the "scientific method" as a test of certainty. There is no knowledge apart from scientific knowledge.[2] However, he goes on to show the inadequacy of this as he states:

> Reason has been dethroned by the combined operations of the psychologists, sociologists of knowledge, Marxists and logical positivists. Rationality can be recovered only by believing in something; or, to put it in another way, the wholeness of our outlook upon the world and life can be re-created only by the deliberate choice of a key-idea by which our fragmentary perceptions of truth can be integrated into a satisfying world-view.[3]

Nida characterizes Western culture from a dif-

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[1]*Ibid*. [2]Richardson, p. 28. [3]*Ibid*., p. 37.

ferent perspective, but none-the-less truly. Comparing it with other cultures, he states: "We are the ones who are so vastly different, with our highly involved technology, specialized division of labor, impersonal systems of communication and unprecedented mobility (geographical, social, occupational and idealogical)."[1]

The process of identification for communication of the Gospel is greatly complicated by these trends and values in Western culture. The man of faith and the man of "scientism" begin from opposite poles. Words about love and the worth of the individual mean little to a person living solely for his own material prosperity. In addition, the very isolation and apathy of people in our depersonalized world makes it hard for a person to relate closely to them. There is a broad gulf, too, between the Christian's view of meaning and authority in life, and the relativism and purposelessness of life to the "outsider."

However, secular culture and Christianity are not mutually exclusive. They have greatly influenced each other, and some understanding of this relationship is important for the Christian who is seeking to identify with the person outside the Faith.

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[1]Nida, p. 49.

2. The cultural influence of Christianity on people outside faith

Who is the outsider? What has been his exposure to Christianity? It is important for the Christian to answer these questions if he is to learn to "think like" this person, the receptor of his message.

Richardson discusses four kinds of outsiders on the basis that there are, ". . . distinctions within unbelief itself, even though they are hard to define."[1] He speaks of, ". . . the seriously-minded humanist, who believes in values and searches for them, and who in the modern world is himself the product of generations of Christian teaching and of a Christian culture and civilization; . . ."[2] He then goes on to say,

> . . . the convinced believers in some non-Christian philosophy of life, such as Marxists or Mohammedans; and thirdly, . . . the class of people who are apparently indifferent to all questions of truth, and who are so interested in themselves and their worldly needs and pleasures that they care for none of these things.[3]

Richardson then suggests the possibility of a fourth group consisting of, ". . . those who deliberately and cynically despise all truth and value and exalt self-aggrandisement (whither nationalistically as in Nazism or individually as practical atheists) to the

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[1]Richardson, p. 25. [2]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[3]Ibid., p. 26.

point of religious devotion; . . . "[1]

However, the influence of Christianity on the culture of the West can be seen in the way many professed humanists and agnostics hold to love as the highest human virtue and "the primary force in men's lives."[2] The Christian influence is also present in the emphasis, (at least constitutionally and verbally), on human rights, in health and welfare plans, and in legislation. Sellers speaks of "Christians by osmosis," and says: "American business life, no promoter of the inward Christian virtues, is in some respects an outgrowth of John Calvin's interpretation of Christian faith."[3] He also draws attention to a key area of difficulty in the Christian's identification with the outsider. He says:

> . . . one reason some would designate this a "post-Christian" age: is that many of the leading beliefs and values which came into our culture from the Christian faith have now become common coin, no longer wearing the explicit label of "Christian." They form a part of the basic moral awareness even of those members of society who do not consider themselves churchmen, or even Christians. Moreover, certain leading Protestant religious ideas appear to have the greatest persistence when they are stripped of churchly authority. So argues John Paul Williams, who points out that Protestantism's influence among the "unchurched" is strong, but primarily ethical.[4]

Later, he adds:

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[1] Ibid. [2] Sellers, pp. 14-15.
[3] Sellers, p. 16. [4] Ibid., p. 17

> . . . the Christianized values reposing in the consciousness of our society make it easy for men to be "Christians" without decisive allegiance either to Christ or his church and to hold an ethical value system and do good without embracing faith in God. When the recipient of churchly communication is under the impression that he is already Christianly religious, the call to formal commitment seems irrelevant. Worse, when the recipient's picture of the world converts the old orthodox Christian categories into cultural attributes, the communicator has left few, if any, distinctive Christian terms with which to speak and to specify the meaning of deliberate commitment.[1]

Here, then, the problem of identification with the outsider in a Christian culture comes to a focus. But is the outsider to be found only outside the organized Church? A study of the effects of secular culture on people who seem to be inside the Christian faith will indicate an answer to this question.

3. <u>Cultural influence on people inside the Church</u>

Sellers states:

> There is one more reason for calling this a "post-Christian" age. If the members of Western society at large no longer need to adhere to organized Christianity in order to hold Christianized ideas, the reverse is also true: people in our society who sincerely call themselves Christians now exhibit a great many secularized values which have nothing especially to do with Christian faith, and even less to do with the traditional interests of the organized church.[2]

It is not the purpose of this paper to ask why this has happened, but rather to discuss some of the effects of this secularizing influence on the faith

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[1]Sellers, pp. 25-26. [2]<u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 17-18.

and life of individuals.

Sellers indicates that,

> thousands of American Christians in the twentieth century feel that their prayers should seek not so much eternal happiness in some world beyond as ordinary present benefits. They agree with George Crane that one of the fruits of church attendance is "less ulcer, less high blood pressure," longer life.[1]

Could one go so far as to say that God is sometimes seen largely as a means to man's ends?

Also, in the fragmented, insitution-filled life of many people, the church is viewed as, " . . . simply another institutional burden, another program of things to do, . . . "[2]. There are many agencies demanding one's time and energy, (Sellers mentions school, business, and the state to name just a few), and the church is no longer the focus and authority for all of life that it once was. ". . . the members of the Christian denominations have become less 'totally committed' to the church as an organizer of their lives and a guide of their beliefs."[3] In fact, many of the "major ethical decisions" of life are made outside the church, and Sellers concludes: "This acceptance of outside management for completion of denominational life has its counterpart in the value system of the individual Christian."[4]

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[1]Sellers, p. 18. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 26.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 18. [4]*Ibid.*, p. 19.

Thus, the church has failed to speak relevantly and authoritatively to all aspects of life for its members, while church people in turn have brought secular motivations and methods into the organizational life of the church. At the same time, they have often continued to use Scriptural terms and to insist upon traditionally orthodox creeds and forms.

Sellers summarizes the situation as follows:

> The church now is composed largely of Christians who express a "need for religion" but do not expect this religion to have any crucial bearing on their lives beyond the church - the realm where the important decisions have to be made. There is nothing new in the dilemma of "believing disbelief," . . . . What is new is the problem of unfocused loyalties - of the simple inability of members of modern society to orient their lives about peculiar Christian values or to look single-mindedly to the message of the church for guidance. From the point of view of the communicator of the Christian message there is no longer, properly speaking, a "gathered" Christian congregation to hear him.[1]

Later Sellers speaks of overcoming this "illusion of Christianity." He says:

> The already-Christianized recipient stands in need, not of acquiring categories to believe with, but of believing with the categories he already has. The people in this situation are neither Christians nor pagans - they are outsiders of one kind or another. All have retained the favorite Christian symbols as various illusions, often including the conceit they are 100 per cent Christians; but they do not evince serious commitment to the manifest church.
> . . . . . .
> If Christianity is to be introduced into this kind

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[1]Sellers, p. 20.

> of situation, it must take the place of, and not simply strengthen, the pseudo-Christianity of the times.[1]

Thus, it can be seen that the relationship between Christianity and Western culture has produced outsiders that are in the organized church as well as outside it. The confusion between secular culture and Christianity, and the lack of awareness of this confusion both complicate the efforts of the insider to identify with and thus communicate with the outsider. What is to be their point of contact concerning the Gospel? This matter will now be discussed.

4. Point of contact

The attitude of the Christian insider, both to the Gospel and to the outsider is an important factor in establishing a point of contact between them. The Christian's attitude will determine the form of the message, if any, and it will also influence the relationship through which the communication occurs. At what point and for what purpose does the Christian touch the life of the outsider to identify and communicate with him?

First, it must be stressed that, while it is God Himself who brings a person to faith in response

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[1] Ibid., p. 91.

to and appropration of the Gospel message, yet the Christian cannot sit back, refusing to be involved with the outsider, and expect the Holy Spirit to work. As Richardson says:

> The gift of sight is always a miracle of divine grace; but this does not mean that Christians may sit still and take no trouble to make ready the way of the Lord.[1]

Sellers would agree with this as he states:

> The other false course is to do nothing, . . . about the outsider, refusing to see in him or his situation a unique problem demanding our most energetic witness and assistance. It is a good thing to believe in the helplessness of man before God and in his inability to talk himself into faith. But it is another (and inexcusable) thing to wash our hands of his helplessness by refusing to start with his unbelief. That is to stand about, presuming somewhat irresponsibly that he will somehow be "elected" to the Christian faith without the help of being confronted, really, by his fellow Christian men.[2]

It becomes clear, then, that the Christian who recognizes his need to be involved with the outsider must begin by taking the latter's unbelief seriously. There must be a real recognition of his condition as an outsider. As Sellers states: ". . . to convert the outsiders . . . we must admit the existence of that which we are seeking to convert."[3]

The outsider's individuality must be respected

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[1]Richardson, p. 28. [2]Sellers, pp. 54-55.
[3]<u>Ibid</u>., p.84.

and understood. On this point, Sellers agrees with Bultmann that, "every recipient . . . may be different from all others, since in each of us 'the conflict with God and the question of man's real being are differently expressed.'"[1]

In view of this, how can the Christian establish a medium of communication with the outsider? Nida suggests that he must identify with people through realistic participation in their lives, working with them, not for them. In addition this participation must be on the symbolic level whether this symbolism involves ideas or activities.[2] They must be involved together in things that are deeply meaningful to the outsider, and the Christian must understand this meaning. The meeting of minds is also important for identification and communication. Richardson indicates, ". . . that there is a 'point of connection' between the minds of believers and those of at least some unbelievers."[3]

There are two approaches to this "point of connection," however. One is to seek "common ground" with the outsider, and the other is to establish that their meeting place is really a point of conflict, though one

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[1]Rudolph Bultmann, Essays; Philosophical and Theological , trans. James C.G.Greig, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1955), pp. 137-38, as quoted in Sellers, p. 56.

[2]Nida, pp. 162-63. [3]Richardson, p. 25.

that is mutually understood to be such by them both. As Sellers says, agreeing with this last approach, ". . . the aim of the apologist is to convince the outsider of the futility of his system and of the sin of his situation."[1]

All the scholars that this writer consulted, agreed that to seek common ground with the outsider is likely to be ineffective, since what used to be purely Christian symbols are now associated with secular values, and Christian ethics are so often accepted apart from commitment to Christ. To seek common ground would only encourage the outsider in his mistaken belief that he is already Christian.[2] Sellers states: "Another way of putting it is that a nominally entertained Christian symbol when chosen as the point of contact will obliterate the Christian meaning underneath instead of yielding to it."[3] He adds:

> . . . Kierkegaard is . . . not against trying to talk to the outsider in the outsider's language, but against trying to talk to the outsider in the conventional Christian language. What is perilous is to attempt the direct proclamation of Christian categories to a post-Christian people who have already discounted the ultimate value resident in these categories.[4]

The answer seems to lie in establishing communication and then showing the outsider his need of God

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[1]Sellers, p. 85.

[2]See Sellers' discussion of this point on pp. 90-96.

[3]Sellers, p. 93. [4]*Ibid.*, p. 97.

in terms that he can understand. Nida agrees that the common ground approach is inadequate, and urges that similarities of thought be looked at, ". . . not as common bases of belief, but as elements that make communication possible."[1]

Richardson, too, insists that the Christian must thoroughly understand and appreciate the values and symbols of the outsider in order to establish a "point of contact," and to interpret Christianity to him in a relevant way. He says:

> Those who have never studied the implications of the Christian faith in the light of such truth as may be found in the case of the humanist or the Marxist are unlikely to make a successful defence of Christianity against the humanist or Marxist attack, and will be unequipped to mount a powerful counter-offensive. The humanist's high regard for truth and value and the Marxist's eagerness for social justice alike prove to be highly significant "points of connection," and there is thus in each case a mutually acknowledged criterion, however small may be the area of agreement when the discussion begins.[2]

Sellers indicates, also, that since sin is expressed in every aspect of man's life, the whole of his existence becomes a point of contact, not because it expresses, "a bit of God's Word already," but because it stands in need of "God's transforming grace."[3] Re-

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[1]Nida, p. 214. See his discussion, pp. 211-215. He presents conclusions similar to those of Seller, but for different reasons.

[2]Richardson, p.27. [3]Sellers, pp. 55-56.

cognizing these things, though, how does one go on to show the outsider this need as well as the Gospel's relevance to him in it? Sellers warns:

> The really dangerous proclamation-activity lies not in seeking secular symbols with which to express biblical meanings, but rather in the opposite course--i.e., providing secular meaning for biblical symbols.[1]

Thus, since Christian symbols cannot be used to show the outsider his need, perhaps biblical meaning can be given to secular or lay symbols. Sellers puts this idea in historical perspective as he examines the apologetic work of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, and concludes:

> . . . it is never the establishing of <u>a point of contact</u> to which the church can legitimately object; it is rather the establishing of <u>a point of contact that honors the pagan value system</u>. In true apologetics the pagan symbols have to come under new management, . . . and their content, . . . must stem from the biblical message rather than from the pagan religions . . . however, that content and form cannot be neatly separated from each other. When the apologist takes over a pagan symbol with the intent of renovating it for Christian purposes, he may find a little (or a lot) of the old pagan meaning clinging to it, try as he will to eliminate it.[2]

Awareness of this danger is important, since one could easily slip unawares into promotion of the pagan message instead of Christianity, but understanding of the outsider's thought-forms and values will help

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 81. [2] Sellers, p. 72.

the Christian avoid this. It is at this point that one must ask how the Christian can gain this understanding.

At least part of the answer lies in the two-way character of effective communication, through identification. The Christian can "hear" what the outsider is both saying and meaning as he is involved with him as an individual, as he reads his books and subjects himself thoughtfully to the same social influences and pressures. The insider must take all the help offered by the psychologist, sociologist, political economist and contemporary philosopher, etc., in order to appreciate the outsider's point of view consciously and objectively. At the same time, he must test the values and patterns that emerge to his understanding against the reality of the Gospel as revealed in Scripture, in history and in life.

In this context, the use of the outsider's language can be of great value in making the claims of Christ understandable to him. The second century apologist, too, ". . . made deliberate use of the thought-forms, symbols, and language of the outsider. His apology was not, like the sermon, couched in the idiom of the already convinced."[1] In this way, he established

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[1]Sellers, p. 62.

a basis for communication with the outsider, and showed him the reality of his sin and inadequacy before God. However, the apologist needs to do more than this. Sellers summarizes: "The apologist, . . . insofar as he makes contact through a set of pagan symbols, preaches in the last analysis only a partial Christian truth."[1] Once the outsider sees his need, the Christian must move on to proclamation which is the preaching of grace. To do this, he must communicate the biblical meaning of Christian symbols through identification with the outsider in life as well as in word.[2]

The question of authority is part of this problem and is one area where differing presuppositions often hinder really effective communication, especially if this difference is not recognized. Speaking of the second century again, Sellers indicates how Justin Martyr did, "everything in his power to bring his listeners finally under the biblical authority," even though he used extra-biblical language to do it.[3] The outsider's acceptance of this authority cannot be assumed, however.

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[1]Ibid., p. 85.

[2]Reuel L. Howe, Man's Need and God's Action (Greenwich, Conn.: The Seabury Press, 1953), pp.69-71.

[3]Sellers, p. 74.

The relationship between reason and revelation becomes important at this point, as Richardson states:

> Christian apologetics, . . . is concerned with the implications of the Christian revelation for the rational understanding of the world and of our existence in it. It seeks to show that revelation, . . . is actually a help and guide to the human reason . . . and, moreover, that revelation is not a figment of the imagination of Christians, but that it is a category based upon observable fact and recognizable experiences, when they are correctly interpreted.[1]

Speaking of one's method of approach to the problem he states further that:

> . . . the task of Christian apologetics in the twentieth century is to demonstrate that the Christian faith can bear scrutiny in the light of modern scientific method, that is, by the scientific method appropriate to it, which is theological method.[2]

In conclusion, it is vitally important for the Christian to be aware of the deep and subtle relationships between Christianity and culture, and of the effects of these on the outsider to faith, found both within and without the church. As the outsider's values and beliefs are seen in the light of the Gospel, the Christian will be better equipped to communicate the reality of his sin clearly to the outsider in his terms, and to help him in turn appreciate biblical meaning as he responds to and experiences God's transform-

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[1]Richardson, p. 21. For a full treatment of this topic the reader is referred to pp. 19-64 of this work.

[2]Richardson, p. 55.

ing grace. This is made possible by the Christian's identification with the outsider in life and understanding and word.

One must remember, however, that while, ". . . the audience may determine the style of communication and may supply many of the symbols, the message itself will have to come from God."[1] Apology, no matter how relevant and complete, is useless apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit.

D. Theological Factors which Influence Identification

The Christian Gospel transforms men's lives. If this is true, then a Christian's relationships, his message and the means by which he communicates it should take their character from the God whose Good News has transformed him.

Jesus Christ not only sets an example of identification, but this identification with God and with man makes the Christian's identification with the outsider both necessary and possible.

1. Christ's identification with God

> Identification is a mental and moral act, involving understanding and will, relating two or more personal subjects, numerically different, in such a way that they are regarded and treated as in all possible respects the same.[2]

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[1]Sellers, p. 58. [2]Foreman, pp. 37-38.

According to the author of this definition, Jesus Christ as a man purposefully and fully identified Himself with God, "...as Son with Father."[1] This is spoken of as an "identification of devotion, of worship,"[2] which is the highest example of identification possible and in which Jesus fully accepted the Father's purposes and made them His own.[3] All that He did was consistent with what God had shown Him.[4]

This identification with God was volitional and continued throughout His life. Foreman says:

> It was the decisive, central factor in his character. It motivated his prayers, it directed his steps, it governed his choice of friends.. . . It was the inspiration of his life's driving interest in the Kingdom of God. It came to a climax in Gethsemane, in the prayer, "Not my will, but thine, be done." And it is heard in his last prayer of all, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"[5]

Jesus did nothing either contrary to, or other than that which would specifically accomplish God's will, and thus would glorify Him, so that at the end of His ministry He could say to Philip, "He who has seen me has seen the Father; . . ."[6]

Through this worshipful, obedient identification with God, Christ was expressing the Father's very character, communicating His Person translated into

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[1]Ibid., p. 98. [2]Ibid., [3]Ibid., p. 48.
[4]John 17:7-8. [5]Foreman, p. 98.
[6]John 14:9.

human language--the language of human life and words. It is interesting to note that revelation of Deity consisted of a total Self-giving to the needs of others. Jesus was kindness, humility, love and justice in action.

In this, He shared God's identification with men, and His desire, ". . . to mold men to his own character and purpose, . . . the identification of love."[1] As Foreman indicates, Christ accomplished God's purpose --His, ". . . tireless, ageless, unswerving will that man shall be God-like, and not playing God: that man shall respond to God's yearning with desire of his own, however weak it may be. . . ."[2] Thus, Christ's identification with God and with man both motivated and made possible man's identification with God.

2. Christ's identification with man

Foreman sets Christ's identification with man against the background of God's Word to man through history. God has always been reaching out to man, revealing Himself to redeem man and bring him into a proper relationship with Himself.[3] As Foreman indi-

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[1] Ibid., p. 89. Foreman supports this on page 92 as he says: "(John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8; John 1:1, 14)...imply the will and the intention on the part of God to identify himself with man."

[2] Ibid. [3] Foreman, p. 93.

cates, He was even identified with man to the extent that the affliction of His people was His affliction also.[1]

However, the Incarnation was something new. It was a climax, the result of God's free choice, though many would argue its necessity. In any case it is represented in the New Testament as the result of God's decision, not man's,[2] an expression of His love and purpose.

It is plain too, that just as God willed the Incarnation purposefully, so, ". . . by his own self-emptying, [He] can be, and wishes to be, regarded and treated for this decisive moment as in all possible respects the same as man."[3] Thus, Christ shared man's very nature, enduring all his temptations, feeling all his weaknesses and sorrows, yet without committing sin.[4] In spite of this, though, He experienced the full weight of suffering that resulted from man's sin, both during His life[5] and in some even deeper way, in His death.[6]

Two questions might be asked at this point. What was the nature of this identification? And for

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[1] Ibid., p. 94.

[2] Ibid., p. 93.

[3] Ibid., p. 94.

[4] Hebrews 2:14, 4:15.

[5] Foreman, p. 98.

[6] II Cor. 5:21; cf. Foreman, p. 105.

what purpose was it made? Foreman indicates that while the Son of God, the Logos was incarnate, the whole Trinity or Triunity" was active in this, ". . . by virtue of that same interfusion of dynamic will which constitutes the divine inner self-identification . . ."[1]

However difficult it is to understand the "mechanics" of these identifications, it must be recognized that the Incarnation was nevertheless real. "Christ was physically, mentally and spiritually a man; not a kernel of impossible deity in a shell of humanity, nor yet a man transformed into a God, but a real man, wholly man."[2] The Incarnation, ". . . was real because it was willed by the God of truth, the God who never wills the unreal; the God who may tell the truth in story form but never truth in form of lies."[3]

The identification was of two kinds: the first was Christ's identification with man for purposes of the second, His desire to identify man with Himself.[4] This is the result of God's love for He knows that man's highest good lies here. Indeed, Foreman says that man ". . . cannot find his destiny . . ." apart from this identification with God.[5]

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[1] Ibid. For a more detailed discussion see pp. 71-79. [2] Ibid., p. 95. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., p. 96. [5] Ibid.

Nida relates God's identification with man and His purpose for man to the two-way communication between them.

> Divine revelation takes place in the form of a "dialogue." . . . in Scripture God is continually revealed as seeking men out to converse with them, . . . The entire concept of the covenant of God with men is predicated upon two-way communication, even though it is God who proposes and man who accepts. Of course, in Jesus Christ the "dialogue" of God with man is evident in all of its fullness, but the divine-human conversation is eternal, for the end of man is for fellowship and communion with God Himself, and for this the communication of "dialogue" is an indispensable and focal element.[1]

He indicates the necessity for God's identification with man for this communication to take place. This is related to the "otherness" of God and to the nature of man's knowing. The author says:

> . . . all divine communication is essentially incarnational, for it comes not only in words, but in life. Even if a truth is given only in words, it has no real validity until it has been translated into life. Only then does the Word of life become life to the receptor. The words are in a sense nothing in and of themselves . . . the word is void unless related to experience.[2]

It is interesting to note that although (or perhaps because) Christ was fully identified with God, He did not hesitate to identify Himself fully with people who were inadequate and unlovely by human standards. In this he was active where the need and often the response were greatest.

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[1]Nida, p. 225.

[2]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 226. Howe, pp. 69-71.

As Foreman says, "...Jesus...identified himself with weak men, men who sin, beaten men."[1] The author goes on to indicate that His baptism was, "...the open, public, dramatic avowal by Jesus of...his identification with sinners."[2] Jesus knew what was in man, and identified with it all. His was not a "holier-than-thou" attitude. His holiness rather sent Him to mingle and communicate, by life and word, with the worst sinners. However,

> ...the high quality of his humanity...cut him off from men in various ways. His best friends continually misunderstood him: two of them he called devils to their faces. His final rejection was by the "best" men of his time. Nevertheless, while Jesus was tragically cut off, he never cut himself off. On the contrary, he was always trying to break through to the dull and the disinclined.[3]

This indicates clearly, something about the nature and purpose of the Christian's identification with the outsider. However Jesus' identification with men goes deeper than this in a unique way, in the atonement, though even here the Christian has something to learn about identification with men and with God through suffering. As Foreman says, "...the life and death of Christ cannot be separated in any right doctrine of the Atonement."[4]

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[1]Foreman, p. 103. [2]Ibid., p. 104.
[3]Foreman, p. 99. [4]Ibid., p. 101.

Christ so identified with men that He suffered the effects of their sin that violated or contradicted the character of God and estranged them from Him in the sense that they were unable to participate in His character (i.e., to be like Him.) More specifically:

> ...God's intention is for man's identification with him, whereas man's basic sin is that he wants to turn this around. He wants God to be identified with him. Instead of being drawn in or drawn upward to God's purpose, vision, destiny, man desires that God shall be drawn down as chief assistant and guarantor of man's schemes, plans, and desires...Man does not want to be identified with God in purpose.[1]

However, Christ not only was and is fully identified with God in purpose, but He also wants to identify men with Himself in this. This is God's purpose. Not only does Christ penetrate man's life, down to it's roots with full understanding of his corruption, but He also wants to draw man up to share and express His life in harmony with the will and character of God. Foreman says:

> That the Highest shares the fate of the lowest is feckless and a great waste, unless there be also the will and intent--and the power as well--to raise the lowest to the life of the Highest. So we dare to believe in Christ's own intention. . .so to identify himself with men that when God looks at men he shall see Christ, and when he looks at Christ he sees mankind.[2]

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[1]Foreman, p. 99. [2]Ibid., pp. 107-108.

Thus, one sees more clearly the relationship between the purpose of God and the work of Christ, but how does this work out in the lives of men?

3. Man's identification with Christ

The communication between God and man is an active two-way process. Christ has revealed God truly, and has made possible man's experience of God through identification with Him, but this must be in turn appropriated through faith. Indeed, faith in the proper object allows man to function as he was meant to do. As Richardson states:

> Man comes to the knowledge of the truth, not by the untrammelled exercise of his reasoning powers, but by accepting or being given the faith which enables him to use this reason aright; reason cannot work until it first makes an act of faith, and it does not work correctly--that is, rationally --unless it makes the right act of faith, unless it has faith in the Truth itself.[1]

Thus, through faith, men are meant to "imitate" Christ, losing themselves in and for Him. In this way they will find life, for this is the proper goal of faith, which allows man to function as God intended. This is what it means to be fully human and this is why Christ identified with men, losing Himself in and for them.[2]

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[1]Richardson, p. 77. [2]Foreman, p. 102.

This life "lost" in Christ involves a transformation of motivations, values and behavior. Indeed, as Nida indicates, ". . . it is only the power of God which can truly transform personality... ."[1] The life which before had been self-centered and inadequate from God's point of view becomes increasingly God-centered and adequate in His power.[2] This change involves one's attitudes toward other people as well. Just as Christ revealed the Father through a life of love and kindness, suffering with and for people that they might experience physical, spiritual and emotional wholeness, so the Christian finds wholeness as he learns to identify with men, giving himself to and for them in whatever way truly meets their deepest needs. In this way the believer identifies with Christ, becoming one with Him in purpose and in life, in the strength that He gives, so that together, they--he and Christ--glorify the Father.

Speaking of the close relation between the Christian's motivation, his commitment to Christ and the character of his life with other men, Nida states:

> Correct behavior is not true behavior until it is God-centered, for God is its ultimate base. Moreover, this very love of God--not mere submission to His will-- is in itself only a reflection of His Grace, for "we love because He first loved

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[1]Nida, p. 157. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 79.

> us" (I John 4:19). Furthermore, by insisting on the love of God rather than mere obedience to God, Jesus raised the whole level of existence from the formal and the material to the symbolic and the spiritual. The criterion of righteousness was no longer to be correct behavior, but a new heart: not scrupulous adherence to law, but unrestricted commitment to God, as revealed in Jesus Christ.[1]

Thus, the Christian freely chooses commitment in response to his experience of Christ's love for him. His choice and action result from his understanding of who Christ is and what He means when He says, "Follow Me,"[2] as this is revealed in Scripture and in the lives of other Christians around him. He also recognizes from this that identification with Christ and with men are two parts of the same thing. A person cannot identify with Christ and not give himself wholly to men for their good, as Christ did. Indeed, the Lord Himself wants to meet men now through the believer, as He says: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son: . . . "[3] Thus, the Christian is enabled increasingly to become an "incarnation" of Christ, just as He is the Incarnation of God.

4. Implications for the Christian's identification with the outsider

The transformation that accompanies identification with Christ reveals both the motivation for and

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[1] Ibid., p. 216. [2] John 21:19, 22.

[3] John 14:13.

and the character of the Christian's identification with the outsider. As Nida puts it:

> ...the love which Christ commanded is not a sentimental attachment, but a profound appreciation of the worth and value of people as God sees them. Moreover, this love is the only transforming power in the world. Force may bring about conformity, but only love can transform the heart...the way of love is not fast, but it is sure, for it is the plan of God.[1]

Later he elaborates in Scriptural terms:

> We are thus to be partners with God, identified with Him in the ministry of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:1,8), called by God to be identified with men in order that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).[2]

More than the addition of new information is is needed to bring people to commitment to Jesus Christ. A total rorganization of one's conceptions is needed to alter one's emotional responses. As Nida states:

> ...only by a true identification with people and by communicating with them on an essentially horizontal plane can one effect a real transformation of individual lives and of society as a whole.[3]

In all of this the power and direction come from the Holy Spirit, although the Christian is deeply involved and active. In fact, the Christian's involvement is the channel through which God's power flows. Nida summarizes:

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[1]Nida, pp. 217-218. [2]*Ibid*., p. 229.
[3]*Ibid*., p. 106.

> Only by the supernatural activity of the Spirit can men possibly experience for themselves the transforming grace of God . . . We ourselves do not communicate this message: we only bear witness to its truth, for it is the Spirit of God that directly communicates and mediates this divine word. The encounter which men have is not merely with an idea, but with God Himself. Hence, the communication in which we are involved is not only supernatural in content (in that it is derived from God); it is also supernatural in process, for the Spirit of God alone makes this message to live within the hearts of men.[1]

In addition, it must be recognized that the message "lives" and God is revealed and encountered through the outsider's experience of the believer's total self-giving love which alone is consistent with the character of God. In this way, the outsider is shown what it really means to be a Christian, and is also drawn to commit himself to Christ as he sees how he is loved by Christ through the believer. This communication of life interpreted by word is what is involved in "preaching the Gospel," and it occurs effectively only in a context of identification motivated by love.

In conclusion, the identifications of God and of man are intimately related. The nature of the identification process, its purpose and its power are also bound together around the very character of God. Although God works in man in supernatural power to enable him to experience what it really means to be human, He also works through man as He has made him to accomplish

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[1]Nida, pp. 228-229.

this purpose. Thus, a discussion of the psychological factors in identification will follow.

E. Psychological Factors which Influence Identification

Identification is, as Nida states, ". . . a very complex concept, for it involves the totality of inter-human relationships."[1] If it is misunderstood, it may be mistaken for imitation which, ". . . usually involves cheap paternalism or superficial ingratiation, and not real empathy."[2] As Nida explains,

> The essential difficulty with the false identification found in imitation is that it creates contempt, the most important barrier to mutual understanding.[3]

Thus, the process of identification will be examined from the viewpoint of human interaction.

1. Identity and Identification differentiated

"Identification means, not being someone else, but being more than oneself."[4] In discussing this Foreman says: "I am always over against, not opposed to but distinct from other men and God."[5] It is thus important to differentiate between "identity" and "identification," since they are not the same, and recognition of one's own identity is an important part of identifying with another.

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[1]Nida, p. 162. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.
[4]Ibid. [5]Foreman, p. 34.

A person's identity is the Self that he is: the answer to the question, "Who am I?" He may or may not be aware of this Self, but that does not alter its existence. When Sherrill speaks of a "lost identity," he is referring to a person's lost awareness of what or who his "Self" is.[1] While an awareness of one's identity, a sense of selfhood, is important, the sense of it is not the thing itself. Foreman emphasizes this point as he differentiates between identity and identification. He says:

> . . . identification is dynamic; identity is static--not dead, static. Identification goes beyond identity. Identity is so, apart from any judge, and without any agent. Identification can take place only as an act of will and choice. Identity is objective in the sense that no act of recognition, will, or personal choice is required for it to be true. Identification is always subjective, always personal, since an act of will is called for. Identity in itself is not moral, not immoral either. It is simply datum. Identification is always moral . . . Identity cannot be created, not now . . . no act on a creature's part can either create identity where it was not, or destroy it where it is. Identity cannot be altered . . . In identification on the other hand, one of the two members can change so that identification becomes no longer possible. Identification therefore depends on a sustained exertion of will united to the understanding and usually to the imagination too, rather than on one single act of will. The same identification may at times be asserted, at times repudiated.[2]

The quest for awareness of one's identity may be one type of identification, but the identity itself is not lost or changed--only the awareness of it changes.

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[1]Sherrill, p. 32. [2]Foreman, p. 43.

Foreman explains:

> One wants to belong, one finds oneself, as it is said in one's relationships. Identity in the sense I mean is not synonymous with relationships; it is rather what is related.[1]

Thus, when the Christian identifies with the outsider, he neither loses his own identity, nor his sense of having an identity that is separate from and different from that of the outsider. He is still himself, even though he becomes "more than" himself.

Also, when a person identifies with God he can expect to gain a new sense of identity. As Nida says:

> People realize that they are "somebody"--not just people, but chosen by God, with a purpose for their existence and a place in history.[2]

2. <u>The need for relationship</u>

It has been seen above that man was created to live in a certain way with God and with others. His relationships need to have a certain character or flavor in order for him to achieve his potential as man. A gulf of separation has occurred, however, between a man and his God and between a man and his brothers, but healing relationships are hard to achieve because of each person's sense of alienation from others which is heightened by the depersonalization of Western culture and also by personal insecurity. Howe feels that each man's deepest need is to be at one with someone, "<u>who</u>

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 34-35. [2]Nida, pp. 146-147.

can be at one with us, and through whom we may find at-oneness with all."[1]

It has also been seen God has recognized man's need and has acted to meet it in Jesus Christ. It is through His identification with men and their response to Him and therefore to other men also that alienation is removed. Thus, relationship is both the goal and the means to the goal. Since the meaning of the Gospel is relationship to God through Christ, relationship between men is necessary in communication of the message, both to make it plain and to draw men to response. What the Gospel is and how it is communicated are thus intimately related. Also, by the very nature of effective communication, relationship is needed for any two-way sharing in depth. Thus, it has been said that identification both makes for and requires this two-way communication. As Nida states:

> No effective communication can possibly take place unless the participants stand in relevant, understandable relations to one another. The source must have a valid role within the context or his words will be relatively meaningless.[2]

However, the kind of relationship between the source and the receptor will determine the kind and depth of communication as well as understanding of the message.[3]

What kind of relationship is needed, then, for

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[1]Howe, p. 15f. [2]Nida, p. 178. [3]Ibid., p.95.

successful identification? Some characteristics of such a relationship will be discussed now.

3. The need for participation

Participation in the life of the outsider is a vital part of the Christian's identification with him. As Nida indicates, this involves a genuine interpersonal experience that is desired by all who are affected. The insider's attitude to himself and to the outsider is important. He must not consider himself a "benefactor" of the other but rather a "colaborer."[1]

Participation also involves "sharing things in common."[2] The things shared must be symbolically significant, however. Similarity in unimportant externals is not identification. Foreman states:

> Participation does not, in itself, produce or induce identification...Nevertheless, without participation, actual or alleged, there is no identification. The problem here is: What exactly is participation, and how great an extent or degree of it is required for identification?...As a working notion, we may say that in the present context, whenever some vital, i.e., essential, points, areas, aspects, or features of the entities in question are felt to be similar or even the same, this likeness or sharing of quality or qualities is what is meant by participation. The similarity, of course must be a vital one...whenever the identifier is convinced that the similarities or identities of essence or qualities are so strong as to warrant classifying both objects together and treating them identically, there participation has been reached.[3]

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[1] Ibid. pp. 169-170. [2] Foreman, p. 44. [3] Ibid. p.45.

Thus, when a person is involved together with another person by means of words, actions and common understandings, in things that are important to them both, they may be said to be participating in each other's lives. It is a two-way process which both involves and results in deep communication. The insider can participate in the life of the outsider by sharing with him his sorrows and joys, by appreciating his problems and frustrations, by helping him at work, by being involved with his family, and by enjoying his recreation with him. All of these are significant areas which are loaded with both symbolic and practical meaningto people.

By means of this participation, the insider can grow in understanding of the outsider's values and needs and can think through both how Jesus Christ can meet this man in his situation, and how He can be shared so that He comes alive to him, in all His adequacy. Through this participation, also, the outsider will gain confidence that the believer really understands and loves him.

Foreman warns, however, that:

> Unless the identifier, the agent of identification, feels that the two subjects identified share some things in common, he will at least hesitate to make the identification.[1]

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[1]Foreman, p. 44.

The Christian should ask himself what kind of people he can identify with in this way. What people are around him to begin with; what do they share in common and what does he really understand about them?

One thing in which the Christian always shares with the outsider is human sin. Insider and outsider together are in need of God's grace and forgiveness. When both recognize their need, and experience the acceptance of the other person in spite of it, a common bond is felt that frees them to share together honestly. The insider does not need to keep up a "front" of perfection, nor is the outsider afraid of revealing his weakness and inadequacy to a "saint" who could not or would not understand. Thus true participation both results in and requires that the outsider feel loved, accepted and understood. In this context of love and mutual understanding of common need, the believer can share the answer of forgiveness and new life in Christ out of his own experience, with relevance, and the outsider can feel free to respond, not feeling the need to be on the defensive. It is up to the insider to initiate this relationship and to maintain it even when the outsider does not respond.[1]

4. <u>The need for love and trust</u>

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[1]Cf. Sherrill, p. 191.

From all that has been said above, it is obvious that the relationship which results in identification must be characterized by love. The love of the Christian for the outsider comes from Christ and is of the same quality as His. The outsider is seen, not as a type, but as a person.[1]

Nida describes the effects of this love on the relationship. He says:

> . . . the indispensable ingredient in identification is a genuine love for people. This love must not be a sentimental romanticizing about a certain group of people in general, but a profound appreciation of certain individuals in particular. We must genuinely enjoy their presence and experience a growing sense of mutual indispensability. Only in this way can we really identify, for we become like those we love.[2]

In this he has touched the heart of the relationship between identification and communication; for just as the insider's love helps him appreciate the outsider and understand him so as to communicate the Gospel clearly, so the outsider not only understands the communication, but responds to the love with love in return, seeking to be like the insider in his identification with Christ.

5. <u>The need for willingness to know oneself and to be known</u>

Just as the Christian's need to know and under-

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[1]Cf. Nida, p. 168. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 170.

stand the outsider has been stressed throughout this study, so his need to be known by the receptor of his message has been implied as well. It has been noted that the source and the receptor must stand in some meaningful relationship to each other for the message to be received with understanding and appreciation.[1] If there is no logical reason for the insider to be involved with the outsider, he may be treated with suspicion or even hostility.

In addition, it was pointed out that the insider's freedom to let his inadequacies be known, puts the outsider more at ease and helps him realize that the person speaking to him really understands his problems. The Christian's honesty also indicates that he trusts the outsider and is willing to be exposed and vulnerable before him. This in turn gives the outsider confidence in the believer's sincerity and love for him. As Nida indicates, ". . . the sooner people know us, for better or for worse, the greater can be our identification.[2]

In addition, this author indicates that the insider must be aware of his own motivations if his communication of the Gospel is to be effective and wholesome. He says:

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[1]This may be one reason why Gospel preaching on the street often has little effect, though it has also been greatly used by God.

[2]Nida, p. 170.

> Our interests in identification must not be some subtle projection of our unsatisfied desire to dominate, nor must they represent any unconscious attempt to escape from our own cultural milieu. . . We must therefore "know" ourselves before we can expect to know others or to communicate with them.[1]

If the believer is operating on the basis of some unrecognized emotional need, he may not only be demonstrating a "warped" Gospel by his life, but he may even be manipulating the outsider to meet his own needs. In doing this he is contradicting the very nature of the Good News and also possibly hindering the outsider from making a full and healthy response to Christ himself. This may take the form of an overdependence on the insider rather than on Christ; it may result in a legalistic devotion to "rules" of Christian living rather than a mature application of Scriptural principles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; or it may take some other undesirable form. It is quite possible, too, that the outsider may reject the Gospel outright on the basis of its false presentation.

In conclusion, it has been seen that identifidation for communication of the Gospel occurs through and in turn deepens wholesome human relationships empowered by the Spirit of God. In this way, men's deepest needs for a sense of "oneness" with themselves, with God and with others are met.

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[1]*Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

F. Summary

In this chapter a study has been made of the essential elements in identification for communication of the Gospel, as presented by contemporary writers in the fields of communication, religious psychology and theology. The need for identification was seen in relation to some of the principles of effective communication; cultural factors were examined; and the implications of certain theological and psychological facts for the process of identification for communication of the Gospel were explored.

It was found that the nature of the Gospel both demands and makes possible a deep two-way communication between persons, which occurs in a context of identification, and in turn, fosters identification.

Some of the difficulties in clear and effective communication involve varied individual meanings for symbols, and differences in background and experience which affect the "encoding" and "decoding" of the message. The Christian's failure to understand the world-view of the outsider and to encourage two-way communication or "feedback," often results in confusion, irrelevancy and a lack of "impact."

In addition, the Christian heritage of Western

culture has produced outsiders who uphold Christian ethics but who reject Christ, and discount the value of categories commonly used to communicate the Faith. The secular motivations and values in the culture, meanwhile, have influenced the church, with the result that many church members think of the church as one more institution among many, and make the most important decisions of life without reference to God.

The Christian's point of contact with these outsiders must show them their need of God's grace and, at the same time, make Biblical truth plain to them, using symbols and thought-forms that they understand and respect.

It was seen that the nature of God's identification with men in Christ not only revealed God truly in "human language," but potentially accomplished God's purpose of drawing men to identify with Christ and be like Him in their values and behavior. Thus men were reconciled to God and equipped to love both God and men. In this way, the nature of the Christian's message and experience of God makes identification for communication both possible and necessary.

It was also observed that while communication of the Gospel is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit, He works through human relationships and activities. For mature identification with the people outside faith,

the Christian should understand something of his own motivations and limitations and should be secure in a sense of his own identity. His relationship with the outsider can then be characterized by love and trust, by the sharing of important things in common, and by a willingness on his part to be known by the outsider.

Identification with the outsider is necessary for effective communication of the Gospel since it is intrinsic to the very nature of the Gospel and to the process of communication.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF PAUL'S IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF PAUL'S IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL

A. Introduction

The preceding chapter has provided an understanding of the nature of identification in communication of the Gospel in western society as seen in the light of contemporary studies in communication, theology and psychology.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discover the essential elements in Paul's identification, with God and with men in his cultural context and to see how these influenced the character and results of his communication of the Gospel. The understandings thus gained will then be used to test the validity of modern thinking in this area, and to deepen contemporary understanding of the process of identification in communication of the Gospel today.

B. Cultural Factors Influencing Paul's Identification

An understanding of Paul's own cultural and religious background and of the political, social and religious conditions under which he worked is vital for an appreciation of his identification with men and women

from all parts of the known world. Who were these people with whom he shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What were their values, hopes and problems, and how did Paul's understanding of these influence his ministry? In an attempt to answer these questions, the Apostle's personal background will now be examined.

1. Paul's cultural and religious background

Paul was born into an orthodox Jewish family, probably of some wealth and social standing in Tarsus, as indicated by his Tarsian citizenship.[1] He was also a citizen of Rome by birth in a day when this privilege was highly sought after and was often purchased at a great price.[2]

However, some scholars feel that Paul did not belong to the literary upper classes of Tarsian society, just as he did not come from the lowest classes. He supported himself by tentmaking out of necessity,[3] and in his writing, he used the vocabulary and forms of "everyday" Greek speech rather than a more formal literary style.[4] He was not vulgar though, and it may

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[1]H. M. Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), pp. 30-32, 35.

[2]Acts 22:27-29.

[3]Acts 18:3; I Cor. 4:11-12; 9:1-18; II Cor. 11:9; I Thess. 2:9; II Thess. 3:7-9.

[4]Cf. William Baird, Paul's Message and Mission (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 67.

well be that his informality shows his concern to identify with people by talking "their language," more than it indicates his own social background. Deissmann concludes:

> ...by birth and education, by sympathies and circumstances of life, he belongs far more to the middle and lower classes than to the upper class. He is no social climber forsaking his own class. As a missionary chiefly working amongst the unliterary masses of the great cities Paul did not patronisingly descend into a world strange to him; he remained in his own social world.[1]

In any case, Paul's education at home was rigorously Jewish in accord with the highest requirements of the Law. Sincerely, he learned to meet its strict ethical and religious demands, becoming ultimately a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" and a grim upholder of the moral order.[2] At least part of his early life was spent in Jersalem as Luke records; "'I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our Fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day.'"[3] That he felt a kinship with Jews everywhere is indicated by his reference to "the brethren" in Damascus,[4] to say nothing of his later expressions

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[1]Adolf Deissmann, Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, trans. Wm. E. Wilson (1st ed., "Harper Torchbook Series"; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 51.

[2]C. Harold Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1920), pp. 69-70.

[3]Acts 22:3, cf. Deissmann, pp. 96-110. [4]Acts 22:5.

of deep love and longing for his own people to respond to the Gospel.[1]

However, Paul was also familiar with Hellenistic thought and life as shown in his speech to the Athenians.[2] His home city, Tarsus, was situated on the trade route from the Mediterranean Sea to the passes of the Taurus Mountains. It boasted a prominent university also, and doubtless Paul was exposed to all the current philosophies, (especially Stoic teaching), in this cosmopolitan atmosphere.[3] He spoke Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic fluently,[4] and was truly a citizen of two worlds, as Ramsay states:

> It was the usual rule in educated society that each man had at least two nationalities and two sides to his character. . . in accord with the mission of Rome to make the idea of cosmopolitanism and universal citizenship a practical reality. . . .[5]

But what was the character of this world in which Paul seemed so much at home? This will now be discussed.

2. The general social and religious character of Paul's time

Paul's age has been called "an age of pessimism."[6] The Jews, though prospering in business in many parts of the Empire, were usually an unpopular minority. Although they had lost their national independence, they remained fiercely nationalistic and proud of their status as the chosen people of God. However, many were discoura-

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[1]Romans 9:1-3. [2]Acts 17:22-31. [3]Baird, p. 17.

[4]Acts 21:37; 22:2; cf. Dodd, p. 22.

[5]Ramsay, p. 33. [6]Baird, p. 18.

ged for it seemed that God had deserted them. He, ". . . had either lost his power or retired from the present historical situation."[1]

The Greeks, too, were in a religious "vacuum." The old local gods were no longer respected or trusted since they had failed to protect the small city states from the invasion of Philip of Macedonia in 338 B.C. The centralization process which followed had destroyed the city governments which supported the local cults, and with them had gone the intimate religio-political community that gave meaning to the lives of individuals. As Baird states: "Man, . . . was set adrift in the vast sea of a universe too big to afford any meaningful association."[2]

In the face of this depersonalization and skepticism, it became obvious to many, both Jews and Greeks, that a universal faith was the only thing that would provide meaning for the times.[3] However, in spite of the growing interest in and acceptance of the concept of a universal God, He remained transcendent. For the Jews, YHWH's name was too holy to be even mentioned, and for the Greeks, the chasm between the finite and the infinite was unbridgeable. As Baird says: ". . .

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[1]Ibid., p. 19. [2]Ibid., p. 20. [3]Ibid., pp. 20-22.

the gods remained remote and mute, with the result that the problem of revelation was of most serious concern to the Hellenistic religion."[1]

In addition, pessimism was increased in both groups by a fatalistic attitude to human history. The Jews believed that God had predetermined the course of history, but wondered why they had to endure such suffering. In spite of their apocalyptic hope, the future was bleak.

The Greeks shared this fatalism, but lacked the hope that helped to sustain the Jew. The best man could do in their view was to find a way to escape tychē or Fate, that "blind power of chance" which controlled their lives.[2]

Man was seen as a duality of body and spirit. It was hoped that at death the divine spirit which is man's essence would escape from the body in which it is "held captive," being forced to endure the tragedy inherent in the historical situation which is in turn controlled by Fate. The body was thus seen to be "the prison of the soul." For followers of the mystery cults, the assurance of immortality provided some hope, but for many others, such as the Epicureans, life after death was held to be impossible. Thus pessimism for

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[1]Baird, p. 22. [2]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

the present was projected into hopelessness for the future as well.[1] For the Greek, "salvation was clearly more a matter of freedom from Fate than a genuine moral redemption."[2]

However, immortality was related to an ethical life as well, for the Jew certainly, but also to some extent for the Greek. Even the mystery cults made some attempts to "purify" the faithful, although cult prostitution was also practised. Neither did the philosophers have much influence on the populace, since their "high ideals" were neither widely known or practiced by the majority, and immorality of the basest kind was common.[3]

It is interesting to note that the Jewish communities in these towns and cities attracted many Greek proselytes who were dissatisfied with the mystery cults and were attracted by the high ethical standard set forth in the Law. These "Godfearers," as they were called, held to many of the Jewish beliefs and practices although they were not allowed to become Jews.[4]

A further trend must be noted, in addition to the pessimism accompanying fatalism, and the limited concern regarding the widespread immorality of the time.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 27-29. [2] Baird, p. 30. [3] Ibid.
[4] Dodd, p. 21.

There was also a search for "religious community," in an effort to restore meaningful personal associations. Since the Jewish theocracy had been destroyed, many of the Jews gained a sense of identity by joining one of many sects available.[1] For the Jews of the Dispersion, the synagogue became the center of life. It provided close fellowship and also ". . . membership in a larger society -- the people of God, whose history was glorious and whose numbers were as the sands of the sea."[2] The Greeks, too, tried to recapture this sense of community through the Oriental mystery cults, but Baird feels that this association was of a more individualistic nature and did not provide close fellowship among believers.[3]

While it is true that relatively few people were consciously concerned about these religious trends and problems in society, philosophy and religion were popular subjects among the masses. It was fashionable to discuss the latest philosophical doctrines, even though understanding was often minimal, to say nothing of practice. Much reading was done, too, and the man in the street was usually at least familiar with the philosophical terms.[4]

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[1]Baird, p. 25. The Qumran Community on the Dead Sea was one of these.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 25-26. [3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 26.

[4]Dodd, p. 20.

"Mobile conditions of international trade and industry" also made for widespread communication of new ideas, as Dodd indicates.[1] Large cities often gained much of their importance from their location on trade route of land or sea, and the frequent passage of merchant caravans helped to provide "telephone," "newspaper" and "radio" services.

How did all these factors influence Paul in his communication of the Gospel? How did he identify with the people who lived under these conditions and held these beliefs? And how did his own background influence this identification? An attempt will be made to answer these questions.

3. The nature of Paul's identification with men in the light of cultural factors

It may first be noted that whenever Paul went to a new place, he first went to the Jewish synagogue to meet people and to preach.[2] Wherever possible, he began his ministry among people whose ways were his own and whose faith he understood. At Corinth he first found Aquila and his wife Priscilla, Jews from the Roman province of Pontus, who had recently come from Rome. Paul stayed and worked at tent-making with them, speaking, "in the synagogue every sabbath."[3] Thus his point

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[1]Ibid., p. 25; cf. Acts 18:2-3.

[2]Acts 13:5, 14-15, 43; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10; 18:4.

[3]Acts 18:1-4.

of contact with them was the "common ground" of his work and his own Jewishness. Writing to the Corinthians later, Paul claims Jewish history as his own, and shows his understanding both of the facts and the meaning of that history.[1]

In addition, the Jews were expecting the Messiah and Luke records that at Thessalonica, Paul, ". . . argued with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.'"[2] In this Paul was relating contemporary history to what was already familiar and important to his hearers. He was interpreting the facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection to the Jews in terms of the Scriptures, the authority of which they already accepted.

It may be noted also that Paul's methods of teaching in the synagogues were as Jewish as his content. In Antioch of Pisidia, he entered the synagogue and sat down with his companions. After the reading of the Scriptures, the ruler of the synagogue invited them to address the people, according to the custom--a courtesy commonly accorded learned guests. In responding to this invitation Paul once again identified himself with

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[1]I Cor. 10:1-11. [2]Acts 17:2-3.

the holy history of Israel, and went on to show how Jesus is the culmination of that history, fulfilling the law and the prophets in His own Person.[1] In doing this sort of preaching and teaching, Paul "argued from Scripture" in typical Rabbinic fashion, often using allegorical interpretations[2] and proofs from analogy.[3] In addition, Paul, like the Rabbis, argued from "the less to the greater," and from "the greater to the less."[4] He also showed their influence on him in his use of the parallel between Christ and Adam that occurs in I Cor. 15:22-49, and in Romans 5:12-21.[5]

Thus, Paul identified with the Jew through his use of concepts and categories, methods and authorities which were familiar and acceptable to them both. Paul's understanding of and appreciation for Jewish culture and thought were genuine and deep since these things were part of his own heritage.

It may be noted, that while Paul used this "common ground" of unity with the Jews to increase their understanding and acceptance of his "new" teaching, the Gospel ultimately proved to be a "point of conflict," since it cut across accepted understandings both of righteousness and of the character and function

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[1]Acts 13:14-43. [2]Gal. 4:21-31; I Cor. 10:1-5.
[3]I Cor. 15:35-50; 9:7. [4]I Cor. 6:1-8.
[5]Deissmann, p. 104.

of the Messiah.[1] Indeed, it was because they understood Paul's Gospel so clearly and recognized its demands, that they reacted against it so violently.[2]

In spite of his understanding of the Jews, however, Paul's ministry was not limited to them. True to his understanding of the universal nature of the Gospel, Paul was able to move on to the Gentiles when rejected by his own people. His point of contact with the Greek world was a natural one, since many of the Grek "God-fearers" knew and respected him through his work in the synagogue. Their common understanding of both Greek and Jewish thought had helped Paul communicate the Gospel clearly so that many of these proselytes had become believers, and his own familiarity with the pagan world completed the transition of his ministry from Jew to Gentile.[3]

As he moved out to the Greeks through these new friends and believers, how was Paul's communication of the Gospel made more effective by his understanding of Greek thought and life? One notes first that he spoke against the fatalism of both Jew and Greek.[4] Dodd states:

> Over against the mechanical rule of law and the domination of the fatal star alike, Paul maintains

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[1]Cf. Romans, chapters 1-3. [2]Acts 14:1-2; 22:1-23.
[3]Baird, p. 77. [4]Rom. 9; 11:1-12; Gal. 4:1-11.

> that God always and in every age is free to deal personally with men.[1]

The Apostle also taught that this God is interested in all kinds of men as individuals.[2] This was an age when the individual was becoming important, and tribal and national views of history were giving way to universal conceptions. Paul was in tune with his times when he insisted upon,

> . . . the absolute importance of the entry of this Son of God into human history as an individual . . . In the centre of this general movement of thought stands the personality of Jesus Christ, intensely individual, and yet wonderfully universal - - an individual who consciously gathered up in His hands the threads of history, and who has proved Himself through following ages to have a direct affinity with the most diverse types of man in all peoples.[3]

In addition, the Apostle adapted the form of his message for the Greek, just as he had for the Jew. Dodd points out that most of the "mystery religions" of the time promised fellowship through certain rites with a"Saviour-God" who had "lived, died and risen again." Many have felt that Paul merely exchanged one of these cults for Judaism, but this conclusion is not justified if one realizes that the terms "Christ" and "Messiah" meant nothing to the pagan, while he had at least some understanding of the concepts conveyed by such terms as "the Lord, the Savior."[4]

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[1]Dodd, p. 36. [2]Rom. 1:18-3:31.
[3]Dodd, p. 89. [4]Dodd, p. 86.

Similarly, the term, euaggelion, used in the Old Testament and by Paul for "good news," is also, ". . . used in the Hellenistic imperial cults for the announcement of the enthronement of a king -- an event which promised the salvation of the world."[1]

It is entirely fair to conclude that Paul used these terms in an attempt to identify with the pagan, to communicate the Gospel to him in a meaningful way, rather than as an expression of his own heresy. This is especially interesting in the light of Baird's statement that, ". . . Paul never adequately appreciated pagan culture, even though he used its thought forms and symbols in the communication of his message."[2] For instance, he interpreted his observation of human behavior to his hearers on the basis of his Old Testament concept of sin as indicated in the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. He also gave the Greeks a new understanding of power when he indicated that it was, ". . . the action of the personal God in creation and history.", rather than, ". . . a natural force inherent in the cosmic order."[3] Thus, while Paul used pagan categories to some extent, one may safely conclude that he was doing this in order

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[1]Baird, pp. 64-65. [2]Baird, p. 34.
[3]Ibid., p. 83.

to communicate Christian content more clearly to his pagan listeners.

It will be recognized from the discussion above that in speaking to the people of his time, Paul was not merely mouthing platitudes of sterile doctrine. Rather, he was was speaking to the real needs of real people as he had observed them in life.[1] In this way, also, his understanding of his age helped him to identify with people where they were. His honest acceptance of their problems and needs, combined with the powerful solution the Gospel provided for these problems, won the respect and response of his hearers. They knew that Paul really understood their situation and had answers that were pertinent for it as well. It is this that has caused the Apostle's influence to go far beyond that of his contemporaries. As Baird states: "The competing faiths and philosophies passed into dissolution, because of their inability to discover solutions to the stubborn problems of the age."[2]

Thus, the character of Paul's age has been examined, and various aspects of his own cultural and religious background have been discussed, as these have influenced his identification with both the Jew and the Greek. It has been noted that Paul was very much aware of the thought and life of his time, and used his know-

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[1] Ibid., p. 34. [2] Baird, p. 30.

ledge to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ meaningfully to all kinds of men. In summary, Paul would agree with Baird that:

> . . . anyone who proposes to proclaim a message to the world will make a serious effort to understand the condition of that world to which he speaks. Moreover, the message which he proclaims, if it is to have validity, will meet the problems of the age at their deepest level.[1]

C. Psychological and Theological Factors Influencing Paul's Identification

One must ask at this point whether Paul's effectiveness was not due to more than his appreciation of cultural differences and human needs. As Baird points out, Paul was just one of many men with a message in his day. He says:

> . . . In the market place he rubbed shoulders with Stoic preachers and Jewish rabbis who were traversing land and sea to make one proselyte (Matt. 23:15). Other sensitive spirits viewed the historical situation with similar alarm so that the time displayed considerable missionary activity.[2]

Is it possible that the unique power of the Gospel to transform human lives accounts in part for Paul's great influence? Was this power operative in Paul himself as well as in his hearers? An attempt will now be made to discover how the Apostle's relationship with Christ influenced the character and the effectiveness of his ministry.

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[1] Ibid., p. 31. [2] Baird, p. 41.

However, any discussion of Paul's relationships with people should first of all take into account the Apostle's own personality as this was influenced by his relationship with Jesus Christ. One might well ask whether Paul's motives in all that he did were not merely selfish. Perhaps he was concerned only for his own spirutual welfare. As he tells the Philippians, "I have suffered the loss of all things, . . . that I may gain Christ . . . that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."[1] He also speaks of his desire to see the Thessalonians, adding, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy."[2] And again, he tells them, ". . . when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain."[3] For what did Jesus Christ "lay hold on" Paul and "make him His own?" Did Paul's motivations really conform to Christ's purposes, and if so, how were these expressed in his relationships with people?

An attempt will now be made to catch a glimpse

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[1]Phil. 3:8-11.

[2]I Thess. 2:19-20.

[3]I Thess. 3:5.

of Paul as a man and further, as a man identified with Jesus Christ, though, these cannot in reality be separated, since all that one is influences the expression of one's faith, and the reality of God influences all that a Christian is and does. It is hoped, however, that this discussion will shed light on the nature and results of the Apostle's identification with men.

1. Paul the man

Something of this person has been seen above in the discussion of Paul's own cultural and religious background, but one needs to bring him to life in all his complexity to appreciate the spirutual significance of his relationships with men. Deissmann states:

> . . . it is not superfluous strongly to emphasise the genuine humanity of Paul. The traditional conception has too often made him either a parchment saint, unacquainted with the world or else has suffered the man to disappear behind the system.[1]

He continues:

> The immense contrasts in Paul's nature, however, reveal even more of his human greatness. Paul had room in his personality for contradictions which would have hopelessly shattered a small man, and which over-burden the small-minded students of Paul with such a mass of problems, that they have to get air for themselves by propounding their theses, "not genuine" and "interpolated." But these contradictions did not shatter Paul: they gave his inner life that tremendous tension which expressed itself in the energy put forth in his life-work.[2]

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[1]Deissmann, p. 57. [2]Ibid., pp. 59-69.

Thus, it is the author's purpose at this time to help the reader "see" the Apostle as he walked the roads of the Roman Empire and mingled freely with centurian and slave, wealthy merchant and religious zealot. As Deissmann indicates:

> If, . . . we place the man of Tarsus in the sunlight of his Anatolian home and in the clear air of the ancient Mediterranean world, among the simple people of his own social class, what before pained our eyes like faint and faded pencil sketches, becomes suddenly plastic, alive with light and shade like some mighty relief of ancient date.[1]

Physically, Paul did not present an imposing figure. As to his physical appearance, there are few sure facts, but tradition describes him as, "a sturdy little bald-headed, bow-legged man, with meeting eyebrows and a rather prominent nose."[2] He was not impressive in manner, either, as his own letters indicate. His enemies felt they could say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."[3] He corroborated this too, as he told the Corinthians:

> And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p.4.

[2] From Acts of Paul and Thecla § 3, as quoted by C.H.Dodd, The Mind of Paul: A Psychological Approach (reprinted from "The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library," Vol. XVII, No. 1; Manchester: The Manchester University Press, January, 1933), p.3.

[3] II Cor. 10:10. [4] I Cor. 2:3-5.

One also notes the marked contrast between Paul's apparently poor health, and his vast physical stamina. He refers several times to his own illnesses,[1] yet he apparently had a tremendous capacity to endure hard work, natural hardships and afflictions that would have stopped and did stop many other men. He mentions to various groups his endurance of fatigue, cold, hunger, deep hostility that often exploded into violence, resulting in terrible physical suffering, and his own great inner fear and uncertainty in the face of all this.[2] In addition, he adds at the end of some twenty years of such service,

> . . . I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.[3]

Dodd concludes:

> . . . this man displayed an inflexible determination, a persistence that nothing could weary, and a courage that was not a mere constitutional audacity, but a steady fortitude prepared for anything except retreat.[4]

Yet, Paul was not by nature a placid person.

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[1]Gal. 4:13-14; and many scholars have concluded that his "thorn in the flesh" was an illness of some kind. See II Cor. 12:7-9; Dodd, The Mind of Paul . . . , p. 4; Deissmann, p. 60.

[2]II Cor. 6:3-10; 7:5; I Thess. 2:9; Acts 14:1-7, 19-20; 16:16-40; 17:1-15; 21:27-22:29; 27:1-28:6.

[3]Phil. 4:11-13. [4]Dodd, The Meaning of Paul.., p.28.

Dodd says, "It is clear that he was what is called highly-strung--sensitive to conditions, a man of moods, with emotions readily aroused."[1] His discouragement is evident in II Corinthians 1:8-9, as he said;

> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia: for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; . . .

Writing also to the young Thessalonian church from Athens shortly after his hurried departure from Thessalonica under persecution, he appeared nervous and worried, frustrated by hindrances, and greatly upset by his lack of information concerning the welfare of these new converts.[2] However, his mood quickly swung to one of greatest joy when he heard that they were growing in faith and love, and remembered him with affection.[3]

Paul's warm, affectionate nature may be seen here, too, along with his great need to have his love returned.[4] When it was not, Paul experienced much anguish as indicated in the Corinthian letters.[5] It becomes plain on closer study, however, that Paul's concern at these times was at least as much for these hostile converts as for him-

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[1]Dodd, The Mind of Paul. . ., p. 4; cf. Ramsay, P.37.

[2]I Thess. 2:17-3:5. [3]I Thess. 3:6-10.

[4]Dodd, The Mind of Paul. . ., p. 5.

[5]II Cor. 5:11-13; 7:2-3; 11:1-12:21.

self, for he said,

> I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her husband. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.[1]

He was concerned because their lack of respect and appreciation for him indicated that they were swerving from the heart of his Gospel too.[2] Again, speaking of a painful letter he had written to the Corinthians and had for a time regretted because of its severity, he said;

> As it is, I rejoice, . . . For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted.[3]

Thus, Paul's longing for himself was apparently associated with his longing for others. When they were whole and growing in Christ, he was contented, and their "zeal" for him was a sign of this spiritual health.

In any case, despite his "need to be loved," Paul had the courage and honesty both to expose his own feelings and to oppose those he believed in error.

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[1]II Cor. 11:2-3. [2]cf. II Cor. 2:4.

[3]II Cor. 7:9a, 11-13.

Again and again he emphasized the fact that he did not "seek glory from men,"[1] but rather lived and spoke to please God and thus, to win men to faith in Him.[2] In fact, true to his volatile personality and to his goal, he was often strong in angry denunciation of those who perverted the Gospel, and authoritatively critical of those who followed them as well.[3]

This is especially interesting in light of what some have called Paul's "natural intolerance." Dodd says:

> In it all he was dominated by a white hot zeal for the truth of which he was convinced as he was convinced of his own existence; . . . He said and wrote things he was sorry for, when he wrote or spoke in heat; but it was always a generous heat, kindled by no selfish feelings.[4]

In spite of this strength, though, at times Paul did depend greatly on his friends. Their support seemed almost necessary to the effectiveness of his work. He told the Corinthians,

> "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ a door was opened for me in the Lord; but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia."[5]

Again in I Thess. 3:1, he said, "Therefore when we

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[1] I Thess. 2:1-6; 1 Cor. 4:3. [2] II Cor. 6:3-10.

[3] Gal. 3:1-5; 5:12; II Cor. 12:19-13:10.

[4] Dodd, The Meaning of Paul . . .,p. 27.

[5] II Cor. 2:12.

could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, . . . "[1] It was only the most desperate anxiety that made him willing to work at Athens without Timothy. At the end of his life, however, this man who loved his friends so much and needed them, was left pracitically alone, yet without apparent bitterness. He told Timothy:

> . . . I am already on the point of being sacrificed;
> . . . . . .
> Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me.. . . At my first defense no one took my part; all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the word fully, . . . Do your best to come before winter.[2]

There is evidence that Paul's capacity for warmth in domestic relations, is also indicated in his friendships, co contrary to the common belief that he was cold toward marriage.[3] Dudley describes, ". . . the gnawing emptiness which lack of home and wife and children made in his great yearning heart."[4] Speaking of the Apostle's many references to his converts and friends as "sons" and "little children" over whom he had "travailed in birth," and as a "father" had "begotten" through the Gospel, so as to "espouse . . .

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[1] I Thess. 3:1-2a. [2] II Tim. 4:6a, 9-11a, 16-17a, 21a.

[3] C.H. Dudley, St. Paul's Friendships and His Friends (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1911), pp. 11-14.

[4] Ibid., p. 13.

a chaste virgin - to one husband, even Christ." Dudley concludes; "Let none, then, dare rise and charge Paul with coldness toward marriage and home."[1]

Paul's friendships also show him to be a man of broad sympathies and understandings. He drew friends from all racial and religious groups, and from all social and economic strata. He included old and young, men and women in a day when many other Jews were thanking God that they were neither "publicans, Gentiles nor women." Paul instead graciously spoke to the women of Philipi who had come together at the place of prayer, and even accepted Lydia's hospitality, thus putting himself in her debt.[2]

In addition, the Apostle's friends included people of every calling in life. Dudley enumerates them:

> In the list of his friends we find the names of missionaries like Silas and Barnabas; ministers like Archippus and Epaphras; prophets like Agabus; Apostles like Peter, James, and John; evangelists like Philip; officials such as Erastus the Chamberlain of Corinth, and Publius the chief man of Melita; rulers of synagogues like Crispus; soldiers like Julius the centurion; tentmakers like Aquila and Priscilla; jailers like the Philippian; authors like Mark and Luke; slaveholders like Philemon; slaves like Onesimus; lawyers like Zenas; physicians like Luke; and captains of ships like the one who commanded when he was carried a prisoner to Rome. Few have made friends of a wider divergence of callings and interest, or won to themselves such a strangely assorted group of men.[3]

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[1]Dudley, p. 14. [2]Acts 16;11-15. [3]Dudley, p. 16.

Thus, it appears that Paul upheld the rights and privileges of the Gentiles, by his life as well as by his words. That his love for these many different people was genuine, is shown by his continuing concern and his efforts to maintain communication with them by letter and by his own and his friends' personal visits, even in the face of unjust rebuff and hostility. It seems also that his interest was not lessened by the pressure of other work, for even when he was deeply engrossed in preaching to the Corinthians, and was experiencing much persecution, he wrote of his great anxiety for the Thessalonians.[1] Possibly for the first time, the "equality of all men in Jesus Christ" became a practised reality, as Paul loved, knew, defended and interacted with men of all backgrounds.[2]

The broad scope of Paul's friendships also seems to indicate that he had the ability to adapt culturally and psychologically as well as physically. Dodd states: "He had a hospitable mind, and a faculty for assimilating and using the ideas of others which is a great asset to anyone who has a new message to propagate; he could think in other peoples terms."[3] In fact, Dodd goes further as he says;

> He may have made mistakes in this direction, but we can hardly respect too highly the efforts of this naturally intolerant man 'to become all things to all men' - to go to the very verge of compromise

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[1]I Thess. 1:2-3; 2:17-3:5. [2]Acts 15:1-35.

[3]Dodd, The Meaning of Paul . . ., p. 27.

> and to risk misunderstanding, that he might assert the central and essential principle over against relatively unimportant accidents. That he was able to do so was the result of a sympathy - sufficiently rare in a strong, self-confident nature - which could see very clearly the other man's point of view.[1]

In addition, Paul manifested an almost mystical enthusiasm along with the ability to, " . . . apply the cold criticism of reason to his own dreams, . . ."[2] One sees this as he measured the value of "speaking in tongues,"[3] and of the "visions and revelations" described in II Corinthians 12. Paul was both deeply spiritual and practical at the same time. He seemed to recognize the spiritual implications of practice and vice versa.

He also used this understanding with wisdom and skill as he led the people toward Christian maturity. Quoting II Corinthians 7:11, Deissmann says;

> One reflects with astonishment, on hearing words like these, so delicate in their psychological discrimination, what extraordinary confidence Paul must have had in the receptiveness and responsiveness of the poor people of Corinth.[4]

It appears that patterns of evangelism and teaching indicate a great confidence in the Holy Spirit as well. In each place, Paul lived and preached "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," gave some basic teaching about the Christian life and hope to the new believers, appointed leaders, and then left the people, (often out of necessity), to experience for themselves the dependability and

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[1] Ibid., p. 28. [2] Ibid., p. 27. [3] I Cor. 14.
[4] Deissmann, p. 245.

depth of God in practical everyday life. This method was not without many serious problems as Paul's subsequent letters to the churches clearly indicate, but through his leadership, men learned to apply spiritual principles for themselves rather than to follow certain "Christian rules" because Paul "said so." Even where he gave specific instructions, the Apostle was careful to emphasize reasons and motivations that are truly spiritual. He also used the encouragement of his love and praise, and the example of himself and others to move his readers to that new perspective and obedience which is conducive to their spiritual growth. A good example of this is found in Paul's discussion of giving in Second Corinthians, chapters seven and eight.[1]

Thus, in answer to the question, "What are Paul's motivations?", one can safely conclude that the Apostle was no neurotic manipulating people for his own ends. Rather, it appears that he was a man of strength and love who posessed a greatness, evident in the midst of contradictory and tumultuous facets of character, that enabled him to lead men into the wholeness of mature Christian experience in life. As he says, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its

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[1]cf. I Cor. 7,8,9,10; II Cor. 1,4; etc.

blessings."[1] And again: ". . . I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved."[2] It is the author's hope to discover how Paul's identification with Christ and with men formed a link between his life and that of his converts.[3]

2. The character of Paul's identification with Christ

The first thing that must be said here is that Paul's identification was with a living person, not with intellectual doctrines or concepts. Whatever categories he used, whether Jewish or Gentile, he did not talk about, ". . . a speculative idea but a piece of real experience."[4] Speaking of this Dodd continues:

> That he Paul had met Christ face to face he never doubted; it was a part of his actual history. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me"; "last of all, He was seen of me also"; "henceforth I am alive, and yet not I, but Christ is alive in me; and the life which I now live under physical conditions I live by the virtue of my trust in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the authentic language of personal experience. . . . Paul's "Christ" bears the definite ethical lineaments of the historic Jesus, and . . . He has a real and intimate relation to the whole universe and its Creator. He is, in fact, the "Son of God" -- the eternal type of all the relationship between personal beings and the personal Centre of reality. . . . that is, . . . the ultimate meaning of all reality is no other than the meaning of the life and character of Christ.[5]

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[1] I Cor. 9:22b-23. [2] I Cor. 10:33. [3] Supra, pp. 71-72. [4] Dodd, p. 87. [5] Ibid.

In addition, this experience began with a confrontation apparently initiated by God, in which the real identity of Jesus Christ was revealed to Paul in terms of his own activity. In Acts 9:4-6, the owner of the voice was identified as the historical Jesus whose followers Paul was persecuting. The Apostle received his first hint then, of the intimate way the Master is involved in the life of believers, as He said, ". . . why do you persecute me?" To hurt His disciples was to hurt the Lord Himself.

As soon as Paul was aware of Christ's identity, however, he was told to do something. Indeed, obedience was not only demanded, but was assumed as Christ said, ". . . rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."[1] Thus, Paul was brought to realize that identification with this Jesus, the Christ, begins with a recognition of His identity which automatically involves recognition of His authority in life. As Baird states: ". . . for Paul, revelation, conversion, and commission are all one event; the essence of the Christian experience is the call to world mission."[2]

From these beginnings, Paul's understanding and experience of identification with Christ grew, as indicated in the references noted above. He came to

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[1]Acts 9:6. [2]Baird, p. 59.

realize that God had revealed Christ, not only "to" him, but also "in" him.[1] Somehow, God revealed Christ not only inwardly to the Apostle himself, but also "through him to others."[2] The purpose of this revelation is clearly indicated by Paul as he says, ". . . in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles."[3] If this revelation of Christ in and through Paul's own life was prerequisite to and preparation for his preaching, then this latter activity involved more than verbalization. Perhaps the revelation through life was even part of the "preaching." Lightfoot says, ". . . St. Paul was not only the instrument in preaching the Gospel, but also bore the strongest testimony to its power in his own person."[4] Thus, a life that is identified with Christ communicates the Gospel by clarifying it. In the believer, the "hearer" sees both what Christ is like and what commitment to Him involves.[5] The reality of power is demonstrated in every-day life situations that are the same

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[1]Gal. 1:15-16.

[2]J.B.Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galations (10th ed. rev.; London, New York: MacMillan and Co., 1892), p. 83.

[3]Gal. 1:16.

[4]Lightfoot, p. 83.

[5]"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For . . . God . . . has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." II Cor. 4:5-6.

as those of the hearer, and he is drawn to surrender by the adequacy and love of Christ "enfleshed" in the "preacher." In this way Paul's identification first with Christ, and then with people, brought them to identify with his Lord.

Paul indicates further the nature of his identification with Christ in the words of Gal. 2:20:

> I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

For Paul, Christ became the source of life. He alone provided purpose and direction so that the Apostle could say in effect, "Apart from Christ I do not exist though my body is alive." Paul willed to be an incarnation of Christ in the same way that Christ is an Incarnation of God. The Apostle wanted to be totally one with Christ in all that he was and did, and he realized this goal increasingly, through the powerful working of Christ within him. Thus he could say, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ."[1] These are not the words of a megalomaniac! Paul was not suffering from grandiose delusions regarding his own importance and abilities. Rather he was recognizing that "apart from Christ he could do nothing," and therefore the measure of what he did do was a revelation of the character

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[1] I Cor. 11:1; cf. I Thess. 1:5-6; Baird, p. 70.

and power of Christ, to support and give meaning to his preaching.

He indicates this fact and its implications for his own life in many ways. He speaks of being grateful for his human weaknesses, for it is God's design to show the effectiveness of His power most perfectly through Paul's weaknesses.[1] The Apostle continues:

> I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.[2]

Thus, Paul's identification with Christ not only made it possible for him to endure and triumph under the most difficult circumstances. His attitude was changed as well. He no longer resented his trials or desired to escape, but rather counted them a privilege, that Christ might be the more honored.[3] In addition, it was Christ's motivating and strengthening power that enabled Paul to persevere with his work even when he was experiencing feelings of depression or elation. It was Christ who gave him a positive perspective toward churches that must have seemed almost hopeless at times; yet Paul could say with sincerity, "I give thanks to God always for you..."[4] It was Christ who gave direction and control

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[1]See Baird, pp. 85-86. [2]II Cor. 12:9b-10.

[3]Cf. I Cor. 2:1-5. See also the discussion of II Cor. 4:8-11 in Baird, pp. 68-69.

[4]I Cor. 1:4, I Thess. 1:2.

to Paul's extremes of tenderness and severity, of love and hate.[1]

Paul's values were changed, too. Things that he formerly valued as precious no longer mattered to him, since he "knew Jesus Christ." Through this experience he discovered that everything else is useless and worthless by comparison.[2] "Gaining Christ," "being found in Him," "having that righteousness which comes from God through faith in Christ," and "knowing Christ" are for Paul intimately related to both his life experiences and his attitude toward these experiences. Speaking of his reasons for "confidence in the flesh," he says:

> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.[3]

Paul not only lost "all things," but was glad to do this in order to "gain Christ and...know him and the power of his resurrection..." Through sharing Christ's sufferings and accepting these in the way he did, the Apost-

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[1]Deissmann, p. 69; cf. Dodd, The Mind of Paul, p. 5.

[2]Phil. 3:2-16. [3]Phil. 3:7-11.

le became progressively, " . . . more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him Christ , perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly."[1] This knowledge through suffering involved the experience of Christ's resurrecting power in suffering as well. Thus, as Paul came to "know" Christ more in this way, he loved Him more, and wanting to be like Him, became increasingly willing to "endure all things for the sake of the Gospel."[2]

In addition, it appears that part of this process of identification with Christ involves a growing desire for the things Christ wants for oneself and for others. Speaking of his "determined purpose . . . to know Him," Paul says, "Not that I have now attained this ideal or am already made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus, the Messiah has laid hold of me and made me His own."[3] It is clear here that identification with Christ is a process involving the believer's will and resulting purposeful activity. The choice to "know" Jesus Christ involves many existential choices to accept the suffering that comes in the course of obedience, recognizing such suffering as a means of fulfilling the desire to know Him. Thus life becomes a means of continuing revelation if it is lived and interpreted as

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[1]Phil. 3:10 as found in the Amplified New Testament, hereafter referred to as the A.N.T.

[2]I Cor. 9:12b. [3]Phil. 3:12, (A.N.T.).

Paul suggests.

One must ask what obedience involved for Paul, however. Since identification with Christ involves taking his purposes as one's own, and since Paul seemed to be wholeheartedly committed to the Savior, what can we understand of God's purposes from this man? It seems plain that the consuming desire of his life was so to proclaim the Gospel that "by all means" some men might be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. It is here that Paul's whole personality found its fulfillment and direction through his identification with Christ. Paul the man and Paul the Christian merged into one dynamic person that was willing to become and to do anything that would win men to Christ. He recognized that only a life that was fully consistent with the Gospel would reveal Christ and win men to Him.[1] He also realized, however, that identification with his hearers was also necessary to complete the communication and win their response. In terms, then, of what Paul was, and of what his identification with Christ involved, how did he identify with those to whom he went? And how was his identification with Christ and with men related? These matters will now be discussed.

For purposes of brevity this discussion will be

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[1] I Thess. 3:5.

limited to the Corinthian letters, I Thessalonians, Galatians, and parts of the Book of Acts that deal with Paul's visits to these cities. Paul's work in these centers was typical of his ministry generally and these letters are accepted almost universally as genuinely Pauline.[1] In addition, Paul reveals the heart of his relationships here, as well as the underlying principles of his work within its historical context.

3. The character of Paul's identification with men in the light of theological factors

It is important to note at the outset that Paul recognized the necessity of identification for the accomplishment of his purpose to win men to Christ. He said:

> For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews;. . . I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.[2]

Whatever is involved in the "all things" that Paul "became," it is clear that it was the result of a conscious decision on his part.

He also recognized that becoming "like" another

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[1]Cf. Baird, p. 13; Deissmann, pp. 15-16, 18; Dodd, pp. 7-8; Robert S. Kinsey, With Paul in Greece (Nashville, Tennessee: The Parthenon Press, 1957), pp. 70, 148.

[2]I Cor. 9:19-20a, 22b.

person is not the same as "becoming" the other person, for he said:

> ...to those under the law I became as one under the law--that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law---not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ---that I might win those outside the law.[1]

He recognized that identification requires one not to be someone else, but to be more than oneself; but what "more" must one be? What did Paul mean when he spoke of having become "all things to all men"? At the end of a discussion on avoiding the worship of idols, which included the problem of eating meat offered in sacrifice to the pagan gods, Paul said:

> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.[2]

Clearly here, the important thing to Paul is deciding what is really in the best interests of the persons with whom he is involved. Action according to this principle, by its inherent character and motive, brings glory to God. It is also plain in this context that "giving no offense" to people involves one's attitudes and motives as well as all of one's actions.[3] In turn, if motives are right, action in the best interests of others requires

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[1] I Cor. 9:20b-21. [2] I Cor. 10:31-11:1.

[3] I Cor. 10:31-11:1.

understanding of what one's actions mean to those others. A person could be sincerely striving to avoid offense but could nevertheless offend and lead others astray through ignorance without even realizing it. Paul emphasized these principles as he told the Corinthians what offering meat to an idol meant to a pagan, and urged them not to approve and encourage others in demon worship by eating such meat knowingly. He implied that even though eating would not offend the Christian's conscience before God, yet it was his responsibility to act in the ways that were ultimately most helpful for his neighbors.[1] To fail in this was to sin against Christ.[2]

One must note, however, in the light of this, that for Paul, "pleasing all men," "giving no offense," and "putting no obstacle in anyone's way," did not mean always saying and doing that which made his hearers happy. Paul was adamant against the Judaizers and others who wanted to shift the center of the Gospel away from "Christ and Him Crucified."[3] He refused to agree that circumcision was necessary for the Christian, and endured persecution rather than remove the "stumbling block of the cross."[4] Instead of telling people just what they wanted to hear, then, Paul governed all that he said and did by their needs as he saw them under the Holy Spirit, striv-

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[1]I Cor. 10:14-11:1. cf. I Cor. 8. [2]I Cor. 8:12.
[3]Gal. 1:6f.: 2:11-21; 3:1-5; 5:1-12. [4]Gal. 5:11.

ing as he said,

> to accomodate myself to the opinions, desires and interests of others, adapting myself to all men in everything I do; not aiming at or considering my own profit and advantage, but that of the many in order that they may be saved.[1]

In addition, it appears that Paul's identification with men involved positive action as well as the avoidance of certain negative things. The Apostle came to appreciate the point of view of his hearers and showed them that he understood them and loved them as he lived among them, sharing their very lives. As he told the Thessalonians, "You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."[2] And again, "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."[3] Thus the sharing and understanding were part of a dynamic two-way process that occurred in a context of very practical self-giving on Paul's part. But how did Paul give them himself? He continued:

> For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; for you know how, like a father with his

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[1] I Cor. 10:33 (A.N.T.) (Note that the square brackets are found in the text.)

[2] I Thess. 1:5b. [3] I Thess. 2:8.

> children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.[1]

In this, it appears that Paul's self-giving sprang out of love--that depth of concern and tenderness of a father for his children. His love resulted in long hours of work to spare the Thessalonians the burden of supporting him. This, along with his honest upright life, seemed to demonstrate his sincerity, his zeal to avoid even the appearance of evil motives, as well as the depth of his love and concern for them. Paul's preaching to them in such a way, at such cost to himself, with no hope of material reward, must have impressed them with the power and genuineness of his message. Even as they recognized how important they were to him, as he spent time with each one of them, earnestly warning them, inspiring them with courage, cheering them on, commanding and instructing them with authority" . . . to lead a life worthy of God who called them into his own kingdom and glory."[2] How they must have listened when he spoke of the privilege and blessing of redemption and life in Christ. Well they might have said, "If Christ can give Paul the power to love us and to live this kind of life, and to count salvation a privilege in spite of all this

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[1]I Thess. 2:9-12.

[2]I Thess. 2:11-12.

hard work and affliction, then it must be real." Truly they knew what kind of life he lived among them.

He indicated this same quality of ministry to the Corinthians, too, as he told them, "...as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way..."[1] His identification with them came out of his love and showed them his love, and it involved the whole of Paul's person--body, mind and emotions. He spoke to them of his perseverance, through sudden calamities and little nagging hardships, through both natural and man-caused afflictions; he told of physical torture, restriction of his freedom, the emotional strain of "sleepless watching," and the uncertainty and tension of riots caused by jealousy and trickery;[2] his identification also involved purity and control of body, mind and feelings, purposeful self-restraint plus full, wise use of his mind for knowledge and spiritual insight; his relationships were marked by patience with people, by kindness in the Holy Spirit and in genuine love; he spoke truthfully and powerfully with the power of God, being equipped both to attack wickedness and unbelief and to defend himself and the Gospel with the weapons of right living and right standing with God.[3] Paul lived like this under

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[1]II Cor. 6:4. [2]Acts 16;11-24; 21:27-22:29.
[3]II Cor. 6:3-13.

all conditions and circumstances, and persevered faithfully through all types of and reasons for human acceptance and rejection. The Apostle indicated that throughout all this, the reality he clung to was often other than what appeared; the reality he demonstrated was often other than what was humanly possible. It was his identification with Christ that enabled him to say:

> We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.[1]

He ended this self-disclosure with the plea;

> Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return--I speak as to children--widen your hearts also.[2]

One sees here, that on his part, Paul was completely open to the Corinthians. He was hiding nothing from them but was sharing everything honestly. In the same way he was also open to love and accept them fully, no matter what they were like, though at the same time, this very love made him do all in his power to help them grow.[3]

His identification with these people to whom he went, is further seen in his apparent sense of one-ness with them in their weakness and their strength, in joy

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[1]II Cor. 6:8-10. [2]II Cor. 6:11-13.

[3]Cf. II Cor. 11:7-15; 12:19-21; I Cor. 4:14-21.

and in sorrow. Not only did he feel with them out of his love and concern, but it was as if what was happening to them was also happening to him. Speaking of the "daily pressure" of his "anxiety for all the churches" he said, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?"[1] Again, Paul told the Corinthians that he was comforted through Titus' good report of them. He said:

> . . . As he Titus told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me . . . I rejoiced still more . . . As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting . . . I wrote to you . . . in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted.[2]

Thus the Apostle seemed to find his comfort and joy in the knowledge that his hearers are moving toward spiritual maturity.[3]

Paul also showed the character of his identification with men in his discussions of their mutual suffering. Not only did the churches know that Paul really appreciated the difficulties they were facing under persecution since he was enduring it too, but they realized that it was for their sakes that he was enduring it. While he did not minimize the real pain involved, Paul did turn suffering into a triumph of grace and love, however, as he indicated to the Corinthians both the good result of suffering and the source and nature of comfort that came

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[1]II Cor. 11:28-29. [2]II Cor. 7:5-13.
[3]Cf. I Thess. 2:17-3:10.

through patient endurance.[1]

In this, it appears that the Apostle identified with empathy more than with sympathy. He accepted the fact of suffering, and acknowledged its difficulty, but instead of "feeling sorry" for the Corinthians, he helped them see it from its true spiritual perspective. His teaching would probably be accepted, too, since he was involved in the experience with them, and could thus help them follow him into ever-deeper discovery of Christ's power and reality in life--the life they shared in common.

Paul seemed realistic in all of this. "Pious platitudes" were not of his making. He was honest both about life and about God, and was thus able to identify with men so as to lead them to Christ, and then on in Him. Because he spoke triumphantly out of real life experience that his hearers could understand and recognize as their own, Paul could say, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."[2]

One must ask at this point, what response Paul wanted and what response he received as a result of his efforts to identify with men in communication of the Gospel.

4. <u>Results of Paul's identification with men</u>

In general terms, one could say that Paul's hearers responded to his Gospel by identifying themselves in turn, both with Christ and with him. Just as Paul's evangelism was not just a depersonalized preaching of a verbal

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[1]II Cor. 1:3-11. [2]I Cor. 11:1.

message, so the response of his hearers was not centered in their mental assent to a set of propositions. The Apostle's warmth and love for Christ and for them apparently communicated Christ clearly in all that he said and did, so that his hearers were drawn to commitment in depth that involved their whole beings. The very character of Paul's communication by life and word indicated the cost and the character of Christian faith. Also, the intensity of his love, attributed by him to Christ, and demonstrated by his total self-sacrifice for them, made Christ come so alive before their eyes that they were able to love the Lord, however imperfectly, with a faith that enabled them to endure, "proving" His adequacy for themselves through the most terrible persecutions.

In addition, just as Paul's concern and care for his converts was continuing, so their response to Christ was both continuing and self-reproducing in their witness to others, at least in some cases as his writings indicate. In a letter to the Thessalonians just a short time after his brief stay there, he said:

> You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true god, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who

delivers us from the wrath to come.[1]

One sees here that the Thessalonians were both motivated and shown how to respond to Christ by Paul's life, so that they in turn identified with him and with the Lord. This identification was genuine and the power of God was released through it since they experienced "joy inspired by the Holy Spirit," in the midst of "much affliction." They also spread the Good News into Macedonia and Achaia, or as Paul said, ". . . the Word. . . resounded forth from you unmistakably . . . [2]

In addition, their identification with Paul was not in externals, but in the deep and important things of faith and life. He referred to the impression the Thessalonians made on the rest of the world by their wholehearted welcome of Paul and by their dramatic turn from idols, recognizing that this turning to God involved serving him in all of everyday life. Theological understanding was also involved, however, since Paul mentioned their expectant wait for the coming of Christ, whom God had raised from the dead, and "who delivers us from the wrath to come."[3] Thus, their minds and wills were continuously excercised as they identified with the heart of Paul's message and life rather than with externals. In the same way, he had identified with them by giving them himself at great cost and by being "gentle" among them, "like a nurse taking care of her children,"[4] rather than just by

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[1] I Thess. 1:5b-10. [2] I Thess. 1:8, (A.N.T.).
[3] I Thess. 1:10. [4] I Thess. 2:8.

copying their manner of dress or other such superficial actions.[1]

How far these extrinsic things are from the heart of identification becomes apparent as one pictures what Paul must have looked like on his arrival at Thessalonica. He had just come from Philippi where his back and other parts had been flayed with rods, he had been up all night there, and then had hurriedly left town after a brief farewell to the Christians. His clothes were probably torn and dirty from the riot in which he had been "dragged into the market place," and he may well have ached all over from his rough treatment followed by a night in the stocks, followed by a walk of approximately fifty miles through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica. Even with some rest on the way, Paul must have presented a worn and disheveled appearance.[2] Yet on his arrival at Thessalonica he began explaining and proving to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.[3] While his work aroused their jealousy and resulted in much violent opposition, some of the people from various backgrounds and social strata responded to his message, thus exposing themselves to the hostility of his enemies as well.

However, opposition did not come from the Jews alone; even Paul's converts sometimes thwarted his sin-

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[1]Supra. pp. 108-115. [2]Acts 16:19-17:1.
[3]Acts 17:2-3.

cere attempts to identify with them in depth. In his letters to the Corinthians, he indicates that they apparently misunderstood his humility and gentleness for weakness and his sense of apostolic authority for domineering conceit and intolerance against which they rebelled.[1] The variations and intensity of his temperament were also confused with vascillation, and his very efforts to meet people on their own ground may have caused the charge of "worldliness" which was brought against him.[2] Thus, it seems that in spite of his desire to avoid giving offense, his attempts to reveal Christ to men through a two-way identification were sometimes misinterpreted and used against him to defeat his purpose.

Many did respond positively, though, and their identification with Paul resulted in a deep personal affection for him. He was overjoyed that they remembered him kindly and longed to see him.[3] Knowing the love and concern they had had for him while he was with them, too, he was quick to reassure them about his own afflictions so that, "no one would be moved"[4] by them. He could well imagine that, as young Christians, they might be afraid for him or for themselves, or they might even have retaliated against the jews for bringing harm to the one they loved so much. Perhaps Paul wondered whether their

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[1] II Cor. 10, 11. [2] Ibid. [3] I Thess. 3:6.
[4] I Thess. 3:2-5.

faith in his integrity had been shaken by such sustained attack from the very people whose Messiah he was proclaiming. In any case, Paul was reassured. Their identification with him and with Christ had been real and God's power was victorious in and through them.

D. Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to discover the nature of Paul's identification with Christ and with men, as he sought to communicate the Gospel to the people of his time.

Cultural factors were considered first, and it was found that the general trends of religious thought and cultural life were conducive to the spread of Christianity. Paul was sensitive to and realistic about the thought and life of his time, both as he interpreted it honestly from a Christian perspective and as he spoke of it with clarity. His own social and religious background was examined also, and it was noted that he began his ministry first with his own people wherever possible, before moving out to the pagan world through Greek friends.

As the psychological and theological factors in identification were considered, the Apostle himself emerged as refreshingly human. He was seen to embody many contradictions, though as a result of his leadership, men grew to mature faith in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Paul's wholehearted identification with Christ,

out of which his ministry sprang, gave direction and purpose to his whole life, which in turn became a revelation of Christ to others. Through his total self-giving in love, men both recognized and were drawn to respond to Christ, identifying with Him as Paul had.

In addition, the nature and results of the Apostle's identification with men were discussed. It was discovered that he understood their deepest needs and values from their point of view through sharing their lives and letting them share his. He refrained from anything that would hurt them and endured anything that he might help them, seeking in this way to glorify God.

For Paul identification was conscious and purposeful; it involved and made possible a deep two-way communication by life and word; Christ was both its means and its goal.

CHAPTER III

A COMPARISON OF THE PRINCIPLES OF IDENTIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL AS DISCUSSED BY CONTEMPORARY WRITERS AND EXPRESSED BY PAUL

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A. Introduction

In attempting a comparison of this type, cultural divergence, variations in the purpose and character of source materials, and the vast differences of background, preparation and function of the writers under discussion in the first two chapters must be recognized. Where do the important differences and similarities lie? The contemporary writers are modern men of science and letters in whose writings the various principles of identification emerge out of an objective study of theology, psychology and communication. Some of the studies involve specific, theoretical analysis of identification itself, while others are concerned with general Christian practice and approach the process of identification implicitly through discussion of the sciences.

Paul, on the other hand, was an ancient man who wrote to his friends without knowledge of the findings of modern psychological and sociological research. In his letters, he did not try either to be objective or to write analytically about the process of identification itself. Rather, he wrote under the most difficult person-

al conditions, to people whom he dearly loved, trying to help them meet specific problems and grow toward Christian maturity in every area of life.

While it seems likely that the Apostle did not study the process of identification by that name as it is known today, it is also clear from his discussions of motivating spiritual principles that he understood the nature of identification and also recognized its importance in communication of the Gospel. The very fact that many were won to faith in Jesus Christ through Paul's application of these principles so long ago should give the Christian pause for thought as he seeks to make the Gospel meaningful to the outsider in this day when the identification process is receiving so much attention. If Paul's communication was enhanced by his identification with men, perhaps contemporary knowledge in this area could make Christian communication more effective today when the Gospel is considered to be irrelevant by increasing numbers of people.

Thus, it is the author's purpose now to compare the principles of identification as discovered from contemporary writings and from certain aspects of the life and work of Paul. It is hoped that the nature of the identification process will emerge more clearly by comparing Paul's personal experience and modern scientific analysis. The influence of cultural factors on these findings

will be examined first.

B. The Nature of Identification in the Light of Cultural Factors

Paul's time and the present are similar in many ways. Then as now men were pessimistic about the future. Immorality was widespread and old beliefs were breaking down under the pressure of rapid social and political change. Men were looking for a universal faith which would give meaning and a sense of relationship with others in a time marked by the isolation of individuals in a depersonalized urban situation. In addition, though, philosophy and religion were popular topics in after-dinner conversation, most people understood the concepts only superficially, and there was little carry-over into everyday life by the majority. Then too, the "professional" philosopher tended to live in an "ivory tower." It was also a time of growing international trade accompanied by widespread communication, and new ideas spread relatively quickly.

So today, materialism, relativism and depersonalization characterize Western culture in a time of rapid change and widespread impersonal communication. Now, however, Christianity has made itself felt in the form of long-standing moral influences, but these are no longer necessarily related to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; rather, they have become cultural characteristics. In addition,

secular values, methods and goals have crept into the church, resulting in a confusion of faith in culture.

In may be observed that while Paul spoke to some people for whom the Gospel was totally new, and modern writers speak to people for whom it has become warped and irrelevant, both address the same Gospel to similar needs in the power of the living God. What can one conclude from these two sources about the nature of identification in communication of this Gospel?

The modern writers seem to indicate that this identification is a dynamic process involving two-way interaction of word and life between individuals who share at least some of life's important things in common.[1] It was noted above that Paul lived with his converts, apparently under all circumstances, preaching, working, conversing with them, sharing their problems, teaching, encouraging and giving them his "very self."[2] It was also discovered that he went first to people whose background he shared and understood and then moved out to the pagan community through Greek friends he had made in the synagogue. He thus had a meaningful role in the social context, and his own bi-cultural background made his identification with both Jews and Gentiles psychologically feasible.[3] Hence it would seem that this kind of interaction

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[1]Supra, pp. 11-13, 35, 39, 58-59.

[2]Supra, pp. 108-111.

[3]Supra, pp. 77-83, and Cf. Nida, p. 165.

is essential in identification.

Also, in a world scarred by self-centerdness and depersonalization, it was observed that identification is initiated by the insider as a result of conscious, purposeful decision growing out of love and concern.[1] As modern writers indicate from various points of view, this identification involves his whole person, including thoughts, attitudes, words and actions, since all of these appear to be involved in communication between persons.[2] It was observed that Paul's identification with men influenced his teaching methods,[3] the form and content of his preaching,[4] and his behavior, both in regard to what he did and what he refrained from doing.[5]

In addition it was discovered that the Christian increasingly wants to be, ". . . regarded and treated . . . in all possible respects the same"[6] as the outsider. He comes to see himself this way, and is willing and even eager for the outsider and others to see him in this light too, though it may involve him in suffering, (as from the expression of social prejudice.)[7] He is willing to share the outsider's lot even when it is an unhappy one, seeing that this may be a necessary part of understanding and loving him. In this regard, Paul apparently grew to know his con-

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[1] Supra, p. 53. [2] Ibid., pp. 12,18-19, 39, 60.
[3] Ibid., pp. 78-79. [4] Ibid., pp. 78-82.
[5] Ibid., pp. 106-111. [6] Foreman, p. 38.
[7] Supra, pp. 47-52.

verts well enough to anticipate their feelings, though in at least one case he was concerned about their response to his situation.[1] However, he seemed to feel with them in their difficulties, too, to the point that their feelings were his own.[2]

On the basis of modern study, though, it was found that this sense of oneness does not mean that the Christian becomes the outsider, even if this were possible. Rather, he retains a clear sense of his own identity--his own values, beliefs and attitudes--but goes beyond this to as full an understanding of the outsider as possible.[3] The Christian goes below the superficial observation of actions, words, habits and dress etc., to discover the symbolic meaning of these things to the outsider. It is this understanding that seems increasingly to give direction to all that the insider says and does since he recognizes that the outsider's world-view influences his interpretation of all that he hears and sees.[4] To appreciate the outsider's point of view--to think as he thinks-- is not necessarily to accept his values or agree oneself with his meanings, but it does seem to involve the communication of one's understanding and wholehearted acceptance of him as a person. The more a Christian grows to understand the needs, problems and potential of another, the more he will be drawn to love

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[1] I Thess. 3:1-5. [2] <u>Supra</u>, pp. 112-113.

[3] <u>Supra</u>, pp. 55-57 [4] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 15-21.

and accept him.[1]

It was noted that while Paul seemed to do all in his power to "become all things to all men," he still retained his Judeo-Christian understanding of life and faith.[2] His many friendships seemed to indicate that he accepted others, yet his appreciation of various points of view did not appear to make him relativistic. Rather, it seemed to equip him to communicate his own strong faith more clearly.[3] Thus, comparison of the experience of Paul and these principles indicates that they are part of the identification process.

The contemporary writers indicate also that communication and identification are inseparably linked. They appear to be two parts of a whole for both occur with the consent and active participation of the individuals involved, and both are ongoing, ever deepening processes that depend on each other. As the insider identifies with the outsider, communication on a deeper level is made possible, and as this occurs identification is increased in turn. It may be observed, however, that identification can never be complete since one person can never fully understand another person.[4]

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[1]Cf. I Thess. 2:8; Nida, p. 170, and Supra, p. 15.
[2]Supra, p. 82-83. [3]Supra, pp. 83-84, 93-95.
[4]Ibid., pp. 10-15.

In any case, as his identification with the outsider grows, the Christian seems better able to communicate the Gospel. Several reasons for this were discovered. His understanding of the outsider helps him establish a common ground between them which makes communication possible. In effect they are both talking the outsider's language in an atmosphere of understanding love and appreciation initiated by the insider. This inspires the outsider's confidence, and he is more open to really "hear" what the Christian is saying. Once communication is established, the Christian can then present the Gospel by life and word in terms of the outsider's own life situation. The point of contact becomes a point of conflict as the hearer comes to recognize both his own need, and God's answer. He is thus truly in a position to accept or reject Christ.[1]

It was felt by some modern writers, however, that the outsider's categories alone were inadequate to make clear to him the full Gospel. As Sellers indicates, they could only be used, ". . . to convince the outsider of the futility of his system and of the sin of his situation."[2] If he is right that secular categories cannot effectively be used to communicate the grace and love of God freely

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[1]See Seller's discussion on "Point of Contact," pp. 33-42.

[2]Sellers, p. 85.

offered in Jesus Christ, then one might think of using biblical categories as the church has always done. The problem is further complicated, however, by the confusion of secular and truly Christian meaning inherent in Christian categories for many people today.

Paul faced this difficulty, too, as he spoke to both Jews and Gentiles. He began with the Jewish scriptural authority and hope, but went on to show that the Messiah who fulfilled both was totally other than they had thought, and had, in fact, come in the Person they had crucified. Through a misunderstanding of the true meaning of Scripture, they rejected Paul's message, refusing to go on with him into an acceptance of Christian categories.[1]

To the Athenians, also, Paul preached Christ, beginning with their own "Unkown God," and moved through natural revelation to tell them of the righteous character and judgement of God. He showed understanding of pagan thought and presented biblical ideas in terms of his listener's categories, but when he came to the resurrection, this foreign concept was also a point of conflict which caused most of his hearers to reject his message.[2]

In light of all this evidence from past and present, it appears that ultimately the outsider must be brought beyond his own categories to an understanding and acceptance of truth in terms of historical, biblical categories. But

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[1] <u>Supra</u>, pp. 79-80. [2] Acts 17:22-34.

how is this to be done, particularly in this post-Christian age?

Paul would agree with contemporary writers that the work of the Christian is to proclaim the facts of the Gospel so that through his own faith and personal testimony, faith can be awakened in the hearer. As Sellers states:

> At bottom, the apologist is describing his own personal encounter with Christianity for the aid and comfort of the recipient--who needs exactly this introduction to faith in order to decide for himself.[1]

It is here that identification with the outsider could enable the Christian to go beyond formal apology to communication of the full Gospel in such a way as to give clear understanding in a cultural context and to win response in the power of the Holy Spirit. An understanding of the nature of identification as this is revealed through consideration of theological and psychological factors will shed light on this matter and will now be discussed.

C. The Nature of Identification in the Light of Theological and Psychological Factors

Recognizing that there are different types of identification, what can one learn about the process itself from a study of God's identification with man? It is plain from the life of Christ that God not only understood man thoroughly from a distance, but in Christ, He

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[1]Sellers, p. 105.

also experienced man's life in every way. He shared with him all that it means to be human including the effects of sin, though He Himself did not sin. As a personal Being, God revealed Himself to man by identifying with him, in order to restore man's relationship with Him. Both the means of this restoration and its goal are found in God's purpose to mold men to His character and purpose through their identification with Him in Christ. Christ's life was a living demonstration of His words and by both means He showed men what God was like and what He wanted them to be like. He also motivated men to respond to God by the quality of His love for them which they experienced through relationship with Christ. Their response consisted of identification with Christ in turn.

Just as Christ's worshipful identification with God involved oneness with the Father in character and purpose, so Paul's identification with Christ involved a growing oneness with Him in character and purpose. For both the Apostle and his Lord, this identification in life involved continuing conscious decision. In addition, just as Christ was the Incarnation of the Father, and the Good News was revelation of a Person and the call to relationship with Him, so Paul was increasingly a revelation of Christ. His "preaching" was the revelation of the Savior by word and life, made valid both in Paul and in his hearer by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.[1]

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[1]Supra, p. 99.

Thus, it would appear that the believer's wholehearted decision to be one with Jesus Christ in character and purpose, translated into life by the Spirit, makes his identification with the outsider both necessary and possible. As the outsider sees the meaning of biblical categories come to life before his eyes in the believer, the falsity of "half-Christianity" becomes obvious to him and he is helped to recognize both his own inadequacy by contrast, and Christ's adequacy.[1] In addition, he is helped to see the contrast as it is made plain to him in terms of his own life experiences, (which the believer shares), and by means of verbal communication in "his" language and thought-forms.

One can see that identification with Christ involves imitation in one sense, but it is imitation of meaningful attitudes and kinds of actions based on similarity of motive and power. In what does this identification result in the believer's life and his relationship of identification with the outsider? The psychologist describes it as the ability to initiate and enter into healing relationships characterized by love, acceptance, empathy, trust and the willingness to know oneself and to be known by another, all of which occurs in a context of participation or involvement in the life of the other.[2]

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[1]Cf. Gal. 3:1. [2]<u>Supra</u>, pp. 57-67.

Paul seemed to exemplify these effects. It appears that he was motivated by his love for Christ and for others, both of which were made possible and given direction by Christ's love for him. In his own life the will to identify with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit resulted in stability and perseverence in the face of both outward hardships and inward emotional turmoil. Christ seemed to meet Paul at the point of his naturally turbulent personality and enabled him to function effectively in spite of it. He helped the Apostle moderate and control his extremes of severity and tenderness, elation and depression.[1] In fact, it was Paul's very triumph over himself in adversity that revealed Christ most effectively as the Apostle interpreted to his hearers the reason for his joy and power. In this regard, he was completely honest with them and freely exposed his weaknesses, risking, (and receiving) ridicule, that the power of God might be recognized and understood as it operates in human life. Thus, it was discovered that identification with Jesus Christ does not mean that a person becomes overnight a superhuman, untouched by difficulty; rather, it means that in the very midst of human weakness and suffering, indeed, through this, Christ's character and power are revealed both to the believer himself and to the outsider.[2]

As a result of Paul's identification with Christ, his identification with people took on a certain character

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[1]<u>Supra</u>, pp. 87-91, 101-103. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 112-114.

too. All that he did and said and thought was governed by his desire to help them achieve wholeness in every way through Christ. Since this involved their being "molded to the character and purpose of God" just as he was and as Christ is, their wholehearted response to the Gospel became his goal. He was one with them both in understanding and experience, in joy and sorrow, in weakness and strength, in persecution and popularity. His feeling with and for them was a continuing thing that did not depend upon his presence with them physically. In his actions with and for them he avoided anything that would hinder their growth, and did anything that would help them, no matter what it cost of personal effort or suffering. His attitude in all of this was one of humility not condescension. He saw himself as one of them--an equal, a brother in need of redemption just as they were, a co-worker with them for the Kingdom of God. Thus, for Paul, identification involved a total self-giving in love, He understood those to whom he went; he was involved with them in feeling and in experience; and his whole being was active in their best interests. His identification both made communication possible and was the channel for it, being fully consistent with the character and purpose of God in Christ. What was its result?

True identification in communication at the deepest level, by its very nature, calls forth the outsider's response. Response is part of the two-way process, so what shall it be? If it is rejection and withdrawal, the identification and communication are hindered or stopped altogether. If the response is openness and acceptance, however, there is reciprocal identification with the believer and with his message. Since he is his message enfleshed, response to Christ means identification with the believer in his identification with Christ. Similarly, rejection of Christ implies rejection of the believer too. For this reason Paul was concerned when his authority and character were questioned by the churches, since this indicated a failure on their part to appreciate and respond to the true nature of the Gospel as embodied in Paul himself.

D. Summary

In this chapter an attempt has been made to indicate the nature of identification in communication of the Gospel as this emerges from a comparison of the principles discussed by modern writers with those expressed by the Apostle Paul. The similarities and differences between Paul's time and the present were examined first, as these give a meaningful setting to identification in terms of real people and situations. In addition, the

theological and psychological factors in identification were discussed in relation to the particular problems involved in communication of the Gospel in this post-Christian age. It was found that the believer's identification with Christ and with the outsider by life and word not only helps the latter recognize his inadequacy and sin, but also makes God's gracious answer in Christ real to him in his situation, and draws him to respond by identifying himself with Christ too. This occurs in the power of the Holy Spirit as the believer "translates" the content of the Christian faith--the Person, Jesus Christ--into secular life-situations and language, and thus gives familiar biblical categories new life and true biblical meaning for the outsider.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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A. Summary

It has been the purpose of this thesis to investigate the nature of the Christian's identification with the person outside faith, in communication of the Gospel to him. The study was deemed important since communication is such a difficult and complex process in this "post-Christian" age. It was seen that many people who do not understand the meaning of Christian concepts and doctrines have assumed that the faith is futile and irrelevant and thus, have rejected it, while others, even many of those within the church, have a warped and secularized understanding of what Christianity is. Also, many people uphold the Christian ethic, though for various reasons, they reject the Lordship of Christ.

In addition, it was noted that the Gospel's communication varies greatly in form and content. Seen schematically, on one hand biblical terms are used exclusively in a verbal message aimed at personal conversion, while on the other, psychological concepts and ethics related to social change are emphasized. The

use of mass media, too, influences the character and result of Christian communication, as does Christian nurture through "the language of relationships." Thus, it has been the author's hope to help the Christian witness to his faith more effectively through an understanding of the nature of identification as it is related to communication of the Gospel.

The character of the identification process was seen in the light of cultural, theological and psychological factors, first as these were discussed by contemporary writers, and then as they were evident in the writings and work of the Apostle Paul. The principles found in both areas were then compared.

In the first part of the study the various types and levels of communication were discussed in their relation to identification. It was discovered that since the Gospel invites each person's free and full response, which results in a total transformation of his life, its communication must involve a deep two-way sharing between persons. This both requires and makes possible an identification that ultimately issues in the outsider's identification in turn with the believer and with his message, Christ. The new Christian then becomes a source of the Gospel to others.

The need for this two-way involvement of persons

was further indicated by the complexities of the communication process itself. The significance of such things as actions, appearance, odors, tone of voice, etc., as vehicles of meaning were noted in addition to language. The various factors influencing the use and perception of this media were also discussed, including the importance of symbols and the factors governing the form and interpretation of the message, such as one's own background, familiarity of words used, etc. In this light, identification with the outsider through an understanding of his values, life-experiences and background was seen to be vital to a meaningful presentation of the Gospel to him.

Some characteristics of Western culture were examined next as an aid to understanding the modern outsider. It was noted that Christianity has influenced the values and attitudes of avowed non-Christians, while secular motivations and goals have crept unnoticed into the life and thought of the church with the result that for many, biblical concepts and categories have either no meaning or a warped "half-Christian" meaning.

How does one's identification with such outsiders influence one's communication of the Gospel to them? It was found that the believer must appreciate both the true character of the Gospel and the "outsideness" of his hear-

er. The nature of his unbelief and the reasons for it must be taken seriously. In addition, common ground must be found for "a meeting of minds" to occur. Then, when communication is established, the outsider can be shown his need for the Gospel in terms of his own categories. In doing this, one must avoid giving secular meaning to biblical symbols, just as one must not allow pagan meaning to cling to the secular symbols used to communicate biblical truth. One must also ensure that finding common ground with the outsider does not confirm him in the erroneous belief that he is already Christian. The Gospel must be seen as a "point of conflict," understandable to him in the context of his present world view, but different from that view. Ultimately the outsider must be brought to appreciate the historical, biblical meaning of Christian symbols so that he might fully experience God's grace in Jesus Christ.

The nature of Christ's identification with God and with men was also discussed as it sheds light on the Christian's identification with the outsider. Christ's total oneness with God in purpose and character, resulting from His knowledge of God and His continuing decision to obey Him, was observed. Christ's experience with men, of all that they face and feel and desire was also noted. His willingness to be one with them and the quality of righteousness and self-less love in His life under such circumstances both made the character and desires of

God clear to them, and also drew them to return His love and desire to be like Him. Through man's dialogue with Jesus Christ then and now, God's desire for man's continuing dialogue with Him is revealed and accomplished. Thus, through faith, men identify with Christ and become one with Him in character and in purpose, being motivated and equipped to endure anything, that He might be revealed in the power of His love through their identification with the outsider. In this way the reality of "the historical, biblical meaning of Christian symbols" is experienced and recognized by the outsider and he is drawn by the Holy Spirit to respond.

Since God reveals Himself through men in the context of their own personalities, the psychological factors in identification were dealt with next. The difference between identity and identification was emphasized, along with the Christian's need to be aware of his own identity as separate from that of the outsider. The kind of relationship through which identification and communication occur was also discussed. Its goal was seen to be "at-oneness" which grows out of participation in symbolically significant areas in an attitude of humility, acceptance, love, trust, and the wholehearted willingness to know oneself and to be known by the outsider.

In the second chapter, the nature of Paul's identification with Christ and with men was examined in the con-

text of his own background and historical situation. He was seen as a Jew, meeting his brothers on the common ground of the Old Testament. Its fulfillment in Christ became a point of conflict for the Jews, however, and as they rejected both him and his message, he went on to identify with the Gentiles whose culture he had also shared since childhood.

In his identification with both Jewish and pagan outsiders, Paul was seen to take advantage of every opportunity to communicate the biblical meaning of estrangement from God, using their categories. He also brought biblical categories to life, however, as he brought the grace of Christ to them in a life lived wholly in their best interests. He shared their life (just as they shared his), and thus, brought the reality of spiritual power to bear on real human needs by demonstration and verbal interpretation. It was seen that this occurred through Paul's own weaknesses of body and personality. In inadequacy he was stabilized and empowered by Christ.

In addition, it was observed that Paul's loving identification with men freed them to respond to the Person, Jesus Christ, and even though much struggle was involved, and their surrender to Christ was imperfect, they began to identify with Him in character and in purpose just as Paul had done.

Thus, Paul recognized that both the necessity of identification and its character rose out of the nature

and purpose of God's revelation of Himself in Christ.

In the third chapter these principles of identification in communication of the Gospel were elucidated through a comparison of findings from past and present. It was found that Paul's cultural situation was similar in many respects to Western culture today, and that identification was made difficult then as now by depersonalization, materialism with nominal religious observance, and moral relativism accompanying social change and the break-away from old beliefs and accepted philosophies. It was discovered that in such a situation, the identification process is initiated by the insider and involves him as a whole person in understanding and participating in the life and thought of individuals outside faith. It was also found that identification results in efforts to communicate the reality of the Person and work of Jesus Christ in terms of the outsider's thought-forms and life situation. The understanding thus developed on common ground could help the outsider see his inadequacy and sin--his "point of conflict" with God and positively respond to Christ, in which case he would thus be open and able to accept the historical biblical categories through which God's grace could be appropriated. In this way identification can facilitate effective communication of the Gospel.

B. Conclusions

Through this study it has been seen that identification in communication of the Gospel involves revelation of the Person, Jesus Christ, rather than mere explication of either abstract intellectual doctrines about Him or ethical principle. This revelation involves a demonstration of both the reality and the character of Christ, through the insider's life, accompanied by interpretive words relating the facts of this historical Jesus to the life of the outsider now. This kind of communication seems to be consistent with the character and purpose of the Gospel, and suggests the possibility that other kinds of communication may expose people to a sort of religion or to an ethical or social system rather than to Christianity. To say this is not to deprecate the use of mass media and other techniques for Christian communication. However, it is to urge the careful evaluation of these techniques in the light of Christ's character and purpose. Wherein are methods used today able, by their very nature, to communicate Christ, and wherein are they inadequate to accomplish this? Does the church properly have any other goal or any other means to accomplish what it might see as its ethical responsibilities in society? These vital questions deserve further study.

However, one must also look at the responsibility and privilege of the individual Christian in the light

of the need for identification in communication of the Gospel. On the basis of this investigation into the nature of identification, it appears likely that unless a believer is wholeheartedly yielded to Christ, longing to be identified with Him in every way through the Holy Spirit's working, he would not either want or be able to identify with the outsider. Christ in him seems to be the motivation, the direction and the power to love, to understand and to suffer with and for the outsider even when this involves rejection of the believer and his message. One could ask at this point whether belief is even possible or real apart from this kind of identification with Christ. Indeed, it would appear that the relationship between identification and belief merits further study. In any case the need for ever deeper commitment on the part of each believer is obvious, since such a relationship with Christ is the goal of Christian communication.

In the light of this study it also appears that identification with Christ involves more than the adoption of certain external "marks" of Christian commitment such as abstinence from certain forms of decoration and entertainment. In reality it is the progressive practice of unqualified self-giving love that seems to set the Christian apart from his fellows, and it is this imitation of Christ in depth of motive and action that really

reveals Him and draws men to Him. The external marks are often unrelated to this in that they have no moral meaning to the outsider today; neither do they in and of themselves reveal either the character or purposes of Christ. In this regard they may be neutral elements in a person's communication of the Gospel or they may hinder effective communication if they are regarded as queer or offensive practices associated with otherwise normal people. This is one area in which traditional Christian symbols seem to have lost their meaning and need to be re-evaluated both in terms of cultural values and in terms of the very essence of the Gospel itself.

It was also discovered that as one comes to appreciate the outsider's world-view, one may see that many of the verbal symbols commonly used in Christian communication may no longer be understood by the hearer of the message. The problems of categories seems to be a real one, and even in the context of the believer's Christ-filled life, one needs to ask how the biblical meaning can be expressed in secular terms today. The demonstration of that meaning in "secular" life situations shared by both believer and outsider may be part of the answer, but the Christian needs also to think through and be able to express something of the meaning of his culture and his faith in relation to each other.

Several areas emerge from this study as possi-

bilities for further study. How is the Christian understanding of freedom related to the contemporary concept of freedom as disengagement and freedom from responsibility? In what might be called an "other-directed" culture, which speaks highly of individualism, yet lives and makes decisions largely on the basis of conformity to the group, what does it mean to be "God-directed" and how can the importance of this be stressed with meaning? Also, in an age when it seems as if reason in the form of "scientism" is depended upon almost in place of God by some people, what, for the Christian, is the relation between his faith and his reason? If believers think it important to take identification with Christ and with the outsider seriously, it seems as if these questions and others will have to be answered.

In light of the complexities of modern living and the difficulties facing the Christian communicator today, one may well ask with what people outside faith can the believer identify? In terms of the principles discussed in this study, it may seem logical for the believer to turn first to the people in his immediate context with whom he lives, works, plays and possibly even worships. The believer's involvement in sports and other recreational, vocational and cultural activities, with people of similar interests, may provide natural opportunities for friendships through which God can re-

veal Himself in power. However, there do not appear to be easy answers here either, since it has been seen that even daily proximity does not automatically allow friendships to develop in this day when people seem to want to isolate themselves from "invasion" and manipulation.[1]

In conclusion, one might say that it is the Christian's increasingly selfless love for the outsider, expressed practically through understanding personal involvement with him in life that lies at the heart of identification.

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[1]<u>Supra</u>, p. 10-11.

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