

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

DOES PAUL CLAIM TO HAVE KNOWN THE HISTORICAL JESUS?

A STUDY OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5 16

FRANK C. PORTER
YALE UNIVERSITY

THE most emphatic affirmative answer to this question is that given by Johannes Weiss in his *Paulus und Jesus*, 1909, pp. 23–31 (English Trans. pp. 41–56) and his *Das Urchristentum* pp. 137 ff. and 347 ff. If Weiss had lived, his interpretation of this verse would have had its final elaboration and a conspicuous place in his Meyer commentary on 2 Corinthians. He begins his discussion in *Paulus und Jesus* with an assertion which, if it is true, is of such great importance in its bearing on the whole problem of the relation of Paul's Christianity to the person and the religion of Jesus that it deserves the most careful consideration. He says, "The wholly arbitrary assumption of theology that Paul had not known Jesus in his lifetime is finally excluded by the express statement of the Apostle himself in 2 Cor. 5 16." And at the end of his defence of this position, after acknowledging that the text is abrupt and obscure, he insists that "the words as they stand admit no other interpretation than . . . that Paul had seen and known Jesus in person;" but he adds, "and that he himself designates this as a knowledge *κατὰ σάρκα*, on which he now puts no value, since it is superseded by a better knowledge, *κατὰ πνεῦμα*. Paul only refers to the point because his opponents boasted of such knowledge on their own part." Weiss's argument involves understanding *ἡμεῖς* as an emphatic "I," since while verses 14–15

and 17 apply to all Christians, v. 18, so understood describes his own personal experience. The words *κατὰ σάρκα*, in accordance with their position, Weiss construes not with the objects (so as to mean "no one according to his external human characteristics" and "Christ in his human earthly nature"), but with the verbs, so as to characterize a kind of knowledge. It is a knowledge which can end at a certain point of time, and is therefore a matter of will, rather than of memory or information. It must mean a renunciation of former human relationships, or a decision that something formerly known has no longer any value. In fact Weiss applies the first of these alternatives to 18a, and the second to 18b, thus seriously impairing the parallelism of the two halves of the verse. The moment of time is that of conversion, the change from old to new indicated in verses 14, 15 and 17. Accordingly v. 18a means that Paul's conversion brought to an end the natural human relationships in which he had stood to home, family and nation. It was for him a tragic severing of ties. But 18b means that Paul had known Christ as men know one another, that is, had seen him with his eyes, but that now such knowledge was valueless to him. The words, "from now on no one do we know" had tragical significance for Paul in 18a, says Weiss, but the parallel expression in 18b must mean no loss, but only gain. Weiss seems to recognize that this gives a different meaning to "knowing according to flesh" in the two parallel halves of the verse; and he suggests another possibility, namely, that 18a is aimed against the claim of his opponents to have a personal acquaintance with such men as Peter and James, as 18b is aimed against their claim to have seen Jesus. Then, in 18a, Paul would say that he also knew such men, but put no value on such knowledge. This is surely an unjustifiable limitation of *οὐδένα*. But there is a more serious difficulty with Weiss's position. He believes, correctly I would say, that Paul had a vivid and true impression of the personality of the historical Jesus. Weiss thinks that Paul's actual seeing of Jesus is essential as an explanation of his vision, his recognition of the heavenly Messiah as Jesus. But also the deeply personal nature of Paul's attitude toward Jesus

throughout, and the degree in which his Christianity, especially on the ethical side, was determined by the actual character and teachings of Jesus, require the supposition that he had received a definite and powerful impression of Jesus' personality. Weiss, therefore, is glad to find in the verse before us Paul's own definite affirmation that he had seen and known Jesus. But if Paul here claims a knowledge of Jesus which had such fundamental importance for him as Weiss holds that it had, how can Paul say in the same breath that this knowledge has now for him no value, or even that it no longer exists? It is not enough to answer, with Weiss, that the heavenly Lord has taken the place of the earthly Jesus in Paul's religion, for Weiss himself has to acknowledge that it is essential to Paul to affirm that the heavenly Lord is inwardly the same as he who lived on earth and died on the cross. It is his earthly life and death that disclose his nature as love. How could one who wrote Phil. 2 1-11 say that he no longer valued the knowledge he had of Christ in the flesh? Weiss confesses that 5 16b must have been called out in controversy and "does not cover all that he really felt" (*Urchristentum*, p. 137f.). But that the love of Christ is the inspiring motive of all his willing and acting is affirmed in verses 14-15. How could any polemical interest have driven this out of Paul's mind in v. 16, which is introduced as an inference (ὡστε)?

Weiss is right, I believe, where many exponents of Paul are wrong, in his emphasis upon the extent of the influence of the historical Jesus on Paul; but he is, therefore, wrong in supposing that Paul could say, and with such emphasis, that his knowledge of the historical Jesus is a knowledge *κατὰ σάρκα*, which has now come to an end. He is right in saying that *κατὰ σάρκα* belongs with the verbs, not with their objects; but, therefore, wrong in thinking still that Paul refers to the earthly in distinction from the heavenly Christ. This distinction of two Christs is exactly the meaning that he has rejected, the common construction of *κατὰ σάρκα* with *Χριστόν*, in the sense of "Christ in his human, earthly nature." To know other men, and also Christ, "according to flesh" is, in this verse, a knowing which ceases when one becomes

Christian. It is therefore a wrong, a common human, but an un-Christian, attitude. Only as such can it "from now on" no longer exist. It can be only an attitude toward men which is "according to man," but not "according to Christ." It therefore cannot be a knowing of the historical Jesus; for there is certainly no sin in that. Nor is it possible for any one suddenly to bring that knowledge to an end, even if there were any conceivable reason for wishing and trying to do so. What this knowledge is which belongs to Paul's and to every Christian's past, and ends when their Christianity begins, would seem to be clearly enough suggested by the connection in which the verse stands. It can be only the opposite of being impelled by the love of Christ, of living not to oneself, of being "in Christ" a new creature. And yet this natural understanding is one which I, at least, in my readings among recent commentaries have not found, — the understanding, namely, that to know all men and to know Christ *κατὰ σάρκα*, is to have toward them the too common human feelings of hatred or fear, of envy, suspicion, ill-will, in one word of selfishness, in contrast to the new feeling toward men, Christ-like, and created by Christ, or by God in Christ, the feeling, or total personal attitude, of love. This is the understanding of the verse which I want to expound and defend in what follows.

It is no doubt true that to our way of thinking the most obvious and the most important distinction between Paul and the earlier apostles is that they had been disciples of Jesus and he had not. We should expect this to be urged against his apostleship by his enemies, and we should expect to find him replying. It is, therefore, tempting to assume that the verse before us has some reference to this subject, but I believe that it has none at all.

For the sake of clearness let me set down at the outset what seem to me to be quite evident marks and tests of a correct understanding of Paul's thought in this verse.

1. The verse has two members and its two halves must be understood as parallel to each other.
2. The first half should have the first place, and the second half should be understood in the light of the first.

3. *Κατὰ σάρκα* belongs with the verbs, and describes a certain way of knowing men, a way that is human and natural, "as men commonly know men."

4. It is a way of knowing men which ends for those who are "in Christ," for whom a new way takes its place.

5. The "we" need not, and in view of verses 14—15, 17, probably does not, mean Paul alone, but Christians in general; so that 15b does not refer to an experience peculiar to Paul.

Our survey of other recent expositions of the verse must be brief. Few accept Weiss's view, yet few escape some sort of reference to the historical Jesus, that is some connection of *κατὰ σάρκα* with *Χριστόν*. Perhaps Meyer's dogmatic affirmation has had influence, namely, that *κατὰ σάρκα* does not define subjectively the standard of our knowing, but objectively the standard by which men are judged; and that Paul means that for the Christian, because of Christ, the old outward distinctions between men have ceased (see Gal. 3 28). The knowledge of Christ, which Paul had left behind, was, therefore, a knowledge of the external Christ, in his earthly station, work and fate. All this Paul could have known without having seen Jesus with his own eyes, which Meyer thinks is not the meaning of this verse because of the "but now no more."

Windisch, who took Weiss's place in the last rewriting of Meyer's 2 Corinthians, thinks no confident decision can be reached among the six interpretations of 5 15b which he lists. These are, in brief:

1. *Χριστόν* means not Jesus but Messiah. (Impossible, Windisch says, in view of verses 14 and 17.)

2. Paul refers to himself as a persecutor, when he denied the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus.

3. Paul refers to a Judaistic stage in his Christianity, and a later second conversion. (Gal. 1 contradicts this. "From now on" can only mean from conversion.)

4. Paul had known Jesus in the flesh. Windisch rejects Weiss's view on the ground that Paul could not in one sentence affirm that he had seen Jesus and so was equal to other apostles, and then cast this knowledge aside as worthless. But in some other

than this literal sense a knowing of the historical Jesus could be meant.

a) What he learned from others might be exaggerated as if equivalent to his having seen JESUS.

b) "We" may be used in a free sense of the whole community.

c) Or, "We" means Paul and his fellow-workers, some of whom could have been disciples of Jesus.

5. Paul's having known Jesus is hypothetical. Even if I had known him in the flesh, he says, I would not now value such knowledge.

6. Paul had learned to know Jesus from tradition.

Of these possibilities Windisch prefers 4 b; next to that 4 c, or 4 a; and he regards as possible 5, 6, and 2.

It is to be noted that none of these apply, as they are stated, to 1a; but the true interpretation of 1b must first truly interpret 1a. My own preference is for No. 2, but only in a form that does not apply to Paul alone as the one who knows, but to all Christians; nor to Christ alone as the one known, but to all men.

We have seen that Weiss approaches the verse with the interest of finding in it Paul's own testimony to the fact that he had seen Jesus and come directly under his personal influence. And we have seen the weakness of Weiss's position in the fact that he insists on finding Paul's testimony to this personal contact with Jesus, although he has to take with it Paul's judgment that it is now to him without value. A different approach is that of Reitzenstein, whose exposition of our verse in his *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (unchanged in the successive editions) is of importance. This is the approach of one who is looking for the influence upon Paul of Hellenistic cults, and finds that influence in the independence and immediateness of the knowledge which Paul here claims for himself. Paul needs no knowledge of Christ of the sort that depends on others' testimony. The verse is to be understood in accordance with Paul's assertion of his independence of "man" in Gal. 1 11-12, 15-17. But Gal. 1-2 is itself the disproof of Weiss's view that Paul affirms that he had seen the earthly Jesus. The knowledge which makes him independent of man came with his vision of the exalted Christ (Gal. 1 15-16), and with

his experience of Christ as indwelling Spirit (Gal. 2 19-20, 4 6-7). Our verse, Reitzenstein rightly says, implies two ways of knowing, one past, the other present; but he unfortunately adds, that while this is enough to say in the case of v. 16a, in v. 16b Paul describes the past knowledge not simply as a human way of knowing Christ, but also as a knowing of the human, earthly Jesus. Having thus admitted a reference to the historical Jesus in v. 16b, that is, having connected *κατὰ σάρκα* with *Χριστόν*, as well as with *ἐγνώκαμεν*, he must provide a substitute for Weiss's inference that Paul had seen the historical Jesus, and adopts the view that the first half of v. 16b states an unreal condition (see Windisch's No. 5, and Heinrici's Meyer). The sentence has, then, a concessive conditional sense, and means, not "Though I have known etc.," but "Even if I had known Christ *κατὰ σάρκα* — as I have not — I would now know him so no more." Paul would undo any relation to the earthly Jesus, even if he had had it, because he must be independent of recollections, his own or others', and of everything past, and must know Christ immediately, in a way which he could verify in his own present experience. One who has seen God has an abiding capacity to know him, and to know all things, for himself. We may agree with Reitzenstein's stress on the importance of Paul's consciousness of his independence of man and of everything external in his knowledge of Christ, as we may agree with Weiss's emphasis on the influence of the historical Jesus on Paul's religion, and yet, in this case as in that, we may question whether Paul has that thought in mind in the verse before us. Against Reitzenstein, as against Weiss, stands the objection that his interpretation of v. 16b does not fit 16a. There is certainly no unreal hypothetical character in the former knowing of every man to which v. 16a refers. "We" have really had the knowledge *κατὰ σάρκα* of our fellowmen which we now have no longer. Moreover, because of v. 16a, it is not allowable to make Paul say something about himself which could not be said about every Christian; nor to make him say something about Christ, and the Christian's old and new attitude toward him, which could not be said about all men, and the Chris-

tian's attitude toward them. Paul is describing, not only in v. 16, but throughout vv. 14-17, the great change which has taken place, not in himself only, but in all who are in Christ, and not toward Christ only, but toward all men. Reitzenstein, on the contrary, is obliged to say that Paul here sets himself apart from other Christians, and especially from those who claim to have known the earthly Jesus; that he makes the personal love and attachment of the disciple to Jesus irrelevant, and affirms that the apostle, who has seen the exalted Christ, is thereby set above the disciple, the follower of Jesus himself. The truth of Reitzenstein's understanding of Paul as a *πνευματικός* requires detailed consideration. Here it is enough to express the conviction that the verse before us does not bear upon this matter at all.

Among other commentators it may be noted that Lietzmann, in his first edition, held the view which Windisch mentions as 4a; but in the second edition he has been persuaded by Reitzenstein to accept the interpretation of v. 16b as stating an unreal hypothesis.

Bousset finds the motive of our verse in Paul's self-defence against those who claim for themselves or for their authorities (Peter, etc.) the advantage of a personal knowledge of Jesus, which Paul did not have. They perhaps also appealed to the example and words of Jesus against Paul as supporting their position as Judaizers in regard to the law. The sentence (v. 16b) is radical and bold, and Bousset says that it can almost be called an act of desperation on Paul's part when he thus breaks off connection with the earthly Jesus and rejects his authority, because he could not himself bear witness to it, and yet must maintain his claim to be an apostle fully equal to any other. He does this, Bousset says, in spite of the fact that he, who had never known Jesus personally, understood his inmost nature better than the small minds who appealed to their personal connection with him. He could with truth have quoted Jesus as on his side in the controversy about Judaism and the law. The knowledge that Paul had of Jesus, according to the flesh, was probably indirect (see Windisch, No. 6), though a passing sight of him in Jerusalem is not impossible.

Bousset's view is open to the objection already made against the views of Weiss and Reitzenstein that v. 16b is interpreted in a sense that does not apply to 16a. Paul could not have written 16a first, and put 16b in parallelism with it, if his purpose had been what Bousset supposes. Is there, indeed, in the form, or tone, or connection of v. 16, and the almost incidental way in which *Χριστόν* is introduced, the slightest suggestion of this bold and desperate decision, this unnatural breaking off from Jesus and his authority, forced upon Paul in self-defence against his will? The immediate setting (vv. 14-17) is one of the greatest, most confident and exultant of Paul's expressions of the power of Christ to make new men and a new world. Verse 16 must necessarily be one description of that end of the old and beginning of the new which Christ brought about. The old that ends cannot possibly be anything that Paul values, and relinquishes under compulsion and with regret. That which from now on is no more can only be something that belongs among the old things which it is the glory of Christ to have brought to an end.

Let us turn now to our own reading of the verse. It has been remarked by many that v. 16 seems almost like an after-thought. It is introduced as a consequence of vv. 14-15; but in verse 17 is another *ὥστε*, which connects not with v. 16, but with vv. 14-15, and brings the great thoughts of those verses to a great and fitting climax and conclusion. If verse 16 were not here it would not be missed. This does not mean however, that it is a later gloss (Völter). Just because it would never have occurred to a scribe that something was lacking between v. 16 and v. 17, it is easier to account for v. 16 as an instance of the frequent unexpectedness of Paul's mental operations. Weiss suggests that he might have inserted it after finishing the letter. Its importance would be no less, perhaps rather greater, if that were the case.

The verse consists of two parallel sentences. There can be no doubt that "but now no longer" in the second half corresponds to "from now on" in the first; and that to know according to flesh has the same meaning in both sentences. There must also be a correspondence between *οὐδένα* and *Χριστόν*. Something is

said in the first half that applies to every one, and in the second half the same thing is applied to Christ. It is absolutely requisite that the interpretation of either one of the two sentences shall be such as to fit and explain the other. Most of the recent interpreters of the second half seem to feel no duty to provide a parallel interpretation of the first. But still further it is surely fair to claim that in such a parallelism the first half has the right to the first place, and the second half must be understood in the light of the first, and in accordance with it. Paul's first and chief affirmation is, "So that, as for us, from now on no one do we know according to flesh." He then repeats the statement with emphasis on the fact that "we" formerly had the kind of knowledge, *κατὰ σάρκα*, which we now have no longer, and specifies Christ as one of whom our knowledge has changed from the old kind to the new. "Although we have known according to flesh Christ, yet (*ἀλλά*) now no longer do we know." Our new knowing of Christ must be fully parallel to our new knowing of every man, and therefore it cannot be a knowing of the heavenly in contrast to the earthly Jesus, for this distinction does not apply to other men; v. 16a cannot be so understood. The two ways of knowing all men, and, as an instance, Christ, belong to the same person or persons (*ἡμεῖς*), but to different times. By *ὥστε* the assertion of v. 16a is made a consequence of vv. 14-15, in which, in distinction from vv. 11-13, Paul is describing not his own experience only, but that of every Christian, as he is also in the second *ὥστε*, v. 17. There is therefore no reason for taking *ἡμεῖς* as an emphatic "I", as Weiss is obliged to assume, supposing that Paul turns back in this single verse to his own distinctive personal experience.

Οὐδένα is naturally to be interpreted in the light of *πάντες* in vv. 14-15. But this connection leaves the question open whether the word means, no one of all for whom Christ died, or no one of "the all" who have died with Christ, of "the living" who no longer live to themselves. Is it no man, or no Christian, whom, from now on, we know *κατὰ σάρκα*? The "Christ" in v. 16b might incline us to the latter opinion, for the Christian's new knowing

of Christ is the knowing which is the love that Christ deserves because of what he has suffered for us (v. 15b). But on the other hand "the love of Christ" which now impelled Paul was love to the undeserving, to all men, love in advance of any change in them, and creative of change, a love that calls forth love in the unloving. That Paul understands this his whole ministry proves. He loves his converts, no doubt, with a peculiar love, but he is possessed by a love which constantly drives him on to new places and new people. He is debtor both to Greeks and Barbarians, to wise and foolish. That there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Greek (Ro. 10 12, Col. 3 11) means not that there is already a change in them, but that the mind of Paul and of every Christian toward *all men* has changed, according to Christ, from hatred, fear, selfishness, to love. So that *οὐδένα* is, I think, to be taken in its natural, unlimited sense, no one of the all for whom Christ died. The love whose self-denials are described in 4 7-15 and 6 3-10, is, like Christ's, a love not only to friends but to enemies. "We," Christians, therefore see *all men* in the new light which Christ casts upon them, or rather with the new eyes, the new nature, that Christ creates in us. We know all men no longer as we formerly did and as men commonly do, and that not because they are already different, but because we are different. So the fact that "we" know Christ also no longer *κατὰ σάρκα* (v. 16b) means not that he is no longer *σάρξ* but *πνεῦμα*, but that we are no longer *sarkical* but spiritual.

The *ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν* of 16a, and the *νῦν οὐκέτι* of 16b, can only be understood in accordance with vv. 14-15 (see the *μηκέτι*) and v. 17. The contrast is between those, Paul and others, who are constrained by the love of Christ, who have died and risen with Christ and now live for and in Christ, and their own former selves. The "now" is the time that begins with conversion.

The position of the words *κατὰ σάρκα* in both clauses certainly favors the view that they are to be taken with the verbs, and not with their objects. They characterize two ways of knowing, two contrasted total attitudes of one person toward another, the un-Christian and the Christian. This connection of *κατὰ σάρκα*

with the verbs seems now to be generally accepted (in contrast e. g. to Meyer's emphatic assertion of the objective, in contrast to the subjective reference of the phrase); but Weiss is not the only one who fails to see that this connection excludes any reference to the earthly in contrast to the heavenly Christ.

To construe *κατὰ σάρκα* with *οἶδαμεν* and *ἐγνώκαμεν* does indeed leave an important alternative open. The word *σάρξ* can mean the outward, sensible or physical nature of man, or his sinful nature, everything in him which is un-Christian. To know men *κατὰ σάρκα* may therefore mean to judge men according to their earthly and outward qualities and relationships, according to their looks, race, rank, possessions, in contrast to knowing them in their inward and real character and worth. So Moffatt translates, "I estimate no one by what is external," and Goodspeed, "I have estimated nobody at what he seemed to be outwardly." But it may equally well mean to have toward others the common human attitude of suspicion, distrust, envy, fear, hatred, in a word the selfish, unloving feelings and purposes which are contrary to the mind of Christ. There is no doubt a certain relationship between knowing people externally and knowing them selfishly, as Paul's use of the word *σάρξ* in both directions itself suggests. In the case of the verse before us both its immediate and its larger connections seem to me to indicate that Paul is thinking of the attitude of unselfish love as the new creation of Christ, in contrast to the natural attitude of enmity between men. So that he means here to say not that "we" formerly knew men according to *their* flesh, outwardly, but that we knew them according to *our* flesh, selfishly. Even if the other meaning were allowed it would not result that Paul is thinking of a former knowledge of the earthly in contrast to a present knowledge of the heavenly Christ. He would rather be contrasting a former judging of Christ by appearances, by the lowliness of his lot and the shame of his death, with the present recognition of his real nature, of the divine excellence and glory of his self-denying love. Only in this sense could the same distinction be applied to our knowing of

all men, as it is in v. 16a. But I believe that *κατὰ σάρκα* here means selfishly, not outwardly. Paul has just described those whom we would call Christians as those who are impelled by the love of Christ, those who, having died with Christ in that death for all which was the supreme act of love for all, now no longer live to themselves. Their new attitude of unselfish love is first toward Christ (15b), and then, like Christ's, toward all men. The opposite of this, the old which this new displaces, is the attitude of those who are controlled by self-love, who live to themselves; and this Paul could well call a knowing of men according to flesh. A brief suggestion of the proof of this will suffice.

In 2 Cor. 1 17 Paul defends himself against the appearance of fickleness and selfishness in not having fulfilled his promise to visit Corinth. Does this mean, he asks, that what I purpose I purpose *κατὰ σάρκα*, that I say yes, and mean no? Paul's answer is that his yes, like Christ's, means only yes, but that it was for their sake that he changed his mind. Here *κατὰ σάρκα* has nothing to do with what is physical or outward. It means simply selfishly, for his own ease or pleasure. In 1 Cor. 3 3-4 Paul charges the Corinthians with being fleshly (*σαρκικοί*) because there was among them jealousy and strife; and that meant that they were walking *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*. Because one said, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, they were but *ἄνθρωποι*, that is, they were not really Christians. This passage shows quite precisely what I suppose 2 Cor. 5 16 to mean.

The works of the flesh as Paul enumerates them, fall into the two categories of sensuality and selfishness; and the contrasted qualities of the fruit of the spirit are almost all those that contradict self-assertion and self-concern. The contrast between the old man and the new is the contrast between anger, wrath, malice, division, and that image of Christ which is described as a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and above all love. Passages such as these (Gal. 5 16-26; Col. 3 5-17) certainly justify one in interpreting flesh as, for Paul, above all, selfishness (cf. Gal. 5 13-15), as spirit is, above all, love. Flesh, the un-Christian nature of

man, shows its quality toward other men in its contrast to love. The phrase 'to know men *κατὰ σάρκα*' could not have a more Pauline meaning than to have toward men feelings contrary to a love like Christ's, to think of others and to act toward them in the ways natural to one who lives to himself and seeks his own. These feelings and this conduct are what Paul finds that Christ has brought to an end. They are no longer natural to the Christian.

That this is what Paul means by saying that "we" (Christians) no longer know anyone according to flesh — as men commonly know men — is confirmed by the larger connection (chapters 1–7). There is here space only to refer to the two striking, powerfully drawn pictures of the complete unselfishness of the Christian life which we find before and after the passage we are considering (2 Cor. 4 7–15; 6 3–10). These are descriptions of the new self that lives when the old self has died. It is a new ideal, so contrary to common human ways of thinking and feeling that only by paradoxes can it put itself into human language. These are poems on the irrationality of the higher reason, the foolishness which is divinely wise and the weakness which is divinely strong, the sacrifice and suffering which are gain and joy, as Paul experienced them in and with Christ. But not Paul alone. It is surely a mistake to translate "we" by "I" in these passages, as our newer versions do. Nothing in these pictures of the Christian ideal of self-denying love is peculiar to Paul. Paul knows what he is doing when he uses "we" as he does here, and when he is compelled to say "I", as he is in 2 Cor. 10–13. Compare the definitely individual experiences described in 11 18–12 10 with these concrete, but typical, not individual, pictures of the Christian. They are the best expositions of what Paul meant by being constrained by the love of Christ, dying with him, living not to oneself; and therefore the best answer to the question what new attitude toward men has taken the place of that 'knowing of men according to flesh' which has come to an end.

Perhaps Paul says with such emphasis "from now on, no one" and "but now no more" as a challenge and a warning. Perhaps he would have the Corinthians realize that this completely new

and superhuman mind and conduct toward one another and toward all men, which rightly belongs to their new nature as Christians, was in reality not fully attained and practiced by them (compare 1 Cor. 1-4). As if Paul had said, from now on let the old human nature be really past and dead. If one is in Christ let him now walk according to Christ.

But how does this understanding of 16a apply to 16b and to the past and present knowing of Christ? We are at once struck by the fact that the word *Χριστόν* is unexpected, and even seems out of place. As v. 16 as a whole would not be missed if it were lacking, so of the word *Χριστόν*. But in both cases a later insertion is hard to account for, just because no need for it would be felt, and it is best to accept both the verse and the word as from Paul. If we omit the word we have a fitting repetition of the thought of 16a, with added emphasis on the fact that "we" actually did once have the attitude toward men which we now have no longer. No object of the verb is expressed in the last clause and none is needed in the first, where *Χριστόν* stands. "Although we have (in reality) had this un-Christlike attitude, we now no longer have it." Paul likes to make reference to Christ in connection with whatever he may be saying about the Christian life; but if he wished to do so here we should more naturally have expected him to say: "Although we have known [men] according to flesh (*κατὰ σάρκα*), yet now we know them according to Christ (*κατὰ Χριστόν*)." This would seem to give the needed culmination of the thought of the whole verse, setting the positive over against the negative expression of it, and giving to Christ the place in the great change from the old to the new which is given to him in vv. 14-15, 17. He is the one who creates the new nature in man, who defines or constitutes the new attitude of the Christian toward all men. Why then does Paul insert Christ as an illustration of those (all men) whom we no longer know in the old human way, rather than as the one who first illustrated the new way of knowing? In fact Christ stood in both places in the thought of Paul. It is as Pauline to say that we should have toward all men the love that we have toward Christ, as that we should have

toward all the love that Christ had toward all. We are to be as Christ, for Christ (cf. *ὡς ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ* in 5 20), toward men, and we are also to feel toward men as we feel toward Christ. Men are to see Christ in us, but we are to see Christ in them. Christ is the first who manifested this new love and who calls it forth in his followers, but he is also the first toward whom the disciple feels it, and by that experience learns to know what it is. That Paul chooses to express the second of these aspects of the Christian experience is quite characteristic of him. He has already made the first unmistakably clear. It is the love of Christ constraining us, it is the death and resurrection of Christ for us becoming our death to self, which transforms our knowing of all men. But Paul has already intimated (v. 15b) that this change in us is first of all a change in our attitude toward Christ himself. Paul chooses to remind his readers, though, as it were, only in passing, that they had formerly had the old attitude of hatred, ill-will, contempt, indifference, even toward him whom they now most loved. The newness which Paul is describing consists therefore not only in their being toward other men as Christ first was, but also in their taking toward other men the new attitude which they had taken first toward Christ.

This understanding of v. 15b is in accordance with v. 10a. It involves no change in the meaning of knowing men according to the flesh. It involves no sudden turn from a thought applicable to all Christians to an experience peculiar to Paul. It is true that Paul had been a persecutor of Christ, and in his case, before his conversion, there had been no one else toward whom he felt the emotions of hatred, fear, enmity, so intensely as toward him. He had indeed known Christ after the flesh. But it was true of all converts to the new religion that their conversion was first of all a change of mind toward Christ from contempt, indifference, if not from active hostility, to love. The knowledge of Christ, which, being according to flesh, has now for every Christian come to an end, is therefore not, in any sense, real or hypothetical, a knowledge of his earthly in contrast to his heavenly being. A knowledge of his earthly life was essential to Paul's Christianity.

He could not forget what he knew about it even if he had wished to do so, and he could not wish to lose whatever of such knowledge he possessed. Nor is the knowledge according to flesh a knowledge of his outward appearance and lot in contrast to his inner and real nature and worth. "We have known according to flesh Χριστόν", means according to our flesh, not according to his. It is our former knowledge of Christ that has ended, and a wholly new knowledge has taken its place. But between the earthly Jesus and the exalted Lord and Spirit there was for Paul no such opposition. The identity of these two was essential to his Christology. Paul could not say "from now on no more" of Jesus himself, but only of something in his own nature and that of others which Jesus had made to cease.

If Paul had really intended to discuss here the question of his own relation to the earthly Jesus in contrast to that of Peter and James, it is incredible that he would have begun with a sentence about his own, and all Christians', relation to every man; nor could the word Christ have come in so incidentally. If the accusation had been made that he was no true apostle because he had not known Jesus he would have given his best attention to it. So obscure and slight an allusion to it is quite incomprehensible. Instead of this, what Paul is really writing about is the new, characteristic and distinctive love which separates the Christian from his own past self. In a way and for a time it inevitably distinguishes him also from his fellowmen; but since that which distinguishes him is self-denying love, the distinction works toward its own overcoming and removal.

The interpretation I have given seems to me to be the one which best meets the conditions and tests enumerated above. It understands the two halves of the verse as truly parallel, and reads the second member in the light of the first. It is consistent in connecting *κατὰ σάρκα* with the verbs, and defining "to know according to flesh" in a way consistent with Paul's principal affirmation about it, namely, that for the Christian it no longer exists. It fits into its immediate connection, vv. 14-17, in its thought, and in the fact that it does not require Paul to say any-

thing peculiar to his own personal experience. It finds a reason for the reference to Christ without changing the meaning of the verse as a whole.

This discussion, long as it is, leaves important matters which are involved in the study of the verse without adequate treatment. The interpretation of the verse which I have given came to me in the course of a study of the thoughts of 2 Cor. 1-7, and especially the important bearing of these chapters on what might be called the self-problem in Paul's Christian experience and reflection. There is not space in the present essay to retrace that path of approach.

I had reached the conclusions here set forth before reading the commentary of Bachmann, in which some of them are already given. Bachmann excludes all reference in the verse to the historical Jesus in contrast to the heavenly Christ, because such an interpretation of 16b does not apply to 16a; because *κατὰ σάρκα* describes one of two ways of knowing, and does not distinguish two sorts of men known, nor two Christs; and because *κατὰ σάρκα* describes an ungodly way of knowing, which ends when men become Christian, whereas there is nothing sinful in knowing the historical Jesus, and no reason why such knowledge should end. With this negative answer to the question which is the title of this essay and with these reasons for it I agree. I do not assent to Bachmann's insistence that v. 16 is subjective and personal, whereas v. 17 is objective and universal; that is, that Paul in v. 16 is speaking of himself alone, and as an apostle. Nor do I find light in the opinion that the knowing of Christ according to flesh means Paul's former Jewish, legalistic judgment and rejection of Christ. It seems to me better, more fitting in 16a and more in accordance with the immediate and the larger connection, to understand *σάρξ* here as un-Christian, not in the narrower sense of Jewish legalism and exclusiveness, but in the general sense of human selfishness and ill-will.¹

¹ One does not like to stand alone in an opinion of this kind. If it is a natural inference from vv. 14-16 it should have occurred to others. I am glad therefore to discover that de Wette (*Kurzgefaßtes Exeg. Handbuch*

Returning to the assertion of Weiss with which we began, we must declare it to be not well founded. The verse has no bearing on the question whether Paul had seen the earthly Jesus. The possibility that he had cannot be excluded. Even the probability may maintain itself because of the need of some such explanation of the very personal character of Paul's relation of loyalty and love toward the person, Jesus Christ, and perhaps also because of the remarkable degree in which Paul made his own the deeper thoughts of Jesus and the distinctive quality of his mind and spirit. Paul makes no claim, here or elsewhere, to have seen the earthly Jesus; yet inferences from what he does *not* refer to in his letters should be made only with extreme caution.

zum *N. T.*) gives it as one of two alternatives in his interpretation of both 15a and 15b. *κατὰ σάρκα* in any case, he says, belongs to the verb; but it can be taken either objectively: to know one according to that which he is in his natural self apart from Christ, according to outward prerogatives or relationships, whether he be Jew or Greek, wise or unwise, *etc.*; or subjectively: with selfishness, according to the measure of one's own selfish advantage. These two do, however, in substance coincide, since it is just the outer self of the other person in which the selfish man is interested. In the same way to know Christ according to the flesh may be taken objectively: of the human side, the human characteristics, of Christ: or subjectively: according to the human way of regarding men, "not yet to have apprehended Christ so that, with the renunciation of fleshly selfishness, one lives to him alone (v. 15)." The same alternatives are discussed above (pp. 268-9), and reasons given for preferring the second. Meyer cites de Wette only on v. 15b, and gives as his view only the second of the two alternatives between which he does not decide; the first one is essentially Meyer's own. Meyer then gives three objections to de Wette's view as thus inaccurately defined: (1) that it is subjective; which is a reason for, not against, it, since *κατὰ σάρκα* is to be construed with the verb; (2) that it does not apply to 15a; but de Wette did so apply it, and that it fits both halves is one proof of its truth; (3) that it does not fit Paul's own pre-Christian knowledge of Christ as a persecutor; but to make it fit perfectly it is only necessary to take selfishness as including all that is contrary to love.

De Wette is the only one that I have discovered who has suggested just this understanding of Paul's phrase "to know according to flesh." He gives it as one of two possibilities, without discussion or proof beyond the reference to v. 15.