



The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letters

By Mark D. Nanos

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Paul's letter to the Romans, says Nanos, is an example of Jewish correspondence, addressing believers in Jesus who are steeped in Jewish ways-whether of Jewish or gentile origin. Arguing against those who think Paul was an apostate from Judaism, Nanos maintains Paul's continuity with his Jewish heritage. Several key arguments here are: Those addressed in Paul's letter were still an integral part of the Roman synagogue communities. The "weak" are non- Christian Jews, while the "strong" included both Jewish and gentile converts to belief in Jesus. Paul as a practicing devout Jew insists on the rules of behavior for "the righteous gentiles." Christian subordination to authorities (Romans 13:1-7) is intended to enforce submission to leaders of the synagogues, not Roman government officials. Paul behaves in a way to confirm the very Jewish portrait of him in Acts: going first to the synagogues.

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