The debate about the relationship between "Paul and Jesus" is a perennial and wide-ranging one, with many different issues potentially at stake. One (and only one) aspect of the debate concerns the possible extent to which Paul may have known and used traditions about Jesus in his own letters. The identification of such traditions might give us insight into Paul and his own tradition as well as possibly providing a valuable source for the Jesus tradition itself. For many too, the existence of such traditions is important in establishing how far there is substantive continuity between Paul's teaching and the teaching of Jesus. However, even when parallels between Paul's words and Jesus tradition can be established, one must be wary of deducing too much too quickly. Modern gospel study has long accepted as axiomatic the possibility that some traditions in the gospels were read into the Jesus story and placed on the lips of Jesus secondarily. Thus a parallel between Paul and Jesus tradition might not necessarily show that Paul was dependent on the Jesus tradition and/or the historical Jesus himself. Rather, the line of dependency may go the other way: sayings may have been read into the gospel tradition from the Pauline letters.¹

In a few instances, Paul himself makes clear that he is quoting, or alluding to, Jesus tradition (cf. 1 Cor 7:10; 9:14; 11:23). In other instances, Paul's language is less clear and it is uncertain whether he is intending to allude to Jesus tradition or not (cf. Rom 14:14; 1 Thess 4:15).² Much of the debate then focuses on a number of instances where Paul's words provide a parallel to similar words or ideas in the Jesus tradition, with discussion then on whether Paul


² Rom 14:14 ("I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus ...") and 1 Thess 4:15 ("this we say by a word of the Lord") can both be taken as referring to alleged teaching of Jesus, but need not do so.
might have been aware of the existence of such parallels or not.\(^3\)

In many of the discussions to date,\(^4\) the possibility that Paul might have used Jesus tradition is often discussed in relation to possible parallels between Paul and the synoptic gospels. It has however been a feature of recent studies of the historical Jesus that more openness is now shown to non-canonical sources as possibly providing just as valuable access to the historical Jesus as the canonical gospels in (what later became) the “New Testament”.\(^5\) Above all the Gospel of Thomas (GTh) has been seen by many as a source independent of the synoptics and incorporating valuable early tradition. In the light of these new developments in Jesus research, the question of “Paul and Jesus” may take on rather different contours if one takes seriously the possibility that the ‘Jesus’ side of the balance should not be confined to the canonical texts alone. Thus James Robinson has (in my view rightly) criticised the approach of N. Walter in his discussion of the issue of Paul’s possible use of Jesus traditions, where Walter focuses solely on canonical material to identify possible Jesus traditions.\(^6\) Robinson’s cited example of one piece of evidence omitted in this way was 1 Cor 2:9, a saying apparently quoted as scrip-

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