

### Paul's 'Farewell' letter to Philippi 207

Paul thought his *Philippians* letter could be his last, he was close to them, so he summed up his message in it.

The *Way* of Jesus is a path of personal transformation, opposing the violent *normalcy* of 'this world'. And it was costly; he would die for it...

### Epilogue: The Death of an Apostle

#### To preserve Christian Unity 215

Paul ended *Romans* with greetings to 27 people known to him, he saw it as last will and testament. He must take contributions from his churches to the poor community under James in Jerusalem. He asks for help against 'unbelievers in Judea', the Jewish conservative wing insisting on circumcision (like 'only male priests' nowadays). All his writings show great concern for his collection for poor *Jewish* Christians in Jerusalem. But conservative Jerusalem Jews would attack him when he took uncircumcised Christians (Paul's version of liberal Judaism) into the Temple. As feared, Paul was arrested, handed over to the Romans as a trouble-maker, and started on his final journey to Rome for trial.

#### The Martyrdom of Paul 219

The writer of *Acts* probably knew how Paul ended. But it was not in his plan to end his story with a martyrdom, so nothing is said.

Therefore neither *Acts* nor the Letters say what happened. We can rely only on conjecture, a mix of existing traditions, and more scholarship.

Two main suggestions.

- Paul was freed and went to Spain for two years, then came back and was killed under the Neronian persecution. As reported in 1 Clement, end of first century.
- Paul was not freed and never went to Spain. Tacitus, *Annals*, tells the story. There was a terrible fire in Rome in 64. Nero was suspected, so he blamed the Christians in Rome and killed them all.

*Consider:* Paul could have let others go to Jerusalem with the collection. But he cared too much about keeping the Jewish(Kosher) and Gentile (non-Kosher) wings of the church together, so he had to go. And he knew it might be to his eventual death. It was.

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Notes on *The First Paul* by Borg and Crossan

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Study notes on

## The First Paul

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan

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Edward James April 2016

## Study notes on *The First Paul*

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan

The objective of these notes is to provide a terse summary of the contents of the book by Borg and Crossan. I hope that it will help in your own study, and maybe also provide you with a background for leading study sessions and discussions.

### Why is *The First Paul* important to me?

I have found that it helps me to make better sense of the life and work of Paul, fundamentally important for the development of Christianity.

**What about the authors?** The authors of the book are Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, theologians based in the USA..

Marcus Borg was Canon Theologian at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, Oregon, and a retired Professor of Bible studies.

John Dominic Crossan is a theologian, formerly a Catholic priest, later Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago. Both have spent their lives in Jesus studies.

### What is significant to me about this book?

It makes full use of the enormous increase in knowledge about life in New Testament times and the meanings of the words used at that time. We now have available written accounts of some events contemporary with Jesus and we can amplify the meaning of events in the New Testament by relating them to those reports. For example, the meaning of 'Messiah' and 'Son of God', which we now know were both applied to the Emperor in Rome during the lifetime of Jesus.

### Is this approach the right one?

This is for you to decide. I make no claims for the truth of what is said, I can only offer some views and encourage discussion as you continue on your journey.

### Is this sort of thinking a good idea?

I think that we may all tend to retain ideas about Jesus which we first heard when children, and which have never developed. It is naturally disturbing to be presented with new ideas which may be a long way from those we are familiar with. It could be natural to oppose those ideas, and hope that they would go away.

But I will assume that we have an ecumenical outlook, and might call ourselves liberal. It is likely that we are all deeply concerned with Jesus, as are the book's authors.

### Why this particular book?

I use this book *The First Paul* because I believe that it looks more carefully at what was really happening in Paul's own time than most other commentaries on the life and work of Paul.

## With fear and Trembling 181

Paul's good news in *Romans* is that God's spirit is offered to everyone unconditionally, and that we are free to accept in faith or to reject.

So why in Philippians 2:12-13 is "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling..."? This is not fear of eternal damnation. It is facing the real problem of how to live a good life in *this* world, which attuned to 'peace' through violence and domination; This is the problem of all people today in the face of religious extremists, who will use violence to achieve their ends.

## Chapter Seven. Life together "in Christ" 185-213

Paul often uses: "In Christ", "Spirit of Christ", "Body of Christ", "Brothers". What did it mean for a local community?

Paul believed that a New Era had begun with Jesus. The Christian 'families', non-biological, would replace the old family groups destroyed by bad urban living conditions in the Roman Empire.

## Share Communities 188

We assume early Jesus communities were 'share groups', sharing spiritual and *some* material wealth. But not selling all possessions as in Jerusalem. Evidence: "Give us this day..."

Income in cities was uncertain; so there were problems with freeloaders living off the others. Paul says we should assist only those with real needs.

## Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles in Galatia 191

As evidence of sharing wealth: When Paul was ill, they supported him. But when he moved away, Judaizing extremists in the group insisted on circumcision for all. Paul was angry because he had said in Christ such practices didn't matter, he felt betrayed. We suggest that he was for real *equality* of all, not just group *unity*.

## Rich and Poor in Corinth 197

Corinth was the only place with both rich and poor in a group. Paul talks of problems for the rich. eg the need to share food at meetings with those who had none. Also problems with some better than others at, eg 'tongues', ecstatic speech. Paul says that only *Love* matters. *Love* is the heart of *justice*, and *justice* is *love in action in society*.

## Two Ways of Life: Flesh and Spirit 205

Paul was not against normal shared living together. By 'works of the flesh' he means a material way of life not in the 'spirit of Christ'. eg, anger, quarrelling... instead of peace, patience...

There are two problems with 'Law' for Paul.

1. Knowing it creates an onerous responsibility to obey it.
2. But knowing the Law doesn't help us to obey it.

*Law and Sin.* Paul means all types of Law: Jewish, Roman, and the leadings of conscience. Law defines what is wrong, but even the best Law does not empower us to follow it.

Paul's theology was *not* about resurrection *after* the bodily death of a particular man Jesus after a 'normal' life. Possible bodily death was ever-present from birth for all in Roman times, three quarters were dead by age 26. This was not the type of death Paul is talking about, but the terrible premature death of a *good* man Jesus on a mission by *unjust* execution, through shameful crucifixion.

Is death at the end of life or is violence the last enemy? And how does Sin come into this? All law can only define what is wrong (sin) when we fail to conform, but it cannot help to achieve the good life.

### **The groaning of Creation** 173

Paul's vision in Romans chaps. 1- 8 is that *all* people, seen as Jews and Greeks (Gentiles, non-Jews), should share in a global peace reached by non-violent means. In the Hymn to the glory of creation at Rom 8:19-23 *redemption* is about recovering peace for *all* in *this* world, not the individual promotion of the self in some other world (heaven).

### **Focussing down: The Unity of Jews and Christians** 174

Paul now looks at a special subsection of people: *The Jews*. A few of these, the Jesus followers, see Jesus as Messiah but most do not. Paul, a loyal Jew, is distraught to see that most Jews will not join him in following Jesus. He searches scripture to explain this, and now sees his Gentile converts in the Synagogues as finding Jesus first, with all Jews coming into line in some hoped-for future. So further progress lies with the *Gentile* 'God-worshippers' in the Synagogues, with the *Jews* hopefully brought into the fold later.

But what happened later in history? 'Christianity' swallowed the rest of the known world while leaving the Jews separated on their own. But Paul can still praise God for this new way of promoting Jesus Christ.

### **The focus narrows: The Unity of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians** 178

In Rom 12:1-15:21 Paul wants unity in all his groups. What was the problem?

*Weak versus Strong:* This was about his Jewish followers observing Kosher food laws. He allows the *weaker* brethren to observe them, while the *strong* need not. Paul's theory: "Nothing is unclean in itself", so no real problem. *But* we must be *sensitive* to the feelings of the weak, To the weak he never says don't be Kosher, just don't judge others who aren't.

But remember that our book is a product of particular authors with particular backgrounds. You may learn from it, but you should not accept it as the only possible view. Interpret it as you can, which is all that we can do with everything we read. Some will say the Bible does not err. What they usually mean is that *their* interpretation of what the bible seems to say brooks no discussion.

I have found it stirring to study *The First Paul*, and hope it will help you to develop your understanding of Jesus and of Paul for yourself.

### **What is in the book?**

The authors follow up all traces of Paul in the New Testament, and associated history of the times in other sources. This includes: all the *letters* attributed to Paul, though they find that not all show real Pauline thought; and also *Acts of the Apostles*, attributed traditionally to Luke.

The notes are designed to support discussion sessions based on the original publication, and follow the Chapters and subdivisions of the original book to enable cross referencing. All the *blue numbers* indicate page numbers in the original book.

However, it is also possible to read these notes on their own, to remind us of the book's message.

### **Chapter One Paul: Appealing or appalling?** 1-27

Paul is second only to Jesus in the foundation of Christianity. But his reputation is mixed. He can be quoted to support opposing viewpoints. Nevertheless, he is central to the New Testament. 13 out of 20 books are 'by him', that is, bear his name. In *Acts*, more than half the chapters are about him. So half the New Testament is about Paul.

Paul led the move to convert Gentiles to 'The Way', a Jewish sect. Over time, the new *Christianity* became a new *religion* separate from Judaism. This was never intended by Jesus or Paul. Both were Jews with a passion for the God and people of Israel. And reading Paul led others, like Augustine, in new directions. At the Reformation, reading Paul was decisive for the *Protestantism* of Luther and Calvin. In 18th century, reading Paul led Wesley to try to reform the CofE, but eventually he ended with a new Church, Wesleyan.

**The Catholic and Protestant Paul 5:** The two groups see Paul differently. For *Protestants*, Paul is the foundation of their theology. In reformation times, the 'protestant' *Luther* saw Paul's 'Saved by Grace' theology as joyful liberation from anxiety at not measuring up, so going to Hell etc. However, other 'protestants' claimed that belief in the *words* of Paul's teaching are essential for entry into 'Heaven'. This is still the case. But for Roman *Catholics*, Paul is a Saint, his letters are sacred, but not central to their beliefs or teaching.

Our aim here is to get Paul out of the *Reformation* world and into the historical *Roman* world where he belongs.

## Paul the Spoiler 8

Many people have very negative views of Paul: They say he is too theological and abstract. And since they do not understand Paul's situation in life, his letters mean little to them. And Paul was educated, the original Disciples not, so his take on Jesus was not the same as in the earliest times.

Passages from *some* letters said to be from Paul seem to endorse the subordination of women, to castigate homosexuality, and to support oppression by rulers.

As a result, some say that Paul systematically distorted the teaching of Jesus, that he converted the message and the actions of Jesus during his life into abstract teaching *about* the *person* of Jesus of his own invention.

This book says NO to all that. We admire Paul as the first writer on Jesus, and a creator of radical Christian communities across the Roman world.

## Meeting the real Paul again 11

Borg and Crossan's book is based on their views that some letters 'by Paul' are reliable, while some represent the later views of different authors using Paul's name. Note that none of our studies will suggest that *any* section of the *words* of the bible are *inerrant*, whatever that may mean in practice.

## Three Pauls 13

We suggest here that there are *three* types of 'Pauline letter'.

Of the authors of the 13 letters:

- Seven are *probably* by Paul: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 3 long letters; 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 4 short letters; We say that these seven letters represent the genuine *radical* Paul.
- Three are certainly NOT by Paul: The Pastorals, 1/2 Timothy and Titus: We say that these represent a *reactionary* 'Paul', nothing like the seven.
- Three are questionable, probably NOT by Paul: Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians. We say that they represent a *conservative* 'Paul'.

There is also a book mostly about Paul, but without his name on it, viz:

- *Acts of the Apostles*: This has a different aim, to show the successful spread of Christianity from Judea as far as Rome. Written by a 'Luke'.

We will use the *seven* letters of the *radical* Paul as the basis for his original teaching. We also use *Acts* where relevant. Note that the other letters ostensibly 'by Paul' often *oppose* the first seven in their teaching.

*Problem*: where Acts and the Letters overlap and don't agree, which is righter?

## Historical Context 16

We need to ask: What was happening at this time? What was the author relating to? What did the words and allusions mean to people at that time, the historical and literary setting? We see this context as three *concentric circles*.

## The Jew first but also the Greek 161

Paul says *all* people have *sinned*, that is, fallen short of the righteousness shown to the Jews in their covenant, and to the Gentiles in a good *creation*. However, righteousness is not achieved by *understanding* this (from the Law or from the wonder of creation), but by *doing* what is right. Paul speaks in the terms of his place in time. We may put it differently, but the failure remains.

## The Righteousness of God has been disclosed 164

How to bridge the gap between our ideal and what we actually do? Paul says: "The *righteousness* of God is granted for the *justification* of humanity through the *sacrifice* of Christ. "

Borg and Crossan say that this has been profoundly misunderstood. It is nothing to do with punishing Jesus for *our* sins. Let us interpret.

The *righteousness* of God is like the *distributive* justice of parents for their children. All receive equal portions,

The justification is not about enabling us to pretend that *we* are righteous, But it is our *transformation* "...from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18), following the pattern of Christ.

We participate in the *sacrifice*, the 'making sacred' of Christ's life and death, as we follow him "day by day". His life was a revelation of a non-violent God. We die with Christ to the violent normalcy of 'the world'.

## Justified by God's Grace as a gift 167

Paul says we are "Justified by God's grace as a free gift" (3:24) Not given a free *gift*, but freely *offered* the gift of grace. Just like the air: it is on *offer* to all, 'good' and 'bad', everywhere. We do nothing to merit it, we depend completely on it, we are free to reject it, or accept and use it as a *gift*. Paul says righteousness is the same. We can collaborate by free acceptance. We accept it through *faith* in Jesus as a pattern of God. However, 'faith' is not assent to a statement, but commitment to an ongoing programme. Faith is lived, not merely agreeing with statements.

## Apart from the Law, sin lies dead 169

Remember that in Paul, 'faith' means 'faith with resulting works'. The works inevitably follow from living by the precepts of the 'faith'.

He contrasts this with 'works', his shorthand for 'works without faith', giving an external impression of doing good works without any commitment to principles.

But what does Paul find wrong with 'Law' (general Law, not the Jewish Torah)?

## Chapter Six. Justification by Grace through Faith 155-183

These words are especially important to Protestants; both Luther and Calvin (original leaders) stressed being saved through *grace*, not *works*.

### Roman Paul, not reformation Paul 155

Borg and Crossan concentrate on the letter to the *Romans*, the only letter explaining his views fully. *Justification by Grace through Faith* forms the first section of *Romans*.

*Common misunderstandings*. That it is all about how to get to a 'Heaven'. And many protestants since the Reformation think Faith is about *beliefs* with a bit of works, compared with traditional 'works' (what clergy tell you to do). So they think it is all about faith *versus* works. *Wrong*.

Paul always talked of transforming *this* world. It was about faith in this great task, always with resulting works, against works without faith, eg thoughtless actions and the repetition of stock phrases.

Why should we see it this way?

Through getting Paul out of Reformation times and back into Roman times *we can better understand his message*. His message was for artisans, not scholars, not priests, and needed to be simple. Yet it was also profound.

### To heal a divided World 158

This is the main subject of *Romans*: To get rid of ALL injustice imposed by violence.

To reunify three divisions of the World's people:

1. Gentiles and Jews (Rom. 1:16 to 8:39)
2. Jews and Christians (Rom 9:1 to 11:36)
3. Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles (Rom.12:1 to 15:21)

Paul's words would be shocking to his Roman friends; in prescribing God's peace on Earth for *Rome*, against the Romans' belief in divinity incarnated in the Emperor.

You could read the Letter to the *Romans* while reading these notes.

### The Unity of Gentiles and Jews 159

The meaning of 'Righteousness' and 'Righteous':

We talk of 'Justice' and 'Just' but gloss over the real problem, *what sort of Justice?* and how achieved?

Nowadays justice mainly means *retributive punishment*

If so, how is it 'Good News'(Gospel) for anybody?

But there is another, *distributive*, justice: a just distribution of God's earth to all. To everyone, Jew and Gentile. Paul is really talking about this.

The *inmost circle*: the local community to which Paul wrote.

The *next circle*: The early Jesus movement within *Judaism*.

The *final (outer) circle*, the context within the *Roman Empire*.

*Note*: Paul's letters are not teaching *about* Jesus and his doings; his readers already knew about that. Except for those in Rome, Paul already knew all the communities he wrote to very well. So his letters are about *local problems*.

Paul was the original reader's friend and fellow member in the Jesus movement, known as '*The Way*'; together they looked for Jesus' meaning for Jews *and* Gentiles. Paul was totally Jewish, so we also need to know how the Gentiles (non-Jews) came in. All those he wrote to were under the power of the *Romans*, and Paul was executed by the Romans, like Jesus. Paul directly challenged the usual way of living in '*this world*', meaning the normal way of living under the Romans; that is, destroy anyone who gets in your way.

### A Jewish Christ Mystic 19

We say Paul was one of these. We define *Mysticism* as a vivid sense of union with God, an *illumination*, 'having the mind of God', an enlightenment. In 2 Cor.12:1-4 he describes a typical mystical experience.

Paul's (mystic) experience on the Damascus road changed his life. We have three descriptions of his experience. He says that he glimpsed *reality*, but "through a glass, darkly". His direct experience of the risen Christ led him to oppose Rome's ideas on how people should live.

### Chapter Two. How to read a Pauline Letter 29-58

How can we understand a letter which was *not* written to us?

Our book uses Paul's short letter to *Philemon* as an example.

*Philemon* is the owner of a former runaway slave, Onesimus, who has been doing important work for Paul in Rome. Paul is sending him back to his former owner with a request to treat him as a friend and equal, just as *Philemon* relates to Paul.

How can we convert a *letter* from Paul to *Philemon* into a *story* which helps us to understand Paul better?

We need to:

- Look critically at the letter itself.
- Compare it with what we believe to be Paul's genuine letters.
- Consider its implications within *diaspora* Judaism, the environment in which groups of Jews lived as communities *outside* Israel.
- And finally, consider the environment of such Jewish groups within the Roman Empire.

The focus of the *Philemon* letter is on the concept of *slavery*. '

Paul is making an emotional appeal to *Philemon*, that he should treat Onesimus, his former slave, as an equal. Our book claims that *Philemon* shows the genuinely *radical* Paul in action. When we look at the other letters of 'Paul', we see that he consistently promotes *equality for all* in those seven letters we consider to be his own.

In contrast, in letters *not* now attributed to Paul, *conservative* letters, e.g. *Colossians*, *Ephesians*, seem to accept slavery as normal, while a *reactionary* letter, *Titus*, unlikely to be by Paul, seems in direct contradiction to the view of slavery shown in *Philemon*. We must look harder at what *each* letter says.

### **The radical Paul on slavery** 31

- Conventional greetings: “From Paul and Timothy our brother (the scribe)”. This implies that Philemon is their brother and trusted associate.
- The meaning of “In my chains” is illustrated by another story from the same period, about a prisoner who was chained to a soldier ‘carer’. The carer could be bribed to make things easier. Even so, Paul is a prisoner, and might be killed at any time.

Paul makes clear the extent of his problems and his suffering, so his request to release Onesimus from slavery places enormous moral pressure on the owner Philemon, and is also cleverly argued.

### **The conservative Paul on Slavery** 45

To be fair, there were problems in releasing slaves: other slaves might flee, or turn on owners. So Paul’s original message was soon *tamed*, in both *Colossians* Col. 3.22 - 4:1, and *Ephesians* (probably copied from Col.). In both, the slave situation is seen as *normal*. But actually, even those views were liberal; no owner would allow someone even to speak to his slave.

### **The reactionary Paul on Slavery** *Titus* 2:9

In *Titus*, there is no advice to slaves, but to the masters only: “Tell slaves... to show complete fidelity...”

But is *Philemon* on Slavery special just in that specific topic?

Is Paul’s *radical* attitude related *only* to slavery? Consider *patriarchy*.

### **The radical Paul on Patriarchy** 48

Paul’s views on equality extend to wife/husband; to female/male in Christian groups, and to the female/male *leaders* of these groups.

Paul was ascetic and celibate himself, but insists on marriage rights for all others; there is equality of sexes in abstinence, divorce, virginity, and he deliberately balances advice between male and female.

However, we have a *problem* in 1 Cor 7. Is this a special situation, where married women are going about appearing as if unattached? Paul suggests that wearing the veil shows a marriage *commitment*, not *subjection*. It is only a custom, as a ring is today, but may it also have been useful to save confusion in local society?

### **The conservative Paul on Patriarchy** 53

*Colossians* and *Ephesians* talk of wives as subject to *husbands*, children subject to *fathers*, slaves subject to *masters*: an entirely different view.

### **The meaning of Atonement.**

This is precisely *a means of reconciliation*. Which presupposes a previous estrangement and a return. Nothing to do with Anselm’s paying a fine. What is the *extra* significance of the cross, if *not* substitutionary sacrifice? Paul had many ways of explaining atonement:

### **As a revelation of the character of the Empire.** 131

‘Christ crucified’ implies that Jesus was anti-imperialist. But He was not just killed. Crucifying was a form of death reserved for rejectors of the Roman domination: for Plotters against the state, State Terrorists. But Christians say that God has vindicated Jesus. He has said YES to Jesus, and NO to Roman power. This is the meaning of Resurrection.

The ‘wisdom of this world’, is what motivates the world’s (Roman) rulers. Their ‘domination system’ was founded on the new technique of large-scale Agriculture, which made food production not a necessary job for everyone, so that towns could arise, and their inhabitants could be dominated by *violent* Roman rulers. Jesus offered an *alternative way* of living for all people in community.

### **As a revelation of the Way to God; Participatory Atonement** 137

For Paul, Jesus’ death and resurrection is a *metaphor* for the change we can make in our own lives: *Galatians* 2:19-20: “I have been crucified with Christ; so it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”. We change our life by following Christ.

### **As revelation of God’s character** 141

Paul talks of Jesus dying for others, and as a ‘sacrifice’. Jesus as a *revelation* of God’s character, showing God’s passion for this world, being *ready* to die for *all* people. *Not* retributive justice for wrong done.

### **The Meaning of Resurrection: God has raised Jesus.** 147-154

Borg and Crossan do not believe that it was the purpose of God that Jesus should be born specifically to die on a cross as a substitute sacrifice for the sins of all humans.

He died at the hands of the Romans because there was no way that such a trouble maker, who preached a *radically different version* of the meaning of peace and justice, could come to Jerusalem at its busiest time (Passover) and be allowed to continue to present his case in the most public place, the Temple forecourt.

And the Jewish elders also wanted Jesus destroyed, because they had been made responsible for maintaining good order in Jerusalem, and they were directly responsible to Pontius Pilate for this job. His death was inevitable only in that he directly attacked those in control, both the ruling Jewish elite *and* their Roman masters.

## God as Householder of the Earth 112

Where did Paul's vision of equality come from?

Other Jews had said the same before: e.g. Philo: "Justice is the offspring of equality". Paul saw a loving God like a *Father*, a householder responsible for *all* his children, that is, *all* people. And caring for them all *equally*, which was very radical, not like the Greek and other earlier Gods.

### Problem: "Be subject to Governing Authorities" 116

Rome has produced peace through *violence*, conquest. How can peace come through distributive *justice*? Romans 13:1-7 seems difficult to justify: "Let everyone be subject to the governing authority...pay taxes..." Borg and Crossan suggest that Paul has overstepped in his caution to prevent Christians' violent opposition to tax gathering, which was widespread. It was more important to demonstrate the ideal of a Christian life than to die just for rioting over taxes.

### Alternative visions of Peace 120

The crucial difference between the programme of Caesar and Christ is between peace through *violent victory* and peace through *non-violent justice*.

## Chapter Five. Christ Crucified 123-154

These two words are the main message of the radical Paul.

Nowadays salvation is all about an afterlife. But Paul meant life *before* death. Christ died for ALL, not just for a few members of a Christian sect.

### Two things Misunderstood. 125

1. That there was nothing else in the message except about physical dying.

2. That Jesus died as a *substitute* for us. This idea was first detailed by Anselm of Canterbury in *Cur Deus Homo*, 11th Century His theory is:

- All people are disobedient, so all are sinners.
- Forgiveness requires *compensation* to be paid to God.
- But, he argues, the debt to God as infinite being is infinite, so no one finite can pay the price. Only Jesus as infinite and part of God can pay by his death. Then we can be forgiven.

*We suggest that this is bad history, bad anthropology, and bad theology.*

### Paul's Understandings of the cross 129

For Paul, *Crucifixion* always went with *Resurrection*.

The Cross on its own would mean nothing for Paul. It is given meaning only by the following Resurrection. Together they are a 'revelation' (model) of the nature of God.

## The reactionary Paul on Patriarchy 55

The Pastoral Letters, said to be to Timothy and Titus, junior colleagues of Paul, imagine Timothy in charge at *Ephesus*, and Titus as overseer in *Crete*. That is, they assume a stable church organisation typical of a much later date than the 60s when Paul himself was active. This implies that these letters were later than that, and *not* written by Paul.

The terrible text is 1 Tim. 2:11-15: "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission..." And yet, this nevertheless implies that *some* women were *not* submitting, even at the real *later* date of these two letters.

Finally, we must consider 1 Cor 14:33b-36. This is placed in a *radical* type of letter, but it seems to be a very *reactionary* statement. However, there is clear evidence that this is a later insertion, it doesn't fit well into its context, and is treated so in recent detailed textual versions.

*Note:* Women were clearly equal in *apostleship* in the earliest times. See Cor 1 16:7 re *Junia*, called an apostle. When the church later became male-dominated, there were attempts to say Junia was a *male* name. This was obviously nonsense.

### The Deradicalisation of Paul 57

So both slavery *and* patriarchy show Paul's message being 'tamed down' in writings later attributed to Paul, in conflict with his earlier letters.

## Chapter Three. The Life of a Long-distance Apostle 59-92

We use Paul's *radical* (we say therefore *genuine*) letters and also the Acts of the Apostles (by 'Luke'), remembering each authors' different aims and particular historical situation.

### Tarsus 59

From *Acts*, Paul was born in Tarsus, Cilicia, A Roman province, a frontier city, in both Greek and Semitic worlds; to the West, Asia minor, to the East, Israel and Egypt. He grew up with a strong work ethic, in a University city and in a Jewish synagogue. It is suggested that Paul also contracted his malaria "the thorn in the flesh" from local marshes.

There is no sign that *Acts*, written at the end of the first century, knows of Paul's letters from about 50AD. The writer of *Acts* had different objectives.

### Tarsus to Damascus 65

Paul's letters and *Acts* agree that he was a fervent Jew, a Pharisee. And he remained so. Forget the bad reviews of Pharisees in the gospels; they were 'zealous for God' and observed purity laws. *Acts* says Paul was taught in Jerusalem by Gamaliel, and was a Roman citizen: unlikely; *Acts* may be upgrading Paul. Why did he persecute Christians? Maybe because they said the Kingdom *has* come, that Gentiles can join, and there is no need to be specifically Jewish, while he himself was a fervent Jew.

## The Road to Damascus 69

Both *Acts* and *Letters* show that his experience on the journey was a turning point for Paul, but provide differing details about the event.

*The Vision of Christ: Acts* says Paul was *commissioned* to arrest dissident Jewish Christians in Damascus. This was not possible. Priests from Jerusalem had no trans-border power. But *Acts* always blames 'the Jews' for *everything*.

*Light from Heaven: Acts* says three times that Paul, on the road to Damascus, saw a light only, and heard the *voice* of Christ. Re Damascus, the *Letters* say Paul only saw Christ, realised what he had done, went off to Arabia to think, and then only *returned* to Damascus (where he had probably been persecuting Christian preachers when he had his vision)

*Paul as Apostle: In Acts*, 'apostle' means 'one of the twelve'. Paul is not one of them. But he is *sent* out by the Antioch church to help Barnabas on outreach, so he is an *apostle* in that sense (Greek *apostolos*='sent'). Paul claims in the *Letters* that he was directly made an apostle by God, even if "the least of them".

## The Nabatean mission 75

In *Galatians*, Paul says that after his vision he went immediately into **Arabia** for three years, but not why. *Acts* does not mention this, but afterwards *both* sources tell of his ignominious departure from Damascus (lowered in a basket). *Acts* says he got out because Jews plotted to kill him. But *2 Corinthians* tells a fuller story: Aretas (King of Nabateans) took Damascus from Herod Antipas (Jewish) while Paul was 'in Arabia', so Paul (Jewish) was soon forced out of Damascus when he returned to work there. The same facts in both letters, but different interpretations.

He then went into **Syria and Cilicia** (Paul tells the Galatians). Tarsus in Cilicia was Paul's home, did he go there to recover from failure in Arabia and Damascus? This is supported by *Acts*: "Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for 'Saul', and brought him to Antioch(Syria)". *Acts* says that Paul (Hermes) was junior to Barnabas(Zeus) and provides detail. *Suggestion*: The writer of *Acts* clearly had detailed journey notes on Barnabas, and assumed that Paul operated similarly. Barnabas *tried* to convert Jews along the way, but had more success with Gentiles. Did Paul get *that* message quickly?

At *Antioch*, the big question was whether the eucharistic meal should be kosher (Jewish OK food) for Jews *and* Gentiles. This was important for Paul later. Then Barnabas and Paul disagreed. Paul went off on his own, and focussed on major Roman *cities*. He tells us three times in *Galatians* that Peter would be the Apostle to the *circumcised*, while Paul would be for the *Gentiles*, as agreed at the council around AD 50. And the Gentile Christians could remain *uncircumcised*. So Paul would *never* go to synagogues and contact *Jews* as part of his mission (as told in *Acts*). But he *could* talk to the *gentile* 'god worshippers' who *also* went regularly to the synagogue. Their limited numbers, only in limited places (89) explains how he had by mid-50s 'done the East' and could then move to 'the West' .

Note that *all* Paul's readers seem assumed to be familiar with Judaism.

Paul's communities were small e.g. a total of 2000 people in the Roman Empire, in networks of friends. So a few dozen in a city. Meeting places small, no churches, but workshops. We don't know how often they met; Paul never told of a community's *regular* practice. Was *The Lord's Supper* commemoration weekly? We don't know.

We have to reconstruct history from the *radical* Paul letters only. The other letters, wrongly attributed to Paul, represent later developments, types of organisation and viewpoints in a variety of Christian local communities.

## Chapter Four. Jesus Christ is Lord 93

Before Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus (31BC-14BC) was given all the titles used later for Jesus. eg: *Divine, Son of God, God, God from God, Lord, Liberator, Redeemer and Saviour of the World* (Not just the Roman Empire), and *Atoner*.

So all these titles are familiar in official Roman theology.

What is the difference between the claims of Augustus about himself and of Paul on behalf of Jesus?

Our book shows the difference by quoting two inscriptions from 50s AD about Jesus Christ and Nero. Both are claimed to bring *Peace on Earth*.

What does Paul claim by this statement? Many quotes throughout his letters. "Peace comes through *justice and goodwill to all*."

What of Nero? Borg and Crossan visited Priene (in Turkey) and quote an inscription there, how "Nero saved all and brought Peace *by conquest*".

## Our Lord is THE Lord. 108

In Acts 25:25-27 Governor Festus writes to Herod Agrippa that he needs to know what Paul has done wrong so that he can write to "The Lord", Emperor Nero, and explain why he is sending Paul to him.

Paul uses two expressions for Jesus, "The Lord" and "Our Lord". He oscillates between the two in all his writings. This is on purpose. Calling Jesus "The Lord" implies that "Our Lord" Jesus *is* "The Lord", which implies that Emperor Nero is *not*. This is high treason, punishable by death, so Festus certainly has something to write to Rome about. The Roman vision of Peace is through military conquest, with the Emperor as "The Lord". So what does calling Jesus "The Lord" imply?

## The Justice of Equality in Christ Jesus 110

Paul's letter to the Galatians explains: "If you were baptised *into* Christ, there is no longer Jew or Greek, ... slave or free, ... male or female, for all are one *in* Christ Jesus".

All are equal *inside* the community, but that equality should spill over into all of life as well.



The Russian czar Paul I (1754-1801), the son and successor of Catherine the Great, reigned from 1796 until his assassination in 1801. Noted for his tyranny, he reversed many of his mother's policies. Born on Sept. 20, 1754, Paul I was the son of Emperor Peter III and Catherine the Great. One of his first legislative measures was the abolition of the arbitrary power of the czar to nominate his successor, a power that had contributed to political instability in 18th-century Russia.