

In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom

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This book "relates the apostle Paul to the Roman imperial world that surrounded him, the Jewish covenantal religion that formed him, and the Christian faith that enthralled him." x

Paul's Christian theology was non-violent, egalitarian

"In Paul's lifetime Roman emperors were deemed divine, and, first and foremost, Augustus was called Son of God, God, and God of God. He Was Lord, Redeemer, and Saviour of the World." x

"What is *newest* about this book is our insistence that Paul opposed Rome with Christ against Caesar, not because that empire was particularly unjust or oppressive, but because he questioned *the normalcy of civilisation itself*, since civilisation has always been imperial, that is, unjust and oppressive." x-xi

"Paul's essential challenge is how to embody communally that radical vision of a *new creation* in a way far beyond even our present best hopes for freedom, democracy, and human rights. The Roman Empire was based on the common principle of *peace through victory* or, more fully, on a faith in the sequence of *piety, war, victory, and peace*. Paul was a Jewish visionary following in Jesus' footsteps, and they both claimed that the kingdom of God was already present and operative in this world. He opposed the mantras of Roman normalcy with a vision of *peace through justice* or, more fully, with a faith in the sequence of *covenant, nonviolence, justice, and peace*." xi

"We argue that Paul went to Jewish synagogues not to convert Jews (despite those stories in the Acts of the Apostles), but to "unconvert" their pagan sympathisers." xi

Only attributes Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon to Paul.

Prologue: The Hope of a Peaceful Earth

"Never, however, was there greater progress made toward one single way of life, a thing to be fairly called "Roman civilisation of the Empire," than in that lifetime of Augustus... The natives would be taught, if it was not plain enough on its face, that they could better rise into the ranks of the master race by reforming themselves -- by talking, dressing, looking, and in every way resembling Romans. They would and did respond as ambition directed." Ramsay MacMullen q1

Reckons that Luke made up Paul's Pharisaic ancestry and Jerusalem education (and, later, Roman citizenship) --p.5

Paul "converted *not from Judaism to Christianity*, of course, but from *violent opponent and persecutor of pagan inclusion to non-violent proponent and persuader of pagan inclusion*." p.6

"It is a profound if standard mistake to dismiss Roman imperial theology as empty rhetoric, poetic hyperbole, or pragmatic flattery. It was, actually, the ideological core of Roman imperial power, the theological heart of Roman global rule." p.10

"Note, by the way, that Latin makes a distinction between *deus*, an eternal God like Jupiter, and a *divus*, a deified human like Julius Caesar. But Greek translates both terms with the same word, *theos*. Latin titles like *dei filius* ("Son of a God") and *divus filius* ("Son of a Divine One") appear, therefore, alike in Greek as *theou yios* or *theou hyios* ("Son of God")." 11

"If, in the early 1930s, some German Christians had called Jesus *der Führer*, we would know why they died at back." p.11

Chapter 1: Jewish Faith and Pagan Society

The *Theoi Sebastoi* are the Augustan gods (*Sebastos* is Greek for the Latin *Augustus*) 19

"Nudity, of course, was the Greek and Hellenistic way of iconographically indicating divinity; imperial nudity meant Imperial divinity." 19

"We do not accept that Paul always went first to the synagogue and tried to convert Jews to Jesus is the Messiah." 35

"Throughout Acts, Luke not only speaks of "Jews" and "pagan Gentiles," but also of a third group, an in-between group who are both/and rather than either/or. He calls those ambiguous individuals or groups "those fearing God" for "God-fearers" four times in Acts (10:2, 22, 35; 13:16; with the Greek verb *phobeō*). He also calls them "those worshipping" or "worshippers" four times (13:43, 50; 17:4, 17), and, more fully, "those worshipping God" or "God-worshippers" twice (16:14; 18:17; with the Greek verb *sebomai*). They are clearly distinguished from Jews, for example, in these phrases: "Israelites, and others who fear God" (13:16), "Jews and devout converts" (13:43), "Jews incited the devout women" (13:50), "Jews... devout Greeks" (17:1, four), or "Jews and the devout persons" (17:17)." 36

"Think, in other words, three concentric rings: an inner ring of Jews, whether born Jewish or converted; an intermediate ring of pagan sympathisers, whether ordinary or wealthy; and an outer ring of pagans, whether friendly or unfriendly." 37

"Luke's Acts often notes that the sympathisers were of high standing in their communities and that they involved women and men." 37

"Male reluctance to consider circumcision because of physical pain, medical infection, and social discrimination did not apply to women, and it would not be surprising to find more women than men among those sympathisers." 37

"Paul, then, did not go to those diaspora synagogues to convert fellow Jews within them, but to convert those semi-Jews around them. His focus was on those pagan *sympathisers* and, of course, he could only or most easily discover them at the synagogue. He was not failing with full Jews; he was succeeding with half-Jews. Of course there must also have been some full Jews and certainly many pure pagans who became part of Pauline communities, but their core was those sympathisers." 38

"The first and *major* hypothesis is that Paul's pagan or gentile mission focused primarily not on full Jews or pure pagans, but on those in-betweens known as God-fearers, God-worshippers, or, more simply, sympathisers (enemies might use some equivalent of nasty terms like hangers-on or fellow travellers). And that explains three basic aspects of Paul's life." 38-39

(1) "Paul's letters. Pick up any letter of Paul's and read a passage at random. How could a pure pagan or a community of pure pagans understand what on earth he was talking about? Even granting prior oral instruction and conversion to Christ, how could they understand those intensively Jewish arguments, those extensively Jewish concerns? But sympathisers, on the other hand, knew quite a bit about the Jewish religion's traditional faith, scriptural basis, and ritual requirements." 39

(2) "Paul's opponents. Again, if Paul was simply converting pure pagans to Christianity, even to Christian Judaism, why would Jews care? They could ignore or even deride him. Imagine Paul preaching exclusively or even primarily at Corinth to the pagan longshoremen who hauled ships and carried cargo across the isthmus from the northwestern harbour of Lechaion on the Corinthian Gulf to the southeastern harbour of Cenchreae on the Saronic Gulf. If that were his focus, why, on the one hand, would pure pagans care about their "freedom" from the Jewish law or, on the other, why would full Jews care about Paul's activities down there at the docks? But if his focus was on converting a synagogues sympathisers to Christianity, with the result of

stripping from Jews their intermediary buffer of support and protection, that would be socially explosive." 39-40

(3) "Paul's converts. The emphasis on God-worshippers as Paul's primary converts makes it unnecessary to postulate opponents following Paul from Galatia to Macedonia as a Christian-Jewish counter movement. In any given city, God-worshippers converted to Christianity would be told correctly by both other God-fearers and Jewish friends that it was theologically wiser and socially safer to convert fully, if such were their wish, but to Judaism rather than to Christianity. It was far better, God-worshipping males would have been told, to be full Jews than full Christians. As Jews they would be recognized, accepted, and protected by Rome, but as Christians they were followers of the leader executed by those same Romans. It is not necessary to have Paul followed by a countermission. His God-worshipping converts would have been inevitably pulled by their newer Pauline community in one direction and by their older synagogal contacts in another." 40

Luke probably a God-worship himself

Luke gives two very important examples -- Luke 7. 1-10 and Acts 10-11 -- of pagans who are very supportive of Judaism -- God-worshippers

"Through consulting the oracle's, plying the arts of augury, all interpreting signs in the heavens, flights of birds, or animal livers, priests and experts anticipated a city's or state's standing with the deities. They then participated in determining their fate by solidifying harmony (*concordia*) with the gods or creating peace with God's (*pax deorum*) by appeasing them with gifts, vows, and animal sacrifices." 46

"Since a city or state's fate hung in the balance, the priests' primary activity was butchering animals: stunning the creature with a mallet, slitting its throat to spill the blood, cutting up the animal, then burning some for the gods and drizzling it with wine, while setting aside other pieces for themselves or for distribution or even sale to the local community. In some ways, sacrifice was a civic performance with procession, pomp, and song, but it was also a civic feast, an open-air barbecue that for many was a rare chance to eat meat. And it not only bonded community and deity, it also bonded community members together and articulated clearly their social hierarchy." 46-47

"*ekklēsia* for that somewhat democratic deliberative body of a Greek city, is by the way, the same word that Paul uses in his letters and that we translate as "church."" 47

"Among the thousands of inscriptions discovered by French archaeologists on Delos, many document what scholars call congregational cults or voluntary associations. In the cosmopolitan and mobile Mediterranean world, these voluntary associations (*collegia* in Latin and the *thiasoi* or *koina* in Greek) were a widespread phenomenon in urban settings, and they especially attracted merchants and freed men." 47

"In the cultic aspect they provided a framework for worship of a particular god or gods and the offering of sacrifices to ensure continual divine patronage, and in their congregational aspect they offered social contacts and protected commercial interests." 47

These congregational cults met together in their own temples, had meals together etc.

Proseuchē even though it means "prayer" was a synonym for synagogue. 52

"According to many comments by pagan authors, Jews distinguished themselves by observing the Sabbath, which often precluded them from military service; by abstaining from pork, which kept them from many civic religious feasts; and by practising circumcision, which identified their males quite clearly in the nakedness of the public baths." 54-55

The Goddess Roma. "There was no Roman-prescribed formula for acknowledging its divine right to rule or for worshipping its imperial power. Instead, without replicating any exact precedence or practice in the city of Rome, communities throughout the eastern Mediterranean adopted the worship of Roman power as part of their local traditions in different ways. Some cities added regular festivals called *Romaia* to their calendars and celebrated them with games and sacrifices, others erected statues and altars to those Roman statesman who sponsored or governed them, and still others set up cults to the Roman People. But perhaps the most common act of reverence was the public worship of the personification of Rome itself, *Dea Roma*, the Goddess Roma." 59

"Many cities that came under Roman rule adopted Roma into their local pantheons." 59

"The religious interaction cannot be viewed solely in terms of provincial responses to Rome. People were not just attracted to things Roman; Romans were also attracted to things not Roman." 61

- spread of the worship of goddess Athena from East to Rome
- spread of the worship of Isis -- "Across the Mediterranean world, Isis was exceeding her husband's popularity, and though originally the "mistress of the house of life" and goddess of maternity and infancy, often showing breast-feeding Horus on her lap, she later took on a more universal character when she moved toward Rome. Isis absorbed a wide array of attributes, becoming the dispenser of life, protector of families, guardian of the fields, and healer and deliver of those who sought her. She was considered the mistress of the universe who offered salvation by overturning fate, and her multiplicity led to the epithet "Isis invoked by innumerable names."" 64-65

"Isis made it onto the official civic-religious calendar by the middle of the first century, and her festival was celebrated each year from October 28 to November 1." 67

"By the end of the first century, she was even wed to the emperor cult, and Domitian refurbished the Iseum after a fire in 80 C.E." 67

Chapter 2: An Appealing or Appalling Apostle

Two Visions of World Peace

The Altar of Augustan Peace -- shows the sequence of piety (Aeneas), war (Mars), victory (Roma), and peace (fertility). 71

"The fall Latin text of Augustus's political autobiography, the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (*res gestae* means "things done," accomplishments, achievements -- hence *Acts of the Divine Augustus*),..." 72

Contrast Paul's peace

"The basic questions, therefore, are about means and not just ends, about methods and not just slogans, about the specific content of vision and the precise content of program. What was the difference in content between the free gift of divine grace as seen by the emperor of the Romans and as seen [74 begins] by the apostle to the Gentiles? How exactly did the peace of Rome differ from the peace of God? How exactly did the peace of the Lord Caesar Augustus, divine and Son of God, differ from the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, also divine and also Son of God?" 73-74

"This entire book is about the clash between those alternative visions of world peace. One is Augustus's vision, following civilisation's normalcy, of *peace through victory*. The other is Paul's vision, following Jesus's radicality of *peace through justice*. In this chapter we begin that comparison by focusing on one crucial element in each visionary program -- on *hierarchy* within the scenario of global victory and on *equality* within that of global justice." 74

Example of Crossan's liberalism: "we next look at the later pseudo-Pauline inserts or texts asserting inequality for women in marriage, assembly, and apostolate. Those changes deliberately muted the radicality of Paul's Christian equality back to inequality for women in marriage, assembly, and apostolate." 75

"These three themes are characteristic of Augustus's rule and revolution, and he might well have stated in with the terseness of his adoptive father, Julius Caesar: *I restored, I expanded, I consolidated*. First, Augustus restored the Republic and the *pax deorum*, or peace with the gods, and led a return to traditional Roman piety. Second, Augustus expanded the forum, the city, and the Empire. And third, Augustus consolidated into a single worldwide empire both those Romans defeated in the civil wars and those nations and peoples conquered in imperial wars. He expanded Roman rule across the Latin *orbem terrarum*, the entire world, and made Rome the capital of the civilised world, the Greek *oikoumenē*." 76

"Augustus revived traditional piety, reactivated ancient Roman rites, and reinstated lapsed priestly offices as a means of restoring the *pax deorum*, or peace with the gods, and he himself took the leading role in this religious renewal. According to his Acts, Augustus "restored eighty two temples of the gods in the city,... neglecting none that needed restoration at that time"(20.4)." 83

"The standards' restoration played an important role in Augustus's pictorial programme, since it symbolised how *piety* resulted in *victory* and how victory led to a vast expanded Empire, a growth that not only confirmed Augustus's stature as *princeps*, "leading citizen," but also justified his programme of religious revival." 85

"The international or cosmopolitan character of the *imperium* was also achieved in the Augustan Forum by the many allusions to that first divinized world conqueror, Alexander the great." 87 ... point of these was "Augustus was the new divine ruler of the new world order." 88

"... the greatest spectacle of Augustus's reign, the Saeculum Games held in 17 B.C.E. on the Campus Martius. This great celebration involved three days and nights of religious rites and theatrical games, followed by another week of entertainment. It marked the passing of one era, or *saeculum*, and the dawning of a new one." 99

"A footnote. In the translation above we have retained the title *imperator*, which is usually translated into English as "emperor." But when Augustus's *Acts* proclaim, "I was twenty-one times saluted as *imperator*" (4.1), you realise that "emperor" will not work as a translation. A victorious general was acclaimed by his soldiers as *imperator*, meaning winner, victor, conqueror. Think of victorious legions beating out *im-pe-ra-tor* with the sword on shield and understand that something like "world conqueror" is a better translation of an "emperor." Once again, first victory, then everything else follows. 102

"There was also, however, another first-century proposal for a restoration, expansion, and consolidation of the earth. It came not from paganism, but from Judaism, not from Augustus and the Julio-Claudians, but from Jesus, Paul, and first Christians." 104

"The problem is whether that pseudo-Pauline history and theology is in valid continuity with Paul himself or is, as we will argue, an attempt to sanitise a social subversive, to domesticate a dissident apostle, and to make Christianity and Rome say for one another." 106

There were two main options available to a runaway slave in the first century -- first, flight to a god's temple; second, flight to an owner's friend -- preferably, a superior who could tell his friend, the slave master, what to do. "That was most likely what Onesimus did, and he too fled "upward," fled to the man who had converted his master to Christ." 108

"Paul speaks explicitly of only one single case, but his implicit principle extends across all of Christianity. Under God and in Christ, the firstborn Son of the Father, all Christians are equal with one another as children in that divine family." 110

"That basic Pauline principle of equality among Christians applies not just to slavery, but patriarchy as well." 110

"In summary, therefore, and on every subtopic concerning celibacy and marriage, Paul speaks deliberately and overtly in terms not just of mutuality, but of equality. 111

Crossan argues that Paul goes for equality in every direction and that subsequent pseudo-Pauline writers tried to reverse his radical egalitarianism.

Chapter 3 the Golden Age, or As Golden As It Gets

One of the most significant changes in the Golden Age concept at Augustus' time is that the Golden age comes to connote a social order rather than a paradisiac state of indolence. 124

Seneca's essay *On Clemency*... is the first work to articulate the Golden Age ideology systematically as a whole. The essay was written early in Nero's reign [mid-50s C.E.], at a time of renewed interest in the Golden Age theme... Given Seneca's position as the emperor's mentor, it may in some sense be taken as an expression of the "official line."... Seneca assumes the basic sinfulness of mankind, its *scelus* ... Secondly, the presence of the emperor provides the only possible hope of escape... Thirdly, however, for the emperor to succeed and saviour he must practise clemency.... Fourthly, Nero has already demonstrated his natural predisposition towards mercy by his unwillingness to execute criminals; the preconditions are thus fulfilled for the Golden Age to return.... In Pauline Christianity... it is Christ, not the emperor, who acts as the mediator between heaven and sinful mankind. It is Christ not the emperor who has the power to undo *scelus*, sin, by his grace or *clementia*, forgiveness. It is faith, allegiance, voluntary submission to Christ that will bring about or make ready for the return of Paradise, original innocence. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology*, 1982 – quoted 124-5

The Divinity of the World Conqueror 125

From Alexander to Augustus, the world conqueror establishes cosmic peace through global victory. And that both necessitates and confirms a transcendental birth from a human mother, but a divine father. Such origins and such triumphs, promise not just universal peace, but utopian or eschatological peace in a world transfigured by farms that do not fail, animals that do not attack, and humans who do not kill. 128

Rome's Golden Age had brought to Thessalonica "peace and security." But, says Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, it was all delusion. It was God's Golden Age that had begun, and it would be climaxed *soon* by the arrival (Greek *parousia*) not of a divine Claudius, but of a divine Christ. But what, asked his new Thessalonians converts, about those who had died there under Roman persecution? Just as the honoured dead in their stately tombs would first greet an emperor arriving along the main road into the city even before the living dignitaries met him at the gate, so the martyred dead be first to greet the arriving Christ. Their death would not disadvantage that advantage them at that *parousia*. 128

Paul stood astride between Judaism and paganism, between Jewish covenantal eschatology and Roman imperial eschatology, between Christian and Augustan utopian visions, each announcing not just the imminent advent of the Golden Age, but proclaiming that it had already begun. 129

It is fair to say that, as we saw in chapter 2, the Roman eschaton was peace through victory while the Jewish utopia was peace through justice. A *shalom* from the heart of the Jewish tradition opposed a *pax* from the core of the Roman Empire. 129

Virgil's *Eclogue 4* is the voice of ecstatic hope written in the glow of October 40 B.C.E, when Anthony married Octavian's sister Octavia and permanent peace seemed possible. 130 (DF - male child to be born, fertility, peace, -- across the whole world.)

Compare this with Isaiah -- perfect ruler perfect peace among humans, perfect peace among animals etc

Eschatological options: "furthermore, Israel's utopian eschatology could be articulated with or without an apocalypse, or revelation, of its permanent content in heaven or its imminent advent on earth and with or without a messianic protagonist, a transcendental figure through whom the Golden age would arrive. But here the alternatives multiply. God could also do it without any such help; God alone could do it directly and immediately. And if there were such a Messiah, it could be an angel or a human and, if human, it could be a king, a priest, or a profit. Or some combination of those preceding options." 133

Bodily resurrection... there was, however, one special theme within Jewish apocalyptic eschatology that would have struck Greco-Roman paganism as utterly alien and totally absurd, namely, the general bodily resurrection. Where did that come from and why? It came from one very general background and one very specific foreground. First, the general background. Jewish covenantal face believed that the world was created in goodness by a God who was just. It must therefore be administered fairly and equitably for itself... if, therefore, you imagine a this-earthly Utopia or a this-worldly eschaton, you have to think about transfigured bodies and not just about disembodied spirits or immortal souls. But all of that was but a very general focus on world, earth, and body. Second, the specific foreground. In the 160s B.C.E., the Syrian monarch Antiochus IV Epiphanes launched a religious persecution against those Jews who resisted his enforced colonisation and urbanisation of the Jewish homeland. Where, many Jewish writers asked, was God's justice when martyrs were being brutalised, tortured and murdered? There would have to be, some Jewish writers answered, the day of global reckoning, the tribunal of cosmic justice, a general bodily resurrection in which those who had suffered in the flesh could be openly, publicly, and officially declared vindicated by the just God for whom they had died. In other words, the general bodily resurrection was not about the survival of individuals, but about the justice of God. The chant was this: God will overcome some day. And soon! 134 -- see 2 Maccabees 7: 9-11

Cosmic transformation, yes, but bodily resurrection also. It was a matter of divine justice. 135

His father's star. The young Octavian grasped one astrological phenomenon early in his life and stressed its cosmic significance ever afterward. Immediately after Julius Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March in 44 B.C.E. the eighteen-year-old Octavian brushed aside senatorial opposition and celebrated games honouring the slain Caesar's victory that July. That proved to be impeccable timing. When a comet appeared in the sky, Octavian urgently promoted and the people willingly accepted it as the apotheosis of Julius Caesar, now divine and taking his place among the heavenly guards.... Octavian displayed that star everywhere as he vied for power with Anthony. It is engraved on ring gemstones and pressed into clay seals and cheap glass beads, but it is found especially on Collins whose legends made the logical conclusion that, if Julius Caesar was now

divine, his adopted son Octavian was therefore "son of a divine one" or "son of God." The title is variously abbreviated from DIVI FILIUS as DI FI, DIVI F, or DIVI FI. Whatever opposing senators might have thought, Octavian was the self-proclaimed and popularly acclaimed divine son, and when Roman sacred law deified Julius Caesar in 42 B.C.E., Augustus's status had legal sanction. 136-137

Finally and above all, Suetonius's *The Lives of the Caesars* tells in *The Deified Augustus* how he was conceived of a human mother, Atia, but a divine father, Apollo (94.4). 139

Interactive eschaton. The Golden age involved, as that Divine Saviour himself insisted, not feral serenity, and laboured fertility, and passive indolence, but activity, involvement, and participation. 141... Augustus's programme was an active utopia, an interactive eschaton. It was not just hope for the future, but promise for the present. And anyone who wished to counter it would have to offer not just hope for a possible future, but promise for the visible present. Enter Paul, then, a generation later and from a background in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, which he pointed straight at the heart of that Roman imperial eschatology so relentlessly emphasised by Augustus's successors. It was a cosmic clash of gods, lords, and saviours, a global struggle not just between future possibilities, but between present actualities, a debate in which exactly the same words have absolutely different meanings. 141-142

... we stress that the pervasiveness of Roman imperial theology's emperor cult across the Mediterranean was one of the key features of Paul's world. It consolidated the various parts of empire into a single whole and was the glue that held the *oikoumenē* or civilised world, together. 142

We do not assume that "the emperor cult" or "the imperial cult" ever existed as a monolithic entity, since the archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence reveals a striking diversity of forms for honouring and worshipping the contemporary supreme and divine Roman. 142

For freed slaves and urban partisans, there were, in the name of Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, or Claudius, philanthropic benefits like free theatrical shows or gladiatorial games as well as public feasts that distributed sacrificial meat and even complimentary drinks to lubricate the social graces. 143

In short, the imperial cult created an urban civic life that, in one direction, demanded loyalty to emperor and stability of empire and obtained, in the other, economic and political benefit, but perhaps most important, social recognition and communal honour at the local level. 143

Nero became Caesar after Claudius's death, but he was the last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. 151

Augustus, of course, was four ways divine, by ancestral descent from Venus and Anchises, by miraculous conception from Apollo and Atia, by paternal adoption from the divine Julius Caesar, and by official decree from the Roman Senate. 160

Imperial divinity was, quite simply, the ideology that held the Roman empire together and the theology that allowed Greek pride and tradition gracefully to accept Roman law and order. 160

Our proposal is that Paul went to the synagogue not for the Jews, but for those pagan sympathisers, and it is precisely his focus on those semi-pagan or semi-Jewish sponsors, protectors, and patrons that would obviously have infuriated Jewish synagogue members. 164

One of the most striking aspects of 1 Thessalonians is the number of Pauline terms that were religio-political in a world where those two aspects of power were never separated at any depth.... they were an expression is absolutely guaranteed to prick up Romanised ears and raise Romanised eyebrows. And, when they were heard, they would have engendered serious suspicion about Pauline intentions. 165

Ecclesia... the word originally meant the citizens of a free Greek city officially assembled for self governmental decisions. 166

Lord

What do you mean, the city's leaders might have asked, by talking about one single, unique gospel (*euangelion*) over against the plural "good news" (*euangelia*) about dynastic successions and imperial victories from Rome? And finally there is this one most inflammatory phrase. "When they say, 'There is peace and security,'" writes Paul in 5:3, "then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come up on a pregnant woman, and will be no escape!" But the mantric slogan of "peace and security," seen, for example, on an altar from Italian Praeneste... was precisely what Rome promised and delivered to its conquered provinces. There is, Paul says, an imminent catastrophic threat to that Julio-Claudian serenity, and

he openly mocks its imperial complacency. Then, there is this next example, maybe the most significant in the entire letter. 167

"We will be with the Lord for ever": "in its ancient context *parousia* meant the arrival at a city of conquering general, an important official, an imperial emissary, or, above all, the emperor himself. Whether that advent was good or bad news for the citizens depended absolutely on their prior relationship with the arriving one. It is probably necessary in those cases to translate *parousia* not just as "visit," but as "visitation." 167

A visitation from the emperor was a very special occasion for any given city and quite possibly a once-in-a-lifetime event. In times of war it was of course a threatening advent, as in the above story, but under the *Pax Romana*, an imperial visitation would usually be a happy occasion. It demanded tremendous preparation for civic sacrifice, aristocratic festivity, and popular celebration, but especially a formal greeting by elites and people at the submissively opened gates of the city. Notice Paul's use of those technical terms for visitation and reception. He uses *parousia* for "our Lord Jesus at his *coming*" in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, "the *coming* of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" in 3:13, "the *coming* of the Lord" in 4:15, and "the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ" in 5:23. He uses *apantēsis* for when the Thessalonians questions will "*meet* the Lord in the air" and his *parousia* in 4:17. That metaphor controls the entire discussion. 168

First of all, the metaphor of formal urban visitation gives Paul a powerful visual answer to the question of the Thessalonians. Any important visitor coming along the major road to an ancient city would first meet the dead before they were greeted by the living. 169... second, the *parousia* metaphor means that Christians do not ascend to stay with Christ in heaven, but to return with him to this transformed world. Paul says nothing about an eschatological world or utopian earth here below, but simply that all believers "will be caught up in the clouds... to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever." The metaphor of *parousia* as state visit would presume that those going out to greet the approaching ruler would return with him for festive rejoicing within their city. So also with Christ. Paul probably took it for granted that all together would then descend to dwell upon a purified earth. The *parousia* of the Lord was not about destruction of earth and relocation to heaven, but about a *world* in which violence and injustice are transformed into purity and holiness. And, of course, as mentioned above, a transformed world which demand not just spiritual souls, but renewed *bodies*. 170

The past is history, the future is prophecy, but the present is experience. *To claim that God has already begun to transform this earth into a place of divine justice and peace demands that you can show something of that transformative activity here and now. To which Paul would have replied unabashedly: to see God's transformation in process, come and see how we live.* 174

Crossan goes on to describe how he thinks that looks in Paul's view and it's all about love as sharing, "a fair and equitable sharing". "What better deserves the title of a new creation than the abnormalcy of a share-world replacing the normalcy of a greed-world?" 176

Chapter 4: Blessings for All the Earth

"Just as the Romans planted colonies of retired soldiers about the world, which were really little bits of Rome sets down on foreign soil, so the Jewish colonies in the various big cities might be compared to little bits of Jerusalem in a foreign country." H V Morton, 1936

"Only three Roman cities in central Anatolia outside the province of Asia have yet been excavated on a substantial scale: Ancyra, Pessinus, and Pisidian Antioch. In each case the central feature of these excavations has been a temple dedicated to the imperial cult, built in the time of Augustus or Tiberius." Stephen Mitchell, 1993

"Paul, of course, announced a different saviour for a different world, a different salvation for a different earth, a different God and Son of God for a different creation. He proclaimed Jewish covenantal *shalom* against Roman imperial *pax*. 183

"We start with generalities about Romanization. Its two foundations were the creation of cities, especially those for disbanded soldiers (*coloniae*), and their adornment by the good works (*euergetism*), of local aristocrats, legionary veterans, and foreign immigrants." 183

Three constructional phases - roads and ports, temples and statues, aqueducts and baths.

We focus on two devices, three stages, and four examples of that imperial transformation. And, of course, as the blessings of Rome flowed eastward along legionary roads to consolidate the world into one empire (*imperium*), Paul was coming westward along those same legionary roads with the alternative blessings of Abraham to convert the world into one very different assembly (*ekklesia*). These are the blessings, then, at whose is the world?" 185

"*COLONIAE*. In modern usage the colony is any foreign territory conquered and controlled by an empire. But in Roman usage a *colonia* was a city and its rural hinterland founded or refounded for legionary veterans or disbanded soldiers, and that is our meaning here. Julius Caesar had founded a series of *coloniae*, or colonies, abroad, but Augustus more intensively and more intentionally urbanised those recently conquered territories. Tiberias continued that process - Caligula's short reign and self-obsession stalled the process - but his successors, Claudius and Nero, and more than made up for him. They all pursued what Michael Mann ... has called a *territorial* empire, an empire that functionally integrated and operationally unified all of its acquired territories. Their policy was to consolidate the provinces into a single cohesive whole, and to do so the Julio-Claudians either founded new colonies or refounded existing cities by giving them new constitutions, adding buildings, and, very often, renaming them in honour of the Emperor or members of the imperial family. ... [two aims in the Roman *civitas* - both functional and ideological]: One was to use cities as administrative centres for supervising the production and distribution of local and regional resources. That also, of course, meant taxation flowing back to Rome. The other one was to build communities by creating for the empire's urban populations a common form of civic life, a common set of civic buildings, and a common Roman cult show. That also, of course, meant loyalty flowing back to Rome." 185

"The Roman roads expressed the Roman outlook on the world. They did not meander along the contours of geography, but often cut across all bridged over natural obstacles, displaying the emperor's ability even to subdued topography and dominate nature ... They were marked with milestones that along with distances and dates always proclaimed *IMP. CAESAR DIVI F.*, "Imperator Caesar, Son of God." They also served as reference points in Roman spatial imagination. In 20 B.C.E. Augustus set up in the Roman Forum beside Saturn's temple the Golden Milestone (*milliarium aureum*), which was the starting point of all the imperial roads and recorded distances from all the empire's great cities. That milestone made Rome the centre of the world, whatever Greeks might say about Delphi or Jews might think about Jerusalem." 187

"STATUES AND TEMPLES. The second wave of Romanisation was not just the peculiarity of the emperor cult, but the panoply of Roman imperial theology. The emperor cult, again? By now you may be tired of that whole subject. It has come up, one way or another, in every section of this book, and it will do so until the very end. If we have overwhelmed you somewhat, we have achieved no more than the cumulative effect of all those imperial images and institutions on city dwellers across the Roman Empire. We do insist, however, that the term "emperor cult" is much too narrow. That was, certainly, the core of Roman imperial theology, but, for example, you could hardly take Christian mediaeval theology and call it a "Christ cult". It was that, of course, but only as the centre of an entire world of meaning. What we stress throughout this book is not the isolated peculiarity of emperor worship, but the integrated universality of imperial theology." 188

"Jewish tradition had long announced a future day when God would end the evil, injustice, and violence that relentlessly destroyed God's world and pressed God's people. There would then be, here below upon this earth, a magnificently utopian (end-of-this-place) or eschatological (end-of-this-time) world." 217

"two divine solutions concerning the nations, the Gentiles... extermination... conversion"

Referring to Paul's theology, "It is not possible to overemphasise the novelty and profundity of those two creative steps. First, the eschatological climax was to be an age and not just an instant, a processing time and not just an end of time. Second, in this new epoch the human and the divine were to cooperate with one another." 219

In the light of Galatians 5: 6, "It is not a clash between *faith* and *works*, but between *faith-works* and *law-works*." 221

In Galatians 3, "Paul continues with a linked barrage of seven biblical proof-texts rather than a sustained exegesis of Genesis 15."

Gal 3.6 = Gen 15.6

Gal 3.8 = Gen 12.3, 18.18

Gal 3.10 = Deut 27.26

Gal 3.11 = Hab 2.4

Gal 3.12 = Lev 18.5

Gal 3.13 = Deut 21.23

Gal 3.16 = Gen 13.15, 17.8

"It is almost impossible to imagine pure ex-pagans reading or hearing this letter or that argument. Paul's Galatian assembly must have contained a very large core of God-worshippers. And, of course, that group's males would also be most vulnerable to a demand for circumcision and Torah. Second, it is not necessary to imagine Paul followed everywhere by Jewish *Christian* [DF emph] countermissionaries demanding circumcision and kosher practices from his converts. That is possible but hardly necessary. If the core of his assemblies were God-worshippers, their former Jewish friends, associates, and colleagues would have tried to bring them back to synagogue loyalty. *If* you want to move beyond God-worshippers and become *full* members of God's people, they would have said with both plausibility and sincerity, you should convert not to Christianity, but to Judaism. That would be theologically better and socially safer -- we at least have a country, a tradition, and a history with the Romans." 227

Chapter 5: Goddesses, Gods, and Gospels

"The absent inscription is the fullest example of two documents known also from several other provincial cities of the Roman province of Asia. They contain the earliest and most striking instances of the term "gospel" or "good tidings" (*euangelia*) used for Augustus in Roman imperial theology. And they contain in detail why exactly their content is good news for all creation. The texts given below are composite scholarly reconstructions integrating the Priene version with fragments discovered in four other Asian cities, for example, Apamea, where it was dug out of a garden in the mid-1920s.

The first part records how Paulus Fabius Maximus, Rome and Governor of Asia, proposed to the Asian League of cities that they change their calendar so that Augustus's birthday would be henceforth New Year's Day. Here are some key lines from his letter:

[It is a question whether] the birthday of the most divine Caesar is more pleasant or more advantageous, the day which we might justly set on a par with the beginning of everything, in practical terms at least, in that he restored order when everything was disintegrating and falling into chaos and gave a new look to the whole world, a world which would have met destruction with the utmost pleasure if Caesar had not been born as a common blessing to all. For that reason one might justly take this to be the beginning of life and living, the end of regret at one's birth ... It is my view that all the communities should have one and the same New Year's Day, the birthday of the most divine Caesar, and that on that day, 23rd September, all should enter their term of office.

The second part records the enthusiastic response and official decree establishing that calendrical change for everyone, but especially for the start of all civic magistracies. You can easily imagine the competitive public celebrations that all those simultaneous inceptions necessitated. Here again are some key lines:

Since the providence that has divinely ordered our existence has applied her energy and zeal and has brought to life the most perfect good in Augustus, whom she filled with virtues for the benefit of mankind, bestowing him upon us and our descendants as a saviour -- he who put an end to war and will order peace, Caesar, who by his epiphany exceeded the hopes of those who prophesied good tidings (*euangelia*), not only outdoing benefactors of the past, but also allowing no hope of greater benefactions in the future; and since the birthday of the god first brought to the world the good tidings (*euangelia*) residing in him ... For that reason, with good fortune and safety, the Greeks of Asia have decided that the New Year in all the cities should begin on 23rd September, the birthday of Augustus ... and that the letter of the proconsul and the decree of Asia should be inscribed on a pillar of white marble, which is to be placed in the sacred precinct of Rome and Augustus. (*SEG* 4.490; translation from Braund, 122) 238-240

"In the Roman province of Asia, to take just those two Priene inscriptions, the Divine Augustus was not just lord of empire and earth, but also of calendar and time. Lord of history, therefore, since there never was before nor ever would be a gain good news or gospel (plural *euangelia*) surpassing that which announced his birth. In every city of rich Roman Asia there was decreed, for all time past, present, and future, but one overwhelming gospel, the good news of Augustus's advent, epiphany, and presence, the good news of a global Lord, divine Son, and cosmic Saviour." 241

"This chapter is about the contrast between divine control and divine uncontrol, between the normalcy of *imperial*, or self-glorifying, divinity and the challenge of *kenotic*, or self-emptying, divinity." 242

Roman religion was of the state, for the state, and therefore controlled by the state. Cicero's *On the Laws* recites the standard Roman attitude that "no one shall have gods to himself, either new gods or alien gods, unless recognized by the State" (2.19)." 250

"Deep down beneath an Augustus or a Jesus, a Paul or a Nero, two giant tectonic plates ground relentlessly against one another in that first century. Each was formed from a powerfully creative transmutation within prior tradition, one within paganism, the other within Judaism. The tectonic plate of Hellenistic tradition mutated under the Roman challenge until, at least for many, Caesar's apotheosis meant not just the promise, but the start of the world's salvation, redemption, and justification. The tectonic plate of Judaism mutated under the Christian challenge until, at least for some, Christ's resurrection meant not just the promise, but the start of the world's salvation, redemption, and justification." 270 -- 271

"The first and more obvious challenge is to Roman imperial theology as the normalcy of civilisation in its own time and place. The hymn subverts and even lampoons how millions within the Roman Empire took it for granted that somebody with the "form of God" should act." 289

"Would all have been the same if Jesus had become a leper, suffered for years of humiliation or rejection, and finally died alone and in agony? We think Paul would have insisted that the cross was not just slow, terrible, or humiliating suffering, but also official, legal, and formal Roman public execution. That displayed unmistakably in Christ the clash of gods and Gospels between Jewish covenantal justice and Roman imperial normalcy." 290

A single upward motion from humanity to divinity, as with the divine emperor, tells us more about humanity and divinity. But a double motion, from divinity to humanity to divinity, first downward and then upward, tells us more about divinity than humanity. The "form of God" given up by Jesus could hardly be different from the very form of God itself. Is kenosis, therefore, not a passing exercise in the ultimate obedience, but a permanent revelation about the nature of God? After all, Paul insisted that Christ was the "image of God" (2 Cor. 4.4). Does, then, a kenotic Son reveal a kenotic Father, a kenotic Christ image a kenotic God?" 290

Chapter 6: Who and What Controls Your Banquet?

"Patronal relations were the ethical mainspring and moral bedrock of the Roman world. They were utterly presumed and ubiquitously normal, just as democratic processes or commercial advertisements for us. Patronage permeated every level of society, from gods to emperors, emperors to countries, aristocrats to cities, and, indeed, from any have to any have-not. Think of our own still more or less acceptable *political patronage*, enlarge it to structure all of society at every level, consider it morally right, and you have the Roman system. It was needed by rulers, praised by philosophers, proclaimed by inscriptions, and used by everyone." 297

"A kenotic community begets equality, a patronal community begets inequality; kenosis begets cooperation, patronage begets competition." 334

2 Cor 11, "that is a marvellous and humourous finale. The Roman legionary soldier who swore he was first over the enemy's city walls received the *corona muralis*, a battlemented gold crown for conspicuous bravery. I got, says Paul, in climaxing this lampoon of superior achievements, the *corona ex-muralis*, for getting away safely, for being first over the wall in the opposite direction." 337

"There is, insists Paul, only one meaningful the term *resurrection*, namely, the *general bodily resurrection* at the end of this evil aeon when God raises all the dead for judgement in lead to transforming this earth into eschatological perfection and utopian peace. Since this great future moment will not destroy but transform the world, will not and null creation but perfected, will not take earth to heaven but heaven to earth, there must be, first and above all, a great scene of public justice. ... Paul adds in the stunningly original adaptation, the totally original variation, the utterly creative revision that Christian Judaism had already made to that Pharisaic theology. That's general bodily resurrection *has already begun* with the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and therefore bad start and finish, that beginning and ending, stand or fall together." 342

"For Paul, a "spiritual body" is not just a square circle, but the normal human body transformed by the Spirit of God" 343

"The general bodily resurrection was, first of all, about the justice of God amid the goodness of creation here below upon a transformed earth, and, second, within that, it was about the martyrs who had died for justice and from injustice with their bodies tortured, brutalised, and murdered. Resurrection was not just about arts and survival, but about God and this earth. It was not about the heavenly evacuation, but the earthly transfiguration of this bodily world. The soul's immortality, even with all due post-mortem sanctions, did not restore a world disfigured by human evil, injustice, and violence. For the Jewish and Pharisaic Paul, divine justice was necessarily about transfigured bodies upon a transfigured earth." 345

"On the one hand the Imperial system was based on the most glaring and flagrant form of idolatry, the worship of a living man as the incarnate god on earth; it was the direct enemy of Christ: its system was like a parody of the Christian Gospel. How could Paul do any thing but hated and condemn it? On the other hand it saved the world from worse evils: every one who lived in those times knew that the Emperor and the Imperial Government alone stood between the civilised world and destruction, and restrained the power of disorder, war and savagery, which had recently nearly overwhelmed society and put an end to civilisation ... The Empire was the servant, the bearer, the instrument of the Church, and yet it was also its irreconcilable and inevitable foe ... Paul was much more likely to see the character of the Empire than the Emperors to comprehend the nature of the Church. It is in truth as inconceivable that Paul could be insensible of the nature of the Imperial system, as it is that he could consent to any compromise with the Imperial worship. A purified Empire was the Pauline idea; but a purified Empire meant the elimination of the God-Emperor." William Mitchell Ramsay, 1907 on p.349

"Nero was finally "pronounced a public enemy by the Senate" and condemned, according to Suetonius's *The Lives of the Caesars: Nero*, to being "stripped, fastened by the neck in a fall, and then beaten to death with gods." He only avoided that fate by suicide, driving "a dagger into his throat aided by Epaphroditus, his private secretary" (49.2-3). On June 9, 68 C.E., the Julio-Claudian dynasty came to an ignominious end and Rome was plunged once more into civil war." 356

"In that new Neronian environment, the situation of *Christian Jews* must have been doubly precarious. On the one hand, *Jewish Jews*, would hardly welcome them since their presence had caused the disturbances and penalties and Claudius. On the other hand, *Christian pagans*, having grown strong and separate in their absence, were unlikely to welcome them back as for fellow Christians. It is particularly those *weak*, or returning, Christians that Paul defends against the *strong*, or resident, Christians ... 367

Sacrifice comes from the Latin *sacrum facere* – to make sacred