

## Preface

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE world: those who divide the world into two kinds of people, and those who don't! Underlying this study is the question of whether there are two kinds of Christians in the world—those who follow Jesus, and those who follow Paul—or whether in fact there ought to be just one, and what that one might look like if Paul were to be understood as a promoter of the movement founded by Jesus.

The importance of this question was impressed upon me in the early 2000s when I was involved in the discussions and debates in the Diocese of New Westminster as to whether to approve of a rite for the blessing of same-sex couples. The issue was complicated, with a number of agendas being pursued. But to some extent it seemed to me that there were genuine believers on both sides, with one group fully convinced that they were following the authoritative example of their Lord, and with the other group fully convinced that they were following the authoritative teaching of the Apostle Paul; and the result was the two could not agree. Clearly it raised the question whether one or the other was wrong. But beyond that, it also raised the question whether Jesus and Paul themselves would have been on the same page, so to speak. Does the New Testament give us a unified vision of the Christian movement, or are there (at least) two major strands to it—strands which may not always be reconcilable?

In addition to this particular experience, it has long seemed to me a useful exercise to try to trace the lines of development from the early days of the life of Jesus, when his followers remembered and re-told the things he said and did, to the many more theologically reflective statements made by those same followers, and by people like Paul, about the significance of Jesus, speaking of him as “Lord” and “Son of God,” and affirming that his death was “for our sins.” How did the followers of Jesus draw such insightful conclusions about him? We are, unfortunately, hampered by having a very incomplete account of the

early church, making such inquiry difficult. And yet, I consider the effort worthwhile because I find myself ever confronted with the same kind of question: How am I to make theological sense of the many details I experience from day to day? If we could show that Jesus and Paul were on the same page, then perhaps we might gain some insight as to how to go about answering this question.

The issues I mention above will not reappear in the pages that follow. The critical question of the relationship between Jesus and Paul has been well established in New Testament studies now for over 150 years and it needs to be addressed with all the tools of historical criticism that scholarship has developed. But it may be helpful for the reader to recognize from the beginning some of the issues that such a study as this could have a bearing on.

SAMPLE