

PAUL WASN'T REALLY AN APOSTLE

Paul of Tarsus, the author of most of the New Testament, claimed to be an apostle equal to the twelve apostles, the men authorised by Jesus to give his teaching to the world with his authority, and gave no evidence whatsoever for this authority. He says nothing more than that the apostles gave him their blessing to preach the gospel which need not imply approval of his apostolic claims. Not everybody agreed that Paul really was an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:2,3). To these he replied that his success as a missionary was the proof that he really was an apostle in the eyes of God. Anybody could use evidence like that and Paul was obviously up against a brick wall. He was using weak arguments to defend himself as liars always do. Marcion of Sinope and his huge band of followers insisted in the second century that Paul was a schismatic and the only true apostle and they followed him alone. They formed a rival Church to the Church that pretended allegiance to the twelve apostles.

In the book of Acts, as Judas the apostle had fallen away and died the apostles sought a new apostle to make up the twelve. Jesus had stressed the importance of there being twelve. They even imagined that the line in the Psalms that another must take somebody's office referred to the need to replace Judas. That if anything stresses that there could only be twelve. No wonder when Jesus in Matthew 19:28 that there would be twelve thrones for twelve apostles. The twelve motif was very solid. The new apostle had to be somebody that went about with Jesus and thus was qualified. Acts 1;15-17, 20-22 says the criteria was that the new man must have been with them since the time of John the Baptist to the day when Jesus went to Heaven and more importantly be able to testify that Jesus rose "one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." Paul did not know Jesus and did not fit even the minimum criteria. The story as good as tells us that seeing the resurrected Jesus did not qualify you to speak about it or testify to it - you had to be tested to be allowed to do that. Paul was never tested and his visions of Jesus are strange as if he didn't want to say much about it in detail.

Jesus said there was an eternal sin, a sin against the Holy Spirit that couldn't be forgiven in this world or in the world to come (Mark 3:28,29). He said this of the Pharisees for they refused to believe the Holy Spirit was behind his ministry. This has been interpreted as meaning that you can be so stubbornly anti-God that you will never repent and so you cannot be forgiven. St Paul was a Pharisee and worse than the ones Jesus said had committed this sin. They didn't persecute Jesus the way Paul persecuted Christians. Paul murdered them brutally and he even got them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11) and blasphemed himself. If anybody committed the eternal sin it was Paul. Yet Paul claimed he had an experience of the risen Jesus and repented and was forgiven. In 1 Timothy 1:13 his excuse was that he acted in unbelief and ignorance so it wasn't really malicious! He said it was because of his ignorance that God forgave him. Now, if he needed mercy he must have sinned deliberately. And it is stupid and boastful to say God forgives you because of ignorance as if God wouldn't forgive you if it was malice! Now, nobody who believes in religious murder and fanatical doctrine and in blasphemy can say that they didn't really mean anything by it. The gospel Jesus as good as tells us that Paul was a fake and had committed the eternal sin. Whatever appeared to him it was not Jesus. Satan maybe trying to make him feel good about his evil? Take Paul's word for it, he never really repented. He just changed his ways but inside he was still the same man. We must remember that when Jesus appeared to Paul at Paul's conversion Paul called him Lord without knowing who he was and he was told the Lord he saw was Jesus (Acts 9). Obviously Paul already knew but had to have it confirmed. He had known Jesus was Lord all along! And yet he blasphemed and hated everything to do with Christ and the Church says he didn't commit the eternal sin! Who knows, maybe the gospels in reporting the teaching about the eternal sin really had Paul in mind! Jesus in Matthew 23 said that the Pharisees were in total opposition to God despite appearances and kept people away from God and said they were the children of Hell and couldn't escape from this fate. He said in verse 28 that they looked good but inside they were evil so they concealed their evil. Jesus meant all Pharisees by this for if they are hiding their black hearts under good works then how can anybody tell who was not meant? He never said he meant some of them so he meant all of them. Paul therefore was damned. He was a false apostle. Paul speaks so well of the Pharisees that it is impossible to reconcile this with Jesus' attitude. And the gospels are full of accounts of the verbal battles and animosity between Jesus and the Pharisees. For Paul to disagree with the gospels on something so foundational shows to how great an extent the Church was making up stories about Jesus. The Church made up the stories out of hatred for the Jews. They used Jesus as a propaganda mouthpiece when he could no longer speak for himself!

By the way was Joseph of Arimathea an exception to Jesus' scathing condemnation of the Pharisees? Maybe Joseph joined the Pharisees after this condemnation in the hope of reforming them. But though he is called a secret disciple of Jesus the fact remains he was a hypocrite and had joined the Pharisees under false pretences and was presumably silent whenever Jesus was condemned by them. He was perhaps a disciple but not a good one. With a deceiver like that handling the body of Jesus anything could have happened.

At times, Paul talks as if he alone understood or had got the correct message of Jesus. In Romans 16 he glorifies God for giving the Romans the strength to live the good news "I preach" and "I which I make proclamation of Jesus Christ" which is "a mystery hidden for countless ages but now its clear and must be presented to Gentiles and pagans everywhere to bring

them to obedient faith". He was certainly not the only one who was preaching to the Romans. He says I in the sense that he considers himself to be the only source the Church must go to to get Christ's authorised teaching. It is possible he considered the apostles to be apostles only of the resurrection but himself the apostle of correct doctrine not just the resurrection.

Paul went as far as to write to the people of Galatia that even if an angel of God contradicts the gospel as he and the Church preach it that the angel is to be accursed! As Heaven is where God lives it amounts to saying that even if God himself contradicts what Paul wants to believe then God is to be cursed. Read Galatians 1:8.

Paul said that his being the apostle and revealer of the mystery to the Gentiles is only what the Jewish scriptures written by God have predicted and it is the way God wants it to be and he alone is wisdom. He feels embarrassed at the role he takes to himself and so he has to use the Jewish Bible to take the sting away. Even that is not enough and he has to say that God knows what he is doing no matter how it looks for God is wise.

There is a very serious problem with Paul's credentials as an apostle. Only the person we know as Luke calls Paul an apostle and does it only twice (Acts 14). Acts also calls Barnabas who was not one of the twelve an apostle so Luke may not be making Paul equal to the twelve. But Paul in his letters says he is equal but not once does he or anybody write that he was accepted as such by the twelve and at most the Bible says he was tolerated. This man is the real foundation of Christianity and there is no evidence from man or God that he was really who he claimed to be. His work testifies to the awesome credulity of the early members of the Christian Church. They were easily lied to. It is the greatest of blasphemies to exalt this man as an apostle of God and a writer of infallible scripture. It is putting a man's word before the divine word without clear authorisation. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul defends his role as an apostle by saying that he has the right to eat and drink, marry and enjoy the fruits of his work and bases this on the Law. In other words, he is an apostle because God has blessed his work with material happiness. But that is clearly not enough. Paul could do no better. He could not depend on the testimony of the other apostles either because there was none that would do or because a testimony coming from liars like them would be worthless. On the way to Damascus to persecute believers in Christ, Paul alleged that he had a vision of the Risen Christ that convinced him to become an apostle – and nobody with him at the time saw the vision so it is a very tenuous one. The admission that his life was good adds weight to the possibility that Paul never had a vision of Jesus at all and was lying through his teeth. He had the motive and the reason to maintain the lies – and it was love of fame and sad fawning servants. Paul's claim to be an apostle actually contradicts the Law of Moses for it decrees that serious claims need the support of at least two independent witnesses who can be questioned and nobody could verify that Jesus really did speak to him in a vision on the road to Damascus. Ideally, in cases involving the very serious claim that God has spoken more witnesses would be preferable or even obligatory. Paul has no support at all and it is not enough to point to his converts for we cannot test them for credulity and pass them. If it were enough then every crank cult could be proven true but it is plain that they cannot all be true.

Galatians 2 indicates that Paul and the apostles did not see eye to eye. It took him fourteen years before he could be bothered to even meet them to request their approval. This shows plainly that he was a schismatic. He would not even meet them publicly in case his visit would be in vain. He said that Titus who was with him was not compelled to get circumcised meaning that it was expected the apostles would order him to undergo it. Paul knew what the apostles wanted and did not give it to them or care enough to have Titus circumcised. He ignored their sensibilities about Titus not being circumcised.

The apostles even dallied with false brethren during that meeting who wanted submission to the Law to be carried out rigidly. Interesting that the apostles were so chummy with them. It shows they had much the same religious inclination. And then quite nastily Paul referred to the chief apostles as those who seemed (dokeo) to be the leaders and added that what they were made no difference to him because God has no favourites. The Church explains that this just says that they were leaders but equal to everybody in the eyes of God. What it says is not that but that the chief apostles had no right to function as leaders. Why else would Paul say such a thing? He agrees with leaders, both spiritual and political, in many other places so why would he feel compelled to say that God has no favourites just here?

Paul declared that they had nothing important to say which was quite nasty. Then he said they saw that himself and Barnabas were in touch with God like they were and they gave them the hand of fellowship. So they only got some acceptance fourteen years. Paul then named the three apostles who were reputed as leaders as Cephas, James and John and said again that they seemed to be pillars. Paul does not tell us what convinced them that he had real authority from God to preach. Was it his glib tongue that convinced them? His motive in telling the Galatians all this was to give himself an air of authority. So why did he mess it up by not saying how he talked the apostles into accepting him as a preacher but not as an apostle for that was not mentioned? There is no evidence that the apostles used their alleged infallibility to accept Paul. Paul even swore at one point that his tale was true (though Jesus banned oaths!). This shows that many were denying that his story was true. That is a strong indication that it was indeed false for there was nothing that anybody would want to deny in what he said unless it really was not true.

Paul might have got the hand of fellowship. Did he really or was it just his take? Did he get the hand of full fellowship?

The apostles might not have approved of Paul so very much but decided to let him minister among the Gentiles and bless that. Though Jews in first century Palestine were xenophobic they had no problem with Gentiles adopting much of their faith. They thought it was better to have pagans converted and close to the truth. It was not that they were welcome in Judaism however. Surely the pope would rather see pagans becoming near-Catholics but not real Catholics than staying pagans.

And did all the apostles approve of the proceedings? James and Cephas and John can't speak for everybody.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus appeared to him after all the apostles as if he were untimely born or a premature birth. Why is he untimely? Is it because he was the last? Or was it because he missed out on meeting Jesus having never lived when Jesus lived? Or was it because he simply never met Jesus? Why does he virtually speak of himself as if he were not born but just survived a natural abortion? He probably is just saying his apostleship was out of the norm. It is as if God had to have a makeshift apostle after choosing the others.

2 Corinthians chapter 13 is where Paul quotes with approval the Old Testament Law of God that in the mouths of two or three witnesses all things must be established. He threatens then to discipline wrongdoers when he comes. Why did he quote the law? Was it because of the wrongdoers and to let the people know that it's God's will that they refuse to let them get away with it? No he was not asking for two or three witnesses for everything the recalcitrant did. That would be absurd. He said then that the people in Corinth wanted evidence that Jesus was really speaking through Paul. This was what the quoting of the law was about. He was applying it to himself. He was saying that he had nothing to fear from the law in terms of his own claims - the main one which was that he saw the risen Jesus and thus had authority over the believers. Then he explained that the proof was how God and Jesus were working in the people. So they were his two witnesses. God and Jesus working in Paul's converts was supposed to prove that Paul was authentic - God was one witness and Jesus the other. The people weren't denying that they felt God and Jesus were working in them. They were denying Paul's claim to have the right to govern them in the name of God and Jesus. That he couldn't mention any affidavits from the apostles in Jerusalem or any testimony from them is significant. It proves that they were saying, "We feel that Jesus rose therefore he did." They could not appeal to evidence. The lack of evidence shows that he was understandably regarded with suspicion by them if not outright opposition. He was using a very subjective proof, "I feel that God and Jesus are working in me and therefore Paul speaks with Jesus' authority and Jesus speaks through him." Such proofs are dangerous and lead only to chaos for any religious teacher could use similar logic. Its no incentive for implementing effectual discipline.

There is no evidence that Paul was a true apostle. He gave fake evidence that he was an apostle. He was a liar. Even if the apostles themselves accepted him, his lies would have marked him out as an impostor.