

The Enigma of Paul

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Abstract

The writings of Paul were the earliest to be written and they constitute the greater bulk of the New Testament literature. Not only that Paul was the first articulator of Christian theology, he was also the greatest apostle to the Gentile world. Paul's life could be understood in the context of three worlds: Jewish, Greek or Hellenistic, and Roman. As a Jew, he started as the worst persecutor of the early followers of Jesus Christ but ended up being persecuted by his own Jewish people. Thus, the enigma of Paul.

Introduction

The study of the New Testament and its theology, according to the Anglican theologian John Macquarrie, must begin with the letters of Paul rather than with the four gospels. Why is this so? It is preferable to start with the writings of Paul, first of all, because Paul's letters or works "constitute the earliest written evidence for the 'gospel' or 'kerygma'." Paul's writings are much closer historically to the Jesus Christ event by about 20 years than the gospels, which were then about 70-95 CE. Secondly, Paul's letters constitute the greater bulk of the whole New Testament. Twenty-one (21) of the twenty-seven (27) New Testament books were in the genre of letters, and thirteen (13) of the 21 letters were written by Paul.