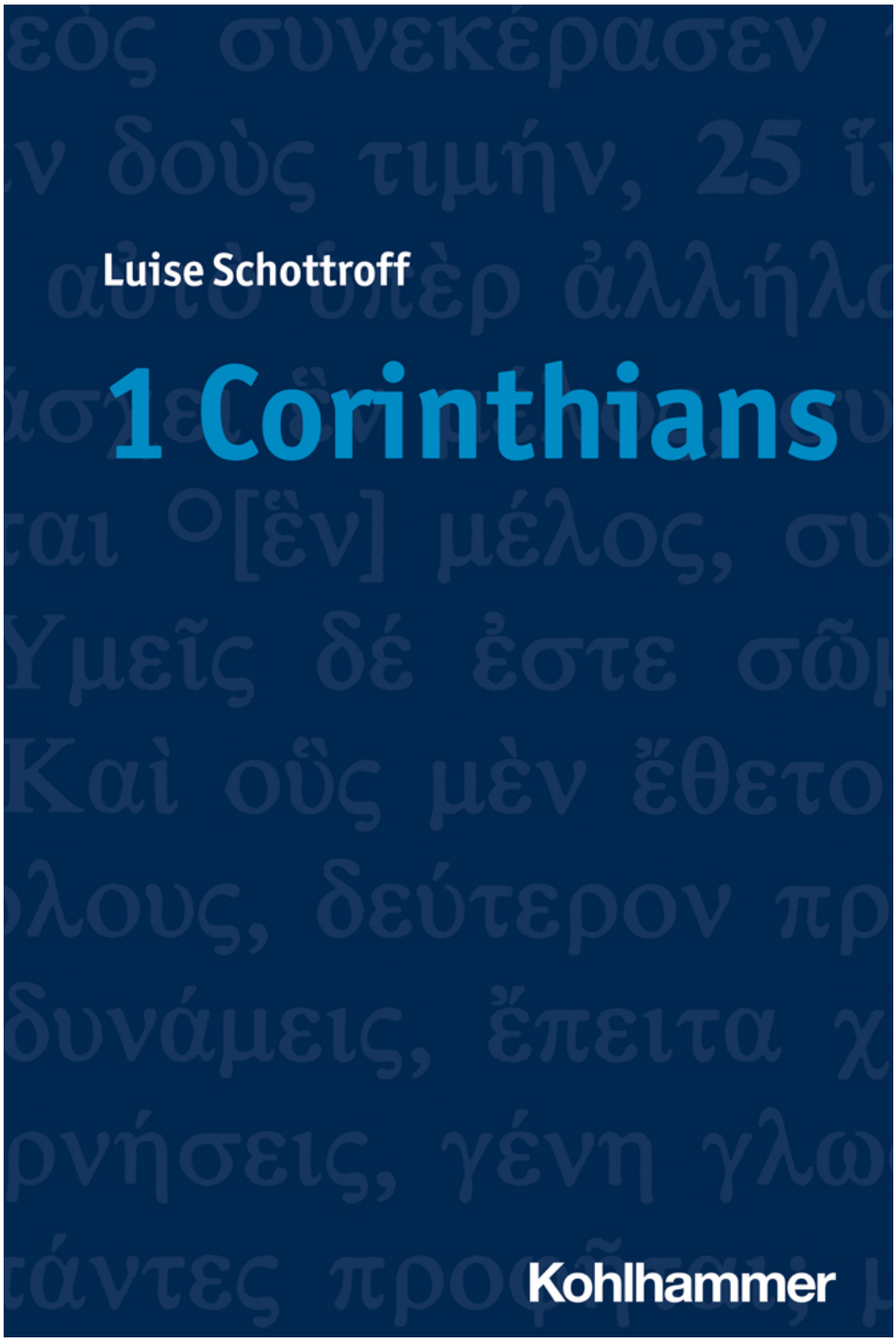
Luise Schottroff

1 Corinthians

Kohlhammer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Revised and with a foreword by Claudia Janssen
Translated by Everett R. Kalin

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1 Corinthian gives us an example how Paul interprets the Tora for Christians from the nations: He tells concretely, sensitively, close to their daily life about the hope against the death. He writes down prayers and songs from the messianic communities of his times. And he contradicts himself&especially in his dealing with women compared to his ideas about how they should be. Luise Schottroff (1934-2015) guides her readers to discover Pauls from anew, digging to his original thoughts through traditional missinterpretations, appropriation, and monopolization.

The English version is based on the German 2nd edition. It was translated by Everett R. Kalin, Professor Emeritus for New Testament at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary at Berkely/CA.

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Luise Schottroff (1934-2015) taught New Testament at the Universities of Mainz and Kassel (Germany) as well as at the University of California (Berkeley/CA).

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Foreword to the Second Edition

The commentary by Luise Schottroff to The First Letter to the Congregation in Corinth appeared in 2013. Therein she offered an easily understandable, true-to-life interpretation of this letter, which directs attention to the living conditions of the Corinthian congregation, offers a political analysis of the power structures underlying the Roman Empire and reveals the daily struggle for dignity of the people in the messianic communities. This second edition offers in extensive sections the unaltered text of the first. The bibliography was enlarged with current publications—in keeping with the wishes of Luise Schottroff, whose concern was never completeness but relevance for a socio-historical, imperium-critical and gender-conscious rereading of Paul's writings in the context of ancient Judaism. Minor mistakes in the manuscript were corrected and a few additions were made. Her interpretation continues to be up-to-date and represents the present state of international Pauline research. Even after her death, Luise Schottroff is an important teacher for those who are seeking their own critical and life-serving access to theology and exegesis.

In 2013, on the occasion of the publication of the commentary, Luise Schottroff received the Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz-Prize of the Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau (EKHN) for her lifework. For this becomes clear: She puts to work in her interpretation of *The First Letter to the Congregation in Corinth* the yield of her more than forty-year research on Paul. The guidelines of the *Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* [*ThKNT*] series, of which she is coeditor, are also the central themes of her own exegetical work since the late 1970s: social history, Christian-Jewish dialogue and feminist theology. Her works were and still are trailblazing for a comprehensive rereading

of Paul’s letters in the German speaking realm and also internationally. The appearance of the second edition of her commentary should, therefore, be taken as the occasion for a comprehensive honoring of her exegetical work in this field of research.

1. Social History

In the introduction, Luise Schottroff writes in 2013 that she will portray Paul’s first letter to the congregation in Corinth from a socio-historical theological perspective. She assumes that the letter is addressed to specific people that Paul describes in this way: »not many wise, powerful or priviledged by birth,« rather »uneducated … weak, disadvantaged by birth, despised, things reduced to nothing« (cf. for on 1 Cor 1:26–28). This perspective determines how things will proceed: She thus bases her interpretation on a detailed investigation of the life-situation of the Corinthian congregation in the context of Roman-Hellenistic society in the first century, which was made up of people of diverse nations and languages, of enslaved and free, women and men. Based on her analysis, these people belonged principally to the lower classes. She does not understand the problems that are addressed in the letter as conflicts with »opponents,« but as discussions about how one lives, the backgrounds of which she develops in Basic Information Sections on themes like slavery, divorce, sacrificial meat—meat consumption, the theology of the body, eschatology. Thereby she comprehensively includes in her interpretation the open and subtle aspects of violence in the Roman Empire: crucifixions as a means of political deterrence, »games« as events for the masses in which people were tortured and executed, slavery as a structure that seizes power over people and their bodies. Paul sets in

contrast to this the image of the congregation as the »body of the Messiah,« the concept of a collective body, with which God acts to effect liberation in the world (1 Cor 12:12–27) and which is not to be thought of in purely metaphorical terms. The congregation embodies the Risen One. The commentary's manifold socio-historical data, which are based on history of religions and archeological investigations, serve to direct the gaze on the difficult life-situations of a congregation within the structures of the Roman-Hellenistic world, on the oppressive situation of women, children, the poor and enslaved and, at the same time, to open an understanding of the attractiveness of the message of the gospel. The people experience themselves in their community as a messianic body, which promises them dignity as God's creatures and allows eschatological visions of God's just world to develop.

In a programmatic essay in 1979, Luise Schottroff has already set forth the theological foundations for this socio-historical work: »Sin's Reign of Terror and Liberation Through Christ According to Paul's Letter to Rome«.[1] Therein she shows that Paul's statements on sin, on the meaning of the Torah and on Christ's liberating activity are based on an analysis of the Roman Empire. The power of the texts then unfolds in a special way, when they are read in this way and questioned about their significance for people's everyday life in the cities of the empire. Her analysis shows that Paul's leading idea is that sin rules over all people as over slaves and Christ brings liberation from this dominion. The sphere of power of *hamartia* is the *kosmos*; it's instrument of power is death. For the execution of its power, it employs the *nomos*. This word, according to Schottroff, does not mean the Torah but the compulsion that makes it impossible to do the will of God. Paul thinks about sin's rule over the world within the dimensions of the Roman Empire, which are first viewed by the believers. They

recognize that the ruler of the world makes use of the Torah. Luise Schottroff further asks what liberation from the power of sin means in concrete terms for people. Paul's principal concern is not an improvement in general living conditions; he is thinking apocalyptically: His hope is directed to God's final intervention, which has already begun with the resurrection of Christ. This hope in a final change of rule has had far-reaching political consequences. The people do not feel themselves loyal, in the first place, to the Roman Emperor as the Lord and his institutions, but to the God of Israel and to the Messiah God has sent.

With this interpretive framework, within which she also reads Paul's other letters, Luise Schottroff prepared the way for further studies of socio-historical exegesis in the German context and internationally in the context of studies of empire-critical Pauline research, which is now being carried on under the watchword »Paul and Empire.« There are available a multitude of publications by her in the area of social-historical biblical interpretation.[2] In 2009, together with Old and New Testament colleagues, she published the *Sozialgeschichtliches Wörterbuch zur Bibel*.

2. Christian-Jewish Dialogue

To the fundamental question that Luise Schottroff posed in 2013 in the Introduction, »Who was Paul?« there first followed the heading: »Paul the Jew.« In her publications it becomes clear that Jewish-Christian dialogue decisively determines her thinking. In the commentary on the letter to the Corinthian congregation she consistently reads Paul as a Jewish author who has remained true to his theological traditions as he came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Thereby she positions herself within an international debate that, under the watchword »Paul within Judaism,«

bundles Jewish and Christian investigations on Paul.[3] A central concern of her entire exegetical work is the overcoming of Christian anti-Judaism. Within the framework of a theology after Auschwitz, she sees it as an important task to recognize anti-Jewish stereotypes and ways of thinking and to develop alternatives—in recognition that in the German context there has not been until now a completely non anti-Jewish Christian theology.

Since the middle of the 1960s, there arose in New Testament scholarship the beginnings of an interpretation of Paul's writings in the context of ancient Judaism, which is now discussed under the title »New Perspective on Paul,« or »Post New Perspective on Paul,« or »Paul Within Judaism.« For the debate in the German-speaking realm, the book by Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (1976), was fundamental; it appeared in translation in 1978 under the title *Der Jude Paulus und wir Heiden*. This understanding of the Jewish Paul was taken up by Luise Schottroff very early, and she consistently developed it further in her own work.

At the end of the 1980's, in the context of German-speaking feminist theology, the question of anti-Judaism in Christian theology was carried on publicly in a broad sphere, challenged, above all, by Jewish women theologians. They criticized the fact that even feminist theologians unreflectively perpetuate anti-Jewish stereotypes of Christian theologies, as, for example, the depiction of Jesus as the »new man,« who freed women from a patriarchal, women-oppressing Judaism. The volume, *Von der Wurzel getragen. Christlich-feministische Exegese in Auseinandersetzung mit Antijudaismus*, which was published in 1996 by Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker, fashioned the subsequent exegetical discussions and their results. The essay published by Schottroff in this volume presented alternatives to the (often anti-Judaisticly connoted) construct »law-free Gentile Christianity.«[4] She

programmatically summarized this in 2013 in the introduction to *The First Letter to the Congregation in Corinth*:

> Paul did not through his call become a Christian but a divine messenger, who spreads the liberating message of Jesus' resurrection. Paul proclaimed liberation from acting unjustly under the power of sin, not liberation from the Torah and the fulfilling of its instructions. So the issue is liberation to the Torah, not from the Torah.

Luise Schottroff reads not only the letters of Paul but also the gospels in the theological context of Judaism. In her book about the parables of Jesus, which appeared in 2005 and is now in the third edition of 2010 [It appeared in English as *The Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis 2006; trans.], the New Testament parables, in comparison with rabbinic parables, are consistently interpreted from their Jewish backgrounds.[5] Posthumously published in 2019 were her interpretations of the Gospel of Matthew.[6]

3. Feminist Exegesis

Also in this field of investigation, Luise Schottroff is one of the women pioneers. Already in an essay in 1985, she raised the question, »How justified is feminist criticism of Paul?«[7] and she analyzed therein a series of passages from his letters in which women are explicitly spoken about. She advocated interpreting these statements in the concrete context of each particular congregational situation, and to consider the history of interpretation separately (beginning with the Pastoral Epistles, continuing with the early church and up to the present). For treating Paul in the early phase of feminist theology, that was not self-evident. For, according to Schottroff, the history of discrimination against and oppression of women in Christianity is closely connected with the interpretation of the Pauline epistles.

Many women have therefore rejected having anything to do with Paul, the »enemy of women,« for that would be »attempts to rescue oppressive texts incapable of being rescued.«[8] This attitude also continues to be nourished in many popular interpretations of Paul, for the cliché of the authoritarian apostle, hostile to women and the body, battling against the Jewish law, holds on tenaciously to the present time. Summing the situation up in the year 1985, Luise Schottroff said: »Compared with the self-understanding of the male church and of male theology today, Paul was a feminist pioneer« (246). Since then much has fundamentally changed, not least thanks to feminist investigations and their reception in wider theological and ecclesiastical contexts. Scholarly feminist exegesis arrived at a more differentiated perspective on Pauline theology. In her overview of feminist research on Paul, Luzia Sutter Rehmann summarized that the interest has shifted: The issue is no longer presenting the suppressed history of women in the Pauline churches but a critical deconstruction of androcentric writings and a new sketch of Paul and his letters.[9]

Feminist theology was an essential center of gravity for Luise Schottroff in the research realm and in university political work, in which she was very involved for the advancement and networking of feminist theologians. Thus in 1986 she was involved in the establishment of the European Society of Women in Theological Research (ESWTR), an interreligious network for women theologians of all disciplines. In 1991 she co-published the *Wörterbuch der Feministischen Theologie*, which in 2002 underwent a thorough reworking and fundamental expansion. To the standard works in the German-speaking realm also belongs the *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung*, which in 1998 was published by her and Marie-Theres Wacker. It offers a short commentary, with the focus on questions of

relationships between the sexes, on all the biblical books, including the Apocrypha, and on selected extra-canonical writings. In 2012 it was published anew in an English translation under the title *Feminist Biblical Interpretation. A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*.

Feminist theology was for Luise Schottroff inextricably connected with liberation-theology oriented social history and questions of Jewish-Christian dialogue, which is shown in an exemplary way by her book *Lydias ungeduldige Schwestern. Feministische Sozialgeschichte des frühen Christentums.*[10] [A year after its publication in German in 1994, the English translation appeared as *Lydia's Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*. Louisville, Kentucky 1995; trans.] In the present commentary Luise Schottroff takes up her own interpretations from earlier times and changes them, in part fundamentally, as, for example, the interpretations of 1 Cor 11:2–16 or 1 Cor 14:34–38. From these examples it can be seen that she always took up current literature and always self-critically engaged with her own perspectives.

The three perspectives that marked the work of Luise Schottroff: social history, Christian-Jewish dialogue and feminist theology determine also the concept of the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (2006, 2011), of which she was one of the editors. Therein she is responsible for the translation of the Gospel of Matthew and also of the First Letter to the Congregation in Corinth, which she developed further in the present commentary and whose backgrounds she extensively developed.

I myself have worked together with Luise Schottroff for many years and discussed current projects. Thus I was able on a continuing basis to accompany the origin of this commentary, and I am especially happy, therefore, that it is now appearing in a second edition. Almost ready for the

publisher is an English translation of the commentary, which will also enable its international reception. I deeply hope that in the long run the commentary will find women and men readers who will engage deeply with Luise Schottroff's interpretations, which are careful, inspiring, often surprising, and always borne along by a deep spirituality, and that these readers will be inspired by her interpretation of Paul's theology.

For their support in updating of commentary I thank Dr. Marlene Crüsemann and Prof. Dr. Carsten Jochum-Bortfeld.

Wuppertal, August 2020
Claudia Janssen

Foreword

Work on this book has led me on a journey of discovery into the life of a large Roman-Hellenistic city, Corinth. Paul was a tour guide into the history of the early Roman Empire. In his First Letter to Corinth it becomes evident how hard daily life in this city was, including for Paul himself. In the midst of this city a resistance community has come together, made up of Jews and those of other nations, a community that has, and lives from, a great vision. From the Torah they have learned this: Israel's God wants all people and the whole world to experience fullness of life. Paul shares this community's way with enthusiasm and passion. Through this letter Paul became a source of inspiration for me: it is possible, even under conditions such as those he faced, to construct a common life and to orient yourself daily on the vision of God's justice for the whole world.

On this journey of discovery, I was accompanied by a group of faithful women companions, who shared with me curiosity about a different Paul and the surprise of unexpected discoveries. Without the continuous exegetical and spiritual dialogue that I carried on with Claudia Janssen, this book would not have come into being. Marlene Crüsemann accompanied the work from the beginning and developed new ideas about the Second Letter to Corinth that are fundamental for understanding 1 Corinthians and Paul as a whole. Finally, she took upon herself the laborious task of a full editorial reading. Ute Ochtendung gave the manuscript her thorough and competent attention. Her support and sound judgment again and again gave me the courage to carry on this work. I have the great joy of being able to work regularly with a group of five women colleagues on the further development of translations in the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*. Dietlinde Jessen, Luise Metzler,

Friederike Oertelt, Susanne Paul and Cathrin Szameit participated with me in the considerations that went into the translation of 1 Corinthians into German—from the details about how to translate individual words to the fundamental questions about the relevance of such texts for 21st century congregations. Our common work was and is inspiring, encouraging and always enjoyable. During walks together in the Dönche [a large nature reserve in the city of Kassel, translator], I experienced many attempts to find clarity during the course of my work. Ariane Garlichs posed creative and challenging questions from the perspectives of pedagogy and psychoanalysis.

The members of the »Heidelberger Arbeitskreis für sozialgeschlichtliche Bibelauslegung« have constructively and critically discussed theses and first drafts. How necessary and constructive it is to understand the New Testament and Paul from the perspectives of the Old Testament and of the history of God's dealings with Israel became more and more clear to me during these discussions.

Obtaining the literature I needed for this project lay principally in the hands of the team of the state church library in Kassel, especially in those of Mr. Thron. He tracked down mountains of new works, as well as rare and older titles. The work of the whole team was a great source of support for me. Benjamin Porps brought me, even in the snow and on icy streets, big bicycle bags full of books. I could rely on his bibliographic competence. My heartfelt thanks go to the women and men at Kohlhammer Verlag, especially Herr Florian Specker from the editorial office, who also produced the information about the illustrations.

From the bottom of my heart I thank all those who accompanied me on this journey. It was a wonderful time.

Introduction: Who was Paul?

In this commentary I interpret Paul's First Letter to the Congregation in Corinth from a sociohistorical-theological perspective.[11] I would like to present briefly, in five steps, my view of Paul, which developed and gained precision as I worked on the commentary. As I do that, I point in each case to the passages in 1 Corinthians where further material on the issue can be found in the commentary.

1. Paul the Jew

Paul was born a Jew and lived and worked as a Jew until he died. At the beginning of his work on behalf of the liberating gospel stands his call by God. His call was so important to Paul that he often refers to it in his letters, including in 1 Corinthians (1:1; 15:8–10; 9:1, 16–27 and more often). Through the **call** he received the divine commission to make the message known, especially among the oppressed nations of the Roman Empire, the *ethnē* (see on 1:22–24), that the God of Israel has raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus was a Jewish man who was executed by the Romans less than twenty years earlier (see on 1:17–18; 2:6–8). That God has raised this executed one means, according to Paul's proclamation, that the world is no longer subject to the powers that oppose life. God has fenced in the structures of death. Thereby, God has freed the people of Israel and the nations (*ethnē*) from slavery (15:20–22). Paul describes this slavery as the power of death (3:22; 15:22, 26, 56), as the **power of sin** (15:56) and of the world (*kosmos* 3:22). These powers force people to become accomplices in their injustice and to practice it in their lives, that is, to fail to observe the Torah (6:9–11; 5:10–11). Political analysis and

mythical concepts of demonic powers ruling the world flow together here.

With the concept of call, as well as with that of the power of sin, Paul is operating within the traditions of Judaism. Despair over the world-power sin, which enslaves everyone, is, for example, the theme of 4 Ezra (on sin, see the basic information at 9:20). For the tradition in which his call is found, Paul points to the prophetic books (see on 1:1). Only under the influence of the separation of Christianity from Judaism beginning in the second century was this call understood as the beginning of a Christian life freed from the law, that is, as a »conversion.« However, compared with the concept Paul himself uses, this one is not appropriate. Paul did not through his call become a Christian but a divine messenger, who spreads the liberating message of Jesus' resurrection.

Paul proclaimed liberation from acting unjustly under the power of sin, not liberation from the Torah and the fulfilling of its instructions. So the issue is **liberation to the Torah**, not from the Torah (see on 7:19–20).

Paul's First Letter to Corinth as a whole is to be understood as an interpretation of the Torah for people from the nations who have embraced the God of Israel and God's Messiah. They do not understand themselves as Jewish. From the Jewish side, they are seen as people from the nations (*ethnē*) and classified among the broad spectrum of non-Jewish people who live in a Jewish manner. However, in Roman-Hellenistic society, and from the perspective of Roman authorities, they were generally treated Jews. The letter is part of the history of the Jewish interpretation of Scripture that unfolds its meaning for the present (halakah; see, for example at 10:1–13; 5:1–11) in the first century.

It was often asked whether Paul, with his concept of the significance of the **Messiah Jesus**, had already sprung the boundaries of Judaism. Although this is widely assumed, even in his »Christology« Paul remains within the

boundaries of Jewish concepts of his time. Decisive for him is the *Shema Israel*/Hear, O Israel; Israel's God is one (see 8:5–6). For him, God's Messiah, with his body and with his whole life, embodies divine action in the world of the people of Israel and of the nations. In his writings there are no attempts to deify the Messiah in any way (see on 8:5–6). »Messiah« is portrayed as an embodied activity on God's part rather than as an individual person who is distinguished from other people (see on 10:4). The assumption that the word »Messiah,« in its translation into Greek as *Christos*/anointed one, is in Paul already on its way to becoming a proper name, does not accord with his use of the word. For him it is not a name; when Paul says Christ/Messiah, he is speaking of God's presence, which frees people from enslavement by the structures of death.

2. Paul and the Messiah

The Messiah has been raised by God, as the world power Rome had crucified him. As Paul was called by God for the **gospel to the nations**, he began his way as God's representative, as an apostle (see on 1:1). He understands his commission to be part of a worldwide event (see 16:5–9), as part of the work in a network to which more and more people belong. His concern is not to establish a church or a religion, but to help spread liberation from enslavement to death and to sin in the world of his time. For him, this spread occurs where people come together and investigate with one another what their way to God's righteous can look like. The concept »mission« can be used only when it is kept separate from the claim that it helps an institution or a teaching to come to power.

By the **resurrection of the crucified Jesus** God has put an end to death and violence. This message is the

foundation of the gospel Paul brings to the Mediterranean world. The Roman Empire enforced its rule through open and subtle violence. This violence includes crucifixions as a means of political intimidation but also »games,« that is, events for the masses in many cities, in which people were tortured and killed (see 4:9). The crowds were supposed to have an apparent role in the great decisions over death and life and to cheer about the violence in the arenas. Whoever didn't participate in this approval of the violence was in danger of being persecuted by Rome. This anxiety over persecution, therefore, had even brought people who already belonged to the communities of the God of Israel (*ekklēsiai theou*) to deny the crucifixion of their Liberator, that is, to suppress the word of the cross (see 1:17, 18), and also the resurrection of the Messiah as well. Already before the appearance of the Jew Jesus, who was seen by many people as God's Liberator/Messiah, Rome had persecuted messianic movements (see the basic information before 15:1). Paul battles to see that God's congregations remain unambiguous about their adherence to a crucified one who was made the Messiah by God. For he understands the assembly or congregation of God as the **body of the Messiah** in this world. The concept of a collective body, with which God is active in the world, is not to be understood metaphorically (see on 12:12, 27). The congregation, with all its members, embodies the Messiah and acts messianically, with one another and toward those on the outside. It openly identifies violence by name and builds a community in which justice becomes a reality. Justice liberates sexuality from its use as a form of coercion (see.6:12–20; 7:1–40); it gives the poor equal rights and puts an end to privileges the rich enjoy at other people's expense (1:26–31; 11:17–34). Women are accorded the same level of dignity as men (see 11:2–16). The ethnic diversity, the many native languages spoken by members of the congregation, should not be suppressed for the sake of

the lingua franca. There is contention over a form of this speech that can be heard openly in the congregation alongside of prophecy (spoken in the common language; basic information about this is available at 14:1).

The body of the Messiah, Jesus' body, and people's individual bodies are where God is present (11:23; 12:12, 27; 6:19). In the Lord's Supper, these diverse dimensions of the concept »body of Christ« (*sōma christou*) are inseparably connected. The Lord's Supper is the place where the bodily presence of God and of the Messiah is constantly being actualized anew.

3. Paul among his Brothers and Sisters

Paul understands himself as an interpreter of the Torah in community. Even the people from the nations quickly became very competent in knowing and interpreting the Torah for their life in the body of Christ. Paul participated in these **interpretative communities.** But he is not accorded a place of privilege (see 5:3–5) when the gathering reaches decisions based on the Torah.

Paul was not the only messenger God sent to proclaim the liberating gospel. Most of his letters were written together with others (see 1:1), and they contain a great deal that emanates from the language of the congregations, their prayers and discussions. Paul did not »have **co-workers**,« whom he directed, but worked together with other brothers and sisters on behalf of the gospel (16:1–24). In the body of Christ there are to be no top-down relationships. In the history of interpretation, Paul is frequently understood as a figure who has authority over others, one who authoritatively renders a verdict about doctrinal differences and »admonishes« the congregation (see 1:10). This interpretation of Paul has made a lasting

impression on his image, even by means of the words chosen in translations of the Bible. In this way he became the role model for leaders who claimed authority in the church. At the same time, however, this Paul also spread fear and abhorrence among those who suffered under hierarchies and worked for just relationships in the church.

Women in the congregations had equal worth for Paul as **workers for the gospel**. But when the issue is women and their sexuality and their relationships to the opposite sex, his ambivalence toward them becomes apparent. He certainly doesn't want messianic men to go to prostitutes. But in this context, the prostitutes themselves remain for him practically invisible. And it remains invisible that a relevant portion of the congregations is made up of women who had to earn their living, entirely or in part, through prostitution. For the reception of Paul in the 21st century, a rediscovery of Paul the brother should be accompanied by the open discussion about his ambivalence on particular issues. Paul also spread ideas that in the history of the church, and in the societies influenced by the church, have oppressed and tormented women and men. That is true especially of those who live as homosexuals (6:9) and for women in patriarchal marriages (7:10, 36). Paul's oppressive side has been strengthened even more through the history of interpretation. Criticism of Paul should be discussed in twentieth-century congregations, even during the worship services.

4. Everyday Life in the Cities of the Roman Empire

Paul speaks relatively often about the conditions under which he lives. He must work hard to support himself. Above all, he is exposed to dangers (4:12; 16:5–9) as he travels on

foot through the expanses of the lands north of the Mediterranean Sea. He is, moreover, constantly in political danger. As a foreigner, he needs protection in the cities. Roman authorities in the cities, in part their inhabitants as well, are quite ready to persecute, beat, imprison and threaten with death (4:11–13) proclaimers of God's peace, which is fundamentally different from the peace offered by the *pax Romana*.

The **living conditions of most of the people** in the cities become incredibly clear through many details in this letter. Paul speaks of poverty and a lack of education (1:26–31). He criticizes the rhetoric used in public gatherings (2:1–5) and probably the thrashing of children in the schools (4:21). He speaks knowledgably about architecture (3:9–17), about the competence of the courts and about the linguistic diversity of the cities and their problems (14). Many aspects of city life in antiquity can be found in this letter. Shocking in all this is the role violence plays in daily life, above all the role it plays in mass gatherings (4:9–13) and in the lives of slaves (7:21–24).

This letter is written to give the brothers and sisters courage—through an interpretation of the Torah that applies it to their daily lives and through praise for the God of Israel. The first chapters of the letter show how difficult it is for members of the congregation to extricate themselves from their own complicities and embroilments, from competitive behavior and well-worn patterns of subordination under diverse masters and from the non-exceptionality of violence in sexual relationships. Even at the Lord's Supper some still try to take advantage of the privileges to which they have grown accustomed. The balancing act between the city's official cults that chapters 8–10 bring to light is striking. Then, from chapter 12 on, Paul speaks less often about the difficulties in daily life, but above all about the riches with which Israel's God has gifted the oppressed nations in this situation. They should be assured that God has put an end