

# **Subversive Spirituality, Ecclesial & Civil Disobedience**

A Survey of Radical Biblical Politics - as incarnated in Jesus and interpreted by Paul.

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## **1. Section One - A Judeo-Christian Perspective.**

In my view the Judeo-Christian Perspective is neither *absolute*, nor *relative*, but *directive*. It is not absolute - in the sense that it is the same message in different times and places. It clearly changes in relation to circumstances. But that does not mean that it is relative - in the sense that it is a different message in different times and places. The changes are more like improvisations on the same themes rather than different themes. There is a progression in the development of the central themes of the bible over time, and, I would suggest, it is the direction of that progressive revelation that provides a critical dimension for our deliberations.

At one stage in human history we were commanded to take 'eye for an eye' and at another stage in human history we were commanded to 'turn the other cheek'. These commands are obviously not absolutely the same. There is a significant difference between taking an 'eye for an eye' and 'turning the other cheek'. But I believe the intent behind both of these different commands was the same - and that was to limit the level of retaliation taken in a world caught up in relentless cycles of revenge. Those who take an 'eye for an eye' are no more likely to slaughter the innocent than those who opt to 'turn the other cheek'. But, we cannot simply choose the biblical statement we prefer to rationalize our actions, because the call to take an 'eye for an eye' has been superseded by the call to 'turn the other cheek'. We were called to move from unlimited violence to limited violence by the command to only take an 'eye for an eye'. And we were called to move on from violence to nonviolence by the command to 'turn the other cheek'. The direction of this revelation - from unlimited violence to limited violence - and, then, from violence to nonviolence - is crucial for considering prospective actions.

When we are considering *ecclesial and civil disobedience*, there are a number of texts in the Judeo-Christian tradition that can inform our discussion.

In Egypt the Israelites endured nearly four centuries of oppression. During that time, as far as we know, the people didn't see any sign of liberation on the horizon. Then, one day, God comes across Moses. God knows Moses is the man for the job. He is the kind of man who will act; but, having been chastened by painful experience, is the kind of man who will act carefully. So God approaches Moses to ask him to help him intervene. And Exodus is the story of their struggle to liberate the Israelites from slavery in Egypt

### **1.1 "Let My People Go!"**

Exod.3:1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup>So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up."

<sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you

are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup>Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup>So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey..."

<sup>10</sup>So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

<sup>7:1</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, " I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. <sup>2</sup>You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. <sup>3</sup>But ... <sup>4</sup>he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out the Israelites. <sup>5</sup>And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."

<sup>6</sup> (And so ... ) Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them.

Note: God loves everybody equally, but has a particular concern for the oppressed. God's concern for the oppressed expresses itself in a call to action. And, in this particular situation, the call to action involves God's people participating, body and soul, in a bloody struggle for total liberation.

The Exodus story is a very powerful paradigm for oppressed people to use in responding to their oppression. But we must take care in interpreting it. Is the Exodus story a paradigm for praxis? A strategy for those who suffer oppression - to seize the day and liberate themselves right here and now? Or is the Exodus story a paradigm for hope? A solace for those who suffer oppression for hundreds of years - that one day their liberation will come?

It is important to note that, in the original story, God guides the struggle!

Right from the beginning the organization of Israel as a nation was in stark contrast with the nation of Egypt that had enslaved them. They not only left Egypt's "pyramids of stone" behind; but also left Egypt's "pyramids of state" behind them. They sought to be a "holy nation" - "not like the other nations". They decided to have no "king", but the "King of Glory." Instead of a central government, they decided to have a decentralized federation of tribes. And disputes that arose were adjudicated by a series of judges.

## 1.2 "The Lord is King!"

Psa24:7 Lift up your heads, you gates; that the King of glory may come in.

<sup>8</sup>Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty.

29:10 (He) sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD gives strength to his people; he blesses his people with peace.

146:3 Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save.

<sup>4</sup>Their spirits depart, they return to the ground; their plans come to nothing.

**<sup>5</sup>Blessed is he whose help is (in) God, <sup>6</sup>the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them-- the LORD, who remains faithful forever.**

**<sup>7</sup>He upholds the cause of the oppressed,gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, <sup>8</sup>the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, he loves the righteous.**

**<sup>9</sup>The LORD watches over aliens and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.**

**<sup>10</sup>The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.**

Until the day the people decided they wanted to have a king of their own.

**"We want a king!"**

Jud21:25 **In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit in his own eyes.**

1Sam.8:4 **So all the elders of Israel gathered together** and came to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup>They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; **now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."**

<sup>6</sup>But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD told him: **"Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. <sup>8</sup>As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. <sup>9</sup>Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."**

<sup>10</sup>Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup>He said, **"This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. <sup>12</sup>Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. <sup>13</sup>He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup>He will take the best of your fields and vine-yards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. <sup>15</sup>He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. <sup>16</sup>Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. <sup>17</sup>He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. <sup>18</sup>When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."**

**<sup>19</sup>But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. <sup>20</sup>Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."**

<sup>21</sup>When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. <sup>22</sup>**The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."**

Note: After the people of Israel were liberated, they set up a free society. A society that was built on the foundation of "trust", rather than "security". But when it came to the crunch, they abandoned the "politics of trust" and embraced the "politics of security". Opting for a monarchy, just "like all the other nations", though they knew, full well, their king would enslave them.

It's interesting to note God's response to the demand for a king. He knows that it represents a clear rejection of his political agenda. He says, sadly, "They have rejected me as their king". He is implacably opposed to a top-down, centralized, political economy that disempowers people, especially the people at the bottom of society. And he warns the people of Israel not to go back to the form of government that they left behind them in Egypt, lest they "become slaves". But the people say they want a king regardless. And in a move that shows God is passionately committed to democracy - as opposed to autocracy - he instructs his representative to recognize the right of the people to decide on the form of government they want - and "give them a king" - even though he disagrees with the decision himself.

God accepts his rejection, but longs for a day when things will be different.

### 1.3 "A New Covenant."

Jer31:31**"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.**

<sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup>"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD.

**"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.**

<sup>34</sup>**No longer will anyone teach their sibling, or their neighbor, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD.**

Note: God longs for a day when he will be able to re-establish his kingdom on earth. A kingdom characterised by acceptance, respect, and reciprocity. Where the rules are no longer external, but internal, 'written on people's hearts' and everyone, 'from the least to the greatest' (note the order), has access to power.

Generation after generation reject God's agenda for love and justice. And generation after generation continue to construct political economies that enrich a powerful minority at the expense of the majority of the population.

Till, one day, God steps onto the stage of human history, in the person of Jesus Christ, to show us the way that we can live with love for justice once again. Jesus not only *tells* us about "the Way"; Jesus *is* "the Way" himself.

When the people try to make Jesus their king - he refuses, saying, he has not come "to be served", but "to serve", and to give his life as "a ransom" -the price he is willing to pay - to set the people free. He says that, while pagans may "lord it over" one another, it should "never be so among you".

## 1.4 "Not so with you!"

Mat23:8 **"You are not to be called `Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers and sisters.** <sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth `father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>Nor are you to be called `teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. **<sup>11</sup>The greatest among you will be your servant.** <sup>12</sup>For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Matt20:20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

<sup>21</sup>"What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

<sup>22</sup>"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

<sup>24</sup>When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

<sup>25</sup>Jesus called them together and said, **"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- <sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

Note: There are two ways of understanding power. Traditionally our dominant notion of power has been defined as *the ability to control other people*. The dominant notion of power emphasises the possibility of *bringing about change through coercion* – an approach that tries to make others change according to our agendas. While the traditional dominant notion of power means *taking control of our lives by taking control of others*, Jesus advocated a radical alternative to the dominant notion of power – *taking control of our lives, not by taking control of others, but by taking control of ourselves*. This alternative emphasises *bringing change by conversion* – an approach that does not try to make others change, but tries to change ourselves, individually and collectively, in the light of a glorious agenda for justice. It breaks the control that others have over us and liberates us from our desire to control others.

The dominant notion of power is popular because it often brings quick, dramatic results. But the dominant approach to power is characterised by short-term gains for some, and long-term losses for everyone else. Every violent revolution there has ever been, has - sooner or later - betrayed the people in whose name it fought its bloody war of liberation. The alternative notion of power is unpopular because it is usually a slow, unspectacular process.

But the alternative approach to power is the only way for groups to transcend their selfishness, resolve their conflicts, and manage their affairs in a way that does justice to everyone.

The essential problem in any situation of injustice is - that one human being is exercising control over another and exploiting the relationship of dominance. The solution to the problem is not simply to reverse roles, in the hope that once the roles have been reversed, the manipulation will discontinue. The solution is for people to stop trying to control each other. All of us, to one degree or another, exploit the opportunity if we have control over another person's life. Common sense therefore dictates that the solution to the problem of exploitation cannot be through the dominant approach to power - with its emphasis on controlling others. The solution is in the alternative - the strong but gentle approach - which emphasises controlling ourselves, individually and collectively, through self managed processes and structures.

Some of us sincerely believe that if we are to help people, particularly the oppressed, we need to manage their affairs for them. But it doesn't matter how we try to rationalise it, controlling others always empowers us and disempowers those we seek to help. The only way people can be helped, particularly the oppressed, is for them to be empowered to take control over their own lives. This is why Christ explicitly forbade his followers taking control over others, no matter how dire the circumstances. Their job was not to seek control, but to enable others to take control over their own lives. (Matthew 20:25–28) It is a pity that many of us who claim to follow Christ have not followed his advice and disobeyed ecclesial and civil authorities who have asked us to do otherwise. We could have been saved the crusades and the inquisition.

### 1.5 "Nonviolence And Self-Control."

Gal5:22 “**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** <sup>23</sup>**nonviolence and self-control. Against such things there is no law.**”

Note: It is a great irony to me that the greatest example we have in modern times of someone who did act on Christ's advice, did not claim to be a Christian. We need a lot more people who will experiment with the nonviolent revolution of *swaraj* or self-rule, like Gandhi

It's interesting to note that Christ and his disciples used organic images to describe how the 'power of the Spirit' - the secret of *swaraj* or self-rule - actually operates in our lives. Self-management is described as the 'fruit of the Spirit'. (Galatians 5:22) The capacity to manage ourselves develops quite unobtrusively - indeed, as quietly as fruit growing on a tree. The capacity to manage ourselves may develop unobtrusively, but is far more significant than we might ordinarily imagine. Like a minute seed, so small we can scarcely see it, that seems like it could never amount to anything great, the 'power of the Spirit' seems embarrassingly insignificant to begin with, yet grows into a capacity that is of tremendous significance in the end. (Matthew 13:31–32) The capacity to control our own lives does not develop without opposition, but like a plant growing in the midst of weeds, 'the power of the Spirit' grows strong in an environment that could easily destroy it. (Matthew 13:24–30) How the seeds of transformation, that bear the 'fruit of the Spirit', grow in a community always was, and always will be, a mystery. (Mark 4:26–29) However, it is no secret that the seeds of transformation that bear the 'fruit of the Spirit' will not grow in a community if those of us, whose lives constitute those seeds, do not bury ourselves in the life of our community. 'Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies it produces nothing, but if it dies it will produce much fruit, that brings much life to others.' (John 12:24)

### 1.6 “We must obey God rather than mere mortals!”

Acts 4:18 “Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John replied, ‘**Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.**’ <sup>20</sup>For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 5:29 “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘**We must obey God rather than mere mortals!**’”

Note: Peter and John wanted to cooperate with the authorities. But on occasion they felt they simply could not, in good conscience, comply with what the authorities were asking them to do. They felt morally obliged to obey God, rather than mere mortals.

### 1.7 “The things that are not nullify the things that are!”

1 Cor.1:26 “Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But **God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.** <sup>28</sup>**He chose the lowly things of this world --and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are,**”

Note: Before he was converted, during his days as a Pharisee, the Apostle Paul - known as Saul - was certainly well-known as a staunch arch-conservative, who would vigorously resist any radical change to his religious tradition. In Philippians (3:5-6) Paul said that he was ‘circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless: as for zeal, persecuting (anyone who tried to bring radical change in the name of Jesus).’

In fact, the first time we meet Paul in the Bible, he is supervising the stoning of the Stephen (Acts 8:1) - whom the apostles saw as a ‘gracious’ man, ‘full of the Holy Spirit’, (6: 5) - but whom Saul, the ‘Pharisee’, saw as a dangerous ‘blasphemer’ who needed to be publicly executed as soon as possible (6:11).

However, on the Road to Damascus, Paul was personally confronted by the ‘once-dead-now-risen’ revolutionary Jesus, who pointed out to him that to oppress people working for Christ-like change was to oppress Christ himself. ‘As he neared Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. (Acts 9:3-5)

And for Saul, that realization meant that everything had to change! So he and his friends took their whole world to task, and set out to reshape it, bit-by-bit, according to the upside-down inside-out values of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. To the great consternation of the key stakeholders in the status quo, Paul and his co-conspirators were ‘able to do immeasurably more’ than one might have imagined they would have (Eph 3:20). They chose the “*things that are not*” - to nullify “*the things that are*”. (1 Cor. 1:26-28). And time and time again they helped ‘*foolish*’ people confuse the ‘*wise*’ and ‘*weak*’ people confound the ‘*strong*’ (1 Cor. 1:26) in their quest to develop *radically inclusive and egalitarian communities of faith* in the midst of an established religious tradition which had previously disenfranchised them. They succeeded to such an extent that one horrified observer is recorded as saying - ‘*these people have turned the whole world upside down!*’ (Acts 17:6)

## 1.8 The biblical themes that emerge we need to consider in our discussion are:

1. *God loves everybody equally, but has a particular concern for the oppressed. God's concern for the oppressed expresses itself in a call to action. And this may involve God's people participating in a bloody struggle for total liberation.*
2. *God is passionately committed to democracy - as opposed to autocracy – and instructs his representatives to recognize the right of the people to decide on the form of government they want even if he disagrees with the decision.*
3. *God wants a form of government where the rules are no longer external, but internal, 'written on people's hearts' and where everyone - 'from the least to the greatest' - (note the significance of the order) - has access to power.*
4. *While the authorities advocate taking control of others, Jesus advocates taking control of ourselves. Jesus told his disciples not to take control over others. Their job was to enable others to take control over their own lives*
5. *The role of the Spirit is not to overpower people, but to empower people. Responsible self-management is described as the 'fruit of the Spirit'. And, the scripture says, 'against responsible self-management there is no law!'*
6. *We should seek to cooperate with other people as much as possible, but when it comes to the crunch we must obey God rather than mere mortals.*
7. *Even if it means we have to turn our ecclesial and civil world upside down!*

## 2. Section Two – Paul's Approach To Disobedience.

Paul's approach to disobedience seemed to consist of six key components -

1. **A Transformational Mindset.**
2. **Careful Preparatory Steps.**
3. **Sensible Long-Term Strategy.**
4. **Shrewd Short-Term Tactics.**
5. **Bold Acts Of Disobedience.**
5. **And Blood, Sweat, And Tears.**

### 2.1. A Transformational Mindset.

**Paul's approach to disobedience – or 'nonconformity' - was based on his passionate proactive - not reactive - commitment to transformation.**

*'I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will.'* Rom12:1-2

For Paul, being *transformed* - being *a subject and agent of transformation* –as opposed to being *conformed* to the current secular and religious patterns of operation in the world – was his *spiritual mission, his way of worshipping God*.

And Paul had a very clear vision of the kind of radically-Christ-like, thoroughly-compassionate, congregational transformation that he wanted to bring about:



'Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in ... love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of every-body. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink". Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

'For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a person's gift is prophesying, let them use it in proportion to their faith. If it is serving, let them serve; if it is teaching, let them teach; if it is encouraging, let them encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let them give generously; if it is leadership, let them lead diligently; if it is showing mercy, let them do it cheerfully.' Rom 12:9-21; 3-8

Paul envisaged a transformed community as...

1) A safe space -

'Practice hospitality'. And, 'as much as possible, be at peace with everybody.'  
Rom12: 13,18

2) where a person is accepted as a person;

'Love must be sincere'. 'Be devoted to one another in love'. 'Honor one another...'

Rom12: 9-10

3) where unity and diversity are respected;

'In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us'.

Rom12: 5-6

4) where no-one is treated as unimportant;

'Do not be proud, but associate with people of low position'. 'Honor one another above yourselves.'

Rom 12:16,10

5) where everyone is taken into account;

'As much as possible, live at peace with everyone'. 'Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.'

Rom 12: 18,17

6) and where there is a commitment to do justice - regardless.

'Share with all God's people who are in need'. 'Do not repay anyone evil for evil. "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink". Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

Rom 12:13,17,20-21

*If we are going to practice nonconformity like Paul did, we need to make sure that it is comes from a passionate commitment to transformation!*

**However, we need to remember, Paul did not only have a *passionate* commitment, but he also had *practical* commitment to transformation...**

As a conservative, Paul knew how resistant and reactive people could be to non-conformists. He had dissidents beaten up and thrown into prison. He personally supervised the public stoning of Stephen. (Acts 7 & 8) So when he was advising dissenters, Paul urged them to proceed with great caution.

Paul quickly followed his call (in Romans 12) for them *'to offer (their) bodies as living sacrifices' in the service of 'transformation' which is 'pleasing to God'*, with his call (in Romans 13) for them *to conform - by 'submitting themselves to the authorities' as much as they could - without compromising their commitment to transformation.*

There are probably many reasons Paul gave them this advice. But I can think of a couple of very important practical reasons that he gave them this advice.

On the one hand, Paul was convinced that if they *did not conform*, or 'submit' to some degree, they would quickly provoke the 'wrath' of the authorities, who - he warned them - 'did not bear the sword in vain!' (Rom 13: 1-4)

'I have been in prison frequently, flogged severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. (And) once I was stoned.'

1 Cor 11: 23-26

On the other hand, Paul was convinced that if they *did conform*, or 'submit' to some degree, people would take their adjustment and their accommodation as a sign of 'respect' and be more likely to reciprocate. (Rom.13:7)

'Though I am free, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.'

1 Cor 9:19-23

So, once we have decided to work for the transformation, Paul tell us we need to proceed with care, conforming to the requirements of the institution as much as we can, while reserving the right to refuse to conform to any requirement which is contrary to 'the law of love'. (Rom13:8),

Because we refuse to conform to anything contrary to our conscience we are always ultimately a threat to institutions. But because we are willing to do everything we can to conform, without compromising our commitment to transformation, institutions do not immediately perceive us as a threat or treat us as a threat. Which gives us time.

*We must always remember the change we seek is not Machiavellian but Pauline; and, as such, we must be committed to 'do what is right in the eyes of everybody'!*

## **2.2. Careful Preparatory Steps.**

**The first step Paul took in subverting a system was to seek a sponsor.**

Paul's sponsors included people like Priscilla and Aquila - whom he stayed with and worked with – and who introduced him to the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3) - and who saved his skin when he got into trouble! (Rom.16:3)

*A sponsor is person in an institution who empathises with us and who is willing to give us a bit of space to work for change. It doesn't have to be a lot of space. Even a little space can make a lot of difference. It can give us room to move in an environment that would otherwise restrict our movements.*

*For a sponsor to be effective, he or she needs to be in a position within the institution to not only provide us with space, but also protect that space.*

On one occasion Paul realised that the only one who could protect him from a terrible miscarriage of justice in the imperial court was the Emperor. So Paul appealed to Caesar for help. "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"(Acts 25:10-11)

*If we can't find an effective sponsor in an institution, who is both willing and able to protect us, if we disobey an order, we will be terminated – sooner rather than later!*

### **The second step Paul took was to find at least a couple of supporters.**

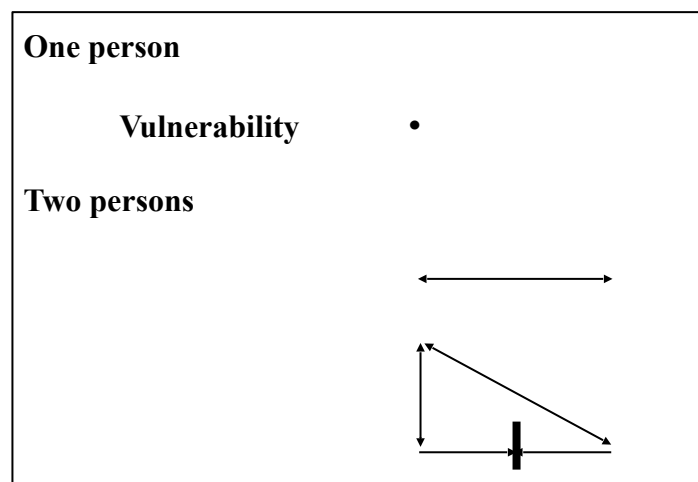
Paul's supporters included Barnabas, Mark, Silas and Luke. These people publicly supported Paul in his campaign to change the world. They set out on the great adventure together, risked the hazards of the road, argued about the route they should take, went their separate ways, got back together again, and shared the joys and sorrows of the grand endeavor.(Acts)

*A sponsor is person in an institution who empathises with us and who is willing to give us a space to work for change. A supporter is a person who sympathises with us and who is willing to join us – wholeheartedly - in our work for change.*

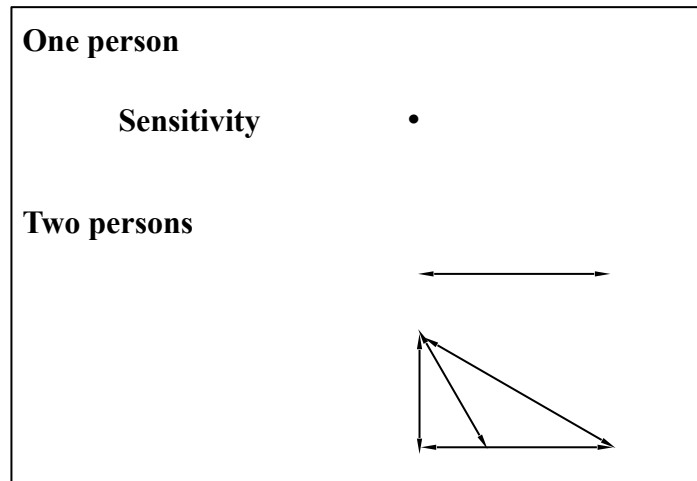
*For a sponsor to be effective, he or she needs to be in a position within the institution to not only provide us with space, but also protect that space. For a supporter to be effective, he or she needs to share our concern about the nature of an institution, and be willing to help us in our campaign to challenge it - if not change it.*

A group of two or three supporters make a significant contribution to a campaign.

A group of two or three can contribute 'stability' and 'security' to a campaign. "Two is better than one. A cord made of three strands is not easily broken." (Eccl. 4: 9,12) Paul found solidarity "fighting the good fight" (2Tim.4:7) in the company of "fellow workers", like Silas, and Epaphras, who were also "his fellow prisoners". (Phil.1:23)



A group of two or three can contribute 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' to a campaign. "Let every matter be decided on the testimony of two or three witnesses." (Matt.18 : 16). Luke, the physician, was always there to give Paul perspective (2Tim.4:11).



*We need to find at least two or three supporters who are willing to fight the good fight with us - planning the battles, taking the blows, sharing the victories and the defeats.*

### 2.3. Sensible Long-Term Strategy.

The most common way of trying to change an organisation has always been to mobilise a group of disenfranchised and disaffected people at the bottom to overthrow the people at the top, and, thereby, institute a change of regime. This can be done either violently, by revolution; or non-violently, by election. Either way, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Because no matter how many times you may change the regime, the system remains. (See Fig. A)

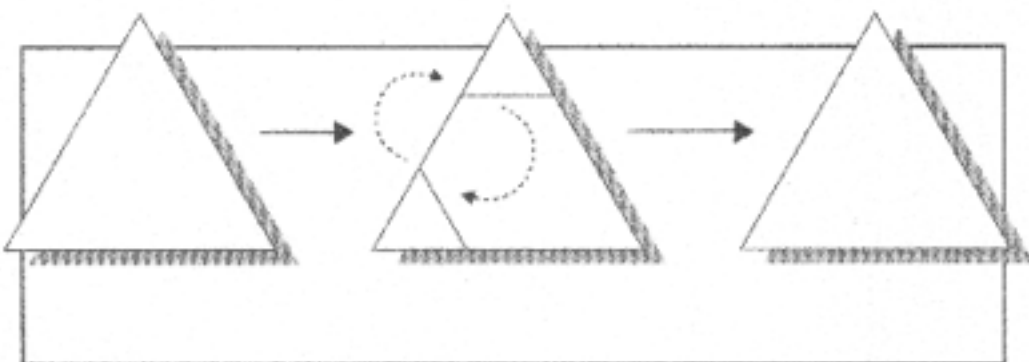


Figure A

**Paul's strategy was based on Jesus' much more innovative, alternative stratagem - of not trying to change the regime - but the system itself!**

Jesus' stratagem was simply to persistently deny hierarchy, advocate mutuality, and reframe all his relationships, over time, in terms of equality.

Time and time again Jesus told the people who were with him to reject any kind of hierarchical modus operandi, and embrace the practice of mutuality.

Jesus said:

'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **Not so with you.** Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' Matt.20: 20-28

'You are *not* to be called 'Rabbi,' for you've only one Master and you are all equals. And do *not* call anyone on earth 'Father,' for you have one Father, in heaven. (And you are all brothers and sisters). The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts themselves will be humbled, and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted'.Matt.23: 8-12

To start with, the disciples related to Jesus as their 'Rabbi', but over time, he reframed his relationship with all of them in clear, radically egalitarian terms.

After three years, Jesus said to them:

*'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.'* John 15: 15

**Paul took on Jesus' strategy and made it his own. He denied hierarchy, advocated mutuality, and reframed relationships in terms of equality. \***

He told the church at Galatia that he believed all people were equal in Christ:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female,  
for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal.3: 28

And when he wrote a letter on behalf of Onesimus - an escaped slave - to Philemon - his former master - Paul asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus back, 'no longer as a slave', but as 'you would welcome me', 'a dear brother.'

"I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him - who is my very heart - back to you. I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good - *no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.* He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you

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\* For detailed scholarly evidence of this, see p159-181 [Reframing Paul](#) (IVP) by Mark Strom.

consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me." Phil. 1: 12-18

Paul's strategy for change wasn't to mobilize the slaves against the masters, but white-ant hierarchy, build up mutuality, and - very carefully - reframe inequality in terms of equality, one relationship at a time. (See Fig. B)

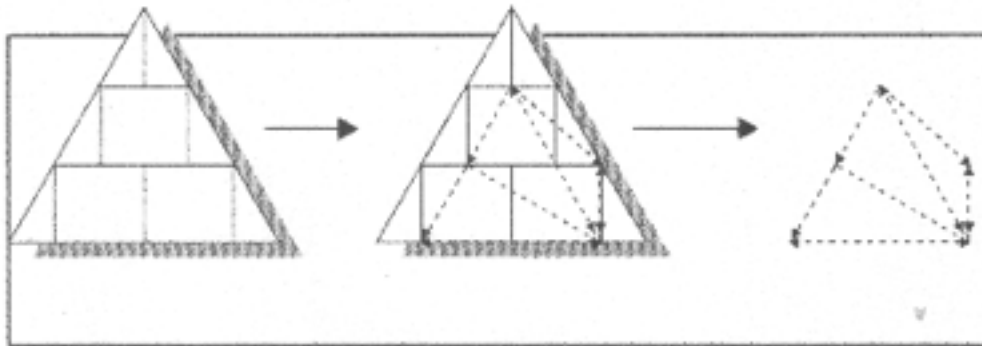


Figure B.

*We need to do more than challenge the existing regime by breaking a few rules. We need to challenge - and change - the entire system that actually makes all the rules. We need to transform the whole underlying system of oppressive and manipulative governance by implementing Paul's strategy of white-anting hierarchy, building up mutuality, and reframing the inequality in terms of equality, one relationship at a time.*

#### 2.4. Shrewd Short-Term Tactics.

When people at the bottom of an organisation feel powerless, they think that if only they were able to work their way to the top of the organisation they would be in a position to have the power to bring about the change that they desire. (See Fig. C)

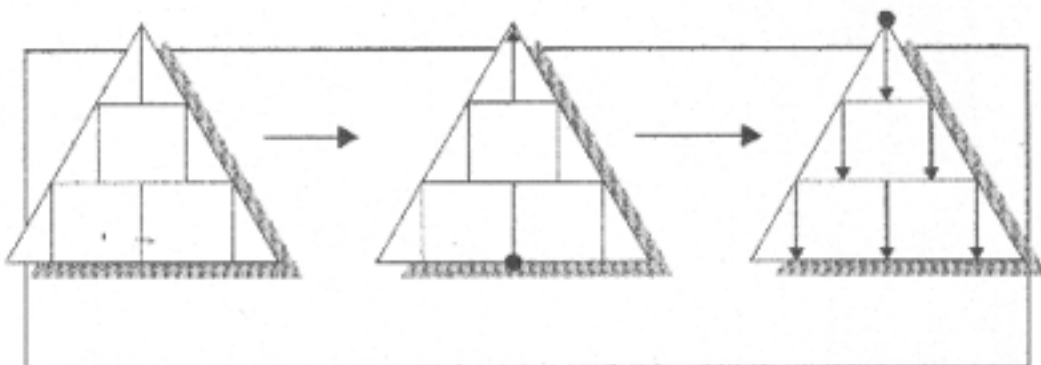


Figure C.

But anybody who has got to the top of an organisation will say that, actually, people at the top are as constrained by the structure as people at the bottom.

I think that maybe an overstatement, but there is undoubtedly some truth in it.

**Paul, certainly, did not encourage anybody to work their way from the bottom to the top of any system they happened to find themselves in.**

He said:

'Everyone should remain in the situation which they were in when God called them.' 1 Cor.7:20

He said:

'Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you.' 1 Cor.7:21a

Then added, rather enigmatically,

'although if you can gain your freedom, do so!' 1 Cor.7:21b

On the surface, this seems typical of Paul's advice – a bit of a contradiction! No wonder Peter said 'his letters contain things that are hard to understand.' (1 Pet.3:16) Ain't that the truth!

But, if we go a little deeper, we will discover there is more to this contradiction than immediately meets the eye. On the one hand, he is counseling people not to move up in the system; on the other hand, he is counseling them to gain their freedom if they can. So, where – we need to ask – does Paul expect people - oppressed by the system - to find freedom from oppression, without moving up in the system? I think the only answer is - by moving out!

**Paul encouraged everybody not to move from the bottom to the top, but from the centre to the edge of any system that they found themselves in.**

Again, in this regard, Paul based his strategy on Jesus' innovative stratagem.

Jesus publicly associated with the synagogue - not only by attending, but also by participating, 'as was his custom', in congregational meetings. (Luke 4:16)

*But*, Jesus never attempted to move up in the organization. He deliberately moved out on to the edge of the institution. *And, locating himself 'on the sidelines', rather than 'in the main game', gave him some great advantages.*

1. It gave him *perspective*.  
From the sidelines *he was able to see the whole field, and see what needed to be done to improve the game.*
2. It gave him *opportunity*.  
On the sidelines *he was far enough away from the game to be beyond its immediate control, yet close enough to affect the way it played out.*
3. It gave him *time*.  
On the sidelines *he was able to develop his short-term alternatives to the system while he worked on his long-term transformation of the system.*
4. It gave him *space*.  
On the sidelines *he was able to demonstrate the alternatives he developed in the eyes of everyone, so they could assess for themselves whether they wanted to adopt them, or not.*

5. It gave him a *position*.

On the sidelines *he could advocate change, without being in a position to impose the change he advocated on anyone*. So people knew *they were truly free* to adopt the change - or not - as they so desired. And because that made the change process much less threatening to the people in the synagogue - *it gave Jesus greater freedom* to experiment more!

**Paul adopted the same strategy Jesus used concerning the synagogue. He did not attempt to move up in the organization of the synagogue. But instead moved to the edge of the system, developing alternatives that people were free to accept, if they succeeded - or free to reject, if they failed.**

Paul's trade as a tent-maker was crucial to his strategy. It was his occupation when he was 'called', and he stuck with it, just as he had advised others to do. (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor.7:20-21)

As a position, it was low in status. But it was a self-supporting profession that gave Paul a high degree of independence, 'out on the cutting edge of society'. And he used it to develop his *ecclesia* - the communities of his dreams. (See Fig. D)

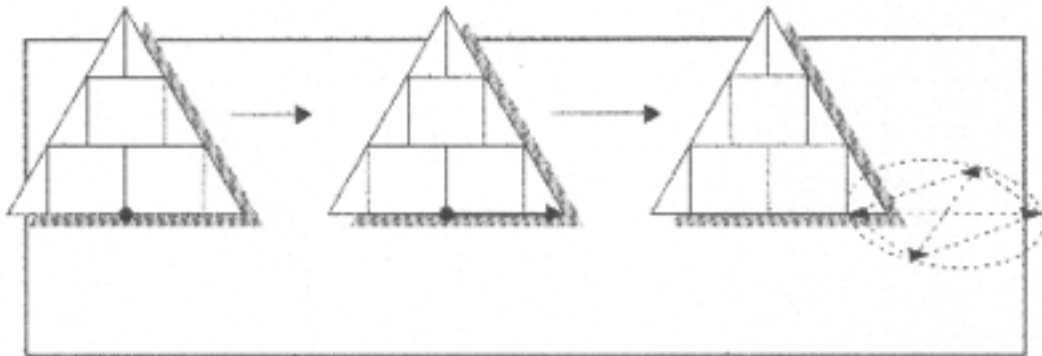


Figure D.

In these experimental groups, Paul worked side by side with slaves, ate and drank with 'clean' and 'unclean' alike - and encouraged the people around him to explore the possibility of 'living in harmony with one another'. (Rom.12: 16)

**Paul's prayer was that his experiments would not stay 'on the margins'. But, that his *ecclesia*, would become 'the centre of attention'. And not only be admired, but also be adopted as the *modus operandi* of society.**

Paul wrote

'I urge you to *imitate me!*

1 Cor. 4: 16

'For you yourselves know how *you ought to follow our example*. We were not idle when we were with you. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling. (And) *we did this in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.*'

11 Thes. 3:7-9



*'Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.'*  
1 Cor.11: 1

*'If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ:*

Phil. 2:1-3

Paul worked for the day when synagogues would adopt the *modus operandi* of his *ecclesia* and institutions would develop into *Christ-like communities*. (See Fig. E)

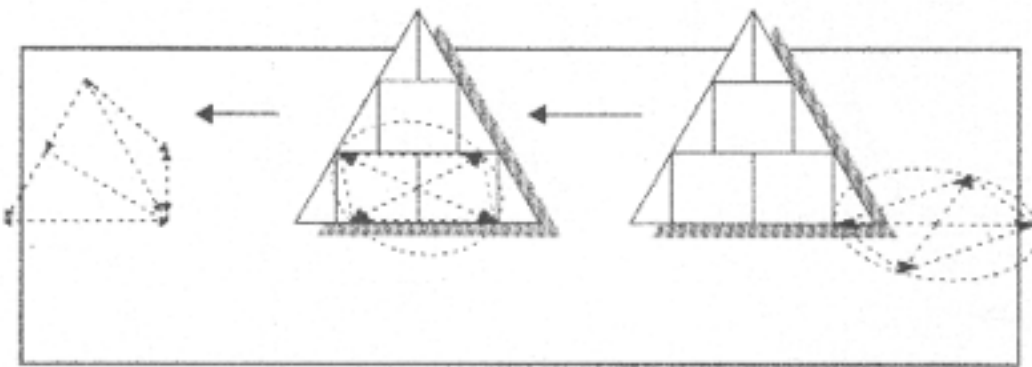


Figure D.

*We need to turn the focus of our attention from the centre to the edge of the systems that we are in and direct our energies towards bold acts of disobedience on the side.*

## **2.5. Bold Acts Of Disobedience.**

I would like to consider five of Paul's many, various acts of disobedience.

### **Paul's first bold act of disobedience was to follow the "un-rule-y" Jesus.**

Jesus didn't call people to "follow my rules". He always called them to "follow me". And Paul decided to follow in the footsteps of the notoriously "*un-rule-y*" Jesus.

*Jesus taught his disciples to pick and choose which rules to obey. After all, he told them, "you weren't made for the rules, the rules were made for you". (Mark 2:27)*

*Jesus often broke the rules of his society deliberately. He touched untouchables against the rules and gave people a break when it was against the rules to do so.*

*Jesus not only the broke the rules of his society, he even tossed out the rulebook. Paul said that "Jesus ... destroyed ... the law with its regulations." (Ephes.2:13-15)*

So for Paul to follow the "un-rule-y" Jesus was to set out on a path of disobedience.

**Paul's second bold act of disobedience was "not to be conformed" but to "be transformed" - and to "become an agent of transformation in society".**

*Paul said that as far as he was concerned "If anyone thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ!" (Phil.3:4)*

*Paul said he wanted to deconstruct and reconstruct a whole new political, religious, social and cultural reality through faith in the "un-rule-y" Jesus Christ. "You who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal.3: 27-28) If that meant destroying the status quo – so be it! "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the things that are not to nullify the things that are!" (1 Cor.1:26-28)*

**Paul's third bold act of disobedience was to ask open questions in a closed system...**

Fran Peavey says – "Questioning is a basic tool for rebellion. It breaks open the hardened shells of the present, and opens up the options that might be explored. Questioning reveals the profound uncertainty that is imbedded deep in all reality beyond the facades of confidence and sureness. It takes this uncertainty towards growth and new possibilities. Questioning can change institutions and entire cultures. It can empower people to create strategies for change."

*Paul loved asking questions that undermined the authority of the system and opened up options for people that - until that time - had been considered completely closed.*

*"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? "*

The answers Paul canvases are nothing less than revolutionary. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8.31-39).

Paul was prepared to –

1. *question the right that a system assumes to rule.*
2. *question the concentration of power assumed in the system.*
3. *question the tyranny of precedent assumed in the system.*
4. *question the monopoly of virtue assumed in the system.*
5. *make sure that each and every system knows that they are answerable for the way that they act, not merely to themselves, but to everyone*

affected by their activities, particularly those affected adversely by their activities.

6. call " to account those who maintain oppressive structures, reminding them of the need to judge those structures from the standpoint of those who are oppressed (and One who identifies with those who suffer from oppression), rather than from those who benefit (from the oppression)"<sup>1</sup>

### Paul's fourth bold act of disobedience was to conduct radical conversations in a conservative society...

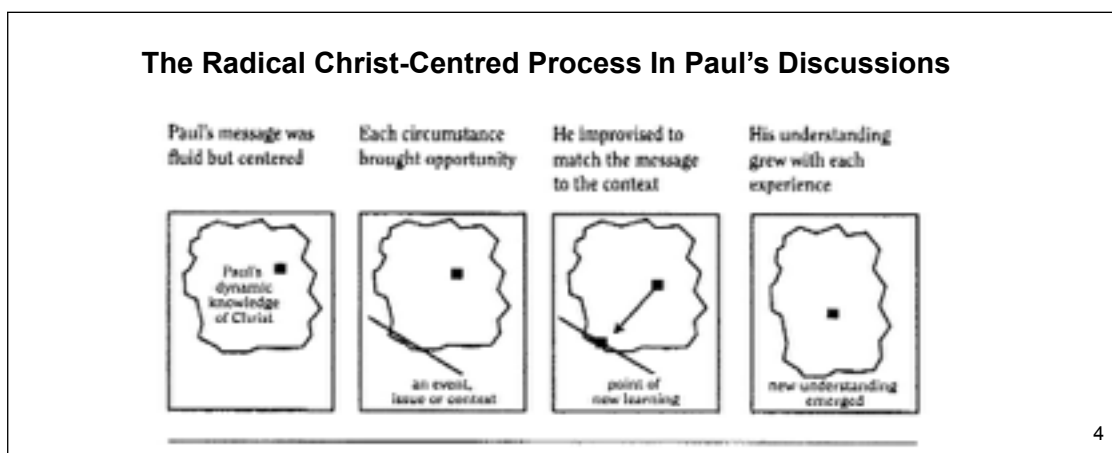
Paul loved to conduct radical conversations in the context a conservative society.

Wherever he went, Paul developed what he called 'ekklesia'. These 'ekklesia' were never defined in terms of vertical relationships - like worship; but in terms of horizontal relationships – as fellowships – 'for one another'. These gatherings were set up as support groups for conversations that could help participants tear down the 'strongholds of their society' (2 Cor.10:3-5 ) and 'build people up'.(1Cor. 14:26,Eph.4:11-16).

Mark Strom points out that the *process* involved in the *radical conversations* Paul conducted were *critical* of the conservative societies in which they were conducted.

Conversations were open to all people and ranged across the topics of everyday life Paul's goal in these conversations was to discourage anyone - including himself - from setting themselves up as an authority, or accepting any authority – apart from Christ. 'His goal is to induce self-examination and self-criticism' in relation to Christ.<sup>2</sup>

'Christ gave coherence to Paul's conversations. Paul modeled the freedom of Christ. Christ gave new shape to social relations. Each conversation brought grace to some aspect of everyday life, liberating practice from enslaving social conventions.'<sup>3</sup>



Mark Strom also points out the *content* of the *radical conversations* Paul conducted was thoroughly *critical* of the conservative societies in which they were conducted.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Elliott Comfortable Compassion p.153-154

<sup>2</sup> Mark Strom Reframing Paul IVP Illinois p189

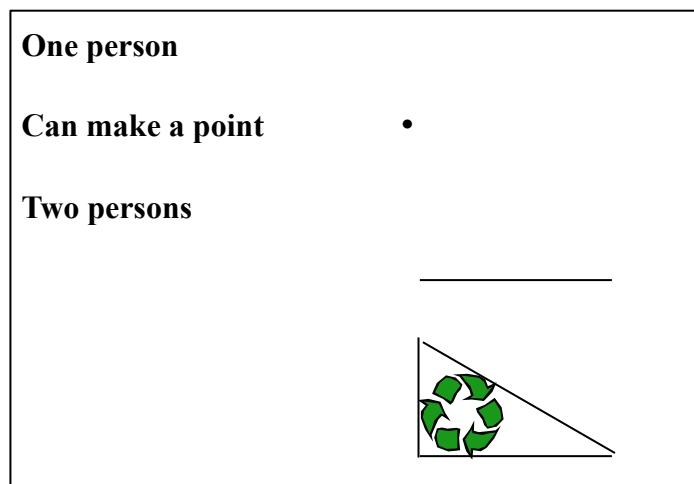
<sup>3</sup> Mark Strom Reframing Paul p183

<sup>4</sup> Mark Strom Reframing Paul p183

<b>The Conservative Content Of Graeco-Roman Society</b>	<b>The Radical Content In Paul's Discussions</b>
Knowledge in terms of abstraction	Knowledge in terms of stories
Coherence through use of reason	Coherence through the Spirit
Pursuit of the ideal over the real	Pursuit of relations through love
Centreing on the ideal of virtue	Centreing on the person of Christ
Importance of balance	Importance of abandonment
Celebration of status	Critique of status
Maintenance of the status quo	Change of the status quo
Transmission of social conventions	Transformation of social conventions
Interest in hierarchy	Interest in mutuality
Focus on individual ambition	Focus on community shalom
Value of extraordinary over ordinary	Value of ordinary everyday life

**Paul's fifth bold act of disobedience was to develop an alternative culture that subverted the dominant order of the day...**

Tony Kelly says that one person can make a point - by asking open questions in a closed system; two persons can draw a line - by conducting nonconformist conversations; but it takes at least three persons, in relationship to one another, to be able to create an alternative social space - for the development of a transformational culture.



Jesus had told his disciples that *"Wherever two or three of you gather together in my name, there I am in the midst of you."* (Matt.18:20). So Jesus had sent his disciples out *'two by two'*, to look for a *third person* - the 'person of peace' - with whom the disciples could form a *trinity as the basis for a Christ-like community*. (Luke10:1,5).

**Paul knew that counter-cultural communities that could subvert the dominant order of the day did not need not be large. They could actually be quite small. A group of three people who met in a single household was big enough. The issue for Paul - as**

*it was for Jesus - was not the size of the group - but the Spirit of the group. And the way that the group allowed the Spirit to embody in them a Christ-like social reality.*

Paul said 'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. *We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.* If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact *God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.* If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But *God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is hon-ored, every part rejoices with it.'* (1 Cor.12:12-26)

In his 'ekklesia' Paul turned society upside down and inside out – *he brought diverse social groups together in unity, encouraged them to give greater honour to the those who normally got less, and expected them to practice equal empathy for one another.*

*The first step we need to take in an act of disobedience is the step of integrity. This is an essentially personal step. When we decide that we can live 'divided no more' but want to live by what we believe in.<sup>5</sup> The second step we need to take in an act of disobedience is the step of unity. This is an essentially relational step. When we decide we need to 'unite with others' and work out a way forward together.<sup>6</sup> The third step we need to take in an act of disobedience is the step of solidarity. This is an essentially political step. When we decide we need to make our private allegiances and private alliances public.<sup>7</sup> The fourth step we need to take in an act of disobedience is the step of policy. This is an essentially structural step. When we decide we need to develop alternative groups and organizations based on our beliefs.<sup>8</sup>*

## **2.6. Blood, Sweat, And Tears.**

**It may sound easy. But it isn't. Because the strategy of transformation Paul advocated entails a struggle - saturated in blood, sweat, and tears!**

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<sup>5</sup> Parker Palmer [The Courage To Teach](#) p167

<sup>6</sup> Parker Palmer [The Courage To Teach](#) p172

<sup>7</sup> Parker Palmer [The Courage To Teach](#) p175

<sup>8</sup> Parker Palmer [The Courage To Teach](#) p180

If we are to play a constructive, rather than destructive, role in our society we cannot afford to be *reactive - treating others as they treat us; instead we need to be proactive -- treating others like we would like to be treated ourselves.*

Paul says -

'Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink". Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

Rom.12: 8-18

*There can be no transformation without grace, and no grace without suffering.*

*The transformation we seek is good. We can only expect good outcomes from good input. Our ability to give consistently good input depends on our willingness to do good consistently. And our willingness to do good consistently is dependent on our capacity to suffer evil without reacting or retaliating in kind.*

Paul says that, for him to bring about change, he had...

*'to fill up in (his) flesh what (was) still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.'*

Col. 1::24

*To bring change, we will have to 'fill up in (our) flesh' the blood, sweat, and tears that are 'still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, the church!'*

### **3. Section Three – Christ-like Nonviolent Resistance.**

It is an intriguing irony that all the major Christian dissidents of the twentieth century – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, and Desmond Tutu – were taught the principles of Christ-like non-violent resistance by a Hindu – Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi said 'The gentle figure of Christ - so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgive-ness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when struck, but to turn the other cheek - was a beautiful example of the perfect person.'<sup>9</sup> Christ, the 'martyr, was an embodiment of sacrifice', and the cross 'a great example of suffering'.<sup>10</sup> 'Jesus lost his life on the cross'. But Jesus didn't lose the battle. 'Jesus won. As the world's history has abundantly shown'. And, consequently, 'the example of Christ' is a crucial 'factor in the composition of my underlying faith in nonviolence - which rules all my actions.'<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi said, 'the art of true self-defense - by which man gains his life by losing it - has not (yet) been perfected for application by large masses of mankind.'

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<sup>9</sup> Gandhi, M. The Message Of Jesus,: Bharitya Vidya Bhavan Bombay 1971 foreword

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 7

'*Satyagraha*' - his famous experiment with 'truth-force' in the struggle for independence - was, he said, 'an experiment in that direction'.<sup>12</sup>

During the struggle for independence in India, Gandhi developed a 'code of conduct', 'rules for engagement', and 'stages of a campaign' for those who wanted to be committed to a strategy of Christ-like nonviolent resistance to the politics of oppression.

### 3.1. The Code Of Conduct

The code of conduct, laid down by Gandhi in 1930, included the following requirements:

1. Never harbor any anger, but suffer the anger of an opponent.
2. Do not submit to an order given in anger, even if threatened.
3. Refuse to return assaults.
4. Refrain from insults.
5. Protect opponents from insult or attack, even at the risk of life.
6. Do not resist arrest.
7. If taken prisoner, behave in an exemplary manner.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. The Rules Of Engagement

The rules of engagement - outlined by Gandhi - were elaborated by Bose, as follows:

1. There must be self-reliance at all times. Outside help may be used in the engagement, but not as a substitute for personal responsibility.
2. Engagement should be proactive, not reactive. Constantly monitoring the engagement to make sure that the actions are always constructive.
3. Education of the public, the participants, and the opponent, in the art of constructive action are an integral part of the process of engagement.
4. Any demands for changes that are made, must be reasonable requests. Not the maximum, but the minimum demands, consistent with the truth.
5. The opponent should not be expected to make any more changes than the participants are prepared to make in the resolution of their conflict.
6. If the opponent is unwilling to change, participants should be willing to move slowly, but surely, into the successive stages of a campaign.
7. There should be a persistent search to find a peaceful settlement at every stage of the campaign - to destroy the enmity - not the enemy.
8. In working out a settlement, participants need to cooperate with their opponents as much as they can, without compromising their principles.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3. The Stages Of A Campaign

The stages of a campaign - developed by Gandhi - are listed by Shridharani:

1. *Negotiation*. Every effort must be made to redress a grievance, or resolve a conflict through the established channels for mediation and arbitration.
2. *Preparation*. If mediation and arbitration fails, then participants need to prepare themselves, through prayer -and fasting - to take direct action.
3. *Agitation*. Direct action takes many forms - from meetings to marches - but all of the many forms of direct action need to be strictly nonviolent.

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<sup>12</sup> M.Gandhi The Science Of Satyagraha Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay 1970 p129

<sup>13</sup> D.Tendulkar Mahatma Vol.III Jhaveri and Tendulkar, Bombay 1952 p17

<sup>14</sup> N. Bose Studies in Gandhism Indian Associated Publishing Calcutta 1947 p175

4. *Presentation*. If there is no response, the opponent should be presented with a serious proposal; and an ultimatum, if no response is forthcoming.
5. *Demonstration*. The participants need to demonstrate their commitment to the cause, where appropriate, by public boycotts and general strikes.
6. *Non-cooperation*. Depending upon the issues involved, non-cooperation might involve either nonpayment of taxes - or noncompliance with a law.
7. *Civil Disobedience*. Noncompliance with a law involves civil disobedience. Laws should only be disobeyed if central to, or symbolic of, the grievance.
8. *Parallel Governance*. If the grievances are still not addressed, then the participants should assume responsibility to deal with them themselves.<sup>15</sup>

*It seems to me, that no-one has ever enunciated a more Christ-like set of principles for conducting a campaign of nonviolent resistance to political oppression than Gandhi did when he laid out his 'code of conduct', 'rules for engagement', and 'stages of a campaign'. And we would be well advised as Christians, to follow the lead of our Hindu guide in this regard, if we would want to follow in the footsteps of Christ.*

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<sup>15</sup> K.Shridharani War Without Violence Harcourt, Brace New York 1939 pp5-42