

An Annotated Outline of W. A. Meeks and J. T. Fitzgerald, *The Writings of St. Paul* (2d ed.; New York and London: Norton, 2007), 228-343. Written by Brandon Wason, Jill Marshall, and Shively Smith.

Brandon Wason (February 1, 2010)

RLNT 770: History of New Testament Interpretation 2

PAUL AS SATAN'S APOSTLE: JEWISH-CHRISTIAN OPPONENTS

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul combats rival missionaries who insisted that Gentile Christians be circumcised and follow the Mosaic law. Jewish-Christianity continued to exist after Paul's time and included such groups as the Ebionites and the Elkesaites. Jewish-Christian groups generally lacked clarity in their portraits of Paul, and often opposed caricatures of the Paul of catholic Christianity and not a Paul derived from a close reading of the letters. (228-29)

AMBROSIASTER [The Non-Apostle] (late fourth century)

Ambrosiaster writes that Jewish believers denied Paul's apostleship because of rejection of circumcision and Sabbath observance. (229)

ANONYMOUS [A False Proselyte] (third century?)

"The Ascents of James" slanders Paul by claiming that he was not a citizen of Tarsus, he was a Greek born of Greek parents, and he became a proselyte of Judaism in order to marry the daughter of the priest, and after being unsuccessful with the girl he wrote against circumcision, Sabbath, and Law. (229-30)

EPIPHANIUS [The Cerinthians] (ca. 375)

The Cerinthians endorse circumcision and adherence to the law because Jesus did both. They oppose Paul because of his rejection of circumcision and his position regarding the law (cf. Gal 5:2, 4). (230)

ANONYMOUS [Messenger of Satan] (ca. 200?)

Kerygmata Petrou: The Letter of Peter to James. Peter tells James to pass on his writings to worthy recipients, just as Moses passed on the tradition to the seventy. Peter refers to "the enemy" (Paul?) who has won converts to his lawless and silly teaching, whereas Peter's own teaching is in support of the Mosaic Law. (230-31)

Kerygmata Petrou: Homily II, 16-17. There is a principle where the second is better than the first. "Simon" (Paul) was first and Peter followed him "as light after darkness, as knowledge after ignorance, as healing after sickness." (231-32)

Kerygmata Petrou: Homily XI, 35, 3-6. The leadership of the church in Jerusalem was entrusted to James. "Simon" (Paul) was sent as a herald under the pretext of the truth, but actually he sowed lies; a sheep in wolf's clothing. (232)

Kerygmata Petrou: Homily XVII, 13-19. "Simon" questions Peter's experience and claims that receiving a vision is better than being an eyewitness of the Lord. Peter questions the authenticity of a vision because the person experiencing the vision might misrepresent its contents or source. God cannot appear in a vision because the human faculties are not equipped to handle it. Peter also claims that when someone sees a vision, it could be understood as an evil demon. He also argues that evil people see true visions. Paul's vision does not qualify him to be an apostle, or else he would not have opposed Peter. (232-34)

ANONYMOUS [Persecutor of the Faith] (date unknown)

Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions. Paul, one of "the enemies" caused a disturbance at the temple and attacked James and threw him down the temple steps, leaving him for dead. This also addresses the circumstances surrounding Paul's trip to Damascus with letters from the high priest. (234-35)

J. LOUIS MARTYN [Paul's Opponents in Galatia] (1985)

There were two parallel missions (Gal 2.7): Peter pursues the mission to the Jews (Law observant) while Paul pursues the mission to the Gentiles (Law free). This hypothesis is entirely accurate because Paul's opponents in Galatia (the Teachers) shows that there were Gentile Law-observant Gentile missions. There are numerous places within Galatians that Paul refers to these Teachers along with other allusion, and so constructing a reliable portrait of them is quite possible. The Teachers are messianic Jews, able to live among the gentiles and to make effective, apologetic contact with them. The Teachers are connected to a powerful circle of Christian Jews, therefore various Jewish-Christian sources should help construct a portrait of these Teachers.

Martyn draws the following sketch of Paul's opponents in Galatia: (1) Outsiders, (2) Jews, (3) Christian-Jewish Evangelists, (4) the Law as Good News, (5) The Law as the Good News for Gentiles, (6) The Motivation for a Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles, (7) the Law as the Source of the Spirit, (8) the Threat of Exclusion, (9) the Necessity of Circumcision as the Commencement of Law Observance, (10) the Christ of the Law, (11) the Descendents of Abraham; the Blessing of Abraham, (12) 'Jerusalem Is Our Mother,' (13) Israel, (14) Victory over the Impulsive Desire of the Flesh. (235-41)

MARTIN HENGEL, *The Letter of James as Anti-Pauline Polemic* (1987)

Why was James written? It's a general letter with very few specifics and is addressed to the church at large. Hengel's hypothesis is that the letter was written by James the Just (or his secretary) to the churches outside of Palestine after Paul's arrest or transfer to Rome. The letter contains anti-Pauline polemic in an indirect form as it does not mention Paul by name. The anti-Pauline character of 2:14-16 (faith and works debate) is widely acknowledged. The critique of the businessmen making travel plans (4:13-16) is likely not a critic against those conducting business, but against missionaries like Paul who made travel plans and boasted of their success. In fact, 4:13-16 refers to Paul's missionary plans failing to be fulfilled, and so the letter originated sometime around his arrest and imprisonment. James warning against the transgressions with the tongue, along with his prohibition against swearing, are further possible references to Paul whose sometimes offensive polemic and oath-like asseverations (and curses) abound in the letters. Hengel takes the reference to the sick being healed at the hands of the elders as being directed to Paul, who could have been freed from his demonic illness by entrusting himself to the elders (James included). Finally, James's polemic against the rich could easily be directed at the Pauline circle, which often included well-to-do members of society. Hengel's hypothesis seems to resolve someone of the perennial issues surrounding the composition of James. If his hypothesis is correct, the original recipients familiar with Paul would have recognized it as an anti-Pauline polemic, while others would have mild edification from the letter. (242-53)

DAVID FLUSSER [*Paul's Jewish-Christian Opponents in Jerusalem and in the Didache*] (1987)

Flusser argues that there were two opposing interpretations of the Apostolic Decree, and that they were represented by Peter and Paul respectively. *Didache* 6:2-3 was written for Gentile believers and contains a maximalist interpretation of the Noachic precepts contained in the decree. An example of this maximalist interpretation of the decree is seen in the Peter's actions at the Antioch episode. Flusser argues that the majority position of the Mother Church would have interpreted the Apostolic Decree in maximalist terms in order to obscure the boundary lines between Jew and Gentile within the church. Paul, on the other hand, argued that the Law should not be followed beyond the Noachic precepts, which also is in line with later Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles. (254-64)

PAUL AND HIS PAGAN CRITICS

There were a number of critiques of Paul from Pagan authors; Meeks references Celsus, Porphyry, Heirocles Sossianus, Julian, and the anonymous Hellene (the latter two are included in the excerpts). (265-66)

JULIAN [Pauline Double Talk: Is the God of Israel Really the God of the Gentiles] (363)

Paul could not decide between arguing that the God of Israel was for the Jews only or if He was also the God of Gentiles. Julian rhetorically asks Paul how he could claim that God is also the God of Gentiles when in fact Moses, the oil of anointing, and the prophets were given to the Jews and not Gentiles. (266-67)

JULIAN [Whether Paul Called Jesus “God” and the Secret Worship of Paul’s Tomb] (363)

Paul did not retain the teachings of the apostles. But Paul and others did not venture to call Jesus “God,” but John was the first to do this. Julian also claims that the tombs of Peter and Paul were being worshipped. (267)

AN ANONYMOUS HELLENE [An Attack on Paul] (late fourth century?)

Acts 16.3. The anonymous author questions why Paul would circumcise Timothy when he called the practice of circumcision “mutilation.” Paul makes circumcision the divider between believer and outsider, and then goes about performing the ritual himself. The anonymous author is also critical of Paul’s claim that he is a slave to all (cf. 1 Cor 9.19). (267-68)

Acts 22.3; Acts 22.27-9. Paul claims to be a Jew in one place and a Roman in another— anyone claiming to be both is neither. Paul’s inconsistency toward the Law, advocating it and denouncing it, shows that he is a liar. (268-69)

1 Cor. 9.7. Paul ironically appeals to the Law when it benefits him financially (“You shall not muzzle an ox...”). (269)

Rom. 7.12, 14. Again, the anonymous author critiques Paul’s stance toward the law. Paul claims on the one hand that the law is holy and just, but puts a curse on those who obey what is whole. Paul is a bad guide who does not know where he is headed. (269-70)

Rom. 5.20. On the one hand Paul chops up the law into little pieces, but also tries to keep the law and finds observance of the law to be virtuous. (270)

1 Cor. 10.20-26; 8.4, 8. Paul is inconsistent in his advice about eating food sacrificed to idols. (270)

1 Tim. 4.1; 1 Cor. 7.25. The anonymous author picks up on a contradiction between 1 Cor and 1 Tim, where in the former Paul praises virginity, but in the later he warns against the teaching of seducing spirits who forbid marriage. (270-71)

Jill Marshall (February 1, 2010)
History of New Testament Interpretation 2

Valentinus and the Gnostic Paul (p. 272)

Introduction: Varying groups claimed Paul in the 2nd century. Paul appealed to Christian Gnostics because of his focus on human redemption, dichotomies, emphasis on freedom, and portrayal of a heavenly Christ. His mystery language and asceticism also appealed to Gnostics. Valentinus claims to have been taught by a student of Paul.

This chapter: excerpt from Theodotus about Valentinians and Paul, essay by Elaine Pagels about Valentinian interpretation of Paul, Irenaeus's reaction to Valentinian interpretation.

THEODOTUS [Paul as Paraclete] (2nd c.) (p. 273)

Paul as "the type of the Paraclete," like Christ. Two kerygmas for those of 2 different points of view: 1. As begotten, 2. As spiritual and wise.

ELAINE PAGELS, "The Gnostic Paul" (1975) (p. 274)

- The argument that Paul argues against Gnostic heresy (esp. in Cor and Phil) does not take into consideration 2nd c. Gnostic exegesis of Paul.
- Most previous studies of Gnosticism, Valentinian exegesis draws from heresiologists. Nag Hammadi provides additional resources for understanding gn. Interpretation. Irenaeus and Tertullian were involved in disputes with the Valentinian over who correctly interpreted Paul and Pauline authorship of certain texts. Development of 2 images of Paul: antignostically (Pastorals) and gnostically (Epistle to Rheginos, Prayer of the Apostle Paul, Interpretation of the Gnosis). Gnostics – special wisdom for the initiates. Paul taught 2 ways at once. Valentinians claim orthodox reads literally. They can't take Jew/Gentile conflict in Romans literally because it is outdated and must mean more – psychics and pneumatics.
- The process by which Paul becomes in 2nd c. "the apostle of the heretics." Gnostics invoke Paul's example—liberation, spirit, mysteries—supported in scripture and acknowledged as a plausible interpretation by Irenaeus. Examples from Paul's letters and how they influenced Gnostics.
- Paul's own relation to the Gnostics? The problem of scholars reading Paul in light of 2nd c. Gnosticism. Probability of Conzelmann's view that Paul's "Gnostic terminology" was appropriated by Valentinians. Pauline terminology in the Gnostic writings. Domination of orthodox reading of Paul and distortion of Paul by both orthodox and Gnostic readings.
- Issue: Pagels's use of texts. She still seems to rely heavily on heresiologists, not Nag Hammadi.

IRENAEUS [On the Valentinian Interpretation of Scripture] (ca. 180) (p. 283)

Irenaeus's accusations of Valentinians: boast perfect knowledge, sources other than scripture, peculiar interpretation, disregard order of scripture, old wives' fables, adapting scripture to serve their views.

Shively Smith (February 1, 2010)

History of NT Interpretation 2

The Only True Apostle: Marcion's Radical Paul (p. 284)

- Marcion was born approximately 20 years after Paul's death
- Marcion believed in salvation by grace and espoused it as the "purest essence of the Christian gospel" (p. 284). Additionally, he argued for the existence of two rival gods. He made a distinction between the God of grace (who was unknown before Christ and focused on love) and the God of the OT (who was about creation, law, and justice).
- Marcion produced his own New Testament, which some scholars have branded as the "first strictly defined Christian canon of scripture." It included revised versions of Pauline texts and Marcion's own writing, *The Antitheses*.
- Marcion was not a Gnostic, although he eschewed the value of the world and materiality. However, he rejected basic Gnostic elements such as allegorical interpretation, the authority of oral tradition, and "cosmogonic mythology." His greatest distinction from Gnostics is his emphasis on grace. For Marcion, God is completely other from humanity and "he has no relationship with humans before his absolutely free decision to save them" (p. 285). This is in contrast to the Gnostics who argues that salvation is possible for the spiritual side of human, which is consubstantial with God.

Irenaeus [Marcion] (ca. 180) (p. 285) - The passage is from *The Treatise of Irenaeus of Lugdunum against the Heresies*.

Makes a series of indictments against Marcion, which are:

- Marcion branded the God of the OT as "the cause of evils, desirous of war, changeable in opinion and the author of inconsistent statements" (p. 285).
- Marcion erroneously separates the God of Creation from God, the Father of Jesus.
- He edited the Gospel of Luke, removing passages that referred to Jesus' birth or teachings, which designated God, the Father of Jesus, as also the creator.
- He also edited Pauline epistles by removing all passages in which Paul refers to God as the creator of the world and in which the OT prophets are quoted (particularly passages about the advent of Jesus) (p. 286).

Tertullian [Marcion's Special Work] (207) (p. 286)

Tertullian gives a brief sketch of Marcion's heresy:

- Marcion separated the law and the Gospel, thus suppressing any notion of continuity between the OT prophets and God with the New Testament writers and God as revealed through Jesus Christ.
- His own writing, *The Antitheses*, are propositions that distance the Gospel from the law and creates rival gods.

Marcion [The Antitheses] (ca. 140?) (p. 286-288)

This is Marcion's own work in which he uses Scriptural references to support his theology and also validate his canon. The major points he makes are as follows:

- The God of the OT and Creation was not only limited in power (Luke 5:22, 6:8, 9:47), this God was also completely eclipsed by God the Father as revealed through Jesus Christ (Luke 10:22).
- Marcion makes a sharp distinction between the characters of these two Gods. The God of Creation is one who judges and punishes, incites terror and violence, withholds relief or help from those in need, is partial and bias, caters only to his elect (Israel), values temporal material possessions (i.e. gold, silver, etc.), plunders the wealth of others, and kills freely.
- In contrast, God the Father is good, merciful, compassionate, forgiving, helpful, values life, protects humanity, despises material wealth and possessions, is impartial, saves all of humanity

Adolf von Harnack [Marcion's Starting Point] (1924) (p. 288)

- Marcion adopted the Pauline dichotomy of law and Gospel, particularly as its portrayed by Galatians and Romans (p. 288).
- He completed subscribed to the Pauline notion of grace freely given, rather than righteousness based on works.
- Marcion further argues that the Redeemer God was not revealed to humanity prior to Christ's revelation in the world. Thus, all previous literary and historical proofs and revelations point to a different Creator God who completely contrary to the loving, open, acceptance expressed by the Redeemer God (p. 289).
- Through Marcion's assertion of two rival gods, he also remains true to the Jewish history and faith. He never says that the God of the Jews is nonexistent. Nor does he deny the activities of the Jewish God in history. He simply makes a distinction between the character and activities of the God of the OT and the God as revealed through Jesus (p. 289).
- Marcion understood his task to be one of interpretative restoration. He saw the church's insistence on the continuity between the God of the OT and the God of the NT as a

corruption of the truth of the Scriptures. Thus, he created his own canon as a way of opposing this teaching.

- Harnack illustrates the situation by saying, “To Marcion, certain that the authentic Pauline faith was his own, all seemed lost in the inner constitution of the mainline Christianity around him. While he was convinced that Christ had abolished the Old Testament and its God and had proclaimed an alien God, the Church more and more identified the two Gods and founded itself upon the Old Testament. It became, that is, thoroughly ‘Jewish.’” (p. 290)
- The true heresy and conspiracy, in Marcion’s view, was the designation of Christ as the Son of this Creator God who judges and punishes.

Concluding Observations and Questions

Marcion was one who challenged the fundamental teachings of the church. He regarded the continuity between the Jewish narrative and Christian narrative as a corruption of the truth. Marcion, in a way, appreciated and defended the unique character and narratives of Judaism and Christianity. For him, the blending of the two along a historical trajectory does violence to both storylines and faiths. It is only through maintaining the distinction between Judaism and Christianity (through an emphasis on the unique portrayals of their gods) that they both are able to stand in their own right. His position does raise a valid question about the legitimacy of Christianity, particularly in its early history. Was Christianity ever truly Jewish in nature through its espousal of God as revealed through Jesus Christ? His critique also raises important methodological questions. What is the legitimacy of a religious narrative that has been adopted from another tradition, and then adapted into a new one that is branded the “true revelation” or “fulfillment” of what the original story was unable to articulate or accomplish?

Lastly, to what degree should Marcion be credited with canonical selection? Does Marcion set precedent for selecting and arguing for a particular set of texts (among many possibilities) as the true and accurate revelation of God and the Christian faith? Is Marcion’s own canon representative of his appreciation and understanding of Judaism (with its selection of texts)?

Jill Marshall (February 1, 2010)

History of New Testament Interpretation 2

The Model Ascetic (p. 291)

Introduction: Asceticism in the Marcionite church.

Asceticism of Paul’s converts in his own time. Key: 1 Cor 7, emphasis on eschatology.

1 Tim 4:1-5 combats such asceticism. Also, heresiologists: Irenaeus attributes “Encratite” movement to Tatian, who migrated to Syria and influenced the heavily ascetic form of Christianity there. Tatian’s *Oration to the Greeks* – bases theology in part on Paul.

Hippolytus's and Clement's arguments, also based on Paul, against Encratism. Emerging catholic position of celibate and married vocations.

Contrast Carpocrateans – libertarian – body/soul dualism.

Paul as an example of asceticism – apocryphal Acts.

ANONYMOUS, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ca. 190?) (p. 296)

Story: Paul preaches in Iconium where Thecla, engaged to be married, hears him and desires to be celibate and follow Paul. Her fiancé Thamyris and 2 followers of Paul plot against Paul and Thecla. Paul is imprisoned. Thecla goes to Paul in prison, and he teaches her. Paul is then flogged and sent away and Thecla condemned to be burned. Fire does not touch her. Paul mourns with Onesiphorus and family. Thecla comes to him, she follows him, cutting her hair. In Antioch, Alexander, enamoured of Thecla. She humiliates him, and is sentenced to fight the lions. Queen Tryphaena takes care of Thecla until the spectacle. Animals do not hurt her. A lioness protects her, she baptizes herself, and she survives and finds Paul. She goes to preach in Iconium with Paul's commission and Tryphaena's resources.

Notes: (5) "Beatitudes" of abstinence

(13) Contrast of Thamyris's "sumptuous supper" with Paul's asceticism

(23) Paul's fasting with Onesiphorus and his whole family

(25) Paul's suspicion of Thecla's beauty and her possible temptation away from celibacy by men

(28) Solidarity of Thecla, Tryphaena, and the lioness

(29) Intercessory prayer for Falconilla

(37) Thecla's confession of faith

(40) Dressed as a man

(41) Rich and poor, resources for ministry

DENNIS R. MacDONALD, "The Pastoral Epistles against 'Old Wives' Tales'" (1983) (p. 303)

- Where, when, and by whom written? 100-140, Asia Minor. Pseudonymity and hypotheses about reasons for it. Necessity of determining "false teachers" to understand letters – but difficulty of doing so. Probably various kinds: Gnostics, Jewish Christians, Marcionites, as well as "Paul himself as depicted in the legend tradition" (305).
- *The False Teachers and the Legendary Paul*: Accusations in Pastorals look like what Paul does in Acts of Paul (AP) – 2 Tim 3⁶⁻⁷; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 5:23; 2:11-15. Asceticism as demonic. Likely that pastoral author knew AP at some stage in oral transmission.
- *The Acts of Paul and the Pastoral Epistles*: similarities of names and episodes in AP and Pastorals. Literary dependence unlikely, probable that both authors knew same oral traditions. Similarities: Demas and Hermogenes, Onesiphorus, Alexander, events in Iconium, rescue from lion. Three possible models that explain the relationship:
 - MODEL 1: THE AUTHOR OF THE AP KNEW AND USED THE PASTORALS

- MODEL 2: THE AUTHOR OF THE PASTORALS KNEW AND USED A WRITTEN SOURCE BEHIND THE AP. (Neither model explains differences).
- MODEL 3: THE AUTHORS KNEW THE SAME ORAL LEGENDS (The Pastoral author “brilliantly exploited the epistolary genre” (311) to combat the depiction of Paul in oral traditions of the AP).
- *Bogus Letters and Social Compliance*
 - PAUL: THE SUBMISSIVE MARTYR—preoccupation of 2 Tim with Paul’s situation in Roma. Why? Criticism of Rome in same story in AP. No criticism of Rome in 2 Tim. Encouraging submission to authorities.
 - TIMOTHY AND TITUS: THE GUARDIANS OF THE TRADITION—links between Paul and bishops; “genealogical divine origin of the offices” (313). Epitomes of church leadership, social responsibility. How does this counteract the legend tradition? Rival models for leadership: 1. Resident bishops, 2. Itinerant charasmatics.
 - BISHOPS, PRESBYTERS, AND DEACONS: THE RESPECTABLE HOUSEHOLDERS—lists of qualifications for bishops, presb, deacons, widows. The special problem of widows. All stereotypical societal virtues—in contrast to socially deviant behavior in AP. Household connected to church. Masters and slaves.
- *Silencing the Storytellers*: The institution of widows – celibacy, prayer, acts of mercy, visitation. The problem in pastorals: widows’ itinerant communication. Pastorals urging a reigning in and domestication of widows. Reason for Pauline pseudonym: 1. Showing socially radical Paul is a distortion, 2. Silence those who told the stories—“old wives’ tales.”

Paul and Christian Martyrs (p. 319)

Introduction: Paul as a point of discussion in interrogation of martyrs: Acts of Scillitan Martyrs (180 CE) and Acts of Phileas (4th c. CE, excerpt below).

ANONYMOUS [A Martyr’s Understanding of Paul] (early 4th c.)

Phileas, in questioning by Culcianus, affirms Paul’s faith and emphasizes Paul’s Greek speaking, wisdom, and philosophical tradition.

Shively Smith (February 1, 2010)

History of NT Interpretation 2

Claiming Paul for “Orthodoxy”: A Sampler of Patristic Interpretations (p. 321)

The introduction argues that Paul was not marginalized or ignored by the early Church Fathers. Rather, Pauline thought was a point of great discussion and critical reflection. The early Church Fathers “deployed Paul’s thought and example” in very particular ways. Even though their view of Paul maybe different from post-reformation perspectives, the point is that Pauline thought was present and vibrant within the early Church context.

Origen [The Multiple Meanings of 'Law' in Paul's Letters] (ca. 246) (p. 322)

- Origen uses Paul's category of law and multiple meaning of the term, "law" to launch into his discussion of the function and purpose of natural law.
 - "We have often said, that the apostle mentions many different kinds of law in this epistle, and only the most attentive reader will be able to detect when he is shifting from one to another" (p. 323).
- Origen makes a connection between Pauline thought and philosophical thought, arguing that the two agree that it is through instruction, sin is overcome. What is interesting about the connection Origen makes between Paul and philosophers is that the philosophers seem to be more normative and authoritative than Paul. It is philosopher's perspective that is used to validate Paul's point and not the other way around. "Whence it seems to me that the philosophers were right when they said that every mortal being on coming to the age of discretion, when by the entry of the natural law it might distinguish between good and evil, first of all discovers what is evil and afterward combats it by means of instruction, precepts and warnings, so as to move on to virtue. I think that Paul was agreeing with them when he said: But when the commandment came, sin sprang to life" (p. 322).

Irenaeus [On 'the god of this world'] (ca. 180) (p. 324)

- Irenaeus argues that Pauline texts have to be read with attentiveness to Paul's syntactical construction. In other words, Paul is subject to interpretative error. Thus, Irenaeus's project is to demonstrate how to properly read Paul. He says, "If, then, one does not attend to the [proper] reading [of the passage], and if he do not exhibit the intervals of breathing as they occur, there shall be not only incongruities, but also, when reading, he will utter blasphemy, as if the advent of the Lord could take place according to the working of Satan" (p. 325).
- In Irenaeus we see that Paul is considered an important, even authoritative voice. But how one assesses that authority and determines the normative features of his text, requires critical engagement. In other words, Paul's normative value is not necessarily immediately accessible.

Victorinus [The Conflict of Peter and Paul at Antioch] (ca. 365) (p. 325)

- Argues that a real conflict occurred between Peter and Paul. Thus, he takes Paul's own self-presentation as genuine, authoritative, and instructive.
- He argues that even James is at fault for championing only a partial gospel.
- The major fault of Peter that Paul corrected was Peter's false actions, which served no missionary purpose whatsoever. Rather, it was to appease the delegates from James and to uphold, in public, a idea of practice that Peter himself did not believe was the nature of the Gospel (nor did he practice in private) (p. 327).

Theodore of Mopsuestia [The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah] (early fifth century) (p. 328)

- Theodore also acknowledges that Paul is subject to misinterpretation. Theodore demonstrates a disdain for allegorical reading that ignores the actual events and narratives of history. He asserts that Paul represents allegorical reading in which the historical events and traditional narratives are reasserted and then reinterpreted as a way to understand the nature of the faith. Thus, allegory for Paul is about making a comparison of equal terms.
 - “And it is clear in many passages that the apostle employed the narrative of things of old as true in all respects. And in this passage it is on the basis of events that actually took place and of those traditions acknowledged by the Jews as true that he strives to prove his own claim, which he sets forth from the outset” (p. 329).

Victorinus [Paul and the Pre-Existence of Souls] (ca. 365) (p. 333)

- Victorinus uses Ephesians 1:4 to argue that Paul sets precedent for the pre-existence of souls. “Though these [elements of the teaching] are esoteric they are nonetheless very true. God chose us. This implies that God chose us when we already existed, and God chose us in Christ. So we were and Christ was before” (p. 333-334).

Theodoret of Cyrus [The Man of Sin] (ca. 445) (p. 334)

- Theodoret rehearses how Paul’s prophecies about the coming Lord has oftentimes been understood according to historical times, people, and events. He asserts that, Paul, however, is discussing conflicts that are happening or will happen within Christianity, rather than conflicts arising from the Roman empire.
 - “It is my view, on the contrary, that the apostle is indicating the heresies that had sprung up: by leading many from the truth through them, the devil causes in advance the ruin of deceit. These people he referred to as “mystery of iniquity” for keeping the snares of iniquity hidden; the devil openly draws people away from God. Hence the apostle referred to his coming as revelation: he will then openly and plainly proclaim what he has constantly been working at in secret”(p. 335).
- More importantly, Theodoret marks a shift in Pauline interpretation. There is no sense that he has to validate Paul as a credible and authoritative voice. Pauline texts are assumed authoritative and thus deserving of comment. I think this is different than early figures such as Origen and Irenaeus, in which, there was the sense that a case needs to be made about the authority of Paul along with comment on his writings.

Ambrosiaster [On the Attire, Subordination, and Salvation of Women] (late fourth century) (p. 336)

- Ambrosiaster also presupposes the authority of Paul's text. He renders a literal read on 1 Timothy 2:9-15. He elaborates on exactly why Paul states women's dress and activities should be censured. He also reinforces the creation story Paul uses to assert particular gender roles.

Theodoret of Cyrus [The 'Last Days'] (ca. 445) (p. 337)

- Offers commentary on 2 Timoth 3:1-8.
- He calls Paul the "divine apostle," in whom the revelation of the "divine Scripture" has been made" (p. 338).
- Here Paul's status has been completely elevated. By the mid-5th century Paul and his writings are not only authoritative, but Paul himself is being exposed as the divine revealer of God's word, purposes, and teachings.

Bernadette J. Brooten [Patristic Interpretations of Romans 1:26] (1985) (p. 338)

- Brooten looks at the reception history of Romans 1:26. One of his first observations is that this verse is rarely mentioned in patristic texts. When it is mentioned he says only one of two reads is offered:
 1. Paul is referring to unnatural heterosexual intercourse, not to lesbians. (Anastasius and Augustine are examples of this view).
 2. Paul is referring to unnatural heterosexual intercourse and lesbianism (John Chrysostom and Clement of Alexandria are champions of this view).
- He concludes that verse 26 is never interpreted as parallel to v. 27 because all the early Church Fathers are concerned with gender distinctions. For them it is a necessity to make a distinction between genders both in dress, mannerism, and even acceptable sexual behaviors.

Concluding Observations and Questions

It seems that Paul was a problem for Early Church fathers. They did not simply quote from him and take his statements at face value in the same way that they used Gospel texts. Rather they seemed to select Pauline texts in order to explain and justify their meaning. Paul's authority and perspective was continually justified through appeals to other sources, such as philosophers, Gospel texts, and OT passages. It appears that while they all agreed that Paul's voice was important for the Christian faith, Paul's voice had to be mediated through other voices and categories. Thus, is it truly Paul's voice that the Early Church father's are championing or is there another authoritative voice and perspective which tempers their read and usage of Pauline texts and categories?

The Second-Century Paul

**David K. Rensberger [The Use of Paul's Letters in Second-Century Christianity] (1981)
(p. 341)**

- Says early in Christianity, Paul's letters circulated primarily in two areas: Asia Minor and Alexandria (and later in Rome).
- Rensberger attempts to demonstrate how Pauline epistles generated wider use through the passing of time.
- Paul's letters were used a variety of ways—from quoting, interpreting, and being used to support oppositional doctrinal and theological positions.
- Paul's authority was never questioned (except by Jewish Christians), and only increased over time. While his authority was pretty much assumed, the normative quality of his writings was determined over time.
 - “Beginning in Alexandria and in Asia Minor, and growing with the passage of time, we also find the letters quoted, interpreted, and adduced in support of a broad range of positions in theology, spiritual cosmogony, ethics, ecclesiology, and exegesis. Increasingly, they enter the controversies of the time and are numbered among the resources available to all sides in the debates, so that the correct understanding of particular passages in them becomes an issue itself” (p. 343).