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— Mark Reasoner  
Associate professor of theology  
*Marian University*

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THE  
PAULINE  
LETTERS

INTRODUCING THE NEW TESTAMENT

DANIEL J. SCHOLZ

JAMES A. KELHOFFER, ACADEMIC EDITOR

The logo features a stylized, flowing wave-like line above the text.  
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## INTRODUCTION

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# Studying Paul and His Letters

Next to Jesus, no figure has had more influence in Christian tradition and history than Paul. In fact, studying Paul's letters is essential for understanding Christianity. Fortunately, the Christian Scriptures provide plenty of source material to understand and interpret Paul. Just as the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John inform readers about Jesus, the thirteen Pauline letters in the New Testament provide information about Paul and his followers. In addition to these letters, the New Testament Acts of the Apostles also focus on Paul in its narrative of the early church's mission and development. Outside the Christian Scriptures, other letters and narratives contribute to understanding Paul and his impact in Christian tradition and history.

One of the most important and surprising features of the thirteen New Testament letters attributed to Paul is that some of these letters most likely do not come directly from Paul. Of the thirteen Pauline letters, scholars are convinced that seven are "undisputed letters" of Paul. The seven undisputed Pauline letters are Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Written between 50 and 60 CE, these letters provide direct access to Paul and offer insights into the world of the first Christians. These seven letters are the primary sources used today to understand and interpret Paul.

The six others Pauline letters fall into the category of the "deutero-Pauline letters": Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. *Deutero-* is a Greek prefix meaning, "second" or "secondary." These six letters are widely regarded by scholars as written by followers of Paul sometime between 70 and

120 CE. For this reason, these letters are often referred to as the “disputed letters” of Paul.

## The Letters of Paul in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the thirteen letters attributed to Paul follow the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and the Acts of the Apostles.

The Pauline letters appear in the Bible not in chronological order but according to length of these letters. Thus, Romans, the longest of the letters with 7,111 words and 1,687 total verses, comes first. Philemon, with 335 words and only 25 verses, appears last in the Bible.

Book	Abbreviation
Romans	Rom
1 Corinthians	1 Cor
2 Corinthians	2 Cor
Galatians	Gal
Ephesians	Eph
Philippians	Phil
Colossians	Col
1 Thessalonians	1 Thess
2 Thessalonians	2 Thess
1 Timothy	1 Tim
2 Timothy	2 Tim
Titus	Ti
Philemon	Phlm

The Acts of the Apostles is another important source for understanding Paul. Written a generation or two after Paul by the same author who wrote the Gospel of Luke, Acts narrates events from the ascension of Jesus in Jerusalem to the imprisonment of Paul in Rome. The author, Luke, commits the entire second half of Acts

to the missionary activities of Paul. Some of what is known about Paul from his authentic letters is supported by details from Acts. For example, the presence of Sosthenes and Crispus in Corinth in Acts 18 parallels references in 1 Corinthians to Sosthenes (1:1) and Crispus (1:14). Other times, however, details from Paul and Acts contradict. For instance, in Galatians 1:18, Paul explains that he waited three years after his call to go to Jerusalem. However, in Acts 9, Paul's visit to Jerusalem appears to occur much more quickly. Needless to say, these types of disagreements have led scholars to question the historical reliability of Acts. Given this, most scholars consider Acts as a secondary source for understanding Paul, as its presentation of Paul is shaped by Luke's theology and cannot consistently be cross-referenced with information from Paul's letters.

## New Testament Sources on Paul

### Undisputed Pauline Letters: 50–60 CE

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Philippians

1 Thessalonians

Philemon

### Deutero-Pauline Letters: 70–120 CE

Colossians

Ephesians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

### Narrative: 85–90 CE

Acts of the Apostles

The remaining sources that help us to understand and interpret Paul fall into the category of extracanonical sources; that is, early source material not included in the canon of the Christian Scriptures. This source material is classified according to its literary form: letters, narratives, or apocalypses (end of the age stories). Written mostly in the second and third centuries CE, these sources highlight the legacy of Paul centuries after his death.

### Extracanonical Sources on Paul

#### **Narrative: 180–200 CE**

*Acts of Paul (including Acts of Paul and Thecla)*

#### **Letters: 150–300s CE**

*3 Corinthians*

*Epistle to the Laodiceans*

*Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*

#### **Apocalypse: 250 CE**

*Apocalypse of Paul*

The New Testament sources reveal three important insights into Paul. First, Paul is complicated. Whether in his early years as a Jewish Pharisee who was a leader of the persecution of the original Christians or in his later years, when he challenged Jewish Christians to accept uncircumcised Gentile Christians as partners in faith, Paul was no stranger to facing controversy. Further, Paul's theological thinking, as seen in the letters, presents a remarkable integration of Jewish theology and Greek thought that is not easily understood today. Second, Paul had an enormous task to accomplish in proclaiming Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. In Paul's own words, he interpreted his encounter with the resurrected Christ as a call from God to "proclaim [Jesus] to the Gentiles" (Gal 1:16). In response to this call, Paul spent the next thirty years spreading the "good news" of Jesus Christ to Gentiles living in the eastern half of the Roman Empire.



Third, Paul's theology eventually influenced the course of Christian history and theology. Within Paul's lifetime, there were competing ideas and beliefs about Jesus. Paul's voice was one among many.

Despite the availability of the various New Testament and extracanonical sources, Paul remains elusive. However, with the rise of various scientific methods for studying the sources in the past two hundred years, theologians and scholars have learned much about how to better understand and interpret Paul and his letters. *The Pauline Letters* presents the fruits of this labor and addresses some of the context and background information needed for an informed understanding of Paul and his letters.

Chapter 1, "Paul of Tarsus," begins with a brief history of the modern interpretation of Paul. This chapter includes the criteria and sources used in this book for interpreting Paul as well as the first-century Jewish and Hellenistic contexts on him. The second half of the chapter summarizes what scholars know about the life of Paul and presents an overview of his letters and of ancient letter writing.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for the two main parts of this book—part 1: the seven undisputed Pauline letters, and part 2: the disputed letters and post-Pauline writings. Part 1 consists of chapters 2–8 and takes up the seven undisputed letters of Paul. Although scholars debate about the dates and order of composition of the letters, part 1 of this book proceeds with the following hypothetical dates and order:

1 Thessalonians	50 CE
1 Corinthians	Spring 55 CE
2 Corinthians	Fall 55 CE
Galatians	Late 55 CE
Romans	Spring 56 CE
Philippians	60 CE
Philemon	Late 60 CE

These chapters focus on the historical, social, and literary contexts of each letter as well as what these letters reveal about Paul's theology and ethics.

Part 2 begins by examining the six remaining letters attributed to Paul—but disputed by scholars—in the New Testament. Although scholars debate the dates and order of composition of these letters also, part 2 of this book proceeds with the following hypothetical dates:

Colossians	70–100 CE
Ephesians	80–110 CE
2 Thessalonians	90–100 CE
1 Timothy	100 CE
2 Timothy	100 CE
Titus	100 CE

Chapter 9 focuses on the deutero-Pauline (or disputed) letters of Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians; and chapter 10 considers the disputed letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, also known as the Pastoral Letters. These chapters discuss the developing historical, social, and literary contexts in which the letters were written as well as the theology and ethics of each letter. Chapter 11 provides a historical and theological overview of certain later letters, narratives, and an apocalypse that claim to convey traditions about Paul. Knowledge of these extracanonical sources is important for understanding the legacy of Paul in the second and third centuries.

Studying Paul and his letters will provide readers with much information and plenty of insights into Paul. The abundance of sources on Paul, canonical and extracanonical, will shed light on the obstacles and opportunities that the earliest Christians faced in spreading their versions of the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman Empire.

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P A R T 1

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The Undisputed  
Pαuline Letters



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## CHAPTER 1

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# Paul of Tarsus

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the historical figure of Paul of Tarsus. The beginning of the chapter includes a brief survey of modern attempts to interpret Paul as well as the interpretative criteria to be used in this book. It also includes some details of the canonical and extra-canonical sources available for understanding Paul as well as the first-century Jewish and Hellenistic influences that shaped his life and work. The latter part presents a summary overview of Paul's life and some background information on his letters.

### **The Reception of Paul in Christian History and Theology**

The reception of Paul and his letters in the formation of the New Testament and throughout Christian history can hardly be overstated. Nearly half of the New Testament writings are attributed to him: thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are traditionally associated with Paul, and his legacy stretches well beyond them. Leading figures from every period of church history have wrestled with the person of Paul and his theological thinking. From the writings of church fathers (such as Augustine of Hippo) to the theology of the sixteenth-century Reformers (such as Martin Luther) to the rise of the modern historical criticism (for example, F. C. Baur and Ernst Troeltsch) and the “new perspective” on Paul (such as E. P. Sanders), scholars have responded to the theology and person of Paul as reflected in his surviving letters.

## A Biblical Figure like No Other

Unlike any other figure in the New Testament, Paul can be known in a unique and distinctive way—through the seven letters that scholars are confident he wrote. Within the context of modern historical criticism of the Bible, such a claim can be said of no one else in the New Testament, including Jesus. To be sure, the four New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John provide information about Jesus, but these are his words and deeds as preserved, recorded, and edited by later Gospel writers a generation removed from the actual events. Jesus himself left no written account of his words, thoughts, and deeds. This is true of Peter as well, another leading figure in the New Testament. The two letters attributed to Peter in the New Testament (1 Peter and 2 Peter) are, in fact, written by others in his name one or two generations after his death.

Paul's seven undisputed letters offer insights into his theology and the world of the early Christians. Through the lens of Paul's perspective, contemporary readers can see the hopes and the challenges of some of the original Christians who formed communities around their belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. In addition, the letters also show some of the earliest theological thinking to emerge in light of the Christians' belief in the death and Resurrection of Jesus.

## The Limits of Historical Inquiry

Despite the advantage and opportunity these letters offer for understanding both Paul of Tarsus and the Christians he associated with, they carry some limitations. Although Paul's actual missionary outreach to the Gentiles spanned nearly thirty years, from about 35 to 64 CE, the seven undisputed Pauline letters cover only a portion of those years, approximately 50 to 60 CE. If Paul wrote at all in the first half of his thirty-year missionary work, no letters have been discovered to date. Neither is there any record of undisputed letters dating to Paul's final years. Furthermore, the "occasional" nature of Paul's letters limits their usefulness. By *occasional*, scholars mean that Paul wrote to address specific situations—the particular problems and concerns of certain congregations. Paul's surviving letters never give a systematic summary of his theology. Indeed, he may be best

understood as a pastoral theologian, applying the gospel to the changing situations he faced.

## **UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING PAUL**

To understand and interpret Paul today requires a brief overview of the past two centuries of Pauline research. This section examines the established paradigms and perspectives that have shaped contemporary approaches to Paul. It also discusses the main sources for Paul, both canonical and extracanonical, that have informed these paradigms and perspectives. The section concludes with a closer look at some of the first-century Jewish and Hellenistic influences that shaped Paul.

### **Brief History of Modern Interpretation**

The work of Pauline scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries finds its roots in the sixteenth-century Reformation period as well as the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment and Age of Reason that influenced the Western cultures of Europe and America. In his approach to the study of the Bible from a linguistic and historical perspective, sixteenth-century Reformer Martin Luther ignited some of the earliest studies of Jesus, Paul, and the early Christian communities. The work of Luther and other reformers laid the foundation for later biblical studies. In the eighteenth century, fundamental ideas and concepts in areas such as science, art, history, music, philosophy, and religion were being thought about in new and different ways. The Bible itself was not immune to these changes in thinking. Scholars began examining the Old and the New Testaments anew in terms of their literary, historical, and cultural dimensions. In short, human reason was now being applied to the study of the Bible. This new Western perception of reality even affected the understanding of the New Testament's central figures, Jesus and Paul.

Much of the discussion on Paul in the past two hundred years has centered upon the question of Paul's relationship to the Judaism of his day. Connecting Paul to Judaism dates back to the nineteenth century and the foundational studies generated by the early work of

historical-critical scholarship. The research and writing of leading German scholars such as F. C. Baur (1792–1860), *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (1845); Ferdinand Weber (1812–1860), *The Theological System of the Ancient Palestinian Synagogue Based on the Targum, Midrash and Talmud* (1880); Emil Schürer (1844–1910), *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Christ* (1897); and Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1903), *The Judaic Religion in the New Testament Era* (1903), paint a portrait of ancient Judaism that shaped early interpretations of Paul.

### Pauline Terminology<sup>1</sup>

Understanding the vocabulary that Paul uses in his letters can be one of the more vexing problems that people encounter in trying to interpret Paul. The following list notes some common terms Paul used along with a general definition of each term and one or more passages in which the term appears.

Faith (Greek: *pistis*)—an absolute trust, belief in God

- Galatians 3:7—“Realize then that it is those who have faith who are children of Abraham.”

Gospel (Greek: *euaggelion*)—good news, glad tidings. For Paul, it was a term that encompassed God’s saving work in Jesus Christ.

- Romans 1:16—“For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; for Jew first, and then Greek.”

Grace (Greek: *charis*)—favor, often divine favor freely given.

- 2 Corinthians 6:1—“Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

*Continued*

1. For a good resource on Pauline terminology (e.g., *salvation*, *righteousness*, etc.), see Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).



### Pauline Terminology *Continued*

Justice/Righteousness (Greek: *dikaiosynē*)—what God required. For Paul, it is God’s restoration of humanity through Jesus Christ. Paul often uses this term in its derivation, *justification* and interchangeably as *righteousness*.

- Galatians 2:21—“I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.”
- Romans 3:21–22—“[T]he righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law . . . through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Law (Greek: *nomos*)—law; God’s instructions to Israel for proper relationship with God and others. The Mosaic Law, which prescribed the Jewish way of life, was defined in both oral and written form.

- Romans 7:25—“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, I myself, with my mind, serve the law of God but, with my flesh, the law of sin.”

Salvation (Greek: *sōtēria*)—the result of God’s action in Jesus Christ, awaiting final fulfillment in God’s coming kingdom.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:9—“For God did not destine us for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sanctification (Greek: *haismos*)—a process of becoming holy because of faith in Christ.

- Romans 6:22—“But now that you have . . . become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life.”

Sin (Greek: *hamartia*)—An offense against God, literally meaning, “to miss the mark.”

- 1 Corinthians 15:3—“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.”

These publications portrayed the Judaism of Paul’s day in very negative terms—a narrow and legalistic system based on a rigid set of Torah-based demands that led to self-reliance on one’s own works

for salvation. The so-called late Judaism was seen to have undergone devolution from the lofty morals of the later Israelite prophets to the (supposedly) legalistic Pharisees. Rather than cultivating the human-divine relationship, it was argued, these religious structures prohibited direct access between God and the Israelites. Such a pejorative view of ancient Judaism provided the lens through which Paul was understood and interpreted. The research of these Christian scholars led to the conclusion that Paul became an “outsider” to his Jewish religion, even an anti-Jewish outsider. Paul had, in fact, become a “Christian,” who offered to the world an alternative to the Jewish way and a restoration of the ideals of ancient Israelite religion that had become corrupted in the centuries before Jesus’ birth. As the great (Christian) apostle to the Gentiles, Paul brought the Christian God revealed by Jesus to the non-Jewish world of the first century. Nineteenth-century New Testament scholarship was convinced that Paul fought the Judaism of his day by advocating that through Christ God was once again made accessible. Paul’s emphasis that salvation was achieved not by works of the Mosaic Law but by faith in Christ became the great dividing line that showed Christianity’s superiority over Judaism. Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) solidified this traditional view of both Paul and Judaism by the mid-twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1940s, Bultmann wrote two books that significantly contributed to standardizing the nineteenth-century negative assessment of the ancient Judaism of Paul’s day: *The Theology of the New Testament* (1948) and *Primitive Christianity in Its Historical Setting* (1949).<sup>3</sup> Bultmann saw *justification by faith* as the center of Paul’s

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2. The emphasis on Paul’s center of thought grounded in “justification by faith” by nineteenth- and twentieth-century German (Protestant) Pauline scholars originated in the work of the sixteenth-century Reformer Martin Luther.

3. See Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1948); ET: *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel. (New York: Scribner, 1951) and *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen* (Zürich: Artemis, 1949); ET: *Primitive Christianity in Its Historical Setting*, trans. R. H. Fuller. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). In one of Bultmann’s earliest and most influential publications, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), Bultmann employed a form-critical study of the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Bultmann’s research established the framework from which the activities of the early church and the formation of the oral and written gospel tradition would shape the training and education of students of biblical studies for generations.

thought. In his view, this Pauline doctrine was the linchpin that held together Paul's theology and best represented Paul's fundamental break from Judaism. According to Bultmann, ancient Judaism mistakenly understood justification as achieved through one's own merit, through one's work of the law. Paul contrasts this erroneous view of self-justification with justification by faith alone. Justification that leads to salvation cannot be merit-based; it is achieved only through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is a gift, a grace bestowed by God.

This characterization of the split between ancient Judaism and Paul on the question of justification found support well into the second half of the twentieth century. Until the 1980s, almost all Pauline scholars held this view.<sup>4</sup>

### The Legacy of Paul

The life and letters of Paul created a legacy early on in Christianity. Evidence of this legacy can already be seen within the canon of the New Testament. Embedded within the Second Letter of Peter, dated by many scholars to the early second century CE, is a reference to Paul and his letters: 2 Peter 3:15–16. The author speaks of the wisdom given to Paul for his letter writing, as well as that in Paul's letters there are "some things hard to understand" and certain people "distort to their own destruction."

The publication of E. P. Sanders's 1977 book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, marked a significant breakthrough in Pauline scholarship. Sanders successfully challenged the now centuries-old negative view of ancient Judaism as a narrow, legalistic religion centered on

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4. Two of Bultmann's leading students, Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998) and Günther Bornkamm (1905–1990), held this view. In 1969, both scholars published influential books on Paul: Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), and Bornkamm, *Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press). Each perpetuated Bultmann's and other scholars' negative view of ancient Judaism and carried on the argument of justification by faith as the center of Paul's thought and the lens through which to view the split between Paul and the Judaism of his day.

self-justification achieved through works of the law.<sup>5</sup> His research of Palestinian Jewish literature facilitated a monumental shift in the discussion of ancient Judaism. In this literature, dated 200 BCE to 200 CE, Sanders noticed a “pattern of religion” within Palestinian Judaism and argued that the Judaism of Paul’s day was actually a religion of “covenantal nomism.”

In speaking of covenantal nomism, Sanders argued that Pauline scholarship had gotten it wrong by characterizing ancient Palestinian Judaism as a legalistic “works-righteousness” religion. Salvation was not something achieved by one’s work through adherence to the law; rather, salvation was a grace, a gift from God established through the covenant with Israel. Justification was an act of divine grace. The law (*nomos* in Greek), or Torah, served as a means to remain (and return) to the right relationship with God as specified in the covenant. Knowing that all people sin and fall short of the covenant, ancient Palestinian Jews viewed observing the law as their covenantal obligation and as the means by which they can remain in right relationship with God. *Justification* or *righteousness* (from the same Greek word, *dikaïosynē*) could not be earned by one’s merit; it was a gift to all Jews who desired to be in the covenant.

Sanders’s argument that ancient Palestinian Judaism is better understood through the lens of covenantal nomism made such an impact in the field of Pauline scholarship that this approach came to be called the new perspective on Paul.<sup>6</sup> It offered a new generation of scholars an opportunity to see Paul and his relationship to the

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5. For other instances, especially in the twentieth-century Pauline scholarship, in which the standard view of Paul and his relationship to ancient Judaism has been challenged: see Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 90–93. Zetterholm discusses the work of three scholars in particular who challenged the research and conclusions of others who studied Paul in relation to rabbinic Judaism and rabbinic literature: Salomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909); Claude Joseph Goldsmid Montefiore, *Judaism and Saint Paul: Two Essays* (London: Goshen, 1914); George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 197–254. In fact, as Zetterholm points out, much of Sanders’s research is built upon the earlier critiques of Montefiore and Moore, 100–105, and more recently, Krister Stendahl, 97–102.

6. James D. G. Dunn is credited with coining the phrase “new perspective” in his 1982 lecture at the University of Manchester and subsequent publication, “The New Perspective of Paul,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983): 95–122. See also Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia:

Judaism of his day in a different light. Scholars of the new perspective such as N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (1997), and *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (2005), and James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (1998) no longer held the traditional view that Christianity was the religion of grace in opposition to the works-righteousness religion of Judaism. Sanders, Wright, Dunn, and other new-perspective scholars do not view Paul as anti-Jewish or as a religious reformer *outside* the Judaism of his day. Rather, they see Paul *within* the Judaism of his day, recognizing how a judgment of ancient Judaism as simply a legalistic “works-righteousness” religion unfairly distorts the Judaism that Paul and other believers in Jesus encountered and engaged.

This most recent generation of Pauline scholarship has given birth to “the radical new perspectives of Paul,” which holds such positions that for Paul there were two covenants, one for Jews and one for Gentiles.<sup>7</sup> This most recent development in the reorientation of Paul to the Judaism of his day has created tension between the new perspective and the radical new perspective. The latter contends that the new perspective simply repeats the old paradigm, albeit in a new and creative way. The former argues that the radical new perspective too narrowly limits Paul to the Judaism of his day. Regardless of these varying positions, the reorientation of Paul has launched research and publication in areas such as Paul and the Roman Empire and Paul and economics.<sup>8</sup> These latest approaches to

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Fortress Press, 1976), 78–96, and his essay “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 56 (1963): 199–215, in which he argues twentieth-century perspectives, such as guilty conscience, are routinely and wrongly projected onto first-century Paul. These insights also helped shape the “new perspective.”

7. See Zetterholm, chapter 5, “Beyond the New Perspective,” 127–164, for a sampling of studies on this radical new perspective on Paul. See also the panel discussion “Newer Perspectives on Paul” at the 2004 Central States Society of Biblical Literature in Saint Louis. See Mark D. Givens, ed., *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010): 1. See also John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), who offers an overview of the traditional and newer perspectives on Paul.

8. On Paul and the Roman Empire, see Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of the Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); on Paul and economics, see David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural and Cultic Contexts* (2008); and on Paul and women, see Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

Paul illustrate well the contemporary trends in Pauline scholarship and the potential for future areas of exploration that have been facilitated by this new perspective on Paul in recent decades. These trends also illustrate the impact of post-Holocaust interpretation on biblical studies, as Christian scholars have sought to find salvific room for Jews apart from Christ.

### Pauline Christianity

Among the first generation of believers in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, Paul's voice was one among many. These voices offered diverse and competing ideas about Jesus. Paul's own insight into Jesus, which he wrote was "not of human origin . . . it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11–12), was one of the distinguishing characteristics of his gospel and "Pauline Christianity."

Paul employed a variety of strategies to deal with these different ideas about Jesus. Sometimes Paul reacted angrily to these other voices, as when he heard that another gospel was swaying the Gentile churches of Galatia: "O stupid Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (Gal 3:1). At other times, Paul countered by presenting a more detailed account of his gospel, as when he wrote his letter to the Romans, introducing himself and his gospel to the Christians in the city of Rome whom he had yet to meet.

### Criteria for Interpreting Paul

Regardless of whether scholars begin with the assumption that Paul was a convert outside the Judaism of his day or a reformer who remained within Judaism, all approaches to Paul embrace a set of criteria, either clearly stated or simply assumed. The set of criteria, in turn, then shapes the interpretative process. This book is no exception, employing its own criteria for interpreting Paul and his letters.

The first criterion used here has to do with the sources on Paul. Not all receive equal treatment; that is to say, some are considered more important primary sources, while others are considered less reliable. The primary sources, the seven undisputed Pauline letters,

provide the best information for understanding and interpreting Paul. Additional sources—the remaining six New Testament letters attributed to Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and extracanonical material (such as early church writings, archeological materials, and so on)—contribute to the interpretation of Paul. These other sources must be understood within the context of their place and time in the development of the early church and Pauline Christianity.

The handling of the sources leads to this book's second criterion. Because the letters of Paul are occasional letters, the information and details contained in each should be explored in light of its specific historical setting, theology, and ethics (that is, rules of conduct). Each Pauline letter must be allowed to stand on its own because each was written for a particular occasion. Further, sorting through the theology and ethics embedded in these letters requires close scrutiny. Some of Paul's thinking forms the basis of his larger theological framework (for example, justification by faith in Christ: Gal 2:15–12; Rom 3:21–28; Phil 3:7–11); some is very situational (such as the case of incest in Corinth, 1 Cor 5:1–13); and some belongs to a received tradition he inherited (for instance, the celebration of the Eucharist in Corinth, 1 Cor 11:23–26).

The occasional nature of Paul's letters, criterion two, connects directly to the third criterion: the chronological treatment of Paul and his letters. The history, theology, and ethics within Paul's letters is commonly handled either thematically or chronologically. Although both approaches have merit, this book proceeds with a chronological treatment, which reinforces the idea that these occasional letters are best understood within the chronology of Paul's life, the evolution of his own theological thinking, and the historical developments within the first and second generation of Christians.<sup>9</sup>

## Sources on Paul

Scholars categorize the source material on Paul in a variety of ways. The clearest division is between canonical sources (those within the

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9. This chronological approach is advocated by some of the best contemporary treatments of Paul. See Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003). For a good example of a thematic approach to Paul, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998).

New Testament) and extracanonical sources (those outside the New Testament). Source material on Paul (and Pauline Christianity) within the canon of the New Testament is plentiful, with the most important source material in the canon being the seven undisputed letters of Paul. First Thessalonians, the earliest of the seven, was written from the city of Corinth in 50 CE, sometime after Paul was expelled from the city of Thessalonica. Paul probably wrote 1 Corinthians in the spring of 55 CE and his Second Letter to the Corinthians in the fall of 55 CE, possibly from the city of Ephesus. Shortly after 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote his Letter to the Galatians. Probably a year or two later, Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans in the spring of 56 CE. During one of his imprisonments (possibly in Ephesus, Caesarea, or Rome), Paul composed his Letter to the Philippians and his Letter to Philemon.

## Pseudepigraphy

*Pseudepigraphy*, from the Greek *pseudēs*, "false," and *epigraphē*, "inscription," is the act of writing in another's name. A common practice in the ancient world, pseudepigraphy was an attempt to deceive the recipients of the written work. An example of pseudepigraphy would include the first century CE "Letters of Socrates" which are presented as if Socrates (470–399 BCE) had written them.

Old Testament pseudepigrapha were quite popular between the years 200 BCE and 200 CE. Many Jewish writings were attributed to biblical characters such as Adam and Eve (Life of Adam and Eve), Moses (Assumption of Moses) and Isaiah (Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah). Early Christians carried on the tradition of pseudepigraphy in works such as the Gospel of Peter (mid-second century CE) and Paul's Epistle to the Laodiceans (mid-third century CE).

Most scholars acknowledge the likelihood of pseudepigraphic works in the New Testament. For example, the apostle Peter, martyred in the mid-60s CE, did not write the First and Second Letter of Peter, composed in the late first century and early second century CE, respectively. In the case of Paul's letters, the majority of scholars believe that later Pauline Christians writing in Paul's name composed the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) and Ephesians. Scholars are less certain if this is the case with Colossians and 2 Thessalonians.



The remaining source material on Paul in the New Testament consists of the six deuter-Pauline letters of Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, and the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>10</sup> Paul did not write the six remaining Pauline letters. Scholars speculate that the real authors may have been either close associates of Paul during his lifetime or contemporary leaders within the Pauline communities that survived after his death. These unknown authors were attempting to carry on the theology and ethics of Paul, adapting it to their new circumstances. Scholars debate the exact date and place of composition of these letters. They were likely written between the years 70 and 120 CE. There also appears to be some literary relationship among these Pauline letters; for example, Ephesians is a later expansion of Colossians. As a whole, these letters take up the concerns of the second and third generations of Pauline Christianity and reflect the legacy of Paul's influence in the early church.

An additional New Testament source for understanding and interpreting Paul is the Acts of the Apostles. Composed in the late first century CE by the same author who wrote the Gospel of Luke, this two-part narrative, Luke-Acts, tells the story of Christianity from the birth and infancy of Jesus (Luke 1–2) to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28). Luke offers his perspective on Paul only decades removed from the actual historical events. Much of what Luke relates about Paul in the Acts of the Apostles can be verified from the authentic Pauline letters.

Source material on Paul (and Pauline Christianity) outside the New Testament is scarce. Scholars classify much of this source material as “apocryphal Pauline literature.” *Apocryphal* here refers to early Christian writings not included in the New Testament. This source material includes letters, acts, and apocalypses (end of the age stories) that were written in Paul's name or about Paul, mostly from the second through the fourth century CE. These pseudepigraphic works include extracanonical letters (*3 Corinthians*, the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, and the *Correspondences between Paul and Seneca*), an extracanonical narrative (the *Acts of Paul*, which includes the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*), and an extracanonical apocalypse

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10. Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter could be included here on the list, as many scholars regard these New Testament letters as additional post-Pauline trajectories.

(*Apocalypse of Paul*).<sup>11</sup> More so than actually disclosing information about Paul, this source material shows how the early church used Paul and his theology to address the concerns, debates, and issues of their times.

## Pauline Contexts: Jewish and Hellenistic

Modern approaches to Paul rightly consider both the Jewish and Hellenistic contexts that shaped his life and his worldview. Paul was ethnically a Jew (a Hebrew) of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5), born and raised in the Greek city of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39), a region several hundred miles north of Jerusalem, outside of Palestine. Luke also presents Paul as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:22–29). Further, Paul and his fellow first-century CE Jews lived in a period of history heavily influenced by *Hellenism*—defined as the adoption of Greek language, literature, social customs, and ethical values. Both Judaism and Hellenism formed and informed Paul throughout his life.

### Diaspora Jews

*Diaspora* comes from a Greek term meaning “scattering.” It is a reference to the dispersion of the Jews upon their return from exile in Babylon (587–538 BCE), although the prophet Jeremiah complains about such a development even before the Babylonian exile. Although many Jews returned to their homeland in Palestine after the exile, many others established Jewish communities in other parts of the Mediterranean area. Paul, born and raised in Tarsus of Cilicia, would have been counted among the scattered Jews. At the time of Jesus and Paul, in fact, most Jews lived in the diaspora in such cities as Antioch, Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, and Alexandria. (See map on p. 31.)

11. For a very good single-volume work that contains all the New Testament apocryphal writings, including the apocryphal Pauline literature, see J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M. R. James* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). See also Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

Research in the past few decades has shown that the Judaism of Paul's day was quite diverse. Some Jews, for example, were born and raised in Palestine (Palestinian Jews), like Jesus and many of



his Jewish followers, and spoke Aramaic. Other Jews were born and raised outside Palestine (diaspora Jews), like Paul and many other first-century CE Jews, and spoke Greek. Various other Jewish groups also had a presence in the first-century CE world. A small percentage of Palestinian and diaspora Jews belonged to the elite groups of the Sadducees (a conservative aristocracy), the Pharisees (interpreters of the oral and written Mosaic Law; the group to which Paul belonged—Phil 3:5; Acts 22:3), and the scribes (trained scholars). Most Palestinian Jews either lived in the Palestinian countryside and were simply referred to as the *Am ha-aretz* (in Hebrew, the “people of the land”) or resided in the cities scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Some Palestinian Jews were revolutionaries trying to evict Romans from their Jewish homeland of Palestine (the Zealots and Sicarii), while others lived in isolated communities anticipating the Messianic Age (the Essenes). The differing religious and political views of these Jewish groups affected how they lived their Jewish faith. For example, different understandings of purity and the calendar was the subject of intense debate among the Jews.

Despite their diversity of beliefs and practices, the various Jewish groups agreed on four fundamental areas: belief in their covenantal relationship with a single God (YHWH); conviction in the divine election of Israel among all the other nations; reverence and adherence to the divinely revealed instructions of the Mosaic Law (the Torah); and devotion to the Temple in their capital city of Jerusalem. These defining characteristics separated Jews from the other nations, and they would be the very issues Paul would integrate into his message and missionary outreach to the Gentiles about the crucified and resurrected Messiah.

In addition to these Jewish influences, Paul was impacted by the Hellenistic culture that had engulfed the ancient Mediterranean world for centuries before he was born. Paul’s Jewish religious belief in a single God (monotheism) was certainly not the norm of the Greco-Roman world. Nearly all people in the Roman Empire were polytheistic; that is, their religious observances were not restricted to a particular god or goddess (deity). Cities within the Roman Empire had sanctuaries, in which devotion to a deity took place by those trained for the proper ceremonial activities. Religious practices associated with the mystery cults of the Roman Empire were also

common. Participants in these mystery cults kept secret the practices of the rites performed to their deity. Meals were often shared among the members of these mystery cults and their deity, with the assurance of the deity's protection and special knowledge for cult members. Among the most popular mystery cults within the Roman Empire were those of Dionysius, Mithras, and Isis.

### Artemis, the Goddess of Ephesus

In the city of Ephesus, there was the well-known temple devoted to Artemis, the goddess of fertility. Artemis was one of the most widely worshipped female gods in the province of Asia.

Acts 19 relates Paul's encounter in Ephesus with the silver-smiths and artisans who made miniature silver shrines of Artemis. Paul publicly challenged the existence of Artemis or any god "made by human hands." Paul's words caused such chaos and confusion among the citizenry that a riot broke out in the city.

Paul also faced numerous Greek philosophies (worldviews) that shaped and defined the Hellenistic culture of his day. Among the more popular philosophies were Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Cynicism. Epicureanism stressed the material nature of all things (including the body and soul as perishable), the importance of inner peace and harmony, and the complete disconnect between the deities of the other world and this world. By comparison, Stoicism emphasized the divine spark in each person and the practice of virtue as the human ideal. In addition, it taught that the universe was held together by a controlling principle called the *logos* (*word*) and a vital spirit or soul called *pneuma* (*spirit*). Cynicism espoused that true human freedom would come from living a simple life, void of possession and material wealth.

Alongside these various worldviews, Paul the Pharisee most likely embraced the Jewish worldview of apocalypticism. As the Essenes also were, the Pharisees were Jewish apocalypticists who viewed the world as a duality between good and evil. Some first-century CE Jews anticipated an imminent end to this age (the eschaton), which

would culminate in God's intervention in the world. God, in control of human history, would send someone to deliver his people from the forces of evil on Earth, set up God's kingdom, raise the dead, and judge the world. These Jews held an apocalyptic eschatology, but many Jews at this time had no such imminent eschatological expectation.

Paul and his contemporaries were immersed in a diverse arena of competing beliefs and philosophies. It was to this world that Paul would bring his gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Summary: Understanding and Interpreting Paul

### CORE CONCEPTS

- One of the main areas of research on Paul for the past two hundred years has been Paul's relation to the Judaism of his day.
- James D. G. Dunn coined the term the *new perspective* to describe recent Pauline scholarship that sees Paul more as a reformer within the Judaism of his day.
- E. P. Sanders's concept of covenantal nomism stemmed from a new perspective in studying Paul within the context of ancient Judaism.

### SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- Source material on Paul is plentiful.
- Most of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century New Testament scholarship portrayed the Judaism of Paul's day in negative terms.
- Paul and his letters are best understood within the chronology of his life, the evolution of his own theological thinking, and the historical developments within the first and second generations of Christians.
- The seven undisputed letters of Paul provide the primary source material on Paul.
- Both Jewish and Hellenistic influences shaped Paul's life and worldview.
- Paul can be understood as a Jewish apocalyptic Pharisee.

## THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL

The second part of this chapter begins with a chronological accounting of Paul's life, beginning with his birth and formative years, and then turning to his life as a Pharisee, his encounter with the risen Christ, and his missionary work as the apostle to the Gentiles. It then takes a closer look at the letters of Paul, which includes a discussion of letter writing in the ancient world and Paul's use of letter writing in his outreach to the Gentiles. This section concludes with a discussion of the composition and formation of what is known as the Pauline Corpus, the body of Paul's works.

### The Life of Paul

#### Paul's Birth and Formative Years in Tarsus

Paul's letters and the Acts of the Apostles say nothing about when Paul was born and very little about his formative years. The only clue to the year of Paul's birth comes from an incidental comment Paul makes in his letter to Philemon, written around 60 CE. There, Paul refers to himself as an old man (Phlm 9), which would have made him perhaps fifty years old in the early 60s. This clue points to the possibility that Paul was born sometime between the years 5 and 15 of the first century CE. Nothing is written of Paul's parents or other relatives, aside from his parents being Jewish (Phil 3:5), but he did apparently have at least one sister (Acts 23:16). Paul never married (1 Cor 7:7–8), and so it is assumed that he had no children.

What scholars do know is that Paul claimed to be a descendent from the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5) and, according to Acts, was born and raised in Tarsus, the capital city of Cilicia in the southeastern part of the province of Asia Minor (Acts 21:39, 22:3). Tarsus stood at the crossroads of major commerce and trade routes. A wealthy, metropolitan Hellenistic city with a large Jewish population, Tarsus was known for its Hellenistic school, which trained and educated the elite in philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry. As an urban Jew surrounded by Hellenistic culture, Paul was exposed to a multicultural environment during his formative years and was conversant in the oral and written dialect of *Koinē* (common Greek)—the

## Was Paul a Roman Citizen?

Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37–38, 22:27, 23:27). Yet nowhere in any of Paul's undisputed letters does he mention his Roman citizenship. Roman citizenship could be obtained by means other than birth, such as adoption into a prominent Roman household or release from slavery. It is entirely plausible that Paul inherited Roman citizenship from his family ancestry of being freed Jewish slaves.

The tradition that Paul was martyred by being beheaded is consistent with Luke's statement of Paul's Roman citizenship, as Roman citizens found guilty of capital crimes against the state were spared torturous deaths. However, there is no reliable historical basis for this later apocryphal tradition. The tradition of Paul's martyrdom by decapitation could be based in part upon Acts, rather than any certain knowledge of the historical Paul.

language of his letters and the entire New Testament. According to Acts, Paul returned occasionally to his hometown after his conversion and during his missionary travels (Acts 9:30, 11:25).

Although Paul never speaks directly of any formal training and education he may have received, his letters point to the use of both Greco-Roman rhetorical style and Jewish interpretive practices. For example, in his letters, Paul employed the literary device of "diatribe," common to the Cynic and Stoic philosophers of his day, in which questions are put forth and then refuted (for instance, Rom 10:5–8). In addition, similar to the Jewish Peshet or Midrash (interpretation of Scripture) of his day, Paul applied the Jewish Scriptures to his new situation of faith in Christ as the Messiah and Son of God (such as 1 Cor 10:1–4).

## Paul the Pharisee

Paul refers to himself as a Pharisee (Phil 3:5). In fact, Paul says he was "a zealot for my ancestral traditions" and had "progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race" (Gal 1:14). Pharisees were descendents of the Hasidim, a resistance



movement that originated in response to the oppressive rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 BCE). Pharisees saw themselves as the interpreters, and the social enforcers, of the Mosaic Law and the oral law that evolved from its interpretation. Where Paul received his Pharisaic training is unknown, although Luke writes that Paul trained “at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3), the well-known and respected teacher of Jerusalem. Paul himself gives no indication that he ever formally studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As a Pharisee, Paul would have viewed the Torah (the written law) and his “ancestral traditions” (the oral law) as the center of his religious identity and life.

Paul’s extremely zealous attitude toward the Mosaic Law most likely fueled his persecution of the early Christians, as he saw these Christ-believing Jews as a threat to the other Torah-observant Jews. Paul likely perceived this band of Jews’ profession of faith in this man as blasphemy, which certainly provided enough justification to try to stop the spread of this dangerous message.

### Was Paul also Known by the Name *Saul*?

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke sometimes refers to Paul as Saul. This mostly occurs in Luke’s references to Paul before his encounter with Christ (Acts 7:58, 8:1–3, 9:1). Twice after he meets the resurrected Christ, Luke calls Paul by the name *Saul*. In Acts 13:9, Luke uses these names side by side, “But Saul, also known as Paul . . .” After Acts 13:9, he is always called Paul, except when Saul/Paul recounts his earlier vision of Jesus (Acts 22:7,13; 26:14).

The name *Paul* is the Greek equivalent to the Semitic name *Saul*. In other words, the name Paul reflects the Greco-Roman culture in which Paul was raised (the city of Tarsus, Cilicia), and the name *Saul* reflects Paul’s Jewish heritage. Paul lived in both the Hellenistic and Jewish world.

Interestingly, Paul never refers to himself as Saul in his letters. This may simply be an indication of his largely Gentile audience who would know him only as Paul. It is more likely, however, that Paul never used the name *Saul* for himself, reflecting his life as a Hellenized Jew.

There are only glimpses of Paul the Pharisee during the period in which he persecuted the early Christians. Scholars can merely speculate that the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem authorized him to persecute the church. Paul himself says, "I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it" (Gal 1:13), and "in zeal I persecuted the church" (Phil 3:6). In Acts, Luke introduces Paul at the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:58). Luke writes that at the stoning of Stephen, the witnesses "laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul," an indication that Paul was the one who authorized the stoning. Luke paints a frightening picture of Paul in his persecution of the church. He notes that immediately following the stoning of Stephen, "a severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1) broke out and that Paul was "trying to destroy the church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment" (Acts 8:3). In his persecution of the church, Luke indicates, Paul was "breathing murderous threats" (Acts 9:1). Much later in Acts (22:4, 26:9–11), Luke discloses even higher levels of violence that Paul directed against the church. As Paul himself reflected upon these actions years after his encounter with the resurrected Jesus, he expressed regret: "For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:9). Luke's portrayal of Paul, before his conversion, as one who literally "breathes murder" is, therefore, probably accurate. In one of the later New Testament letters attributed to Paul, the author in 1 Timothy 1:13 offers an apologetic attempt to present Paul as ignorant about what he did in persecuting the church.

### Paul's Encounter with the Risen Jesus

Scholars debate about the length of Paul's persecution of the early church and the year in which Paul received his call and commission. Dating Jesus' crucifixion in the year 30 CE, and Paul's call and commission in the year 33 CE, is a common position.<sup>12</sup> Paul's conviction that God revealed the resurrected Jesus to him reshaped and reoriented his entire life and worldview. It is difficult to overestimate the impact this event made on Paul and his understanding of himself, Judaism, and the universe.

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12. See Schnelle, 51.

## Did Paul Have a “Conversion” Experience?

Interpreters of Paul have traditionally thought that Paul had a “conversion” experience after meeting the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. By *conversion*, a change from one religion (in this case, Pharisaic Judaism) to another (Christianity) is meant. Yet neither Paul in his letters nor Luke in the Acts of the Apostles uses the language of *conversion* in this sense.

Most details of this event come from Luke. Three times Luke narrates the encounter between the resurrected Jesus and Paul in the telling of the story of the early church: Acts 9:1–19 (Paul on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians); Acts 22:3–16 (part of Paul’s defense speech to the Jews in Jerusalem); and Acts 26:2–18 (part of Paul’s defense speech to King Agrippa). In Acts 22:15, Luke says that Paul is to be the risen Christ’s “witness” (*martus*) “before all to what you have seen and heard.” The idea of “witness” is repeated in Acts 26:16.

In Galatians 1:11–16, Paul speaks of having a “revelation” (*apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ, and being called by God “to preach” (*euangelizomai*) Jesus to the Gentiles. In this revelation and call, it is doubtful that Paul saw himself converting from one religion (Pharisaic Judaism) to another (Christianity).

The conversion Paul had was likely an internal one, of heart and mind, as he sought to reconstruct and redefine his understanding of God, Israel, and himself in light of the crucified and resurrected Christ. It should be noted that both *call* and *conversion* are modern terms and that neither is completely adequate for interpreting the accounts of Paul and Luke.

Paul speaks briefly to this event in his letters to the Galatians and the Corinthians, both written about twenty years after the event and in the specific context of Paul defending his apostolic status and authority. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1), and “Last of all, as one born abnormally, he appeared to me” (1 Cor 15:8). In Galatians, as part of his autobiographical sketch, Paul writes that God “was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles” (Gal 1:15–16).

That Paul does not discuss this life-changing event in the seven undisputed letters does not minimize its importance for the formation of Paul's theology. After all, in his occasional letters, Paul is writing to specific circumstances, most of which did not require any discussion of his original encounter with the risen Jesus.

### Paul, Called to Be the Apostle to the Gentiles

The revelation of the resurrected Christ fundamentally changed Paul's life. Paul spent the next thirty years fulfilling what he believed God had called him to do: preach the good news of Jesus Christ to Gentiles. This revelation and call made Paul's gospel distinct among all others who were spreading the "good news" of the death and Resurrection of Jesus. The following reconstruction of these thirty years is based upon what can be gleaned from Paul's letters, cross-referenced (when possible) with Luke's account of Paul's missionary journeys in the Acts of the Apostles. It begins in 33 CE, the approximate year Paul experienced the resurrected Christ.

Immediately following his revelation, Paul reports going into Arabia and returning to Damascus (Gal 1:17). Exactly how long Paul stayed in Arabia or how far he traveled into Arabia before returning to Damascus is unknown. However "after three years" (about 35 or 36 CE), Paul went to Jerusalem "to confer" with Cephas (Peter) and stayed with him for fifteen days (Gal 1:18). From there, Paul traveled in the regions of Syria and Cilicia, presumably on his initial missionary outreach to the Gentiles of that region (Gal 1:21–24), joined at some point by Barnabas and Titus. This entailed considerable travel by Paul. Jerusalem is about 200 miles south of Damascus. Paul's return north to the regions of Syria and Cilicia was closer to 400 miles.

Paul made his second trip to Jerusalem (the so-called Jerusalem conference) fourteen years later (about 49 CE), after receiving a revelation (Gal 2:2). This time he went with Barnabas (a Judaic Christ-believer) and Titus (an uncircumcised Gentile Christ-believer), to present to Peter, James, and John "the gospel" that he "preached to the Gentiles" in Syria, Cilicia, and elsewhere (Gal 2:1–10). The Jerusalem conference was likely intended to resolve the growing tensions between Judaic and Gentile Christians, specifically around the question of admitting Gentiles as equal members of the church.

## Paul's Autobiography

The closest thing to an autobiography of Paul is found in the undisputed letters of Galatians 1:11–24 and Philippians 3:4–11. These passages, although limited in scope, contain some details on Paul's life, in his own words:

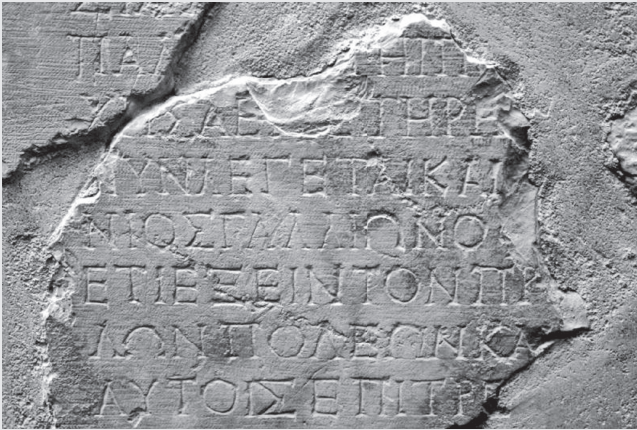
- Born into the race of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5)
- Jewish parents (Phil 3:5)
- Circumcised on the eighth day (Phil 3:5)
- A Pharisee, zealous for his ancestral traditions (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:5)
- Progressed in Judaism beyond many of his peers (Gal 1:14)
- Blameless before the law (Phil 3:6)
- Zealously persecuted the church and tried to destroy it (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6)
- Had a revelation of God's resurrected Son (Gal 1:16)
- Called to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16)
- Visited with Peter in Jerusalem three years after his encounter with the risen Jesus (Gal 1:18)
- Was initially well known for going from persecutor of the churches to defender of the faith (Gal 1:22–23)

Peter and Paul apparently reached some kind of an agreement, shaking “their right hands in partnership,” and concluding that Paul and Barnabas would continue their missionary work to the Gentiles, and Peter, James, and John would go “to the circumcised” (the Jews).

Precisely what was agreed at the Jerusalem meeting is uncertain. For example, a two-pronged mission to Jews (led by Peter) and Gentiles (led by Paul) does not address what kind of community the church would form among the many Jews living in the diaspora. Paul then met Peter in Antioch, where they argued over the issue of Jews sharing table-fellowship with Gentiles. Paul “opposed” Peter “to his face because he was clearly wrong” and acting hypocritically (along with Barnabas) over not dining with Gentiles (Gal 2:11–13). Paul and Barnabas went separate ways after they had a falling-out

when Barnabas took the side of the circumcision faction. According to Luke, Paul chose Silas to replace Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41). Clearly, in Antioch different understandings of the Jerusalem agreement emerged. Does a mission to Gentiles mean accepting Gentiles as uncircumcised Gentiles who do not eat kosher foods? Do Judaic Christ-believers have to abandon the Mosaic Law when in fellowship with Gentile believers? Can there be one community comprised of Jews and Gentiles that can eat and worship together? Such questions would not be resolved within Paul's lifetime.

### The Gallio Inscription



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Fragment of the "Gallio Inscription" with the Greek form of Gallio visible in the fourth line from the top

According to Acts 18:12–16, Paul was brought to trial before Lucius Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, sometime during his eighteen-month stay in the city of Corinth. The "Gallio Inscription," an inscription documenting a letter from emperor Claudius addressed to Gallio's successor, offers reliable historical evidence that Gallio was in Corinth in the summer of 51 CE. This fact provides the only verifiable date in the chronology of Paul's life from which all other dates are calculated backward or forward.

## Paul the Tentmaker

As a missionary to the Gentiles, Paul worked for a living as an artisan. According to Acts, Paul was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:1–3). However, nowhere in Paul's letters does he attest to this trade.

Tentmaking in the ancient Mediterranean was hard, physical labor. Tents were sewn together with cloth and sometimes leather. It required strong hands, shoulders, and back to work effectively with these materials. Cities such as Tarsus, where Paul grew up, and Corinth, where Paul met Aquila and Prisca (also known as Priscilla) and stayed for a lengthy time, would have had a high demand for tents, because tourists, soldiers, sailors, and athletes all needed tents for travel and lodging.

Paul continued his Gentile missionary work with Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy, traveling through Asia Minor and crossing into Macedonia, where they established small house churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and possibly Berea (Acts 16–17). It should be noted here that out of necessity, scholars follow the chronology of Acts, allowing for the possibility that some details may point more to Luke's theology than to Paul's life.

After being expelled from various Macedonian cities, they moved south to Achaia. Paul briefly visited the city of Athens but was unsuccessful there (Acts 17). The three then moved on to Corinth, the capital of Achaia, where they stayed for about eighteen months. There they met Prisca and Aquila, who were in Corinth after Emperor Claudius expelled them from Rome in 49 CE (Acts 18). It is plausible to infer that Paul wrote his First Letter to the Thessalonians from the city of Corinth in the year 50 CE.

After leaving Corinth, Paul next traveled through Asia Minor, then to Syria (including brief visits to Jerusalem and Antioch), and back again to Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor (Acts 19). Paul stayed in Ephesus for at least twenty-seven months, preaching and strengthening the churches in the region (about 52 to 55 CE). Paul traveled personally, sending and receiving messengers and letters back and forth from Ephesus to Macedonia, Corinth, and

other parts of Asia Minor. In the spring of 55 CE, Paul wrote his First Letter to the Corinthians, and in the fall of that year, wrote his Second Letter to the Corinthians and his Letter to the Galatians. Throughout his extended stay in Ephesus, Paul encountered significant opposition from both Jews and Gentiles and even spent some time in prison in Ephesus.

After his twenty-seven months in Ephesus, Paul made a third and final visit to Corinth. From there, he sent his Letter to the Romans in the spring of 56 CE. In the conclusion to his Letter to the Romans, Paul documented his upcoming plans to revisit Jerusalem and then stop back in Rome en route to Spain (Rom 15:23–29).

Establishing a timeline for the final years of Paul's life requires exploring a portion of Scripture written after Paul's death, Acts 21–28, which provides details that are impossible to verify from any of Paul's letters. During his third and final visit to Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and brought to trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22–23). Paul's trial caused such a commotion that he was transferred and imprisoned at Caesarea for two years under Antonius Felix and his successor, Porcius Festus (Acts 24) before being put on trial again, this time before King Agrippa (Acts 25–26). Agrippa found Paul guilty of "doing nothing at all that deserves death or imprisonment" (Acts 26:31). Paul was then transported under armed guard back to Rome, where he remained under house arrest for two years (Acts 27–28).

## The Persecution of Paul

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul catalogs the ways he suffered for responding to his call and commission to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own

*Continued*



**The Persecution of Paul** *Continued*

race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fasting, through cold and exposure. And apart from these things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Cor 11:24–28)

Paul summarizes here twenty years of persecution, from his original revelation and call in 35 CE to the writing of 2 Corinthians in 55 CE.

Paul wrote two other letters—the Letter to the Philippians and the Letter to Philemon—while in prison. Late in his apostolic career, Paul was imprisoned in three cities at different times: Ephesus, Caesarea, and Rome. Scholars are uncertain of where Paul wrote these two imprisonment letters.

### The Death of Paul

The death of Paul remains the subject of speculation. Luke does not narrate Paul's death, choosing to end the Acts of the Apostles with Paul under house arrest, still very much alive and preaching his gospel. No canonical sources provide information about Paul's death, and only one extracanonical source from the early Christian tradition speaks of it. That source, the *First Letter of Clement*, dates to the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian, 95–96 CE, and presupposes Paul's death as a martyr in Rome. *First Clement* 5 offers an account (decades removed) of the death of Paul:

By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had

borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance.<sup>13</sup> (1 *Clement* 5:3–6)

The date of Paul's death remains uncertain, but early church tradition holds that Paul was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero (54–68 CE), most likely during the years between 62 and 64 CE, when persecution of Christians in Rome was widespread. In Romans 15, Paul mentions his hope to *visit* Rome (*not* in chains) and thereafter conduct missionary work in Spain. The accounts of Acts 28 (Paul under house arrest in Rome) and Romans 15 cannot be harmonized.

## The Letters of Paul

### Letters and Letter Writing in the Ancient World

The sending and receiving of letters was a common form of communication for people living in the Roman Empire. This certainly holds true in the case of the early Christians; indeed, twenty-one of the twenty-seven writings in the New Testament are classified as “letters.”

### “Letters” or “Epistles”?

Past scholarship used to classify some of Paul's writings as letters and others as epistles, with letters thought to be read privately (like Paul's Letter to Philemon) and epistles read publicly (like Paul's Letter to the Romans). This historic distinction in nomenclature is no longer used today. This book will use the terms *letter* and *epistle* interchangeably.

A comparison of Paul's letters with those of the time clearly shows that Paul followed the literary conventions of his day. However, he did adapt his letters in some ways to the churches to which he wrote. For example, the salutation of Paul's Letter to the Romans

13. English translation from J. B. Lightfoot.

(1:1–7) includes not only the standard identified sender-recipient (“Paul . . . to all the beloved of God in Rome”) and greeting but also a basic summary of his gospel and an explanation of his missionary outreach to the Gentiles (1:2–6). The length of the body of Paul’s letters was also atypical for his day. The theology and ethics that Paul develops in the body often required extensive explanations, resulting in an unusually long letter.

Letter writers in Paul’s day routinely followed a basic structure. Letters began with a salutation that included the name of the sender, the name of the intended recipient(s), and a brief greeting. After the salutation came a thanksgiving (oftentimes a prayer) and then the body of the letter that contained the main purpose for writing. Some type of command often signaled the closing of the body of the letter. The letter then ended with a conclusion that included a peace wish, a greeting to known acquaintances of the letter’s recipient, and a benediction.

Letters were typically written on papyrus. Papyrus, a plant grown on the banks on the Nile River in Egypt, provided the raw materials for making paper. The center of the plant was split into thin strips, pressed, and dried in the sun. The strips were then joined together and made smooth by pieces of ivory or shell in preparation for writing. Letter writers wrote with pens made of reeds (hollow stalks) with one end of the reed sharpened for writing. The “ink” used for writing was typically made from carbon soot deposits that resulted from burning wood and other materials. The soot was mixed into a solution of gum water in a metal or ceramic holder. Paul most likely used all of the mentioned materials (papyrus paper, black-soot ink, and reed pens) for the letters written during his missionary work to the Gentiles.

The Roman Empire established a formal delivery system for letters, whereby carriers on horseback or in chariots (somewhat) reliably delivered them. Normally, only government officials, the military, and the wealthy had access to this system. The typical citizen (and non-citizen) of the Roman Empire had to depend upon slaves, acquaintances, or the goodwill of travelers heading in the right direction to deliver a personal letter. This was, of course, far less reliable.<sup>14</sup>

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14. See E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004) and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), for a good introduction to Paul and his letters within the context of letters and letter writing in the ancient world.

## Paul's Use of Letter Writing

At some point during the course of his thirty years of missionary work among the Gentiles, Paul took up the practice of letter writing to keep in touch with the churches he established and address problems that arose in these communities after he departed and between his visits. It is unknown if Paul wrote letters before 50 CE, the year scholars believe Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, the earliest of the canonical Pauline letters. It is clear, however, that Paul was a letter-writer in the second half of his thirty-year career, writing numerous letters between 50 and 60 CE. There is good reason to believe that Paul wrote more than the seven letters that appear in the canon of the New Testament. Paul refers to other (lost?) letters (see, for example, 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:2–4), and many scholars are convinced that Philippians and 2 Corinthians are composite letters made up of material from previous correspondences between Paul and the churches in Philippi and Corinth.

### Paul the Letter Writer

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, dated to the fall of 55 CE, Paul writes of his already widely known reputation as one whose “letters are severe and forceful” (2 Cor 10:10), and he describes his physical attributes as “weak . . . and contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10). Paul perceived that others saw a disconnect between the rhetorical power of his letters and the physical weakness of his bodily presence.

Most letter writers of this time actually dictated their letters to a secretary or a scribe, a trained and paid professional. This appears to have been the case with Romans. At the end of this letter, the scribe identifies himself in the final greeting: “I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord” (Rom 16:22). Furthermore, at the conclusion of three of his undisputed letters (1 Corinthians 16:21), Galatians 6:11), and Philemon 19)), Paul indicates that he did not write his letter himself, only signed it. Common practice with Hellenistic letters was to sign them to verify their authenticity. It is

estimated that it took two to three weeks to dictate and write a letter from its beginning to its final form. It was quite an undertaking for both author and scribe.<sup>15</sup>

### Women as “Co-workers” in the Pauline Congregations

Paul’s letters frequently mention women, most often in very favorable ways as his “co-workers” in ministry. For example, in his letter to the Philippians, Paul speaks of two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who worked side by side with him in his ministry (Phil 4:2–3).

One of the best examples of Paul’s positive working relationships with women comes from his concluding remarks in Romans 16. In this chapter, Paul mentions twenty-six people by name, ten of whom are women. All of these women helped Paul in various capacities as his “co-workers”: Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, Julia, and Nereus’s sister.

Paul viewed the roles of men and women in rather counter-cultural ways. In his recognition of women among his co-workers, Paul modeled for others his gospel message.

It remains unclear who delivered most of Paul’s letters. In the case of the Letter to the Romans, a wealthy woman by the name of Phoebe delivered Paul’s letter to the church in that city (Rom 16:1–2). As far as scholars can tell, Paul did not use the legal and established delivery system of the Roman Empire. Paul most likely relied upon some of his trusted co-workers to personally deliver his letters. Paul’s close associates, such as Titus (2 Cor 12:18) and Timothy (1 Thess 3:2), are often cited as leading candidates for the delivery of Paul’s letters to their intended destinations.

### The Order of Composition

Scholars are uncertain of the exact order in which the Pauline letters were written. There is little internal or external evidence to

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15. See the Introduction to Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

help place these letters in their proper chronological sequence. Paul does not date his letters, and Christian writers of the second and third centuries CE offer no solid external evidence.

There is general agreement that the thirteen Pauline letters were written between 50 and 120 CE. The seven undisputed letters were written in the 50s, with the six remaining deuter-Pauline letters composed by the next generations of Pauline Christians, sometime between 70 and 120 CE. Internal evidence, such as concerns over the imminent (impending) return of Christ (1 Thess 4:13–18) and the eventual creation of more structured church offices and structures (1 Tim 3:1–13), helps scholars differentiate between the undisputed and later Pauline letters. Many in Paul's day wondered (and worried) about the Second Coming of Christ; this is a common theme in the undisputed letters. Attention to more organized and structured operations, such as clarifying the function and role of bishops and deacons, is more the concern of the deuter-Pauline letters, which date to a later generation of Pauline Christians.

### The Center of Paul's Thought

Identifying the "center" of Paul's thought has been a topic of debate among Pauline scholars. Nowhere in his letters does Paul offer a systematic accounting of his theology. Many (especially Protestant) scholars have identified Paul's "justification by faith" as the center of Paul's thinking and the point from which his theology flows. Others have argued that Jesus Christ himself and, therefore, Paul's Christology is his center of thought. More recently, scholars have questioned whether Paul's theological system had a single center; perhaps Paul is best understood in relation to several central motifs.

What can be said with some certainty is this: Paul was convinced that in raising the crucified Jesus from the dead, God had acted decisively in human history, offering salvation to all who professes faith in this divine act. Regardless of the occasional nature of Paul's letters, this is the fundamental conviction from which Paul lived out his call from God and probably as close as one can get to a "center" of Paul's thought.

Some consensus exists on the chronological sequencing of the seven undisputed letters. For example, almost all scholars agree that 1 Thessalonians is the earliest surviving letter of Paul (50 CE) and that the two Pauline letters written from prison (Philippians and Philemon) were composed during one of his imprisonments, perhaps one of those in Ephesus, Caesarea, or Rome. However, questions remain such as, Was Galatians written before or after 1 Corinthians? What might be the order of composition of the apparent various letter fragments that make up 2 Corinthians?

### The Formation of the Pauline Corpus

One of the more interesting historical details about Paul's letters is that, from very early on (beginning as early as the late-first century CE), they were collected and circulated together to various Christian communities. Scholars have proposed numerous theories about the origin and formation of the Pauline Corpus.<sup>16</sup>

One theory is that as the second half of the first century unfolded, the churches to whom Paul wrote (such as Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi) kept the letters, preserving and copying them for their own use and circulation. Eventually, as the various Pauline Christian communities grew, expanded, and interacted, there developed a desire to collect the letters sent to the other churches. Different churches began to assemble partial collections of Paul's letters. By the early- to mid-second century CE (after the production of the Pastoral Letters), Paul's letters finally came together, forming the Pauline Corpus. This basic explanation, along with its various mutations, was dubbed the snowball or evolutionary theory.

Such snowball or evolutionary theories were successfully challenged by what became known as the big bang theories. This position argued that the Pauline Corpus was formed by the initiative of a single person or a single community or school (for example, the Pauline school). One motivating factor may have been Luke's production of the Acts of the Apostles. The circulation of Acts among the different churches intensified interest in Paul, as later generations of Christians heard of Paul's central role in the early church. Someone

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16. See Richards, 210–223 and Murphy-O'Connor, 114–130. Both present a good overview of the different theories associated with the formation of the Pauline Corpus.

with access to one (or more) of his letters would have been motivated, after reading the Acts of the Apostles, to collect other letters that Paul wrote to the various churches he established. This theory holds that the Pauline Corpus came together very quickly, assembled by someone seeking the additional letters written by the great apostle who was now recognized as one of the key figures among the first generation of Christians.

More recently, new theories of the formation of the Pauline Corpus have taken center stage. Labeled the codex and collection theories, they offer yet another plausible explanation. The early Christians preserved and circulated the Gospels and Paul's letters using codex, that is, writing in modern "book" form versus the earlier traditional form of the scroll. This preference in format lent itself well to preserving Paul's letters together, as the codex conveniently placed Paul's letters in a single publication.<sup>17</sup>

## Summary: The Life and Letters of Paul

### CORE CONCEPTS

- Paul was born between 5 and 15 CE and raised in the city of Tarsus, Cilicia, as a diaspora Jew.
- For Paul, the "revelation" of the resurrected Christ (33 CE) was the turning point of his life.
- In writing his letters, Paul adapted the literary conventions of his day to fit his needs.
- The early formation of the Pauline Corpus indicates the reception of Paul already in the first century CE.

### SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- Paul had Jewish parents and a sister, but as far as scholars know, never married.

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17. For a collection of contemporary essays from leading Pauline scholars on this and related matters, see Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *The Pauline Canon* (Boston, MA: Brill Academics, 2004). Porter's essay in this volume speaks directly to the various theories of the formation of the Pauline Corpus, "When and How Was the Pauline Canon Compiled? An Assessment of Theories," 95–107.



**Summary: The Life and Letters of Paul** *Continued*

- Paul was a Pharisee, although not much is known about his formal training.
- As a Pharisee, Paul had persecuted the early church and tried to destroy it.
- Paul interpreted his encounter with the risen Christ as a call to preach the “good news” of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.
- Very little is known of the first half of Paul’s thirty years of missionary outreach to the Gentiles, 35–50 CE.
- Almost all scholars agree that 1 Thessalonians (50 CE) is the earliest of the seven undisputed Pauline letters.
- Paul probably dictated several of his letters to a scribe or secretary.
- The length of the body of Paul’s letters was unusually long for the conventions of the day.
- The New Testament does not record the death of Paul. Tradition holds that Emperor Nero beheaded Paul, 62–64 CE.
- The chronological order of the composition of Paul’s letters remains uncertain.

**Questions for Review**

1. How are Paul and first-century CE Judaism portrayed by nineteenth-century German scholarship?
2. What is meant by “covenantal nomism,” and how did it affect the study of Paul’s Jewish background?
3. What is the difference between a chronological and thematic approach to understanding and interpreting Paul?
4. Which source material on Paul is considered most important, and why?
5. Explain what it means to say that Paul was a diaspora Jew.
6. What is known of Paul from his autobiographical sketches?
7. In what ways do Paul’s letters reveal a man educated in both Greco-Roman rhetorical style and Jewish interpretive practices?
8. When do scholars think Paul wrote the seven undisputed letters?

9. In what ways did Paul follow the standard practices of letter writing in his day?
10. What are the difficulties in determining the order of composition of Paul's letters?

## Questions for Reflection

1. What challenges to understanding and interpreting Paul do you anticipate?
2. If Paul were alive today, what might be some of the major influences affecting his life and worldview? How would these be different from those in antiquity?
3. What do you imagine was Paul's biggest challenge as he tried to live out his call and commission to preach the "good news" of Jesus to the Gentiles?
4. Which theory of the formation and editing of the Pauline Corpus do you think is the most plausible, and why?

## Recommendations for Further Reading

Furnish, Victor Paul. *The Moral Issues of Paul: Selected Issues*. 3rd ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009.

As the title implies, Furnish applies the ethics of Paul to a variety of contemporary moral issues: sex, marriage and divorce, homosexuality, women in the church, and the church in the modern world. Furnish balances Paul's historical sociocultural context and contemporary moral reasoning to address these modern questions.

Roetzel, Calvin J. *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*. 5th ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

This is the fifth edition of Roetzel's book, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*, originally published in 1974. It incorporates recent studies on Paul. As the subtitle implies, this book places Paul and his letters in their original historical and cultural setting, viewing the Pauline letters as conversations between Paul and his recipients.

Schnelle, Udo. *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*. Trans. M. Eugene Boring. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

This work examines the life and theology of Paul and his letters, written by one of the leading German Pauline scholars. Schnelle divides his

work into two parts: (1) The course of Paul's life and the development of his thought, which includes the life and letters of Paul; and (2) the basic structures of Pauline thought, which explores Paul's thinking in such areas as Christology, anthropology, and ethics. This is an excellent resource for advanced students.

Witherup, Ronald D. *101 Questions and Answers on Paul*. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003.

Witherup uses a question-and-answer format to present many of the frequently asked questions about Paul. Covering a range of questions grouped together by seven themes (Paul's life and ministry, Paul the person, the communities and companions of Paul, Paul's letters, theology, ethics, and legacy), this book serves as a ready-reference guide in an easy-to-read format for beginning students.

Zetterholm, Magnus. *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

Zetterholm provides a roadmap of the past two hundred years of Pauline scholarship on the subject of Paul and Judaism, sorting through the paradigms and perspectives that have shaped the modern understanding of Paul, as well as offering some important insights into future directions of Pauline studies. This book offers students a historical perspective on how scholars have been researching and writing about Paul and his letters.