

Chapter 1

THE LETTERS OF PAUL AND OF THE PAULINE TRADITION

Christian literature begins, for us today, with the letters of Paul the Apostle. These letters contain preexisting elements, which scholars describe as “preliterary forms” (P. Vielhauer). These include short professions of faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus (e.g., 1 Thess 4:14) and statements of a comparable kind that were used in the catechesis of new Christians. Such was the tradition regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus, for example, which Paul says he has received and which he passes on in his turn (1 Cor 15:3–5). Other formulas may have been used in a liturgical context, such as certain hymns (which scholars identify in, e.g., Phil 2:6–11 or 1 Tim 3:16). It is difficult to determine the original form of these passages, and in these cases, it is difficult to speak of literary phenomena. Only toward the end of the third century would formulas of belief appear as independent documents and works by individuals; we shall speak of those in connection with their authors. They would appear later still as statements that were in some sense official; these we shall discuss in vol. II.

1. Letter as a Genre

The earliest Christian documents preserved as independent entities are the letters of Paul. At a time when the transmission of the Christian message was primarily oral, letters served as a replacement for oral communication when sender and recipient were separated in space. The first Christian letters were not written for posterity but to meet the needs of the moment. Third John is the only letter from the beginnings of Christianity addressed by one individual to another. The next one is that of Ignatius of Antioch to Polycarp. Of the authentic letters of Paul one is addressed to an individual, Philemon, but it is intended also for the church that gathers in his home. Others are meant for churches or groups of churches; the latter include Colossians, Ephesians, 3 Corinthians, and 2 John, six of the seven letters of Ignatius, and the letter of Polycarp of Smyrna.

The letters to Timothy and Titus claim to be written by one individual (Paul) to another, but that setting is a fiction. *First Clement* is written by one church to another. Other “letters” from early Christianity are rather treatises that have some of the formal elements of a letter and a more or less broad readership. These include Hebrews,

James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and *Barnabas*; *2 Clement* is a homily and does not read at all like a letter. The Apocalypse of John contains seven “letters” to communities of Asia Minor (chs. 2–3) but these are in fact prophetic messages. As a whole, the Apocalypse does have an epistolary framework (1:4–6; 22:21), probably due to the author’s intention that it be read during the liturgy. Finally, two letters are found within the Acts of the Apostles (15:23–26; 23:26–30).

This variety of forms and functions mirrors the variety of letters in the Hellenistic world. Deissmann distinguished between letters true and proper, which were meant for immediate communication of a private kind and had no literary aspirations, and epistles, in which the letter form was a fiction and served to dress up a treatise intended for a broad public. To the first category he assigned the letters of Paul and 2 and 3 John; to the second, the Pastoral Epistles, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude.

This classification, later modified as a distinction between real letters and artificial letters, had a great influence but is now considered too rigid. Today the scholarly preference is for more flexible classifications that reject two broad categories in favor of a spectrum of possibilities that take into account the ancient treatises on the subject of letter writing. (Hellenistic manuals on the subject distinguished twenty-one types of letters and, later, forty-one.) Thus W. Doty bases his classification on a distinction between “more private” letters (with an immediate relationship between writers and addressees) and “less private” letters (characterized by a formal or distant relationship), and then subdivides the latter into various categories. David Aune distinguishes between the following types of letters: (a) private or documentary letters intended to maintain contact with family or friends, communicate news, or make requests; (b) official letters (written by an authority in the exercise of an office); and (c) literary letters preserved and transmitted through literary channels, as in epistolaries.

Almost any kind of composition could be set within an epistolary framework. The formal elements of letter writing can give the appearance of a letter to writings of various kinds; as we have seen, this was repeatedly the case in early Christianity. Let us look at these elements briefly; they consist of fixed formulas that allow a limited range of variations and occur chiefly at the beginning and the end of a work. A letter begins with a preamble (*praescriptum*) consisting of three elements: the name of the writer or sender (*superscriptio*), that of the addressee (*adscriptio*), and a greeting (*salutatio*), which is usually represented by the infinitive *chairein*, to which might be added a wish for good health (*formula valetudinis*). An alternative form of preamble was: from sender, to addressee, without a greeting. The three elements may also be expanded, for example, by adding information on the relationship between the two persons, or by adding titles to both names and adverbs to the greeting.

A letter ends with a formula of the kind “Take care of yourself and be well.” This is later replaced by a formula in which the greetings of others are added, or the writer asks the addressee to greet their common acquaintances. The final word is often *errōso/errōsthe* (“be well,” singular or plural), often followed by the date. The body of the letter is structured by formulas introducing various kinds of communication; for example, “I received your letter”; “you should know that”; “as I write to you”; “I am surprised”; “please . . .” and so on.

Paul, creator of the apostolic letter that served as a model for subsequent early Christian letters, adopts and alters these conventions. The basic form of the *salutatio*

becomes “grace and peace be yours,” which adds the theologically meaningful *charis* (a reference to the work of Christ) to the traditional Hebrew greeting *shalōm*. The simple form is found in 1 Thess 1:1; in other letters it is expanded to include “from God (our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul extends the mention of his own name as sender by adding the title of apostle, which might in turn be expanded by a reference to the origin and meaning of the title (Rom 1:1–6) and possibly by adding the names of collaborators associated with the sending of the letter (1 Cor 1:1: Sosthenes; 2 Cor 1:1: Timothy; 1 Thess 1:1: Silvanus and Timothy). The mention of the addressee can also be expanded (1 Cor 1:2; Rom 1:7).

Next comes the *proem* or introduction; a thanksgiving for the situation of the community being addressed (e.g., Rom 1:8–17; 1 Cor 1:4–9; absent from Galatians, which is a letter of rebuke). It begins with “I thank God,” or “blessed be God.” At the end, Paul sends greetings (e.g., 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Cor 16:19–20), but he replaces the traditional formula of greeting with a wish, the earliest form of which is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (1 Thess 5:28). Other features of his greetings are the invitation to exchange a holy kiss (1 Thess 5:26; 1 Cor 16:20; etc.), which alludes to a reading of the letters during the community liturgy, and mention that the greeting is in his own hand (e.g., 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Phlm 19). Paul also uses some of these conventional formulas in the body of his letters. He has a special liking, whether in moving from the introduction to the main part of the letter, or in moving to a new subject within the body, for a formula of the type “I want you to know” (Gal 1:11; Phil 1:12) or “I want you not to be ignorant” (2 Cor 1:8; Rom 1:13). He also uses a formula of request, usually with *parakalō* (1 Cor 1:10; 4:16; 16:15).

The letters of Paul are a good deal longer and more complex than most of the private letters that have come down to us on papyri. They expound theological and ethical subjects and make full use of the resources of rhetoric for polemical and apologetic purposes. But the letters are always connected with concrete situations in which the apostle thinks he must intervene from afar, and to which his doctrinal exposés are related. The letter to the Romans is a partial exception: in this letter Paul addresses a community he has not founded, and he gives an organized explanation of the major themes of his gospel. But even this peculiarity is connected with a specific situation: Paul wants to undertake a mission in the west and he needs acceptance and support in Rome. So in this case, too, we have a treatise in letter form, but an authentic letter that abundantly develops a set of issues as required by the real needs of the situation.

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2. Chronology of Paul

Thanks to his letters, Paul is for us by far the best-known personage of very early Christianity; still the chronology of his life is not easily determined. We have at our disposal two kinds of sources. First, we have the letters, but these are not meant to be autobiographical and the information they give is therefore shaped by the occasion. Second, we have the Acts of the Apostles, in which Paul is the principal actor from ch. 13 on; but the author's sources are fragmentary, and the presentation is shaped by a theological perspective that systematically obscures the conflicts within the Christian world that manifest themselves so dramatically in Paul's letters. It is nevertheless impossible to do without the testimony of Acts, provided we sift it critically by comparing it with the letters. Among the latter, the principal witness is Galatians 1–2, in which Paul recalls his activity before and after his vocation. But he is here inspired by a polemical goal: to show his independence of the authority of the Jerusalem church, and he therefore mentions only what will serve this purpose.

According to Acts, Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia (21:39; 22:3; see 9:11); the fact is not confirmed by Paul, but Luke can hardly have invented it. Moreover, an origin in Tarsus, a Hellenistic city possessed of a high cultural level, matches the image of a hellenized Jew that the letter gives. Although he always describes himself as Paul, the name Saul, which Acts gives him through 13:9, fits in with his origin from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5; Rom 11:1). In addition, it was not uncommon in the Middle East to have a double name: one from the person's original tradition, the other a Greek name. It is unlikely, however, that Paul received a rabbinical training from the great Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 5:34; 22:3). In Gal 1:13–14 Paul describes himself in terms of his calling as a young Pharisee, who was completely won over to the defense of Israel's religious identity through an intransigent observance of the Law and of the "traditions of the ancestors." This zeal led to his violent persecution of Christians. However, the claim that the center of his activity as persecutor was Jerusalem (Acts 9:1–2), so that he was present for the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 22:20), seems to be contradicted by Gal 1:22, according to which he was personally unknown to the churches of Judea.

In Gal 1:15–16 Paul describes the experience that turned his life upside down, but he does so in the language of the calls of the Old Testament prophets, describing the meaning of the event for him, and not its external circumstances. The threefold description of the event in Acts (9:3–9; 22:6–11; 26:12–18) is Luke's embellishment of it. Paul did indeed regard it as a vision of Christ (1 Cor 15:8) that was closely connected to his missionary mandate to the pagans (Gal 1:16). We cannot speak of it, however, as a conversion in the sense of passing from one religion to another, since Christianity was still a development within Judaism, and Paul thought of it as completely in continuity with God's plan for Israel.

Immediately after this event, Paul withdrew to Arabia (probably to the kingdom of the Nabateans, southeast of Damascus). “After three years” (that is, two and a half years according to the method of counting at that time) he went to meet Cephas in Jerusalem and remained fifteen days with him. At this time he also met James, the brother of the Lord (Gal 1:16–18). The setting in Acts, according to which Paul met the apostles in Jerusalem a few days after his conversion (9:19, 26), is therefore not trustworthy: Luke wants to show that Paul received legitimacy from the Church of Jerusalem. Paul then went to Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21), surely in order to exercise his mission there.

“Then after fourteen years [thirteen and a half],” he returned to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus, evidently as an envoy of the church of Antioch where Barnabas was working, and whither Paul was to be transferred later (Acts 11:25–26). His purpose was to discuss the conditions to be imposed on Christians converted from paganism (Gal 2:1–10). This episode certainly corresponds to the one in Acts 15:1–29. Before the “apostolic council” of Jerusalem, Acts 13–14 places the events that are usually described as Paul’s first missionary journey, which supposedly took him, as a missionary of the church of Antioch along with Barnabas and Mark, to Cyprus and southern Asia Minor (Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia). How this mission can be reconciled with Paul’s activity in Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21) is not clear. Admittedly, in Galatians Paul’s intention is not to describe all of his activity but only to emphasize the time that has passed and his independence of Jerusalem. Some, however, prefer to locate this first missionary journey after the council of Jerusalem.

After the “council,” Paul recalls a meeting in Antioch with Cephas and Barnabas about table fellowship with Christians converted from paganism (Gal 2:11–14); this meeting seems to have taken place after Paul had returned from Jerusalem to Antioch. It was probably this, and not the circumstances reported in Acts 15:36, that distanced Paul from Barnabas and even from Antioch, where his position was certainly a difficult one, and sent him off on independent missionary activity. From this point on, Galatians is no longer of any help with Paul’s chronology; the account in Acts can be checked against the information in the letters regarding the collection that Paul had pledged to take up on behalf of the Jerusalem community.

Having left Antioch, Paul traveled through Syria and Asia Minor (Cilicia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, the territory of the Galatians), then crossed over into Europe and reached Corinth, where he founded a church and remained for a time. This was the so-called “second missionary journey.” The story in Acts 15:40–18:17 is confirmed by the information in 1 Thessalonians, which was composed during this stay in Corinth. On the other hand, there are reasons to doubt the return from Corinth by way of Ephesus and Caesarea to Jerusalem and then to Antioch, with a fresh departure immediately afterward back to Asia Minor and Ephesus, as Luke relates in a few verses (Acts 18:18–23; 19:1: the beginning of the “third missionary journey”). Perhaps Paul simply went from Corinth to Ephesus, where he stayed for three years, during which he supposedly visited the communities of Phrygia and Galatia, carried out a mission in the valley of the Lycus (Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis: Acts 19:10), and paid a short visit to Corinth (2 Cor 2:1; 12:21; 13:2).

He then went via Troas and Macedonia to Corinth, and remained there for three months (Acts 20:3) before undertaking the return journey to Jerusalem in order to bring the proceeds of the collection he had pledged to make at the

“council.” With regard to this journey we have no external confirmation of the account in Acts 20:3–21:17. According to Luke, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27–36), then transported to Caesarea (23:21–23), where he remained for two years. He was transferred to Rome as a result of his appeal to the emperor (the journey is narrated in Acts 27:1–28:14), and remained there for two years under house arrest (28:31). *First Clement*, written at the end of the first century, refers to Paul’s martyrdom in Rome, which doubtless took place under Nero and, at the latest, during the persecution of Christians in 64 (5.7). A report contained in second century sources of a journey to Spain would presuppose a release in Rome and a second imprisonment. The story was probably based on Paul’s plan in Rom 15:28, but it is unlikely that the journey ever took place.

Up to this point the chronology is a relative one; reference points that would turn it into an absolute chronology are few. According to Acts 18:2, when Paul was in Corinth he met Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife who had “recently” arrived from Italy as a result of an edict by the emperor Claudius, expelling the Jews. The edict can be dated to 41 or, more probably, to 49. The only fairly solid date is the proconsulate of Gallio in Achaia (Acts 18:2). An inscription at Delphi, discovered in 1905, mentions Gallio as proconsul; this allows us to establish that Gallio’s proconsulship lasted from May 51 to May 52 or, less probably, from May 52 to May 53. According to Acts 19:11, Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months and was accused before Gallio toward the end of his stay, which would therefore have begun at the end of 49 or in 50. With this date as a starting point, it is possible, with some degree of certainty, to situate the events of Paul’s life:

- vocation: ca. 32
- first visit to Jerusalem: 34/35
- activity in Syria and Cilicia; move to Antioch and mission on behalf of Antioch: 34/35–48
- second visit to Jerusalem (“council”); dispute with Peter in Antioch: 48/49
- independent missionary journey: 49/50
- stay in Corinth: 50–52
- stay in Ephesus: 52–55
- stay in Corinth (three months): 55/56
- arrival in Jerusalem, arrest: 57/58
- arrival in Rome: 60 (?)

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3. Authentic Letters

a. First Letter to the Thessalonians

According to Acts 17, after Paul had founded the church in Thessalonica, capital of the province of Macedonia, he had to flee to Berea, where he left Silas and Timothy behind and went on to Athens. From there he went to Corinth, where his two coworkers joined him (18:1–5). At Corinth he wrote 1 Thessalonians between 50 and 52. In it he mentions his own activity in Thessalonica (1:5–6), then in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7–8), and in Athens (3:1).

The letter can be thought of as having two parts: a lengthy introduction (1:2–3:13) with a parenthesis or exhortation (4:1–5:22), followed by a conclusion (5:23–28). The first part is dominated by the theme of the mutual recollections of Paul and the Thessalonians; the apostle recalls, among other things, the superabundant action, in the form of charismatic phenomena and wonders (1:5), of the Spirit who presided over the birth of the community. In 2:1–12 he recalls and defends his apostolic activity at Thessalonica. The apostle probably means to differentiate the impression he gave from that of the other preachers who thronged the “religious marketplace” of the time: itinerant philosophers, mendicant prophets, magicians, and charlatans. The attack on the Jewish opponents of the gospel in 2:13–16 seems odd, since it was at the hands of the pagans that the Thessalonians had suffered. Some exegeses consider these verses to be an interpolation, but this seems unnecessary, since the passage interprets the Thessalonians’ difficulties by applying to them both the traditional idea of Jewish opposition to God’s messengers, as well as the *topoi*, or common themes, in pagan attacks on Jews.

First Thessalonians 4:1–12 contains exhortations on the moral life and relationships in the community. The next verse begins an instruction on the lot of deceased Christians, thereby answering concerns of the Christians of Thessalonica (4:13). The latter expect the Lord’s return in the very near future, and the death of some brethren has caused them to ask whether the deceased would be excluded from union with Christ at his coming. Paul answers that the dead are not excluded, because they will be raised up at the coming of the Lord and meet him along with the living. The apostle here uses a saying of Jesus that is not transmitted in the gospels; it occurs after 4:16 and makes use of themes traditional in Jewish expectation of the “Day of the Lord.” Paul is convinced that he too will be alive at the Lord’s coming (4:15), and therefore urges watchfulness for the sake of readiness (5:1–11). He then adds some recommendations for community life (5:12–22) before ending with a prayer and formulas of greeting (5:23–28).

b. First Letter to the Corinthians

Corinth, destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Romans, was founded anew as a Roman colony a century later by Julius Caesar. In Paul’s time it was the largest city in Greece. A mixture of peoples and religions set it apart, and its immorality was renowned, though its reputation was doubtless exaggerated. Paul had come there during his “second missionary journey” (Acts 18:1–18) and had founded a community of Christians converted from paganism. He stayed there a year and a half, probably in 50–52. From

Corinth he went to Ephesus, then to Jerusalem and Antioch, whence he left again for Ephesus (Acts 18:19–19:1). We noted earlier that the return to Palestine between the two stays in Ephesus is probably an invention of Luke. In any case, it was from Ephesus that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, toward the end of his stay there (16:8) and therefore probably in the early months of 55.

The letter is of great help in understanding of the problems that could arise when the good news of Christ was received in a cultural environment that was not Jewish but “pagan.” Paul had preached at Corinth in a religious atmosphere in which people did not expect salvation to come by an eschatological divine intervention representing the climax of a lengthy history of relations between a people and their God. They looked for salvation rather from the possibility that individual believers, in an intimacy with the divinity that would break with their individual and collective past, might be seized by the divinity and, through a sharing in this divinity’s mythical fate, be immediately freed from demonic forces by the divinity who had overcome them. Characteristics of such an attitude are: enthusiasm, that is, the conviction of the divine spirit dwelling within one; individualism; a tendency in some degree to moral indifference, inasmuch as individuals think of themselves as “beyond good and evil”; and the persuasion that the spirit of the human being is already saved, while the body will never be saved, nor is there any reason why it should be.

The letter does not have a well-defined structure. There are responses to questions raised by the Corinthians (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1), but also to situations that Paul sees as problems, and first of all to the divisions within the community and the formation of parties.

After the preamble and introduction (1:1–9), Paul confronts the problem of parties (1:10–4:21). He has learned that groups have formed in the community, each of them appealing to a leader: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ (1:12). There has been a great deal of discussion about what distinguished such groups. Paul claims that as evangelizer of the Corinthians he alone is their “father,” and he bemoans the fact that some have become puffed up with pride, thinking that he will not return (4:15, 18). He says that it matters little to him if the Corinthians pass judgment on him (4:1–5). He emphasizes the continuity between his own work and the later work of Apollos (3:15–15; see Acts 18:4–26; 19:1).

The basic theme of chs. 1–4 is the contrast between (human) wisdom and foolishness (of the cross). This does not prevent Paul from having another wisdom, which he teaches to adult Christians, but which is unknown to the world and is revealed to believers by the Spirit (2:6–12). He was not able to teach it earlier to the Corinthians because they were babes in the faith. Nor can he teach it now, because their divisions show them to be fleshly, not spiritual (3:1–4), even though they think themselves spiritual (3:18) and base their pride on human beings, i.e., Paul, Apollos, Cephas (3:21–22). These statements of Paul give us a glimpse of two levels in Christian formation: *initiation* could be followed, in a phase which Paul describes as “adult,” by *instruction* based on the mysteries of God, which are revealed only by the Spirit (M. Pesce). The reference, it seems, is to a knowledge of the role of Jesus in God’s plan, a knowledge perhaps based on an interpretation of the Scriptures and connected with manifestations of the Spirit. We may think that after Paul’s departure the Corinthians discovered (possibly from Apollos) elements of this Christian “wisdom,” and that some blamed Paul for not having told them of it. They then chose to appeal to other

apostles, such as Apollos and Cephas. The latter may never have been in Corinth, but traditions connected with his name were in circulation there.

To interpret this wisdom the Corinthians seem to have used categories supplied by the mystery cults of the day. The spread of these categories in Corinth is attested a few decades later by Apuleius. This perspective allows us to understand the several questions discussed in the letter. The knowledge in question would be reserved to the initiated, whence the importance of baptism, understood as a rite of initiation, and of the names of those who guarantee the tradition. This knowledge would ensure immediate salvation. This belief accounts for the position of the “strong,” who extol their freedom in the area of sexual ethics (chs. 5–6) and of flesh sacrificed to idols (chs. 8–10), the spread of enthusiasm and ecstasies (chs. 11–14), and the conviction that they are already risen (ch. 15). In keeping with all this is the importance attached by the Corinthians to knowledge (*gnōsis*), their slogan, “Everything is permitted” (6:12; 10:23).

Paul responds by identifying the wisdom invoked by the Corinthians as human wisdom, which here has a negative connotation. To this he opposes a “theology of the cross,” which is meant to disparage the “strength” that the Corinthians boast of having acquired through their conversion, and by virtue of which they regard themselves as superior to others. In Paul’s view, the gospel is the opposite of all that: it is the foolishness and weakness of God, which are manifested in the cross of Christ (1:18–25), in the seemingly weak preaching of Paul (2:15), and in the makeup of the church of Corinth (1:26–29).

In chs. 5–6 Paul discusses some special problems, in particular *porneia*, that is, sexual disorder, rejecting among other things the thought of tolerating in the community a man who lives with his father’s (second) wife (5:1–5). In ch. 7 he answers questions on marriage, suggesting that it is better for persons to remain in the state in which they were when they became Christians (i.e., celibacy or marriage), but also making the avoidance of sin the basic norm of behavior.

Chapters 8–10 deal with the eating of flesh sacrificed to idols: May it be eaten? May one share in the meals celebrated in pagan temples? Paul shares the presupposition of the “strong,” that Christian liberty permits the eating, because idols do not exist and therefore cannot cause uncleanness. But he also sets down, as the principle that should prevail, the necessity of not scandalizing the “weak” brethren. He rejects participation in the meals because one enters thereby into communion with demons. Chapter 11 settles questions regarding the behavior of men and women during worship and especially during the cultic meal. Here, as throughout the letter, the norm is communion among the faithful and their mutual edification.

Chapters 12–14 have to do with the gifts of the Spirit. Before their conversion the Corinthians had already witnessed or been the subjects of ecstatic phenomena (12:2). Analogous phenomena now appear in the Christian community, with the result that the Corinthians think they have a direct connection with the heavenly world. Paul does not reject the manifestations of the Spirit but, whereas the Corinthians prize chiefly the gift of tongues (an unintelligible language, thought to be produced by the presence of the Spirit), he himself gives first place to prophecy because, being intelligible, it contributes more directly to the welfare of the community. The well-known hymn to love as superior to every other gift occurs in this context (ch. 13).

Some in Corinth claim that there is no resurrection of the dead (15:12). In ch. 15 Paul emphasizes the order followed in the resurrection: first Christ, as the firstfruits, and then, at Christ's return, those who belong to him. Coming as they did from a Greek cultural environment, the Christians of Corinth had difficulty understanding how the body could share in salvation. Paul stresses the spiritual nature of the risen body and incorporates this concept into the scenario for the end of the world that had been developed in Judaism.

Chapter 16 gives practical instructions for the collection for the Church of Jerusalem, news about Paul's travel plans, and, finally, personal greetings.

c. Second Letter to the Corinthians

Other problems were soon added to those faced in 1 Corinthians. These were different in origin but were, like the former, connected with the Hellenistic culture and religious spirit that prevailed in Corinth. Once again, the issue was the model used to envisage the activity of the divinity, that is, the way in which he reveals his power. Now, however, the question is phrased in terms of the model given by the apostle himself as he proclaimed that power and communicated its blessings. But before addressing this point, we must turn to the problems of composition, which are more complex than for any other letter of Paul, and are connected with a time of very sensitive relations with the Corinthian community.

After the preamble (1:1–2) and introduction (1:3–11), Paul explains why he has not returned to Corinth since his last visit (1:12–2:4). He had originally sent Timothy (1 Cor 4:7; 16:10), with the intention of going there himself after traversing Macedonia (1 Cor 16:5–10); subsequently, he decided to go directly to Corinth, then to Macedonia, and then back to Corinth (2 Cor 1:15–16). It would seem that something had spurred him to visit Corinth immediately; Timothy's mission had evidently not been successful. But Paul did not return for the third time, as he had planned, and instead wrote to Corinth "with many tears" (2:4).

In 2:5–13 Paul describes a meeting with someone at Corinth, after which he returned to Ephesus. From here he sent the "tearful letter" and also sent Titus to Corinth. He himself then went to Troas, the port of embarkation for Macedonia. There, contrary to his expectation, he did not find Titus. He then boarded a ship for Macedonia. This subject does not come up again until 7:5, where he speaks of meeting Titus. Instead, 2:14–7:4 is occupied by a lengthy defense of his own apostolic ministry, which is paradoxical in that glory is achieved only through suffering and the scorn of others. Within this section there is a further break: the exhortation to the Corinthians to open their hearts is uttered in 6:13 and has its natural continuation in 7:2, whereas the section 6:14–7:1 seems like an intrusion, since its subject is the exhortation not to be joined with unbelievers. This last passage, which is phrased in a style different from that of the context, is probably a post-Pauline interpolation.

In 7:5–16 the story of the prehistory of the letter continues: Paul met Titus in Macedonia and was delighted by the end of the conflict with the Corinthians. Chapter 8 gives instructions for the collection. Chapter 9 continues the subject, but as if Paul were now only introducing it (9:1), while at the same time he proposes the churches of Achaia as a model for those of Macedonia, whereas in ch. 8 it is the other way around. The atmosphere of these two chapters is one of joy and thanksgiving; but

suddenly, beginning in 10:1, Paul's tone hardens, as he defends himself against accusations made in Corinth, especially by one individual, who is surely the one mentioned in 2:5–11. Paul gives a spirited defense of his ministry against those whom he describes as "super-apostles" (11:5; 12:11). He recalls his second visit to Corinth, and announces a third (12:14, 21; 13:1–11). He also urges the Corinthians to be self-critical because, once he comes among them, he will not spare them. The final greeting (13:11–13), however, is unexpectedly quite cordial.

In summary, the letter shows some obvious breaks:

Chapter 2:13 is continued in 7:5. The section in between is not simply a digression by Paul, since it presupposes a different situation: up to 2:13 and then in 7:5–16 Paul views the conflict with the Corinthians as a thing of the past, whereas the defense in 2:13–7:4 seems to suppose that a conflict is imminent, although the tone does not have the same fierceness as in 10:1–13:10.

Chapters 8 and 9 are concerned with the collection, but it is hard to see them as belonging to the same letter.

Chapter 10:1–13:30 reflect a violent controversy and cannot belong to the same letter as 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16. It is also unlikely that they belong to the same letter as 2:14–7:5, because in the latter section the conflict seems to be still in its beginnings.

Chapter 6:14–7:1 interrupt the argument and are not Pauline in style or content.

It seems therefore that 2 Corinthians is to be regarded as a combination of several letters, or parts of letters, from Paul. This is a phenomenon seen in antiquity in the publication of letters with the same addressee: letters on related subjects were combined by eliminating references to more concrete circumstances. The several letters or parts of letters can be reconstructed as follows:

Second Corinthians 10–13 (except for the greetings) would be "the tearful letter" that Paul wrote from Ephesus (2 Cor 2:4) after the quick visit to Corinth during which he was challenged and offended. This, his second visit, after the visit during which he founded this Church. It took place perhaps in the autumn after 1 Corinthians (possibly 55) or the following spring. As for 2:14–7:4, which is polemical in content, it may be another section of that same letter, but it may also reflect an earlier phase in which the conflict had not yet become serious. In this case, it would have been written after Paul received unsatisfactory information from Timothy and before his second visit to Corinth, which would have been motivated by the letter's lack of success.

When Paul later received good news from Titus in Macedonia, he wrote the Corinthians the letter of reconciliation represented by 2 Cor 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16. This letter was therefore composed in Macedonia, probably in the year after 1 Corinthians. Chapter 8 on the collection could be part of this letter, while ch. 9 would be a later instruction; but the contrary is also possible, that is, they may be two independent letters.

What caused the crisis, and who were Paul's adversaries? They came from outside with letters of recommendation (3:1; 10:12, 18). This situation was different from that of 1 Corinthians, in which the problems originated within the community. These outsiders, who claimed to be apostles (11:13), Paul derides as "super-apostles" (11:5; 12:11). They took credit for the work of others and boasted of being Hebrews (10:16; 11:22). They challenged Paul's activity, asserting that his letters were forceful but his personal presence was feeble (10:16). Unlike Paul, they asserted their legitimacy with powerful signs, which they claimed should be characteristic of an apostle (12:11–12).

They boasted of their ecstatic experiences, to the point that Paul is forced to remind them that he is not their inferior in this area but chooses not to boast of it (12:1–9). They insisted that they belonged to Christ and were his ministers (10:7; 11:23). In response Paul protests that he does not want to know Christ in a human way (5:16).

It is likely that these outsiders were Christian apostles of Jewish origin who adopted a model of itinerant preacher known to the Hellenistic world: the “divine man,” full of the power of the divinity, which enabled him to be in communication with the divine, to work miracles, and to dispense wisdom. They must have preached a Christ who fit that model, drawing from the tradition of his miracles and of his sayings, which took the form of words of wisdom. It is probably this that Paul rejects in 5:16, because for him the Christ who is to be preached is Christ crucified. The Corinthians, who were responsive to the manifestations of the Spirit (as 1 Corinthians had already shown), must have been impressed by these missionaries and allowed themselves to question Paul’s apostolic authority.

d. Letter to the Galatians

The date of Galatians, which is not addressed to a single church but to all the communities of Galatia (1:2), depends on the identification of the addressees, giving rise to an age-old controversy. The Galatians, a branch of the Celtic family (the two names are equivalent in Greek) were summoned from the Balkans to Asia Minor in 278 B.C. to serve as mercenaries of King Nicomedes of Bithynia, and later settled in an area of central Asia Minor that then took its name from them. Beginning in 36 B.C., Aminta, an ally first of Antony, then of Octavian, was able to establish a kingdom made up of Galatia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Pamphylia, and Cilicia. At Aminta’s death in 25 B.C., Augustus turned the whole area into the Roman province of Galatia. The question, then, is whether Paul means by “Galatia” the territory of the Galatians as such or the larger Roman province. During his first missionary journey with Barnabas, Paul had already evangelized Pisidia and Lycaonia, which belonged to the province of Galatia (Acts 13–14). If, then, the letter is addressed to the inhabitants of the province, he could have written it shortly after the “council of Jerusalem” in 48/49 (to which reference is made in Gal 2:1–10). On the other hand, he worked in the territory proper of the Galatians only during his “second journey” (Acts 16:6), and returned there during the third (Acts 18:23). Since Gal 4:13 hints that Paul visited Galatia twice, Galatians would have to be dated after 52/53, and therefore would have been written during the two- or three-year stay in Ephesus. Scholars remain divided.

Galatians is a highly polemical letter, elicited by the preaching, after Paul’s departure, of Christian missionaries who required pagans converted to Christianity to observe the Jewish law and, in particular, circumcision. They cast doubt on Paul’s authority, probably emphasizing the difference between his practice and that of the church of Jerusalem. The issue here was the very identity of Christianity: Were the signs denoting membership in Judaism among the basic things defining Christianity? Such was indeed the view of the missionaries who competed with Paul: in their eyes, the salvation God offers in Christ occurs within the context of the ancient and permanently valid covenant between God and Israel, a covenant ratified by circumcision and the observance of the law. Observance of the law did not mean that the Jews believed that they were saved by their own powers through fulfillment of the law’s pre-

scriptions, an unfortunate caricature developed and kept alive down the centuries by Christian anti-Jewish polemics. The point was rather that observance of the law was a sign of membership in the community, which God saves in virtue of the covenant he has made with it.

Paul, on the other hand, following an insight that would be decisive for the success of Christianity, refused to make Christian identity subordinate to Jewish identity, defining it instead solely by faith in Jesus Christ. This presented a difficult problem, because the God of Israel, of Jesus, and of Paul seemed to be in contradiction, since in the Scriptures salvation was always connected to the covenant with Israel and the gift of the law. Paul had therefore to engage in a bold line of thinking in order to set aside the law from the ongoing line of salvation. In this he drew on tendencies already at work in Judaism: he connected salvation instead with the promise, much older than the law, that God had given to Abraham and his posterity. This posterity Paul boldly identified with Jesus and the Christians. In this view, the law represented simply an interlude, a “pedagogue” assigned to Israel until it should become “adult” and capable of receiving the “inheritance.” Paul is aware of the delicacy of his position, but he is possessed by the certainty, which also came from his personal experience (and history has justified him), that at this point the whole of Christianity is at stake. He therefore throws himself into the struggle with a passion and a clarity of mind that make Galatians one of the key documents in the history of Christianity. Over the centuries, efforts to rediscover and give radical new expression to Christian identity have repeatedly turned back to this letter.

Already significant are the expansion of the *superscriptio* by a claim of divine origin for Paul’s apostolate, and the absence of the introduction, which is replaced (1:6–10) by a rebuke to the Galatians for so easily going astray.

In 1:11–2:14 Paul looks back to his experience as a zealous Pharisee and persecutor of Christians, whom God then called and entrusted with a mission to the pagans. Paul recalls these events in order to show his apostolate as independent of the authority of the church of Jerusalem, and as at the same time acknowledged by that church. He had gone to Jerusalem for the first time more than two years after his call, and for the second time another thirteen years later, in order to meet the leaders of the community there who had acknowledged the divine origin of his ministry to the uncircumcised. Paul had already defended the “truth of the gospel” in a meeting at Antioch with Cephas, who, worried as he was about the Jewish Christians who were observing the law, had abandoned table fellowship with Christian converts from paganism.

Chapter 2:15–21 answers the question raised by the conflict in Antioch and states Paul’s position: believers in Christ who seek further justification from the law render void the work of Christ.

Chapters 3:1–5:12 give the line of argument intended to justify Paul’s position. This section appeals to the experience of the Spirit, which the Galatians had at the time of their conversion, when there was no question of any law observance. It proves that the divine promise was based on the faith of Abraham (3:6–18) and emphasizes the point that observance of the law ended with the adoption of Christians as the free children of God who must refuse to fall back into slavery (3:19–4:11). After a reference to Paul’s founding of the community, an exegesis of the biblical story of Hagar and Sarah contrasts the slavery connected with the Law and the freedom flowing from the promise. An exhortation to remain free then follows.

Chapters 5:13–6:10 contain a parenesis (moral exhortation), a typical element in the second part of Paul’s letters: freedom in the Spirit must beget mutual love and service. Chapter 6:11–18 has a final exhortation to guard against those demanding circumcision; it is followed by rather brusque greetings.

Although the adversaries are different, Galatians, like 2 Corinthians is an interesting witness to a fluid Christian mission: the Christian communities gradually came in contact with various missionaries who preached different forms of the gospel. In this case, the missionaries active in Galatia, who, as we saw, made Christian identity continuous with Jewish identity (4:10; 5:2; 6:12–13), called into question the divine origin of Paul’s gospel, which moved in the opposite direction. These men appealed to the authorities in Jerusalem against Paul, as can be seen from Paul’s efforts to prove that these authorities are in agreement with his gospel, not his adversaries’. But his reference to “false brethren” who had been so bold as to demand the circumcision of Titus in Jerusalem (2:4–5) and his ironical mention of the “pillars” of the mother church (2:6) suggest that, apart from the polemical need to emphasize his agreement with Jerusalem, Paul has no illusions about his reputation among the Judeo-Christians of Palestine.

e. Letter to the Philippians

Philippi, favorably situated on the Via Egnatia that connected Rome and Byzantium, was an economically flourishing city of mixed population and a place of encounter of various religions. Paul founded his first European community there during the “second missionary journey” (around 49). Acts covers his stay in the city at length (ch. 16), but the story has little historical plausibility. However, the persecution he suffered there is confirmed by 1 Thess 2:2.

The introduction of the letter (1:3–11) takes the form of a thanksgiving followed by a prayer. Paul’s relations with this community were excellent, and words expressing joy (*chairō*, *chara*) characterize the letter. Paul then speaks of his own situation (1:12–26): he is in prison and expects to suffer martyrdom, although he does not exclude the possibility of living on and seeing the Philippians again. In any case, he exhorts them to be constant through the suffering inflicted on them (1:27–30); their situation is apparently one of persecution, although not of an excessively violent kind.

Paul exhorts the Philippians to mutual harmony and submission. They must regard others as better than themselves (2:1–4). This behavior must be based on Jesus Christ: the idea is developed in a christological hymn (2:6–11) expressing the preexistence of Jesus in his divine state and his acceptance of “self-emptying” (*kenōsis*) by taking on the condition of a slave, that is, human form. Many scholars think that the apostle has here adapted an earlier hymn and added to it in particular the detail “even to death on a cross” (2:8).

In 2:12–18 Paul continues his exhortation. Personal communications follow (2:19–3:1a): he expects to send Titus soon and hopes that he himself can also come in person. Meanwhile, he is sending back to the Philippians Epaphroditus, whom they had put at his disposal, and who has been ill while with Paul.

In 3:2 the tone changes abruptly, as Paul writes a violent attack on “wicked workers,” and “mutilators of the flesh.” He follows with a defense of his own life, first as a persecuting Pharisee and then as one trusting solely in the righteousness obtained

through faith. In his present life he has not yet obtained what he hopes for, but he presses on to the reward God has promised in Christ (3:2–16). Here is one of the key theological points in the letter: when faced with Jewish-Christian missionaries who think themselves “mature” (3:15; see 3:12), probably because of their observance of the law, and perhaps having been attacked personally, Paul does not restrict himself to argument, but throws onto the scale his own life as a Jew who had placed his trust in his own zeal and his blamelessness before the law, but who subsequently threw everything away in order to rely solely on faith in Christ. The Philippians are urged to imitate Paul and not let themselves be led astray by those who “behave as enemies of the cross of Christ” (3:17–4:1).

In 4:2–9 the tone becomes calm once again as Paul urges individuals and exhorts the community to remain in the peace of God. In 4:10–20 Paul thanks the Philippians for the financial help they have given him.

The letter raises problems regarding its integrity. There are two concrete difficulties: First and foremost, the break between 3:1a, which seems to be the beginning of a conclusion of the letter, and 3:2, which picks up the discourse again in an entirely different spirit. Beginning with 4:2 (or 4:4), the tone becomes friendly once again. Many exegetes therefore see in 3:2–4:1 (or 4:3) a later letter elicited by the arrival of Judaizing missionaries in Philippi. The question remains an open one, because tensions within the community also appear in the rest of the letter (1:15; 2:21), but it must be admitted that 3:2 poses a real problem. Second, the thanks for the gift brought by Epaphroditus (4:10–20) seems long delayed, inasmuch as Epaphroditus has been ill for a long time while with Paul, and during this time there has been an exchange of news with Philippi (2:25–30). It has therefore been suggested that 4:10–20 is a thank-you note sent before the main letter. The latter would therefore consist of 1:1–3:1; and 4:2(or 4)–9, 21–23.

The question of the date and place of composition of Philippians depends on the identification of the imprisonment in which Paul is awaiting trial (1:7, 13, 17). We are told at the end of Acts about his imprisonment in Rome. But 2:24–26 supposes frequent contact between Paul and the Philippians, and this does not fit in with the great distance between Rome and Philippi. Similarly, Paul’s plan of going immediately to Philippi if he is freed does not harmonize with his plan to go from Rome to Spain as expressed in the letter to the Romans. Because of the distance from Philippi, even Caesarea, where Paul was detained for two years according to Acts 24–26, presents difficulties as the place of composition. For this reason exegetes today prefer Ephesus. We have no direct testimony to an imprisonment of Paul there, but he does allude to the great dangers he experiences there (1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8–9). Philippians would therefore belong to the same period as 1 and 2 Corinthians.

f. Letter to Philemon

The letter is addressed not only to Philemon but to the entire church that gathers in his house, with particular mention of Apphia and Archippus. The domestic church or house church was the rule at that time. In the introduction Paul describes himself not as an apostle but as a prisoner (1; see 9, 10, 13, 22–23), so the letter can be taken as composed in Ephesus, at the same period as Philippians. Since Colossians places Onesimus and Archippus in Colossae, it is possible that Philemon likewise lived there.

The occasion of this short letter was a particular incident. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, had run away and taken refuge with Paul while the latter was in prison. Onesimus has been “useful” to Paul, a play on the meaning of the man’s name in Greek, but Paul does not want to detain him. Paul sends him back to Philemon, with the request that the latter treat the slave as a brother, and with the pledge that he, Paul, will make up for possible damages (19). At the same time, Paul reminds Philemon that he owes a debt to Paul. Behind these words and the petition that Philemon would do him a favor (20), there can be glimpsed an unobtrusive request by the apostle that Onesimus be put at his disposal (see 13–14).

Paul does not appeal to Philemon’s generosity in urging forgiveness of the slave; Paul does not want the commandment of love to be practiced in a way that would create personal obligations and a need of gratitude. He does not ask for Onesimus’ freedom, in keeping with his position in 1 Cor 7:20–24: those who are called while slaves are not to seek their freedom, because the time is short until Christ’s return. The change of social relationships did not, in Paul’s view, influence the coming of the reign of God.

g. Letter to the Romans

Alone among the letters of Paul, Romans is addressed to a church he did not found. We do not know that church’s origins. In Corinth Paul had met Priscilla and Aquila, a couple whom he mentions several times (1 Cor 1:14ff.; 16:19; Rom 16:3–5), who had come there from Rome because of an edict of emperor Claudius (probably in 49 or 41) expelling the Jews. This edict is also mentioned by historian Suetonius, who says the reason for it was that the Jews “were ceaselessly agitating at the instigation of Chrestos” (*Claud.* 25). It is likely that Suetonius, or his source, misunderstood an item of information about conflicts caused within the Jewish community by missionaries preaching Christ. Around the mid-forties, then, there was a Christian community in Rome, the nucleus of which consisted of Jews. On the other hand, when Paul devotes a great deal of attention to the value of the law and the destiny of Israel (Rom 9–11), he is addressing Christians who had come from paganism (1:5–6, 13; 11:13; 15:15–16). There must therefore have been a mixed community of Christians, made up of converts from both Judaism and paganism, but generally tied to the theological tradition, ethics, and modes of expression of Diaspora Judaism. This, at any rate, is the picture that emerges forty years later from the letter of Clement to the Corinthians.

Romans was probably written during Paul’s stay of about three months in Corinth (Acts 20:2–3) before leaving for Jerusalem with the collection. Despite all the struggles he has weathered, Paul knows that he is not necessarily well liked by the churches of the East, nor is he sure that the collection he is bringing will be well received in Jerusalem (15:30). He has decided to move his field of activity to the west; in 15:14–33 he makes known his plans, which also explain the writing of Romans. Having proclaimed the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyria, he believes that he has finished his work in the east and is now proposing to go to Spain. For this he needs a base, which can only be Rome. He has therefore decided to violate the principle he has always followed of not going to churches founded by others.

Paul is looking, then, to set up a base in Rome, but he knows that the Roman church, the origin of which, as we saw a moment ago, was closely tied to Judaism, could well have received its information about him from his adversaries. Several times he takes an explicit stand in this letter against the erroneous conclusions that could be, and doubtless were, drawn from his teaching (3:8, 31; 6:1, 15). With the central core of his preaching, namely, justification through faith, as his starting point, Paul seeks to give the Christians of Rome an “authentic” explanation that will unmask the slanders against him and arouse sympathy for him. In particular, he must take a position on the value of the law in relations between God and human beings (chs. 1–8) and on the overall meaning of Israel’s religious experience, especially in view of the fact that the Jews are rejecting the very gospel of Christ that should represent the culmination of the history of their relationship with God and give it its full meaning (chs. 9–11). For once, Paul gives in letter form an organized exposition of the essentials of his thought as this has taken shape in the final phase of his activity. This does not mean, however, that the letter to the Romans is less “realistic” and therefore closer to the genre of treatises in letter form. On the contrary, its systematic character is explained precisely by the concrete circumstances in which it was written.

Let us review the content of the letter. After the preamble, which is expanded by a traditional formula of faith (1:1–6), Paul’s introduction (1:7–17) states his intention of coming to Rome and introduces his subject: the revelation of God’s righteousness in the gospel, through faith and for faith.

Chapters 1:18–3:20 develop the theme negatively: human beings are able to know God from God’s works and are therefore without excuse for having alienated themselves from God. For this reason God has abandoned them to immorality. They are sinners and do not escape God’s judgment, which falls on Jew and Greek alike, because the words of the law are written in the hearts of all. Circumcision is of no use to Jews if they do not observe the law, which does not bestow any superiority on Jews. The law serves to make sin known, has a negative role, and cannot make anyone just.

Chapter 3:21–31 shows the way of rescue provided by the initiative of God, who has made God’s righteousness known in Jesus and has, without human merit, made all sinners just through expiation in the blood of Jesus. Paul insists that he is not stripping the law of its value, which for him is to make sin known. In fact, it is in the light of this manifestation and therefore of the consciousness of being subject to the judgment of God that one appreciates the righteousness of God and the importance of faith.

Justification by faith does not suddenly annul a covenant based on observance of the law. In ch. 4 Paul devotes himself to showing that in the Scriptures justification by faith preceded the law, as is clear from the story of Abraham, who was justified by faith (Gen 15:6). God’s promise to him and his posterity applies therefore to all who appeal to the faith of Abraham.

Having been justified by faith, we are at peace with God; our trials indeed continue, but we boast of them because they beget hope, which does not deceive (5:1–12). The second half of ch. 5 goes further into the relations between sin, death, the law, and grace, using the antithesis between Adam, through whose disobedience all have become sinners, and Christ, through whose obedience all have been made just (5:12–21).

In ch. 6 Paul rejects a possible malicious interpretation of his thought: we must not conclude that we should remain in sin so that grace may abound. Christian baptism is

a sharing in the death of Christ, in which he removed himself from the control of death; but while Christ is already risen, the believer's sharing in his resurrection has not yet come to pass. This "eschatological reservation" is important for avoiding interpretations of Paul's gospel like the one he fought in Corinth, according to which the resurrection of believers has already taken place.

Chapter 7 argues that this sacramental death is also decisive for the relationship of believers to the law. Just as death breaks the matrimonial bond and allows the surviving spouse to marry again, so the believer's death with Christ frees him from subjection to the law and allows him to belong to Christ. On the other hand, Paul insists, the law simply makes sin known: human beings may delight in the law but they are enslaved to the law of sin, which inevitably drives them to evil. In ch. 8 deliverance comes from the Spirit of God, who gives life in Christ.

Chapters 9–11 contain a meditation on the destiny of Israel: If Israel does not accept Christ, does this mean the word of God has failed of its purpose? No, because Israel is made up not of the fleshly descendants of Abraham but of the children of the promise and therefore of all who share the faith of Abraham. According to Gen 21:12, Abraham's posterity comes through Isaac, the son of the promise. Moreover, God has shown his mercy by justifying the pagans, who were not seeking justice, in order to show the error of the Jews, who wanted to achieve righteousness through works. Behind all this, in Paul's view, there is a "mystery" of divine mercy: the hardening of some in Israel has allowed the pagans access to salvation. When all the pagans have entered in, Israel too will be saved.

Chapter 12 begins the hortatory section: Christians are exhorted to offer themselves as living sacrifices. Chapter 13 contains the important exhortation to submit to the authorities whom God has appointed to ensure respect for what is good and to punish evildoers. Paul here conforms to the ethics of his time.

In 14:1–15:13 Paul takes up the question of the "weak," who observe dietary prescriptions and distinguish between days. The reference seems to be to a form of asceticism, but we cannot judge the extent to which this was a real problem in the Roman community. The principle to be followed is the necessity of not scandalizing the brethren.

In 15:14–33, as was said earlier, Paul explains his plans for evangelizing the west. Before carrying them out, however, he must first go to Jerusalem with the collection from Macedonia and Achaia. We know that during this journey Paul was arrested (Acts 21) and would arrive in Rome only as a prisoner (Acts 28).

Chapter 16 contains a commendation of deaconess Phoebe, quite extensive personal greetings, and a final doxology, or glorification of God (16:25–27). Problems of the letter's integrity arise here. On the one hand, this doxology is found at various points of the letter in the manuscripts and ancient versions: in some, after 16:23 (16:24 is an interpolation); in others between 14:33 and 15:1; in still others twice, after 14:23 and 16:23; between 15:33 and 16:1 in Ψ^{46} , the oldest manuscript of Paul (ca. 200). In old Latin manuscripts, i.e., of the Latin versions of the Bible preceding Jerome's, the doxology comes after 14:23, and chs. 15–16 are lacking. Marcion (ca. 140) likewise lacks the final two chapters. A unique but comparable situation is to be seen in manuscripts which have the doxology after 14:23, because it is meaningful at this point only if, when placed there, it was at the end of the text. On the other hand, some non-Pauline elements suggest that the doxology is not from Paul, but is a later

addition. In any case, the version of Romans that ends with ch. 14 is surely secondary, since 15 continues the argument of 14 and therefore belongs to the letter.

Can the same be said of ch. 16? Here a further problem of integrity emerges from internal criticism. It is surprising that Paul should greet so many people in a community with which he is not familiar. Furthermore, many of the individuals mentioned would be far more at home elsewhere than in Rome. We may accept that Priscilla and Aquila (16:3–5) returned to Rome after the death of Claudius, although 2 Tim 4:19 has them still in Ephesus, but we would have to suppose a move to Rome by Epaenetus, the first convert in Asia (16:5), and by many others who had worked with Paul (16:8–9). In addition, the attack in 16:17–20 on those who cause divisions and have departed from the teaching they have received does not seem attuned to the tone of the rest of the letter. On the other hand, ch. 16 is surely Pauline. It has therefore been suggested that Romans originally ended with 15:33 and that ch. 16 represents either the conclusion of another letter that was added when the letter was published, or an appendix added by Paul himself in a copy of Romans that was sent to Ephesus.

Manuscript \mathfrak{P}^{46} would seem to support this last hypothesis; it has ch. 16 but also has the doxology at the end of 15, thus presupposing a text of Romans that ended with ch. 15. But this solution is likewise not without its problem: Rom 16 has all the characteristics of the endings of Paul's letters and to that extent it is a valid continuation of ch. 15. Furthermore, precisely because Paul was not known personally in Rome, it was in his interest to display friendly relations with many individuals in that community who could recommend him; it is a fact that in no other letter are personal greetings so extensive. Nevertheless, it requires some effort to imagine all the Christians greeted having moved to Rome. This problem remains unsolved.

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Texts

The critical edition to be used for all the New Testament writings is *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (ed. B. and K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). It is cited as Nestle-Aland²⁷.

Commentaries and Studies

The literature is endless. The major commentary series (HNT, KEK, HTKNT, EKKNT, ÖTK, CSANT, CNT, etc.) contain excellent commentaries on the various letters, as well as huge bibliographies.

Almost all the monographs listed earlier (bibliography, sec. 2) contain expositions of Paul's writings and thought.

I mention here only one commentary in Italian that is useful for a first approach:

G. Barbaglio and R. Fabris, *Le lettere di Paolo* (3 vols.; Rome: Borla, 1980).

ANRW II 25.4 (1987) is entirely devoted to the Pauline corpus (problems and state of research).

B. Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998).

4. Pseudepigraphical Letters

Scholars today like to speak of a Pauline school that would have arisen during the apostle's lifetime out of his relations with his fellow workers. In the communities that Paul founded and that were the recipients of his letters, and in others that came to know these communities through exchange of the letters, reflection on his message continued and was adapted to new situations and cultural stimuli of various kinds. In the philosophical schools thinkers used to develop the thought of the founder, and it was customary to circulate new works under that founder's name, inasmuch as these were regarded as faithfully continuing and applying his thought. Hans Conzelmann has suggested seeing Ephesus as an important center of Pauline tradition, this being continued by a school in the full sense of the word, one modeled on those in which the sapiential traditions of Judaism were developed. It is undoubtedly to circles that wanted to remain faithful to Paul's message while rethinking it in light of new needs, that we owe a pseudo-Pauline epistolary, much of which entered the canon. Consensus on the pseudepigraphical nature of the letters now to be discussed varies: the authenticity of some of them is still defended, but in practice no serious study of Paul's personal thought would regard itself as authorized to draw on them.

a. Second Letter to the Thessalonians

This was the first to be doubted in the modern era (1801) and remains the one most debated. Let us look first at its content; as in 1 Thessalonians the main subject is instruction about the final days.

Paul takes a position (2:1–12) against those who, on the basis of a letter falsely attributed to him, claim that the Day of the Lord is imminent. Not so, for the signs preceding that Day are not yet visible. From a motif extensively developed in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition the author draws the idea of an expected apostasy, that is, a general state of corruption; this will be climaxed by the manifestation of the “man of lawlessness,” who will set himself up in the temple and proclaim himself God. This personage, who will become the antichrist of Christian tradition, is one of the forms taken by the eschatological enemy of God, who has already been actualized numerous times in the Jewish tradition through identification with individuals responsible for terrible actions against the religion of Israel, especially the desecration of the temple—such men as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Pompey, and Caligula. According to 2 Thessalonians this adversary, a vague figure of the future, does not yet show himself because of “that which” (2:6; “him who,” in 2:7) “is holding him back.” The addressees of the letter, unlike readers today, had evidently received an instruction on the subject.

Chapter 2:13–17 is a new thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians and includes an exhortation to hold to the traditions taught by Paul; 3:6 repeats the exhortation to take as a norm the tradition (this time in the singular) received from Paul.

Chapter 3:1–15 is a warning to members of the community who are living disorderly lives and refusing to work, evidently being convinced of the imminent coming of Christ. Chapter 3:16–17 contains the greeting; verse 17 emphasizes the autograph signature, meant to guarantee the authenticity of all of Paul's letters.

As in 1 Thessalonians, the senders of the letters are Paul, Silas (Silvanus), and Timothy. Since Silas disappeared from Paul's circle during the (first) stay in Corinth, 2 Thessalonians would have to be dated before that event and therefore very close in time to 1 Thessalonians. This fact already raises a difficulty: Paul would have sent to the one community, within a short time, two letters with contrary purposes, since in 1 Thess 4:13–5:11 he emphasizes the imminence and suddenness of the Parousia, while in 2 Thessalonians the idea that the Parousia is imminent is called illogical, and the emphasis is on the lack of the warning signs. Moreover, in 2 Thessalonians, section 2:1–12 on the warning signs has no parallel in 1 Thessalonians, although the remainder of the letter shows numerous contacts with the first letter, and the structure is on the whole analogous.

If we add the emphasis on “command” (*parangellō*) (3:4, 6, 10, 12; elsewhere only three times in Paul), on the need to cling to the Pauline “tradition” (2:15; 3:6), and on Paul as a “model” for Christians who work (3:9; Paul's motivation here is quite different from 1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 9:15, 18; 2 Cor 12:14!), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author had used the model provided by Paul's eschatological instruction in 1 Thessalonians in order to persuade the churches linked to the apostle's authority to accept a version of Pauline thought that was adapted to the times. In fact, the allusion in 2:15 to a previous letter of Paul to which they must remain faithful is an allusion to 1 Thessalonians, as can be seen from 2:1, which alludes to 1 Thess 4:17. But 2:1 and 2:15 frame a new instruction on the signs of the Parousia!

The setting, then, is one of conflict over the Pauline heritage. Even those whom the author opposes appeal to the authority of the apostle (and have perhaps already written a forged letter of their own: 2:2) and regard themselves as faithful to it precisely by maintaining the expectation of an imminent Parousia. The author of 2 Thessalonians sees the Parousia as delayed, and consequently an orderly community meant to last must be organized. He is worried about the consequences, in the form of social disorder, that the attitude of those individuals might cause. He claims for his position the authority of Paul and presents his own viewpoint as continuous with the tradition passed on by the apostle.

The author and addressees were living, then, in the area covered by the Pauline mission, but the address to the Thessalonians may be a literary fiction resulting from the adoption of 1 Thessalonians as a framework. The period of the composition is likewise uncertain: the mention of Paul's autographed greetings, which are meant to guarantee the authenticity of the letter (3:17), seems to suppose that the originals of Paul's letters no longer existed (they would allow verification of the claim) and suggests the 80s as the time of composition.

b. Letter to the Colossians

Colossae in Phrygia, in the valley of the Lycus, was close to Laodicea and Hierapolis, which in Paul's time had surpassed it in importance. The Christian communities of these three cities had not been founded by Paul (Col 2:1; 4:13) but by his fellow workers, probably by Epaphras (1:7).

Chapter 1 continues the introduction (9–20): Paul prays for the Colossians and exhorts them to thank God, whose intervention is described in language proper to a confession of faith (1:13–14). This leads in turn into a hymn to Christ (1:15–20),

which is generally taken to be a citation, with changes, of a preexisting hymn on the role of Christ in creation and redemption. In the original hymn, the body must have been the universe; in Colossians it becomes the church. The Colossians are now reconciled with God thanks to the body of the Son, but they must continue steadfast in the faith and not let themselves be drawn away from the gospel of which Paul is the suffering minister (1:24–2:5).

In 2:6–15 the Colossians are exhorted to continue their journey in Christ without letting themselves be ensnared by philosophy. The meaning of baptism is recalled: believers have died with Christ and have been raised with him. As for the heavenly powers, they have been dragged along in the triumphal procession of the cross. Chapter 2:16–23 is an attack on adversaries who seek to deceive the Colossians. Much of what is said about them consists of commonplaces: they require dietary observances (2:16a) and in particular abstention from certain foods, an ascetic way of life (2:21), and the observance of special days (2:16b). Verse 2:18 alludes to veneration of the heavenly powers and to visions, which were probably received on the occasion of initiations (*embateuō*). The adversaries probably thought of the world as subject to angelic powers or “basic principles of this world,” and of asceticism as needed in order to evade their power. Against them the author argues that Christ is the mediator of creation, even the creation of the powers (1:16), and that by his cross he has reduced their power to nothing (2:10, 15). Through baptism believers have died and risen with Christ and have therefore been removed from the control that the powers exercise through their commands (2:20–21).

Chapters 3 and 4 contain the parenesis. The author exhorts his readers to Christian freedom and fidelity to Christ, while they keep their gaze fixed on heaven (3:1–14). He also gives a catalogue of vices to be avoided and virtues to be “put on” (3:12, 14). Next comes a “domestic code” (3:18–4:1), that is, instructions for the various groups in the community (see Eph 5:22–6:9; 1 Pet 2:18–3:7). Then follow exhortations to prayer and the proper attitude to non-Christians (4:2–6). Chapter 4:7–18 contains personal communications. Many of the names mentioned here are also in Philemon: Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Luke, and Demas.

In this letter Pauline Christology and soteriology take a new direction that was certainly called for by the syncretism of the writer’s adversaries, according to whom the cosmic forces retain power over believers. The latter must rescue themselves by an asceticism that leads them to the acquisition of “wisdom” (2:8, 23). Countering this view, the letter emphasizes the cosmic primacy of Christ, mediator of the same creation to which the powers belong, and destroyer of their power through his cross. Thus the Pauline theme of the church (the local community) as body of Christ, of which the head is a member like the others (1 Cor 12:12–27; Rom 12:4–5), is repeated here, but the church is now the universal church, and Christ is its head. He becomes, as it were, the space within which believers are protected, and the vertical dimension (Christ the head in heaven) is emphasized by comparison with the horizontal (relations among Christians) which is dominant in Paul. Thus the reason for hope is sought not in the future but “in heaven” (1:5). Especially important is the modification of the understanding of baptism. The author derives his inspiration from Rom 6:1–11, but whereas in Romans believers have been buried with Christ and will rise (future) with him (6:4–5, 8), according to Colossians they are already risen (2:12–13; 3:1). It is, in addition, this resurrection already accomplished that grounds ethics, allowing believers to “set your hearts on things above” (3:1).

In such a setting, Paul the apostle has a central function, that of making it possible, through suffering and imprisonment, to bring about the mystery of God, that is, Christ, among the pagans (1:23–2:3).

The shift in theological perspective and the emphasis on Paul as exclusive mediator of salvation, along with a style different from that of the authentic letters, lead us to deny Paul the authorship of Colossians (the apostle's situation as a prisoner—4:3, 10, 18—is part of the image of the apostle that the letter is meant to convey). But the themes developed are directly connected with those central to Paul. The author of Colossians is still very close to Paul and was perhaps his immediate disciple. He has chosen as a setting for Colossians the same one that is presupposed in Philemon. The influence of Romans is also considerable. But it is impossible to specify the real place of origin of the letter.

c. Letter to the Ephesians

There is reason to ask to whom this letter was originally addressed. Paul stayed in Ephesus for a long time, and yet Eph 1:5; 3:2 give the impression that he is not known personally to the addressees. Moreover, in the *adscriptio* (1:1) the words “in Ephesus” are missing in the earliest manuscripts. Around 140 Marcion regarded the work as a letter to Laodicea. It has been suggested that Ephesians was a circular letter sent to several communities, with the name of each inscribed on a separate copy, but we know of no comparable procedures in antiquity.

According to 3:1; 4:1, Paul is in prison. There are two introductions, 1:3–14 and 1:15–23. The first is a hymn to God who has chosen believers before the foundation of the world, that they might become his adoptive children in Christ. The second is a prayer that the Ephesians may realize the hope that has been opened to them by the call they have received, and the power that has been exerted for them in Christ. As a matter of fact (2:1–10) believers were formerly subject to the ruler of the powers in the air and were objects of wrath, but God has made them live with Christ through grace and by faith. In 2:11–22, Christ has torn down the barrier that used to separate the two peoples, Jews and pagans. He has made them one and given them free access to God. In 3:1–13, the apostle has received through revelation a knowledge of the mystery that was hidden from eternity and through which the pagans are admitted to the same inheritance as the Jews.

Chapters 4–6 contain the parenthesis. Verses 4:1–16 are an exhortation to unity amid the diversity of gifts received, for the sake of building up the body of Christ. Verses 4:17–5:50 exhort the addressees to leave behind the old self and put on the new, which is created in the likeness of God. There follows a “domestic code” (5:21–6:9), comparable to that in Col 3:18–4:1. Exhortations to put on the armor of God for the struggle against the forces of evil (6:10–20) are followed by final greetings (6:21–24).

The extensive contacts between Ephesians and Colossians give rise to a literary problem. Use of the same material does not explain the identical words in the opening (Eph 1:1/Col 1:1) and in the final greetings (Eph 6:21–22/Col 4:7–8). We might think that Paul was writing the two letters at the same time. In some cases, however, the same terminology expresses different ideas. Thus in Colossians 2:10, 19 the body of which Christ is the head is the universe; Ephesians 4:16 uses almost the same words to speak of the body, which is the community. An author would hardly give different

meaning to the same words and phrases in two letters close in time. It is therefore likely that Colossians was written earlier, and was later used by the author of Ephesians. This simple hypothesis takes into account the shift from a letter concerned with the concrete problems of a community, as in Colossians, to one such as Ephesians, which does not seem linked to specific circumstances. In this case, and independently of the authenticity of Colossians, Ephesians cannot be regarded as Pauline.

It is precisely when Ephesians uses expressions typical of Paul, such as grace and faith (Eph 2:1–10), that we become aware that the theme of justification has disappeared and has been replaced by salvation and the forgiveness of sins (1:7), an expression unknown to Paul. Ephesians emphasizes salvation already accomplished (6:2). This salvation is made visible in the church, which coincides in its extension with the body of Christ that embraces the universe (1:22–23). In ecclesiology, the hierarchy becomes important: the church is founded not on Christ, as in 1 Cor 13:11, but on the apostles and prophets (2:20). According to 3:5, the latter are the recipients of the revealed mystery, rather than all believers through the mediation of Paul, as in Col 1:25–26. This last thought does appear in Ephesians 3:3–5 but it is restricted precisely by the emphasis put on the apostles and prophets. On the other hand, Ephesians, unlike Colossians, restores the motif of mutual service among believers, the members of Christ's body (4:25; 5:30).

The theology of Ephesians, like that of Colossians, is an extension of Paulinism to problems raised by a view of salvation that was widespread in the Hellenistic world. In this view, the lower realm of the cosmos, where human beings dwell, is controlled by wicked powers of the firmament and the air (2:2; 4:9–10), and salvation consists in escaping this control. The membership of believers in the church incorporates them into a body whose head, Christ, is in heaven; he provides the "armor" that gives protection against the powers (6:10–17). Paul had seen Christ, Adam's opposite, as the second, spiritual man who comes from heaven and is the author of life (1 Cor 15:45–49). In Ephesians this conception is connected with that of the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–27) in order to develop the image of the universal church as the body of Christ that unites earth with heaven. An analogous image may be seen in gnostic speculations of the second century, in which the saved belong to a divine figure, the Heavenly Man. This image, however, implies an element essential to gnosticism but lacking in Ephesians: this church/body of the Heavenly Man was originally a part of God that fell into this lower world. The Savior came seeking it out in order to reincorporate it into the divine plenitude, the Pleroma. The word "pleroma" is already a distinguishing mark of Ephesians, where it signifies the divine fullness resident in the church (1:23; 3:9; 4:13). In Col 1:19; 2:9 this fullness resides in Christ, not in the church.

The author suggests a situation in Paul's life that is close to that of the Colossians, but the real historical setting of Ephesians is difficult to identify. We are probably dealing here with the development of the Pauline tradition in western Asia Minor perhaps (Ephesus?). The date may be the end of the first century.

d. Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

These three letters, which are fairly similar, are the only ones in the Pauline corpus that are addressed to individuals (on Phlm see above, sec. 3f), but Timothy and Titus represent model heads of churches. In writing to them, "Paul" gives instructions for pastors; hence the name "pastoral" usually given to the letters.

On 1 Timothy: Paul has instructed Timothy to remain in Ephesus to carry on the fight against people who teach “alien doctrines” (1:3–20). Paul, foremost of the sinners saved by Christ, is proposed as a model for those who obtain divine mercy. Chapters 2 and 3 contain community regulations on prayer for all human beings and especially those in authority, on modesty in female dress, and on the behavior of bishop and deacons. This section ends with a christological hymn (v. 16). Chapter 4 again takes up the attack on adversaries and exhorts Timothy to be a model for believers, despite his youth. Chapters 5:1–6:2 contain standards of behavior for widows who are in the care of the community, and rules for presbyters and slaves. Verses 6:3–10 attack false teachers and those whom love of money has estranged from the faith. As for Timothy himself, he must “fight the good fight of the faith” (6:11–16). At the end the rich are urged to do good (6:17–19). The final, very short greeting is preceded by an urgent appeal to guard the treasure entrusted to him and avoid contrary ideas of “what is falsely called knowledge.”

In the opening of 2 Timothy Paul exhorts Timothy to bear witness to the faith for which Paul is now a prisoner, and to “guard the good deposit” entrusted to him. Timothy is to pass on Paul’s teaching, accept suffering after the apostle’s example, and not deny Christ (2:1–13). The central part of the letter (2:14–3:13) is taken up with an attack on the authors of empty and wicked discourses. Among the anticipated evils of the last times are enemies who make their way into homes and bewitch silly women. Timothy must instead hold fast to the Scriptures, which are inspired by God and useful for teaching and correcting. He must also proclaim the word in order to offset the tendency of human beings to turn to myths (3:14–4:5). Paul, for his part, is now at the end of his life and drawing near to his reward (4:6–9). Timothy is to come to him as soon as possible, since everyone but Luke has deserted him. But the Lord is at his side (4:9–18).

In Titus, Paul describes himself as an apostle “for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness” (1:1–4). He reminds Titus that he left him in Crete in order to complete the organization of the church there. He then sketches a picture of a good presbyter and a good bishop, emphasizing attachment to “the trustworthy message as it has been taught” (1:5–10). At this point an attack is made on adversaries (1:10–16), followed by instructions of the “domestic code” type (2:1–10) to older persons, the young, and slaves. Proper behavior has its basis in the manifestation of God’s grace in Christ (2:11–15). Generally speaking, the faithful should be subject to authority, and their relations with one another should be marked by consideration. After all, in the past they had been rebellious and gone astray, but God saved them in his mercy (3:1–8). They must avoid “foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law,” and have nothing to do with any “divisive person” (*hairetikos*; 3:9–11).

Timothy was a faithful fellow worker of Paul, at least beginning with the “second missionary journey.” In Acts 16:1, Timothy is described as a native of Lystra in Galatia, son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother who had converted to Christianity. He was dear to the apostle who had converted him (1 Cor 4:17) and entrusted him with sensitive missions in Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:2–3), Corinth (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10–11), and Philippi (Phil 2:19, 23). He appears as a joint sender of letters in 1 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Philemon (see Rom 16:21). First Timothy claims to belong to one phase of this collaboration, when Paul went from Ephesus to Macedonia and

left Timothy behind (1:3). But this does not agree with Acts 19:22, according to which Paul sent Timothy on ahead to Macedonia with the intention of rejoining him later from Ephesus. The circumstances of 1 Timothy do not correspond to what we know of Paul's biography, nor is it clear why Paul needed to give elementary instructions to so seasoned a collaborator as Timothy, especially since he intends to return quickly to Ephesus (3:14).

The situation in 2 Timothy likewise raises questions: Paul is in prison in Rome (1:17) and has left Trophimus in Miletus, but according to Acts 21:19 the latter accompanied Paul as far as Jerusalem. The situation in Titus is no less problematic. Titus, a Christian of pagan origin (Gal 2:3; Acts says nothing of Titus), was one of Paul's most trusted collaborators. He had accompanied Paul to the "apostolic council" (Gal 2:1) and played a decisive part in resolving the crisis mentioned in 2 Corinthians (see above, sec. 3c). According to Titus, Paul left Titus in Crete, but no New Testament source mentions any missionary activity of Paul in Crete or a winter spent in Nicopolis (3:12). It has been suggested that the Pastoral Epistles refer to Paul's activity after being released from the Roman imprisonment at the end of Acts; but in that case he would have returned to the east, contrary to the intentions expressed in Romans and to Acts (20:25; 21:10), according to which Paul would not work in that area again.

To these difficulties is added a vocabulary close to that of Hellenistic theology but pretty much foreign to the authentic letters of Paul: God as *sōtēr* (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; never in Paul); Christ as *sōtēr* (2 Tim 1:10; Tit 1:4; 2:13; 3:6; in Paul only in Phil 3:20, which may be pre-Pauline); God as *despotēs* (2 Tim 2:21; Tit 2:9; never in Paul); God as *dynastēs* (1 Tim 6:15; never in Paul). The Pastoral Epistles set great importance on sound teaching (*hē hygiainousē didaskalia*: 1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1), sound words (1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13), sound discourse (Tit 2:8), and being sound in the faith (Tit 1:13; 2:2)—all of this being terminology unknown to Paul. They urge a teaching, *didaskalia*, understood as a body of thought received through Paul (in addition to the four passages cited, see 1 Tim 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim 3:10, 16; Tit 2:7, 10), while Paul uses the word only in Romans (12:7; 15:4), and in a different sense. The attachment to doctrine finds a practical embodiment in "godliness," *eusebeia* (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3 *hē kat'eusebeian didaskalia*; 6:5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Tit 1:1), which is absent in Paul (see 1 Tim 5:4; 2 Tim 3:12; Tit 2:12).

In the letters to Timothy and Titus the law is good, as in Rom 7:12, 16, but in Romans the power of sin prevents the observance of the law. Quite differently in 1 Tim 1:8–11, the law serves precisely to avoid evil and urge to the good, so that it is of no use to those already just. Given this approach, political loyalty is understandable (2 Tim 2:1–8). It comes from the ethics of Hellenistic Judaism and is already found in Rom 13:1–7, but in 1 Timothy the emphasis is on the idea that peace promotes *eusebeia* and the Christian mission. The Pastoral Epistles show a church conscious of its visibility and anxious to gain credibility by reassuring those who think Christians are subversive or immoral (see 1 Tim 3:7). The return of Christ is not on the horizon, and the Christian community is settling down in the world for an indefinite duration.

This outlook also implies a dissociation from Christian tendencies that are potentially contrary to good order within the community and outside it. In the three letters, the attack on false teachers occupies a key place: in the beginning, middle, and end of 1 Timothy; in the middle of 2 Timothy; in the middle and end of Titus. The

identification of these adversaries has given rise to endless debates. Some names of individuals appear, but they are unknown to us. They seem to claim a special knowledge of God (1 Tim 6:20; Tit 1:15). They claim to be teachers of the law (1 Tim 1:7), and they defend Jewish myths (Tit 1:14; 1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4), legends, and endless genealogies (1 Tim 1:4). These adversaries probably based their teaching on an exegesis of Scripture. First Timothy points to their ascetic outlook, with its rejection of marriage and certain foods (4:3); these tendencies are attacked (1 Tim 2:15; 5:14, 23; Titus 1:15; 2:4). The rejection of marriage may have been connected with an emancipation of women since the teachers were successful among women (2 Tim 3:6).

This doubtless accounts for the massive effort of the Pastoral Epistles to keep women in a condition of subjection. One passage, 1 Tim 2:11–14, orders women to be silent during instruction, in open contradiction to 1 Cor 11:5, which expects women to prophesy during the liturgy. Romans 16 and other passages of Paul show women holding positions of importance in the community; the Pastoral Epistles urge them to return to the silence and submissiveness of family life. This is justified from the Old Testament (1 Tim 2:13–15), probably in order to silence the arguments of the adversaries. Widows, that is, women not subject to the oversight of a father or a husband, seem especially to worry the author (5:3–16). The effort to bring about and show forth an “orderly” Christian community has led to the imposition of a model of family organization that was thought to function properly when hierarchies were respected; 1 Tim 3:5 and 15 make this assimilation perfectly clear. The same line is followed in regulations not only for women but for the elderly and the young (Tit 2:2–8) and for slaves who ought to render their masters even better service if they are Christians (1 Tim 6:1–2; Tit 2:9–10)!

Paul is the model of one who sinned through ignorance but was touched by divine mercy and is held up as an example for the adversaries if they will only repent (1 Tim 1:12–16). This picture of the pre-Christian Paul as a blasphemer and sinner is quite different from the picture the apostle gives of himself in Gal 1:14 and especially in Phil 3:6, where he says that he was faultless in his observance of the law. But Paul serves at the same time as a model of struggle and suffering for the ecclesiastical authorities, represented by Timothy and Titus, who struggle against adversaries. This is a central motif, especially in 2 Timothy, which shows the influence of the “farewell discourse” genre, that is, a testament, uttered as death is imminent, in which the life of the individual becomes a “mirror” for the listeners.

The Pastoral Epistles are located therefore in a line of Pauline tradition that is different from that of Ephesians and Colossians. They are much less concerned with theology and aim above all at managing the apostle’s legacy, controlling “destabilizing” tendencies by means of a consolidated ecclesiastical hierarchy based on the bishops (1 Tim 3:1–7; Tit 1:7–9), presbyters (1 Tim 5:17–19; Tit 1:5–6), and deacons (1 Tim 3:8–13) and by holding fast to socially approved hierarchical relationships. Instead of engaging in foolish controversies, the community should accept the tradition of the church, which the bishop is to communicate and safeguard. Hans von Campenhausen has shown how close the language and content of the Pastoral Epistles are to Polycarp of Smyrna; the two must be close to each other chronologically and geographically. The Pastorals can be located in Asia Minor (Ephesus?) in the first decades of the second century.

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e. Third Letter to the Corinthians

In several languages and in two versions, of which the longer is certainly secondary, there is a letter of the Corinthians to Paul, in which Stephen (see 1 Cor 6:15) and "the presbyters with him" ask Paul to censure the doctrine preached by two missionaries, Simon and Cleobius, who have come to Corinth. An answer from Paul condemns this preaching. This correspondence, with a short introduction and a narrative passage connecting the two letters, is found together with the *Acts of Paul* in the Coptic version (Heidelberg papyrus); it has also been handed down separately with the connecting passage in Armenian and Latin, as well as in the commentary of Ephraem the Syrian on the letters of Paul. Its presence in Ephraem fact proves that in the fourth century the correspondence was part of the Syrian New Testament canon. The two letters, without any narrative framework, are found in other Latin manuscripts and, more important, in the original language (Greek) and, in what is surely the oldest form, in a papyrus of the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana of Cologne (Geneva). The publication in 1959 of this manuscript, which attests to the circulation of the separate letters in the third century, has undermined the earlier accepted view that the correspondence was composed as an integral part of the *Acts of Paul* near the end of the second century and was only later separated from this document. It now seems rather that the correspondence was originally independent. Therefore, although the letters were never in the canon, they are to be placed among the pseudepigraphical letters of Paul.

According to the letter of the Corinthians, Simon and Cleobius preach that no use is to be made of the prophets, that God is not the Omnipotent One (*pantokratōr*: this probably means that the supreme God is not to be identified with the creator, YHWH Sabaoth, because *pantokratōr* translates Sabaoth in the Septuagint), that there is no resurrection of the flesh, that human beings were not formed by God, that the Lord did not come in the flesh nor was born of Mary, and that the world belongs not to God but to the angels. As W. Rordorf has shown, this doctrine shows close affinities with that of Saturninus (or Saturnilus), one of the first gnostics, who was active in Syria in the first decades of the second century, as described by Irenaeus of Lyons (*Haer.* 1.24.1–2).

The letter is rich, especially at the beginning and the end, in echoes of various Pauline letters, which the author was therefore familiar with. He explains the rule of faith, which he himself had received: Christ was born of Mary in the line of David, “a holy spirit having been sent into her from heaven by the Father” (5), in order to set all flesh free through his own flesh and to raise up the dead in their flesh. Human beings were formed by God. The God of the universe, the Almighty, who made heaven and earth, sent the prophets to the Jews after bestowing on them a share in the spirit of Christ, but the devil, who wanted to pass himself off as God, killed them. Then God “sent down a spirit in the form of fire on Mary in Galilee” (13), namely, Christ, who through his own body saved all flesh. The second part treats (24–32) the resurrection of the flesh, proving it by biblical examples; this development seems to come from the Jewish tradition.

The resurrection of the flesh (*sarx*) is indeed not found in Paul, but it is current in Christian texts beginning in the first decades of the second century. Echoes of Pauline theology appear in the letter. In particular, what is said of the sending of the Son (6) is inspired by Rom 8. But the Pauline elements have lost their unifying center, namely, the themes of justification through faith and of the law, and have been reorganized in the service of a polemic, alien to Paul, against the denial of Christ’s human reality and of the value of the material creation.

Many verses of this antidocetist polemic, along with the emphasis on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, headed by the bishop, opposing erroneous teaching, remind one of Ignatius of Antioch and seems to fit well into the same development of “orthodoxy” within which Ignatius retrieves Pauline motifs. As W. Rordorf says, this composition is to be dated to the first half of the second century and to be located in Asia Minor or, as seems preferable, in western Syria, the homeland of Saturninus and Ignatius.

It will be enough to mention here a letter to the Laodiceans, the idea for which came from the mention in Col 4:16 of a letter to the church of Laodicea. The work is a theologically unimportant cento of Pauline phrases. It is perhaps the same document referred to in the *Muratorian Canon*, which regards it as a Marcionite forgery. In that case, the date of the canon, presumably around 200, would be the *terminus ante quem*. The attempt of A. von Harnack and G. Quispel to prove its Marcionite character has not been accepted.

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