

PAUL AND HIS THEOLOGY

A Brief Sketch

SECOND EDITION

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Introduction

3 (I) **Aims, Limits, and Problems.** A sketch of Pauline theology must take into account the character of the Apostle's writings, which do not offer a systematic presentation of his thought. Most of what Paul wrote was composed *ad hoc*—to handle concrete problems by letters. In them he developed certain topics and exhorted his churches to the practice of a more intense Christian life. Almost every extant letter exemplifies this twofold purpose. This also explains how he could mingle elements of revelation, fragments of the primitive kerygma, teachings of Christ, interpretations of the OT, a personal understanding of the Christ-event, and even his own private opinions. Any attempt, therefore, to sketch Pauline "theology" must try to reckon with the varied nuances of the Apostle's thought and expression.

Moreover, a presentation of "Pauline" theology is an admission that Paul's view of the Christian experience is but one among several theologies in the NT. It is imperative to respect Paul's theology and not confuse it with John's, Luke's, or any other's. It must be studied in and for itself. This caution is not meant to imply that a NT theology is impossible or that contradictions are to be expected between Paul and other NT writers. The NT as a whole bears witness to a faith in one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph 4:5–6), and a theology explaining that one faith is not an impossibility. But such a presentation will be the richer if nuances of individual NT writers are respected.

4 A sketch of Pauline theology is a systematization of the Apostle's thought in a form in which he himself did not present it. If such a systematization forces his thought into categories foreign to it or attempts merely to line up "proofs" for a theological system born of another inspiration, it has little value. The effort to synthesize Paul's thought must respect his categories as far as possible, with due allowance for the unequal degree of his affirmations and the diversity of the formative contexts. The guiding principle of such a sketch, therefore, cannot be an extrinsic one, be it Aristotelian, Thomistic, Hegelian, or Heideggerian.

5 Though the primary aim is a descriptive presentation of Paul's view of Christian faith, this sketch also intends to be a normative theological presentation. It aims above all at determining what Paul meant when he wrote to the Christians whom he immediately addressed, but it also aims at ascertaining what his theology means for Christians of today. This sketch is not merely a study of Paul's thought as a historian of religion (agnostic or believer) might present it; it does not attempt merely to determine what Paul taught, what influenced him, or how his teachings fit into the general history of Hellenistic, Jewish, or Christian ideas. Paul's theology is an exposition of the inspired biblical heritage of early Christians, and the Word of God proposed in his exposé still has an existential meaning for the faith of people today. In this way, Paul's theology is a *part* of normative biblical theology, just as biblical theology itself is only a part of normative theology as such. There are two poles in biblical theology, one descriptive, the other normative.

6 The "meaning for the faith of people today" cannot be something completely other than the meaning intended by Paul for his contemporaries. Any attempt to understand him that fails to recognize a radical homogeneity between his meaning "now" and "then" fails to bring *his* inspired message to people today. A valid sketch of Pauline theology must, therefore, ascertain first of all what Paul meant, and in this sense it must be descriptive. The means to achieve this are not the logic or metaphysics of some philosophical system foreign to him, however legitimate or fruitful such a transposition might be for other purposes. The means are rather those of philological, historical, and literary criticism, joined to an empathy of Christian faith. In other words, the one who sketches Paul's theology in a descriptive presentation shares with Paul the same faith and seeks through it to determine his meaning for today. Although biblical theologians, in trying to discover what Paul meant, employ the same tools of interpretation used by historians of religion—or, for that matter, by interpreters of any ancient document—they also affirm that through Paul "the one Lord . . . the one God and Father of us all" is communicating an inspired message to them and the people of their time. The fundamental presupposition is the inspired character of the Pauline corpus, a matter of *faith*. Paul's exposé and understanding of Chris-

tian faith are sketched in a way that is meaningful and relevant for Christians of a later age.

7 This empathy of Christian faith is sometimes expressed in terms of the "analogy of faith," a phrase derived ultimately from Paul himself (Rom 12:6). It may not be used to insist that the totality of Christian faith has to be found in Paul or even that his thought *must* be interpreted according to the sense of later dogmatic progress, with its precisions and specific nuances. If a seminal notion formulated by Paul has in time undergone further dogmatic development because of a polemical situation or a conciliar decision in the church, then that seminal notion must be recognized as such. It may be that the seminal notion is expressed by Paul in a vague, "open" fashion; and thus formulated, it could conceivably (by philological criteria) have developed in one way or another. But the further dogmatic development may have removed that *openness* of formulation, so far as Christian tradition is concerned. Yet this does not mean that the historian of dogma or the dogmatic theologian can insist that this later development is the precise meaning of a text of Paul. Such scholars have no charism whereby they can read more in an "open" Pauline text than can the exegete or biblical theologian. To understand the "analogy of faith" in such a way as to read back into Paul a later meaning would be false to him and to the inspired autonomy of his conception and formulation. Rather, that analogy must be understood in terms of the total Pauline biblical faith. Obviously, the biblical theologian is not content merely with the interpretation of individual passages in their immediate context (that is, with exegesis). One seeks to express the total Pauline message, which transcends the contextual situation and embraces also the relational meaning of Pauline utterances.

Though normative biblical theology is only a part of the larger complex of Christian theology, it does enjoy its own autonomy of formulation and conception. While only inceptive, for it cannot be regarded as the full answer to theological problems of today, it is privileged: It attempts to formulate synthetically what the witnesses of the early Christian tradition were inspired to set down in their own way. It deals immediately and exclusively with a form of Christian tradition that alone enjoys the distinctive divine charism of inspiration. True, for a Christian the continued guidance of the Spirit has guarded the authentic dogmatic developments of later times from contradicting the seminal formulations and conceptions. But such protection does not mean that the full flower is already present in the seed. Hence the need to respect Pauline theology for what it is.

(Barr, J., "Biblical Theology," *IDBSup* 104–11. Käsemann, E., "The Problem of a New Testament Theology," *NTS* 19 [1972–73] 235–45. Merk, O., "Biblische Theologie: II. Neues Testament," *TRE* 6, 455–77. Richardson, A., "Historical Theology and Biblical Theology," *CJT* 1 [1955] 157–67. Stendahl, K., "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB* 1, 418–32. Strecker, G. [ed.], *Das Problem der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [WF 367; Darmstadt, 1975].)

8 This sketch of Pauline theology reckons with seven uncontested letters of the Pauline corpus: 1 Thess, Gal, Phil, 1 and 2 Cor, Rom, and Phlm. Today three letters of that corpus, 2 Thess, Col, and Eph, are disputed and often considered to be Deutero-Pauline (i.e., written by a disciple of Paul). The three "Pastoral Letters" (Titus, 1 and 2 Tim) create a still greater problem; their relation to the two foregoing groups of letters is at best pseudepigraphical. Following the lead of other modern Catholic interpreters, we shall omit the data from the Pastorals. References to the Deutero-Paulines, when called for, will be set in parentheses. The theology of Heb is a problem apart and is not treated as Pauline. Material in Acts related to Paul's teaching can at best be used for comparative purposes, for it really forms part of the Lucan portrait of Paul and is more properly part of Lucan theology.

9 Can one detect any development in Paul's teaching? This is a debated issue. Those who in the past admitted a development were often reckoning with a corpus of ten or more Pauline letters; and so, for instance, it was not difficult to detect a development in Paul's ecclesiological teaching, as one moved from the uncontested letters to Col and Eph, and then on to the Pastorals. But that alleged development is precisely part of the reason why one distinguishes the Pauline Letters as in § 8 above. The majority view today queries whether a development can be detected in the seven letters that constitute the uncontested group (see W. G. Kümmel, *NTS* 18 [1971–72] 457–58). Yet one can note at times differences in issues (often of minor importance) that reveal some development. For instance, in the early letter, 1 Thess 4:14, one finds only an extrinsic connection between Christ's resurrection and the glorious resurrection of Christians: Through Jesus, God will lead with him those who have died. It is thus set forth in an apocalyptic description of the *eschaton*, reflecting the primitive eschatology of the early church. Later on one notes a more intimate connection between the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ and human beings who find salvation in him. Christ has become a "power," producing new life in Christian believers, which eventually ensures their resurrection and life "with Christ" (see Phil 3:10–11; cf. Rom 6:4). Again, Paul's treatment of the role of the Mosaic law in human life develops from Gal to Rom (→ 95 below).

(Allo, E.-B., "L'Évolution de l'évangile de Paul," *VP* 1 [1941] 48–77, 165–93. Buck, C. and G. Taylor, *Saint Paul: A Study of the Development of His Thought* [NY, 1969]. Dodd, C. H., "The Mind of Paul, I and II," *New Testament Studies* [Manchester, U.K., 1953] 67–128. Hurd, J. C., *The Origin of I Corinthians* [London, 1965] 8–12. Lester-Garland, L. V., "The Sequence of Thought in the Pauline Epistles," *Theology* 33 [1936] 228–38. Lowe, J., "An Examination of Attempts to Detect Development in St. Paul's Theology," *JTS* 42 [1941] 129–42.)

10 (II) **Paul's Background.** Five factors that influenced Paul's theology may be considered; not all of them are of equal importance.

(A) Pharisaic, Jewish Background. The polemical passages in which Paul reacts against the Mosaic law should not be allowed to obscure the fact that even the Christian Paul looked back with pride on his life as a Jew of the Pharisaic tradition (Phil 3:5–6; Gal 1:14; 2 Cor 11:22). This strong Jewish background accounts for the fact that he thinks and expresses himself in OT categories and images. It also accounts for his abundant use of the OT, which he cites explicitly almost 90 times (yet never in 1 Thess, Phil, or Phlm). Though his use of the OT is often similar to that of the authors of Qumran and other intertestamental Jewish literature, he usually quotes it according to the LXX. At times, he accommodates the OT text or gives new meaning to passages he cites (e.g., Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17 or Gal 3:11; Gen 12:7 in Gal 3:16; Exod 34:34 in 2 Cor 3:17); he may allegorize a text (Gen 16:15; 17:16 in Gal 4:21–25) or wrest it from its original context (Deut 25:5 in 1 Cor 9:9). Paul's use of the OT does not conform to our modern ideas of quoting Scripture, but it does conform to the contemporary Jewish way of interpreting it and must be judged in that light. That he was inspired by the Spirit to interpret it in this fashion does not mean that his interpretation always reveals a hidden, deeper (literal) sense otherwise unsuspected. Yet his Jewish background makes him quote the OT to stress the unity of God's action in both dispensations and often as announcing the Christian gospel (Rom 1:2) or preparing for Christ (Gal 3:24). Even if he contrasts the "letter [of the law] and the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:6; Rom 2:29; 7:6), the OT is still for him a means through which God speaks to humanity (1 Cor 9:10; 2 Cor 6:16–17; cf. Rom 4:23; 15:4). Indeed, most of his theology (in the narrow sense, teaching about God) and his anthropology (teaching about human beings) clearly reveal this Jewish background.

11 Luke depicts Paul as trained by a rabbi in Jerusalem (→ Paul, 18), but Paul himself never says anything about his "rabbinical" background. Though he has identified himself as a former Pharisee (Phil 3:5), as a member of the Jewish group out of which came the later rabbinic tradition, one must use discernment in appealing to such literature to illustrate his Jewish background, for the vast majority of it was not put in writing until the time of Rabbi Judah the Prince at the beginning of the third century AD.

(Bring, R., "Paul and the Old Testament," *ST* 25 [1971] 21–60. Byrne, B., "Sons of God"—Seed of Abraham [AnBib 83; Rome, 1979]. Davies, W. D., "Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Flesh and Spirit," *The Scrolls and the New Testament* [ed. K. Stendahl; NY, 1957] 157–82. Ellis, E. E., *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* [GR, 1981]. Espy, J. M., "Paul's 'Robust Conscience' Re-examined," *NTS* 31 [1985] 161–88. Fitzmyer, J. A., "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *ESBNT*, 3–58. Murphy-O'Connor, J. [ed.], *Paul and Qumran* [Chicago, 1968]. Sanders, E. P., *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Phl, 1977].

On the rabbinic issue: Daube, D., *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* [London, 1956]. Davies, W. D., *Jewish and Pauline Studies* [Phl, 1984]; *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* [Phl, 1980].)

12 (B) Hellenistic Background. Despite Paul's heavily Jewish way of thinking, factors such as his use of a Roman name, his appeal to the OT in Greek, and his composition of letters in Greek reveal him to have been a diaspora Jew. Though he does not write literary Koine, his style betrays a good Gk education (→ Paul, 16–18). Attempts to detect Aramaisms in Paul's Greek (see W. C. van Unnik, *Sparsa collecta* [NovTSup 29; Leiden, 1973] 129–43) have not been successful, even though Paul, in calling himself a "Hebrew" (Phil 3:5), may mean that he also spoke Aramaic, a Semitic language widely used in his day in Syria and Asia Minor.

Even if Paul had not been trained as a professional *rhētōr*, his mode of composition and expression often reveals the influence of Gk rhetoric. See H. D. Betz's analysis of Gal according to Greco-Roman rhetoric and epistolography (*Galatians* [Hermeneia; Phl, 1979] 14–25). Traces are found in his letters of the Cynic-Stoic mode of argumentation called *diatribē*, a mode of discourse conducted in familiar, conversational style and developed by lively debate with an imaginary interlocutor; its sentence structure is often short, and questions are interjected; antitheses and parallel phrases often punctuate the development (see J. Nélis, *NRT* 70 [1948] 360–87). Good examples of this style are found in Rom 2:1–20; 3:1–9; 9:19; 1 Cor 9. It was once fashionable to ascribe to Paul's Hellenistic background such terms as "Lord," "Son of God," "flesh and spirit," and "mystery" and to ascribe to Hellenistic gnosticism his use of "Adam" and "Man," a redeemer myth, preexistence, instrumentality in creation, etc. But many of these terms and notions have been shown to have been at home in first-century Judaism, even in Palestine itself, which in the last pre-Christian centuries had come to grips with Hellenistic influence and the use of the OT in Greek.

Whereas Jesus' illustrations often reflect the agrarian life of Galilee, Paul frequently uses images derived from city-culture, especially Hellenistic. He uses Gk political terminology (Phil 1:17; 3:20), alludes to Gk games (Phil 2:16; 1 Cor 9:24–27), employs Gk commercial terms (Phlm 18) or legal terminology (Gal 3:15; 4:1–2; Rom 7:1), and refers to Hellenistic slave trade (1 Cor 7:22; Rom 7:14) or Hellenistic celebrations in honor of a visiting emperor (1 Thess 2:19). He employs the Hellenistic ideas of *eleutheria*, "freedom" (Gal 5:1,13) and *syneidēsis*, "conscience" (1 Cor 8:7,10,12; 10:25–29; 2 Cor 5:11; Rom 2:15), and the Stoic ideas of *autarkeia*, "sufficiency, contentment" (2 Cor 9:8) and *physis*, "nature" (Rom 2:14). Note especially the Hellenistic vocabulary in Phil 4:8: *prospilēs*, "amiable," *euphēmos*, "well-sounding," *aretē*, "moral excellence," and *apainos*, "something praiseworthy." In 1 Cor 15:33 he even quotes Menander, *Thais*, frg. 218. This Hellenistic influence is detected more in Paul's ethical teaching than in his theology proper.

(Betz, H. D., *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition* [BHT 45; Tübingen, 1972]. Broneer, O., "Paul and the Pagan Cults at Isthmia," *HTR* 64 [1971] 169–87. Bultmann, R., *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die*

kynisch-stoischē Diatribe [FRLANT 13; Göttingen, 1910]. De Witt, N. W., *St. Paul and Epicurus* [Minneapolis, 1954]. Hagedorn, N., *Saint Paul et la culture grecque* [Geneva, 1966]. Koester, H., "Paul and Hellenism," *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* [ed. P. J. Hyatt; NY, 1965] 187–95. Pfitzner, V. C., *Paul and the Agon Motif* [NovTSup 16; Leiden, 1967]. Stowers, S. K., *Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans* [SBLDS 57; Chico, CA, 1981].

13 (C) The Revelation to Paul. Paul's theology was influenced most of all by his experience near Damascus and by his faith in the risen Christ as the Son of God that developed from that experience. Today NT scholars are less prone than those of former generations to look on that experience merely as a psychological "conversion" to be explained in terms of Paul's Jewish background or of Rom 7, understood as an autobiographical account. Paul himself speaks of that experience as a revelation of the Son accorded him by the Father (Gal 1:16); in it he "saw Jesus the Lord" (1 Cor 9:1; cf. 1 Cor 15:8). That revelation of the crucified "Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8) not only turned Paul the Pharisee into an apostle but also made him the first Christian theologian. The only difference between that experience, in which Christ appeared to him (1 Cor 15:8), and the experience of the official witnesses of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:5–7) was that his vision occurred much later. It put him on an equal footing with the Twelve and others who had seen the Lord. He spoke of it as an event in which he had been "seized" by Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12), and a "necessity" had been laid upon him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (1 Cor 9:16; cf. Gal 1:16b). He compared that experience to God's creation of light: "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). The compulsion of divine grace pressed him into the service of Christ. His response was one of vivid faith, in which he confessed with the early church that "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3; cf. Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11). In a creative act, that experience illumined Paul's mind and gave him an insight into what a disciple later called "the mystery of Christ" (Eph 3:4).

14 (1) That "revelation" (Gal 1:12,16) impressed Paul with the unity of divine action for the salvation of all humanity, which is manifest in both the Old and New Dispensations. As a result of that encounter with the risen Christ, Paul did not become a Marcionite, rejecting the OT. The Father who revealed his Son to Paul was the same God that Paul the Pharisee had always served. He was the creator, the lord of history, the God who continually saved his people Israel, and who proved to be a faithful lord of the covenant despite Israel's infidelities. Probably because he had been a Pharisee preoccupied with the minutiae of the law, Paul never manifested a profound understanding of that "covenant," so infrequently does he speak of it. Yet his experience near Damascus did not alter his fundamental commitment to the "one God."

(2) That vision taught him the soteriological value of the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah in God's salvific plan. If his basic *theology* did not change, his christology did. As a Jew, Paul had shared the messianic expectations of his people (see Dan 9:25; 1QS 9:11), looking forward to the coming of a messiah (of some sort). But the vision of the risen Christ taught him that God's Anointed One had already come, that he was "Jesus our Lord, who was handed over for our offences and raised up for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Before his experience near Damascus, Paul certainly knew that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified, "hung on a tree," and hence "cursed" in the sense of Deut 21:23 (see Gal 1:13; 3:13). This was undoubtedly one of the reasons why he as a Pharisee could not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus was "a stumbling block" (1 Cor 1:23), one "cursed" by the very law that Paul so zealously observed (Gal 3:13; cf. 1:14). But that revelation impressed him emphatically with the messianic, soteriological, and vicarious value of the death of Jesus of Nazareth in a way that he never suspected before. With a logic that only a Pharisee could appreciate, Paul saw Christ Jesus taking upon himself the law's curse and transforming it into its opposite, so that he became the means of freeing humanity from malediction. The cross, which had been the stumbling block to Jews, became in his eyes the "power and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24). Henceforth, he would understand that crucified "Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8) as his exalted Messiah.

(3) That revelation impressed Paul with a new vision of salvation history. Before the encounter with the Lord, Paul saw human history divided into three great periods: (1) from Adam to Moses (the period without the law); (2) from Moses to the Messiah (the period of the law); and (3) the messianic age (the period when the law would be perfected or fulfilled). The experience near Damascus taught him that the messianic age had already begun; it thus introduced a new perspective into salvation history. The *eschaton*, "endtime," so avidly awaited before, had already started (1 Cor 10:11), although a definitive stage of it was still to be realized (as was hoped, not too far in the future). The Messiah had come, but not yet in glory. Paul realized that he (with all Christians) found himself in a double situation: one in which he looked back upon the death and resurrection of Jesus as the inauguration of the new age, and another in which he still looked forward to his coming in glory, his Parousia.

15 Far more than his Pharisaic background, therefore, or even his Hellenistic cultural roots, that revelation of Jesus gave Paul an ineffable insight into the "mystery of Christ." It enabled him to fashion his "gospel," to preach the fundamental good news of salvation in a form that was distinctively his own. However, Paul did not immediately understand all the implications of the vision accorded him. It provided only a basic insight that was to color all that he was to learn about Jesus and his mission among human beings, not only from the early church's tradition, but also from his own apostolic experience in preaching "Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23).

(Beker, J. C., *Paul the Apostle*, 3–10. Jeremias, J., “The Key to Pauline Theology,” *ExpTim* 76 [1964] 27–30. Menoud, P.-H., “Revelation and Tradition: The Influence of Paul’s Conversion on His Theology,” *Int* 7 [1953] 131–41. Munck, J., *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* [Richmond, VA, 1959] 11–35. Rigaux, B., *Letters*, 40–67. Stob, H., “The Doctrine of Revelation in Paul,” *CTJ* 1 [1966] 182–204.)

16 (D) Paul, Jesus, and Early Tradition. If the main inspiration of Paul’s theology was the revelation granted near Damascus, that event was not the only source of his knowledge about Christ and the Christian movement. Paul was not the founder of the movement but joined it after missionary activity had already been begun by those who were apostles before him (Gal 1:17). It is a priori likely, then, that Paul inherited from the pioneer tradition of the church at least some ideas about Christ. At first, this observation might seem to contradict what he himself says in Gal about the origin of his gospel, that he was not taught it and that it came to him rather through a revelation of Jesus Christ (1:11,15–17; 2:6). Yet here especially we must be sensitive to the nuances of Paul’s expression: These passages in Gal were written in the heat of controversy. Paul had been under attack, accused of not being a real apostle and of preaching only a watered-down version of the gospel because of his attitude toward the law of Moses and Jewish practices. When he wrote Gal, Paul was at pains, then, to emphasize his divine, direct, and undelegated apostolic commission and the heavenly origin of his gospel.

Yet this emphasis must not be allowed to obscure what is found elsewhere in his letters that clearly indicate a dependence on the apostolic tradition of the early church—on its kerygma, liturgy, hymns, confessional formulas, theological terminology, and parenthesis. Fragments of the primitive kerygma are found in Paul’s letters: 1 Thess 1:10; Gal 1:3–4; 1 Cor 15:2–7; Rom 1:3–4; 4:25; 8:34; 10:8–9. He has incorporated elements of the liturgy into them: the eucharistic formula (of Antiochene origin? 1 Cor 11:23–25); prayers like “Amen” (1 Thess 3:13[?]; Gal 6:18; cf. 1 Cor 14:16; 2 Cor 1:20), “Maranatha” (1 Cor 16:22), “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15); doxologies (Gal 1:5; Phil 4:20; Rom 11:36; 16:27[?]), and hymns (Phil 2:6–11; [cf. Col 1:15–20; Eph 5:14]). His confessional formulas also echo church usage: “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3; Rom 10:9), “Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11), or “the Messiah” (Rom 9:5). He inherited as well a number of theological terms, for example, the titles “Lord,” “Son of God”; the word “apostle”; the expressions *baptizō eis*, “church of God,” etc. Finally, certain hortatory parts of his letters that employ stereotyped terminology suggest that Paul is incorporating parenetic or catechetical material drawn from common usage (1 Thess 4:1–12; 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21; [Eph 5:5]).

17 At times Paul explicitly calls attention to the fact that he is “handing on” (*paradidonai*) what he has “received” (*paralambanein*); see 1 Cor 11:2,23;

15:1,3. He thus uses the Greek equivalents of the technical vocabulary of tradition paralleled in the rabbinic schools: *māsar lē-*, “pass on to”; *qibbēl min*, “receive from.” He also appeals to the customs of the churches (1 Cor 11:16) and recommends fidelity to tradition (1 Thess 2:13; Phil 4:9; 1 Cor 11:2; 15:2; Rom 6:17; [cf. 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6]). O. Cullmann (*RHPR* 30 [1950] 12–13) found it surprising that Paul applied such a discredited notion to the normative doctrinal and moral precepts of the primitive community, when he recalled how Jesus reacted precisely to the *paradosis* of the Jews (Mark 7:3–13; Matt 15:2). Obviously, Paul saw something different here; it was for him not merely “the tradition of human beings” (Mark 7:8). Cf. 1 Thess 2:13.

18 Another aspect of Paul’s dependence on early church tradition is seen in his acquaintance with what Jesus did and taught. Paul gives no evidence of having known Jesus personally in his earthly ministry (→ Paul, 18); not even 2 Cor 5:16 need imply that he did. Nor should it be imagined that Paul was granted a cinematic view of that ministry at the time of his Damascus experience. It is remarkable how little his letters betray knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth or even of what is recorded about Jesus in the Gospels. One reason for this is that Paul wrote his letters before the Gospels took the form that we know. Yet an even more important reason is that Paul, not having been an eyewitness, emphasizes the salvific effects of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, which for him transcend the data of the historical ministry of Jesus. His interest lies in these climactic events of Jesus’ career rather than in the minutiae of Jesus’ manner of life, his ministry, his personality, or even his message. He may allude to or quote a saying of Jesus occasionally (1 Thess 4:2,15; 5:2,13,15; 1 Cor 7:10–11 [cf. 25]; 9:14; 11:23–25; 13:2; Rom 12:14,17; 13:7; 14:13,14; 16:19), and such allusions or quotations reveal that sayings of Jesus were already being handed on in the early church in addition to the kerygma. But these sayings are invariably referred to by Paul as utterances of “the Lord” (*Kyrios*), a title that immediately reveals the transcendent aspect under which Paul regarded them. He was not interested in Jesus as a teacher, a prophet, or as the chronological source of such transmission. Rather, he was interested in the exalted, risen Lord, who became the real agent of the tradition developing in the bosom of the apostolic church. That is why he attributed to the *Kyrios* what in reality he had derived from the early community. The *Kyrios* is at work in that transmission, and as such he is regarded as “the end of the law” and a replacement of the *paradosis* of the Jews.

19 Paul alludes to remarkably few events of the life of Jesus: He was born of a woman under the law (Gal 4:4), instituted the eucharist (1 Cor 11:23), was betrayed (1 Cor 11:23), was crucified (Gal 2:20; 3:1; Phil 2:8; 1 Cor 2:2,8), died (1 Cor 15:3), was buried (1 Cor 15:4), was raised from the dead (1 Cor

15:5), and taken up to heaven (Rom 10:6 [cf. Eph 4:9]). Yet even these events are not narrated for their own sake or in the manner of the evangelists; they are, instead, recorded in contexts of a peculiarly theological or kerygmatic character. Paul may have learned the outline of Jesus' last days from the early church, but probably some of the details were already known to him before his conversion and were related to his persecution of "the church of God" (Gal 1:13).

20 Such features as these suggest that Paul had derived information from the traditions of early churches (Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch). Moreover, his visit to Jerusalem, when he spent 15 days with Cephas (Gal 1:18), would support this. But such information was always transformed by Paul's personal vision and insight.

(Baird, W., "What Is the Kerygma?" *JBL* 76 [1957] 181–91. Bruce, F. F., "Paul and the Historical Jesus," *BJRL* 56 [1973–74] 317–35. Cullmann, O., "Kyrios' as Designation for the Oral Tradition Concerning Jesus," *SJT* 3 [1950] 180–97. Dungan, D. L., *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* [Phl, 1971]. Gerhardtsson, B., *Memory and Manuscript* [ASNU 22; Lund, 1961] 262–323; *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* [ConNT 20; Lund, 1964]. Hunter, A. M., *Paul and His Predecessors* [Phl, 1981]. Kuss, O., *Paulus*, 440–51. Ridderbos, H. N., *Paul and Jesus: Origin and General Character of Paul's Preaching of Christ* [Phl, 1958]. Stanley, D. M., "Become Imitators of Me: The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition," *Bib* 40 [1959] 859–77; "Pauline Allusions to the Sayings of Jesus," *CBQ* 23 [1961] 26–39.)

21 (E) Paul's Apostolic Experience. Another factor in the development of Paul's theology was his experience as an apostle and missionary proclaiming the gospel and founding churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe. How much did his practical experience and concrete contacts with Jews and Gentiles mold his view of Christianity? Would Paul have written as he did on justification or on the relation of the gospel to the law, if it were not for the Judaizing problem that he encountered? The real meaning of the universal scope of Christian salvation probably dawned on Paul as he worked continually with Jews who failed to accept his message and with Gentiles who did heed him. From his earliest letters he reveals an awareness of the privileged position of his fellow Jews in the divine plan of salvation (1 Thess 2:13–14; cf. Rom 1:16; 2:9–10). He wrestled in Rom 9–11 with the problem of the role of Israel in the Father's new plan of salvation by grace and through faith in Christ Jesus. But he was keenly aware that he had been called to preach to the Gentiles (Gal 1:15–16); he calls himself the "apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13). He admits that he is "indebted to Greeks and to Barbarians" (Rom 1:14). Moreover, the church as the "body" of Christ (1 Cor 12:27–28) is almost certainly the result of his understanding of the Christian

ekklēsia in the light of the contemporary Greco-Roman understanding of the state as the body politic (→122 below). (The tendency manifested here is carried further by the disciples of Paul who in Col and Eph unite the themes of church, body, and head in a view of the risen Christ as the lord of the *kosmos* and employ the notion of *plērōma*, "fullness.") The problems that Paul himself encountered in founding and governing individual churches were almost certainly responsible for his gradual awareness of what the "church" meant in a transcendent, universal sense. To his apostolic experience must also be attributed a number of references to the Hellenistic world, which are met in various developments of his teaching (see 1 Cor 8:5; 10:20–21; 12:2; Gal 4:9–10).

22 Was part of Paul's apostolic experience a contact with gnostics? This is a highly debated question today. That Paul speaks of *gnōsis*, "knowledge," in a special sense and pits over against his "story of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18) a worldly knowledge is clear. But that he is coping with some form of gnosticism that was invading his communities is another question. Here no little part of the problem is what is meant by "gnosticism." That full-blown gnosticism was already current in the time of Paul is very difficult to admit. There may be elements in Pauline teaching that eventually fed into its full-blown form in the second century AD, but they are at most proto-gnostic elements in his letters. Despite all the claims about gnosticism as a pre-Christian phenomenon, no real evidence of a *pre-Christian* redeemer figure or of such a myth of the primal man has been adduced.

(Cook, R. B., "Paul . . . Preacher or Evangelist?" *BT* 32 [1981] 441–44. Holtz, T., "Zum Selbstverständnis des Apostels Paulus," *TLZ* 91 [1966] 321–30. Kertelge, K., "Das Apostelamt des Paulus, sein Ursprung und seine Bedeutung," *BZ* 14 [1970] 161–81. Lüdemann, G., *Paulus, der Heidenapostel: Band II, Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum* [FRLANT 130; Göttingen, 1983]. Seidensticker, P., *Paulus der verfolgte Apostel Jesu Christi* [SBS 8; Stuttgart, 1965].

Chadwick, H., "Gnosticism," *OCD*, 470–71. Dupont, J., *Gnosis: La connaissance religieuse dans les épîtres de S. Paul* [Louvain, 1960]. Pagels, E. H., *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* [Phl, 1975]. Ridderbos, H. N., *Paul*, 27–29, 33–35. Schmithals, W., *Gnosticism in Corinth* [Nash, 1971]; *Paul & the Gnostics* [Nash, 1972]. Yamauchi, E. M., *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* [GR, 1973].)

23 Whatever Paul inherited from his Jewish background, from his contacts with Hellenism, and whatever he later derived from the tradition of the early church and his own missionary activity were all uniquely transformed by his insight into the mystery of Christ accorded to him near Damascus. Other NT writers could claim a Jewish background and Hellenistic contacts, but none of them has Paul's profundity in understanding the Christ-event, except possibly John.