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BEYOND THE ORIGINAL CONTEXT: RECEPTION OF THE PAULINE LETTERS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Introduction: the Primary and Secondary Context of the Pauline Letters

The Pauline Letters are read today in two respects: they are treated on the one hand historically, that is, as documents from the past. But at the same time they are also accepted as a religious message which is valid beyond its original context and *mutatis mutandis* for all Christians.

This way of reading the Pauline Letters is not a compromise of modern historical studies and traditional Christian belief, but goes back to the Christians in the first century A.D. who copied the letters of Paul and passed them on to other churches not intended originally as their addressees. Although no papyrus fragments dating from the time of Paul or shortly after his death (ca. 60 A.D.) have been preserved,¹ we have no reason to doubt that the Pauline letters were already being duplicated for repeated reading or for circulation in the first century. They were treated as documents to be read also in churches whose members were neither primary recipients nor necessarily faced the issues dealt with in the letters. Otherwise it would be quite difficult to explain, for example, how *Clement of Rome* in the 90s of the first century² was accessible to the *First Corinthians* (cf. 1 Clem. 47:1-3).

(1) No New Testament papyrus dating from the first century is preserved today. The oldest of the Pauline letters, P52 (Chester Beatty II), is dated to ca. 200 A.D.

(2) On the date of 1 Clem., see A. LINDEMANN, *Die Clemensbriefe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, 17) 12; H. E. LONA, *Der erste Clemensbrief* (Göttingen: V&R, 1998) (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, 2) 76.

Though each of the Pauline letters³ represents as its primary context the correspondence from Paul to the addressed church,⁴ they began to be read also with a new context, in which the validity of their content was not restricted to the original situation, but extended to other Christians and accepted as theological and ethical criterion of Pauline Christianity.

The character of this "multiple context" was one of the most important features that the Pauline letters gave to early Christian literature. In the history of early Christianity we can find, in my view, a process of the Pauline letters being read as "multiple context" documents. And in this process the emphasis was placed more and more on the secondary context.

In this paper we are dealing with the process of the reception of the Pauline letters in the first century. Here the focus is put on the way in which they came to be read more with the secondary context. But because of limited space, we have to restrict ourselves to a few of the most important points in this process.

1. Readership of the Pauline Letters

There are several ways of categorizing letters in antiquity. For example, the so-called Pseudo Demetrius (*Epistolary Types*: 2nd Century B.C. – 3rd century A.D.) mentions 21 types, whereas Pseudo Libanius (*Epistolary Styles 2*: 4th–6th centuries A.D.) gives as many as 41.⁵

But for our purpose it would be sufficient, following David Trobisch,⁶ to accept the following three categories: (1) private letter,

(3) Regarded as genuinely "Pauline" here, by the majority of scholars, are the following seven letters: Rom., 1–2 Cor., Gal., Phil., 1 Thess. and Philemon. The others, i.e. Eph., Col., 2 Thess. and the Pastoral Epistles are treated as pseudonymous and called "deutero-Pauline," without detailed discussions about authenticity.

(4) Also the Letter to Philemon is actually one of the "church-letters", because it is addressed not only to him, but also to "Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house" (Philemon 2 [RSV, as always in this article], italics mine). But, as its reception history suggests (the Pastoral Letters, the letters of Ignatius, and the title of this letter given by the copyists of older manuscripts), it was regarded as a personal letter.

(5) Cf. A. J. MALBERBE, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1988) (Sources for Biblical Study, 19) 31, 67.

(6) D. TROBISCH, *Die Entstehung der Paulusbriefsammlung* (Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag, Göttingen: V&R, 1989) (Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus, 10) 85–86.

(2) open letter, and (3) literary letter (Kunstbrief). These are based on the method of communication between sender and recipient(s). The private letter is a substitute for a direct conversation between persons who are separated from each other; when it is read by the intended recipient(s), its function is fulfilled. In contrast, the open letter is based on the premise, that it is possible and expected to be read not only by the intended recipient(s), but also by others. Totally different is the case of the literary letter. Its alleged recipient(s) does not actually read it. The sender and addressee can often be fictional.⁷

Adolf Deissmann's analysis of the type of communication, the distinction of the "letter" and "epistle" is basically right, though it needs some corrections. According to Deissmann, the former is non-literary and "is intended only for the person or persons to whom it is addressed, and not at all for the public or any kind of publicity," whereas the latter is "an artistic literary form," whose contents "are intended for publicity — they aim at interesting 'the public.'"⁸ It must be noted that Deissmann fails to see an important factor of the Pauline letters, i.e. that they are not addressed to individuals, but to a church community, and that he consequently compared them with ancient private letters, which are shorter and simpler than they are. But this inadequate comparison had, as is well known, a great influence on the Pauline studies of following generations.⁹ This problem with Deissmann's analysis is related to another shortcoming that he does not consider concerning the letters of the second category above. And we are just dealing with the boundary between the first and the second category, which Deissmann did not take into consideration.

Which of these categories do the Pauline letters belong to? Though they are not private letters between two persons, they were undoubtedly written as a substitute for direct conversation between Paul and a church community, or communities sharing the same context. Thus they were apparently written as a kind of private letter, which expects no circulation outside of the intended readership.

(7) TROBISCH, *Entstehung...*, 86.

(8) L. R. M. STRACHAN (trans.), A. DEISSMANN, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927) 228–229 (also citations).

(9) But DEISSMANN'S thesis has been long since treated not without criticism; cf. e.g. W. G. KÜMMEL, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1983²¹) 212–214; Ph. VIELHAUER, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin—New York: de Gruyter, 1975) 59.

But at the same time we have to differentiate among the Pauline letters in this respect. Some of them are really addressed to one church community without presupposing further circulations. *1 Thessalonians* and *Philemon* will fall under this type.

Galatians could also fall into the first category, though it is composed as a circular letter: "to the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2). These churches are supposed to share the same context that Paul is now using. In this sense the churches of Galatia can be regarded as his intended first readers.

More difficult is the case of *Philippians*. The address "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1) seems not to restrict the recipient to a single church community.¹⁰ Here Paul is surely talking to the church of Philippi (cf. 4:15–16), but at the end of the letter he sends greetings to "every saint in Christ Jesus" (4:21).¹¹ Who is Paul thinking of with "every saint," if they are not the members of the Philippian church who are supposed to listen to the letter read aloud at the service (cf. 1 Thess. 5:27)? Paul may know that the letter will be duplicated and sent to other churches. If so, then *Philippians* indicates that Paul wrote also a letter of the second category.

In the case of the *Corinthian letters* there is a higher probability of this second category. In the addressee (*adscriptio*) of *1 Corinthians* (1 Cor. 1:2) Paul mentions three groups as recipients: "the church of God which is at Corinth", "those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" "with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ".¹²

The second group might be interpreted not separately from the first, but as an apposition ("the church...at Corinth, namely those sanc-

(10) *Contra* GNILKA, cf. "Hier verzichtet er [= Paulus] auf den ἐκκλησία-Begriff (vgl. 1 Kor 1,2; 1 Thess 1,1; 2 Thess 1,1), es darf aber nicht übersehen werden, daß mit πάντες οἱ ἄγιοι faktisch dasselbe gemeint ist" (J. GNILKA, *Der Philipperbrief* (Freiburg—Basel—Wien: Herder, 1987) (Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 10.3) 31, italics mine).

(11) GNILKA, *Philipperbrief*, 181 n. 5, refers to Rom. 16; 2 Cor. 13:12 and 1 Thess 5:26 as parallel. But these passages clearly concern only members of each community. On Rom. 16, cf. below.

(12) The following αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν is, as in RSV, to be connected to κύριος, hence: "both their Lord and our Lord."

tified...").¹³ In that case, the "saints" belong to the Corinthian church. However, the third group cannot mean the Christians in Corinth.

The preposition σύν ("with") is used here as synonym for καί ("and").¹⁴ It cannot be related to the preceding κλητός ("called"), since this is not a participle but an adjective and does not permit a translation "called to be saints with all those...".¹⁵ But, at the same time, this σύν connotes that the third group are not the first target of the letter, but rather supplementarily mentioned as a secondary readership.

Without assuming a later interpolation for catholicizing the address, which is not impossible but unnecessary here,¹⁶ we can but regard this phrase as a reference to a further secondary readership of the letter. It is not convincing, for example, that this phrase is meant to remind the Corinthians that they are living jointly with all the other Christians.¹⁷ Why should Paul mention such a thing at the very beginning of this letter? Rather, Paul is here apparently thinking of the possibility that his letter is also to be read by other Christians beyond the Corinthian church.

The expansion of readership can be read more clearly from the addressee of *2 Corinthians*: "to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1). While in *Galatians* the plural churches are treated as the primary recipients (see above), here the letter targets primarily the Corinthian church, without excluding the possibility of being forwarded to other Chris-

(13) So e.g. W. SCHRAGE, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Zürich—Braunschweig: Benziger — Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991) (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 7.1) 103; similarly A. LINDEMANN, *Der Erste Korintherbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, 9.1) 26 ("etwas plerophor").

(14) "...bisweilen ist σύν einem καί gleichwertig. Lk 20:1 οἱ γραμματεῖς σύν τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις." (F. BLASS, A. DEBRUNNER, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, bearbeitet von F. REHKOPF (Göttingen: V&R, 1990¹⁷) § 221).

(15) With K. TAGAWA, *Shinyaku-Seisho: Yaku to Chu (The New Testament: Translation and Notes)*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2007) 228–229 (on 1 Cor. 1:2).

(16) Cf. SCHRAGE, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther...*, 104–105 (p. 105: "Auszuschließen ist das nicht. Aber damit ist man die Schwierigkeiten doch auf recht gewaltsame Weise los").

(17) *Contra* SCHRAGE, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther...*, 105; LINDEMANN, *Der erste Korintherbrief...*, 27.

tians in Achaia.¹⁸ The connection with the preposition *ὡς* ("with") denotes this (see above on 1 Cor.).

The letter to the *Romans* has a special character in that it is addressed to a place where Paul has never been (cf. 1:13). Though he wanted the letter to be read first in the churches there, as his admonition about the "weak in faith" (14:1–15:13) shows, he must have anticipated that the letter would reach not only those named in chapter 16,¹⁹ but also other Christians whom he does not know yet. The somewhat vague address, "to all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints," would suggest this. In this letter Paul unfolds his understanding of the gospel (Rom. 1:15: "so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome"), with an expectation of being read also by readers whom Paul does not have in sight; Paul undoubtedly wants to deliver his gospel to as many readers as possible.

So we can now summarize the intended readership of the Pauline letters as follows. In *1 Thessalonians* and *Philemon* Paul addresses his letters to a single church community without presupposing further circulations (category 1 = private letter). *Galatians* also falls under the same category, though it is a circulated letter within a group of churches in Galatia. These churches are altogether regarded by Paul as his primary readers.

On the other hand, *1 and 2 Corinthians* as well as *Philippians* are probably anticipated as being duplicated and forwarded to other churches, which do not necessarily share the situation described in the letters. These letters will belong to the second category (open letter). In *Romans* Paul is, in my opinion, more aware of being read by a wider circle of readers than he originally intended. His primary read-

(18) Cf. M. E. THRALL, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994) (International Critical Commentary) 88–89 (p. 89: "Paul's comprehensive form of address might be intended to ensure that all these other people should have the opportunity of hearing his response to the Corinthians' apparent misunderstanding — if not actual criticism — of the character of his ministry").

(19) Here we cannot go into details about the problem of Rom. 16, whether it is formerly a part of another letter directed to Ephesus and attached later to *Romans*. But we rather regard it as the original end of this letter. So e.g. P. LAMPE, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989) (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, 2.18) 124–135; U. SCHNELLE, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Göttingen: V&R, 2002) (Uni-Taschenbücher, 1830) 138–141.

ers are clearly those who are facing the problem of the "weak" and the "strong" (Rom. 14–15), but he may think that his message would be more or less appropriate to other church communities, too.

Can we see here a development of the character of Pauline letters from private letter (category 1) to open letter (category 2)? Though there is no consensus on the chronology of the Pauline letters, almost all scholars acknowledge that *1 Thessalonians* is the earliest among the genuine Pauline letters and that *Romans* is one of the latest. Here we may assume that Paul did not think of the secondary readership of his letter at the beginning of his missionary work, but gradually became aware of it, as he wrote more letters to churches.

2. The Compilation of Pauline Letters

If our assumption is on the right track, it corresponds with the intention of Paul, that after his death people would compile his letters addressed to the same recipients into "the letter to the church A." This is most likely the case with *2 Corinthians*, while on the partition of *Philippians* scholars are still debating,²⁰ and the redaction or secondary expansion of *1 Corinthians* and *Romans* has, in my view, lower probability.²¹ So it is safe to limit ourselves to 2 Cor. on this matter, without excluding the possibility that some of the other Pauline letters are also compilations.

Here we presuppose that the addressee of Pauline letters is an original part of each letter, or at least of one of the letters which were later

(20) Cf. R. E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York et al.: Doubleday, 1997) (The Anchor Bible Reference Library) 497–498; SCHNELLE, *Einleitung...*, 158–160. Both of them stand for the original unity of the present Phil.

(21) On the partition-hypotheses of 1 Cor., cf. e.g. SCHNELLE, *Einleitung...*, 80–83; on the problem of Rom. 16, see *ibid.*, 138–141. Schnelle is correct when he says: "Partition hypotheses are thus methodologically justified only when no explanation for the present form of the text can be given at Pauline level, proceeding on the principle of *textual coherence* and its different dimensions such as syntactical coherence, semantic coherence, and pragmatic coherence" (tr. by M. E. BORING, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998] 74). But Broer (I. BROER, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, B. 2 (Würzburg: Echter, 2001) (Die neue Echter-Bibel. Erg., 2/2) 414–415) goes too far when he says that the lack of coherence in 2 Cor. pointed out by modern scholars is attributed to Paul, who found no problem of coherence in writing the letter in this way.

compiled into a single letter (see below). We do not follow the hypothesis that it belongs to a later redaction (see above on 1 Cor.).

The purpose of the compilation is clear: People want to preserve the essential parts of correspondence between Paul and them, not only for their sake, but also for other Christian churches under the Pauline influence. They undoubtedly presuppose a practice of circulating the Pauline letters, as Col. 4:16 shows: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea". For this purpose the original letters were edited and compiled into a single one, which is not only convenient for duplication and circulation, but also understandable to the secondary readers who are not familiar with the original context. Through the edited version they can grasp now in short the original situation and, at the same time, apply the statements of Paul to their own context.

The compilations presumably occurred quite early after the death of Paul.²² This assumption is supported in that no reference to a lost part of the original Pauline letters is found in the early Christian literature.²³ After the death of Paul, people must have begun the compilation in order to make "the letter" available to be read beyond the original context.²⁴

3. Corpus Paulinum

The collection of the Pauline letters, so called *Corpus Paulinum*, is a developed form of the Pauline letters for wider readership. The *Corpus Paulinum* is meant to be read and interpreted as "the statements of Paul" for every Christian under his authority. Thus each letter has

(22) Or was it already begun during his lifetime by himself (or somebody else under his authority)? So TROBISCH, *Entstehung...*, esp. 123–128, on 2 Cor. (cf. further IDEM, *Die Paulusbrieve und die Anfänge der christlichen Publizistik* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1994) (Kaiser-Taschenbücher, 135) 106–124).

(23) Cf. also: "Die Tatsache, daß das Corpus Paulinum, wo wir ihm auch begegnen, den gleichen Text bietet [...] ergibt ein weiteres entscheidendes Argument gegen die Teilungshypothesen" (K. ALAND, *Die Entstehung des Corpus Paulinum*, in: IDEM, *Neutestamentliche Entwürfe* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1979) (Theologische Bucherei, 63) 349; 302–350). But this would not necessarily exclude the possibility of compilation immediately after Paul's death.

(24) Cf. GNILKA, *Philippenerbrief...*, 14–15, who divides *Philippians* into two letters: a captivity-letter (1:1–3.1a; 4:2–7,10–23) and a polemical letter (3:1b–4:1,8f) (cf. GNILKA, *Philippenerbrief...*, 10).

now clearly the character of a message of Paul which is valid beyond its original context.

But the process of development from each letter to the *Corpus Paulinum* is quite complicated and difficult to be reconstructed. Anyway we cannot imagine a single, unified core of some letters as its starting point. There must be different small, local collections, each of which then developed in a complex and manifold way.²⁵

While 1 Clem. in the 90s of the first century seems to know only 1 Cor. (cf. 1 Clem. 37:5; 38:1; 47:1; 49:1) and perhaps Rom. (and 2 Cor.? Cf. 1 Clem 30:6 // Rom 2:29b; 1 Clem. 61:1–2 // Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Clem. 36:2 // 2 Cor. 3:18),²⁶ the author of the Pastoral Letters (around 100 A.D.)²⁷ has undoubtedly more Pauline letters at hand: Rom., 1 Cor., Phil., Philemon (and Col.).²⁸ Furthermore, Ignatius of Antioch († ca. 110–120) must have formed a group of letters to churches plus one letter to an office holder according to the model of the *Corpus Paulinum*, though the literary dependence on it can be proven only in limited cases.²⁹ Polycarp of Smyrna, a contemporary of Ignatius, knows not only

(25) Cf. ALAND, *Entstehung...*, 348–349; H.-J. KLAUCK, *Die antike Briefliteratur und das Neue Testament* (Paderborn et al.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998) (Uni-Taschenbücher, 2022) 250.

(26) Cf. A. LINDEMANN, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979) (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, 58) 193, according to whom it is probable, but cannot be decided with certainty, whether there is a literary dependence between Rom and 1 Clem, while it must remain open, whether 1 Clem. also knows 2 Cor. Likewise, but somewhat more positively (on Rom., "very probably") A. F. GREGORY, 1 Clement and the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament, in: A. F. GREGORY and Chr. TUCKETT (eds.), *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 129–157, esp. 142–151 (cited p. 150).

(27) Cf. SCHNELLE, *Einleitung...*, 380.

(28) Cf. M. TSUJI, *Der zweite Timotheus als letzter Gefangenschaftsbrief*, *Kwansei Gakuin University Humanities Review* 11 (2007) 1–11; IDEM, *Die Inter textualität von 1 Tim. 2:1–3/Tit. 3:1–2*, in: P. LAMPE et al. (eds.), *Neutestamentliche Exegese im Dialog. FS U. Luz* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2008) 99–110, esp. 100. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:8 // Rom. 7:12,16; 1 Tim. 1:20 // 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:7 // Rom. 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:8 // Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 2:11–13 // Rom. 6:3–4,8; 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:20 // Rom. 9:21; 2 Tim. 4:6–8 // Phil. 1:23; 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:10–12 // Philemon 24; Col. 4:7–14.

(29) "The four epistles for which a strong case for Ignatius' usage can be supported are, in declining order of likelihood, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy" (P. FOSTER, *The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament*, in: GREGORY and TUCKETT,

1 Cor. and the Pastoral Letters, but probably also other Pauline letters.³⁰ These observations will lead to the conclusion that while some of the Pauline letters like Rom and 1 Cor. (and 2 Cor.?) came relatively early into circulation, the other ones came to be known widely only later, presumably around the end of the first century. Anyway, the Pauline letters were no longer read simply as occasional letters, but now as "the word of the apostle to the Gentiles," which is valid for any church under his authority.

4. The Deutero-Pauline Letters

The deutero-Pauline letters, i.e. *Colossians*, *Ephesians*, *2 Thessalonians*, and the *Pastoral Letters*, all belong to the third category, namely literary letter (Kunstbrief) (see above 1). They appear to be written by Paul for specific recipient(s),³¹ but actually are not intended to be read by them. The (fictive) correspondence between Paul and the recipient(s) is one of the devices of forgery. Important is the "Pauline" message in the letter to be read beyond that fictive original context. This technique is only understandable under the circumstances that the genuine Pauline letters are already read in the same way. For the deutero-Pauline letters the "secondary" readers are de facto their first targets.

Reception..., 172, 159–186). That Ignatius cites the Pastoral Letters makes his knowledge of the *Corpus Paulinum* certain, because, as discussed below, they were written in order to complete the *Corpus* and to lead the readers to its correct interpretation.

(30) According to LINDEMANN, *Paulus...*, 229, Polycarp knew and used 1–2 Cor., Gal., Eph. and Past. (at least 1 Tim.), knew about the existence of Phil., which he however did not use. HOLMES admits probable use of Rom., Gal., and Phil. in addition to 1 Cor., Eph., and 1–2 Tim. in *PolPhil.*, but leaves it open whether these are only a circumstantial accumulation or have formed a deliberate collection or defined corpus (M. W. HOLMES, Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians and the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament, in: GREGORY and TUCKETT, *Reception...*, 226–227; 187–227). In my view, the first possibility is definitely excluded, and it is difficult to make a distinction between the second and the third.

(31) This is true even for Ephesians, which had originally no place name in 1:1 (but cf. 3:3; 6:21–22, where a direct relationship between "Paul" and recipients is suggested). On the strategy of this "imperfect" addressee, see M. TSUJI, Persönliche Korrespondenz des Paulus: Zur Strategie der Pastoralbriefe als Pseudepigrapha, *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010) 253–272, esp. 261–262.

It is to be noticed that each of the deutero-Pauline letters relates to an issue that was very controversial in the Pauline Christianity. The author of *Colossians* refutes a false teaching with ascetic practices:³² "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath" (Col. 2:16). This asceticism (cf. also 2:21,23) seems to have been adopted into the Christian church through Judaism, because it is connected with Judaic elements as circumcision (2:11,13), festival, new moon, and sabbath (2:16).

We know well that the controversy over the Judaic understanding of Christianity goes back to Paul himself. Yet, Paul seems somewhat ambiguous on this matter. On the one hand, Paul is definitely critical of the Judaic Law as a means of salvation: "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28. Cf. also 3:21; Gal. 3:11). There is no special significance any more to clinging to Judaic tradition, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28. Cf. also 1 Cor. 12:13). But, on the other hand, he makes statements which seem to side with the Law and the salvation of all of Israel: "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12. Cf. 11:1,26). Thus it is not difficult to imagine that Paul's ambiguous attitude gave rise to contradictory positions to the Law and Judaic tradition in the post-Pauline Christianity.

The same is true in the case of asceticism. On marriage, for example, Paul gives a vague admonition: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:1–2), but "I say this by way of concession, not of command" (7:6). He himself is clearly ascetic, but he allows the Corinthians to live in another way (7:7: "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another"). Hence both ascetic and non-ascetic Christians have got a chance to base their practice upon Paul.

In this post-Pauline situation, the author of *Colossians* tries to put "the last word" on these issues into the mouth of Paul. So the letter is supposed to be read as a "self-reference" of Paul to the problems that

(32) On the opponents in Col. cf. e.g. R. E. DE MARIS, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1996) (JSNTS, 96) 18–40.

he once left open.³³ It tells the readers how to understand the statements of Paul in his earlier letters.

Ephesians is known for its ecclesiological concern, especially for the unity of gentile Christians and Jewish Christians (Eph. 2:11–22): “And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (2:17–18).

The coexistence of them was no doubt a big issue in the Pauline churches. It already began, as Gal. 2:11–14 shows, in the lifetime of Paul, and must have become more and more serious, as the number of gentile Christians increased. That is why Paul in Rom. 9–11 managed to explain how his gospel is reconcilable with God’s promises to Israel: “Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). The author of *Ephesians*, as one of the Jewish Christians, tries to solve this problem by letting Paul once again insist on the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Christian church. This letter testifies how this issue was widespread in the post-Pauline churches.

It would be unnecessary to describe how the author of *2 Thessalonians* relates its contents to *1 Thessalonians*. Regardless of whether “a letter purporting to be from us” in *2 Thess.* 2:2 implies *1 Thessalonians*,³⁴ it is beyond doubt that a statement “to the effect that the day of the Lord has come” (2:2) goes back to the eschatology of Paul in *1 Thess.* 4:13–5:2: “you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Against a background of disputation on this issue, which must have been widespread and acute in the post-Pauline period because of delay of the parousia of Christ, *2 Thessalonians* was written in order to correct (or deny?)³⁵ the statement of *1 Thessalonians*.

(33) On this function, which is essential to pseudepigraphy, see A. MERZ, *Die fiktive Selbstausslegung des Paulus* (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: V&R, 2004) (Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus, 52) esp. 232–242.

(34) Cf. H. ROOSE, “A Letter by Us”: Intentional Ambiguity in *2 Thessalonians* 2.2, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2006) 107–124, who rightly sees that here the relationship between both Thessalonian letters is intentionally left ambiguous. Cf. also TSUJI, *Persönliche Korrespondenz...*, 262–263.

(35) So M. RIST, *Pseudepigraphy and the Early Christians*, in: D. E. AUNE (ed.), *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (FS A. P. Wikgren) (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 75–91; 82; A. LINDEMANN, *Zum Abfassungszweck des*

The *Pastoral Letters* are typical of deutero-Pauline letters, which try to show “the correct interpretation” of Paul on controversial matters. The form of letter-collection presupposes the already existing *Corpus Paulinum* and is meant to be accepted in connection with it.

But this collection, the so called *Corpus Pastorale*, was never intended to provide another *Corpus Paulinum*. It is rather a supplement and conclusion of “a *Corpus Paulinum* that is in a long process of development and should be completed by them [= Past]”.³⁶

The main function of the *Pastoral Letters* within this extended *Corpus* is as an “apparatus for interpretation.” They present, as the other deutero-Pauline letters do, “the correct interpretation” of Pauline statements that caused dissent in post-Pauline churches.

This is favored by the observation, that the author of the *Pastoral Letters* addresses the issues which come from Paul; e.g. the Law (1 Tim. 1:6–11), obedience to rulers and authorities (1 Tim. 2:1–3; Tit. 3:1–2),³⁷ behavior of women (1 Tim. 2:8–15; 5:3–16³⁸), the purity commandments (1 Tim. 4:1–5; Tit. 1:15), relationship between slaves and masters (1 Tim. 6:1–2), and the interpretation of the resurrection (2 Tim. 2:8–13,18).³⁹ On these points at issue the author of the *Pastoral Letters* tries to give “the last word” by a fictional device which represents Paul as referring to his earlier statements to try to clarify, or even correct them.⁴⁰

But this task can be achieved only when the statements of the *Pastoral Letters* are accepted as universally valid beyond the original con-

Zweiten Thessalonicherbriefes, in: IDEM, *Paulus, Apostel und Lehrer der Kirche* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 228–240.

(36) P. TRUMMER, *Corpus Paulinum — Corpus Pastorale: Zur Ortung der Paulustradition in den Pastoralbriefen*, in: K. KERTELGE (ed.), *Paulus in den neutestamentlichen Spätschriften* (Freiburg et al.: Herder, 1981) (Quaestiones Disputatae, 89) 133.

(37) Cf. TSUJI, *Intertextualität...*, 99–110.

(38) Cf. TSUJI, *Zwischen Ideal und Realität: Zu den Witwen in 1 Tim 5.3–16*, *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001) 92–104.

(39) The resurrection is also a matter of debate in *Colossians* and *Ephesians* (cf. Col. 2:12; Eph. 2:4–6).

(40) Cf. A. MERZ, *Amore Pauli: Das Corpus Pastorale und das Ringen um die Interpretationshoheit bezüglich des paulinischen Erbes*, *Theologische Quartalschrift* 187 (2007) 274–294, esp. 283.

text, i.e. correspondence between Paul and his coworkers.⁴¹ It is for this purpose that the author proposes a collection of three letters, modeling it after the *Corpus Paulinum*.

Summary: The deutero-Pauline letters arose in the situation, where the genuine Pauline letters were widely circulated and read beyond their primary context. The more people read them, the more interpretation appeared. So the authors of the deutero-Pauline letters tried to present "the correct interpretation" as Paul's own voice and keep the readers on the right track.

5. The Catholic Letters

The influence of Pauline letters can be seen not only in the letters under his authority, but also in other streams of early Christianity. The so-called Catholic Letters, except for the Johannine Letters,⁴² are here to be taken into consideration.

The *Letter of James*, a pseudonymous document of the Brother of the Lord, criticizes in 2:14–26 the idea of justification by faith, which originates from Paul: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (Jas. 2:24). Because the author of the letter undoubtedly knows this idea described in Romans (and maybe in Galatians),⁴³ it is highly improbable that 2:14–26 can be understood without the influence of Paul.⁴⁴ This passage is only understandable with the presupposition, that the Pauline idea of justification by faith unfolded in Romans

(41) The author of the Pastoral Letters wrote personal letters instead of church-letters because, in my view, it was not possible at the end of the first century to forge more Pauline letters to a certain church without raising doubts about their authenticity. Cf. TSUJI, *Persönliche Korrespondenz...*, 256–259.

(42) 1–3 *John* no longer tends to be treated as part of the Catholic Letters anymore, but together with the Gospel of John as the "Johannine Writings" (see e.g. SCHNELLE, *Einleitung...*, 479–555).

(43) This is suggested by (1) correspondence of wording, (2) the example of Abraham (Jas. 2:21–23; cf. Rom. 4:1–12; Gal. 3:1–14), and (3) the statement "God is one" (Jas. 2:19; cf. Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:6). Cf. M. TSUJI, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997) (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2.93) 189–193.

(44) *Contra* e.g. T. C. PENNER, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996) (JSNTS, 121) 63–65; D. J. VERSEPUT, *Reworking the Puzzle of Faith and Deeds in James 2:14–26*, *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997) 97–115; D. H. EDGER, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001) (JSNTS, 206) 175 n. 58.

was widespread among the churches in the post-Pauline period.⁴⁵ That is exactly why the author of James felt it necessary to contradict it in a "letter to the twelve tribes in Dispersion" (Jas. 1:1).

James takes the form of a letter from a prominent leader of the earliest Christianity to an unspecified number of general Christian readerships. With the address "to the twelve tribes in Dispersion" (Jas. 1:1), which evidently takes over here the tradition of an early Jewish "Diaspora-letter,"⁴⁶ it aims to reach as many readers as possible. This is evidently one of the countermeasures against the widely known Paulinism.

While it is still debatable whether *1 Peter* is under the theological influence of Paul,⁴⁷ the author of *2 Peter* undoubtedly knows a collection of the Pauline letters, the interpretation of which seems to have caused dissension in the church (2 Pet. 3:15–16). These observations favor the view that behind the emergence of the Catholic Letters there exists the literary and theological influence of the Pauline letters, which were collected and widely read in the post-Pauline period.

Conclusion

We can now summarize our observations as follows:

(1) Among the three types of letter (private letter, open letter, and literary letter), the genuine Pauline letters belong to either the first (1 Thessalonians, Philemon, also Galatians) or the second category (1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Romans). At the beginning of

(45) The *Letter of James* was, in my view, probably written in the 70's or 80's of the first century A.D. Here we can leave the much debated question open, whether the author of Jas. intends to criticize Paul's idea itself, or only its "misunderstanding" (cf. TSUJI, *Glaube...* 194–195). That the author of James speaks of "works" instead of "works of the Law" as in Paul (cf. Jas. 2:14, 24 with Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16), indicates the former is reading the Pauline letter(s) not in the original, but in another, secondary context. But this never excludes the possibility, which is in my view more likely, that he attacks Paul himself.

(46) TSUJI, *Glaube...* 18–21. The addresses of the other Catholic Letters (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1) can be regarded as developed, more Christianized forms of this diaspora-letter (cf. TSUJI, *Glaube...* 28–34).

(47) Negative: BROWN, *Introduction* 716–718; J. HERZER, *Petrus oder Paulus?* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 103); P. J. ACHTEMEIER, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996) (Hermeneia) 15–19. Affirmative: SCHNELLE, *Einleitung...*, 456. SCHNELLE (together with exegetes named in n. 177) sees also in the opponents of Jude a "heritage of Pauline theology" (SCHNELLE, *Einleitung...*, 467).

his missionary activities Paul may not have thought of the possibility that his letters would be circulated and read by secondary readers who did not share the original context of the letter; but he gradually came to be aware of it, as he wrote more letters to churches.

(2) The Pauline letters which he addressed to the same church began to be compiled into a single letter. This presumably occurred quite early after the death of Paul, or maybe already in his lifetime. The compiled letter was convenient for the secondary readers as it enabled them to grasp the issue(s) in the original context and to apply the statements of Paul to their own context.

(3) The Corpus Paulinum reflects the situation, in which the Pauline letters came to be read more as "the statement of Paul" for every Christian under authority. While some of them, i.e. Rom., 1 Cor., and possibly 2 Cor., came relatively early into circulation, the other letters came to be known only later, presumably around the end of the first century.

(4) The deutero-Pauline letters were written in order to present "the correct interpretation by Paul himself" on the issues Paul left open to controversy. The more widely the Pauline letters were read, the more likely it was that variations of "Paulinism" would appear.

(5) That the Pauline letters could be known also to other streams in early Christianity is attested to by James and 2 Peter. The Catholic Letters, which take the form of a general letter from an authority of Jerusalem, may have arisen in view of the wide circulation of Pauline letters and theology.⁴⁸

(48) This article goes back to my opening lecture at Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society 5th Annual Conference, held at Tohoku Gakuin University (Sendai, Japan) from 10.9 to 12.9.2009.

SUMMARY

The Pauline letters represent as their primary context a correspondence from Paul to the addressed church, but they began to be read, already in the lifetime of Paul, also with a new context, in which the validity of their content was extended to other Christians and accepted as theological and ethical criterion of Pauline Christianity.

In this article we are dealing with a process of reception of the Pauline letters in the first century A.D. The focus is put on the way they came to be read more with the secondary context, and in the following manner: (1) In some of his letters Paul himself seemed to be aware that his letter would be read also by those who were not the original addressees. (2) The Pauline letters addressed to the same church began to be compiled into a single letter, e.g. 2 Cor. (3) The Corpus Paulinum reflects the situation, in which the Pauline letters were read more as 'the statement of Paul' for every Christian under his authority. (4) The deutero-Pauline letters were written in order to present 'the correct interpretation by Paul himself' on the issues Paul left open to controversy. (5) Some of the Catholic Letters attest the wide circulation of the Pauline letters, also in non-Pauline circles.