

Bratislava Conference 2022: September, 19–22

Receptions of Paul during the First Two Centuries: Exploration of the Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity

Location: Comenius University Bratislava, Evangelical (Lutheran) Theological Faculty

List of Speakers including paper titles and abstracts
(In alphabetical order)

Atkinson, Kenneth, University of Northern Iowa, USA

The “Man of Lawlessness” as an Eschatological Enemy in Second Thessalonians and its Second Temple Period Jewish Background

The paper examines the theme of the “man of lawlessness” as an eschatological enemy in Second Thessalonians and its Second Temple Period Jewish Background. Texts to be covered include the Dead Sea Scrolls, Psalms of Solomon, and the Sibylline Oracles, all of which provide a historical and theological background for understanding this theme in Second Thessalonians. This paper also explores this New Testament writer’s use of Second Temple Jewish texts to interpret biblical passages and what it tells about the Jewish background of Second Thessalonian’s author.

Ábel, František, Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia, Evangelical (Lutheran) Theological Faculty

Παύλου συμμύσται έστε. Ignatius’ Reception of Paul and Jewishness in the Antiochean Context: Another Piece of Mosaic

Searching for written records of the early reception of Paul, a Second Temple Jew, beyond the New Testament corpus cannot exclude, among others, the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. The primary reasons are that Ignatius and his message are part of this significant early second-century period, and Ignatius was a church leader – the bishop of Antioch of Syria – in a city that was also significant in the missionary work of Paul the Apostle. Furthermore, Ignatius mentions Paul directly in his writings and is undoubtedly familiar with some of Paul’s letters. Ignatius is also one of a few ancient authors who used the otherwise rare word Ἰουδαϊσμός, as opposed to Χριστιανισμός, a term which Ignatius coined himself, or either learned in Antioch. This is an indication that his use of the term Ἰουδαϊσμός and cognate terms were negative, superficial, and contemptuous. In this essay, I am interested particularly in Ignatius’s perception of Paul, as well as his attitude towards what he means when referring to Judaism in the context of the socio-cultural dynamics of Antioch of Syria.

Bachmann, Michael, University of Siegen, Germany

Observations on the Reception of the Pauline Expression “works of the law”
Since more than 40 years an older perspective on Paul has been opposed to a “New Perspective on Paul”/NP. A “topic” that determines the NP is given by the question, what the expression “works of the law” (Gal 2:16 etc.) may mean. In my opinion, they are to be understood as Jewish “boundary markers”, namely (exclusively) the relevant regulations and not also the corresponding deeds. Eph 2:9; Tit 3:5 and James 2:21ff. presuppose Paul. There is no polemic against an alleged Jewish works righteousness in these passages, and Eph 2:19–22 is about Jews and non-Jews. The situation is similar with the Apostolic Fathers (see esp. 1Clem 32,[2-]3f.). In the second century (see Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons) the expression “works of the law” is referred to ceremonial Jewish regulations (esp. circumcision). This is valid to a large extent too for the following centuries, also for Erasmus of Rotterdam. But Augustine in “De spiritu et littera” (29.50) says with regard to *opera legis*: The “Jews” “ascribed to themselves to have the power to observe the commandment ‘Thou shalt not covet’ and the other holy and righteous commandments”. Luther refers not to Erasmus, but to Augustine (letter to Spalatin, October 19, 1516), and the Reformer sets an anti-“Catholic” accent (Themata de Votis, 1521). In this respect, the NP could mean: Not only a better relationship between Christianity and Judaism, but also between Protestantism and Catholicism!

Boccaccini, Gabriele, University of Michigan, USA

The Reception of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles

Acts is often presented as a first attempt to “normalize” Paul. The author would have offered an irenic picture in which, for example, Paul’s opposition to Judaism is much more nuanced. Is it so or is it the traditional Christian interpretation that made Paul distant from Acts? The analysis aims to restore a picture in which Acts offers a reading that is much closer to the Jewish Paul of history than to the Paul of the Christian tradition and therefore much more in line with his original thought. The focus will be on some key-topics such as the relationship between forgiveness of sins and salvation in the last judgment, messianism, and Paul’s relationship with the Mosaic law and circumcision, by comparing Acts with Paul’s authentic letters.

Bühner, Ruben A., University of Zurich, Switzerland, Faculty of Theology

Paul’s Torah Observance According to Acts in Light of Recent Reconfigurations of Paul’s Jewishness

It is a commonly accepted interpretation that the Acts of the Apostles presents us a Paul who not only maintains his Jewish identity but also demonstrates his rigorous Torah observance. Yet, in light of more recent efforts to work out the diversity of Jewish and especially diaspora Jewish ways of life in Second Temple Judaism, the question of Paul’s Torah observance in Acts can no longer be answered with a simple yes or no. Rather, it must be asked more precisely in which respect and under what circumstances Acts presents us a Christ-believing Paul who is living according to Jewish commandments. This corrected picture then also allows to sharpen the discussions about the continuity and discontinuity between the Paul of the Epistles and the Paul of Acts.

Charlesworth, James H., Princeton Theological Seminary, USA
Correcting Some Misperceptions About Paul

Viewing the publications on Paul from the present back to about 1960, I recall some tendencies in the study of Paul, “the Apostle,” that may still need correcting. As this survey is based on sixty years of research, an equal time span for teaching Paul, and a bibliography is added, only a few notes will be supplied. First, I will focus on some concepts and terms that should have been discarded long ago. They too often reflect the triumph of so-called Christianity and lead to a misperception of the Judaism Jesus and Paul knew. Second, I shall focus only on eleven issues that have bothered me and others who have followed the study of Paul. Finally, there are some questions that need to be in focus and discussed by all who seek to comprehend Paul in his time.

Dančiaková, Valéria Terézia, Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia, Faculty of Law
Charges against Paul in Acts 16:21: The Term $\tau\acute{o}$ $\acute{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ in the Context of Roman Law

Most of the situations that occur in the Acts of the Apostles in relation to the fate of the apostles are interpreted in a religious sense, which is understandable, as the scholarly work concerning the biblical book has been conducted in a prevalently religious environment for a long time. However, the term $\tau\acute{o}$ $\acute{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ used in Acts 16, 21 can refer to issues far beyond religious rites. The same term is used in documents granting privileges to various peoples in the Roman Empire. The majority of documents granting privileges are concerned with legal status of the Jewish people in the Empire, which can be found in the work of Josephus Flavius. The same term, however, is also used in documents granting privileges to Greek city states. As such, the term does not include only privileges to observe religious rights but refers to the permission granted to a certain community by the Roman authorities to continue living in accordance with their ancestral law. In short, $\tau\acute{o}$ $\acute{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ refers to the entire legal system.

Duff, Paul B., George Washington University, USA
John’s Reading or “Jezebel’s”: The Contested Reception of 1 Corinthians in the Late First Century

The Book of Revelation, composed in the late first century by a Jewish Jesus-follower, provides evidence of a struggle over proper ethical behavior. It is my contention that this struggle had its roots in the reception of 1 Corinthians.

Ehrensperger, Kathy, Abraham Geiger Kolleg, University of Potsdam, Germany
Teaching and Learning and the Role of Women – Pauline Trajectories in Acts and the Pastorals?

Both, Acts and the Pastorals commonly assert that Paul is commissioned to be a teacher to the non-Jewish nations. The image depicted is clear, even though the narrative of Acts builds into this image the notion of Paul addressing Jews and non-Jews initially, and only subsequently focusing on teaching non-Jews. However, where Acts has Paul speaking about himself, he refers to his call to teach non-Jews. This image is clearly also found in the Pastorals, although in variation between 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Thus, Paul’s self-presentation in his undisputed letters finds an

undisputed reception in the disputed Pastorals as well as in the narrative of Acts. Whereas in Acts disputes with unconvinced fellow Jews are part of the narrative plot in order for Paul to assert in his speeches and his teaching his loyalty to his Jewish tradition, such disputes fade into the background to a vast extent in the Pastorals. Given that the Pastorals present themselves in Pauline tradition, they clearly address non-Jews in Christ, continuing the Pauline tradition of teaching the nations. Since Paul and his teaching remained firmly Jewish the question is whether trajectories of this can also be found in the Pastorals and Acts. In this paper I will consider this question in particular in relation to the role of women in the Christ-movement. Although women are not as prominently named and present in Acts as in the Gospel of Luke, there are some striking passages, with Lydia, the daughters of Philip, and Priscilla certainly not playing subordinate roles when presented as first Christ-follower in European soil (Lydia), as prophets (Philip's four daughters), and Priscilla teaching Apollos. The images of these women resemble the women Paul mentions as co-workers, partners, and deacons etc in the undisputed letters. How then do such active women square with requests found in 1 Tim 2.11-15, and Titus 2.3-5? Did something get lost en route or in certain contexts? Here, I will build on an earlier publication where I have argued that Paul in 1 Cor 14 does not restrict women's participation in the meetings of Christ-followers generally, but follows Jewish tradition, which presupposed beyond question that men and women learn, that is, are being educated, or as Philo has it in his idealization all the people are philosophers. However, in the context of teaching and learning in public, women should not take an active role. A similar rationale may be found in 1 Tim 2.11-15, and Titus 2.3-5, thus being in continuation rather than deviation from Paul's rationale in the undisputed letters. Whether this amounts to imposing restrictions on the role of women in Acts and the Pastorals compared with the undisputed letters or the Gospel of Luke needs to be carefully assessed in light the diverse cultural traditions among which the groups of non-Jews in Christ lived.

Elliott, Neil, Independent Scholar, USA
The Quintessence of Pauline Deracination

In *The Christian Imagination*, Willie Jennings developed the thesis that the modern toxins of racism and colonialism were made possible because of ancient Christian supersessionism, which from early on “deracinated” the biblical understanding of a people of God from ties to land, history, and ethnicity. His thesis has received historical and theological criticisms but is in the main compelling. I seek to examine Ephesians as a case study in that deracination. Rather than the “quintessence of Paulinism” (as Arthur Peake, 1916, described the letter), I consider it as the quintessence of deracination, creating a logic—in Paul's name—of spiritual universalism that repudiates Israel's standing before God and, therewith, the value of ethnicity as such. Ironically, it does this through the invention of the *ethnos* and *ethnē* in the sense of the “non-ethnic,” the universal—thus reproducing, whether or not intentionally, the logic of imperial and imperializing culture. The long celebration of Ephesians and the understanding of Pauline theology that it represents is thus an indispensable factor in the generation and maintenance of the “Christian imagination” that Jennings so helpfully analyzes and resists.

Garroway, Joshua, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, USA
The Triumph of Paul in Portraits of Peter

Paul's legacy was crafted not only by the descriptions of his life and teachings such as one finds in the last quarter of Luke-Acts and in the deuterio-Paulines, but also by the descriptions of his colleague and adversary, Peter. This study explores early Christian deployments of Peter, as a character in the synoptic gospels and as the purported author of 1 Peter, and the extent to which these portraits cemented the authority of Paul's once rogue and reviled gospel.

Krauter, Stefan, University of Zurich, Switzerland, Faculty of Theology
The Pastoral Epistles and the Jewish Paul

The so-called Pastoral Epistles appear to have played a central role in Paul's reception in emerging Christianity. They are among the earliest texts to transform Paul's reflections on the relevance of the Jewish Torah for non-Jewish Christ-followers into something resembling the later Christian doctrine of justification. Michael Theobald has aptly called this development "forgetfulness of Israel." The lecture will show that it is necessary to differentiate between the three letters. Titus not only "forgets" Israel, but is the only one of the three letters to polemicize against "Jewish" teachers. 1 Timothy deals in a special way with the question of the law and makes Paul an example for saved sinners. 2 Timothy seems at the same time to have most thoroughly "forgotten" questions about Israel, the Torah, and Gentiles and is the letter that shows the deepest appreciation of Paul's Judaism.

Ledan, Istvan, Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary
The Image of Paul in Act's Speeches

Paul is without doubt the pivotal figure in Acts. Everyone else in the book seems to be a minor character, just as everyone else in the Luke-Gospel is a minor character alongside Jesus. In my presentation I will try to answer the question of how this key figure of the Gentile mission resembles that Paul we know from his genuine letters. I will focus on the main themes of the Act's speeches and ask whether (and to what extent) is the theologian we know from the letters recognizable in these speeches?

Lukeš, Jiří, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic, Hussite Theological Faculty
From Pharisee to Ascetic. The Shift of the Image of the Apostle Paul in the Literature of the Genre of Acts

The paper deals with the transformation of the image of the apostle Paul from the canonical Acts of the Apostles (from the 80s or 90s) to the apocryphal Acts of Paul (the four parts existed around 200). The writings and their genres will be examined primarily through the lens of socio-rhetorical criticism (where the text is perceived as a texture – V. K. Robbins) and social memory theory (Jan and Aleida Assmann, Astrid Erll). The character will be analyzed according to ancient contemporary models, and modern narrative theory (e.g., Seymour Chatman) will be used. The figures of the philosophers will be used for comparison, and the letters to the Corinthians - canonical and apocryphal - will also be compared. The paper follows a historical perspective and diachronic aspects and relies on the principles of Gadamerian hermeneutics. The

historical context traces the time of Second Temple Judaism and works with both Greek and Roman influences.

Noffke, Eric, Facoltà Valdese di Teologia, Roma, Italy
How Pauline is the Gospel of John?

Ephesus has been one of the main centers of Paul's mission, and has been also considered the birthplace of John's Gospel by ancient traditions. Paul and John never met personally, that's almost certain. But did John get in touch with the apostle's heritage in some way? Where there any traces left in the Christian communities in Ephesus, that allow us to suppose a connection between the two New Testament authors? The issue has been deeply studied in the past, without coming to a shared opinion among scholars. The aim of this paper will be to survey the scholarly debate on the subject and check if there is any new path we can follow to shed more light on this connection that can be perceived, but not focused in detail.

Paluchník, Pavel, Evangelical Theological Seminary of Prague, Czech Republic
The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Consoling Appeal to Ostracized Jewish Christians (and non-Christian Jews) in the Roman Empire?

The Epistle to the Hebrews has often been regarded as an anti-Jewish treatise in which the author aims to dissuade the addressee to return to Jewish synagogue. Recent research has showed some other plausible scenarios for interpreting the message of Hebrews in its historical context. The letter does not contain explicit anti-Jewish language. Rather, this Early Jewish-Christian homily is drawing its strength from the extensive use of Jewish Scripture using Jewish hermeneutical tools. The analysis of the relationship between the expository and hortatory parts via the author's method of syncretism (and other rhetorical, socio-rhetorical instruments) may lead us to a conclusion that the letter to the Hebrews represents a rather positive appeal to the fatigued Jewish (and probably also non-Jewish) followers of Jesus who suffered and were socially ostracized in Graeco-Roman Empire. Jesus, the true Son of God and the only High Priest is higher than any other political and religious authority of that time. If written after Jewish war in 66-70 AD, the letter represents a post-Pauline document in a new historical situation. The author's appeals could offer a consolation and vital solution for both Jewish (and non-Jewish) Christians as well as for non-Christian Jews in a Greek-Roman society after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

Sandnes, Karl Olav, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Norway
The Colossian "Philosophy" and Torah: Paul in a New Context

This is a working title. I proceed from the generally held opinion that this epistle is Pauline, but not Paul's. "Pauline" indicates a furthering and development of traditions found in the authentic letters. Many scholars have addressed the so-called "Colossian philosophy," but the role of Torah here has not been sufficiently addressed (in spite of James D. G. Dunn's commentary). I want to read Col 2:6-3:11 as perception of Paul's Torah-theology. I read this passage as a re-working of Paul's theology on Torah. Without anticipating conclusions, it seems, at the present, right to say that a genuinely Jewish issue, Torah, is here included in a philosophically motivated asceticism which paves the way for understanding Torah in a more general and stereotype way.

Tucker, J. Brian, Moody Theological Seminary, Plymouth, US
The Perception of Paul's Social Influence in the Corinthian Correspondence

Paul was part of a Jewish mission to the nations. One social implication of this mission is that existing social identities are not rendered redundant though a certain degree of transformation would need to occur. Gentiles in Christ, however, were not to become Jews. The Christ-group could appear quite Jewish to those outside the group and those inside the group likely struggled with the expected patterns of embodiment as contexts and referent groups changed. This suggests gentile identity in Christ existed in a constant state of liminality. The Corinthians Correspondence reveals some of this negotiation of identity and allows interpreters insight into some of these group processes. This paper highlights the way Paul's social influence was exercised, received, accepted, thwarted, and/or redeployed by those who thought and acted differently about the need for identity transformation.