## The Letters of Paul

The question of whether the development of the Pauline epistle collection was similar to that of other ancient epistle collections has already been answered in the affirmative in a small monograph by David Trobisch.[[1]](#footnote-1) This position was again supported and nuanced by Eric Scherbenske in his larger study on the process of the canonization of Paul’s writings in the course of the history of the various collections. [[2]](#footnote-2)

However, when asking contemporary Pauline scholars about the characteristic profile of Paul’s message, his thinking, ethics, and religious practice, the answers are usually drawn exclusively from the seven of the fourteen Pauline letters that have become canonical,[[3]](#footnote-3) namely the Epistle to the Romans, the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Epistle to the Philippians, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and the Epistle to the Philemon; whereas the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the Epistle to the Colossians, as well as the Pastoral Epistles (First and Second Epistles to Timothy, Epistle to Titus) are regarded as pseudonymous, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is only conditionally classified as part of the Pauline tradition. In terms of content, it is concluded from the seven letters that Paul believed the following:

Let Jesus be known as the Messiah long awaited by the Jews ... who had now offered freedom from sin and reconciliation with God to all people through his death and resurrection. What had begun in these two world-shaking events will soon be fulfilled in the resurrection of all who trust in Jesus and in the full realization of God’s kingdom in a redeemed creation.[[4]](#footnote-4)

But one only has to leaf through the works of one of the early readers of Paul, such as Clement of Alexandria, who stylized Paul into a “divine apostle” and “constantly quotes from his letters” to get a “considerably different *summarium*.” Clement “emphasizes the knowledge of God as the central endeavor of the Christian, the striving for perfection and the hope of ascending through the heavenly spheres to the perfect goal of the infinite contemplation of God.”[[5]](#footnote-5)[[6]](#footnote-6) These ideas are drawn precisely from those epistles whose authorship modern scholarship denies to Paul himself and instead attributes to his imitators, i.e., from the passages Col 1-2, Eph 3, Heb 5 “the emphasis on heavenly realities, the celebration of the mysteries of divine knowledge,” from Col 1:15-20 “the reflections on the pre-existence of Christ as the Creator of all,” and from Heb 4:14; 6:20 “his role as forerunner in the ascent of believers to heaven.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Clement consequently read Paul in the larger collection known to us from the canonical New Testament and drew from there the image of a Platonizing, philosophical Paul and of a Christianity that for him was “knowledge” or “gnosis” right from its beginnings, resembling more a school of philosophy than a network of church communities.

As in the case of Ignatius, a question consequently arises concerning what collections of Paul’s letters existed at the time, and what ideas of the beginnings of Christianity they convey to us.

Paul’s best-known collection of letters is, of course, found in the canonical edition of the New Testament. We do not need to go into the different placements of Paul’s letters in the various Bible manuscripts here, as this has already been addressed above. Rather, here we will focus on the different number, cut, and position of the letters within this one of the four New Testament sub-collections, to then examine how the Pauline letters existed outside the canonical collection.

In the New Testament we find the fourteen Pauline epistles just listed, namely the seven that are widely recognized as authentic by contemporary research, plus the three Deuteropaulines, the Pastoral Epistles, and finally the Epistle to the Hebrews, which does not bear Paul’s name as a sender. The order in which these letters appear in the New Testament is already found in the complete Bible codices of the 4th and 5th centuries, and is as follows: Rom, 1-2Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1-2Thess, 1-2Tim, Tit, Phlm, Heb.

An older collection of Pauline letters is attested for the time before the middle of the 2nd century for the Pauline collector and possibly editor Marcion of Sinope, namely by two authors: Epiphanius of Salamis from the 4th century and Tertullian of Carthage from the beginning of the 3rd century. It is further supported by two other witnesses, the first known as the commentator on the Syriac New Testament, Ephrem the Syrian, who is often used in research for testifying to Marcionite readings of the Gospel of Luke and the Pauline Epistles, and another Syriac witness, the *Canon* or *Catalogus Sinaiticus* from around 400 CE, which is a “mixture between an arrangement resembling that of Marcion for the prologues of the first four epistles, and an arrangement more like that of our Greek manuscripts for the rest of the epistles.”

The main witnesses for this older collection of Marcion give the following arrangement of the letters:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tertullian** | *Gal* | 1-2Cor | *Rom* | 1-2Thess | *Laod/Eph* | *Kol* | *Phil* | *Phlm* |  |  |  |  |
| **Epiphanius** | *Gal* | 1-2Cor | *Rom* | 1-2Thess | *Eph* | *Kol* | *Phlm* | *Phil* | *Load* |  |  |  |
| **Canon Sinaiticus** | *Gal* | 1-2Cor | *Rom* | *Heb* | *Kol* | *Eph* | *Phil* | *Phil* | 1-2Thess | 2Tim | *Tit* | *Phlm* |

In addition to the two collection arrangements by Tertullian and Epiphanius, there are also those that constitute variants of them. Thus, despite the close similarity of Ephrem’s collection of Pauline letters to that of Marcion, which his commentary testifies to, here the last Pauline letter following Tertullian, Phlm, is replaced by the so-called Third Epistle to the Corinthians, which we have already encountered above as part of the Acts of Paul.

### The canonical collection of the fourteen letters

Let us first take another look at the collection of Paul’s letters in the canonical New Testament. We can note some general observations before distinguishing between the various forms in which this collection is available to us: the Greek version, the Old Latin translation(s), and its revision in the late 4th century associated with the name of Jerome and the title “Vulgate,” which, however, was continuously expanded and revised over the following centuries, giving rise to a complex history of editions and corrections which has not yet been researched in detail.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The New Testament collection of Paul’s letters, which opens with Rom, followed by 1-2 Cor, and only then by Gal, conveys a distinctive profile of Paul in terms of content. In particular, the beginning and end of the canonical Rom offers “the easiest entry point” to understanding Paul and to seeing “how Paul thought of himself, who he was,” as in fact this letter has become “one of the most influential documents in Western history.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Next, interposing Phil between Eph and Col bridges the latter two, today called Deuteropaulines, via a letter that scholars consider authentic. The series of letters addressed to specific churches is concluded with 1-2Thess; the Pastoral Epistles are then added, followed by Phlm, which is today considered authentic, and the collection closes with Heb.

When comparing Marcion’s collection with the canonical one, we find that the positions of Gal and Rom are swapped, and that the Deuteropaulines Laodiceans/Eph and Col are grouped together. The position of the other epistles varies, and the direct witnesses to Marcion’s collection show that the Pastoral Epistles and Heb were missing from this collection. Neither of the two collections, however, consists exclusively of letters that are regarded as authentic by contemporary scholars; i.e., as far back as Pauline letter collections can be traced historically, we are already dealing with a version of Paul that does not correspond to that of the seven-letter collection.

Let us first consider the further collection of Paul’s letters to which the canonical New Testament bears witness.

The preface to this collection, as indicated, is Rom, which is followed by the other long letters to the various churches. By placing the letters to the churches before the letters to individuals, Paul is presented from the outset as an authority instructing this network of communities, sometimes through direct presence, but mostly through his writings from a distance. Such long-distance instruction serves to form an enduring doctrinal tradition bridging geographies and, above all, reaching across time. Within Rom itself, it is especially its opening and conclusion that introduce Paul in a self-reflective way. Right at the beginning, Rom refers to him as “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart to preach the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1), showing that Paul does not see himself as a second founder, or even the original founder of a religious movement, transmitting his own message and conviction, but rather as the servant of another, Christ Jesus, by whom he knows himself to be called as a messenger, set apart as the proclaimer of God’s gospel.[[10]](#footnote-10)

In the verses Rom 1:5-6 quoted above, he initially emphasizes that he has received “grace and apostleship” to demand “obedience of faith.” But it is not until chapter 15 of this letter that he makes his role clearer.[[11]](#footnote-11) Here he writes that Christ himself became the “minister of the circumcised to confirm the promises made to the fathers” (Rom 15:8) so that the Gentiles could “worship the God of Israel.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Paul describes himself as a “minister of Christ to the Gentiles” who “administers the gospel of God as a priest” (Rom 15:18). This is the only reference to Paul’s priesthood in the letters considered authentic and, like this priestly language in general, is described by scholars as “highly unusual.” [[13]](#footnote-13)

The context ... clearly shows that Paul solemnly presents his apostolic ministry, the proclamation of the gospel, in the image of a priestly sacrificial service ... and in the final clause v 16b Paul’s evangelism is described as a sacrificial act in which the apostle offers the Gentile nations to God as a sacrifice pleasing to him.[[14]](#footnote-14)

This language and style of thought is also unusual for Paul because at no point in his seven letters, in which he speaks of various leadership structures and offices, does he ever mention a priest or even a priestly office, not even that of a Jewish presbyter.

Furthermore, reference is repeatedly made to Rom 9-11, in which Paul describes the relationship between the Jews and those who “have become unbelievers.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Certainly, one can also refer to Rom 3,1-8 to answer the question of what the “advantage of the Jew” is (Rom 3,1), which Paul sees first and foremost in the fact that “the words of God are entrusted to him” (Rom 3,2). One may also invoke the long explanations in Rom 6,1-8,39, in which Paul commands to put oneself “at the service of righteousness” (Rom 6,19), knowing, however, that to achieve this, one has become free from the law (cf. Rom 7,6). But it becomes clear that “these three chapters,” Rom 9-11, “form a self-contained train of thought,”[[16]](#footnote-16) which is why some scholars were even of the opinion that these chapters could sensibly “also be read without the rest of the letter,” or indeed that conversely “the letter could be read without a break if these three chapters were omitted.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

These three chapters, however, cast the beginnings of Christianity as already harboring a fundamental tension between, on the one hand, the Jews, who have been entrusted with the word of God and know themselves to be under the law, and, on the other hand, those whom Paul calls the “unbelievers.” However, this tension is alleviated precisely in Rom 9-11, where Paul both gives expression to Israel’s lasting calling (Rom 11:2: “God has not cast away his people”) and calls the conscience of those who follow Christ to modesty (Rom 11:18: “It is not you who carry the root, but the root that carries you”).

The discussion that follows in Galatians (after 1-2 Corinthians) is therefore already placed in a context in which the relationship between the circumcised and the uncircumcised has been fundamentally discussed and brought to a mediated solution by Paul.

We cannot here go into the details of the picture that the canonical collection of Paul’s letters paints of the beginnings of Christianity; still, we shall briefly address the question of how Paul, as far as can be ascertained from this collection, represents them.

It has long been noted that Paul has no “interest in the narratives and words of Jesus” as they are reported to us in the Gospels.[[18]](#footnote-18) However, this phenomenon has been mostly looked at in the context of the broader problematic of continuity vs. non-continuity between Jesus and Paul, a question that has received very different answers from the most famous New Testament scholars. While Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976)[[19]](#footnote-19) has a rather minimalist understanding of this continuity,[[20]](#footnote-20) Ernst Käsemann (1906–98) sees stronger connections,[[21]](#footnote-21) Werner Georg Kümmel (1905­–95) allows for even more links,[[22]](#footnote-22) and Joachim Jeremias (1900–79) assumes a pronounced continuity.[[23]](#footnote-23) Thus, let us at least briefly address this issue.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Since in Gal 1,11-16 Paul recounts how fiercely he fought the church, Bultmann concludes that he must have been concerned with its tradition in order to have been informed and motivated enough to oppose it (cf. Phil 3,4-6; 2Cor 11,22); according to Bultmann, Paul reproduces this knowledge of church tradition in his letters, namely that the churches were critical of the law,[[25]](#footnote-25) and believed that God had raised the crucified Jesus of Nazareth and made him the Messiah who would come to pass judgment and bring salvation.[[26]](#footnote-26) However, the scholar points out that this belief is no longer simply based on the gospel, but represents a myth of Christ that goes beyond Jesus’ own message. When Paul speaks of Christ here, he is not thinking of the historical personality of Jesus, but of the pre-existent Christ.[[27]](#footnote-27) Furthermore, he adds that in his letters, Paul does not attribute these contents to human knowledge or church experience, but exclusively to revelation (Gal 1,1.11f). [[28]](#footnote-28)

In his letters, Paul does not give the impression that he physically met the historical Jesus.[[29]](#footnote-29) Indeed, in Gal 1,22 he says, “but to the churches of Christ in Judea I remained personally unknown.” Thus he does not seem to have stayed in Jerusalem for any length of time, nor to have been trained by Gamaliel, even though Acts claims both.[[30]](#footnote-30) Paul reports little about Jesus himself. According to him, Jesus was born of a Jewish woman (Gal 4:4; cf. Rom 1:3), not adding any extraordinary information about a virgin or a virgin birth. He also states that Jesus had James as a brother and apostle (Gal 1:19), as well as some disciples, Peter and the Twelve (1Cor 15:5), that he was crucified (Gal 3:1; 1Cor 2:2 etc.), and that he rose from the dead (1Cor 15 etc.), where specifically the cross and the resurrection are mentioned as “eschatological, not historical events.” He transmits just four of Jesus’ sayings, the first three of which are in one and the same letter, the First Epistle to the Corinthians:[[31]](#footnote-31)

1Cor 7:10-11: “10 To those who are married I do not command, but the Lord: the wife must not separate from the husband 11 – but if she separates, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband – and the husband must not put away the wife.”

1Cor 9:14: “14 So also the Lord commanded those who preach the gospel to live by the gospel.”

1Cor 11:23-25: “23 For I received from the Lord what I then delivered to you: The Lord Jesus took bread on the night he was delivered up, 24 said the prayer of thanksgiving, and broke the bread, saying, ‘This is my body for you. Do this in remembrance of me!’ 25 Likewise, after the meal, he took the cup and said, ‘This cup is the New Covenant in my blood. As often as you drink from it, do this in remembrance of me.’”

1Thess 4,15-17: “15 For this we say to you according to a word of the Lord: We, the living who are left at the coming of the Lord, will have nothing ahead of those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven when the command goes forth, the archangel calls, and the trumpet of God sounds. First those who have died in Christ will rise; 17 then we, the living who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds into the air to meet the Lord. Then we will always be with the Lord.”

Paul’s statement in 1Cor 7,25, “but as for the unmarried, I have no commandment from the Lord,” seems to imply that he refers to relevant sayings of the Lord whenever he has knowledge of them; but in view of the narrow tradition he leaves us of Jesus’ words, his knowledge may have been very limited. We may note that the first two sayings have a practical, ethical orientation, and that especially the first quotation establishes the closest documented connection between Paul’s and Jesus’ interpretations of the law.[[32]](#footnote-32) The next saying is the only one that recalls a historical act performed by Jesus, namely the Lord’s Supper “on the night he was delivered up.” Paul here demonstrates knowledge of a part of the story of the Passion of Jesus, without us being able to tell in how far he knew further details. The last saying is different in character, offering an apocalyptic outlook on the Second Coming of the Lord, which Paul expects to take place during his lifetime.

Even though a number of other passages in Paul echo the Gospels, his silence about Jesus’ childhood, baptism, miracles, and parables, as well as about the life and work of the disciples both during Jesus’ lifetime and at the beginnings of the church[[33]](#footnote-34) is unmistakable; the small amount of knowledge Paul does convey has been found to be “astonishing”[[34]](#footnote-35) and “embarrassingly scanty.”[[35]](#footnote-36)

As far as the evidence of his letters is concerned, we must say that he (Paul) had little or no interest in him (the historical Jesus), and that in this respect Bultmann’s judgment seems indisputable, according to which Paul was concerned about the *that,* but not about the *what of* Jesus’ existence.[[36]](#footnote-37)

The reasons for this given since Ferdinand Christian Baur, namely that Paul’s joining of the Jesus movement was based on a revelation of Christ rather than an encounter with the historical Jesus, and that he also might have had little access to the Jesus traditions of the Jerusalem community due to his rather strained relationship with it, may be convincing to a certain extent.[[37]](#footnote-38) On the other hand, first, because of his eschatological expectation of the Second Coming of the Lord, he seems more inclined to look forward in time rather than backwards; and second, we can see from his letters that even his persecution, which he describes as historical, required direct contact with the movement, which he does report – including that with Jerusalem and the local authorities.

Rather, it becomes clear from the retrospective that in research, the entire tradition of what is assumed to exist in the canonical Gospels[[38]](#footnote-39) and Paul’s letters is usually already read as indicative of this view. According to what has been said so far, one might conversely assume that in the groups of Jesus-followers in contact with Paul, there was little more information and interest in the past beyond what he himself demonstrates, and that only the growing distance from the historical events and reduced expectations of Jesus’ immediate return gradually engendered a desire to reach backwards rather than forwards and look at the historical beginnings of one’s own movement. However, this is contradicted by the fact that not even the Acts of the Apostles were regarded as a historical document by its first readers, but were instead read as an anti-Heretical apology.

However, we can gather from Paul’s letters that he presents the followers of Jesus as an identifiable group whom he has persecuted harshly, saying more about himself than about Jesus and those whom he persecuted:

5 I was circumcised on the eighth day, I am of Israel’s lineage, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, according to the law a Pharisee; 6 I zealously pursued the church and was blameless when measured by the righteousness required by the law. (Phil 4:5-6)

22 They are Hebrews ­– so am I. They are Israelites – so am I. They are descendants of Abraham – so am I. (2Cor 11,22)

Even though Paul later commits himself to this church, this does not seem to lead to changing his self-assessment of being a “Hebrew,” an “Israelite,” a “descendant of Abraham,” or blameless when measured against the righteousness required by the law.

Since the major church epistles are bound into one collection with the Deuteropaulines, we may ask how the picture of the beginnings of Christianity expands if we first look at Eph, 2Thess, and Col in particular before adding the so-called Pastoral Epistles.

Eph is an overall “puzzling,”[[39]](#footnote-40) “difficult” letter.[[40]](#footnote-41) It takes up several themes from the preceding Gal, offering a continuation and deepening of these thoughts, such as the prominent role of God’s Spirit in our salvation, that the elect are to become His sons, or that the people will be God’s inheritance. While these important thoughts are taken up immediately after the greeting address of Eph 1:3-14,[[41]](#footnote-42) the hymn also goes far beyond Gal. Here these ideas are extended into prehistory: even “before the foundation of the world he chose us to live holy and blameless before him. He predestined us in advance out of love” (Eph 1:4-5). Also “the mystery of his will ... he has graciously determined in advance" (Eph 1:9). Even the believers’ calling as heirs was “predestined according to the plan of him who brings all things to pass as he determines in his will” (Eph 1:11). “In His beloved Son” this pre-determined calling took place (Eph 1:6). The concept of predestination runs through this hymn like a refrain, as if the author knew that he was introducing an important new theme against the backdrop of the previous epistles. What is important to our context is that thereby the history of Jesus’ followers is traced back not only to the prophetic announcement in the Jewish scriptures, but is moved further back, before David and Abraham, into the antediluvian Christ, and thus into the foreseeing and planning will of God Himself; and this conceptual shift will not fail to have its effect, as we have seen among others in Gregory of Tours, Orosius, and Eusebius.

In the further course of Eph, too, themes are echoed that have already been encountered in the earlier letters and in part widely discussed, especially the relationship between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, which was considered in Rom 9-11 and elaborated in Gal. Eph dresses the theme up in other images, no longer making reference to a trunk and grafted branch as does Rom, but instead clarifying the case using the example of building a house or obtaining the citizenship of a city:

14 ... He united the two parts and tore down the dividing wall of enmity in his flesh ... 19 So now you are no longer strangers and without citizenship, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household. 20 You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. 21 In him the whole structure is held together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 Through him you also are being built into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (*Eph* 2:14-22)

Eph is linked editorially and literarily with the following Phil, for the latter likewise opens with the greeting formula in which both Paul and Timothy are introduced as “servants of Jesus Christ” and senders. This double naming also occurs in other Pauline letters, namely in 2Cor, 1-2Thess, and Phlm, i.e., in both letters attributed to Paul and those regarded as inauthentic. However, Timothy also refers to Acts via the collection of Pauline letters, where he plays a significant role as Paul’s companion.

Strikingly, although Acts’ last mention of Timothy reports that he was with Paul, among others, when the latter planned to travel from Greece via Macedonia to Asia Minor, it does not declare that they would stay in Ephesus (Acts 20:3-5). This information can only be gleaned from the present collection of Paul’s letters, where in 1Tim Paul writes of Timothy that he “asked him to stay in Ephesus to warn the brothers against false teachers” (1Tim 1,3). What these false teachers might have preached can be deduced from Timothy’s profile, as according to Acts, he formed the model “case” for casting Paul in the role of bringing the circumcised and uncircumcised together in one house:

1 He (Paul) also came to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, there lived a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewess and a Greek. 2 He had been recommended to Paul by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to take him with him as a companion and had him circumcised in consideration of the Jews who lived in those regions, for all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 Now as they passed through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, and charged them to keep them. (Acts 16:1-4)

Timothy is clearly associated here with the so-called Apostles’ Council and the question of circumcision. He is said to come from a mixed family with a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and while he is Jewish by law by virtue of his mother, he is not circumcised.[[42]](#footnote-43) Paul is said to have had Timothy circumcised “with regard to the Jews;” thus he is not portrayed as the uncompromising figure as which he portrays himself in Gal, and this despite the fact that the Jews “stirred up and incited the people,” Paul had to save himself to the sea, was taken to Athens for safety, and Timothy was sent after him with Silas (Acts 17:13-15). Finally, Paul reports towards the end of 1Thess that from Athens he sent “Timothy, our brother and God’s co-worker in the gospel of Christ” as a scout and messenger to the Thessalonians to “strengthen them and build them up in the faith” (1Thess 3,2):

5 For this reason I could bear it no longer; I sent Timothy to learn about your faith, whether the tempter had not led you into temptation and our efforts had been in vain. 6 But in the meantime Timothy has come back to us from you, bringing us good news of your faith and love, also that you always keep us in good remembrance and long to see us, just as we also long to see you. (1Th 3:5-6)

The opening of Phil in conjunction with that of Eph and the other epistles in which Timothy is given as the epistolary author along with Paul support the picture that Acts paints of these two as harmonizing and integrating figures. Such a role is further substantiated by the Pastoral Epistles, where Paul is in direct contact with Timothy, calling him “his true child in the faith” (1Tim 1:2) and “his beloved child” (2Tim 1:2), seems to know the Jewish part of Timothy’s family when he speaks of the “sincere faith” that “was already alive in your grandmother Loïs and in your mother Eunice” (2Tim 1,5), and makes such detailed requests of him that they may convince the reader of the historicity of what is written:

9 Make haste to come to me soon. 10 For Demas has left me for the love of this world and has gone to Thessalonica, Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Luke is the only one with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you; for he is useful to me for service. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the mantle I left at Troas with Carpus, also the books, especially the parchments! (2Tim 4:9-13).

The fact that Paul names Luke as the only one who has stayed with him shows his special closeness to the ascribed author of Acts, and immediately placing Mark beside him and describing him as “useful” creates another bridge to the Petrine tradition as well as a connection with Mk. Further, the reference to books and parchments points to the learned environment in which Paul moves along with the others mentioned, especially the letter’s addressee, Timothy. David Trobisch interprets “Carpus,” the name of the man with whom Paul left not only the cloak but also books and parchments, to refer to Polycarp, and even sees it as a hidden reference to the author of the Pastoral Epistles and editor of Paul’s letters. After all, Heb knows “that our brother Timothy has been released; as soon as he comes, I will visit you together with him” (Heb 13:23). Thus the last letter in the Pauline epistle collection contributes further to our knowledge of Timothy’s closeness to Paul. Timothy also shares the fate of arrest with his eminent brother Paul. And just as he sent to Timothy to the Thessalonians, Paul also intended to send him to the Philippians, as he writes in Phil:[[43]](#footnote-44)

19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be encouraged when I learn how you are doing. 20 For I have no one like-minded who is so sincerely concerned about your cause; 21 for all seek their own advantage, not what is Jesus Christ’s. 22 You know how he proved himself: As a child to his father – so he has served the gospel with me. 23 This, then, I hope to send as soon as I overlook my situation. (Phil 2:19-23)

On the other hand, Timothy is also considered Paul’s trustee, even though he does not seem to possess Paul’s dynamism. Thus, Paul must advocate for him in 1Cor 16:10-11: “10 When Timothy comes, take care that you do not discourage him, for he labors in the service of the Lord as I do. 11 Let no one hold him in low esteem.” This is clarified in 1 Timothy 5:23 by depicting him as prone to sickness: “Don’t just drink water, but take some wine too, with consideration for your stomach and your frequent illnesses!” Nevertheless, towards the end of the letter Paul appears to see him as the right custodian of the faith in the face of the false interpretations that research has often associated with gnosis and Marcion: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you! Keep away from the ungodly babblings and the antitheses of what is falsely called knowledge!” (1Tim 6,20)

What is exemplified here, and could equally be demonstrated in other places, is the fact that the letters comprising Paul’s epistle collection in the canonical New Testament are interwoven among themselves in many ways and, beyond this collection, are also connected to the broader textual framework, especially Acts and the Gospels of Luke and Mark.

Let us now take a special look at the sub-collection of Pauline epistles referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. We have just seen how they give color, historical detail, and personal closeness to Acts and the Pauline letters. They also outline Paul’s ethical and religious thinking and put it in a different light, which is why the New Testament scholar Harry Maier calls the Pastoral Epistles the “most dramatic treatment of Paul in the New Testament.”[[44]](#footnote-45) In Maier’s and several other researchers’ opinion, they make use of a double pseudonymity,[[45]](#footnote-46) in that they reinvent on a literary level not only Paul, but also Timothy and Titus, to whom these letters are addressed[[46]](#footnote-47) as a kind of testament. However, scholars still puzzle over the real nature of the pastoral letters, as on the one hand, this kind of pseudepigraphy is “far from what can be called accepted scholastic pseudepigraphy, but rather belongs to literary forgery with an intention to deceive that was also negatively judged in antiquity,” and on the other hand, the question arises “why they were written and to whom they were addressed.”[[47]](#footnote-48)

While past research has largely been concerned with questions of authenticity and dating of the Pastoral Epistles and the suggestion has been made that each of the three letters should be interpreted more strongly based on its “own profile and claim,”[[48]](#footnote-49) the importance of the collection contexts has also been pointed out,[[49]](#footnote-50) as well as the validity reading the Pastoral Epistles as a trilogy that was created “‘in the course of a new edition of the previous corpus’ of the Pauline Epistles and was also disseminated via such a new edition – now expanded to include its own corpus.”[[50]](#footnote-51) Like in this approach, the aim here is to start from the historical appearance and effect of these letters.

As the collection contexts of the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Alexandrinus* show,[[51]](#footnote-52) the Pastoral Epistles are placed in the order 1-2Tim, Tit[[52]](#footnote-53) and come after Paul’s letters addressed to the various churches; they are followed by Phlm, a letter addressed to an individual. Thus we find the Pastoral Epistles as part of the letters to individuals in the larger collection of Paul’s letters, which “in many manuscripts of the Byzantine Recension is titled on the flyleaf before the Epistle to the Romans:” “Fourteen Letters of Paul,”[[53]](#footnote-54) one of the four collection units that make up the New Testament of the early great Bible editions.

Among others, however, they are also clearly directed against such persons who, as the preceding testimonies prove, read Paul as a radical ascetic, “confounding whole houses” (Tit 1,11), “creeping into houses and capturing certain women who are ruled by sins and driven by lusts of all kinds, women who are always learning and yet can never come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Tim 3,6-7). These letters “forbid marriage and require abstinence from certain foods” (1Tim 4,3). Already Maier recognized the connection between these opponents of the Pastoral Epistles and the positions found in the Acts of Paul.[[54]](#footnote-55) But he goes beyond this by following the older position of Hans von Campenhausen, who considered “Marcion to be the actual (though not the only) opponent” addressed in these letters.[[55]](#footnote-56) 1Tim 6,20 might allude to the latter’s preface to his New Testament, called Antitheses, when it speaks of the “antitheses of the falsely called Gnosis.” Because the texts also rebut the preoccupation with myths (1Tim 1,4; 4,7; 2Tim 4,4; Tit 1,14) and genealogies (1Tim 1,4; Tit 3,9), which were of no concern to Marcion, one may assume that the text also answers to other opponents, such as the “Gnostic” representatives of genealogical systems, who were exposed and attacked by Irenaeus among others.[[56]](#footnote-57) Tit, however, specifies that Paul’s adversaries are “mostly people of the circumcision” (Tit 1,10), i.e., mostly but not exclusively Jews.

While the Pastoral Epistles do not offer us a picture of the development of the young movement as we have found it above all in Acts, they still place Paul in a world from which he is no longer eschatologically distanced, as he remains for example in 1Cor 7,29-31. On the contrary, he is concerned about the teaching being passed on in the right tradition:

1 So then, my son, be strong in the grace given you in Christ Jesus. 2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who are able to teach others also. (2Tim 2,1-2)

And:

1 But proclaim what is in accordance with sound doctrine. 2 Let the older men be sober, respectable, prudent, strong in faith, in love, in endurance. 3 In the same way, let the older women be dignified in their conduct, not slanderous and not drunkards; they must be able to teach what is good, 4 so that they may urge the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be prudent, respectable, domestic, kind, obedient to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be brought into disrepute. (Titus 2:1-5)

While we are reminded of the “blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), an “appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which shall show us in his time the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in a light to which no one can come, whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:14-16), a coming of Christ Jesus “to judge the living and the dead” (2 Tim 4:1), yet “there is no sense of near expectation or eschatological tension” in the Pastoral Epistles.[[57]](#footnote-58) Furthermore, it has been shown that the Pastoral Epistles do not acknowledge other theological themes that we find in the canonical form of the Pauline letters (for example, the importance of Israel), and it also seems likely that they knew the short version of the Epistle to the Romans (without chapters 15-16) attested for Marcion’s ten-letter collection.[[58]](#footnote-59)

### The Ten-Letter Collection

Let us return to the Pauline epistle collection in its whole historical complexity. Having looked in more detail at the fourteen-letter collection of the canonical New Testament, we shall now turn to the ten-letter collection as found in Marcion’s earlier version.

Let us first consider the epistles included in the collection and their arrangement. As we have already established, according to the mutually consistent witnesses Tertullian and Epiphanius, this collection contained the following letters in this order: Gal, 1-2Cor, Rom, 1-2Thess, Laod (called Eph in the fourteen-letter collection[[59]](#footnote-60)), Col, Phil, Phlm. Only the position of the last two letters is not attested consistently: according to Epiphanius, Phlm comes before Phil. He might have rearranged the letters in this way because of the related contents of Col and Phlm, even if this arrangement did not reflect the older order. Modern research therefore often comments on Col and Phlm in a joint form. An example are the introductory words of James D.G. Dunn’s commentary on Col:

Colossians can rightly be called the most fascinating Pauline letter. Primarily because it forms the bridge between the undisputed Paulines and the pieces of the Pauline corpus that are generally regarded as deuteropaulinic. That is, on the one hand, it is surprisingly close in many respects to Ephesians, whose deuteropaulinic authorship is supported by a broad consensus in Pauline scholarship. But at the same time, his Christology and ecclesiology in particular are clearly less developed than in Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles. In a deutero-Pauline perspective, Colossians would have to be placed very close to the beginning. On the other hand, some details place it very close to Philemon, whose authorship of Paul has rarely been doubted in the course of the history of Christianity. And yet, at the same time, his Christology and ecclesiology, and also the paraenesis, seem to be considerably advanced beyond what is found in the undoubted Paulines.[[60]](#footnote-61)

Consequently, there is much to be said in favor of the sequence attested by Epiphanius, in which Eph, Col, and Phlm stand in sequence. Finally, Epiphanius exhibits another peculiarity when he both names Eph and then refers to Laod at the end of his commentary, whereas Tertullian claims that Marcion knew Eph as Laod.

Since in contrast to the fourteen-letter collection, in which Phil precedes Col, in the ten-letter collection to be discussed here Col immediately follows Laod, the referent of its explicit mention not only of Laodicea, but also of a “letter from Laodicea” is evident. With the invitation to also read Col to the church in Laodicea, a direct connection is made to the preceding Laod, which is addressed precisely to this community. Moreover, this passage in Col refers to the practice of reading letters out loud to different audiences and to the exchange of letters between Christian congregations, which endows Col with a certain authority and significance. Accordingly, considering Col and Laod (as Eph) together in research is not just a modern perspective,[[61]](#footnote-62) even if today Col is considered to be the older text:[[62]](#footnote-63)

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. 15 Greet the brothers in Laodicea, also Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when the letter has been read to you, see to it that it is also read to the church at Laodicea, and that you also read the one from Laodicea! (Col 4:14-16)

According to this passage, Col is to be read in Laodicea, which is located just 16 kilometers from Colossae.[[63]](#footnote-64) The passage begins with a reference to Luke, which could be seen to establish a connection to Acts and Lk. However, since these two writings are not present in the Marcionite collection of the New Testament, it is not surprising that Tertullian’s commentary on the Col of the ten-letter collection only goes as far as Col 3,10.[[64]](#footnote-65) The connection that Col 3,11-4,17 draws to Acts and Lk is therefore most likely the result of a later editorial treatment of this letter, which also inserted the name of Timothy in Col 1,1, conspicuously missing from Col 4,18. This shows that the Pauline epistle collection was probably expanded the same way as were the Ignatians, revising all existing epistles in the process – a topic that shall return to below with an example.

Let us move back to the beginning of the collection. Tertullian’s commentary explicitly shows that Marcion’s collection began with the Epistle to the Galatians (mGal = version of Gal in Marcion’s collection of ten epistles), and thus precisely with Paul’s challenging attribution of the source of his authority to neither the other apostles, nor to a church, nor an institution, but to Jesus Christ alone: “Paul, called to be an apostle, not by men or through a man, but through Jesus Christ” (mGal 1:1).[[65]](#footnote-66) As already indicated by Tertullian and made even clearer by Jerome, Marcion’s Gal did not contain the phrase “and through God the Father, who raised him from the dead” that follows “Christ” in the canonical text.[[66]](#footnote-67) Since the reference to Jesus’ being a descendant of David is not attested for Marcion and was most likely missing from his copy of Rom,[[67]](#footnote-68) the beginning of Rom agrees in several ways with the opening of Gal. Both beginnings are Christ-centered, confirming that Paul is an apostle, adding in Rom 1:1 that he was “called” as one. Finally, according to Tertullian, Marcion’s Rom 1:2 also seems to have read differently from the canonical Rom, which, as already noted above, establishes the connection to the prophets and the Jewish scriptures right at the beginning of the fourteen-letter collection: “1 Paul, slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart to preach the gospel of God, 2 which he promised in advance through his prophets in sacred writings” (Rom 1:1-2). In contrast, according to Tertullian, Marcion’s copy seems to have stated that Paul had been set apart and called to preach the gospel that God proclaimed in Christ – that is, not in the prophets and the Jewish Scriptures: “1 Paul, (slave of Christ Jesus), called to be an apostle, set apart to preach the gospel of God, 2 which he proclaimed in Christ” (Rom 1:1-2).[[68]](#footnote-69)

The absence of reference to the prophets and the Jewish Scriptures is consistent with the position otherwise reported by Marcion, according to which he compiled his New Testament as a deliberate antithesis to the Old Testament, the validity of which he limited to Judaism. Instead, mGal opens his collection of the letters in which Paul most clearly articulated his position of not circumcising the uncircumcised who turn to the gospel. He saw the opposing position as an apostasy from the gospel and a reversion to the dominance of the law. According to Marcion, “the prophets and the law applied only up to John (the Baptist),”[[69]](#footnote-70) which Tertullian points out at the very beginning of his commentary on the Pauline text witnessed by Marcion, a quotation from Marcion’s Gospel text (Mcn 16,16).[[70]](#footnote-71)

This collection of ten Pauline letters thus offers us a very different idea of the beginnings of Christianity, opening neither with the history of Israel as does the fourteen-letter collection,[[71]](#footnote-72) nor with its creator God, nor with the prophets, nor with David, but rather with an unknown God. Such a beginning is most reminiscent of the pre-existence of the Logos in John, to which this gospel has moved the origin of Jesus’ history. But Marcion’s idea that the beginning of everything leads back before the Creator and creation to a “new and unknown God,” a “foreign God” and “an exotic divinity” (“novus et ignotus deus;” “alius deus;” “peregrina divinitas”) goes beyond this gospel.[[72]](#footnote-73) Marcion’s new deity did not bring creation or history into being, since these were fabricated by an inferior demiurge, as described in the “Old Testament.” In order to save man, who is caught up in this very creation and history, God unexpectedly and suddenly breaks into these directly to reveal himself as Savior – a Christ who must not be confused with the political Christ that the Jews expect from their Creator God.

The history of Christianity, according to Marcion’s New Testament with its one Gospel and Ten Pauline Epistles, in which neither Acts nor the Catholic Epistles nor Rev were to be found, begins with the unknown God and his unforeseen revelation in Christ, who replaces the “old law” with his “new edict.” Tertullian summarizes Marcion’s preface to his New Testament thus:

Marcion asserts that the Christ revealed by an unknown God in the time of Tiberius is different from the one appointed by the Creator God to restore the Jewish state, and who is only to come one day. Between these two he draws the gulf of opposition as wide and as general as between strictly just and benevolent, between law and gospel, between Judaism and Christianity.[[73]](#footnote-74)

While for Marcion the demiurge of creation and the founder of political history is “strictly just,” the true God, unknown before his revelation, is “benevolent.” Probably from Paul, but also from the message of the Beatitudes, Marcion must have deduced the contrast between the demiurge who revealed and imposed the law on the Jews, and the true Christ of the unknown God who brought the “new edict” of the Gospel –etymologically a “Eu-angelion,” a good message or, also, an angel’s message. According to Marcion, this difference also gave rise to the contrast between “Judaism” and “Christianity.” Here – probably for the first time in the history of Christianity, as far as we know – a clear distinction is drawn between the two as opposing institutions or “schools of religion.”[[74]](#footnote-75)

As much as Tertullian adopts the Pauline-Marcionite idea of the newness of Christianity and also takes up the criticism of the Law, he rejects the radical distancing between Judaism and Christianity as he reads it in Marcion, and as he could have read it likewise in Marcion’s contemporary Aristides of Athens and his Apology. Just like after the mid second century, Justin and Irenaeus wanted to hold on to the inheritance of Israel and saw the coming of Christ prefigured in the prophets of the “Old Testament,” Tertullian did not want to distinguish between a God of the Christians and one of the Jews, nor between a Christ of the Christians and one of the Jews. [[75]](#footnote-76)

Tertullian reads Marcion’s collection of Pauline letters as highlighting Paul’s sole authority. According to him, in the first letter of this collection, mGal, Paul unjustly criticizes all other apostles and authority figures as having failed to recognize the coming of God in Christ, the great prophet and teacher. Tertullian counters this argument by making it clear that it is, on the one hand, a question of sources, where one may take as a basis, as Tertullian did, the canonical New Testament of the four Gospels and the fourteen Pauline Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation, or, like Marcion did, the New Testament of the one Gospel and the ten Pauline Epistles. On the other hand, it is also a question of which tradition could be relied upon. Was it that of the twelve apostles, first and foremost James, Peter, and John, whose writings Tertullian believed he had read, or was it exclusively that of Paul as the only guarantor of revelation, as Marcion read it in his New Testament – after all, both the Pauline Epistles and his Gospel offered ample evidence that first and foremost Peter, but also all the other apostles, failed repeatedly, misinterpreted Jesus, and Peter in particular even denied Jesus in the end. Peter also turned out to be a turncoat towards Paul, so that Paul “resisted him to his face” (Gal 2:11) and left him along with Barnabas to go his own missionary ways.

If Tertullian refers precisely to the tradition of the churches founded by these apostles and connects with them the Gospels, Acts, the Catholic letters, Paul’s fourteen-letter collection, and Rev,[[76]](#footnote-77) it becomes all the more clear what a different story of the beginnings of Christianity Marcion’s New Testament of the one Gospel and Paul’s ten-letter collection tells. This holds true whether Marcion merely compiled and used it, and as the oldest collection, it was called the “New Testament” to suit his conception,[[77]](#footnote-78) as some scholars think,[[78]](#footnote-79) or whether as I suggest, he wrote the Gospel himself and put it into a biographical form on the basis of Paul’s letters and the oral traditions about Jesus of Nazareth which he had collected in the absence of an older written version.

### The development of letter collections

“The only Paul we have is the one that was read by later readers.”[[79]](#footnote-80) However, if we reconsider David Trobisch’s observations on the development of epistle collections in antiquity and the nuanced confirmation his theses have received from our consideration of the Ignatiana, we may assume that the Pauline epistle collection did not put a single Paul before his later readerships. We most likely have to expect a similar development process – one which projects different profiles of Paul depending on the collection. While texts and collections were not amorphous or fluid, neither were they were rigid; rather, they were being supplemented with new letters by further authors and editors, and the existing stock was textually edited and repeatedly brought together into a new structure.

Building on Trobisch, we may assume that the first collection of these letters might have been compiled by either Paul or one of his followers,[[80]](#footnote-81) unless one accepts a radical critique and, in analogy to the Ignatiana, fundamentally assumes a pseudonymy of these texts as well.[[81]](#footnote-82) However, one argument against such a pseudonymy of the letters considered authentic in research is the fact that one can distinguish between the seven letters that today tend to be attributed to Paul and the Deuteropaulines (Eph, Col, 2Thess), which in turn can be differentiated from the Pastoral Epistles. The fact that Marcion already knew the seven plus three letters in an early version, to which the Pastoral Epistles were evidently not yet attached, and that one can detect a redaction process, as above with Col and below with Rom and 1Cor, at the stage of adding the Pastoral Epistles, speaks for the view that at least an early form of the seven letters can be assigned to the historical Paul.

We may therefore assume that Paul not only wrote the hitherto mostly undisputed letters, but perhaps also produced a first collection. The following note in 2Petr has often been claimed as evidence for this:[[82]](#footnote-83)

14 Therefore, beloved, who expect this, strive to be met by him without blemish or fault in peace! 15 And consider the patience of our Lord as your salvation. This also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom given to him; 16 it is in all his epistles where he speaks of it. In them some things are hard to understand, and the ignorant, who are not yet established, will pervert these passages as they do the rest of the Scriptures to their own destruction. (2Petr 3:14-16)

The phrase “all his epistles” suggests that a collection of letters already existed at the time 2Petr was written. Unfortunately we cannot exactly date the latter, and it remains unclear why it makes reference to Paul; however, there is now sufficient evidence to argue that 2Petr constitutes a response to the Apocalypse of Peter, which has recently been dated to around 150 AD, and must therefore have been written later.[[83]](#footnote-84) However, the text is deliberately backdated to imply that it was written just after the first generation of Christians, on which the author looks back. In the same breath, it turns against people who find the absence of Christ’s return (expected by Paul during his lifetime) problematic, as the verses immediately preceding the ones just quoted show:

1 This is already the second letter, beloved, which I am writing to you. In both of them I want to call to mind your clear understanding and remind you: 2 Remember the words spoken in advance by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour which your apostles handed down to you. 3 Know this above all things: In the last days scoffers will come, mocking, following their own lusts, 4 saying, Where is his promised coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things remain as they were from the beginning of creation. 5 Those who say this overlook the fact that there were once heavens and an earth, which came into being out of the water and endured through the water at the word of God. 6 Through this the world of that time was flooded by water and perished. 7 But the present heavens and earth were saved for the fire by the same word. They are being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But this one thing, beloved, shall not be hidden from you, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord of promise does not delay, as some think, who talk of delay, but he is patient with you, because he does not want any to perish, but that all may come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a clatter, the elements will dissolve into fire, and the earth and the works upon it will be found no more. 11 When all this dissolves in this way: How holy and devout you must then live, 12 awaiting and hastening the coming of the day of God! In that day the heavens will burst into flame and the elements will melt in fire. 13 According to his promise, we expect a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. (2Petr 3:1-13)

The letter explicitly refers to a first letter from the same sender to the same addressees,[[84]](#footnote-85) even if the latter group is not as clearly defined here as it is in the preserved 1Petr.[[85]](#footnote-86) The addressee group of 2Petr may, however, have been left vague intentionally with a view to the deliberate pseudonymous linking of 2Petr with 1Petr.[[86]](#footnote-87) Research cites a number of reasons to regard the two letters as stemming from different authors.[[87]](#footnote-88)

As the text makes clear, the author seeks to substantiate his ideas both via the Petrine and the Pauline tradition. Combining these two quite different currents of thought,[[88]](#footnote-89) he aims to counter the “scoffers” who taunt the early Christians about the absence of a Second Coming of the Lord. Their argument seems to have been weighty enough for the author to restate it in this letter. It is not very convincing when Wolfgang Schrage, in his commentary on 2Petr, tries to deny that this absence did not “play a role for the first Christians,” when the text speaks of the opposite.[[89]](#footnote-90)

According to this reasoning, the criticism refers not only to the absence of the coming of Christ, but also to the fact that nothing particularly “new” has occurred in the world at large. How much is at stake around this “newness” is shown by the quotation at the end in which the author refers to the promised, expected future “new heaven” and the “new earth,” and commands that neither the arrival nor the future occurrence of the new should be calculated.

This theme of the absence of the Second Coming is reminiscent of the *Epistula Apostolorum* discussed above. A parallel to the Pastoral Epistles is the emphasis on the apostolic teaching tradition.[[90]](#footnote-91) According to our retrospective approach, we can ask when 2Petr was first read and discussed. However, the letter is not mentioned in the *Canon Muratori,* whose date in itself is disputed.[[91]](#footnote-92) It is also not explicitly listed in Eusebius of Caesarea along with the writings of the New Testament, which Clement of Alexandria interpreted in his “Hypotyposes” towards the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century.[[92]](#footnote-93) In fact, this letter is also missing “in the extant commentaries of Clement.”[[93]](#footnote-94) One of the earliest witnesses – despite being difficult to locate in time – seems to be, as mentioned, the Apocalypse of Peter, which scholars date before or around the middle of the 2nd century because of its possible allusion to the Jewish rebel Bar Kokhba.[[94]](#footnote-95) Later, around the middle of the 3rd century, Origen shows knowledge of the text. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, he was critical of it, as Eusebius’ quote from fifth book of Origen’s commentary on John shows:

Peter, on whom is built the Church of Christ, which shall not be overcome by the gates of hell, left only one generally acknowledged letter. He may have left a second, but it is doubted.[[95]](#footnote-96)

However, since another note by Origen states that he considers both Epistles of Peter to be reputable works,[[96]](#footnote-97) Eusebius might have put his teacher at his service, since he himself considered 2Petr to be “un-Petrine”[[97]](#footnote-98) and “controversial,” even though he admits that “it is held in high esteem by most.”[[98]](#footnote-99) Indeed, he was also known to various authors of the 3rd century (Firmilian of Caesarea, Methodius of Olympus; he was also part of the papyrus Bodmer VII = P72, probably from the 3rd century).[[99]](#footnote-100)

It can be assumed that 2Petr, which contains the reference to Paul’s collection of letters, probably became known after the time of Bar Kokhba, and thus also after the Apocalypse of Peter, which makes reference to this rebel leader. It is therefore not surprising that this letter speaks of a collection of Pauline epistles, which had already been available since Marcion around the year 140. Whether Marcion had taken up a collection of Pauline letters that had been circulated, which perhaps in part still went back to Paul himself – following Trobisch’s model – or, as seems more likely to me, whether it was Marcion who compiled the collection and brought it to Rome, will have to be discussed among scholars in the future. However, to compile letter collection in those times required not only literacy and a certain level of education, but also the financial means and a adequate network to have manuscripts copied or to copy them oneself, to provide the writing material for such copies, to secure the transport of these materials and manuscripts, and much more. The fact that Marcion, according to Tertullian, had more than sufficient means being a businessman and ship owner, and that he taught in Rome and soon became the most discussed teacher of the 2nd century, strongly suggests that he was the person who brought this collection together.[[100]](#footnote-101) This is also supported by the fact that some of the prefaces to the Pauline Epistles were last attributed to Marcion by Erik Scherbenske.[[101]](#footnote-102)

The status of this question will be further substantiated after we have taken a closer look at the character of the Pauline letters as they are presented to us in this collection. Related is the further, no less important question of which of the two collections, featuring not only different numbers of letters, but also, as we have seen above for Rom 1:1, considerably different textual recensions of the letters themselves, is older and closer to the historical Paul.

In this regard contemporary readers may at first glance favor the ten-letter collection since most of the letters, namely seven out of ten, are considered authentic by modern research, while the other three, despite all the differences noted among them, are regarded as less close to Paul’s thinking, language, and style. In comparison, the fourteen-letter collection does not add even a single letter that modern research would consider authentic, and instead includes four more pseudo-Paulines. Such an initial comparison does not increase confidence in the fourteen-letter collection. If we consider Marcion to have omitted some texts and shortened others, as the apologists have assumed since Irenaeus towards the end of the 2nd century until our time, we must at least concede to him that he included, with a seemingly modern critical eye, precisely those texts that we today also consider the most Pauline. From a methodological and historical point of view, it seems more probable that the ten-letter collection, as we find it in Marcion, is to be trusted more than the fourteen-letter collection, which was expanded to include pseudepigrapha equal in quantity to the Pauline letters considered authentic.

But now we must also ask whether this first, external impression is confirmed by the text versions. Unfortunately, here we can answer only using a few examples, which of course cannot replace a comprehensive comparison. But in view of the goal of our investigation, which is reconstruct concepts about the beginnings of Christianity, we have to be content with a few historically and ethically oriented passages which, on the one hand, shed light on these, and on the other hand, based on the relationships between their versions possibly provide insight into how the idea of the beginnings has changed significantly or should even change.

A brief example from Rom 1:1 concerning Paul’s apostleship has already been given. The appendix discusses the first and parts of the second chapter of Gal (see below xxx).

As this comparison shows, the reconstructed text of the ten-letter collection offers us a Paul who is different in many respects from that of the fourteen-letter collection. He is on the one hand more self-confident, on the other hand more modest. His Christ-orientation is even clearer, and he does not see his own calling as rooted in history, nor in an encounter with the historical Jesus, the apostles, or other bearers of tradition. His calling does not originate from and did not take place through human beings, but exclusively through Jesus Christ, and specifically through the Son of God, who set Paul apart[[102]](#footnote-103) already in his mother’s womb and called him by his grace. This beginning leads him to “proclaim” the Son “among the nations,” expressly without any connection back to the apostles in Jerusalem.

While Paul knows the Jerusalem apostles, he does not turn to them to have his apostolate confirmed, as the readership of his letter evidently expected – since Acts actually has him travel to the church in Damascus to this end (9:6, on Jesus’ express command!). Instead, he discards such a consideration and moves on the basis of his immediate divine calling “to Arabia and then returned again to Damascus.” The “again” here indicates that the persecution of the church Paul spoke of earlier had also taken place in Damascus. Acts reports the events differently, having Paul first persecute the church in Jerusalem (8:3) and only later extend his activities to the synagogues of Damascus (9:2); similarly, Acts in general does not represent Paul’s actions as merely disciplining and suppressing the church, but rather as leading to murder, manslaughter, and the arrest of persecuted individuals.[[103]](#footnote-104)

Paul warns the Galatians against the danger of turning away from him and the gospel he preaches and towards another gospel which he considers to be falsified. As it soon turns out, his point concerns not only the way the law is interpreted, but also the position and meaning of the law in general. In contrast, the fourteen-letter collection conveys that Paul was not only versed in the traditions of the Fathers,[[104]](#footnote-105) but had also championed them “with the greatest zeal,” i.e., that his position flowed not only from God’s calling, but also from the study of the divine law. This mediating tendency is also served when, according to the fourteen-letter collection, Paul seeks out and builds a personal relationship with Peter in Jerusalem, and also makes contact with James, the Lord’s brother. Moreover, his journey to Syria and Cilicia only takes place after this visit to Peter and James. When even the churches in Judea, to whom Paul has consequently remained unknown, laud him in that “he who once persecuted us” now proclaims “the faith he wanted to destroy,” and praise God for his sake, it sounds as if this also reflects the opinion of the Jerusalemites, Peter and James. Thus according to this collection, Paul is seen as an integrated and integrating part of a harmonious great movement of churches, whereas the ten-letter collection rather represents him as an individual proclaimer.

I shall not elaborate on these historical examples in the present study, as this would require a detailed comparison, not undertaken so far, to determine both versions in detail and, as far as can still be ascertained today, in their mutual relationship. But it seems to me that even this brief overview is enough to illustrate that the canonical forms of Gal, as well as Rom, 1Cor, and the other letters belonging to the ten-letter collection, including even the deuteropauline Col, underwent considerable editorial revision in their insertion into the fourteen-letter collection. If Theobald’s observations suggesting the use of the Marcionite version of the ten-letter collection in the Pastoral Epistles are correct, then the fourteen-letter collection seems to have undergone a similar editorial revision and, for instance with regard to Rom 14-16, an expansion when it was joined with Acts and harmonized – even if not fully. To some extent, these collections were finally adapted to the canonical Gospels. Based on these findings one should also re-read the two final chapters of Rom, absent in the ten-letter collection, and likewise, as indicated above, re-establish a link with Acts and other texts from the canonical New Testament.[[105]](#footnote-106)

However, to conclude our discussion of the Pauline epistles, I would like to give another example of such an interlocking process, this time regarding their ethics, which was brought to my attention by one of my students, Janelle Priya Mathur. The example will also demonstrate that despite the ethical rigorism of Marcion’s collection, we encounter in it a Paul who, especially on the question of homosexuality, takes a position which is contrary to that of the ten-letter collection expanded with the Pastoral Epistles, and is in harmony with the tolerance on this question that can be observed elsewhere in the first and second centuries.[[106]](#footnote-107)

The example is significant because, given the intensification of the ascetic tendency in Christianity commented on before, its handling of homosexuality in particular has led to a position that still has devastating effects today, with homosexuality regarded as a grave sin by many churches. To this day it is claimed, with reference to the canonical Paul, that “Paul and the later followers of Christ defined the boundaries of their movement through sexual ideas.”[[107]](#footnote-108) In the Catholic Church’s first official document on the subject, *Homosexualitas problema* (1986), the Church reacts vigorously against “a new exegesis of Sacred Scripture which variously claims that Scripture has nothing to say on the subject of homosexuality, or that it silently endorses it.”[[108]](#footnote-109) In fact, there is a relevant passage in Jewish Scripture:

If a man sleeps with a man as one sleeps with a woman, both do what is to be abhorred. They must be punished with death; their blood will be on their own heads. (Lev 20:13)

Now, there are also three relevant passages in the canonical New Testament, interestingly none in the Gospels, but all within the fourteen-letter collection (Rom 1:26-27; 1Cor 6:9-10; 1Tim 1:9-10),[[109]](#footnote-110) but, as will be shown below in the appendix, none of these seem to have been included in the ten-letter collection. If we look at the historical context, the ten-letter collection is more in keeping with the attitudes of the time, in that the paucity of evidence against homosexuality in the Jewish scriptures and in the New Testament reflects the widespread lack of criticism outside the canonical literature. The single time that homosexuality is problematized in this period is due to a specific situation.

Shortly after the middle of the second century, Justin writes in an apologia addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius (and the Roman Senate): “We who not long ago delighted in fornication have now embraced restraint alone” (1Apol. 14). However, with this writing Justin criticizes this emperor’s predecessor for an immoral behavior of his that had become known: Hadrian had fallen in love with a young man whom he had presumably met on his journey to Bithynia in 124 AD, before continuing on to Athens. But the unfortunate boy was reported to have drowned in the Nile later in 130 on Hadrian’s second trip to Egypt.[[110]](#footnote-111) A second harsh criticism of homosexuality also seems to refer to this prominent case and is found in the Syriac version of another Christian apologist, Aristides of Athens.[[111]](#footnote-112) Apparently he too criticized Hadrian’s dubious treatment of the youth, and like Justin, he also addressed his writing to Hadrian’s successor Antoninus Pius after the former’s death.[[112]](#footnote-113) The criticism of homosexuality found in the Epistle to Timothy, which entered this version of the Pauline letters as a result of the editing of Rom and 1Cor to join the Pastoral Epistles, may be another contemporaneous reaction to this apparently widely famous incident.

Let us draw out a few conclusions about the ideas of the beginnings of Christianity from these brief examples. According to the ten-letter collection, Paul did indeed see moral transgressions within the young congregation (e.g., a son being intimate with the father’s wife), and while he resolutely called on the congregation to exclude the persons committing them, he did not present this demand as a judgment, and certainly not as a divine one. Moreover, divine judgment as such seems alien to this Paul, a Paul who represents divine praise and the salvation of all people.

If we add to this picture of Paul the question of his authority over the other apostles, his closeness to the theological positions of Marcion becomes even clearer. It was not only Tertullian who, in his commentary on the ten-letter collection, pointed out its persistent proximity to Marcion and argued vehemently against the latter’s views. For him, Marcion’s ten-letter collection lacked, among other things, the concept of the judging God, and the authority of the twelve apostles with their apostolic tradition, which he saw preserved in the Gospels named after the apostles and their disciples, but not in Marcion’s New Nestament.

We may now ask – if the shorter texts of the smaller collection are seemingly older than their canonical version – how can their content so closely reflect the theology of their collector? Did Marcion find these letters and merely put them in order, bind them together and publish them, drawing from them his own views? Is it not more likely that Marcion – like the later redactors who inserted cross-references, substantive edits, and new letters which let in turn their moral and theological positions shine through – incorporated his own ideas into his Paul as he did into his Gospel? If this is the case, the oldest form of the writings of the New Testament, even if only attested by secondary witnesses and at best by divergent readings in our manuscripts and by ancient readers, is the recension of Marcion, beyond which older traditions can only be hypothetically inferred.

If we adhere to Marcion’s recension, we should in any case read it with great caution, infer the author’s intention from the preface, and always ask ourselves to what extent it reflects his view of the beginnings of Christianity, as is the case with the other authors discussed here. The very fact that in Marcion’s New Testament, the letters of Paul followed the Gospel and were preceded by the preface of the *Antitheses* makes it clear that Marcion was deliberately aiming to impose his angle on his readers so that they would perceive this collection accordingly, namely through the lens of the “opposites,” as they have already been described in detail above.

Despite Paul’s presumably low interest in retrospective history and his orientation towards the approaching end and the Second Coming of the Lord, Marcion nevertheless placed the Gospel account of the descent, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus at the beginning. In doing this he conveyed a picture of the beginnings of Christianity according to which from the heaven of the unknown, alien God, his great prophet, Son and Spirit suddenly and unexpectedly burst into Roman-Jewish history. From the beginning, the Lord himself remained unrecognized, misjudged by both the authorities of the Romans and the leading figures of the Jews. Not even the disciples chosen by Jesus, the appointed apostles, had an eye for the new; the new law, the new edict of the beatitude of all, God’s judgment-free, universally good saving action, his sacrifice of his own Son on the cross, the liberation of all people, and even Christ’s resurrection – aroused nothing but doubt, suspicion and jealousy in all these authorities.

Only those on the margins of traditional society, the poor, the prostitutes, the sick, the outcasts, the publicans, etc. were open to revelation. For Marcion, Paul also finds his place among them. He is the one called and chosen by God alone as an apostle, he who had persecuted the church out of the blindness with which his zeal for the law of the Jewish God had struck him.

Overall, Marcion’s New Testament has a historical layout: after the systematic thoughts of the preface, it begins with the biography of the protagonist – Jesus Christ; then, after his resurrection, follow the letters of the single apostle called by him – Paul – giving us insight into the beginning of the Church. With this historicizing collection, Marcion laid the foundation for the similarly oriented canonical New Testament, even though it still took decades and centuries for these texts to be read from a historical angle rather than an apologetic one.

Nevertheless, Marcion’s New Testament would be misunderstood if seen only as aiming to provide us with a historicizing picture of the beginnings of Christianity. Rather, Marcion brought together his collection with the objective of expose any history of the flesh, i.e., any physical and temporal history, as provisional. This history was for him merely the product of a judgmental and rather pathetic, jealous demiurge whose judgmental nature, fickleness, short-sightedness, and self-centeredness were documented in the Jewish scriptures. For Marcion, created time was not a history of salvation but a history of disaster, into which the unknown God, a stranger to this history – the wholly other, had to penetrate in order to liberate the people in this world and history from their own fetters and entanglements. But liberation itself only happened through the one who was bound, crucified, and sacrificed. Paul fared no better, even though the collection reports nothing of his martyrdom. The worldview conveyed by the collection is a gloomy one, with its only light consisting in God’s saving revelation.

# Outlook: What was it really like?

If the earliest witnesses able to offer us an idea of the beginnings of Christianity are neither Jesus nor Paul, and do not date back to before the end of the second Jewish war, i.e., the year 135 AD, what were these beginnings really like? Can we, as has often been attempted in research, see through these witnesses and distil the words and deeds of Jesus, the message and life of Paul, and the ideas and developments of the first Christians from their writings?

As the foregoing account shows, even the later Christian historians Gregory of Tours, Orosius, and Eusebius, but also the chronicler Iulius Africanus, hardly used the Christian writings of the New Testament as historical sources, but rather made use of extra-Christian and so-called apocryphal texts, although they had a decided interest not only in theological questions but also in those that we would describe as time-driven. Certainly they wanted to write history – and did write Christian history or a history of Christianity.

In this they differ to a certain extent from the great authors of the 3rd and 2nd centuries, such as Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and also Marcion, who made comparatively greater use of the New Testament writings, but had less interest in a historical account per se, writing history above all as an apology or with a view to an intended religious practice.

In general, today’s historiography, as well as the earlier and even the earliest one, differs from our testimonies of the first 150 years of the Christian era in that it understands the beginnings of the Jesus movement as those of “Christianity.” Even today, when the question is asked of “whether Christian sources have a place within the study of Jews and Judaism” and “whether Christian sects and sources are by definition not Jewish,” a thoroughly Christian historiography leads to such a flashback that even the beginnings of Christianity are not simply understood as “Jewish history,”[[113]](#footnote-114) but rather uses the designation “Jewish Christianity,” invented in the modern era, which is more obfuscating than illuminating.[[114]](#footnote-115)

While Origen was the great scholar of the Scriptures, both the Jewish and the Christian works brought together in the Bible as the Old and New Testaments, he too read these texts less from a historian’s point of view than from a spiritual one. He was not interested in the factuality, nor in the physical or psychological beginnings of Christianity, but rather in its spiritual dimension.

Tertullian, on the other hand, both knew a charismatic prophetic reading of the writings of the Old and New Testaments, and was well aware that the writings of the New Testament in particular were brought into the field by his opponents, the heretics, who studied them as the basis of their argumentation. That is why Tertullian did not want to conduct debates based on Scripture in the first place, even though he devoted more than half of his life’s work to arguing against Marcion and his New Testament*.* Instead, Tertullian referred to ecclesiastical tradition, which alone seemed to grant him membership in orthodoxy. He saw the authority handed down by Christ to the apostles as being passed on by them to the apostolic congregations they founded, which in turn transferred it to the congregations that went back to them.

Irenaeus laid the foundations for both Origen and Tertullian by propagating the new format of the New Testament compiled in his time, which comprised four Gospels, 13 or 14 Pauline Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles with the Catholic Epistles and Revelation, and by attempting to establish authority for this corpus. Like Tertullian, Irenaeus still knew of the importance of the New Testament as a bearer of authority for his opponents, which is why he developed his argumentation for the new format of the New Testament precisely in his work “Against Heresies,” even though he was still critical of the title “New Testament.” Thus he made use of the expanded version of the New Testament (compared to Marcion’s) in order to develop his own construction of the beginnings of Christianity on this basis. In contrast to the anti-historical design of Marcion (and the Valentinians), for Irenaeus it is the historical salvation event of Christ’s coming that is inscribed in the writings of the Old and New Testaments and that is revealed to the people through them. For Irenaeus, this scripture is both a spiritual reading and a historical source directed against the heretics, laying the foundation for authority in the Church and safeguarding Orthodoxy against any heresy. As with Origen and Tertullian, it is the scholars who read and interpret these writings “correctly” and create the orthodox picture of the beginnings of Christianity.

What were these beginnings really like? Like the various and often controversial reconstructions of the beginnings of Christianity presented by the different early Christian authors, my own answer to this question is also a subjective reconstruction. Jan Bremmer inspired me to write this final outlook and give it the title “What was it really like?” Of course, the question mark already indicates that this is a slight irony, in reference the often misunderstood dictum of the great historian Ranke.[[115]](#footnote-116) If no author in early Christianity was interested in gaining a historical idea of the beginnings of the movement, can we work out our own picture of them on the basis of such evidence? Such a picture, even just because of the nature of the testimonies, cannot inscribe itself in the “classical ideal of historicism,” but, as has become abundantly clear in the preceding pages, can only sketch the past “in the mode of the present” and indeed “in interpreted and selected” perception,[[116]](#footnote-117) and must therefore interpret the past itself as an open beginning.

I am not only returning to common ground with New Testament research, but also to the starting point of this work – the wish of my colleague at Cambridge, James Carleton-Paget, that I present the results of my previous research on early Christianity. I do not wish to refuse to do so, even if I explicitly point out the hypothetical nature of these ideas.

If we do not get behind Marcion’s testimonies, I will start with him. As I tried to demonstrate in an earlier post, Marcion seems to me to have come from a Hellenistic-Jewish milieu;[[117]](#footnote-118) Adolf von Harnack already placed him close to Jewish proselytes. Who else would have such detailed knowledge of the Jewish scriptures and a passion for their interpretation, even if he came up with idiosyncratic interpretations of them? Who else would be deeply touched by two other Jews, first of all by Paul and his writings, and presumably through them by the words and deeds of the Jesus portrayed in those writings, the Christ revered as a prophet and Messiah?

The fact that we cannot go back before the years of the Jewish revolt under Bar Kokhba (132–135 AD), and only hear and read about Christian teachers in Rome for the first time after it, and indeed that in Marcion’s time there was evidently a transfer of teachers from Asia Minor and Greece to Rome and we can recognize a rapidly flourishing Christian literature from this time onwards, indicates that this Jewish war created a socio-political situation in which Jewish as well as Roman life was faced with new, extraordinary challenges, and corresponding innovative impulses were activated. This is not to say that these events had no other preconditions. History rarely develops in leaps and bounds, even if there was (and still is) a tendency in historiography to highlight breaking points and mark certain moments of cultural thrusts.[[118]](#footnote-119)

History therefore does not have a beginning, at least not one that is delimited on both sides. Neither is it unambiguous and monolithic with regard to what develops in its course – we have spoken above of the diversity of what has emerged over the decades – but it is also not closed to the past. For when I speak of the “open beginning,” I also refer this openness to the prehistory of these developments. Here, the universal historians in particular have already shown the way, as they have drawn out their history into the past, but even if one wants to take up this approach in contemporary historiography, the hitherto chronologically goal-oriented narration of a triumphalist success story as an ideological teleology must be avoided. Instead, the history of Christianity initially represents a marginal thread within Jewish history, and indeed within a Jewish history that is itself deeply integrated into that of the Hellenistic-Roman world.

If we look at the surviving canonical and non-canonical literature of Jews and Christians as well as the non-Jewish and non-Christian testimonies, it will be difficult to deny that in the Greco-Roman-Jewish region of the 1st century a movement had formed around the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, which, although initially marginal, is nevertheless sufficiently historically tangible. Even if it was itself part of a multifaceted Jewish life, it seems to have remained relatively low-profile for decades. For a long time, its insiders seem to have perceived themselves as Jewish and perhaps nothing else, not even a movement or group, whereas outsiders and non-Jews identified them more easily as a visible and tangible group. Yet after the middle of the 2nd century, Justin still wishes to be part of the “true Israel” (“verus Israel”), even though at the same time voices like those of Marcion, or also Aristides of Athens, aim to propagate Christianity’s greatness on its own terms.

Nevertheless – if one may trust the few existing testimonies – “Christians” seem to have been designated as such by outsiders and distinguished by name from other Jews in places such as Rome in the late forties and sixties of the 1st century.[[119]](#footnote-120) In the seventies, Titus’ Council of War describes “Christians” in the same breath first as “one religion” (“superstitio”) and then along with Judaism as two rival “religions” (“superstitions”), offering the metaphors of root and branch. Finally, in Bithynia after the year 110 AD, a correspondence between the local procurator, Pliny the Younger, and the Roman Emperor Trajan, includes is a report of local cases of denigration in which people were defamed as “Christians.” But these cases are neither geographically nor temporally representative of the outsider description, let alone of the existence of a movement that was aware of its special position, and the scattered testimonies certainly do not speak for a consistent persecution situation of these “Christians.” Quite to the contrary: the fact that the experienced Pliny, who was in his last posting after many leading positions in Roman justice, cannot fall back on any precedents in dealing with “Christians,” but has to turn directly to the emperor to request instruction, speaks both against the importance of these “Christians” in Rome or elsewhere in the Roman Empire, and against the assumption that there was already a legal template for how to deal with them. The movement, if it was one, was of no significance to the Romans; as for the Jews, if they had noticed it at all, it was at best an annoyance to Pharisaic-oriented scholars such as Paul, or a phenomenon among many others to Josephus.

Regarding the historical Jesus of Nazareth, neither his life, nor his deeds, nor even his claimed resurrection seem to have played a major role for the movement in the 1st century, at least not outside the reading of Paul and Pharisaic circles. The case was different for some of Jesus’ Torah interpretations, with his striking and pointed, often socially critical as well as spiritual aphorisms, and with his death.

Jesus’ death in particular provoked different responses. Some Jews, committed to the Sadducee priestly tradition but also inspired by Jesus, saw him as a critic and a victim of the Pharisaic interpretation of the Mosaic Law. The learned Pharisee Paul, on the other hand, regarded him as part of his own Pharisaic movement, whose death was brought about by Sadducee-Roman collaboration, but who testified by his resurrection that Pharisaic doctrine meant the end of the physical temple and the political leadership of the Roman-appointed Jewish puppet kings and high priests. People who were closer to the Qumran community may have perceived a kinship to their ideas of purity, similarities with their fasting and calendar practices, and also their temple criticism.

Since the first Jewish war of 66–70 AD, the pressure for solidarity had been growing among Jews and, rather involuntarily, also a Jewish identity. For with the destruction of the Jewish Temple of Jerusalem in this war, not only were temple implements, the menorah, as well as gold and other valuables confiscated and brought to Rome in a triumphal procession as trophies of victory, but these funds were also used to build and finance Titus’ Colosseum. Cynically, the temple tax imposed by the Jews on themselves was now collected by the Romans, but instead of being allocated to the temple was redirected to a newly created department of the Roman treasury. Even though this tax was hardly enforced with the thoroughness of German tax authorities and police clout, there were cases in which people were officially prodded about their Jewish affiliation, not for the privilege of not having to work on the Sabbath, but to pay an additional tax to the Roman treasury because of their religious practice or social affiliation. We know of no case in which a Christian would have refused such a tax; however, on the other hand, Jesus’ word from the Gospel stands before us, according to which Caesar’s is to be given to Caesar (Mt 22:21).

It is therefore not surprising that during the Bar Kokhba war, if Justin reports correctly, the Jewish rebel leader subjected Christians to the harshest punishments, possibly even the death penalty. This is only plausible if Bar Kokhba assumed that Christians, like other Jews, should support his rebellion and he therefore had renegades punished, even though we know of other Jews, such as the scholar Rabbi Akiba, who is said to not have supported the revolt either, yet went unpunished.

Perhaps it was this warlike confrontation, which far surpassed the first Jewish revolt in brutality and cruelty, but above all in the numbers of Roman soldiers and Jewish revolutionaries who were killed, that presented Jews and Romans with a new challenge. It is reported of Emperor Hadrian that he was the first Roman commander to appear before the Senate and announce the end of the war not with the message of victory: “The Emperor and his soldiers are well,” but with a silence that gave the dark impression that Rome had suffered defeat for the first time in history. In any case, there was no triumphal procession in Rome, but instead draconian punitive measures against Jews. First, they were forbidden to be present in Jerusalem – except for one day a year when they were supposed to celebrate the victory of the Romans – then the Temple Mount was cleared and a statue of Zeus was erected on its site for the Roman garrison city of Aelia Capitolina, which was to replace the holy city of Jerusalem. Whether non-Jewish Christians were allowed to live in Aelia Capitolina in the period thereafter because Christians became known as non-supporters of the revolt seems rather out of the question, since Eusebius reports that Christians were given an uncircumcised bishop in Jerusalem for the first time at that time. It therefore seems more likely that Christians escaped the ban on presence because their Jewish parishioners had left Jerusalem, but because uncircumcised people were also accepted into the Christian congregations, they did not fall under the ban on Jews.

In any case, the oldest apologia of Aristides that handed down to us, in which he divides humanity for the first time into three or four different cultural peoples, Barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians, fits into this period. While the first two trace their identity back to their gods, that of the Jews, according to Aristides, does not refer to their God, but to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, his twelve sons and finally the lawgiver Moses, as well as to their geographical homeland, because they were called Hebrews after their exile in Egypt and Jews after their arrival in the promised land. However, he regards the Christians as lacking any reference to this Jewish tradition, because according to Aristides they derive their origin from Jesus Christ alone and form precisely not a geographically limited, but a universally oriented messianic people. Only Jesus’s birth by a Jewish virgin forms any connection to the Jews. It is striking that Aristides does not mention the Romans in his division of humanity. Romanitas thus seems to form universality as a matter of course as the socio-political space within which the various cultural peoples live. With the fiction of the Roman emperor as the addressee of this apologia, this framework of life is tacitly presupposed as authoritative and unquestioned.

In his preface to the New Testament, Marcion is no less radical in defining the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, even though his Gospel clearly marks some distance from the Roman political sphere. In the preface, however, he is exclusively concerned with distancing Judaism and Christianity, which he constructs as antitheses. In general, Marcion seems to be the first author in history to give the name “Christianity” to the “new” religion that stands in contrast to “Judaism.” And presumably it was he who not just found the first Gospel, but actually wrote it, and then joined it by the ten-letter collection of Paul’s writings he brought together.

As already explained, Marcion, as a ship owner, had the financial means and the corresponding network in ports of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to find Paul’s letters and have them copied into a codex. Perhaps inspired by them, or perhaps prompted by an already existing affiliation with a Jewish community in which Jesus was a teaching authority, he set about collecting the oral traditions concerning Jesus of Nazareth in the context of the emerging Christian identity in Bithynia and further prompted by the Christian martyrs in the Bar Kokhba war. Unlike to Paul, to whose authorship of the letters he refers, the Jesus traditions do not seem to have been available to him in written form. That is why he brought them together without a name in what he called an “Eu-angelion,” the “good news of an angel” – since, according to him, they contained the revelation of God’s angel or messenger to mankind. This text may have been the basis for all other, later Gospels, providing the groundwork for the fact that these no longer saw in Jesus primarily a historical rabbi, but instead his historical Jewish identity was covered up and often replaced by that of an angelic or divine miracle worker and healer, who rose from pre-existence into time and again into timelessness. In opposition to the Marcionite model, this angelic figure was supplemented with the idea of an impending apocalyptic judgment, an idea nourished by the Jewish scriptures, against which Marcion had explicitly formulated the message of a non-judging Jesus. Or, to put it another way, without the Marcionite notion of an unhistorical savior sent into history by an unknown God to rescue people from a terrible world history created by an inferior demiurge – the Jewish rabbi Jesus would have remained what he was from birth to death, and for a long time beyond: a man who charismatically inspired people by his scholarly freedom in dealing with his tradition, and obviously sought to win over Jews of the most diverse religious directions from this freedom and order of Torah interpretation far beyond the more liberal Rabbi Hillel for his interpretation. At the same time, he seems to have transformed a near neurotic Pharisee like Paul from an opponent of this free oral interpretation of the Torah into one of its most convinced and zealous supporters and promoters. However, he himself never met this Paul – even though Paul seems to have claimed that none other than Jesus as Christ and Lord had given him the impetus and revelation for this turn of life. But this construction, too, is unfortunately only to be found in the Marcionite testimonies, and I am aware that many of the emphatic ideas about Paul and Jesus are shaped by the no less charismatic Marcion.

The learned and affluent Marcion did not write his text into the traditional scrolls used by the Jews, but, whether for antithetical or practical reasons, into the innovative, school-bound form of the codex. Already in his copy he seems to have used abbreviations for the names of God, the Father, the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit. The fact that almost all later Christian manuscripts make use of these abbreviations suggests that they go back to such an original innovation. But perhaps the material here tempts the historian into a tunnel vision that tries to explain things too systematically and monocausally.

What was it really like? Would it change our world if we knew? However the idea of the beginnings of Christianity is constructed, it cannot be understood as a dogmatically closed beginning, because beyond the initial witnessing of Christianity around the middle of the 2nd century, we only have a black box into which we can project further ideas about ourselves. These, however, should serve a world less centered on separating from and competing with each other, on religions, denominations, ideologies, and “fake news,” on who derives from what in contrast to others, who walks in the light of truth and who in the darkness of error; in contrast to Aristides and Marcion, a contemporary description of the beginnings should offer the opportunity to describe contrasts between different cultures and religions while bringing their representatives into peaceful conversation with each other.

But already early on, the judge seems to have been seen as superior to the universal savior, the nameable God to the unnameable one, the male to the not sexually determined, and the ascetic to the permissive. How I would love to look into the 1st century, but here the gap opens up between the hard work of interpretive reading and the even more hypothetical imagination.

1. D. Trobisch, Die Paulusbriefe und die Anfänge der christlichen Publizistik (1994).astonishing how little attention has been paid to this research perspective so far, compared to the mountains of theological-historical research on Paul; just read the overview of the years since 1945 published in 1987, H. Hübner, Paulusforschung seit 1945. Ein kritischer Literaturbericht (1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. E.W. Scherbenske, Canonizing Paul. Ancient Editorial Practice and the Corpus Paulinum (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In this, this research differs from older research, which is often based on the portrait of Acts and also takes into account the pseudo-Pauline texts of the New Testament and has easily encountered the philosopher Paul, cf. for example the famous Deems Lectures by W.M. Ramsay, The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day. The Deems Lectures in New York University (1913).Nevertheless, on the same basis, one could also arrive at an opinion contrary to Ramsay's and read Paul as a literarily illiterate Jew, cf. G.A. Deissmann, Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History (1926); A. Schweitzer, Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus (1930).for example, shows what a different conclusion can be reached if one concentrates exclusively on Paul's seven letters. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. "Jesus came as the messiah long expected by the Jews, who now, by his death and resurrection, offers freedom from sin and death and reconciliation with God to all people. What began in these two earth-shattering events will soon be consummated in the resurrection of all who trust in Jesus and the full realization of God's kingdom in a redeemed creation." This is the summary of a presentation on "Counsels of perfection: the place of Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews in Clement of Alexandria's reading of Pauline theology" for the Conference on International Patristic Studies 2019 by Judith Kovacs (Charlottesville, USA). See also, for example, H. Schlier, Grundzüge einer Paulinischen Theologie (1978); H.-J. Schoeps, Paul. The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History (1961); E.P. Sanders, Paulus und das palästinische Judentum. Ein Vergleich zweier Religionsstrukturen (1985).An overview of Pauline studies can be found, for example, in S. Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New on Paul. The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. "Emphasizing knowledge of God as the Christian's most important concern, the pursuit of perfection, and the hope of ascent through the heavenly spheres to the perfect end of everlasting contemplation of God." ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. "An emphasis on heavenly realities, celebration of the mysteries of divine knowledge (Col 1-2; Eph 3, Heb 5), and reflections on Christ's pre-existence as creator of all (Col 1:15-20) and his role as forerunner in the believer's heavenly ascent (Heb 4:14; 6:20).", ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. L.S.a.M. Vinzent, Ed. Index Eckhardianus I, Die Bibel : Meister Eckhart und seine Quellen (2015). Cf. the brief remarks made in the preface of ibid. co-edited. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. "The letter [to the Romans] became one of the most influential documents of Western history ... We learn, first, who Paul thought he was" E.P. Sanders, Paul (2001), 2.Epistle to the Romans as a pre-text of the Pastoral Epistles is highlighted by M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016), 56-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. On such attempts (Wilhelm Wrede, Arnold Meyer, Alfred Rosenberg) to stylise Paul as the founder or second founder of Christianity, cf. R. Bultmann, Jesus and Paul (1961 (1936)), 183-184.On Wrede critically H. Rollmann, Paulus alienus: William Wrede on Comparing Jesus and Paul (1984); J. Weiss, Paul and Jesus (1909).still provides support for Wrede. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The two final chapters of the Letter to the Romans are missing in Marcion's version of the Letter to the Romans, also in other witnesses, and are therefore considered "the most difficult problem ever posed to New Testament textual criticism", according to K. Aland, Der Schluss und die ursprüngliche Gestalt des Römerbriefes (1979); E.P. Sanders, Paul (2001), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. E.P. Sanders, Paul (2001), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. E. Käsemann, An die Römer (1973), 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer (2014), 118.Probably for dogmatic reasons, it is sometimes disputed that priestly sacrificial terminology is meant here, cf. for example C.E.B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1979), 754-755. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. H. Räisänen, Römer 9-11: Analyse eines geistigen Ringens (1987). Cf. for instance ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer (2014), 181; H. Räisänen, Römer 9-11: Analyse eines geistigen Ringens (1987), 2894-2895. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. "Chaps. IX-XI form a compact and continuous whole, which can be read quite satisfactorily without reference to the rest of the epistle ... the epistle could be read without any gap, if these chapters were omitted", according to C.H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (1959), 148-149; U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer (2014), 181; C.H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (1959), 148-149.This position is contested by U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer (2014), 181; H. Räisänen, Römer 9-11: Analyse eines geistigen Ringens (1987), 2895. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. D. Wenham, Paul and the Historical Jesus (1998), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. K. Hammann and A. Beutel, Rudolf Bultmann und seine Zeit. Biographische und theologische Konstellationen (2016); K. Hammann, Rudolf Bultmann. Eine Biographie (2012). Cf. K. Hammann and A. Beutel, Rudolf Bultmann und seine Zeit. Biographische und theologische Konstellationen (2016); K. Hammann, Rudolf Bultmann. Eine Biographie (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. R. Bultmann, The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul (1969 (1929)); R. Bultmann, Jesus and Paul (1961 (1936)). Cf. R. Bultmann, The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul (1969 (1929)); R. Bultmann, Jesus and Paul (1961 (1936)). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. E. Käsemann, Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy (1969). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. W.G. Kümmel, Jesus und Paulus (1965). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. J. Jeremias, The Present Position in the Controversy Concerning the Problem of the Historical Jesus (1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. S.G. Wilson, From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate (1984); V.P. Furnish, The Jesus-Paul Debate: from Baur to Bultmann (1989); G.R.C. Schoberg. (2014). "Perspectives of Jesus in the Writings of Paul: A Historical Examination of Shared Core Commitments with a View to Determining the Extent of Paul's Dependence on Jesus." See also S.G. Wilson, From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate (1984); V.P. Furnish, The Jesus-Paul Debate: from Baur to Bultmann (1989); G.R.C. Schoberg. (2014). "Perspectives of Jesus in the Writings of Paul: A Historical Examination of Shared Core Commitments with a View to Determining the Extent of Paul's Dependence on Jesus." [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. R. Bultmann, The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul (1969 (1929)), 221. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. R. Bultmann, Jesus and Paul (1961 (1936)), 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. R. Bultmann, The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul (1969 (1929)), 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. R. Bultmann, Jesus and Paul (1961 (1936)), 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. R. Bultmann, The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul (1969 (1929)), 221; C. Wolff, True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ: Exegetical Reflections on 2 Corinthians 5.14ff. (1989).2 Corinthians 5:16 ('So from now on we know no one according to the flesh; even though we used to know Christ according to the flesh, now we no longer know him so') does not seem to contradict this, as does R. Bultmann, The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul (1969 (1929)), 221; C. Wolff, True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ: Exegetical Reflections on 2 Corinthians 5.14ff. (1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Acts 7,58 - 8,3: Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen; Acts 22,3: "here in this city [= Jerusalem] I was brought up, trained at the feet of Gamaliël exactly according to the law of the fathers, a zealot for God, as you all are today". So already earlier scholars, though not without dissenting voices, which again Bultmann did not consider convincing, cf. R. Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus (1929). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. S.G. Wilson, From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate (1984), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. R. Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus (1929). Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. R. Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus (1929); D. Wenham, Paul and the Historical Jesus (1998); S.G. Wilson, From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate (1984), 7-8; N. Walter, Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Tradition (1989), 56-59. Cf. the lists in R. Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus (1929); D. Wenham, Paul and the Historical Jesus (1998); S.G. Wilson, From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate (1984), 7-8; N. Walter, Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Tradition (1989), 56-59.However, it is unclear whether these echoes in the Gospels are spun out of Paul, or whether Paul is a witness to traditions found independently of Paul in the Gospels, to whose early existence Paul then testifies, as Wenham assumes. Wilson calls Paul's citation of further words of the Lord, as collected by Resch, "fantasies", cf. A. Resch, Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu in ihrem gegenseitigen Verhältnis untersucht (1904). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. N. Walter, Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Tradition (1989), 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. S.G. Wilson, From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate (1984), 8. "Embarrassingly few in number", ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. "From the evidence of his letters we are bound to say that he showed little or no interest in him and that to this extent Bultmann's judgment that Paul was concerned with *that* and not the *what of* Jesus' existence seems irrefutable", so ibidibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Cf. ibid. Ibid. 8-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. An example of this is the recent study by G.R.C. Schoberg. (2014). "Perspectives of Jesus in the Writings of Paul: A Historical Examination of Shared Core Commitments with a View to Determining the Extent of Paul's Dependence on Jesus." [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. H. Merkel, Der Epheserbrief in der neueren exegetischen Diskussion (1987); A. Jülicher and E. Fascher, Einleitung in das Neue Testament (1931), 142. , cfibid. also W.G. Kümmel, Das Neue Testament im 20. Jahrhundert ein Forschungsbericht (1970), 54; H. Merkel, Der Epheserbrief in der neueren exegetischen Diskussion (1987).gives a research overview. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. R. Schnackenburg, Der Brief an die Epheser (1982), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. E. Best, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians (1998), 103-154 mit reichlich Lit. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. That this is a Pauline conception of being a Jew can be seen from Gal. 4,4f. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. D. Trobisch, Who Published the New Testament (2007/2008), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. H.O. Maier, Marcion the Circumsizer (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. G. Häfner, Die Pastoralbriefe (1 Tim/2 Tim/Tit) (2013), 459-462; M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016); H.O. Maier, Marcion the Circumsizer (2019).Maier refers to J.W. Marshall, ‘I Left You in Crete’: Narrative Deception and Social Hierarchy in the Letter to Titus (2008).On the pseudonymity of the Pastoral EpistlesG. Häfner, Die Pastoralbriefe (1 Tim/2 Tim/Tit) (2013), 459-462; M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016).see also G. Häfner, Die Pastoralbriefe (1 Tim/2 Tim/Tit) (2013), 459-462; M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016).However, there is also the researcher opinion that holds to the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles, one cf. for example L.T. Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (2001), 63-64, 89-90; R.d. Fuchs, Unerwartete Unterschiede müssen wir unsere Ansichten über "die" Pastoralbriefe revidieren? (2003); P.H. Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus (2006), 88-89.See the discussion in J. Herzer, Abschied vom Konsens? Die Pseudepigraphie der Pastoralbriefe als Herausforderung an die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. H.O. Maier, Marcion the Circumsizer (2019). Thus ibid. Maier here invokes R.F. Collins and Paulus, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. A Commentary (2003), 181-183. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. J. Herzer, Abschied vom Konsens? Die Pseudepigraphie der Pastoralbriefe als Herausforderung an die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (2004), 1267-1268. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Ibid. 1280 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. S.E. Porter, When and How Was the Pauline Canon Compiled? An Assessment of Theories (2004). Cf. for example with further literature ibid. whole volume is of importance for the present chapter, S.E. Porter, The Pauline canon (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016), 57.Here he refers to P. Trummer, Corpus Paulinum - Corpus Pastorale (1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. 1-2Tim, Tit, Phlm, Rev are missing in the *Codex Vaticanus,* so their order cannot be determined. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016), 40-42. Modern research also suggests that the original order was Tit - 1-2Tim, so with older lit. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. D. Trobisch, Die Paulusbriefe und die Anfänge der christlichen Publizistik (1994), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. J.W. Aageson, Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church (2008), 7-8; J.W. Aageson, The Pastoral Epistles, Apostolic Authority, and the Development of the Pauline Scriptures (2004); R.W. Wall, The Function of the Pastoral Letters within the Pauline Canon of the New Testament: A Canonical Approach (2004). In this he follows D.R. MacDonald, The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon (1983), 34-77; A. Merz, Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe (2004), 218-222, 318-333, 374-375.To cf. is also J.W. Aageson, Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church (2008), 7-8; J.W. Aageson, The Pastoral Epistles, Apostolic Authority, and the Development of the Pauline Scriptures (2004); R.W. Wall, The Function of the Pastoral Letters within the Pauline Canon of the New Testament: A Canonical Approach (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. H.v. Campenhausen, Polykarp von Smyrna und die Pastoralbriefe (1951); N. Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe (1969), 32.Cf. H.v. Campenhausen, Polykarp von Smyrna und die Pastoralbriefe (1951). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Cf. Iren., Adv. haer. I 30,5.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. G. Häfner, Die Pastoralbriefe (1 Tim/2 Tim/Tit) (2013), 461. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Thus, with further lit. M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016), 155-156.Since Theobald nevertheless fundamentally assumes the canonical textual stock of the Pauline Epistles, he takes it for granted, without being asked, that in other places where the Pastoral Epistles show parallels to the other Pauline Epistles (for example 1Tim 1,2 and 1Cor 4,16f., a parallel to which we will return below), the Pastoral Epistles "take their cue" from the Pauline Epistles (ibid. 160), whereas we suggest below that it is more likely that in editing the Pastoral Epistles the existing Pauline Epistles were revised so that the Pastoral Epistles could be fitted and inscribed accordingly in this corpus. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. M.-E. Boismard, Paul's Letter to the Laodiceans (2004). Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. "Colossians could fairly be described as the most intriguing of the Pauline letters. This is primarily because it serves as a bridge between the undisputed Paulines and those members of the Pauline corpus that are generally considered post-Pauline. That is to say, on the one hand, it is remarkably close at many points to Ephesians, whose post-Pauline authorship is a matter of substantial consensus in Pauline scholarship. Yet at the same time, particularly in its christology and ecclesiology, it is significantly less developed than Ephesians and the Pastorals. In a post-Pauline trajectory, Colossians would have to be placed very close to the beginning. On the other hand, some of its detail locates it in close proximity to Philemon, whose Pauline authorship has been little questioned in the history of Christianity. Yet at the same time, again particularly in its christology and ecclesiology, and also its parenesis, it seems to be significantly developed beyond what we find in the undisputed Paulines", so J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon. A Commentary on the Greek Text (1996), 19.Cf. also A. Lindemann, Der Kolosserbrief (1983), 73-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. G. Strecker, Paulus in nachpaulinischer Zeit (1970), 210; K.M. Fischer, Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes (1973), 95-108; A. Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum. Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion über die frühe Paulusrezeption (1979), 40; J. Gnilka, Das Paulusbild im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief (1981). Cf. G. Strecker, Paulus in nachpaulinischer Zeit (1970), 210; K.M. Fischer, Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes (1973), 95-108; A. Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum. Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion über die frühe Paulusrezeption (1979), 40; J. Gnilka, Das Paulusbild im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief (1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. See, for example, A.T. Lincoln and A.J.M. Wedderburn, The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters (2010); J.P. Hering, The Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln in Theological Context. An Analysis of their Origins, Relationship, and Message (2007), 107-156.Hering writes: "The large amount of common material, as well as the coincidence of its ordering, indicate an intricate literary relationship between the two forms", adapting the material from Kol, ibid. Ibid. 154-155 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. E. Schweizer, The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary (1982), 241; E. Schweizer, Der Brief an die Kolosser (1976); A. Standhartinger, Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte und Intention des Kolosserbriefs (1999), 10-16 mit dem Urteil der Fiktionalität von Verfasser und Adressaten. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. W. Schenk, Der Kolosserbrief in der neueren Forschung (1845-1985) (1987), 3338-3349. Cf. the quite different evaluation of Col within the canonical New Testament, ibid. However, one would still have to add the references to Acts (or vice versa) here. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Tert., Adv. Marc. V 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Cf. here, Comm. in Gal. (PL 26, 313A): "sciendum quoque in Marcionis apostolo non esse scriptum 'et per deum patrem', volentis exponere, Christum non a deo patre, sed per semetipsum suscitatum." [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. U.B. Schmid, Marcion und sein Apostolos. Rekonstruktion und historische Einordnung der marcionitischen Paulusbriefausgabe (1995), I/331. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. This reference unfortunately escaped Schmid. Even if Schmid's work is a highly learned study both methodologically and text-critically, it still needs improvements in details here and there, as here, and a similar methodological discussion on the reconstruction of the Marcionite Pauline text would have to be conducted again, as is currently underway on the question of the reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel. On this, cf. most recently with older literature J. Heilmann and M. Klinghardt, Das Neue Testament und sein Text im 2. Jahrhundert (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. A. Camplani, John the Baptist According to Marcion's Gospel and Early Syriac Texts (2018); M. Vinzent, Methodological Assumptions in the Reconstruction of Marcion’s Gospel (Mcn). The Example of the Lord’s Prayer (2018). Cf. A. Camplani, John the Baptist According to Marcion's Gospel and Early Syriac Texts (2018); M. Vinzent, Methodological Assumptions in the Reconstruction of Marcion’s Gospel (Mcn). The Example of the Lord’s Prayer (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. M. Klinghardt, Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien (2015).Tert., Adv. Marc. V 2. I take the abbreviation Mcn for Marcion's Gospel from ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016). same observation with the extended indication that the Pastoral Epistles share this view can be found in ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. So Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 20,5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 6,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. How alien the term "Judaism" as an abstract religion was to Jewish ears was again recently highlighted by C.A. Barton and D. Boyarin, Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Cf. in detail my commentary on the anti-Marcionite texts of Tertullian, M. Vinzent, Tertullian's Preface to Marcion's Gospel (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. According to Adolf Harnack, of the "27 writings now in the N. T., Tertullian knew all except II Pet., II and III John and Jacob", according to A. Harnack, Tertullians Bibliothek christlicher Schriften (1914), 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Wolfram Kinzig has been able to show that the title "New Testament" is a creation of Marcion, W. Kinzig, Καινὴ διαϑήκη: The title of the New Testament in the second and third centuries (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. M. Klinghardt, Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien (2015); J. BeDuhn, The First New Testament: Marcion’s Scriptural Canon (2013).Cf. also the different positions in the anthology J. Heilmann and M. Klinghardt, Das Neue Testament und sein Text im 2. Jahrhundert (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. D.E. Wilhite, Introduction (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. "Either he [Paul] himself or one of his followers in Corinth could have created the oldest collection of Pauline letters from these four letters [Rom, 1-2Cor, Gal]. But this is only a possibility and not really provable." Even if one wants to accept this assumption, it is doubtful when it is concluded: "If the assumption of such a primary collection were true, then the ... criterion [completeness] of canonicity would have been fulfilled (retrospectively) already during Paul's lifetime for his own letters." Both quotations from G. Theißen, Wie wurden urchristliche Texte zur Heiligen Schrift? Kanonizität als literaturgeschichtliches Problem (2012), 436.Trobisch's history of the development of epistle collections and our example of the Ignatians shows that a collection does not yet constitute a canon. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Cf. for instance the historical positions of the 'Dutch radical critics' Allard Pierson (1831-1896), Abraham Dirk Loman (1823-1897), Willem Christiaan van Manen (1842-1905), G.J.P.J. Bolland (1854-1922), Gustaaf Adolf van den Bergh van Eysinga (1874-1957); cf. E. Verhoef, Die holländische radikale Kritik (1996); A. Wechsler, Geschichtsbild und Apostelstreit. Eine forschungsgeschichtliche und exegetische Studie über den antiochenischen Zwischenfall (Gal 2,11 - 14) (1991), 99-128; S.J. De Vries, Bible and Theology in the Netherlands Dutch Old Testament Criticism under Modernist and Conservative Auspices 1850 to World War I (1968), 52-55.Successors who reinforced this radical critique include R.M. Price, The Amazing Colossal Apostle: The Search for the Historical Paul (2012); H. Detering, Der gefälschte Paulus. Das Urchristentum im Zwielicht (1995); H. Detering, Paulusbriefe ohne Paulus? Die Paulusbriefe in der holländischen Radikalkritik (1992); P.L. Couchoud, The First Edition of the Paulina. Translated by Frans-Joris Fabri and Michael Conley (2002 (1928)). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. On the outstanding importance of the Second Epistle of Peter in the question of the formation of the 'canonical edition' of the New TestamentD. Trobisch, Die Endredaktion des Neuen Testaments: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der christlichen Bibel (1996), 125-154; W. Grünstäudl, Geschätzt und bezweifelt. Der zweite Petrusbrief im kanongeschichtlichen Paradgomenstreit (2018).cf. D. Trobisch, Die Endredaktion des Neuen Testaments: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der christlichen Bibel (1996), 125-154; W. Grünstäudl, Geschätzt und bezweifelt. Der zweite Petrusbrief im kanongeschichtlichen Paradgomenstreit (2018).Although Grünstäudl presents a number of counter-arguments to Trobisch, he does accept (ibid. 85) the formulation of the 'editorial idea' in the following way: 'The 2nd Epistle of Peter is an editorial in epistolary form for a canonical edition of the New Testament in the 2nd century', according to G. Theissen, Literaturgeschichte und Literaturästhetik. Zu D. Trobisch: Das Neue Testament als literaturgeschichtliches Problem (2011), 136.Cf. now also J. Frey, M.d. Dulk and J.G.v.d. Watt, Eds., 2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter: Towards a New Perspective (2019), 62-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. J.N. Bremmer, The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text: Its Date, Provenance and Relationship with 2 Peter (2019), 87-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. "But because the letter hardly shows any knowledge of 1 Peter, and the characterisation does not quite fit the content and scope of 1 Peter, it is of course not undisputed that "this first letter ... is hardly a lost or unknown letter, but the 1st Epistle of Peter", according to H. Balz and W. Schrage, Die "Katholischen" Briefe. Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Johannes und Judas (1982), 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. 2Peter 1:1: "1 Simon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have obtained the same precious faith as we"; 1Peter 1:1: "1 Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, the chosen stranger in the Diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia and Bithynia." [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. On 2Petr cf. (with older lit.) W. Grünstäudl, Petrus Alexandrinus. Studien zum historischen und theologischen Ort des zweiten Petrusbriefes (2013); L. Doering, Apostle, Co-Elder, and Witness of Suffering. Author Construction and Peter Image in First Peter (2009); W. Grünstäudl, U. Poplutz and T. Nicklas, Der zweite Petrusbrief und das Neue Testament (2017); W. Grünstäudl, Petrus, das Feuer und die Interpretation der Schrift. Beobachtungen zum Motiv des Weltenbrandes im zweiten Petrusbrief (2013). Grünstäudl notes: '2Petr sketches ... artfully creates a complex image of Peter, but refrains from reconciling this fiction with the only text of Peter that he explicitly mentions and thus presumes to be known by his addressees! It is not surprising that this finding has been interpreted to mean that 2Petr does not want to hide its pseudepigraphical character at all, but on the contrary to reveal it to its readers in a propopian manner." [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Cf. for example P.H. Davids, The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude (2006), 126-130; K.H. Schelkle, Die Petrusbriefe, der Judasbrief (1980), 179-181.Cf. also Schrage: "Almost unanimously, the letter is rightly regarded as a pseudepigraphical letter. If the 1st Epistle of Peter does not originate from Peter, the 2nd Epistle of Peter, which refers to him (3:1), is even less likely to do so. It is irrelevant whether the author himself considers the 1st Letter of Peter to be genuine or not. That both letters cannot be derived from one and the same author is shown by the great differences in language and theology", according to H. Balz and W. Schrage, Die "Katholischen" Briefe. Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Johannes und Judas (1982), 127.On the Second Epistle of Peter, cf. W. Grünstäudl, Petrus Alexandrinus. Studien zum historischen und theologischen Ort des zweiten Petrusbriefes (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Referring to harmonisation and differentiation of the two traditions through 2PetrJ. Frey, M.d. Dulk and J.G.v.d. Watt, Eds., 2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter: Towards a New Perspective (2019), 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. H. Balz and W. Schrage, Die "Katholischen" Briefe. Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Johannes und Judas (1982), 152.Anders ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Ibid. 122 Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. K.H. Schelkle, Die Petrusbriefe, der Judasbrief (1980), 182. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Cf. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 14,1; nevertheless Schelkle claims that Clement "also explained 2 Peter" after this passage, ibidibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. J.N. Bremmer, The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text: Its Date, Provenance and Relationship with 2 Peter (2019). Thus C. Detlef G. Müller, in NTApo6 II (1990), 263-264. Cf. on this text also J.N. Bremmer, The Apocalypse of Peter (2003).Now also with new considerations J.N. Bremmer, The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text: Its Date, Provenance and Relationship with 2 Peter (2019).Cf. in general the new volume J. Frey, M.d. Dulk and J.G.v.d. Watt, Eds., 2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter: Towards a New Perspective (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 25,8. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Cf. Orig., In libr. Jesu Nave 7,1 (GCS 7,328). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 3,4. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 3,1; cf. also III 25,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. K.H. Schelkle, Die Petrusbriefe, der Judasbrief (1980), 182-183. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. M. Vinzent, Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels (2014). Thus my suggestion in ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. E.W. Scherbenske, Canonizing Paul. Ancient Editorial Practice and the Corpus Paulinum (2013), 71-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Cf. also Rom 1,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. A.J. Hultgren, Paul's Pre-Christian Persecutions of the Church: Their Purpose, Locale, and Nature (1976). Cf. the juxtaposition of the actions as presented in Paul's letters and Acts in ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Cf. also the use of language in Jos. X 51; XIII 297; XIII 408; XIX 349; but also Mk 7,3.5 ("the tradition of the elders"). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. M. Theobald, Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. In what follows, I elaborate on what was first drafted with me by Janelle Priya Mathur, cf. J.P. Mathur and M. Vinzent, Pre-canonical Paul. His Views Towards Sexual Immorality (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. "Paul and later followers of Christ frequently defined the boundaries of their movement in sexual terms", J.W. Knust, Abandoned to Lust. Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity (2006), 51-87, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter "Homosexualitas problema" on pastoral care for homosexual persons, AAS 79 (1987) 543-554; Engl.: Announcements of the Apostolic See 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Some compare Mt 19:4-6 and Mk 10:5-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. S. Perowne, Hadrian (1960), 100. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Arist., Apol. 8:1; 9:3; 13:5; 17:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. R.M. Grant, Greek apologists of the second century (1988), 38-39. Cf. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. M. Vinzent, Earliest 'Christian' Art is Jewish Art (2016). As I tried to show in ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. A.Y. Reed, Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism. Collected Essays (2018), xv. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. "History has been given the task of judging the past, of instructing the world for the benefit of future years: the present attempt does not subjugate itself to such high offices: it merely wants to show how things actually were", according to L.v. Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke (1877), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. U. Schnelle, Die ersten 100 Jahre des Christentums 30-130 n. Chr. Die Entstehungsgeschichte einer Weltreligion (2016), 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. M. Vinzent, Marcion the Jew (2013); A. Camplani, Mosè, Elia e Abramo nel Vangelo di Marcione (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. For a critique of the contemporary tendency to single out such "moments when everything changed", see S. Schwartz, How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Cf. the discussion on the distinctiveness of 'Christians' (even if they did not call themselves such) in connection with the persecution under Nero: B. van der Lans and J.N. Bremmer, Tacitus and the Persecution of the Christians: An Invention of Tradition? (2017), 303-304, 308-309. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)