

Explorations in the Preaching of St. Paul



Session One

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Discussion

What do you already know about St. Paul?

Catholic Principles of Biblical Interpretation



Foreword

The Incarnation



- ✧ Fully human, Fully Divine.
- ✧ PIUS XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), no. 37: “[O]f the modes of expression which, among ancient peoples, and especially those of the East, human language used to express its thought, none is excluded from the Sacred Books [...]”
- ✧ *Ibid.*, no. 34: “[T]he supreme rule of interpretation is to discover and define what the writer intended to express.”

Interpreting St. Paul



- ❧ The letters of St. Paul obey the literary and rhetorical conventions of the 1st century A.D. In order to interpret his writing accurately, we must read them in accord with their historical and literary context.
- ❧ Paul's letters are **NOT**:
 - ❧ Gospels
 - ❧ Catechisms
 - ❧ Epistles (Yes, there is a difference!)
- ❧ Paul's letters are generally written *ad hoc*; they are designed to address specific communities and circumstances.

The Format of a Letter



- ✧ Letters written in the ancient Greco-Roman world tend to follow a set format:
 - ✧ **Opening Formula:** Includes the name of the author, addressee, a greeting, and remembrance.
 - ✧ **Thanksgiving:** Often gives thanks to the deity (in both Christian and non-Christian contexts) for specified reasons.
 - ✧ **Body/Message:** The main message. In Paul, this section usually includes a doctrinal (with past/present tense verbs) and an ethical part (*paranesis* – with imperative verbs).
 - ✧ **Concluding Formula:** Includes well wishes and, in Paul, often a doxology and blessing.

Authorship: Definitions



- ❧ The English word “author” comes from the Latin *auctor* (which itself is a derivative of *auctoritas* – “authority”).
- ❧ Today, we typically identify the author strictly with the one who committed the words to the pages. In the ancient world, the concept of authorship was broader. In addition, an author in the ancient world could include:
 - ❧ One who dictated ideas to a scribe.
 - ❧ One who attracted a “school” of followers who later wrote and attributed their work to him.
 - ❧ A significant figure from the distant past who later writers wished to honor or connect with their work (e.g. Wisdom of Solomon).

Paul as an Author



- ❧ This expanded definition of authorship enters into the discussion of Paul's letters. A letter is deemed **authentic** if Paul either handwrote or dictated a letter himself:
 - ❧ 7 letters are undisputedly authentic (**proto-Paulines**):
1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans.
 - ❧ Another 3 are of disputed authenticity (**deutero-Paulines**):
2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians.
 - ❧ Another 3 are even more disputed (**Pastorals**):
1 & 2 Timothy, Titus.
 - ❧ *The Letter to the Hebrews*: Pauline authorship generally abandoned by scholars (and by the *Lectionary for Mass*).
- ❧ Key Point: "Inauthentic" **DOES NOT MEAN** "uninspired" or "fraudulent"!

Paul of Tarsus: The Man



A Biographical Sketch

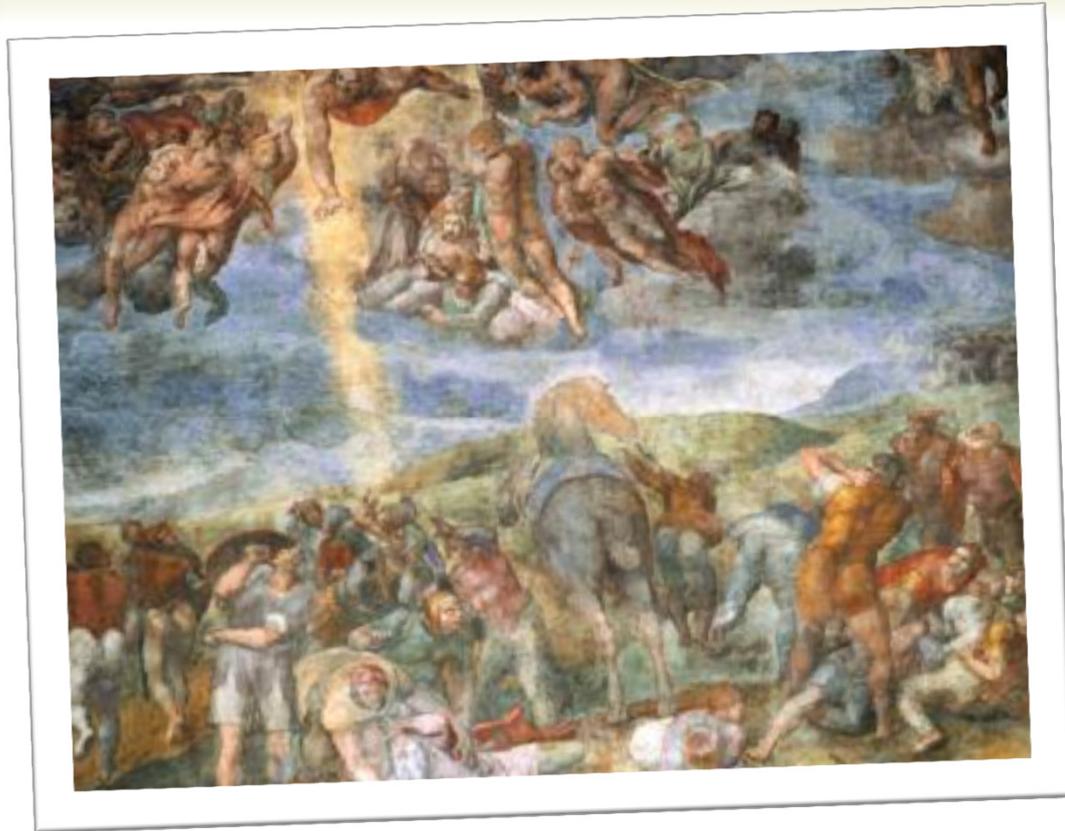
The Influence and Importance of St. Paul

- ❧ **Rom 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek.
 - ❧ I wanted to call this course: “Explorations in the Gospel of St. Paul the Apostle”
- ❧ J.D.G. DUNN, *A Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 2-3:
 - ❧ “[Paul] belonged to that generation which was more creative and more definitive for Christianity’s formation and theology than any other since. And within that generation it was he more than any other single person who ensured that the new movement stemming from Jesus would become a truly international and intellectually coherent religion.”

A Biographical Sketch



- ❧ A few details from the NT on Paul's life:
 - ❧ **Acts 22:3** – Paul was educated at the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem (between 20-30 A.D.)
 - ❧ **Acts 7:58** – Paul was a “young man” when Stephen was martyred.
 - ❧ **2Cor 11:32** – Paul in Damascus when King Aretas was influential (likely between 37-41 A.D.)
 - ❧ **Acts 18:2** – Paul arrived in Corinth when Claudius had “recently” expelled the Jews from Rome (49 A.D.)
 - ❧ **Acts 18:12** – “But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia...” (Had to occur between 51-52 A.D.; hence Paul had to be in Corinth at this time)
 - ❧ **Acts 24:27** – Paul was prisoner in Caesarea when Festus became governor (59 or 60 A.D.)
 - ❧ **Phlm 9** – Paul calls himself an “old man.”



The Conversion of St. Paul

Michelangelo, 1542-1545, *Cappella paolina* in the Vatican.

Paul's Conversion



- ❧ The Accounts of Paul's Conversion
- ❧ What kind of a conversion is Paul's?
- ❧ Paul went from persecutor of the followers of a crucified Messiah to a believer in the Risen Lord.
- ❧ Paul still sees himself as a Jew! (For him, Judaism and Christianity are not two separate religions. Rather, Christ is the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham.)



How Have You Experienced Conversion in Your Life as a Follower of Christ?

(Picture: Caravaggio, *The Conversion of St. Paul*, 1600).

Paul: Three Cultures and Three Titles

☞ 3 Cultures:

- ☞ Hebrew
- ☞ Greek
- ☞ Roman (Citizen; cf. Acts 16:37-38 and 22:25-29)

☞ 3 Titles:

- ☞ Apostle (his preferred title)
- ☞ Theologian
- ☞ Saint

The Personality of Paul



- ❧ As a proclaimer of the Gospel, Paul was personally involved and is a key character in his letters.
- ❧ He Can Be Extremely Passionate:
 - ❧ **Gal 3:1, 3a** O stupid Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? [...] ³ Are you so stupid?
 - ❧ **Gal 4:19** My children, for whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you! ²⁰ I would like to be with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed because of you.
 - ❧ **Gal 5:12** Would that those who are upsetting you might also castrate themselves!
 - ❧ **1Cor 11:1** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

The Legacy of Paul



- ✧ A Gentile and Jewish Church: A Church that is Truly Catholic (in the sense of “universal”).
- ✧ Relationship between the OT and NT
- ✧ A Pre-eminent Pastor, Missionary, and Teacher
- ✧ In general, the Pauline Letters (at least the Proto-Paulines) are the earliest books written of the NT

Practical Matters



Methodology for Each Session

Scope for the Class



- ❧ Given the vast expanse of the 13 letters that make up the Pauline corpus (out of a total of 27 NT books), a detailed survey is impossible.
- ❧ Solution: St. Paul's Greatest Hits!
- ❧ Each week, there will be one key fundamental text (relatively short) which we will examine in depth.
 - ❧ It will be freshly translated along with plenty of explanatory footnotes.
 - ❧ Our biggest goal will be to discern the importance of what Paul is saying for our faith, prayer, and daily life.
- ❧ We will also look at that text in the context of the letter to which it belongs.

Outline for Each Session



- ❧ 1. Use of the Letter in the Liturgy
- ❧ 2. Historical Background of the Letter
 - ❧ Recipients
 - ❧ Date
 - ❧ Situation that Caused the Letter to Be Written
- ❧ 3. Overview and Significance of the Letter
- ❧ 4. Interlude: Small Group Discussion Questions
- ❧ 5. In-Depth Examination of the Key Text (and its Immediate Context)
- ❧ 6. Discussion of Major Themes and Actualization

Next Week...



❧ **Letter:** 1 Thessalonians

❧ **Key Text:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

❧ **Larger Context:** 1 Thessalonians 4-5

❧ **Significant Theme:** Morality and Eschatology

General Bibliography



☞ Study Bibles:

- ☞ W.J. HARRELSON, ed., *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, Nashville 2003.
- ☞ D. SENIOR – J.J. COLLINS – M.A. GETTY, *The Catholic Study Bible*, Oxford 1990, 2011³.

☞ Other Reference Works:

- ☞ S.N. BRODEUR, *Il cuore di Paolo è il cuore di Cristo*, Roma 2010. (English edition forthcoming)
- ☞ R.E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York 1997.
- ☞ J.D.G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids 1998.
- ☞ M.A. POWELL, ed., *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, New York 2011.