

After the Reformation – Pauline Exegesis in the Early Modern Period

Zurich, April 10–12, 2025

Contemporary Pauline exegesis has generally subsumed the interpretation of Paul's letters under the headings of 'Old Perspective' or even 'Lutheran Perspective' to indicate a traditional reading of Paul stemming back to Luther and Melanchthon and leading up as far as the 1980s. Many scholars distance themselves from such an approach to Paul, yet this in no way does justice to the diversity of Pauline exegesis that has occurred from the 16th through the 20th centuries.

Already the second and third generation of Protestant commentators in the later 16th century approached the Pauline texts differently, in their often detailed and learned commentaries, than Luther and Melanchthon in the stormy years of the early Reformation.

On the one hand, commentaries became more dogmatic in Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy. The principle of *sola scriptura*, together with the doctrine of verbal inspiration, led in part to an exegesis focused on individual doctrinal concepts. But already these doctrinal concepts were highly disputed. On the other hand, the historical and philological interests of humanism continued to have an effect. The newly discovered Peschitta was included in the exegesis. Attempts were made to historically reconstruct the biography of Paul beyond the traditional legends of Saint Paul. However there was no uniformity in how to include these insights in the exegetical procedure, and there was no agreement on whether they may affect theology.

Within Early Modernity, movements deviating from mainstream Protestantism, such as Socinianism and early Pietism, set themselves apart from the Reformers' interpretations of Paul and prepared the ground for historical criticism that would appear in the 18th century. At the same time, Roman Catholic exegesis of Paul evolved in critical opposition to the Reformation with its own settlement of humanist influences, yet it did not simply continue the medieval tradition but provided important new impulses.

This conference, "After the Reformation – Pauline Exegesis in Early Modern Times," is the second workshop of the research project "16th Century Exegesis of Paul," which is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Our first conference, "The Many Faces of Paul – Pauline Exegesis in Pre-Modern Times" (Geneva, March 22–24, 2024), focused on Pauline exegesis leading up to the 16th century. While the research project itself focuses primarily on the Reformation, this second conference is dedicated to the early modern aftermath of the Reformation in as broad a sense as possible.

We are therefore deliberately interested in presentations on a broad spectrum of possible figures and sources, and we welcome contributions on the whole corpus that was historically associated with the Apostle, including the Epistle to the Hebrews, letters that are today considered as deutero-Pauline, and apocryphal material such as the *Acta Pauli*. In particular, we invite papers from the late 1500s up to the early 1800s which focus on

- a particular theologian, historian, philosopher, and their use of (parts of) the *Corpus Paulinum*,
- a particular commentary or treatise dealing with one of the Pauline Epistles or with the figure of Paul,
- a particular Epistle and its reception in a specific milieu,
- particular passages in the *Corpus Paulinum* and their exegetical treatment,
- the uses of Paul in moral treatises or sermons,
- biographical, historical, or historiographical knowledge of Paul as communicated in prologues, *vitae*, historical works, or images,

- the reuse of earlier works on Paul in later treatises, sermons, or commentaries.

Since this is an interdisciplinary project, we also invite contributors to include modern exegetical perspectives when reading the historical sources. This is not meant to check whether the historical readers “were right” with their interpretations, rather the modern perspective has proven a helpful contrast to recognize the specificities of individual historical approaches.

The conference will be held in Zurich, April 10–12, 2025. We will cover travel and accommodation fees for accepted speakers, but please be aware that, for environmental reasons, we are not allowed to cover flight tickets. For those who want to participate from far abroad, there is the possibility to join us on Zoom.

We invite you to submit proposals with a provisional title and a summary (200 words) before September 30, 2024, to be sent to benjamin.manig@uzh.ch and stefan.krauter@uzh.ch. Papers may be given in English, German, or French.



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