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My gratitude is due to my loving and supportive parents **William and Jennifer**. I also thank all the readers of *Canterbury Tales* and *The Crucified Rabbi*.

I offer my sincere love and gratitude to **my wife Joy** with whom I am united in a “profound mystery” (Eph 5:32). Joy, please forgive me for all the times that I have not represented Christ as your husband.

It may seem odd to Protestant readers, but I must personally thank **Saint Paul** himself to whom I have prayed for guidance—though not nearly enough. I hope that I have been a worthy client of his patronage.

As a schoolchild who seeks to honor his mother with a drawing, I place this book into the loving and fragrant hands of my **Blessed Mother Mary**. May she in turn, present it to our **Lord Jesus Christ** to the greater glory of **God the Father**. If any word of this book is false, prideful, pompous, incorrect, or contrary to the doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church, may it be rejected and attributed to my ignorance. If there be anything of worth and goodness, may it be attributed to the Divine Mercy of God.

**O** ALTITUDO DIVITIARUM SAPIENTIÆ, et scientiæ Dei: quam incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia ejus, et investigabiles viæ ejus! Quis enim cognovit sensum Domini? aut quis consiliarius ejus fuit? aut quis prior dedit illi, et retribuetur ei? Quoniam ex ipso, et per ipsum, et in ipso sunt omnia: ipsi gloria in sæcula. Amen.



## HOW I DISCOVERED THE CATHOLIC PAUL

My first prayer came as a response to reading the words of Saint Paul. I did not grow up in a Christian home; however, when I was about nine years old, my father presented me with the autograph of the catcher for the Texas Rangers, Darrel Porter, who had written under his signature “Rom 10:9.” Thinking it to be a secret code, I quickly cracked it after discovering it to be the abbreviation of a Bible verse. When I looked up the verse, I read these inspired words from the pen of Saint Paul:

“For if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

In that moment, I prayed my first prayer, “I believe that You raised Jesus from the dead,” and I confessed with my mouth that “Jesus is the Lord.” Thereafter, I began to read the Bible in order to learn more about my Lord who had risen from dead. God works in mysterious ways...even through baseball. The Spirit breatheth where he will.

About nine years later, the summer after I graduated from high school, my mother took us on a vacation to Italy. We flew into the airport outside of Rome and our taxi driver drove us into the marvelous city—the Eternal City. I could not believe my eyes as we

wound through the city. I saw the story of civilization flash before me—thousands of years of history and the most magnificent buildings that I had ever seen. As Saint Francis once remarked, “Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for he shall enjoy everything.”

As a generic Christian without denominational commitments, I was completely unaware of the five hundred year debate between Catholics and Protestants. I knew that I was not a “Catholic,” but I didn’t know why. I began exploring Rome as an alien in a foreign land. Here and there I discovered details about the amazing superstitions of Catholics. I say “amazing superstitions” because they truly amazed me. I was not yet a hardened Protestant and hardly felt the need to “protest” against Rome at all. However, I was generally suspicious of the gold ceiling in Saint Peter’s Basilica. Nevertheless, I thought to myself, “If anyone deserves a gold ceiling, it would be God.” The marble churches piqued my interest as I came into contact with a form of Christianity that did not conform to my experience.

Although the form of religion confused me, I saw Scriptural events depicted everywhere in the sacred art of Rome. I also saw depictions of holy virgins, bloody martyrs, and popes—personages completely foreign to me—yet sewn seamlessly into the fabric of biblical themes. For example, I remember a tour guide showing us the Altar of St. Leo the Great carved by Alessandro Algardi. The monumental marble relief depicts the Pope Leo I († A.D. 461) repelling Attila the Hun and his armies from Rome. I asked the tour guide, “Who are those men in the sky—the two men flying like superheroes and bearing swords?”

“Ah yes,” replied the guide, “those two men are the Apostles Peter and Paul, the founders of the Church of Rome.”

I certainly knew who Peter and Paul were from the Bible, and I had been aware that they came to Rome (after all, the book of Acts ends with Paul in Rome—more on that later). However, I was somewhat confused by the fact that Catholics believed that Peter and Paul (two men now in heaven) were still somehow interested in Rome. I was even more perplexed by the belief that Peter and Paul would appear centuries after their deaths in the sky with swords raised high against heathen invaders.

I left Rome with an uneasiness about what I had seen. I retained respect for the glory of Catholicism. I admired it as an anthropologist admires a recently discovered, but long lost civilization. However, I believed that its amazing superstitions were not those of Paul. I felt sure that if Saint Paul were transported from back in time to contemporary Rome, he would not feel at home with the gold ceilings and marble altars.

I wish that I could write that this trip to Rome kindled a growing love for Catholicism, and that I began my journey toward the Catholic Church after this visit. Rather, my life moved in the opposite direction. My curiosity led me to study theology more precisely. To my horror I found that Catholicism was not merely “superstitious.” I naively concluded that it was idolatrous and dangerous. I began to believe that Catholicism was devolution of Christianity, since it taught people to worship bread, worship images, and worship the Blessed Virgin Mary. As I studied Paul’s epistles I could find no common ground between the religion of Paul and the religion of Rome.

A few years later, I traveled to Greece and was once again confronted with a “foreign Christianity” in the form of Eastern Orthodoxy. Intrigued at first, I soon realized that the Eastern Churches held much in common with Catholicism: saints, sacraments, altars,



priests, and incense. I felt like weeping over the city of Athens, and I recalled the parenthetical words of Saint Luke regarding Paul's visit to Athens:

“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16).

I wrote in my journal that night, “Athens is still a ‘city full of idols’—only now they call the idols *icons*.” As you know, the Eastern Church has a profound devotion to the two dimensional icons that are revered as windows to heaven. As I entered churches and saw worshipers kissing them, I felt once again that I was in the presence of a deformed Christianity.

I went to the site of the Areopagus in Athens, where Saint Paul had first preached the Gospel to the Athenians, and I prayed that the city would once again return to the Saint Paul's so-called Protestant message: the justification of sinners by *faith alone*.

Before leaving the city, I noticed a monument erected to a deceased bishop of Athens. The inscription on the monument was written in Greek, which I was able to read. Today, I cannot recall the text of the inscription perfectly. However, it referred to the city's cathedral as a *ἱερόν* (pronounced *hieron*)—meaning “temple” in Greek. To my horror, the inscription also referred to the city's bishop as a *ἀρχιερεύς* (pronounced *archiereus*)—meaning “high priest” in Greek. In my mind, the identification of churches as “temples” and clergy as “priests” was tantamount to returning to the Jewish Old Testament—something expressly forbidden by Saint Paul.

So from that time, I considered everything Catholic and priestly as fundamentally contrary to the teaching of Saint Paul. However, the Holy Spirit did not

leave me in that state. After studying the Scriptures in Greek and Hebrew and reading the early Church Fathers in their historical context, I began to see that my original conclusions were too hasty. I soon began to see that my prejudices against Catholic Christianity were unfounded. After an extended journey in which I examined the Jewish Origins of Christianity, I came to see that Paul was in fact Catholic. I soon afterward embraced the Catholic Faith, the Faith of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. This book presents this “Catholic Perspective on Paul.” It’s not a new perspective on Paul. In fact, it’s the oldest perspective on Paul—a perspective that is almost two thousand years old.



## INTRODUCTION

G.K. CHESTERTON ONCE OBSERVED that the Catholic Church has been “attacked on all sides and for all contradictory reasons. No sooner had one rationalist demonstrated that it was too far to the east than another demonstrated with equal clearness that it was much too far to the west.”<sup>1</sup> The same may be said of Saint Paul. The history of heresy is essentially a series of contradictory positions, each claiming the authority of the Apostle Paul.

According to some heretics, Paul was the first corrupter of the life and doctrines of Jesus Christ. To others Paul alone preserved the true message of Christ that had been corrupted by the Twelve. Some consider Paul to have been the champion of grace, while others accuse him of yielding to the so-called Jewish legalism of Peter and James. Paul has since been accused of being too Greek, too Jewish, too gnostic, and too orthodox.

In his own day, he was held by some to be an apostle and by others to be a heretic. Martin Luther claimed Paul’s authority, as did the Catholic Council of Trent. He has been called both a misogynist and a liberator of women. Some hail him as a proponent of freedom and others revile him for imposing rules against sexual freedom and social progress. Always and everywhere, Paul is pulled and tugged in opposite directions. Paul has been stretched out so thinly that his features have become faint, almost forgotten. Prophetically, Saint Peter aptly described the controversial nature of Paul’s epistles:

So also, our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (2 Pet 3:15-16).

All the detractors of Paul stand united in their conviction that the historical Paul is certainly not the same Paul revered by the Catholic Church. There is today a deep prejudice against the so-called “Saint Paul” of the Catholic Church. They will grant that Paul was a rabbi, missionary, mystic, polemicist, author, and apostle. However, they will not grant that the man enshrined in the mosaics, statues, and stained glass of a thousand Catholic cathedrals is the Paul of history. The critics are convinced that the Catholic religion as we know it today has little to do with the historic Paul of Tarsus.

The book in your hands seeks to show that this prejudice is just that—a prejudice against a man defined by his own words. Paul is none other than a saint of the Holy Roman and Catholic Church. He spent his life wishing to bring his feet within the walls of Rome and he surrendered his head to the sword outside those very walls. Within his writings, we find the primitive and pristine doctrines of the Catholic Faith. We discover a Paul who is Catholic, a theologian who is sacramental, a churchman who is hierarchical, a mystic who is orthodox.

*The Primitive Heresy of Marcion*

Scarcely one hundred years had passed after the death of Paul before he was seized upon by one of the most systematic heretics in the history of the Church.

Marcion was the son of a bishop near the Black Sea who began teaching publicly some time near A.D. 140. Marcion affirmed that Jesus Christ was the savior of mankind sent by a benevolent God. However, Marcion believed that the God of the Jews was not the God of the Christians. Instead, he believed that the god of Israel was a malicious lower deity whom he identified as the Platonic *demiurge*. Marcion rejected the Old Testament as the horrific history of a capricious god that had created the world and subjected it to unbearable laws. According to Marcion's gospel, a higher and more compassionate God sent his son Jesus Christ to free us from the bondage of the demiurge. Marcion's doctrine of salvation consisted in deliverance from the tyranny of the demiurge's created world, as well as the corrupt apparatus of Judaism that had been instituted by the demiurge.

Marcion held that the twelve disciples of Christ had corrupted the "true gospel" through their Jewish legalism, and that Paul alone had preserved the message of Jesus Christ. Consequently, Marcion believed that Paul, and Paul alone, was the true interpreter of Christ's message. For Marcion, Paul was simply *the* Apostle. Consequently, Marcion and his followers accepted only the writings of Paul and only the Gospel according to Luke, since Luke had been a disciple of Paul. However, even the Marcionite version of Luke's Gospel was modified by Marcion in order to cater to his anti-Jewish presuppositions. Take for example the canonical passage in Luke where Christ rebukes the two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

O foolish and hard of heart to believe in *all that the prophets have spoken* (Luke 24:25).

Marcion edited this verse in Luke to reflect his anti-Semitic bias:

O foolish and hard of heart to believe in *all that I have spoken to you* (Marcion's version of Luke 24:25).<sup>2</sup>

One can see from his slight of hand that Marcion rejected the Old Testament prophets as misled servants of the demiurge. Marcion would follow this same prejudice as he read the epistles of Paul. He would emphasize Paul's teaching that the New Covenant surpasses the Old Covenant. Similar to heretics of a later age, Marcion favored the epistle to the Galatians as the primary epistle of Paul. Marcion even placed Galatians as the first book in his biblical canon.

Marcion traveled to Rome and donated to the Church of Rome a gift of two hundred thousand sesterces—the equivalent of several million US dollars in today's economy.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Pope Saint Pius I returned the money to Marcion and formally excommunicated him for his heretical doctrines. On another occasion, Marcion introduced himself to Polycarp, the Catholic bishop of Smyrna. Saint Irenaeus preserves the account of their brief exchange:

Marcion met Polycarp on one occasion and said, "Do you know me?"

Polycarp responded, "Yes, I know you to be the first-born of Satan!"<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, the leaders of the second-century Church identified Marcion's teaching as something novel and dangerous. Yet, the Marcionites were a force to be reckoned with well into the third century. The

Marcionites possessed an organized hierarchy, systematic theology, and biblical canon. Nevertheless, the heresy seems to have fizzled out completely by the fifth century.

*Martin Luther's "Protestant Paul"*

After the condemnation of Marcion in the second century, the Catholic Church continued to hold that Paul and the other Twelve Apostles proclaimed a unified message—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This consensus remained unchallenged until the protests of Martin Luther and the subsequent Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk and a Catholic priest who bore a troubled conscience. He came to feel oppressed by the unshakable conviction that he could never merit the love of God. As he lectured through Saint Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians, he came to believe that Paul presented a gospel that was wholly different than the one taught by the Catholic Church. Whereas, the Catholic Church taught that Christ came to redeem man by infusing grace into the soul of man so that he might *become* holy through faith, hope, charity, and works, Luther taught that a man was justified by faith *alone*.

Luther felt that he was as devout as any Christian could be. He was a bible scholar. He was a priest. He was an Augustinian monk. Luther believed that his new religious epiphany corresponded to Paul's own drastic conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Since the time of Luther, the Protestant tradition has unwittingly read Paul in the same way—through the lens of Martin Luther. The narrative of Luther's conversion is so well canonized in the Protestant tradition that magisterial Protestants often cannot help but think of



Paul as a sort of primitive Luther; and the Law of Moses as the corpus of Catholic tradition; and the Jewish apparatus of legalism as the Catholic Church itself. Whether they intend to or not, many read Luther's anti-Catholic rhetoric into Paul's arguments.

The Protestant conjunction of Paul's conversion with Luther's conversion is like one transparency layered on top of another. It is sometimes difficult to tell them apart. This Lutheran fascination with Paul can lead to a latent Marcionite method in theology, that is, to a tendency that elevates Paul at the expense of the other apostles. By this we mean that Protestant sermons and Bible studies focus more on Paul's epistles than they do on the four Gospels depicting the teaching, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Contrast this to the Catholic practice. In every celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, all present stand to their feet for the reading of the Holy Gospel. Next, all present make the sign of the cross upon their foreheads, lips, and chests—that the Gospel might remain in their minds, mouths, and hearts. The Catholic Church shows greatest honor to the four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) since these books contain the very words of Christ. Unfortunately, the four Gospels do not hold the esteemed place in Protestantism that they do in the Catholic Church. Instead, Paul is primary in Protestantism. Other biblical authors (especially James!) are cited less frequently. A Protestant friend of mine once remarked, "If all we had were the four Gospels and none of Paul's writings, we would not be able to understand the true Gospel." The Catholic Church naturally disagrees with this sentiment.

Interestingly enough, the Catholic Church opposed Martin Luther not by retreating from Paul, but by rallying to Paul's epistles at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). There has never been a more "Pauline"

council in the history of the Catholic Church. The canons and decrees of the Council of Trent repeatedly cite and reference the writings of Paul. In this case, the Council of Trent served Protestantism a healthy dose of its own medicine. However, the Catholic Church did not present the “Lutheran Paul” filtered through Luther’s interpretation of Romans and Galatians, but a Paul in harmony with the entire corpus of Paul’s writings, along with the rest of the New Testament. When the Council of Trent finally ended, the fathers of the council solemnly invoked “the indignation of Almighty God and of his blessed apostles, Peter and Paul,” upon the divisive misinterpreters of Paul.

*The Modern Liberal Agenda against Paul*

In the nineteenth century, an entirely new challenge was levied against the traditional Catholic perspective on Saint Paul. Following the philosophy of Hegel, the German theologian F.C. Baur (1792-1860) suggested that the primitive Catholic Church was actually the ingenious synthesis of two contrary versions of Christianity.

Recalling the influence of the second-century heretic Marcion and the unshakable resistance of the Roman Church against Marcion, Baur suggested that the first one hundred years of Christianity began as an antithesis between Judaizing Christians who followed Peter and James on the one hand, and anti-Judaizing Christians who followed Paul on the other hand. Baur believed that Christ and the original twelve apostles were Messianic Jews who followed the Law of Moses. Paul came afterward and took up for himself the title of “Apostle.” Paul then proceeded to create a *new* form of Christianity that was thoroughly opposed to the so-called primitive Jewish Christianity of the original

apostles. Baur believed that Marcion and his devotees were not actual heretics, but the true followers of the “historical Paul.”

Baur suggested that sometime around A.D. 100, Christian leaders created legends that yoked together the alleged twelve “pro-Jewish” Apostles with the alleged “pro-Gentile” Apostle Paul. The centerpiece for this great synthesis, according to Baur, was the work we know as the Acts of the Apostles. Baur believed that Luke did not write this document, but that early Christian leaders stitched together a false history that united two opposing versions of Christianity. The canonical Acts of the Apostles accomplishes this feat, Baur explained, by splicing together the Jewish ministries of Peter and the Apostles with the so-called anti-Jewish ministry of Paul. According to Baur, these same synthesizers also falsely composed the Pastoral Epistles of Paul (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus) in order to suggest that Paul favored Jewish legalism, hierarchy, and church structure. Baur questioned the authenticity of any epistle attributed to Paul if it spoke of the church, formal church leaders, or any epistle that favored tradition or rules. As a result, Baur rejected not only 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, but also Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians. In addition, Baur unabashedly denied the historical accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles. Baur even dared to suggest that the “false apostles” condemned by Paul in Corinth were actually Peter and the other Apostles!

Liberal biblical theologians today share many of Baur’s prejudices to a greater or lesser extent. In academia, Baur’s conviction concerning the forged origins of Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus is still widely presumed. In many academic circles, one would be openly ridiculed

for holding the belief that Paul was the author of the epistle to Titus.

If we seriously examine Baur's hypothesis, we see that it is riddled with Protestant prejudices. Baur assumes, along with Luther, that Paul is opposed to James. He also assumes that Paul is opposed to rules, sacraments, and a hierarchical church. However, Baur and Luther have put the cart before the horse. They have imagined Paul in their own image. They created that for which they had been looking. They have cut and pasted the epistles of Paul until they concocted a Paul that fit their schemes. This is not responsible scholarship and it is not the Catholic way.

### *The Method of This Book*

The method of this book questions the methods of Marcion, Luther, and Baur. Instead, we give credence to the textual tradition. We acknowledge the corpus of Paul's epistles as genuinely Pauline in authorship. Granted, the epistles of Paul bear different styles in places. Yet, we also observe from Paul's own writings that Paul did not in fact "write" all of his epistles. He used secretaries or *amanuenses*, as did nearly all authors in antiquity, as for example Cicero. The epistle to the Romans bears the line: "I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord" (Rom 16:22). In other words, Paul's epistle to the Romans was *written* by Tertius, but *authored* by Paul. The same is true of the other epistles that often bear the greeting of "Paul and Timothy" (2 Cor, Phil, Col) or "Paul and Sosthenes" (1 Cor).

Paul seems to have been losing his eyesight (Gal 4:15), and it therefore makes sense that he would author his epistles by using his assistants as secretaries. We might assume that Luke the physician performed this

duty for Paul in the apostle's final years, since Paul himself admits, "Luke alone is with me" (2 Tim 4:11). In fact, the style and vocabulary of Paul's last three epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) bear some similarities to those books authored by Luke (Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles). Catholic tradition also holds that Luke redacted the final version of the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews on Paul's behalf, a view endorsed by Saint Thomas Aquinas.<sup>5</sup>

For the argument's sake and for rhetorical purposes, this book assumes the posture of Marcion. I have attempted to restrict all theological arguments to the Pauline books of the New Testament. From time to time, I cite the Old Testament or other New Testament passages, but I make it my aim to argue the case for a "Catholic Paul" by sticking to Pauline material.

I consider there to be three strata of Pauline texts in the New Testament. On the first level are those thirteen epistles that explicitly bear the name of Paul and claim to be authored by Paul:

Romans	Colossians
1 Corinthians	1 Thessalonians
2 Corinthians	2 Thessalonians
Galatians	1 Timothy
Ephesians	2 Timothy
Philippians	Titus
Philemon	

On the second level, I place the epistle to the Hebrews. I realize that this work does not explicitly bear the name of Paul, but Catholic tradition holds it to be at least Pauline, even if the Apostle did not personally give the letter its final form.

On the third level, I place the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, since Saint Luke was a

close and intimate disciple of Saint Paul. There is not one ancient source doubting Luke's authorship of Gospel of Luke or the Acts of the Apostles. Early sources, such as the Muratorian Fragment, Irenaeus,<sup>6</sup> Tertullian,<sup>7</sup> and Clement of Alexandria<sup>8</sup> affirm that Luke was the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Although these two works are not strictly Pauline, they do reveal the theology of a man that lived and worked with Paul on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. Luke no doubt reflects the sentiments and convictions of his master. For this reason, I place Luke's Gospel and Acts on the third and lowest tier of "Pauline documents."

Weighing each of these sources, the balance tips toward Paul being a Catholic, or rather that the Catholic Church is what she is because she is faithful to the Apostle Paul. In Paul, we find a man who is very much like a Catholic priest. He speaks of his ministry as being "priestly" (Rom 15:6). He is proudly and openly celibate (1 Cor 7:7-9). He calls himself "father" (1 Cor 4:15). You will find this volume filled with examples of Paul's Catholic teachings as they relate to the attributes of the Church, the role of faith and works, baptismal regeneration, the sacrament of confirmation, the Eucharistic Real Presence of Christ, purgatory, marriage, moral issues, and even the significance of Rome for the Catholic Church. Through this journey, we find that Saint Paul is in fact a Catholic priest.

Taylor R. Marshall  
June 29, 2010  
Solemnity of Saint Peter  
and Saint Paul

## NOTES CONTINUED

<sup>1</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1994), 89.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Marcion's version of the Gospel of Luke, see David Salter Williams' "Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 477-96.

<sup>3</sup> This is a reliable interpretation of "currency exchange" since we know that a Roman legionary received a stipend of about one thousand two hundred sesterces per year in the second century.

<sup>4</sup> Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3, 3, 4.

<sup>5</sup> See the preface to Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*.

<sup>6</sup> Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1, 3.14.1.

<sup>7</sup> Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.2.2.

<sup>8</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.1.15; *Stromata* 5.12.82.

## 1. RABBI SAUL AND THE APOSTLE PAUL

### *Rabbi Saul*

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT Saint Paul's early life comes from Saint Luke's Acts of the Apostles. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39), which is located in what is today eastern Turkey. His parents were Israelites of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5), and he was named *Saul* after Israel's first king who also was of the tribe of Benjamin. Saul was born with the prestigious privilege of being a Roman citizen, which entails that his father had also been a Roman citizen (Acts 22:26-28).

We know little of Saul's parents. Saint Jerome records a tradition that his parents were natives of Gischala in Galilee and moved to Tarsus before his birth.<sup>9</sup> If this tradition were true, we might conclude that Saul's kin were Galileans just as the other Apostles had been Galileans. We know that Saul's family was pious and devout (2 Tim 1:3), and that he had been a follower of the traditions of the Pharisees (Phil 3:5-6).

As for his education, Saul's parents had sent him as a boy to study Torah in Jerusalem. We also read that Saul had a sister who resided in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). As a young man, Saul sat at the feet of the renowned Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was the grandson of one of the greatest Jewish scholars in Jewish history—Hillel who died around A.D. 10. Hillel is the founder of the intellectual dynasty culminating in the



Jewish *Mishnah*—the first record of oral law for Rabbinical Judaism.

The sect of the Pharisees was itself divided into two schools—the followers of Hillel and the followers of Shammai. Shammai interpreted the Jewish law more strictly than Hillel did. The classic example used to show the differences between the school of Hillel and the school of Shammai is that Hillel permitted divorce liberally (e.g. a man could divorce his wife if she burned dinner), whereas Shammai did not permit divorce. Paul conforms to the latter belief (Rom 7:2-3, see also CHAPTER NINE). Hillel served as the president of the Sanhedrin until his death in A.D. 10 when Shammai succeeded him to the office of president of the Sanhedrin. When Shammai died in A.D. 30, Hillel's grandson Gamaliel was elected president.

Paul claims to have studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). This does not, however, entail that Saul was a follower of Hillel. N.T. Wright is correct in identifying Saul with the Shammaite Pharisees.<sup>10</sup> Wright observes that Gamaliel, who represented the Hillelites, was tolerant of Christianity, whereas Saul sought to murder the early Christians. Perhaps Saul did study under Gamaliel and later became an adherent of Shammai. Another suggestion is that Gamaliel was unique in his toleration of Christianity.

Catholic tradition subsequently identified Gamaliel as an undercover Christian, even as a Catholic saint. This belief arose from Gamaliel's toleration of the incipient Christian movement. Saint Luke records how Gamaliel appealed to the Jewish Sanhedrin on behalf of the Apostles:

But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put

outside for a while. And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone. For if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail. However, if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" (Acts 5:34-35, 38-39)

Thus, Gamaliel played a key role in convincing the Sanhedrin to free the Apostles (Acts 5:40).

The second to third century document *Clementine Recognitions* describe Gamaliel's secret allegiance with the early Christians and with Saint James of Jerusalem in particular. According to this document, Gamaliel received a special dispensation from the Apostles allowing him to profess faith in Christ privately so that he might then inform the Apostles about the Sanhedrin's plans of persecution:

Then, when profound silence was obtained, Gamaliel, who, as we have said, was of our faith, but who by a dispensation remained among them, that if at any time they should attempt anything unjust or wicked against us, he might either check them by skillfully adopted counsel, or might warn us, that we might either be on our guard or might turn it aside.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the Roman Martyrology of the Catholic Church describes Gamaliel as a saint of the Catholic Church in its account for commemorations on the date August 3:

At Jerusalem, the body of Blessed Stephen the Protomartyr, and the bodies of Saint Gamaliel, Saint Nicodemus, and Saint Abibo were found

through a divine revelation made to the priest Lucian, in the time of Emperor Honorius.<sup>12</sup>

Catholic art also depicts Gamaliel and Nicodemus as those who orchestrated the burial of Saint Stephen after his martyrdom.<sup>13</sup> The relics of Gamaliel are still venerated at the Cathedral of Pisa (known for its famous leaning tower).

Saint John Chrysostom relates that Gamaliel converted to Christianity before Saint Paul was baptized.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the presbyter Lucian testifies that Saint Gamaliel appeared to him several times beginning on the third day of December in A.D. 415. He appeared to Lucian as bearded man, wearing a white robe, and holding a golden staff. "I am Gamaliel" the apparition explained, "who instructed the Apostle Paul in the Law." In the vision, Gamaliel described how he laid the body of Saint Stephen in his own tomb. Next, Gamaliel revealed to Lucian the site of this same tomb outside Jerusalem where the bodies of Nicodemus, Gamaliel, and Gamaliel's son also rested. Following the directions of Gamaliel, the presbyter Lucian discovered the tomb and the relics within. When the relics were found, the people in the region of Jerusalem flocked to the site and many were cured of various maladies.

Lest we dismiss this account as exaggerated hagiography, it's worth noting that Saint Augustine, a contemporary witness to these events, confirms the mysterious discovery of Saint Stephen's relics.<sup>15</sup> Bishop Ovidius, a close friend of Saint Augustine, also published a work entitled *The Miracles of Saint Stephen*, which depends on the same account described above. Furthermore, Saint Augustine records how his diocese of Hippo received relics of Saint Stephen from the tomb miraculously discovered by Lucian, and he also records the miracles wrought by these relics.<sup>16</sup> The

testimony seems to confirm that Gamaliel appeared in the fifth century as a Catholic saint from heaven.

Whether or not Gamaliel was a Christian before or after Paul converted, Gamaliel nevertheless exerted influence on the adolescent Saul—perhaps more than Saul originally comprehended. Saul's relationship with the respected Rabbi Gamaliel gained him entry into the upper echelons of the religious authorities in Jerusalem. He stood by and "held the coats" of the men who killed Stephen the Deacon (Acts 7:58-60; 22:20) in Jerusalem for the charge of being a Christian. In the biblical account of the murder of Saint Stephen, Saul is called a *neanias*, a Greek term indicating that he was a "young man" in his twenties at the time.

As a Pharisee, Saul possessed a vehement hatred of the early Christians who at this time were called "the followers of the Way" (Act 19:9). The Pharisees held fast to the traditions of the elders and rejected the Christian claim that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and the Son of God who had been raised from the dead. The Pharisees, whose name means *pure ones*, believed that God would liberate the Jewish people and reunite the twelve tribes of Israel by sending the Messiah only when the people of Israel had purified themselves and dutifully observed the works of the Law of Moses.

The newly formed sect of the Christians rejected the central tenants of the Pharisees. The Christians taught that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, and that Jesus had already established the Kingdom of God by ascending to the right hand of God the Father. Moreover, Christians believed that the reunification of the twelve tribes of Israel would also incorporate all the gentile nations. One can understand how Saul's blood boiled when he with the other

Pharisees heard Stephen accuse them of being spiritually uncircumcised and persecutors of the prophets:

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it (Acts 7:51-53).

Given the convictions of the Pharisees, we can also understand why Saul gladly stood by as his comrades executed this Christian “blasphemer.” Yet Stephen’s death did not satiate Paul’s anger against the Christians. Saul went to the High Priest, “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,” and obtained authority to hunt down and capture Christians outside of Jerusalem (Acts 9:1). Having received authorization, Rabbi Saul set out to arrest Christians in Damascus. Little did Saul know that he would arrive in Damascus as the world’s most recent convert to the sect that he had previously sought to destroy.

### *Apostle Paul*

Many people believe that Paul was knocked off his horse on the road to Damascus. Caravaggio’s famous painting entitled “Conversion on the Way to Damascus” has seared into our imaginations the image that Paul fell in amazement from his horse when Christ appeared to him in the midst of a blinding light. However, if you go back and read the biblical account of the miracle, nowhere does it describe Saul falling off his horse. In fact, we can be certain that Rabbi Saul was *not* on his

horse at midday when Christ appeared to him (Acts 26:13). We know this because Pharisees prayed regularly throughout the day in obedience to Psalm 55:16-17, "But I call upon God, and the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon." Jewish men recited these prayers standing on their feet and facing toward Jerusalem. Saul no doubt observed noonday prayer on that day as he traveled along the road to Damascus. He was likely standing erect and facing south to Jerusalem when Jesus Christ spoke to him and blinded him with light. Paul described the experience like this:

I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.'

And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?'

And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles – to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (Acts 26:14-18).

Blinded by this brilliant apparition of Christ, Saul went to Damascus where the very Christians whom he had sought to imprison received him. A Christian leader in Damascus by the name of Ananias laid his hands on

Saul, and at once the one-time persecutor of the Christians received back his sight. Saul then received the sacrament of baptism. Incidentally, Saul was baptized in a home and not in a river (Acts 9:17-18). As might be expected, the Christians of Damascus were not eager to receive Saul into their fellowship. "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called on this name? And he has come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests" (Act 9:21). However, Saul's conversion proved genuine as he immediately began to proclaim that Jesus was the promised Messiah of Israel.

I cannot help but wonder whether Saul contemplated Stephen's dying words of forgiveness as he traveled along the road to Damascus. Perhaps Saul began to contemplate Stephen's claims in light of his comprehensive knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Saul had dedicated his life to studying the Messianic promises of God to the people of Israel, and on that day at noon, the Messiah Himself appeared to him. Although his eyes became blind, his heart became filled with light. Was Saul horrified by how wrong he had been? Was he delighted to know that God's promises had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth? We only know that he reacted by transforming his zeal into a fiery love for Christ.

It has been said that Paul's entire theology is an expansion upon the particular words of Christ pronounced to him on the road to Damascus: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" (Acts 26:14). With these words, Christ revealed that to persecute any of His disciples is to persecute Him. When Saul approved of the murder of Stephen, he had approved of the murder of Christ. When Saul imprisoned Christians, he had imprisoned Christ. From this intimate union between Christ and his disciples, Saint Paul extrapolated his

entire theological system. Accordingly, Paul's doctrine of the believer's union with the person of Christ is the bedrock of Catholic theology because it presents salvation in terms of *participation*. Christ's statement to Saul reveals that the Christian believer participates in the life of Christ. This is the center of Paul's message. "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom 12:5). The epistles of Paul constantly and consistently resound with the phrase "in Christ" and "in Him." This phrase is more common than any other topic in the letters of Paul *combined*. This means that Paul discusses the believer's participation in Christ more than justification, faith, works, law, or predestination. Union with Christ is the ubiquitous theme of Paul's theology.

When we understand Christianity as a participation in Christ, we begin to read Paul's epistles in a new light, or rather under the ancient light of the Church Fathers who lived before us. We find that the "old perspective on Paul" articulated by the Catholic Church had it correct all along. Saint Paul presents the church, baptism, the Eucharist, marriage, faith, works, justification, sanctification, and regeneration as participations in the person and work of Christ. As we shall see, this interpretation confirms that Paul's teachings are in fact the teachings of the Catholic Church.

### *Paul's Doctrine of Participation in Christ*

Paul's paradigm of "union with Christ" can be contrasted with what I call "zero-sum theology." Let me boldly suggest that all theological misunderstandings regarding the Catholic Faith can be attributed to the adoption of "zero-sum theology." By "zero-sum theology," I mean that theological framework that views



salvation, grace, life, and love as a pie with only so many pieces. Christ either gets all pieces or loses the remaining pieces to Mary, saints, sacraments, priests, popes, etc. Naturally, Christ as God should receive all the pieces—not merely some of the pieces. He is the whole of salvation, right?

Of course, Christ is the whole. He is “all in all” as Saint Paul beautifully teaches (Eph 1:23). However, Catholics do not subscribe to a “zero-sum” approach to Christ. Rather than using a “zero-sum” model, Catholics use Saint Paul’s paradigm of participation. Christ is “all in all,” but this means that all other aspects of redemption participate in and through Christ—not apart from Christ. Catholics thus believe that the sacraments, Mary, saints, and priests participate in and through Christ, and thereby lead the Christian to embrace Christ more deeply.

This difference between Catholicism and Protestantism accounts for almost every doctrinal difference between Catholic theology and Protestant theology. Catholicism is framed by a doctrine of participation—Protestantism is generally framed by the zero-sum paradigm. To help us better appreciate how the doctrine of participation in Christ plays out in the realm of human salvation, let us look at the historical controversies surrounding the doctrine of grace.

### *How Are We Saved by Grace?*

Are people saved by grace alone to the exclusion of all human effort and activity? This question has been argued back and forth for centuries. I have outlined below four possible answers to this question: Does God accomplish salvation or does man *add* something?

100% God & 0% man (Calvinism, Jansenism)  
99% God & 1% man (Arminianism)  
50% God & 50% man (Semi-Pelagianism)  
0% God & 100% man (Pelagianism)

The Catholic Church rejects all four of the above solutions. Instead, the Catholic Church posits the following solution:

100% God & 100% man (Augustine, Aquinas)

As Saint Augustine confirms:

Now, concerning His working that we may will, it is said: "It is God who works in you, even to will." (Phil 2:13). While of His co-working with us, when we will and act by willing, the Apostle says, "We know that in all things there is co-working for good to them that love God" (Rom 8:28).<sup>17</sup>

Augustine focuses on Paul's words in Philippians 2:3 stressing that God *works within us*. God's operation and our cooperation are intimately related. Following Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas also held that grace is fittingly divided into operating and cooperating grace.<sup>18</sup>

The Catholic Church articulates human salvation in terms of operation and cooperation because it perceives human salvation *in union with Christ*. By becoming united to Christ, the Holy Spirit takes us up into Christ's love for the Father. Christ has a divine will and a human will working together in perfect synergy.<sup>19</sup> Just as Christ's human will cooperated with the divine will, so we also unite our human wills to the will of God: "thy kingdom come, thy will be done" (Mt 6:10). God does not accomplish the work of salvation without

us: Christ is crucified, but we are also crucified “in Him.” As Saint Augustine once remarked: “God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us.”<sup>20</sup> God is entirely responsible for our salvation, but we too play a part by participating in His work. For Catholics, salvation is not “God *and* me,” but rather, “God *in* me.” There is no contradiction in that. Paul teaches the same:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Paul’s sufferings are not viewed apart from Christ’s suffering. It is not that Christ performs 95% and Paul provides 5%. Rather, Paul explains “Christ lives in me.” There is now a complete union of Christ and Paul so that the work of Christ echoes through the actions of Paul. Christ is fully active and Paul is fully active through a cooperative synergy. Nowadays the word “synergy” carries with it an economic connotation, so do not let that confuse you. The word synergy comes from the Greek word *synergia*—a word used by Saint Paul to mean literally “working together.”<sup>21</sup> For example, the Apostle writes:

*Working together* {*synergountes*} with Him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain (2 Cor 6:1).

This “synergy” of Christ in believers is based firmly on the grace of God. Christ’s life echoes in the lives of those closest to Christ. This is why Christ asked Saul, “Why do you persecute *me*?” when Paul and others

murdered Saint Stephen. The martyrdom of Stephen is a reverberation of the passion and death of Christ. Stephen's sufferings do not compete with Christ's sufferings. Rather, Stephen's sufferings (and the sufferings of all the saints) participate in the sufferings of Christ and extend the passion of Christ throughout time.

If we understand salvation in terms of synergy, then we can also appreciate the role of sacraments and human agency in salvation. An Evangelical might object and say, "Baptism does not save you. Jesus saves you." Again, this is the error of zero-sum theology. Why can't baptism participate instrumentally in the redemptive work of Christ and save me? Why must it be "either/or"? We will discuss this difficulty in more detail in the chapter on baptism.

A Protestant might also say, "Christ saves you, not the saints." Yet Paul writes: "I have become all things to all men, that *I might save some.*" (1 Cor 9:22) Paul is a saint and he clearly believed that he "saved" people. However, Paul only "saved" people through his participation in the apostolic priesthood of Christ. It is not Jesus vs. Paul—it is Jesus *through* Paul. Here again, Paul shows us that the biblical paradigm is participation, not zero-sum. With this in mind, let us move on to Paul's doctrine of the Catholic Church. Paul's vision of the Church amplifies our understanding of being "in Christ," since Paul defines the Church as the mystical "Body of Christ."

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<sup>9</sup> Saint Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 5.

<sup>10</sup> N.T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand

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Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 26.

<sup>11</sup> *Clementine Recognitions* 1, 66.

<sup>12</sup> *Roman Martyrology*, August 3. Translation from Latin mine.

<sup>13</sup> The most notable example is Carlo Saraceni's school version of "Saint Stephen Mourned by Saints Gamaliel and Saint Nicodemus," which is displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

<sup>14</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily XIV in Act.*

<sup>15</sup> Saint Augustine, *Commentary on St. John*, Tractate 120. Migne also reports that this revelation, whereby the bodies of Saint Stephen and Nicodemus were discovered through the appearance of Saint Gamaliel the Jew, is referred to the close of the year 415, by those who trust in the authority of the Presbyter Lucian, in a small book written on the subject. See also how Photius, *Cod.* 171, p. 199 read in a work of Eustratius how Gamaliel was baptized by St. Peter and St. John. According to the Jewish tradition, Wolf. *Bibl. Hebr.* ii. 882. he died President of the Sanhedrim, eighteen years after the fall of Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> Saint Augustine, *City of God* 22, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Augustine, *De Gratia et Lib. Arbit.*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 111, a. 2. Thomas clarifies that, "Operating and cooperating grace are the same grace; but are distinguished by their different effects."

<sup>19</sup> *Seventh Ecumenical Council* (Nicea II): "We profess, and so we believe that in our one Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, there are two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, undividedly, and two

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natural wills and two natural operations; and all who have taught, and who now say, that there is but one will and one operation in the two natures of our one Lord Jesus Christ our true God, we anathematize.”

<sup>20</sup> Saint Augustine, Sermon 169, 11, 13: *Patrologia Latina* 38, 923.

<sup>21</sup> For Paul's use of *synergeo* see Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 16:16; 2 Cor 6:1.