In the history of Western exegesis, the Pauline Epistles have always played an important role. It is true that the Protestant reformations claimed to be particularly inspired by the Apostle’s authority, but the *Corpus Paulinum* shaped Latin theologians ever since the teachings of the Church Fathers and throughout the medieval period, and that in many different ways. For example, almost one third of the ca. 700 biblical allusions in Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* refer to the *Corpus Paulinum*, underlining its authoritative status, and in the prologue to his *Commentary on Romans* Thomas Aquinas famously stated that «just as the Church uses most frequently the Psalms among the writings of the Old Testament, so it most frequently uses in the New Testament the Epistles of Paul, since in both writings almost the whole doctrine of theology is contained.» ¹ At the dawn of the Reformation era, humanists such as Jacques Lefèvre d’Étapes and Erasmus gave their ethical projects an explicitly Pauline shape, but they differed from both the scholastics’ and the protestants’ approaches. Similarly, the theological controversies of the 16th century provoked an impressive number of doctrinal commentaries to the Pauline epistles not only among the proponents of Reformation theologies, but also among the defenders of traditional beliefs. In other domains, historians in the 12th century explored no less than those of the 16th century the *Corpus Paulinum* in order to recount the events of the 1st century BC, and teachers of rhetoric as well as predicators of both the mendicant orders and of more heterodox movements used the example of Paul as a model to imitate. These various, and often opposing uses and interpretations of Paul make apparent that, in the Western exegetical tradition, the Apostle had many different faces. To put it with Karlfried Froehlich: «There was never just one Paul». ²

This diversity, however, is far from having been sufficiently taken into account in modern research. While in contemporary New Testament studies the «new perspectives» on Paul that have emerged in recent decades have simply resumed more traditional readings as the «Western» (or, even more reductively, the «Lutheran») perspective on Paul, historians of theology have tended to identify rather quickly «typically» Pauline elements in their sources without asking what «type» of Paul they are referring to, and how their sources’ perspective on Paul was shaped. Our conference on the *Many Faces of Paul* aims at exploring this diversity and at promoting a contextualized understanding of the reception of the *Corpus Paulinum* in the vast Latin tradition from Late Antiquity to Early Modernity. When citing, using, and interpreting Paul, what image did his readers draw of the Apostle, and how did they get to that image? What goals did they pursue, and what resources did they have at hand?


The conference on the Many Faces of Paul is the opening workshop of the research project “Exegesis of Paul in the 16th Century”, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Other than the project itself which will mainly focus on Reformation theology, our interest for this conference is to focus on other intellectual traditions, be they late antique, medieval, or early modern, that will help us later to contextualize Protestant perspectives. 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 and apocryphal material such as the Acta Pauli. In particular, we invite papers which, from Late Antiquity roughly up to 1600, focus on

- a particular theologian, historian, philosopher and his 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,
- 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, but the modern perspective has proved a helpful contrast to recognize the specificities of individual historical approaches.

The conference will be held in Geneva, from March 21-23, 2024. We will cover travel and accommodation fees for accepted speakers, but please be aware that, for ecological 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 short summary (200 words) before September 31, 2023, to be sent to matteo.colombo@unige.ch. Besides conventional papers, there is the possibility to submit contributions for a poster session. If you wish to do so, please specify it in your proposal. Papers can be given in English, French, or German.

We are looking forward to seeing you next March in Geneva!

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