St. Jerome’s Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon

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Saint Jerome (347–420) was undoubtedly one of the most learned of the Latin Church Fathers. The staggering range and depth of his reading can be glimpsed from his work *De viris illustribus* (*On Famous Men*), a pioneering work of patrology, written around 385 and modeled on Suetonius’s *Lives of the Caesars*. To this day his survey is considered indispensable for much of our knowledge of the literature of the Church’s early centuries.¹ *De viris illustribus* offers proof that Jerome had mastered nearly the entirety of the antecedent exegetical and theological tradition, both Greek and Latin. It is also well known that Jerome learned the biblical languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. He put this knowledge to work in his most famous editorial achievement, the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible. Such linguistic learning makes Jerome stand out in dramatic contrast with his contemporary Augustine, who knew well the Latin language but was almost completely unacquainted with the Greek exegetical tradition. While Augustine was a far more influential theologian in the Church of the West, because of his ranking as a bishop and for his more systematic and dogmatic approach to theological topics, Jerome’s philological learning was deeper and his legacy as an exegete was greater.

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1. For English translations see NPNF2 3.359–84 and FOTC 100.
It is therefore regrettable that the majority of Jerome’s commentaries on Scripture have never been translated into English. As late as the mid-twentieth century, Popes Benedict XV and Pius XII were warmly commending Jerome’s Scripture scholarship to Catholic scholars. In Dei Verbum 23, the bishops of the Second Vatican Council encouraged exegetes to study the Holy Fathers of both East and West. Unfortunately, such exhortations fell and continue to fall on deaf ears. Indeed, in modern Scripture scholarship, St. Jerome’s commentaries are almost completely neglected, even in Catholic circles.

It is true that the modern Catholic Scripture commentary edited by R. E. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, and R. Murphy was entitled The Jerome Biblical Commentary, and that this title has probably made Jerome’s name more familiar to American readers. But neither the principles nor the substance of Jerome’s exegesis are taken into consideration in this work. Even the Protestant D. L. Dungan criticized the JBC and the NJBC for its uncritical surrender to liberal German Protestant historical criticism and observed that none of the commentaries in this work are informed by Catholic principles of exegesis. The neglect of such principles seems to have been deliberate, since the chief editor, R. E. Brown, has published his own opinion: “I think we must recognize that the exegetical method of the Fathers is irrelevant to the study of the Bible today.” Likewise, Brown’s colleague and fellow contribu-

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2. To my knowledge, the only commentaries of Jerome available in English thus far are Gleason Archer’s translation of Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1958), Ronald Heine, The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and my translation of St. Jerome’s Commentary on Matthew, FOTC 117. Intervarsity Press has announced their intention to publish a translation of Jerome’s Commentary on Jeremiah in the series Ancient Christian Texts. I have in preparation a new translation of Jerome’s Commentary on Isaiah.


tor to the JBC, J. L. McKenzie, SJ, wrote: “The Old Testament in no way predicts or leads one to expect the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth nor the saving act which the disciples of Jesus proclaimed as accomplished in him.” Such an opinion is rationalist and more closely resembles Marcionism than St. Jerome’s theology of the Old Testament. It would not be difficult to demonstrate that Brown’s and McKenzie’s prejudices prevailed in the JBC’s essays and commentaries, which either minimize Jerome as a significant figure for Catholic exegesis or betray ignorance of his writings. It appears that the editors of this volume wanted their work to be associated with the name of St. Jerome rather than with the substance of his exegesis.

In spite of this neglect and indeed repudiation of St. Jerome’s principles of exegesis by modern Catholic interpreters, F. X. Murphy has correctly observed that Jerome is nevertheless “an indispensable witness to the mind of the Church in dealing with the Word of God.” Therefore, it is to be hoped that this first English translation of St. Jerome’s commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon will be received with interest and attention.

A Brief Biography of Jerome

Jerome was born in Stridon, a village in the western Balkans under northern Italian influence. His wealthy parents seem to have been devout Christians, the evidence being that three of their children later entered religious life. Jerome was not baptized as an infant, in keeping


7. For instance, in his essay on “Hermeneutics,” JBC, p. 612, Brown writes: “In his early days Jerome (d. 419) followed Origen’s principles, but the commentaries written at the end of Jerome’s life betray greater interest in the literal sense.” This summary statement could only have been written by someone who is completely ignorant of both Jerome’s and Origen’s commentaries.

with a common custom of the time. At the age of twelve he was sent to Rome to complete his literary studies. For the next eight years he acquired a thorough education in grammar, the humanities, rhetoric, and dialectics. In Rome Jerome studied under Aelius Donatus, who was the most famous teacher of literature of the period. He honed his skills as a young scholar by transcribing a great number of Latin authors for his personal library. His own competence in Latin prose was such that to this day Jerome’s letters rank alongside the epistolary collections of Cicero, Seneca, and Pliny the Younger as the most celebrated in Latin literature. Jerome also learned the rudiments of Greek in Rome, though his eventual mastery of the Greek language would only be attained later, after living in the East for many years.

Jerome may have allowed himself some experience of the dolce vita, “since he was not yet baptized.” His comment under the lemma to Gal 6.1 may even be autobiographical in this respect. Yet he did not break off his ties with his Christian friends with whom he was accustomed on Sundays to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs. At the age of eighteen or nineteen, Jerome asked for baptism, which he received in Lent 367, possibly from Pope Liberius. Later that year he traveled to Gaul, where, in Trier, he made a decision to pursue the monastic life. Here he made copies of some works by Hilary of Poitiers (d. 368). In Vir Ill 100, Jerome reports that Hilary, in his commentaries on the Psalms, had imitated Origen, but also added some original material. Jerome further mentions that Hilary, in his Commentary on Job, had translated freely from the Greek of Origen. Observing orthodox Latin and Greek interpreters assimilate the writings of the Greek exegete Origen of Alexandria (185–254) into their own works will estab-


10. “If someone remains a virgin until old age, he should pardon one who was once deceived by the burning passion of youth. For he knows how difficult it was for him to pass through that period of life.”

lish a paradigm for Jerome. Repeatedly, he will encounter theologians of untainted orthodoxy who recognized Origen as an exegete *par excellence*. One point of attraction to Origen, of course, was his famous knowledge of the Bible. Jerome later remarked that he would gladly trade his knowledge of Scripture with Origen, who “knew the Scriptures by heart.”

Jerome moved to Aquileia in northeastern Italy, where he continued to study theology and lived as an ascetic for seven years. In 374 he began living as a hermit in the desert of Chalcis, a region located slightly east of Syrian Antioch. During this period Jerome was introduced to the Hebrew language by a converted Jew named Baranina. Jerome was the first Latin Christian to attempt to learn the original languages of the Old Testament in this manner and to use this knowledge in his scholarship. He would eventually master both Hebrew and Aramaic. A famous incident in his life occurred at Chalcis: Jerome dreamed that he stood before the judgment seat of Christ. In the vision he was accused of being a Ciceronian rather than a Christian and was ordered to be flogged. In the midst of the scourging, he begged Christ for mercy and vowed never to touch pagan literature again. Jerome recounts the experience in Ep. 22.30 to Eustochium. He seems also to allude to it in the preface to book 3 of the commentary on Galatians.

Jerome went to Antioch in 379, where he was ordained by Bishop Paulinus. He heard lectures there from Apollinaris of Laodicea, an Alexandrian grammarian, who had mastered Greek literature and philosophy and had written an important apologetic work in thirty books, *Against Porphyry*. Apollinaris’s work, which does not survive, had a formative influence on Jerome. In Ep. 84.3, Jerome said that he had learned biblical interpretation from Apollinaris, though he distanced himself from Apollinaris’s heterodox understanding of the Incarnation. Certainly the influence of “Alexandrian,” that is, Origenian methods of exegesis would influence Jerome in a decisive way.

12. Ep. 84.8.
13. For a study of the letters Jerome wrote during this period, see Cain, “Vox Clamantis.”
From Antioch Jerome went to Constantinople, where he became a pupil of St. Gregory Nazianzus (d. 389). This famous Cappadocian Father likewise encouraged Jerome to study and assimilate Origen’s scriptural exegesis. Jerome continued to do so in emulation of his orthodox predecessors. More than that, Jerome would adopt Origen’s comprehensive pattern of life, scholarship, and asceticism as a model for his own. Jerome’s fluency in Greek at this point is demonstrated by the fact that he undertook translations of Origen’s homilies on Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. He also translated Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Chronicle of World History*. These projects were completed around 381. Jerome also translated Origen’s homilies on the Song of Songs, which he dedicated to Pope Damasus (d. 384), and Origen’s homilies on Luke around 389. At about this time he also wrote his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*.

Jerome spent the early 380s in Rome where he had become embroiled in controversy with his brother monks and priests as a result of the insulting and defamatory style of his satirical writings. The situation became so serious that, after Pope Damasus’s death in December 384, an official ecclesiastical inquiry was conducted and Jerome was condemned in a formal judgment that was delivered orally. Thus around 385 the atmosphere in Rome had become so hostile toward Jerome that he was asked to leave the city altogether. After traveling to Palestine and visiting the holy sites, Jerome made a brief visit to Egypt, where he stayed for thirty days with Didymus the Blind (d. 398). Soon he would publish his own translation of Didymus’s *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*. Jerome was well aware that Didymus too had been immersed in the writings of Origen, and Jerome wanted to make this material available to Latin readers. Unfortunately he was inspired to translate Didymus partly by a rather base motive: he aimed to show Latin readers that St. Ambrose, whom he intensely disliked, had pla-
giarized much of his own book on the Holy Spirit from Didymus. Rufinus of Aquileia will later expose Jerome’s ill will and come to Ambrose’s defense in his Apology against Jerome 2.22–25.17

In 385 Jerome settled in Bethlehem, where he set up a monastery. Being within range of Caesarea, he traveled there frequently to consult its magnificent library,18 which included a copy of Origen’s Hexapla, or “six-fold Bible.” In this work, which does not survive, on which he dedicated twenty-eight years of research, Origen displayed the text of Scripture in six or more parallel columns: (1) Hebrew text; (2) Hebrew transliterated into Greek; and the Greek versions of (3) Aquila, (4) Symmachus, (5) the Septuagint, and (6) Theodotion. For the Psalms Origen displayed two or three other Greek translations. The Hexapla would assist Jerome immensely in his own biblical translations and commentaries. He mentions Origen’s Hexapla in the Commentary on Titus 3.9. Jerome copied and otherwise obtained important manuscripts of the Scriptures and the writings of Origen. It was precisely at this time, in the early Bethlehem period, when Jerome completed the three commentaries contained in the present volume, those on Philemon, Galatians, and Titus, in that order. Jerome informs his readers that he originally intended to treat all the Pauline letters.19 Just as he did not fulfill his original intention of translating Origen’s writings, so his planned commentaries on Paul remained an incomplete work.

The remaining period during which Jerome lived in Bethlehem until his death in 419/20 was also very productive. He produced his Old Testament translations and massive commentaries on the prophets. Jerome also continued his famous epistolary exchanges and later combated the Pelagian heresy.

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18. For a description of the library see the article on “Disciples of Origen” in WHTO.

The commentaries presented in this volume were written shortly after Jerome’s arrival in Bethlehem in ca. 386–388. They were composed in the following order: Philemon, Galatians, [Ephesians], Titus. They are presented in this volume not in their chronological order, but in the order in which I have translated them: Galatians, Titus, Philemon. This rearrangement has been done to make the footnoted material more coherent for the reader. Jerome began his treatment of the Pauline letters with the briefest one, that to Philemon. In spite of his not mentioning his exegetical predecessors and sources in the preface to the Commentary on Philemon, it is clear that he depended on Origen. Excerpts from Pamphilus’s Apology for Origen and Rufinus’s Apology against Jerome confirm this. The discussion of the symbolic meaning of names under verse 25 plainly derives from Origen. Generally, however, it is noticeable that Jerome completely avoids allegory in this work and in the other Pauline commentaries. The subject matter does not lend itself to allegory. This method applies chiefly to the interpretation of the Old Testament, not the epistles of St. Paul. In the Commentary on Philemon an important theological defense of the free will is found under verse 22, and his treatment of the exegetical difficulty contained in verse 4 is worth reading, where Paul speaks of faith in God and in the saints. On the whole Jerome offers a practical and quite literal exposition of the brief Pauline letter to Philemon, an exposition that draws heavily on Origen, who is not credited.

A few days after completing the Commentary on Philemon, Jerome began working on the Commentary on Galatians. In the preface to Galatians Jerome admits that Origen is the principal exegetical authority he is following in his interpretation of Galatians. Origen had written five books on Galatians and had devoted the tenth book of his Stro-
mateis to it. Jerome’s work in fact contains lengthy verbatim translations from Origen’s *Stromateis*, a work that is no longer extant.\(^{23}\) Fragments from Origen’s now lost exegesis of Galatians and Titus that are preserved in Pamphilus’s *Apology for Origen* confirm the extent of Jerome’s dependence on Origen.\(^{24}\) Giacomo Raspanti suggests that one of the reasons Jerome tackled Galatians was that the exegesis of this letter provided him an opportunity to illustrate and defend his translation agenda for the Old Testament, in which he would rely at least to some extent on the Hebrew text, compare it with the Greek text in the context of the Greek exegetical tradition, and take some liberties occasionally to suggest exegetical and translational changes on the basis of the Hebrew original.\(^{25}\) There are many instances in the *Commentary on Galatians* when Jerome does do precisely this, as Raspanti shows.

After completing the Galatians commentary, Jerome wrote his commentary on Ephesians.\(^{26}\) This was followed by his *Commentary on Titus*. The *Commentary on Titus* 1.5 contains a significant theological discussion in which Jerome argues that in the apostolic age the terms “bishop” and “priest” were synonymous, each church being governed by a council of coequal priests. The emergence of the episcopate proper, Jerome argues, was due not to any ordinance of the Lord Jesus but to ecclesiastical custom, with the object of excluding schisms. Jerome is thus an important ancient source for subsequent controversies in the Church over the divine institution of monarchical episcopacy.\(^{27}\)

I will provide one historical example of such a controversy spawned by Jerome’s views. In the early sixteenth century, the Catholic priest-scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) had obtained a very exact knowledge of St. Jerome’s writings and even published the first printed

\(^{23}\) See *Commentary on Galatians* 5.13; 5.24.

\(^{24}\) Cf. *Commentary on Galatians* 1.1; 1.11–12; *Commentary on Titus* 3.10–11. See my forthcoming translation of Pamphilus’s *Apology for Origen*, FOTC 120.


\(^{26}\) See Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome*.

edition of them in 1516. As a result he questioned whether papal mon-
archy was recognized or exercised at the time of Jerome. Erasmus did
not call into question whether papal sovereignty existed, but whether it
was universally acknowledged. In a letter to Lorenzo Campeggi, Eras-
mus defends observations he had made in his scholarly notes to his
Edition of St. Jerome (1516) against an attack upon his orthodoxy by a
rabid critic named Zuniga (who was later officially silenced by consecu-
tive popes). Erasmus writes:

As to the sovereignty of the pope I have never doubted; but whether
that sovereignty was recognized in Jerome’s day or exercised is a
doubt I do raise somewhere when prompted by the context, I think
in my published notes on Jerome. But this has two sides: in one pas-
sage I set down what happens to support this view, and again in
others I record in the same notes what leads to a different opinion.
And there are so many other places where I call Peter first in rank
among the apostles, Roman pontiff, Vicar of Christ, and head of the
church, assigning him the chief power after Christ himself. All this
is concealed by Zuniga, who picks out only what can be distorted to
my discredit.28

In other words, Erasmus does not call into doubt that Christ intends
the bishop of Rome to hold the primacy over the universal Church,
but he questions whether, historically, this primacy was universally
acknowledged or practiced in Jerome’s day. It seems that evidence
from St. Jerome’s commentaries provided Erasmus with the historical
grounds for raising these questions.

Use of the Septuagint

It is evident that the text of the Old Testament that Jerome cites as
Scripture in these commentaries is that of the Septuagint, that is, the

Alexandrian Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was Origen’s Bible. Jerome has no hesitation in quoting from the Greek books that were added to the Alexandrian canon of Scripture, such as Sirach, Wisdom, Tobit, and the additions to Daniel. He treats these books as inspired Scripture and ecclesiastically authoritative, as did Origen. Later they were called the deuterocanonical writings by the Council of Trent. Jerome’s free use of them confirms the insight that Jerome’s subsequent theory about the authority of the Hebrew canon over against the Alexandrian canon was not consistent with his actual practice. In his early commentaries and in his correspondence, he continued to cite as Scripture texts from the Septuagint canon. To my knowledge Jerome never challenged the divine inspiration of the Septuagint translation, but he accepted its ecclesiastical authority.

Jerome’s Commentary on Galatians

The remainder of this introduction will focus on the content of Jerome’s Commentary on Galatians, which was largely a compilation drawn from Origen’s writings. Although Origen’s original exegesis of Galatians does not survive, in 406 Rufinus of Aquileia translated into Latin Origen’s Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. This was a felicitous enterprise for Christians of the West, since otherwise we would not possess Origen’s Pauline exegesis. The Greek text of Origen’s CRm

29. I have always cited Scripture references according to the RSV chapter and verse. However, the reader needs to be aware that Jerome’s citations of the Old Testament are based on the Septuagint, which does not always have an identical versification.

is preserved only in fragments. The preservation of Rufinus’s Latin translation of the CRm offers scholars a golden opportunity to compare Origen’s Pauline exegesis with Jerome’s. A comparison shows substantial agreement in the substance of the exegesis. As an interpreter of St. Paul, Origen’s exegesis was embraced by Catholic theologians. In the footnotes of the present translations I have attempted to identify parallel passages.

It is noteworthy that in the epilogue of Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s CRm, Rufinus describes some malicious contemporaries who are encouraging him to steal the title from Origen and to put his own name on the title page of the translation. Rufinus refuses to do this, he says, since Origen is responsible for the exegetical material that he has rendered into Latin. Hammond underscores Rufinus’s intention in this passage and notes that his words are really aimed at Jerome. She writes:

Rufinus’ stand against such plagiarism . . . was an implied criticism of Jerome’s methods in his biblical commentaries. The procedure that he [Rufinus] refuses here . . . is similar to that for which he had attacked Jerome and those like him earlier. By directly translating Origen, he himself will reveal to Latin readers the source of Jerome’s vaunted learning as a biblical commentator.

This analysis seems quite accurate, and it answers the question of why Jerome himself never wrote a commentary on Romans: Rufinus’s Latin translation of Origen left him with nothing to say of his own on Paul’s epistle. Harnack confirms my conjecture in this regard when he raises

31. See the introduction to my translation (FOTC 103) and my study, Origen and the History of Justification.
32. For proof that Jerome had direct access to Origen’s Greek commentary on Romans, see Hammond Bammel, “Philocalia IX,” and Bammel, “Patristic Exegesis.”
33. This is essentially the thesis of my book, Origen and the History of Justification. Cf. C. Verfaillie, La doctrine de la justification.
the question of why Jerome commented only on the letter to Titus among the Pastoral Epistles and answers: “Because a commentary of Origen was available only for this letter. Enough said!”

I have not called attention to this in order to reproach Jerome or to single him out. He was doing precisely what his predecessors Ambrose and Hilary had done and what Didymus and Gregory Nazianzen had encouraged him to do. In fact Jerome himself was never embarrassed by the fact that he relied on Origen’s exegesis in his own. He recommended Origen’s works for study throughout all periods of his life. In 392 Jerome responded to critics who accused him of dependence on Origen in his own exegetical writings with these words:

> They say that I made excerpts from Origen’s works, and that it is illegitimate to touch the writings of the old masters in such a way. People think that they gravely insult me by this. For myself, however, I see in this the highest praise. It is my express desire to follow an example of which I am convinced that it will please all men of discernment and you too.

In 400, at the height of the Origenist controversies, Jerome wrote in Ep. 85 to Paulinus of Nola an endorsement of Origen’s defense of the free choice of the will found in *Peri Archon* (which was supposedly the most dangerous of Origen’s works). To explain the meaning of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, Jerome recommended Origen’s explanation. Jerome’s later Old Testament commentaries also display massive assimilation of Origen’s exegesis. All of this confirms that Jerome did not substantially differ from his ecclesiastical contemporaries such as Rufinus and Ambrose in his method of appropriating Origen. Origen’s best exegetical and spiritual insights were adopted, while his errors and controversial speculations were set aside. Jerome is not to be

37. I have not discussed these controversies in detail here. See the introduction to my translation of St. Jerome’s *Commentary on Matthew*, FOTC 117. See also F. X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia*, and Kelly, *Jerome*. 

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faulted for assimilating Origen, but for the way he attacked others, such as Rufinus, for refusing to publicly denounce Origen, and Ambrose, for allegedly stealing his exegesis from Origen. Both accusations are hypocritical, because Jerome himself had once praised Origen to the skies, and because his own exegesis relies heavily on Origen’s insights.

**Neglect of Ambrosiaster**

In the preface to the *Commentary on Galatians*, Jerome discusses his exegetical predecessors, but he is completely silent about the Roman Churchman and scholar, Ambrosiaster, who had preceded him as a Latin commentator on Galatians. Kelly suggests that something deeply personal to Jerome accounts for this deliberate neglect. The unedifying story goes like this. Under the patronage and commission of Pope Damasus, Jerome had been asked by the pope to systematically revise existing Latin versions of the four Gospels and the Psalter. This was the beginning of Jerome’s editorial work that became the Latin Vulgate Bible, though he did not touch the New Testament Epistles. Ambrosiaster, a Greek-less churchman from Rome, had criticized Jerome’s revision and given outspoken preference for the Old Latin version of the New Testament over the Greek original. Jerome expressed his anger at the “two-legged asses” who had attacked his attempts to improve the Old Latin of the Gospels. Kelly argues that since he had clashed with Ambrosiaster on this earlier issue, Jerome avenged himself on his opponent by relegating Ambrosiaster’s *Commentary on Galatians* to oblivion.

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38. Ambrosiaster’s commentaries on St. Paul have been recently translated into English by G. Bray, *Ambrosiaster: Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2009), and *Ambrosiaster: Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2010).


40. Ibid.
Disparagement of Marius Victorinus?

On the other hand, in the preface to the *Commentary on Galatians* Jerome does not fail to report that Gaius Marius Victorinus, his former teacher of rhetoric in Rome, had published a commentary on the apostle. But he did so, Jerome goes on to say, “while he was occupied by the task of instructing in secular literature, and he was completely ignorant of the Scriptures. And no matter how eloquent someone is, he cannot discuss a subject well that he does not know.” Few today would deny that Victorinus knew Platonism much better than he knew Christian theology and Scripture. Nevertheless, Jerome’s disparaging assessment of Victorinus’s *Commentary on Galatians* has been received as a haughty dismissal.41 This too requires an explanation.

Marius Victorinus (280?–380?), known also as Afer (from Africa, the country of his birth), taught rhetoric in Rome, where his success earned him a statue in the forum. He abandoned his chair in 362 following Julian’s edict forbidding Christians to teach. In old age he converted to Christianity.42 Victorinus was the first to comment on Paul in Latin.43 He did not use Greek sources but applied his experience in commenting on pagan texts to Paul’s letters. At first glance Jerome’s negative assessment of Victorinus’s work seems excessive and arrogant. However, closer analysis of the respective commentaries suggests that Jerome is probably referring to Victorinus’s complete neglect of the early Greek exegetes and to his total ignorance of the Old Testament, and even of the Gospels.

For Jerome a basic principle of Christian scriptural exegesis is to consult the mind of the Church as it is embodied in the antecedent exegetical tradition. This applies to Origen above all, its premiere

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42. His conversion is the subject of Augustine’s *Confessions* 8.2–5.
43. See Cooper, *Marius Victorinus’ Commentary on Galatians.*
exegete, and especially to Origen’s exegesis when that exegesis had been consensually approved by subsequent orthodox exegetes. Origen’s great gift was identifying the Old Testament sources for the thoughts of the New Testament. In Jerome’s estimation, an ecclesiastical commentator should report what the interpretive tradition has said about the Scriptures under examination. Victorinus fails to do this.

Moreover, even a cursory reading of Victorinus’s exegesis of St. Paul shows that he simply does not consult the Old Testament or even the Gospels for clarification of Paul’s meaning. He interprets Paul solely from Paul in the manner in which the Greeks explained Homer solely from Homer. A comparison of the Scripture indexes of Victorinus’s and Jerome’s commentaries reveals the real distinction between these two approaches. Victorinus’s commentary does not contain a single explanatory reference to the Old Testament; moreover it offers very minimal consultation of the Gospel traditions to shed light on Paul’s teaching and intentions. The contrast with St. Jerome’s exegesis could not be greater. Stephen Cooper nicely summarizes their different exegetical approaches as follows:

While Victorinus’ method of interpreting authors with respect to their corpus of writing conformed to the academic procedures developed by the schools of his day, it was a notable departure from the tradition of Christian commentary. Origen’s work exemplifies a standard feature of this tradition: an individual scripture must be explained by recourse to relevant, usually lexical parallels from the entirety of Scripture, whereby potential conflicts could be resolved. This manner of proceeding, reminiscent of rabbinic discussion, had its rationale not only in the theological desideratum to assert the unity of scriptural truth. It was also necessary to combat heretical rejections of the Old Testament (e.g. Marcion’s Antitheses) or pagan attacks upon Christianity which often exploited discrepancies between the Gospels or between the Old Testament and the New. The tradition of Christian commentary . . . involved not only philological clarifications of the text (a technique of Latin grammarians and rhetors as well) but also discussion of the interpretive options explored by earlier exegetes. Victorinus’ almost complete neglect of
this latter task may have been the thing that earned his commentaries the disdain of Jerome, who considered a comparison of opinions to be the essence of commentary both sacred and secular.44

Excursus: Did Paul Know the Gospel Traditions?

Ironically, the features that seem to have offended Jerome in Victorinus’s approach to Pauline interpretation have made Victorinus a more interesting and attractive exegete to some streams of modern scholarship. Whereas Jerome’s way of reading Paul is to see the apostle as completely rooted in the Old Testament, and as a faithful follower of the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels, many modern scholars wish to disassociate Paul both from the Old Testament and from the broader Christian tradition. In fact, much modern New Testament scholarship has been heavily influenced by the assertions of the radical New Testament critic Rudolph Bultmann, who claimed said that “Jesus’ teaching is—to all intents and purposes—irrelevant for Paul.”45 Bultmann’s school of thought pits Paul against the Jesus tradition. With two exceptions, 1 Cor 7.10 and 1 Cor 9.14, Paul purportedly never cites or alludes to sayings of Jesus. In Bultmann’s case, this manner of reading Paul dovetailed with his existential philosophy according to which the historical existence and crucifixion of Jesus are indispensable, but otherwise the historical Jesus and traditions about him are irrelevant for faith.

The Bultmannian approach to Paul entered Catholic Scripture scholarship with a vengeance after 1968. For example, notice how Joseph Fitzmyer minimizes Paul’s knowledge of the Gospel traditions:

It is remarkable how little he [Paul] knew of Jesus the Galilean rabbi or even of what is recorded in the Gospels about him. One reason

44. Cooper, Marius Victorinus’ Commentary on Galatians, p. 109.
for this is the early date of Paul’s letters—almost all of them were written before the Gospels took the form we know. . . . He is not interested in the historical Jesus as a teacher, a prophet, or as the chronological source and the first link in the chain of such transmission. Rather, Paul is interested in the exalted Lord who is the real agent of all the tradition developing in the bosom of the apostolic Church.46

The presupposition here is that knowledge about Jesus was severely restricted until the Gospels took written form, and that the alleged silence of Paul’s letters proves that Paul was not interested in Jesus as a teacher and prophet. Elsewhere, Fitzmyer claims that precisely because of his lack of interest in Jesus of Nazareth, Paul’s writings “create an anomaly for Christians of later generations.”47 It is not clear which Christians Fitzmyer may be referring to here who found Paul to be an anomaly, but it is clear that Fitzmyer stands firmly in the Bultmannian tradition of interpretation. Fitzmyer claims that Paul’s Damascus road insight did not give him a “cinematic reproduction of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, but the understanding of Jesus for humanity.”48

Along similar lines Paula Fredriksen mimics Bultmann and says: “About Jesus of Nazareth Paul evinces little interest.”49 Such a minimalist approach to Paul’s writings, which severs Paul from the Gospel traditions, differs radically from the presuppositions of Origen and Jerome respecting St. Paul’s theology. Consider, for example, all the references to the Gospels in the Scripture index of the present commentary or in Origen’s CRm and contrast that with the claims of the Bultmann school of interpretation.

Although at first glance it seems that Origen and Jerome offend against the “best and most assured results” of modern historical criti-

46. JBC, 79:17.
48. Ibid.
cism, a radical paradigm shift is now occurring in the modern scholarly treatment of this problem. Bultmann’s influence is lessening. Recently, the Protestant New Testament scholar, David Wenham has demonstrated in two important books that Paul was a devoted follower of the teaching of Jesus.\textsuperscript{50} Wenham challenges the Bultmannian approach to interpreting Paul’s writings and shows that Paul’s epistles manifest a deep rootedness in the Gospel traditions. Wenham’s point is not that the Gospels had already taken written form during Paul’s ministry period; rather, he argues that the oral tradition that was later recorded in the Gospels was very much alive to Paul and that Paul had direct access to it.

Far from “evincing little interest” in Jesus’s life and teaching, far from creating “an anomaly for Christians of later generations” by his insight into Jesus’s existential significance for humanity, Paul’s letters allude to the Gospel traditions on a massive scale. Some of Paul’s knowledge was directly revealed to him by the appearance of the risen Christ. But he also learned a great deal from other Christians. According to Gal 1.18 he stayed with Peter for two weeks in Jerusalem. The book of Acts and the evidence from Paul’s letters document massive contact between Paul and the early Hebrew-Christian disciples. Of great interest is the way Wenham shows that Paul’s allusions to the Gospel tradition in his letters are accidental, that is to say, Paul uses the sayings and teachings of Jesus in his letters only as a reflection of the particular issues that he is dealing with in his relation to particular churches.

For instance, the echoes of Jesus’s teaching in 1 Corinthians overlap a little with the echoes found in Galatians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, but to a large extent they are different. This shows that the selection of echoes in each letter is determined by the problems in the particular church. Thus in 1 Cor 11 there is a specific focus on the Last Supper, because the Corinthians’ Eucharistic meals were filled with liturgical abuses. Likewise, in 1 Cor 15 there is a specific reference to the

\textsuperscript{50} Paul and Paul and Jesus.
resurrection appearances, but only because resurrection was a debated issue in Corinth. The fact that Paul does not describe the crucifixion is not because he had not taught the Corinthians about it, obviously, but because it was unnecessary to retell the story in the letter. It would have been wasted ink. Wenham summarizes:

It is salutary to reflect that, if the Corinthians had not had problems in their eucharists, we would have no evidence at all that Paul knew or taught about the Last Supper in any of his churches. He does not need to mention it in his other letters. We conclude that silence does not prove ignorance—not at all. The references that we do have to the stories and sayings of Jesus are the tip of an iceberg that is mostly concealed from us.51

Wenham draws the far-reaching conclusion that the Jesus tradition was central to Paul’s theology. Therefore it is ludicrous to suggest that Paul was the real founder of Christianity or that Paul’s writings are inconsistent with the rest of the New Testament. On the contrary, the anomaly comes about when we assume that Paul would have spoken about Christ without providing for his congregations information about Jesus’s teaching and deeds.52

For Paul the fountain of theology was the Jesus whom he met on the Damascus road, who was identical with the one about whom he learned from the Christian tradition. He considered himself Jesus’s slave; he did not view himself as the founder of Christianity. Wenham writes:

If the primary text that Paul is expounding in his writings is the text of Jesus, then instead of reading Paul’s letters in isolation from the Gospels, it will be important to read them in the light of the

52. This is Denis Farkasfalvy’s criticism of Fitzmyer in “Jesus Reveals the Father: The Center of New Testament Theology,” Communio 26 (1999), pp. 235–57, at p. 247, n. 25.
Gospels—not falling into naïve harmonization, but recognizing that Paul was above all motivated by a desire to follow Jesus.  

Wenham’s way of reading Paul, as a theologian who knew the Gospel traditions intimately, is the way Origen and St. Jerome read Saint Paul. In spite of what may be naïve assumptions on Origen and Jerome’s part about the extremely early dating of the written form of the Gospels, Origen and Jerome seem to have rightly understood that Paul was thoroughly acquainted with Jesus’s teaching and based his own upon it. Wenham’s analyses suggest that Origen and Jerome’s way of reading Paul is the right way to read him, while Bultmann’s (and to some extent Marius Victorinus’s) approach is the wrong way.

**End of Excursus**

Surely from Jerome’s point of view another negative result of Marius Victorinus’s “complete ignorance of the Scriptures” was the way his interpretation of St. Paul pits the apostles against each other. Under the lemma to Gal 1.19, for example, Victorinus claims that Paul “denies that James is an apostle” when he calls him the Lord’s “brother.” According to Victorinus, Paul had a “different conception of the gospel” than James, who “may have been in heresy.” Later, under the lemma to Gal 2.12–13, Victorinus explicitly asserts that this same James, the “brother of the Lord,” is the progenitor of the Symmachians, a Jewish-Christian heretical sect. Such judgments would be shockingly immature, not to say sub-Christian, from St. Jerome’s Catholic perspective. They fundamentally misunderstand the nature of Paul’s relations with the other apostles and the theological coherence of the New Testament.

54. For instance, Jerome assumes that Luke’s Gospel was circulating during the period of Paul’s ministry activity; cf. *Commentary on Philemon* 22–25.
56. Ibid., p. 278.
Victorinus’s English translator, Stephen Cooper, follows Harnack’s lead in presenting Victorinus as a “proto-Luther” figure. Cooper sees this connection especially in view of the strong “sola fide” (justification by faith alone) tendency in some of Victorinus’s statements, which, of course, is also found in Luther’s writings. The phrase _sola fide_ (by faith alone) appears in Victorinus’s commentary on Gal 2.15; 3.2; 3.7; 3.21; 3.22; 6.10. It seems reasonable, however, to question whether Victorinus and Luther really meant the same thing when they spoke of justification by faith alone. In calling attention to Victorinus’s alleged resemblance to Luther, it is odd that Cooper overlooks what clearly appears to be the deepest link between Victorinus and Luther, namely Victorinus’s disparagement of St. James and his depiction of him as a proto-heretic. Luther’s similar animosity toward James is well known.

Finally, in assessing Jerome’s dismissal of Victorinus, it may also be relevant to notice that when he comments on Gal 4.4, Victorinus appears to speak as if the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary were still an open question: “cum Virgo Maria sit _vel_ fuerit,” “Because Mary is, or was a virgin.” Thus does Cooper translate _vel_ as a genuine alternative. Although the passage is not completely clear, and Cooper’s theological conclusions may lay too much stress on a single word, it should be obvious that Jerome, following Origen, would attribute even the suggestion that Mary was not perpetually a virgin both to impiety and to the profoundest ignorance of Holy Scripture.

From St. Jerome’s standpoint, these are precisely the kinds of immature judgments that one might expect of a teacher of rhetoric, con-

57. Ibid., pp. 285, 327.

58. In his preface to the book of James, Luther writes: “He does violence to Scripture, and so contradicts Paul and all Scripture. He tries to accomplish by emphasizing law what the apostles bring about by attracting men to love. I therefore refuse him a place among the writers of the true canon of my Bible.” J. Dillenberger, _Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings_ (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 36.

59. Jerome wrote the first great defense of Mary’s perpetual virginity, _Against Helvidius_ (NPNF2 6.334–46). Origen described as an impious opinion the view that Mary did not remain a virgin. Cf. Origen _Commentary on John_ 1.23 (FOTC 80.38).
verted to Christianity in extreme old age, who was unfamiliar both with the Christian exegetical tradition and with the Scriptures themselves. Thus Jerome’s seemingly haughty dismissal of Victorinus’s commentary actually has the result of protecting Victorinus’s reputation for posterity against more serious charges against his orthodoxy. Victorinus is less culpable precisely because of his late conversion and ignorance of the deeper principles of Christian exegesis. It is noteworthy that in a similar fashion, at Commentary on Galatians 4.6 Jerome attributes the deficiencies found in Lactantius’s Trinitarianism to his unfamiliarity (imperitiam) with the Scriptures.

**Jerome’s Interpretation of Galatians**

Jerome’s is the lengthiest and most learned of the ancient patristic commentaries on Galatians. His work occupies 130 columns in Migne, which compares with 43 columns for Augustine’s commentary, 51 for Victorinus’s, 36 for Ambrosiaster’s, and 19 for Pelagius’s. He dictated the work hurriedly to a stenographer, and in the preface to book 3 he apologizes for the way the work lacks polish. In spite of this we are dealing with a formidable piece of exegesis. The patristic scholar C. P. Bammel considered Jerome the first “scholarly” (wissenschaftlich) Latin commentator on Paul. In the nineteenth century, the great Protestant Scripture scholar J. B. Lightfoot assessed St. Jerome’s Commentary on Galatians in these words:

Though abounding in fanciful and perverse interpretations, violations of good taste and good feeling, faults of all kinds, this is nevertheless the most valuable of all the patristic commentaries on

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60. These calculations were given in Plumer, Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians, p. 33.

the Epistle to the Galatians: for the faults are more than redeemed by extensive learning, acute criticism, and lively and vigorous exposition.\footnote{Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, p. 232.}

Lightfoot, whose reflections are based on a careful study of Jerome’s work, seems to have been one of the last “modern” exegetes to have read Jerome carefully and to have taken him seriously as an interpreter of St. Paul.\footnote{For example, in contrast with Lightfoot, the commentaries by Burton (ICC), Ridderbos (NICNT), and Longenecker (WBC) contain no real engagement with Jerome’s exegesis.}

On the other hand, J. N. D. Kelly dismisses Jerome’s commentaries on Ephesians and Galatians as disappointing works, due to “Jerome’s failure to understand, much less present adequately, the profound theological issues with which these letters are concerned.”\footnote{Kelly, Jerome, p. 147.} This criticism resembles Martin Luther’s, which will be discussed below.

**The Main Argument**

Jerome summarizes the argument of the Epistle to the Galatians in the preface. The subject is the same, he says, as that found in the Epistle to the Romans, with this difference: Romans is more exalted and profound, reasoned and persuasive, whereas Galatians contains a rebuke of the converts and shows Paul making use of his authority by means of blunt speech. The basic message is that the burdens of the old law have been set aside through the grace of the gospel. All that came before in types and images has ceased, because the law is now fulfilled through the believer’s faith. These two epistles, Romans and Galatians, thus focus on the theme of the termination of the old law and the inauguration of the new. Yet Galatians is unique in that it was written to converts from paganism, not former Jews. Paul’s audience in Galatians were guilty of backsliding after being terrified by certain men who
claimed that Peter, James, and all the churches had mixed the gospel of Christ with the old law. They also thought that Paul mingled the old and the new in his own missionary work. So Paul treads softly between the concerns of Jewish and Gentile Christians, not wanting to betray the grace of the gospel nor do injury to his predecessors while he defends grace. In the preface Jerome mentions Porphyry’s interpretation, that Peter had been impudently rebuked by Paul for error, and that the early leaders of the Christian churches were at variance with each other. Jerome will combat this interpretation throughout the commentary.

**Free Will, Foreknowledge, and Predestination**

Jerome sustains his usual polemic against the heretics Marcion, Valentinus, Manicheus, Arius, and others, which is a trademark of all his exegesis. It is particularly the anti-Gnostic material that is largely drawn from Origen, as Harnack’s valuable study has called attention to. In opposition to heretical ideas, Jerome insists upon the identification of the God of the Old Testament with the God of Jesus. Under the lemma to Gal 5.12 Jerome exposes serious inconsistencies in Marcionite exegesis of Scripture using arguments borrowed from Origen. A very significant byproduct of the anti-Gnostic polemic is Jerome’s strong defense of the freedom of the human will in the process of salvation. Jerome repeatedly says that the human being contributes something to his salvation and that obedience or disobedience lay within the power of his choice (5.8). God’s work is to invite; man’s is to believe or not believe (5.8). Paul does not remove personal choice from us (5.17). Moreover, Jerome explains that the divine predestination or choosing, of Jacob and Esau, for instance, is explained by God’s

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65. For a more detailed discussion of these heresies, see the introduction of my translation of *St. Jerome’s Commentary on Matthew*, FOTC 117.

66. I have endeavored to integrate Harnack’s insights into the footnotes. Harnack admitted that his research only scratched the surface of Jerome’s assimilation of Origen.

67. Precisely the same emphasis is found in Origen’s Pauline exegesis. See his *CRm*, Preface1.
foreknowledge of their future merits (1.15–16), not by their inborn nature or by any sort of pre-birth divine decree. It is the heretics who assert that there are different kinds of natures in men, some destined to perish, others to be saved, apart from the free choice of the will. The proof Jerome offers for his defense of freedom is found in the scriptural witness to the human being’s mutability, or capability of conversion in both directions (2.15).

Jerome’s approach to predestination is found prominently in the Greek theological tradition and in the early Augustine. It differs strikingly, however, from the late Augustine. Eric Plumer notes that the early Augustine held the same view as Origen, Chrysostom, and Jerome, that God chooses certain people for salvation on the basis of his foreknowledge of their free decision of faith. Later on, however, Augustine became dissatisfied with this position and viewed it as endangering the sovereignty of divine grace. He continued to move further and further in the direction of religious determinism, without, however, ever abandoning the idea that human beings freely cooperate in conversion and always retain the power to resist divine grace. It is probably St. Jerome’s support for the Greek understanding of predestination that led Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) to conclude that Augustine was isolated in his opposition to the idea that God chooses based on his foreknowledge of foreseen merits. W. Fremantle confirms this when he says of Jerome’s Dialogue against the Pelagians, “[I]t cannot fail to appear that Jerome is not like Augustine, a thorough-going predestinarian, but a ‘synergist,’ maintaining the co-

68. Once again, consider CRm 7.16.4; 7.17.7.
69. Cf. CRm 1.3.3.
70. Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians, p. 182, n. 150, referring to lemma 4.7; Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos 52 (60).
71. Cf. Erasmus’s words in Hyperaspistes II, addressed to Martin Luther: “Only Augustine excludes foreknown merits as the reason why Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected, and his interpretation makes original sin the cause of the hatred. For my part, Augustine is a man to whom anyone may grant as high a status as he likes; but I would never attribute so much to him as to think he sees further in Paul’s epistles than the Greek interpreters”; Erasmus, Controversies, 77.535.
existence of free will, and that he reduces predestination to God’s foreknowledge of human determination (see the Dialogue, especially 1.5, 2.6, 3.18).”72 This observation indicates that for Jerome the repudiation of Pelagianism did not entail the endorsement of Augustine’s views on predestination.

John Ferguson confirms this when he writes with respect to Jerome’s views articulated in his Dialogue against the Pelagians:

But Jerome does not hold the extreme predestinarian views of Augustine. He is rather a synergist,73 holding that God’s grace and man’s free will come together in the work of salvation, and equating predestination with prescience, that is to say, interpreting the doctrine not in terms of an arbitrary fiat of the Almighty that A shall be saved and B damned, but to mean that God having in His Almighty perfection complete knowledge of past, present and future, foreknows that A will so live as to be saved, and B will so live as to be damned.74

Jerome’s understanding of predestination and free will is more in line with the emphasis of the Greek theologians than with late-Augustinian views.

The Relation of Faith, Works of the Law, and Love

On the crucial question of justification by faith, Jerome presupposes that it is apart from the merit of works that our former sins are forgiven in baptism and that peace with God is granted after the pardon. He interprets Paul as being firmly opposed to those who think we can be

73. Synergism is merely a transliteration of the Greek term, συνεργέω, which means “cooperation” (from cooperor) or “working together.” The term is scriptural (cf. Mk 16.20; Rom 8.28; Jas 2.22) and indicates that God and man collaborate or work together in the process of salvation.
justified by works (Gal 1.3). But Jerome makes a fundamental distinc-
tion between pre- and post-baptismal works, as well as pre- and post-
baptismal merit. By no means does Jerome reduce Christ’s benefits to
the forgiveness of sins. Jerome says that Christ became a curse for us
for our glory (3.13–14). He died that we might live; he descended to the
underworld that we might ascend to heaven; he became foolishness
that we might become wisdom; he emptied himself that the fullness of
divinity might dwell in us; he was hung on the tree that our sins might
be blotted out (3.13–14). To be sure Christ brought us the forgiveness
of sins, but he brought us much more than that.

Jerome does not separate faith from love, grace from works; nor
does he view “law” as a purely negative and condemnatory term (6.2).
The old law of Moses is one thing, the new law of Christ is something
else. Jerome thinks that St. Paul’s principal polemic in Galatians is di-
rected against “works of the law,” not against good works or law in a
general sense and certainly not against Christ’s command of love and
obedience. The “works of the law” refer to the works of Judaism, such
as circumcision, Sabbaths, rituals, sacrifices. In the Christian dispensa-
tion no one is justified by these works, since they have been abolished
by the advent of the grace of the gospel (2.3–5). However, ceremonial
works are not identical with the good works of Christian discipleship
that are demanded by Jesus of his disciples. On the contrary the law of
Christ, the law of love, must be obeyed and fulfilled as a precondition
of final salvation. This is according to Christ’s own threats and prom-
ises (6.2). The law of the Spirit is that we love one another (6.3). We
will be judged by whether or not we keep this law (6.5). Love alone
cleanses the heart (5.13–14).

Natural Law and Knowledge of God

Jerome insists that the knowledge of God is present in everyone by na-
ture; no one is born apart from Christ (Gal 1.15–16). All people can do
some things wisely and virtuously for which they will be held respon-
sible at the judgment. The principles of the virtues and the seeds of
God are sown within all men. The Old Testament saints were justified
in part by natural law. The justice of the old law, when fulfilled spiri-
tually, can increase the justice of the law of nature (3.2). Cornelius the centurion received the Spirit by the hearing of faith and by works of natural law, but not by “works of the law,” that is, Judaistic works, with which he was unacquainted (2.16; 3.2). The works of natural law were not adequate in themselves; rather Cornelius was saved by those works and by the hearing of faith (3.2). Without faith the works of natural law, though good, are reckoned as dead (5.6). But when faith is put first, this is not done in order to destroy the works of the law, or to give Christians a license to sin (3.2).

No License to Sin

Like Origen and St. Paul himself, Jerome does not believe that the purity of Christian faith requires the repudiation of morality and asceticism. On the contrary he views the Christian life as a combat initiated at baptism. Thus he insists that freedom to transgress does not arise from faith in Christ, but the will for good works is increased by the love that springs from faith (Gal 3.2). Indeed, Jerome says that in order to be saved one must have both faith and love, or rather, faith working through love (5.6). The whole burden of the old law has not so much been excluded through the grace of the gospel as abbreviated into the one word of love (5.17). Therefore we must live according to the spiritual law and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (5.17). The one who gives himself to the flesh and its passions is not alive in the Spirit (5.25). Far from being contrary to law, grace causes us to be restrained all the more by the law of nature. True freedom from the abolished law comes when we have put to death the deeds of the flesh (5.17). The Holy Spirit is always given to the worthy (3.5; 6.18). One must advance in the

75. Cf. 1 Cor 10; Gal 6.7. The interpretation of Paul’s doctrine found in the new book by C. VanLandingham, Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), chap. 3, is strikingly consonant with Jerome’s.
77. Cf. Levy, “Fides qua per caritatem operatur.”
virtues and bring faith to completion in love (3.5), for works adorn faith (3.5). With the good thief we must nail the trophy of our own mortification to the wood of the Lord’s suffering (2.19). For any one of the works of the flesh can equally exclude us from the kingdom of God (5.19–21).

Glorying in the Cross

Jerome states that “glorying solely in the cross of Christ” does not negate Christian asceticism and discipleship, but is fulfilled in the one who takes up the cross to follow the Savior. Thus there is no opposition between the teaching of Jesus, who demands the good works of obedient discipleship, and the teaching of Paul, who repudiates the Judaizing “works of the law.” Paul’s words in Gal 6.14 about glorying solely in the cross apply precisely to the one who has crucified his own flesh with its lusts and desires and who has died to the world. Thus according to St. Jerome, Paul does not exclude all “glorying” absolutely, but only that kind of glorying that boasts in the Judaistic works of the law.78

The Christian’s glorying in his weaknesses and mortifications is the glory of the cross, since anything worthy that is done in respect to the virtues is done for the sake of the Lord’s passion (6.14).

Overall Jerome’s exegesis of St. Paul represents a deeply Catholic synthesis of faith and post-baptismal good works, wherein paschal grace is seen as the source of the grace that enables the merits and achievements of Christian asceticism and discipleship. He supports fundamental themes in the Catholic interpretation of St. Paul, such as the distinction between pre- and post-baptismal works; pre- and post-baptismal merit; the claim that love, as a complement to faith, is equally necessary for salvation and is intrinsic to the process of the human being’s justification; that St. Paul’s polemic against “works of the law” is

78. The resemblance to Origen’s categories of interpretation is remarkable. Cf. Origen, CRm 3.9.6–7; 8.6. In the former passage Origen says: “The only just boasting then is based upon faith in the cross of Christ, which excludes all boasting that derives from the works of the law.”
directed primarily at the ceremonial works of the old law, not at law or good works in general; and finally that the good works that issue from faith formed by love have meritorious value before God, as an outworking of paschal grace. These themes will retain a firm place in Catholic theology in subsequent centuries.

*Paul’s Rebut of Peter at Antioch*

One of the more well-known interpretations advanced in Jerome’s commentary is the way he mitigates the conflict between Paul and Peter that is described in Gal 2.11–14.79 A pagan opponent of the Church, Porphyry, thought that Paul and Peter were adversaries. Porphyry interpreted Paul’s threatening words in Gal 5.10, “he who is troubling you will bear his judgment,” as being directed against Peter. Following Origen, Jerome answers that Paul would not have spoken with such an offensive malediction against the ruler of the church (5.10).

There is not complete consistency or clarity in the Jerome’s interpretation of the Paul/Peter conflict at Antioch. In fact Jerome’s remarks under 2.6 and 2.14, for example, seem to assume that the conflict was real.80 Moreover, Jerome apparently did not wish to dogmatize on this subject, as he makes clear in his explanatory letter to St. Augustine, which will be discussed further below. However, the general outline of Jerome’s view is this: in a very strong reaction against Porphyry’s exaggerated portrayal of the dispute between the apostles, Jerome suggests that both Peter and Paul were behaving under a spontaneous (not planned) pretense for the sake of their respective audiences, Jewish and Gentile Christians. Peter knew full well that the Jewish ceremonial law was no longer binding after Christ’s death and resurrection. In Antioch Peter temporarily withdrew from fellowship with Gentile


Christians for the sake of Jewish Christians. But the Gentile Christians misinterpreted Peter’s policy and inferred that ceremonial law was binding on them. Paul saw that these Gentile Christians were now in danger of being led astray. To prevent them from falling away, he pretended to rebuke Peter, knowing full well Peter’s good intentions. According to Jerome, when Paul states that Peter was “in the wrong” (2.11), he is expressing not his own opinion but only that of the Gentile believers. Jerome likens Peter and Paul to two orators who feign fictitious lawsuits for the sake of their respective clients. Jerome also offers examples of Old Testament kings of Israel who adopted public pretences in order to accomplish various purposes.

The gist of Jerome’s interpretation is that Peter and Paul did not have a substantive disagreement over the question of whether the old law continued to be in force for Christians. Both were aware that the law was no longer binding on them. St. Peter’s apparent backsliding was a tactical measure temporarily adopted to win Jews over to Christianity. St Paul’s rebuke, similarly, was not seriously intended or taken as such. Jerome invites anyone who thinks that Paul truly opposed Peter for the sake of the truth of the gospel to explain Paul’s own similar behavior, insofar as Paul circumcised Timothy,81 participated in Jewish ceremonies,82 and in general “became as a Jew in order to win the Jews,” according to 1 Cor 9.20. By what effrontery, then, would he dare to rebuke Peter for such behavior, when he himself has done the very same things? Jerome thinks that, in Paul’s argument in the epistle to the Galatians, the publicly contrived “polemic” with Peter is continued by Paul down to Gal 2.21.

Most modern exegetes dismiss Jerome’s explanation of the incident at Antioch out of hand. It is alleged to be a ridiculous and forced interpretation. What is interesting to observe, however, is that these same modern exegetes, who think that Paul and Peter were indeed at loggerheads with each other over their basic understanding of the gospel, nevertheless claim that Paul, without any indication, abandons his

polemic against Peter in 2.15. Longenecker, for example, following Betz, asserts that Gal 2.15–21 “should not be considered just as part of Paul’s speech to Peter, though it springs from that, but as the summary of all that Paul has argued in 1:11–2:14 and as the introductory transition to 3:1–4:11.”83 Likewise, Ridderbos says that 2.15–21 should be regarded as a “transition from the historically occasioned to the generally considered aspects.”84 In other words, both Longenecker and Ridderbos, as well as many others, want to mitigate the severity of Paul’s words in 2.15–21 and deflect them from being interpreted as an attack against Peter. Yet there is not the slightest textual basis for reading these verses as a “transition.” This idea has been introduced into the text by the modern interpreters.

Jerome thinks, on the contrary, that the “polemic” against Peter continues until the very end of chapter 2, but that it is a contrived or feigned polemic, not sincere. This does not mean that Jerome thinks that Paul and Peter had planned and staged the confrontation; rather, they had spontaneously feigned the dispute for the sake of others. What this shows is that even modern scholars agree with Jerome in denying that Gal 2.15–21 is directed purely and sincerely against Peter.

Scholars who are familiar with Jerome’s interpretation usually do not find Jerome’s particular explanation of the conflict at Antioch plausible, nor do I find it entirely satisfying. However, in my judgment Jerome’s explanation deserves more careful consideration than it has hitherto received. He is usually rejected on the basis of hearsay and not as a result of careful consideration of his exegetical arguments. Many of the questions Jerome raises, modern exegtes simply refuse to answer. It seems that the unavailability of this commentary in translation has hindered scholars from fully engaging these issues. Jerome asks important questions of interpreters who support variations of the Porphyrian interpretation of the conflict. One query is found under the lemma to 2.14a: What consequences follow from Paul’s reproving in

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Peter what he himself had done? It appears to me that this question needs to be answered before Jerome’s exegesis is utterly dismissed. It is no solution to simply set aside Luke’s portrait of Paul in Acts as a fictional construction, since the evidence from Paul’s own letters points to the same reality: that Paul became as a Jew and as one under the law in order to win to faith in Christ Jews who were under the law (cf. 1 Cor 9.20). In any case I. H. Marshall has demonstrated the historical plausibility of Luke’s portrait of Paul.  

The Reaction of St. Augustine to Jerome’s Explanation

Before he had been made a bishop, the forty-year-old Augustine wrote Ep. 28 to Jerome in 394/95 in which, among other things, he took issue with Jerome’s interpretation of the incident at Antioch, which he found unsatisfactory and even dangerous. This letter never reached Jerome, and so Augustine penned Ep. 40 (Jer. 67) in late 398 or early 399, repeating much of what he said in Ep. 28 and offering his own exposition of the Galatians passage. Jerome’s response to Augustine was written in Ep. 112 to Augustine (Aug. 75) in the year 404, thus some ten years after the initial letter of Augustine. Augustine’s criticism of Jerome’s interpretation shows that the African doctor equates pretense with mendacity. He consequently accuses Jerome, and by implication those who agree with Jerome, of defending the use of lying for the sake

85. See his Acts, TNTC (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 246–47. Even with regard to Luke’s claim that Paul took the step of circumcising Timothy (Acts 16.4), Marshall writes (p. 260): “To Haenchen it is impossible that the Paul who wrote 1 Corinthians 7:17–20 should have acted thus; why did he not go on to make Timothy keep the whole law of Moses (Gal 5:3)? But Haenchen has confused circumcision as a means of salvation with circumcision as a legal act to remove a stigma from Timothy, and his objections are without force.”

86. CSEL 34.1, pp. 103–13. This is Jerome, Ep. 56.

87. I have used the edition of the Jerome-Augustine correspondence in White, The Correspondence.

88. CSEL 55, pp. 367–93.
of expedience. What Jerome had described as Peter and Paul’s contrived or feigned public dispute, Augustine interprets as Jerome’s advocacy of outright deception and lies. But if the Bible condones lies, then nothing in the sacred writings can be trusted.

It appears to me that Augustine is probably correct in finding some inadequacies in Jerome’s particular explanation of the incident at Antioch. However, he does not seem to have fully grasped the nature of Jerome’s explanation, and he draws defective inferences when he equates feigning with mendacity. Whereas Jerome is willing to admit that Paul made use of pretense and even lost his temper at times, Augustine is at pains to safeguard the authority of Paul. Plumer has observed that this leads Augustine to casuistry and to some very tortured exegesis at times.

Epistle 112 to Augustine is Jerome’s response to Augustine’s criticisms. Before he composes his defense of his own exegesis, Jerome offers two arguments that serve as preliminary rebuttals of Augustine’s accusations. First Jerome clarifies the source of his interpretation as coming from the Greek Fathers. He reiterates his words from the preface of the commentary concerning his sources and reminds Augustine not only that Origen was the first to offer the interpretation that Jerome has transmitted, but that all subsequent Greek exegetes adopted Origen’s explanation, including John Chrysostom in his *Homilies on Galatians*. Jerome then comments:

If then you considered anything in my explanation worthy of criticism, it was up to your learning to find out whether what I had written was to be found in the writings of the Greeks, so that if they had not said them, then you could justifiably condemn my opinion, especially since I openly confessed in my preface that I had followed the commentaries of Origen and had dictated either my own or other people’s ideas.

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89. See on Gal 5.12.
90. *Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 92–93.
Jerome’s tactical maneuver demonstrates that the Greek exegetical tradition was a closed book to Augustine. Further, Jerome seems to presuppose that Origen’s exegesis of Scripture is not to be accused of heresy when it has been adopted by subsequent orthodox writers. Thus Augustine should tone down his accusations of the senior scholar, since the same charges would inevitably land not merely on Jerome but on all the exegetes of the Greek tradition who followed Origen.

The second preliminary argument in refutation of Augustine’s criticism is preceded by another lengthy verbatim citation of his own words in the commentary on Gal 2.14a. In this argument Jerome proposes an attractive model for scriptural interpretation. He says to Augustine: “I thereby made it clear that I was not defending unequivocally what I had read in the Greek authors but had expressed the ideas that I had read in such a way as to leave it to the reader to decide for himself whether to approve these things or not.”92 In other words, Jerome reminds Augustine that he has not wished to dogmatize in his explanations, or to pretend to offer the final answer to every problem raised in Scripture. He does not claim to be the final authority in Pauline interpretation. Instead, his method of exegesis aims to provide the reader with multiple interpretations that are present in the ancient tradition and to leave to the reader the freedom to adopt the view he deems best. These two rebuttals are succeeded by a very detailed answer to Augustine’s specific criticisms of the exegesis.

Unfortunately, in his lengthy response to Augustine, Jerome shows himself equally guilty of drawing defective inferences of Augustine’s proposed interpretation of the issues. For example, Jerome concludes that Augustine is espousing the idea that all who have been converted from Judaism have an obligation to keep the law. In reality Augustine had merely said that there was a period of time when this was permitted, in light of the fact that circumcision is an indifferent matter. Circumcision only threatens faith if one places one’s hope of salvation in it.93 In general, however, it seems fair to say that Jerome is the more

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92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p. 117.
liberal minded of the two interpreters of St. Paul. While Augustine’s *Commentary on Galatians* is a great piece of exegesis, perhaps his greatest, very frequently, especially in his later theological works, Augustine has a strong tendency to force a dogmatic straightjacket on Paul’s thoughts. Jerome, on the other hand, imitating Origen, often offers multiple interpretations of given passages. He is more pleased to leave the reader the freedom to choose for himself the best interpretation.

*The Incident at Antioch*

Most modern Scripture scholars presuppose that Paul was in the right and Peter in the wrong in the incident described in Gal 2.11–14. Allegedly Peter, out of his characteristic weakness, caved in to Judaizing pressures and truly compromised the principles of the gospel when he temporarily withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentiles in Antioch. I am not convinced that this judgment on Peter is correct. Paul himself tells us that Barnabas took Peter’s side in the situation (2.13), which would suggest that Paul was isolated in his criticism of Peter. Unfortunately we do not have Peter’s version of the story. David Wenham offers a reconstruction of Peter’s perspective on the events that strikes me as very plausible. It may be the case that neither Jerome nor Augustine, nor even a majority of modern exegetes, have understood the true complexity of the situation at Antioch.

Paul comments in Gal 6.12 that the Judaizers were doing what they were doing only “to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.” For Jews in Jerusalem, the mission of Paul and Barnabas had been a particular source of friction, since this mission had divided the Jewish communities throughout Asia Minor. It is possible that Peter had been warned by Jewish Christians that he was forfeiting all respect as leader

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95. Consider, for example, the three interpretations Jerome offers of Paul’s “weakness of the flesh” (Gal 4.13).
of the Church by his custom of having table fellowship with Gentiles, since this was something that was explicitly forbidden in the Mosaic law. When the Jews from Jerusalem came to Antioch, he may have felt that his and Barnabas’s initiative in withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentiles, and thus in increasing the rigor of their (provisional) adherence to the Mosaic law, was necessary in light of the crisis that their Christian brothers and sisters were experiencing in Jerusalem.

Clearly by their temporary separation, Peter and Barnabas had no intention of “compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews,” as Paul defectively infers in 2.14. On the contrary, their behavior did not have Gentile Christians in view. Peter and Barnabas were motivated by missionary concern. Their withdrawal did not represent some official change in policy that was of universal application. It is true that according to Galatians Paul condemned the behavior on principle, but it is difficult to understand why, when we consider Paul’s own flexibility in relation to practicing Jewish customs and food laws, according to Rom 14.15, 14.20, and 15.1, and 1 Cor 9.20. When Paul claims that Peter “stood condemned” and that Barnabas too was in the wrong in this “hypocrisy,” these appear to be Paul’s private inferences and do not necessarily correspond with God’s judgment of the situation. It is hard to understand how these accusations could not be turned against Paul for his adoption of Jewish customs and even for his circumcising Timothy (cf. Acts 16.3). Scholars who assert that the “real Paul” (as opposed to Luke’s allegedly fictional portrait) need to explain Paul’s stated principles in the texts from Romans and 1 Corinthians cited above.

We also recall that when the issue of the necessity of circumcision for Gentile converts was finally resolved by the Council of Jerusalem, a sort of compromise was reached (Acts 15.22–29). To be sure Gentiles were declared to be free from the obligation to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. However, the same Council decreed that unnecessary offense to the Jews was to be avoided by means of the Gentiles’ abstaining from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality (Acts 15.29). This was, to be sure, an endorsement of Paul’s unwavering mission policy of maintaining table fellowship with the Gentiles; but it did not give Gentiles license to offend Jewish sensibilities unnecessarily.
The upshot of this analysis is that Jerome (and Origen) may have had a more profound understanding of the larger issues involved in this situation than they themselves realized or than they are often given credit for. They seem to have been right in seeing that Peter and Paul were in basic agreement about the core principles of the gospel as they pertained to Jewish and Gentile believers. Where Peter and Paul differed was in the application of those principles. Jerome is unwilling to conclude that Paul’s angry rebuke of Peter was unjustifiable. Instead, he suggests the idea that the two men feigned the public quarrel as a matter of diplomacy.

The situation in Antioch seems similar to Acts 15.36–41, which reports a dispute between Paul and Barnabas over the worthiness of John Mark for missionary work. Paul judged him unworthy for ministry, whereas Barnabas considered him worthy. In assessing this situation, are we obligated to side with Paul against Barnabas? Why should this be the case, either in Acts or in Galatians? Paul himself appears to have changed his mind respecting John Mark: see Col 4.10; Phlm 24; and 2 Tm 4.11. From Rom 14.15 and 15.1 it appears that Paul eventually reconciled himself with Peter’s principles.97

Legacy of St. Jerome’s Commentaries on St. Paul

In the Middle Ages the Catholic Church declared St. Jerome to be one of its four great Latin Doctors, alongside St. Augustine (354–430),

97. For an assessment of the Antioch incident that dissents widely from Wenham’s and mine, see Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1982). In this imaginative book that makes capital use of the argument from silence, Meier (pp. 39–40) concludes that Paul lost the argument in Antioch and, subsequently, divorced himself completely from the church of Antioch, the evidence being that Paul never mentions Antioch again in his surviving epistles. Meier presumes that if Paul had any further contact with that church, we would be reading about it in his subsequent letters. Meier distrusts the account given in the book of Acts and thinks that Luke was perhaps confused. It appears to me that many of Meier’s own reconstructions are confused and run directly counter to the New Testament evidence.
St. Ambrose (d. 397), and Pope St. Gregory the Great (d. 604). He had always been recognized as a preeminent scriptural commentator, and the Council of Trent spoke of him as “the greatest doctor in explaining the Sacred Scriptures.” In particular Jerome’s commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon became standard works of exegesis in the Western Church. In his influential book Institutiones, Cassiodorus (490–583) commended them immediately after mentioning Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians. The venerable Bede (d. 735) cites Jerome’s exegesis frequently in his own exegetical writings. Scores of other medieval and renaissance theologians adopted Jerome as the model exegete.

In the sixteenth century the Catholic priest Erasmus of Rotterdam published the first complete edition of Jerome’s writings in nine folio volumes at the Froben Press in Basel in 1516. He wrote: “It is a river of gold, a well-stocked library, that one acquires who possesses Jerome and nothing else.” In a letter to Pope Leo X in 1515, Erasmus assessed St. Jerome’s stature as a theologian more fully in these terms:

I saw clearly that St Jerome is chief among theologians of the Latin world, and is in fact almost the only writer we have who deserves the name of theologian (not that I condemn the rest, but men who seem distinguished on their own are thrown into the shade by his brilliance when they are compared with him); indeed he has such splendid gifts that Greece itself with all its learning can scarcely produce a man to be matched with him. What Roman eloquence, what mastery of tongues, what a range of knowledge in all antiquity and all

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98. This was formally ratified by Pope Boniface VIII on September 20, 1295.
100. PL 70: 1121A.
history! And then his retentive memory, his happy knack of combining unexpected things, his perfect command of Holy Scripture! Above all, with his burning energy and the divine inspiration in that amazing heart, he can at the same moment delight us with his eloquence, instruct us with his learning, and sweep us away with his religious force.102

Erasmus’s edition contains the first biography of the saint that uses well-grounded historical and critical principles.103 It would be difficult to point to a Catholic scholar who has ever equaled Erasmus in devotion to St. Jerome and in the faithful imitation of Jerome’s ascetic lifestyle devoted to ecclesiastical scholarship.104 In his Paraphrases on Matthew, Ephesians, Galatians, Titus, and Philemon, Erasmus assimilates Jerome’s exegesis into his own,105 even to the point of Erasmus’s adoption of Jerome’s interpretation of the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch. Moreover, Erasmus wrote formidable defenses of Jerome’s exegesis against both Catholic and Protestant critics.106 Erasmus deservedly occupies one of the peak moments in the history of Roman Catholic veneration of St. Jerome.

106. For example, Erasmus’s Ep. 844 to the Catholic theologian John Eck is a careful and cogent defense of Erasmus’s preference of Jerome’s exegesis and learning to Augustine’s. Erasmus’s Hyperaspistes I and II contain lengthy defenses of Jerome’s exegetical insights in the face of Martin Luther’s attacks.
Martin Luther’s Animosity toward Jerome’s Pauline Exegesis

The antithesis of Erasmus’s veneration of St. Jerome is encountered in the radical repudiation of St. Jerome by the German reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546). Luther praised his colleague Phillip Melanchthon in terms that deliberately contrast him with Origen and Jerome:

No one has expounded St. Paul better than you, Philipp [Melanchthon]. The commentaries of St. Jerome and Origen are the merest trash in comparison with your annotations [on Romans and Corinthians]. Be humble if you like, but at least let me be proud of you. Be content that you come so near to St. Paul himself.107

In his own Commentary on Galatians Luther sustains a polemic specifically against St. Jerome’s exegesis of Galatians. Luther claims that Jerome simply did not understand the difference between the gospel and the law. He writes:

Of this difference between the law and the Gospel there is nothing to be found in the books of the monks, canonists, school-divines; no, nor in the books of the ancient Fathers. Augustine did somewhat understand this difference, and shewed it. Jerome and others knew it not.108

Luther strongly reproached Jerome’s interpretation of Gal 3.13, and he makes Jerome’s exegesis of the Pauline epistles one of his principal targets in his famous work defending his doctrine of the enslaved will, De servo arbitrio (1525). In this work Luther claims that among ecclesiastical writers “no one has handled Holy Scripture more ineptly and

108. Cf. J. Dillenberger, Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings, pp. 144–45.
absurdly than Origen and Jerome.”^109 Luther responds to Jerome’s interpretation of the divine choice of Jacob over Esau by saying that Jerome “does nothing but corrupt the Divine Scriptures and deceive the souls of the faithful with a notion hatched out of his own head and violently thrust upon the Scriptures.”^110 As an interpreter of Scripture, Jerome is “a man quite without either judgment or application.”^111 Jerome has “besmirched with Jewish filth” his interpretation of Paul. ^112 The high point of Luther’s criticism of Jerome is articulated in the following text.

But they are in the habit of trying to get around Paul here, by making out that what he calls “works of the law” are the ceremonial works, which since the death of Christ are deadly. I reply that this is the ignorant error of Jerome, which in spite of Augustine’s strenuous resistance—God having withdrawn and let Satan prevail—has spread out into the world and persisted to the present day. It has consequently become impossible to understand Paul, and the knowledge of Christ has been inevitably obscured. Even if there had never been any other error in the Church, this one alone was pestilent and potent enough to make havoc of the gospel, and unless a special sort of grace has intervened, Jerome has merited hell rather than heaven for it—so little would I dare to canonize him or call him a saint. It is, then, not true that Paul is speaking only about ceremonial laws; otherwise, how can the argument be sustained by which he concludes that all men are wicked and in need of grace?^113

Luther does not display an accurate knowledge of Augustine’s conflict with Jerome here, which was not focused on the issue of law. In my

^111. Ibid., p. 267.
^112. Ibid., p. 269.
study of the legacy of Origen’s CRm, I have analyzed Luther and Melanchthon’s decadence theory of Christian theology and noticed that in spite of some inconsistencies and contradictory statements, they equally faulted St. Augustine for failing to measure up to these key themes of Pauline theology.  

114. Cornelis Augustijn confirms that Luther was diametrically opposed both to Jerome’s and Erasmus’s understanding of the “gospel.” He writes: “In Luther’s view the center of the Gospel is at stake here. Jerome is the quintessence of all theology which Luther detests.”

On the other hand Jerome’s interpretation of St. Paul was admirably defended against Luther’s accusations by Erasmus in his Hyperaspistes I and II, which was his two-volume refutation of Luther’s De servo arbitrio. For our purposes it has been important to note that Jerome’s Pauline exegesis provoked a firestorm of controversy when it

114. Origen and the History of Justification, chap. 6. In an interesting article, Josef Lössl reports on the “sensational” discovery in 1988 of a handful of marginal annotations, written in Luther’s own hand, in his personal copy of Erasmus’s Edition of St. Jerome. Cf. Josef Lössl, “Martin Luther’s Jerome: New Evidence for a Changing Attitude,” in Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings and Legacy, ed. Andrew Cain & Josef Lössl, pp. 237–51 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009). In these marginalia Luther expressed approval of a handful of exegetical comments made by St. Jerome, namely, those which seemed to agree with several of Luther’s own idiosyncratic interpretations of St. Paul. At the same time Luther vilifies Erasmus, as an atheist and a heretic, for questioning the accuracy of these particular insights of St. Jerome, in the scholarly annotations he had appended to his Edition of St. Jerome. Erasmus had questioned these particular comments of Jerome because they appeared to stand in tension with statements found elsewhere in Jerome’s writings, and because they tended to set Jerome at odds with the broader consensus of the Greek and Latin exegetical tradition. Lössl’s evidence shows that Luther, in some private unpublished marginalia, did apparently seek confirmation of his own views in the writings of St. Jerome, and also that he vilified Erasmus on these particular occasions. However, such evidence scarcely negates Luther’s global repudiation of St. Jerome found in his De servo arbitrio (a work that Lössl never mentions or discusses).


116. Hyperaspistes I and II.
was engaged during the first phase of the Protestant Reformation. This makes the work all the more interesting.

_**St. Jerome’s Text and the Scripture Citations**_

The translation in this volume of Jerome’s _Commentary on Galatians_ has been made from the new critical text edited by Giacomo Raspanti, _Commentarii in Epistulam Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas, S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars I Opera Exegetica 6, CCSL 77A_ (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006). For the _Commentary on Titus_ and the _Commentary on Philemon_, I have used the new edition by Federica Bucchi, _Commentarii in Epistulas Pauli Apostoli ad Titum et ad Philemon, S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars I Opera Exegetica 8, CCSL 77C_ (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003). These new critical editions represent the first activity in at least two centuries on Jerome’s works, apart from the reprint by Migne in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Migne (PL 26) had reprinted the edition published by Vallarsi in Venice in 1766–72.

Scripture citations are given according to their location in the RSV, Catholic edition. I have tried to conform the wording of my translation to that of the RSV, as much as possible. The reader should be aware, however, that Jerome usually cites the Old Testament according to the Septuagint version, which does not have an identical versification as the RSV. The Septuagint was also the version that his main exegetical source Origen followed.