

Currents and Crosscurrents

Questions on Chapter 7 of Calvin Roetzel's *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*

1. What five major issues does Roetzel identify that have “dominated Pauline interpretation over the centuries”?

Gnosticism: The Problem of Evil in the World (pp. 162—166)

2. What aspects of the letter to the Colossians may be seen to reflect an antecedent to Gnosticism?
3. What connection might the letters to Timothy and Titus have with *gnosis*?
4. Give a brief description of *second century* Gnosticism. List as many characteristics of the movement as you can find.
5. Who was Marcion, and why is it important to know about him?
6. Who was Bishop Rabbula, and what part did he play in the suppression of Gnosticism?

Pelagianism: The Problem of Sin (pp. 166—170)

7. List at least three passages from Paul's letters that Roetzel says were used by the Gnostics. Give a brief statement about why each of these three is significant.
8. Discuss Paul's use of the term “law.” Why is this a problematic issue? What did Origen say about it?
9. Describe the conflict between Augustine and Pelagius. What ideas separated the two? Discuss how each one read Romans 5:12. Why is this verse significant for the debate between Pelagius and Augustine?

10. Briefly state the contribution of Martin Luther to the ongoing debate over sin and free will. How have American Protestants been influenced by the views of Augustine and Luther?

Paul and Jesus (pp. 171—174)

11. Describe the “antithesis” between Jesus and Paul proposed by scholars such as Julius Wellhausen, John Locke, William Wrede, and Geza Vermes.
12. How does the work of Rudolf Bultman and Martin Dibelius (two Form Critics) and Albert Schweitzer challenge the antithesis between Jesus and Paul proposed by other scholars?
13. How do both Jesus and Paul represent *apocalyptic* thinkers?

The Relationship of Paul to His Native Judaism (174—182)

14. Briefly explain the “conversion” experiences of Augustine, Martin Luther, and the Pietists of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. How have these shaped the way many Protestants understand Paul?
15. How has the “New Perspective” on Paul challenged this way of understanding Paul? What specific statements in Paul’s letters have contributed to this change?
16. How does the traditional Protestant way of understanding Paul’s experience of the risen Christ shape (or misshape) Christian views toward Judaism?