D. FRANCOIS TOLMIE

Pointing Out Persuasion in Philemon

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Editors

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Pointing Out Persuasion In Philemon

Fifty Readings of Paul's Rhetoric From the Fourth to the Eighteenth Century

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

When I started this research project in April 2014, I believed it would take me more or less six months to have a quick look at the way in which some of the Church Fathers interpreted the rhetoric of the Letter to Philemon. The "quick look" turned out to be a much longer and an enormously interesting journey, during which I was privileged to become acquainted with many theologians across the centuries whose works I had not read before, and to share their love for the writings of Paul. I have come to realise how often exegetical gems are lost as the years go by, and I trust that this book will help to give new life to some of their insights on the Letter to Philemon.

I wish to express my gratitude to my institution, the University of the Free State, which supported this research project financially, gave me abundant research leave and enabled me to visit overseas libraries and attend international conferences. I was privileged to visit the library of Princeton Theological Seminary several times (where Kate Skrebutenas always was a huge help), as well as the theological libraries of KU Leuven, Universität Wien, Universität Heidelberg and Radboud University (Nijmegen).

Without the help of John Hilton, I would not have been able to complete this study. He translated numerous Latin texts for me and responded meticulously to all my questions about the interpretation of difficult Latin texts. Alfred Friedl assisted me with the interpretation of the *Glossa Ordinaria* and also provided me with copies of many articles and extracts from books that were not available in South Africa. I also wish to express my gratitude to Chrys Caragounis, Marianne Dircksen and Zoe Tsiami, who helped me with the translation and interpretation of some of the commentaries, as well as Nanette Lötter, who did the language editing of the book.

I dedicate this book to my eternally beloved, my wife Ansa, and our children, Carmien, Francois and Mialise.

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Abbreviations

AAWLM.G	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz. Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ACar	Analecta Cartusiana
AcTh.S	Acta Theologica Supplements
ACCS.NT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament
ACN-L	Acta Conventus Neo-Latini
ACT	Ancient Christian Texts
AHDL	*Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*
ANCTRTBS	Ashgate New Criticial Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies
ARG	*Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
Bib. Com.	Biblical Commentaries. Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas
BCCT	Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition
BCP	Blackwell Companions to Philosophy
BCR	Blackwell Companions to Religion
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich & F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. 3rd edition.
BDR	F. Blass & A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch. Bearbeitet von Friedrich Rehkopf*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001. 18th edition.
BHTh	Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
Bibl.Interpr.	*Biblical Interpretation*
BMSBES	Benedictina Monograph Series: Biblical-Ecumenical Section
BMT	Bible in Medieval Tradition
BP	Bibliotheca Patrum
BPEC	Bibliotheca Patrum Ecclesiae Catholicae
BR	*Biblical Research*
BS Vulg.	*Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. 2007. 5th edition.
BSIH	Brill's Studies in Intellectual History
BSt	*Biblische Studien*
BT	*Bible Translator*
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
Calv. Com.	Calvin's Commentaries
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CChr.CM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CChr.SL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CHRL	*Church History and Religious Culture*
CEH	*Central European History*

CistSS	Cistercian Studies Series
Cont & Conf	Controversia et Confessio
Comment.	Commentaria
CFCMW	Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West
CIL	Classics of International Law
CHMA	Collection Haut Moyen Âge
CR	Corpus Reformatorum
Cr	*Crux*
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CS	Classical Studies
CSQ	*Cistercian Studies Quarterly*
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
ConJ	*Concordia Journal*
CThM.ST	Calwer theologische Monographien, Reihe B, Systematische Theologie und Kirchengeschichte
CTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
CWE	Collected Works of Erasmus
DBTR	Dortmunder Beiträge zu Theologie und Religionspädagogik
DMMRS	Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies
DRCH	*Dutch Review of Church History*
DThC	Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique
EBR	Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
ECF	Early Church Fathers
EOr	*Échos d'Orient*
ES	*Erasmus Studies*
EstB	*Estudios Bíblicos*
ET	*Expository Times*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
FGJ	Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden
FH	*Fides et Historia*
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte
FMSt	*Frühmittelalterliche Studien*
GMT	Great Medieval Thinkers
GT	The Great Theologians
Grot.	*Grotiana*
HBW	Heinrich Bullinger Werke
HDRPM	Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements
HJ	*Historisches Jahrbuch*
HorSem	*Horae Semiticae*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
ICS	*Illinois Classical Studies*
Inters.	Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture
Interp	*Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*
JCMAMW	Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JMLS	*Journal of Medieval Latin Studies*
Jos	*Josephinum*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNT.S	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT.S	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series

JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KLK	Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung
KuD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
Lab.	Labarinti
L&N	J. P. Louw & E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988.
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott & H. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
LSQ	*Lutheran Synod Quarterly*
LStRLO	Leucorea-Studien zur Geschichte der Reformation und der Lutherischen Orthodoxie
LuJ	*Lutherjahrbuch*
LuthQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*
LW	Luther's Works
LWW	Library of the Written Word
LThK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche
MoTh	*Modern Theology*
MR	*Methodist Review*
MRTS	Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies
MSt	Mariologische Studien
MSKGEJ	Millennium-Studien zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.
NA28	*Novum Testamentum Graece*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. 2012. 28th edition (revised).
NAKG	*Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*
Neotest	*Neotestamentica*
NSHL	The New Synthese Historical Library (Texts and Studies in the History of Philosophy)
NT	*Novum Testamentum*
NT.S	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
OHM	Oxford Historical Monographs
OODER	Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami
OrChrAn	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OSHT	Oxford Studies in Historical Theology
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
OWS	Oxford-Warburg Studies
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PMS	Publications in Mediaeval Studies
PRJ	*Puritan Reformed Journal*
PTMS	Pittsburg Theological Monograph Series
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
QDGR	Quellen und Darstellungen aus der Geschichte des Reformationsjahrhunderts
QFRM	Quellen und Forschungen zum Recht im Mittelalter
QULPMA	Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters
RBen	*Revue Bénédictine*
R-F	Rhetorik-Forschungen
RGST	Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte
RHT	Reformed Historical Theology
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RP	Reformed Paperbacks

RRR	*Reformation & Renaissance Review*
RThAM	*Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*
RThR	*The Reformed Theological Review*
SASRH	St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History
SBL.RBS	SBL Resources for Biblical Studies
SBL.WGRW	SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World
SCD	Souvenirs chrétiens de Damas
SsOC	*Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano*
SE	*Sacris Erudiri*
Sem.	*Semeia*
SHL	Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia
SHR	Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation
SHCT	Studies in the History of Christian Thought
SiT	Studies in Theology
SKG	Studien zur Kirchengeschichte
SKZ	Sklaverei, Knechtschaft, Zwangsarbeit. Untersuchungen zur Sozial-, Rechts- und Kulturgeschichte
SPAW	*Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*
SPB	Studia Patristica et Byzantina
SPIB	Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici
Spec.	*Speculum*
StPatr	*Studia Patristica*
StT	Studi et Testi
STT	Studia Traditionis Theologiae. Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology
TaS	Texts and Studies
TCS	TEAMS Commentary Series
TeT	Temi e Testi
ThAthen	*Theologia* (Athens)
ThR	*Theological Review*
THR	Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance
ThTo	*Theology Today*
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*
Trad.	*Traditio*
TS	Theological Studies
T.stone	*Touchstone*
TUMSR	Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion
VCS	Variorum Collected Studies
VigChr	*Vigiliae Christianae*
Viator	*Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
VL	*Vetus Latina. Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel*
WHCT	Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology
WbF	Wolfenbütteler Forschungen
WSV	Wittenberger Sonntagsvorlesungen
WThJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZBRG	Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
Zwing.	*Zwingliana*

Introduction

In 2005, I published a study on the rhetorical analysis of the Letter to the Galatians in which I opted not to "apply" a particular rhetorical model – ancient or modern – to the letter but instead attempted to reconstruct Paul's rhetorical strategy from the text itself, thus using the letter itself as starting point.[1] Since it seemed as if such an approach could be applied fruitfully to other Pauline letters too, I decided to investigate the Letter of Philemon in a similar way. In the study on Galatians, I only offered a very brief overview of the research on the rhetoric of the letter. In the study on the Letter to Philemon, I decided to devote more attention to this aspect and thus began to look at the way in which the rhetoric of the letter was interpreted in the earliest commentaries on it. What I originally thought I would only spend a couple of months on, soon proved to be such a fascinating and interesting journey (constantly expanding!), that it put me on a new research voyage that took several years to complete. In this book, I share the results of this research with other scholars who might be interested in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the letter and in particular, in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the rhetoric of the letter. I offer an overview of the way in which fifty[2] commentators interpreted the rhetoric of the letter; beginning from the first extant commentary on the letter (the one by Ambrosiaster) up to the commentary of Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten, published posthumously (1767). To my mind, Baumgarten's commentary represents the first commentary on the letter written in a way that would nowadays be considered characteristic of the commentary genre, and it thus served as a good place to end the overview.

I have divided this overview into three time periods, in the same way as McKim[3] does in his overview of Biblical interpreters through the centuries. For the first period (Early Church), eight authors have been discussed, while in the

[1] D. F. Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians. A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter* (WUNT 2.190; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

[2] Take note that I actually discuss 51 commentators, but since Atto of Vercelli's comments on the Letter to Philemon were copied from Claudius of Turin, his commentary was not included in the number above. Furthermore, take note that I use the term "commentators", well aware that in some instances the term "commentary" does not adequately cover the contribution of a particular person. For example, Chrysostom did not write a commentary on the letter but homilies.

[3] D. K. McKim (ed.), *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove IL/Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

cases of the second and third periods (the Middle Ages and the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, respectively), a number of commentaries that may be regarded as representative of what happened during these periods were selected for discussion. In the final chapter, I have attempted to draw all the lines together by pointing out the continuity as well as the diversity in the ways in which interpreters viewed Paul's rhetorical strategy over a period of almost 1400 years. I have written the final chapter in such a way that it will make sense even if one has not read the first three chapters. Additionally, I offer a very brief summary of the most important findings of the study on the last pages of the final chapter.[4]

[4] See the section "In a Nutshell".

Chapter 1

The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Rhetoric of the Letter to Philemon in the Early Church

In this section, the focus is on the Patristic Era, broadly defined as stretching until the seventh century CE in the West and the ninth century CE in the East.[1] The interpretation of the Letter to Philemon in this era is scrutinised from the perspective of the way in which the rhetoric of the letter was understood. Of course, these authors were not interested in the rhetorical analysis of the letter in the sense that we are pursuing the matter nowadays; they were rather interested in what Paul was saying to the believers of their times.[2] Nevertheless, by reading their interpretations of the letter, one quite often gets a fair idea of the way in which they perceived its rhetorical effect, and this is the aspect that will be highlighted in this overview.

1. Ambrosiaster

"Ambrosiaster" is the name given to an unknown member of the Roman clergy who wrote a commentary on the Pauline letters in the fourth century CE. The commentary was attributed to Ambrose of Milan for a long time, and it was only realised in the seventeenth century that it had been written by someone else.[3] This commentary, in Latin, was written during the time of Pope Damasus

[1] See C. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity. With Special Contributions by Various Scholars* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 3.

[2] See M. M. Mitchell, "Reading Rhetoric with Patristic Exegetes: John Chrysostom on Galatians", in: A. Y. Collins and M. M. Mitchell (eds.), *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 339.

[3] G. L. Bray (transl. & ed.), *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon: Ambrosiaster* (ACT; Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2009), pp. xv–xvi. In the past, it was thought that Desiderius Erasmus was responsible for the name "Ambrosiaster". However, this is not correct. Some scholars believe that the name was created by the Maurists. See, for example, J. Papsdorf, "'Ambrosiaster' in Paul in the Middle Ages", in: S. Cartwright (ed.), *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages* (BCCT 39; Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 51, n. 1, based on the research of A. E. C. Volgers, *A Church in Search of Answers: A Study of the Latin Quaestiones-Tradition* (D. Phil. Thesis; University Utrecht, 2005), p. 31. However, J. Krans, "Who Coined the Name 'Ambrosiaster'?", in: J. Krans, B. J. L. Peerbolte, P.-B. Smit and A. Zwiep (eds.), *Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer* (NT.S 149; Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 274–

(366–384 CE[4]) and is the oldest extant commentary on *all* the Pauline epistles. Ambrosiaster's views have been described as "distinctively *clerical,* distinctively *moderate*, and distinctively *Roman*."[5] In his commentary, Ambrosiaster follows the Biblical text, adding brief comments by which he tries to present a clear account of Paul's message to educated people of his time.[6] For our purposes in this study the following are important:

How Ambrosiaster understands what would nowadays be called the *rhetorical situation* of the letter can be gained from the preface to his commentary:[7] Paul wrote this private letter to Philemon on behalf of his slave Onesimus.[8] According to Ambrosiaster, Philemon was not one of the clergy but a worthy layman.[9] Paul wanted him to welcome Onesimus back and also to thank God because he was

281, pointed out that this idea was also wrong and that the name was actually created by Lucas Brugensis in his *Notationes in Sacra Biblica* of 1580.

[4] Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis,* p. 1081. The time of the writing of his commentary and the *Quaestiones* may be narrowed down to the early 380s. See D. G. Hunter, "2008 NAPS Presidential Address: The Significance of Ambrosiaster", *JECS* 17:1 (2009), p. 7.

[5] Hunter, "Significance of Ambrosiaster", p. 5 (emphasis by Hunter).

[6] Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis,* p. 1082.

[7] I used the text in H. J. Vogels (ed.), *Ambrosiastri qvi dicitvr commentarivs in epistvlas Pavlinas III: In epistvlas ad Galatas, ad Efesios, ad Filippenses, ad Colosenses, ad Thesalonicenses, ad Timothevm, ad Titvm, ad Filemonem* (CSEL 81/3; Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1968). Page and line numbers are indicated in brackets according to this text. I also used the English translation of Bray (transl. & ed.), *Galatians – Philemon (Ambrosiaster)*, pp. 161–163.

[8] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm. arg.* (337.4–5). He uses the phrase *familiares litteras facit*, borrowed from the so-called Marcionite prologues. In the Marcionite prologues, the occasion of the Letter to Philemon is summarised as follows: *Philemoni familiares litteras facit pro Onesimo servo eius. Scribit autem ei a Roma de carcere*. See A. Souter, *The Text and Canon of the New Testament* (SiT; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 206. According to J. J. Clabeaux, "Marcionite Prologues to Paul", *ABD* 4 (1992), pp. 520–521, these prologues are first found in Marius Victorinus's commentary on the Pauline letters. The origin of the prologues is uncertain. D. de Bruyne, "Prologues bibliques d'origin marcionite", *RBen* 24 (1907), pp. 1–24, and P. Corssen, "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des Römerbriefes", *ZNW* 10 (1909), pp. 1–45, 97–102, identified them as Marcionite, but this was disputed by scholars such as W. Mundle, "Die Herkunft der 'marcionitischen' Prologe zu den paulinischen Briefen", *ZNW* 24 (1925), pp. 56–77, and N. A. Dahl, "The Origin of the Earliest Prologues to the Pauline Letters", *Sem.* 12 (1978), pp. 233–77. The Marcionite prologues became part of the Vulgate and were thus later taken up in some of the (Latin) commentaries on the Pauline letters. The expression *familiares litteras* literally means "friendly/intimate/amicable letter". D. J. Theron, *Evidence of Tradition: Selected Source Material for the Study of the History of the Early Church, the New Testament Books, the New Testament Canon* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1957), p. 83, and Bray (transl. & ed.), *Galatians – Philemon (Ambrosiaster)*, p. 161, translate it as "personal letter", but V. Blomkvist, *Euthalian Traditions: Text, Translation and Commentary. Including the Appendix: Parainesis as an Ancient Genre-Designation by David Hellholm and Vemund Blomkvist* (TU 170; Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), p. 254, opts for "private letter". G. Dahan, "L'exégèse médiévale de l'épître à Philémon", *AHDL* 85:1 (2018), p. 17, explains the meaning of the term as an indication that the letter was not directed to a congregation. In this study, the translation "private letter" will be used.

[9] *vir laudabilis* (Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm. arg.* [337.4]).

receiving Onesimus back not as a slave but as a dear brother.[10] Further on in the commentary, some additional pieces of information are provided: On the basis of his apostolic authority, Paul was entitled to expect of Philemon to do what he wanted him to;[11] Philemon was a good man and about the same age as Paul;[12] Onesimus had fled to Paul for divine help during his imprisonment in Rome, and on realising his potential, Paul baptised him.[13] Ambrosiaster also mentions that Onesimus had offended Philemon, taken refuge with Paul after a long journey and wanted to show that he was not going back to his earlier life as someone bound in sin but rather as someone whose sins had been forgiven.[14]

Broadly speaking, Ambrosiaster thus accepts what later became known as the "traditional view"[15] on the origin of the letter: Onesimus offended Philemon in some way, fled, was baptised by Paul and was then sent back by Paul to his master.[16] What is interesting, though, are some of the detail aspects which Ambrosiaster uses to fill out this view, in particular the notion that Onesimus had fled to Paul for divine help[17] and that he had taken refuge with Paul after a long journey.[18] Unfortunately, Ambrosiaster does not elaborate on these two comments, so that one cannot be sure exactly what he has in mind, but what is intriguing is that it seems as if he was of the opinion that Onesimus did not wander around aimlessly after he had left Philemon's house and then met Paul by chance but that he deliberately went to him for help. This is the first occurrence of such a notion in existent literature on the Letter to Philemon and only rarely taken up in later commentaries. Also, take note that if this explanation of Ambrosiaster's view is correct, it may serve as further proof that Peter Lampe's interpretation of the origin of the letter is indeed accurate.[19]

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[10] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm. arg.* (337.3–7).

[11] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 8–9 (338.29–339.2).

[12] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 8–9 (339.2–4).

[13] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 10–13 (339.21–26).

[14] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 15–16 (340.5–9).

[15] See D. F. Tolmie, "Tendencies in the Research on the Letter to Philemon since 1980", in: D. F. Tolmie and A. Friedl (eds.), *Philemon in Perspective. Interpreting a Pauline Letter* (BZNW 169; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 2–6, for a detailed overview of research in this regard and how this view was later challenged by scholars.

[16] As Ambrosiaster's commentary on the Letter to Philemon is the oldest extant commentary on the letter, this is the first time that we find this view expressed in a commentary. However, as M. M. Mitchell, "John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Second Look", *HThR* 88:1 (1995), pp. 145–147, points out, this interpretation of the origin of the letter was not new and is also reflected elsewhere in literature around that time.

[17] *ad divinum auxilium* (Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 10–14 [339.22]).

[18] *confugit longa peregrinatione ad apostolum* (Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 15–16 [340.5–6]).

[19] According to P. Lampe, "Keine 'Sklavenflucht' des Onesimus", *ZNW* 76:1–2 (1985), pp. 135–137, Onesimus should not be classified as a *fugitivus*; although he had left Philemon's house, he intended to return to him and only went to Paul to intercede on his behalf so that he could do so. See also P. Lampe, "Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Interpretation", in: D. F. Tolmie and A. Friedl (eds.), *Philemon in*

With regard to Ambrosiaster's reception of Paul's *rhetorical strategy*, the following should be highlighted:

vv. 1–3: According to Ambrosiaster, Paul mentions the fact that he is a prisoner in order to indicate the importance of his letter. Ambrosiaster also points out that to be imprisoned for something wrong, was shameful but to be imprisoned for Christ, should be regarded as the height of glory.[20]

v. 7: Ambrosiaster interprets the reason for the joy that Paul expresses regarding Philemon's refreshing of the "entrails"[21] of the saints as follows: This commendable behaviour of Philemon in providing for the needs of the saints makes Paul confident that he will also obey his request because Paul is of a higher rank than the saints that he helped.[22]

vv. 8–9: Ambrosiaster highlights the fact that Paul appeals to Philemon instead of ordering him. Paul has the right to order him, "his disciple", because he has the apostolic authority to do so but seeing that Philemon is a good man, Paul rather appeals to him to comply with his wishes because of his love for Paul. Furthermore, Philemon is almost the same age as Paul and also a "prisoner for Christ",[23] which means that he has to do the Lord's work.[24]

vv. 10–14: In his discussion of these verses in which Paul begs Philemon "for his 'son', Onesimus", Ambrosiaster again mentions Paul's authority and points out that he does not use it. Instead, he humbles himself, according to Ambrosiaster, a very praiseworthy thing to do for such a prominent person as Paul.[25]

vv. 15–16: That Paul calls Onesimus Philemon's brother both in the flesh and in the Lord, is interpreted by Ambrosiaster as a way of humbling Philemon. Ac-

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Perspective. Interpreting a Pauline Letter (BZNW 169; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 62–65.

[20] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 1–3 (337.8–338.5).

[21] The term σπλάγχνα referred to one's entrails and figuratively, to the seat of one's emotions ("heart"). See BDAG (σπλάγχνον). It was also used (especially at later stage) to refer to somebody's children. See G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), σπλάγχνον. In Latin, the situation is more or less the same: the word *viscera* refers to one's entrails and in a transfigurative sense to the seat of one's emotion, as well as to one's children. See P. G. W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 [1982], 2nd edition), *uiscus*. As will be seen in the rest of this study, the different ways in which the two terms could be interpreted gave rise to a diversity of interpretations in commentaries.

[22] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 7 (338.19–24).

[23] The version of the *Vetus Latina* that was used by Ambrosiaster reads *cum talis sis* (Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 7 [338.27–28]), thus referring to Philemon also. All the other manuscripts of the *Vetus Latina* also read *sis* (with some variation in word order). See H. J. Frede (ed.), *Epistula ad Philemonem* (VL 25; Freiburg: Herder, 1983), p. 981. The reading in the Vulgate is similar: *cum sis talis.* As M. Barth and H. Blanke, *The Letter to Philemon. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), p. 320, point out, a correct Latin translation of the Greek would have been *cum sim talis,* or *cum talis sim* – as Erasmus had already pointed out. See also n. 39 in Chapter 3.

[24] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 8–9 (338.25–339.9).

[25] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 10–14 (339.10–26).

cording to him, Paul does so in order to prevent him from taking a conceited approach to Onesimus, as masters often do.[26]

v. 17: Ambrosiaster regards Paul's request to Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive him (i. e., Paul), as a means of scaring Philemon into taking Onesimus back, in case he may not be persuaded to take him back out of love.[27]

v. 18: Ambrosiaster interprets Paul's remark that Philemon may charge anything that Onesimus owes him to his account as a way of removing any reason that Philemon may still have for being angry at Onesimus and for finding it impossible to forgive him.[28]

vv. 20–21: Ambrosiaster views these verses as a gentle treatment of Philemon so that he will obey Paul voluntarily. According to Ambrosiaster, such an approach might work since it is normally the case that people who know that they are thought well of do more than is expected of them.[29]

v. 22: Paul's request for accommodation is interpreted by Ambrosiaster as a measure of ensuring Philemon's obedience. This is the case since people who are absent are usually easily ignored.[30]

Evaluation

With regard to the way in which Ambrosiaster understands Paul's rhetorical strategy in the letter, three aspects should be highlighted.

Firstly, the interesting way in which he understands the rhetorical purpose of some of Paul's remarks must be pointed out. In the case of vv. 1–3, he interprets Paul's reference to himself as a "prisoner of Christ" as a way of indicating the importance of his letter. And in the case of v. 7, it is important to take note that Paul's reference to the other saints whose "entrails"[31] Philemon refreshed is interpreted by Ambrosiaster not so much as a compliment to Philemon but rather as an indication that Philemon will have to obey Paul since he is of higher rank than the saints already helped by Philemon.

Secondly, for Ambrosiaster the authority and rank that Paul has, play an important role in his rhetorical strategy. Ambrosiaster mentions this several times (see his comments on vv. 7, 8–9 and 10–13). He also points out that, in some instances, Paul chose not to base his rhetorical strategy on his authority. For example, in vv. 8–9, Paul begs Philemon rather than ordering him because Philemon is a good man; and in vv. 10–14, Paul again humbles himself by begging Philemon.

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[26] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 15–16 (340.1–15).
[27] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 17 (340.16–21).
[28] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 18 (340.23–341.3).
[29] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 20–21 (341.11–18).
[30] Ambrosiaster, *ad Philm.* 22 (341.19–23).
[31] See n. 21 above on the term "entrails".

Thirdly, it seems as if Ambrosiaster is of the opinion that Paul might have foreseen that Philemon would not be persuaded so easily and that Paul therefore also has to make use of other rhetorical strategies in order to achieve his goals. For example, Ambrosiaster interprets v. 17 ("Receive him as if me") as a way of scaring Philemon into taking Onesimus back, v. 18 ("Charge it to my account") as Paul's way of removing any anger that Philemon may have had and v. 22 (Paul's request for accommodation) as another way of putting pressure on Philemon.

2. Jerome

Jerome wrote his commentary[32] on the Letter to Philemon between 386 and 388 CE, i. e., shortly after he had settled in Bethlehem. It represents the first of his exegetical works on the Pauline letters.[33] In his explanation of the letter, he depended mainly on Origen's commentary on the letter (which has unfortunately been lost); to such an extent that we may even assume that through Jerome's work on Philemon, we have access to Origen's interpretation of it, which probably was the first written interpretation of this letter.[34] Jerome's work on Philemon is much longer than that of Ambrosiaster, whose commentary Jerome ignored – there was not much love lost between the two of them![35]

The nature of Jerome's four commentaries on Paul is aptly summarised by Gorday:[36]

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[32] As A. Friedl, "St Jerome's Dissertation on the Letter to Philemon", in: D. F. Tolmie and A. Friedl (eds.), *Philemon in Perspective. Interpreting a Pauline Letter* (BZNW 169; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), p. 294, points out, strictly speaking, Jerome does not call his study on Philemon a "commentary". He uses the word *dissero* ("discuss") in the introduction to this work and later refers to it as an *interpretatus* in the introduction to his work on Galatians, in which he mentions his work on Philemon. He completed the latter a few days before he started working on Galatians. In view of the foregoing, Jerome's work on Philemon may be called either a "dissertation" or an "interpretation". Friedl opts for "dissertation".

[33] Friedl, "St Jerome's Dissertation", pp. 289–290.

[34] Friedl, "St Jerome's Dissertation", p. 291. See also the detailed investigation of this issue by R. E. Heine, "In Search of Origen's Commentary on Philemon", *HTR* 93:2 (2000), pp. 117–133. Take note of Heine's conclusion: "We may, therefore, be fairly confident that in this commentary we have the exposition of Origen dressed in the garb of Jerome's Latin. This, in turn, means that we have a commentary on Philemon from the mid-third century rather than from the late fourth century. Furthermore, it makes the exposition contained in the commentary the earliest known exposition of the Epistle to Philemon. Indeed, this exposition, in all likelihood, represents the first commentary ever written on the epistle" (p. 133).

[35] Ambrosiaster opposed Jerome's revision of the Latin translation of the Bible and he may be one of the "two-legged asses" mentioned by Jerome in this regard. See the discussion by Hunter, "Significance of Ambrosiaster", p. 10.

[36] P. J. Gorday (ed.), *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (ACCS.NT 9; Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 2000), p. xxv.

As elsewhere in his work Jerome reveals a constant concern for the *hebraica veritas*, for the background in Hebrew and Jewish language and culture, as the key to understanding some obscurity in Paul's statements. He also has a fine sense for the various qualifications and nuanced modulations that Paul introduces into arguments. Unlike Chrysostom, who tends to see these as equivocations that protect the feelings and sensibilities of his readers, Jerome sees them as the balancing tools of a good scholar who wishes to state his arguments with dialectical precision. In the fashion of the Greek exegetes on whom Jerome modeled himself, he saw his exegetical work in terms of the removal of obscurities and the deft balancing of various interpretative options inherited from his predecessors, so that the reader might make judicious and informed decisions.

For the purpose of this study, the following should be noted:

Jerome understands the *rhetorical situation* of the letter as follows: Paul was in prison in Rome, "chained up", as Jerome puts it,[37] from where he wrote the Letter to Philemon at the same time that he wrote the Letters to the Philippians, the Colossians and the Ephesians.[38] The recipient of this particular letter was Philemon, who was a Colossian, like his slave Onesimus. Paul sent Onesimus (accompanied by Tychicus) to Colossae with two letters: one was meant for the whole congregation, and the other one was a private letter with recommendations to Onesimus's master.[39]

Jerome explains the events giving rise to Paul's letter as follows: Onesimus stole some of his master's possessions and then fled to Italy where he knew he would not be apprehended easily. There, through an extravagant lifestyle, he wasted the money that he got for the stolen possessions.[40] However, everything changed when he met Paul: he genuinely repented of his sins, was baptised by him and thus had Paul himself as a witness of his conversion.[41] Thus, from being a runaway slave and a thief, he was asked to become Paul's helper, his *minister*.[42] Jerome links the service that Onesimus rendered to Paul's own ministry. According to him, the only ministry that Paul had was the gospel of Christ. By becoming Paul's *minister,* Onesimus thus became involved in the same ministry as Paul. This means that Onesimus had become Philemon's "fellow-slave and

[37] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 1–3 (84.82). I used the critical edition of F. Bucchi (ed.), *Commentarii in epistvlas Pavli apostoli ad Titvm et ad Philemonem* (CChr.SL 77C; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 75–106, citing page and line numbers in brackets according to this text. I also consulted the English translation of Jerome's commentary on the Letter to Philemon by T. P. Scheck (transl.), *St. Jerome's Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 351–382.

[38] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 1–3 (84.82–84).

[39] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 1–3 (85.107–113). The expression that he uses is *privata et … commendatrix … littera* (85.112–113). Later on, Jerome also claims that Paul did not dictate the Letter to Philemon – as was his usual practice – but wrote it with his own hand. See Jerome, *ad Philm.* 19 (99.481–483).

[40] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 8–9 (94.336–339). Jerome deduces this from Paul's statement in v. 19 that he will repay anything that Onesimus owes Philemon.

[41] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 8–9 (94.344–348).

[42] *minister Apostoli* (Jerome, *ad Philm.* 8–9 [94.352–353]).

fellow-evangelist";[43] like Philemon, he was "a slave and a minister of Christ".[44] Further on, Jerome again refers to this idea several times: in his comments on vv. 10–13, he speaks of Onesimus's ministry in the gospel as something that was established in chains;[45] in his comments on the next two verses, he refers to Onesimus who became "a minister of the gospel" because he had fled from his master;[46] and in the explanation of v. 20, he mentions the possibility that Onesimus will be refreshed by receiving religious instruction from Philemon.[47] Thus, Jerome's view on this matter differs from that of Ambrosiaster. Onesimus would not return to Philemon's household to continue his work as a slave; his life (as a slave) would be devoted to the spreading of the gospel, just like that of Paul and Philemon.

In his discussion of the contents of the letter itself, Jerome's focus does not fall on Paul's *rhetorical strategy*. He is mostly interested in the meaning and the theological implications of the text. For example, in the case of v. 14, where Paul writes that he does not want to do anything without Philemon's consent so that his good deed might be voluntary and not forced, Jerome does not discuss the strategy that Paul follows in this instance at all but immediately moves to a theological issue, namely, why God did not create humankind good.[48] Nevertheless, occasionally Jerome does refer to Paul's strategy or the effect that the letter might have had on Philemon. These instances will now be discussed.

vv. 1–3: In his discussion of this part of the letter, Jerome mentions two issues that are related to rhetorical aspects. First, he interprets Paul's reference to himself as "a prisoner of Christ" as a way of enhancing his authority. He describes it as "an authority of chains",[49] something that will help Paul to get what he wants: Onesimus.[50] Second, Jerome refers to the fact that Paul also mentions the co-writer, Timothy. According to him, Paul's reason for doing so is that the letter will have more authority because it does not come from one person only.[51]

vv. 4–6: Jerome points out that the first three verses are addressed to Philemon, Apphia[52] and Archippus (i. e., except for the words "and the church that is in your

[43] *sed quasi a conseruo et coeuagelista* (Jerome, *ad Philm.* 8–9 [95.355]).
[44] *seruus … et minister* (Jerome, *ad Philm.* 8–9 [95.355–356]).
[45] *ministrum Euangelii in uinculis constituti* (Jerome, *ad Philm.* 8–9 [94.380–381]).
[46] *minister Euangelii* (Jerome, *ad Philm.* 15–16 [98.437]).
[47] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 20 (101.517–519).
[48] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 14 (96.390–410).
[49] *auctoritas uinculorum* (Jerome, *ad Philm.* 1–3 [84.71]).
[50] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 1–3 (83.65–84.73).
[51] Jerome, *ad Philm.* 1–3 (86.138–143).
[52] For an overview of the way in which Paul's reference to Apphia was interpreted by Patristic exegetes, see D. F. Tolmie, "The Reception of Apphia in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries CE", in: D. F. Tolmie (ed.), *Perspectives on the Socially Disadvantaged in Early Christianity* (AcTh.S 23; Bloemfontein: SunMedia, 2016), pp. 282–300. Also take note that I use the (Greek) spelling, i. e., "Apphia", throughout this study.

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