

Pauline *and* Patristic
Scholars *in* Debate

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THE APOLOGISTS AND PAUL



Edited by
TODD D. STILL *and*
DAVID E. WILHITE

THE APOLOGISTS AND PAUL

PAULINE AND PATRISTIC SCHOLARS IN DEBATE

SERIES EDITORS

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The Pauline Writings in Dionysius of Alexandria

Lincoln H. Blumell

Up to the end of the second century the Alexandrian episcopate is known only through a list of bishops preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*.¹ According to Eusebius, Mark, the alleged author of the second gospel, was the first bishop of the city, and there was an unbroken line of episcopal succession that stretched to Eusebius's own day.² Despite Eusebius's claims, it is not until the episcopate of Demetrius (bp. c. 189–232)³ that this list becomes anything more than mere names and dates as this patriarch is known from the other sources,⁴ although no writings ascribed to Demetrius have survived.⁵ Similarly, while Demetrius's episcopal successor Heraclas (bp. c. 232–247)⁶ is known from other sources,⁷ none of his writings have survived. With the succession of Dionysius (bp. c. 247–264),⁸ however, things change: not only is Dionysius well known in other sources, being the first Alexandrian bishop mentioned in Jerome's *Lives of Illustrious Men*,⁹ some of his writings have survived. While Jerome's brief biographic vignette preserves a lengthy list of treatises and letters by Dionysius that

¹ For this list, see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.24.1 (SC 31.91), 3.14.1 (SC 31.119), 3.21.1 (SC 31.125), 4.1.1 (SC 31.160), 4.4.1 (SC 31.163), 4.5.5 (SC 31.164), 4.11.6 (SC 31.175), 4.19.1 (SC 31.198), 5.9.1 (SC 41.39).

² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16.1-2 (SC 31.71-72), describes Mark's arrival in the city. On the early Alexandrian episcopacy, see Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2004), 1–17.

³ According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.22.1 (SC 41.65), Demetrius became the bishop in the tenth year of Commodus (i.e., 189) and presided for forty-three years (*Hist. eccl.* 6.26.1 [SC 41.128-29]).

⁴ A. Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina: Évolution sociale et institutionnelle du christianisme alexandrin (Ile et IIIe siècles)*, *Christianismes antiques*, 1 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 175–214 where Jakab argues that before the episcopate of Demetrius that it was a collection of Alexandrian presbyters that governed the church and not a bishop.

⁵ Much later Coptic sources preserve various hagiographical stories about Demetrius; see Maged S. A. Mikhail, *The Legacy of Demetrius of Alexandria (189–232 CE): The Form and Function of Hagiography in Late Antiquity and Islamic Egypt* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁶ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.26.1 (SC 41.128-29) and 6.29.4 (SC 41.141-42). According to *Hist. eccl.* 7.7.4 (SC 41.172), Heraclas was the first Alexandrian bishop to be called a "pope" (πάππa). Cf. 6.3.1-2 (SC 41.86-87), 6.15.1 (SC 41.109), and 6.19.13-14 (SC 41.117).

⁷ Julius Africanus, *Chronographiai* frag. 54; Photius, *Interrogationes decem cum totidem Responionibus* 9 (PG 104.1219-32).

⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.28.3 (SC 41.213).

⁹ Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 69.1-7 (PL 23.714C-718A).

exceeds thirty, only mere fragments of this corpus are extant.¹⁰ Even though none of Dionysius's treatises survive complete, and only two of his letters have survived in full,¹¹ his writings were apparently important enough that they were periodically invoked by later Alexandrian bishops like Athanasius in the wake of the Arian controversy in the mid-fourth century as well as at the third Council of Trullo in 680.¹²

Based on the extant remains of Dionysius it is evident that he was educated and well-read. Eusebius reports that he was a pupil of Origen and that before his episcopal ordination he was the head of the elusive catechetical school in Alexandria¹³ and also suggests that before his conversion and subsequent election to the bishopric he was well-to-do and had a successful civil career.¹⁴ From a survey of Dionysius's extant writings, it is also evident that he was a skilled interpreter of the scriptures. In the extant portions of his treatise *On Promises* (περὶ ἐπαγγελιῶν),¹⁵ written c. 262 and primarily addressed to church membership in the Fayum,¹⁶ he shows himself to be a thoughtful reader of the book of Revelation as well as the Gospel of John and the Johannine letters.¹⁷ In addition to being an adept interpreter of the scriptures, his extant writings also show him to be well-read in "secular" matters. In the extant portions of his treatise *On Nature* (περὶ φύσεως)¹⁸ it is evident that Dionysius had a firm grasp of Epicureanism in

¹⁰ For the most recent catalog of the extant works of Dionysius, see K. J. Fleischer, *Dionysios von Alexandria, De Natura (περὶ φύσεως): Übersetzung, Kommentar und Würdigung, mit einer Einleitung zur Geschichte des Epikureismus in Alexandria* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 228–33; W. A. Bienert, *Dionysius von Alexandria. Zur Frage des Origenismus im dritten Jahrhundert*, PTS 21 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 51–70. For an older yet still useful summary of Dionysius's works in English, see C. L. Feltoe, *St. Dionysius of Alexandria Letters and Treatises* (London and New York: Macmillan, 2018), 9–34. PG 10.1237-1342 includes a collection of the fragments of Dionysius; see also PL 5.117 for an alleged Latin translation of another fragment.

¹¹ The two complete letters include a letter to Novatian preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.45.1 (SC 41.161-62) and a letter to Basilides, bishop of the churches of the Pentapolis, that has been preserved among the *Canonical Epistles* of the Greek Church. See C. L. Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λειτουργία: The Letters and other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 91–105. For references to Dionysius's letters to Basilides, see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.26.3 (SC 41.211) and Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 69.6 (PL 23.718A); cf. CPG 1584.

¹² Athanasius, *Dion.* (*On the Opinion of Dionysius*), in which fragments of Dionysius's *Refutation and Apology* are cited. Dionysius's letter to Basilides, bishop of the Pentapolis, is included among the extant documents from Trullo; see Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λειτουργία*, 91–2.

¹³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.29.4 (SC 41.131-32).

¹⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.11.18 (SC 41.183-84).

¹⁵ The extant portions of this treatise are preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.24-25 (SC 41.201-10).

¹⁶ J. Gage, "Commodien et le mouvement millénariste du III^e siècle," *RHPR* 41 (1961): 360–2. According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.24-25, Dionysius wrote *On Promises* in response to a treatise published by Nepos, bishop of Arsinoe, titled *Refutation of the Allegorists* (ἐλεγχον ἀλληγοριστῶν) in which Nepos attempted to show that many parts of the book of Revelation should be interpreted literally. On the proceedings of this conference, see A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Église d'Égypte au IV^e siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1996), 18–20; D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 270–8.

¹⁷ In fact, Dionysius anticipates much of modern scholarship in suggesting that the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation were written by two different authors: Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.12-16 (SC 41.207-8). Additionally, Dionysius points out many parallels between the Gospel of John and the Johannine letters showing that they emanated from the same milieu: Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.17-23 (SC 41.208-9).

¹⁸ Preserved in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 14.23-27 (SC 338.189-221). For the most recent critical edition, see Fleischer, *Dionysios von Alexandria, De Natura (περὶ φύσεως)*, 240–51.

addition to other philosophical ideas about substance, matter, and creation.¹⁹ Likewise, his extant letters show that Dionysius was familiar with epistolary style and delivery and that his letters conformed to epistolary norms at that time.²⁰ Furthermore, his letters reveal that he was widely regarded in the larger church outside of Alexandria and Egypt not only as a respected and skilled interpreter of the scriptures but also as an esteemed and judicious arbitrator, as he was called upon by various bishops from Antioch to Rome to help deal with ecclesiastical troubles stemming from the Decian persecution (c. AD 249–51) and the Novatian schism (c. AD 251).²¹

While Eusebius, our principal source for the life and writings of Dionysius, is silent regarding his conversion to Christianity, the much later *Chronicon Orientale* alleges that Dionysius's conversion came as a direct result of the reading of Paul's letters.²² This claim cannot be verified, and given the chronological distance of the *Chronicon Orientale* from Dionysius's day this claim could be regarded with some suspicion, but for the purposes of the present investigation it raises the question of the influence of Paul's writings on Dionysius. As a survey of the extant corpus of Dionysius reveals, Dionysius periodically invoked Paul and sometimes even conscripted distinct Pauline phrases and idioms. On this final point it is evident, based on Dionysius's extant epistolary remains, that unique features of Paul's epistolary greetings and valedictions are even paralleled in certain of Dionysius's letters. Thus, it is evident not only that Paul's letters influenced Dionysius at various levels but also that it is possible to derive some impressionistic conclusions regarding the reception and use of Paul by Dionysius even though his writings are only fragmentarily preserved.

Pauline References, Citations, and Quotations in the Writings of Dionysius²³

To begin, at the most obvious level the reception of Paul by Dionysius can be seen in a couple of references he makes to the apostle that are devoid of any explicit scriptural

¹⁹ On Dionysius's understanding of Epicureanism as demonstrated in the extant portion of *On Nature*, see Fleischer, *Dionysios von Alexandria, De Natura (περι φύσεως)*, 413–42.

²⁰ L. H. Blumell, "A Note on Dionysius of Alexandria's Letter to Novatian in Light of Third-Century Papyri," *ZAC* 14, no. 2 (2010): 356–61.

²¹ *Ep. ad Fabianum* (bishop of Antioch) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41–42, 44 [SC 41.145–52, 159–60]); *Ep. ad Cornelium* (bishop of Rome) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.46 [SC 41.162–63]); *Ep. ad Stephanum* (bishop of Rome) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.2 [SC 41.167]); *Ep. ad Sixtum* (bishop of Rome) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.5.3–6 [SC 41.169–70]); *Ep. ad Philemon* (presbyter at Rome) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.7 [SC 41.171–73]); *Ep. ad Dionysium* (bishop of Rome) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.7.6; 8.1 [SC 41.173]). Most recently on the Decian persecution, see L. H. Blumell and T. A. Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources (Second through Fourth Centuries)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2015), 373–80.

²² Petrus Ibn Rahib, *Chronicon Orientale*, CSCO, *Scriptores Arabici*, series tertia, 1, ed. L. Cheikho (Paris: Universite Catholique De Louvain, 1903), 116 where the Latin translation reads as follows: . . . *causa vero eius ad fidem conversionis fuit lectio epistolarum Pauli* (" . . . however, the reading of the letters of Paul was the cause of his conversion to the faith"). The *Chronicon Orientale* was composed in the thirteenth century by the Copt Buṭrus Ibn al-Rāhib, and while it is very late it does preserve much earlier sources that have otherwise no longer survived.

²³ In this and subsequent sections, the NT Greek text used for comparison of all Pauline citations, quotations, and allusions in Dionysius is drawn from the NA²⁸.

context. Both come from his work *On Promises* where in the portions of the treatise preserved by Eusebius, Dionysius discusses the authorship of the book of Revelation and the Gospel of John and argues that while they are both written by authors who bear the name John, in his view it is two different people who bear the same name.²⁴ This leads Dionysius to digress about contemporary onomastic practices in Egypt during his day where he makes the following observation and mentions the Apostle Paul:

I [Dionysius] hold that there have been many persons of the same name as John the apostle, for out of love for him, admiring and emulating him, and desirous of being loved by the Lord even as he was many assumed the same name; even as the children of the faithful are often called after Paul and also after Peter.²⁵

While the reference is only passing, it says something about the reception of the name Paul, a non-Egyptian name hardly attested in Egypt before the third century,²⁶ as well as something about the status and reception of this apostle by Christians in Egypt in Dionysius's day based on onomastic preferences.²⁷

The other reference to Paul in this treatise relates more specifically to the reception of the Pauline corpus by Dionysius even if it too does not explicitly quote a passage. While continuing his discussion of the authorship of the book of Revelation, Dionysius argues that in the Johannine epistles there is no mention of the Apocalypse whereas in Paul's letters he does refer to revelations he received but that were not actually recorded: ". . . whereas Paul in his epistles gave us a little light also on his revelations, which he did not record separately."²⁸ Dionysius's reason for invoking Paul and his "unrecorded revelations" was to cast further doubt that John the Apostle, whom Dionysius believed had authored both the gospel and the letters (i.e., 1–3 John), could have also authored Revelation since he never referred to the book of Revelation in any of his letters. But aside from what this passage tells us about what Dionysius thought about the Apostle John, from the reference one may plausibly infer that Dionysius was probably thinking of 2 Cor 12:1 and Paul's "revelation" (ἀποκάλυψις) of the "third heaven" (v. 2) that is never elucidated or perhaps either Gal 1:12 or 2:2 where Paul speaks about his "revelation" of Jesus Christ that is not further elaborated.²⁹

²⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.12-16 (SC 41.207-8).

²⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.14 (SC 41.207): πολλοὺς δὲ ὁμωνύμους Ἰωάννη τῷ ἀποστόλῳ νομίζω γεγονέναι, οἱ διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον ἀγάπην καὶ τῷ θαυμάζειν καὶ ζηλοῦν ἀγαπηθῆναι τε ὁμοίως αὐτῷ βούλεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, καὶ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τὴν αὐτὴν ἡσάσαντο, ὡσπερ καὶ ὁ Παῦλος πολὺς καὶ διη καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἐν τοῖς τῶν πιστῶν παισὶν ὀνομάζεται.

²⁶ On the reception of the name Paul in Roman Egypt, see L. H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 263–4.

²⁷ For a discussion of this passage and early Christian onomastics in Egypt, see Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 237–50. For the first attestations of a Christian in Egypt called Paul, see P.Bas. 16.1 (mid AD III CE): χαῖρε κύριέ μου σύνκριτε ἀδελφε Παῦλε ("Greetings my incomparable lord brother Paul"); PSI 9.1041.1-2 (mid III CE): χαῖρε ἐν κ(υρ)ίῳ ἀγαπητῆ ἀδελφε Παῦλε ("Greetings in the Lord beloved brother Paul").

²⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.23 (SC 41.209): Παύλου διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὑποφῆραντός τι καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων αὐτοῦ, ἃς οὐκ ἐνέγραψεν καθ' αὐτάς.

²⁹ 2 Cor 12:1: καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, οὐ συμφέρον μὲν, ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὄπτασις καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου; Gal 1:12: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεων

Beyond these generic references where Dionysius mentions Paul and his writings in passing,³⁰ Dionysius only cites Paul's letters a handful of times in his surviving writings.³¹ The first and most significant occurs in the extant extracts of his treatise *On Nature* preserved in Eusebius's *Praeparatio evangelica* 14.23-27.³² In this treatise Dionysius set out to refute the Epicurean teaching that matter and creation could have occurred accidentally without divine providence and argues instead that the order of creation denoted that there was a supreme creator. In these brief extracts Dionysius is emphatic that creation was not an accidental process; rather, everything is the fruit of deliberate design and so there was of necessity a creator. In order to corroborate his point, he presents several examples drawn from everyday life (e.g., a simple garment is not the result of chance, but of an intentional project; a house or city does not spontaneously arise), and he even asserts that the ways in which atoms combine are not random.³³ He then proceeds to assert that the way atoms combine to make the sun is different from how they combine to make the moon and that the differences imply purpose and thus intelligent design. At this point he invokes the Apostle Paul and cites 1 Cor 15:41: "For Paul has well distinguished when he says: 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for a star differs from a star in glory.'"³⁴

Dionysius's citation of 1 Cor 15:41 appears exactly as it is rendered in NA²⁸ and is prefaced by an explicit reference to the apostle and an interpretive note that Paul "well distinguished" (καλῶς . . . διέστειλεν)—or recognized the differences—in celestial bodies. According to this brief preface, as well as the discussion of atoms and celestial bodies that immediately preceded, Dionysius sees in 1 Cor 15:41 a scriptural

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; Gal 2:2: ἀνέβην δὲ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν· καὶ ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρῦσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν, μή πως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον.

³⁰ Near the beginning of the extract of *On Promises* preserved by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 7.24.1-25.27 [SC 41.201-10]), Dionysius makes mention of the "letters of the apostles" (τὰς τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐπιστολάς) that have authority in the church (7.24.5 [SC 41.202-3]); while Paul is not directly mentioned and no scriptures are cited, it is hard to imagine that Dionysius did not have Paul's letters in mind.

³¹ For the purposes of the present investigation, a citation will be distinguished from a quotation in that the former contains an explicit reference to the author or to their work when a passage is referenced whereas with the latter only the passage is referenced without any accompanying information like author or work. This distinction between scriptural citation and quotation is drawn from M. Choat, "Echo and Quotation of the New Testament in Papyrus Letters to the End of the Fourth Century," in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, ed. T. J. Kraus and N. Tobias (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 267-92.

³² From the preserved extracts it appears that this treatise took the form of a letter and was addressed to an individual named Timothy who is styled as the "son" of Dionysius. It is generally believed that this Timothy was not the actual son of Dionysius but was instead his pupil. For discussion, see Feltoe, *St. Dionysius of Alexandria*, 11; cf. Bienert, *Dionysius von Alexandrien*, 111.

³³ An underlying vein in this treatise is an engagement with the atomism of the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus and how it was employed in the materialism of the Epicureans who used it to argue that creation was the result of spontaneous atomic collisions, thus denying the necessity of a creator. On the atomism of Democritus, see D. W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy. The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics. Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 516-629.

³⁴ Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 14.25.7: καλῶς γὰρ ὁ Παῦλος διέστειλεν εἰπών· Ἄλλη δόξα ἡλίου καὶ ἄλλη δόξα σελήνης καὶ ἄλλη δόξα ἀστέρων· ἀστὴρ γὰρ ἀστέρους διαφέρει ἐν δόξῃ. (Greek text taken from Fleischer, *Dionysius von Alexandria, De Natura (περὶ φύσεως)*, 243).

confirmation of the differentiation in celestial bodies that implies that they are not accidental but rather consciously created for different purposes at even the atomic level.³⁵ While 1 Cor 15:41 is used by Paul for a different purpose—namely to explain that resurrected bodies are different than mortal bodies—looking at how the passage is used both within the larger context of 1 Corinthians 15 and *On Nature* reveals an interesting parallel. Both Paul and Dionysius use the verse in the larger context of addressing a rhetorical question from an opponent: “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12);³⁶ “How shall we bear with them when they say that the wise and, for that reason, the good productions of creation are the result of chance coincidences?” (*Praep. ev.* 14.24.1).³⁷ Therefore, even if the passage is being used to address two different issues (i.e., resurrection [Paul] and creation [Dionysius]), the rhetorical purposes behind its use are similar and in Dionysius’s case he felt that it advanced his point that difference in celestial bodies establishes creative consciousness and not accidental randomness.

A second citation from Paul appears in a letter Dionysius addressed to Fabian, bishop of Antioch (bp. c. 250–52/53),³⁸ in the wake of the persecution of Decius that was caused when the emperor issued an edict that all inhabitants of the empire were required to offer a sacrifice to the gods.³⁹ In this letter, fragmentarily preserved in Eusebius’s *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.41–42, 44, Dionysius dramatically outlined what happened in the church in Alexandria as well as other parts of Egypt when the edict arrived and began to be enforced.⁴⁰ Dionysius describes how Christians who chose to rebuff the dictates of the edict and failed to offer the prescribed sacrifices were interrogated, tortured, imprisoned,

³⁵ On this point, see also discussion in Fleischer, *Dionysios von Alexandria, De Natura (περι φύσεως)*, 325–6.

³⁶ 1 Cor 15:12: εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς κηρύσσεται ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγήγερται, πῶς λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες ὅτι ἀναστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν.

³⁷ πῶς αὐτῶν ἀνασχόμεθα τυχερὰ λεγόντων εἶναι συμπτώματα τὰ σοφὰ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καλὰ δημιουργήματα. (Greek text taken from Fleischer, *Dionysios von Alexandria, De Natura (περι φύσεως)*, 241).

³⁸ On the potential episcopal dates of Fabian as well as the pertinent sources for his tenure as bishop of Antioch, see G. Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis, II: Patriarchatus Alexandriae, Antiochae, Hierosolymitanae* (Padova: Messaggero, 1988), 682.

³⁹ For a concise overview of the edict of Decius (late 249/early AD 250) and the consequences it had for many Christians, see Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 373–80.

⁴⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.10–13,

The edict arrived, and it was almost like that which was predicted by our Lord, well-nigh the most terrible of all, so as, if possible, to cause to stumble even the elect. Howsoever that be, all covered with fear. And of many of the more eminent persons, some came forward immediately through fear, others in public positions were compelled to do so by their business, and others were dragged by those around them. Called by name they approached the impure and holy sacrifices, some pale and trembling, as if they were not for sacrificing but rather to be themselves the sacrifices and victims to the idols, so that the large crowd that stood around heaped mockery upon them, and it was evident that they were by nature cowards in everything, cowards both to die and to sacrifice. But others ran eagerly towards the altars, affirming by their forwardness that they had not been Christians even formerly; concerning whom the Lord very truly predicted that they shall hardly be saved. Of the rest, some followed one or other of these, others fled; some were captured, and of these some went as far as bonds and imprisonment, and certain, when they had been shut up for many days, then forswore themselves even before coming into court, while others, who remained firm for a certain time under tortures, subsequently gave in. (Translation taken from J. E. L. Oulton, *Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History Books 6–10*, LCL 265 [Cambridge, Repr. 1994], 103–5)

deprived of personal possessions and property, and in some cases were exiled or even executed.⁴¹ Within this general context Dionysius includes a single citation of Paul. While detailing the many hardships faithful Christians endured at that time he compares their hardships to the hardships described in Heb 10:34, which he explicitly ascribes to Paul: “But the brethren gave way and gradually submitted, and, like those of whom Paul testified, ‘they accepted joyfully the spoiling of their possessions.’”⁴²

For the present purposes it is irrelevant whether or not Paul authored Hebrews as Dionysius believed he was its author.⁴³ The citation of Heb 10:34 is basically verbatim with how it appears in NA²⁸ with the only difference being that Dionysius changes the second-person plural προσεδέξασθε (“you accepted”) to the third-person plural προσεδέξαντο (“they accepted”) to have the passage better fit the context of his discussion.⁴⁴ The primary force of the citation is to forge a direct link between Christians in Dionysius’s day and those of the New Testament period: both endured hardships and depravities and “accepted joyfully the spoiling of their possessions” because of their faith. Thus, the passage makes the trials faced in the New Testament period especially relevant for the Christians of Dionysius’s day as the latter were faithfully emulating their spiritual forbearers.

A third citation, that is coupled with a quotation, appears in a letter Dionysius addressed to a certain bishop named Germanus who had apparently attempted to defame him because of his activities during the persecutions of Decius and Valerian.⁴⁵ In the extant extracts of this letter Dionysius defended his actions and provided various details surrounding his subsequent capture, arraignment before the prefect, and exile to Cephro in Libya. Dionysius then reports that at the arraignment, the prefect expressly forbade him from holding any church assemblies while he was in exile, but that despite this injunction, he nevertheless held assemblies and did not shrink from his episcopal duties. In this context, he cites 1 Cor 5:3, accompanying it with “he [i.e. Paul] said,” and then follows this citation with a quotation from Col 4:3:

But we did not abstain from even the visible assembling of ourselves with the Lord, but those who were in the city [Alexandria] I more earnestly urged to assemble as if I were with them, “being absent in body,” as he said, “but present in spirit.” And at Cephro a large church also sojourned with us, some brethren following from the city, others joining from Egypt: “And there God opened unto us a door for the word.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Martyred: Fabian in Rome (Jan. 20 or 21, AD 250); Babylas in Antioch (Jan. 24, AD 250); Nestor in Pamphylia (Feb. 28, AD 250); and Pionius in Smyrna (Mar. 12, AD 250). Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.39.2-4 (SC 41.141-42); Origen languished in prison for months (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.39.5 [SC 41.142]).

⁴² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.6 (SC 41.146): ἐξέκλινον δὲ καὶ ὑπανεχώρουν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ τὴν ἀρπαγὴν τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ὁμοίως ἐκείνοις οἷς καὶ Παῦλος ἐμαρτύρησεν, μετὰ χαρᾶς προσεδέξαντο.

⁴³ Other Alexandrians like Clement and Origen also attributed Hebrews to Paul. Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.1-3 (SC 41.106-7), 6.25.11-14 (SC 41.127-28).

⁴⁴ This change, therefore, should not be taken to reflect some textual variant.

⁴⁵ Extracts of this letter are preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.40 and 7.11 (SC 41.143-45, 179-86). Germanus is otherwise unknown but it appears that he was a suffragan bishop.

⁴⁶ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.11.12 (SC 41.182): ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῆς αἰσθητῆς ἡμεῖς μετὰ τοῦ κυρίου συναγωγῆς ἀπέστημεν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν ἐν τῇ πόλει σπουδαιότερον συνεκρότουσιν ὡς συνῶν, ἀπὼν μὲν τῷ

The citation from 1 Cor 5:3 is near verbatim with how it appears in NA,²⁸ the only difference is that Dionysius moves the μέν so that it directly follows ἀπών (“being absent”) instead of preceding it.⁴⁷ This is apparently done because he does not cite the first part of the verse that has ἐγώ γάρ (“For I”) since the expression is taken over and is applied to himself and not Paul.

In both usages of this expression the context is the same: Dionysius and Paul inform disciples with whom they are separated that although they are not physically present they are still spiritually present and therefore possess authority. Proceeding to the quotation of Col 4:3,⁴⁸ it does not qualify as a citation since unlike 1 Cor 5:3 that is accompanied by an explicit reference (“as he [i.e. Paul] said”) in the present case Dionysius makes no attribution. While the quotation is not verbatim, it is nonetheless secure as there is considerable verbal overlap between the two: “God” (θεός); “open” (ἀνοίγω); “to us” (ἡμῖν); “door for the word” (θύραν τοῦ λόγου). In Dionysius’s letter, the expression is taken over and employed in the direct context of his exile since it provided an opportunity (i.e., “door”) for the “word” to be preached more widely in the vicinity of Cephro. The passage is used in Colossians in a similar way; in the same verse Paul informs the Colossians saints that he is “in prison” and asks them to pray so that he may nonetheless have an opportunity to share the “word.” Moving beyond the circumstantial parallels here between Dionysius and Paul and the former’s contextual employment of the latter’s writings, it could be inferred that Dionysius used these two Pauline passages since it lent legitimacy to his own situation and actions. As noted previously, in the extracts from the letter to Germanus in which these two passages are found, it appears likely that Dionysius was attempting to defend himself against defamation by Germanus. Therefore, the conscription of passages from the writings of Paul that are directly related to his own circumstances appears to give an apostolic sanction of his actions: he acted appropriately, like the apostle Paul, and is therefore beyond reproach.

A potential fourth and final citation from the writings of Paul appears in an extract of Dionysius’s letter to a certain Domitius and Didymus.⁴⁹ In this letter, as in the letter to Fabian previously discussed, Dionysius details the difficult circumstances caused by the edict of Decius. After narrating how some faithful Christians had received their eternal crowns through martyrdom, Dionysius turns to provide a brief description of his own sufferings that had been prolonged. In the course of this discussion, he appears to cite 2 Cor 6:2: “Wherefore I have been put off until a time that he himself knows to be the right one, by him who saith: ‘In an acceptable time I heard you and in a day of

σώματι, ὡς εἶπεν, παρῶν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι, ἐν δὲ τῇ Κεφροῖ καὶ πολλῇ συνεπεδήμησεν ἡμῖν ἐκκλησία, τῶν μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως ἀδελφῶν ἐπομένων, τῶν δὲ συνιόντων ἀπ’ Αἰγύπτου. κακεῖ θύραν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέφξεν τοῦ λόγου.

⁴⁷ 1 Cor 5:3: ἐγώ μὲν γάρ, ἀπῶν τῷ σώματι παρῶν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι, ἥδη κέκρικα ὡς παρῶν τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον.

⁴⁸ Col 4:3: προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγου λαλῆσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι’ ὃ καὶ δέδεμαι.

⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.11.20-25 (SC 41.184-85). The Domitius and Didymus who are addressed in this letter are otherwise unknown and cannot be identified with any other known Christians, bishops, or individuals.

salvation I helped you.”⁵⁰ The citation from 2 Cor 6:2 is identical to NA^{28,51} however, 2 Cor 6:2 is a quotation of LXX Isa 49:8.⁵² The question, therefore, that remains is whether Dionysius was drawing this citation from Isaiah or Paul, or was perhaps even aware that it appeared in both. As LXX Isa 49:8 and 2 Cor 6:2 are identical in the section cited by Dionysius, it is not easy to determine what reference he actually had in mind. In the context of Isaiah 49, it is the Lord who speaks this to Israel to remind them that they have a covenant relationship and have been aided in the past and will therefore be helped in the future;⁵³ in 2 Cor 6:2, the passage is used primarily to emphasize the urgency to be reconciled to God through Christ as the “day of salvation” is near.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Dionysius seemingly uses the passage to highlight that while his hardships have been prolonged, in contrast to those who have already received the crown of martyrdom, he has been helped by the Lord and is awaiting his own “day of salvation.” Thus, his main point in citing the passage is not to emphasize urgency, as with Paul, but rather patient endurance that the Lord will continue to help until his “day of salvation” arrives.

Moving beyond these four citations,⁵⁵ there is one other quotation from Paul’s writings that appears in the extant fragments of Dionysius.⁵⁶ Returning to the extracts of his letter to Fabian previously referenced (*Hist. eccl.* 6.41-42, 44 [SC 41.145-52, 159-60]), as Dionysius continues describing the extreme hardships many Christians endured under the edict of Decius he employs a verbatim phrase drawn from Heb 11:38. While the quotation is subtly woven into Dionysius’s description of some of the depravities his contemporaries were experiencing, it is nonetheless obvious: “What need is there to speak of the multitude of those ‘who wandered in deserts and mountains,’ and perished by hunger and thirst and frost and diseases and robbers and wild beasts?”⁵⁷ The quotation is not verbatim as the word ordering is slightly altered and the verb for “wandering” (πλανάω) is a genitive participle instead of a

⁵⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.11.21 (SC 41.184): ὡσπερ οὖν ἔοικεν μηδὲ ἔμοι μέχρι νῦν, διόπερ εἰς ὃν οἶδεν αὐτὸς ἐπιτήδειον καιρὸν ὑπερέθετό με ὁ λέγων καιρῶ δεκτῶ ἐπήκουσά σου, καὶ ἐν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι.

⁵¹ 2 Cor 6:2: λέγει γάρ· καιρῶ δεκτῶ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι· ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας.

⁵² Isa 49:8: οὕτως λέγει κύριος καιρῶ δεκτῶ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι καὶ ἔδωκά σε εἰς διαθήκην ἔθνων τοῦ καταστῆσαι τὴν γῆν καὶ κληρονομησά κληρονομίαν ἐρήμου.

⁵³ This is made clear in the latter part of Isa 49:8 and the verses 9-12 that follow.

⁵⁴ For a thorough discussion of Isa 49:8 in 2 Cor 6:2, see R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians. World Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1986), 167-70.

⁵⁵ There are four other scriptural citations of Paul in works attributed to Dionysius, but in all cases Dionysian attribution is less than certain or is even dubious: a Syriac fragment which Feltoe (*St. Dionysius of Alexandria*, 53) believed could have come from a section of Dionysius’s letter to Stephen, bishop of Rome, that was not quoted by Eusebius (cf. *Hist. eccl.* 7.4.1-5.2 [SC 41.168-69]) cites either 1 Cor 16:22 or Gal 1:8-9; there are three citations in an exegetical text titled εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαίου that could come from Dionysius (see Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λείψανα*, 208-10): 1 Cor 3:19 (Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λείψανα*, 212 lines 10-12); 1 Cor 8:1 (Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λείψανα*, 213 line 1); and Titus 3:19 (Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λείψανα*, 226 lines 3-5).

⁵⁶ For previous quotation of Col 4:3, see discussion above. For the differences between a citation and quotation for the purposes of this investigation, see Choat, “Echo and Quotation of the New Testament,” 267-92 (cited above).

⁵⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.42.2 (SC 41.151): τί δεῖ λέγειν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐν ἐρημίαις καὶ ὄρεσιν πλανηθέντων, ὑπὸ λιμοῦ καὶ διψῆς καὶ κρούσεως καὶ νόσων καὶ ληστῶν καὶ θηρίων διεφθαρμένων.

nominative participle found in the scriptural passage, but this change is necessitated to seamlessly work the quote into the larger description being presented by Dionysius.⁵⁸ The only lexical element of the quote that differs from how it appears in NA²⁸ is that the preposition ἐν is used in place of ἐπί; however, it should be noted here that ἐν is attested in some mss. and is also used by two other roughly contemporaneous Alexandrians who also cite this passage, Origen and Clement.⁵⁹ Therefore, this prepositional change could perhaps reflect a textual variant known to Dionysius and that is borne out here. Finally, as with the citation of Heb 10:34 earlier in the letter,⁶⁰ a primary purpose of the present quotation is to provide a scriptural parallel for contemporary circumstance: just as prophets of old and saints endured severe hardships and “wandered in deserts and mountains,”⁶¹ so too do contemporary disciples face the same hardships.

Pauline Allusions and Echoes in the Writings of Dionysius

For the present purposes of this discussion, an allusion or an echo can be understood as an instance where a distinct word or phrase is employed by Dionysius that has a Pauline precedent that is being consciously invoked.⁶² However, in this endeavor, the inherent challenge is attempting to differentiate genuine allusions and echoes from just parallel vocabulary. For example, does the use of a “distinct” word or two that appears in Dionysius and also appears in a Pauline letter constitute an actual allusion? In Charles L. Feltoe’s survey of the extant fragments of Dionysius, he cites dozens of Pauline allusions in his index of scriptural references, but many of these are by no means certain.⁶³ For example, does Dionysius’s use of the term υιοθεσία (“adoption as a son/sonship”),⁶⁴ a Pauline term that only appears in the New Testament at Rom 8:15, 23, 9:4; Gal 4:5; and Eph 1:5, constitute an allusion? While in many cases the use of this term by later Christian writers can be shown to have been directly influenced by Paul,⁶⁵ it also appears outside of strictly Christian usage and is attested in various documents from Egypt at about the same time as Dionysius was writing.⁶⁶ Likewise, does Dionysius’s reference to the martyrs as the “pillars” (στῦλοι)⁶⁷ of the church in his own day constitute a deliberate echo of Gal 2:9 where Paul uses the term to refer to

⁵⁸ Heb 11:38: . . . ἐπὶ ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν . . .

⁵⁹ Mss. that read ἐν instead of ἐπί include D K L Ψ 81 104 630 1505 Ƶ. Clement, *Strom.* 4.16.102.1; Origen, *Cels.* 7.14, 7.18.

⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.6 (SC 41.146).

⁶¹ From the verses that precede Heb 11:38, it is clear that biblical prophets and saints are intended.

⁶² For a more in-depth discussion of the methodology of identifying scriptural allusions and echoes in early Christian literature, see Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 220–5.

⁶³ Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λείψανα*, 264–6.

⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.21 (SC 41.208-9).

⁶⁵ Clement of Alexandria and Origen use this term on a number of occasions.

⁶⁶ The term is used in various papyri (e.g., registers and adoptions) from the Roman Period: P.Oslo 3.114.4 (first century–early second century); P.Worp. 22.4 (second century); P.Oxy. 50.3593.6 (c. 238–44).

⁶⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.14 (SC 41.148).

church leadership at the Jerusalem Conference as “pillars” (στῦλοι)?⁶⁸ While context is surely important in such classifications, given that there is only a single word of overlap such allusions are difficult to prove. Furthermore, while Paul could be the ultimate source of such a reference, it is also possible that such terminology had become somewhat common in ecclesiastical usage by the time of Dionysius so that its appearance does not necessarily point to a Pauline passage as the only source for its appearance.

Notwithstanding these inherent challenges, there are a few rather secure allusions to the Pauline corpus that appear in the fragments of Dionysius. In the letter to Germanus previously mentioned, wherein Dionysius defended his actions during the persecutions of Decius and Valerian, when he begins to give his side of the story he starts by emphatically declaring that he is telling the truth in the letter by asserting: “Now I for my part speak also before God, and he himself knows if I lie.”⁶⁹ A similar expression, used in a similar adversarial context, appears in Gal 1:20 where after recounting certain revelations and events, Paul writes: “In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie.”⁷⁰ In both instances, the prepositional phrase “before God” (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ) and the verb “I lie” (ψεύδομαι) appear, and the parallels are such that it is hard to imagine that the language of Gal 1:20 was not in some way informing Dionysius’s sentiments at the beginning of this letter. In a fragment from a letter to two presbyters, Dionysius and Philemon, while detailing how the Sabellian heresy had spread into the Pentapolis, Dionysius refers to Jesus with the title “firstborn of all creation.”⁷¹ The first time this designation occurs is in Col 1:15,⁷² and while it will be picked up by later writers like Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Origen, it is hard not to imagine that this is a genuine Pauline allusion. Finally, in the extracts of a letter to a certain Hermammon, while discussing the usurper Macrianus and his ill-fated attempt at the throne,⁷³ Dionysius briefly discusses the providence of God and notes that Macrianus was unaware of the one (i.e., God) who was “before all and through all and over all.”⁷⁴ Though not exact, the language employed here by Dionysius is clearly reminiscent of the second half of Eph 4:6: “[one God and Father of all], who is over all and through all and in all.”⁷⁵

Three more subtle, and perhaps less secure, Pauline echoes may appear in short succession in the opening extract of Dionysius’s *On Promises*. While discussing Nepos, the author of a treatise on the Millennium with whom Dionysius vigorously disagrees yet acknowledges his merits as a good Christian, Dionysius states the following:

⁶⁸ A little later in this same letter at *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.23 (SC 41.151), J. E. L. Oulton, the translator of Loeb translation of Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* (LCL 265), posits an allusion to 2 Cor 2:14 simply because of the use of the verb θριαμβεύω (“to triumph”).

⁶⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.40.1 (SC 41.143): ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ λαλῶ, καὶ αὐτὸς οἶδεν εἰ ψεύδομαι.

⁷⁰ Gal 1:20: ἃ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι.

⁷¹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.6.1 (SC 41.170): . . . τοῦ πρωτοτόκου πάσης κτίσεως.

⁷² Col 1:15: ὃς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.

⁷³ See *PLRE* 1.528.

⁷⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.10.6 (SC 41.178): πρὸ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐπὶ πάντων.

⁷⁵ Eph 4:6: εἰς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πάντων.

And if he [Nepos] were still with us and propounding his views merely by word of mouth, a discussion without writing would have sufficed to persuade and convince those who are in opposition by way of question and answer. But now that this writing of his is published, which many think most convincing, . . . they parade the teaching of this book as if it were some great and hidden mystery and will not allow our simpler brethren to hold any high and noble opinion either about the glorious and truly divine appearing of our Lord or about our rising from the dead and our gathering together and being made like unto him.⁷⁶

The first potential echo is in the phrase “those who are in opposition” (τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους) as Paul previously instructed Timothy in 2 Tim 2:25 to correct with gentleness “those who are in opposition.”⁷⁷ While the phrase parallels exactly what is found in v. 25, as the overlap consists of a single word and preposition it is not entirely certain.⁷⁸ Proceeding down a few lines to where Dionysius comments on “the glorious and truly divine appearing of our Lord,” a similar phrase occurs in Titus 2:13 where Titus is admonished by Paul to wait for “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”⁷⁹ The use of “appearing” (ἐπιφάνεια) accompanied by “glorious” (ἐνδοξος) or “glory” (δόξα) in relation to Jesus in both texts could suggest that Dionysius had the language of Titus 2:13 in mind. Lastly, Dionysius’s use of “gathering together . . . unto him” in reference to the Second Coming of Christ potentially echoes Paul’s statement in 2 Thess 2:1 that is also given in reference to the Second Coming: “our gathering together unto him” (καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν).

Two additional echoes may appear in the same treatise but near the end. In this section, Dionysius provides some reasons for why he believes the author of Revelation was different from the author of the Gospel of John. In his opinion, the latter was written with faultless Greek whereas the former contained various barbarisms and solecisms. However, lest he come across as overly critical of the author of the book of Revelation, he begins by conceding that the author possessed “by the free gift of the Lord, the word of knowledge and the word of speech.”⁸⁰ Though the language is not exact, it is certainly reminiscent 1 Cor 12:28 where the gifts of the Spirit (v. 4) include the “word of wisdom” and the “word of knowledge.”⁸¹ If such is the case, Dionysius

⁷⁶ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.24.5 (SC 41.202–3): καὶ πρὸς μὲν παρόντα καὶ ψιλῶ λόγῳ δογματίζοντα αὐτάρκης ἦν ἂν ἡ ἀγραφὸς ὁμιλία, δι’ ἐρωτήσεως καὶ ἀποκρίσεως πείθουσα καὶ συμβιβάζουσα τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους· γραφῆς δὲ ἐκκειμένης, ὡς δοκεῖ τισιν, . . . τὴν δὲ τοῦ συγγράμματος τούτου διδασκαλίαν ὡς μέγα δὴ τι καὶ κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον κατεπαγγελιομένων καὶ τοὺς ἀπλουστέρους ἀδελφοὺς ἡμῶν οὐδὲν ἐώντων ὑψηλὸν καὶ μεγαλείον φρονεῖν οὔτε περὶ τῆς ἐνδόξου καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐνθέου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἐπιφανείας οὔτε τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως καὶ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπισυναγωγῆς καὶ ὁμοιώσεως.

⁷⁷ 2 Tim 2:25: ἐν πραῢτητι παιδεύοντα τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους . . .

⁷⁸ In Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.7.4 (SC 41.172), within an extract from a letter Dionysius sent to a presbyter in Rome concerning baptism he similarly refers to “those who are in opposition,” although the construction is a little different from how it appears here: . . . παρὰ τοῖς ἀντιδιατιθεμένοις . . .

⁷⁹ Titus 2:13: προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁸⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.25 (SC 41.209–10): χαρισαμένου τοῦ κυρίου, τὸν τε τῆς γνώσεως τὸν τε τῆς φράσεως.

⁸¹ 1 Cor 12:28: ᾧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδεται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλῳ δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα.

apparently substituted, consciously or not, “word of wisdom” (λόγος σοφίας) with “word of speech” (λόγος φράσεως).⁸² He then proceeds to say about the author of Revelation: “I will not deny that the other writer [i.e. author of Revelation] had seen revelations and received knowledge and prophecy.”⁸³ In 1 Cor 14:6, Paul informs the Corinthian saints that unless he speaks to them “with a revelation or with knowledge or prophecy or teaching” he cannot help them.⁸⁴ The overlap of “revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις), “knowledge” (γνώσις), and “prophecy” (προφητεία) may be enough to suggest that Dionysius had this passage in mind here.

There is only one other example in the undisputed writings ascribed to Dionysius that consists of more than a single word and that could be reckoned an allusion to Paul. Returning to his letter to Germanus, while relaying one particular personal detail that may have struck his readers as farfetched, if not unbelievable, he prefaces his remarks with the phrase “God knows” (οἶδεν ὁ θεός) to lend credibility to his account.⁸⁵ On three separate occasions at 2 Cor 11:11 and 2 Cor 12:2-3, Paul similarly employs the phrase “God knows” (ὁ θεός οἶδεν) to add credibility to his statements.⁸⁶ While there exists both a verbal and contextual parallel between Dionysius and Paul when it comes to this phrase, and Dionysius may well be echoing Paul with its use, it is important to keep in mind that this phrase is not purely Pauline as Philo of Alexandria also employed it, and there is even evidence that it was even used in non-Jewish and non-Christian contexts in Egypt.⁸⁷ Furthermore, a survey of third-century Christian letters from Egypt preserved on papyri reveals that this phrase was becoming more widely used.⁸⁸ Thus, while its usage in the third-century letters from Egypt, including Dionysius’s letter here, could be directly linked to Paul’s usage, it is also possible that this phrase had a wider currency in the language patterns of the day that was not directly linked to Paul.⁸⁹ Thus, it remains an open question whether this phrase in Dionysius constitutes a conscious Pauline echo.

⁸² There are no attested variants in 1 Cor 12:8 where σοφία is replaced with φράσις.

⁸³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.26 (SC 41.210): τούτω δὲ ἀποκαλύψεις μὲν ἑωρακέναι καὶ γνῶσιν εἰληφέναι καὶ προφητείαν οὐκ ἄντερῶ.

⁸⁴ 1 Cor 14:6: νῦν δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν ἔλθω πρὸς ὑμᾶς γλώσσαις λαλῶν, τί ὑμᾶς ὠφελήσω ἐὰν μὴ ὑμῖν λαλήσω ἢ ἐν ἀποκαλύψει ἢ ἐν γνώσει ἢ ἐν προφητεῖα ἢ [ἐν] διδασχῇ.

⁸⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.40.7 (SC 41.144).

⁸⁶ Cf. also 2 Cor 11:31, where the sentiment of “God knows” is present but is separated by intervening text: ὁ θεός καὶ πατήρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ οἶδεν. This phrase seems to carry the force of “God knows!” without necessarily making any real religious assertion.

⁸⁷ Philo, *Legat.* 3.69; *Decal.* 1.18. In SB 14.11644.10-11 (first or second century) this phrase appears and the letter contains a *proskynesis* to Aphrodite. It even had a polytheistic antecedent with “the gods know” (οἱ θεοὶ οἶδασιν); see P.Cair.Goodsp. 3.7 (third BC).

⁸⁸ For a list of the relevant papyri containing this phrase, see Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 62-3.

⁸⁹ A. M. Nobbs, “Formulas of Belief in Greek Papyrus Letters of the Third and Fourth Centuries,” in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, Vol. II, ed. T. W. Hillard, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 235-6, notes the following with respect to the phrase “God knows”:

As is frequently the case, we have here a phrase which, though not as common in the everyday thought patterns recorded by the papyrus letters prior to the advent of Christianity, was used by both pagans and Christians until, partly under the influence perhaps of Biblical examples, it becomes common in the Christian papyri of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries.

Paul as an Epistolary Template for Dionysius

A final place worth surveying to consider the reception of Paul in the writings of Dionysius is the format of his extant letters. While only two of Dionysius's letters are preserved in full,⁹⁰ in both of these letters, the opening and closing sections share parallels with various features found at the beginning and end of Paul's letters. While some of these features become common in early Christian epistolary practice, and it is open to question to what extent their employment by later authors directly relates back to Paul, at the very least these features show Pauline influence on early Christian letter writing even if their influence is somewhat indirect.

	Dionysius to Novatian	Dionysius to Basilides
Opening Address	Διονύσιος Νοουατιανῶ ἀδελφῶ χαίρειν. ("Dionysius to Novatian, a brother, greetings.")	Διονύσιος Βασιλειδῆ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ μου νιῶ καὶ ἀδελφῶ καὶ συλλειτουργῶ καὶ θεοπρεπεῖ, ἐν κυρίῳ χαίρειν. ("Dionysius to Basilides my beloved son, and brother, and fellow minister, and one worthy of God, greetings in the Lord.")
Closing Valediction	ἐρρῶσθαι σε ἐχόμενον τῆς εἰρήνης ἐν κυρίῳ εὐχομαι. ("I pray that you farewell, cleaving to peace in the Lord.")	ἐρρῶσθαι σε, ἀγαπητὲ νιέ μου, ἐν εἰρήνῃ λειτουργοῦντα τῷ κυρίῳ εὐχομαι. ("I pray that you farewell, my beloved son, serving the Lord in peace.")

For starters, it is well established that the use of the salutary or valedictory phrase "in the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ), which is attested in both letters, first appears in the letters of Paul.⁹¹ While this epistolary phrase becomes more widespread by the third century, as a survey of other Christian letters from third-century Egypt reveals,⁹² its use points to Paul. Next, in Dionysius's address to Basilides, he greets him as a "beloved brother" (ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφός),⁹³ which can also be traced back to the letters of Paul.⁹⁴ While

⁹⁰ Letter to Novatian of Rome found in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.45.1 (SC 41.161-62) and a letter to Basilides, bishop of the Pentapolis, preserved as part of the canonical letters from the third Council of Trullo (680), see Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λείψανα*, 91–105. According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.26.3 (SC 41.211), and Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 69.6 (PL 23.718A), Dionysius wrote many letters to Basilides.

⁹¹ The earliest epistolary use of these phrases can be traced back to the Pauline letters. In the opening lines of address in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul begins each letter by employing this phrase: 1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:1; cf. 1 Thess 4:1; Rom 14:14; 16:2, 8; 11, 12, 13, 22; 1 Cor 1:31; 4:17; 6:17; 7:22; 7:39; 9:1-2; 11:11. 15:58; 16:19; 2 Cor 2:12; 10:17; Gal 5:12; Phil 1:14; 2:19; 3:1; 4:2, 4, 10; Col 3:18, 20; 4:7, 17; Phlm 16, 20. On this distinctly Pauline epistolary formula, see M. Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 101–4. He notes on p. 103: "It is with Paul, nevertheless, that these formulae enter the epistolographic tradition."

⁹² Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 55–7.

⁹³ Presumably Dionysius does not use the address "beloved brother" in his letter to Novatian since he was at the time of the letter embroiled in a schism in the church in Rome.

⁹⁴ Rom 16:8, 11, 12, 13, 22; 1 Cor 15:58; 16:19; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7, 9; Phil 3:1, 4:4, 10; Phlm 16. A. Nobbs, "Beloved Brothers' in the New Testament and Early Christianity," in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting: Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B.W. Winter on His 65th Birthday*, ed. P. J. Williams, A. D. Clarke, P. M. Head, and D. Instone-Brewer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 144; L. Dineen, *Titles of Address in Christian Greek Epistolography to A.D. 527* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1929), 17–20. It may be noted that

this familial address will gain widespread currency in early Christian letter writing so that it even becomes somewhat of a convention, even if indirect, it still points back to Paul. Finally, the notion of communicating “peace” (εἰρήνη), especially in the context of the “Lord” (κύριος), is another Pauline epistolary salutation.⁹⁵ Therefore, the two extant openings and closings of Dionysius’s letters are permeated with Paulinisms. Whether Dionysius was consciously crafting this material in deliberate imitation of Paul or was simply following contemporary Christian epistolary practice that had conscripted many elements of Pauline letter writing cannot be known for certain, but at the very least it shows the indirect influence of Paul’s letters on the structure and form of Dionysius’s letters.

Conclusion

It is difficult to say much with certainty about Paul’s influence on Dionysius of Alexandria given that only a small part of his corpus is preserved. Therefore, while any conclusions must remain provisional and tentative, there are enough traces of Paul in Dionysius’s extant writings to provide some impressionistic judgments regarding his use. Eusebius, our primary repository for the works of Dionysius, preserves a number of extracts from Dionysius that elucidate the edict of Decius and the deleterious effects on the Christian communities of Alexandria and larger Egypt. In these fragments, which are all comprised of extracts from letters Dionysius wrote, the handful of Pauline citations, quotations, and genuine allusions that appear first and foremost suggest that Dionysius employs Paul to connect the present circumstances to trials faced by disciples of the New Testament period. He therefore selects Pauline passages that discuss hardships but also those that show the faithfulness of true disciples in such circumstances. The passages therefore show that contemporary disciples were just like their spiritual forebearers as they endured the same kinds of trials.⁹⁶ Additionally, from his letters it also seems that Dionysius at times consciously conscripted Pauline language to lend legitimacy to his personal narrative. It seems evident that both overtly and more subtly Dionysius weaves Pauline reference into his letters that have direct personal application and given the clustering of this usage in his letter to Germanus, which was written to defend his actions, it is apparent that there is an apologetic purpose in their employment.

Stepping back and looking cumulatively at the Pauline references, a couple of general observations emerge. First, it appears that Paul, both the person and his writings, carried much influence among Dionysius and his contemporaries; not only

while the phrase ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφός is first attested in Tob 10:13, it is in the letters of Paul that it first appears as an epistolary address.

⁹⁵ Cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Phlm 1:3.

⁹⁶ Here it may be added that this is in keeping with how other New Testament (non-Pauline) passages are invoked in the same letters. For example, in the extract of the letter to Fabian (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.10 [SC 41.147]), Dionysius quotes Matt 24:24 to tie it in to the present circumstances caused by the edict.

do we learn from Dionysius about the emerging popularity of the name Paul among Christians in Egypt, which surely tells us something about the reception of Paul at a more popular level, but his writings are often used in such a way by Dionysius that they carry an inherent authority. For example, the citation of 1 Cor 15:41 in *On Nature* is the culmination of Dionysius's argument about celestial bodies and creation and requires no additional reinforcement. Second, another observation that appears to emerge from a cumulative assessment of all the Pauline references is that Dionysius made no distinction between "genuine," "contested," and "spurious" letters of Paul; in fact, he seemingly invokes Colossians and the Pastorals just as he does 1 Corinthians.⁹⁷

While the extant references to Paul and his corpus provide glimpses of how Dionysius was influenced by and used the apostle, we nevertheless need to keep in mind the provisional nature of the aforementioned observations given the caveats previously mentioned.⁹⁸ Furthermore, since these references do not generally consist of more than a citation here or a quotation or allusion there, it is not possible to discern his engagement with Paul at a more sustained level. Consequently, other questions remain. Based on his in-depth discussion of the book of Revelation in the extracts of *On Promises*, we can see in a more profound way how Dionysius read and interpreted that text and what assumptions informed his hermeneutic—namely allegory.⁹⁹ For Paul, however, we do not possess the same level of information and sustained engagement in the extant fragments. Nevertheless, we may wonder if Dionysius's largely allegorical handling of the Apocalypse was just a special case or whether Paul's writings were ever treated in a similar way.¹⁰⁰ Or, for that matter, whether Paul's writings could have possibly informed Dionysius's allegorical approach.

⁹⁷ Here it may be added that he expressly believed that Hebrews was authored by Paul.

⁹⁸ See also Feltoe, *Διονυσίου Λειψάνα*, xxvii–xxviii, where Feltoe notes that the available extracts of Dionysius's corpus make it somewhat difficult to define his scriptural approach and methods.

⁹⁹ This should not be that surprising given that he was once a student of Origen and given the general trend toward allegorical interpretation in a number of early Alexandrian readers of the scriptures. For a useful overview of allegorical scriptural interpretation in Alexandria, see D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁰ Here it is worth pointing out that Procopius of Gaza (*Comm. in Gen.* 3.21 [PG 87.222B]) notes that in Dionysius's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (lost) he attacked Origen's allegorical reading of Gen 3:21 and the "coat of skins" to buttress his (i.e., Origen's) doctrine of the preexistence of the soul. For a discussion of Dionysius's anti-allegorical, or at the very least anti-Origenian, reading of Gen 3:21, see T. Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 112–13.