



Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 7, 1-2 Corinthians

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Paul's letters to the Corinthian church have left a mark on Christian Scripture in a way that could never have been predicted. Here the pastoral issues of a first-century Christian community in what Chrysostom identified as "still the first city in Greece" stand out in bold relief. How was a community shaped by the cross to find its expression in a city that Chrysostom knew to be "full of orators and philosophers" and that "prided itself . . . above all on its great wealth"? How was church unity to be maintained in a setting where prominent believers, bending truth and morality to their own advantage, divided the body of Christ? Here lay the challenge for the apostle Paul. And as the apostle writes, the fathers lean over his shoulder, marveling and commenting on his pastoral wisdom. Best known among these patristic commentators is Chrysostom, whose seventy-seven homilies on the two Corinthian epistles are a treasury of exposition and application. The fragmentary works of Didymus the Blind and Severian of Gabala give us samples of Greek exegesis from the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools. The partial work of Theodore of Mopsuestia, a commentator of great skill and insight, was long valued in the church. And the comments of Theodoret of Cyrus are notable for their sensitivity to the intertextuality of Scripture. Then there are Origen and Pelagius, whose names resonate with notable error, to the needless obscuring of their brilliant insights into Scripture. But pride of place goes to the unknown fourth-century commentator long mistaken for Ambrose and now dubbed "Ambrosiaster." His excellent commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians has been unavailable in English translation, and for that reason it is excerpted more generously in this volume. This Ancient Christian Commentary on 1-2 Corinthians opens a whole new way of reading these New Testament texts. The pastoral and theological interpretation of the fathers offers spiritual and intellectual sustenance to those who would read Paul again with open minds and hearts. Here we find the Pauline wisdom of the cross generating an effective heritage of Christian interpretation.

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