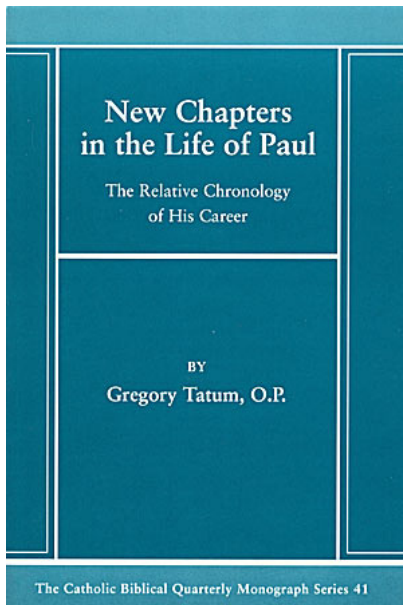


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Tatum, Gregory

New Chapters in the Life of Paul: The Relative Chronology of His Career

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Eve-Marie Becker

Faculty of Theology University of Aarhus
Aarhus, Denmark

This monograph, written by Gregory Tatum, Assistant Professor of New Testament, Dominican School of Theology and Philosophy, Berkeley, California, now at École Biblique, Jerusalem, raises the question of a *relative* chronology of Paul's life and career. It distances itself from the approach of "absolute chronology" because "the evidence at hand is both insecure and incomplete. The construction of an absolute chronology requires the harmonization of the few references to time in Acts, and the fragmentary detritus of Roman administration. Chronological data in Paul's letters are too few and far between to construct a complete sequence of events and letters" (7–8). Instead, Tatum's investigation "seeks to establish relative sequence rather than absolute chronology and brackets off the use of Acts and extra-biblical data" (9). According to the relative-chronological approach, this monograph mainly discusses questions of the Pauline letters' order and sequence. It is therefore subdivided as follows.

The first chapter gives a short introduction to the history of research, the approach, and the preliminary decisions of this monograph (1–18). Tatum's approach is based on the following assumptions: he takes the undisputed Pauline letters into consideration (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians) but not Philemon ("evidence for situating it in sequence is lacking" [4]); and he assumes the

unity of Philippians and the “two-letter hypothesis” for 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 10–13; 1–9; see below), which is lately suggested by, for example, H.-J. Klauck (3rd ed., 1994). The reception of the “two-letter hypothesis” is explained in discussion with M. E. Thrall and R. Bieringer (5 n. 11). Tatum does not focus on further partition theories (e.g., 2 Cor 6:14–7:1; Rom 16) because the letter-fragments cannot be “placed in sequence because of lack of evidence” (5) either. Tatum therefore suggests the following order of the Pauline letters: 1 Thessalonians; 1 Corinthians; 2 Cor 10–13; Galatians; Philippians; 2 Cor 1–9; Romans (6).

In chapters 2–4 Tatum applies “the intertextual method of context specificity and triangulation to the question of the sequence of Paul’s undisputed letters” (93). The second chapter (19–48) discusses the location of Galatians between 1 Corinthians and Romans “on the basis of Paul’s characterization of his ministry in relation to Jews and Gentiles” (7). The third chapter (49–72) discusses the location of 2 Cor 10–13 before 2 Cor 1–9, while the fourth chapter (73–93) argues for the location of Philippians after Galatians.

According to Tatum’s description, the fifth chapter (94–122) should be considered as the second part of the book, more specifically as a “complementary study of Paul’s journeys and financial affairs” (7). The last chapter (123–30) offers some conclusions—including a reconstruction of Paul’s career (126ff.)—as well as some aspects concerning the discussion “of the relation of Acts to the proposed sequence of letters” (7).

The bibliographical part (131–40) is, in comparison with the problems of the history of research, quite small but, in comparison with the outline of the whole book, adequate. The bibliography indicates mainly a limitation of this investigation to the history of research until the second half of the 1990s. Only a few titles (e.g., A. C. Thiselton; F. J. Matera; P. Oakes) touch the beginnings of the twenty-first-century discussion. Recent contributions to Paul’s biography and the chronology of letter-writing, such as S. Vollenweider, “Paulus,” *RGG* (2003); U. Schnelle, *Paulus* (2003); E.-M. Becker, *Letter Hermeneutics in 2 Corinthians* (JSNTSup, 2004) are, unfortunately, missing. The last pages of this monograph (141–45) offer a short index of authors (141–42) and an index of biblical citations (143–45).

Tatum’s ideas and results can be summarized in three main aspects as follows. (1) In terms of the discussion about Paul’s development of theology, Tatum suggests: “the notion that Paul augmented his repertoire of arguments, expressions, and motifs in response to concrete rhetorical/political situations replaces the notion of the linear development of systematic theology” (13). (2) In terms of chronology, Tatum suggests that one should “lengthen the time period” (18) not just between 1 and 2 Corinthians but even within the

canonical letter of 2 Corinthian (see 129–30). (3) In terms of hermeneutical issues, Tatum suggests a reading of “Paul’s undisputed letters *as a whole*” (124).

Finally, I take the liberty of commenting on some of the results proposed here more in detail. After a period during which the question of *Literarkritik* has been suppressed, it is refreshing to see *that* and *how* studies in *Literarkritik*, especially in 2 Corinthians, can open up a new picture of Paul’s letter-writing and even his biography (as in the title: “New Chapters...”). Tatum’s rejection of historical questions, however, could be reconsidered, and the attempt to find intertextual evidence for a chronology of Paul’s life and connecting it with external historical data should not be underestimated. Especially in the case of the Corinthian correspondence we do have external data (the Claudius edict; the Gallio inscription) on which—carefully, of course—an absolute chronology could be built.