ABSTRACT
FINDING PAUL IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL: JOHN 8 AND THE RECESSION OF THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

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The earliest extant Christian texts are not narratives of the life of Jesus but occasion-specific letters of Paul. Whether formed through Paul’s own habit of retaining copies or by the collection efforts of early followers, a *corpus Paulinum* circulated with remarkable speed and guided the development of a Christian literary tradition.

Rudolf Bultmann convinced a generation of commentators that, despite a remarkably similar theology, the Gospel of John has no literary connection to Paul’s writings. This claim bolstered the Fourth Gospel’s renown as a purportedly independent witness to local Christian tradition. But recent NT scholars have shown a *Tendenz* to argue for Pauline influence upon texts whose authors were previously not deemed directly dependent on Paul, e.g., Matthew, Hebrews, James. In consequence of this, John’s possible debt to Paul—a theory common during the first half of the twentieth century—is an idea in need of revival.

While inconsistent criteria have hindered previous efforts to assess whether one text depends literarily upon another, new tools provide more evidence than ever before. Electronic databases of ancient Greek documents allow the researcher to trace the occurrence of words and phrases over time. Since the emergence of these tools it has become possible to distinguish between major and minor, significant and insignificant, instances of literary convergence.

I argue that John 8:31–59 shows the author’s engagement with Paul’s letters. I contend that a dense combination of significant literary and conceptual parallels to Romans and Galatians demonstrates that a climactic argument between Jesus and “the Jews” recasts in narrative form Paul’s discussions of Abraham, sonship, slavery, and sin. The same passage shows conspicuous agreements with aspects of Pauline soteriology, ethics, and salvation history.

With special attention to John 8:31–59, I have sought in this study to validate the impulse of Christians down the ages who have read Paul and John as in agreement, and I posit a historical explanation for their many shared ideas. Similarities between Paul and John are the product not only of shared tradition but of a direct line of literary influence. In other words, Paul has a literary presence in John 8.