

## AN EVALUATION OF THE NEO-DUTCH RADICAL SCHOOL OF NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM

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### Abstract

Due to the Dutch Radical thesis, that the Pauline epistles are all inauthentic and interpolated patchwork creations, having not been critically evaluated by many academics currently, the present article seeks to levy a series of criticisms at the thesis by identifying several problems with their methods: (1) that they have failed to keep up with current research, with the work of Verhoef refuting them partially, (2) that their theories are internally inconsistent at times, leading to situations where their work is self-refuting, and (3) that they do not apply a consistent skepticism when it comes to their theories, meaning that it seems like their methods are arbitrary.

**Keywords:** Dutch Radicals, Pauline Epistles, authenticity, textual criticism, historicity of Paul, early Christian writings

### Introduction

The Dutch Radical school of New Testament criticism has had a somewhat downplayed history in New Testament textual criticism, being mostly seen as an irrelevant or footnote-only event in the history of issues regarding the Pauline Epistles. While the original Dutch Radical school largely died out with the passing of G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga in 1957, thus spelling the end of its university presence for some decades, in the 1990's a revival, of sorts, occurred with a few scholars (primarily associated with the *Journal of Higher Criticism* and Drew University) coming forth challenging the authenticity of all of the Pauline epistles and arguing for large scale interpolations throughout them.<sup>1</sup> This Neo-

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<sup>1</sup> For comprehensive surveys of the original Dutch Radical schools, see G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Die holländische radikale Kritik des Neuen Testaments; ihre Geschichte und Bedeutung für die Erkenntnis der*

Dutch Radical (which I will call the NDR) school at its height comprised of the academics Robert M. Price, Darrell Doughty, and Hermann Detering, who published a voluminous series of works in the last thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

In the present day, Price, Doughty, and Detering gained several followers, though primarily only among laity, though in one respect Detering's work has become important to some scholars who have levied challenges to the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians once again. Given the lack of interaction with the NDR, save for the work of Verhoef, it seems prudent to issue a brief survey of the works which they have produced and a more formal response to them as well, noting where these theories still, despite their renovations, fail. This paper will go through first a brief history of the NDR since their beginnings with Doughty and Detering, and where they currently stand in academia, along with their published works, and then it will address several their theses and where they appear to fail. This will entail the central issues they raise with the authenticity of the Pauline epistles, including interpolations, authorship, and the claims that the epistles are essentially "patchworks" by many authors.

## **A Brief History of the Neo-Dutch Radicals**

The Neo-Dutch Radicals find their originations in the work of Hermann Detering, primarily, who began his thesis on the Pauline epistles while studying under noted text critic Walter Schmithals at the Church University of Berlin in 1991. The following year,

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*Entstehung des Christentums* (Jena: Diederichs, 1912); Harry James Hager, "The Radical School of Dutch New Testament Criticism," PhD Diss. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1933); Eduard Verhoef, "Willem Christiaan van Manen: A Dutch Radical New Testament scholar," *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 55, no. 1 (1999): 221-227 and "The 'Dutch Radicals' Espoused Historical Research as the Basic Principle of their Study," in Kenneth Parker and Erick Moser (eds.), *The Rise of Historical Consciousness Among the Christian Churches* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2013), 144-153.

<sup>2</sup> On the problematic nature of Price's and Detering's political views, which have often interrupted their scholarship, see Christopher M. Hansen, "The Christ and the Discourse: A Critique of the Historiographical and Rhetorical Trends in the Christ Myth Debate," *Northern Plains Ethics Journal* 8, no 1 (2020): 97-123.

Detering published his doctoral dissertation entitled *Paulusbrieve ohne Paulus?* (1992) which served as a revival of the thesis that none of the Pauline epistles were written by the apostle Paul, but that a large number likely originated with Marcion claiming to have “discovered” letters from the apostle.<sup>3</sup> Detering’s views, however, were not picked up in academia in Germany or in Holland, and Detering appears to have continued his career as a pastor. Shortly afterward, however, Darrell Doughty and Robert M. Price introduced the *Journal of Higher Criticism*, which was sponsored by the Institute for Higher Criticism at Drew University. In the first issue, Doughty then, citing Detering and Schmithals on numerous occasions, argues that the Pauline epistles are patchwork creations of numerous interpolations which have been, essentially, stitched together into an incoherent whole, which Doughty argues explains the incongruencies in the theology of the Pauline epistles.<sup>4</sup> With the introduction of the *Journal of Higher Criticism* the NDR views were more broadly published with the English article of Hermann Detering in 1996.<sup>5</sup> At this point, Detering was already working in Germany at spreading his position through a book for laity entitled *Der Gefälschte Paulus: Das Urchristentum im Zwielight* in 1995, which largely distilled his arguments from his dissertation in a digestible format.<sup>6</sup> Notably, the works of J. C. O’Neill on Romans and Galatians also became influential among the NDR around this time.<sup>7</sup>

Through the *Journal of Higher Criticism* numerous works were published, by academics and non-academics, on various interpolations into the Pauline epistles, drawing from Doughty, Detering, and others, including Price’s own growing skepticism of

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<sup>3</sup> Hermann Detering, *Paulusbrieve ohne Paulus? Die Paulusbrieve in der holländischen Radikalkritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Darrell J. Doughty, “Pauline Paradigms and Pauline Authenticity,” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 1 (1994): 95-128.

<sup>5</sup> Hermann Detering, “The Dutch Radical Approach to the Pauline Epistles,” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 3, no. 2 (1996): 169-193.

<sup>6</sup> Hermann Detering, *Der Gefälschte Paulus: Das Urchristentum im Zwielight* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Specifically, J. C. O’Neill, *The Recovery of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1972) and *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975).

the epistles and their unity, as well as reprints of older Dutch Radical materials and works which challenged the authenticity of various ancient documents relating to them.<sup>8</sup> This further included Detering's paper attempting to date the Gospel of Mark to the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt in the second century CE.<sup>9</sup> In the final issue before Doughty's retirement, he published a translation of *Der Gefälschte Paulus* into English through the *Journal of Higher Criticism* as well.<sup>10</sup>

After Doughty's retirement in 2004, the NDR would cease having much of any major university support. In addition, Doughty then passed away in 2009, though two more volumes (of two issues each) of the *Journal of Higher Criticism* would appear, though without university backing. In these issues, a few notable developments occurred. Most notably there was a rebuttal to the Dutch Radicals from Eduard Verhoef, who had written extensively on the radicals and their history, which presented a thesis for how the Pauline epistles could be determined to be authentic, challenging the central basis for all of the NDR theories.<sup>11</sup> In addition, at this time Detering began exploring the Christ Myth Theory (the thesis that Jesus did not exist) and was then

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<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Price, "Apocryphal Apparitions: 1 Corinthians 15:3-11 as a Post-Pauline Interpolation," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 2, no. 2 (1995): 69-99; Ernst Barkinol, "The Non-Pauline Origin of the Parallelism of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Galatians 2:7-8," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 5, no. 2 (1998): 285-300; Thomas Whittaker, "An Exposition of Van Manen's Analysis of the Epistle to the Romans," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 6, no. 2 (1999): 258-298; William P. Killen, "The Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 8, no. 1 (2001): 91-143; G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, "Early Christianity's Letters," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 9, no. 2 (2002): 294-317 and "The Spuriousness of the So-called Pauline Epistles: Exemplified by the Epistle to the Galatians," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 6, no. 1 (1999): 103-123.

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Detering, "The Synoptic Apocalypse (Mark 13/par): A Document From the Time of Bar Kokhba," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 7, no. 2 (2000): 161-210.

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Detering, "The Falsified Paul," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 10, no. 2 (2003): 3-199, translated by Darrell Doughty. Detering later republished this as *The Fabricated Paul: Early Christianity in the Twilight* (Independently Published, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Eduard Verhoef, "Determining the Authenticity of the Paulines," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 11, no. 2 (2005): 83-95.

challenging the authenticity of all of the extrabiblical references to Jesus, as well as the works of St. Augustine.<sup>12</sup>

Robert M. Price began fully taking up NDR views in the mid-2000's apparently, with his *Pre-Nicene New Testament: Fifty-Four Formative Texts* (2006) being where many of his foundational views were found.<sup>13</sup> Here he endorsed a mixture of Doughty's and Detering's views, specifically on the Pauline epistles being inauthentic patchworks. Price followed this with his book *The Amazing Colossal Apostle: The Search for the Historical Paul* in 2012, which argued that the historical Paul was actually a cipher for Simon Magus, following Detering's thesis, and that none of the epistles go back to the Paul of Christianity.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Price then edited together all of the English writings of W. C. van Manen, who had previously been the most well known of the original Dutch Radicals in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>15</sup> All of these works received endorsements from Detering, in addition. On the issue of the historicity of Jesus, Price further argued that his fellow mythicists who rejected Jesus' historicity should adopt the NDR standpoint, a view has recently echoed in reviewing Richard Carrier's latest book.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Price's current ambitions have been to extend the NDR to mythicism and create a fusion of these more extreme and

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<sup>12</sup> Hermann Detering, *Falsche Zeugen: Außerchristliche Jesuszeugnisse auf dem Prüfstand* (Aschaffenburg: Alibri Verlag, 2011) and *O du lieber Augustin: Falsche Bekenntnisse?* (Aschaffenburg: Alibri Verlag, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Robert M. Price, *The Pre-Nicene New Testament: Fifty-Four Formative Texts* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2005), 315-316, 329-331, 369-371, 391-394, 425-426, 433-434, 439-441, 459-461, 467-468, 471-472.

<sup>14</sup> Robert M. Price, *The Amazing Colossal Apostle: The Search for the Historical Paul* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Robert M. Price (ed.), *A Wave of Hypercriticism: The English Writings of W. C. van Manen* (River: Tellektual Press, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Robert M. Price, "Does the Christ Myth Theory Require an Early Date for the Pauline Epistles?" in Thomas L. Thompson and Thomas S. Verenna (eds.), *Is This Not the Carpenter? The Question of the Historicity of the Figure of Jesus* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 95-116 and "Higher Critical Review," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 15, no. 3 (2020): 132-135. See also, Robert M. Price, *Bart Ehrman Interpreted: How One Radical New Testament Scholar Understands Another* (Durham: Pitchstone Press, 2018), 93-109.

fringe positions, though mythicists like Richard Carrier have been reluctant to condone such theories from the NDR.<sup>17</sup>

Hermann Detering later took up mythicist views as well, arguing for a Buddhist-Christian origin, with a mythical Christ at its center.<sup>18</sup> Detering then passed away in 2018 after a battle with cancer for some time, one of his last works being a second edition of his doctoral dissertation.<sup>19</sup> This left Robert M. Price as the last notable academic still taking up the NDR theories. However, a number of laymen have also published works which either adopt or otherwise are inspired by NDR theories.<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy that completely independent of the the old and neo-Dutch Radical schools, Thomas L. Brodie came to the position that none of the epistles were authentic and that Paul was an ahistorical figure as well,<sup>21</sup> however with Brodie's publication *Beyond the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (2012) the resulting backlash meant that he was

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 261n13 is sympathetic to Price's case for Philemon being a forgery, but on his blogs he has actively rejected the views of Detering and Price with the other epistles, see "Jesus From Outer Space! The Price Review," *Richard Carrier Blogs* (September 27, 2020), <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/17174> and "The Historicity of Paul the Apostle," *Richard Carrier Blogs* (June 6, 2015), <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/7643>.

<sup>18</sup> Hermann Detering, *Buddha, Josua, Jesus und der Weg Zum Anderen Ufer: Die Gnostische Interpretation des Exodus und die Anfänge des Josua-Jesus-Kultes* (Self Published, 2018). This was translated into English as Herman Detering, *Jesus on the Other Shore*, translated by Stuart Waugh (Independently Published, 2018), p. 98. See link here: [http://mythicistpapers.com/Detering/2017\\_ENG\\_Jesus\\_on\\_the\\_other\\_shore.pdf](http://mythicistpapers.com/Detering/2017_ENG_Jesus_on_the_other_shore.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Hermann Detering, *Inszenierte Fälschungen: Die Paulusbrieve in der holländischen Radikalkritik* (Independently Published, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Frank R. Zindler, *The Jesus the Jews Never Knew: Sepher Toldoth Yeshu and the Quest of the Historical Jesus in Jewish Sources* (Cranford: American Atheist Press, 2003), 193; René Salm, *NazarethGate: Quack Archaeology, Holy Hoaxes, and the Invented Town of Jesus* (Cranford: American Atheist Press, 2015), 400, 408, 434-444, 474; Anne Skjønberg, *Jesushistorien - myte eller virkelighet?* (Oslo: Norske Sierer, 2011); Chris Albert Wells, *Sorting Out Paul: Caught Between Man and Legend* (Houston: Strategic Book Publishing, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas L. Brodie, *Beyond the Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Memoir of a Discovery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 137-154.

restricted from further research, teaching, and his academic positions were largely revoked.<sup>22</sup> As such, the Neo-Dutch Radical school can be largely said to be defunct in universities, and is only currently maintained by Robert M. Price and a few laymen who have followed in the steps of himself, Detering, and Doughty, or have taken to using the work of the Old Dutch Radicals.

## Evaluating the NDR Theories

Despite the proliferation of literature from the NDR school, there have been few detailed responses made to any of the new radicals, instead the majority have often simply handwaved them without any rebuttal.<sup>23</sup> In the case of Doughty, William Walker has offered a few critiques, primarily focusing on what Walker perceives to be Doughty shifting the burden of proof when it comes to the matter of interpolations in the Pauline epistles.<sup>24</sup> Price received two notable reviews of his book *The Amazing Colossal Apostle*, which largely argued that his positions were far too extreme and did not take note of more recent scholarship refuting many of his points.<sup>25</sup> The only notable acceptance of NDR work is that of Detering's which was used in Marlene Crüsemann's dissertation arguing the

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<sup>22</sup> See Jeremy Corley, Review: "Beyond the Quest for the Historical Jesus," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79.2 (2014): 177-194 for a review of Brodie's work and overview of the issues.

<sup>23</sup> Gerd Lüdemann, *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 263n232; Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Second Edition (London: SCM Press, 1977), 250; Georg Strecker, *History of New Testament Literature*, translated by Calvin Katter (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 40; Emmanuel Rehfeld, *Relationale Ontologie bei Paulus* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 4.

<sup>24</sup> William Walker, *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 16, 20-21, 57-60.

<sup>25</sup> Glenn E. Snyder, review of Robert M. Price, *The Amazing Colossal Apostle: The Search for the Historical Paul*, *Review of Biblical Literature* [http://www.bookreviews.org] (2015); Corneliu Constantineanu, review of Robert M. Price, *The Amazing Colossal Apostle: The Search for the Historical Paul*, *Review of Biblical Literature* [http://www.bookreviews.org] (2015).

inauthenticity of both of the epistles to the Thessalonians.<sup>26</sup> The two most noted authors to respond as of late are Eduard Verhoef<sup>27</sup> and Patrick Hart,<sup>28</sup> who have both offered some quite fervent critiques of their theories, Verhoef arguing the authenticity of the epistles and Hart noting problems with their interpolation theories. Verhoef has been very prolific on these issues, though his work has not been responded to by NDR adherents, nor have many academics cited Verhoef in response to the NDR either. Instead, the entire issue has largely been ignored, though the question of whether the Pauline epistles are authentic is most certainly valid and worth engaging with.

Because of this lack of notable interaction with NDR material, it has become prudent to issue a response here in some detail to several their theses. Verhoef has largely handled the central theory of whether any of the Pauline epistles are authentic, by presenting a methodology largely inspired by that of W. C. van Manen's defense of 1 Thessalonians.<sup>29</sup> The method relies on analyzing three main criteria by which one can then adduce similar authorship. To start with, one does not assume there is any specific author. Instead, Verhoef notes that the largest letter should be taken, that is Romans, to give the largest sample size of the three criteria: (1) theological views, (2) lexical/grammatical data, and (3) historical information. In this case, Romans provides us with the largest amount of vocabulary, as well as also only claims to be written by one author in the prescript. Thus, Verhoef takes this as his "point

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<sup>26</sup> Marlene Crüsemann, *Die pseudepigraphen Briefe an die Gemeinde in Thessaloniki: Studien zu ihrer Abfassung und zur jüdisch-christlichen Sozialgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Eduard Verhoef, *W.C.van Manen. Een Hollandse Radicale Theoloog* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1994), "Numerus, Sekretär und Authentizität der paulinischen Briefe," *Protokolle zur Bibel* 4, no. 1 (1995): 48-58; "Willem Christiaan van Manen," 221-227, "Die holländische Radikale Kritik," in R. Bieringer (ed), *The Corinthian Correspondence* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 427-432, "Determining the Authenticity of the Paulines," 83-95, "The Authenticity of the Paulines Should Not be Assumed," *Protokolle zur Bibel* 19 (2010): 129-151, and "The 'Dutch Radicals' Espoused Historical Research as the Basic Principle of their Study," 144-153.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Hart, *A Prolegomenon to the Study of Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 110-133.

<sup>29</sup> Verhoef, "Willem Christiaan van Manen," 224-225.

of departure” for then arguing authenticity.<sup>30</sup> Based on the closeness the other epistles share in the three criteria, the more likely they can be said to be authored by the same person. From the historical data, which is then collected from these epistles, one can then assemble a broad view of the author’s history, name, socio-political/religious/economic context, etc. and thus we arrive at a figure called “Paul,” writing at least Philippians, Romans, and 1 Thessalonians in Verhoef’s view, though 2 Thessalonians presents a few issues due to the forger likely using 1 Thessalonians as a basis, as Ehrman and Verhoef have both noted.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, central thesis that the Pauline epistles are *all* inauthentic seems to be completely unjustified and the NDR has failed to defend their theories against Verhoef since the numerous publications which he has offered, with Price, Detering, and Doughty failing to ever address his work in their own writings.

Another issue which has become notable regarding the NDR is the problem that their theories are largely reliant on rather static views about the theological developments of early Christianity. Willem Christiaan van Manen, who originally defended the authenticity of the Pauline epistles, became one of the most public faces of the old Dutch Radicals after he came to the conclusion that the epistles had to be filled with anachronisms due to his strict chronology of the theological developments that took place in the first two centuries of Christian thought. In van Manen’s case, there was a successive series of Christian conceptions: Petrinism, Paulinism, Judaism, and finally Catholicism, and the fact that the Pauline epistles had anachronistic elements of more than one of these events meant that they had to be inauthentic and written at a later date.<sup>32</sup> While NDR figures have since evolved many of the views of the old Dutch Radical school on interpolations, the issue of

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<sup>30</sup> Verhoef, “Determining the Authenticity of the Paulines,” 91.

<sup>31</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156-171; Eduard Verhoef, “The relation between 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians and the inauthenticity of 2 Thessalonians,” *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 53 (1997): 163-171.

<sup>32</sup> For his views, see Price (ed.), *A Wave of Hypercriticism*, which has all his English language writings which gives these views in brief.

anachronism is still prevalent in their work and relies on a primarily static concept of early Christianity wherein they have laid out a chronology of the theological developments and the texts which do not abide by this have to be redated or denied as well.<sup>33</sup> However, William E. Arnal has actually pointed out that such thinking is inherently fallacious. These arguments are hinged on a specific idea of theological developments, but in order to even know of these developments they must rely on the texts. Thus, they construct a chronology using these texts, but then use the chronology to redate the texts, even though the texts internally do not attest to such a chronology.<sup>34</sup> In short, the texts are used to assemble their chronology, even though they actually disprove the validity of the chronology of events, but despite this the invalid chronology is then used to disprove the very texts they used to assemble it. The methodology is, thus, entirely faulty from the start. This means that, for instance, Price's redating of the Pauline epistles based on supposed "Marcionite" and "gnostic" elements in the texts is primarily uncritical and arbitrary. As Verhoef further notes, the advances in literature studies and archaeology have largely disproven the idea that there was any linear development of Christianity. Instead we had numerous groups and sects among early Christians, and therefore the anachronism arguments about theological developments lose all basis.<sup>35</sup>

There are several other arguments. For example, Detering and others have presented problems with the start of Romans due to the length the prescript, the credal tradition regarding Jesus' descentance from David, and more.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, O'Neill (whom Price follows) also points to Codex Boernerianus and Codex

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<sup>33</sup> For instance, Detering and Price argue that 1 Clement and the Ignatian letters are all forgeries as well, since they do not align with their theories, denying more recent scholarship on the issues, such as Thomas J. Herron, *Clement and the Early Church of Rome* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> William E. Arnal, "Bringing Paul and the Corinthians Together? A Rejoinder and Some Proposals on Redescription and Theory," in Merrill P. Miller and Ron Cameron (eds.), *Redescribing Paul and Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 75-104, specifically 76n3.

<sup>35</sup> Verhoef, "Willem Christiaan van Manen," 224.

<sup>36</sup> Detering, *The Fabricated Paul*, 60-62.

Augiensis, wherein the beginning sections of Romans are all missing as evidence that these texts were later interpolations.<sup>37</sup> With the loss of the prescript of Romans, it could therefore be argued that the launching off point for Verhoef's thesis is therefore invalid. Other arguments have been advanced against Romans 1, such as the fact that Tertullian never cites it against Marcion, which means it may have been absent from Marcion's versions of the Pauline epistles which Tertullian worked from.

These interpolation theories cannot be simply dismissed out of hand, though there are several issues with the NDR reasoning that is applied. In what follows, I will look at a few examples, specifically Romans 1:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-11 and demonstrate several the issues which pervade throughout the Dutch Radical interpolation theories.

### **Errant Methods in Arguing that Romans 1:1-4 is an Interpolation**

There are multiple reasons why such argumentation against the authenticity of this passage is particularly strained and faulty. For this section, I am first going to focus on the manuscript evidence (which is scant) in favor of the interpolation theory. There are only two lines of support for this, the fragmentary quotes of Marcion's *Apostolikon* by the Church Fathers, and two manuscripts which derive from the same exemplar, Codex Boernerianus and Codex Augiensis.<sup>38</sup> Codex Boernerianus and Codex Augiensis are in particular what J. C. O'Neill hinges his own argumentation on, as, when he was writing, there did not seem to be an explicable reason for why the passages were missing from the texts, other than these are from a family of texts where they were absent, thus, evidence of interpolation.

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<sup>37</sup> O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 26.

<sup>38</sup> William Henry Paine Hatch, "On the Relationship of Codex Augiensis and Codex Boernerianus of the Pauline Epistles," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 60 (1951): 187-199. For the textual history of Romans, see Harry Gamble Jr., *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

Firstly, there is a substantial reason to dismiss the witness of Codex Augiensis as defective. In this case, it is missing everything up to Romans 3:19, for which there is no substantially explicable reason, even by interpolation under the Dutch Radical theses.<sup>39</sup> There seems no comprehensible way (which does not fail due to Occam's Razor alone) that these would be missing unless Codex Augiensis is either defective itself or working from a defective exemplar. Attempting to argue the entire two and a half chapters as interpolated requires a lot of insecure reasoning and assumptions that simply cannot be substantiated, especially since its cousin from the same exemplar is not missing all of the same amount of material. Such an extensive interpolation is not argued by O'Neill,<sup>40</sup> and Price himself argues that there are Marcionite relations running between chapters 1 and 3, while parts of chapters 1 and 2 are interpolations from other sources. As such, this manuscript does not align with either NDR theories or the consensus of Pauline ones. Because of this, as Calhoun notes, Codex Augiensis is of no aid to us in deciphering if Rom. 1:3 is actually an interpolation or not.<sup>41</sup> This leaves us with its cousin, Codex Boernerianus.

Codex Boernerianus has the start the prescript with Paul introducing himself, v. 1a. However, from 1b-5a there is no text, however, the scribe left a large gap in the text, i.e. a visible lacuna.<sup>42</sup> This large blank space in the manuscript has been puzzling to some commentators, however, the only major explanation available currently is that the scribe who was writing realized that his exemplar was damaged and so, unlike Codex Augiensis which did not make any attempts to correct or make the reader aware of this defective nature, the scribe of Codex Boernerianus left what is called a space behind, realizing their text

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<sup>39</sup> For the text, see Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener, *An Exact Transcript of Codex Augiensis* (Cambridge: Deighton, 1859), 1.

<sup>40</sup> O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Matthew Calhoun, *Paul's Definitions of the Gospel in Romans 1* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 104n43.

<sup>42</sup> A. T. Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (reprint. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 88-89.

was defective.<sup>43</sup> This gives us the indication that the scribe was dealing with a problematic exemplar (cf. Codex Boernerianus) and so then the manuscript is not evidence of an interpolation, but of a damaged or otherwise defective exemplar, whose details we do not know. In short, these manuscripts cannot be used for the interpolation thesis without any direct knowledge of the exemplar. Without knowledge of how the exemplar came to be in its problem state, we cannot determine how to interpret these manuscripts conclusively. However, the numerous gaps throughout these codices seem to indicate that the scribes knew the exemplar was defective and left these gaps on purpose as a space that would fit the missing sections. As such, there fails to be any manuscript evidence in favor of interpolation.

This means that we are left with Marcion for the manuscript evidence. It is true that Tertullian does not reference Rom. 1:3 in rebuttal to Marcion, nor does he quote Marcion as having had the text. Does this indicate that Marcion did not, in fact, have it? Not necessarily, and especially not in light of BeDuhn's research, who cites Origen's *Commentarium in evangelium Joannis* 10.21-24. As BeDuhn notes, this strongly seems to imply that, since Origen is using this against Marcion, but makes no mention of him removing this from the epistles, but instead that Marcion excised references in the *Gospels*, that this indicates that Marcion, in fact, did have Rom. 1:3 in the text.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the argument from silence is, definitively, disproven. There is no indication from Tertullian or any other Church Father that Marcion had actually omitted these verses, and we now have Origen using this against him and in the context of Marcion's concept of Jesus' incarnation. As such, the evidence is purely in favor of this being authentic from a manuscript perspective here. Of note, it must be said that absences in the already fragmentary and imperfectly preserved

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<sup>43</sup> Calhoun, *Paul's Definitions of the Gospel in Romans 1*, 104n43.

<sup>44</sup> Jason BeDuhn, *The First Edition of the New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (Salem: Polebridge Press, 2013), 295.

texts of Marcion's letters is not indicative of anything conclusive textually at this point.<sup>45</sup>

This leaves us with the so-called contradictions. Detering's contention based on 2 Cor. 5:16, which entails that if Paul wrote Rom. 1:3 he would be fully contradicting himself.<sup>46</sup> Of course, this seems to be an excessively strained reading of 2 Cor. 5:16. It reads:

Therefore, from now on we do not consider anyone according to the flesh. Though we previously regarded Christ according to the flesh, we now no longer do so.<sup>47</sup>

The assumption here is that the passage is meant to deny that Jesus was no longer being perceived as having lived on earth or been fleshly, at least this is the only way in which one could then argue that Rom. 1:3 is contradicting it. Of course, the problem in context here is not to do with anything of earthly heritage or being, but of coming into new being by the accepting of Christ (read 2 Cor. 2:15, 17). Here, this is not a rejection that Jesus ever appeared in human form or had a human ancestry, but it is that the author is arguing that one should know Christ as he truly is (i.e. the savior) and that we should know each other and Christ in this way, i.e. not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.<sup>48</sup> The fact that the Christ element is paralleled with other humans indicates that this is not a denial of human ancestry, to think this would be to make Paul think that no humans had parents and relatives, even though he acknowledges his own past elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> In short, there is no reason to actually interpret this as contradicting Rom. 1:3 at all, unless one wishes to have the most strenuous and unsubstantiated of readings.

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<sup>45</sup> See John J. Clabeaux, *A Lost Edition of the Letters of Paul: A Reassessment of the Text of the Pauline Corpus Attested by Marcion* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989).

<sup>46</sup> Detering, *The Fabricated Paul*, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), ebook unpaginated.

<sup>49</sup> Rom. 16:7 and Philip. 3:5-6.

The next to last argument that seriously remains would then be Price's consideration that Paul's ascribing to a creed he did not truly agree with, just to promote himself, would be to suppose a most disingenuous motive. Of course, this may not truly be the case. That one makes use of a tradition for one's own purposes, even if they do not completely agree with it in its original context, does not mean they cannot creatively make use of it later. In addition, this also presupposes that Paul would have perceived the supposed contradiction in using Rom. 1:3 in the moment, which is not always the case. Price's argument presupposes a writer who has a perfect eye for always spotting contradiction, yet, it can be said that any author of any time contradicts themselves from time to time, in fact, they do so quite often (the average human likely does so daily). In short, this argument only works by assuming a perfect writer/perceiver, one which does not exist in reality. A two verse (vv. 3-4) moment of contradiction is not enough to claim interpolation, especially with manuscript support.

The final argument is that the prescript is lengthy, a problem which Detering has with other epistles as well.<sup>50</sup> Of course, while these are long prescripts, they serve both theological and greeting purposes and so we cannot suppose interpolation based on their length (and the other arguments have largely failed as seen above).<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in reviewing other letters written during the time, prescripts did vary greatly in length and style at the time.<sup>52</sup> As such, even this is not entirely out of the ordinary, although some of Paul's may still be quite long.

This largely leaves us with no reason to consider Rom. 1:3 an interpolation. The arguments are based purely on several assumptions which, ultimately, just will give them a predetermined output, rather than a comprehensive look at the evidence. The minute one challenges the assumptions and looks

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<sup>50</sup> Detering, *The Fabricated Paul*, 60.

<sup>51</sup> Philip L. Tite, "How to Begin, and Why? Diverse Functions of the Pauline Prescript Within a Greco-Roman Context," in Stanley Porter and Sean A. Adams (eds.), *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 57-99.

<sup>52</sup> See examples in Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1989).

closer at the most recent arguments and data the conclusions of this interpolation thesis collapses. With this in mind, they fail to have an argument against the prescript in Romans and therefore fail to reject the basis for Verhoef's work as well.

### **1 Corinthians 15:3-11 an Interpolation?**

In the case of this interpolation claim, primarily by Price, there is not much more that can be said that was said above. There is simply no manuscript evidence of the absence of this piece, the reliance on theological anachronism fails Price since the texts which inform his chronology likewise fail to attest to the validity of his chronology, and as such there only remains one main argument. Price makes the case that 1 Cor. 15:3-11 is an interpolation partially based on the authority of Gal. 1:12. Of course, there is a problem with this view, which is actually the fact that Price is a Dutch Radical at all. In Price's view, Paul never wrote any of these letters and, in fact, he argues that Marcion himself drafted the original Galatians,<sup>53</sup> while a gnostic is the one who drafted 1 Corinthians.<sup>54</sup> As such, if we neither make an assumption affirming nor denying the authenticity of 1 Cor. 15:3-11, but do take them as being from different authors as Price has, then we ultimately come to the conclusion there cannot be a contradiction, as they are different authors.

Ironically, given that Price protests this, the only way to make this argument is an attempt to harmonize these works of different authors, i.e. to argue that despite being from different authors the "contradiction" still matters for some reason. As a result of Price's own adherence to the Dutch Radical thesis that none of the epistles are written by Paul, and that Galatians and 1 Corinthians are from different authors, it therefore means that his reasoning for thinking that 1 Cor. 15:3-11 is inauthentic due to contradiction is automatically rendered invalid. What this generally shows, which also is consistent in other interpolation theories that Price and Detering argue for, is that the NDR interpolation positions largely are inconsistent with their own central thesis, creating a

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<sup>53</sup> Price, *The Amazing Colossal Apostle*, 411.

<sup>54</sup> Price, *The Amazing Colossal Apostle*, 299.

series of self-contradictions and incongruencies, which lead us to wonder whether there is any solid methodology in practice with their work at all.

Another critical issue which Patrick Hart has noted, is that these interpolation theories largely assume that Paul, a human being, could not possibly have contradicted himself or had inconsistencies in his work. Any argument based on a “contradiction” between two texts is necessarily hinged on the idea that an author cannot be contradictory. But as Hart notes, such expectations are quite radically absurd.<sup>55</sup> Human beings are inconsistent creatures. This *Paulusbild*, as Hart calls it, creates a view of Paul wherein we have, perhaps, the first ever perfect human being, never contradicting himself. Of course, this assumption cannot be upheld if one were to realistically view Paul as a human being with human failures. Thus, the fact that things contradict within Paul’s letters are not even clear determiners of interpolation.

### **The Issue of Simon Magus: Detering and Price**

Next, I would like to present an inconsistency that is often seen especially among the Neo-Dutch Radicals.<sup>56</sup> For this examination to work, a hypothetical will be indulged where the historicity of Simon Magus (the figure whom NDR scholars often choose to replace Paul with) is challenged on a similar basis to how the NDR often challenges Jesus’ and Paul’s historicity.

While the NDR are skeptical of the existence of Jesus and of the mentions of him in Josephus, they are quite fervently point toward the existence of Simon Magus based on a supposed account of him in Josephus. I wish to briefly note the critical problems with such a hypothesis though. The text of Josephus’s passage (*Antiquities* 20.7.2) notes that this Atomos (not Simon, see below on this) is brought to a Drusilla the sister of Felix, and he is sent to persuade her to not marry the person she is supposed to. It is likewise said

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<sup>55</sup> Hart, *A Prolegomenon to the Study of Paul*, 131-132.

<sup>56</sup> Hermann Detering, *The Fabricated Paul*, 173-179, 181-209 and following Detering, see Price, *The Amazing Colossal Apostle*, 185-233.

that he claimed to be a magician of some sort. He is also said to be a Cypriot as well.

A few notable problems arise from this: (1) the text does not actually reference Simon in the Greek but one *Atomos*. The mention of “Simon” only actually occurs in two Latin recensions.<sup>57</sup> As such, there is reason to suspect that this is an alteration in those lineages to try and harmonize this Josephan account to that of Acts. (2) The home of this *Atomos* and of Simon are inconsistent. *Atomos* is said to be Cypriot, while Simon has been either called a generalistic “Samaritan,” as in Acts (which did not necessarily denote an ethnic group at all times<sup>58</sup>), or from the specific town of Gitta (near Flavia Neapolis).<sup>59</sup> As such, there is no geographical coordination except where they were both active, roughly, thus we cannot clearly identify them based on geographical origins. (3) The identity of Simon as a sorcerer is a misrepresentation and the text of Acts 8 is unclear on what its terms mean, making the connection to *Atomos* similarly weak based on occupation.<sup>60</sup>

This means that the identification of Simon Magus in Josephus is entirely spurious (and in the present author’s opinion they are not the same person) and based on no concrete foundation. As such, what can we actually conclude? Well, that the only non-Christian source for Simon is not able to be demonstrated to actually attest to this figure at all. Instead, Simon only exists for the as a part of a tale in Acts. While Justin Martyr may be cited by some, it is clear he had no direct knowledge of any of these figures and even misinterpreted archaeological elements.<sup>61</sup> As such, his information is suspect at best.

Furthermore, Acts represents Simon Magus as a literary double of Peter (is it coincidence we have two Simons in conflict with each

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<sup>57</sup> Stephen Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) 61n117. The reading of “Simon” is only found in Codex Ambrosianus (11<sup>th</sup> century CE) and the *Epitome* (10<sup>th</sup> century CE).

<sup>58</sup> Haar, *Simon Magus*, 85-89, 160-166.

<sup>59</sup> *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.7 and *Recognitions of Clement* 2.6.

<sup>60</sup> Haar, *Simon Magus*, 192.

<sup>61</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and Faith We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 165-167.

other's roles? cf. Simon of Cyrene and Simon Peter in Mark). This itself will make us suspicious. The hypothesis that Simon Magus was a historical figure, and that "Paul" was a double who was separated from him and euhemerized into a more acceptable orthodoxy (this being Detering's and Price's theories) is, thus, suspect down to its core. We have no non-Christian writings, no non-polemical writings, no writings which go back to his followers, no archaeological information, etc. In fact, one would be forgiven if instead of arguing that Simon was the historical kernel, that it was Paul, and that Simon is the literary invention by pro-Petrine tradition to attack Paul,<sup>62</sup> i.e. the exact opposite of the NDR view.

One can clearly see that the NDR identification of Simon Magus in the work of Josephus has been based on an uncritical review of the evidence, inconsistent with the same skepticism that the NDR have applied to Paul and Jesus. It is simply the case that Jesus has better outside attestation than Simon,<sup>63</sup> and yet the NDR are more than willing to say Jesus did not exist, while retaining Simon. And like debates on Jesus, one can point to the fact that Christian authors cannot agree on where Simon hailed from, who his father was, they made mistakes on the geography associated with him, whether he was converted to Christianity is not agreed upon, whether he repented or left belief in God is not agreed upon, and more.<sup>64</sup> In short, the consistency between the sources is nonexistent.

When it comes back to Acts, I am inclined to align with what A. D. Howell Smith wrote:

The story in Acts has every appearance of being a romance, and there is a certain plausibility about Schmiedel's theory

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<sup>62</sup> This was proposed by John Chapman, "Clementines," in Andrew A. MacErlean, *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), 42.

<sup>63</sup> On the extrabiblical sources for Jesus, see Christopher M. Hansen, "Jesus' Historicity and Sources: The Misuse of Extrabiblical Sources for Jesus and a Suggestion." *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 22, no. 6 (2021): <http://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/HansenCM01.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Haar, *Simon Magus*, 119-131.

that the charge of sacrilege made against Simon Magus by Peter was levied against Paul by Judaizers, and was therefore rebutted by the compiler of Acts in a fictitious narrative, which seeks to make it clear that Simon and Paul were different persons by placing the conversation of Simon before that of the Apostles of the Gentiles.<sup>65</sup>

This view of Simon as a literary cipher for Paul is that of many scholars on the Pseudo-Clementines, and it may very well ring true in Acts.<sup>66</sup> If one takes this view for Acts, the historical Paul is called “Simon” as a literary double of Peter presented as a foil by the Luke-Acts author, so that he would not have to preserve a polemic against Paul, instead placing this polemic on a different figure who is, thus, a cipher for Paul. Whether or not one accepts this theory, it is, in my opinion, far more probable than Paul simply being ahistorical and Simon Magus being the historical source for these traditions, as the NDR claim.

The attempts to see Simon as historical are, by far, less founded than those which see Paul or Jesus as such. As Meeks remarked, “the quest for the historical Simon is even less promising than the quest for the historical Jesus”<sup>67</sup> While there are sources which attempt to present teachings or biographical information about Simon, none of it is reliable or can be used to reconstruct his life. And while we have Acts, the double naming, literary juxtapositions, and more do not give us the impression of him being a historical figure. This also applies closely to Philip as Keener shows, with Simon Magus having an exact literary parallel

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<sup>65</sup> A. D. Howell Smith, *Jesus Not A Myth* (London: Watts & Co., 1942), 110-111.

<sup>66</sup> For the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 312-321. As Stanton remarked (quoted in Markus Boekmuehl, *The Remembered Peter: In Ancient Reception and Modern Debate* [London: Coronet Books, 2010], 104), “There can be no doubt at all that behind the mask of Simon Magus stands Paul... Paul’s authority is being undermined.”

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Haar, *Simon Magus*, 2.

with the figure of Philip.<sup>68</sup> In addition, he follows another literary pattern of apostates in Acts.<sup>69</sup>

Of course, all of this could be wrong, here we have merely entertained a hypothetical of Simon Magus not existing but being a double for Paul, and it could be that Simon Magus, Paul, Jesus and the rest are all historical, and the events in Acts are entirely historical as well. The hypothetical here does not hinge on the historicity of the figures but specifically on the fact that the Neo-Dutch Radicals clearly do not apply the same level of skepticism toward their own theories that they do toward traditional or consensus opinions when it comes to the New Testament. Instead, their theories are given much leeway and go rather unchallenged by their skepticism, while other theories are largely discredited by ever increasing “hypercriticism.”

### **Conclusions: Where the Radicals Stand**

The Neo-Dutch Radicals largely do not seem to have any valid methodology on which to make their cases. The argument that none of the epistles are authentic largely fails due to new methods being devised, ironically based on the work of a previous radical W. C. van Manen. Verhoef’s theory on how to defend the authenticity of the epistles has not seen any rebuttal by the radicals, and this article has shown that many of the problems they could raise have a number of problems. For instance, the interpolation theories rely on outdated knowledge of manuscripts, which have since been clarified by later authors, and further rely on (what Hart calls) a *Paulusbild* that demands a perfectly consistent human being who does not contradict himself, an assumption entirely unrealistic of any author. Even more problematic is the fact that the acceptance of the Neo-Dutch Radical positions arguably undoes numerous interpolation theories just from the fact that no singular author can be credited even with the *hauptbriefe* according to the Neo-Dutch Radicals. Thus, the supposed contradictions (such as between Galatians

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<sup>68</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 263.

<sup>69</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 266.

1:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-11 or between Romans 1:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 2:16) become entirely unsustainable. Then there is Arnal's point that the Dutch Radical position is hinged on a paradoxical fixed chronology of Christian theology in history, but their history necessarily is based on the texts which do not actually attest to such chronology, meaning the chronology based on the text, is used to then discount the text it is based on.

When it comes to Neo-Dutch Radical view held by Detering and Price that Simon Magus was the original figure who was the basis for Paul, there are numerous issues. In the end, it appears that the historicity of Simon is so questionable that their theories mainly come down to conjectures. However, regardless of Simon's historicity or the events in Acts, what was shown here was that the skepticism which the Neo-Dutch Radicals have is intermittent, it is not consistently applied. Instead, their skepticism appears to end where their own theories begin, thus meaning that they do not actually apply their own avowed skepticisms (which are often seen as near virtuous by the authors) to their own work.

What we are left with, when it comes to the Neo-Dutch Radicals, is a school of thought that seems to lack any methodological or theoretical cohesion, even among the theories of singular authors. They have, instead, many ideas and concepts about early Christianity, the Pauline epistles, and often the historicity of Jesus, but when these are all placed together, they tend to often cancel each other out. The Neo-Dutch Radicals, like their predecessors, fail to be particularly convincing with any of their arguments, neither in whole nor in part. As a result of all these issues, one will likely not expect to see their idea that the Pauline epistles are all inauthentic accepted by academics any time soon. Thus, the current evaluation of the school is largely in keeping with past findings on the old Dutch Radicals as well. The Dutch Radicals simply appear to be wrong.

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