

DANIEL MARGUERAT

Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

310

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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e-ISBN PDF 978-3-16-152572-8

ISBN 978-3-16-151962-8

ISSN 0512-1604 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset by Martin Fischer in Tübingen, printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

This book is a collection of 13 essays devoted to Paul, however they follow the path of reverse chronology: starting with the reception of Paul and moving back to the apostle's writings. The reason for this is revealed in the first chapter which acts as the program of this book: "Paul after Paul: a (Hi)story of Reception". I defend here the idea of a three-fold reception of Paul in the first century: documentary, biographical and doctoral. But mainly, I advocate that the value of the phenomena of reception be appreciated; in particular, the figure of Paul in Acts testifying the biographical reception should not systematically be compared to the apostle's writings; even though this image evolves from a Lukan reinterpretation, it proceeds from traditions absent from the epistles, giving us an aspect of Paul, especially concerning his rapport with Judaism, thus forging the background of the epistolary literature.

Eight chapters of this book (chapters 2–9) are devoted to the literary and theological construction of the Acts of the Apostles focusing in particular on the figure of Paul: his rapport with the Torah, the reference to the Socratic model, the Lukan character construction, the resurrection as a central theme, the significance of meals.

The last four chapters of the book (chapters 10–13) treat some classical or less classical themes of Pauline theology: Paul the mystic, justification by faith, imitating Paul as father and mother of the community, and the issue of the woman's veil in Corinth.

The collaboration of several people has made the publication of this collection of essays possible. I would like to thank my translators who have worked hard translating my language, while preserving its precision: Julien C. H. Smith, Michael D. Thomas, Gerald and Diana Downing, and especially Paul R. Voumard and Joanne Simon. They have my gratitude beyond compare for the care taken in transferring the message from French to English. I am grateful to the editor in charge of WUNT, Professor Jörg Frey, who has accepted this book in his collection without any hesitation. I want to thank my colleagues and friends with whom I have discussed over time these studies; they have enhanced my thoughts with their remarks, suggestions and objections. I would especially like to mention Loveday Alexander, Carl Holladay, Michael Wolter and Ulrich Luz. My assistants Emmanuelle Steffek and Agnes Nagy provided me with their precious assistance

during the first elaboration of these studies. Yvette Nissen was precious in establishing the biblical index.

In the end a text is never the work of the author alone. It always benefits from the *koinonia* of researchers – a theme dear to the author of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2,42).

March 2013

Daniel Marguerat

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Bibliographical references

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Abbreviations

I have adopted the norms of the *SBL Handbook of Style*, Peabody, Hendrickson, 1999. In addition, consult *Abkürzungen Theologie und Religionswissenschaft nach RGG*⁴ (UTB 2868), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2007.

Biblical quotations

The biblical quotations are normally borrowed from the NRSV. If not, they are my own translation.

Translations

Unless indicated otherwise, the translations of ancient texts are my own. The same is true for the translation of quotes originally in any language other than French.

For the chapters the translators' names are listed under the title "First publications" (p. 255–257).

Chapter 1

Paul after Paul: A (Hi)story of Reception

The question of the reception of Paul is as old as historical criticism. I express it as follows: how can we understand and connect the different facets of Paul's extraordinary image, which Paul enjoyed within early Christianity? What paradigm should be applied in order to interconnect the Deutero-Pauline epistles (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians), the Pastorals (1–2 Timothy, Titus), the Acts of the Apostles, and the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*¹?

Each of these texts creates, in fact, a specific construct of Paul's image. The Deutero-Paulines, as well as the Pastorals, explicitly take the thematic and biographical motifs of the apostle's letters. Acts differs from them in presenting Paul, not as a writer, but rather as a missionary founder of churches. As for the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*, dating from the end of the second century, they do equal justice both to the image of the missionary and to that of the writer (third letter to the Corinthians). The way in which I define my subject indicates that on the literary level I adopt the position which consistently seems to me to be the most illuminating, even if it is the object of debate: the Deutero-Paulines and the Pastorals are part of an "after Paul" legacy, whoever the responsible authors of this post-Pauline tradition may be (a secretary? a Pauline school?). I therefore treat these letters as originating not from the hand of the apostle, but rather as appropriating the legacy of Pauline thought.

I will begin by posing the problem of the reception of Paul with respect to the relationship between Acts and the Pauline correspondence (1), then propose a model of the reception of Paul (2), and apply this model to three common themes shared by Paul and by the writings belonging to his heritage (3): first, the status of the apostle (3.1); second, the suffering of the apostle (3.2) and third, Paul's teachings (3.3). Finally, I will close with a brief conclusion (4).

¹ This article is the *Presidential Address* I delivered at the 62nd General meeting of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in Sibiu, August 1, 2007. An earlier version of the thesis I am proposing here was presented at the University of Manchester as *Manson Memorial Lecture*, October 26, 2006. I thank the colleagues who, on these two occasions, gave me a number of interesting suggestions.

1. The Paul of the epistles and the Paul of Acts: between incompatibility and harmonization

The question of the connection between the image of Paul drawn from his writings and the image which emerges from Acts has been scrutinized since the Tübingen school. The question of connectedness continues to give rise to the clash of two theses: from one point of view, the two images of Paul are declared irreconcilable (the thesis of incompatibility), whereas from the other perspective, they are harmonized.

The divergences between the given facts of the letters and those of Acts are well known; I will but recall them briefly. They appear on the level of the *informative*: Paul acknowledges himself as a mediocre orator (1 Cor 2:4; 2 Cor 10:10) while Luke credits him with brilliant discourses like those of ancient orators (Acts 13; 14; 17; 20; 22; 26)². The Jerusalem assembly, which must settle the discord between Paul's mission to non-Jews and the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, concludes in Acts with the imposition of four practices from which non-Jews must abstain (Acts 15:20.29), whereas Paul boasts in Gal 2:5–10 that nothing was imposed upon him except collecting the offering for Jerusalem. Paul protests that some Christians have returned to the practice of circumcision (Gal 5:1–12), but in Acts 16:3 he circumcises Timothy. One notices, moreover, troubling *silences*: why does the author of Acts mention neither the theological conflicts which Paul had to face in his communities, nor his epistolary activity? Why does Luke refuse the man of Tarsus the title of “apostle”, which plays however such a fundamental role in Paul's self-understanding (Gal 1:1; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:9)? On the *theological* level, the disagreements become obvious. It is well known that Paul's essential theological struggle revolves around the issue of the Torah: for the apostle, salvation in Jesus Christ is salvation “apart from the works of the law” (Rom 3:20); and one reads in Galatians that Paul does not admit the slightest compromise on this score; this polemic is absent from Acts, which shows Paul displaying an unflinching attachment to the customs of the fathers (Acts 28:17b). Moreover, the crystallization of Pauline theology of the cross is met with, in the discourses in Acts, a focus on the *kerygma* of the resurrection of Christ: the discord between Jews and Christians in Acts is not centred on the cross, as it is for Paul, but rather with the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:22–36; 3:15–21; 13:26–39; 23:6–9; 26:6–8).

The thesis of incompatibility found its classic expression in a famous article by Philipp Vielhauer in 1950³. The author vehemently argues the idea that Luke, in

² John C. LENTZ, *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS 77), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

³ Philipp VIELHAUER, “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts”, in: *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander KECK and J. Louis MARTYN, Nashville, Abingdon, 1966, p. 33–50 (reprinted in: *Paul and the Heritage of Israel*, ed. David P. MOESSNER, Daniel MARGUERAT, Mikeal C. PARSONS and Michael WOLTER, [LNTS 452] London-New York, Clark, 2012, p. 3–17).

Acts, contravenes the teaching of Paul, in part by defending a natural theology in Paul's discourse in Athens (Acts 17:22–31), and in part by abandoning the Pauline position on the Torah in the name of a Christian-Jewish continuity, leaving out the Christology of the cross, and attesting a collapsed eschatology. In brief, he concludes, "the author of Acts is pre-Pauline in his Christology, and post-Pauline in his natural theology, concept of the law, and eschatology. One finds in him not a single specifically Pauline idea"⁴. Here we see Luke expelled from the Pauline school for reporting so poorly! However in its massiveness, Vielhauer's position proves to be untenable. It is inexact to say that Acts 17 defends a natural theology; the failure of pagan knowledge of God is also affirmed in it as much as in Rom. 1:18–32: God brings to an end, says the Lukan Paul in Athens, to the "times of ignorance" (χρόνοι τῆς ἀγνοίας, Acts 17:30a) by announcing the necessity of conversion to the One whom he has designated as Judge of the world (17:30b); the necessary *metanoia* injects the idea of a moment of change, which breaks from natural theology. Moreover, opposing the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3) with the non-circumcision of Titus does not take into account the fact that Titus is a gentile, whereas Timothy has a Jewish mother; this corresponds to the position that the apostle assumes in 1 Cor 9:20–21. "I became as a Jew for the Jews ... for those without the law as one without the law": Paul puts forward an explicitly differentiated position with respect to religious status. Moreover, viewing the Pauline version of the Jerusalem assembly (Gal 2:5–10) as contradictory to that of Luke (Acts 15:5–21) does not take into account the different literary genres: Paul is arguing a case, whereas Luke is describing a practice⁵.

One must add that, methodologically, the specific aim of each writer must be kept in view. Luke describes Paul as debating with outsiders, in the synagogue or with a gentile audience; in his correspondence, the apostle takes a position within an internal debate, thus arguing as an insider. Luke's Paul proclaims the gospel; the Paul of the epistles expositis it. One might equally expect that a biographical writing would mention traits of the apostle which he himself might omit or mention only briefly; such is the case with his acts of healing, to which I will return later. The methodological deficiency of Vielhauer's position is that it overlays two literary genres and considers Paul's letters to be the norm to which Acts should conform: in brief, his thesis of Lukan infidelity, to the Pauline tradition is no longer defensible. One could demonstrate, moreover, that the stark contrast between Luke and Paul constructed by Vielhauer is deeply permeated with the theological controversy between Barth and Brunner during the 1930s,

⁴ Philipp VIELHAUER, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts", p. 49.

⁵ This argument is explored in the Graeco-Roman literature by Tom W. HILLARD, Alanna NOBBS and Bruce W. WINTER, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus 1: Ancient Literary Parallels", in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, I Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1993, p. 183–213.

and that Vielhauer thinks he must reiterate the “no” signified by Barth to Brunner concerning the relationship between nature and grace⁶.

At the other extreme, harmonizing the contents of the epistles and Acts is equally unsatisfying⁷. Even though it argues correctly for the complementarity of the contents of the apostle’s writings and those of Luke, the positions set forth by one or the other regarding the Torah cannot be superimposed. Vielhauer is correct: the acuity of the debate regarding the validity of the law is no longer Luke’s concern. The Christology of Acts is not at all that of Paul, which is focused on the cross. The thesis of harmonization, in my opinion, is no more defensible than the thesis of incompatibility in the final analysis.

What can we do, other than leave behind the alternatives of incompatibility or a harmonization? A differentiated approach to the reception of Paul make it possible.

2. A typology of the reception of Paul

What information did the author of Acts have at his disposal in order to write his work? In my opinion, it hardly appears possible to defend the idea that the author was a companion of Paul, given that the Christianity reflected in Acts is closer to that of the Pastorals, dating from the 80s. It has been demonstrated numerous times that the farewell discourse to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18–35) bears witness to a situation analogous to the issue addressed by the Pastorals: the announcement of internal tensions, the questioning of Paul’s integrity, and the polemic against false preaching⁸. Maintaining the notion of an eyewitness only aggravates the problem: how could a witness who listened to Paul daily omit his epistolary activity, or deny him the title of apostle, for which he fought?

We must therefore ask ourselves again what information Luke had at his disposal. The model of harmonization and that of incompatibility share a common presupposition: Luke knew of the letters of Paul, yet for unexplained reasons did not mention them. Can we be so sure? Can we be certain that Luke knew of

⁶ Emil BRUNNER, *Natur und Gnade*, Tübingen. Mohr, 1934; Karl BARTH, *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* (Theologische Existenz heute 14), München, Kaiser, 1934; Emil BRUNNER and Karl BARTH, *Natural Theology: Comprising ‘Nature and Grace’*, trans. P. Fränckel, London, The Centenary Press, 1946; I am indebted to Michael Wolter for these references.

⁷ Frederick F. BRUCE, “Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?”, *BJRL* 58, 1976, p. 282–305; Colin J. HEMER, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49), Tübingen, Mohr, 1989; Stanley E. PORTER, *The Paul of Acts. Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology* (WUNT 115), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1999; Alexander MITTELSTAEDT, *Lukas als Historiker. Zur Datierung des lukanischen Doppelwerkes* (TANZ 43), Tübingen, Francke, 2006.

⁸ Jacques DUPONT, *Le discours de Milet. Testament pastoral de saint Paul (Actes 10,18–36)* (Lectio divina 32), Paris, Cerf, 1962); Beverly ROBERTS GAVENTA, “Theology and Ecclesiology in the Miletus Speech: Reflections on Content and Context”, *NTS* 50, 2004, p. 36–52.

the Pauline correspondence? The intense work currently focusing on Christian apocryphal literature leads us, in fact, to reexamine the means by which the tradition was transmitted. The existence of numerous apocryphal Gospels or apocryphal Acts of the apostles leads us to the realization that outside and alongside the tradition fixed in the canonical texts, a number of both oral and partially written traditions, later gathered up into the Apocrypha, were circulating in the communities. Today, we know with greater clarity that the redaction of canonical texts did not by any means exhaust the tradition of Jesus and the apostles. Many other traditions, and the communities giving life to these traditions – passed on orally or promulgated by prophets and teachers – composed the network of Christianity during the first two centuries.

What transpired after the death of Paul, around the year 60? The circulation of his letters was already attested during his life (2 Cor 10:10). His writings were progressively collected and assembled, the first indications of a canon of Pauline letters dates to the end of the first century. *First Clement*, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna, clearly manifest their awareness of his writings, but without taking interest in the person of the apostle.⁹ Between 60 and 100, what else took place? Paul's heritage was preserved by other means, along other paths than the collection of his writings. In my opinion it is an anachronism to imagine Luke writing a history of Paul with the letters of the apostle in front of him. Between Acts and the canon of Pauline letters a historical phase is being overlooked: the complex and multiform phenomenon of the reception of Paul.

2.1 The three poles of Paul's reception

To speak of "reception" signals a change of paradigm for the proponents of the theories of incompatibility and harmonization. The phenomenon of reception implies that a dialectic of identity and shift characterizes the relationship between an original thought and its subsequent resumption. The diversity of forms which the Pauline tradition took corresponds to this observation. On one hand, some letters imitate the apostle's style and present a teaching in his name: these are the Deutero-Pauline letters and the Pastorals. On the other hand, the memory of the apostle is magnified by the recollection of his actions: this is the case with Acts and the *Acts of Paul*. François Bovon defended the thesis that the reception of the apostle, in the first century, took two forms: on one hand, Paul survived in the letters as a "document"; on the other, in biographical writings as a "monument"¹⁰. The proposition is interesting, but it calls for a correction: Colossians and Ephesians, as well as 2 Timothy, continue the epistolary activity of Paul, but at the

⁹ Andreas LINDEMANN, *Paulus. Apostel und Lehrer der Kirche. Studien zu Paulus und zum frühen Paulusverständnis*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1999, p. 294–322.

¹⁰ François BOVON, "Paul as Document and Paul as Monument", in: *New Testament and Christian Apocrypha*, ed. Glenn E. SNYDER, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2011, p. 307–317.

same time do so without neglecting the biographical dimension of his persona, noting his life of suffering (Col 1:1–11; 1:24–2:4; Eph 3; 2 Tim 1:12–2:7; 4:6–8).

Pursuing this insight, I would say that the reception of Paul is organized around three poles: *documentary biographical*, and *doctoral*. The “documentary” pole remembers Paul as a writer: his writings are collected, copied, reconfigured in certain cases, and assembled in a collection which is integrated into the New Testament canon. From the “biographical” pole, Paul is celebrated as the herald of the gospel, the missionary to the nations, whose salient facts are narrated (as Luke does in Acts); a hagiography is in the works here, of which the *Acts of Paul* is the first installment a century later. From the “doctoral” pole, Paul is invoked as doctor of the church: his sentences in pseudepigraphical letters are imitated; his teaching in the areas of ecclesiology and ethics are spread; texts in his name are written; these are the Deutero-Paulines and Pastorals.

It is essential to recognize that these three types of reception are parallel and simultaneous, unfolding between 60 and 100. They represent three ways to respond to the absence of the apostle: establish the memory of his life (“biographical” heritage), preserve his writings (“documentary” heritage), institute him as the theological icon who ensures an orthodox interpretation (“doctoral” heritage: cf. Col. 2:5). Each of these strategies of managing the Pauline heritage selects the traits of the apostle’s persona most amenable to its view and confers upon this persona a specific status. The persona of the apostle is thus constructed along three parallel paths. Here I must stress that the canon of Pauline epistles does not constitute the common documentary basis, the backdrop against which the entire reception of the apostle would be constructed. The documentary reception constitutes in itself a branch of the reception of Paul’s persona, a specific branch which preserves his status as a polemical writer. Once again, it is anachronistic to think that, since we have his correspondence before our eyes today, his letters constituted the sole means by which he was known in the first century. All that we know of the rarity of writing in Antiquity should lead us to think the contrary: the memory of the apostle was preserved primarily through oral tradition circulating in the communities which he had founded. Only literate persons had access to texts. In no way was the social memory of the apostle transmitted through purely literary channels.

The consequences of the paradigm that I am proposing are important for the construction of Paul’s image. The “doctoral” pole traces the literary activity of the apostle and is based on his writings; this activity of reading and rereading can be found from the effects of an intertextual conversation between pseudepigraphical and proto-pauline letters¹¹. The same does not apply to the “biographical”

¹¹ Annette MERZ, *Die fiktive Selbstausslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe* (NTOA 52), Göttingen / Fribourg, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht / Academic Press, 2004.

pole, demonstrated by Luke's silence with regard to Paul's writings: the author's knowledge of Paul is not a literary one. Luke works with the memory of Paul's life and teaching, such as it was preserved by his circle, when twenty years later, Paul's debate concerning the Torah has lost its urgency. The memory of it was preserved (Acts 15:1–35; 16:1–6; 21:17–26), but the discussion as such is absent from Acts – not because Luke would have misread Paul, but because he depends on another source of information. On the other hand, the memory of the communities founded by the apostle to the Gentiles furnishes Luke with abundant narrative material absent from the letters. It is therefore inadequate to measure the Lukan historiographical reliability by a norm constituted by the corpus of Pauline writings, precisely because these writings in and of themselves did not constitute the norm of Pauline tradition.

2.2 Paul the healer

An example: the image of Paul the healer. The book of Acts recounts five miraculous acts (13:9–11; 14:8–10; 16:16–18; 28:7–8), as well as the resurrection of a dead person (20:7–12) and a summary of healings (19:11–12). The Tübingen school highlighted the technique of *syncrisis* between Peter and Paul systematically constructed in Acts, concluding that Luke would have distributed between Peter and Paul the same qualities in order to model the portrait of one on the other. Jacob Jervell had good reason to protest, invoking the therapeutic activity of Paul attested by his letters¹². He drew attention to the “signs of the apostle” (τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου) claimed by the apostle in 2 Cor 12:12. The modality of the signs of the apostle is explained by the triad “deeds of power, wonders and signs” that one recognizes in Acts¹³. In Rom 15:18b–19, the apostle synthesizes his ministry, using the same terms: Christ worked through him “to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders (ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων)”. To the Thessalonians, he speaks of the gospel which “came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 1:5).

In brief, what Paul touches upon so discreetly, the “biographical” memory has preserved it for us. Acts inscribes it within a correlative schematic Jesus-Peter-Paul, whereas the *Acts of Paul*, in their rereading of the canonical Acts, gives way to an amplification in a legendary mode; fundamentally, by describing Paul as a healer, these writings have invented nothing. Furthermore, they help us to better comprehend the “Paul effect” in the communities he founded, and which

¹² Jacob JERVELL, *The Unknown Paul. Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1984, p. 76–95.

¹³ Acts 2:22; 8:13. See also 2:19.43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12.

welcomed him, following the example of the Galatians, as “an angel of God” (Gal 4:14).

2.3 Points of contact

The terminological points of contact between Acts and Pauline language are not numerous¹⁴. The same verb πορθεῖν designates Paul’s opposition to the Christian movement (Gal 1:13; Acts 9:21) as well as the formula ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων (Gal 1:14; Acts 22:3). In the episode of the flight from Damascus, there are the same expressions, “through an opening in the wall” (διὰ τοῦ τεύχους) and “lowering” (χαλᾶν) in 2 Cor 11:33 and Acts 9:25. These points of contact may be explained easily by the diffusion of the Pauline legend: as one perceives it in the reading of Phil. 3:6, Paul himself contributed to the diffusion of his portrait as a repentant persecutor. These terminological contacts relating to his teaching, present in the discourse between Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:43) and in Paul’s speech in Pisidian Antioch (13:38–39), will be treated below under 3.3; it is not a matter of citation, but rather of the use of the logia of the apostle in circulation among Pauline communities.

Let me illustrate my thesis on these two points of narrative contact between Acts and the Pauline letters: the result of the Jerusalem assembly and the flight from Damascus.

Whereas Paul assesses the Jerusalem assembly for the benefit of the Galatians – “we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you” (Gal 2:5) – the account in Acts sets up the four required abstinences of the apostolic decree (Acts 15:20.29): idolatry, immorality (πορνεία), eating strangled meat, and drinking blood are forbidden to Gentile Christians. Once again the basic contradiction between Paul’s text and the Lukan text has led most often to the suspicion that Luke has inserted here a late and local decree adopted by Jewish-Christian communities; possibly Luke himself actually recorded such a pronouncement. Most importantly, in my opinion, he thereby gives an account of the actual practice of Paul. When Paul demands, in Corinth (1 Corinthians 8) or in Rome (Romans 14), that the strong have regard for the weak, he pleads, in effect, soteriologically for the freedom of the strong, but pragmatically recommends their abstinence: “If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love, Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died” (Rom 14:15). Does not one discover in the apostolic decree this echo of the apostle, at the same time theologically firm

¹⁴ Cf. William O. WALKER, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus Reconsidered”, *JSNT* 24, 1985, p. 323 or *The Pauline Writings*, ed. Stanley E. PORTER and Craig C. EVANS (The Biblical Seminar 34), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, p. 55–74. For a maximizing evaluation of parallels with the Pauline literature: Richard I. PERVO, *Dating Acts. Between the Evangelists and the Apologists*, Santa Rosa, Polebridge, 2006, p. 51–147.

and ethically supple, in the name of agape¹⁵? One conceives that in the rhetorical strategy of Galatians 2, Paul is defending the soteriological principle and not its ethical modulations; these have been retained in the memory of the apostle as recorded by Luke.

The second point of narrative contact is the famous incident of the flight in the basket down the wall of Damascus. The hostility which forced the apostle to flee is attributed by Paul to the ethnarch under King Aretas (2 Cor 11:32–33), by Luke to the Jews (Acts 9:25). The two versions therefore do not agree. The proposals in the history of exegesis which attribute to Luke a distorted re-reading of the episode of 2 Corinthians 11 are by no means absent. But it is more plausible that such a spectacular anecdote gave rise, in the oral tradition, to multiple variants; the author of Acts has thus drawn his version, without a doubt choosing the one most amenable to his purpose, in order to be able to present the Jews in the role of persecutors of Paul, himself only recently converted from his activity of persecuting Christians (9:26–30)¹⁶. Here again, the tradition on which the author of Acts draws is inspired primarily not by the writings of the apostle, but by the history of his life.

It is correct, of course, to question the historical plausibility of such a paradigm. Could such a great admirer of Paul, as the author of Acts, not have known of the existence of letters attributed to his hero? The existence, within the Pauline communities, of copies of certain letters could hardly have passed unnoticed. Therefore, we cannot affirm with certainty that Luke was unaware of them but with regard to Luke's work, one may observe that he ignored them. Their absence in Acts does not prove the literary ignorance of the author, but rather signals that within the traditional milieu to which he belonged, the letters did not control the memory of the apostle. To insist that an "authentic" knowledge of Paul is mediated exclusively through his letters, while at the same time blatantly ignoring the traces of his actions left in history, is a prejudice which dates back to the Enlightenment.

E. J. Goodspeed, in his time, launched the idea that the canon of Pauline letters was assembled by an anonymous admirer of Paul, the interest in such a collection having been sparked by the reading of the recently published Acts, and that this person collected his letters from within the communities founded by the apostle¹⁷. Taking into account the long and complex process which presided over the establishment of the Pauline canon and the reconfiguration of certain

¹⁵ Karl LÖHNING, "Das Evangelium und die Kulturen. Heilsgeschichtliche und kulturelle Aspekte kirchlicher Realität in der Apostelgeschichte", in ANRW 11/25.3, ed. Wolgang HAASE, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1985, p. 2604–2646, especially 2623–2625.

¹⁶ See Daniel MARGUERAT, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)* (CNT 5a), Geneva, Labor et Fides, 2007, p. 340–341.

¹⁷ Edgar J. GOODSPEED, *New Solutions of the New Testament Problems*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1927.

of his letters, this romantic idea should be abandoned; but the intuition which guided it may be retained: at the time when Luke wrote, the canon of Pauline letters was neither truly assembled nor completed – since the redaction of the Pastorals was still in progress nor, above all, consolidated into a referential corpus of the apostle's memory¹⁸.

I will now illustrate this differentiated management of the Pauline heritage by demonstrating how the presence of motifs from the “biographical” pole and the “doctoral” pole develop the possibilities present in the apostle's letters. In other words, I want to show how the choice of different motifs from one or the other of the poles of Pauline reception corresponds to the possibilities present in Paul's letters, yet these motifs developed in diverse ways in service of the needs of the tradition.

3. A differentiated reception of Paul

How was Paul's persona constructed in the writings which I associate with the “biographical” and “doctoral” poles? And can one identify in Paul's letters the traditional source of the motifs retained in this construction, differentiated according to his writings? I repeat: in my opinion, what distinguishes the biographical branch from the doctoral one is that the “doctoral” writings yield themselves to a re-reading of the proto-Pauline letters, while the “biographical” writings derive from a memory of the apostle which had not been normalized by the writings from Paul's own hand.

3.1 Paul's status

What status is accorded to Paul from the point of view of the history of salvation? In Acts, the situation is clear. Luke's account testifies to the distinct interest in the person of Paul, which dominates the narration of ch. 13. Paul is the *σκευός εκλογής* (9:15), the instrument chosen by God to proclaim the gospel outside its originating space, Judaism. Luke sees in him the providential man by whom the testimony of the resurrection will reach the *ἔσχατον τῆς γῆς* (1:8). The progressive concentration of the narrative on the person of Paul is the result of a narrative strategy: introduced surreptitiously into the account on the occasion of the martyrdom of Stephen (7:58–8:3), converted (9:1–31), active in Antioch (11:25–26), Saul/Paul is the companion of Barnabas in Acts 13–14, then he plays the primary role in the second missionary voyage of Acts 15–21; from ch. 22 onwards he figures solely as an accused witness, proclaiming the gospel in the

¹⁸ Charles K. BARRETT, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus”, *ET* 78, 1976, p. 2–5.

face of Jerusalem and the officials of the Empire. Luke has skillfully fashioned a picture of the rise to power of his hero from Acts 7 to Acts 28.¹⁹

But it must be immediately added that the plot of Acts sets up a series of characters prior to him: Paul is preceded. He is neither the first, nor – as is too frequently said – the partner in a tale of two personalities, Peter and Paul. Luke, for whom the argument of continuity provides a theological structure, puts in place – between the time of the Twelve apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 1–6) and the time of Paul (Acts 13–28) – a series of intermediary figures: Stephen, who provokes the crisis with Judaism in Jerusalem (6:8–7:60), Philip, who evangelizes outside of Judea (8:5–40), Barnabas, who introduces Paul to the community in Jerusalem (9:27) and is his associate in the evangelization of Antioch (11:25–26). This narrative succession inserts Paul in a chain of witnesses which prevents the reader from isolating him. Even more importantly, Paul does not inaugurate the mission to non-Jews; this privilege is attributed to Peter in the famous encounter with Cornelius, which sanctions the abandonment of the ancient barrier between pure and impure (10:1–11:18). This narrative device is significant: the programmatic beginning of the evangelization of non-Jews, to which God pushes Peter, is inserted between the account of Paul's conversion in Damascus (Acts 9) and the start of his mission (Acts 13); Paul merely continues what Peter began and what was put in place before him by the Hellenistic Christians who found refuge in Antioch (11:19–20). This secondary status of Paul with respect to the Twelve is verified in the surprising refusal by Luke to accord him the title ἀπόστολος, reserved for the companions of Jesus (1:21–22)²⁰. Can one imagine that a reader of the letters would dare deny such apostolic standing to Paul? The final image of Paul in Rome, welcoming and preaching to “all who came to him” (28:30), Jews and non-Jews, puts into concrete form the relationship constituted in Acts by the man of Tarsus, between Israel and the Church – a link which Luke reaffirms despite the notice of Israel's rejection of the gospel at the end of the book (28:26–27).

In the Deutero-Paulines, Paul is also a figure of inclusiveness, no longer between Israel and the Church, but between Jews and pagans. The slogan of Gal 3:28, but also Rom 3:22–23 and 10:12–13 must have resonated in Pauline tradition. In Colossians, Paul appears as the herald *par excellence* of the word of God (1:25), a word identified with the gospel (1:5) and interpreted as a “mystery” (μυστήριον, 1:26); this mystery, hidden for centuries and now made manifest, and of which Paul is the privileged recipient, is not simply “Christ”, but rather “Christ among you” (ἐν ὑμῖν, 1:27)²¹. The category of the μυστήριον, fundamental in Colossians (1:26.27; 2:2; 4:3), finds its ultimate concrete expression in the

¹⁹ See below, p. 33–47.

²⁰ I consider the exception of 14:4.14, where ἀπόστολος designates in the plural Barnabas and Paul, to be a lapse, signalling that the author is conscious of the apostolic title accorded to Paul, yet decides not to attribute it to him.

²¹ This is my translation. The phrase ἐν ὑμῖν can also be translated “within you”.

presence of the gospel among the nations, of which the existence of the Colossian church is a sign. The letter to the Ephesians brings to the μυστήριον its ecclesiological interpretation. The mystery, which was made known to Paul through a revelation (3:3), is still the “mystery of Christ”, but its contents are described in 3:6: “the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”. Ephesians thus brings out the ecclesiological implications of the “Christ among you” of Colossians: it concerns the creation of the new person distinct from Jews and pagans, and the reconciliation with God of the two into one body by means of the cross (2:15–16 condenses 2:11–22). The “mystery” is thus none other than the ecclesiological and missiological interpretation of the Pauline gospel. What is significant here is that Paul is not just the recipient of the revelation, but also its divinely authorized herald. He becomes an integral part of the gospel which he announces, since for him it concerns the accomplishment (πληρῶσαι) of the word of God (Col. 1:25). Paul belongs thereafter to the μυστήριον²².

This picture changes noticeably in the Pastorals. Paul is the sole author of the letters (contrasted with Col 1:1) and the sole apostle named in the letters. Paul is the “chief” (πρῶτος, 1 Tim 1:15), the first among saved sinners, the “model” (ὑποτύπωσις, 2 Tim 1:13) of all those who come to faith. He is at the heart of the “good treasure” (καλὴ παραθήκη, 2 Tim. 1:14), which Timothy is charged to preserve. Paul thus exhorts Timothy to keep his teaching, his sound doctrine, governing the life of the Church following the model of the Graeco-Roman *oikos*: 1 Timothy and Titus are witnesses to this type of household organization, distributing to each category of person (bishop, deacon, elder, widow, slave) his or her place, behavior, and role. Paul is presented here as the founder and organizer of the Church. The priority he is credited with as πρῶτος (1 Tim 1:15) is at the same time a temporal priority in the order of conversion, as well as a theological priority inasmuch as it forms a model for the believers to come. There is a blatant contradiction with the declaration of 1 Cor 15:8–9, in which the apostle degrades himself in the face of the first beneficiaries of the paschal appearances, by portraying himself as the ἔσχατος πάντων, the “last of all”, the “least”, the ἐλάχιστος; it is Cephas, in fact, who is recognized as having the status of πρῶτος (1 Cor 15:5). In reality however, a tension dominates the passage, since Paul affirms in v. 10: “On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them (περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα)”.

²² “Paul’ himself now belongs to the contents of the proclamation, and thus belongs to the ‘mysterium’” (Helmut MERKLEIN, “Paulinische Theologie in der Rezeption des Kolosser- und Epheserbriefes”, in: *Paulus in den neutestamentlichen Spätschriften*, ed. Karl KERTELGE [QD 89], Freiburg, Herder, 1981, p. 25–69, here 29). A difference between Colossians and Ephesians is perceived in the measure to which the Paul of Colossians is solely authorized to proclaim the mystery (Col 4:4), no reference being made to the common apostolic tradition. By contrast, the μυστήριον in Eph 3:5 is revealed “to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”.

There is tension between the posteriority of Paul (the ἔσχατος πάντων) and his claim that a more efficacious grace was given to him. Paul never presents himself as the first in a line, and Ephesians portrays him as “the very least of all the saints” (Eph 3:8). The argument of preeminence, known to have been widely diffused in the popular philosophy, is thus reversed between 1 Cor 15:5 and 1 Tim. 1:15, just as the Petrine priority of 1 Corinthians is transposed on Paul in 1 Timothy²³. It appears to me that the Pastorals radicalize the Pauline paradox of 1 Corinthians 15. In simplifying it from the “more than” (περισσότερον of 1 Cor 15:10 which becomes the dominant element), they thus construct the type of “first sinner” / “first saved”. The theological foundation is certainly maintained: in any case the action comes from God, in 1 Corinthians (cf. 15:10a) as in 1 Timothy (cf. the divine passive ἡλεήθην, “I received mercy” in 1:13.16).

Second Timothy, which occupies a particular position within the Pastorals, distinguishes itself with a biographical anchorage that certifies Paul’s teaching, in contrast to 1 Timothy and Titus. Its image of the author, imprisoned and preaching in Rome (2 Tim 1:17), recalls the final scene of Acts 28:30–31 in order to present the situation in which the letter speaks; it thus clearly envisions the time after Paul. The apostle’s forced inactivity explains the unstable situation of the Church, in which former unreliable collaborators work; it is in this fragile period of succession that 2 Timothy intervenes. The network of Paul’s collaborators is extensively named (1:5.15–18; 2:17; 3:12–13; 4:9–21). Those who abandoned him (1:15; 4:9–10) are contrasted with those who have remained faithful to him (1:16; 4:11). The Pauline tradition here mixes the data from the epistles and from Acts with its own data, in an effort to draw together the “doctrinal” pole and the “biographical” pole²⁴.

From the integration of Paul in a chain of witnesses (Acts) to the position of the founder of the Church (Pastorals), one sees an evolutionary line forming whereby Paul receives a progressively more hieratic status. The Deutero-Paulines, which attribute to the apostle the function of mediating a “mystery” (Colossians / Ephesians), occupy a median position in this development. This is accentuated even more if one moves on to the *Acts of Paul*, a writing attributed by Tertullian to an elder who was an admirer of Paul (though a badly inspired author, according to Tertullian; cf. *De Baptismo* 17.5). This text helps us to see the superimposition of the figure of Christ on that of the apostle.

There is no lack of examples. Led to the theatre to be burned, Thecla looks around for Paul and sees “the Lord sitting in the form of Paul”; the moment

²³ With Michael WOLTER, *Die Pastoralbriefe als Paulustradition* (FRLANT 146), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1988, p. 51–56.

²⁴ Is this conjunction of poles an indication that 2 Timothy was drafted before the other Pastorals in a time when the memory of Paul was yet vital, or (rather) the sign that the writing of 2 Timothy testifies to a late inclination to harmonization between the different poles of Pauline reception?

she fixes her eyes on him, he departs into heaven (*Acts of Paul* 3:21²⁵). Paul was previously driven from the city, and it is Christ who borrows his appearance in order to reassure Thecla before the ordeal. Later, when Paul is imprisoned before being handed over to wild beasts, he prays God to be delivered. A miracle occurs: the doors of the prison open, the guards are asleep, and here “a young man resembling the body of Paul, lighting [the way] not with a lantern, but with the radiance of his body, preceded them until they reached the sea” (9.20). It is Christ disguised as Paul who guides them to deliverance.

Let us note how subtle the process is. Jesus is not confounded with Paul but bears his traits. The conviction that the Lord intervenes through him is so strong that it generates an unclear image: is it Paul who acts, or rather Jesus? We perceive here the emergence of a stage of veneration of the apostle attained towards the middle of the second century: Paul is no longer the disciple, the apostle, but the saint, the blessed; his image rejoins that of Christ to the point of temporarily fusing with it. By successive shifts, Christ is absorbed by the divine sphere, and the apostle tends to identify with the Saviour. In terms of the biographical itinerary of the *Acts of Paul*, the apostle is decapitated by order of Nero. After his execution, he appears before the emperor and his court: “Caesar, behold, here is Paul, the soldier of God; I am not dead but live” (14:6²⁶). Paul’s return to life duplicates the miracle of Easter, and his resurrection becomes the proof which confounds the incredulous pagans. From his status as mediator, the apostle has become a source of revelation.

Finally, the growing concentration on the uniqueness of Paul suggests to me that the different roles accorded to the apostle correspond to the diverse faces of Paul’s own self-comprehension. Each pole of Pauline reception made concrete a potential that is present in the writings of the apostle. The placement of Paul in a chain of witnesses (*Acts*) and his secondary status with respect to the apostolic foundation (*Ephesians*) corresponds to the position of the apostle in 1 Cor 15:5–11, where he aligns himself in last place after Cephas, after the circle of the Twelve and a series of witnesses, as the last of the apostles. Paul declares himself to have been preceded by an apostolic tradition. But when the Pastorals construct the figure of the founder of the Church, they validate a tradition which developed from other declarations by Paul: those in which he declares himself to be the beneficiary of a revelation which owes nothing to human mediation, a direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11–12); those in which Paul presents himself as father (1 Thess 2:11) or mother (1 Thess 2:7) of the community; those in which he declares himself the “good aroma of Christ” (2 Cor 2:15) for the Church. At the same time, in this conflict with the Christians of Galatia, Paul does not hesitate to refute all possibility of “another gospel”, one other than the one he proclaims

²⁵ Trans. R. McL. Wilson.

²⁶ Trans. J. K. Elliot.

and which is confused with “the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6–7). The image of Paul contained in his letters is neither smooth, nor uniform. One encounters in it the ambivalence of Paul being simultaneously situated in a tradition which precedes him and depicted as the origin of a movement which arises from his Gospel. The history of reception amplified this ambivalence to the point where it constructed divergent images of the apostle.

3.2 *The suffering of the apostle*

The christological foundation given to the suffering of the apostle, and thereby to the suffering of the community, is a fundamental theological structure of Paul’s theology. This foundation is made concrete by the category of “sharing” / “solidarity” (κοινωνία): “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing (κοινωνία) of his sufferings by becoming like him (συμμορφιζόμενος) in his death” (Phil 3:10). The participial phrase, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, offers commentary on sharing in the sufferings of Christ: the present tense signals that it does not apply to baptism, but rather to the trials of the apostolic life. Thus the apostolic condition is the place of a double experimentation: the power of the resurrection (under the eschatological horizon – Phil 3:11) as well as the conformity to the suffering destiny of Christ. The same semantic field of death / resurrection appears in 2 Cor 13:4, in which the structural parallelism aligns the destiny of the apostle with that of Jesus: “For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God”²⁷.

The same category of κοινωνία is applied to the suffering of believers. The Christians of Corinth were “sharers (κοινωνοί)” in the sufferings (2 Cor 1:7); they endured “the same sufferings” (2 Cor 1:6). The apostolic suffering constitutes the horizon of understanding for the community’s own suffering, in the same way as the suffering of Christ constitutes the horizon of understanding for the suffering of the apostle²⁸. This double correlation of community / apostle and apostle / Christ is explicit in the verses that refer to imitation: “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thess 1:6; see 1 Cor 1:11).

What is to become of this christological foundation of the apostolic suffering in Pauline reception?

²⁷ This conformity to the suffering of Christ returns under a changed terminology: the παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ are profusely assigned to the apostle (2 Cor 1:5); he bears in his body the νέκρωσις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (2 Cor 4:10); he bears the στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 6:17). These genitives possess a qualitative value: it is the participation in the suffering of Jesus which is the irrefutable marker of the apostolate and which guarantees its authenticity (2 Corinthians 10–13). This communion with the destiny of the Crucified One assures within the tile of the community the salvific dimension of the cross: “So death is at work in us, but life in you” (2 Cor 4:12).

²⁸ Michael WOLTER, “Der Apostel und seine Gemeinden als Teilhaber am Leidensgeschehen Jesu Christi: Beobachtungen zur paulinischen Theologie”, *NTS* 36, 1990, p. 535–557, here 551.

Let us look at the Deutero-Paulines. In its construction of the image of Paul the prisoner, the letter to the Ephesians retained the image of the suffering of the apostle “for the sake of you Gentiles” (Eph 3:1). But the christological dimension is to be found, rather, in the famous formula of Col 1:24: “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church”. The well-known difficulty with this verse comes from the fact that it seems to postulate an insufficiency with the salvific work of Christ, which contradicts the christological hymn of 1:15–20.

Not wanting to explore the complex problem of this verse, at the same time semantic and theological, I will limit myself to two remarks in order to justify my reading of Col 1:24:

Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν
 ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν
 καὶ ἀναταπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου
 ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία

On one hand, this verse is composed of two parallel phrases: one is concerned with the sufferings “for your sake”, the other with the afflictions “for the sake of his body, that is, the church”. We are therefore beyond the ecclesiology of Paul, which understands the local community as a concretization of the body of Christ. This leads us, however, to conclude that the lack of these afflictions does not characterize the engagement of the apostle Paul as witness of Jesus in the world for the church of the Colossians only, but rather for the universal Church conceived as a cosmic entity. On the other hand, the syntactical order places ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου after τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ. The deficit does not affect Christ’s afflictions themselves, but rather their presence in Paul’s flesh; it is in Paul’s story that they still have to be accomplished²⁹. Moreover, θλίψις, according to Paul, always designates the tribulations of the apostle and of his churches. In brief, Colossians takes over the Pauline structure of apostolic engagement as participation in the sufferings of Christ, but gives it an extension which corresponds to the universal dimension of its ecclesiology.

In the Pastorals, 2 Timothy alone creates the image of a suffering Paul. From the outset, Timothy is exhorted as a co-sufferer with Paul for the gospel (2 Tim 1:8); he is thus invited to engage in a life of trials, for which the model is the apostle (1:12). But the most interesting passage is 2:11b–13, which establishes a correlation between the destiny of suffering and the eschatological sanction he will receive. This is a traditional section, already formed from composite elements; by its structure it recalls the sentence from Q 12:8–9, and by the use of συναπεθάνομεν, it echoes Rom 6:8: “If we have died with him (συναπεθάνομεν),

²⁹ Here I take up the reading proposed by Jean-Noël ALETTI, *Saint Paul. Epître aux Colossiens* (EtB 20), Paris, Gabalda, 1993, p. 31–37.

we will also live with him (συζήσομεν); if we endure, we will also reign with him (συμβασιλεύσομεν); if we deny him, he will also deny us ...”.

The Pauline *koinonia* is present in constructions with the prefix συν-, but how does it relate to the christological foundation? The context of 2:8–13 indicates that the interpretative key to this credo resides in Paul’s situation: his suffering permits the salvation of the elect (2:10). The reference to salvation history has thus changed: the suffering has become the passion of Paul for the Church; it permits the verification of the eschatological correlation of solidarity. It is the apostle’s committed existence that lends credibility to our passage, and one notices here the point at which the paradigmatic status conferred on the apostle exercises strong influence on Christology³⁰.

Up to this point we have noticed that Colossians I maintains the christological foundation of the apostle’s suffering, while 2 Timothy 2 evokes it without working it out theologically. What is the situation in the Acts of the Apostles? Paul’s destiny of suffering is revealed from the very beginning, at the moment of his conversion in Damascus: he is the instrument chosen to “bear the name” of Christ and to commit himself to the path of trials: “I myself will show him how much he must suffer (παθεῖν) for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:16). Significantly, his conversion is followed immediately (εὐθέως 9:20) by his preaching activity in the synagogues of Damascus, to which the Jews react by plotting his death (9:23). His flight from Damascus leads him to Jerusalem, where once again, a plot by Hellenistic Jews threatens his life (9:29). The sequence of 9:1–30 is programmatic of Paul’s destiny, which passes from the status of persecutor of Christ to that of persecuted witness of Christ. The episode of Antioch of Pisidia (13:13–52) presents the scenario repeated throughout the Pauline mission: an initially favorable reception to his preaching in the synagogue is followed by a second hearing, in which Paul is violently rejected. Luke reproduced this scenario with a regularity that borders on monotony: at Iconium (14:1–7), at Thessalonica (17:1–9), at Berea (17:10–14), at Corinth (18:1–10), at Ephesus (19:8–10). The schema repeats itself: Paul reaps the hostility of a large part of the synagogue (synthesized under the name οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι), while arousing the interest of the God-fearers and the Greeks. The hostility is not exclusively Jewish, as is to be seen by the riot of the silversmiths of Ephesus (19:21–40). The difficulties encountered are not only particular to Paul; they also affect his collaborators, Silas, Jason, Sosthenes, or Alexander: all of them participate in Paul’s distress.

At a first glance, the christological foundation of these trials appears to be absent, because it is not formulated. Methodologically, it is not recommended that one analyze narrative theology in the same way that one would argumentative theology. Luke does not make explicit in Acts the christological foundation, but

³⁰ On this text, see Yann REDALIÉ, *Paul après Paul. Le temps, le salut, la morale selon les épîtres à Timothée et à Tite* (Le Monde de la Bible 31), Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1994, p. 193–199.