Auctoritas Pauli according to the Deutero-Pauline Literature and the Acts of the Apostles

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Abstract

The contribution tries to understand an important, although mostly implicit aspect of the Lukans and the deutero-Pauline rereading of the figure of Paul, i.e. the question of authority. The comparative approach treats five major elements: (1) "Paul" and his authority is no longer contested, without necessarily becoming an ethically idealised figure; (2) the construction of the authority of "Paul" - in the epistolary (Col, Eph), but also in the historiographical (Luke-Acts) reception - is linked to the dialectical relationship of presence and absence; (3) "Paul" becomes a quasi-soteriological figure (esp. in Col and Eph), his authority being founded in and maintained exclusively by God; (4) the authority of "Paul" is essentially based on teaching and argumentation; (5) "Paul" becomes a figure which includes both unique and paradigmatic dimensions.

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Chapter 13

AUCTORITAS PAULI ACCORDING TO THE DEUTERO-PAULINE LITERATURE AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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I. By Way of Introduction: Presuppositions and Approach

In studying the Deutero-Pauline literature, the astute reader quickly realizes that the issue of authority is fundamental to understanding these texts. Deutero-Pauline writings utilize a range of strategies for assigning authority that function not only to clarify Paul's role, but also to legitimize the author's own approach. It will be expedient to consider the historical and hermeneutical issues involved with the literary device of pseudopigraphy. Accordingly it will be helpful to adopt the question of authority as the key to reading these texts.

The authoritative dimension remains in large part beneath the different post-apostolic images of Paul and yet is highly determinative of them. More specifically, our approach will be as follows: in each section we will begin with the epistolary reception of Paul, focusing on Colossians and Ephesians, in order to put this 'backbone' of the Pauline school into dialogue with the Lukan image of Paul. Needless to say, this approach is not intended to summon Luke before the court of Colossians and Ephesians, a constellation of texts which, a few decades ago, would have signalled the worst for the 'Paulinism' of Luke. Fortunately, we are now beyond this kind of theological interrogation. It is also needless to mention that the chosen approach is not in any way striving toward a harmonized or unified perception of the post-apostolic image of Paul. The fact that we are dealing here with two starkly different types of reception – epistolary, on the one hand, and historiographic, on the other – already calls for prudence and nuance. Finally, it is hardly also necessary to point out that our approach is experimental and that we have no intention of capturing the phenomenon in all of its complexity. Jürgen Roloff, a seasoned Lukan scholar, wrote the following words some thirty years ago: 'The Lukan portrait of Paul is certainly a very complex phenomenon, and it is expected that any treatment of the subject will only perceive a part of the references and associations interwoven within.' Our work is no exception, even more so because our contribution will focus primarily on the Deutero-Pauline literature and will have a highly synthetic orientation.

II. Pauline Authority in the Epistolary and Historiographical Receptions of the New Testament – A Phenomenological Approach

a. An Uncontested Authority

It is striking to see how Colossians and Ephesians describe Paul as an uncontested authority. Compared to the undisputed Pauline literature – particularly the Corinthian and Galatian correspondences – which exhibit a Paul who is almost constantly concerned with intensely and controversially reasserting his apostolic authority, the Deutero-Pauline writings convey the image of an uncontested Paul. The first clue: Colossians and Ephesians use the title of apostle (Col. 1.1, and again, in the same way, Eph. 1.1: Παύλου ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ) without any intention of polemical demarcation. The second clue: clearly the two epistolary self-condemnations of Colossians (1.24-2.5) and Ephesians (3.1-13) – foundational texts for the construction of Paul's image in these two letters – have the general pragmatic function of rendering the author present among the recipient community, by demonstrating his irreproachable ethos. However, a detailed analysis shows that these two key passages have no real biographical aim. Therefore, the Paul of Colossians, and even more noticeably, the Paul of Ephesians, seems to have become a figure detached from any historical contingency or individuality. These letters are not concerned with Paul's


2 Here and throughout we are using the term 'Luke' conventionally to designate the author of the work ad Theophilum without expressing an opinion on the historical identity of the author.


5 For the literary genre of 'authorial self-commendation' or 'epistolary self-presentation' see the study by F. Schneider and W. Stenger, Studien zum Neutestamentlichen Briefformular (NTTS, 11; Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 56-60; the authors speak of 'briefliche Selbstempfehlung', while M. Wolter, Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon (ÖTBK, 12; Gütersloh and Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlag und Echter Verlag, 1993), pp. 98-99, prefers the term 'briefliche Selbstvorstellung'. K. Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament', in AnRw 2/25/2.2 (1984), pp. 1031-142 and 1381-85 (1353-54); and idem, Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1984), p. 268, speaks of 'Apostolikos', defining it as follows: (…) epistolary self-introduction of the apostle, to which belongs not only his name, but also the description of his function, a short report of his message and his self-understanding.' The terminological nuances are negligible.
psychological or historical individuality, but his function or, if one prefers, his theological work in the revelation of the 'mystery' (μυστηρίου) on behalf of the world. We can speak here of a kind of 'iconization' of the figure of Paul, without necessarily confusing it with the process of 'legendarization'. Michael Gese has convincingly shown that the image of Paul in Ephesians resists either 'heroization' or 'legendarization', and thus also resists the utilization of Paul as a simple figure with whom to identify (whether ethical or otherwise). 6

A few brief remarks should suffice to illustrate this point. The limited biographical information, imported from undisputed Pauline writings, are dissociated from the person of Paul and accentuated in a new way: the *imitatio Pauli* — a topos already well known in the undisputed Pauline letters (cf., for example, 1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1; Gal. 4.12; Phil. 3.17) — is transformed into the *imitatio Dei* (Eph. 5.1, θεος του θεου τοιου θεου του θεον του θεου; believers are no longer 'children' of Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 4.14) but of God (Eph. 5.1); the Pauline self-designation 'slave of Christ' is generalized and applied to all believers (δουλοι Χριστου, Eph. 6.6). Finally, we note that Paul certainly remains a 'prisoner of Christ' (ευγος Παυλου ο δούλιος του Χριστου, Eph. 3.1; cf. 3.13; 6.20), but the description of his suffering — even considering the Colossian description — remains strangely faint and discreet. Other characteristics supplement this perception.

The next element that should be mentioned here concerns the historical situation presupposed or constructed by the letters of Colossians and Ephesians. Where particularly portrayed, one notes a liberating supremacy of the exalted Christ. For Colossians, for its part, once again goes even further. The difficulties in identifying the 'mystery' of salvation, while he as a person is described with 'discretion': 'If one fully understands, one notes a clear reluctance to associate sayings to the person of Paul' (p. 24), emphasis mine.

7 On this subject, see in French, for example, P. Nicolet, 'Le concept d’imitation de l’apotre dans la correspondance paulinienne', in Paul, une théologie en construction (ed. A. Dettwiler, J.-D. Kaestli, and D. Marguerat; MdB, 51; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2004), pp. 393-415.


11 Ibid., p. 112.


14 Ibid., p. 113: ‘In fact, mentioning the apostle Paul is a commitment to the realization of his theology in a new time, identification of the point of reference for the theology of the author of Ephesians, and a criterion for the evaluation of this theology.’

15 Cf., among others, C. Burchard, Der dreizehnte Zeuge. Traditions- und kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas’ Darstellung der Frühzeit des Paulus (FRLANT, 103; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970). As shown in the programmatic and original designation of the 'thirteenth witness', Burchard places Paul on the same level as the Twelve in his central function as witness. See, for example, the following citation: 'In principle, Luke's intent is not are well known. First, the original recipients of Ephesians remain in the shadows of history since the localization phrase 'in Ëpheso in the adscription of Eph. 1.1 is absent in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. Second, the relationship between 'Paul' and the recipients is reduced to a bare minimum, as demonstrated by reading the final exhortations and salutations (Eph. 6.10-24) and comparing them with those in Colossians (Col. 4.2-18). Finally, the *actor ad Ephesios* does not seem to have made any effort to create a strong and convincing 'pseudepigraphical situation' 9 To borrow a delightful observation from Rainer Kampling: we are dealing here with a pseudepigraphy that lacks real pseudepigraphical elements! 10

Kampling makes the following assessment: 'Ephesians is undoubtedly a post-Pauline letter, but one that takes little account of the methods of pseudepigraphy. It neither constructs an inner-textual situation out of which the letter is to have emerged, nor does it provide any evidence of extra-textual events that might clarify, at least partially, its delayed publication.' 11 Taking up an idea from Michael Wolter, 12 Kampling prefers to speak of 'symbolic pseudepigraphy'. 13 The primary intention, therefore, does not lie in a concern to 'hide' behind the name of the apostle or to impose upon the recipient community a particular theology by usurping another's authority, but in the obligation to update Pauline theology for a new historical context. The mention of the apostle Paul would then serve the primary function of indicating the place from which the author of Ephesians constructs his theology (his point of reference) as well as providing the criteria for judging the letter's theology.

Rather than stumbling against the historical indeterminacy of Ephesians, exegetes would do better to take seriously this intentional feature of Ephesians and to interpret it. Clearly Ephesians remains in continuity with the thought-world of its older sister (Colossians) while at the same time accomplishing the 'iconization' of the figure of Paul.

What about the Lukan figure of Paul on this subject? It seems that the models that read Luke's Paul as a polemical figure are not very compelling. Several contributions have shown that the Lukan affirmation of Paul's authority — or, conversely, its alleged relativism — is not based on an interest in polemical demarcation. 15

6 M. Gese, Das Vermitteln des Apostels. Die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie im Epheserbrief (WUNT, 299; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 240-49. According to Gese, the entire emphasis in the Ephesian description of Paul is on his understanding, deemed unique, of the 'mystery' of salvation, while he as a person is described with 'discretion': 'If Paul's task is particularly portrayed, one notes a clear reluctance to associate sayings to the person of Paul' (p. 24), emphasis mine.

7 On this subject, see in French, for example, P. Nicolet, 'Le concept d’imitation de l’apotre dans la correspondance paulinienne', in Paul, une théologie en construction (ed. A. Dettwiler, J.-D. Kaestli, and D. Marguerat; MdB, 51; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2004), pp. 393-415.

critical question concerning this issue is, rightly understood, the Lukan conception of the apostolate. The fact that the author of Acts does not use, with two exceptions, the title of apostle for Paul in any way implies a relativization of Paul’s role in the inexorable expansion of God’s Word ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8). If this were the case – perhaps for specific, polemical circumstances – we could not make sense of the famous ‘faux pas’ of Acts 14,4,14.16 On this point, we tend to follow Andreas Lindemann, according to whom Luke accords no ‘fundamental primacy’ to the title ἅγιος.17 Also note that the author of the Lukan work does not hesitate to use the verb ‘send’ (ἀπεστέλλειν) to describe the mission that the risen Lord gives to Paul.18 Nevertheless, the status of authority that Luke attributes to Paul is entirely comparable to the Colossian and Ephesian image of Paul as the missionary to the nations par excellence. According to Luke, the authority of Paul is uncontested.19 The simple fact that Luke gives his hero the privilege of making a programmatic speech, practically a farewell speech (Acts 20:18-35),20 which is intended to outline to subordinate this one [Paul] to the status of the twelve but rather to rank him as one of thirteen witnesses” (p. 174); A. Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum. Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion (BHT, 58; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), pp. 66-68; Roloff, ‘Die Paulus-Darstellung’, p. 519: ‘Through the way in which he deals with the traditions concerning Paul, one recognizes that Luke knows nothing more about Paul ever having been a controversial figure in the church’; M. C. de Boer, ‘Images of Paul in the Post-Apostolic Period’, CBQ 42 (1980), pp. 359-360 (365-66). ‘Luke [...: a very much an apostle-like figure in Acts.’ 16 Rightly Roloff, ‘Die Paulus-Darstellung’, pp. 519-20: [Luke retains] the term “apostle” for Paul and Barnabas in the Antiochian traditions seen in 14,4 and 14, [...], although he otherwise reserves the title “apostle” for the twelve. This carelessness would be virtually unexplainable if it were Luke himself who removed the title “apostle” from Paul due to a prevailing polemical circumstance. But obviously the foundational limitation of the apostolate to the twelve was already part of the tradition of his church. It seems that he was no longer aware that at some point this could have been a point of contention.’ 17 Cf. Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum, pp. 60-62. 18 Cf. also J. Schröter, ‘Paulus als Modell christlicher Zeugenschaft’, Apk 9,15f. and 28,30f. als Rahmen der lukanischen Paulusdarstellung und Rezeption des “historischen” Paulus’, in D. Marguerat (ed.), Reception of Paulinism in Acts. Réception du paulinisme dans les Actes des apôtres (BETL, 229; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), pp. 53-80 (71-72). 19 Let us turn again to Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum, p. 67: “[... the portrayal of Paul in Acts [conveys] very few polemical elements. Paul appears in Acts as an absolute, unquestioned authority”; and a little further on: “One can therefore say that at the time when Acts was composed, the view of Paul in the church was not seriously in danger; on the other hand, however, Luke found it necessary to establish deliberately the portrayal of Paul” (p. 68). 20 The characterization of Acts 20,18-35 as a ‘farewell speech’ dominates – in our view rightly – the research (G. Ballhorn, ‘Die Mitleute – ein Literaturbericht’, in Das Erbe des Paulus. Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte [ed. F. W. Horn; BZNW, 106; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2001], pp. 37-47 [41-42], provides a brief overview of the issue), but there is not unanimity. See, e.g., the hesitations of A. Lindemann, ‘Paulus und die Rede in Mittel (Apg 20,17-38)’, in D. Marguerat (ed.), Reception of Paulinism in Acts. Réception du paulinisme continuity from one generation to another, is significant in itself. In addition, ‘the narrative’s increasingly personalized nature at the end of Acts, and its focus on the person of Paul in his role as teacher and martyr’21 is in direct contrast with an alleged relativization of the Lukan Paul. The fact that the different receptions of the apostle – epistolary and historiographical – both transform him into a figure of uncontested authority could be paired with a process of idealization or legitimation. We have seen, however, that the author of Ephesians resists this trend. On this point, the Lukan corpus appears more complex. The historiographical genre tends to turn its heroes into paradigmatic figures. The tendency to idealize the central character – especially in Acts 21-28 – seems inevitable, especially since the medium of narrative allows the author to describe the character in all his ‘vividness’ and present him to the audience as a character with whom to identify. At the same time, the Lukan Paul does not escape suffering and decline. Does the ‘theology of suffering’ in Luke22 function to counterbalance the tendency to idealize the hero of a story? Or is it, instead, used in service of this idealization? That brings us to our next point.

b. An Authority Inscribed in the Dialectic between Presence and Absence

The second thesis we wish to develop is that Pauline authority is inscribed in the dialectic between presence and absence. Let us begin again with the epistolary reception. We touch here upon a special feature – one recognized from antiquity – of the literary genre of the letter.23 Cicero, for example, defines in passing the ‘friendly letter’ by referring to its emblematically dialogic nature, as ‘conversations between absent friends’ (amicorum colloquia absentium) (Philippica 2.7). The passage is worth citing because it shows Cicero’s concern for preserving the private sphere, to which the friendly letter testifies. Cicero accuses his opponent of having read one of his letters in public:

In his hopeless ignorance of civilized conduct and the usages of society, he read it aloud. Has anyone possessing the least acquaintance with the behavior of gentlemen ever produced a letter written to him by a friend with whom he had substantially had a difference and read it aloud in public? That amounts to robbing life of its social
Cicero repeatedly emphasizes the dialogical nature of the letter. In *Ad Familiares* 12.30.1 (Letter 417), for example, he sees the letter as a substitute for real dialogue: ‘Now that I cannot talk to you face to face, what could I like better than writing to you or reading your letters?’ (Bailey, LCL).\(^{25}\) The dialogical dimension is also regularly mentioned in *Ad Atticam*, for example, in 12.39.2 (Letter 280): ‘Still it is a comfort to talk to you in absence, and a much greater one to read your letters (Tamen adlevor cum loquor tecum absens, multo etiam magis cum tuas litteras lego)’ (Bailey, LCL).\(^{26}\) About a century later, Seneca places himself in this same tradition when he repeatedly emphasizes, in particular in his *Epistulae morales*, the close proximity between letter and dialogue. Hildegard Cancik interprets *Epistulae* 67.2; 38.1; 40.1 and 55.9 in this way.\(^{27}\) The last of these letters (*Epistula* 55) even suggests that the ‘being-together’ at a distance that is achieved by means of a letter is of a superior quality to that of real, immediate presence. The traditional notion that the letter is a deficient substitute for real presence is here eclipsed:

‘You may hold converse with your friends when they are absent, and indeed as often as you wish and for as long as you wish. For we enjoy this, the greatest of pleasures, the most of all: to be absent from one another (Conversari cum amisIs absentibus licet, et quidem quotiens velis, quamdiu velis: magis hac voluptate, quae maxima est, fruirem, dum absunsem) […] A friend should be retained in the spirit; such a friend can never be absent (Amicus animo postsidendus est; hic autem nuncquam absit) [55.11] […] I see you, my dear Lucilius, and at this very moment I hear you; I am with you to such an extent that I hesitate whether I should not begin to write you notes instead of letters (Video te, mi Lucili; cum maxime audio: adeo tecum sum, ut dubitem, an incipiam non epistulas, sed codicellos tibi scribere)’ (ibid.; Basore; LCL).\(^{28}\)

Finally, Demetrius, Ἰσπί ἐραυνείας 223, cites Artemon, the editor of Aristotle’s letters, who says that the letter should be written in the same way as a dialogue and

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on the other – we believe we are able to observe an analogous dialectic in Luke.

Acts is interested in mediating the narrative presence of Paul. The historiographical genre, while respecting the temporal distance of the events and characters of the past, establishes, by means of the story, a kind of narrative immediacy between the reader and the world of the story, an immediacy that is realized at the moment when the reader finds himself or herself involved or ‘entangled’ in this narrative device. What we find most interesting, however, is the fact that within this narrative device, Acts progressively inscribes the dimensions of Paul’s absence, decline, and his eventual death. This anticipation of the end starts early in the narrative – in fact, with the debut of Paul’s new career as announced in the programmatic affirmation of the risen Christ to Ananias in Acts 9.15-16 – and then gradually develops, in a dramatic way, for example, in Paul’s speech to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus (Acts 20.18-35), finding its culmination in the last section of the narrative (Acts 21-28), with its end left open as a narrative finale in Acts 28.30-31. Along with Daniel Marguerat, we think it is legitimate to see, as the final theological outcome, the decline of the figure of Paul in favour of what carries him or transcends him, namely, the divine Word.

c. A De-centred Authority

When we inquire into the source of Paul’s apostolic authority in Colossians and Ephesians, the answer is clear. Certainly Colossians, for example, is concerned with presenting a Paul who ‘toils’ (1.29) and leads an intense ‘struggle’ on behalf of the Church universal (ὁδὸν γαρ χ [{'a}μος εὐδοκιμίαν ήλικον στόχον ἐχω ὑπὲρ υμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδίκειαι καὶ όσιοι συν ἔφρακεν τὸ πρός ὑμᾶς μου συν οὐρα, 2.1), It is thus a Paul who assumes entirely the task which has been entrusted to him, a task given specifically from God (κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν του θεοῦ τῆς δικαιοσύνης μου, 1.25!), His authority does not rest in any human performance, but in God. Even his struggle is ultimately an expression of the divine ‘energy’ (… στον θεον κατὰ τὴν ενέργειαν αὐτοῦ τῆς ἐνεργειαν ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν δυναμει, 1.29). It is a question of decentralized authority. The two key texts that highlight this aspect of decentralized authority are the epistolary self-commendation in Col. 2.14-2.5 and its Ephesian reedition in Eph. 3.1-13. The focus is specifically theocentric. It attempts to clarify the role given to Paul – or, if we grant the Deuterono-Pauline fiction, the role that Paul gives to himself – in the process of revealing the ‘mystery’ to the nations. In a helpful contribution, Helmut Meikle points out that in Colossians and Ephesians, the key term μυθητικόν – which is materially identical to ‘Christ among you’ (Χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν, 1.27), formally identical to the Word of God (λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, 1.25), and retrospectively identical to the Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον, 1.5) – means any mediation of Christ that finds its origin in God and is accomplished by Paul’s preaching to the nations. The conclusion is clear: the Paul of Colossians and Ephesians is now an integral part of the Gospel. A Christ who does not meet the world through the missionary activity of Paul remains an unfilled, disembodied Christ. This integration of Paul into the process of revelation constitutes, therefore, the original attempt to reflect in a systematic way on an articulation which, de facto, already exists in the undisputed Pauline literature: the relationship between the revelation of Christ and the apostolic preaching of the historical Paul.

We arrive, therefore, at the following intermediate result. On the one hand, the attribution of authority to Paul in Colossians and Ephesians strives to emphasize the de-centred dimension of this authority. On the other hand, this authority is reinforced to such an extent that Paul, the recipient and bearer of the divine revelation (quite pronounced in Eph. 3.3-7), appears to receive a quasi-soteriological status. Such a development in the figure of Paul at first seems surprising and in discontinuity with the Paul of the authentic Pauline letters. However, 1 Cor. 9.22 and possibly also certain parts of 2 Cor. 1.14-7.4 may reflect a similar self-understanding of Paul and thus allow the relationship between the historical Paul and his subsequent reception to be placed along a line of continuity.

We will leave the question open here. Again we discover that the Lukan image of Paul does not differ fundamentally from the epistolary reception of Paul. The passage to analyze in detail, of course, is the account of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9) and its two reprises (Acts 22 and 26) in the guise of autobiographical recounts. Here Paul receives his new identity and consequently his new role as a ‘witness’ (μαρτύρης) par excellence (explicitly Acts 26.20).

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22.15; 26.16) from the risen Christ himself. On this point, Luke and Ephesians occasionally converge, to the extent that the self-commendation of Ephesians 3 picks up and updates the biographical information taken from Galatians and 1 Corinthians (Eph. 3.3 picks up Gal. 1.16, and Eph. 3.8 picks up 1 Cor. 15.8).

But how does the revelation of Christ fit into the world, or more specifically, what are its modes of transmission? Are we dealing with a similar configuration to that of Colossians and Ephesians where Paul, the missionary to the nations par excellence, receives a quasi-soteriological status? This seems unlikely, because the general theological tendencies of Colossians (and Ephesians) on the one hand, and the Lukian corpus on the other, are very different: Lukian theology is fundamentally built along a line of continuity — the temporal continuity of the Church and the Spirit, but also the continuity between Judaism and Christianity in so far as Luke understands Christianity to be the finality or the fulfillment of Judaism. The description of Paul as prisoner (Acts 21–28), which continues to assert his Pharisaical identity, can be taken in this way. Colossians, in contrast, does not at all take up the paradigm of salvation-historical continuity. There is continuity, but it is mostly within the (Pauline) Christian tradition! As outrageous as it may seem, the author of Colossians renews a theology of rapture, based on the exclusivity of the revelation of Christ, while at the same time linking it to the (Pauline) tradition. In Ephesians the situation is slightly more complex. On the one hand, the author takes up and emphasizes the ‘pattern of revelation’ in Eph. 3.1–13 which, originating from the apocalyptic tradition, puts the entire emphasis on the radical newness of the revelation of Christ.39 On the other hand, Ephesians also encourages the reader to think within the context of salvation history, with the following main emphasis: first, Ephesians links Paul with the foundational age of the ‘apostles and (Christian) prophets’ (2.20; 3.5) and thus creates a temporal distinction between the apostolic and post-apostolic age. The present age of the letter’s recipients, therefore, is recognized as an age sui generis.40 Second, Ephesians conceives of the establishment of the universal Church as a synthesis between Israel and the nations (2.11–22).

d. An Authority Based on Teaching and Argumentation

Our fourth thesis evokes an important rhetorical and hermeneutical dimension that is already fully present in the undisputed Pauline literature. It is important to take the phenomenon of the (apostolic) letter seriously, not only at the technical level (as a means of transmitting knowledge from a distance), nor only at the historical level (which includes the question of pseudepigraphy), but also specifically at the hermeneutical level. Hans Weder has drawn attention to the fact that the letter’s form itself, and in particular its dialogical character, includes an intrinsic affinity with the content of the gospel.41 Add to this the fact that the Pauline school continued to cultivate a central element of the legacy of the apostle from Tarsus, namely, the development of an argumentative theology. This is not the place to treat the subject in all of its nuances. If we understand correctly, the particular theological reflection advanced by Colossians, and subsequently by Ephesians, is meant to develop a kind of theology of memory (or of reviewing the past). The Paul of the Deutero-Pauline letters does not come across as one who would convey a wholly unknown and new knowledge to the recipient community. On the contrary, the argumentative strategy of Colossians, and also Ephesians, aims to revive a religious knowledge that the author of the letter presumes is known. Accordingly, ‘Paul’ assumes the role of a competent interpreter of the past in order to clarify the present. It then follows that the (unbelievably enormous!) authority given to the apostle is not an end in itself, but fits rather into a hermeneutical approach that simultaneously presupposes and makes accessible the intelligibility of the tradition and the faith. In other words, the hermeneutical competence of ‘Paul’ — at the literary level, the epistolar staging of ‘Paul’ as a competent teacher — is manifested in the concern for a tradition (in this case a Pauline tradition) and a well-argued faith and thus strives for, at the pragmatic level, not blind obedience, but knowledge and consent on the part of the recipient community. To echo the words of the great twentieth-century philosopher of hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, authority is not primarily a phenomenon connected to obedience (in its worst form, blind obedience) but is above all a structural element of knowledge.42

Let us try again to articulate our understanding of Deutero-Paulinism in terms of what we find in Luke. Here the differences seem to be accentuated. It remains a difficult task to understand the Lukian Paul not as a missionary preacher but as an ‘authoritative teacher of the Church’.43 This depends, in large part, on how one addresses the problem and what questions one poses to the Lukian text. We suggest considering, at least, the following three elements.

First, we must consider the simple fact that this historiographical reception places its hero in the earliest phase of his missionary activity, that is, Paul’s first appearance is among the various urban centres of the Roman Empire, an appearance described

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40 Well noted by ibid., p. 238.
41 H. Weder, Neutestamentliche Hermeneutik (Zürcher Grundrisse zur Bibel; Zürich: TVZ, 1986), pp. 314–25; e.g., ‘an inner affinity between the gospel itself and the form of proclamation in a letter’ (314).
42 See H.-G. Gadamer, Truth and Method (trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; London: Continuum, 2004), p. 281, concerning the phenomenon of authority: ‘Admittedly, it is primarily persons that have authority; but the authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subtraction and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge — the knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence — i.e., it has priority over one’s own. This is connected with the fact that authority cannot actually be bestowed but is earned, and must be earned if someone is to lay claim to it. It rests on acknowledgment and hence on an act of reason itself which, aware of its own limitations, trusts to the better insight of others. Authority in this sense, properly understood, has nothing to do with blind obedience to commands. Indeed, authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge.’
43 Thus De Boor, Images, pp. 378–79, summarizes the problem.
in terms of speeches and miraculous activities and not in terms of epitomatory activity. The epitomatory correspondence of the undisputed Pauline letters, on the other hand, reflects a later phase of communication in which Paul resumes contact with communities he had founded himself—with the exception of Romans. Pragmatically, Colossians, and without question Ephesians, are similar to Romans to the extent that these two Deutero-Pauline letters presuppose and construct a communicational model analogous to Romans: the author and the recipients do not know one another. This specific example notwithstanding, the differences between the historiographical and the epitomatory receptions remain clear, in the following way: Luke wants to present a Paul in the earliest stages of his missionary activity, but this tendency is nowhere present in the Deutero-Pauline literature. Colossians, for example, introduces Epaphras and not Paul as the founder of the community, in order to establish a subtle interplay between the promotion of Epaphras' authority and its assimilation into the authority of 'Paul'.

Second, the question of how Luke presents Paul's teaching authority should not be confused with the question of whether there are authentic Pauline theological elements in the Lukan presentation of Paul. In our view, identifying some passages as having a '(Deutero)-Pauline' tint—the most evident being Acts 13.38-39 and 20.18-35—does not fundamentally change the fact that the theology of 'Paul' is more Lukan than Pauline. Moreover, the question of whether the author of the Lukan work was aware of any of Paul's letters and, if so, why he would not have more clearly used them, is the kind of question that, while continually supplying fodder for scholarship, may not ultimately be of much help due to the lack of sufficiently clear textual evidence. The two aspects that we have just mentioned are not determinative for our problem.

44 See for example, Schröter, 'Paulus als Modell', pp. 57-58.
45 See on this subject Müller, Anfänge der Pauluslehre, p. 297.
46 Methodologically, we find it more interesting to connect these passages with the evolution of Pauline theology as it appears, for example, in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles than to question the degree of discrepancy between Acts and the proto-Pauline letters. Concerning Acts 20.18-35, see for example C. K. Barrett, The Acts of the Apostles. Vol. II. Acts XVI-XVIII (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), pp. 964-65, who shows their proximity with the Pastoralis; cf. also Ballhorn, 'Die Milesrede', pp. 43-45. Concerning Acts 13.38-39, it is appropriate, for example, to be aware that the language of 'forgiveness of sins' (θέλεται διωκτός, Acts 13.38) belongs to the Deutero-Pauline reception (see Col. 1.14b; repeated in Eph. 1.7) rather than the historical Paul.
47 The position of Burchard, Der dreizehnte Zeuge, p. 173, is still relevant: 'Luke does not have Paul say anything different than the apostles, although here and there his speech is tinted in distinctive Pauline terms', or also R. Maddox, The Purpose of Luke-Acts (PRLANT, 126; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 66-90 (67): 'Luke's representation of Paul's theology [...] is not, in any case, the most important aspect of Luke's picture of Paul. The theology which Paul preaches and teaches in Acts is Lukan rather than Pauline: or, better, it is not distinctively Pauline but shares the general character of early Christian theology as Luke understands it.'
49 Lindemann, Paulus im altellen Christentum, p. 67.
50 Roloff, 'Die Paulus-Darstellung', p. 520.
51 See ibid., pp. 521-22, concerning Acts 20: 'What, however, is completely missing is the commitment of the church to a specific form of Pauline teaching' (521). This is also well understood by Marguerat, 'L'image de Paul', p. 149: 'The surprise comes from the fact that the author of Acts does not take advantage of this speech [i.e., Acts 20.18-35] in order to link Christian memory to the person of Paul, or even to Paul's word(s) (which is what the Pastoralists do). To the contrary, Luke links the farewell to the word, to the Word [...] Paul commits his own to the power of the Word.'

Third, it seems clear on the other hand that Luke wanted the reader to think of his Paul also as a theologian! Andreas Lindemann rightly stressed this point, even if we remain hesitant to accept his emphasis on justification: 'It is true that the image of Paul in Acts is not determined by the theological work of the Apostle himself. But on the other hand, Paul is also portrayed via the Lukan sermons as a theologian, and in his first speech [cf. Acts 13.15-31] still more (and in my opinion programmatically) as a theologian of justification.' Yet the question is what general status Luke accords to the teaching authority of his Paul. Two elements in this regard must suffice here. First, the author ad Theophilium is concerned to give the greatest possible intelligibility to the missionary preaching of the Lukan Paul. The discourse of 'Paul' at the Areopagus before cultured Greeks in Acts 17.22-31, with its subtle rhetoric of including the cultural and religious context of his interlocutors, provides an excellent illustration of this despite the fact that the Lukan Paul's attempt leads to a (partial) failure. Furthermore, it is interesting to observe—as Jürgen Roloff has rightly noted—that the Lukan Paul's teaching does not seem to assume a criteriological or normative function: 'He [Paul] is [...] for this church not a theological authority, upon whom one calls for the definition and boundary of one's particular theological position in ongoing theological arguments.' Paul's speech at Miletus (Acts 20.18-35)—a text that plays a central role in the construction of Paul's image as pastor and theologian—in our opinion does not contradict this reading. Admittedly, the speech emphasizes Paul as a model servant and faultless witness. But what will enable the church to live in an age without the apostles and the 'thirteenth witness' is specifically not loyalty to an exclusively Pauline tradition, but the awareness of living by the 'word of grace' (λόγος τῆς χάριτος, Acts 20.32).
What is the situation in Colossians and Ephesians? It is undeniable that the complex and multidimensional image of Paul in Colossians—and to a lesser degree in Ephesians—includes paradigmatic traits. But the general tendency is rather to assign Paul a unique role in the process of communicating the divine 'mystery'. We have already addressed the key function of the epistolary self-commendations (Col. 1.24–2.5; Eph. 3.1–13) that establish 'Paul' as one who through his teaching, and even more so through his suffering, 'fulfils' the Christ event (Colossians) and who is not only the bearer of the 'mystery' par excellence but at the same time its enlightened interpreter (Ephesians). In Ephesians this tendency is further highlighted by the fact that 'Paul' is part of the apostolic generation (Eph. 2.20; 3.5) and is thus temporally separated from the recipients of the writing.

Finally, let us consider briefly Luke's work. How does one reconcile the apparently unique salvation-historical role of the Lukan Paul with our tendency to conceive the same figure in a paradigmatic sense? We see two major axes in the research. One emphasizes Paul's unique role within the conceptual theological framework of salvation history. There is, for example, the question of whether Paul is a 'figure sui generis, for which there can be no successor'.52 The other axis sees Paul as 'representative',53 'symbolic' or 'paradigmatic' for the condition of the believer54 or, more precisely, the condition of the suffering witness.55 All of the suggestions in the second category prefer to see Paul as a figure with whom to identify. But the conclusions vary and can be understood in different ways. According to Jürgen Roloff, for Luke's church Paul became a figure with whom to identify and through whom to better understand its own situation, in particular the demarcation from the Jewish tradition to a new religious identity.56 Paul, far from functioning merely as an ethical figure with whom to identify, serves here as a paradigm—at an individual level, but also, and above all, as a communal one—which goes far beyond the ethical dimension.57 Is this how—by means of a retrospective understanding of his special identity, as reflected in this eminent figure of early Christianity—we can finally reconcile the two aspects, i.e., the unique character and the paradigmatic character of 'Paul'? This question deserves further and deeper study.

52 Lindemann, Paulus im ältesten Christentum, p. 67: 'In Acts, Paul is not a link in the chain which connects the church and apostolic tradition. Paul is, rather a figure sui generis, for which there can be no successor, as the “missing” conclusion shows.' Cf. also Burchard, Der dreizehnte Zeuge, p. 176: '[...] Paul’s influence [represents] an historical process [...] , the end of which constitutes an historical caesura [...]. As a witness, it is just as unlikely that he can have a successor as the twelve; there is also no one else in another capacity in view. (It is striking that Luke has no interest in recommending any of Paul’s coworkers or companions; in this way he does not construct any possible chain of tradition) [...] .'

53 Thus, for example, Maddox, Purpose, p. 70: 'There remains the possibility that Paul is important to Luke as a representative or symbol of the whole of Christianity in the generation before Luke’s own.'

54 Thus Marguerat, 'L’image de Paul', pp. 485–86, on the second retelling of the narrative of Paul’s conversion in Acts 26.

55 Thus Schröter, 'Paulus als Modell', p. 72: the author sees two complementary trends: the first is that Luke highlights the ‘salvation-historical’ particularity of Paul as the privileged recipient of a vision of the risen Lord that leads to his calling as missionary to the gentiles; the second is the exemplary, ‘existential’ dimension: 'The exemplary, and what is to be universal, is in the meantime found in the confession, as well as in the situations involving suffering and being persecuted.'


57 In this sense too, apparently, Marguerat, ‘L’image de Paul’, p. 486, cf. p. 497: 'The figure of Paul in Acts is the narrative point of deployment for Christian identity; to tell of Paul’s mission is consistent with a deployment of the identity of Christianity [itself]. The figure of Paul in Acts has an “identity” function. This [function] permits the author to reveal the bond of continuity with Judaism and the causes of the break, the universality of the new faith, the foundational role of the Word, and the entry of Christianity into the social fabric of the Roman Empire. Here, Paul is emblematic of the future of Christianity.'
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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii
Abbreviations ix
Contributors xiii

The Editors

Part I. Re-figuring Paul

1. On the “Paulinism” of Acts [reprinted] 3
   Philipp Vielhauer

   Odile Flichy

3. The Paulinism of Acts, Intertextually Reconsidered 35
   Richard B. Hays

4. The Development of Pauline Christianity from a ‘Religion of Conversion’ to a ‘Religion of Tradition’ 49
   Michael Wolter

5. Paul After Paul: a (Hi)story of Reception 70
   Daniel Marguerat

6. Paul’s Place in Early Christianity 90
   Christopher Mount

Part II. The Figure and Legacy of Paul in the Book of Acts

   David P. Moessner

8. ‘Has God Rejected His People?’ (Romans 11.1). The Salvation of Israel in Acts: Narrative Claim of a Pauline Legacy 148
   Simon Butticaz

   Richard I. Pervo