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The First Three Years of Christianity¹

Abstract: This study is an initial attempt to unveil the first three years of Christianity. A strict adherence to the seven genuine letters of Paul establishes a clear identification of principal details concerning earliest Christianity. Leaving aside any secondary source, notably the Acts of the Apostles, and spelling out the reasons for doing so, the value of such an approach is put to the test by constructing the chronology of Paul (the first thirty years of Christianity) on the sole basis of the authentic letters. This initial analysis not only demonstrates the ability to construct a history of earliest Christianity using this method, but also concretely illuminates certain facts that otherwise (using Acts) are dealt with in less accurate ways.

In a second step this method is applied exclusively to the first three years of Christianity. By examining two rituals of the Christian group persecuted by Paul—baptism and the Lord's Supper—and reconstructing the first three years of Christianity on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 and other pre-Pauline creeds, a stark geographic and ethnographic distinction between the earliest Christian communities—Jerusalem and Damascus being the centres—can be observed. Indeed, the case is being made that within three years of the death of Jesus, these two distinctive Christian communities have arisen. Moreover we are able to identify Paul's affiliation with Damascus-Christianity and then associate this powerful influence with what would become catholic Christianity. This study finally establishes a framework for further inquiries into the first three years of Christianity, giving Paul's genuine letters primary consideration.

Keywords: Paul, Acts, Damascus, Jerusalem, Sacrament

Introduction

Two things should be noted at the outset: First, I use “Christianity of the first three years” as an umbrella term for the phenomenon of groups both within and outside Jerusalem that shortly after Jesus' death claimed one way or the other that he was alive. Second, “three years” designates the time between Jesus' death and the conversion of Paul. This time span is based on a chronology of Paul's life derived from his letters and on the assumption that Jesus was executed in 30 CE.

For the study of Christian origins, seven undisputed letters of Paul, being the only firsthand sources from the first generation among twenty-seven texts of the New Testament, occupy a special position. They allow us to read what Paul thought, to hear his own voice, and tentatively to date the foundational events of earliest Christianity. In short, work on these important documents provides the basis for nearly every other question related to Christian origins.

Let me demonstrate the forensic value of these letters by constructing on their sole basis both an outline of Paul's life and the first three years of Christianity. Clearly, these two tasks are related; but while the first is occasionally addressed in research,² the second has never been tested. I hasten to mention in advance that both subjects require a preliminary critique of the Acts of the Apostles, whose author—here for the sake of convenience called Luke—presents both Pauline biographical material and a narrative of the first three years of Christianity. Despite a recent vogue for rehabilitating Luke as a historian,³ many of the reports found in Acts stand in sharp conflict with first-person evidence found in the authentic letters of Paul.

An Outline of Paul's Life

Luke's Fallacies in Acts 9–28

One of keystone of Pauline research is the fact that the available sources establish beyond cavil the number of times Paul visited Jerusalem as a Christian. In Galatians 1:15–24 he gives his solemn oath⁴ that he was in Jerusalem only once⁵ between the time of his conversion⁶ and his attendance at the Jerusalem meeting.⁷ The reported unanimity concerning the collection for the “poor” of the Jerusalem community,⁸ together with the history of the collection recorded elsewhere in the letters, gives powerful support to the contention that subsequent to the meeting Paul returned to Jerusalem only on the occasion when he brought the collection.

In Acts, however, we find Paul making no fewer than five journeys to Jerusalem: first directly after his conversion,⁹ then with Barnabas to bring a gift of the community of Antioch to the community of Jerusalem,¹⁰ again with Barnabas to participate in a meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem community over the issue of circumcision,¹¹ subsequently for a short visit in the midst of missionary activity in Greece,¹² and finally for the visit leading to his arrest.¹³ Besides, bearing the collection to the Jerusalem community does not appear in Luke's account as the chief motive for Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. This raises the suspicion that Luke has distorted one or more key historical facts. If for no other reason, Acts cannot serve as a primary witness for the reconstruction of Paul's life.

Indeed Luke, who is writing years later and from a later perspective, does not qualify as a primary witness. His approach is that of a theologian who

develops his account to support a dogmatic agenda. In both his gospel and Acts, Luke's reasons for understanding and presenting his characters and their activities as he does arise from an overarching theological concept: that of salvation history—the Christian belief that all the events in the Old and New Testaments are part of God's all-encompassing plan to bring salvation to humanity. The history of salvation constitutes the very fabric of Luke's story as it moves from Galilee to Jerusalem¹⁴ and at last to the great metropolis of Rome.¹⁵ The worldwide missionary activity and the person of Paul form the ultimate focus of Luke's entire story. Everything else—the beginning in Galilee, the crisis in Jerusalem involving the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Jerusalem church, and the experimental mission of the Hellenists—builds towards this consummation. The Jerusalem meeting, located midway in Acts 15, is the pivotal point in the telling of Luke's story. It separates the primitive period of the Church from the present and forms the presupposition for Paul's independent mission that begins after his separation from Barnabas.¹⁶

In the second part of Acts, Paul stands alone on centre stage. The depiction of the course of Paul's mission all the way to Rome is driven by theological motives, and placing that mission *after* the Jerusalem meeting demonstrates the continuity in the history of salvation from the primitive Church to the Church in Luke's day. The reasons for this placement are *not* primarily chronological, but theological. When Luke has discovered the theological significance of an event, he feels free to deduce from it the correct chronology, and this means, among other things, that he can begin to modify the narrative of Mark.¹⁷

Reconstruction of an Outline of Paul's Life on the Sole Basis of the Letters

A reconstruction of the chronology of Paul solely on the basis of the letters must begin with an analysis of Galatians 1:6–2:14, the central pillar of every chronology of Paul.

Here, as a result of the invasion of the Galatian congregations by Palestinian Jewish Christians, Paul is forced to present a summary of his relation to the Jerusalem apostles. The opponents maintain the inferiority of Paul's gospel to the gospel of circumcision. They claim that Paul's gospel is dependent on the gospel proclaimed in Jerusalem, and they say that Paul has fallen away from this true gospel: his gospel must be supplemented with the observation of the Jewish law.

Paul points out in verse 17 that after his conversion he did not go to Jerusalem to those who were called apostles before him but to Arabia—according to the language of that time, to the kingdom of the Nabataeans, east of Palestine—and after that returned to Damascus. That Paul “returned” (in Greek, *hypostrephein*) to Damascus indicates that his conversion took place there—returning to a place he had been before.¹⁸ Paul had to flee from the ethnarch

or governor of the Nabataean trade colony at Damascus. This vassal was the appointee of King Aretas IV, who apparently had no use for Paul's missionary activity in his kingdom.

From the number of years Paul indicates at the beginning of verse 18 and later in Galatians 2:1, it follows that the first Jerusalem visit took place three years (really two years) after his conversion and the second one (when he went to participate in the Jerusalem meeting) fourteen years (really thirteen years) after the first visit.¹⁹ Verse 18, then, recounts the first visit of Paul to Jerusalem during his Christian period. Its purpose was to get to know Cephas. But it lasted only fifteen days and included meetings only with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, not with the other apostles.

Verse 21 mentions Syria and Cilicia as the places to which Paul journeyed after his first visit to Jerusalem. Refuting his opponents' arguments, Paul stresses the fact that he left the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. Nothing is said of how he got to Syria and Cilicia, how long he stayed there, or where he spent the fourteen years before the second Jerusalem trip.

Galatians 2:1–10 gives a report of the *Jerusalem meeting*. Because of a revelation Paul went to Jerusalem along with Barnabas but also took Titus with him.²⁰ I suggest that the real purpose of this meeting may be determined through an evaluation of the result of the meeting as reflected in verse 9.

This verse presents us with the agreement formulated at the meeting: it establishes an ethnographic division of the world missions. The purpose of the agreement was to eliminate problems that arose from the commingling of the two Christian groups, Jews and gentiles. Now, Paul never mentions a mission to the Jews, all his letters being directed to gentiles. That Paul never undertook a mission to Jews and that Titus is the representative of Paul's mission provide the clearest possible explanation for Paul's statement in verse 6 that "those who were of repute added nothing to me"—that is, they did not require Paul to alter his message or the religious praxis required of his converts.

The demand that gentile Christians should be circumcised in order to be able to become members of the Christian community²¹ was directed against the practice of accepting gentiles into the community without circumcision. This decision had not been made just prior to the conference, but some time earlier, specifically in the communities in which Paul was active.

Yet one clause was added to the agreement: "only they would have us remember the poor, which was the very thing I made it my business to do."²² Therefore—historically speaking—the most important resolution of the conference was the least apparent: the pledge of a collection for the Jerusalem community, and Paul's further efforts to secure and deliver this collection were among the most important of his missionary activity.

After reporting on the Jerusalem meeting, Paul gives an account of an incident at the Syrian Antioch. On the basis of Galatians 2:11–15 the course of events can be reconstructed as follows: In the integrated Christian church

in Antioch, those who were Jews by birth had participated in table fellowship with the gentiles. Peter joined in this practice while in Antioch. During a visit to Antioch by some Christians associated with James, the Jewish Christians in Antioch, including Peter and Barnabas, withdrew from this table fellowship for fear of offending or alienating the circumcision group. Thereupon Paul brought the charge especially against Peter that by this action he was compelling gentile Christians to adopt the Jewish way of life, a procedure that did not conform with the truth of the gospel message.

Paul's report of the proceedings permits the following inference: The people from Jerusalem had been sent by James the brother of Jesus and came to Antioch by his authority. They represent the circumcision group and advocate the separation of the Jewish Christians from the gentile Christians. The basis for the demanded separation is their insistence on following Jewish dietary practice, a demand that Paul, as the spokesperson for the gentile Christians, refused because he expected Jewish Christians to follow his example. I hasten to add that the indiscriminate table fellowship pictured in Paul's account would have occurred only before the conference visit because the agreement of that meeting tried to prevent problems resulting from the commingling of Jews and gentiles.

We are now ready to turn to the collection as an external criterion for establishing a chronological framework.²³ The past tense (*aorist* in Greek) in Galatians 2:10b "which was the very thing I made it my business to do" (in Greek, *ho kai espoudasa auto touto poiêsai*) makes it clear that immediately after—not before—the Jerusalem meeting, Paul began an operation to provide a special collection for the benefit of the congregation in Jerusalem. Paul's remark further indicates that the collection was known to the Galatians and that it was at the time of writing an ongoing effort. Organizing the collection occupied most of Paul's ministry taking place between his second and third Jerusalem visits—during which time he travelled to Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia.

It is of note that the organization of the collection in those areas seems to prove the existence of Paul's mission in these provinces before his second visit to Jerusalem. It would indeed be very strange if in Jerusalem Paul had promised to raise money from communities that did not yet exist. However, Galatians 2:10 suggests that Paul raised the money soon after the conference in order to comply with the agreement. And where should he go to collect the support except to the communities he had founded before the meeting?

The earliest reference to the collection is 1 Corinthians 16:1–4. The Corinthians have asked Paul *how* to go about gathering the collection, and here receive instructions for collecting the money: they are told simply to follow the example of the Galatian churches. The Corinthians' knowledge of the ongoing collection in Galatia is clearly presupposed. The nature of their question shows, however, that they have learned about the collection only recently.²⁴

The remarks in 2 Corinthian 8–9 allow us to assume that the Macedonian collection began around the same time as the Corinthian collection.²⁵

While the Corinthian Letters and Romans allow us to trace the progress and completion of the collection, 1 Thessalonians makes no reference to it. The reason is that it was written before the Jerusalem meeting. Philemon and Philippians likewise make no reference to it—either because Paul was in prison and had more pressing concerns or, possibly, the letters were composed in Rome *after* the delivery of the collection. Yet Philippians contains a hint that Paul’s mission in Greece may have been the true beginning of his preaching. Positively, Philippians 4:15 (“You . . . know that in the early days of my mission when I set out from Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me”) specifies the time lapse between 1 Corinthians and the founding of the congregations in Macedonia and Achaia. Moreover, it suggests the chronological setting of the mission in Europe. Here Paul speaks of the “early days of my mission” (literally, “in the beginning of the gospel”) as following upon and including his mission in Macedonia. This phrase is most naturally understood as an indication of the beginning of Paul’s missionary activity as a whole, though this does not fit in with the standard view that Paul preached in Greece only after the conference meeting late in his missionary career. 1 Thessalonians 2:2 and 3:1 then indicate the cities along the route of Paul’s initial mission to Europe: Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth.

A preliminary chronological overview, presupposing 30 CE as the death of Jesus, yields the following result:

- 30 Crucifixion and “resurrection” of Jesus
- 33 Conversion of Paul at Damascus
- 35 Paul’s first visit (“Cephas-visit”) to Jerusalem, journey to Syria and Cilicia
- 38 Independent mission in Europe: Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth
- 41 1 Thessalonians (from Corinth)
- 48 Incident at Antioch involving James, Cephas, Barnabas, Paul
- 48 Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem (“conference-visit”): the Jerusalem meeting, followed by the journey to the Pauline congregations for the organization of the collection
- 49 Paul for the second time in Galatia; organization of the collection there
- 51 Letter from the Corinthians with questions regarding the collection (1 Cor. 16:1)
- 51 1 Corinthians (from Ephesus)
- 51/52 Philemon and Philippians (from Ephesus or from Rome in 57)
- 52 2 Corinthians 1–9, 10–13, and Galatians (from Macedonia)
- 53 Romans (from Corinth)
- 54 Third Journey of Paul to Jerusalem in order to deliver the collection

Uncovering the First Three Years of Christianity

Luke's Fallacies in Acts 1–8

Concerning the first years of the Church, the book of Acts is the only putative source. It gives an impression of coherence and a vivid picture of the life of the early fellowship. Its message—that from the beginning the Church was of one heart and soul and marked by unflinching harmony—has until now exerted a strong influence in Church history. The effectiveness of the author's program is evident in the central position in the Christian calendar of "the Great Fifty days" framed by Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.

In the following I shall present the critical view against the historicity of Luke's narrative²⁶ and—what has not been done before—I shall offer arguments based on the undisputed letters of Paul against any historical value of Acts 1–8.²⁷

Luke's bias is clear in the very *first chapter* of Acts. The presence of the risen Jesus for forty days with his disciples is clearly a secondary development of the earliest report that Jesus' resurrection and appearance to the disciples occurred on Easter Sunday.

The account of Judas's horrible death and the election of another disciple to replace him clearly presuppose the Judas myth according to which one of the Twelve—Judas—handed Jesus over to be killed. However, in Paul's account of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25 we read a quite different story. The introduction runs as follows: "The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was handed over." The original hearers of these words could hardly avoid thinking of Isaiah's Suffering Servant whose fate—as one punished by God for the sake of the Old Testament community of faith—the first Christians regarded as a prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus.²⁸ In other words, the tradition quoted by Paul claimed that for the sake of Christian believers God had consigned to death Jesus, the true Suffering Servant. Indeed, this interpretation, which arose immediately after the resurrection visions, permeates the earliest Christian confessions.²⁹ But is difficult to correlate this divine salvific act derived from theology and scriptural interpretation with the treachery of a scoundrel such as Judas. It is clear, then, that we should not read Judas into the tradition of the Lord's Supper received and transmitted by Paul. That attempt is also undermined by the fact that Judas is listed as one of the circle of Twelve, the members of which were reportedly the first to behold the risen Jesus.³⁰

In the *second chapter* Luke gives a totally misleading impression of the spreading of the gospel in Jerusalem. For one thing, Jerusalem at the time of Jesus was a city of about twenty-five thousand inhabitants. It would be miraculous indeed if on a single day more than 10 per cent of the whole population came to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Another difficulty arises when one tries to imagine baptizing three thousand people in a single day: where

and how and by whom would those baptisms have been performed? Furthermore, Luke's narrative theory leads us to neglect the historical evidence available in Paul's letters, which state that people other than the Jerusalem Christians were responsible for the expansion of Christianity—outside of Jerusalem. When a good while later Luke has James talk to Paul about the tens of thousands of believers in Jerusalem,³¹ we at last know beyond all question how to read the fantastic Lukan numbers of Christians in Jerusalem. It is almost beyond belief that learned scholars still avoid contesting the veracity of Luke's account.

The narrative *details* in *chapters 3–4*—healing of a lame man, speech of Peter, Peter and John before the High Council, prayer of the community provokes an earthquake—are historically worthless, for the narrative framework can hardly be based on accurate historical foundations. Therefore, the negative result of the historical analysis of the traditions in Acts 3–4:31 casts serious doubts on the reliability of Luke's "knowledge" of the first years of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. It has been suggested that the missionary activity of the Jerusalem community shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus must have sufficiently alarmed Sadducean circles that at the very least they considered action against the Jesus community. Yet we have very little solid indication of any significant missionary activity in Jerusalem. In short, it is evident that Luke himself constructed the scenario in Acts 3–4 on the basis of the Gospel of Mark.³²

In *chapter 5* we read that Paul's teacher Gamaliel advises the High Council not to take action against the Christians. But it must strike us as strange indeed that the historical Paul acted in direct contradiction to the advice of one Luke has him later claim as a mentor.³³ He must have been absent the day the great teacher lectured against persecuting new movements. Once again wishful thinking has led a loyal defender of a no doubt well-intentioned myth to replace argument with supposition when no evidence could be found.

Chapter 6 introduces a new and quite different topic. The account begins with the report in 6:1 of dissension within the community and its resolution in 6:5–6 by the appointment of "deacons." To be sure, this continues the theme of the communal organization found in 2:44–45 and 4:32–5:11, but now—after the preparatory remarks in 5:16—the mission that had previously been limited to Jerusalem reaches out to the surrounding area through the preaching of the Hellenists. The section 6:1–8:3 focuses on the person of Stephen, as does 8:4–40 on the figure of Philip.

Yet despite this focus and the verisimilitude of the section, nothing in it constitutes a claim to historicity. The Hellenists, after all, are useful to Luke as Greek-speaking diaspora Jews, and for the book as a whole they serve as a thematic transition from the apostles to Paul. In short, the transition all too readily portrays a Lukan historiographic creation. What many have taken to reflect a Lukan cover-up may instead be a Lukan invention. This possibility is the more attractive when we note that all the individual elements of Acts

6:1–8:3 are thematically integrated with the rest of the book. For Luke, the Hellenists and Stephen have a central function both in increasing the diversity of the initial Jerusalem fellowship and in explaining the spread of the gospel from the Jerusalem apostles to Paul and his gentile communities. The expulsion of the Hellenists from Jerusalem must therefore be seen as a narrative bridge to the subsequent development of his plot.

In Acts 6:8–15 Luke intentionally revises data from the tradition he received concerning Jesus' trial in order to present the trial of the first Christian martyr in a recognizably similar light. In Luke's opinion, Stephen even supports the same basic position that Paul will later advocate. Of particular note is that the agreements between Acts 6:13 and 21:28 derive from Luke. By creating parallels between Stephen and Paul, Luke apparently seeks to underscore the continuity of salvation history. The essentially Lukan character of Acts 6:8–15 and the contradictory nature of its content lead to the conclusion that it is not a dependable historical report.

Indeed, Luke's account in chapter 6 begins on a problematic note because the care of the widows bears no relation to the dispute over the law that leads to Stephen's lynching. Furthermore, it is confusing if not contradictory to paint Stephen as a spirit-filled preacher although he had been ordained as a "deacon" to care for widows. And it is surely an artificial report that all the Hellenists must flee from Jerusalem while the apostles are allowed to stay. Finally, Luke has falsely made Paul a witness to, and thus participant in, Stephen's execution, for while Paul himself indirectly acknowledges that he persecuted Christians in Damascus, he also says that he was unknown to the Christians in Judea³⁴—that is to Christians in the southern part of Palestine, including Jerusalem.

Uncovering the First Three Years of Christianity

Rituals of the Christian Group Persecuted by Paul

Paul's theology is rooted not in the proclamation of the Jerusalem community, but in the traditions of the Greek-speaking church of Damascus, whose teachings and practice were Paul's primary materials. A brief yet compendious account of Greek-speaking Christianity before Paul's time would therefore be of inestimable value. But that cannot be essayed here. I shall deal only with a few basic texts that either can be assigned to a pre-Pauline practice or that the apostle identifies as part of a tradition that he received and afterwards transmitted: Galatians 3:26–28, 1 Corinthians 11:23–25, 15:3–7. They will help to shed light on two major rituals of the group persecuted by Paul and allow us to construct the chain of events commonly called resurrection appearances.

Before carrying out the job, let me add two important insights. First, in the Greek-speaking Christian circles the word *Christ* began to be understood less

as a title and increasingly as a proper name as it does in the pre-Pauline tradition³⁵ and throughout Paul's letters. Second, Jesus' words received little attention among the Greek-speaking community of Damascus. Even their most famous pupil, Paul, quotes Jesus in only two places (1 Cor. 7:10–11, 9:14), and for the rest derives insight from the spirit or from reflections on the gospel. I hasten to add that in the community that Paul persecuted, the noun *gospel* denoted the primitive Christian preaching that proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus.³⁶ It would constitute an anachronism to assume that during the first three years of Christianity "the gospel" included the story of his suffering and death, let alone an account of his life.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Two Major Sacramental Rituals

We must now consider two major rites that already existed before Paul became a Christian. I shall analyze both, in each case beginning with a key text, and then seeking to clarify the related issue. Before doing so, let me define *sacrament* as an act that employs natural means to activate supernatural powers, commonly by accompanying a ritual act with spoken words in order to bring about a specific change in one or more persons.

Baptism

In Galatians 3:26–28 Paul makes the following statement:

²⁶You are all sons of God through faith in Christ. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ. (Translations throughout are by the author)

This text seems to derive from tradition: first, it stands out from its context; second, there is a change of person from first plural in verse 25 ("we are no longer under a custodian") to second plural in verse 26 ("you are all sons of God"). Third, only the pair Jew/Greek is directly pertinent to Paul's argument.

In the context of arguing that Christians are Abraham's descendants and therefore free from the law, Paul quotes a formula that, as verse 27 shows, has its origin in the ritual of baptism. Here the apostle reminds the readers of their own baptism. Since for him faith is an important element in Christianity, he has added "through faith" to the formula. This renders the Greek syntax quite awkward, for you cannot speak of a "faith in" (*en*) but only of a "faith into" (*eis*). Be that as it may, by adding "through faith" Paul interprets a traditional baptismal unification formula in order to make it fit the context.

From the standpoint of form criticism, the formula is recognizable as a blessing. It was spoken to every initiate just before being baptized. By participating in that ritual, Christians were inaugurated into the "new reality" of Christ where previous differences of ethnicity, religion, gender, and social condition were replaced or transcended once and for all. Indeed, Christians

claimed that very old and decisive ideals and hopes of the ancient world did come true in their community. We are dealing here with a utopian sacramental declaration of all people's unification that would certainly attract attention.

Note that the pair "Jew and Greek" stands at the top. From now on, Jews and gentiles were one in Christ and, as a consequence, common meals without any restriction would be customary—as they clearly were in Antioch and likely in Damascus. Needless to say, circumcision as a Jewish identity marker would also be irrelevant.

The pair "male and female" deserves special attention. It is different from "Jew and Greek" and "slave and free," since in this case not only the social differences between man and woman are repudiated, but also the *biological* distinctions. In short, Galatians 3:28 seems to proclaim the abolition of sexual distinctions as a result of salvation in Christ. Such a claim may well be based on the idea of the androgynous nature of Christ himself.³⁷

We can observe the result of such a theology of baptism among Corinthian women who, after listening to baptismal formulae like Galatians 3:28, seem to have demanded full equality with men and wanted to pray without veils—just as their male fellow Christians. In 1 Corinthians 11:3–16 Paul responded negatively to such claims; on this particular point he did not translate the new reality in Christ into general practice. Nor did he when he returned the slave Onesimus to his master in the hope of getting him back as a servant.³⁸ Liberation, it would seem, was not an issue.

In summary, the following statements can be made about baptism in the pre-Pauline Greek-speaking communities. Baptism functioned as an initiatory rite by which new members entered the Christian community; it probably entailed immersion, involved an act of confession, and accepted the inductee "in the name of Jesus"³⁹ or "into Christ."⁴⁰

For Greek-speaking Christians, the all-important gift of the Holy Spirit was inextricably linked with baptism, for as is clear in the traditional formula adduced in 1 Corinthians 6:11, every baptized person was understood to have received the Holy Spirit.

Most importantly, baptism meant dying and rising with Christ. In his letter to the Roman Christians, to whom Paul had never preached, he assumes this understanding on their part. In asking, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"⁴¹ he takes for granted that for both the gentile and Jewish Christians he addresses, those receiving baptism understood themselves to be incorporated into both Christ's lordship and his ignominious death.

Observe, however, that Paul does not relate baptism to Christ's resurrection. In Romans 6:8 he writes, "But if we have died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him." Still, it is clear that while sharing in his resurrection is reserved for the future, its ethical implications involve present realities: "We were buried . . . with him . . . so that as Christ was raised from the dead. . . we too might walk in the newness of life."⁴² Recalling the baptismal formula in Galatians 3:26–28, which proclaimed the abolition of ethnic,

social, and sexual distinctions by Christ's new reality, it seems reasonable to propose that in Romans 6:4 Paul may be correcting a tradition that saw in Christ's resurrection a pledge of the present resurrection of Christians. This surmise is strengthened by the fact that in Romans 6:8 he seems intent on revising that tradition by emphasizing the death rather than stressing the resurrection, as Christianity was used to doing.

The Lord's Supper

One feature of worship service in the Greek-speaking community persecuted by Paul is certain: its focal point was the Lord's Supper, which was an integral part of the Church's common meal. This was one reason for the severity of the crisis at Antioch, for when Jewish Christians withdrew from the common table, they left the communion table as well.⁴³

The name Lord's Supper (in Greek, *kyriakon deipnon*) has its single explicit New Testament attestation in Paul.⁴⁴ The name is clearly pre-Pauline and like the later attested name Lord's Day⁴⁵ reflects a Christian communal concern, the cult of Christ.

The ritual that Paul originally taught the Corinthians—which he himself had received—appears in the tradition he passed on in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25. Note, however, that at verse 23 he claims to have received it from the Lord. Yet this can hardly mean that we are dealing here with a word of Jesus taken from a narrative or that Paul heard these sentences spoken to him directly by the heavenly Jesus. Indeed, the apostle here employs the same terms he uses in 1 Corinthians 15:3 (received–delivered) and thereby indicates that he describes the sharing of a common tradition. The phrase “from the Lord” thus indicates that the Lord himself has established the holy rite of eating and drinking.

The institution of the Lord's Supper as a cult observance occurs not only in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25 but also in Mark 14:22–25, Matthew 26:26–29, and Luke 22:15–20. The Synoptics, though, portray the Lord's Supper as a Passover meal. This is an important departure from Paul, who in 1 Corinthians 5:7 accepts the interpretation of Jesus' death as a Passover sacrifice, but does not use that concept in connection with the Last Supper. Furthermore, essential elements of the Passover liturgy such as the narration of the deliverance from Egypt and the eating of the lamb are missing in all New Testament accounts of the Lord's Supper. Matthew has essentially taken over Mark's text, and Luke is dependent on Mark and the tradition found in Paul. That means in order to get to the earliest texts about the Lord's Supper we must start with Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:

²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”²⁵ In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. *Do this*, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Paul cites the liturgical words that make the Lord's Supper a sacrament asymmetrically—"this is my body; this cup is the new covenant in my blood"—and has a supper separate the two acts of administering the bread and the cup.

The text of Mark 14 gives the liturgical words in parallel—"this is my body; this is my blood."

²²And while they were eating he took the bread, blessed and broke it and gave (it) to them and said, "Take, this is my body." ²³And he took a cup, gave thanks and gave (it) to them; and they all drank of it. ²⁴And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many."

A further comparison of Paul's account with Mark's has a significant result.

First, both accounts attest that "Christ died for our sins."⁴⁶ In the Pauline formulation the body is specifically made an element of the atonement theme by the clause "which is for you," whereas in Mark the blood of the covenant "which is poured out for many" is so incorporated. Furthermore, in Paul the covenant motif all but explicitly involves the proclamation of a new reality because of its strong prophetic echo: "Look, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah."⁴⁷

Second, Paul reiterates the injunction that this rite be performed regularly, with the statement, "Do this is remembrance of me," an element absent from Mark. A liturgical origin is thus attested, and something more than remembering is indicated: this is a commemoration, an act in which the significance of a vital event of the past becomes a present reality. Indeed, we are dealing here with a foundational account of a sacred rite that supposedly derives from the events of the night in which Jesus was handed over: this etiological legend explains the origin and meaning of a current practice in a community. Note, however, that we are unable to get to a single earliest tradition of the Lord's Supper. Communal practice shaped the tradition from the very start.

Yet the liturgical words in Paul and Mark—the words that make the Lord's Supper a sacrament—have a close similarity to and likely derive from one simple formula: "This is my body, this is my blood." Thus the celebration clearly embodies the sacramental interpretation of the act expressed in the repeated phrase "this is," by which bread and wine are offered the partaker as flesh and blood of Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul confirms his sacramental interpretation the Lord's Supper:

¹⁶The cup of blessing over which we say the blessing, is it not a *participation* in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we, many as we are, form one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

By twice using the word *participation* to characterize the Supper, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the cup and the bread (the reversal of order is of no significance) involve *koinonia*—communion with or participation in the blood of Christ. Paul's insistence that they could not eat the Lord's Supper and then join in a similar rite at some pagan shrine⁴⁸ attests to a shared understanding that partaking of a sacred meal involves sharing in the reality that it commemorates—in this case, the salvation that accrues from Christ's saving death.

We conclude, then, that baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Greek-speaking community of Damascus and other Greek-speaking Christian communities during the first three years of Christianity were related to one another. The performance of baptism established the Christian's being in Christ and Christ's being in the Christian, while the regularly celebrated Lord's Supper renewed, strengthened, and nourished that union. It appears, then, that from the earliest days on, these Christians understood baptism and the Lord's Supper to be sacramental. The efficacy of both rites depended both on the holy power to which they attested and on the ritual performance itself; it was by the power of this invoked "holy otherness" that the action was able to bring about results.

Traditions of Founding Events of Christianity

Having dealt with the two chief rituals of the Christian group persecuted by Paul, let me now turn to the next task. Here I shall deal with another text received by Paul—one containing traditions that allow us to further reconstruct the first three years of Christianity. As a first step, I shall uncover traditions in 1 Corinthians 15 and after that locate them.

¹And now, brothers, I must remind you of the gospel that I preached to you, the gospel that you received, in which you stand, ²by which you are saved, if you hold fast—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,

⁴and that he was buried, that he has been raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures

⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

⁶Thereafter he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

⁷Thereafter he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I, or they, so we preach and so you believed.

At the outset Paul reminds the addressees of the content of his preaching during the founding of the community and stresses that he himself had received it. The tradition attested to Christ's death and resurrection along with his appearance to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Paul adds other appearances of the risen Christ that he says were reported to him: the appearance to more than 500 brothers at one time and the appearance to James, then to all the apostles. At the end of the list he introduces Christ's appearance to himself.

It is evident that the report in verses 3b–5 is different in structure from the elements of appearance-tradition that follow in verses 6–7.⁴⁹ The two elements, therefore, must be investigated separately.

First, in 1 Corinthians 15:3b–5,

³Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures ⁴and was buried.

He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures ⁵and appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

Verses 3b–5 offer a twofold proof: from the scriptures (we know them as the Old Testament), and from confirmation by facts. The reference to the burial confirms the reality of Jesus' death, while the reference to his appearance to Cephas underscores the reality of the resurrection.⁵⁰ In addition, "for our sins" and "on the third day" parallel one another, casting doubt on the correctness of a literal understanding of "on the third day."

As to the origin of this piece of tradition, it clearly derives from the Greek-speaking community of Damascus whose members had been persecuted by Paul.

Within the report of the first appearance of Christ to Cephas in verse 5, the clause "he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve" can be detached as an independent unit from the tradition handed down by Paul during his founding visit. This is suggested not only by the parallel to Luke 24:34 ("the Lord was really raised and appeared to Simon"), but by Mark 16:7 ("tell his disciples and Peter"). A place for the "appearance" is not given.

The second element appears in 1 Corinthians 15:6–7:

⁶Thereafter he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, *most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.*

⁷Thereafter he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Verse 6 reports an appearance of Christ to more than five hundred brothers at one time, and verse 7 announces one to James and all the apostles.

The number "more than 500" indicates an immense crowd of people; the appearance to more than five hundred clearly derives from tradition. However, the qualification "at one time" seems to stem from Paul, who thereby stresses the trustworthiness of the appearance. If more than five hundred at once encountered Christ, it must be reliable. To be sure, not everybody will be convinced by the logic of such a conclusion.

The appearance to James, then to all the apostles is formulated in the same way as the report of the appearance of Christ to Cephas and the apostles. Paul may have learnt about the appearances during his first Jerusalem visit when he became acquainted with Cephas. Note that during this visit he got to know James as well.

Next, for practical reasons, I shall limit myself to engaging the following question: What really happened when Christ “appeared” to various persons, including Paul?

To begin with, the verb *appeared* is the English rendering of the Greek *ôphthê*, which is the third person aorist passive of *horan*, “to see.” The Greek phrase *ôphthê Kêpha* could be translated either “he appeared to Cephas” or “he was seen by Cephas.” Furthermore, it should be observed that in 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 Paul lumps together the very different phenomena of individual encounters and mass manifestations under the single term *ôphthê*. The appearances exhibit other differences, too: for Cephas the experience denoted by *ôphthê* does not depend upon a previous communication with the Risen One, nor is it contingent upon the consolidation of a community (and thus other members in a chain of witnesses), but is first of all an immediate event, a primary experience. The latter also applies to Paul. But a difference between Peter and Paul lies in the fact that Peter had seen Jesus before, whereas Paul had not; he was “seeing him” for the first time. In other words, the appearance to Peter and others is at least based on their acquaintance with Jesus during his lifetime, but the vision of the later witnesses is based on the early witnesses’ proclamation of Jesus as the risen Christ.

Specifically, “Christ appeared to Paul” means that Paul saw the risen Christ in his glory.⁵¹ In and of itself, this statement could signify either an inner vision or an outward vision, but clearly it reports an extraordinary event and a revelation. In other words, the visionary received insights into an otherworldly sphere of reality, one that was marked by an esoteric character and therefore represented secret knowledge. The whole event had a character of light and, like the vision of John of Patmos,⁵² happened in the spirit, in an ecstasy.

As it is commonly understood, the word *visions* intends both appearances (of persons, things, or happenings) and auditory experiences (voices or other sounds) that do not originate in objective stimuli. Like dreams, they occur entirely within the human person, though visionaries often claim the images and sounds to have external origins. This was the experience of Paul, who seems never to have had a moment’s doubt that he had encountered Christ just outside Damascus. Moreover, the experience had as profound an effect on him, both immediate and permanent, as an objective event would have had.

The Appearance to Cephas and the Appearance to the Twelve
(1 Cor. 15:5)

The relationship of the appearance to Peter to the appearance to the Twelve can be defined in two ways: First, the two appearances might originally have

been one. Paul could have replaced an *and* (in Greek, *kai*) with a *then* (in Greek, *eita*) and thereby altered “Cephas and the Twelve” to “Cephas, then to the Twelve,” simply because of the other appearances that he intended to cite in sequence. However, such a view is improbable (see below). Second, the appearance to Cephas and the appearance to the Twelve might derive from two different events. This thesis is probably correct, since support for it rests not only on the very formulation in 1 Corinthians 15:5, but even more persuasively on historical grounds.

Peter was the leader of the earliest community in Jerusalem. This must be concluded from Galatians 1:18, according to which Paul went to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, to make acquaintance with Cephas in order to introduce himself to the most important leader of the Jerusalem community of that time. As reflected in 1 Corinthians 15:5 and Luke 24:34, Peter most likely was appointed to this position of prominence as a result of witnessing an appearance of the risen Jesus.

However, we have no explicit account of the appearance to the Twelve in the New Testament.

The Appearance to More Than Five Hundred Brothers at One Time
(1 Cor. 15:6)

We may start by noting that, according to some interpreters, “at one time” suggests the ecstatic character of the event, especially since such a great number of people were present. At various times it has even been suggested that “Pentecost” should be identified with the “appearance to more than five hundred brothers.” Yet since “at one time” seems to be an addition from the pen of Paul, all these theories collapse. For the time being, at least, I must therefore confess my ignorance on this point.

The Appearance to James and the Appearance to All the Apostles
(1 Cor. 15:7)

Only vague conjectures are possible about the historical background of this individual vision, which all but certainly represents some kind of conversion experience of James. Note that during Jesus’ life James did not belong to his brother’s followers.⁵³ Also the vision of all the apostles cannot be historically tracked down or further amplified. It is bizarre, though, that the expression “all the apostles” excludes other visions. Therefore I am inclined to think of the phrase “Christ appeared to James and to all the apostles” as a legitimizing formula without any basis in history. After all, we are here encountering a claim of family hierarchy that successfully ousted Cephas within a few years from his primary position.

In Retrospect

In this section we have analyzed the various traditions contained in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 on Jesus’ death, his burial, and his various appearances.

A most important result is that the appearance traditions have the form of creedal statements. They allow the historical conclusion that at the beginning of early Christian faith stood visions of the “Risen One,” ecstatic experiences that led to perceiving a formerly dead person as being forever raised from the dead.

An important corollary of the analysis is that the appearance tradition originally had nothing to do with stories of the empty tomb. The earliest recorded appearance did not take place in or near the tomb, and the narrative of the empty tomb had the ironically twofold purpose of answering questions from adherents *and* opponents. To appeal to objections from within the Christian circles, the empty tomb tradition stresses the corporeal character of Jesus’ resurrection. Similarly, accounts addressed to hostile Jews were intended to correct ugly rumours about the theft of Jesus’ body by the disciples.

But if a tomb in Jerusalem must be ruled out as the historical setting of the first resurrection appearance of Jesus, the same must be said about Jerusalem in general. The collective evidence overwhelmingly suggests Galilee—where the disciples immediately fled after the disaster of Jesus’ death—as the locus of the original vision.

The First Three Years of Christianity in Jerusalem and in Damascus

Still, despite Galilee as the most likely setting of Cephas’s resurrection-vision, there can be no doubt that soon after that Christianity established itself in Jerusalem with Cephas and the Twelve as its leaders. However, Jesus’ brother James before long claimed leadership for himself and assembled a circle of all the apostles. Christians in Jerusalem venerated Jesus as their Lord: witness the Aramaic acclamation and prayer *marana tha* (our Lord come).⁵⁴ New converts were received by applying the baptism of John, especially since Jesus himself had been baptized by John and many a pupil of John joined Christianity in Jerusalem. An imminent expectation by that group can be inferred from the cry *marana tha* and from the fact that in his earliest letter, six years after the Cephas-visit, Paul pictures the Lord’s coming on the clouds of heaven and promises that a goodly number of believers will still be alive at Jesus’ Second Coming.⁵⁵ Here Paul seems to reflect what was apparently the common expectation of the earliest Christians. But while in Jerusalem the cry *marana tha* expresses a purely apocalyptic Christology, on the Greek soil of Damascus—and later in Paul’s churches—the community not only waits for the Coming One but also gathers to worship the Lord who rules the present. Now the cry is, “Jesus is Lord.”⁵⁶

In connection with the organization of the collection, Paul repeatedly refers to the members of the Jerusalem community as “the Saints,”⁵⁷ a term that undoubtedly reflects their claim that they are a chosen people and the centre of Christianity.

The Jerusalem community was held in high esteem and even revered by Christians who lived elsewhere. This high regard no doubt obtained in the Damascus congregation as well, for its members told the Jerusalem Christians about the conversion of Paul and thereby led the Jerusalem church to glorify God.⁵⁸ And despite individual differences in belief and practice, a core of shared doctrines and understandings must have united the two communities. Note that the two congregations had in common the notion of the uniquely Jewish God as the creator of heaven and earth. Besides, Paul's home church of Damascus and other Greek-speaking churches adopted from the Jerusalem community both *marana tha* and the other Aramaic cry found in Galatians 4:5 and Romans 8:15: *abba*, Father.

Yet even in the first years of Christianity there existed discrepancies that could not be overlooked—and were to increase.

At this point, we must refute some myths about the first three years of the Jerusalem community. First, there was no empty tomb—that is, no Easter Sunday (see our earlier analysis of the Easter traditions)—and neither an ascension nor an outpouring of the spirit of the sort described in the Pentecost account.⁵⁹ Second, the Lord's Supper cannot have been celebrated in Jerusalem for the obvious reason that the ritual as reported by Paul and Mark could be understood only in a sacramental way, and therefore cannot conceivably be set in Jerusalem. For Jesus himself is pictured as giving out the bread and wine and himself saying the words, "This is my body, this is my blood."

Furthermore, we simply cannot get from the common meals that Jesus celebrated with his disciples and friends in anticipation of the messianic banquet to the sacramentally understood Lord's Supper. Nor is there a way to get from John's understanding of baptism for the forgiveness of sins to an understanding of baptism meaning dying and rising with Christ.

Also, the idea of Jesus' death as atonement for sins seems to come not from Jerusalem, but from Damascus. Unlike the Jerusalemites whose conceptualization of Christianity depended largely on the Hebrew Bible where a representative death to atone for the guilt of others can hardly be found—Greek-speaking Jews were familiar with the idea of dying for the benefit of others. For the Greeks, from the classical period onwards, the voluntary death for the common good of one's city or one's friends was well known. Only in Hellenistic Judaism, and especially after the time of the Maccabean Revolt, do we find examples of martyrs dying for the people or for the Law and thereby atoning for the sins of others.⁶⁰

Thus, upon accepting the message that Jesus had been raised from the dead, Greek-speaking Jews interpreted his death as an act of atonement and may even have thought of Isaiah's Suffering Servant—one who was punished by God for the sake of the Old Testament community of faith. In this matter it is crucial to note that the Septuagint (Greek) version of Isaiah 53:12 is "He himself bore the sins of many and was handed over for the sake of their

sins,” while the Hebrew text reads, “He bore the sins of many, and made intercessions for the transgressors.”

In other words, the tradition of the Lord’s Supper quoted by Paul claimed that for the sake of Christian believers God had handed over to death Jesus, the true Suffering Servant. Indeed, this interpretation, which arose soon after the resurrection visions, permeates the earliest Christian confessions.⁶¹

Last but not least, Jerusalem Christianity involved only Jews and called for observance of the Law, while Christianity in Damascus commingled Jews with gentiles and abandoned the Law for the sake of life in Christ. The decisive issue became the common meals of which the Lord’s Supper was an integral part—meals that celebrated the newly established new creation and the unity of all people in Christ. Indeed, it was this bold innovation that made Paul persecute these Christians, while subsequent to his conversion he became Damascus Christianity’s most famous disciple.

Thus we can identify two clearly different kinds of Christianity during its first three years, with Damascus and Jerusalem the two centres. Neither can claim chronological priority, of course, for that honour obviously belongs to Galilean Christianity, the delineation of which still remains to be accomplished. Yet the most influential of the three was the Damascus variety because of its powerful influence on Paul, who was the real founder of what would become catholic Christianity. Damascene Christianity developed two sacramental rituals, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, that stand in stark contrast to Jerusalem Christianity but would shape the Christian religion of the next two thousand years. I have deliberately omitted the question of the origin of these two rites, but would be derelict if I did not conclude this discussion by insisting on the necessity of a detailed investigation of their sources.

Summary and Outlook

In this paper I have tried to construct the first three years of Christianity at two places on the sole foundation of Paul’s undisputed letters, leaving any secondary source, notably the Acts of the Apostles, aside and spelling out the reasons for doing so. In a preliminary first step I tested the value of such an approach by constructing the chronology of Paul—that is the first thirty years of Christianity—on the sole basis of the authentic letters, and in a second step turned to our primary task. A strict adherence to the method of working solely with the letters afforded some astonishing results that should serve as a basis for further inquiries into the first three years of Christianity. Especially called for is a study of the Jesus tradition in order to shed new light on its origin and emergence. Among other things, this study must address the question of when the proclamation of Christ’s resurrection was first combined with the traditions of the words and deeds of Jesus. Be that as it may, and

irrespective of the correctness of the specific results of my study, it must be a fundamental principle of our scholarly labours that in examining every aspect of Earliest Christianity both during and beyond the first three years, Paul's genuine letters deserve our primary consideration, and must remain determinative even when we turn to other sources.

Notes

- 1 The present essay originated as a lecture delivered at the University of Toronto, October 14, 2008. I thank my good friend Tom Hall and my student J. Scott Almanzar for help in matters of content and English. A full treatment of the topic is presented in my book *Die ersten drei Jahre Christentum* (Springe: zu Klampen, 2009). Since references to secondary literature can be found in this book and seemed unnecessary in the original context, I have only included the most essential here. Some ideas of the present essay are treated in my published works *Paul—Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004); *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005).
- 2 See especially John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, ed., intro Douglas R.A. Hare (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987); and Donald W. Riddle, *Paul, Man of Conflict: A Modern Biographical Sketch* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1940). The work by John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: S.P.C.K, 1965), and reissued as *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), brought my attention to the value of a new chronology of Paul and represents a significant development in Pauline studies. See also John C. Hurd, *The Earlier Letters of Paul—and Other Studies* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1998).
- 3 See Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1989); Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), and the examples cited in Lüdemann, *Acts of the Apostles*.
- 4 Gal. 1:20.
- 5 Gal. 1:18.
- 6 Gal. 1:15–16.
- 7 Gal. 2:1–10.
- 8 Gal. 2:10, and see further, below.
- 9 Acts 9:26–30.
- 10 It should be noted that Acts 11:30 does not reference the collection for the poor mentioned by Paul in Gal. 2:10. This is made clear when Luke claims that the fulfilment of a ministry (*diakonia*) was the real purpose for this trip to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25). Lüdemann, *Paul—Apostle to the Gentiles*, 77–80.
- 11 Acts 15.
- 12 Acts 18:22.
- 13 Acts 21:15–17.
- 14 Luke 24:47.
- 15 See Acts 1:8 and the ending of Acts.
- 16 Acts 15:39–40.
- 17 For a history of scholarship on Acts, see A.J. Mattill, Jr., “Luke as a Historian in Criticism since 1840” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1959). The most influential essay has been Phillip Vielhauer, “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn, 33–50 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).
- 18 Paul's stay in Damascus and in Arabia is also reflected in 2 Cor. 11:32–33.
- 19 The adjustment from three to two and from fourteen to thirteen is necessary because in antiquity fractional parts of the first and the last years of such time periods were counted as full years.

- 20 Gal. 2:1–2.
- 21 Gal. 2:3.
- 22 Gal. 2:10.
- 23 Lüdemann, *Paul—Apostle to the Gentiles*, 80–88.
- 24 See Hurd, *Origin*, 200–207.
- 25 Compare 2 Cor. 8:1–4, 9:2.
- 26 For a survey of research on this topic, see Lüdemann, *Paul—Apostle to the Gentiles*, 7–19.
- 27 It goes without saying that for the present I shall deal only with select passages.
- 28 See further below.
- 29 Rom. 4:25, 8:32.
- 30 1 Cor 15:5.
- 31 Acts 21:20.
- 32 For a brief explanation of Luke’s redactional tendencies in both his gospel and Acts, see Lüdemann, *Paul—Apostle to the Gentiles*, 11–13.
- 33 Acts 22:3.
- 34 Compare Gal. 1:22.
- 35 1 Cor. 15:3.
- 36 Compare Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:1.
- 37 Compare Gen. 1:27.
- 38 Philem. 8–14.
- 39 1 Cor. 1:13.
- 40 Gal. 3:27.
- 41 Rom. 6:3.
- 42 Rom. 6:4.
- 43 Gal. 2:11–13.
- 44 1 Cor. 11:20.
- 45 Rev. 1:10.
- 46 See 1 Cor. 15:3.
- 47 Jer. 31:3.
- 48 1 Cor. 10:20–21.
- 49 Another sentence construction begins after “then to the Twelve,” employing a different conjunction.
- 50 Please note that no empty tomb comes in sight here; in fact, it is excluded, because the burial confirms the death of Jesus and not his resurrection.
- 51 Compare 1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:15–17; Phil. 3:8.
- 52 Rev. 1:10
- 53 Compare Mark 3:21.
- 54 Compare 1 Cor. 16:22.
- 55 1 Thess. 4:13–17.
- 56 1 Cor. 12:3.
- 57 Rom. 15:26–27; 2 Cor. 8:4, 12.
- 58 Gal. 1:23.
- 59 Acts 2:1–12.
- 60 See 2 Macc. 7:32–33, 37–38; 4 Macc. 6:27–29.
- 61 Compare Rom. 4:25 and 8:32.