

## Paul and Power



BENGT HOLMBERG

# Paul and Power

*The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church  
as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*

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# To Solweig

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## Introduction

One of the sore points in ecumenical discussions between Christians from different churches has always been the origin of the ministry and its exercise of authority. A reflection of this is the well-known fact that even scholarly studies in this field are often marked by the particular theological background of the scholar.<sup>1</sup> Every ecclesiastical tradition wishes to find its own church order confirmed by the New Testament; in fact this can in many cases be effected without doing violence to the texts due to the paucity and ambiguity of the relevant historical material.

Consequently, discussion of such questions seems to belong to the field of systematic theology and not to historical study.<sup>2</sup> But no serious theological discussion can in the long run do without the connection with reality that is mediated by historical investigation. Hence a discussion of the ministry and its exercise of authority within the Primitive Church is almost inevitable. Moreover, as it is a sound methodological principle to ascertain the facts of a case before starting to discuss their import, any theological analysis of the order of the Primitive Church ought to be preceded by a historical examination of the phenomena pertaining to this aspect of its life. That is what this book purports to be.

Still, there is no lack of historical investigations in this field, and it can rightly be asked what a new study can hope to accomplish that has not already been done.<sup>3</sup> Even if the field of investigation is narrowed to the Pauline epistles, one has to state that there exists a profusion of detailed

1. Cf. the characterizations by *Goppelt* (1966:121 n. 1) and the introduction of *Hainz* (1972:11–28).

2. Among works of this kind can be mentioned *Häring* (1972) and *Schütte* (1974).

3. For a history of the research of the last hundred years, see *Linton* (1932), *Hainz* (1972:11–28), *Brockhaus* (1975:7–94) and *Skjevesland* (1976:9–28, 109–127). See also the bibliography in *Kertelge* (1977: 565–574).

commentaries and scholarly monographs and articles on almost every single verse in these epistles. *Joseph Hainz* gives a full and balanced treatment to nearly every text of interest for this study in his massive monograph "Ekklesia. Strukturen paulinischer Gemeinde-Theologie und Gemeinde-Ordnung", (Regensburg 1972); this applies as well to *John Howard Schütz's* penetrating "Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority", (Cambridge 1975). Moreover, to special texts and themes within the field of (Pauline) church order there exists any number of detailed investigations.

It is also apparent that there exists a considerable degree of consensus among scholars on the vast majority of details concerning philological and historical fact. But this is not accompanied by a corresponding degree of consensus as to how the facts are to be interpreted and fitted together into syntheses of historical reconstruction. This is a vital, if often neglected, part of historical study and it is here that work must be done anew in every generation.<sup>4</sup>

To attempt a synthesis of details of historical fact implies working with the categories of interpretation. The New Testament data are usually interpreted by means of categories from philosophy,<sup>5</sup> history of religions and later Christian theology, all belonging to the world of theoretical conceptions and ideas. Often a too direct and uncomplicated transition is made from isolated historical facts to their interpretation by theological categories. The facts are organized in structures or syntheses of a theological kind before the attempt is made to interpret them as parts of social structures or an organically coherent historical development. For instance, too often the material is interpreted by raising questions about "the ministry" in the New Testament—a later theological category—instead of by analysing more fundamental phenomena, such as who emits and transmits authoritative words, who has the decisive word in new situations or conflicts, who receives financial support for work in the Church or its mission, etc.

This investigation is an attempt to begin from the beginning of the ministry, order and polity. An attempt will be made to analyse the phenomena constituting the germs of the later ministry and polity, viz. the distribution of power and exercise of authority in the Primitive Church.

This type of investigation is not unlike that made by an anthropologist visiting a hitherto unknown tribe: he collects the phenomena as they appear

4. Cf. on the methodological necessity of syntheses *Riesenfeld* (1968).

5. *Bultmann's* "Theologie des Neuen Testaments", Tübingen 1953, is a well-known example of the influence of existentialist philosophy (Heidegger) on the interpretation of the New Testament.

and tries to organize them conceptually in structures of an ordinary social kind (kinship, system of customary law, financial organization, etc.). Naturally he wants to know why some people are considered wise or entitled to decide for others, i.e. why they are considered authoritative; this brings him into contact with the lore and myth of the tribe, which is a conceptual structure differing from his own. In spite of evident differences, this is the procedure used by any scholar of our century who treats the New Testament historically: he organizes the phenomena into conceptual structures (e.g. chronological order, relation to similar phenomena, probable influences between them, etc.) of which the original authors of the New Testament were either not conscious or which they did not find important enough to comment upon. Most New Testament texts, though perhaps reflecting the social structures of the Church, are not written to communicate information about them. Nonetheless they can be used in collecting such information without necessarily leading to a distortion of what they have to say on other matters.<sup>6</sup>

As no book of this size could comprise a full investigation of the historical phenomena pertaining to the distribution of power and exercise of authority in the Primitive Church, a limitation of the investigation must be made. Hence our concern here is with a historical study of the structure of authority in the Primitive Church as reflected in the Pauline epistles.

This means that I do not investigate the theology either of the Church, the apostolate, the divine Word, the sacraments, the worship, the church discipline or of any other phenomena of Church life. The opinions, interpretations and theologies of the actors will only be treated to the extent that they serve as evidence for the structure of authority. By "authority" is meant social relations of asymmetric power distribution considered legitimate by the participating actors. I do not analyse fully the content of the theories used to legitimate authority.<sup>7</sup> By "structure" is meant a totality or system of interdependent qualities or phenomena.<sup>8</sup>

The historical material for this investigation has been restricted to the

6. ". . . it is possible to put questions to all sorts and levels of literature—from Dickens to seaside postcards—to get it to yield information . . . which it was never written to provide. Yet it does not follow that the more it tells us of this, the less it tells us of what it is meant to be about", *Robinson* (1976:354).

7. The concept "authority" is discussed and defined in greater detail below, in Chapter 4.

8. My use of the term "structure" is not "structuralistic", i.e. postulating and analysing very general, "deep" structures of social life. Cf. *Piaget* (1971:97) and *Granger* (1973:210 ff, 228 ff) on the difference in this respect between Lévi-Strauss and sociologists such as Durkheim and Gurvitch. The structures we observe in the Primitive Church need not have been evident to the actors themselves, as they are latent organizing principles of social life, cf. *Piaget* (1971:97 f), *Naumann* (1973:4) and *Hennen-Prigge* (1977:13 f, 23 f).

genuine Pauline epistles, and as such I here consider Rom, 1 and 2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess and Philem.<sup>9</sup> This means that I treat only information concerning the Pauline sphere or region of the Church. The choice is a deliberate one. It is methodologically necessary in a historical treatment of the Primitive Church to distinguish the separate regions of the Church from each other and follow one "trajectory" at a time.<sup>10</sup> A description of the authority structure within the Pauline trajectory would, however, be incomplete if Paul's (and the Gentile Mission's) relations with the church in Jerusalem were not treated at all. Therefore part of the investigation concerns the structure of authority in a larger part of the Primitive Church, and here the sources must be supplemented by critically sifted information from the Acts of the Apostles.

The main reason for choosing the Pauline trajectory before other possible ones is that it has been of central importance for the scholarly discussion of primitive church order since before the beginning of this century. It might not be unfair to say that, to many Protestant scholars from *Rudolph Sohm* to *von Campenhausen* and *Käsemann*,<sup>11</sup> and to some Catholic ones, e.g. *Küng* (1967), the Pauline trajectory is even of normative importance within the New Testament. Any new result or view-point, any valid criticism of prevailing opinions in this field thus promises to be of importance for the whole discussion of the ministry and authority in the Primitive Church.

My investigation has two parts, the first being a historical account of the distribution of power in the Primitive Church. Here I want to give a picture

9. These seven are generally considered to have been written by Paul while the authenticity of the others, 2 Thess, Col, Eph, 1 and 2 Tim, Tit has been discussed. In order to avoid burdening this investigation with a discussion of the complex questions of authenticity, and because an inclusion of at least the first three of these letters would (as far as I can see) not considerably alter the picture of authority in the Primitive Church, I have chosen to use only the first-named seven letters. If, however, the Pastoral Epistles were written by Paul, the picture of intra-church authority given in Chapter 3 would need revision.

On the historical value of the Acts of the Apostles, see the introductory remarks of Part I.

10. On the original diversity of the Primitive Church, see *Streeter* (1929), *Schille* (1966), *Dias* (1967), and on methodological conclusions from this fact see *Robinson* (1971), who together with *Koester* introduced the term "trajectory".

11. Protestant scholarship after the Second World War has not continued the "new consensus" of the 1930's and 1940's (on this, see *Skjervestrand* 1976:17-22), but taken up again discussion, themes and opinions from the "old consensus" (of the 1880's) and from *Rudolph Sohm*. Bultmann's position approximates that of *von Harnack* and the "old consensus", *Brockhaus* (1975:22 n. 90; 31 f n. 157), *Skjervestrand* (1976:22-25), while other scholars are closer to the position of *Sohm*: on *von Campenhausen*, see *Hainz* (1972:13), *Dreier* (1972:29-37) and *Brockhaus* (1975:36 f), on *Käsemann* see *Dreier* (1972:29-37) and *Brockhaus* (1975:41 f, 45 f), and on *Schweizer* see *Hainz* (1972:27) and *Brockhaus* (1975:42, 45).

of how power is distributed before I proceed to an analysis of which relations are considered legitimate and why they are so regarded.

When collecting the phenomena that constitute this picture I have of course begun by scrutinizing the sources. But I have not found it necessary to continue in the usual way of exegeting in detail every cited text. This is a practical methodological conclusion from the existence of a vast resource of reliable scholarly work on the texts. There is no point in presenting a detailed, painstaking analysis of the relevant texts when this would only amount to a repetition of well-known facts.

The practical conclusion to use and refer to the work of others when collecting and presenting historical data is, however, only a consequence of my theoretical methodological conclusion, that the important work of interpreting historical data must be reoriented. The predominantly theological interpretation of early Christian history, concentrating on the history of ideas, needs to be balanced by a different approach. I have chosen to interpret the data with categories taken from sociology, a field of scholarship seldom used by New Testament scholars.<sup>12</sup>

This does not need any special defence, as if the use of sociology (or economics, or psychology, or any other scientific approach) necessarily entailed a positivistic attitude toward the phenomena investigated, or any special insensitivity to the inner life of the Church.

If and in what way a sociological examination of Primitive Christianity is feasible and to what degree it is appropriate, is possible to decide only by observing it used on the available sources, not by reflections on the "non-disposability of the faith" ("Unverfügbarkeit des Glaubens") or the "non-objectifiability of the kerygma" ("Nichtobjektivierbarkeit des Kerygmas") and other formulas, that could be abused in intimidating scientific curiosity, even if they are legitimate in other contexts.<sup>13</sup>

Naturally one has to be aware of the limitations of a sociological analysis of New Testament material. Such an enterprise cannot purport to be a full investigation of the reality concerned (but neither can a purely theological analysis!) and must at times appear crass in comparison with investigations sympathetically treating the opinions of the actors. But to analyse the actual distribution of power within the church of Corinth is not to deny that

12. To mention just one example where New Testament scholarship could (and should) have profited from a knowledge of sociology one can point to recent discussion on the alleged "domination-free" ("Herrschafts-freie") interaction and communication in the Primitive Church; cf. *Hoffmann-Eid* (1975:214–230) and *Löning* (1974:57–60). The latter is corrected in the same volume by *Iserloh* (1974:143 ff), who rightly stresses that charismatic communication is anything but "domination-free".

13. *Theissen* (1974c:37), my translation.

Paul is justified in defining prophecy or any other function in this church as a gift of the Holy Spirit; and to state that financial obligations are a manifestation of a power relation is not to deny that money could be given from kind and loving hearts. The sociological type of analysis represents, however, a very interesting type of analysis, revealing aspects of the Primitive Church which would otherwise have remained unknown.

As I mentioned above, Part I is a collection of historical data, most of which are familiar to everyone working in the field and largely uncontroversial. Here I attempt to give a synthetic, well-informed description of the distribution of power within the Primitive Church. In Chapter 1 I describe the relations between the leaders of the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem and the leaders of the Gentile Christian church (especially Paul). In Chapter 2 I continue by describing the relations within the Pauline region of the Church, i.e. between Paul, his co-workers and his churches, and in Chapter 3 attention is focused on the relations within local Pauline churches.

Part II is an attempt at analysing the historical material in Part I in order to acquire a clearer understanding of the authority structure of the Primitive Church. According to the definitions given above, this means that I wish to describe the system of legitimate domination at work in the Church or, to use a somewhat anachronistic term, its (implicit) hierarchy. But a static diagram of organization showing who is over whom is not what is really interesting about a structure. We want to know something about the inner functioning of this system, what laws regulate it, how it develops and why.

This involves an analysis of how authority functions, and consequently I begin by investigating the structure of authority as such, i.e. the interdependence of the elements that constitute authority (Chapter 4). To decide to use sociology in the interpretation of authority means to discuss *Max Weber's* classical sociology of authority, which still dominates this field. But since his death more than fifty years ago, his work has been criticized, defended and modified by numerous other sociologists, and I have tried to profit from this discussion.

*Weber's* theory of authority includes a typology distinguishing between traditional, rational-legal and charismatic authority, as well as many hypotheses on the inner functioning and transformations of the different types of authority. In Chapter 5 I discuss the concept of "charismatic authority" and attempt to determine the extent to which such authority functioned at different levels of the Church. This has been done to a certain extent by *Schütz* (1975), who uses *Weber's* sociology, interpreted by *Parsons* and

*Shils*, to interpret Paul's theology of his own person and authority.<sup>14</sup> My own approach to *Weber* differs from *Schütz's*, mainly in that I use sociology in interpreting social phenomena concerning the authority of Paul and others.<sup>15</sup>

In *Weber's* terminology the Primitive Church should be described as manifesting the "routinization of charisma"; this is the subject of Chapter 6. I begin this by discussing the relation between this concept and the concept of "institutionalization" in modern sociology, and then try to analyse the development of the exercise of authority in the historical material with the help of these sociological categories.

Chapter 7 contains a short summary of the preceding discussion, and an attempt at drawing some methodological conclusions from what has been found to be the structure of authority and its nature in the Primitive Church.

14. *Schütz* (1975:16–20, 264–278).

15. The sociological approach to New Testament history is being increasingly used, after having made a start (that was never fulfilled) as early as sixty years ago with the form-historical approach, *Gewalt* (1971). The work of *de Haas* (1972) is mainly a treatise in systematic theology although it uses *Weber* and other sociologists to criticize *Käsemann's* views on Early Catholicism (pp. 87–110). Among other New Testament scholars using *Weber's* sociology can be mentioned *Gager* (1975, esp. pp. 67–76) and *Theissen* (1975a), who however confuses *Weber's* and *Paul's* conceptions of charisma in this essay (1975a:211, 215). Otherwise *Theissen* has given excellent discussions on questions of methodology concerning the use of sociology in New Testament research (1974c and 1975b), and his works generally manifest the fruitfulness of this approach. *K Berger* provides methodological discussions of a general kind, taking as his starting point the sociology of knowledge (1977b:218–241 and 1977c).



## PART ONE

# *The Distribution of Power in the Primitive Church*

Before beginning to describe the distribution of power at different levels in the Primitive Church a preparatory discussion on what is meant by "power" is in place. This is not intended to be a technical discussion of theoretical sociology but will be limited to some remarks on the phenomena to be looked for to get a picture of how power is distributed within a social group which is not a formal organization in the modern sense.<sup>1</sup>

Social scientists are not unanimous in their definitions of "power",<sup>2</sup> but at this stage I do not want to go into the finer distinctions between different definitions of the concept. As a preliminary definition I have chosen that by *Etzioni*: power is "an actor's ability to induce or influence another actor to carry out his directives or any other norms he supports".<sup>3</sup> This broad, inclusive definition of power will be used throughout Part I, as it will permit me to treat a large range of power phenomena, including supernatural powers in human beings and power relations of which the participants are unaware or only partly aware.

Indications of this "ability to induce or influence another actor, etc." are in the first place phenomena belonging to relations of explicit superi-

1. Etzioni, following Parsons, defines organizations as "social units devoted primarily to attainment of specific goals" and elucidates by adding that in his book the term stands for "complex bureaucratic organizations", *Etzioni* (1961:XI n. 1). Bearing in mind the great difference between a modern complex organization and the aggregate of small local churches we call the Primitive Church, I have taken care to use only Etzioni's most general and abstract terminology, and to use his discussion of modern phenomena as heuristically useful but not directly transferable to the period I am examining.

2. Cf. *Bachrach-Baratz* (1972:29-50), *Hennen-Prigge* (1977:1-7) and any major dictionary of social science.

3. *Etzioni* (1961:4). Another attempt to conceptually structure the field of "power" is made by *Hartmann* (1964), who takes "influence" as his general category within which "power, force, manipulation, authority, etc." are placed.

ority and subordination. When we see that orders, admonitions, decisions and rebukes coming from one person (or group of persons) to another person (or group of persons) evoke a positive response we can state that there is an asymmetric distribution of power, i.e. one person exercises power over another.<sup>4</sup> If a particular person regularly exercises power we say that he has a power position.<sup>5</sup>

When all phenomena of this kind have been collected one can try to fit them together into a meaningful pattern, e.g. see whether there is more than one level of subordination or, in other words, an enduring hierarchical structure of power positions.

The degree of subordination can vary from very close control in almost every sphere of the life of the subject, to the other extreme where there is virtually no control and what there is of control is exercised only in one sphere of life.<sup>6</sup> There can be a high degree of subordination without formal organization. (The question of how power is legitimated does not belong to the strictly phenomenological field and will be discussed in Chapter 4.)

Related to the phenomena of explicit superiority and subordination and not easily distinguished from them are phenomena that indicate what can loosely be termed "word-power". This term refers to the fact that in most groups the exchange of verbal communication is asymmetric, not only as regards frequency but also as regards kind. Some people are listened to more than others, not primarily on account of their loquacity but because their words are considered to yield better information or judgement and are generally regarded as being wise and weighty. This may be "codified" in a set of rules about who may speak and where. (E.g., "Children should be seen and not heard". Women must be silent in the congregation, 1 Cor 14:34. After a general discussion the important men have the final and decisive word (Acts 15:5-22). Or the reverse, as in the Qumran community (1 QS VI:8-12): everybody may take part in the discussion, but the important men speak first and then the rest in a strictly descending order of rank.) Another universal phenomenon is the fact that sacred words, oracles, prophecies and revelations of divine wisdom are generally received as genuine only from certain kinds of people, "word-bearers" chosen and legitimated according to specified criteria, so as to ascertain that what is spoken really comes from a transhuman source.

Thus if we look at the flow of communication of authoritative words

4. *Etzioni* (1961:4). This does not mean that the subordinate actor is devoid of power, only that he has less.

5. *Idem*, p. 5.

6. *Idem*, p. 17.

(words listened to with respect)<sup>7</sup> and note that this flow is asymmetric (most of it comes from a small group of persons), there is reason to regard the “senders” as being the élite of the group. There is generally a close identity between the group that sends authoritative words and the group of power-position incumbents. The man with “word-power” can make willingly met demands on other members of his group or society that they shall “hear” him, which comes close to meaning “obey” him. They willingly accept and submit to his influence, which is normally not manifested in the form of explicit orders but rather in the form of teaching, instruction, recalling and interpreting the holy tradition, defining the situation and so on.<sup>8</sup>

Although I have now distinguished between verbal and practical behaviour denoting explicit superiority and subordination on the one hand and more general “word-power” corresponding to a readiness to be influenced by certain “senders” on the other, it is obvious that these two kinds of phenomena are better seen as lying at two different points on the same continuum. At one end of the continuum we have an asymmetric power relation of extreme explicitness and intensity (formal command, unquestioning and prompt obedience), at the other end a relation where the influence of one actor over another is discernible but not intense and not explicitly expressed. Thus I cannot concentrate my investigation of the distribution of power in the Primitive Church on expressions of explicit, more or less formalized power relations alone. I must also take into account what can be learnt about the more informal and hidden yet effective power structure by looking at the distribution of influential, authoritative words.

A third class of phenomena which we have to consider is the behaviour of subordinate actors when specifically oriented towards superior actors. The relation between actors in a power relation can be described as an unbalanced exchange relation. One party gives the orders, makes demands, speaks authoritative words and the other gives in return obedience, service, personal support and money. The subordinate actor has to “pay” in some way.

To get a clear picture of how power is distributed one must investigate not only the stream of authoritative words from the “senders” or superior actors but also the stream of service, support and money in the opposite

7. This is of course not an exact definition of “authority, authoritative”. This concept will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

8. In a social system (a group or organization, for example) the direct order is not used in everyday relations (“ein Arbeitsmittel des Alltags”), but is a forceful, boundary-defining and boundary-enforcing measure, used in more extreme and precarious situations, and then only by superiors. Ordinarily, relations are upheld and the system made to function by communications of a less stringent type, *Luhmann* (1964:151 f).

direction from the "subjects" or subordinate actors. The mere existence of "payment" (a transfer of money or other goods) indicates the presence of influence in the social field. But to keep this within the phenomenon of power as defined above I shall restrict the investigation of "payment" to those situations where we have some indication that this is a response to a tacit or expressed demand from an actor whom we on other grounds have found to have some sort of power position.

Now we know in broad outline what will be treated in the following: explicit and implicit relations of superiority and subordination. And we shall expect to find them by collecting and interpreting phenomena of two kinds: (a) the stream of authoritative words and (b) the stream of obedience and support. The question I apply to the New Testament texts is to begin with simply this: Who is subordinate to the other, and in what degree? And I attempt to find the answer to that question by investigating who is at the receiving end of the two streams. By doing this I shall be able to establish the main facts of the power structure of the Primitive Church.

Not until this has been done (in Part I) can the investigation proceed to an analysis of what kinds of power we find in this community and why the power is distributed as it is or, in other words, to an analysis of the *authority* structure. This secondary analysis will constitute Part II of this work.

#### SOURCE-CRITICAL REMARKS

Our sources of information on the Primitive Church in the times of Paul are mainly the letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. As is nowadays generally recognized the letters of Paul are primary sources, Acts secondary. The tendency to regard Acts as little more than a piece of romantic fiction from the end of the first century has, however, been decisively countered during the last decade.

Among the number of surveys of the literature on Acts published lately<sup>9</sup> Grässer's survey in "Theologische Rundschau" 1976 and 1977 is the most up to date and gives a full account of what has been done in the field since 1960.

According to Grässer there seems to be a new tendency emerging. Scholars such as *Dibelius*, *Haenchen*, *Conzelmann*, *Klein*, *Schmithals* and *O'Neill* tend to see Acts as a late, strongly idealizing and theologizing literary composition reflecting the ("frühkatholisch") outlook which came to the fore around the end of the first century, and containing a slender amount of accurate historical information. Now a new generation of schol-

9. E.g. *Dupont* (1967), *Marshall* (1970) and *Gasque* (1975).

ars, *Burchard, Jervell, Löning, Marshall, Stolle* and *Wilson*, have continued the redaction-critical work of their predecessors but arrived at different results.

Luke is now no longer regarded as primarily a systematic theologian, still less a "frühkatholisch" one (*Wilson, Grässer*). His history of the Primitive Church is based on historical tradition, sometimes of a very fragmentary kind; he makes real mistakes here, but they are not intentional reinterpretations. The work of separating tradition from redaction has revealed a larger amount of factual, historical information than was formerly thought to be there. This applies to both Luke's information about facts and circumstances in contemporary history, politics and geography<sup>10</sup> and his knowledge of what happened in the earliest times of Church history.

A number of works on Paul in Acts exhibit the new tendency, e.g. the works of *Burchard* (1970) on the conversion of Paul in Acts, of *Stolle* (1973) on Paul on trial and of *Wilson* (1973) on the Gentile Mission in Acts.<sup>11</sup>

This shift towards a view of Acts which credits it with a generally higher degree of reliability as regards historical information seems to permit of a greater confidence in the use of information about Paul from Acts. I shall not, however, attempt a full analysis of those texts from Acts which are cited in the following as corroborating and sometimes supplementing the information from Paul's own letters, but shall content myself with referring the reader to scholarly discussions on them.

Of course this also applies to some extent to what will be said on the Pauline texts. The literature dealing with Paul's letters is boundless and I do not presume to do more than draw some conclusions from this discussion. It seems to me that there is something of a consensus on the main facts and lines of interpretation of Pauline texts, and it would be presumptuous not to acknowledge and make use of this.

When using texts from the letters of Paul as the main sources for historical reconstruction one must take account of both the special character of Paul's thinking and reasoning and the special, often controversial situations for which his letters are written (this applies in particular to Gal and 2 Cor). The character of Paul's thinking and the way he reasons has been described as dichotomizing, generalizing and simplifying, ruthlessly drawing out the consequences of underlying principles.<sup>12</sup> It is not unusual to find

10. This was pointed out early in this century by W. Ramsay, and lately by the classical scholar A.N. Sherwin-White.

11. Cf. *Grelot* (1971:465 f), *Hengel* (1972b:17 n. 11a) and *Mussner* (1974:127 n. 1, and 132 n. 13).

12. *Eckert* (1971:22–26), with numerous examples.

him engaged in putting forward his theological or practical view in marked contrast to what his readers think and practise.

Another fact of importance for the assessment of the historical value of these sources is the fact that Paul's relation to Jerusalem does not remain unchanged throughout his life as a Christian. Having begun as a persecutor of the Church he is still very much an outsider and a newcomer, especially to the Jerusalem church, during the first part of his life as a Christian. This he spent partly alone in distant regions (Gal 1:17b, 21) and partly as one of the "prophets and teachers" leading the Antiochene church.<sup>13</sup> We may presume that the two-week visit to Cephas c. A.D. 35 (Gal 1:18) convinced Cephas and James that Paul's conversion was genuine and that he had seen the Risen Lord and received His call to "evangelize". But not until about thirteen years later, at the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem is there any mention of recognizing Paul as apostle of Christ to the Gentiles, the equal of Cephas (Gal 2:7 f).

When we meet him in the major epistles the situation has changed. He is no longer a member of the leading gremium of Antioch, nor a missionary under Antioch accompanying Barnabas.<sup>14</sup> He has struck out on a great, independent, and successful missionary enterprise of his own, which has established beyond doubt his God-given grace as apostle to the Gentiles. He is now an independent and powerful leader with his own team of assistants, his own contacts in numerous local churches that he himself has founded, his own expansive planning (cf. Rom 15:19 ff) and a theological diction of great originality and depth.<sup>15</sup> With *Holtz* and many other writers I believe we must regard the Apostolic Council (Gal 2:1–10) and the Antioch Incident that followed close on it (Gal 2:11–14) as forming something of a watershed in Paul's development.<sup>16</sup>

13. *Idem*, p. 178. Cf. *Gerhardsson* (1961:262 f) about which characteristics Paul must have been lacking in the eyes of the Jerusalem church.

14. On the relation between Paul and Barnabas, see Chapter 2.

15. It is only after the Council and the Antioch Incident that Paul develops his habit of using letters as a medium for apostolic work, *Holtz* (1974:147 n. 5).

16. *Holtz* (1974, *passim*), *Stuhmacher* (1968:106 f), *Maly* (1969:77 f), *Mussner* (1974:187).

## CHAPTER 1

# *The Distribution of Power within the Church—Paul and Jerusalem*

### A. FROM THE CONVERSION TO THE ANTIOCH INCIDENT

#### 1. The Tendency of Paul's Report

Paul writes Gal 1–2 in the latter part of his life. The events he treats of belong to the earlier part of his Christian period<sup>17</sup> and have been given a very unfavourable interpretation by people in Galatia who, as Paul well knows, have the hearing of his “own” Galatians. This is a contributory cause of the tendentious record of what happened in Paul’s earlier life, especially in connection with the church in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> The word “tendentious” does not mean that Paul is making deliberately false statements. That is precluded for instance by Gal 1:20 where Paul takes God as witness to the fact that he is speaking the truth.<sup>19</sup> But it means that his perspective is strongly dominated by his own (later) theological interpretation of his own apostolate and his need to explain and defend this.

Commentators do not agree as to what it was Paul was accused of by his opponents in Galatia. Either it was said (a) that he had showed too great a measure of independence (by treacherously concealing the necessity of

17. *Haenchen* (1965:61 et passim) has argued the importance of this.

18. *Stuhlmacher* characterizes Paul’s description as throughout tendentious (“durchaus tendenziös”), (1968:85). *Schlier* calls the report “die auf das apologetisch Notwendige konzentrierten Berichte” and says that it is formed “unter dogmatisch relevanten Gesichtspunkten”, even if dates and facts are correct (1971:112). Cf. *Theissen* on another polemical Pauline text (2 Cor 10–13): “Seine (sc. Pauli) Objektivität bei der Wiedergabe der Aussagen anderer muss bezweifelt werden” (1975c:206).

19. *Kasting* (1969:77 n. 71), *Nickle* (1966:41) and *Robinson* (1976:36). Like most of the commentators, *Sampley* (1977) limits the reference of 1:20 to the preceding two verses, but argues that the oath is made at the most sensitive point of Paul’s argument: the first contact with the Jerusalem apostles. The taking of a voluntary oath in a conflict was regarded as a very significant action in Roman legal custom; it could sometimes close a lawsuit before it was opened.

circumcision, thus “pleasing men”, Gal 1:10),<sup>20</sup> or (b) that he showed too little independence to be considered the equal of the other apostles (cf. Gal 1:11 f).<sup>21</sup> In any case it seems clear that his “gospel” and his person were thought to be incomplete and lacking in full authority. Paul’s answer to this defamation is a vigorous explanation of his own position as an apostle against suspicions, misunderstandings and false reports.<sup>22</sup> *Stuhlmacher* summarizes:

Paulus hat aus der Rückschau ein Ereignis zu interpretieren, welches in stärkstem Masse für seine Gegner und zu seinen eigenen Ungunsten zu sprechen schien.—Die paulinische Tendenz ist offensichtlich auch in Gal. 2 die, Eigenständigkeit und Unabhängigkeit seines Apostolates und seiner Botschaft zu erweisen.<sup>23</sup>

Although this tendency is obvious we should beware of oversimplifying Paul’s intention in Gal 1–2. On the one hand it is quite clear that from Gal 1:1 to 1:12 and through the report of 1:18—2:14 Paul is stressing the God-given independence of his apostolate. On the other hand it is also quite clear that he does not repudiate other authority than his own nor is he out to minimize his contacts with Cephas and the other “pillars” in Jerusalem. He is careful to point out to his opponents and detractors the incontrovertible fact that he was officially and irreversibly acknowledged by the Jerusalem “pillars” as Apostle to the Gentiles, with a competence and a “gospel” of his own (Gal 2:6–9).<sup>24</sup> The dialectic between being independent of and being acknowledged by Jerusalem is the keynote of this important text and must not be forgotten.

## 2. Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem Up to the Apostolic Council

It cannot be denied that the first part of Paul’s report on his dealings with Jerusalem is dominated by what has been called “alibi-reasoning” (“I was not there”). From his conversion and onwards he has been utterly inde-

20. *Georgi* (1965:36 n. 113), *Roloff* (1965:66), *Kasting* (1969:121), *Eckert* (1971:217), *Holtz* (1974:116), *Schütz* (1975:130) and *Wilckens* (1974:132): “Er habe die nötige Subordination seiner Mission unter die Jerusalemer Autoritäten aufgegeben”.

21. *Gerhardsson* (1961:264), *Stuhlmacher* (1968:65–68), who thinks Paul was accused of being a mere delegate or missionary from the Antiochene church, and *Schlier* (1971:22).

22. *Linton* (1949) considered that the need for Paul to give a scrupulously true account of his dealings with Jerusalem to the Galatians points to their knowledge of another and different version of the same events, a version that influenced Luke’s picture of Paul in Acts. This much-cited hypothesis has lately been criticized by *Burchard* (1970:159 f) on methodological grounds.

23. *Stuhlmacher* (1968:85). Cf. *Bonnard* (1956:26, 35), *Gerhardsson* (1961:263 f), *Eckert* (1971:177 and 210) and *Mussner* (1974:126).

24. *Holtz* (1974:118), *Wilckens* (1974:133).