

*Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians*

Steve Walton

SNTS.MS 106; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 256 pp., £40, hb. ISBN 0-521-78006-3

**SUMMARY**

In this volume Dr Walton makes an important contribution to the ongoing debate about the portrayals of Paul in the book of Acts and in his own letters. Walton studies Paul's speech at Miletus, recorded in Acts 20, and identifies several major themes on Christian leadership, such as faithful fulfilment of responsibilities, suffering, and new attitudes to wealth and work. A careful exegesis of some sections of 1 Thessalonians indicates a remarkably similar portrait of Christian leadership in Paul's letter. Paul's speech, recorded by Luke, is close in thought, presentation and vocabulary to an unquestioned Pauline letter. This suggests several conclusions for the assessment of Luke's work and its historical reliability. In addition, Walton's volume contributes to the understanding of Christian leadership in the NT, which should inspire every Christian leader.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Dieses Buch ist ein wichtiger Beitrag zu der andauernden Debatte über die Paulusdarstellung in der Apostelgeschichte und seinen eigenen Briefen. Walton untersucht die Miletrede von Apg 20 und bestimmt mehrere große Themen christlicher Leiterschaft wie die treue Erfüllung der Aufgaben, Leiden und eine neue Haltung zu Reichtum und Arbeit. Die gründliche Auslegung einiger Passagen aus dem ersten Thessalonicherbrief enthüllt ein erstaunlich ähnliches Porträt christlicher Leiterschaft. Die Paulusrede, so wie sie Lukas überliefert, ähnelt sowohl in der Präsentation als auch in der Diktion einem unumstrittenen Paulusbrief. Dieses Ergebnis erlaubt verschiedene Schlußfolgerungen für die Einschätzung des lukanischen Unternehmens und seiner historischen Glaubwürdigkeit. Daneben trägt Waltons Band ganz allgemein zum Verständnis christlicher Leiterschaft im Neuen Testament bei. Jeder christliche Leiter wird davon inspiriert.

**RÉSUMÉ**

S. Walton apporte une contribution importante au débat sur le portrait de l'apôtre Paul dans le livre des Actes et dans ses propres lettres. Il étudie le discours de Paul à Milet tel qu'il est rapporté en Actes 20 et y décèle plusieurs thèmes principaux en rapport avec le ministère chrétien : la fidélité pour assumer les responsabilités, la souffrance, de nouvelles attitudes à l'égard des biens matériels et du travail. Une exégèse serrée de certaines portions de 1 Thessaloniciens fait ressortir une vision tout à fait semblable du ministère chrétien dans une lettre paulinienne. Le discours de l'apôtre, tel que Luc le rapporte, est proche par la

pensée, la présentation et le vocabulaire d'une lettre de Paul dont l'authenticité n'est pas mise en doute. Il en découle certaines implications quant à l'appréciation que l'on peut porter sur l'œuvre de Luc et notamment sur sa fiabilité historique. En outre, Walton nous fait mieux saisir la conception néo-testamentaire du ministère chrétien, ce qui devrait inspirer tout responsable chrétien.

\* \* \* \*

Luke's portrait of Paul in relation to that arising from Paul's own letters has been an endless source of academic interest and research, a welcome field for dissertations of all kinds, has sparked research that has led to a better understanding of both authors and has also produced widely diverging results. German speaking scholarship in the wake of F. C. Baur, M. Dibelius, P. Vielhauer and E. Haenchen has by and large concluded that the Paul of Luke, however well intended Luke's portrayal may have been, does not reflect the real Paul (at least in reconstruction of modern scholarship). Thus the author of Acts cannot have been Luke, the beloved physician of Col 4.14, the traditional travelling companion of Paul. Accordingly, the historical reliability of Acts is assessed negatively. Acts is neither a reliable source for the life and theology of Paul nor for reconstructing the history of Early Christianity (for exceptions see e. g. C.-J. Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen: Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen*, WUNT 56; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991; for an example involving 1 Thessalonians and the respective sections in Acts see C. vom Brocke, *Thessaloniki – Stadt des Kassander und Gemeinde des Paulus*, WUNT II.125; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001, reviewed in *EuroJTh* 11, 2002, 56-58). There are some indications that this negative estimation of Luke is undergoing a welcome re-assessment (see e.g. H. Botermann, 'Der Heidenapostel und sein Historiker: Zur historischen Kritik der Apostelgeschichte', *Theologische Beiträge* 24, 1993, 62-84 and my survey in 'Hinweise zu einem wiederentdeckten Gebiet der Actaforschung', *Communio Viatorum* 41, 1999, 65-91). While some scholars have followed the German 'tradition', the approach and results of Anglo-American scholarship, by and large, have been more positive and have pointed in a different direction (cf. Walton's summary, pp. 1-32 and e. g. S. E. Porter, *The Paul of Acts*, WUNT 115; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999; cf. my review in *ThLZ* 125, 2000, 1021-24).

Some comparisons in this field have been methodologically flawed by not paying sufficient attention to matters of content and also of genre (Luke's narrative genre vs. Paul's epistolary genre), thus, for example, a comparison between Luke's abbreviated report of Paul's speech before a Gentile audience in Athens (Acts 17.22-31) with Paul's own statements in a letter to a Christian community in Romans 1. To avoid such flaws and methodological problems, Dr Steve Walton of London Bible College, sets out to compare for the first

time Paul's one and only (abbreviated) speech in Acts which is addressed to a Christian audience (at Miletus to the elders of the Ephesian church) with one undisputed Pauline letter ('... no previous attempt has been made to compare the speech as a whole with a single Pauline letter as a whole', 33). In Walton's view this procedure 'has advantages at key points... It will allow us to listen to a whole letter of Paul alongside a Pauline speech reported by Luke, and therefore will permit us to compare not just individual points of argument, but the way that arguments are assembled into a whole. It will open the possibility of seeing not just individual words as points of comparison, but how these words are grouped in larger complexes – seeing the nuances which they receive in particular contexts... Comparing the speech with a complete letter will open the way to considering the conceptual worlds assembled by the two, and to look at them side by side' (49). This comparison is justified as, in both texts, '... we listen to Paul speaking to a young church and its leaders', 141).

After methodological reflections (34-51, 'Are parallels in the eye of the beholder?') Walton examines the Miletus speech in its literary context (Acts 20.17-38) and discusses its genre as a farewell speech using both Jewish and Graeco-Roman examples. Walton searches for the structure of the speech (outline on p. 75), analyses its content (18-21: retrospect; 22-24: the future of Paul in Jerusalem; 25-27: prospect and retrospect; 28-31: a charge to the elders; 32-25: conclusion) and the development of ideas. He identifies a number of important key themes, namely: 'Faithful fulfilment of leadership responsibility, suffering, the attitude to wealth and work, and the death of Jesus' (84-93), which are discussed in detail.

Next Walton compares this speech with speeches by Jesus in Luke's Gospel (99-136) which parallel the Miletus speech and address similar issues before the disciples (Luke 22:24-38; 12:1-53; 21:5-36 and some shorter passages: 7:38,44; 9:2; 10:3; 13.32), in order to assess the Lukan understanding of Paul's speech: 'Luke presents Paul as both the model of the discipleship lived and taught by Jesus, and the model of leadership on the tradition of Jesus – and this precisely in the context of expounding that leadership to the church leaders of Ephesus' (134). This procedure leads to a clear Lukan notion of Christian leadership, which is 'focused on the manner and "conditions of service"... of leadership, rather than being taken up with considerations of "office"' (135).

The heart of Walton's study is the fifth chapter (140-85) which compares the Miletus speech with 1 Thessalonians. After defending his choice of 1 Thessalonians, Walton first begins with the speech and approaches the letter from that perspective (where and how do the identified key themes of the speech appear in the letter?) and then vice versa (which other themes and ideas in 1 Thessalonians also appear in the speech?): 'This two-way process should help us to compare the thought of the speech and the letter, and permit us to

weigh the relative Lukan and Pauline contributions to the speech, as well as to what knowledge of the Pauline letters (if any) Luke might have' (33). Walton concludes '... the four major themes of the Miletus speech are paralleled within 1 Thessalonians, often using similar vocabulary. This suggests that Luke and Paul inhabited closely related thought-worlds, to the extent that when Luke presents Paul speaking to Christians in the Miletus speech, the Paul he presents sounds remarkably like the Paul of 1 Thessalonians' (174). After his survey of ideas and vocabulary in the letter which are not covered by the major themes in the speech, but which are paralleled in Acts 20:18-35, Walton adds: '... that the thought of the two texts, and often its verbal expression, runs remarkably parallel. The conclusion seems inescapable that Luke and Paul did inhabit similar thought-worlds. Luke is clearly capable of presenting Paul speaking in ways that sound very much like the *ipsissima vox* of the apostle himself' (185).

Walton then compares the Miletus speech with Ephesians and 2 Timothy, letters for which close links have been claimed, and shows that for 1 Thessalonians the similarities in ideas and individual expressions are more significant than for Ephesians and 1 Timothy and that the speech should thus not be considered to belong to the so-called Deutero-Pauline literature (186-98).

According to Walton, Luke was familiar with Pauline tradition independent of the letters. Luke knows this tradition far better than often assumed. Luke wants to pass on and commend Paul's tradition, especially concerning Christian leadership, to his readers (212). When it comes to Christian leadership 'Luke's Paul sounds like the Paul of the epistles' (213) and 'Luke not only knows individual threads from the Pauline sewing basket, but also understands how Paul combines these into tapestries.' The Vielhauer/Haenchen view that the 'two Pauls' are at variance is – put in best British politeness – 'overstated' (213).

Despite Walton's arguments to the contrary (47-50, 140f), one may wonder whether this speech should not be compared to more of Paul's letters which address the whole leadership issue (so L. Aejmelaeus, *Die Rezeption der Paulusbriefe in der Miletrede* (Apg 20.18-35); Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987; cf. Walton's assessment on pp. 205-12). What Walton claims for 1 Thessalonians is true for most of Paul's letters ('... speaking to a young church and its leaders', 141). Does the Corinthian correspondence not also contain Walton's key themes? In addition, the other Pastoral letters should be consulted as they are specifically addressed to Christian leaders. Despite such questions, Walton presents an interesting and persuasive study (in content and method) of the Miletus speech and of 1 Thessalonians and a further contribution to a fresh assessment of Luke's portrayal of Paul in Acts.

In addition to contributing to this debate about the Paul of Acts and to advancing the more positive Anglo-American tradition, Walton has also provided a helpful

survey of leadership principles and responsibilities in Luke-Acts (see the fine summary on pp. 135f) and Paul (summary of the contribution of 1 Thessalonians on pp. 183f); this moves beyond the common discussion of the subject and relevant texts, which has in many cases – often anachronistically – been based on later notions of office; see the helpful studies of A. D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth*, AGJU 18 (Leiden, New York, Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1993) and *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge, U. K.: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000; cf. my review in *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 25/26, 2000, 129f). On leadership Luke 'represents far more than a collection of vague platitudes; [he] offers a dynamic, sharply focused model of Christian leadership rooted in Luke's understanding of Jesus, in contrast with other approaches to leadership available in the ancient world' (136; for such contrast in the Miletus speech cf. my *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith*, WUNT II.108; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999, 354-61).

Christoph Stenschke  
Bergneustadt, Deutschland

### *Paul and Jesus: The True Story*

David Wenham

London: SPCK, 2002, xii + 195 pp., £12.99, pb, ISBN 0-281-05480-0

#### SUMMARY

This very commendable book is largely a popular version of the author's *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* It shows that Paul knew much more about Jesus than is often assumed and also demonstrates the reliability of Acts. It surveys Paul's life until the mid 50s AD and the contents of four early letters.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses empfehlenswerte Buch ist zum grössten Teil eine populäre Version von Wenhams *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (1995). Es zeigt überzeugend dass Paulus viel mehr über Jesu Leben und Unterricht wusste als oft gedacht wird. Darüber hinaus gibt Wenham ein Übersicht über Paulus' Leben bis zum Schreiben des 1. Korintherbriefes, wobei die Zuverlässigkeit der Apostelgeschichte klar herauskommt, und bespricht er den Inhalt der vier ältesten Paulusbriefe.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Comme son sous-titre l'indique, cet ouvrage est davantage destiné au grand public que ceux qui sont habituellement recensés dans notre revue. Il évite les notes, ne contient qu'une brève mention d'autres ouvrages dans l'introduction et se limite à la discussion de quelques points en petits caractères au fil du texte.

Bien qu'il apporte quelques éléments nouveaux, c'est une vulgarisation de l'étude majeure de Wenham intitulée *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995).

\* \* \* \*

As can already be seen in the subtitle, this is a more popular book than the ones which are usually reviewed in this journal. It contains no footnotes, just a brief 'note on other books' in the introduction and a few discussions in small print further on in the text. Although there are some new elements, it is largely a popularisation of Wenham's major study *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1995).

Although this is a popularisation, at the same time it is not a simple book because Wenham offers several different things:

- An overview of Paul's life and ministry until the moment he wrote 1 Corinthians, based on both Acts and Paul's own writings and issuing in an explicit defence of Luke's accuracy. The last chapter but one is a very brief look at the rest of the apostle's life and letters.
- A defence of Paul's person and apostleship.
- Discussions of the occasion and contents of Paul's earliest letters (Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians).
- A discussion of all elements in these letters which in Wenham's opinion show that Paul was familiar with (the traditions about) the life and teaching of Jesus.

Regarding the last point, the author openly acknowledges that the case for some of the evidence is far stronger than the case for other elements, but nonetheless the reader comes away with the impression that Paul knew all major events in the life of Jesus as well as many of the things he taught. These include things found specifically in only one of the four gospels so including John.

The style of writing throughout is lively. For example, Wenham compares Paul's conversion to 'an advanced driver, who prides himself on his road sense and driving skills, [who] suddenly finds himself driving the wrong way down a dual carriageway,' (16). The effort to find 'Jesus tradition' in the epistles is repeatedly called 'detective work'.

The conclusions are sound and Evangelical, and the book can be recommended to a wide readership. Those who already own the earlier book might not be so interested, but in Britain the present book might be suitable for use by pupils doing an RE A-level, whereas I could also see it translated into languages in which not much good literature is yet available, for use in theological education.

My one complaint is that I do not fully understand why the author has restricted himself to the first part of Paul's life and writings. The book convincingly makes the case for the reliability and coherence of major parts of the New Testament but it also makes one look