The account of Paul’s mission in Acts, particularly when read alongside the corpus of Pauline letters preserved in the canon,¹ tends to obscure the context for the literary Paulinism of Acts in early Christianity. Whether in the Irenaean construction of the ‘Acts of the Apostles’ and the ‘Pauline’ Luke or in modern critical reconstructions of Pauline movements, communities, and traditions, the portrayal of Paul in Acts has repeatedly been taken to presuppose the importance of Paul and his legacy in the early Christian communities of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaea known to the author. The power of the assumption that the portrayal of Paul in Acts can be correlated with Pauline movements, communities, and/or traditions in early Christianity is evident in the common ground shared by the critical options that have been laid out in this century for the interpretation of the Paul of Acts. Constant in the various attempts to sort out redaction, tradition, and historical value in Acts’ portrayal of Paul is a presupposed reservoir of Pauline material available to the author. This Pauline material available to the author is usually defined in terms of traditions from the Pauline mission territories,² a Pauline letter collection,³ and/or personal association with Paul himself.⁴ The content of this reservoir of information about Paul, how-

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¹ This perspective on Acts and the Pauline letters is first clearly evident in Irenaeus. See chapter 2 above for the reception of Acts in early Christianity.


⁴ Near the turn of the century, Harnack (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 162) commented: “If St. Luke the physician is the author of the Acts, the question of sources is simply and speedily settled for the whole second half of the book. So far as a considerable portion of this second half is concerned, he has written as an eye-witness, and for the rest he depends upon the report of eye-witnesses who were his fellow workers.” See also Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 104–5.
ever, is too often determined by prior commitments to theories of the development of early Christianity and reconstructions of the place of Paul in this development. Because it has proved impossible to recover well-defined sources for the narrative of Acts, such prior commitments tend to guide the distinction among redaction, tradition, and history in the portrayal of Paul on an episode-by-episode basis. On this basis, no clear understanding of the author’s connection to Paulinism in early Christianity can be gained as long as the author’s portrayal of Paul is taken from the outset to be a redactional (or compositional) construct that can be related to the (supposed) Pauline traditions available to the author. This shared Paulinism (however the relationship is defined) between the author of Lk-Acts and his sources (whether written or oral,

5 For example, Haenchen (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 86) comments: “When, years after Paul had run his course, Luke set about the task of describing the era of primitive Christianity, various possibilities of collecting the required material lay open to him. He could himself, for example, look up the most important Pauline communities—say Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch. He might even visit Jerusalem. But it was also possible for him to ask other Christians travelling to these places to glean for him whatever was still known of the old times.... Lastly, he could have written to the congregations in question and asked them for information.” Cf. Jervell (The Unknown Paul, p. 69): “Luke’s problem was the incessant, ever-growing crop of sayings, rumors, gossip, apologetic, polemic, veneration, admiration, declaration of aversion, etc., from Paul’s foes and friends, and from Paul himself... Luke had too much material on the disputed missionary Paul.” For Jervell’s assessment of Luke’s sources, see The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles, pp. 1–10.

6 Lüdemann (Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts, e.g. pp. 10–11) is confident that he can not only untangle tradition and redaction, but also assess the historical value of details in the narrative. He proposes a ‘tradition hypothesis’ that presupposes the importance of Paul’s legacy in the areas of his mission. He confidently asserts: “The names of Paul’s colleagues were, of course, part of the store of knowledge in the Pauline communities...”

7 Jervell (The Unknown Paul, pp. 68–69) prefers to speak in terms of a skillful authorial composition rather than the distinction between redaction and tradition. The problem of sorting out traditions, redaction, and composition in the author’s portrayal of Paul is not, however, that the author has so carefully constructed his narrative that redaction and traditions have become one. Rather, attempts to distinguish tradition and redaction have been burdened by misleading assumptions about Pauline traditions available to the author (an assumption Jervell shares with those whom he criticizes; see especially The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles, p. 6).

There are in fact several instances in the author’s narrative about Paul in which the author’s redaction of source material can be detected by the seams in the narrative (see below under Ephesus and Corinth). At other points, though, the author’s narrative about Paul is probably better understood not as a redaction of sources but a composition based on little or no information. As a result, both redaction and composition are useful terms in describing the author’s construction of his narrative about Paul.