

Article

A Wisdom (Not) of This Age: Paul's Education from His Letters to the Early Acts

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Abstract: This article takes up the matter of Paul's education and explores it within the Roman world of education. In order to do this, the article draws upon and contributes to reception historical studies of Paul. More specifically, the article illustrates the flexibility of Paul's education as it is described in his letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Acts of Paul. While Paul downplays his education in several autobiographical statements within his letters, his letters nevertheless suggest that Paul received a high level of education. The Acts of the Apostles further contributes to an early Christian portrayal of Paul as an educated figure by giving readers a Paul who speaks eloquently and presents a controversial message that can be narrated with reference to both Jewish scripture and to Graeco-Roman philosophy. The Acts of Paul presents Paul as a persuasive speaker, but the speeches contained within this narrative are generally of a more concise nature. On the other hand, the Acts of Paul presents Paul as a writer who can read and respond eloquently to highly disputed queries from other groups of believers. These texts coalesce in depicting a Paul who is well educated, but they differ in their depictions of how his education was evident in his life.

Keywords: Acts of the Apostles; Acts of Paul; biography; education; letter; narrative; Paul; reception history



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1. Introduction

This article explores how Paul's level of education might have been perceived within the Roman world. However, it is difficult to answer a question such as 'What was Paul's level of education?' with a high level of precision or certainty. One reason for the difficulty in discerning Paul's level of education is that Paul sometimes downplays his learning (e.g., Gal 1:6–2:14; Phil 3:2–12). In addition, none of the early biographical sketches from either Paul or other early Christians focus on his formal education. Although the topic comes up occasionally and will be explored in this article in some passages, Paul's early training is at best a secondary matter in service of a larger rhetorical purpose. A final difficulty in establishing Paul's level of education is the lack of standardisation in Graeco-Roman education during the early Roman imperial period. Although the progression of students from primary, through grammatical, and into rhetorical or philosophical education can be roughly traced, there was no systematic curriculum that could be used by later researchers as a tool with which to measure any individual's education.

In light of these difficulties in determining Paul's level of education, this article will endeavour to observe markers that bear on the question from within his letters and two early biographical narratives about him. The two narratives to be explored will be the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Paul. The article will leave questions of historicity largely untouched but will instead place the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Paul in implicit dialogue with Paul's letters. The three texts will be allowed to carry on a conversation within the pages of this article by analysing the traditions from and about Paul side-by-side. Accordingly, the article draws from and contributes to studies of Pauline reception. Although the article will not make a methodological contribution to reception

studies, it will employ a way of looking at Pauline texts and later Pauline reports that is not wholly unlike the work of scholars such as Benjamin Edsall (2019), Alexander Kirk (2015), Judith Lieu (2010a, 2010b), Jennifer Strawbridge (2015), and Benjamin White (2014). While drawing from these works both in their studies of Paul and in their ways of examining early Christian treatments of Paul, the article will take up an understudied topic in Pauline reception, namely, ways in which Paul's education is discussed or displayed within the early Christian literature. Strawbridge (2016) has offered an important study of one way in which Paul's letters were utilised within early Christian educational practices by showing that some papyri containing Paul's letters were likely school texts that pupils copied, while Ryan Schellenberg (2013) and Heidi Wendt (2016) have endeavoured to locate Paul more closely to the rhetorical practices of other religious experts in the Roman Empire. However, the way in which Paul's education was viewed within the first and second centuries remains relatively untilled ground to explore and this article hopes to offer a map with which others can engage in further study as they examine the three sets of texts taken up here.

In order to accomplish this purpose, the article begins by defining what it means by education. Education is understood here to refer primarily to markers of literate and rhetorical education that can be discerned in Paul's letters and two early stories about him. Given the complex relationships between Paul's letters, narratives about Paul, and Pauline scholarship, it will also be helpful to note how these texts will be treated within this study. The article then proceeds to examine Paul's letters as the earliest sources from which Paul's education can be studied. The letters have the additional benefit of offering scholars autobiographical glimpses into how Paul portrays his education. Although much in Paul's letters suggests that Paul possessed high levels of literate and even rhetorical skill, Paul regularly downplays his education when he writes autobiographically. In the Acts of the Apostles, the author elevates Paul's education and portrays his rhetorical finesse through his speeches. In turn, the Acts of Paul envisions Paul as a persuasive rhetor but enfolded a lengthy epistolary correspondence within its story. While the Paul of the letters, the Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, and the Paul in the Acts of Paul reveal that Paul likely received some education in order to write and speak in the ways that these documents describe, they differ from one another in how they portray markers of education within Paul's life and shed little light on whether Paul received formal training. The flexibility of Paul's educational markers in the literature by and about Paul will be highlighted in the conclusion through a concise comparative analysis.

2. Methodological Reflections

It will be helpful to set down two sets of methodological markers at the start. Since I rely upon means of studying Paul's letters and biographical presentations that can be found elsewhere in scholarship, the methodological considerations will aim only to provide an orientation and will accordingly be kept brief. Two matters will be addressed: an attempt to clarify some of the ambiguities concerning how the word education is used and a few indications of how narratives about Paul can be read alongside Paul's letters.

2.1. Towards a Definition of Education

The term education is malleable and might refer to a dizzying array of Graeco-Roman practices that could involve training a person for athletics, music, military service, or even apprenticeship for a profession. In this article, I am primarily interested in two matters concerning Paul's education. First, I am interested in descriptions of the apostle that can be used to determine his level of literate education. Literate education refers here to Paul's ability to read and write as well as to closely related practices such as composing with attention to rhetorical standards. Although the focus of the article will lie on Paul's literate education, reports about Paul's capacity to speak with rhetorical eloquence or to serve as a teacher will also receive attention. Second, I will pay attention to the roles of these descriptions in the respective texts in which they can be found. Depending on the texts under discussion, these portrayals may be alternatively autobiographical (Paul's letters) or

come from later authors in narratives about Paul's life (Acts of the Apostles; Acts of Paul). The second matter is secondary to the purpose of the article but is nevertheless vital since no depiction of Paul survives that is without an additional rhetorical purpose.

This definition of education is admittedly artificial because it separates literacy from, for example, the physical and professional elements of education that were part and parcel of the educational lives in some Roman-era youths.¹ For example, Paul likely also learned a trade. The author of Acts refers to Paul as a 'leather worker' (σκηνοποιός; Acts 18:3), while Paul notes in his letters to Thessalonica and Corinth that he worked while staying in those cities rather than living off patrons in the cities (1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 4:11–12; 9:12–18; 2 Cor 11:7–12).² Yet, Paul's professional education as a craftsman will not be discussed in this article. Despite the multifaceted nature of Graeco-Roman education during the early Roman Empire, Teresa Morgan has ably defended the distinction between literate and other forms of education with reference to Hellenistic and Roman sources that collectively 'indicate that literate and numerate education constitute a distinct category among educational practices' (Morgan 1998, p. 6; see further pp. 4–7). One might think of literate education as a kind of 'domain-specific-education' that was available in the Roman world and that Paul evidently acquired to at least some degree (Robertson 2022, p. 184). Raffaella Cribiore's wide-ranging account of education in Graeco-Roman Egypt further demonstrates both the variety of ways in which students encountered different levels of education and the heuristic value for historians of continuing to utilise the *enkyklios paideia* (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία), that is, the course of education whereby students progressed from the elementary learning of letters, numbers, and basic reading, through secondary education at the hands of a grammarian, and finally to the rhetorical training that served as the summit of a young person's education (Cribiore 2001, pp. 2–3, 160–244).

Accordingly, this article endeavours to examine the partial glimpses into Paul's education that can be gleaned from his letters and the two earliest narrative accounts of his life. However, one further addendum is required in light of the source material. This article refrains from examining claims of direct divine enlightenment as a means of education. Paul claims to have had direct revelatory experience both in his letters (e.g., 2 Cor 12:1–10) and in stories about his life (e.g., Acts 9:1–30). The decision to exclude such evidence is not made from any bias about what such experiences reveal regarding one's status as an educated person. Aelius Aristides, for example, writes exquisite orations that indicate a deep and wide-ranging literate knowledge while at the same time narrating his experiences of healing at the direct intervention of Asclepius.³ Rather, direct tutelage at the hands of the divine is excluded from this study for the sole purpose of intensifying the focus placed on Paul's literate education in three early Christian sources that are important for the study of Paul and the reception of his biography.⁴ Thus, at the centre of this paper lies Paul's literate education insofar as it is variously reported in Paul's letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Acts of Paul.

2.2. Reading Narratives about Paul alongside Paul's Letters

This article thus utilises both letters written by Paul himself and narratives written about Paul by others. The differences in the source material bring a high level of hermeneutical complexity by employing sources of such divergent backgrounds. Although questions about how to read early Christian narratives about Paul might be probed in manifold ways, the important matter for this article is to consider how these ostensibly historical stories about Paul communicate their message.⁵

The first thing to note is that both the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Paul have their respective theological aims along with their own rhetorical means by which to implement these aims. Two examples may be noted as representative. The Acts of the Apostles highlights continuities between Peter and Paul in order to draw together the two main characters of the story through literary parallels. To cite just two instances, both give programmatic speeches early in their ministries (Acts 2:14–36; 13:16–41) and both are credited with unintentional healings that occur in their vicinity (Acts 5:15–16; 19:11–12). On

the other hand, the Acts of Paul elevates ascetic tendencies and emphasises that the flesh will be raised in the resurrection. These dual foci are found in the beatitudes that Paul gives early in the narrative (Acts Paul 3.5–6). Although both works portray Paul travelling across the eastern Roman Empire and interacting with supportive believers as well as jealous opponents, Paul is constructed in a way that suits each author's larger communicative aims. A key means by which readers learn about Paul in each work is through the use of speeches that are attributed to the apostle.⁶ However, these speeches are not transcripts of what Paul actually said on any particular occasion. Rather, the speeches are constructed by the authors as part of their *prosopopoeia* of Paul. *Prosopopoeia* refers to speeches that are given in character and might designate speeches that one gives while temporarily taking on the voice of another in a discourse or, as in the case of these narratives, a speech that an author writes for an identifiable character who is entirely different from the author.⁷ These early Christian authors take part in a rhetorical practice found elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world.⁸ Readers of these works must thus remember that Paul's voice is given to him by authors who attempt to communicate their own stories to readers.

While Paul's letters allow readers to hear Paul's voice more directly, his auto-biographical portraits are likewise constructed by their author as part of his larger communicative aims. For example, his presentation of his life in Gal 1:6–2:14 highlights the direct way in which Paul encountered God as part of his attempt to call the Galatians to accept Paul's authority over and against that of the teachers whom Paul opposes. This is not to say that Paul's self-presentations are false but rather that they are only a secondary element of what Paul wants to communicate to his audiences.⁹ Any statement pertaining to Paul's education found within Paul's letters is also likely to be of secondary importance within Paul's larger endeavours to communicate with his audiences. The importance of this observation for a study of traditions about Paul's education lies in the recognition that there is no unfiltered access to Paul's biography. As in the case of the Acts of the Apostles and Acts of Paul, so in the letters the contact that readers may hope to make with Paul's story is likewise ensconced within other rhetorical purposes.

Since all access to Paul is filtered and since this article is interested in the traditions about Paul that existed in early Christian texts, this article will not focus on placing the historical Paul in a specific school or determining his precise educational credentials. Rather, this article accepts the respective portraits of Paul and considers what marks of education are evident in each portrait. These traditions will be compared in the conclusion to consider what they say about Paul and to reflect on what Paul's education contributes to each text. While not endeavouring to establish the historical Paul's education, this article hopes to compare how Paul and two early Christian narratives draw upon marks of Paul's education to construct their model of Paul.

3. The Pauline Letters

The letters that Paul left behind evince traces of his education but do not allow much to be said about precisely how Paul may have achieved his level of education. The mere fact that he left letters suggests that he had achieved at least some level of education, since letters were among the first and most important texts that students learned to write. However, the length and rhetorical skill that are evident in the Pauline epistles far surpass the simplicity evident in daily correspondence.¹⁰ A glance at the sophistication of a text such as Romans quickly reveals Paul's comfort in constructing complex arguments, while even the brief and personal letter to Philemon is a rhetorically complex text designed to deal with a delicate situation.¹¹ Paul's education is further revealed in his ability to interpret scripture, since the interpretation of sacred texts marked people in the Roman world with prestige based on their education and relation to the gods. While Paul's autobiographical statements sometimes downplay his relationships with his teachers, even his Corinthian opponents begrudgingly acknowledged the impressive nature of his letters.

The clearest way in which Paul's education is on display is in the epistolary record that he left behind.¹² Although the number of letters that Paul writes has been disputed by

critical scholarship for at least the past two centuries, the seven letters that are nearly universally attributed to Paul (Romans; 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon) demonstrate impressive epistolary capabilities on their own. Six other letters are attributed to Paul, but their relationship to Paul remains uncertain in current scholarship (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus). Naturally, Paul's place as a letter-writer only grows as more letters are connected directly to Paul. Yet this first-century citizen of the Roman Empire should not be imagined alone with pen in hand in the inner room of a quiet Roman villa. Rather, Paul's letters were written with other co-authors, amanuenses, and letter-carriers working alongside him in the midst of the bustling itinerant life he led. Mentions of Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2), Tertius (Rom 16:22), Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1), Silvanus (1 Thess 1:1), and Timothy (Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1) suggest a network of people who collaborated to bring Paul's letters into existence and ensured that Paul's letters were properly received (Botha 2001, pp. 415–17).¹³ While Paul collaborates with others in ways that coincide with broader Roman epistolary practices, Paul remains the driving force in these letters. His voice occasionally breaks in directly to the letter through the use of a greeting written with his own pen (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; see further, Reese 2017). In so doing, Paul sets himself up as a literate figure who has both the knowledge and authority to communicate well with his audiences.

Paul's lengthy letters indicate impressive learning when placed alongside the short letters that have been discovered on papyrus in archaeological finds, but his learning should be contextualised within the Graeco-Roman world in order to avoid tacitly imparting twenty-first-century notions.¹⁴ Students began to write letters as they transitioned from primary education to learn with a grammar teacher in their second level. Letters were copied from models used by the teacher until the student was able to draft letters on their own. Aspirations to write with increasing clarity are evident even in Roman oratorical handbooks such as Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (e.g., Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.3). Letters thus run the gamut from the very basic to formal requests for assistance. Letters were employed by intellectuals as a means to communicate complex philosophical or religious reasoning. In the second century BCE, the Epistle of Aristeas describes how the Torah was translated from Hebrew to Greek, while Ptolemy writes a letter to Flora in the second-century CE that outlines his beliefs about how scripture should be interpreted (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.3.1–33.7.10). Closer to Paul's time, Seneca set forth his reflections on Stoicism, among other matters, in the form of epistles sent to a certain Lucilius. These letters contain highly complex material on philosophy and ethics that is encased within the letter genre.¹⁵ In so doing, these epistles illustrate the breadth of information that could be communicated by educated members of Roman society through missives sent back and forth to one another.

The Pauline epistles include robust arguments that might be placed alongside other letters that might be classified as philosophical or religious in the Graeco-Roman world (Schnelle 2015, pp. 136–38), but this information sets comfortably alongside statements from the author that offer points of immediate connection with the audience. Paul's letters contain personal information about his travel (e.g., Rom 15:14–33), his relationships with believers whom he addresses (e.g., Phil 4:15–16), and knowledge of ongoing situations in the lives of his addressees (e.g., Phlm 8–22). They are thus not solely constructed for the benefit of readers outside of the intended audience but are simultaneously personal letters by which Paul remains in touch with the people who are named in the letters. Paul's letters are also written with closely reasoned arguments about divine–human relationships (e.g., Gal 3:6–4:31) and the consequences of this relationship for the present lives of his audience (e.g., 1 Cor 5:1–14:40). Paul's letters display a high level of learning in their composition that is broadly in-keeping with the epistolary practices of other learned members of Roman society during the early imperial period.¹⁶ Despite the learned nature of Paul's writing, it remains difficult to classify Paul's letters precisely within the categories of ancient letters or ancient rhetorical forms employed by classicists (Reed 2001). Likewise, it is challenging to

determine either what level of formal education Paul may have received in order to write at this level or when he may have achieved it.¹⁷

The letters further attest to Paul's education through his use of both rhetoric and scriptural interpretation. That Paul knows at least some ancient rhetoric is widely acknowledged in scholarship on the Pauline letters, even if the way in which he learned it, the degree to which he used it, and the specific rhetorical elements found in the letters remain disputed.¹⁸ Despite its brevity, Philemon serves as a good example of how Paul imbibed at least some of the rhetorical techniques found in his surroundings. Paul's role in the letter is neither simple nor straightforward because he is writing to Philemon, a slave owner, about Onesimus, his slave. Onesimus appears to be returning to Philemon with this letter from Paul. The letter is carefully written to persuade Philemon not to create any difficulties for Onesimus but instead to view his slave instead as a brother. Paul places Onesimus in his familial orbit by identifying Onesimus as his son and brother (Phlm 10, 16). Philemon is likewise called 'brother', while Paul refers to himself as an old man in comparison to Philemon (Phlm 7, 9, 20). Within the rhetorical world of the letter, Philemon and Onesimus are not primarily related as master and slave but are instead brothers of Paul and, perhaps, his children. The familial relationships are repositioned on more equal grounds.¹⁹ Onesimus, whose name suggests 'usefulness', is now able to be useful (εὐχρηστον) to Onesimus, even though he was formerly useless (ἄχρηστον; Phlm 11; see further [Winter 1987](#), pp. 4–5; [Young 2021](#), pp. 116–17). The apostle notes that he is willing to be Onesimus's creditor and to incur debt to Philemon so that Onesimus can be accepted again into the household (Phlm 18). Yet Paul quickly adds that Philemon already owes something to Paul that he will not describe with more than an allusion (Phlm 19). Paul utilises an example of paralipsis, a technique whereby he emphasises Philemon's debt while claiming to say little about it ([Bird 2009](#), p. 142). Paul's request for Philemon to prepare a room for him likewise fits rhetorical conventions wherein the author deepens connections by promising to visit the addressee, while it simultaneously furthers his request to Philemon by asking that Onesimus receive the same treatment (Phlm 22; [Nicklas 2008](#), p. 216). Philemon is thus a letter that stands out in the Pauline corpus both because it is addressed to an individual and because of the delicate situation that led Paul to write it. Paul's use of carefully stylised rhetoric suggests a level of education that at least extended to basic rhetorical forms that he could utilise in his epistles.

Citations of scripture within Paul's letters provide a further glimpse into the elevated level of education that he had achieved. Paul was not alone in his knowledge of scripture. It is likely that textual and educational practices related to Jewish scripture extended throughout much of the Hellenistic world before Paul was born ([Carr 2005](#), pp. 201–14). However, the high number of citations and the integral usage to which they are put in his arguments indicate a highly literate reader who engaged with scripture as a leading figure among a community of readers. Beyond the immediate audiences of his letters, Paul's voice was one in a chorus of early Christians who sought to interpret God's work in history, the significance of Jesus, or situations that the community around them encountered with an eye to what Jewish scripture had to say about these matters (see further [Porter and Stanley 2008](#)). Jesus's role is understood as a reversal of Adam's failure when Paul writes to believers in Rome and Corinth (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:42–49). Whereas death came through Adam's body, Jesus's resurrection signals the in-breaking of a new kind of life. Paul likewise places Jesus's story as an extension of the Abraham narrative so that Jesus is the true messianic descendant of Abraham (Gal 3:6–18), while the declaration of Abraham's justification prior to his circumcision substantiates Paul's belief that circumcision is not central to being declared right with God (Rom 4:1–8; [Tilling 2019](#), pp. 137–46).

Paul's knowledge of scripture enables him to strengthen his arguments about what should be done in specific situations encountered by believers. As he sets himself up as a model for the Corinthians to follow as they exercise their freedom, Paul appeals to Deut 25:4 to show that Barnabas and he have a right to material support from the Corinthians that is enshrined in Torah (1 Cor 9:9).²⁰ Nevertheless, they gave up their right

with the Corinthians for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor 9:3–18).²¹ Paul's use of scripture is complex because he insists on the validity of this legal passage while simultaneously upholding himself as a pedagogical model of life according to the gospel because he does not insist upon it. However, the multifaceted ways in which Paul can utilise scripture in his argument may be most clearly on display when he outlines how God continues to be faithful to Israel in Jesus Christ. As Paul writes to the Romans, he insists that God has kept God's promise to Israel, albeit in unexpected and unprecedented ways. Paul appeals to narratives from the Pentateuch about the patriarchs (Rom 9:6–12). The allusions to these narratives are punctuated by a quotation from the Prophets (Rom 9:13; see Mal 1:2–3). Just as he demonstrates God's faithfulness with reference to scripture, so also he argues that Israel has been unfaithful by means of a chain of scriptural references in which the words of scripture stand as witnesses to his claims (Rom 10:5–21). Paul portrays himself as a textual authority who strengthens his arguments by appealing to scripture in ways that suggest that he expects his interpretations to be taken seriously by his audiences. In so doing, Paul simultaneously reveals a marker of his education.

Some letters contain additional autobiographical passages in which he describes himself, his background, and recent events in his life. These passages are written as part of Paul's larger rhetorical aim. Paul's letters do not contain autobiographical notes that focus exclusively on him for the sake of posterity. Rather, his story is employed to defend himself from opponents' charges or to support a larger argumentative goal that the letter endeavours to achieve. For example, Paul downplays the role of human teachers in his formation as a Jesus disciple in Gal 1:6–2:14. Rather than learning how to follow Jesus from the disciples in Jerusalem, Paul appeals to direct revelatory experiences that he had with Jesus in order to strengthen the gospel that he proclaims (Gal 1:11–17; 2:2; Donaldson 1994). He similarly insists that he will not speak to the Romans except what Christ accomplished, thereby rhetorically downplaying his own role (Rom 15:18). Paul's description of his life before Jesus may hint at the possibility of schooling (Phil 3:2–12).²² He describes himself as a 'Hebrew of Hebrews; in accordance with the Law, a Pharisee; in accordance with zeal, a persecutor of the church' (Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, κατὰ ζήλον διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν; Phil 3:5–6; Vegge 2006, pp. 462–63). Although it is not unreasonable to think that Paul was exposed to Jewish instruction in order to attain the positions that he describes, nothing in this description demands that Paul underwent schooling. Moreover, he discounts the high status of his life before Jesus by considering them loss in view of what he has gained in Jesus (Phil 3:7–8). If these ways of telling Paul's story are understood to be descriptions of his life *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, they might lead one to think that Paul's education was minimal and that he learned nothing from his limited interactions with Jesus-followers in Jerusalem.

This picture of Paul as having received little education might be furthered if one believes what Paul writes to the Corinthians regarding the role of wisdom. He insists that the message about the cross is 'foolishness' (μωρία; 1 Cor 1:18) and that 'the wisdom of the world' (ἡ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου) has been made to look foolish by God (1 Cor 1:20). Yet isolating such phrases fails to recognise Paul's rhetorically sophisticated point. While God uses what is foolish to shame the wise (1 Cor 1:27) and Paul thus did not come with any particularly wise words when he visited (1 Cor 2:1, 4), he insists that there is a wisdom that he proclaims among believers who are mature (1 Cor 2:6). The wisdom that he brings comes from God and was revealed in ways that traditional authorities failed to comprehend (1 Cor 2:7–10), but it is no less wise or rigorous.²³ Without sharply separating rhetoric or philosophy (Brookins 2010), Paul removes his education from the terrestrial realm and insists that his words are pneumatically inspired.²⁴ Paul builds upon similar arguments in 2 Cor 10 when he writes that the battle that he fights is not located in the flesh but that his weapons have God's power in order to destroy traditional strongholds of power (2 Cor 10:3–6).²⁵ Paul then reports that his opponents have characterised his letters as weighty and strong but portray his own presence as weak and his speech as contemptible (2 Cor 10:10). If true, then even Paul's opponents, who appear to be rhetorically sophisticated themselves,

recognise the strength of Paul's writing. They may demean Paul as an inferior speaker, but they attest to the learning that is evident within his letters. Although Paul employs rhetorical flourishes, the precise level of Paul's formal rhetorical training is uncertain.²⁶ Yet despite doubts about his level of rhetorical education, Paul insists that he is not untrained in knowledge (2 Cor 11:6).²⁷ Paul can employ arguments with some rhetorical sophistication, downplay his rhetorical training, and still claim to have knowledge that comes from God. While Paul's accent often lies on the divine initiative of his knowledge, the expressions in his letters suggest that he received some level of educational training.

Paul's letters thus portray their author in ways that are not straightforward when it comes to determining how he was educated. Paul was literate, knew scripture, could construct lengthy arguments, and could engage in written debates with his opponents. Collectively, the evidence suggests that Paul knew much about Jewish scripture, was able to apply it to Jesus and to his audiences, and was able to communicate his knowledge expressively. While Paul must have had at least some basic education in literacy and may have studied the Jewish scriptures in some way, quite how he picked up his rhetorical ability remains unclear. It is possible that Paul may have received some training as a youth, but this hypothesis is not necessary (Schellenberg 2013). The uncertainty about Paul's early education for readers of his letters may set the stage for those who read early narratives that feature Paul.

4. The Acts of the Apostles

If Paul's autobiographical statements sometimes play down his associations with human teachers or the extent of his learning, the earliest extensive biographical sketch found elsewhere in the Christian literature highlights Paul's learning alongside God's choice to work through Paul. Since Paul's life has been transformed by his encounter with Jesus, the narrator in Acts shows that the prior learning in Paul's life is now employed to spread the message about Jesus. Although Paul's early persecution of believers in Jesus is denounced, his erudition is not disparaged. Whereas Paul's written exchanges with the Corinthians suggest that his letters were more rhetorically sophisticated than his speeches, Paul's primary communicative mode in Acts is the multiple speeches that he delivers to audiences ranging from raucous mobs to high-ranking Roman officials. Paul spreads the message about Jesus across the eastern Roman Empire with care for the way in which his presentations are structured. He makes heavy use of Jewish scriptural interpretations throughout his labour in Acts, while he also has the capacity to appeal to philosophers outside of the Jewish tradition. Although Paul's writing ability is not highlighted in Acts to the same degree as in the Pauline Epistles, the author of Acts refers to Paul's literacy and portrays Paul as active in proliferating letters. The Paul of Acts thus takes his early education and utilises it to persuade, confound, and irritate a variety of audiences by means of his scripturally saturated and philosophically robust rhetoric.²⁸

In Acts, Paul's early education is largely assumed and is immediately taken up into his story as a Christ-follower in his early interactions with believers. Immediately following his initial encounter with Jesus, Paul acts as a teacher, interact with disciples, and has didactic terminology applied to him.²⁹ Paul begins to act as a teacher in Damascene synagogues where he proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 9:20). In his teaching, he confounds his Jewish interlocutors by demonstrating that Jesus is the messiah (Acts 9:22). As things unravel for Paul in Damascus, he is able to leave the city under the cover of darkness because 'his disciples' (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ), that is, his students, lower him outside the city wall in a basket (Acts 9:25). This initial episode allows the narrator to demonstrate Paul's persuasiveness as an educator. In a short time, Paul's spirit-inspired teaching leads some to follow him while provoking others to the point that they want to kill him. The mixed reactions of Paul's first teaching experience foreshadow subsequent stories about Paul's provocative pedagogy.³⁰ After a time in Jerusalem and in Tarsus (Acts 9:26–30), Paul re-emerges in the narrative at the behest of Barnabas. Barnabas brings Paul to Antioch where they teach believers in the city for a year (Acts 11:26). Paul is later listed alongside

Barnabas and others as one of the prophets and teachers (προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι) in Antioch (Acts 13:1; [Falcetta 2020](#); pp. 53–59). His name occurs last in the list of teachers in Antioch, and he is quickly set apart with Barnabas for a particular calling (Acts 13:2–3). Paul is nowhere else designated a ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλος), but he teaches and interacts with disciples throughout the narrative.³¹

In addition to the attribution of didactic terminology, Paul’s work as educator is evident in Acts through his work as a model to imitate and his ability to communicate in multiple language. As a teacher, Paul sets himself up as a model for others to follow. When Paul returns to Jerusalem with the expectation that he will not return to Roman Asia, he calls the elders in Ephesus to meet him in Miletus (Acts 20:17–38). As he comes to the end of his speech, Paul uses himself as an example for the Ephesians when he tells them that he has shown them how they must aid those who are vulnerable (Acts 20:35).³² Employing models was a common pedagogical tactic in the Graeco-Roman world. For example, Quintilian argues that pupils who want to learn oratory must learn to imitate not only their model’s words but also their method, their procedures, and their interactions with people. Only then will someone be able to go beyond their selected exemplum (Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.2.27–28). Paul further displays his knowledge through his multilingual communication with other audiences. In this case, neither Paul nor Barnabas appears to know the Lycaonian language (Acts 14:11–14).³³ However, Paul later addresses the chiliarch who arrests him in Greek when he asks for a chance to speak to the mob in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37). After a brief exchange in Greek during which Paul clarifies that he comes from Tarsus and is not an Egyptian incendiary, Paul is allowed to speak to the people. His speech then proceeds ‘in the Hebrew dialect’ (τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ; Acts 21:40; 22:2). Paul’s speech in ‘Hebrew’ is most likely to have been given in Aramaic, since Aramaic remained the most prominent language in Jerusalem during the first century and Paul’s aim was to win over the crowd ([Keener 2020](#), pp. 528–29).³⁴ A similar story is contained within Paul’s speech in Acts 26:14–18. Paul clarifies that Jesus’s voice spoke to him outside Damascus ‘in the Hebrew dialect’ (τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ).³⁵ Paul’s education is thus implicit not only in his position as a model to audiences within the narrative but also in his linguistic versatility and concomitant ability to communicate with multiple audiences.

Paul carefully elevates his educational background in the story that follows. Tarsus is not an insignificant city in the Roman Empire (Acts 21:39), and it is the city of Paul’s birth (Acts 22:3). Yet the Paul of Acts goes to even greater lengths to emphasise both his connections to Jerusalem and the way in which he was educated. Despite this emphasis on education, little can be said about the mechanics of how Paul’s education occurred as a child.³⁶ If he was educated in Tarsus or Jerusalem, he would likely have had access to elementary education in Greek ([Pitts 2008](#)). Beyond that, however, little can be said from within the narrative that is not speculative.³⁷ Two details about his education are underlined as the Lukan Paul cultivates an image of himself as an obedient Pharisee ([Butticaz 2018](#), p. 429). First, Paul learned ‘at the feet of Gamaliel’ (παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιήλ), a respected teacher in Jerusalem who has already demonstrated his wisdom in Acts by urging the Sanhedrin not to do anything rash to followers of Jesus but instead to allow the movement to fizzle if it is genuinely opposed to God (Acts 22:3; see also Acts 5:34–39; [Padilla 2008](#), pp. 106–34). Paul thus identifies himself as a student of a renowned teacher. Since Paul learned from Gamaliel, the mob should recognise him as one of their own, while the audience is implicitly invited to see the injustice exhibited by the crowd in hassling such a well-educated, well-regarded man as Paul. Second, Paul’s education attended to the ancestral law (τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου), that is, the Torah and its interpretation. Paul knows the Torah well because it was the centre of what Gamaliel taught him. Paul thus portrays himself as a faithful Jew. His study in Jerusalem and his credentials with Gamaliel are designed to comfort his audience by identifying Paul as someone from within their circle. While Paul sheds light on his early pedagogical training, his speech ultimately provokes rather than appeases his audience.

The remainder of Paul's speech in Acts 22:3–21 joins his other speeches in shedding light on how the narrator puts Paul's education on display through his rhetoric. Paul employs rhetorical topoi that are evident in the apologies of other Graeco-Roman figures (Veltman 1978, pp. 253–54). He starts with the introduction that has just been highlighted with a view to Paul's education (Acts 22:3). The role of the introduction in the speech is to cultivate solidarity with his audience. Not only was Paul's education undertaken at the feet of a respected Jewish teacher, but he was formerly a persecutor of the Way whose actions were endorsed by the High Priest and Sanhedrin (Acts 22:4–5). After attempting to ingratiate himself with his audience, Paul's defence revolves around Jerusalem and the leaders whom he addresses. Jerusalem is the city where he was authorised by Jewish leaders, to which he intended to return with members of the Way, and in which he was commissioned to preach to Gentiles after meeting Jesus (Acts 22:4–5, 17–21). Paul's new assignment comes from Jesus himself and is given in the temple (Acts 22:17). Although ultimately unsuccessful in placating his audience, Paul's geographical frame complements his introduction in its goal of highlighting the common ground between them. Paul further knits the speech together with the repetition of witness terminology (Fitzmyer 1998, p. 703). The high priest and Sanhedrin can testify (μαρτυρεῖ) about Paul's zealous actions regarding the Way (Acts 22:5). Ananias's devotion is attested (μαρτυρούμενος) by everyone who lives in Jerusalem (Acts 22:12). Ananias tells Paul that he must be a witness (μάρτυς) on behalf of Jesus (Acts 22:15), but Jesus later clarifies that the residents of Jerusalem will not accept Paul's testimony (μαρτυρίαν; Acts 22:18). Despite Paul's approval of Stephen's murder, whom Paul identifies as 'your (Jesus's) witness' (τοῦ μάρτυρός σου), Jesus nevertheless insists that Paul must go to the Gentiles (Acts 22:20). Paul employs 'witness' terminology to tie the speech together. Paul's lexical thread joins his geographical frame in weaving his judicial defence before the Jerusalem crowd into a rhetorical tapestry.³⁸

Paul may not have been successful in persuading his audience in Acts 22, but this speech is neither his only rhetorically sophisticated speech nor was every speech unsuccessful. Paul's teaching in Antioch with Barnabas appears to have been received generally well, at least insofar as the summary statements in Acts allows readers to see (Acts 11:25–26; 13:1). Paul's speech to a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch leads Gentiles in the audience to rejoice and glorify the Lord's Word through Paul (Acts 13:48). In addition to Paul's ability to structure his speech in rhetorically sophisticated ways, an additional contributing factor to Paul's persuasiveness within the narrative of Acts is his ability to comport himself with what is expected of a rhetor. Mikael Parsons has pointed out Paul's use of gestures as a sign that ancient readers would recognise for its rhetorical significance (Parsons 2008, pp. 191, 307–8, 337). Quintilian advises orators to place the thumb against the middle finger and to extend the other three fingers (Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.3.92). Paul gestures in his speech at Acts 13:16; 21:40; 26:1, that is, at the beginning of the speeches in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, before the crowd in Jerusalem, and in front of Agrippa and Festus. Different from Paul's self-portrayal in the Corinthian correspondence, the Paul of Acts appears quite at home speaking within the Roman rhetorical world.

More similarly to Paul's autobiographical accounts in his letters, the author of Acts depicts Paul's success as fraught in the best of circumstances. Even in the speech at Pisidian Antioch, Paul's education does not win over the entire audience. Although Gentiles in the audience rejoice at what Paul says (Acts 13:48), Jewish leaders appeal to the civic elite in order to cause problems for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:50). Paul's interpretation of scripture plays a vital role in this. In the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, Paul's 'word of encouragement' (λόγος παρακλήσεως; Acts 13:15) is a retelling of Israel's history and purpose starting with God's election of Israel in Egypt, narrating God's presence with the people in the wilderness, and continuing to God's promised salvation through a Davidic heir who has come 'to us' (ἡμῖν; Acts 13:26), that is, to Israel as it is embodied in Paul's synagogue audience (Acts 13:16–26; see further Wendel 2011, pp. 244–46). Paul identifies Jesus as the Davidic heir, narrating how the Jerusalem authorities asked Pilate to have Jesus executed but noting that God vindicated him by raising him from the dead (Acts 13:27–31).

On the basis of Jesus's vindication, Paul appeals to Ps 2:7 and the words promised to the Davidic king (Johnson 2002, pp. 40–46). Paul recognises Jesus as God's Son about whom the Psalm speaks (Acts 13:33). Paul elaborates the Davidic promise in Isaianic and Psalmic terms (Acts 13:34; Isa 55:3; Ps 15:10 [LXX]). Although Paul's audience has not yet objected to his interpretation of scripture, things become more controversial with Paul's final interpretive move as he takes up the prophetic claim in Hab 1:5 that God is doing something that cannot be believed in Jesus (Acts 13:41). While some in the audience initially follow Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:43), the audience later divides on Jewish and Gentile lines because of Paul's application of Israel's Isaianic calling to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47–48; Isa 49:6). Paul's interpretation of scripture is thus a source of strife in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch.³⁹

Throughout Acts but especially in the paradigmatic speech to the synagogue in Acts 13, Paul is depicted as a 'text-broker', that is, as a specialist who could mediate written texts to other listeners (Snyder 2000, pp. 11, 194–205).⁴⁰ The authority that Paul exhibits through his scriptural interpretation coincides nicely with his self-presentation as someone who was educated by Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Paul is knowledgeable in Jewish scripture and displays his capacity to explicate it in ways that demonstrate both his learnedness and his authorisation as an interpretive expert who has been called by Jesus. Yet Paul's authority in scriptural interpretation proves to be divisive with several of his Jewish interlocutors.⁴¹ Paul confounds (συνέχυνεν) Jewish residents of Damascus with his teaching about Jesus's role as messiah—something that he appeals to with the support of scripture in Acts 13:16–41. When Paul later arrives in Ephesus, he teaches in the synagogue for three months but is eventually forced to leave the synagogue with some disciples for the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8–9).⁴² At issue is how to understand 'the word of the Lord' (ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου; Acts 19:10). Although Paul's lengthy stay in Ephesus allows the author to claim that 'all the residents in Asia ... both Jews and Gentiles' (πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας τὴν Ἀσίαν ... Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλλήνας) heard Paul's proclamation, a riot later breaks out in Ephesus (Acts 19:23–41) while Paul is later accused of defiling the temple by Jewish residents from Asia (Acts 21:27–29; see also 24:18–22).

Paul's interpretation of scripture is an outgrowth of the high level of education that the narrator states was taken up under Gamaliel's instruction (Acts 22:3). Yet the textual authority that Paul receives as a result of his learning creates divisions among Paul's audience with some of his Jewish auditors having a particularly difficult time accepting Paul's understanding of scripture. Even while Paul's rhetoric is dominantly taken with references to Jewish scriptural themes and language, Acts offers a more explicit declaration of Paul's reception among philosophers than his letters.

Paul's positive reception among at least some Graeco-Roman philosophers comes to the fore when Paul visits Athens (Acts 17:16–34). Although Paul characteristically begins his debates in the Athenian synagogue, he also engages in dialogue with those in the agora (Acts 17:17). Some Epicureans and Stoics bring Paul to the Areopagus when they encounter him in order to hear more (Acts 17:18–20). Both the setting of the story in Athens and the active role of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers suggest that Paul's engagement with and reception among philosophers will play a major role in what follows. Although Paul acknowledges the Athenians' devotion to the gods in the speech that follows (Acts 17:22; see also 17:16), he eventually calls them to transfer their allegiance from an unknown deity to the God whom Paul proclaims. In order to persuade the audience gathered on the Areopagus, Paul appeals to the God of Israel in terms that were broadly recognisable among his pluralistic, intellectually curious audience. The most explicit example of this phenomenon in Paul's speech is his quotation of 'some of your own poets' (τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν): 'for in him we live and move and are' (ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν; Acts 17:28). The use of 'for' (γάρ) as well as the explicit reference to other Greek poets suggest that Paul is quoting at this point in his speech. If so, Paul likely quotes a line from the Cretan poet Epimenides, but the nature of this quotation is difficult to discern because the form of the poem during the first century remains unknown

(see further [Renehan 1973](#), pp. 37–40). As Paul continues the speech, he quotes a line that appears to come from Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5 but which is also similar to Cleanthes's *Hymn to Zeus* 4.⁴³ Paul's quote is 'for we are (his) offspring' (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν). Whether Paul quotes from Aratus, the Cilician philosopher, or from Cleanthes, who was closer in time to Paul, his language betrays knowledge of philosophers that would have appealed to his Athenian audience. The Lukan Paul has the ability to alter both his speech and his intellectual dialogue partners to suit his philosophical audience ([Mason 2012](#), pp. 164–66). The narrative portrayal of Paul enhances these philosophical associations when one notices that Paul is depicted similarly to Socrates ([Cowan 2021](#); [Marguerat 2013](#), pp. 70–74; [Sandnes 1993](#)). Although some scoff when Paul brings resurrection into his discourse, Paul is left with an invitation to discuss his God further (Acts 17:32; [Vegge 2006](#), p. 462). Moreover, some of the Athenians became believers, and two of these believers are named—Dionysius the Areopagite and Damaris (see further [Den Heijer 2021](#); [Evans 2022](#); [Weiß 2015](#), pp. 95–101). Paul's learning is on display in his Athenian visit, and his teaching is elevated into philosophical respectability by the narrator.

A final marker of Paul's education to note is Paul's literacy. Although it is possible that Paul's ability to cite other authors came solely from hearing others read, Paul's ability to read is more likely implied by the repetition of scriptural interpretation and philosophical quotations. If the narrative of Acts does not show Paul reading, however, he is involved in the act of written communication through letters. His encounter with Jesus on the way to Damascus is preceded by a request that he lodges with the high priest for letters of authorisation so that his search for members of the Way will take place with the approval of the temple authorities (Acts 9:2). Paul is well-connected enough with leaders in Jerusalem for the high priest to acquiesce to his request and to empower Paul to carry out the task with the aid of his letter. Paul later serves as a letter-carrier in the aftermath of the meeting in Jerusalem. Following the controversy in the early chapters regarding how the Holy Spirit is working among Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas join the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss Gentile inclusion. While Paul and Barnabas explain what God has done among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12), James is the one who initiates the composition of a letter from Jerusalem to believers in other cities (Acts 15:20). The letter lists 'the apostles and elders' (οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) as the senders (Acts 15:23), while Paul joins Barnabas, Judas Barsabbas, and Silas as the letter-carriers (Acts 15:22). As letter-carriers, their responsibilities extend beyond the mere delivery or reading of the letter. They were also entrusted with ensuring that the letter was properly interpreted ([Head 2009](#)). Thus, Judas and Silas encourage the believers in Antioch (Acts 15:32), while Paul and Barnabas stay longer 'teaching and proclaiming the good news' (διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι; Acts 15:35). Paul's experience with letters is notably less than what might be expected from someone who had read Paul's letters. However, his literacy extends beyond the ability to read the words on the page to include the active clarification of epistolary contents.

The narrator in Acts utilises several factors in the biographical presentation of Paul to point to Paul's education. Paul acts as a pedagogue from the beginning of his encounter with Jesus. Immediately following Jesus's appearance to Paul outside Damascus, Paul begins to teach, and didactic terminology is applied to this multi-lingual model in the narrative. Paul is a student of Gamaliel who studied the Torah and its interpretation. He is also a speaker who had some knowledge of rhetorical practices that were utilised elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world. Paul's literacy is most evident in his knowledge of Jewish scripture, his quotations of philosophers from outside the Jewish tradition, and his ability both to compose and to interpret letters. Although Paul comports himself with what is expected of an educated Roman citizen, the author leaves questions about how precisely Paul was educated in his childhood unanswered. That Paul is educated is more important than the means by which he gained it. Moreover, Paul's education does not endear him to everyone in the story. On the contrary, Paul's successfulness as an educator is highly mixed. His divisive message attracts some but pushes others away.

5. The Acts of Paul

Paul likewise appears as a well-educated teacher in the Acts of Paul, but the ways in which his education comes to the fore differ from the presentations in Paul's letters or in the Acts of the Apostles. As in the Acts of the Apostles, the Paul in the Acts of Paul is a better speaker than his self-descriptions in the letters might suggest. Unlike in the Acts of the Apostles, the Acts of Paul contains a full letter from Paul's pen within the narrative. The Acts of Paul was known to Tertullian (*Bapt.* 17.5) and likely dates to the middle of the second century (see further [Dunn 1996a](#), pp. 8–11). The manuscript evidence for the Acts of Paul is complicated, and some have argued that the acts of Paul was formed as a composite document comprised of earlier discrete stories (e.g., [Snyder 2013](#)). However, this article follows those who read the acts of Paul as a single narrative, albeit one that cannot be known in its entirety due to lacunae in the manuscript tradition ([Edsall 2019](#), pp. 67–74).⁴⁴ Although Paul experiences conflict in the Acts of Paul, his teaching is more persuasive to the audiences in this story than in the earlier Acts of the Apostles.

The presentation of Paul's biography is not as extensive in the Acts of Paul or in the Acts of the Apostles, at least, insofar as the story can presently be reconstructed. Certain episodes—the incident with Thecla, the Ephesian affair and baptism of a lion, and the martyrdom narrative—are narrated at length. Unlike in the Acts of the Apostles, no reference is made to Paul's earliest learning or to any study in Jerusalem. However, the Acts of Paul offers readers a description of what Paul looked like. This description participates in Graeco-Roman physiognomic practices wherein the physical appearance of a person or character is thought to reveal inward realities about the person's identity and characteristics ([Grant 1982](#), p. 1).⁴⁵ Paul is described as short, bald, bow-legged, healthy, as well as having a unibrow and a prominent nose (Acts Paul 3.3).⁴⁶ While there is broad agreement that Paul's physical description is best understood within the physiognomic tradition, it is not clear what this description of Paul communicates about him. Some have thought that Paul is depicted as a general ([Barrier 2009](#), p. 75; [Grant 1982](#); [Murphy-O'Connor 1996](#), pp. 44–45) or as a new kind of Heracles ([Malherbe 1986](#), pp. 168–70). Yet it is also important to observe ways in which this description of Paul might fit with statements that he makes in his letters, particularly in 2 Cor 10–13 ([Bollók 1996](#), pp. 9–12). Paul's description also resembles portrayals of Socrates, who likewise was described with less than a full head of hair and angular facial features ([Cartlidge and Elliot 2001](#), pp. 138–42). Although Paul is not described exactly as a second Socrates, his physical characteristics may be understood such portrayals to present Paul as an itinerant teacher ([Pervo 2014](#), pp. 93–94). Paul's physical characteristics demonstrate that he is the embodiment of the perfect teacher. As a teacher, he is inwardly full of grace, but his physical traits suggest that age, wisdom, and a rugged lifestyle have coalesced in the body of this travelling pedagogue.⁴⁷

If Paul's appearance suggests that he is educated, his way of speaking displays his learning without any doubt that he is a teacher. When Paul enters Iconium, he stays with a man named Onesiphorus. Iconian residents then come to pray, to receive the Eucharist, and to hear Paul proclaim God's Word (Acts Paul 3.5). The Acts of Paul records a paradigmatic sermon by Paul in Acts Paul 3.5–6. Thirteen words of blessing are given in a form that is reminiscent of the Matthean Jesus's first sermon on a mountain in Galilee (Matt 5:3–12). The narrator summarises the contents of Paul's preaching in two terms: self-control and resurrection (Acts Paul 3.5). The thirteen specific statements that follow can be organised upon this basis. The first five blessings concern self-control and sexual renunciation, while statements six through ten anticipate the hope of the resurrection for those who follow the ascetic lifestyle that Paul puts forward. The final three macarisms return to the theme of sexual renunciation as love for God leads believers to abandon worldly fashions and marks virgin bodies as uniquely blessed. The speech in Acts Paul 3.5–6 is thus central to understanding Paul's message in the Acts of Paul. However, comparison of this speech with Paul's paradigmatic sermon in Acts 13:16–41 reveals a difference in the rhetorical styles of the respective Pauls. In the Acts of Paul, the main character is comparatively terse in his presentation. He is appealing as a teacher who is direct and echoes a form of speech

that is most closely associated with Jesus in the early Christian literature. On the other hand, the Lukan Acts presents Paul as a rhetorician whose ability enables him to construct long speeches with greater rhetorical complexity.

The simplicity of the Pauline message is further exhibited in Paul's judicial defences in the Acts of Paul. When Paul is arrested as a magician and teacher, he stands trial before Castellius in Iconium (Acts Paul 3.15–16).⁴⁸ Paul's defence is notably shorter than the speeches before legal officials in Acts 22; 24; 26. However, Paul speaks loudly and declares that the content of his teaching concerns God's sending of his Son who empowers Paul's teaching. He concludes by asking the proconsul what law he is breaking since he teaches matters that have been revealed by God (Acts Paul 3.17). Although Paul's speech is not recorded, he continues to teach in Myra as Thecla reunites with the apostle after her miraculous escape in Antioch (Acts Paul 4.15). Paul's defence before the Ephesian proconsul provides Paul with another attempt to summarise the content of his teaching. The summary is again briefer than those who have read Paul's declarations in the Acts of the Apostles might expect. This concise message begins with a statement that Paul serves the God who created all things, that people have rejected God, and that salvation is to be found in Jesus rather than in deities who can be visualised in wood and stone (Acts Paul 9.13). The governor responds that Paul speaks well (Acts Paul 9.14), but Paul is nevertheless condemned to the beasts due to the response of the crowd (Acts Paul 9.15). Paul's final defence before Nero is his briefest speech. Readers instead encounter Nero's wariness of Christians through his interactions with his recently converted slave, Patroclus (Acts Paul 14.2).⁴⁹ Paul, on the other hand, seems both resigned to an initial death and fully committed to resurrection. Paul thus insists that he will appear to Nero again after Nero has him decapitated (Acts Paul 14.4), a promise that Paul keeps by appearing to Nero while he has philosophers and soldiers in his audience (Acts Paul 14.6). Paul's speeches remain consistently simple and direct throughout the narrative. Although they are not sophisticated, they remain effective in their presentation of Paul's teaching and thereby fulfil their role in assuring readers of Paul's innocence.

While Paul's rhetoric is not as ornate as that found in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's education is exhibited in the Acts of Paul through the persuasiveness of his words. To be sure, Paul does not persuade everyone to whom he speaks. Paul's judicial speeches are among his least successful. However, the Acts of Paul portrays their main character as someone who can effectively guide audiences to greater understanding. While some whom Paul encounters are already believers before he meets them (e.g., Onesiphorus [Acts Paul 3.4]), Paul's communication leads others to faith. The paradigmatic example of this phenomenon is Thecla, who is persuaded by Paul's words alone (Acts Paul 3.7). No view of the apostle is required for Thecla. The power of his speech is sufficient. Paul remains persuasive to Onesiphorus and his family when, as they hide with Paul in a cave outside Iconium, the children are instructed by Paul to buy bread (Acts Paul 3.23). The children do not question Paul further and find Thecla while they are in the market. While the Ephesian proconsul is ultimately forced to condemn Paul, he is impressed with the quality of Paul's speech (Acts Paul 9.14). Paul's account of God's deliverance in Christ and the frailty of worldly goods leads an Ephesian noblewoman named Artemilla to request immediate baptism (Acts Paul 9.17). When Paul speaks to the Corinthians prior to his departure for Rome, he resumes his message to renounce food in favour of love (Acts Paul 12.2). Although the believers are initially troubled, Cleobius, a Corinthian leader, affirms Paul's message that he must go to Rome. He also notes Paul's learning in the course of his speech (Acts Paul 12.3). Paul does not persuade everyone to whom he speaks (e.g., crowds in Asia Minor [Acts Paul 9.11]; Caesar [Acts Paul 14.3]), but his words carry great weight. Paul's ability to speak in ways that persuade others mark his speech out not only as specially empowered by God but also as the words of an educated person. Paul's ability to communicate in a persuasive way should thus be understood to derive from his education.

Paul further displays his learning by means of his appeals of scripture. Admittedly, in the Acts of Paul, the title character does not use scripture with the same frequency of

either the Paul of the letters or that of the Acts of the Apostles. However, scripture plays a significant role in framing Paul's understanding of the situation in Rome as he approaches the capital. In his farewell address to the Corinthians before he departs for Rome, Paul alludes to David's difficult sojourn in Saul's footsteps as a model by which to reassure the Corinthians that he must go to Rome (Acts Paul 12.2). Just as God protected David when he endured against his enemies in 1 Sam 24–25, so Paul trusts that God will enable him to face whatever awaits him in Rome. After Myrta, a Corinthian believer, prophesies that Paul's trip to Rome will lead many in faith, Paul and the Corinthians conclude their time together with a feast that involves singing the Psalms of David (Acts Paul 12.5). The table is set for Paul's departure with Davidic allusions. When Paul arrives at Claudius's home in Rome, he utilises the most extensive narrative summary of Israel's history in the Acts of Paul.⁵⁰ Paul notes God's faithfulness to Israel in delivering them from lawless figures. Paul mentions Pharaoh, Og, and Arad, while the contemporary figure of Nero looms in the background (Acts Paul 13.5).⁵¹ He next refers to the prophets' reception of the Spirit and their deaths at the hands of lawless people (Acts Paul 13.6).⁵² Paul's ability to refer to scripture enables him to urge his audience to remain faithful throughout the impending trial (Acts Paul 13.7). While this Paul does not appeal to scripture with the same regularity as the Pauline traditions already explored in this article, the mature Paul nevertheless demonstrates his knowledge through his ability to call upon scripture in anticipation of the climactic trial.

Paul's limited but general appeals to scripture may coincide with his depiction as a catechetical leader in the Acts of Paul. Benjamin Edsall has rightly noted that the Acts of Paul portrays the main character as a teacher, but he notes that the work casts Paul 'in ways that are consonant with the catechetical process of initiation emerging at the time of its composition' (Edsall 2019, p. 91). Much of Edsall's work is concerned with Paul's work in training Thecla and particularly the question of why Paul refuses to baptise her when he baptises others in the Acts of Paul (see also Edsall 2017). Such a question is of great interest to a study of the Acts of Paul but lies out of the more limited purview of this article's focus on Paul's education. Yet it is worth noting that a catechist could be presumed in most cases to have at least some education. If Paul is depicted in ways that are consonant with second-century catechetical leaders, then such an observation suggests that Paul enjoyed some level of education.

Paul's position as a learned man within the Roman Empire is also made clear in his ability to read and write. The Acts of Paul thus continues a traditional depiction of Paul that stems from his letters and is likewise found in the Acts of the Apostles. However, the Acts of Paul presents Paul in a vein that is closer to the Pauline letters than to Acts. Paul is not only as an interpreter of letters but also an author of an extended and theologically rich reflection in the correspondence that has come to be known as 3 Corinthians (Acts Paul 10). Within 3 Corinthians there are two letters: an epistle from the Corinthians enquiring about teachings that they have heard and a response from Paul outlining the way in which the Corinthians should think. The Corinthian letter notes the origin of the teachings in Simon and Cleobius before listing a series of disputed issues from the second century (Acts Paul 10.2; 3 Cor 2.2, 9–15).⁵³ Paul's response echoes earlier Pauline letters and presents him in a similar way to the Pastoral Epistles (White 2009, pp. 505–10; 2014, pp. 116–21). Paul's greeting formula in 3 Corinthians differs from what is found elsewhere in the Pauline letters, but it nevertheless holds to the formula, 'X, to Y, greetings', which was so widespread elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean. The Paul of the Acts of Paul is fully conversant with the letter-writing practices of his time. As Paul responds to the Corinthians' questions, he appeals to the good news that Jesus came as a Davidic descendant born of Mary (Acts Paul 10.4; 3 Cor. 4.5), that the prophets proclaimed Jesus in advance to Israel (Acts Paul 10.4; 3 Cor. 4.9–10), and that the resurrection will take up the flesh and not just the spirit (Acts Paul 10.5; 3 Cor. 5.24–27).

Paul's epistolary activity is not only more extensive in the Acts of Paul than in the Acts of the Apostles. His words also echo the letters of Paul more clearly than is found in the

Acts of the Apostles. Although he locates his teaching alongside the apostles and thereby differentiates this letter from what is found, for example, in Gal 1:6–2:14, the Acts of Paul nevertheless portray Paul in dialogue with the earlier Pauline tradition as someone who passes on what he received from the apostles before him (Acts Paul 10.4; 3 Cor 4.4). This language recalls what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the first century, when he likewise insists that he is passing on traditions that he has received from others (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). The Acts of Paul's continues its implicit dialogue with 1 Corinthians when Paul addresses the topic of resurrection. Although Paul appeals to scriptural precedent to strengthen his argument for resurrection (Acts Paul 10.5; 3 Cor. 5.29–30, 32), the strongest elements of his case come in his echoes of 1 Cor 15. The apocryphal Paul refers to seeds that grow out of the ground clothed in a body (Acts Paul 10.5; 3 Cor. 5.26–27). Such language is reminiscent of Paul's earlier claim that the sowing of seeds is completed when it grows with a body (1 Cor 15:37–38; Dunn 1996b, pp. 446–47). The Paul of the Acts of Paul is well-read enough to allude to his own letters from roughly a century before! Nor is Paul alone in these citations. The Corinthians participate in these allusions to 1 Corinthians when they report that Simon and Cleobius teach that there is no resurrection of the flesh (Acts Paul 10.2; 3 Cor. 2.12). The Corinthians thereby recall Paul's warning against some who claim that 'there is no resurrection of the dead' (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν; 1 Cor 15:2), while simultaneously updating Paul to address controversies that had arisen in the second century.⁵⁴

The portrayal of Paul in the Acts of Paul continues a dialogue about Paul's education that started with Paul's own words in his letters and is likewise found in the Acts of the Apostles. While the Acts of Paul shares an interest with both the letters and Acts in depicting Paul as learned, the Acts of Paul does not merely restate what has come before. Paul's rhetoric is pithier. He speaks in ways that sound like words drawn from the Jesus tradition. He functions as a catechetical teacher. He also reads and responds to letters that address matters that arose within the Pauline tradition during the second century. Paul's education is clear in every major incident in the narrative, but the ways in which he demonstrates his education build upon earlier Pauline traditions so that Paul can be viewed in a favourable light at the end of the second century.

6. Conclusions

This article has examined depictions of Paul's education as a literate and rhetorically capable communicator during the Roman Empire. Although some of the most memorable lines in Paul's letters come from autobiographical sections in which Paul downplays his education in order to elevate his dependence upon Jesus, the letters are rhetorically robust documents through which Paul communicates to his audiences across the eastern Mediterranean world about a variety of intellectually complex or socially delicate matters. Paul's high level of literacy is further illustrated by his ability to cite scripture, in the length and complexity of his compositions, and in his use of common epistolary tools that were available in the Graeco-Roman world. In light of the importance of the letters for understanding Paul's thought, it is surprising that the Acts of the Apostles minimises Paul's writing activities. While he writes a short letter to a Roman guard and is involved in interpreting a letter as he and Barnabas take it to the intended addressees, Paul is more active in speaking to his audiences. The speeches in Acts are rhetorically complex, and Paul makes regular use not only of words and verbal structure but also of hand gestures by which rhetors commonly communicated in the Roman world. The author of Acts further characterises Paul as educated through Paul's quotations of Jewish scripture and Graeco-Roman philosophers. Writing later in the second century, the author of the Acts of Paul likewise depicts Paul as a teacher who communicates through spoken words with his disciples. However, the speeches in the Acts of Paul are generally shorter than those in the Acts of the Apostles. The brevity of Paul's speeches enables the author to depict Paul speaking in ways that mimic Jesus. As in the letters and the Acts of the Apostles, the Paul of the Acts of Paul continues to quote scripture. However, he does not quote it to

the same extent as in the earlier works. Instead, Paul writes a letter in response to a query that he received from believers in Corinth and thereby updates his theological views for a second-century audience.

At the end of this account of how Pauline education was received in dialogue with Paul's letters, it may be helpful to observe again the flexibility with which Paul's education is depicted within by recognising that Paul's literary and rhetorical abilities are flexibly illustrated in each text. That Paul was educated with a view to both his literacy and his rhetorical capabilities is a common feature of how Paul is portrayed in his letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Acts of Paul. However, the texts 'exhibit significant creative energy' with regard to the ways in which this education become evident.⁵⁵ All texts agree that Paul was literate, but they differ in how their respective portrayals of Paul demonstrate his literacy. The letters display Paul's literacy most clearly as he writes highly complex documents that are seasoned with scriptural quotations. The Acts of Paul offers a pseudepigraphic letter that brings Pauline theology into the second century while also demonstrating the apostle's pastoral care with his pen. The Acts of the Apostles, on the other hand, has no doubt about Paul's literacy but refers to his writing ability only once and only in a brief letter to inform a guard about a plot on his life. Paul's ability to use spoken rhetoric is depicted in similarly variegated ways. While Paul occasionally concedes his opponents' view that his speech is unimpressive when he writes his letters, the later narratives present a Paul who is rhetorically capable, either through sophisticated speeches or through his imitation of Jesus's way of speaking.

The success of the respective Pauls is another matter that should be noted in order to bring these traditions into still closer conversation. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's teaching is received by some of his listeners. For example, Paul's teaching is received by Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:13–15), members of the community in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), and Jewish believers in Beroea (Acts 17:10–15). Yet Paul's controversial message results in a more consistently turbulent set of responses from Paul's enemies than may be found in the Acts of Paul. The conflict over Paul's teaching is especially trenchant from the 'Jews of Asia' (Crabbe 2021). On the other hand, the Acts of Paul highlights Paul's success. Although conflict arises in the Acts of Paul and eventually leads to Paul's bodily demise, his teaching persuades Thecla (Acts Paul 3.7), Cleobius (Acts Paul 12.3), Patroclus (Acts Paul 14.1–2), and even a lion (Acts Paul 9.7–10). The controversy surrounding Paul functions as a narrative tool by which to progress the plot. Both the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Paul may here rely on traditions about Paul that stem from the letters. On the one hand, the success that Paul finds in the narrative portrayals of his teaching may also be found in the earlier letters as Paul praises his respective audiences (1 Thess 2:13–16; 3:6–10; Phil 1:25–26; 4:10–20). The letters attest to positive interactions among at least some of his audiences. On the other hand, Paul worries that some believers will turn to other teachers (Gal 1:6–10; 1 Cor 1:10–17), while the physical abuse that he endured indicates strenuous opposition to his towards and presence (2 Cor 11:24–28). Paul's letters thus testify to the presence of both success and, from the perspective of adding numerical adherents, failure. Because Paul's writings are not incorporated into a single, streamlined text but are instead extant in a collection of individual letters, both sets of statements can stand in a tension that speaks to Paul's perception of his receptions. When these traditions are later received in a single narrative, however, the tension is lessened by the authors of the Acts of the Apostles and Acts of Paul with the result that either Paul's troubles or Paul's success is emphasised more strongly.

Although certain statements about Paul appear to be broadly accepted in his reception history (e.g., Paul was educated), traditions about Paul could be adjusted to fit the needs of later authors and readers. In a 1997 entry on Paul and his letters, Stanley Porter (1997, p. 536) acknowledged that 'the direct evidence from the New Testament regarding Paul's capability as a rhetor is not great'. Porter immediately clarifies that he makes a distinction between direct evidence for Paul's rhetorical training over and against reconstructions that might be made from his letters. After this reception historical study of Paul in the earliest

narratives about his life, a similar conclusion is fitting regarding Paul's early training in education. The direct evidence for such formal education in the New Testament 'is not great'. Although the Acts of the Apostles asserts that Paul trained under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), there is no other clear evidence for Paul's educational training. Paul's literacy and the complexity of his letters demand that he must have had some training. Yet how that training was achieved, either in the biography of the historical Paul or in the reception of Pauline traditions, remains open. Paul may have received formal education as a youth in Tarsus or Jerusalem, he may have continued to study into adulthood as a freelance religious expert (Wendt 2016), his knowledge may have revolved around certain domains of education (Robertson 2022), or some combination of all these things may best account for the state of the Pauline letters and reception history that remain extant. The evidence is simultaneously enticing and limited. The study of traditions about Paul and of their role in the reception of both Paul and his level of literate education remains an ongoing endeavour to which this article hopes to have made some contribution.

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Notes

¹ See, for example, Marrou's (1948, pp. 351–52) description of physical education in ancient Rome.

² For further discussion of Paul's labour and means of financial survival, see (Blanton 2022).

³ On Aristides's life, education, and encounters with Asclepius, see (Trapp 2016, pp. 3–7). See also (Brockmann 2016) for a comparison of Asclepius and Galen on healing and the divine. See further (Johnson 2009, pp. 50–63; Stanley 2023, p. 122).

⁴ On the bricolage of tendencies as well as the difficulty of disentangling each tendency that is found among religious freelancers in the Roman Empire, see (Wendt 2016, pp. 20–22).

⁵ Another influential and more multi-faceted way of exploring Paul's reception in the Acts of the Apostles is set out in (Marguerat 2008).

⁶ On the composition of speeches in antiquity, see (Mason 2011).

⁷ For a possible example of the former, see Rom 7:7–25, where Paul uses the first-person pronoun in his discourse. The identity of this speaker remains highly disputed. However, if Paul's 'I' represents someone other than himself, then Paul may employ prosopoeia in this case. On this passage and the debatable assumptions that scholars bring to it concerning prosopoeia, see (Dyer 2016) and the literature cited therein. For more on speeches given in character in progymnasmata and in the New Testament, see (Parsons and Martin 2018, pp. 141–74).

⁸ See, e.g., Cicero, *Quinct.* 46–47, 54–55; Plutarch, *Cor.* 33.6. See further (Broome 2021; Buszard 2010).

⁹ On the role of Paul's story within Galatians and alongside other ancient rhetorical practices, see (Betz 1975, pp. 362–67).

¹⁰ Margaret Mitchell (2021, p. 76) puts it well when she writes, 'These lengthy missives show extraordinary care to articulate and defend a position (on matters theological, social, cultural, and political), often against acknowledged competitors and detractors. They presume of their readers the patience to read and reread, to hear and hear again, and to work through complex rhetorical and theological proofs. In this way, Paul's letters straddle the line between various classifications of ancient Greek (or Latin) letters—between documentary and literary letters or private and public letters.' For further study of Paul's letter-writing practices, see (Stirewalt 2003).

¹¹ As the longest of Paul's letters, Romans is a good example of the varied ways in which Paul utilises rhetorical elements in his discourse that can be found elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world. Byrskog (1997) draws attention to the way in which Rom 1:1–7 serves not only as an epistolary greeting but also functions rhetorically to establish Paul's ethos. Although rhetorical studies of Paul have swelled since the last quarter of the twentieth century, Sowers (1981, pp. 7–75) illustrates that rhetorical features such as diatribe have been studied for a long time by critical New Testament scholars.

¹² On the place of Paul's letters alongside the work of other educated religious free-lance experts in the Roman world, see (Dingledein 2022; Wendt 2016, pp. 146–89).

¹³ On the role of Roman-era letter-carriers and how this knowledge might affect readings of Paul's letters, see (Cadwallader 2018; Harmon 2014; Head 2009; Richards 1991).

- For useful anthologies of Greek and Roman letters that demonstrate the variety of types of letters that were written in the ancient Mediterranean world, see (Muir 2009; Trapp 2003).
- Further study of the way in which philosophy and epistolography intersect both in Paul's letters and in Paul's world can be found in (Pitts 2010).
- For a thorough study of Paul's literate education, see (Vegge 2006, pp. 345–423).
- Additional discussion of the issues involved in determining the level of Paul's rhetorical training can be found in (Schellenberg 2013; Robertson 2022).
- See further (Classen 1991, 2016; Thuren 2022). A further matter that could be considered when reflecting on the importance of rhetoric for interpreting the Pauline epistles is the oral presentation of these letters to Paul's audiences, on which, see (Loubser 1995).
- For an insightful use of Positioning Theory as a tool with which to read Philemon, see (Young 2021).
- See also 1 Tim 5:18, where a quotation from Deut 25:4 is connected to a saying attributed to Jesus in Luke 10:7 and, in a similar form, in Matt 10:10.
- On Pauline imitation language elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, see (Kim 2011).
- For a recent study of whether Paul 'converts' from Judaism and the ways in which conversion language may or may not be appropriate to this passage, see (Löhr 2022).
- On Paul's use of rhetoric in 1 Corinthians and location alongside ancient philosophical discourse, see (Brookins 2014; Mitchell 1993).
- In other letters, Paul similarly sets his speech alongside the actions of the Spirit or the word of God (1 Thess 1:5; 2:13).
- A somewhat different strategy is found earlier in 2 Corinthians where Paul insists that his speech is genuine, while his opponents speak falsely or sell their words (2 Cor 2:17; 4:2).
- Schellenberg (2013, p. 255) argues that 'there is no evidence in 2 Cor 10–13 that Paul received formal training.
- Paul likewise places himself alongside his opponents as their equal in status but insists that he will highlight things that make him look weak. See, e.g., 2 Cor 11:21–29.
- Alexander (1993, 2005, pp. 43–68) analyses Paul's story in Acts alongside other intellectual biographies in the Graeco-Roman world and, more particularly, the figure of Socrates. Although this avenue of research will not be explored here, it is worth noting that such a portrayal on the part of the author of Luke-Acts would enhance this depiction of Paul as a learned figure in the eyes of ancient readers.
- On the role of light in the story of Jesus's revelation to Paul, see (Rordorf 1999, pp. 140–41; Wilson 2014, pp. 371–72).
- E.g., Acts 13:42–52; 17:4–5, 32–34; 18:5–11.
- References to Paul teaching using the word διδάσκω can be found in Acts 15:35; 18:11; 20:20; 21:21, 28; 28:31, while references to Paul's disciples or to Paul's interaction with disciples occur in Acts 9:19, 25, 26; 11:29–30; 13:52; 14:20, 22, 28; 16:1; 18:23; 19:1, 9, 30; 20: 1, 30; 21:16. Paul also makes disciples (μαθητεύω) in Acts 14:21.
- Paul's admonitions to help the vulnerable are given in words that fit both the Lukan Jesus and the Pauline letters. See further (Johnson 1992, p. 365; Walton 2004, pp. 179–80).
- On this episode and how it may be understood alongside other research on Anatolian languages in the Graeco-Roman world, see (Porter 2008).
- On languages in Palestine, see further (Levine 1998, pp. 80–84; Millard 2000, pp. 84–131).
- Although the language of Paul's address is not clarified in Acts 26, the presence of Festus makes it likely that he was speaking in Greek while telling a story about a communication that he received in Hebrew or Aramaic. Jesus's address to Paul in Hebrew heightens Paul's Jewish origins and continues to emphasise Paul's Jewishness to the end of the narrative. See further (Watson 2018, p. 198).
- Paul's claim to have been born in Tarsus 'but raised in this city' (ἀνατεθραμμενος δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ; Acts 22:3) has led to some controversy about where Paul was raised. W. C. Van Unnik (1962, pp. 17–45) understands 'this city' as a reference to Jerusalem. He has been followed by commentators such as Albright (1967, pp. 309–12), Barrett (Barrett 1994–1998, vol. 2, pp. 1034–36), Fitzmyer (1998, pp. 704–5), and Murphy-O'Connor (1996, pp. 32–33). Pitts (2008, pp. 27–33) has pointed out, however, that δέ need not imply a strong sense of contrast and that 'this city' is used in Acts 16:12 to refer to a city that was already named, that is, Philippi. Accordingly, Pitts argues that 'this city' in Acts 22:3 is best identified as Tarsus. See further (Du Toit 2000). The precise identity of 'this city' is unnecessary for this article because Paul's overall trajectory is not altered on either interpretation. On either reading, Paul moves from Tarsus to Jerusalem to learn from Gamaliel. What is at issue is the age at which Paul might have left as well as the proper interpretation of the Greek syntax of Acts 22:3.
- For recent assessments of the historical Paul's education that engage this statement in Acts along with other historical evidence about Paul's education, see (Hock 2003; Robertson 2022).
- Paul's judicial defences in Acts 24 and 26 are likewise given in rhetorically sophisticated ways, on which, see (Keener 2008).
- On the paradigmatic function that both Paul's speech and the reactions of others in Pisidian Antioch serve within Acts, see (Butticaz 2011, pp. 261–78).
- For an application of the terminology of 'text-broker' to the portrait of Peter in Acts, see (Adams 2015).

- 41 Paul's Jewish interlocutors regularly remain unnamed in the narrative. For recent studies of Acts and the so-called 'Parting(s) of
the Ways', see (Crabbe 2021; Hagner 2018, pp. 14–53).
- 42 Den Heijer (2022, p. 208) helpfully places this episode in the context of *παρρησία*-rhetoric elsewhere in Acts. On the divide
between Paul and the synagogue viewed through a pedagogical lens, see further (Lookadoo 2022, pp. 52–57).
- 43 Note also the similarity to Aristobulus in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.13.26.
- 44 Zahn (Zahn 1888–1892, p. 2.2.880 n.2) noted at the end of the nineteenth century that there were verbal similarities between the
episodes that suggested connections between the episodes within the Acts of Paul.
- 45 On the place of physiognomy in the early Christian literature, see the excellent study of (Callon 2019).
- 46 References to the Acts of Paul are numbered in accordance with (Rordorf 1997).
- 47 An additional biographic detail to be noted is Paul's facility with language. When Paul prays, he communes with God in Hebrew
(Acts 14.5), a language that would not fit Paul's itinerant work in Iconium, Ephesus, Philippi, or Rome.
- 48 The Iconians again accuse Paul of practising magic in Acts Paul 3.20. See further (Bremmer 2017, pp. 155–56).
- 49 'It is clear that Nero perceives Patroclus, his bodyguards, and all other Christ followers as a military threat, not just followers of
an alternative worldview, for he describes them as enemy soldiers' (Eastman 2019, p. 45).
- 50 For this understanding of narrative summary, I am indebted to (Wee 2012).
- 51 The narrative of Pharaoh's defeat in the Exodus was central to Jewish scripture and to the Second Temple Jewish literature. The
central narrative text in which this story is recounted can be found in Exod 5:1–15:21. The account of Og's defeat is found in Num
21:3–35. Finally, the story of Arad is told in Num 21:1–3.
- 52 Paul's reference to the prophets as he approaches his death complements his earlier discussion of the prophets in his letter to the
Corinthians (Acts Paul 10.4; 3 Cor. 4.9–11). In light of the variation of citation systems in Acts Paul 10 (i.e., 3 Corinthians), I will
cite both Rordorf's numbering and the traditional numbering for 3 Corinthians when citing from this text.
- 53 On other opponents in the Acts of Paul, see (Edsall 2018).
- 54 See Lehtipuu (2015, pp. 115–16); White (2014, pp. 128–29).
- 55 The phrase in quotation marks comes from (Snyder 2022, p. 121).

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