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## Piecing Together Paul's Life: A Review Article

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*The EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY does not often carry reviews of works in other languages than English, but every now and then it may be helpful to draw readers' attention to such works, and what better way than by an extended review which summarises a significant book at length?*

### Introduction

Understanding the course of Paul's life and ministry may once have seemed an easy task to some of us: you simply had to read the book of Acts, consult a few maps showing his missionary journeys, and everything became clear (or moderately so!). Things today, however, are not quite so simple, at least for those familiar with modern scholarship. Big questions have been raised about the trustworthiness of the evidence of Acts and (to a lesser extent) about Paul's own account of things, for example in Galatians 2. Various scholars have come up with reconstructions of Paul's life which are significantly different from that of Acts.

Particularly influential in recent years has been the German scholar Gerd Lüdemann (who was himself influenced by the early arguments of John Knox). In his book *Paul Apostle to the Gentiles. Studies in Chronology*<sup>1</sup> he argues that Paul's mission to Greece—to places such as Thessalonica and Corinth—took place before the Jerusalem Council (described in Acts 15 and Galatians 2), not after it, as Acts suggests. This proposal helps explain what Paul was doing in the 'fourteen years' between his first and second post-conversion visits to Jerusalem, referred to in Gal 2:1. The suggestion leads Lüdemann to date Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians to AD 41; the first New Testament writing was thus significantly earlier than had generally been supposed. Galatians, which has been seen as the earliest New Testament letter by other scholars, was thought by Lüdemann to have been written almost ten years later (after 1 and 2

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<sup>1</sup> London: SCM Press, 1984.

Corinthians and just before Romans which it resembles in its emphasis on justification by faith). Galatians, like Acts, is seen by Lüdemann as historically confused or confusing, with Galatians 2 in particular giving a misleading impression about the order of events (e.g. the so-called 'Antioch incident' of vv. 11–14 preceded the Jerusalem Council described in 2:1–10, and vv. 7,8 actually belong not with the Council but with Paul's first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem described in Acts 9:26 and Gal 1:18).

A different reconstruction of events has been offered very recently by Raymond A. Martin in his *Studies in the Life and Ministry of the Early Paul and Related Issues*.<sup>2</sup> He, like Lüdemann and others, argues that we should depend on Paul's own letters in trying to reconstruct Paul's life, not on the secondhand and in some ways unreliable evidence of Acts. He argues that Paul was a Palestinian Pharisee, probably belonging to the strict and zealous party of Shammai; despite Acts, he was not born as a Roman citizen or given a Greek education in Tarsus, or brought up under Gamaliel (of the party of Hillel). After his conversion Paul started to evangelize Gentiles and to learn about things Greek; he did not, according to Martin, at first preach a law-free gospel, but advocated the circumcision of Gentiles. He came in due course to feel that Gentiles should not be required to be circumcised, but when he went up to Jerusalem to the meeting described in Galatians 2, he was concerned for unity and he even circumcised the Gentile Titus (though not under compulsion). Relations between Paul and Jerusalem took a nose-dive for the worse, however, when people from Jerusalem started trying to impose circumcision on the Gentiles and when Cephas, whom Martin sees as an elder in the Jerusalem church distinct from the apostle Peter, withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles, as described in Galatians 2:11ff. Martin's reconstruction differs from that of Lüdemann in various ways: he does not postulate an early mission to Greece before the Jerusalem Council, and he dates Galatians early. He agrees with Lüdemann that the Acts 15 account of the Council is in some respects misleading.

What are we to make of such reconstructions, and in particular of their questioning of the reliability of Acts? Some arguments are easily dismissed, like Martin's wholly improbable view that 'Cephas' is not Peter. Admittedly Paul's switching from the Greek 'Peter' to the Aramaic 'Cephas' in Galatians 2 is a little puzzling. But perhaps Paul used Peter in 2:7,8 to remind his readers of the meaning and origin of the name in Jesus' saying of Matt 16:18 about the 'rock'. Still it is far more likely that the Cephas to whom Paul refers as a well-known

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<sup>2</sup> Lewiston: Mellen, 1993.

and prominent person in 1 Cor 9:5 and 15:5 (the first mentioned witness to the resurrection) is Peter, rather than some other unknown character.<sup>3</sup> But others of Lüdemann's and Martin's arguments are not so easily dismissed, being based on a careful reading of the New Testament texts and an expert knowledge of contemporary history and thought.

What, however, may be significant is that scholars like Lüdemann and Martin can come up with such different reconstructions, disagreeing with each other. This in itself may suggest that the evidence (from Paul especially) on which they are building their hypotheses is more ambiguous than might at first appear.

### A New Work

Such is precisely the contention of the newest book on the chronology of Paul, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus (The Early Period of the Apostle Paul)* by the German scholar, Rainer Riesner.<sup>4</sup> Riesner's 509 page work is easily the most important book to appear on this subject for many years. He begins by reviewing earlier work, including Lüdemann's (though not Martin's, which had not appeared). He notes how those scholars who have tried to work out Pauline chronology without the help of Acts have ended up with widely differing theses (as we observed with Lüdemann and Martin) and that, despite their attempts to do without Acts, in fact they all to a greater or lesser extent do bring in the evidence of Acts in some way or another. Riesner argues that Acts is indispensable and that methodologically it is perfectly proper to use Acts: it claims to be a 'primary' source (the 'we passages'), no less than the epistles.

Riesner does not on that basis proceed to use Acts in a naive way. On the contrary, he offers a rigorous and critical examination of the evidence of Acts, the epistles and early Christian traditions, relating it to what we know of the archaeology, history, and geography of the first century Mediterranean world. The book is a mine of interesting, up-to-date information, for example about the Roman emperors and their attitudes and actions, about travel (by land and sea) in the ancient world, etc. The result is not a simple endorsement of the Acts narrative, but it is an extraordinarily interesting and largely persuasive reconstruction of Paul's early ministry, which certainly lends massive weight to the view that Acts should be taken seriously as a first-hand historical source, but which supplements and illuminates the Acts narrative in all sorts of ways.

<sup>3</sup> Further on this point see D. C. Allison, 'Peter and Cephas: One and the Same' in *JBL* 111 (1992), 489-95.

<sup>4</sup> Tübingen: Mohr, 1994. 509+xiv pp. DM 168. ISBN 3-16-145828-1.

How does Riesner reconstruct the story? He begins by trying to identify certain fixed points in Paul's story, and then he suggests how the evidence of Paul's letters and of Acts may fit in. What emerges from Riesner's study? In what follows I can only draw out some salient points in his argument (supplementing them at one point with some additional observations).

### **Riesner: Before Antioch**

Hardly anyone doubts that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and Riesner begins his work by examining the evidence concerning the precise date of the crucifixion, concluding for AD 30. The persecution of Christians continued sporadically after the crucifixion during the remaining years of Pilate's period as governor. Paul was of course a major persecutor; Riesner dates Paul's conversion only a year and a half after the crucifixion, leaning (among other things) on early extra-biblical traditions about the resurrection appearances lasting for a year and a half. (Curiously Riesner does not mention the '40 days' of Acts 1:3. A simple reading of Acts would suggest that Paul's conversion was significantly separated in time from the original resurrection appearances to Jesus' first followers).

His conversion was at Damascus, a place quite possibly associated with messianic salvation for some Jews (e.g. for some Essenes) and with the salvation of the Gentiles (cf. Isa 8:23–9:1). After his conversion Paul went into 'Arabia', then returned to Damascus, where he had to escape over the wall in a basket from the 'ethnarch of king Aretas' (Acts 11:25; 2 Cor 11:32). Scholars have often suggested that 'Arabia' is Nabataea, that Paul did missionary work there, and that the king of Nabataea, Aretas, who was also ruler of Damascus for a time, was for that reason pursuing Paul. Riesner questions (a) whether Paul's Arabia was Nabataea, (b) whether he was involved in any mission there, (c) whether Aretas was ever ruler of Damascus. He suspects that it was the Jews in Damascus who were out to get Paul and that they lived in the Nabataean quarter of the city and that the Nabataean leader collaborated with the Jews in trying to get Paul.

Acts and Galatians agree that Paul went from Damascus to Jerusalem, and Riesner considers that it may have been this visit that marked the real beginning of the Pauline mission (see Rom 15:19 'from Jerusalem' and Acts 22:17–21 on Paul's vision in the temple in which he was instructed to go to the nations). Paul went from Jerusalem to Tarsus (9:30). Riesner suggests that Paul's vision for his mission derived more than anywhere else from Isaiah 66:19, which speaks of God sending people to the nations and 'proclaiming my

glory among the nations'. The verse lists the nations to whom the messengers will go, and the first is Tarshish. Riesner argues that this was understood by many to mean 'Tarsus', and that Paul sees himself as fulfilling that prophecy. After Tarshish the verse goes on to speak of other nations (in the Hebrew Pul, Lud, Meshech, Qesheth, Tubal, Javan, and the 'far islands'), and Riesner shows that these places could have been understood as referring respectively to Cilicia, Lydia, Mysia, Bithynia, Macedonia, and the far West. He suggests that this came to be Paul's missionary agenda, and that this explains why his missionary travels took him not to places like Egypt or Babylonia, but into Asia Minor, Greece, and then (as he hoped) to Rome and Spain. The thesis is a very interesting one, though whether Isa 66:19 was determinative for his mission in the way Riesner proposes, or whether things developed in a more ad hoc way (led by the Spirit) is difficult to say. Paul certainly saw his mission as the fulfilment of the prophetic promise for the gathering in of the nations (Rom 15:7-16) and may well have seen his collection for the saints in Jerusalem as representing the offerings of the Gentiles to Jerusalem such as are referred to in Isa 60:5, cf. 66:20.

Riesner, like Martin, thinks that, when he was working in Tarsus, Paul, who had had a strongly Jewish upbringing from childhood ('a Hebrew of the Hebrews'), deepened his knowledge of Greek language and thought. His mission may well have focussed on Jews at this stage and may have had relatively little success. But then came Antioch. It was a remarkable move in Riesner's view—for someone who had been working independently to join the leadership team at Antioch; it is possible that Paul's vision of 2 Cor 12:2 influenced him.

### **Antioch: Riesner, Nicholas Taylor, and Other Comments**

What happened in Antioch? Riesner says rather little about the significance of Antioch for Paul. He points out how important Antioch was: it was the third or fourth largest city of the Roman empire, with a large Jewish community. He also discusses the testimony of Acts about Antioch being the place where the 'disciples were first called Christians' (11:26). The implication is that the followers of Jesus were no longer seen simply as a Jewish group, and that there was a significant parting of the ways between Christians and Jews. Riesner, along with others, considers that 'Christians' may well have been the authorities' name for the newly emerging group. Vitellius, the governor of Syria who was based at Antioch and who had relieved Pontius Pilate of his post would have been well aware of the distinctive Christian movement and of its growing impact.

Riesner observes that there was considerable anti-Jewish feeling in

high Roman circles in AD 39 when the Roman emperor Caligula tried to have his statue erected in the Jerusalem temple, and then again in AD 41; so there could have been reasons for the Christians to distinguish themselves from the Jews. But the parting of the ways is in any case likely to have been provoked by the growth of an increasingly Gentile Christianity in Antioch that was tending to abandon traditional Judaism and that would have alienated the Jews.

But what was Paul's role in the Antioch church? Riesner says rather little about this, beyond noting that Paul was part of the leadership team of the church there before setting off on mission with Barnabas. Riesner's failure to explore Paul's ministry in Antioch more fully is probably prudent, given the complexity of some of the issues involved, but it is also arguably the greatest weakness of his book, given the importance of Paul's Antioch period—to judge both from Acts and Galatians and from modern scholarly debate.

Other scholars have explored Paul's Antioch ministry more fully. Thus, to take one notable and interesting example, Nicholas Taylor has much to say in his recent book, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*.<sup>5</sup> He argues, among other things, that Acts' description of Paul and Barnabas taking up famine relief from Antioch to the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30—Paul's second post-conversion visit to Jerusalem in Acts) is historically mistaken, Luke having misplaced Paul's collection which took place at the end of his ministry. This means that for Taylor Gal 2:1–11 (Paul's second post-conversion visit to Jerusalem in Galatians) is not that famine relief visit, as some scholars have argued. It is true that the Jerusalem apostles ask Paul 'that we should remember the poor, as I was (or had been) eager to do', but this is apparently nothing to do with a famine relief visit, but is a general request that the Antiochene Christians should continue to take account of the concerns and needs of the Jerusalem church.

Taylor, like many others, identifies Gal 2:1–11 with the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, but he argues that both Galatians and Acts give a misleading impression of what happened. Paul in Galatians portrays the Council as all to do with himself and his ministry, whereas it was a consultation between the largely Gentile Antioch church (of which Paul was one leader) and the Jewish Jerusalem church, which ended with the two churches recognizing their differing forms of Christianity. Acts is misleading in suggesting that this consultation, at which Paul was present, issued in a series of 'decrees' about the conditions of table fellowship (Acts 15:29). Taylor, like various other scholars, believes that these decrees issued from a later meeting at which Paul

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<sup>5</sup> Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.

was not present, and that the author of Acts has conflated two meetings.

After the original Antioch-Jerusalem consultation and agreement, things, according to Taylor, went badly wrong for Paul in Antioch: the Jerusalem church (under pressure from the Jews who were hostile to the Gentile mission) sent messengers to Antioch asking the Jewish Christians there to stop eating with Gentile Christians. The Antioch church, along with Peter and Barnabas, agreed to do so—for the sake of fellowship with Jerusalem—but Paul saw this as a betrayal, and broke away from Antioch (and Jerusalem) beginning his independent mission and ministry. At this point it became important to Paul to argue for his own apostolic authority (since he was no longer part of the Antioch team), and so he began to argue that he was commissioned directly by God at his conversion without reference to Jerusalem this being the argument of Galatians. Taylor is only one of many recent scholars who argue that Paul 'lost' the argument with Peter and Barnabas in Antioch.

How are we to assess this reconstruction of Paul in Antioch? Taylor is surely correct to note the importance of the Antioch period for Paul—something that Riesner insufficiently brings out. But, although Taylor's argument is in many ways plausible with good insights, it also has significant weaknesses. In the first place, he (and others with him) much too quickly dismisses the historicity of the famine relief visit of Acts 11:30; Riesner helps us significantly at this point, by showing how acute and widespread the problem of famine was at just this period. In the second place, Taylor too quickly dismisses the identification of the famine relief visit (the second post-conversion visit of Paul to Jerusalem in Acts) with that described in Gal 2:1–11 (the second post-conversion visit in Galatians); Riesner mentions this identification without committing himself to it. In favour of this identification is Paul's comment that the Jerusalem apostles asked us 'to remember the poor, which very thing I was keen to do', since this is (despite Taylor) very plausibly taken to hint at a context of acute material/financial need.

The effect of Taylor's identification of Galatians 2 and Acts 15 is, as we have seen, to cast doubt on Acts and Galatians, whereas identifying Galatians 2 and Acts 11 obviates the need to accuse either author of misleading us. It is true that Acts 11 describes a famine relief visit and Galatians 2 a visit when Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is discussed; but it is impossible to imagine the Acts 11 visit not including discussion of the Gentile mission, given the growth of the Gentile church in Antioch (as described in Acts). It does much greater justice to both our sources to assume that the famine relief visit of Acts 11 included private discussion of the Gentile mission



between Paul, Barnabas and the Jerusalem leaders, but that the matter (especially of table fellowship) was not resolved at that meeting. As a result, when the issue of table fellowship was raised by Jewish Christians demanding separate eating for Jews and Gentiles, the 'Antioch incident' took place, with Paul standing against Peter and Barnabas; the upshot of the incident was the Jerusalem Council (of Acts 15), where the matter was discussed and formally resolved. The incident may have encouraged Paul to go off on his own mission, but it did not mark a defeat (though a compromise) for Paul or a serious rupture with either Antioch or Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

This alternative reconstruction to that offered by Taylor does not diminish the importance of the Antioch period for Paul or for the development of his Gentile mission. But it was not the Antioch incident on its own that was the catalyst, but more broadly Paul's experience in and of the Antioch church.

Acts suggests that the Antioch church was the first place where Gentile Christianity took off in a big way, and where (as we have observed) the Christians were for the first time clearly distinguishable from the Jewish community. The growth of the church in Antioch must have been controversial in Antioch itself, particularly within the large Jewish community; one recent scholar has claimed that there is some evidence of violent clashes taking place.<sup>7</sup> This is not unlikely: the author of Acts attests such violence elsewhere, and, although he doesn't mention it in the context of Antioch (perhaps because it was a particularly unhappy issue, like the later rioting in Rome, which led to the expulsion of Jews from Rome—see Acts 18:2 and further discussion below), he does indicate that the situation in Antioch was controversial and sensitive, hence the Jerusalem church's action in sending Barnabas to see and supervise what was going on in the capital city of the region. If the suggestion that 'Christians' was a name attached to the followers of Jesus by the authorities, then this too could reflect on a situation of public disorder, which brought the Christians to the notice of the Roman authorities.

Into this church, according to Acts, Barnabas brought Paul as a colleague. It is arguable that this move was at the same time

<sup>6</sup> For an explanation of this view (and of other competing views) see my 'Acts and the Pauline Corpus II. The Evidence of Parallels' in B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke, *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 215–58. Winter's and Clarke's book is the first in a series of volumes *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, which complement Riesner's work in all sorts of ways.

<sup>7</sup> J. Taylor, 'Why were the Disciples first called "Christians" at Antioch? (Acts 11,26)', *RB* 101 (1994), 75–94.

brilliant—helping to launch Paul into what was to be his distinctive mission for the rest of his life—and risky. Paul was not someone in good odour with the Jews, having converted from Pharisaism and ‘changed sides’; bringing him into the leadership of what was already a controversial situation probably did no good for already strained Christian/Jewish relations. It is entirely likely that reports of his involvement will have got back to Jerusalem, and that the knock-on effect will have been to damage Jewish-Christian relationships in Jerusalem. It is quite likely also that the Christian leaders in Jerusalem may have been concerned about Paul’s involvement: whereas Barnabas was an authorized and trusted delegate of the Jerusalem church, Paul was much more of a free-lancer, who was not well known to people in Jerusalem and who now, by his vigorous leadership of Gentile Christianity, was making life difficult for Christians in Jerusalem.

In this context it is interesting to observe that in Acts 11 and 12 we find (a) the spectacular growth of the Antioch church, (b) the recruitment of Paul by Barnabas, (c) the mention of the disciples becoming known as ‘Christians’, (d) the sending of famine relief from Antioch to Jerusalem at the hands of Paul and Barnabas, (e) the description of Herod attacking the church in Jerusalem in the persons of James and Peter. Putting the different things together, it seems quite possible that it was the development of the Christian mission away from traditional Judaism and towards the Gentiles particularly in Antioch that enraged the Jews in Jerusalem at this time, all the more so given the involvement of the renegade Paul, and that it was this that encouraged attacks on the church by Herod on behalf of the Jews—Herod had already proved himself a vigorous defender of Judaism when Caligula tried to erect his statue. It may be no accident that, when Herod tried to kill Peter and Peter left Jerusalem, it was the more conservatively Jewish-Christian James who assumed the leadership of the Jerusalem church.

It also seems possible that the sending of famine relief by the Antiochene Christians was in part a conciliatory gesture by the Antiochenes towards the Jerusalem Christians at a time when things were particularly difficult for them—not just because of famine, but also because of the persecution that they faced (which could have exacerbated their food shortages). It may be no accident that the Antiochenes sent Barnabas and Paul with their gift, because they (and especially Paul) were the ‘ringleaders’ of the developments in Antioch that were causing problems for the Jerusalem Christians. Part of the purpose of the visit may have been specifically to talk the situation out.

This, of course, brings us back to Galatians 2, since it suggests that

Paul's second post-conversion visit was precisely of this sort. It was not a formal, public council: that might well have been impossible at this tense time. It was a private meeting with Peter, James (the Lord's brother) and John, a meeting in which Paul's position in particular was discussed—Galatians suggests that this was a key issue, which is entirely plausible, despite Taylor—and it resulted in the Jerusalem leaders giving the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, 'that we should go to the Gentiles'.

In the context of this agreement, it makes excellent sense that on their return to Antioch Paul and Barnabas were sent off by the Spirit-inspired leaders of the Antioch church to other places (Acts 13:1,2). Jerusalem had given the green light to what had got under way in Antioch, controversial though it was, and it was now time to move out.

### **Riesner: After Antioch**

Riesner takes the story on, arguing interestingly that the proconsul Sergius Paulus, whom Paul and Barnabas meet in Cyprus, is a man known to us from Roman sources as having connections in the Roman province of Galatia, which may explain why the two missionaries make that their next port of call. Riesner argues strongly that Galatians was written to this area (supporting the South Galatian theory), and that it was written at a rather early date, either from Antioch before the Council of Jerusalem or a little later from Corinth. The Antioch option is preferable in my view: it was probably the Antioch incident of Gal 2:11–13 and the controversy on that occasion over table-fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians that gave rise to the formal discussions and decisions of Acts 15. Galatians was written after the incident had blown up, but before the Council.

Paul resumed his mission, covering more of the ground set out for him in Isa 66:19, working through Asia Minor and then crossing into Macedonia. Here he would have liked to proceed directly to Rome and the West (cf. Rom 1:13), but he was prevented from doing so by the news that the emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. So instead he proceeded South to Corinth. Riesner argues unequivocally for the view that, when the Roman historian Suetonius refers to Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome because they were 'rioting at the instigation of Chrestus', this is a reference to troubles within the Roman Jewish community caused by the arrival of Christian missionaries. This expulsion took place, Riesner concludes, in AD 49, not in AD 41 as Lüdemann argues; Lüdemann's dating is important to his whole idea of an early Pauline mission to

Greece, and Riesner's conclusion favours the chronology of Acts rather than that of Lüdemann. Acts refers to the expulsion in connection with Paul's visit to Corinth (18:2); there is no mention of Christians being implicated in the expulsion, though the fact that Aquila and Priscilla were expelled would suggest that Jewish Christians were at least affected. It may be that Acts does not mention Christian involvement on this occasion for diplomatic reasons; he may similarly have preferred not to mention the troubles in Antioch directly, because he is sensitive to the charge that Christians have been troublemakers in the empire. After referring to the expulsion Acts goes on to refer to Paul's appearance before the Roman governor Gallio (18:12): this fits chronologically, since the appearance before Gallio can be dated to AD 51.

After staying in Corinth with victims of the expulsion and fellow-tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla—Paul may have taken up his tentmaking after his conversion, after renouncing previous wealth—Paul moved East again to mission in Ephesus (going via Jerusalem, where he was inspired to make his collection for the saints, and Antioch). He worked there for some time, and may well have experienced an imprisonment there, which Acts does not mention, again perhaps because it was a sensitive matter. On the other hand, Riesner is not impressed by the arguments for lost Pauline letters and visits from Ephesus to Corinth: he regards 1 Corinthians as the 'painful letter' (2 Cor 2:3); the 'painful visit' was planned, but never came off, and when Paul speaks of coming to them for the 'third' time (2 Cor 13:1), he means that this is his third intended visit, not that he had already visited them twice.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Enough has been said to suggest the flavour of Riesner's chronological reconstruction. Some of his argument is very detailed and impressive (e.g. his discussion of the Nabataeans and Damascus, and of the Claudian expulsion from Rome); some is much more cursory with reference being made to others (e.g. his discussion of the Corinthian correspondence). One matter he deals with particularly thoroughly at the end of his book is the relevance of 1 Thessalonians to the argument. Not only are there certain tensions between 1 Thessalonians and Acts (e.g. apparently on the length of Paul's stay in Thessalonica), but the evidence of 1 Thessalonians is an important support for Lüdemann's case: he argues that 1 Thessalonians can be seen to be different and much earlier than other Pauline letters (like 1 Corinthians, Romans and Galatians). Riesner argues forcefully and in detail against this view.

Where does Riesner's work leave us? With traditional chronology and our maps of his missionary journeys intact? Possibly. But with something much more exciting than that: with an immensely interesting, knowledgeable and suggestive exploration of Paul's ministry seen in its context. And far from being a book that the Pauline scholar can relegate to a position of relative unimportance, Acts is shown to be a thoroughly plausible and valuable historical source, though not the whole story by any means. Studies of the chronology of Paul will need in future to start with Riesner; it is to be hoped that his book will in due course be made available in English.

### **Abstract**

The article summarises the argument of R. Riesner's new book on the chronology of the early life of Paul and relates it to other work in the same area by G. Lüdemann, R. A. Martin and N. Taylor. Riesner in effect defends a traditional chronology but with new arguments and powerfully attacks the reconstruction offered by Lüdemann. He does not discuss the significance of Antioch in detail, and the article explores this point briefly. Riesner's rehabilitation of the Book of Acts as a historical source deserves serious consideration.