

NOTES

THE STYLE OF ST. PAUL: APROPOS OF BRUNOT'S *LE GENIE LITTERAIRE DE SAINT PAUL*

In his *Antike Kunstprosa*, the great Hellenist Eduard Norden admitted that "Paul is a writer whom I, for one, have great difficulty in understanding."¹ This difficulty he attributed to two causes: first, Norden found Paul's logic extremely "foreign"; and, secondly, Paul's entire style, he felt, was quite "unhellenic." Later studies have done much to explore both of these aspects. That Paul's style is not as un-Greek as might be supposed has become clear from the vast amount of work done on the language of the papyri from the time of Deissmann's *Licht von Osten*. Moreover, many scholars are convinced that the apparent lack of logic in some of the Epistles is due not so much to Paul's style as to the editorial work of a later redactor of the Pauline corpus. Finally, much work has been done in the field of Pauline imagery and *idées-matresses*, as well as in Paul's use of rabbinical techniques. And although we must perhaps still say, with one of Paul's early colleagues, that there are in the Epistles "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest . . . to their own destruction,"² our comprehension is becoming ever deeper.

Very timely then is the little monograph of Père Amédée Brunot, *Le génie littéraire de saint Paul*,³ which is an excellent summary of most of the work of the last three centuries on Pauline style. It is not, however, a mere survey. Brunot arranges his discussion of Paul's style under four general heads: "intelligence" (structure as well as theological depth), "volonté" (his passion, his mysticism), "sensibilité" (poetic and rhetorical techniques), and "imagination" (Paul's sense of the dramatic; his richness and variety). The very richness and complexity of Paul's thought and style make it difficult to come to any satisfactory definition, but Brunot sums it up as "une logique passionnée"—a union of apparent contradictories, but ultimately an ideal combination of what Pascal called the "esprit de géométrie" and the "esprit de finesse."⁴ This gift of synthesis makes Brunot's book a most valuable one; for his discussion is always in contact with the real, the organic, so far as this is possible today.

Under the heading of "intelligence," Brunot (pp. 41-49) gives us a fine

¹ *Die antike Kunstprosa* (3rd ed.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1918) 2, 499.

² 2 Pt 3:16, a verse which presupposes, it would seem, that the Epistles had already enjoyed considerable circulation.

³ Paris: du Cerf, 1955. Pp. 252. This volume is number fifteen in the collection *Témoins de Dieu*, which includes work by Allo, Cerfaux, Auvray, and others.

⁴ Cf. Pascal, *Pensées*, art. 1; Brunot, p. 227.

treatment of Johannes Weiss's cyclic theory of Paul's style, that is, the reprise of a previous theme after a digression (designated *aba'*). Brunot extends the application of the theory, and finds the *aba'* scheme in 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians, but not in the Pastorals. But I am not prepared to follow his conclusion: "Is not the discovery of the *aba'* scheme a supplementary proof of their authenticity? On the other hand, from their absence in the Pastorals, one should not rush to the conclusion that they are not authentic."⁵ For although the presence of the *aba'* scheme (sometimes rather liberally interpreted) is interesting, I should hesitate to use either its presence or its absence as a criterion of authenticity. It is a common and natural device, found often enough in the rhetorical sections of minor literary works of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

It is good to see that Brunot has not taken seriously the theory of Roller (1933) on the length of time it would take for the Pauline epistles to be transcribed. The theory was based on a misunderstanding of several pagan references as well as on a complete ignorance of ancient methods of writing. It is unfortunate that certain modern scholars have used Roller (e.g., Penna, Ricciotti) and that Brunot should even take the trouble to refute him. For in the matter of ancient writing material, the position has not substantially changed since Wilhelm Schubart wrote in 1921: "Individual communities perhaps copied out letters received from Paul on parchment leaves, but we can hardly be sure of what sort of material Paul himself used; it might have been an unpretentious notebook of waxed boards or of parchment, a papyrus roll or even a number of individual leaves."⁶ Hence the problem of the time of composition of Paul's letters, based on the material he may have used (even if originally it had any point), is now a dead question.

One of Brunot's finest chapters deals with Paul's imagination (pp. 203-22). In his summary of much that has been written on this subject, Brunot rightly lays emphasis on Paul's love of the dramatic and his penchant for the vivid confrontation of characters or symbols. On the stage, as it were, of Paul's imagination there appear the Law, Christ, the Spirit, the Father; there is the dramatization of the Last Supper, Christ's resurrection, the parousia; and, all throughout, the struggle of man against the powers of evil, the dying to sin, the being baptized and buried in Christ. This section, "le sens du drame" (pp. 215-21), is for Pauline studies perhaps one of the most important in the book. It is along these lines that much good work remains to be done, with perhaps an image-analysis with reference to the sub-

⁵ Brunot, p. 50 f.

⁶ *Das Buch bei den Griechen und Römern* (2nd ed.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1921) p. 120 f. For the latest and most complete discussion of the question of the type of writing material used by the Evangelists and the early Christians, one should now consult C. H. Roberts, "The Codex," in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 40 (London, 1955).

conscious. It seems clear that in Paul's use of the "sunken image" and the "expansive image" (where the interpenetration between the imaginative and the doctrinal elements produces a further dimension of thought), there is a preference for the violent conflict (the clash and conquest, the contest, death, resurrection); and this would surely seem to reflect the Apostle's own vigorous, combative temperament, a trait he manifested not only as a Jew in a Gentile world but also as a missionary, an athlete, for Christ. Perhaps no other sacred writer so clearly reveals himself in his written words.

But in the discussion of the more external traits of Pauline style, Brunot is not so satisfactory. More emphasis, for example, could have been laid on the contributions from the sciences of papyrology and textual criticism, particularly from the work of English and American scholars.⁷ Another source I should like to have seen exploited is the recent work on Greek prose rhythm and *clausulae* by (for example) de Groot, Novotny, and Skimina. There are six predominant types of accentual *clausulae* (depending on the number of syllables between the last two accents of a clause or sentence),⁸ and the most frequent in Paul seem to be types one ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$) and two ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$).⁹ Though it is still not clear whether a scientific

⁷ Despite occasional quotations from German and English works, this is perhaps the weakest part of Brunot's otherwise excellent book.

⁸ The types are listed as follows: 0 (with no syllables between accents: $\text{—} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{—}$), 1 ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$ as in *Christo Iesu*), 2 ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$ as in *Dominum nostrum*), 3 ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$), 4 ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$), and 5 ($\acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$). Types 1 and 2 are, in Greek, the ones most frequently used in doxological endings, and this may be the reason for their frequency in Paul.

⁹ It is obviously difficult to agree on what is to be counted as a *clausula*. My own count, which omits endings which quote the Old Testament, is merely provisory. Paul's preference in Romans is for 2 1 3 4, in that order; in 1 Corinthians it is 1 2 3 0 4; in 2 Corinthians it is 2 1 3 0 4, but in each of these three Epistles 1 and 2 together constitute over 50% of the total number. In Philippians, 1 is almost 50% of the total, with 2 next; in 1 Thessalonians, 2 is almost 75% of the total; in 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 are about equal and make up almost 90%; in Galatians, 1 is almost 39% and 2 almost 27%; in Colossians, we find 2 almost 28% and 1 almost 24% as the most frequent endings. It may be significant that in Hebrews there is a preference for endings 3 and 2, with 3 almost 27% of the total. In Ephesians (where, however, the results might be better if we attempted to remove the "quotations" from Colossians), ending 2 is about 38% and 3 about 26%. As for the Pastorals, in 1 Timothy the preference is apparently for 2 and 3 (about 32% each); but in 2 Timothy (where endings 1 and 2 are each about 32%) and Titus (where 2 is about 48% and 1 about 21%) we return to the preference for 1 and 2. Hence it may be that, with the exception of Hebrews, this method will not yield definitive results. As a comparison, we might note that in 1 Peter the preference is in the order 1 2 3 (35%, 20%, and 14%), and in 2 Peter it is 1 3 2 (35%, 29%, and 22%); and from this restricted point of view, it would seem that the author of both epistles was the same. It might be added that in Clement of Rome's epistle, the most frequent ending is 2 (about 36%), with 1 and 3 not far behind (each being about 21%); in the so-called *Epistle to Diognetus*, endings 1, 2, and

study of accentual *clausulae* in the New Testament and early Christian literature would produce significant results, it is a source which might still repay investigation.

It is not intended as a criticism of Brunot's excellent study to remark that he seems everywhere to be skirting a problem that becomes more acute the more deeply we study the various aspects of Pauline style. That is the problem of the redactor of the *corpus Paulinum* and the extent of his editorial work. For if some definite stand is not taken on this question, the entire discussion of the Apostle's style will rest on an extremely insecure basis. In the first place, the difficulty in understanding Paul's apparent "gaps in thought" becomes far less acute if we recognize the possibility of editorial dislocation—a very likely procedure in view of the nature of the Epistles and the difficulty of "publishing" in the early days of the Church. Now much of this work had been done even before the advent of Form-Criticism and it may be well to summarize the results here.¹⁰

The present position of chapter 16 of Romans has long given difficulty: 16:25–27 should perhaps be taken (with the Chester Beatty papyrus) immediately after 15:33 (with 16:24 completely omitted) as the formal end of the epistle.¹¹ Then 16:1–23 represents a fragment of an "introductory letter" (*litterae commendaticiae*) written on behalf of a certain Phoebe, a woman associated with the church at Cencreae (near Corinth); and there is no assurance that this letter was intended for Rome at all. A similar problem arises in Philippians. It is curious that Paul's expression of gratitude is postponed to 4:10 ff.; and it is not impossible that 4:10–20 represents a fragment of a shorter letter of thanks addressed to the community at Philippi and later joined to the longer one for editorial convenience. The two letters to the Corinthians pose a more complex problem; for the two apparently lost letters which Paul refers to in 1 Cor 5:9 and in 2 Cor 2:4 may possibly, as some scholars hold, have been editorially joined to what we now know as 2 Corinthians. Thus there would be four letters originally written

3 are almost equal (each about 28%), giving a peculiarly mannered effect. In the *Epistle to the Ephesians* of Ignatius of Antioch, 1 (about 33%) and 3 (about 30%) are preferred. Apart from variations which may occur due to different methods of counting, the one drawback, at least in the early Christian literature, is that such effects were perhaps not consciously striven for and hence our figures may be, in some cases, the results of random distribution.

¹⁰ For a convenient summary (not mentioned by Brunot), see Arthur D. Nock, *St. Paul* (London: Butterworth, 1938), and also T. Henshaw, *New Testament Literature in the Light of Modern Scholarship* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), with the bibliographies cited.

¹¹ There seem to have been three forms of Romans: (1) ending at 15:33 with the close, 16:25–27; (2) with cc. 15–16 omitted, a form apparently known to Marcion (cf. the apparatus of Merk-Lyonnet and Nestle, 21st ed., *ad loc.*); and finally (3) as we have it in our manuscript tradition, complete (but omitting 16:24 with the best traditions).

to Corinth: (1) the letter on morality referred to in 1 Cor 5:9 (perhaps reflected, as some would hold, in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1) and further explained by 1 Cor 5:9-13; (2) 1 Corinthians, as we have it today; (3) a letter of reproof (written "with many tears": 2 Cor 2:4), perhaps reflected in 2 Cor 10-13; and (4) the final letter of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians, at least cc. 1-9 (ending with the doxology of 9:15). Now I am far from saying that the hypothesis of editorial dislocation can be completely demonstrated;¹² but it should perhaps be given consideration in any serious treatment of Paul's style. On this view, the abrupt transitions (which were recognized as a Pauline trait as early as the third century¹³) and the lacunae in thought, which may perhaps be the result of editorial decisions, would not be lightly attributed to the Apostle himself.

The Chester Beatty papyri, recently studied in great detail by Gunther Zuntz,¹⁴ give us a good indication of the state of the Pauline corpus in the third century of our era. The manner, however, of its formation and the community which first made the edition of the entire corpus, including Hebrews and the Pastorals, are still questions to which we have not yet been able to give convincing answers. The theory of Goodspeed, which would make Ephesus the center of dissemination (chiefly to explain the difficulties connected with the epistle to the Ephesians), has not yet found complete acceptance.

In conclusion, therefore, it should be repeated that Brunot's new book is an extremely well written contribution to Pauline scholarship. That he has not thought fit to discuss the problems of Pauline style in terms of textual and editorial considerations should not perhaps diminish the solid worth of all that he has to offer.

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¹² For a more conservative view (and the earlier literature), see F. Prat, *The Theology of Saint Paul* (2 vols.; Westminster: Newman) 1, 153 ff.

¹³ See, for example, the long discussion by St. Methodius of Olympus in his *Symposium* (c. 260-90 A.D.), Discourse 3.2 (an author overlooked by Brunot): "You should not be disturbed by the sudden shifts in Paul's discussions, which give one the impression that he is confusing the issue or bringing in irrelevant material or wandering from the point at issue. . . . Paul's style in general is a most varied one and follows the climactic method of development; it begins quietly, and then proceeds to a more lofty and magnificent level. Or, again, starting off by being extremely profound, he sometimes arrives at what is simpler and easier to grasp, and sometimes at a point that is rather subtle and delicate. And yet in all these transitions he never introduces anything that would be irrelevant to his doctrine; but gathering up all his ideas into a wonderfully harmonious pattern, he makes them all tell on the single point at issue which he has proposed" (ed. Bonwetsch, pp. 28.13-29.1).

¹⁴ In his Schweich Lectures for 1946, published as *The Text of the Epistles. A Disquisition on the Corpus Paulinum* (London and Oxford, 1953), the most important textual study of St. Paul up to the present day.