son who prepares himself (in a mystical sense?) for conformity with Christ (Phil 1-3). Why does Paul shift between different traditions and merge them? Is he willing to hand down and possibly evaluate the rich and manifold heritage of Jewish thinking and writing? To what extent does he actually intend to transform apocalyptic motifs into anthropological or existential thinking (R. Bultmann)?

It seems to me that Paul once more aligns his approach to traditional sources with his strategy of literary communication: in his epistolary teaching, exhortation, consolation, proclamation and various hermeneutical tasks he has to be inventive, flexible, critical, surprising. As a result of this mixture of motifs, traditions and argumentative claims the Pauline letters appear “weighty and strong” in the ears of his audience(s) (2 Cor 10:10).

3. Paul’s literary strategy of selectively merging certain types of traditions can already be found in 1 Thessalonians. Already here, Paul begins “using rhetorical and philosophical traditions, in the process modifying them to suit his immediate purpose” (cf. 1 Thess 1:5). As soon as he leaves the Syro-Palestinian area and moves to Asia Minor, Macedonia and further west, he is increasingly confronted with Hellenistic-Roman moral discourse. In light of the popular ethical debates, Paul could only communicate his message properly if he could demonstrate his ability to master relevant rhetorical and philosophical traditions. In this light, Acts 17:16ff. constitutes a proper, although much later, Lukan attempt to connect the Pauline heritage of arguing to the more general philosophical discourses of his time.

5. Brief conclusion

The investigation of how and why Paul uses various types of traditions has revealed how selective and connective the apostle is as a letter writer. Whenever needed, he refers to post-Easter formulas as much as the Jesus traditions within the context of his letter-writing and authorial perspective. He quotes the Scripture viz. Septuagint in order to shape argumentative evidence of the truth of the gospel message and to express fundamental critique of (Christian) faith and life; he shows his familiarity with prophetic as well as sapiential and apocalyptic traditions in order to demonstrate the plurality of (religious) motifs by which intellectual discourse can develop beyond the simple game of raising and answering controversial questions (cf. περὶ δὲ structure in 1 Corinthians). Furthermore,