he uses general Hellenistic rhetorical and philosophical traditions in order to address those readers who are at this stage of affiliation to the ἐκκλησίαι only tentatively sympathizing with observing early Christian missionary activities and the communitarian life.

Paul’s selective and connective way of dealing with traditions can only partly be explained by the circumstances under which his letters were written. In many ways, Paul develops a literary strategy: the apostle does not commit himself to one particular stream of tradition but, rather, frees up space for innovatively shaping the individual profile of his, the Pauline, ministry. It is only at first sight then, that not to be part of the inner circle of the Jerusalem community (στῦλοι) causes authoritative problems. In Paul’s view, his status as a late- or newcomer allows for self-styled apostolic activities that he, nevertheless, has to trace back to his commissioning by God and the previous agreements on missionary politics reached with the “pillars” in Jerusalem (Gal 1-2).

Paul’s argumentative technique is no less than the literary part of his missionary strategy: “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel” (1 Cor 9:22f.). As Paul does not “run aimlessly,” nor “box as though beating the air” (1 Cor 9:26), his approach to and use of traditions is always intentional. Paul’s selective and connective use of different sets of traditions might result from his apostolic ambition as much as his hermeneutical pragmatism.

We might today criticize Paul for not being more comprehensive, explicit, precise and distinctive when using and transforming traditional materials. As a result, Paul’s place in intellectual life in the first century CE is hard to define. However, Paul tried hard to transform the stigma of being the “least” into the attribute of being unique and running first (1 Cor 9:24). In order to do so he accessed and arranged traditions in a highly selective and specifically connective manner.

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