
Av Wiard Popkes

Tor Vegge: Die Schule des Paulus. Eine Untersuchung zur Art und zum Stellenwert schulischer Bildung im Leben des Paulus. Forsvar for dr. theol.-graden under Det teologiske fakultet ved Universitetet i Oslo 08.05.04. Forste opponent: Prof. Dr. Wiard Popkes, Hamburg. Annen opponent: Prof. Dr.theol Karl Olav Sandnes, Det teologiske menighetsfakultet. Tredje medlem av bedømmelseskomitéen: Prof. Dr.theol Halvor Moxnes, Det teologiske fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo. Prøveforelesninger holdt 07.05.04. «Jesus – en snekkersonn med litterær dannelse? Om den litterære stillen i Jesu ord» (selvvalgt emne) og «Paul's self-presentation og community formation in 1 Cor 2:1-5.» (oppgitt emne).

Abstract
The point of departure of the investigation is Paul's literacy. This means according to Vegge: the work and life of the apostle is characterized by «school», including both education and character formation. It accounts for Paul's literary production and for the group-work around him, continuing after his death. What «school» meant in antiquity, i.e. Paul's educational background, is analysed at length.

How was Paul able to compose such rather extensive pieces of communication with so much professional skill? The question leads to his educational background, the «school» Paul passed through. Vegge later extends the scope of «school» to Paul's educational work with his co-workers and, even beyond Paul's life-time, to the group which preserved and developed his thoughts. The dissertation thus has three parts, the first and largest one being on Paul's educational background; the second part applies the insights to Paul's actual work, including biographical issues. The third part is, for the time being, just a prospect on the founding and continuation of a school around the apostle.

Part I starts with an investigation of «teachers and students», followed by «the sociological identity and function of schools» and «literary formation (Bildung) in schools», the longest chapter. Schools had several functions: training in skills (techne), liberal education (paideia), intellectual inquiry, and morality (lifestyle). Vegge distinguishes between Bildung and Ausbildung, best rendered by education and character formation. Here «literary formation» refers to learning literary competence, with special emphasis on the progymnasmata, exercises on e.g. proverbs (gnome), general insights (topos) or personification (prosopopoeia). The ensuing chapter dealing with «education versus character formation» picks up the two crucial terms; both can render paideia. The enkyklios paideia means competence in the canonized parts of a curriculum as well as perfection of character formation. Their relation was widely discussed in antiquity. Can a good character be taught? It is expressed in virtues such as wisdom (sophia) and considerateness (sophrosyne, temperantia).

Part II (Paul's Ausbildung und Bildung) proceeds by connecting direct references with indirect evidence from form and content in Paul's letters. Vegge's result on Paul's pre-Christian time is: Paul, the son of a Roman citizen, acquired a general Greek-Hellenistic literary education in his hometown Tarsos, and made himself familiar with the learning and ethos of philosophers. Possibly only then he joined the Pharisaic movement and made progress on this Jewish road to perfection. The probably most crucial section of the entire investigation, being the test case for relat-
ing the general background and the evidence of the Pauline texts, is «Remarks on Paul's literary and rhetorical formation in the light of his way of argumentation», using 1 Cor 7 and 2 Cor 10-13 as texts of demonstration. Chapters on Paul's biographical background, especially on Tarsos and Pharisaism, and «the cultural identity of Paul» conclude Part II.

Part III, as it now stands, is just an outline of work still to follow. The epistle to the Romans might reflect Paul's style of teaching (by diatribe) and possibly was used as a textbook in the Pauline school which Vegge tends to locate in Ephesos. From 1 Cor he depicts the relation between Paul and his disciples, from 1-2 Cor the structure of the school, and from several texts the teaching contents. The Deutero-Pauline epistles stem from a school initiated by the apostle himself who took decisive impulses for founding and structuring such a school from his own course of education.

Questions raised by the opponents
A variety of aspects was taken up. They can be summarized as follows:

- What is the connecting link between the major parts of the study, i.e. Hellenistic education, Paul's work in the churches and the continuation by his successors? In particular, is the term «school» apt to define or describe such different phenomena as a cultural system of transmitting skills and virtues, and a social entity of like-minded people?
- What is the relation and distinction between Bildung and Ausbildung? For instance, the analysis of 1 Cor 7 is done under the heading «Die literarische Bildung des Paulus». But in fact Vegge argues on the basis of the progymnasmata which belong to Ausbildung. Should the argumentation not be different if really aspects of Bildung (character formation) were treated?
- If Vegge is right, Greek education should shine through more visibly in Paul's letters. Should we not expect references to classical writers (the cultural canon) as signs of an educated man? But Paul quotes the Old Testament only.
- These OT quotations occur in some letters more than in others. Would this indicate different literary situations in local Pauline schools?
- Likewise, Paul's semantic universe is, at least often, more Hebrew than Greek, as e.g. in the case of «righteousness». How does this agree with a primarily Greek education?
- What did Paul learn from the Pharisees? Was it more Bildung or also Ausbildung?
- Why does Philo of Alexandria not receive more attention as an analogous case of a Jew versed in Greek education?
- Why is so much emphasis laid on Tarsos as Paul's educational home? Was Jerusalem no real alternative? Is the textual basis in Acts 22:3 treated adequately?
- Was it possible to be familiar with school-tradition without necessarily being a student? Can we rule out that Paul was a gifted autodidact picking up school-traditions on the margin of schools?
- If Paul used his own educational experience for his own schools, is it probable that he exercised progymnasmata with his co-workers? Are there any indications supporting such an assumption?
- Why would Paul not make use of some aspects of the progymnasmata? For instance, prosopoia was regarded as a most helpful epistolary device for counselling. Are Paul's epistles not often counselling?
- Paul's letters have an occasional character challenged by certain situations. How does this relate to the teaching-aspect? Again, 1 Cor 7 is an appropriate case of demonstration. The phrase peri de points to urgent local questions, rather than to a thesis. And the question of marriage was caused by Paul's own position, radicalized by some church members; this is different from dealing with a traditional topos.
- Why are the primary texts of demonstration limited to 1-2 Cor? What are the criteria for selecting these texts?
- The argumentation on 2 Cor 10-13 is only loosely connected to the discussion of what was brought to face in Part I.
In Vegge’s perspective, the co-workers become more important than the converts. Does this reflect the contents of Paul’s letters? Different from e.g. Epicurus who wrote letters to his students, Paul addressed his converts. Moreover, how would congregations be included in a school?

School terminology might be used as a metaphor, without necessarily referring to an actual established school; this could account e.g. for a father-learner-relationship.

What does really favour Ephesos as a location for a or even the Pauline school? Should we think of one school or more?

As the discussion with Thomas Schmeller indicates, Vegge favours the philosophical school as the major ecclesiological cradle and pattern of the churches founded by Paul. How does this view relate to other current suggestions, in particular house churches, voluntary associations, and Jewish synagogues?

Wiard Popkes
B. 1936. Dr. Professor of New Testament (emeritus), Hamburg University. Adr: Klosterkamp 83, D-21337 Lüneburg, 04131-268758. E-post: W.popkes@t-online.de