INTRODUCTION

THE LAYOUT OF THIS STUDY AND THE APPROACH BEHIND IT

For Paul the truth of the gospel of Christ was not to be understood by dodging the logical riddles with which it confronts us. He does not speak as if the illumination guaranteed by the Holy Spirit dispenses with the need for reflection. Rather he speaks as if, sharpened and directed by the Holy Spirit, the human capacity for exercising critical judgement plays a formative role in our grasp of the gospel. In addressing those who, in different ways according to their differing backgrounds, had to face the difficulties such a perspective entails, Paul, impelled by the urgency of his message, was unaccommodating.

'The attempt to understand the logic and argumentation of Paul must give a Greek a headache,' V. Grönbech once observed (in *Paulus Jesu Christi Apostel*). And certainly to the mind shaped by the Socratic tradition, his manner of reasoning could scarcely fail to occasion perplexity of reader response. It was not his aim to stimulate detached intellectual enquiry in anything like the Socratic spirit. He assumes in his readers a core of conviction in which an answer to every question lies latent. And yet, if his approach is thus out of line with the Greek tradition, it is no less out of line with the OT tradition. In his concern with explanation, verification, substantiation, though it may be questionable how much there is of the Greek philosopher, there is certainly much of the Greek rhetorician with his philosophical background. Paul's propensity for applying to the data of divine revelation a technique of syllogistic appraisal is clearly part of his Greek inheritance, and if his use of it is such as to give a Greek a headache, his Jewishness can hardly have failed to ensure it meant headaches for him too. But if it did he seems to have thrived on them.

This study focusses on Romans 1–8, an area pervaded by argument which is nothing if not intricate and tangled. Commentators have given much attention to cultural influences and situational

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motivation in the attempt to account for its awkwardnesses. Neces-
sary and valuable as such researches eminently are, I believe that
they involve a risk of falsifying the tune Paul is playing; for he
introduces his arguments as representing a source of blessed encour-
agement. At any rate, that is how I would propose we should
construe Paul's attitude. It is a construal which colours all my
considerations, and is the goal towards which they all tend – as its
role in drawing my discussion to a conclusion in Chapter 5, sections
4–5, displays. Towards this proposal, which gives my study its
direction, the build-up is essentially a vindication of the intellectual
substance of Paul's argumentation. It is a vindication founded on a
somewhat innovatory approach to Pauline rationality.

I have been led to it by viewing Paul against the background of
semiology, the science of signs – perhaps, better, of *signification* or
sign-production. Though I see this as giving to my study a new and
distinctive slant, let me say at once that the final outcome I have to
report is more a matter of envisaging a promising line of investi-
gation than of being able to offer results. The promise is that
afforded, as I believe, by the new analytical tools of 'fuzzy logic':
promise of a more conceptually penetrating dissection than has
hitherto been feasible of some of the issues that figure most promi-
nently in Paul's argumentation, in particular those surrounding his
use of the terms δίκαιος, νόμος and θάνατος. As to what this might
involve, I give as much elucidation as my level of competence
permits in Chapter 5, section 3. That section thus provides the
immediate foundation on which I base my proposal regarding the
'encouraging' tenor of Paul's 'tune'.

I do not settle upon 'fuzzy logic' as the best source of promise
without having first reviewed other approaches to Pauline argu-
mentation that developments in the science and philosophy of
language in the twentieth century might seem to commend. And
Chapter 5, section 2, reflects my concern to take account of the
scope such approaches may offer, notably those emanating from the
ambit of aesthetics, existentialism and deconstructionism. Into a
related category Chapter 1, sections 2–4, may also be seen to fall,
where I deal with the 'rhetorical' and 'sacred' dimensions as they
impinge on Pauline discourse.

It is, however, the way that general semiotics has led me to where
I stand that I am principally concerned to expound as fully as
possible in this study. And it is to this exercise that I apply myself
right at the very beginning of Chapter 1, section 1. Attention there

centres at once on a nucleus of semiological theory which is to dominate all my references to the subject: that constituted by the typology of semiosis elaborated by Umberto Eco. I see in his findings a striking relevance to the Pauline propensity for logical argumentation. The method by which I move towards vindicating the latter springs from this relevance, for in the principle of signifi-cation which – among the various modes into which he classifies sign-productivity – Eco identifies by the term 'Recognition' we can, I believe, see both the reason why argumentation is indispensable to Paul and why it gets him into difficulties. Section 1.1 illustrates the applicability of Eco's semiological typology to Paul's apprehension of the significance of the Crucifixion. The persistence with which intractable logical issues are pursued by him can then be linked to specific tendencies inherent in the particular semiological mechanism (Recognition) which is involved. Later in the chapter (1.5) I show how these tendencies and the impasse to which they bring the deductive process (on which Recognition nevertheless depends) are manifested in Paul's argumentative persistence.

The central body of my study then deals with the technical phenomenon which is the most conspicuous outcome of this persist-ence, syllogistic reasoning formulated enthymematically – that is to say, elliptically, without a full display of the syllogistic components. That Paul's argumentation may often not be clear, that it may involve insidious shifts of meaning, that its motivation may be difficult to perceive (and that the influence of cultural and situ-ational factors complicates and confuses the issues as much as it sheds light on them) are all features which become amply apparent as Chapters 2–4 of my study work their way through the argu-mentation of Romans 1–8 highlighting the incidence of the enthymematic element, and bringing out the perplexingly wide vari-eties of effect with which it becomes associated (Chapter 2), the differing ways in which it arises (Chapter 3), and the changing levels of importance which it assumes (Chapter 4).

I do not pretend that the semiological background against which I would view these complexities disposes of the problems to which they give rise. I do, however, contend that it does much to set them in a fundamentally positive light, not only because it shows them as inevitable rather than self-induced (of an essentially healthy, not idle, irrelevant or incidental origin), but because they emerge as tangles in which illuminatory potential is as much to be cherished as obscurity regretted or excused. They emerge in a light compatible

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with their having inspired in Paul an optimism and a confidence to be shared with others as blessings. It is indeed a function of semiology to show that communicativity does not depend on 'clarity' of one kind only; it shows, for example, that rational inconsistency or inexactitude is not incompatible with expressive immediacy. These are issues I pursue in 5.1 – but only, in the end, to affirm that the promise which I can see in recourse to 'fuzzy' logic deflects me from tackling Pauline reasoning on any such basis. In fact, it convinces me that the most fruitful approach to the rational element in Paul, particularly – but not only – in Romans 1–8, is to expect the communicative energy inherent in objective argumentative substance to be the *main* source of illuminatory potential in the tight corners where Paul's logic lands him.

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ENTHYMEMATIC SEMIOSIS IN PAUL

1.1 A semiotic perspective for the study of Pauline argument. Umberto Eco's 'typology of modes of sign-production'.

'It is very difficult to imagine an imprint that mentions a referent without the mediation of a content.' This is a comment which the semiologist Umberto Eco is prompted to make in relation to the significance which Robinson Crusoe reads into the human footprint which he comes upon on the island where he is shipwrecked.[1] The message may be spelt out thus: 'There is at least one other human being on this island in addition to me.' The referent which the imprint, by virtue of its form, 'mentions' is 'human being', but the 'mention' does not come about for Crusoe on this occasion without the mediation of a content which the words 'human being' alone do not adequately represent. He does not think 'human being' except as 'a particular human being who must be my fellow inhabitant on this island'.

This example illustrates one mode of the operation which Eco defines as 'sign-production'. It is the mode which he refers to as 'Recognition'. It is the first of four modes into which he distinguishes 'sign-production'. The others are Ostension, Replica and Invention.[2] It is a feature of Eco's general theory of semiotics that the object of semiological study should be understood not as the sign itself but as the production of signs.[3] It is his belief that it must be a theory which embraces all the forms in which sign-production can occur.[4] Its products, he considers, are more properly identified by the term 'sign-function' than 'sign'.[5] It is a further feature of his theory that 'sign-production' embraces not only intentional but also unintentional signs.[6] The Crusoe example is a case in point. The 'production' of the sign in such a case – the process whereby the imprint becomes 'sign-functional' – arises with the act of recognition. Eco's definition of 'Recognition' is, in fact, as follows: 'Recog-

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nition occurs when a given object or event, produced by nature or
human action (intentionally or unintentionally), and existing in a
world of facts as a fact among facts, comes to be viewed by an
addressee as the expression of a given content, either through a
pre-existing and coded correlation or through the positing of a
possible correlation by its addressee.'[7]

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is an event which was produced by
human action and which exists as a fact in a world of facts. These –
whatever doubts some may have or have had on the subject – were
undoubtedly the terms on which it was recognised by Paul of Tarsus
as the expression of the content which he read into it through the
correlation which he posited between the event and that content.
That the action, as understood by Paul, has a dimension which
makes 'human' an epithet of questionable adequacy, and that the
complexity which invests the intentionality of its occurrence is of a
uniqueness that lies outside anything Eco was concerned to accom-
modate, does not prevent his definition of 'Recognition' from fitting
the sign-receptive experience of Paul as aptly as it does that of
Robinson Crusoe.

Eco's definition of Recognition, as I have just quoted it, may not
seem to account adequately for his inclusion of Recognition under
the heading 'sign-production'. The 'coming to be viewed' of an
event or object in a certain light is not naturally or obviously to be
equated with the view having been 'produced' by anyone. (And to
call the viewer the 'addressee' sounds decidedly odd.) But, as Eco
sees it, when an object or event is recognised as having a certain
meaning – as being, that is, the expression of a certain content – it is
as if (a) the one who recognises the meaning had had his attention
drawn to it, or (b) as if recognising it had involved its being
represented to him, or (c) had entailed an appeal being made to his
creative judgement. 'The object or event', as he puts it, 'must be
considered as if it had been produced by ostension, replica or
invention.'[8]

Paul first sees the Crucifixion as speaking to himself. This is
Recognition. But it speaks as something he has been shown and that
he can show to others. If Crusoe had had a fellow castaway with
him, he could have shown him the footprint, and – without his
having said anything – his companion would have understood the
message to be 'Look, we are not the only human beings on this
island.' From Recognition we pass at once to Ostension.[9] And there
is a sense in which Paul considers that the Crucifixion is an event

which, once it is shown, speaks.[10] But even if the significance of the
Crucifixion may be considered as essentially complete the moment
the identity of the victim is grasped (i.e. that he is the Son of God),
to any but those who had been with him personally or had enjoyed a
unique illuminatory experience like Paul's, it would need pointing
out and spelling out.[11] Even Paul has understood the meaning
revealed to him by spelling it out, representing it to himself. And
here we move into the ambit of Replica.

The term 'replica' is used by Eco to cover that category of sign
which is distinguished by its repeatability. A sign that has the form
of an object or an event existing in a world of facts is by its nature
unrepeatable. Intentional communication largely operates by means
of artificial signs which depend for their functioning on the repro-
duction of the convention.[12] The English word 'book' means what
the body of English speakers agrees it to mean. Repetition is both
the mode and the source of its sign-productivity. Words are by no
means the only form that repeatable signs can take, but they are the
most common, and are notable particularly for the capacity to
explicate the meaning latent in other types of sign-production (*some*
others, that is: not all – as Eco characteristically insists, whatever
had previously been claimed);[13] words explicate what is recognised
in Recognition and what is displayed in Ostension. Through repe-
tition they represent the meanings which as a result of the sign-
productive process come to be recognised in or imparted to objects
or events.

The meaning of a footprint in the sand seems to be best construed
as something that represents itself to Crusoe in words. And so it is
with the meaning of the Crucifixion to Paul. In both cases the
communication of the meaning by means of ostension can be seen as
implying a verbal content, even if, at least in the case of Crusoe, it
can do without any words actually being uttered aloud. In the case
of Paul silent ostension is not feasible – with far-reaching con-
sequences for the involvement of the mechanism without which
semiosis could not occur at all: Coding.

The meaning of an object or event is something we decipher, and
to decipher we need to know and apply the appropriate code.
Decoding is a matter of correlating forms with meanings. Coding is
the principle by virtue of which objects or events are correlated as
'expression' to 'content'. It is the principle on which words depend
for their meaning.[14] Where expression is verbal the correlation with
content is fundamentally arbitrary and is brought about by coding

which operates at various different levels.[15] It is ultimately rooted in
the manipulation of expression units composed of elements which
depend for meaning entirely on the combinations in which they
figure.[16] For example, 'book' exists as a sign-function in its own
right. It can also contribute to the sign-functional value of a propo-
sitional unit such as 'That book is red'. But whereas the meaning of
the proposition is the sum of a series of sign-functional contri-
butions the nature of each of which can be separately identified and
explained, the meaning of the word 'book' is not the aggregate of
what the orthographic elements b, o, o, k, of which it is made up,
can be separately explained as contributing.[17] The coding on which
the combination of elements like these depends for its operation is
coding at its most rigorously artificial.[18] Replica, then, is a semiotic
mode in which a great deal of the coding involved is arbitrary.
However, where Replica occurs non-verbally (as in the case of
conventional signs, on the road, in public buildings, etc.) the con-
vention may contain a 'motivation' that makes it less than entirely
arbitrary and to some extent self-explanatory. For instance, the sign
⚢ is chosen to indicate access to a provision intended for women
because its appearance has some correlation to the circumstances of
being a female. Where sign-production arises through Recognition
or Ostension, the correlation, though it may enjoy the status of a
convention in some cases, never involves wholly arbitrary coding. In
the case of an imprint the code is established by experience, and
experience provides all that is necessary to crack it.[19] The range of
experience enjoyed by an 'addressee' may indeed determine whether
or not, and according to what principle, he or she is in fact
'addressed' by the sign-productive potential of the situation. As
women come to wear skirts less and less, a child of today may need
to be taught a convention before being able to interpret the ⚢ which
experience would formerly have sufficed to decode.

Whether the code which enabled Paul to 'recognise' the meaning
of the Crucifixion was a code provided by experience alone, it is
effectively impossible for us to say. The Recognition certainly
depended on a code which, through the experience of a moment of
privileged insight, invalidated at a stroke the code that had served
him hitherto. By the terms of the invalidated code to the formation
of which the whole of Paul's earlier experience had contributed, he
had read the crucifixion of Jesus as the fitting punishment of an
impostor who had blasphemously claimed to be the Son of God
whose coming the Hebrew Scriptures had foreseen.[20] Under the new

code formed with dramatic suddenness as an integral part of his
conversion experience, he read the same event as God's sacrifice of
his Son in mysterious fulfilment of all (and more than all?) that the
Hebrew Scriptures could be seen to foreshadow concerning his
coming. The writings of Paul abundantly display his anxiety that the
meaning he thus saw in the Crucifixion should be adequately spelt
out. But their volume scarcely seems to square with his resolve to
know nothing among the Corinthians except Jesus Christ and him
crucified, a declaration which is consequently often regarded as a
mere tactical device to be seen strictly in relation to the dangers of
over-reliance on intellect or of empty shows of eloquence.[21] I would
argue that it should be taken more seriously.

The key factor in the disclosure experience of Paul's conversion is
identified by Paul himself as his having seen the risen Jesus. The new
code is determined by the evidence that he who was crucified had
indeed risen from the tomb and was alive for ever. Paul's identifica-
tion of the victim of the Crucifixion as the Son of God, and the
particular connotative dynamic which the title 'Son of God' carries
for Paul (as well as all the soteriological implications that he draws
from it) arise from the code having its origin in the evidence of
Paul's own eyes (albeit those spiritually opened for him by miracu-
lous means). I see myself here as following assertions in Paul's own
letters (Gal 1:12–16; 1Cor 9:1; 15:8).[22] If it is thought that I make
insufficient allowance for the teaching he received from other Chris-
tians, I would still say that whatever part such teaching may have
played in his act of recognition, a unique focus on the risen victim of
the Crucifixion remains characteristic of, and central to, his experi-
ence.[23] However, Eco affirms that 'all sign-functions depending on
replica, ostension and recognition articulate given units in order to
produce more complex texts'.[24] Paul cannot grasp what he has
'recognised' without the mediation of a verbal text. And he cannot
communicate what he has grasped without relaying the verbal text
as it has articulated itself for him.

The experiential background to the sign-productive event of
Paul's recognition of the significance of the Crucifixion is one in
which the experience of a revelatory confrontation with the
resurrected victim impinges on a network of attitudes and of beliefs
drastically reshaping and expanding it. And therefore, whilst the
code governing the Recognition is provided by a single sudden
experience, at least six distinct core statements seem to inhere in the
content of the Recognition as Paul must, even initially, have spelt it

out to himself for it ultimately to produce the flood of more complex texts that it does.

1   A man is crucified.
2   That man is the son of God.[25]
3   God gave him up to be crucified.
4   It was for us that God gave him up to be crucified.
5   This is the extent of God's gift to us.
6   The measure of the gift is the measure of God's love.

For the meaning of what Paul points to in the Crucifixion to be communicable to others certainly no fewer than these six propositions are necessary. Its decoding cannot begin to come about in terms of less textual elaboration than this. But perhaps no more elaboration than this is necessary for enough text-productive energy to have been sparked off to generate, without further boosting, the total result with which the teaching of Paul confronts us. Already, however, the minimum textual elaboration needed to give effect to the initial decoding dynamic of Paul's encounter with the Risen One depends necessarily on the special codificatory mechanisms by which verbal communication operates. These quickly multiply and diversify (as we shall see in 1.4) as more and more explicatory texts, flooding Paul's channels of outgoing transmission, amplify the basic textual nucleus. Nevertheless the acts of sign-production that make up Paul's teaching are all ultimately instances of Replica effecting Ostension by explicating Recognition; the myriad sign-productive tokens of which his discourse is composed serve always, directly or indirectly, in diverse ways, to articulate the single sign-productive event which the Resurrection led him to decode as the Crucifixion of the Son of God. Once this is taken duly into account, many problems to which the idiosyncrasies of his discourse give rise are alleviated, not the least those surrounding his propensity for introducing arguments to support his statements. The present study attempts to demonstrate this.

1.2   Pauline argument and the rhetorical dimension of his discourse. Two lines of approach: the classical and the 'new'.

Paul's use of argument can roughly be said to take two forms: they are (1) appeals to Scripture; (2) appeals to reason. Only (2) comes within the scope of what I have just been saying and what I am proposing to say.

There seems to be a fairly wide consensus of opinion today that it