

FORT BEND CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

AN EXAMINATION OF PAUL AND PAULINE SCHOLASTICISM

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS OF
FORT BEND CHRISTIAN ACADEMY'S APOLOGETICS CLASS

DEPARTMENT OF WORLDVIEWS AND APOLOGETICS

BY
LOGAN HERRINGTON

SUGAR LAND, TX

MAY 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
a. The Problem of Paul.....	4
b. What This Thesis Is and What It Is Not.....	5
2. The Theology of Paul.....	6
a. The Mission of Paul.....	6
b. Jesus in the Worldview of Paul.....	8
c. Jewish Literary Styles in the Writings of Paul.....	10
d. Jewish Monotheism in the Theology of Paul.....	12
3. Bridging the Gap Between Judaism and Hellenism	14
a. Problems with the Original Question.....	15
b. Scholasticism on the Judaism/Hellenism in Germany.....	16
c. Brief Summary of Pauline Scholasticism.....	17
d. Some Aspects of Hellenism in Paul.....	19
4. CONCLUSION.....	21
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	22

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” – Paul

Introduction

Second only to Christ himself, no one has played a more key role in establishing the Christian religion than Paul. It was through his tireless efforts of traveling, speaking, teaching, preaching, sailing, and the more-than-occasional endurance of torture that Christianity was established throughout the surrounding Gentile nations. Playing the roles of author and subject of the two most preached books of the Bible, Acts and Romans, and altogether authoring almost a third of all of the New Testament texts, it is not difficult to understand the reasons for his celebrity among the church throughout the ages.

It is interesting, in light of all this, to stop and ask the simple question “Who is Paul and where did he come from?” The short answer is found in Scripture. He was a devout Pharisee from Tarsus, who held an uncertain position of authority with which he used to carry out blood-thirsty punishment upon the members of the early church until one day he was visited by an apparition of Jesus commanding him to change his aim to *spreading* the news of his kingdom instead of stifling it. However, seeing how this information all comes from essentially the same collection of writings all sharing a common developing theme of establishing this new church, one must question the validity of these sources. Of course, this is easier said than done and, as often is the case with historical research, many different unapparent methods of analysis will be required to come to the proper conclusion.

The Problem of Paul

The simplest way to introduce the problem of Paul will be through an attempt at a very transparent analogy. There is a set of ancient ruins from some indigenous country with some peculiar writings along the front that only two men in the entire world know how to interpret. One is of decent of the people who wrote the ruins and the other is American. The only clear words that the men are able to interpret from the ruins are ‘dog,’ ‘walk,’ and ‘Thursday.’ The American, being thoroughly American in orientation, decides that the ruins must mean that they would walk their dogs on Thursdays, since this is a common American practice. The other man, however, knows that this is far from accurate because those people did not domesticate their dogs. Instead, pulling from his worldview that is similar to the writers’, interprets the ruins to be referring to the spiritual ‘walk’ characterized by the ‘dog’ which would represent loyalty that the ancient people would embark on upon reaching adulthood which was synonymous with ‘Thursday.’ Perhaps this is a tiresome example, but it demonstrates a point very similar to one that must be investigated in this thesis. If Paul was the Pharisaic Jew that he claims to be, then he is like the man of the same descent as the people who wrote the ruins- thoroughly versed in the culture and able to interpret the Christ account as a Jewish thinker would have. However, it is also a possibility that Paul was not who he claimed to be, and that he is more like the American in the story who, having no proper context with which to interpret the ruins, infuses an entirely inaccurate meaning into the words.

Perhaps now is a good time to explain the third aspect of the analogy: the writings on the ruins. These have been used to represent the raw data of the Christ account. All of the miracles, sayings, sermons, actions, and ultimate death and alleged resurrection included in the written and

oral account of Christ's life that a man like Paul would have had access to comprise the raw data referred to above.

The biggest puzzle when it comes to understanding who Paul was is as follows: Was Paul the tried and true Pharisee that he claimed to be, who would have been able to understand the life and kingship of Jesus as an extension of Judaism and a true fulfillment of the prophecies, or was he completely an outsider to Judaism who heard what was said about Jesus and decided to use his pagan lens to interpret the events of Jesus' life?

What This Thesis Is and What It Is Not

As one can imagine, there is a multitude of subtopics within the idea that has just been expressed in the above paragraphs. One could possibly search out secular sources that in some way lend credence to Paul's life story, or one could trouble himself/herself to simply respond to all of the minor details criticized in Biblical texts surrounding Paul. These are certainly areas that need to be explored, especially in light of the fact that the most common and popular criticisms of Christianity seem to focus upon the smaller but numerous apparent inconsistencies between the text and history. Hyamm Maccoby's *The Mythmaker* is a prime example of this. For example, a point might be raised that Paul could not have been a Pharisee because the High Priest who gave him his orders to persecute the Christians would have been a Sadducee, and the two groups were very much opposed to each other and would not have ever collaborated.¹ As interesting of a point like this is, details such as this have a way of working themselves out as scholasticism progresses. Even if they are never reconciled, there will always be the battle

¹ Maccoby, Hyamm. *The Mythmaker*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1986. 8

between those who feel the details are important enough to do damage to the veracity of the entire account and those who do not.

Instead of exploring the above approaches to this topic, this thesis will be split into two sections. The first section will discuss how Pauline Christianity is a perfect extension of Judaism. If Paul's ideas do, in fact, square with Jewish tradition and his idea of Jesus truly fits the bill for a fulfillment of Jewish prophecy, then it is probably safe to say that his ideas were legitimate and not merely a pagan perversion of Judaism. This, at the least, can move the default position of the argument to one that tends to agree with his account. The second part of this thesis will focus on how Pauline scholasticism throughout the last few centuries has perhaps gotten a bit off track in its efforts to prove that Paul was simply Greek or Jewish in orientation, the former of the two cultures of course devastating the case of the Christian and the latter verifying that he was probably right about his views on Jesus. It is the goal that by the end of this paper, one can understand that Pauline Christianity is a fulfillment of Jewish prophecies and that there is little reason to doubt his account.

The Theology of Paul

The Mission of Paul

Before diving into the worldview of Paul and how the discussed facets fit within a Jewish perspective, it is important to understand how Paul's life-work is perhaps the most Jewish of all the discussed traits.² It is sometimes stated that his position as the intermediary between Jews and Gentiles makes him appear to be an outsider to the Jewish faith with the intentions of bastardizing the religion to spread it to pagan nations for one reason or another. However, those

² 'Most Jewish' meaning most essentially Jewish.

who make this assertion forget perhaps the most crucial of all passages of any text in the history of Judaism:

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” – Genesis 12: 1-3

According to Jewish tradition, the great moment of their faith’s founding came when God spoke personally to Abraham and said that through him, he would establish the Jewish people and *also* bless and establish himself in the rest of the world through the Jewish people.³

It is also important to note that some of the differences between Paul and Jesus that are often pointed out as bastardizations of Jesus’ original ‘Jewishness’ can be reconciled by understanding his mission as opposed to Jesus’. For example, a huge point of contention between the teachings of Paul and Jesus is found in their seemingly opposing takes on how one should follow the Jewish law. Many are quick to point out that Jesus proclaims that ‘not a single brushstroke of the law’ is to be altered or forgotten, claiming that Jesus promotes a purely legalistic religion while Paul seems incredibly relaxed in his moral teachings, going as far as to say that circumcision was unnecessary and scolding those who spoke out against him. While this paper does not focus on the teachings of Jesus specifically, the writer thinks it would be sufficient enough to say that perhaps the teachings were not, at their core, different, but were simply altered to get a similar message across to different audiences. Jesus, in speaking to the Jewish people, assures them that God is unchanging in his demand for their obedience to his laws. Paul, on the other hand, emphasizes that now is the time for all nations to become a part of

³ Strom, Mark. *Reframing Paul*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. 79-81

God's kingdom and to be found in Christ. All authority is not found within the Jewish nation and heritage, as some of the teachers were indicating, but in God, and only the moral law of God was necessary for Jew and Gentile alike to follow.

Jesus in the worldview of Paul

An important question one must ask when studying the Apostle Paul is how Jesus even fit into the Pharisaic ideas of the 1st century Jew. A huge stumbling point for Modern Westerners in understanding what Paul would have made of a man like Jesus is that they assume Jesus fit into a perfect criteria that Paul had bouncing around in his head for the 'Messiah' and, though Paul had his doubts about Jesus being this person, Jesus appeared to him and set him straight. This explanation, however, will not do.

First of all, Paul was a 'strict' Jew. During this time, two schools of thought dominated Pharisaic ideology. One group, the Hillelites, was more lenient in how they viewed their duties as Jews. This idea of leniency was less of a personal moral compass and more of a political agenda.⁴ As long as the Jews were free to practice Torah and serve YHWH as they pleased, it was immaterial to them who were in charge politically. The most sinful of pagan leaders could be in control of their people, but as long as they were free to live life as moral Jews, they were unwilling to take up arms or resist their leaders in any way. Paul, on the other hand, was a Shammaite and nothing like the above description.⁵ The Shammaites had a much stricter idea of how the Jewish people should live. They believed that in order to truly follow Torah, they must completely be free of any gentile command; this was important enough for which to fight and

⁴ Wright, N. T. *What Saint Paul Really Said*. Cincinnati : Forward Movement Publications , 1997. 27

⁵ Ibid. 27

kill. In light of this, it is not difficult to understand why the New Testament reader is first introduced to Paul as he is overseeing the brutal murder of the 'pagan' Stephen.⁶

The reason for the Shammaite sense of urgency to eliminate all pagan threats to the Jewish faith can be explained thusly: the Jewish people were waiting for God to deliver them from evil when His kingdom came to earth. The Shammaites thought that until the elect people of God got their collective acts together and began to faithfully serve Him again, they would not be judged righteous and God would not usher in His great kingdom through which all of creation would be saved. The Shammaites believed that their current position under the mighty thumb of Rome could be comparable to their state many years ago under Babylon. Both were results of continued punishment for disobedience. The ushering in of God's great kingdom would deliver Israel from her tyrannical leaders, judge her to be righteous in his eyes while judging the evil of the pagans and thus saving all of creation. N. T. Wright describes this apocalypse like a grand court case: God would be the judge, the world would be on trial, and the pagans would be judged unrighteous while the Jews would be acquitted of all charges due to God's grace.⁷

This day, however, would not come in the way that a man like Paul had expected. The conclusion that the New Testament reader must come to is that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of what the Jews had been waiting for since the Babylonian exile. The same vindication that the Jews had hoped would come to them collectively in a mighty trumpet blast and in the fullness of the Father had instead been given only to Jesus, for the time being. It was Jesus who had suffered at the hands of pagans and been found righteous in the eyes of God, and instead of defeating the pagan leaders with a violent revolution, he defeated sin and death. This event was, more or less,

⁶ Acts 7

⁷ Ibid. 33

the great apocalypse or day of justice that the Jews had looked to. It is from this singular event that the Kingdom of God would be gradually ushered into creation, and it was Jesus who God found to be righteous, not the Jewish people.⁸ Given all of this, one should see that Jesus would have fit perfectly into the Jewish worldview, even one as radical as the Apostle Paul's.

Paul expounds upon his views of Jesus in the first chapter of Colossians. Paul writes the section in balanced 'halves,' as N. T. Wright would refer to them, similar to the way the 19th Psalm was composed.⁹ Both passages emphasize the subject as the creator and also the fulfillment. The Psalm begins by describing the works of God's hands and how his creation glorifies him, and how he lovingly provides laws and structure for it to abide in. The passage from Colossians is similar in that it describes the one through whom "all things were made" and "through him to reconcile to himself all things... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." As one can see, Jesus is referred to with the same covenant language that the psalmist used to describe God. The fact that Jesus is referred to as the fulfillment of the covenant is central to Paul's theology.

Jewish Literary Styles in the Writings of Paul

The seventh chapter of Daniel is the story of the prophet's far-from-pleasant dream and its subsequent interpretation. In the dream, giant, animalistic monsters burst forth from the sea and speak in riddles to Daniel and bring forth an unspeakable violence upon the land. Following the written account of the dream is an interpretation of the events by an assumed angelic host. This account, along with many other stories in the same book, is an archetypal example of apocalyptic literature. This genre of literature is based upon the Jewish idea that all of reality

⁸ Ibid. 36

⁹ Wright, N. T. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2005. 50- 51

could be divided into earth and heaven; mortals only have the capability to understand that which is earthly and only God and angels have the ability to understand both and will, at their discretion, reveal the meanings of heavenly things, like the dream, to mortals.¹⁰ Understanding this fact is essential to getting a firm grasp on the writing style of Paul in his letters to the various churches. For example, his repeated claims that all ‘treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in the Messiah’ is not a Gnostic claim of a secret knowledge, but a fairly common Jewish idea that he is privy to the knowledge of heaven in the same way that the angel understood the meaning of Daniel’s dream. However, the writing style of the letters is by no means identical to that of the dream. The key difference in the apocalyptic styles of the pieces is in the fact that Paul believed the great and final ‘apocalypse’ occurred in death and resurrection of the Messiah. God had revealed his heavenly agenda to the world through this event, and, in a sense, Paul is the great interpreter.¹¹

Apocalyptic stylization can also be seen in the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, which North American churches often mistakenly interpret as passages alluding to the great rapture of God’s people, however, the general consensus among scholars is that he is simply giving support to those in mourning. The most interesting part about this passage, however, is its use of apocalyptic phrases like Jesus descending from the clouds and the trumpet blaring accompanying the apparition of Moses with the Law descending Mt. Sinai.¹² All of this language is pointing to the fact that the New Age has been ushered in and the kingdom has finally entered the world through the Messiah

¹⁰ Ibid. 51

¹¹ Ibid. 52

¹² Ibid. 55

Yet again, no individual ‘cold hard fact’ will sufficiently prove or disprove the case for the legitimacy of Paul’s personal account. However, when yet another piece of the puzzle fits into a Jewish context it makes the case all the more difficult to call Paul an outsider to the Jewish faith in any respect. All that the modern world has today to examine the life of the Apostle Paul is his many writings to his contemporaries, and the fact that he stayed well within the Jewish frame of mind when composing the letters of encouragement and instruction is extremely helpful to his personal history.

Jewish Monotheism in the Theology of Paul

Throughout the ministry of Paul there is perhaps no greater obstacle to those who oppose the idea of his Jewish nature than his monotheistic inclinations. It is essential to the Jewish religion that there is no other god aside from YHWH. In fact, all of evil in the Jewish context can be summed up as giving anything more importance than total devotion to God.¹³ In the early books of the Old Testament, all accounts point back to the one theme that the one god of the universe is involving himself with his creation. That statement alone isolates Judaism from an innumerable amount of theologies throughout human history, so it is vital to verify that the theology of Paul is in complete accord with this before one can declare him purely Jewish in orientation. Monotheism, a seemingly self-explanatory term, can actually have more than one meaning and it is important to understand the *kind* of monotheism that is present in Paul’s letters and throughout his ministry.

Pantheism, the belief that all of reality is God is, technically, a form of monotheism. The writer of this thesis feels that it is necessary to include this because pantheism was not so foreign

¹³ Ibid. 88

to the Greeks, and it is possible for someone to label Paul's theology as one that is similar to that of Stoicism: a Greek philosophy that followed pantheism.¹⁴ One of the ideas fleshed out in pantheistic philosophy is that, seeing as how all is a portion of god, nothing is ever truly evil in any sense, and any problem that a person might be having can be reconciled by trying to be more connected with the divinity in all things. This is how one could almost deify sexual acts.¹⁵ This label, however, will not fit Paul for a multitude of reasons. Paul proclaimed avidly that it was of vital importance to being a true follower of God for one to totally devote himself to the one, true god and to not cast his praise upon idols of any kind. For example, in Romans 1, Paul goes over a list of sexual 'impurities' that the early church was supposed to strongly avoid like homosexuality, group sexual activities etc. This is something Paul would not have said if he followed a more Stoic view of god and reality.

Quite different from pantheism and perhaps a slide in the direction of Jewish thought, Epicureanism also falls under the category of monotheism. In this theology, God is a singular being rather than all of reality, but unfathomably removed from the reality that humanity exists within. Evil exists as the byproduct of humanity's great separation from the heavenly realm.¹⁶ This theology birthed the philosophy known as hedonism, in which man can do nothing but try his best to enjoy life for all that it is worth because he can do nothing to better his situation. While to even the least educated of Bible-readers it should appear obvious that Paul spoke messages diametrically opposed to this philosophy, there is an even deeper opposition between the two worldviews (Judaism and Epicureanism). Paul spoke on multiple occasions of the intrinsic goodness of God's creation, saying that marriage, sex and food were all created by God

¹⁴ Ibid. 86

This would be the case because of Greek influence in that area, not that Paul wrote anything in agreement with the philosophy.

¹⁵ Ibid. 87

¹⁶ Ibid. 87

for his people and were to be enjoyed while under certain restrictions. Epicureanism, along with several other Greek philosophies, enforced an ontological dualism, saying that one thing was inherently good while another was inherently evil. Paul strongly opposed this. For example, in 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote that even though certain animals were sacrificed to idols and its consumption was meant to honor them, it was still in no way evil to partake in eating it because God had created it and as long as they were not making an effort to worship idols with it, they were simply eating food.

Paul's theology is a purely Jewish one. As N. T. Wright would say, the Jews followed a *creational* and *covenantal* god.¹⁷ In this theology, God is the all-powerful, life-giving god who was still actively involved in his people. He brought them into being through his creation and he is bringing his kingdom and doing his work through them with the covenants that he has set up. All things are created by him and nothing that he has created is evil. Evil is rooted in mankind's efforts to serve any other power that is not him. God's agenda is to redeem his creation through his active involvement and mankind's active obedience to his will. With this in mind, it is easy to interpret Paul's message as one heavily rooted in Jewish theology.

Bridging the Gap between Judaism and Hellenism

Up to this point in the paper, the consistent theme has been that the Apostle Paul was Jewish through and through. There have been varying opinions and insights from scholars throughout the centuries who have written on the orientation of the Apostle Paul, but usually the opinions can fall into one of three categories: Paul was Jewish, Paul was Greek, or some

¹⁷ Ibid. 86

combination of the two leaning more toward his Jewish side.¹⁸ Now that a foundation has been set for the purpose of this thesis, it is unavoidable that the writer is forced to muddy the waters a bit and talk about the undeniable effect that Hellenization would have had on the Jewish people of that time period including the Apostle Paul, however, this thesis will be taking a slightly new approach. That is not to say that the ideas expressed in the coming pages are new in and of themselves, but in relation to the long anthology of Pauline writings, a bit of a new perspective has emerged in the last century which was not present at the time of authorship of many of the more popular works on Paul.

The new question that this thesis will promote is not whether or not Paul was Hellenized, because the answer is undoubtedly yes. However, it will seek to establish the relevance of a new question: in what way was Paul Hellenized? The first portion of the paper has established that he was well within the realm of the Judaism of that time as far as the subject matter of his letters is concerned. The author will now seek to establish not only that Judaism and Hellenism are conceivably compatible in certain ways, but also that Paul would have only been Hellenized to a degree that would not in any way damage his reputation as a purely Jewish thinker.

Problems with the Original Question

According to Wayne Meeks, the question of how Christianity became Hellenized is a distinctly post-Enlightenment question.¹⁹ Up until the nineteenth century, no one had posited the dichotomy between the two and proceeded to ask what effect each had on Christianity. One might defy the above claim to say that Tertullian made reference to the idea back in the second century. However, his quoted question about Athens having nothing to do with Jerusalem should

¹⁸ People often do not include the fact that Paul may have been a little Jewish if their point is to invalidate his writing on Christ.

¹⁹ Wayne A. Meeks, *The Writings of St. Paul*. New York: Norton, 1972. 273

be understood to be specifically contrasting Greek ‘human wisdom’ and Jewish ‘simplicity of the heart’ as opposed to religion, culture, or even Greece as a whole.²⁰

Dale Martin points out that it is misleading to ask a question as simple as “Greek or Jew?” since the Jewish culture that had any role in the early church would have been Hellenized and all forms of Greek culture at that time would have been heavily influenced by ‘oriental’ cultures.²¹ The question also does not account for all of the other cultures that would have affected Paul and the early church. Paul was not from Jerusalem or Athens, but Syria.²² Also, Paul was a Roman citizen; one must consider whether the culture of Rome would have affected his worldview. Another problem with the question arises when one examines the falsity of the dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism. No person of the pre-Christian ancient world would have placed Judaism and Hellenism into a dualistic relationship. Judaism has historically represented an ethnic group, complete with its own practices, language, rites, etc. while Hellenism is more related to self-cultivation or education.²³ The point is that when one simply asks if Paul was ‘Hellenized,’ he/she is either clumping several other cultures into that category or throwing them out entirely, neither of which is a good practice of historical analysis.

Scholasticism on Judaism/Hellenism in Germany (19th and 20th Century)

It is interesting that, up until recent studies, scholasticism on the Apostle Paul seemed to be aiming its efforts full-throttle in the wrong direction. Though it would be easy for one to simply throw his/her hands up and consider this a trial and error process of study, it might be

²⁰ Martin, Dale. *Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question. Paul: Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Edited by Troels Engberg-Pederson. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 31

²¹ Ibid. 30

²² Many times throughout the remainder of this thesis, the writer will refer to ‘the question’ to avoid the redundancy of saying “the question of whether Paul was Greek or Jewish in orientation.”

²³ Ibid 30 The author uses the term *Bildung*, in this context but the writer of this thesis felt self-cultivation to an appropriate substitute to get the point across.

rewarding to see why the academia on Paul may have derailed in the first place. The answer can possibly be found in understanding the environment from where much of the scholasticism comes: Germany. Perhaps a note of warning about the following section is fitting: as far as socio-historical studies go, the following is probably the shortest that an analysis can possibly be while covering such a long period of time. The smaller details will not be able to be discussed, and certainly do not need to be. As long as one can understand the basic and general structure of how the Hellenism/Judaism dichotomy could possibly have come into place throughout the following historical account, that is all that is important.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Germany was officially founded as a country. While neighboring nations like France and even Britain were enjoying well-established national identity, Germany ‘gazed across the Rhine’ in envy. German politics and culture were heavily influenced by France (e.g. French was spoken by the nobility in their courts).²⁴ Following the victory of Napoleon over Prussian forces at Jena in 1806, German intellectuals began to rally interest in promoting a German sense of nationalism and consciousness.²⁵ Due to the extreme importance of developing a universal language when seeking national identity, linguistic studies became somewhat of a top-priority around this time. This spawned the development of the Indo-European language group which gradually grew to be commonly contrasted with the Semitic language group. This dichotomous relationship was perhaps the first to begin the Hellenism/Judaism divide; it is important to note that the two were placed in a relationship of unequal worth, Hellenism often representing individualism, universalism and freedom while Hebraism represents particularism, limitation, and reaction with a propensity towards stagnation

²⁴ Ibid. 39

²⁵ Ibid 40.

This defeat meant more French influence in that area in the years to come.

for preservation. One German intellectual refers to Hebraism as incapable of evolution whose lack of refinement impeded their development of culture comparable to that of Greece or Rome.²⁶ It is around this time that many German intellectuals began their growing love affair with Hellenism.²⁷ Though most German scholars chose Hellenism as the obvious superior of the two, some chose to celebrate the virtue in firm foundation provided by the conservative nature of Judaism. One can easily see how the evolution of such a divide between cultures could have seeped into Pauline scholasticism by the German authors around the years to come, who would have viewed Hellenism as the obvious, unwanted outsider to Judaism's comfortable, established worldview.

A Brief Summary of Pauline Scholasticism

In light of the above section, it is not hard to understand why German scholasticism in the nineteenth and twentieth century is largely responsible for the contradistinction between Judaism and Hellenism. (Roughly) Beginning with writers like Ferdinand Baur in the mid 1800's who posits that the birth of Gentile Christianity is a result of the dialectical movement from the clash of Jewish Christianity and Pauline Christianity, thus beginning the grand dichotomy that would heavily affect the scholasticism on Paul for a long time.²⁸ Soon after, Albert Schweitzer came to the conclusion that Paul was thoroughly Jewish and not a speck of Hellenization tainted his worldview.²⁹ His reasoning being that anything Hellenized would have been extremely foreign to the earliest disciples of Christ, and if Paul was communicating Hellenistic ideology to them, they

²⁶ Ibid. 40-44

²⁷ Following in the footsteps of France, who began to heavily pull from Roman culture to establish themselves, Germany began to become a 'New Greece.'

²⁸ Ibid. 34.

It is not difficult to imagine the ideas of Hegel entering into the equation at this point. Also it is important to understand that for every grain of sand on the West Coast, there is a theologian in this time period who contributed to the overall scholasticism on Paul. This paper will only cover a select few 'heavy-hitters' and leave quite a few people out.

²⁹ Schweitzer, Albert. *Paul and his Interpreters: a Critical History*. London: Black, 1912. 77

would have surely attacked his influence and not allowed it to influence their own thinking. In addition to the problem with distinguishing Hellenism and Judaism as two distinct entities, Dale Martin also points out that one should take into account what was happening historically at the time of Schweitzer's writing. The political and racial tension occurring in Germany around the early twentieth century can be compared to the stark differentiation between Judaism and Hellenism and the disciples' desire for 'purity' in their teachings that Schweitzer claimed to be present at this time.³⁰ Perhaps the most bizarre of all German scholars on Paul, Rudolf Bultmann, posited that Paul was, in fact, way more Greek than Jew, but insisted that this did not hurt his case or damage the Christian religion.³¹ From here, one can trace Pauline Scholasticism through people like Kaesmann, Davies and Sanders, and notice that all authors posit either a Jewish Paul, or a Greek Paul.

Some aspects of Hellenism in Paul

In light of what was stated earlier in this thesis about the possibility of Hellenism having some effect on Pauline Christianity, it would be helpful to at least glance at several of the similarities between the two. Dr. Stanley Stower, a professor of Christian studies at Brown University, has compiled a list of seven similarities, three of which will be summarized in the coming section. However, before going into those, it is important to note the following: 'similarities' do not indicate parallel origin and are not mutually exclusive of numerous other worldviews of that time. Also, the author of the list finds that the differences between the two are far more important and numerous than the similarities.

³⁰ Ibid. 37

³¹ Bultmann, Rudolf. *Theology of the New Testament*. Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2007. 187

Both Pauline Christianity and many Hellenistic philosophies focus less upon a legalistic morality and more on a unitary focus or central value that will dictate the goodness of all decisions. For example, Epicureans made freedom from pain and friendship the main focus of their worldview. “My father is nothing to me but only the good,” states Epicurus. This statement, though rather detached by today’s standards, is a fleshing out of this idea. Similarly, Paul places his focus on life in Christ and allows all moral issues to be viewed through this lens to determine their right/wrong status. For anyone who has read Romans, it is easy to see this idea when Paul speaks on marriage, procreation, and even eating.

Second, both tend to be contrary to conventional thinking. According to Pauline Christianity, and many Hellenistic philosophies, man could not live a moral life by simple civic virtue. The newly found beliefs spawned by critical reflection changed one’s motivations, needs, and desires resulting in a tension between the old and new self. For example, most of the founders of the philosophies were very often unmarried and demonstrated a great need for asceticism. More specifically, Paul often compares the wisdom of God with the wisdom of the world, the former being the winner in a seemingly-eternal battle.

Third, conversion to the philosophy or religion would result from a certain action or actions that the convert would willingly need to do. This is not a literal rite of passage like ascending a mountain or baptism, but one of the heart. For example, Epicureans asserted that fear of death and of the gods was the cause of all moral unhealthiness. Removing this from one’s life would then place him on the path to righteousness. Conversely, Paul states that turning from

idols and focusing one's heart on the one true god will start the life-long process of self-mastery that the Christian seeks after, or 'sanctification as it has come to be called.'³²

Several other examples were given in the essay like the 'wise-man' persona of the leaders and the call for social reforms found in various aspects of the worldviews. However, as stated earlier, Dr. Stower does not believe these to be indicative of any philosophical 'borrowing' from the Hellenists and even concludes his essay with an interesting take as to why these similarities might exist. Traditionally, in the Mediterranean, religion and wider cultures were based on local knowledge of small, personal communities led by aristocrats who administered the lore and practices of the land. During the Greek Enlightenment there was a massive shift from local to specialized knowledge.³³ Perhaps an illustration could help clarify this point. Imagine a small village home to mostly farmers and blacksmiths and fellow keepers of simplistic traditions. The village elders tell the people when to celebrate festivals, interpret omens, and legislate sacrificial laws. All runs quite smoothly until one day a wise man travels to the town claiming to know the secrets of life and is profound to the people of the village because they follow a legalistic morality rather than aligning their lives with a unitary value. The people are quite enthralled with all that is said and decide that this is the best way to live life. This is now somewhat of a bother to the elders because they are now required to employ the wise man or one of his affiliates as the town's spiritual advisor. Paul was this wise man along with Epicurus, Zeno and the like, who would 'shake up' the worldview of the traditional Judean or Greek or Roman village. Naturally, it would be that Paul would look more like the wise man (of whom there were quite a few

³² Stower, Staney. *Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?. Paul: Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Edited by Troels Engberg-Pederson. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 89-92

³³ Ibid. 101-102

Hellenists, so it is quite easy to assimilate him with any one of them) than the elders who ran the village prior to the revival.

Conclusion

As was stated at the beginning of this thesis, there are many approaches when one wishes to learn more about the legitimacy of Pauline Christianity. It is the opinion of the author that the most effective approach has been explored in this paper because the one characteristic that will make or break the truthfulness of Paul's account is whether or not it fits within a Jewish context. If Jesus did not fulfill the Jewish prophecies the way the Paul that describes, then it should all be disregarded as a perversion of Judaism. However, seeing how Paul's interpretation fits very well within a Jewish context, one should at least take Pauline Christianity very seriously.

It is also important to understand the proper questions to be asking when studying Pauline Christianity. As stated earlier, the author of this thesis finds that the traditional question of "Jew or Greek?" is entirely missing the point and should not be the focal point of Pauline scholasticism. Perhaps a better question would be "what kind of Greek?" or "how was he Hellenized?" One should focus on whether or not his ideas really are an extension of Judaism. It is through this method that one will be able to truly understand the mysterious pioneer of Christian mission work.

Bibliography

- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Theology of the New Testament*. Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2007.
- Maccoby, Hyamm. *The Mythmaker*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1986.
- Martin, Dale. *Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question. Paul: Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Edited by Troels Engberg-Pederson. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *Paul and his Interpreters: a Critical History*. London: Black, 1912.
- Strom, Mark. *Reframing Paul*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Stower, Staney. *Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy? Paul: Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Edited by Troels Engberg-Pederson. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Wayne A. Meeks, *The Writings of St. Paul*. New York: Norton, 1972.
- Wright, N. T. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2005.
- Wright, N. T. *What Saint Paul Really Said*. Cincinnati : Forward Movement Publications , 1997.