

**DOES HELLENISM CONTRIBUTE
CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS TO
PAUL'S CHRISTOLOGY, A
DISSERTATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649369492

Does Hellenism Contribute Constituent Elements to Paul's Christology, a dissertation by John William Bailey

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JOHN WILLIAM BAILEY

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The University of Chicago

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A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE DIVINITY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND INTERPRETATION

BY
JOHN WILLIAM BAILEY

CHICAGO
Press of Geo. K. Hallitt & Co.
1905

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Reel. M. V. P. - 11-29-39

INTRODUCTION.

In seeking to answer the question investigated in this essay it is advisable to get the right point of view from which to consider Paul's constructive thinking. In the matter of other New Testament writers the problem is not so difficult. No one would e. g., inquire with any seriousness whether Hellenistic thought had entered constructively into the synoptic gospels. On the other hand, no one can seriously doubt that it has influenced largely the epistle to the Hebrews and probably the fourth gospel. In the case of Paul, however, there is room for investigation. By birth he was a Hellenistic Jew, by training a Palestinian, and the question as to the influences which entered constructively into his thought becomes legitimate and natural.

If we interrogate the apostle through his writings we have not long to wait for an answer as respects that which was most fundamental.

He takes pains to tell us several times (Gal. 1:14; 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5; cf. Acts 23:6) that he was one of the most zealous adherents to the traditions of his fathers as they were handed down by the Palestinian Rabbis that could be found among all his countrymen. He was blameless in his life as a Pharisee, was more exceedingly zealous than many of his own age, and was a persecutor of the Christian church because of his zeal for that which he had learned in the Rabbinic schools. It would do violence to the apostle's own testimony to make him fundamentally a representative of Hellenistic rather than of Pharisaic Judaism.

But the incidental testimony of his own writings is even stronger in its indication of the apostle's central standpoint. No one will question that the letters of Paul ally themselves in general point of view with Palestinian Judaism. The intense regard for the law and the strenuous endeavor to observe its precepts which Gal. 2:15ff, and Rom. 7 show to have been characteristic of pre-Christian Saul, were impossible except to a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Philo, it is true, indicates that there was in Hellenistic Judaism a difference in point of view concerning the binding character of the law. But, according to the same representation, Philo was himself one of those who held that it was not to be abrogated. But that Philo could in any wise be classed with the Pharisees or could have written of his own struggles to keep the law as Paul has done cannot be seriously thought of. Philo the Hellenistic legalist, and Saul the Pharisee, are as far apart as the east and the west.

Another point in which Paul is clearly in line with Palestinian thought is his general Messianic expectation. The difference between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism on this subject is even more marked than on the point just considered. The role which the Messiah played in the expectation, its general catastrophic character involving the resurrection of the righteous at least and eternal punishment of the wicked; the world judgment in which the Messiah as the representative of Jehovah, or Jehovah himself, sat on the throne and rewarded men according to their deeds, all these belong to Palestinian Judaism and are carried over into the Christian thought of Paul. In contrast with this we have in the Hellenistic writers who reflect the messianic ideal at all, little more than a hope for the restoration of the Dispersion to Jerusalem, and a rehabilitation and purgation of the land. In so far as a Messiah appears at all he is regarded simply as a leader appointed from the community to direct the people. This, it is true, is very similar to the hope of the Zealots in Palestine itself. But the general view of Paul is not that of the Zealots, or even of the popular expectation, but is most closely allied with that of the Apocalyptists.

If, now, Paul occupied the same general position as the most advanced Palestinian thought, he also was closely connected with primitive Christianity. Although his thought represents an advance beyond anything to be discovered in Jewish Christian writers, there is ample evidence that in the beginning he was in close connection with it. The struggle which he had with Jewish Christianity was not in reference to any Christological problems. Both he and the Jewish Christians held essentially, in the beginning at least, the same view concerning the positive work of Christ. The point at which they differed was as to the implication of that work of Christ concerning the old legal system. For both, Jesus was the Messiah, the bringer of life to his followers, the representative of God, and had been appointed both Lord and Christ. To the Jewish Christian who had not tested thoroughly the legalistic conception of religion, and had not thought through the significance of Christ's activity, the old legal system seemed binding. Paul himself had received from the primitive church the teaching that Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3) and had been raised again, and his earliest preaching seems to have placed the emphasis upon these facts. But he knew, as he thought the matter to the bottom, that the legalistic system had been utterly done away in Christ. If it was still binding then Christ had died in vain (Gal. 2:21). Thus on the questions investigated in this essay there seems no reason for saying that Paul represents anything more than an advance over Jewish Christianity. He evidently started from the same general position, and he worked farther through the problem

because of the conditions which he had to face and the natural ability and the training which he brought to bear upon the task. (See more fully below, p. 54.)

While, then, Paul, by training and tradition, occupied the general point of view of Palestinian Judaism and primitive Jewish Christianity, we must also remember that his opportunities for making the acquaintance of Hellenistic thought were large. He was born and spent his early years in Tarsus, itself a great commercial metropolis, and one of the centers of Greek philosophy, full of the devotees of learning and the home of several of the most noted teachers of Stoicism. According to the testimony of Strabo (Book XIV, 5, 13-15), it surpassed even Athens and Alexandria "and every other place which can be named where there are schools and lectures of philosophy." In this atmosphere Paul was reared. The Jews in all probability had their own quarter of the city as was the custom in the cities of the Empire¹, but Paul's father being a Roman citizen as well as a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 16:27; 22:26-28) was most probably a man of wealth and position. For according to Dio Chrysostom (ARNIM'S ED. I, p. 321) most of the inhabitants of the city were outside of citizenship and a certain fortune was required to attain it. There can be little doubt that Paul mingled freely with the best people of the city and was in daily contact with the Greek speaking population, for it is highly probable that a family with the rank and standing of Paul's would cast off its Jewish exclusiveness (SEE DIO CHRYSOSTOM, ARNIM'S ED. I, p. 302; p. 321). Especially would this be true if, as Ramsay has suggested, Paul's father was connected with the administration of the government. This would by no means necessitate a waning of zeal for Jewish traditions. There is no evidence that he attended Greek schools here, and the fact that at an early age (Acts 26:4, 5) he was sent to Jerusalem to study in the Rabbinic schools (Acts 22:3) strongly suggests that his parents were sufficiently zealous of the traditions to have given him in the synagogue school such training as he may have previously received. Otherwise, he would scarcely have been prepared for his duties at Jerusalem. If he went to Jerusalem at the usual early age he can hardly have had opportunity to learn very much of Greek thought in Tarsus in his boyhood. Of course his studies at Jerusalem were not connected with Hellenistic thought.²

¹JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* XII. 1, 7; XIV. 3, 2; *War.* II. 18, 2; *con. Ap.* II. 4; cf. SCHURER, *Gemeindeverfassung* etc., and RAMSAY, *Exp.* 1902, pp. 19-32; 92-109. But see PHILO, *ad Flaccum*, 8.

²SCHIELE, *Z. W. TH.* 1899, p. 31, suggests that Paul was one of the five hundred pupils of Gamaliel who, according to Jewish traditions, gave themselves to the study of Greek philosophy and literature. Even LIGHTFOOT, *Bib.*