PAUL AT THE FEET OF GAMALIEL (ACTS 22:3): A FRESH LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE

[1]Rowland Onyenali
[2]PhilipMary E. Ayika

[1]Spiritan International School of Theology,
Attakwu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

[2]Department of Religion and Human Relations,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Abstract
The Acts of the Apostles presents a double picture of St Paul. At the beginning, he was a persecutor of Christians. At the end, he was a staunch advocate of Christianity. At the beginning, he manifested a strict view concerning adherence to Judaism. At the end, his mission centred on incorporation of gentiles into the Christian fold. This double picture presents Paul as a theologian at cross-roads. His defence before the Jews in Jerusalem made him pitch camp with the revered Gamaliel of the House of Hillel. He confessed his tutelage at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), a confession which set the tone for a retelling of his involvement in the persecution of the early believers in Jesus. Paul's persecution of the early Jesus' movement seems to contradict the lenient view of Gamaliel with regard to the believers in Jesus (Acts 5:34–39). However, Paul's active involvement in the gentile mission could be a vestige of the openness of Bet Hillel towards the gentiles. Hence there is a need for a fresh look at Acts 22:3. This paper contends that the balance of argument shows that it is difficult to defend a Pauline learning under Gamaliel.
Keywords: Gamaliel, Gentile Mission, Hillel, Paul, Persecution, Rabbinic Judaism, Shammai

Introduction

There is no doubt that Christianity and the New Testament are rooted in Judaism. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament shows the indebtedness of Christianity to the Jewish religion. This is evident in the copious references and allusions the New Testament makes of the Old Testament. A typical instance of this is the concerted effort of the Matthean gospel to make the life of Jesus a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. The link between the two Testaments is also evident in the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament as a preparation to the New Testament. Vermes (87)

goes to the extent of regarding Christianity "as part of a larger environment of Jewish religious and cultural history." As related to our topic of study, P. J. Hartin (113) makes the important remarks that "some of the views of Jesus and Paul can be explained against the background of the schools of Hillel and Shammai of the first century AD". He goes on to argue that the greatest affinities between the school of Hillel and Paul emerge in the attitude towards gentiles. In this regard, Paul's positive view of the gentile mission shows his leaning towards the school of Hillel, while his polemics against the Judaisers are a confrontation with the house of Shammai.

In this connection, the short note in Acts 22:3a–d becomes important. In it, Paul reveals his tutelage under Gamaliel. This is important, judging from the fact that the verse also notes that although Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, he grew up in Jerusalem. This means that the rabbinic school under the leadership of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, and not the schools of rhetoric in Tarsus, was the overriding factor in shaping the religious upbringing of Paul. Connected with several other passages where Paul shows his Jewish roots and inclinations, one is led into a better awareness of the theological currents that propelled the thoughts and mission of the self-acclaimed apostle to the gentiles.

Beginning from Acts 22:3, this paper takes a new look at the Jewish origin of Paul, especially as it relates to Gamaliel and ultimately to Bet Hillel. It tries to compare the two schools of Hillel and Shammai and to establish the principal contributions of Gamaliel to the school of Hillel. It also looks at Gamaliel's stance on the early Christian movement and then asks the pertinent question, namely, if Paul was trained in the lenient school of Hillel under Gamaliel as Acts 22:3 would want us to believe, how does this influence Paul's earlier intolerant stance on the followers of Jesus and the later gentile mission which he saw as his calling?

Acts 22:3a–d: Text and Linguistic Observations

Greek	English
a. Egō eimi anēr Ioudaīos	I am a Jew,
b. Gegennēmenos en Tarsō tēs Kilikias	born in Tarsus of Cilicia
c. anatethrammenos de en tē poleī tautē para tous podas Gamaliēl	but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel
d. pepaideumenos kata akribeian tou patrōou nomou	educated according to the exactness of the law of our fathers.

To begin with, our text falls within the second of the three accounts of the call of Paul (Acts 22:1–21). The other two accounts are in Acts 9:1–19 and Acts 26:9–18. Together with Acts 22:30–23:11 and 26:1–32, our verse functions as part of Paul's defence before different tribunals. And "in each of them Paul defends his Jewish orthodoxy, his preaching of the resurrection of the dead and his mission to the Gentiles" (Crowe: 167). In each of them, he also reiterates his Jewish descent. The differences in the texts show that the contents were influenced by the audience (Wick: 72).

The first part of our text (22:3a) claims a Jewish origin for Paul, a repetition of 21:39. This is important since he was talking to the Jewish people, unlike in Acts 22:25 where he presents his Roman citizenship before the Roman centurion. Perhaps, the Lukan remark that Paul addressed the crowd in the Hebrew language (Acts 21:40; 22:2) and called them brethren and fathers (22:1) serves as concrete indication of Paul's Jewish upbringing. They also serve as introduction to his Jewish origin. The Hebrew language (*hebraidi dialekto*) in which Paul spoke "is probably a loose expression for Aramaic" (Fernando: 564) and could refer to "the vernacular of much of rural Syria-Palestine and all lands to the east" (Keener: 389).

Acts 22:3b informs us that Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. Paul's birth in Tarsus is known in other places in Acts (9:11; 21:39; see also 9:30; 11:25). Tarsus, in the south of Asia Minor was an important city, noted for the presence of myriad schools of the act of rhetoric. There was also the presence of different cults of the gods, most especially, the cult of Heracles. In one of his letters, Paul also mentions his missionary work in Cilicia without the mention of Tarsus (Gal 1:21). Instead of claiming a Cilician upbringing and education, Paul claims to have grown up in Jerusalem (22:3c). That Paul grew up in Jerusalem is supported by the remark in Acts 26:4 where he claims that his life spent among his people in Jerusalem is common knowledge to all (see also van Unnik: 259-320; Stuhlmacher: 229). Of particular importance to us is Paul's claim of tutelage under Gamaliel (22:3d). It was under Gamaliel, a leading member of the school of Hillel in Jerusalem, that he claimed to have been brought up. It was also under Gamaliel that he claimed to have learned the exactness of the law of the fathers. This makes Acts 22:3a–d a key text in our study.

The three participles in Acts 22:3: *gignomai* (to be born), *trephō* or *anatrephō* (to be brought up) and *paideuō* (to be trained) "correspond to the three regular stages in the c.v. of a notable person – birth, childhood and education" (Dunn, 2009: 331). Hence, "it was the proper thing to describe the development of a man's youth in this way" (Van Unnik: 28). The three participles form part of the eleven motifs that characterise ancient bibliographies (Loveday: 40-43). However, our concern is with *trephō* and *paideuō*, that is, the upbringing and

education of Paul. This is so since our aim is to see the possible influence of Gamaliel on Paul.

Strictly, Acts 22:3a–d only informs us that Paul was brought up (*anatethrammenos*) under Gamaliel and educated strictly (*pepaideumenos kata akribeian*) in the ancestral law. Commentators only infer the education of Paul under Gamaliel with the supposition that the upbringing of Paul and his education both happened under the tutelage of Gamaliel. This is also our position in this paper. In other words, the expression means that Paul was brought up and educated under Gamaliel. In line with this, the translation of *anatrephō* as 'to be brought' up "is not to be taken as indicating anything more than that Paul was educated in Jerusalem under Gamaliel when he came to that city for his professional training" (McRay: 31). However, in the other places where the word *anatrephō* or *trephō* appears in the NT (Matt 6:26; 25:37; Luke 4:16; 12:24; 23:39; Acts 12:20; James 5:5; Rev 12:6: 12:14), it means no more than physical nourishment by food. The word will not be of importance in this study.

On the other hand, *paideuō* or *paideia* is a word with a rich meaning. It generally denotes teaching, correction or chastisement (Thayer, 3811). It is from it that our English pedagogy is derived. Its result is mental culture, learning and education. It also refers to anything taught or learned (Liddel and Scott, 1286). It is in this sense that Aristotle applied *paideia* (cf. Pol. $1338^{a}30$). In the places where *paideia* appears in the LXX it could be translated as correction (Prov 17:21; Sir 42:5) or chastisement (Deut 22:18; Psa 2:12). In Sir 10:1 and 37:23, *paideuein* has more the sense of education (Bertram: 608). The various shades of meaning all point to the aim of *paideia* as education in the sense of the cultivation of the whole person. These various shades of meaning are also evident in the New Testament. Luke uses it twice in the passion narrative (Lk 23:16.22) to mean chastisement. The only other time Luke uses the verb in Acts is to describe the education of Moses in all the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). Paul also applies the verb to mean chastisement (1 Cor 11:32; 2 Cor 6:9; 2 Tim 3:16), discipline (Eph 6:4), instruction (Tit 2:12), or correction (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:25). In other words, it incorporates more than the modern conception of education. It refers to the student days of a Jewish child under the custody of a rabbi. This normally happens in the *Bet Midrash* (house of study) dedicated to the study of the commandments. Graduating from the *Bet Midrash* qualifies the Jewish child to be called *Bar Mizvah*, that is, son of the commandment (McRay: 19).

Although these specifications may not accurately apply during the time of Paul, they point to what educational context Acts 22:3a–d could be referring to. In summary, the contention of our passage is that Paul was learning the commandments of God and the rabbinic interpretations of these

commandments under Gamaliel, the Pharisee. In this connection, the use of *akribeia* (22:3d) could relate to the Pharisaic exactness in matters of the law. Hence, one is not surprised to hear Paul talk about his zeal in following the ways of his ancestors. We shall return to this later. Suffice it to say that our passage shows Paul's boast of his Jewish roots and his upbringing in the *Bet Midrash* under Gamaliel.

The Jewish Roots of Paul

One is probably correct in asserting that Paul was a Jew even as an apostle of Christ. Both his letters and the Acts of the Apostles bear witness to this. Paul is proud of his Israelite race and his tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1). In Philippians (3:5), he not only renews his boast about his belonging to the race of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin and of being a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents, he also informs us about his circumcision on the eight day of his life according to Jewish customs (cf. Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3). This claim of belonging to the Hebrew race is again repeated in his second letter to the Corinthians (11:22). The expression "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (*hebraios ex hebraiōn*) is an idiom. In this idiom, "a noun is repeated in the genitive plural in order to express very emphatically the superlative degree" (Bullinger: 283.) In other words, Paul is claiming belongingness to the Hebrew race in the superlative degree. To his claim of being 'a Hebrew from Hebrews' Harvey (146) observes that Paul aims at underscoring his traditionalism or fundamentalism. Paul even makes a distinction between his Jewish race and the gentile sinners (Gal 2:15) and reveals that, according to the Law, he is a member of the strict religious sect of the Pharisees. Perhaps, this was a claim to "the highest degree of faithfulness and sincerity in the fulfilment of duty to God as prescribed by the divine Torah" (Beare, quoted in Martin and Hawthorne: 186). All these show that even if others doubted his loyalty to the Jewish law (cf. Acts 21:21.28; Rom 3:31) he believed himself to be an authentic Jew. He did not only see himself as an authentic Jew, he laid claims to his earnestness and zeal in the observance of the Jewish Law which impelled him to work more than his age mates (1:14). It is his extreme fundamentalism in the traditions of his fathers that led to his intense persecution of Christians.

Paul's Jewish roots and his Pharisaic leaning are also manifested in the theological themes and approaches that appear important to him. We shall only make an eclectic presentation of some of them. Following the findings of Wischmeyer (25f) we note first his belief in the resurrection of the dead and his apocalyptic hope (see Rom 4:17.24; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15). Also to be counted as product of his Jewish inheritance are his self-image as apostle to the gentiles and his understanding of salvation history as beginning from the Jews (Rom 1:16); the description of his call in line with the call of the

prophets of the Jewish religion (Gal 1:15f); the adoption of forms and terms of Jewish propaganda for the gentile mission in which repentance means turning away from the gods and returning to the living God (1 Thess 1:9f); the reception of the eschatological and geographical concept according to which Zion is not just the beginning of salvation history (Rom 15:19) but also the eschatological destination (Rom 11:26f); the application of various forms of Jewish scriptural interpretations of his time (Qal wahomer in Rom 5:9f; Gezera shawa in Rom 4:1–12; Midrash in Gal 3:6–14, Typology in 1 Cor 10:1–13, Allegory in Gal 4:21–31), etc. Even if these do not prove Paul's study under Gamaliel, they, at least, confirm the Pauline tutelage under a distinguished rabbi of the Pharisaic sect. Paul tells us that this rabbi is Gamaliel of the house of Hillel. Hence, it is important to delimit the broad contours of the teachings of the house of Hillel.

The House of Hillel and the House of Shammai

The house of Hillel (Bet Hillel) and the house of Shammai (Bet Shammai) were the two most famous Jewish schools of thought during the period of Tannaim (10-220 CE). They were named after Hillel and Shammai who founded them. These two schools were noted for their various disputes concerning ritual practice, ethics and theology. Their teachings shaped the oral Law of the Jews within this period and also for later centuries. The Mishna (Pirkei Avot, 5:17) records their dispute as one with a positive value. In most cases, the teachings of the school of Hillel were considered more lenient than that of the school of Shammai. Some reasons have been adduced for the differences. First, Hillel was said to be kind and gentle while Shammai was stern and ill-tempered (Hartin: 114). This view is supported by a saying in the Babylonian Talmud that 'A man should always be gentle like Hillel and not impatient like Shammai' (B. Talmud: Shabbat, 31A).

Their temperaments seem to have affected their teachings. It is written:

> "It happened that a certain heathen came before Shammai and said to him, 'make me a proselyte on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot'. Thereupon he repulsed him with the builder's cubit which was in his hand. When he went before Hillel, he said to him, 'what is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah while the rest is the commentary thereof: go and learn it" (B. Talmud: Shabbat, 31A).

The above remark agrees with the school of Shammai. Rabbi Eliezer, a representative of this school, expressed that the gentiles have no place in the world to come (B. Talmud: Sanhedrin, 105A). This explains the rationale behind Shammai's repulsion of the gentile. Bet Hillel, on the other hand,

accepted that any non-Jew who kept the sevenfold Noachic commandments, namely, to refrain from blasphemy, idolatry, adultery, bloodshed, robbery, eating flesh cut from a living animal is considered a part of the Hasidim and merited a place in the world to come (B. Talmud: Sanhedrin, 56A-59B). The implication of this is that Bet Hillel was accommodating to interactions with the gentiles more than Bet Shammai.

Obviously, the strict stance of Bet Shammai would have suited those Jews who longed for the liberation of the Jewish race from any form of foreign domination. Probably because of this and/or the nationalistic bent of Judaism during the first century CE, the rulings of Bet Shammai dominated rabbinic Judaism until the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. However, after the destruction of the Temple, it was said that a voice from heaven nullified the legality of the teachings of Bet Shammai (Yerushalmi Berakhot, 1:4). Consequently, the teachings of Bet Hillel are considered more normative by the Halacha and most modern Jews than the teachings of the school of Shammai. Evidently, it was in the lenient school of Hillel that Gamaliel learnt the Jewish teachings which Acts 22:3 claims he transmitted to Paul.

The Person and Leadership of Gamaliel

Gamaliel, who is known as Rabban (our master), is one of the most prominent Talmudic figures. Gamaliel came to be known as Rabban Gamaliel the Elder (Ziegler: 688) and he was the first one to be titled "Rabban". He was probably the president of the great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem at a time and held a senior position in the highest court in Jerusalem (Jewish Encyclopaedia: Gamaliel). His importance cannot be diminished in Bet Hillel. In the line of succession in this school, Hillel was succeeded by his son Simeon as the Nasi (head of the court) of the Sanhedrin. When Simeon died, his son, Gamaliel, was elected Nasi. This means that Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel. Also Josephus mentions Gamaliel and notes that he comes from "a very noble family of the sect of the Pharisees, which are supposed to excel others in the accurate knowledge of the laws of their country" (Life: 38). The Talmud puts the following words in the mouth of Gamaliel's son, Rabban Simon ben Gamaliel: "There were a thousand children in the household of my father, Rabban Gamliel; five hundred of them studied the Torah, and five hundred of them studied Greek wisdom" (Bava Kamma, 83a). The study of Greek wisdom in the house of Gamaliel could also be reckoned as an aspect of the accommodation of gentiles by Gamaliel.

Gamaliel seems to have been leader of the Sanhedrin before the destruction of the Temple. It is recorded in a *baraita* that Hillel, and his son Shimon, and his grandson Gamaliel, and his great-grandson Shimon filled their position of Nasi before the House, while the Temple was standing, for a hundred years (Shabbat, 15a:10). The importance of Gamaliel with regard to the Torah is manifest in a note from the Mishna that from the time when Rabban Gamaliel

the Elder died, the honour of the Torah ceased, and purity and asceticism died (Sotah, 49a:16).

Gamaliel was also acknowledged by the king and the queen during his time as leader of the Sanhedrin. Two examples suffice. A teaching in a *baraita* says:

> "One may not register for two Paschal offerings at once." And there was an incident involving a king and queen who said to their slaves: Go and slaughter the Paschal offering on our behalf. And they went out and slaughtered two Paschal offerings on their behalf. They came and asked the king which one he wished to eat. He said to them: Go and ask the queen. They came and asked the queen. She said to them: Go and ask Rabban Gamliel to rule which one should be used… (Pesachim, 88b:9-13).

The quote above fails to record the king and queen to which the reference is made. However, another teaching mentions Agrippa in connection with Gamaliel. Avodah Zarah (55a:2–3) makes the following submission:

> Agrippa the general asked Rabban Gamliel: It is written in your Torah with regard to idol worship: "For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24). Doesn't jealousy arise only in the following cases: A wise man might be jealous of another wise man, and a mighty man might be jealous of another mighty man, and a rich man might be jealous of another rich man? If so, why is God jealous of objects of idol worship, which are not gods?

An important teaching attributed to Gamaliel comes from the Mishna which mentions Gamaliel's contribution to laws concerning marriage, arguing that the law should protect women during divorce and, for the purpose of remarriage for a woman, a single witness is enough to ascertain the death of the husband (Yevamot, 16:7). This is against the background of the Old Testament's injunction that two witnesses are needed before a charge could be sustained (cf. Deut 19:15). Apart from this, Rabban Gamaliel also set three things as leniencies, in opposition to the view of most of the Sages: (1) one may sweep the room of the couches on a Festival, i.e., the dining room, where they would recline on couches to eat, as there is no concern that by sweeping the room one might come to fill in the holes and level the ground; (2) one may place incense consisting of fragrant herbs on burning coals in order to perfume one's house on a Festival; (3) and one may prepare a whole kid goat, meaning a kid goat roasted whole (Beitzah, 22b:9–11).

It is important to note that these leniencies also extended to interactions with gentiles. We learn from the Mishnah that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said:

> The ancestral house of my father, the dynasty of *Nesi'im* from the house of Hillel, was accustomed to give its white clothes to a gentile launderer no fewer than three days before Shabbat. It was taught in the *Tosefta* that Rabbi Tzadok said: This was the custom of the house of Rabban Gamliel: They would give white clothes to the gentile launderer three days before Shabbat, and they would give him colored clothes even on Shabbat eve… (Shabbat, 19a:10).

And when asked how he could bathe in the bath of Aphrodite in light of the biblical ban on idolatry, Rabban Gamaliel is said to have responded that Aphrodite's statue serves a purely decorative and not a cultic function in the bathhouse (M. Avodah Zarah 3:4). Obviously, Gamaliel did not consider these interactions with the gentiles as in any way defiling to him or to his household.

These few lines make clear the leadership position of Gamaliel in the Sanhedrin. As we have seen, his leadership extended to the high and low people of his time. And as leader of the Sanhedrin, he also gave out teachings that could easily be categorised as leniencies from the point of view of Pharisaic Judaism. This lenient view of Gamaliel in rabbinic literature is also made manifest in his only recorded speech in the Christian bible.

Gamaliel's Reception in the New Testament

The Christian bible speaks of Gamaliel as a man held in high esteem in the Sanhedrin. In Acts 5:33, the Sanhedrin was so infuriated by the speech of Peter that it resolved to kill the followers of Jesus. This plan was aborted when Gamaliel made a plea of leniency. His speech was preceded by a remark concerning his importance in the Jewish council. He belonged to the party of the Pharisees. He was also a teacher of the law and a man respected by the whole people (Acts 5:34). In line with the leniency approach of the school of Hillel, he said:

> Men of Israel, be careful how you deal with these people. Sometime ago there arose Theudas. He claimed to be someone important, and collected about four hundred followers, but when he was killed, all his followers scattered and that was the end of them. And then there was Judas the Galilean, at the time of the census, who attracted crowds of supporters; but he was killed too, and all his followers dispersed. What I suggest, therefore, is that you leave these men alone and let them go. If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it

> will break up of its own accord; but if it does in fact come from God you will be unable to destroy them. Take care not to find yourselves fighting against God (Acts 5:35–39).

Gamaliel's warning to the council is premised on two historical facts. The first historical fact (v.36) bothers on the movement associated with Theudas, who lived around AD 45-46 (cf. Jos. Ant. 20.5.1§97-99). When he was killed, his followers scattered and his movement fizzled out. The second historical fact (v.37) recalls the fate of Judas, who lived around AD 6 (cf. Jos. Ant. 18.1.1 § 1-10). His movement also faded away when he was killed.

If the dating of these two personalities by Josephus is correct, then the Lukan Gamaliel has misplaced the chronology of these two movements. However, a reconciling of the historical chronology is not our concern in this study. It is important for us that these two examples are meant to remind the council that if Jesus was an impostor, his followers would soon scatter since he has been killed. All that the Sanhedrin had to do was to watch and wait because killing the disciples of Jesus would mean fighting God if Jesus was really sent by God. Naturally, the idea of fighting God was abhorrent to the Jews. Anyone who did such a thing had God as his enemy (cf. 3 Macc 7:9). Following our line of argument, N.T. Wright (27) explains that Gamaliel's stance was indicative of the Hillelites who "broadly speaking, pursued a quality of 'live and let live.'"

The fact that the Sanhedrin made up of Pharisees and Sadducees adhered to the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5:40–42) is a pointer to his high position in the council. This implies that both the Pharisees and Sadducees in the council accepted the counsel of a Pharisee. It could rightly be said that Gamaliel played a vital role in protecting the lives of the early followers of Jesus.

With all this bulk of evidence about Gamaliel and the House of Hillel, it comes then as a surprise that Paul would lay claims to studying under him. This is because the early vocation of Paul seems to be the direct opposite of what we know about Gamaliel.

Paul as Arch-Persecutor of 'Christians'

Many passages in the Christian corpus make references to Paul's murderous intent against the early believers in Jesus, who were later called Christians. Paul is casually introduced in Acts 7:58 as the young man at whose feet the executioners of Stephen laid down their garments. He is also said to have approved the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1). He later sought and received letters from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem to drag into prison all those who followed Jesus (Acts 9:2; 22:5; 26:12). These reports see Paul ravaging the church

(Acts 8.3) and breathing out threats and murder (Acts 9.1) to the point of not only locking up many of the adherents of Jesus in prison, but also casting his vote against them when they were being condemned to death (Acts 26.10). Although this seems "to go beyond the judicial discipline which the synagogue was permitted to exercise" (Dunn, 2009: 338), as we shall soon come to see, it is in consonance with Paul's statement that he persecuted the church to an extraordinary degree. This is because of his zeal for the law and the traditions of his fathers. Luke reports that it was during such murderous missions that he was struck down by light from heaven.

The Lukan depiction of Paul as persecutor of the early 'Christian' movement also agrees with the accounts in some of his letters. This is witnessed in four core places: I persecuted the church of God (I Cor 15:9); I persecuted the church of God in excessive measure and tried to destroy it (Gal 1:13); as to zeal, a persecutor of the church (Phil 3:6); I used to be a blasphemer and a persecutor and contemptuous (I Tim 1:13). The initial suspicion of the early believers in Jesus towards Paul was a result of his pronounced hatred for the embryonic movement (cf. Gal 1:23). The underlying factor to the Pauline persecution of the early believers was his zeal.

Paul's zeal mirrors that of Phinehas who is acknowledged in the Hebrew scripture as model and reflection of the zeal of Yahweh. 1 Macc. 2.26.54 documents that Phinehas was given the covenant of everlasting priesthood because he was deeply zealous. His singular recorded act of zeal was the murder of a fellow Jew and the Midianite woman he brought into the tent (cf. Num 25:6–11). Phinehas' example was followed by other notable Israelites who burned with zeal for Yahweh. Dunn (2009:343) has documented the important places where zeal functions as motivation for the destruction of perceived transgressors of the law of Israel's God:

> Simeon and Levi burned with zeal for you God and abhorred the pollution of their blood (Jdt. 9.2–4), which referred to their slaughter of the Shechemites after the seduction of their sister Dinah by the son of Hamor (Genesis 34). In Jubilees 30 the avenging of Dinah's defilement (vv. 4–5) and protection of Israel's holiness from Gentile defilement (vv. 8, 13–14) was counted to them for righteousness (v. 17). Elijah's 'zeal for the Lord' was most fully expressed in his victory over (and execution of!) the prophets of Baal. Mattathias sparked the revolt against the Syrians when, 'burning with zeal for the law, just like Phinehas', he executed the Syrian officer and the fellow Jew who was made to apostatize by offering forbidden sacrifice (1 Mace. 2.23–26). Mattathias rallied the rebellion by crying out, 'Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come with me' (2.27; Josephus, Ant.

> 12.271) and his death-bed testimony is a paean in praise of zeal and the heroes of Israel (1 Mace. 2.51–60).

Similarly Philo writes that "if any members of the nation betray the honour due to the One they should suffer the utmost penalties. . . . And it is well that all who have a zeal (zelos) for virtue should be permitted to exact penalties offhand and with no delay, without bringing the offender before jury or council or any kind of magistrate at all, and give full scope to the feelings which possess them, that hatred of evil and love of God which urges them to inflict punishment without mercy on the impious" (Spec. Leg. 1.54-57 see also Spec. Leg 2.253).

Although this does not mean that Paul belonged to the zealot movement, it seems to be the connotation of zeal that inspired Paul's attempts to exterminate nascent 'Christianity.' This is understandable. Anyone with a flaming zeal for the Pharisaic tradition would surely see it as a religious duty to eliminate anybody proclaiming Jesus as the Lord or Messiah, especially judging from the manner of his death. This was basically the preaching of the early followers of Jesus (see Acts 2:36). Also the notion that the early followers of Jesus were preaching against the Jewish Laws and customs (cf. Acts 6:13f) adds to the urgency of eliminating this movement (see Wick: 36).

Despite all these, Paul makes the bold statement during his defence before the Jews in Jerusalem that he learnt at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). As already seen, Gamaliel, a representative of Bet Hillel, bears the mark of a lenient Pharisee. Paul's murderous rage against 'Christians' prior to his conversion seriously questions the association of Paul with Gamaliel. However, Paul's openness to the gentile mission comes closest to what we glean from the leniencies of Gamaliel.

Paul and the Gentile Mission

Despite the already established discrepancy between the teachings of the school of Hillel, propagated by Gamaliel and the early attitude of Paul to the Christians, there are still veritable points of contact between Paul and Gamaliel. This is mostly evident in Paul's approach to the gentile mission. We have already seen traces of the aversion of the house of Shammai and the openness of the house of Hillel to the gentiles. It is with this that Paul could lay claim to having learnt at the feet of Gamaliel.

Paul's openness to the gentile mission is the most characteristic distinguishing mark of his ministry as reported in his letters and in the Acts of the Apostles. First, Paul addresses himself as apostle to the gentiles (Rom 11:13; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). In the first chapter of his letter to the Galatians, Paul makes a pronouncement concerning his call, which parallels the calls of the prophets

Isaiah (LXX 49:1.6) and Jeremiah (LXX 1:5): "But when he who had set me apart from the womb of my mother and called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his son in me, in order that I might proclaim him among the gentiles, I did not confer with any human being...." (Gal. 1:15–16). In the second chapter of this same letter, ethnicity became the distinguishing mark between his mission and that of Peter. Despite Peter's claim to have been assigned the mission to the gentiles (cf. Acts 15:7), Paul writes: "… I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised just as Peter has been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised, for the one who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me making me an apostle to the gentiles" (Gal 2:7–8). It was his mission to the gentiles that led to the use of his other name Paul (Wick: 33).

We also reckon with the vehemence with which Paul opposed the Judaisers who taught the people that unless they are circumcised in the tradition of Moses they cannot be saved (see Acts 15:1; Gal 4:21; 5:2–12; 6:12–15) and also his opposition to certain members of the Pharisee party who insisted that gentiles should be circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5). These are eloquent testimony to his awareness of God's election of the gentiles. Paul did not only criticize the Judaisers, he also reprimanded them for their doctrines and behaviour (Dunn, 1993: 459-477).

The above sets the tone for Paul's confrontation with Peter in Galatians 2:11–14. In this section, Paul recounts how Peter used to eat with the gentiles until the arrival of those from the circumcised (Gal 2:12). Their arrival made Peter to withdraw from the practice of eating with the gentiles. Paul's reaction to this withdrawal was as swift as it was hard. He writes: "but when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a gentile, and not like a Jew, how can you compel the gentiles to Judaize' (Gal 2:14)? Paul considers his own attitude to the gentiles as being consistent with the truth of the gospel. This means that the mission of Paul to the gentiles is not just in line with the prophetic call to bring the whole world to the God of Israel, it is also in line with the truth of the gospel proclaimed by Jesus. Put in another way, "Paul's work as teacher of gentiles is part of the larger story of Israel, not a break from it" (Hodge: 276).

Finally, it was at the instigation of Paul and Barnabas that the council of Jerusalem was convened. The speech of James at the end of the council, which ratified the admission of gentiles into the Jesus' movement and the apostolic letter that followed this speech were predicated on the condition that the gentiles abstain from food sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages (Acts 15:20.29). This could be seen as reflecting the consideration of Bet Hillel and "as an appeal for a sympathetic understanding of Jewish-Christian sensitivities" (Fitzmyer:

196). Moreover, these four stipulations correspond to "an early Tannaitic variant of the Noachic laws found in the Tosefta Avodah Zorah 9:4" (Falk: 48).

The above seems to be the broad outline of the Pauline interactions with the gentiles. One is then tempted to ask whether his sympathetic stand for the gentile mission is enough to accept his tutelage under the distinguished Gamaliel of the house of Hillel.

Paul, a Student of Gamaliel: Evaluation of the Evidence

Perhaps, the most important fact to look at in the evidence is the historicity of Acts 22:3. As most scholars have acknowledged, our passage seems to show the freedom of Luke in bringing many issues together. For instance, Paul is arrested with the supposition that he was the Egyptian who led a group of four thousand Sicarii to the desert (cf. Acts 21:38). However, his ability to speak Greek was noted as evidence that he could not have been an Egyptian. However, since the time of Alexander the Great (356-323), Egypt has been under the cultural influence of Greece. Hence, Paul's speaking in Greek could never be a reason for presuming that he is not an Egyptian as 21:38 suggests (Drewermann: 926).

Secondly, during the time of Paul, Aramaic, and not Hebrew, was the official language. Therefore, the remark that Paul spoke in Hebrew (Acts 22:40; 22:2) is imprecise, to say the least. Some of these considerations led Dibelius (178-180) to ascribe the passage to Luke's redaction and to name it the biggest problem of the last Paul complex in 21:15-26:32. Among other points already mentioned, it is safe to assume that the passage of our study shows the freedom of the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Again, the early life of Paul seriously questions his tutelage under the lenient Gamaliel. His intolerance and outright persecution of the early believers in Jesus question his learning under Gamaliel.

Perhaps, Paul's claim of being tutored under Gamaliel could only be defended by noting the words of Paul himself that he lived the life of a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5) and that he was advancing in Judaism beyond many of his own age among his people, being extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal 1:14). In support of the view of Paul's learning under Gamaliel, Lake comes up with the following point:

> it does not follow that pupils always follow the doctrines of their teachers. Saul of Tarsus may have been a pupil of Gamaliel, and be profoundly affected by him, and yet afterwards succumbed to other influences. We do not always follow all the opinions of our teachers, and it would be scarcely

> suggested that our books are not authentic because they do not agree with the teaching which we received at our universities or theological colleges (Lake: 427).

Although this is a plausible resolution of the problem created by the Pauline claim, a closer scrutiny shows that it simply begs the question. It was only after Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus that he made a complete turn around and became the strongest ambassador of the Christian faith. This is also attested by Paul in Acts 22:17–21. This passage notifies the reader that it was during a prayer session in the temple of Jerusalem that Paul received the message of being the apostle to the gentiles. One could argue that it was after this that he became all things to all people so as to gain the opportunity to save some (I Cor 9:21). With the same zeal he persecuted the early Christians he propagated the Christian faith to the gentile world. One might be safe to conclude that the encounter of the resurrected Jesus with Paul was the greatest school that formed his theological and missionary orientation.

References

Bader, G. 1940. *The Jewish Spiritual Heroes: The Lives and Works of the Rabbinical Teachers from the Beginning of the Great Synagogue to*

the Final Completion of the Talmud. Seven Centuries of Jewish Thought. New York: Pardes.

Barnes, J. (ed). 1984. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bertram, G. "Paideuo, ktl" *TDNT* 5: 596-625.

Bullinger, E.W. 1968. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Dibelius, M. 1953. "Paulus in der Apostelgeschichte," in: *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte* (H. Greeven, ed.). Berlin, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Drewermann, E. 2011. *Die Apostelgeschichte: Wege zur Menschlichkeit*. Ostfildern: Patmos Verlag.

Dunn, J. D. G. 1993. "Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul's Letter to the Galatians." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (3), 459-477.

Dunn, J. D. G. 2009. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Falk, H. 1985. *Jesus the Pharisee: A new look at the Jewishness of Jesus.* New York: Paulist.

Fitzmyer, J. & R. Dillion. 1970. The Acts of the Apostles, in Brown, R., J. Fitzmyer & R. Murphy (Eds.), *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (vol.2). London: Geoffrey Chapman, 165-214.

Fernando, A. 1998. *Acts: The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic.

Hartin, P. (1987). "The Pharisaic Roots of Jesus and the early Church." *Neotestamentica, 21*(2), 113-124. Retrieved June 4, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/43070387.

Harvey, G. 1996. *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature*. Brill: Leiden.

Hawthorne, G. F and Martin, R. P. 2004. *Philippians* (WBC 43). Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic.

Hodge, C. J. 2005. "Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul's Identity." *Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 13(3): 270-288.

Keener, C. S. 2015. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (vol.4). Michigan: Baker Academic.

Lake, K. 2004. *The Earlier Epistles of St Paul: Their Motive and Origin*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Liddel, H. G. and R. Scott. 1996. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Loveday, A. 2006. *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist looks at the Acts of the Apostles.* London: T&T Clark International.

McRay, J. 2003. Paul: His life and teaching. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Schechter, S. and Bacher, W. "Gamaliel I". Jewish Encyclopedia.

Stuhlmacher. P. 1992. *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Bd. 1: Grundlegung: von Jesus bis Paulus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thayer. J. H. (trans.). 1998. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: American Book Company.

Van Unnik, W. C. 1973. *Tarsus or Jerusalem*, in ders., Sparsa Collecta 1 (NT.S 29). Brill: Leiden.

Vermes, G. 1984. *Jesus and the World of Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Whiston, W. 1980. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (New Updated Edition).
Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.

Wick, P. 2006. *Paulus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Wischmeyer, O. (Hrsg). 2006. *Paulus: Leben-Unwelt-Werk-Briefe*. Francke: Tübingen.

Wright, N.T. 2014. *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Yonge, C. D. (trans.). 1993. *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.

Ziegler, K. 2013. *Der Kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike in Fünf Bänden*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler.